

PERCEIVED BODY IMAGE AND SEXUAL SATISFACTION:
THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNER VIEWS AND REINFORCEMENT IN INTIMATE
RELATIONSHIPS

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Perceived Body Image and Sexual Satisfaction

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). While several associations between an individual's poor body image and low sexual satisfaction have been made (Steer & Tiggemann, 2008; Smith et al., 2011), this relationship does not capture the whole story. Researchers have found that participants place a significant amount of importance on how they are perceived by others. These perceptions often have the ability to influence cognitions and behaviors (Erbil, 2012; Lemer, Blodgett-Salana, & Benson, 2013). As there is more than one person in a relationship, the associations between an individual's body image and sexual satisfaction may be influenced by his or her partner in the relationship. With this in mind, it stands to reason that the perception of the partner's satisfaction with the individual's body is important when considering the individual's sexual satisfaction.

Body Image

Body image is a complex social construct that can be defined and measured in multiple ways. One way of defining body image is as the subjective perceptions and attitudes about one's own body (La Rocque & Cioe, 2011). Because body image is multidimensional, several scales have been designed to assess these different aspects of body image. For example, the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ; Cash, 2000) is broken down into several subscales, such as the appearance evaluation subscale (AE), which focuses on feelings of physical attractiveness or unattractiveness, to better achieve a full picture of body image satisfaction. The subscales vary in content in attempts to encompass all aspects of body image. The multidimensionality adds to the complexity of defining body image, and individuals'

body images easily become distorted and affect other areas of functioning (van den Brink et al., 2013).

According to Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, and Peterson (1999), body image influences self-image cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally. Cognitively, body image has the ability to lower an individual's self-worth and create distractions in everyday life. Emotionally, lower body image is more associated with negative attitudes and feelings of depression or resentment. Behaviorally, an individual with negative body image is more likely to engage in risky behavior because of lower self-worth. All of these aspects—cognitions, emotions, and behaviors—are recognized as being engaged during sexual acts. There is strong support for the association of body image with frequency of and comfort with sexual behavior (Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, & Peterson, 1999). If a woman is distracted by thoughts about her body, she is less likely to be able to focus on her sexual pleasure to gain maximum sexual satisfaction (Steer & Tiggemann, 2008).

Sexual Satisfaction

Much like body image, sexual satisfaction is a multifaceted construct. Sexual satisfaction is one's subjective evaluation of the various dimensions within a sexual relationship (Mark, & Murray, 2012). Based on an extensive literature review, del Mar Sanchez-Fuentes, Santos-Iglesias, and Sierra (2014) identified a number of variables associated with sexual satisfaction, such as socio-demographics or psychological health status, variables characteristic of intimate relationships, social support variables, and variables regarding beliefs and values. In a sample of 116 undergraduate women from an Australian university, Steer and Tiggemann (2008) found that satisfaction in the relationship was a major predictor of sexual functioning and overall sexual satisfaction. They also found that self-objectification was closely related to self-consciousness during sex, body shame, and decreased sexual activity. Other influences on sexual satisfaction

include “spectatoring,” where individuals mentally disengage from the sexual act and instead analyze the situation rather than experiencing it (Purdon & Holdaway, 2006).

Another influence of sexual satisfaction is how individuals perceive and are perceived by their partner (Luo, Zhang, Watson, & Snider, 2010). For example, in a sample of 58 heterosexual and homosexual undergraduate couples, Stoeber (2012) found that dyadic perfectionism influences satisfaction within the context of the relationship. The study focused on two types of perfectionism, expectations, such as better performance during intimacy, towards one’s partner and the perceived expectations from one’s partner. These perceptions were found to put stress on both individuals in the relationship and negatively affect the opinion of the quality of the relationship (Stoeber, 2012).

Perceived Body Satisfaction

Frederickson and Roberts (1997) postulate that women internalize how others view them and then use it as a primary means of viewing their own body or self. This concept is known as the objectification theory and essentially states that individuals, women in particular, view themselves how they believe others view them. It is suggested to lead to negative outcomes within the individual, including unipolar depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). This idea insinuates that people would have a tendency to be critical on themselves, but no more critical than how they believe others perceive them. This has not always been found to be true. It is possible that the perception of self and perception of others’ opinions of the individual can differ.

Markey and Markey (2006) conducted a study on body image satisfaction and perceived body image satisfaction. Using a sample of 95 heterosexual couples, they found that women were more critical of themselves than their perceptions of their partner’s ratings. This means that

women's body image satisfaction, scored using the Contour Drawing Rating Scale, was found to differ from their partner's perceived body satisfaction with the individual's body, also scored using the Contour Drawing Rating Scale, which seems to contradict the objectification theory. Various theories can be applied to understand these findings. For example, the "love is blind" bias is the theory that individuals perceive their partners to be more attractive than reality (Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek & Furnham, 2009). This theory would suggest that an individual's partner is likely to perceive the individual as being more attractive than they really are, leading to higher body satisfaction.

Girouard et al. (2014) studied partner influence on body image in 106 heterosexual couples, recruited at a university in France, who had been living together for a minimum of six months. Similar to the results in Meltzer & McNulty (2010), body dissatisfaction in women was found to be associated with lower sexual satisfaction for both partners. Girouard et al. suggests that sexual affirmation and cognitive distractions during sex might be associated with the satisfaction of the partner. They postulate that it is possible that an individual will be dissatisfied if their partner is distracted by the partner's own appearance (Girouard et al., 2014). Therefore a partner with low body image may cause an individual to be dissatisfied with the sexual experience. It is important to note, however, that this reasoning for the relationship is merely speculation and has yet to be proven.

