



# Hostile Worlds or Connected Lives? Research on the Interplay Between Intimacy and Economy

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## Abstract

Economic sociologists have devoted most of their attention to the activities of individuals and firms in markets. However, recent attempts have pushed for a better understanding of the relationship between intimacy and economy. Such efforts have been inspired, in large part, by Viviana Zelizer (2000, 2005). In her inquiry on the purchase of intimacy, Zelizer proposed seminal differentiations between the “hostile worlds,” “nothing but,” and “connected lives” perspectives, and advanced a cultural relational analysis of the economy. In this essay, we review research that applies Zelizer’s framework, and suggest substantive and analytical avenues for future research on economy/intimacy nexus.

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## Introduction

Economic sociologists have largely shied from discussing the intersection of intimacy and economy, and have paid most attention to the embeddedness of markets and firms<sup>1</sup> (for reviews of the field see Smelser and Swedberg 2005, Portes 2010). A prominent exception is Viviana Zelizer, who has provided a seminal conceptualization of the intimacy/economy link in her book *The Purchase of Intimacy* (2005). For Zelizer, intimacy refers to relations which “depend on particularized knowledge received, and attention provided by, at least one person – knowledge and attention that are not widely available to third parties” (Zelizer 2005, 16), and therefore pertains to connections of sexual nature, family ties, friendship, and also client–therapist relations, for instance. Research on the intimacy/economy nexus therefore examines how such intimate relations may nevertheless be penetrated by the economic, or “activities concerned with the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of scarce goods and services” (Smelser and Swedberg 2005, 3). We also consider the intimacy/economy nexus to encompass intimate objects, such as bodies, or bodily parts and looks, and consider interpretations of their potential economic exchange.

Zelizer surveyed the broader social scientific and legal scholarship to identify three different approaches to the intimacy/economy nexus. To the question, how do scholars conceive of this relationship, Zelizer provides the following answer:

A first group, the most numerous, have long proposed the twin ideas of “separate spheres and hostile worlds”: distinct arenas for economic activity and intimate relations, with inevitable contamination and disorder resulting when the two spheres come into contact with each other. A second, smaller group has answered “nothing-but”: far from constituting an encounter between two contradictory principles, the mingling of economic activity and intimacy, properly seen, is nothing but another version of normal market activity, nothing but a form of cultural expression, or nothing but an exercise of power. A far smaller third cluster—to which I belong—has replied that both of the first two positions are wrong,

that people who blend intimacy and economic activity are actively engaged in constructing and negotiating “Connected Lives” (Zelizer 2005, 20–22).

In this essay, we review the literature in sociology and related fields that applies Zelizer’s framework of connected lives, including investigations of household and care economies, markets for babies, bodies and bodily parts, and sex economies. In the last part of the essay, we identify some remaining analytical questions and venues for future research.

### **Intimacy and economy as hostile worlds**

Before we lay out the research that applies the connected lives perspective to intimacy/economy interactions, we should describe the scholarship, which Zelizer characterizes as “hostile worlds.” This refers to work that depicts the spheres of intimacy and the economy as incompatible and incommensurable, and also resonates with commonly held beliefs that intimate relations should not be infused with economic content. If so, holds the “hostile worlds” view, unwarranted contamination and perverse consequences result.

For instance, Elizabeth Anderson (1993) writes in support of the “hostile worlds” view, arguing that while markets offer many benefits, their influence must be carefully limited to appropriate goods or else their destructive influence will spread, destroying the fabric of our social world. For instance, Anderson uses legalized prostitution as an example of commodified sexual relations, and as such, incompatibility leading to destruction. While at times Anderson advocates for legal support to maintain the boundaries between the economic and the social (as in the case of carefully limited marriage contracts where market mechanisms exist but do not take over the marriage relationship), her discussion is ultimately in the hostile worlds spirit where mixing spheres is thought to have destructive consequences.

