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Sharing/Restricting Knowledge: The Moral Economy of Sex Workers' Information Sharing Practices

Abstract

According to Yochai Benkler, information is different from other types of goods because it does not get used up by its consumption. For this reason, we might expect information to be shared more freely than material goods among sex workers, but this is not always the case. As scholars studying the media practices of marginalized groups suggest, information sharing practices are governed by cultural contexts, and there are important reasons for restricting access. Through in-depth interviews with twenty-four current or former sex industry workers living in a large city in the Northeastern United States, this article asks: when is information shared freely with few limits to access; when are resources limited to members of a particular group; and why? The unrestricted sharing of safety information, training, and intimate personal information is necessitated by unsafe working conditions and the failure to recognize reproductive labor as skilled work, and it is encouraged by the homosocial work environment and a mutual experience of stigma. However, exploitative managerial practices including hiring and scheduling too many workers, the resulting competition among them, as well as the criminalization and stigma of sex work, restrict the flow of personally identifying information and training.

Sex workers at establishments such as erotic massage parlors, dungeons, and strip clubs may form rich networks of support to care for one another physically and emotionally and to share material resources and information. This transformation of social relations among workers is born out of the needs and opportunities emerging directly from the physical and financial precarity of this type of labor, its stigmatization by society, and its criminalization by the state. Socially and economically marginalized groups create non-capitalist economic practices, and this article extends attention to the alternative economic practices of marginalized groups to sex workers.¹ In addition to caring for one another emotionally and physically, sex workers share material resources with each other, and their material sharing practices frequently conform to the model of a gift economy, where resources are shared circularly among a limited group of individuals.² These resources could also be described as “limited-

access *common property resources*” because access is limited to a particular group of workers.³ However, as Yochai Benkler points out, information is different from other types of goods because it is “nonrival”—that is, because it does not get used up by its consumption. Therefore, he claims, information is a “public” good because “the market will not produce [it] if priced at [its] marginal cost – zero.”⁴ For this reason, we might expect information to be shared more freely than material goods among sex workers, but this is not always the case. As scholars studying the media practices of marginalized groups suggest, information sharing practices are governed by cultural contexts, and there are important reasons for restricting access.⁵ This article, then, asks: when do sex workers' information sharing practices resemble sharing economies, where information is shared freely with few limits to access; when do they look more like gift economies, in which resources are limited to members of a particular group; and why?

Gift Economies and Sharing Economies

According to Marcel Mauss, in a gift economy, goods and wealth are circulated through the reciprocal giving of pseudo-voluntary gifts.⁶ As Kylie Jarrett points out in her study of affective gift economies online, gifts are not truly voluntary; rather they are “obligations or informal contracts imposed by collective norms.”⁷ And Mauss maintains that the gift economy continues to exist in contemporary society alongside capitalism.⁸ Sex workers’ support networks demonstrate the cooperation and reciprocity characteristic of this economic system. Drawing on Mauss’ theory, Lewis Hyde links women to the gift economy through their exclusion from the economic sphere under capitalism, and, as a gendered form of labor, sex work is frequently performed by women.⁹ Moreover, Hyde, Elinor Ostrom, and Joana Conill, Manuel Castells, Amalia Cardenas, and Lisa Servon insist that resource sharing practices must occur within limited networks in order to be sustainable, which is borne out by sex workers’ material sharing practices.¹⁰

By contrast, some scholarship about sharing information suggests that information is shared more freely than other goods. Legal scholar Lawrence Lessig defines a “sharing economy” as practices of exchange that do not involve money, but cement relationships between individuals in a community.¹¹ Although Lessig equates gift economies with sharing economies, they are, in fact, distinct because sharing economies do not restrict the circulation of resources to members of a particular group. Sharing economies, Lessig notes, are increasingly common on the internet and are often based on expectations of reciprocity.¹² According to Benkler, the creation and sharing of information via nonmarket means has increased because of the decrease in the cost of creating and exchanging information in a digitally networked environment.¹³

