also from Brazil.

The vignettes about the sex workers profiled have a consistency about them. Whatever language they speak, practitioners appear pragmatic, calculating, and guileless in their answers. They are unapologetic about their decisions and don't justify them with reference to identity politics.

The book is at its most interesting when it provides statistics, such as an essay on escort prices by Trevon Logan, an economist at Ohio State University. Using a statistical method called hedonic regression on 1,476 data entries from a national U.S. escort website, Logan found that "tops" command a premium while exclusive "bottoms" suffer a penalty, but tops who will also bottom command extra for the service. On average, race and ethnicity do not influence the going rate, though the price differential between tops and bottoms is especially pronounced for African-American hustlers. Other physical characteristics—eye color, hair color, body hair, and height—likewise seem to have little influence on pricing. The penalty for age is about a one percent decrease per year. Athletic and muscular builds command a premium, while both flabbiness and thinness exact a penalty.

The book is full of intriguing information that might add up to something, but the editors leave it to the reader to integrate the various findings. Thus, for example, several studies suggest that the majority of escorts are gay or bisexual, such as a British study in which 72 percent of respondents identified as gay. But a study of 145 sex workers in Argentina found that only 42 percent identified as gay, with another 28 percent saying they were bisexual. What the two studies have in common is that only around thirty percent of the sex workers identify as straight. This finding was fairly consistent in a number of studies, tempting us to conclude that only a minority of male prostitutes in modern urban societies are heterosexual.

Many sex workers tell researchers that they don't think of prostitution as a career. They do it for monetary payoff, but also for gay companionship and fun. They are not motivated by a sense of accomplishment, contribution to others, or professionalism. The editors' notion that sex work is just another type of job is true only up to a point. As Kong writes about money boys: "most of them tended not to treat sex work as work and did not identify themselves as sex workers." Thus the editors' insistence on calling it "sex work," however well-intentioned, might be missing the point: most male prostitutes don't identify themselves as such in the way that a bricklayer thinks of himself as a bricklayer. Clearly this is not because they don't acknowledge what they do, but rather indicates that their work is not a source of pride for them.

The Newport Sex Scandal Explained

ALLEN ELLENZWEIG

Certainty
by Victor Bevine
Lake Union Publishing
339 pages, $10.99

AMONG THE FIRST gay scandals to reach widespread public consciousness in the U.S. was the Navy's investigation into homosexual activity at its Naval Training Station in Newport, Rhode Island. Taking place in the immediate aftermath of World War I—thus following on the heels of both the massive wartime build-up of army and naval forces and the brief but devastating flu epidemic of 1918, which hit the armed services especially hard—the investigation shed a glaring light on "immoral" sexual activities either at the training station or within the town of Newport. The town was, of course, long the summer residence of America's well-heeled "Four Hundred." Upper-crust society would not have been happy to learn that their summer playground was also the haunt of "fairies" plying their trade on the Cliff Walk.

Turning such dated material into a work of contemporary fiction might not seem especially propitious, but Victor Bevine, an actor and screenwriter, has done something wholly remarkable: made a piece of gay American history entertaining without sacrificing the essential gravity of the events. He credits an essay by historian George Chauncey for the initial inspiration. In a savvy stroke he decided to concentrate on the person whose arrest for homosexual solicitation provided the impetus for local newspapers, and then national ones, to take notice. That figure was the Reverend Samuel Kent, a highly respected clergyman who had ministered tirelessly to young men at the Newport Armed Services YMCA and then, in the direst hours of the influenza epidemic, comforted the sick and dying.

Bevine tells much of the story from the vantage of Kent's lawyer, William Bartlett, the heir of a Newport legal nabob who, himself a husband and father of the highest ethics, saw in Kent a heroic man of extraordinary rectitude and honor being brought low by the testimony of unworthy enlisted men. These uniformed accusers had been drafted into entrapping other sailors and Newport locals, operating as a series of "moles" and "decoys" to penetrate the well-developed homosexual party scene that, especially during wartime and its aftermath, flourished around the town. It was then that the armed services population swelled beyond the training station, with many men living off base in local boarding houses.

Bevine enters the world of the "decoys" and their superiors, whose self-appointed task was to weed out perverts in their midst. Among his most fascinating characters is Charlie Mc-Kinney, a tough young Irishman who grew up in the streets and prides himself on being in the know before anyone else. McKinney, better than the other decoys, realizes just why he's been impressed into this cohort of moles and double-crossers. Like the others, only more so, he's a handsome rake whose sturdy build and good looks will lure the local and uniformed fairies like bees to honey. He is the one figure self-aware enough to engage real life ethical questions that challenge his sense of honor while being forced to do the dirty work.

Allen Ellenzweig is a frequent contributor to these pages.