

# The Social, Economic and Sexual Networks of Prostitution

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## ABSTRACT

Prostitution is, on one hand, a unique socioeconomic phenomenon, on the other hand, it can tell us much about society as a whole. Selling sex has rarely been accepted socially; it has often been prohibited and suppressed; still it exists in almost all the World's countries, and has done so for thousands of years [1]. Furthermore, prostitution is female dominated, labor intensive, requires little education, and still it is well paid. This contradicts mainstream theories of labor economics [2]. Moreover, sex-buyers are almost exclusively male, but apart from that, they have few traits in common. They are very uniformly distributed among different age classes, professions and ethnicities [3]. These examples illustrate the special nature of prostitution as a socioeconomic system. One may wonder if prostitution can give us any information at all about society as a whole? Is it an isolated system with a unique set of rules and mechanisms? Yet more peculiarities are that the social norms around prostitution vary much between different societies. The same is true for the legal statuses that range from legal and regulated to laws against both buying and selling sex. Economists are also interested in the unusual age-wage curve of sex sellers (leveling around 30–40 years to decrease for yet older sellers) [4].

The fact that prostitution has to circumvent the mainstream channels of advertisement creates a more laterally organized economy. Not unlike the new network economy driven by social media. We argue that, even though most research questions about prostitution are rather specific, it can also teach us something more general about network-economic systems emerging today. To reach these conclusions, we review prostitution research with a focus on Internet mediated forms. In particular, we will study many aspects of a dataset derived from an online community serving sex-buyers needs [5,6]. At this community, the users log and review their sex purchases, giving the date and time of the

encounter as well as a rating of the experience. We use this data to study online-offline feedback effects over a sex-sellers time of presence in the data as well as spatial factors. We briefly mention (with the above-mentioned dataset as example), the use of this type of dataset for the study of infectious disease spreading [7].

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## 2. REFERENCES

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