



Louise Shelley

Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective

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Over the last two centuries, human trafficking has grown at an immense rate, and it is becoming more frequently documented by academic scholars, emerging non-governmental organisations, and social activists worldwide. The magnitude of the phenomenon extends beyond an exploited individual to the wider political, social, and economic influence that the global system has upon local communities, national stability, and transnational crime. Existing literature on human trafficking and illegal migrant smuggling has generally focused on debates about the push and pull factors that drive the system; the different types of victims and perpetrators within it; estimates of the numbers of those involved; and the efficacy of various policy responses.

Louise Shelley presents a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted dimensions of this complex issue in her book, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*. The volume aims to contribute both to human trafficking literature and to the practical battle against this transnational crime. Shelley readily acknowledges the difficulties that arise in making quantitative estimates of the victims currently being exploited and trafficked for labour, domestic services, organs, or their bodies: despite the highly public nature of the issue figures are difficult to establish. Whilst human smuggling is not as exploitative as trafficking, in reality the two crimes are not as easily differentiated as definitions in current legal frameworks suggest. Shelley recognises these limitations and uses a range of sources to present her research in an analytical form that is both informative and inspiring for readers. The book is mostly concerned with the exploitation of young girls and women in sex trafficking; this represents, in quantitative terms, one of the largest sectors of the human trafficking trade. Shelley, drawing on sixteen years of research, aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by analysing the role of internationally organised crime and economic incentives in relation to this trade. She also provides a comparative analysis between world regions.

The book's introduction establishes how human trafficking is understood in the existing literature and it also outlines Shelley's aims. The first section on the rise and costs of human trafficking goes on to address the rapid rise and consequences of this trade. It moves beyond the immediate circumstances that can feed this transnational issue, such as domestic poverty, to analyse the wider and more detrimental effects that globalisation has had on human trafficking thanks to the growth in rural to urban migration and gendered discrimination across nations. What is made clear here is the complexity of the issue when social, demographic, political, sovereign, health, and labour factors influence the continuation of this exploitation. In this section, Shelley introduces what becomes, as the book goes on, a call for a modified approach to target this unlawful issue: this new approach would contend with issues such as generational poverty, the uneven status of men and women, and ingrained political conflict.

In the second section of the book, which deals with the financial side of human trafficking, Shelley presents an analysis of the underlying business motivations that incentivise organised



crime. This aspect of the trade is emerging as an important focus in human trafficking literature. For a reader who knows little about the issue apart from the social factors involved, this section offers a coherent insight into the business of human trafficking. It explores lesser-known aspects of the trade such as the role of female traffickers; common methods and challenges with regard to control; recruitment; and the transportation of victims. In emphasising the financial motivation behind human trafficking, Shelley stresses the vital need to change the outcomes of cost-benefit analyses for perpetrators, as well as the importance of policy development to address the vulnerable social circumstances of trafficked people. Readers are encouraged to conceptualise the issue of human trafficking in a new way by making a direct comparative analysis between human and drug trafficking in terms of perpetrators, commodities, regions, and risks. The theoretical insights that emerge in this section establish a general framework that is then exemplified in the third part of the book which concentrates on regional perspectives. Shelley ties these regional perspectives together by analysing six business models in order to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the internal processes of human trafficking. Readers are challenged to apply their new understanding of profits and methods to these different cases.

The section on regional perspectives provides examples of each of the six business models within and between five different regions: Asia; Eurasia and Eastern Europe; Europe; the United States; and Latin America and Africa. Different sub-regions and countries within these regions, either alone or in combination, provide a point of origin, transit, or destination for human traffickers. With the aim of presenting a comparative analysis, Shelley writes about the historical precedents, distinctive features, and internal variations in each model. This provides readers with a consistent structure to help them identify similarities among, and differences between, incidences of this multifaceted problem across the globe. There are important distinctions to be noted between the patterns evident in more developed and developing nations, and nations in transition; for example, Asia provides the origin, transit route, and destination for human traffickers, whereas the United States is seen as the preferred destination for domestically and internationally trafficked persons. By analysing human trafficking trends in countries with different development statuses, Shelley challenges the common perception that it is solely the uneducated poor who are victimised and that the political corruption which enables traffickers only occurs in the global south.

In her conclusion, Shelley identifies the influence of the cold war and economic crises on contemporary human trafficking, and argues that this legacy will continue to exert influence if intervention is not more successful. She also furthers her call for the international community to make the issue a higher priority at the levels of systemic inequalities, a far-reaching demand and consumer market, and the trade's flourishing business profits. In line with the observations made in her overview of human trafficking, Shelley addresses a range of stakeholders with suggestions as to how they might use policy to counter trafficking. She calls on social activists to help, but also provides rational examples which offer consumers, the business world, civil society, governments, and multilateral organisations ways to make their own contributions.



