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978-0-521-54069-8 - The Politics of Prostitution: Women's Movements, Democratic States
and the Globalisation of Sex Commerce

Edited by Joyce Outshoorn

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The Politics of Prostitution

*Women's Movements, Democratic States and
the Globalisation of Sex Commerce*

The most effective way to deal with prostitution has always been hotly debated by governments and women's movements alike. Feminists want it abolished or regulated as sex work; governments have to safeguard public health and order. This book shows how women's movements in Western Europe, North America and Australia have affected policies on prostitution and trafficking of women since the 1970s, asking what made them successful in some countries but a failure in others. It also assesses whether government institutions to advance the status of women – so-called women's policy agencies – have played a key role in achieving policy outcomes favourable to movement demands. Written by an international team of experts and based on original sources, all chapters follow the same framework to ensure comparability. The final chapter offers an overall comparison identifying what makes women's movements successful and women's agencies effective, presenting the case for 'state feminism'.

JOYCE OUTSHOORN is Professor of Women's Studies at Leiden University. She has been active in the Dutch women's movement since its re-emergence in the late sixties, was co-editor of the *Socialist Feminist Texts* from 1977 until 1989, and has published extensively on the movement, women's public policy and abortion politics in both Dutch and English.

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Leiden University



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Masculinities: Constructing Gender in Theories of Political Transition and Democratic Consolidation', in *Gender in Transition in Eastern and Central Europe*, edited by Gabriele Jähnert et al. (Trafo Verlag, 2000); 'Conceptualizing the German State: Putting Women's Politics in its Place', in *Handbook of Global Social Policy*, edited by S. S. Nagel and A. Robb (Marcel Dekker, 2000); and *Die Asche des Souveräns. Staat und Demokratie in der Geschlechterdebatte* (Campus Verlag, 2001).

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in *Medical Discourse 1812–1875: the Case of Stockholm*, in *Sex, State and Society: Comparative Perspectives on the History of Sexuality*, edited by Lars-Göran Tedebrandt (Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000).

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Preface

This study of the politics of prostitution has emerged from the co-operation of scholars within the Research Network on Gender Politics and the State (RNGS) which set out to answer the perennial questions of feminist politics and social movements: do feminist politics make a difference, and can democratic states, still dominated by men and often denoted as patriarchal, actually be feminist? Do women's policy offices work? And how do women's movements actually contribute to the improvement of women's status? To look into prostitution as a political issue to research these questions seemed both an obvious and an unlikely choice. On the one hand, prostitution is mostly about women selling sexual services to men, a long-time concern for feminism as it mainly occurs within unequal relationships of power. On the other hand, prostitution is usually neglected by the mainstream of political science and policy studies that tend to regard the matter as a social or public health problem. Both aspects made it a challenging topic for analysing the question about the impact of women's movements in democratic states and the role of women's policy agencies within government in improving women's status.

The Research Network on Gender Politics and the State was founded in 1995 at Leiden University, the Netherlands, by a group of political scientists, sociologists and women's studies experts from both sides of the North Atlantic. Previously many of them had collaborated on the book *Comparative State Feminism*, edited by Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy Mazur (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995), which had explored the role of women's policy agencies in equal opportunity policies in a number of advanced industrial democracies. Its outcome called for more extensive, in-depth research into the policies designed since the 1970s in democratic states to meet the challenge and demands of the fast-growing women's movement. In Leiden the first steps were taken towards developing a common design to analyse the impact of the women's movement and 'state feminism' systematically. An analytical framework was set up, and the decision was taken to study the major research questions in several

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issue areas, in order to prevent generalisation on the basis of just one or two issues. Prostitution was one of the issues selected.

From then on the common research design was developed and adjusted in a truly collaborative spirit. Conferences were held at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) in San Francisco in 1996 in a two-day Short Course/Workshop session, a two-day meeting at CREDEP, Université de Paris IX in 1998, an APSA panel on Comparative Politics in Boston that same year, a three-day conference at the University of Southampton/Chilworth Centre in 1999, a five-day workshop on The Politics of Prostitution during the annual Joint Sessions of Workshops of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) in Copenhagen in 2000, a Short Course/Workshop on Comparative Politics at APSA in San Francisco in 2001, and a final two-day meeting at Queen's University, Belfast, in 2001.