Partner Influence & Verbal Feedback

Partners within a relationship have a significant effect on each other. Social Influence theories suggest that individuals in self-defining relationships are strongly influenced not only by their partner, but by the relationship itself (Orina, Wood, & Simpson, 2002). This means that the individual is likely to turn to the relationship when making decisions and rely on the values set

up in the context of that relationship (Orina, Wood, & Simpson, 2002). If the relationship has established norms regarding values (i.e. health or appearance) then it is likely that the individual will turn to those norms about how to view him or herself. For example, if a norm within the relationship stresses the importance of appearance, or an established belief is that “my partner desires a thin mate,” the individual will be critical of his or her appearance or weight, hoping to be closer to the ideal. These values and norms could be the result of opinion or perception of opinions, but also have the capability of being established through verbal communication. One study found that over 30% of students in serious committed relationships had either told their partner or had been told by their partner to gain or lose weight (Sheets & Ajmere, 2005). This communication expresses what is acceptable and establishes values and norms in the relationship.

Sheets and Ajmere (2005) explored the expression of weight-related concern and importance of weight in college students’ dating relationships. By surveying 554 undergraduates, researchers found that, in men, weight was positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, but with women was negatively correlated with satisfaction. As previously stated, the results of this study found that over 30% of students in serious committed relationships had either told their partner or been told by their partner to gain or lose weight (Sheets & Ajmere, 2005). For women, they were just as likely to have been told to either gain or lose weight, while men were predominantly told to gain weight. As a result, women who were told to lose weight and men told to gain weight actually had lower reported relationship satisfaction (Sheets & Ajmere, 2005).

Burke and Segrin (2014) looked at the influence of romantic partners in regard to diet and exercise (and other health behaviors) in 192 heterosexual couples. Using an Actor-Partner

Mediator Model to analyze these associations, researchers found that individuals reported feeling more supported when their partners used positive influence strategies. Furthermore, men who felt more supported by their partner also engaged in healthier behaviors than those who did not (Burke & Segrin, 2014). This finding was not found in women, potentially because of the impact of the feedback given to the individuals about diet, exercise, and their implications on weight.

Calogero, Herbozo, and Thompson (2009) examined the relationship between experiences of appearance commentary and women's objectification processes in 116 female undergraduate students at a university in Australia. Results indicated that the impact of the appearance comments was associated with body dissatisfaction and body surveillance (Calogero, Herbozo & Thompson, 2009), as defined as individuals focusing on how his or her body looks rather than how it feels, essentially viewing their bodies as an observer (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Furthermore, the individuals with more negative feelings about appearance criticism and more positive feelings with appearance complements had higher body surveillance and body dissatisfaction (Calogero, Herbozo & Thompson, 2009).

Body Image, Sexual Satisfaction, and Partner Perceptions

Several aspects of body image, including weight concern and thoughts about body during sexual activity, contribute to sexual satisfaction (Pujois, Mesten, & Seal, 2010). These aspects, as previously mentioned, have the capability of altering cognitions and increasing maladaptive thought processes, like excessive shame or anxiety (Ackard, Kearney-Cooke, & Peterson, 1999). Because of the level of shame and anxiety that many women feel about their bodies in general, self-consciousness during sexual activity is also likely to occur (Steer & Tiggemann, 2008).

Self-consciousness can occur at any time or stem from a number of sources. Often it is a result of an individual's perceived understanding of how others view the individual. Zhaoyang

and Cooper (2013) analyzed not only individuals' views of their own body image and its effect on their sexual satisfaction, but also individuals' views of their partner's perceived rating of body image in 144 couples. An important finding was a significant interaction between partners' perceived body image of the participant and gender. Perceived body image had more of an effect on sexual satisfaction for women than for men (Zhaoyang & Cooper, 2013).

When analyzing the results, Zhaoyang and Cooper (2013) controlled for the individual's satisfaction with the partner's body and partner's satisfaction with the individual's body to focus on the dyadic nature of the research. Contrary to previous findings, which took the dyadic perspective, this study found that an individual's own body satisfaction was not a significant predictor of the individual's sexual functioning, when taking the dyadic perspective.

Furthermore, their results indicated that satisfaction with the partner's body more strongly predicted the sexual satisfaction than satisfaction with the individual's own body (Zhaoyang & Cooper, 2013). Body image satisfaction was not a predictor of sexual satisfaction, when taking the dyadic perspective, thus reinforcing that an individual approach to sexual satisfaction and body image is not adequate. Furthermore, researchers who sampled 373 random couples, with wives no older than 35 years of age, have found a positive relationship between verbal affirmation and joyful sex (Henderson-King, & Verhoff, 1994)

