

**Pamela Fuentes-Peralta, Women's and Gender Studies
Dyson College of Arts and Sciences**

Managers of the Demimonde: Madams, Pimps, and Prostitution in Mexico City, 1920-1952

This book examines prostitution, state regulation, and debates about women's trafficking against the backdrop of revolutionary politics and the consolidation of state authority in Mexico during the interwar period. Focusing on madams and pimps, but also on neighbors, doctors, authorities, artists, and prostitutes, this book argues that the state-led closure of regulated brothels, mainly owned or administered by women, escalated the level of violence in commercial sex work, particularly in the daily life of prostitutes. Even when it was widely argued that these changes sought to protect women's wellbeing, the criminalization of those in the sex trade did not decrease with the closure of the premises they worked at. On the contrary, commercial sex spread to the streets, and pimps took over the role of administrators, often using verbal and physical violence. This book shows that in Mexico City the main results of end of state-regulated prostitution were: disempowerment of prostitutes, prosecution of madams, and an increase in violence and extortion faced by sex workers at the hands of police and pimps. The most important finding is that, over time, power shifted from women involved in Mexico City's sex trade –madams and sex workers– to male hands: pimps, landlords, and cops.