However, not all scholars of digital media agree that information should be “free,” or circulated without restriction to access. For example, Kimberly Christen examines the “information wants to be free” meme in relation to indigenous knowledge, concluding that knowledge is “assemblages of dynamic modes of making

sense of the world that are embedded in cultural, social, and political systems” as opposed to a “non-rivalrous good.”¹⁴ In other words, the decision whether or not to share knowledge is based on culturally specific social norms, and not everyone is entitled to all knowledge. Similarly, in her book about sexting, Amy Adele Hasinoff, maintains that “constraints on the free flow of information are...important...Just because something can be distributed...doesn’t mean it should.”¹⁵ For Hasinoff, the “unrestricted circulation of data” makes people who are dependent on privacy for their safety, like sex workers, vulnerable.¹⁶ Yet, due to cultural attitudes about sex, those engaged in “nonnormative sexual behavior,” such as commercial sex, are seen as “not deserving of privacy.”¹⁷ As Christen and Hasinoff suggest, then, a more restrictive information sharing regime like a gift economy may be more suited to sex workers’ in person sharing practices than a sharing economy.

Methods

In 2018, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with twenty-four current or former female-identified sex industry workers living in a large city in the Northeastern United States. All names in this article are pseudonyms. The majority of research participants had been working at Dungeon X, a pseudonymous commercial dungeon, or place for BDSM play, between May 2013 and July 2015, but women who had worked in other dungeons and sectors of the sex industry were also interviewed as a point of comparison. Participants were recruited intentionally and by snowball-sample from other participants. Interviews covered relationships with coworkers, types of support given and received, hierarchy at work, relationships with friends and family, and work history; and participants spoke about sharing personal information, job related information, and advice. To protect the confidentiality of my research participants, I obtained oral rather than written consent, and all data collected was anonymous.

When Information is Shared Freely

Sex workers freely share information necessary to keep each other safe, such as information about dangerous clients, and in this way, their

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in-person sharing networks resemble sharing economies. Workers at Dungeon X also share sensitive personal information with each other, and this exchange is encouraged by the stigma of sex work. Finally, managers and workers often train new workers, both at Dungeon X and in the sex industry as a whole. In these cases, too, information is shared without limits to access. At Dungeon X, the unrestricted exchange of information is facilitated by the homosocial work environment. As Dungeon X worker Lily implied, the commonality of gender allowed advice to move freely throughout the network, and her coworker Yanna suggested that the same-sex environment ensured open communication among women. Working exclusively with other women, therefore, enabled personal advice to circulate easily at the dungeon.

Safety Information

There are a variety of reasons sex workers share information with each other, the foremost of which is the need for safety. The stigmatization and criminalization of sex work means that working conditions can be exploitative and dangerous, particularly for those working for a manager, like the women at Dungeon X. Workers lack workplace protections, and they have no recourse if they are assaulted at work or if they are pressured by management to see violent clients.¹⁸ Accordingly, mutual vulnerability to harm generates solidarity among workers, and workers bond together to share safety information that protects each other from abuse.

A number of participants indicated the extreme importance of sharing information to keep one another safe. Because sex work is often criminalized, it can be difficult for workers to report abuse when it occurs on the job, making them particularly susceptible to violence from clients, so workers share “warnings” about “bad clients.” For example, according to former Dungeon X manager and worker, Jane, at Dungeon X women would share information with each other “about certain gross things or fucked up things that people wanted to do, just making sure that they knew what they were getting into before they got in there,” suggesting that workers were often sent in blind to unpleasant or risky sessions by management. Dungeon X worker Miriam confirmed that clients

could be aggressive or difficult to manage, and she warned fellow workers “about the types of things men tended to do, like if they tended to get violent or something or tended to be difficult.”

Other Dungeon X workers recalled specific incidents in which women warned one another about clients. Worker Megan recalled warning a coworker about a client who would sexually assault workers:

When I did subbing, maybe at the start of my working there, there was a guy from Brazil that would do spanking, but he would also try and touch you, even if you told him not to, inappropriately, on your vagina. And, he would just be very insistent on that, so I remember telling someone who was going into session about that, like, “You just have to keep pushing him away.”

Megan shared information about how to manage this client so that other women could avoid molestation. Moreover, Lana recollected coworkers warning each other about clients who looked like they might have an STI, showing how workers also shared information to shield each other from health risks as well as sexual violations and other types of physical abuse.