The Current Study

The current study is designed to explore the relationship between perceived partner's satisfaction with the participant's body (PPS) and the participant's sexual satisfaction. Too often researchers focus on only half of the relationship, only assessing the body image satisfaction of the participants in the study (Steer & Tiggemann, 2008). Some studies are progressively moving towards incorporating the opinions of both partners involved in the relationship, which gives

more clarity to the actual dynamics of the relationship, including sexual satisfaction and functioning (Zhaoyang & Cooper, 2013). The current study incorporates an alternative way to measure body image and sexual satisfaction with the intention of incorporating the perceptions of both partners of the relationship. The aim is to obtain a more comprehensive picture of body image and its relation to sexual satisfaction by incorporating the partner's perceived satisfaction with the individual's body (PPS), which is how satisfied the participant believes his or her partner is with the participant's body. In order to measure PPS, or similar concepts, previous studies have commonly used a modified Contour Drawing Rating Scale (Markey & Markey, 2006; Girouard et al., 2014). However, the scale has generally been used to assess satisfaction for the body as a whole, rather than attending to the multidimensionality of body image satisfaction. Therefore the PPS will not be measured with the Contour Drawing Rating Scale and instead a different scale was created for the purpose of this study.

Moreover, the current study not only asks the participant to answer how they believe their current partner would rate them; participants will also be asked about any specific comments that have been made regarding his or her body, whether positive or negative. Analyzing the relationships between the participant's own body image satisfaction rating, the rating from the perspective of the partner, and the verbal feedback given to the individual from their partner allows for a holistic approach to how an individual views himself or herself. As previously mentioned, the objectification theory states that individuals view themselves primarily based on how they believe others perceive them. With this in mind, discrepancies between ratings might serve as interesting results in need of further investigation.

Other variables included in the study consist of demographics (gender, age, and ethnicity) and Body Mass Index (BMI). BMI was assessed because of its established relationship with

body image and therefore was examined (Meltzer & McNulty, 2010; Smith et al., 2011; van den Brink et al., 2013). It is possible that the participants whose body image scores do not align with their BMI (for example someone with a healthy BMI reporting a constant preoccupation or dissatisfaction with weight), the same relationship will be reflected in their PPS (van den Brink et al., 2013).

Hypotheses. The current study proposes a number of hypotheses. (1) Because of its prevalence in previous literature, the first hypothesis is that there will be a relationship between an individual's body image rating and sexual satisfaction. More specifically, that body image will be significantly positively correlated with sexual satisfaction. (2) Because of their influences on each other, the second hypothesis is that body image satisfaction, PPS, and verbal feedback will be positively correlated. For example, it is likely that participants will draw from concrete examples (including verbal commentary) to deduce their partner's satisfaction. Because of the implications of the objectification theory, gender differences are expected. (3) More specifically, one expectation is that women will have lower body image satisfaction than men. (4) Furthermore, it is hypothesized that the correlation between PPS and sexual satisfaction will be stronger for women rather than men. (5) The final hypothesis is that PPS and verbal feedback will account for a significant amount of variance in sexual satisfaction, even after body image is taken out. Further relationships regarding demographic information will also be explored to validate the similarity of the current sample with previous literature and explore relationships between variables not previously studied in this context.

Method

Participants

While 702 individuals opened the survey and were presented with the informed consent, only 492 met the requirements to participate and completed the survey. Participants were required to be 18 years or older, the oldest reporting being 73 years old ($M = 26.70$; $SD = 9.73$). Because of this requirement, 6 people were excluded from data analysis. Participants were also required to be in a heterosexual relationship lasting longer than three months ($M = 5.01$ years; $SD = 6.60$). The relationship requirements eliminated 168 people from the current study. Reported relationship type varied, with 44.1 % identifying as “Dating, not living together” ($n = 217$), 21.5% as “Dating, living together” ($n = 106$), 28.5% as “Married” ($n = 140$), and 5.7 % as “Other” ($n = 28$). Thirty two participants were removed from data analysis due to missing data.

Participants were recruited online, via an email to anyone with a Ball State email address distributed by the Ball State Communication Center ($n = 173$), or through social media, including Facebook ($n = 124$) and Reddit ($n = 195$). The sample consisted largely of women ($n = 359$; 73%) with 24% of the sample identifying as men ($n = 121$) and 2.2% identifying as “Other” ($n = 11$). The sample also identified as “White” ($n = 430$; 87%), “African American” ($n = 9$; 1.8%), “Hispanic” ($n = 23$; 4.7%), “Asian” ($n = 14$; 2.8%), “Native American” ($n = 5$; 1.0%), “Multi-racial” ($n = 4$; 0.8%) and “Other” ($n = 6$; 1.2%). Participation was strictly voluntary as participants were offered no incentive for their participation.

Measures

Besides collecting demographic information (sex, age, height, weight, and relationship status and length), body image, partner’s perceived body image (PPS), and sexual satisfaction were measured. Height and weight were analyzed individually; rather, they were entered into a

formula calculating the participant's BMI ($M = 25.98$; $SD = 6.47$). All questions and scales were presented in Qualtrics, an online survey, accessible to the participant anywhere that there is internet connectivity.

Sexual satisfaction. The Sexual Satisfaction Subtest (SSS) of the Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (Allison, Alfonso, & Dunn, 1991) contains five items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*) designed to assess participants' satisfaction with their sex life. This subscale of the Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale has high reliability, with an alpha of .96 and test retest of .87 (Alfonso et al., 1996). Regarding validity, the SSS has strong divergent validity, correlating weakly at best with all other subscales of the Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (including family, social, physical, school, and work) except the relationship subscale, with which it had a strong correlation, $r(260) = .57, p < .05$ (Alfonso et al., 1996). The SSS was selected because of its applicable questions and easy comprehension. Example statements include "*In most ways my sex life is close to my ideal*" and "*I am generally pleased with the quality of my sex life.*" Higher scores on this scale are affiliated with higher sexual satisfaction. In the current study, this five-item scale also had a high reliability, with an alpha of .96.