Michael Sandel (2005) and Debra Satz (2010) present more recent discussions of the incompatible relations between intimacy and economy. Sandel puts forth an argument that “some moral and civic goods are diminished or corrupted if bought and sold” (8) and therefore should not mix with money. Likewise, in her book, *Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets*, Satz focuses on, “noxious markets,” which are markets comprised of vulnerable economic actors and which are “toxic to important human values” (3). When describing the noxious market around child labor, Satz writes that some goods “need to be protected from markets because when the exchange of these goods is adopted as a social practice (in markets), they reinforce significant inequalities of bargaining power and sometimes political power that lead to extreme harms” (2010, 209). In this discussion, noxious markets offer no benefits and do little more than perpetuate the inequalities around which they are formed, harming both individual actors as well as society at large.

This argument resonates with Margaret Radin’s (1996) position on the markets for babies. Radin asserts that if such a market was to exist, it would not only be philosophically destructive to commodified babies but also to the entire idea of personhood. She notes that the reason why a fully free market for babies has not come to fruition is that it is on par with slavery, wherein market logic creates a hierarchy of worth for certain attributes and characteristics of people. Such a system has the possibility of destroying the conception of personhood because it reduces individuals to a set of characteristics that are commensurable and exchangeable. This market, then, would call into question all of humanity, and Radin contends that this is the main reason why such markets do not exist. In Radin’s view, opposition to markets for babies is “intuitive” (138), and as such, aligned with commonly held convictions that some kinds of economic exchanges are simply off-limits (Carruthers and Espeland 1998).

Finally, even if not providing a strong argument in favor of keeping certain segments of social life away from monetary transactions, Arlie Hochschild (2012) nevertheless describes the oftentimes painful and damaging impacts that market exchanges of love and care have on participants. In her discussion of surrogate mothers in India, for example, she describes the complicated processes navigated by both the Indian surrogate mothers (who provide a womb-for-hire but struggle to reconcile this with their own motherly feelings toward the growing fetus inside them), and the women in Western countries who struggle with the power dynamics involved in “buying” a womb, even if temporarily, and have trouble bringing a human element to the relationship. Ultimately, while recognizing that people navigate these intersections of intimacy and money as best they can, Hochschild nevertheless concludes that human life and interpersonal connections suffer when intimacy and economy are mixed.

### **Intimacy/economy nexus as nothing but rational exchange**

According to Zelizer, the nothing but perspective stands at the opposite pole from the hostile worlds one, considering intimacy as nothing but another arena of power, culture, or most often, the economy. According to this latter “nothing but market” perspective, intimate ties are, in fact, fully explainable by the logic of markets. Key writers in this area have been economist and Nobel Laureate Gary Becker and legal scholar Richard Posner. Becker (1996) looks at issues such as marriage, divorce or having and investing in children with the idea that these social processes are a product of rational cost benefit analysis. For instance, having children pays off, or has a return on investment, because it is expected that children will take care of elderly parents, so having children is a rational thing for people to do. In his early work, Posner looks at the issues of adoption and markets for babies. Contrary to Radin’s view presented in the previous section on hostile worlds, Landes and Posner (1978) argue that markets for babies *should* exist as this would allow for an equilibrium that could remedy both the shortage of certain preferred babies with the overabundance of less-wanted babies. As such, Landes and Posner (1978) call for extending the market further than it currently exists and treating the procurement of children as a process better handled by the market.

In a later exposition of the “nothing but” perspective, Posner (1992) makes the provocative argument that sexual behavior is best interpreted as a rational choice, where the private and social costs/benefits of action are calculated and balanced in decision-making about sexual practices, rather than as the result of biological, psychological, or social forces (116). Posner uses the case of non-contraceptive vaginal intercourse as one example, arguing that the improvements to the efficiency of contraception explain the rise in the frequency of vaginal intercourse by lowering the “costs” of unintended pregnancies for participants (143). He also discusses “search costs” involved in making decisions about one’s sexual practices, which are low in cases of solitary masturbation and streetwalkers, which occur frequently, but relatively high in cases of call girls and finding a heterosexual partner in a single-sex prison, which occur less frequently (120–121). Generally, Posner (1992) propagates an economic, transactional view of sexual behaviors where the maximization of benefits and the minimization of cost are the primary influences on behavior. In brief, sex is nothing but a rational calculation.

