

# **Fatal (fiscal) attraction: Tightwads and spendthrifts tend to marry (w/ Video)**

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(PhysOrg.com) -- When it comes to love and money, opposites really do attract, says a University of Michigan researcher.

New research by Scott Rick of Michigan's Ross School of Business suggests that people who are tight with their money often end up marrying those who spend more freely -- much to the detriment of their marriage.

"Generally speaking, birds of a feather flock together," said Rick, assistant professor of marketing at the Ross School. "We tend to be attracted to mates who share similar demographic characteristics, similar attitudes, similar values, even similar names. But our surveys of married adults suggest opposites attract when it comes to emotional reactions toward spending.

"That is, tightwads, who generally spend less than they would ideally like to spend, and spendthrifts, who generally spend more than they would ideally like to spend, tend to marry each other."

Rick and colleagues Deborah Small of the University of Pennsylvania and Eli Finkel of Northwestern University surveyed more than 1,000 married and unmarried adults in three separate studies to find out whether feelings toward spending money predict who people will marry and whether spousal differences in feelings toward spending money influence marital well-being.

They found that both tightwads and spendthrifts are unhappy with their emotional reactions toward spending money—and the more dissatisfied they are, the more likely they are to be attracted to people with opposing views toward spending.

"However, this complementary attraction ultimately appears to hurt marriages, as it is associated with greater conflicts over money and diminished marital well-being," Rick said. "The more spouses differ on the tightwad-spendthrift dimension, the more likely they are to argue over money and the less satisfied they are with the marriage.

"This remains true even when income, debt and savings are controlled for. That is, even though a spendthrift will have greater debt when married to another spendthrift than when married to a tightwad, the spendthrift is still less likely to argue about [money](#) with the other spendthrift."

Despite people's tendency to attract spouses who are their "spending" opposites, Rick and colleagues found that unmarried people believe that their ideal romantic partner should share the same views on spending as they do.

"On the surface, this finding may appear to contradict the hypothesis that opposites attract, but the results are easily reconciled when one considers that people tend to have poor introspective awareness of what they will initially find attractive when actually encountering potential mates," Rick said. "Our findings are consistent with the commonly observed disconnect between what people say they look for in an ideal mate and the characteristics of actual mates to whom they are attracted.

"Consistent with this pattern, people appear to accurately forecast what types of mates will make them happiest in the long run, but these forecasts fail to predict what types of mates people actually select."

Provided by University of Michigan ([news](#) : [web](#))

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