Body image satisfaction. To measure body image satisfaction, two subscales of the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ; Cash, 2000) was presented to the participants in their original form. The Appearance Evaluation subscale (AE), which includes seven items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*), has a reliability that ranges from .85 to .87 in the college population and involves feelings of physical attractiveness or unattractiveness (Cash et al., 2002; Pearson & Hall, 2013). Higher scores are associated with positive feelings (Pearson & Hall, 2013). Example statements include "*my body*

is sexually appealing” and *“I like the way I look without clothes.”* In the current study, reliability was found to be high, with an alpha of .91 (n = 485). The Body Areas Satisfaction Scale (BASS) has a reliability ranging from .76 to .89 in the college population (Cash et al., 2002; Pearson & Hall, 2013) and focuses on specific aspects of appearance. It includes nine items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very dissatisfied* and 5 = *very satisfied*). Higher scores indicate a general satisfaction with most areas of the individual’s body. Participants rate satisfaction of various aspects of their body including aspects like, *“Face (Facial features, complexion)”* and *“Mid Torso (waist, stomach).”* In the current study, reliability for the BASS was also found to be high, with an alpha of .84 (n = 478). These subscales were chosen because of their relatedness, yet their slight differentiation from one another.

Perceived Partner Satisfaction. To measure PPS, the same two subscales of the MBSRQ used in measuring the participant’s body image satisfaction was modified to create a multidimensional measure of PPS. These two scales will include reframed questions so instead of addressing the participant’s perspective they will address what the participant believes his or her partner’s satisfaction is. The statements in the AE and BASS scales were not modified; only the instructions were altered. The modified AE scale for PPS (AE-PPS) contains seven items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). The modified BASS for PPS (BASS-PPS) includes nine items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very dissatisfied* and 5 = *very satisfied*). For both scales, high scores indicate more positive feelings and higher satisfaction. Both of the scales measuring PPS were found to have high reliability, with the AE-PPS scale having an alpha of .91 (n = 488), and the BASS-PPS scale having an alpha of .90 (n = 481).

Verbal Feedback. Similarly to the measure created for PPS, verbal feedback will also be measured using modified AE and BASS scales. These two scales will include reframed questions so instead of addressing the participant's perspective they will address what the comments made by the participant's partner. The statements in the AE and BASS scales were not modified. The modified AE scale for verbal feedback (AE-VF) contains seven items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *less than once a month*, 3 = *less than once a week*, 4 = *less than once a day*, and 5 = *more than once a day*). The modified BASS for verbal feedback (BASS-VF) includes nine items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very negative*, 3 = *neither negative nor positive*, and 5 = *very positive*). For both scales, high scores indicate more positive feedback and higher communicated satisfaction. In the current study, AE-VF was found to have a high reliability, with an alpha of .82 (n = 483) and the BASS-VF also had a high reliability, with an alpha of .90 (n = 484).

Procedure

A link to the online survey was included in the recruitment email sent to all university affiliated email address. To increase recruitment, a link to the survey was also available on social media sites (e.g. Reddit, Facebook). After following the link, the participant was presented with an informed consent page. In order to participate and be presented with the survey, individuals selected "I agree" to indicate their understanding of the informed consent and willingness to participate in the study. If participants did not select "I agree," they were sent to a page thanking them for their time and were unable to participate in the study. Once participants selected "I agree," they were presented with a few questions about their current relationship. If participants answer that they were single, they were redirected to a page thanking them for their time and their participation in the study was completed. If participants indicated being currently in a

committed, sexually active, heterosexual relationship lasting more than three months, they were presented with the rest of the demographic questions. After completion of the demographic questions, participants were presented with the measures of sexual satisfaction, body image satisfaction, PPS, and verbal feedback. Once participants completed the survey, they were thanked for their participation and the study was over.

Results

A variety of statistical analyses were performed to test the hypotheses. (1) Correlations were used to analyze the first hypothesis of a significant positive relationship between an individual's body image and sexual satisfaction. (2) Correlations were also used to analyze the relationships between body image satisfaction, PPS, and verbal feedback. (3) Because of the lack of evidence to support a gender difference for all variables, T-tests were used to compare gender differences for sexual satisfaction, body image satisfaction, PPS, and verbal feedback between men and women. Bonferroni corrections were incorporated to reduce familywise error rate. (4) To compare correlations for men and women regarding sexual satisfaction and body image satisfaction, PPS, or verbal feedback, a Fisher's r to z transformation was used. (5) Finally, stepwise multiple regressions, putting body image first and then PPS and verbal feedback on the following step, were conducted to determine if PPS and verbal feedback accounted for a significant amount of variance in sexual satisfaction, even after the variance accounted for by body image was taken out.

Gender Differences

Because the majority of the sample identified as women (a nearly 3:1 ratio), gender differences were analyzed first to ensure that the samples were similar enough to use in further data analysis without having to exclude a number of female participants from the analyses.

Levene's test established homogeneity of variance, with the exception of the scores on the Appearance Evaluation scale, $F(477) = 5.85, p = .016$. Therefore, all female participants who completed the survey were incorporated into the data analyses.