### **Connected lives perspective**

Zelizer (2005) argues that the “hostile worlds” and “nothing but” types of formulations of the interface between economy and intimacy are overly simplistic in their view of actual sociality. Zelizer articulates a third way of understanding economy and intimacy that is not reducible to the hostile worlds/nothing but dichotomy but instead offers a more nuanced perspective. She proposes that the intertwining of economy and intimacy be better understood as consisting

of “connected lives,” or, what she referred to in earlier writing as “differentiated ties” (Zelizer 2000). For Zelizer, the concept of connected lives/differentiated ties offers a more realistic understanding of how intimacy and economy exist in relation to each other because it recognizes that people constantly navigate the ever-fraught terrain of the intimacy/economy nexus by finding what they deem to be appropriate matches between intimate relations and economic transactions for the purpose at hand. She points to areas of social life, such as financial exchanges between sexual partners, or the monetarization of child and personal care, for instance, that are often perceived as inappropriate, but then shows how, time and again, people are able to make the two work simultaneously without one sphere being contaminated or destroyed. She then shows how other areas that are seemingly nothing but the machinations of markets are, in fact, also imbued with, curtailed by, and enabled by the existence of the social (and often intimate) ties.

For instance, Zelizer (2000) discusses professional caregiving as an example of a seemingly simple economic transaction that is in fact much more complicated due to the influence of the variegated social ties in which it exists (165–172). Zelizer finds that professional caregiving is a complicated endeavor for the givers and receivers of care, and often exists simultaneously with (and not in the absence of ) continued caregiving from family members. Hiring care from outside the family does not necessarily pollute the family formation, nor does it result in a diminished economic transaction. Instead, the sphere of professional caregiving involves the complicated expression of “connected lives” by all participants – or, the negotiation of the intimate, the economic, and the meanings associated with them.

Zelizer provides another example in a more recent piece (2012) when she discusses monetary “earmarking,” or the ways in which money is a differentiated, social medium rather than a single, economic one. She provides examples of individuals navigating the intersection of intimacy and economy, such as “boomerang children,” or adults who return home to live with their ageing parents. “Boomerang children” and their parents experience a contradictory set of feelings and emotions regarding their situation: the children are at once adults and yet still dependent on their parents, and the parents are still “mom and dad” but also landlords. Zelizer notes that the case of “boomerang children” highlights the pervasive uncertainty that exists as parents and adult children refashion their relationships in this new context, which is both intimate and economic.

Key to the connected lives argument is that, in both the caregiving and earmarking examples, the intimacy and economy coexist and are continually negotiated by participants without disastrous consequences for either sphere. Zelizer’s framework has received significant attention and been applied to studies that tackle different aspects of intimacy and economy interactions, such as households/care economy, sex economy, and markets for babies and body parts. We review applications of the connected lives framework in empirical studies on each of these topics in turn.

### *Households, families, and care*

In the literature on families and households, research examines a variety of specific issues to show how the presence of an economic component does not contaminate intimate contexts but actually often reinforces some intimate relations. In a study of postdivorce families in Norway, Gry Haugen (2005) points to the coupling of intimacy and economy by showing how money becomes extremely important in postdivorce families as a medium through which love is conceived and expressed. Similarly to what Allison Pugh (2005) finds when observing why low income parents buy relatively expensive goods for their children in response to their

need to belong in peer cultures and at school, Haugen notes that money and the purchasing of gifts can become symbolic of love. Haugen gives an example of one respondent who, when questioned about her father, began to cry and said that her father told her he could not buy her new clothes yet she knew that he bought his stepchildren new clothes. In this instance, money becomes tightly connected to emotion and social relations, and not destructive of the relationship between the people involved, as it may be commonly assumed.

