

Fatal Attraction: Tightwads and Spendthrifts Tend to Marry

When it comes to love and money, opposites attract.

Research by Scott Rick of the 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.

"We tend to be attracted to mates who share similar demographic characteristics, similar attitudes, similar values, even similar names," said Rick. "But our surveys of married adults suggest opposites attract when it comes to emotional reactions toward spending." In other words, tightwads, who generally spend less than they would ideally like to spend, and spendthrifts, whom generally spend more than they would ideally like to spend, tend to marry each other.

Rick and his colleagues surveyed more than 1,000 married and unmarried adults in three separate studies to find out whether feelings toward spending money predict whom 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.

People Want Balanced Political Information ... Sometimes

When they know they will be engaged in a debate and have to defend their positions, anxious citizens seek out a balance of viewpoints about candidates, according to a U-M study. When they have no reason to believe that a balanced search is useful, respondents view information only from their favorite candidate. The findings expand the scope of the debate about the impact of emotions in politics.

"Anxiety suppresses the likelihood that individuals will expose themselves to counter-attitudinal information unless they believe the information at their disposal will be useful in some way," said Nicholas Valentino, associate professor of communication studies and political science.

The study was conducted from October 14 to November 1, 2004, with respondents focusing on emotions caused by the 2004 presidential campaign. Participants could visit the candidates' Web sites to learn about the campaign and were allowed to switch back and forth between the Web sites to compare information. The online environment was closed, so subjects could not navigate away from the candidate sites to visit other locations on the Web.

Vincent Hutchings, associate professor of political science, said although this study involved presidential candidates, the findings could be applicable to the recent heated debates about health care at town halls nationwide.

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