

Admittedly, I was struck by a statement at the beginning of the book, which pretty much sets the tone for the rest of the book. Lichtenstein writes: "To my knowledge, no one has written articles, or books, or proposed a theory, that would transform the personal trouble of having a STI diagnosis into community action for social change" (p. 14). I immediately thought of Tim Dean's *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections on the Subculture of Barebacking*. In terms of postcolonial policy and sexuality, sexual stigma and the Caribbean, I also thought of M. Jaqui Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Of course, there are many, many more people theorizing about STI stigma, postcolonial state policy, racialization, and sexuality. Nonetheless, I was left wondering how such an important concept as "colonizing stigma," might have developed differently, if there had been engagement with the theoretical work of those stigmatized by the various axes of power discussed in the text.

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*Migration, Prostitution, and Human Trafficking: The Voice of Chinese Women*, by **Min Liu**. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2011. 203pp. \$34.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781412815055.

VANESSA BOUCHE  
Texas Christian University  
vanessa.bouche@tcu.edu

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The purpose of this book, according to the author, is to "examine prostitution in China in the context of a society in transition" from rural to urban and agricultural to industrial (p. 2). While Min Liu successfully explains prostitution in this context, she does not provide many answers, though it is not entirely clear what question she is seeking to address in the first place. As such, the book has a number of theoretical and empirical problems.

*Migration, Prostitution, and Human Trafficking* proceeds first by setting up the context—China in transition. Liu summarizes a process whereby China's economic shift from agriculture to industry leads to migration to cities and urbanization as people seek jobs and benefits. At the same time, however, state-owned enterprises started to

privatize, which led to a loss of jobs and benefits for many workers, but prosperity and wealth for private executives and factory owners. Thus, the author sets the context for a burgeoning commercial sex industry in China, where poor women from rural areas migrate to cities for factory jobs, but find they can make more money in prostitution, and corporate executive men have disposable income to purchase sex.

Using snowball sampling, Liu interviewed forty prostituted women in four segments of the sex industry: streetwalkers, hair salons, massage parlors, and karaoke lounges. She also interviewed nine sex establishment managers, fifteen law enforcement officers, and conducted eight field observations. She provides a very thorough record of her data collection, including the times and venues in which she conducted the interviews, and her rapport-building interview technique.

After setting the context and describing her methodology, the author has a chapter on the feminist debate regarding prostitution and human trafficking—whether all prostitution is human trafficking or whether prostitution is a legitimate form of work. This chapter is where confusion for the reader sets in regarding exactly what this book is about. Fundamentally, the book is about explaining prostitution in China. Yet, Liu insists on discussing human trafficking, which only serves to weaken the book and confuse the reader as to its central question. Is the central question how much of the commercial sex industry in China is sex trafficking and how much is "legitimate," or is it deciphering different factors that lead one into forced versus "voluntary" prostitution? If it is either of these, then the book falls woefully short, both theoretically and empirically. If the author had pursued her initial objective to examine prostitution in China, she would have come closer to the mark. As it stands, the discussion of human trafficking was unnatural and forced, and led to a great deal of weakness in the rest of the book.

On the one hand, Liu gives away her position on the feminist prostitution debate as pro-sex work. Implicitly, she refers to women in commercial sex as "prostitutes" rather than "prostituted women," and explicitly, she places prostitution within a "rational choice" theoretical framework, stating that

"there are . . . many differences between forced and voluntary participation in the sex trade, based on women's circumstances and motivations" (p. 58). Yet, she wants to make clear that her rational choice theoretical construct does not "advocate the decriminalization or regulation of prostitution" (p. 58). Rather, on the other hand, she acknowledges that the choices of women in commercial sex "are limited" (p. 55), that "prostitution was in no way their first choice" (p. 107), and that there is "sexual exploitation involved in commercial sex" (p. 58). It seems as though Liu wants to please everyone, as it were, and in the process sends mixed messages.

The author argues that the issue of why women enter prostitution is very complex, and factors include any combination of the following: poverty, the ability to migrate, friend/family influence, rape/abuse in their past, and a large income. Some of these factors are those over which the women perhaps have some agency and may therefore make a "rational choice." For example, they make a "rational choice" to migrate to the city for employment. On the other hand, it is imperative to examine these factors in light of structural and cultural factors over which prostituted women have no agency. For instance, structural factors include lack of access to education and a large economic gulf between rich and poor. Cultural factors include the devaluation of women and increased materialism. Thus, although they may be making a "rational choice" to migrate, both structural and cultural factors push and pull them into making this decision.

The autonomy of prostituted women in China also must be examined. Liu explains ways and reasons that prostituted women are fined: if they refused to go out with a customer, if they worked less than the minimum number of days per month, if they did not bring in enough customers per week, or even if they did not smile. Moreover, they have to share their profits with their superiors, whether that be the owner of an establishment, a mimmie, or a pimp. In another case, a woman was arrested thinking her boss would care enough to bail her out; she spent 10 days in jail. And beyond issues of pay and incarceration, 17 of the interviewed women reported some type of physical violence on the job.

Liu seemingly justifies this lack of autonomy. For example, she reports that women in hair salons and karaoke lounges think it is fair to share their earnings with owners and mimmies because, without them, they would not have jobs or as many customers. She even alarmingly attempts to justify the violence by stating that violence comes "exclusively from the customers" and never by the sex ring operators, and even then, she says, "most customers are good" (p. 137).

It seems that the primary reason the author normalizes and then justifies this lack of autonomy is so that she can stick to her "rational choice" construct. However, the application of rational choice to prostitution is like trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. It does not fit. The simple reason is that the author fails to account adequately for the psychological coercion inherent in prostitution. Although she is explicit about the complexity of prostitution, she is notably silent on the most complex aspect of it all—the psychological factors. She is so focused on giving the prostituted women agency through a rational choice explanation that she misses the mark by a long shot.

In order to find a middle ground between the "force vs. choice" dichotomy, the author sacrifices clarity and makes contradictory statements. She reports the level of dissatisfaction that many of her interviewees feel with life (e.g., "This is not a job for a human being;" "To be a prostitute is already to be in a state of moral deterioration;" "I regret being a prostitute;" "I am depressed;" "I attempted suicide in 2006 . . . I really wanted to die;" "I look down upon myself;" "I feel very sorry that I am a hypocrite"), yet still calls this the "optimal choice which can help them fulfill their aspirations and life objectives" (p. 174).

Overall, the book would have been more coherent if Liu had put a stake in the ground on one side or the other of the debate. Perhaps the truest middle ground is an acknowledgment that prostituted people worldwide are strong and courageous, yet are victims of systems and structures that devalue and degrade human dignity and worth.