Daniel Cook (2009) teases out an understanding of the interplay between “commerce, mothering, caring, sentiment and children” (332) by introducing the concept of semantic provisioning into Zelizer’s articulation of connected lives. This approach focuses upon how “caretakers attend to, create, negotiate and act upon the social meaning of goods” (322). By looking to how mothers navigate the realms of commerce around the food they feed their children, Cook highlights the intricate ways in which acts of consumption come to be constitutive of the meaning making processes and the ways that mothers express their motherhood and sentiment for their children. Here, what foods mothers buy for their children is emblematic of their care. This becomes increasingly evident in the ways in which mothers must engage with the commercial meanings of foods, by which children come to understand food. The result is that the mothers must continually enact meanings of food items that simultaneously fulfill their goals of feeding their children what they deem good or proper in addition to having them align with the ideas of what children conceive of as child food, as opposed to adult food. These constant negotiations, meaning attributions, and understandings give further insight into the ways in which a certain aspect of economy, namely consumption of commercial products, intertwines with the intimate realm of mothering and caring.

Rhacel Parrenas (2008) discusses the case of Filipina labor migrants, who often migrate and find employment as domestic workers or nannies. Parrenas argues that the connected lives perspective is much more applicable to these cases than the hostile worlds perspective. Parrenas notes that rigid analytical boundaries positioning monetary transfers as destructive to relationships of caregiving, for instance, do not represent the reality in which intimate ties and monetary relationships often coexist. For instance, she considers childcare as an example of a “socially accepted form of commodified intimacy” (164), noting that the simple act of receiving payment for childcare does not make nannies bad caregivers, nor does it have destructive consequences for unpaid mothers. Rather, she argues that these are distinct social relationships that signal different appropriate monetary transfers. In each case, the content of the social relationship between the children and the caregiver, whether this is a mother or a nanny, is represented in the particular economic exchange that marks each case.

### *Sex economy*

Several studies of the sex economy have also found Zelizer’s connected lives framework analytically useful. Kimberly Hoang’s (2011) research on sex workers in Vietnam elucidates that sex is not simply bought and sold in prostitute and client relations, as workers also build intimate relationships with their clients that extend over time, a process which also depends on class differences. Lower-end markets tend toward sex-for-money, whereas middle and high-end markets exhibit a proliferation of relational ties between sex-worker and client. In the cases of the middle and high-end markets, not only sex but also intimacy was purchased, and not only money was exchanged but also gifts which go beyond the realm of simple compensation for sex.

Similarly, Heidi Hoefinger (2013) documents the case of “professional girlfriends,” or the “bar girl subculture” in Cambodia. With rich ethnographic detail, Hoefinger demonstrates that the life of a professional girlfriend is not simply defined by a “sex-for-cash” logic. Instead,

women work as bar girls both to provide for their economic well-being as well as their emotional well-being – meaning that they often turn to this work not just for money but because they are looking for “marriage and love” (3). Hoefinger provides numerous portraits of “professional girlfriends” who carry out their work and maintain intimate relationships with their partners at home, and where they form ties and relationships in the bars that later turn intimate. In general, Hoefinger’s work reads very much in a “connected lives” spirit, demonstrating that the mingling of intimacy and economy does not always meet with destructive consequences, but instead, is often sustaining (26).

Prabha Kotiswaran (2011) discusses the sex worker population in India and efforts at legalizing female sexual labor as an official type of work. Breaking with “hostile worlds” perspective, which views sex work as bad or immoral based on the overlap of intimate and economic relationships, Kotiswaran advocates for the legalization and decriminalization of sex work as a means to better protect the rights of sex workers and to limit their exploitation. Central to her argument is the understanding that sex work is no different from many other areas of life where intimacy and economy mix without deleterious consequences.

