



Women of the Street: How the Criminal Justice-Social Services Alliance Fails Women in Prostitution

Susan Dewey, Tonia St. Germain

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Women of the Street explores encounters between those who make their living by engaging in street-based prostitution and the criminal justice and social service workers who try to curtail it. Working together every day, the lives of sex workers, police officers, public defenders, and social service providers are profoundly intertwined, yet their relationships are often adversarial and rooted in fundamentally false assumptions. The criminal justice-social services alliance operates on the general belief that the women they police and otherwise regulate choose sex work as a result of traumatization, rather than acknowledging the fact that socioeconomic realities often inform their choices.

Drawing on extraordinarily rich ethnographic research, including interviews with over one hundred street-involved women and dozens of criminal justice and social service professionals, the book argues that despite the intimate knowledge these groups have about each other, measures designed to help these women consistently fail because they do not take into account false assumptions about street life, homelessness, drug use and sex trading. Reaching beyond disciplinary silos by combining the analysis of an anthropologist and a legal scholar, *Women of the Street* offers an evidence-based argument for the decriminalization of prostitution.

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