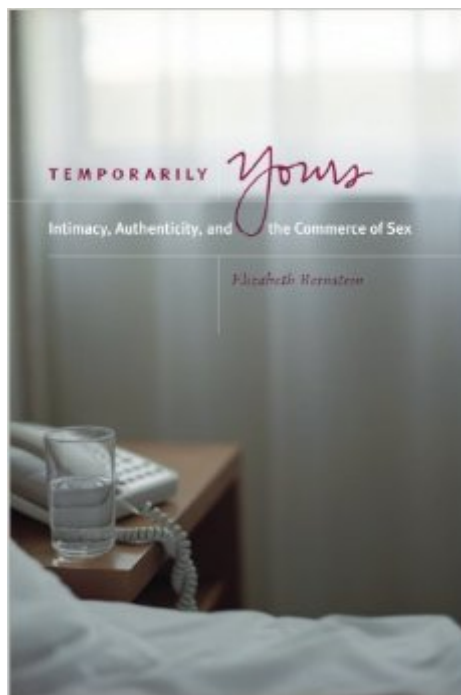


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Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, And The Commerce Of Sex (Worlds Of Desire: The Chicago Series On Sexuality, Gender, And Culture)



Synopsis

Generations of social thinkers have assumed that access to legitimate paid employment and a decline in the "double standard" would eliminate the reasons behind women's participation in prostitution. Yet in both the developing world and in postindustrial cities of the West, sexual commerce has continued to flourish, diversifying along technological, spatial, and social lines. In this deeply engaging and theoretically provocative study, Elizabeth Bernstein examines the social features that undergird the expansion and diversification of commercialized sex, demonstrating the ways that postindustrial economic and cultural formations have spawned rapid and unforeseen changes in the forms, meanings, and spatial organization of sexual labor. Drawing upon dynamic and innovative research with sex workers, their clients, and state actors, Bernstein argues that in cities such as San Francisco, Stockholm, and Amsterdam, the nature of what is purchased in commercial sexual encounters is also new. Rather than the expedient exchange of cash for sexual relations, what sex workers are increasingly paid to offer their clients is an erotic experience premised upon the performance of authentic interpersonal connection. As such, contemporary sex markets are emblematic of a cultural moment in which the boundaries between intimacy and commerce—and between public life and private—have been radically redrawn. Not simply a compelling exploration of the changing landscape of sex-work, *Temporarily Yours* ultimately lays bare the intimate intersections of political economy, desire, and culture.

Book Information

Series: Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; 1 edition (November 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226044580

ISBN-13: 978-0226044583

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (5 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #263,205 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #182 in [Books > Business & Money > Industries > Service](#) #453 in [Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Sexuality](#) #467 in [Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Criminology](#)

Customer Reviews

Elizabeth Bernstein's ethnography **Temporarily Yours** is arguably the most illuminating account of the domestic sex trade to be published in the last decade. In it Bernstein shows how large-scale transformations to the U.S. political economy have affected prostitution work in urban areas. Her argument is that a large segment of sex work in America has "gone indoors" as the country's economy has shifted from an industrial to a postindustrial structure. With more and more people working in the service economy and thinking of paid sex not as a stigmatized vice but as a flexible, leisurely activity that fits nicely into their schedules, the world of prostitution has expanded beyond its streetwalking stereotype to include Internet-savvy, upwardly mobile, high-end escorts. Bernstein's book is especially relevant given the media's fascination with the lives of escorts over the past year, ever since Eliot Spitzer was fingered in a federal prostitution ring bust. Now we have brothel prostitutes on **Tyra**, Showtime's **Secret Diary of a Call Girl**, and a host of news programs on the subject (Bernstein was featured in MSNBC's **Dirty Money**). Before you get caught up in the hype, though, I urge you to read **Temporarily Yours**. Bernstein's even-handed analysis avoids sensationalizing the work of escorts by showing how what they do is part and parcel of well-established social structures and economic practices. In addition, excerpts from her interviews with prostitutes and johns illuminate the very real, even mundane, decisions that go into purchasing and selling sex.

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