Rhacel Parrenas (2011) makes a similar case in her exploration of hostess work and “illicit flirtations” among Filipina labor migrants in Tokyo, which is a group that is often mentioned in discussions of human trafficking. Parrenas describes the moral enterprises in which hostesses are engaged as they negotiate the complicated relationships of affection and the commercial exchange of intimacy with their customers. Importantly, Parrenas notes that even though sex work is often blamed for trafficking, it is actually the laws and regulations, originating from a hostile worlds viewpoint, that position sex work as illegal and as an unrecognized form of work, that produce the impetus for trafficking in the first place.

### *Markets for body parts and looks*

Zelizer’s differentiations of nothing but, hostile worlds, and connected lives perspectives have also been applied to markets for bodily goods. Rene Almeling (2007) examines markets in eggs and sperm – both equally necessary contributions of genetic material needed to produce life – to compare how processes of their commodification differ for men and women who sell these bodily materials. Almeling follows Zelizer in asserting that “there is no separation between economic and cultural spheres in which the economic valuation of genetic material trumps the cultural framing of altruistic donation” (337). For instance, she cites understandings of “eggs as scarce resources” and “women as nurturing” as explanations for why eggs are valued at greater levels than sperm when both make equal contributions to reproduction.

In another example, interviewing women who donate eggs to other couples, Jennifer Haylett (2012) highlights the incompleteness of the hostile worlds and nothing but conceptions of how economic processes and intimacy are connected. Haylett observes that egg donation entails, in a significant way, a constant negotiation of the relationships between the egg donor and a receptive couple. While many egg donors initially conceived of their donation as being about the money they receive (in a “nothing but” manner), through interactions with donation agency staff, they come to understand the donation as being more than simply economic. Emotional ties are built around the idea of donating eggs, ideas of “doing good” are forged, and often donation of eggs as a “gift” to a couple who was having trouble conceiving come to replace the notion of eggs as commodified objects that were simply being sold.

Researching trade in cadavers, Michel Anteby (2010) invokes Zelizer in his desire to understand how markets and morals come into contact. Anteby argues that suggesting how certain goods need to be kept separate from markets is not complete or absolute (and thus



not aligned with hostile worlds) since there are distinctions in perceiving morality or immorality due to *how* said good is traded. Cadavers are regularly conceived of as something to not be commoditized, but they are nevertheless traded in certain contexts, such as in the medical industry where they are routinely used for training and educational purposes. Anteby adjusts the argument that some given market exchanges are simply immoral, such as trade in dead bodies, by identifying the ways in which morals and markets are negotiated in mutually constitutive ways in determining when such exchange is actually appropriate and inappropriate.

Kieran Healy (2006) makes a similar argument in his work on blood and organ donations, where he describes accounts that actors within certain settings and organizations provide to justify economic exchanges of otherwise non-commercial, even taboo, objects. Procurement organizations, or the agencies charged with handling blood and organ donations, are key actors in not only creating opportunities for donors to give but also in constructing narratives about what it means to be a donor, carefully negotiating the space in between altruism and “cash for organs” (27).

Ashley Mears (2011) offers an interesting take on intimate objects in markets in quite a different context by examining the relatively unchallenged valuing and pricing of bodily looks in fashion modeling work. Mears uncovers a key difference in pricing the sale of such looks in different modeling contexts. On the one hand, and counterintuitively, highly respected modeling jobs, such as those for the well-known fashion magazine *Vogue*, actually pay very little. At the other extreme is what Mears calls “money girls.” Even this name denotes a level of (potentially) inappropriate selling of bodies for financial gain, but “money girls” do in fact make good money modeling for catalogs. The financial rewards enjoyed by “money girls” come at the cost of professional respect and prestige, though, as these models are unlikely to have high-level careers within the industry. While the subjects Mears and Anteby study – fashion models and cadavers – are distinct, both authors present findings describing the differential ways in which body parts and looks are priced across different contexts.

