

Sexual Economics: A General Theory of (Hetero) Sexual Interactions, Or Why the Man Buys Dinner

Roy F. Baumeister

The commencement of sexual relations can be considered as the result of a negotiation subject to marketplace principles, and as such it invokes the interface between psychology and economics. Gender differences in average frequency of sexual desire create the basis for a marketplace, with women in the role of sellers and men as buyers. The price of sex (not just money but also commitment, love, attention, respect, and other goods) fluctuates according to supply and demand, competition among buyers, collusion among sellers, variations in product quality, and other factors. Research findings confirm gender differences (reflecting the complementary economic roles) in prostitution, courtship, infidelity and divorce, female competition, the sexual revolution and changing norms, unequal status between partners, cultural suppression of female sexuality, abusive relationships, and sexual attitudes.