T-tests were used to compare gender differences for sexual satisfaction, body image satisfaction, PPS, and verbal feedback between men and women. As predicted, there were not significant gender differences for all variables. Specifically, there was not a significant gender difference for sexual satisfaction scores between men ($M = 5.27, SD = 1.51$) and women ($M = 5.39, SD = 1.45$) on the SSS, $t(478) = -0.74, p > .05, d = 0.08$. To reduce familywise error, a bonferroni correction was used, changing the alpha to .007. This modification was made by dividing the usual $\alpha = .05$ by the number of T- tests run (7). Once this change was made, the gender difference between men ($M = 4.10; SD = .64$) and women ($M = 4.27; SD = .64$) for the BASS-PPS scale was no longer significant, $t(474) = -2.44, p = .015, d = 0.27$.

T-tests revealed significant gender differences for all other measures of body image satisfaction (AE, BASS), PPS (AE-PPS), and verbal feedback (AE-VF, BASS-VF) between men and women. As predicted, men had significantly higher body image satisfaction scores on the appearance evaluation scale ($M = 3.36, SD = .84$) than women ($M = 3.08, SD = .95$), $t(228.24) = 3.10, p < .007, d = 0.31$. Similarly, men had significantly higher body image satisfaction scores on the body areas satisfaction scale ($M = 3.50, SD = .70$) than women ($M = 3.30, SD = .73$), $t(477) = 3.20, p < .007, d = 0.28$. However, for the measures on perceived partner satisfaction and verbal feedback, men scored significantly lower than women (See Table 1).

Table 1

Gender Difference t-tests on Sexual Satisfaction, Body Image, Perceived Partner Satisfaction, and Verbal Feedback

| Measure ¹ | Male | | Female | | <i>t</i> | <i>d</i> |
|----------------------|------|------|--------|------|----------|----------|
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| SSS Score | 5.27 | 1.51 | 5.39 | 1.45 | -0.74 | 0.08 |
| AE Score | 3.36 | 0.84 | 3.08 | 0.95 | 3.10* | 0.31 |
| BASS Score | 3.5 | 0.7 | 3.3 | 0.73 | 3.20* | 0.28 |
| AE-PPS Score | 4.14 | 0.7 | 4.45 | 0.64 | -4.48* | 0.46 |
| BASS-PPS Score | 4.1 | 0.64 | 4.27 | 0.64 | -2.44 | 0.27 |
| AE-VF Score | 3.61 | 0.77 | 3.91 | 0.71 | -3.93* | 0.41 |
| BASS-VF Score | 4 | 0.64 | 4.23 | 0.64 | -3.43* | 0.36 |

¹SSS = Sexual Satisfaction Subscale, AE = Appearance Evaluation, BASS = Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Appearance Evaluation, BASS-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Appearance Evaluation, BASS-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, * $p < .007$.

Body image and sexual satisfaction

The first hypothesis was that there would be a relationship between an individual's body image rating and sexual satisfaction. More specifically, that body image was significantly positively correlated with sexual satisfaction. As there were multiple measures of body image satisfaction, correlations between scores on the SSS ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.45$), AE ($M = 3.16$, $SD = .93$), and BASS ($M = 3.33$, $SD = .73$) scales were all examined.

First, the scores on the measures of body image AE and BASS scales were significantly, strongly and positively correlated, $r(490) = .84$, $p < .01$, suggesting that if an individual scored highly on the appearance evaluation scale, that he or she would also score highly on the body

areas satisfaction scale. Scores on both the AE and the BASS scales were also found to be significantly correlated to scores on the SSS; between the AE and SSS $r(491) = .29, p < .01$, and between the BASS and SSS $r(491) = .31, p < .01$. It is important to note, however, that although these correlations were significant, they were not strong. Both relationships were, however, positive correlations, indicating that there was a positive correlation between body image and sexual satisfaction.

Body Image, PPS, and Verbal Feedback.

The second hypothesis was that body image satisfaction, PPS, and verbal feedback would be positively correlated. All measures of body image (AE and BASS), PPS (AE-PPS and BASS-PPS), and verbal feedback (AE-VF and BASS-VF) were significantly positively correlated at the .01 level (2-tailed). However, not all correlations were strong. Other than the previously mentioned strong correlation between scores on the AE and BASS scales, the other strong correlations were between BASS-PPS and AE-PPS ($r(488) = .78, p < .01$), BASS-PPS and BASS-VF ($r(487) = .80, p < .01$), BASS-VF and AE-PPS ($r(488) = .71, p < .01$), AE-PPS and AE-VF ($r(491) = .69, p < .01$), BASS-PPS and AE-VF ($r(488) = .63, p < .01$), and BASS-VF and AE-VF ($r(487) = .68, p < .01$).

While the scores on the Appearance Evaluation based Verbal Feedback scale strongly correlated with all other measures of verbal feedback and perceived partner satisfaction scales, AE-VF scores only weakly correlated with measures of body image satisfaction (AE & AE-VF; $r(490) = .25, p < .01$) (BASS & AE-VF; $r(490) = .28, p < .01$). All of the correlations between the body image scales (AE & BASS) and the other measures of perceived partner satisfaction (AE-PPS & BASS-PPS) or verbal feedback (BASS-VF) were significant and moderate in strength (See Table 2).

