

For some people, attractive wives and high status husbands enhance marital quality

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Your decision-making style—whether you make a "good enough" choice or seek to make the "best" possible choice among all possible options—influences your satisfaction with your partner, according to a

3-year study of newlyweds. Researchers from Florida State University found that maximizing men—those who seek to make the "best" choice—who had attractive wives were more satisfied at the start of their marriages than maximizing men who had less attractive wives, and maximizing women who had high status husbands experienced less steep declines in satisfaction over time than maximizing women who had low status husbands.

The research appears in *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.

"Maximizing people are constantly trying to obtain the very best outcomes in life," says lead author Juliana French (Florida State University). "For example, which is the best ice cream flavor? Which is the best song on the radio right now?"

"In the context of romantic relationships, maximizers are those who seek the best possible [partner](#) and who, over the course of their relationships, continue to compare their partners to other [potential partners](#)," says French. This could lead to overall lower satisfaction in maximizers' long-term relationships if their partners do not compare favorably to those alternatives on qualities that are important to them.

To test how maximizers might find happiness in their [long-term relationships](#), the researchers studied 113 heterosexual newlywed couples in north Texas and 120 newlywed couples in north Florida. In both studies, people completed questionnaires assessing their marital satisfaction, tendencies to maximize when making decisions, and social status; additionally, the researchers obtained photographs of each spouse that they objectively coded for [physical attractiveness](#).

They found that maximizers were more satisfied with their marriages if their partners possessed traits that were desirable to them—maximizing men were more satisfied if they had attractive wives, and maximizing

[women](#) were more satisfied if they had high-status husbands. In contrast, satisficing men and women were similarly satisfied regardless of their partners' traits.

Making decisions about romance—for example, who to date and who to marry—are central to our lives and well-being.

What other aspects of [relationship](#) functioning are impacted by maximizing tendencies?

"We might find that maximizers take relationships slower than satisficers," speculates French. "For example, maximizers might take longer to decide to be exclusive with someone, to move in together, to get married, to have children together, and so on."

More information: Juliana E. French et al, Maximizing Tendencies in Marriage: Accentuating the Implications of Readily Observable Partner Characteristics for Intimates' Satisfaction, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* (2019). [DOI: 10.1177/0146167219832337](https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219832337)

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