According to Benkler, because information is a nonrival, “[F]rom the perspective of society’s overall welfare, the most efficient thing would be for those who possess information to give it away for free,” and Dungeon X workers Janice, Gretchen, and Emily indicated that safety information was often shared freely in this way.¹⁹ For instance, Janice mentioned that she would warn women about dangerous clients even if she did not like them personally, suggesting that safety information would be shared regardless of interpersonal dynamics between workers, and Gretchen stated, “There’s always an exchange of information, and especially when clients can potentially be dangerous, or have in the past done things that would make others uncomfortable.” Gretchen’s comment indicates that dungeon management allowed clients who had engaged in unsafe or harassing behavior to return, but workers shielded each other from further abuse by freely sharing information, like in a sharing economy. Emily echoed Janice and Gretchen, saying:

If there was a client who was potentially dangerous or who had screwed someone over, you were told. If there was a client who brought alcohol in or who was known for maybe not treating the girls so good, you were told. And no one sent you in blind to any situation ever. That was my experience. I never felt like I didn't have all the information that everybody else had, ever. It was really open. That was something I appreciated a lot because I just knew whether to be on guard or not, and you need that to feel safe in a place.

Even though there were clients at Dungeon X who were regularly abusive and/or deceptive, Emily felt safe working there because of the transparency among workers. Even dancer Laurie insisted that dancers would warn each other “if they knew somebody was a bad customer, maybe physical or something,” showing that even in non-criminalized sectors of the sex industry, workers shielded each other from the increased risk of abuse due to stigma.

Managers at Dungeon X also shared information about clients to keep workers safe. For instance, Jasmine was careful to share safety information with her workers. She told them about a panic button they could take with them into sessions, and she advised them to leave one arm unrestrained when doing a bondage scene with an unfamiliar client. Jasmine continued: “I made sure that the older girls, the senior girls, knew where the second exit was and how to use it. I made sure they knew where the elevator was because we not only had the stairwell, we also had the elevator. I did a bunch of safety classes. Safety was a big thing for me.” Jasmine ensured not only that workers were safe when they were in session with clients, but also that they were able to escape the building in case of a police raid.

In addition to sharing information about clients in person, sex workers share information online to keep each other safe, and Sarah compared coworkers sharing information about clients at Dungeon X to these online sharing practices:

I tried to talk about the clients, like which one's good, which one's bad, basically just sharing the knowledge

I had. I mean, I know this is [a] really common thing. I know that sex workers online have a list, so I think it's just a form [of sharing information] that we sex workers do. Even if you're not friends, I think it's something that sex workers do because it's so connected to safety.

Sarah implies that these online “bad date lists” can be considered sharing economies because information about dangerous clients is not limited to particular workers, and these digital networks imitate sex workers' in-person exchange of safety information. As Juno Mac and Molly Smith note, “harm-reduction information such as ‘bad date’ lists, which warn workers of violent clients” are “a huge community resource” for indoor sex workers.²⁰

Training

Another significant form of information sex workers share with each other is knowledge about how to do the job, and at Dungeon X this often took the form of free, on-the-job training. As Silvia Federici and Leopoldina Fortunati point out, the capitalist division of the public and private spheres causes women's reproductive labor, that is, the labor necessary to reproduce the life of the worker, to be invisible as labor and devalued in relation to waged work.²¹ Because housework is unwaged and performed within the home, it is not considered productive, even though it creates surplus value for capital by (re)producing labor power, a key commodity under capitalism.²² Sex work, then, like other forms of reproductive labor such as domestic work or care work, is not considered “real” or skilled work. Because sex work is seen as unskilled labor, there is frequently no formal training available for workers, so they are informally trained by managers and other workers.

Several women at Dungeon X claimed they had been trained by managers. Janice studied under one such manager, who taught her “so many things about being a domme and was so good at breaking down sessions before you went in there.” Because of this manager's guidance, Janice adapted to working at Dungeon X relatively quickly, and she ended up working there for nearly a decade, significantly longer than most others. Jasmine also claimed to have trained workers: “I'd give

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training sessions sometimes and show the girls how to flog properly, how to use a cane properly, how to use a crop properly.” This information not only prevented workers from injuring clients, but also allowed them to gain the skills necessary to become competent BDSM practitioners.