Shelley draws from an extensive array of resources produced by scholars, journalists, and non-governmental organisations in an attempt to compile a concise range of ideas about and explanations of human trafficking in one publication. Each chapter is rich in detailed examples which shed light upon a hidden industry and illustrate Shelley's arguments for change. In addition to analysing supply and demand factors as other scholars have done, Shelley provides regional analyses that offer new perspectives on prevention, protection, and prosecution approaches to countering the human trafficking trade. These analyses are specific to local business trends within the industry and to local cultural systems too. Here, as elsewhere in the volume, Shelley's language and presentation are easily comprehensible and accessible to a wide audience whatever the reader's education levels or reason for interest in the topic.

At first glance there appears to be an economic bias in Shelley's book, despite its claim to offer a 'global perspective'. Human trafficking has a largely economic basis, encompassing as it does everything from re-sellable commodity profits to the debts generated that traffickers coerce from victims and their families. Although whole sections of Shelley's book could have been equally devoted to cultural, social, and political dimensions of the trade, Shelley has instead integrated them throughout the economic chapters and the book as a whole in order to provide a holistic overview.

The business models for human trafficking that Shelley sets out perhaps attracted my attention the most. I have read a lot of research literature about trafficking, as well as the first-hand experiences of anti-trafficking activists, because of my own interest in having a positive effect upon this corrosive trade. Shelley's new models go beyond the generalised understanding of how human trafficking works that other sources offer. Shelley has drawn six models from her regional studies that describe six overarching cultural trends in human trafficking, including, for example the 'violent entrepreneur model' based on Balkan crime groups (p. 121). Each model recognises specific, systemic, social and financial drivers, and offers a detailed explanation of how each strand of the human trafficking process functions from trafficker to victim. These models give a deeper insight into the multifaceted nature of human trafficking, and prompt the realisation that not all approaches to combating such corruption are applicable to each region or case. Shelley rightly argues that there is hope for mitigating human trafficking if an understanding of the vulnerabilities in each of these models is gained and if intervention efforts have at their core bids both to counter corruption and increase respect for children's rights. It is also interesting to note the ways in which colonial and communist legacies continue to have an astounding effect upon human trafficking systems in countries like Nigeria and Cambodia respectively.

Shelley has essentially fulfilled her aim which was to provide an analytical overview of human trafficking, its hidden issues, and regional settings; however, there are limitations to writing of human trafficking in general whilst maintaining a dominant focus on sex trafficking in her discussions. It was interesting that, after writing predominantly about sex trafficking, Shelley's conclusion notes that 'despite the disproportionate attention to sex trafficking today, contemporary trafficking victims are more likely to be victims of labor trafficking, forced to serve as child soldiers, or trapped in domestic servitude.' (p. 297). Human trafficking is



multifaceted, and trafficking for exploitation purposes demonstrates variations in quantities, tactics, and socioeconomic circumstances. The introductory section might have benefited from the addition of estimated statistics from approved organisations in each of the human trafficking trades – organs, sex, and labour – that Shelley mentions. To add a more rounded dimension to her passionate overview, Shelley could also have briefly acknowledged literary criticism about the extent of human trafficking and the nature of moral panic.¹ In addition to Shelley's call for more integrated scholarly research, there is also a need for empirical studies that exemplify documented claims of high prevalence, profitability, and organisation (Keo, 2013; Nicola, 2013).²

Overall, this book provides a good background for readers wanting more than can be delivered by a cause-oriented piece of literature. Shelley sets out actions that people can undertake in their attempts to mitigate the ongoing issue of human trafficking. The book is written in a way that encourages readers to go further into the issue, and Shelley provides avenues for them to do so through references to organisations, films, and literature. Given the somewhat ineffective and slow approach to mitigating human trafficking being taken as the issue slowly gains momentum in terms of literature and awareness, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* represents a step in the right direction toward making issues surrounding the phenomenon more accessible and practically approachable for a wide variety of readers.

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¹See Talbot, M. (1999) 'Against innocence: the truth about child abuse and the truth about children', *The New Republic*, 3 May 1999. Available at http://www.ipce.info/library_2/pdf/talbot_99.pdf [Accessed: 6 February 2016]; Anderson, B. and Andrijasevic, R. (2008) 'Sex, Slaves and Citizens: The Politics of Anti-Trafficking', *Soundings*, 40, pp. 135-45; and Weitzer, R. (2007) 'The Social Construction of Sex Trafficking: Ideology and Institutionalization of a Moral Crusade', *Politics Society*, 35 (3), pp. 447-74.

²See Keo, C. (2013) *Human Trafficking in Cambodia*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis; Nicola, A. (2013) 'Researching into Human Trafficking: Issues and Problems'. In: Lee, M. *Human Trafficking*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, pp. 49-73.