### **Venues for future research on economy/intimacy interplay**

Research into how different kinds of intimate relations are intimately (no pun intended) intertwined with economic considerations makes a valuable contribution to economic and cultural sociology. It pushes economic sociologists to consider spheres outside of the so-called “hard-core” phenomena that have traditionally been the subject of economic analyses, like markets and firms. It also allows sociologists interested in practices and processes of meaning-making to consider how economic actors negotiate these meanings in what are often considered taboo exchanges.

Applications of Zelizer’s connected lives framework that we reviewed in this essay advance this cultural economic sociology. However, there are also empirical phenomena that economic and cultural sociologists alike have not yet tackled that deserve more attention to further explicate the deeply intertwined nature of intimacy and economy. Some of these include family businesses, which have been extensively studied by business scholars but not by sociologists; transnationally brokered marriages, which, although a popular policy item, remain largely unstudied in terms of individuals’ own understandings of this process (likely extending beyond the hostile worlds approach); and adoption agencies, which are sites similar to egg/sperm donation entities where potentially taboo exchanges occur and are therefore likely sites of negotiated meaning, further threading the line of commodification vs. sacralization of children.

For instance, studying family business in the context of connected lives might explain divergence in findings about whether family businesses have a performance edge over other kinds of businesses found in the management literature (for a review, see Gedajlovic et al.

2012). As organizing business in family-owned firms is not simply either about economy (efficiency) or family (sociability), the connected lives perspective could reveal circumstances where the intertwining of family and business spheres may have downsides together with those situations where “family embeddedness” (Aldrich and Cliff 2003) offers business advantages. Likewise, studying transnationally brokered marriages might reveal a more nuanced portrayal of women’s lives intertwined with push and pull factors in their home and host countries, and negotiation of their intimate and economic lives that goes beyond often media sensationalized portrayals of domestic abuse and sex trafficking stereotypically associated with transnationally brokered marriages.

Furthermore, in addition to the new substantive directions for connected lives research, there are also new analytical directions that have yet to be considered. We argue that two such directions should be pursued. The first one concerns Zelizer’s own more recent preoccupation with the notion of relational work in economic sociology, as a way to trace how connected lives are accomplished. The second direction we identify as fruitful is to treat connected lives, hostile worlds, and nothing but not only as scholarly perspectives but also as available interpretive frames that actors draw upon when they negotiate their views or direct experiences with intimacy/economy interactions.

### *Relational work that sustains connected lives*

Discussing connected lives in *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Viviana Zelizer (2005, 28) also introduced a concept of relational work, to capture the “process of differentiating meaningful social relations” by using “different payment systems” and often arguing over which form of payment is most appropriate, or matched, with a particular kind of social relation. Zelizer proposed that through relational work participants forge “connected lives,” where spheres of intimacy and economy are intertwined. In a later rendition, Zelizer (2012, 146) defined the concept of relational work as...

an alternative relational account of economic activity. In brief, in all economic action, I argue, people engage in the process of differentiating meaningful social relations. For each distinct category of social relations, people erect a boundary, mark the boundary by means of names and practices, establish a set of distinctive understandings that operate within that boundary, designate certain sorts of economic transactions as appropriate for the relation, bar other transactions as inappropriate, and adopt certain media for reckoning and facilitating economic transactions within the relation. I call that process relational work.

Attention to relational work has increased recently (e.g. Bandelj 2012, 2015; Block 2012; Garcia 2014, Lainer-Vos 2014), but less so in studies of intimacy and economy. In our view, this is unfortunate as it is precisely in many supposed “taboo” exchanges (Fiske and Tetlock 1997; Rossman 2014), such as those of human body parts, babies, sex cells, and the like, that relational work is salient. Indeed, how are such “taboo” exchanges achieved? Haylett’s (2012) study of egg donors provides a case in point. Haylett shows that even if donors say that they are initially motivated by monetary compensation and that these payments are non-negligible, it is through relational work of fertility center staff members that donors are encouraged to think of their donation not as quid-pro-quo exchange of payment for service but as a gesture of help, or a gift, to infertile couples. It is staff’s acts of relational work, which enable this supposed taboo exchange, by simultaneously preserving the sanctity of bringing children to this world, despite the fact that money is being paid for it. Staff is careful to structure interactions with donors, and



between donors and clients (who are never allowed to meet each other), in order to support and solidify the meaning of egg donation through concrete practices.