Sex workers also train other workers, and this was the main way women were trained at Dungeon X. For example, Lily reported primarily receiving informational support about how to do the job: “There was always lots of support there. Mainly it was for doing the job as I was learning it cause you don’t learn that shit in school or anything, so it’s on the job training. And, I didn’t really know what I was doing, so there’s lots of support that way.” Lily’s assertion that “you don’t learn [how to do sex work] in school” indicates that sex work is considered unskilled labor requiring no training. And Sarah likewise maintained that the women at Dungeon X shared their knowledge with her: “You’re basically just thrown into the pool, and there’s quote unquote ‘training.’ But you basically pick up [it] as you go along. I remember Janice was showing [us] how to make different knots in the locker room, and I did use that.” Because sex work is devalued as labor, training at sex work establishments like Dungeon X often relies on the unrecognized and uncompensated labor of other workers, and, like other forms of education, training can be considered reproductive labor because it reproduces the conditions enabling the labor of the worker.

Former Dungeon X worker and manager Jane expressed that senior workers were better at training new workers than more junior ones. One senior worker, Jade, was mentioned several times by her colleagues as someone who would take the time to train new hires, and Yvette expressed gratitude toward Jade:

I felt like Jade was really supportive. Especially with new girls, she was always so open and so sharing with information. She specifically stuck out in my mind as one of the girls who was there full time but not mean. I remember at the beginning I felt like I got a lot of help from her. If someone chose me but I didn’t know exactly how to go about something, then she would tell me how she did it, for example, and she wasn’t judgmental. Cause

someone else might say that but then be like, “Why don’t you know anything?” but she’s just not that way. It’s just not her personality. She just wants to help you.

As one of the most senior workers at Dungeon X, Jade helped new workers acclimate to the job by giving advice in a non-judgmental way, without shaming her trainees about their lack of experience. Similarly, Lacey recalled, “[Jade] was one of the first girls that brought me in on a session, that helped train me, that taught me a lot of shit and got me my first clients.” By bringing new workers into their sessions for training, women like Jade not only taught workers how to do their job but also introduced them to clients, enabling them to make money on their own. The fact that senior workers frequently provided the invisible labor of training reveals the importance of embodied experience to sharing information; workers with the most experience had the most knowledge to share.

Other women at Dungeon X also recalled receiving training from specific coworkers. One woman taught Emily to cane, even though a client had chosen Emily over her for a caning session, illustrating that workers often supported each other despite the fact that they were in direct competition for clients. And Lana detailed a specific time a coworker showed her how to set a client’s pubic hair on fire with rubbing alcohol, a novel and impactful trick Lana later implemented in her own sessions. Maddison also asserted that she received training from certain women at Dungeon X:

I’ll ask questions, and there were girls [who] would show me the equipment that they would use. They would tell me how to go about, like, if you’re going to hit a client [with] the paddle, how to go about easing up. There’s also a girl who trained me to do sounds [inserting metal rods into the urethra] before, which was really interesting. I think I liked that one the most. [laughs] So, yeah, I would say I did get help from a lot of different girls in there, different tips.

Because different women were willing to share “tips” with Maddison about how to avoid injuring clients

and how to perform certain BDSM acts, Maddison was able to learn the technical skills necessary to do the job, indicating that at Dungeon X knowledge was collective and shared, as in a sharing economy. Maddison also expressed gratitude toward one woman in particular who trained her:

When I first started working there, there was a girl who trained me. She was actually very kind. She was gorgeous too, and I would say she gave me support by actually being open to training me, you know. She wasn't standoffish. She didn't just try to get the job done and get it out the way. She wanted me to know how to set limits between me and my clients, how to be able to say no, and how to be able to work the room and things of that matter [sic]. So, I feel like she really helped me with that.

Maddison's mentor made sure that she was able to manage and set boundaries with clients, implying that adequate training was closely connected to safety at Dungeon X. Thus, not only does information-sharing pertain to client screening and vetting, it also centers discovering one's comfort level among erotic services, as well as learning strategies for establishing and maintaining one's autonomy.

