Money Fights Predict Divorce Rates

By CATHERINE RAMPELL

You know it in your gut, and you’ve seen it in the splintered marriages around you. Finance-related tensions — however you define them — raise the risk of divorce.

A new study, by Jeffrey Dew at Utah State University, attempts to quantify that risk. His finding: Couples who reported disagreeing about finance once a week were over 30 percent more likely to get divorced than couples who reported disagreeing about finances a few times a month.

Professor Dew looked at responses from about 2,800 couples surveyed in 1987 by the National Survey of Families and Households.
Families and Households. In this survey, both husbands and wives were asked, separately, about how often they disagreed with their spouse over chores, in-laws, spending time together, sex and money. These same respondents were then contacted again several years later, in 1992, and asked if they were still married.

Of all these common things couples fight about, money disputes were the best harbingers of divorce. For wives, disagreements over finances and sex were good predictors of divorce, but finance disputes were much stronger predictors. For husbands, financial disagreements were the only type of common disagreement that predicted whether they would get a divorce.

These findings were presented last month at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, and appear in “The State of Our Unions,” a report on marriage and money released today by the University of Virginia’s National Marriage Project and the Center for Marriage and Families at the Institute for American Values.

For some suggested money-related discussions couples should have before getting hitched, go here.

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