



Working at the Bar: Sex Work and Health Communication in Thailand (Civic Discourse for the Third Millennium)

Thomas M. Steinfatt

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Commercial sex is the occupation of a significant portion of the women of the world, providing economic support for millions of people and their families. *Working at the Bar* is the first-ever, long-term, longitudinal, in-depth study of a large sex work industry—and Thailand, the most prominent nation in the rapidly growing sex tourism industry, makes for an excellent case study. While previous works have provided brief glimpses of one group of workers studied from a particular point of view, author Thomas Steinfatt examines considerations of health, behavior, economics, morality, religion, and worker safety. The result of data gathered from thousands of workers and customers in Thailand over a period of twelve years, *Working at the Bar* covers all aspects of an industry that, although it does not conform to various Western ideals, is nevertheless enormously significant.

Among the most provocative of Steinfatt's arguments is that sex work is not itself immoral, and that far from being the exploitation industry we might imagine, sex work in Thailand is beneficial to everyone involved—especially given that education in this nation has proven not to be a viable alternative. Providing an opportunity for economic progress unavailable through other means, and providing working conditions far safer than those of the average Thai factory, sex work is ripe for a study that explores all aspects and perceptions associated with it. *Working at the Bar* is that long overdue study.

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