Other instances of how relational work helps accomplish taboo exchanges include the study of life insurance in China by Cheris Chan (2009), where Chinese sales agents introducing a new product considered taboo (because it may be interpreted as profiting from death) often drew on their pre-existing family or friendship ties to sell these products, and these close contacts of sellers bought life insurance often to return the reciprocal obligation that an intimate tie implies, rather than out of genuine desire for the product. All in all, paying attention to how actors create, differentiate, and negotiate social relations to deal with contexts in which cultural and moral incommensurability needs to be surmounted, showcases the relational work that undergirds connected lives. Scholars studying how such relational work is accomplished, and with what consequences, would advance the connected lives research in meaningful ways.

### *Economic actors' conceptions of connected lives or hostile worlds*

Inspired by Zelizer's work, researchers have used connected lives, hostile worlds, and nothing but as analytical lenses to interpret empirical phenomena under investigation. However, the question remains as to what extent people themselves rely on conceptions that underlie these analytical lenses. Gabriel Rossman (2014) suggested that people actually operate with strong oppositions in their minds and engage in complicated relational work to "obfuscate" taboo exchanges in such ways that they can be carried out in spite of their taboo or inappropriate natures.

One work in this spirit comes from Zsuzsa Berend (2012), who analyzes the ways in which surrogate mothers frame their experiences in an online surrogate support group. Berend documents the collective, discursive process that occurs within surrogate support group, where surrogates collectively learn to situate their experience as an ultimate "gift of life" that is important and worthy even in the absence of sustained relationships with the children and in spite of the economic compensation involved in the very intimate act of giving life.

Although not on the topic of intimacy but aesthetics, Erica Coslor (2010) focused on how art world actors' differing conceptions of appropriate interactions between art and commodification influence how prices of art are understood and responded to (cf. Velthuis 2005). Coslor finds that a hostile worlds framework still has some traction for certain collectors, artists, and gallerists who are concerned that the market may result in various, negative outcomes. Coslor concludes that art and money are negotiated differently by different people, depending upon the buyer's and seller's understanding of and interest in buying art, so we cannot assume that there is an *a priori* perspective that actors subscribe to.

We encourage more work that applies Zelizer's framework not only as analytical lenses but also as interpretive frames. Such research would begin by asking how participants in exchanges themselves adopt the hostile worlds view, or the opposite. We believe this is a fruitful attempt to extend the sociological research on the link between intimacy and economy, which has so far mostly been set on showcasing that interactions between these two spheres do not corrupt one another but instead coexist in varied ways. We encourage future research aimed at uncovering what understandings economic actors themselves have about the relationship between money and intimacy, and how this may lead to unintended consequences or potential conflicts, such as points of tension between market and personal life (cf. Hochschild 2005, 203). Given that conceptions about the (in)compatibility of intimacy and economy exist as part and parcel of people's cultural repertoires, we foresee such an inquiry to be situated in the expanding scholarship on how culture influences economic life (e.g. Abolafia 1996; Bandelj

2008, 2011; Biernacki 1995; Ho 2009; Spillman 2011; Weber 1978 [1922]; Wherry 2012; Zelizer 2010).

Moreover, according to Parrenas (2011), it is not only people's minds but also laws and regulations that encapsulate different conceptions of the link between intimacy and economy. Analysis of such laws, to systematically uncover their underlying assumptions along the lines of hostile worlds, nothing but, or connected lives, would be useful, especially because regulations have direct consequences for people's life chances, as in cases of immigration, transnational marriage, domestic violence, or sex trafficking. Zelizer (2000), of course, draws heavily from legal material as evidence in her seminal text, and legal scholars provide further analysis of case law from specific spheres of intimacy–economy intersection (see Ertman 2009 on genetic material and Zatz 2009 on prison labor). We encourage more sustained investigation of this type to uncover the ways in which assumptions about relationships between intimacy and economy on the part of legal actors shape decisions.

