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Book Review:
*Collaborating Against Human
Trafficking: Cross Sector Challenges
and Practices*

(Author: Dr. Kirsten Foot)

Reviewed by

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Dual cum laude Master's degree from Utrecht University in the Netherlands and Central European University in Hungary.

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***Collaborating Against Human Trafficking: Cross Sector
Challenges and Practices***

Author: Dr. Kirsten Foot
Rowman & Littlefield. 215 pages (2016)

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Holds a dual cum laude Master's degree from Utrecht University in the Netherlands and Central European University in Hungary. She writes about issues of human trafficking in the US and the Netherlands.

In a world increasingly without boundaries, there is a need to (re)shape responses to borderless crimes accordingly. Human trafficking is a transgressive phenomenon by nature and calls for a diverse, multi-sector response. In 2009, the introduction of ‘Partnership’ to the existing Prevention-Protection-Prosecution response model for human trafficking¹ signaled an important acknowledgement that this fourth “P” is essential to effective anti-trafficking collaboration. In her book, *Collaborating Against Human Trafficking: Cross Sector Challenges and Practices*, Dr. Kirsten Foot unpacks the cross-sector implications and manifestations of partnerships through an extensive and critical overview of the contemporary anti-trafficking landscape in the United States. Foot’s book, which is 215 pages and includes six Chapters, also includes extensive Notes and Collaboration Resources sections.

In her book, Foot delves into the factors that challenge optimal collaboration against human trafficking among sectors such as service providers (VSPs), survivor-activists, law enforcement, governments, NGOs, businesses and faith-based organizations (FBOs). Foot takes conventional anti-trafficking efforts a step further, arguing for a more intersectional approach to anti-human trafficking collaboration. Based on the underlying assertion that “[c]ollaboration is a complex interaction between human agency, interpersonal dynamics and the wider social, political, and economic contexts in which it takes place,” (10), Foot boldly argues that in order for anti-trafficking efforts to be truly constructive, effective and lasting, they must not only take systemic challenges into account but also “societal

¹ Yeo-Oxenham, Kelly Ann & Dyan Rose Schneider. “Partnership and the 3Ps of Human Trafficking: How Multi-Sector Collaboration Contributes to Effective Anti Trafficking Measures”. *International Journal of Sustainable Human Security* Vol. 2; 1. p. 100 (December 2014).

forces” (131) such as race and gender that shape the beliefs, values and positioning of anti-trafficking stakeholders.

Within her discussions, Foot is careful to position herself and to engage with this positioning in a way that provokes readers to consider their own. In Chapter 4, Foot highlights the lived experiences of white and non-white trafficking victims and survivor-activists, asserting that “no matter what survivors of color do... they will not end up ‘looking every bit the part of a conservative politician’s daughter’” (86). Foot argues that the empathy evoked by the image of the (presumably white) “conservative politician’s daughter” motivates support by many anti-trafficking stakeholders but is unproductive at best and damaging at worst. “My intent in highlighting this... is to invite my fellow white readers to think hard about whether and how our responses to human trafficking vary based on the hues we perceive, or imagine we perceive” (87). As with race, Foot explains how imbalances in gender representation in sectors reinforce gendered hierarchies and tensions, ultimately discouraging some stakeholders from collaborating effectively. Foot contends that directly engaging with issues of race, gender and class, are lacking in conventional anti-trafficking efforts but should be leveraged. Foot’s claim is central to her book and is based on observations of and interviews with diversely-positioned stakeholders across anti-trafficking sectors.

As a red thread throughout her book, Foot digs deeply into the structural, social, political and economic complexities that shape the positioning of various stakeholders within the anti-trafficking movement in the United States. Effective collaboration within and across sectors, Foot argues, must persevere beyond traditional relationships between stakeholders, such as law enforcement only working with VSPs or larger stakeholders dominating resources and agendas. Foot does not shy away from addressing the obstacles that challenge successful collaboration, including “collaboration fatigue” (146) and, as one VSP representative notes, “surviving the dance” (97), or simply going through the motions of a partnership without securing an underlying trust or respect. By bringing such challenges to light, Foot addresses an important elephant in the realm of anti-trafficking efforts: doubts, reservations and fears among collaborators about one another.

At the same time, Foot is optimistic about the future of cross-sector collaboration. In Chapters 2 and 6, Foot tells the encouraging story of collaboration between Washington State mobilization and advocacy nongovernmental organizations (MANGOs), VSPs, multi-lingual trafficking experts, law enforcement, the State Attorney’s office, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), among others. The results of such a “triumph in anti-trafficking efforts” (150) Foot contends, can be seen in the increase in calls from Washington to the national anti-trafficking

hotline, improvements in relationships between trafficking stakeholders as well in the “infectious” (Ibid.) nature of the initiative to seven other U.S. states, to name a few. Foot encourages readers to consider this example of successful collaboration beyond its particular context and to envision such forms of collaboration in broader multi-sector efforts.

Foot’s honest and critical attention throughout her book to the visible and the not-so-visible challenges to cross-sector collaboration against human trafficking is a refreshingly clever approach to partnership-building within this growing field. Though human trafficking is often cited as a crime that is “hidden in plain sight”², Foot works to confront this belief in her book by encouraging stakeholders of all backgrounds and positioning - from victims to survivors to law enforcement, governments and VSPs - to persevere through challenges of collaboration together. In doing so, Foot makes a strong case for an achievable and worthwhile way forward in the anti-trafficking arena in the United States and beyond.

² Hepburn, Stephen and Rita Simon. “Hidden in Plain Sight: Human Trafficking in the United States.” *Gender Issues*. Vol. 27; 1-2. pp. 1-26 (June 2010).