

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

Departmental Research Seminar

Financial Infidelity Asymmetry Predicts Couples' Financial and Relationship Well-Being

By

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Date : 4 Oct 2024 (Fri)
Time : 9:30 am – 11:00 am
Venue : Online via Zoom

Abstract

Financial infidelity (FI)—engaging in and concealing financial behavior expected to elicit spousal disapproval—is relatively prevalent in marriage, but its impact on couples has been largely unexplored. This research is the first to examine how discrepancies in partners' propensity to commit financial infidelity (i.e., the degree of divergence between each partner's FI-proneness, or the degree of financial infidelity asymmetry) affect couples' financial and relationship well-being. Using a multi-method approach, including a pilot study with real bank account data, dyad studies, and an experiment, we find that greater financial infidelity asymmetry predicts having individualized (vs. shared) financial goals, lower relationship satisfaction, and decreased financial well-being. Critically, we demonstrate that financial infidelity asymmetry has unique predictive value beyond 1) other potential asymmetries within couples (e.g., partner differences in tightwad-spendthrift tendencies) and 2) total FI-proneness within couples. Our findings extend prior work at the individual level and highlight that it is not just the absolute level of financial infidelity within a couple, but the differential levels of partners' FI-proneness that pose harm to the couple.

Dr Hristina Nikolova is a behavioral data scientist and consumer insights expert on joint decision-making with 12+ years of experience conducting award-winning quantitative and qualitative research published in top academic and practitioner journals. Her research focuses on dyadic decision-making, interpersonal relationships, and data-driven consumer welfare interventions. Specifically, she has two research streams: (1) the influence of dyadic decision-making contexts (e.g., decisions made jointly by two partners, such as choosing a restaurant/movie, buying a home, or making long-term retirement choices together) on consumer behavior (her primary area of research expertise and interest); and (2) data-driven consumer welfare interventions.

Dr Nikolova's pioneering research work on dyadic decision-making work has won several research awards including but not limited to: the Society for Consumer Psychology Early Career Award (2023), the *Journal of Marketing Research* Paul E. Green Award Finalist (2023), the Franco Nicosia ACR Competitive Paper Award (2019), John A. Howard/American Marketing Association Doctoral Dissertation Award (2014), American Marketing Association CBSIG Rising Star Award (2014), Association for Consumer Research/Sheth Foundation Dissertation Award (2012), Society for Marketing Advances Dissertation Proposal Runner-Up Award (2012), the Emerald/EFMD Outstanding Doctoral Research Highly Commended Award (2012), and the Academy of Marketing Science Mary Kay Dissertation Competition Honorable Mention (2013). In addition, her research contributions were recognized by the prestigious Marketing Science Institute Young Scholar award (2019).

Her research has been published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Retailing*, and *Psychology & Marketing*, and featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Forbes*, *Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *The Huffington Post*, *New York Magazine*, *ABC News*, *Expert Beacon*, *Shape*, and *Allure* among others.

All interested are welcome.



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