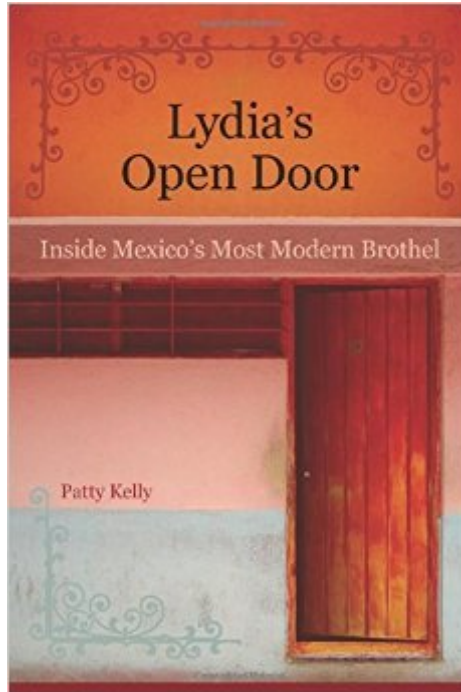


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# Lydia's Open Door: Inside Mexico's Most Modern Brothel



## Synopsis

In this groundbreaking ethnographic study, Patty Kelly examines the lives of the women who work in the Zona Galactica, a state-run brothel in Chiapas's capital city. By delving into lives that would otherwise go unremarked, Kelly documents the modernization of the sex industry during the neoliberal era in the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez and illustrates how state-regulated sex became part of a broader effort by government officials to bring modernity to Chiapas, one of Mexico's poorest and most conflicted states. Kelly's innovative approach locates prostitution in a political-economic context by treating it as work. Most valuably, she conveys her analysis through vivid portraits of the lives of the sex workers themselves and shows how the women involved are neither victims nor heroines.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a very solid contribution to the scholarly research on prostitution. It documents a dismal scene that most would ignore, or not even see (due to physical isolation), which is explored within the historical, social, regional, sexual, and economic contexts that define that part of Mexico which is best known for creating revolutionaries. Written by a feminist anthropologist, it is also a grounded, scathing, critique of neoliberal thought. If you are a sociologist or a deviance researcher, and enjoy well written, scrupulously documented, ethnographic work, you are also in for an unexpected surprise as Kelly also makes a seminal contribution to the social control literature. If you are not an anthropologist, you will find flaws stemming from differences unique to your discipline's methodological canon, descriptive conventions, and favored analytical styles. If you feel

uncomfortable with feminist and gender driven theorists you will not be pleased. If the "French Follies" do not provide your favored theorists, you will moan a bit. If you are a social science researcher, however, whether you confront it, enjoy it, criticize it, or moan a bit because Kelly's perspective is not yours, or if you ultimately incorporate the findings into your own work, you will agree that time spent reading this book has been time well spent. This research is simply too important to ignore and too compelling to not attract interest in many fields. A masterful job.

Prostitution is already a pretty controversial topic in and of itself, but add in the politics neoliberalism along with the idea of a state controlled brothel and prostitution becomes an interesting web of societal issues. In Lydia's *Open Door - Inside Mexico's Most Modern Brothel*, author Patty Kelly details her anthropological study of "legalized" prostitution in Tuxtla Gutiérrez the capital of Chiapas, Mexico. Avoiding the cold detachment of a social scientist, Kelly dives into her exploration of Zona Galactica, a state-sponsored brothel, with an emotional zeal that creates a captivating narrative. While, Lydia's *Open Door* focuses largely on the activity that takes place behind the Zona Galactica (as well as the underlying social factors that force it behind those gates), Kelly takes a holistic look at prostitution, the women of Zona Galactica, the reasons for their role as sex workers, their family life, and the politics of prostitution. The vividness of Kelly's account, which could only be provided by her willingness to maintain close proximity to the workers of Zona Galactica, provides a level of understanding that may not otherwise be available. I was struck by Kelly's willingness to immerse herself in her work and to understand the nature of sex work not only on a societal or institutional level, but on a personal level. By bringing both the mechanics of prostitution and the personalities of those involved to the table, she provides the background necessary to open up a meaningful discourse about the issues looming in the air regarding sex work. While Lydia's *Open Door* focuses on the forces that create and maintain prostitution in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, its applicability is much wider as it provides a comprehensive examination into sex work. I would recommend this book to any aspiring social scientist or anyone looking to better understand the dynamics of sex work.

I bought this as research material for a book I'm writing. The factual background is helpful but oftentimes the author gets too bogged down trying to make her socio-political arguments. It would've been a much better read without all of that mess thrown in. Still, interesting information about a topic that doesn't receive much attention.

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