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# Put your partner on a pedestal? You might have a happier marriage

By ZOSIA BIELSKI  
From Wednesday's Globe and Mail

*A new study finds people who are 'unrealistically idealistic' about their partners are more satisfied with their marriage*

You're perfect, honey.

People who idealize their romantic partners are happier in the long run than those who see them as they really are, according to a new study being published in April in the journal *Psychological Science*.

Those who were "unrealistically idealistic" about their partners when they wed were more satisfied with their marriage three years later compared with their less optimistic counterparts.

"People who idealized their partner less experienced a steep decline [in satisfaction]," Sandra Murray, a social psychologist at the University at Buffalo and co-author of the study, said in an e-mail Tuesday.

The findings are surprising, given that rose-coloured glasses usually trigger disappointment.

The researchers recruited 222 couples as they applied for their marriage licences at Buffalo's city hall. Participants filled out surveys every six months for three years. They were asked to describe their partners and their hopes for an ideal spouse. The spouses were in turn asked to describe themselves.

"For instance, 'Gayle' might perceive her ideal partner as more athletic than intelligent and she might perceive her husband 'Ron' in the same light," Dr. Murray explained.

"However, his self-perceptions might be quite different than her ideals. He might see himself as being more of a couch potato. This is the sense in which her idealization of him may be unrealistic."

The more the ideals and realities didn't gel, the happier the couples appeared to be.

Does it amount to little more than ignorant bliss? "I wouldn't argue that people are 'deluding' themselves," Dr. Murray said. "Rather, people are seeing their partner through an optimistic [or] idealistic lens."

"Generally that is beneficial for relationships because seeing a partner in the best possible light gives people greater reason to believe that they can deal with problems within their relationships."

You're rosy and perfect, honey.

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