Women at Dungeon X also spoke about training newer workers themselves. Emily taught newer hires what she herself had learned, and she specifically mentioned teaching them how to clean in front of clients so that they would come back to the dungeon, keeping the knowledge she had acquired from her coworkers in circulation. Moreover, Janice held informal training events at the dungeon for her coworkers, stating:

For a while I was doing these really in-depth talks, where, brand new girls, I would take them on a tour, and I would bring them through every room. I would show them: "This is the phone. This is how you dial the manager. This is a flogger. This is this. Don't use this. Use this. This is a bed. It's also a coffin. You can tie people up here." I would show them, literally, the ropes, like how to do the rope tying.

Janice gave new workers tours of Dungeon X and explained how to use the equipment, vital information they would otherwise not have received. In addition to maintaining safety, there was an economic advantage to training new workers in this way, as Lacey made clear: "I did try to train a lot of people because the more you know, then I can bring you in on my own sessions and you can help me. And if I felt like you really wanted to learn, then, yeah, I'd definitely try to teach some of them." Workers at Dungeon X would often bring other women into their sessions for a tip, reducing the labor necessary for the primary dominatrix and spreading money around, and if business was slow this money from "tipping in" could be a worker's sole earnings for the day. Training new workers, then, served a dual purpose of lightening one woman's workload and financially assisting another. Although training new workers so that they could tip in is an example of the unrestricted sharing of information at Dungeon X, it reflects Christen's ideal of "alternative systems of knowledge production that rely...on social relations maintained and forged through negotiated interdependencies, which have as their goal the mutual gain between stakeholders in social, cultural, and economic terms."²³

Outside of Dungeon X, sex workers also trained each other. Natalie clarified that she arrived at Dungeon X with a variety of skills because a coworker at a previous dungeon had taught her. The fact that this woman trained Natalie enabled her to pick up the job without difficulty. Likewise, the women at both bodywork studios where Erin has worked helped train each other. Because no one at the first studio had any formal training, they were more likely to train other workers for free. Of her current bodywork studio, Erin maintained that women share work tips and advice about how to manage clients, which, while it may not constitute formal training, can help junior workers learn how to do the job. Additionally, Erin revealed that in general bodywork practitioners offer each other support by "sharing bodywork tips and showing each other moves that we've come up with or things that we've learned through videos or porn or whatever," indicating that training is shared freely in erotic bodywork, just as in a sharing economy.

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Taboo Subjects

Finally, sex workers exchange intimate personal information with each other, such as information about relationships or personal problems. Several women at Dungeon X mentioned that coworkers could share information on taboo subjects. Sex work is a stigmatized occupation, and because of their common experience of stigma, workers were able to discuss issues they could not anywhere else.²⁴ Because she was able to talk about sensitive topics without fear of judgement, Jane compared her relationships with coworkers at Dungeon X positively to her relationships with friends outside of the dungeon: “It was just nice to have an open-ass discussion where everyone was very blunt, and it was nice too cause nobody was judgey or mocking or how you would think. Like, in real life conversations with friends, [they] sometimes say the wrong things, and you’re like, ‘Eh, nevermind. I’m not talking to you about this ever again.’ So, it was nice.” As an example, Jane was able to talk about an incident of domestic violence with other women who shared similar experiences, something she had not even been able to talk to her own family about.

By the same token, Dungeon X manager Jasmine explained that relationships with coworkers differed from relationships with friends outside of the dungeon because coworkers could talk about matters typically frowned upon:

A lot of people have friends that things are taboo, so you don’t wanna say them cause you don’t wanna be judged. You don’t want someone mixing up your words and stuff like that, and maybe you just don’t trust that person. So, I guess at the dungeon, it kinda puts you in a position where trust is a big thing, and so if I trust you with my personal information and you’re trusting me with your personal information, then it’s kinda like, “Hey, we both have dirt on each other, so we know we’re not gonna try to bury each other. We’re just gonna play in the dirt together.”