At these meetings, all members contributed to refining the framework. In a continual dialogue, care was taken to ensure comparability between different nation-states, guarding against conceptual stretching and the denial of important cultural differences between states. Researchers, coming from sixteen different countries and deeply familiar with their native political system and women's movements, could continually check the appropriateness of the framework for their particular country. At each meeting, Dorothy Stetson and Amy Mazur, co-convenors of the RINGS, kept track of the debates and reworked the research design, which they then distributed to all members. In this way the project has become a truly cross-national study, providing well-grounded theory based on thorough and qualitative research in each country.

After its inception RINGS organised itself into country teams, with a country director recruiting scholars from her country for each issue area. Around each issue a network of researchers developed, studying the issue in a particular country; in due course the work was co-ordinated by an issue area director. Research on the prostitution issue started in 1999 at the Southampton/Chilworth meeting; draft papers were presented and discussed at the 2000 Copenhagen ECPR sessions, the 2001 San Francisco APSA meeting and the conference in Belfast of that same year. I was the network director for the prostitution issue, and took on the responsibility of planning the book, monitoring the progress of the study of each country, making sure the deadlines were met and authors observed the requirements of the framework of the project. I have also written the introduction to the book and the final chapter, in which I make the cross-case analysis and test the hypotheses of the project framework. Without the commitment, enthusiasm and hard work of all the authors, this book would not have materialised, and I want to thank all of our prostitution

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network for their co-operation: Delila Amir, Menachem Amir, Daniella Danna, Anne Maria Holli, Leslie Ann Jeffrey, Johanna Kantola, Amy Mazur, Birgit Sauer, Judith Squires, Dorothy McBride Stetson, Barbara Sullivan, Yvonne Svanström and Celia Valiente.

This book is the third study completed in the RNGS project. The first issue studied, job training, resulted in a book, *State Feminism, Women's Movements and Job Training: Making Democracies Work in a Global Economy*, edited by Amy Mazur and published in 2001. That same year *Abortion Politics, Women's Movements and the Democratic State: a Comparative Study of State Feminism*, edited by Dorothy McBride Stetson, was published on the abortion issue. In the next two years the books on the remaining issues, political representation of women, edited by Joni Lovenduski, and the 'hot issue' (focusing on a major issue in each country), edited by Birgit Sauer and Melissa Haussman, will be published.

Many people have made this study possible. Thanks go to the various institutions that supported our work financially in the course of the years – the US National Science Foundation grant for the 1995 Leiden meeting, the European Science Foundation grant for the 1999 Chilworth meeting and the American Political Science Association travel grants for European RNGS members to attend APSA meetings – and to the universities that hosted our meetings: Leiden University, the University of Paris-Dauphiné, the University of Southampton and Queen's University, Belfast. My personal thanks also go to Australian National University, Canberra, where I was a visiting fellow at the Research School for the Social Sciences in 2000, enabling me to plan the book and present some of the first findings; to Barbara Sullivan of the University of Queensland, Brisbane, for her comments at these presentations; to Jantine Oldersma, my fellow researcher in the RNGS project on the Netherlands and colleague at the Joke Smit Centre for Research in Women's Studies at Leiden University; to Willemijn Jansen and Kathleen Asjes, also of the Joke Smit Centre, for helping to prepare the manuscript. I am also very grateful for the critical but very helpful comments on the original manuscript made by the two anonymous reviewers of Cambridge University Press. Thanks, too, go to Sarah Caro and Alison Powell at Cambridge University Press for their work, and Carol Fellingham Webb for her copy-editing of the manuscript. Above all, I want to thank Amy Mazur and Dorothy McBride Stetson, not only for all the hard work they have put into the RNGS, but also for their support and friendship over the years.

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