Table 2

Correlations: Sexual Satisfaction, Body Image, Verbal Feedback, and Perceived

Partner Satisfaction

| Measures ¹ | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. SSS Score | -- | | | | | |
| 2. AE Score | .29 | -- | | | | |
| 3. AE-PPS Score | .34 | .42 | -- | | | |
| 4. AE-VF Score | .37 | .25 | .69 | -- | | |
| 5. BASS Score | .31 | .84 | .42 | .28 | -- | |
| 6. BASS-PPS Score | .31 | .39 | .78 | .63 | .45 | -- |
| 7. BASS-VF Score | .35 | .32 | .71 | .68 | .38 | .80 |

¹SSS = Sexual Satisfaction Subscale, AE = Appearance Evaluation, BASS = Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Appearance Evaluation, BASS-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Appearance Evaluation, BASS-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, *Note: all correlations significant at $p < .001$.*

Fisher's r to z transformation

To compare correlations for men and women regarding sexual satisfaction and body image satisfaction, PPS, or verbal feedback, z scores were calculated using Fisher's r to z transformations. These transformations revealed a significant gender difference for the correlations between the AE-PPS and the two measures of body image (AE and BASS). The correlation between the AE and AE-PPS for men ($r(119) = .63, p < .01$) is significantly stronger than the correlation for women ($r(359) = .40, z = 2.91, p < .01$). The correlation between the AE and AE-PPS for men ($r(119) = .62, p < .01$) is significantly stronger than the correlation for women ($r(359) = .41, p < .01, z = 2.74, p < .01$).

Table 3

Male and Female Body Image, PPS, and VF correlations

| Measure ¹ | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. |
|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. AE | --- | .83 | .40 | .37 | .22 | .30 |
| 2. BASS | .85 | --- | .41 | .44 | .26 | .36 |
| 3. AE-PPS | .65 | .62 | --- | .76 | .65 | .69 |
| 4. BASS-PPS | .53 | .56 | .82 | --- | .62 | .79 |
| 5. AE-VF | .47 | .43 | .74 | .66 | --- | .66 |
| 6. BASS-VF | .49 | .54 | .76 | .82 | .72 | --- |

¹SSS = Sexual Satisfaction Subscale, AE = Appearance Evaluation, BASS = Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Appearance Evaluation, BASS-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Appearance Evaluation, BASS-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, *Note: all correlations significant at $p < .001$; Women's correlations above the axis*

Similarly, the correlations between the BASS-VF scale and both measures of body image have significant gender differences. The correlation between the AE and BASS-VF for men ($r(116) = .49, p < .01$) is significantly stronger than the correlation for women ($r(359) = .30, z = 2.08, p < .05$). The correlation between the BASS and BASS-VF for men ($r(117) = .54, p < .01$) is significantly stronger than the correlation for women ($r(359) = .36, z = 2.14, p < .05$).

The final significant gender difference is for the correlation between the AE and the AE-VF score. The correlation between the AE and AE-VF for men ($r(119) = .47, p < .01$) is significantly stronger than the correlation for women ($r(359) = .22, p < .01, z = 2.69, p < .05$).

Table 4

Fisher's r to z gender comparisons for gender differences between men and women on Body Image scales, Perceived Partner Satisfaction Scales, and Verbal Feedback Scales

| Measure | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. |
|-------------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| 1. AE Score | -- | | | | |
| 2. BASS Score | 0.41 | -- | | | |
| 3. AE-PPS Score | 2.91* | 2.74* | -- | | |
| 4. BASS-PPS Score | 1.89 | 1.49 | 1.52 | -- | |
| 5. AE-VF Score | 2.69* | 1.86 | 1.53 | 0.73 | - |
| 6. BASS-VF Score | 2.08* | 2.14* | 1.52 | 1 | 1.06 |

¹AE = Appearance Evaluation, BASS = Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Appearance Evaluation, BASS-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Appearance Evaluation, BASS-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, *significant at $p < .05$;

Regression analyses

A stepwise multiple regression analysis, putting body image first and then perceived partner satisfaction and verbal feedback on the following step, was used to determine if PPS and verbal feedback account for a significant amount of variance in sexual satisfaction, even after body image is taken out. Because two different measures of body image were used, and they were so highly intercorrelated, two separate stepwise analyses were used; one for each measure of body image (AE, BASS).

The results of the regression using the AE scales (AE on the first step, and AE-PPS & AE-VF on the second) indicated that body image (AE) and verbal feedback (AE-VF) significantly predicted sexual satisfaction, accounting for 17.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .177$, $F(2, 487) = 52.40$, $p < .001$). It was found that body image significantly predicted sexual satisfaction,

($\beta = .32, p < .001$), as did verbal feedback ($\beta = .63, p < .001$), even after the variance accounted for by body image satisfaction was factored out. Standing alone, body image satisfaction, using AE scores, ($\beta = .45, p < .001$) accounted only for 8% of the variance ($R^2 = .080, F(1, 488) = 43.68, p < .001$).