Like Jane, Jasmine indicates that friends could be more judgmental than coworkers, and she suggests that trust arising from mutual stigma and the threat of exposure made possible the reciprocal

sharing of personal information about illicit subjects. For instance, Yvette recalled talking to her fellow workers at Dungeon X about having had an abortion, and she reported feeling comfortable telling her colleagues about this because they all were all engaged in stigmatized work, whereas she would have felt less at ease sharing such proscribed information in a typical office environment. Although this instance represents the free sharing of information at Dungeon X, it shows how sex workers’ support networks distribute knowledge in systems based on trust as well as obligation and reciprocity, as in many indigenous communities.²⁵

When Access to Information is Restricted

Nevertheless, sex workers sometimes share information in a more limited fashion that resembles a gift economy more closely than a sharing economy. For instance, sharing personally identifying information was restricted because of criminalization and stigma. In some cases, just as in a gift economy, access to information was constrained to a core group of workers determined largely by seniority due to material scarcity. As Dungeon X worker Miriam stated, “There’s so much need and not enough resources at all, at all, for anyone.” The competition engendered by insufficient material resources was worsened by systematic over-staffing, leading to high worker turnover, and Natalie suggested that the owner’s policy of constantly hiring new workers at Dungeon X increased competition and caused the very workplace attrition he was attempting to solve.

Over-Hiring

The competition caused by over-hiring at Dungeon X led some women to become burned out training new workers. As Natalie succinctly put it, “I taught people how to do shit constantly, and then they would quit the next week. And then I got really disillusioned with it and stopped teaching people stuff.” Because there were always too many women on shift, new workers quickly left, and Natalie’s efforts were for naught. In situations of scarcity, it makes sense to share resources, but when new workers quit without having the opportunity to give back, these resources are lost to the network. For this reason, workers restrict the circulation of

knowledge about how to do the job to particular workers, as in a gift economy. Because such limitations to access benefit the network as a whole, they are part of the moral economy of information sharing at Dungeon X, in which knowledge is “circulated properly within an ethical system.”²⁶

Some workers at Dungeon X also avoided training other women because of legal risks connected to criminalization. For instance, when she first started working at Dungeon X, Janice shared information freely with other women by training them, but she admitted that she stopped after an undercover journalist wrote an expose on the dungeon mentioning incriminating information that Janice had given her while training her:

After that everything completely changed. We started having to give our names at the door. Half the clients stopped showing up. One person literally took down that entire business, and I was being so careless with the information that I was giving. You know, that was kind of the start me realizing that information is a very expensive currency, and you have to prove that you're worth me spending that currency on you.

Here Janice compares information to money, highlighting the cost of sharing information at Dungeon X, which contradicts Benkler's assertion that information is a public good.²⁷ Eventually, Janice trained new workers only selectively, explaining: “I stopped doing a lot of the free information. It became, you know, not that you had to be in the club, but you had to show that you were serious.” Thus, Janice shared information only with workers who had worked at the dungeon long enough to prove to her that they were “serious” about the job, typically after a few months. This incident illustrates Hasinoff's point that it may be necessary for people to restrict the free flow of circulation for their own safety.²⁸

Personally Identifying Information

Although women at Dungeon X were able to share intimate personal information with each other without fear of judgement, they were more cautious when sharing personally identifying information such as legal names, phone numbers, and email

addresses because of the stigma attached to sex work. Yanna and Leona shared such personally identifying information selectively with coworkers they considered friends. As Sarah Jane Blithe, Anne Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr (2019) reveal, workers at Nevada's legal brothels are forbidden from using their legal names and are careful about what they share with coworkers, in part from fear of being “outed.”²⁹ Workers at Dungeon X are more likely to tell their coworkers about traumatic experiences including childhood abuse, intimate partner violence, and abortion than they are to exchange addresses because they are afraid that they could be exposed as sex workers to friends, family, or others, which suggests that criminalization and stigma restrict the sharing of information among sex workers. Because she had a “straight” job that she feared could be compromised if anyone found out that she was a sex worker, it took Lana a long time open up to other women at Dungeon X, and she only revealed her day job to a select few, including an older woman who had achieved financial success in the mainstream economy, illustrating how stigma against sex workers contributes to their social isolation. This further supports Hasinoff's claim that some people need to hide personal information for the purpose of safety.³⁰

Conclusion

As we can see from the previous examples, in face-to-face settings, information is not always a non-rival good. Although information was shared freely among sex workers in many of the described cases, women working at Dungeon X sometimes withheld information from coworkers. The unrestricted sharing of information was necessitated by unsafe working conditions and the failure to recognize reproductive labor as skilled work, and it was encouraged by the homosocial work environment and a mutual experience of stigma. However, exploitative management practices including hiring and scheduling too many workers, the resulting competition among them, as well as the criminalization and stigma of sex work, restricted the flow of personally identifying information and training at Dungeon X. Thus, solidarity encourages the circulation of information at Dungeon X, and in the sex industry as a whole, while unfettered capitalism and the carceral state impede it. These

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findings have implications for labor activism, management practices, and governmental policy.