## Summary

Economic sociologists have devoted most of their attention to the activities of individuals and firms in markets (Aspers 2010; Fligstein 2001). In contrast, we take stock of recent scholarship, which pushes for a better understanding of the relationship between intimacy and economy. Such efforts have been inspired, in large part, by Viviana Zelizer's (2000, 2005) seminal differentiations between the "hostile worlds," "nothing but," and "connected lives" perspectives in her inquiry on the purchase of intimacy. We argue that this line of work contributes to a cultural relational perspective on the economy, which surpasses current strong foci in economic sociology on structures and power (Krippner and Alvarez 2007).

In this essay, we reviewed research that applies Zelizer's framework and suggested avenues for future research. We argued that Zelizer's framework could be fruitfully applied to substantive topics, such as family business, transnational marriage, and child adoption, among others, to better understand the multi-faceted nature of these phenomena. We also called for synergistic research that overlaps with recent research on relational work in economy and reinvigorates the important and growing research on how cultural conceptions, including interpretive frames of hostile worlds, nothing but or connected worlds, influence economic outcomes.

## Short Biographies

Nina Bandelj is a professor of Sociology and co-director of Center for Organizational Research at the University of California, Irvine. Her research examines the social and cultural bases of economic phenomena, determinants and consequences of globalization, and social change in postsocialist Europe. Her articles have been published in the *American Sociological Review*, *Social Forces*, *Theory and Society*, and *Socio-Economic Review*, among others. Her monographs include *From Communists to Foreign Capitalists: The Social Foundations of Foreign Direct Investment in Postsocialist Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2008), *Economy and State: A Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010, with Elizabeth Sowers), *Economic Sociology of Work* (ed., Emerald Publishing, 2009), *The Cultural Wealth of Nations* (ed., Stanford University Press, 2011, with Frederick F. Wherry), and *Socialism Vanquished, Socialism Challenged: Eastern Europe and China, 1989–2009* (ed., Oxford University Press, 2012, with Dorothy Solinger). She currently serves as editor of *Socio-economic Review* and as chair of Economic Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association.

Paul James Morgan is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of California, Irvine. His research is located at the intersection of economic sociology and the sociology of culture, with cross interests in work, labor, and organizations. His dissertation, supported by the Center

for Craft, Creativity & Design (at UNC Asheville) and the Institute for Labor and Employment (at UCLA) investigates how contemporary craftspeople determine the prices for their crafts by focusing upon how aesthetic value, use value, and labor value are combined and conceptualized as bases for varying price forms.

Elizabeth Sowers is an assistant professor of Sociology at California State University, Channel Islands. Her research interests include the sociology of work, the sociology of globalization, and economic sociology. Her doctoral research at University of California, Irvine, centered upon the areas of work and globalization, with a specific focus on collective action and inequality within the trucking, transportation, and logistics industries. Sowers' recent work has been published in *Sociology Compass* (2011, with Nina Bandelj and Kristen Shorette) as well in *Economy and State: A Sociological Perspective* (Polity Press 2010, with Nina Bandelj).

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The embeddedness of markets and firms, as explored by a large body of literature in economic sociology, is the central subject of work that investigates in what ways, to what extent, and with what consequences the economy – traditionally defined as markets and firms – is embedded in society. Much work in this tradition gives primacy to social networks as the key aspect of social structure in which economic action is embedded (e.g. Granovetter 1985), and explicates how particular network ties and configurations shape economic outcomes for individuals (e.g. Granovetter 1974) as well as firms and markets (e.g. Aldrich 2005; Uzzi 1996, 1997). For a discussion of another meaning of embeddedness in economic sociology, where the economy is thought to be embedded more broadly into social systems, not only social networks, see Krippner and Alvarez (2007).

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