



# The Purchase of Intimacy

*Viviana A. Zelizer*

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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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