Table 5

Appearance Evaluation Stepwise Regression Predicting Sexual Satisfaction

| Variable ¹ | <i>B</i> | <i>SEB</i> | β | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>R</i> ² |
|-----------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Step 1 | 3.939 | .224 | - | 17.59 | .000 | .08 |
| AE Score | .450 | .068 | .287 | 6.61 | .000 | - |
| Step 2 | 1.936 | .341 | - | 5.67 | .000 | .17 |
| AE Score | .324 | .067 | .206 | 4.85 | .000 | - |
| AE-VF Score | .625 | .083 | .318 | 7.50 | .000 | - |
| Excluded | | | | | | |
| AE- PPS Score | - | - | .08 | 1.27 | .21 | - |

¹AE = Appearance Evaluation, AE-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Appearance Evaluation, AE-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Appearance Evaluation

The results of the regression using the BASS scales (BASS on the first step, and BASS-PPS & BASS-VF on the second) indicated that body image (BASS) and verbal feedback (BASS-VF) significantly predicted sexual satisfaction, accounting for 15.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .158, F(2, 484) = 45.35, p < .001$). Results indicate that body image significantly predicted sexual satisfaction, ($\beta = .40, p < .001$), as did verbal feedback ($\beta = .62, p < .001$), even after the variance accounted for by body image satisfaction was factored out. Standing alone, body image satisfaction, using BASS scores, ($\beta = .60, p < .001$) accounted only for 9.3% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.09, F(1, 485) = 49.76, p < .001$).

Table 6

Body Areas Satisfaction Stepwise Regression Predicting Sexual Satisfaction

| Variable ¹ | <i>B</i> | <i>SEB</i> | β | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>R</i> ² |
|-----------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|----------|-----------------------|
| Step 1 | 3.350 | .292 | - | 11.491 | .000 | .09 |
| BASS Score | .604 | .086 | .305 | 7.054 | .000 | - |
| Step 2 | 1.440 | .421 | - | 3.423 | .001 | .16 |
| BASS Score | .396 | .089 | .200 | 4.437 | .000 | - |
| BASS-VF Score | .622 | .102 | .275 | 6.102 | .000 | - |
| Excluded | | | | | | |
| BASS-PPS Score | - | - | -.01 | -.17 | .87 | - |

¹BASS = Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, BASS-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, BASS-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Body Areas

Exploratory Analyses

Exploratory analyses were conducted on the demographic information, including ethnicity, age, BMI, relationship length, and relationship type. An analysis of variance revealed that race was not a relevant factor when considering sexual satisfaction, body image satisfaction, perceived partner satisfaction, nor verbal feedback ratings, $F(6, 486) = .07- 1.75, p > .1$. An analysis of variance did, however, reveal the significance of relationship type for sexual satisfaction and perceived partner satisfaction. Primarily there were significant differences between scores for participants identifying as “Married” and “Dating, not living together” or “Other,” see Tables 7.

Table 7

Marital Status Means that Significantly Differ on Sexual Satisfaction and PPS Scales

| Source | | n | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----|-------|----------------|
| SSS Score | Dating, not living together | 217 | 5.62* | 1.25 |
| | Dating, living together | 106 | 5.17 | 1.56 |
| | Married | 140 | 5.17* | 1.55 |
| | Other | 28 | 5.11 | 1.76 |
| | Total | 491 | 5.36 | 1.45 |
| AE-PPS Score | Dating, not living together | 217 | 4.48* | .58 |
| | Dating, living together | 106 | 4.37 | .75 |
| | Married | 139 | 4.21* | .72 |
| | Other | 28 | 4.50 | .54 |
| | Total | 490 | 4.38 | .67 |
| BASS PPS Score | Dating, not living together | 217 | 4.28 | .59 |
| | Dating, living together | 105 | 4.21 | .73 |
| | Married | 138 | 4.14* | .65 |
| | Other | 27 | 4.52* | .46 |
| | Total | 487 | 4.24 | .64 |

¹SSS = Sexual Satisfaction Subscale, AE-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Appearance Evaluation, BASS-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, *significantly differ $p < .05$

Correlations were run to determine significant relationships between demographic variables including age, relationship length, and BMI. Age was significantly correlated with all variables, excluding measures of body image satisfaction. Perceived partner satisfaction, verbal feedback, and sexual satisfaction were found to decrease as age increases. Relationship length was not significantly correlated with sexual satisfaction or body image satisfaction. However, it was significantly correlated with measures of partner satisfaction and verbal feedback. Similar to

age, with which relationship length was significantly correlated ($r(488) = 0.77, p < .001$), perceived partner satisfaction and verbal feedback were found to decrease as relationship length increases. BMI was found to be significantly correlated with all variables except sexual satisfaction.

Table 8

Demographic Correlations with Sexual Satisfaction, Body Image, PPS and Verbal Feedback

| | SSS | AE | AE-PPS | AE-VF | BASS | BASS-PPS | BASS-VF |
|---------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|----------|---------|
| Age | -.09* | -.01 | -.26** | -.19** | .02 | -.19** | -.24** |
| Relationship Length | -.08 | -.06 | -.25** | -.19** | -.03 | -.19** | -.22** |
| BMI | -.04 | -.41** | -.17** | -.12* | -.31** | -.12** | -.09* |

¹SSS = Sexual Satisfaction Subscale, AE = Appearance Evaluation, BASS = Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Appearance Evaluation, BASS-PPS = Perceived Partner Satisfaction with Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, AE-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Appearance Evaluation, BASS-VF = Verbal Feedback regarding Body Areas Satisfaction Scale, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

Discussion

The current study was designed to explore various aspects of body image satisfaction, including an individual’s perception of his or her partner’s satisfaction with the participant’s body (PPS) and verbal feedback, and how they relate to reported sexual satisfaction. Analyzing the relationships between the participant’s own body image satisfaction rating, the rating from the perspective of the partner, and the verbal feedback given to the individual from his or her partner allows for a holistic approach to how an individual views himself or herself.

