

## **ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Perceived Body Image and Sexual Satisfaction: The Importance of Partner Views and Reinforcement in Intimate Relationships

**STUDENT:** Carin Smith

**DEGREE:** Master of Arts

**COLLEGE:** Sciences and Humanities

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Combined with the rising rates of body image dissatisfaction and low self-esteem in women, the strong association between sexual behaviors and body image should be considered a significant concern in human health and sexuality (Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, & Peterson, 1999). Too often researchers focus on only half of the relationship, only assessing the body image satisfaction of the participants in the study rather than incorporating the perception of the participant's partner (Steer & Tiggemann, 2008). The current study is designed to explore the relationship between the participant's body image, the perceived partner's satisfaction with the participant's body (PPS), verbal feedback, and the participant's sexual satisfaction. Participants were 492 men and women in heterosexual relationships lasting more than three months with ages ranging from 18 to 72 years ( $M = 26.70$ ;  $SD = 9.73$ ) recruited from a university affiliated email and social media (Facebook and Reddit). Analyses revealed significant correlations between sexual satisfaction, body image, PPS, and verbal feedback. T-tests with bonferroni corrections revealed significant gender differences, with men reporting higher body image satisfaction, but lower PPS and verbal feedback than women. Finally, step-wise regression analyses revealed that body image did not account for the most variance when also considering partner opinions, suggesting a need for further investigation between various components of partner opinion about the individual's body (partner satisfaction and verbal feedback) and sexual satisfaction.