



## The Purchase of Intimacy

By Viviana A. Zelizer

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### The Purchase of Intimacy By Viviana A. Zelizer

In their personal lives, people consider it essential to separate economics and intimacy. We have, for example, a long-standing taboo against workplace romance, while we see marital love as different from prostitution because it is not a fundamentally financial exchange. In *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Viviana Zelizer mounts a provocative challenge to this view. Getting to the heart of one of life's greatest taboos, she shows how we all use economic activity to create, maintain, and renegotiate important ties--especially intimate ties--to other people.

In everyday life, we invest intense effort and worry to strike the right balance. For example, when a wife's income equals or surpasses her husband's, how much more time should the man devote to household chores or child care? Sometimes legal disputes arise. Should the surviving partner in a same-sex relationship have received compensation for a partner's death as a result of 9/11?

Through a host of compelling examples, Zelizer shows us why price is central to three key areas of intimacy: sexually tinged relations; health care by family members, friends, and professionals; and household economics. She draws both on research and materials ranging from reports on compensation to survivors of 9/11 victims to financial management Web sites and advice books for same-sex couples.

From the bedroom to the courtroom, *The Purchase of Intimacy* opens a fascinating new window on the inner workings of the economic processes that pervade our private lives.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Are sociologists today the best economic scientists? On the evidence of Viviana Zelizer's striking book on the mix of the sacred and profane in our lives, it seems so."--**Deirdre McCloskey, *The Times Higher Education Supplement***

"Zelizer's book does an excellent job in demystifying the intertwining of economic activity and intimacy."--**Xiaoshuo Hou, *Theory and Society***

"The theoretical importance of this book cannot be overstated, and it cannot fail to have a lasting impact on our understanding of a variety of intimate relationships, of the circulation of money, of care, of interest, and mostly of their inextricable intertwining. . . . [T]his book is a major contribution to sociology and . . . it provides a very significant challenge to the dichotomies on which sociology rests. The tight elegance of its prose and style will make it a joy to the undergraduate student, while the scope, ambition, and originality of its argument will make it indispensable to scholars."--**Eva Illouz, *American Journal of Sociology***

"Zelizer offers a perspective that focuses attention on incomplete commensurability, an essential task where markets and supposedly non market realms intersect. In doing so, Zelizer's approach gives judges, academics, lawyers, and lay people a vantage point on markets and intimacy that reflects how people actually live their lives."--**Martha M. Ertman, *Law & Social Inquiry***

#### From the Back Cover

"The interactions of our private lives consist of subtle blends of acts of intimacy and economic exchange, which the legal system awkwardly deconstructs when things go wrong. This beautiful book will gently guide you through the many ironies of intimate exchange."--**Daniel Kahneman, Princeton University, and Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences**

"Do you think that the realm of money and the realm of intimacy are separate spheres? Viviana Zelizer will make you think again. A fascinating demonstration that romantic relationships are pervaded by transactions of multiple sorts--and that we ignore those transactions at our peril."--**Cass Sunstein, author of *Republic.com***

"Zelizer demolishes the idea that caring and commerce inhabit two separate and mutually exclusive realms. As she shows in a wide range of examples drawn from marriage, the sex trade, and the caring professions, love and money have always been intimately intertwined. A fascinating and even liberating book."--**Ann Crittenden, author of *The Price of Motherhood* and *If You've Raised Kids, You Can Manage Anything***

"Viviana Zelizer has long been known as the world's most astute, discerning, and original cultural analyst of economic processes. Here, she brings together the two streams of her work in a mighty river of a book. The Purchase of Intimacy will be read for years to come."--**Charles Tilly, Joseph L. Buttenweiser Professor of Social Science, Columbia University, author of *Roads from Past to Future***

"Author of the classic *The Social Meaning of Money*, Viviana Zelizer here draws many examples from the law and from studies of everyday life to illuminate the wondrous variety of ways money and intimacy continuously mix. Carefully researched and clearly argued, *The Purchase of Intimacy* is an important and

challenging read for scholars and nonscholars alike."--**Arlie Russell Hochschild, author of *The Commercialization of Intimate Life* and coeditor of *Global Woman***

"Here, Viviana Zelizer explores the fascinating interplay of intimate relationships and economic interest, using legal cases as her raw material. Rejecting simplistic interpretations that privilege either economics or culture, she charts a middle course of 'connected lives' that reveals the complexity and richness of her subject matter. Zelizer provides an exhaustively researched, original, and carefully argued analysis that, like her previous classics, is sure to transform the way scholars think about economics and social relations."--**Juliet Schor, Boston College, author of *Born to Buy* and *The Overworked American***

"This terrific book establishes the commodification of intimacy as something that now cannot be ignored."--**Carol Sanger, Barbara Aronstein Black Professor of Law, Columbia University**

#### About the Author

Viviana A. Zelizer is Lloyd Cotsen '50 Professor of Sociology at Princeton University. Her previous books include "The Social Meaning of Money" and "Pricing the Priceless Child" (both Princeton) and "Morals and Markets".

#### Users Review

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###### **Richard Gary:**

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