Because training was constricted by economic competition among workers, organized collective strategies may have provided a more effective solution for distributing knowledge and skills. In legal sectors of the sex industry, workers can campaign for better working conditions and fair wages, or they can form unions to collectively bargain with employers. The fact that Erin reported coworkers sharing work related information freely at the bodywork studios where she had worked, while workers at Dungeon X trained each other in a more circumscribed way, implies that information sharing is also greatly impacted by workplace culture, which managerial practices help to shape. For example, as Natalie suggested, if the owner at Dungeon X would stop scheduling too many people on a single shift, then fewer workers would quit and senior workers would be more willing to share what they know with junior workers.

Furthermore, owners and managers could acknowledge that sex work is skilled labor by recognizing and compensating workers' professional development. Skilled managers and senior workers could be paid for holding information and training sessions for junior workers, rather than being expected to do so for free, and workers could receive an hourly wage for training, as in other commission or tip-based occupations like food service. Such an investment in personnel might also mitigate the high turnover of workers in the sex industry. Labor regulation is thus necessary to ensure the free circulation of information among workers, but the criminalization of many types of sex work makes this difficult. Full decriminalization of the sex industry would recognize sex work as work and allow already existing labor regulations to be applied to sex industry businesses, permitting governments to hold employers accountable for the labor exploitation of sex workers. For this reason, decriminalization is a key aim of the sex workers' rights movement.³¹

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Notes

1 See: Patricia Hill Collins, "The Meaning of Motherhood in Black Culture and Black Mother/Daughter Relationships," *Sage: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women* 4, no. 2 (1987): 4-11; Carol B. Stack, *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974); and Kath Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, and Kinship*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

2 See: Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (New York: Random House, 1983); and Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Expanded Edition*, Translated by Jane I. Guyer (Chicago: Hau Books, 2016).

3 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions of Collective Action* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 23.

4 Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 36.

5 See: Kimberly Christen, "Does Information Really Want to Be Free? Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the Question of Openness," *International Journal of Communication* 6 (2012): 2870-2893; and Amy Adele Hasinoff, *Sexting Panic: Rethinking Criminalization, Privacy, and Consent* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

6 Mauss, *The Gift*.

7 Kylie Jarrett, *Feminism, Labour and Digital Media: The Digital Housewife* (London: Routledge, 2016), 122.

8 Mauss, *The Gift*.

9 Hyde, *The Gift*.

10 Joana Conill, Manuel Castells, Amalia Cardenas, and Lisa Servon, "Beyond the Crisis: The Emergence of Alternative Economic Practices," in *Aftermath: The Cultures of the Economic Crisis*, 210-250, ed. Manuel Castells, João Caraça, and Gustavo Cardoso (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012); Hyde, *The Gift*,

and Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*.

11 Lawrence Lessig, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 143-154.

12 Lessig, *Remix*.

13 Benkler, *Wealth of Networks*.

14 Christen, "Does Information Really?" 2878.

15 Hasinoff, *Sexting Panic*, 129.

16 Hasinoff, *Sexting Panic*, 136.

17 Hasinoff, *Sexting Panic*, 137.

18 See: Juno Mac and Molly Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights* (London: Verso, 2018), 109-111.

19 Benkler, *Wealth of Networks*, 37.

20 Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*, 123.

21 Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012); and Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital*, trans. Hilary Creek (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomia, 1995).

22 See: Maria Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Bristol, UK: Falling Wall Press, 1975); and Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*.

23 Christen, "Does Information Really?": 2880.

24 See: Sarah Jane Blithe, Anne Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Illegal Brothels* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).

25 Christen, "Does Information Really?"

26 Christen, "Does Information Really?" 2883.

27 Benkler, *Wealth of Networks*.

28 Hasinoff, *Sexting Panic*.

29 Blithe, Wolfe, and Mohr, *Sex and Stigma*.

30 Hasinoff, *Sexting Panic*.

31 Mac and Smith, *Revolting Prostitutes*.