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## Love in life boils down to financial forces

**Brett Josef Grubisic, Special To The Sun**

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Dollars and Se How Economics Influences Sex and Love

By Marina Adshade (HarperCollins)

No mindreader is required to ascertain that Marina Adshade is an organizationally-minded and unabashed dataphile. Across the 11 research-stuffed chapters of Dollars and Se How Economics Influences Sex and Love (comprised of 68 subsections and 42 page-length sidebars), the University of British Columbia Economics prof incorporates a dizzying array of information taken from the studies (more than 120 of them) listed in her bibliography.

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A scholar with a popularizer bent, Adshade provides the welcome service of "translating" specialist publications - with titles like Two-Side Estimation of Mate Preferences for Similarities in Age, Education, and Religion (from Journal of the American Statistical Association) and Anthropometry of Love: Height and Gender Asymmetries in Interethnic Marriages (from Economics and Human Biology) - into material non-PhDs can (a) access and (b) apply to the world around them.

And on any given page, the educator moves briskly from idea to concept to claim.

There are field-specific terms (Pareto efficiency; revealed preference; opportunity cost; cohort effect), equations - e.g., "Probability of Pregnancy (0.45) x Probability of Marriage (0.48) x Foregone Income from Marriage (\$50,000) = Expected Cost of Promiscuity (\$10,800)" - and statistics (such as: "The empirical evidence finds that teenage women from low socio-economic homes who live in low-income-inequality states are less likely, by five percentage points, to give birth by age 20 than are similar women living in high-income-inequality states.")

There's also much extrapolation based on data (for instance: "Societies in largely industrialized nations have rejected polygamy as a marriage institution because in those economies mental ability is highly valued in the labour force. Thus, men prefer to have fewer educated children to having many less educated children. Since monogamy helps them achieve that goal, the collective has come to adopt the view that monogamous marriage is preferred to polygamous marriage") and interesting, quote-worthy statistical trivia that's perfect for dinner table banter (as in, "Honey, did you know that 'the greater the age difference in married couples, the more likely

it is that their marriage will end in divorce'? No, I'm not implying anything.")

While the success of Dollars and Sex rests on the infectiousness of the author's enthusiasm for number-based assertions and the individual reader's tolerance for mathematical details delivered in lecture-format chunks, Adshade strives mightily to assert the centrality of economics behind our motivations - on everything from online dating to choosing a marital partner of a different ethnicity, income or height.

If you're firm in the belief that decision-making reflects your complete autonomy from external forces (that you're the master of your own destiny, in other words), or that your choices are mere products of psychology and history, Adshade wants you to think again. Micro-and macroeconomic forces are as unavoidable as gravity, she contends, and "almost every option, every decision, and every outcome in matters of sex and love is better understood by thinking within an economic framework." The case she's put together is compelling. Adshade organizes Dollars and Sex along a rough chronology that concludes with "Love in the Sunset (Years)" (Unexpected fact: STIs are "on the rise in the over50 population as a consequence of increasing rates of casual sex and extremely low rates of condom usage.") From being a single but curious teenager through to being a wizened widower on the prowl (not to mention the numerous in-betweens: virginity, dating, sexual assault, promiscuity, unexpected parenthood, STIs, marriage, opting for an extramarital affair, divorcing and remarrying), men and women of all sexual preferences come across, to vary degrees, as creatures at the mercy of largely invisible (economic) forces that guide them here, nudge them there.

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