The first hypothesis, that body image and sexual satisfaction are significantly correlated, was supported by the findings in the current study. Consistent with previous findings, as body image satisfaction increases, so does sexual satisfaction (Steer & Tiggemann, 2008; Smith et al., 2011). Findings also supported the second hypothesis: that there would be a positive correlation

between body image, perceived partner satisfaction, and verbal feedback. Originally this hypothesis was predicted because of concepts like the objectification theory, in which the individual views him or herself based on a belief of how others view the individual (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). However, while the correlations between measures of verbal feedback and body image were significant, for the appearance evaluation scale it was a very weak correlation, suggesting that perhaps individuals are not relying as heavily on verbal feedback to shape their body image satisfaction. It is important, however, to note that the current study only measured the frequency of the verbal feedback given to the participant. To a certain extent, the nature was also evaluated (positive comments versus negative). However, how the participant interpreted the comments, or the impact they had on the participant was not evaluated, which may account for why verbal feedback and body image had a rather weak correlation.

Calogero, Herbozo, and Thompson (2009) studied the associations between appearance commentary and the objectification process. They found that the impact of the verbal feedback, or how the individual felt about the comment (positively or negatively), but not the frequency of those comments, was associated with body satisfaction and surveillance. These findings shaped a concept called complementary weightism, which postulates that verbal feedback given to individuals on their appearance can be positive in nature (i.e. "You look amazing; have you lost weight?") but can have damaging effects as it may remind the individual that their appearance is being evaluated, which may in turn remind them of how close or far they are from the ideal body type or weight (Calogero, Herbozo, & Thompson, 2009). In this respect, the present findings align with previous literature as the frequency of verbal feedback was not strongly correlated with body image.

As predicted, and consistent with previous literature, men had higher reported body image satisfaction than women (Furnham, & Greaves, 1994; Tseëlon, 1995; Best, 2005). However, unexpected gender differences were found as well. For example, men had lower verbal feedback scores, suggesting that they receive less verbal feedback about their bodies than women. It is possible that these lower scores are reflective of a lack of awareness of the feedback given to them. Doohan and Manusov (2004) studied compliments in the context of romantic relationships and found that women are more aware of the presence or absence of verbal feedback in their relationships. However, it is also possible that these lower scores are reflective of the idea that appearance is more emphasized for women. This is not surprising, as literature supports that appearance feedback, or compliments, is more commonly given to women over men, with appearance based compliments being targeted at women (Taavitsainen & Jucker, 2008). Furthermore, literature also supports that women report giving more feedback about personality traits, performance, and emotion, where as they report receiving most compliments about their appearance (Doohan, & Manusov, 2004).

Also similar to previous findings, perceived partner satisfaction differed from body image satisfaction, meaning that individuals scored themselves differently than they believed their partner would score them. Similar to Markey and Markey, (2006)women rated their partners as having higher opinions of their bodies, which is also consistent with the love is blind theory which supports that the partner would be less critical on the individual because they are “blinded” by love (Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek & Furnham, 2009). This is a theory that is commonly applied to both men and women in relationships. However, in the present study, men had lower scores on the perceived partner satisfaction scales than the body image scales. Nevertheless, it is possible that the love-is-blind bias may still be applicable to both partners. As

previously mentioned, women have a higher awareness of the verbal feedback in relationships. It is also possible that women have a heightened awareness of her partner's views, and perhaps the understanding that they are inflated because of love. Men are less likely to be aware of the feedback, and perhaps partner views, in the relationship meaning they would focus on their opinion of their partners to infer partner opinions. With the love is blind bias in mind, men would think more highly of their partners, thinking that their partners are better than them, and in turn rate themselves lower through the eyes of their partners because that is how the men see it. This relationship is complex when obtaining reports from only one partner and beckons further investigation.

Results were not indicative of a stronger correlation between body image and perceived partner satisfaction for women over men. In general, the opposite was true: men's scores on the partner opinion scales had stronger correlations with body image. Similar to the weak relationship between body image satisfaction and verbal feedback scores, the findings do not support common theories including the self-objectification theory. Historically, the self-objectification theory has been accepted as being applicable predominately to women (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). However, if this were the case, Fisher's *r* to *z* scores would reveal significant differences in the correlations, with women having stronger correlations for the measures of partner opinions and body image, which was not the case. Furthermore, the stronger correlation for men is peculiar when considering the findings of Doohan and Manusov (2004) who found that men are less likely to be aware of the verbal feedback (compliments) given in the context of romantic relationships. It is possible that there is a confounding variable that is affecting the relationship between partner opinions and body image satisfaction, which has yet to

be examined. These findings are surprising and not rooted in literature, which highlights the need to incorporate men in studies of body image satisfaction and related variables.

The foundation of the present study was that PPS and VF (partner opinion scales) would account for a significant amount of variance in sexual satisfaction. If the partner-based opinion scales were not significantly predictive of sexual satisfaction beyond the variance accounted for by the participant's body image, then studying partner opinion in this respect would be needless. The hypothesis was supported in that body image did not account for all of the variance also accounted for by the partner opinion scales. However, only verbal feedback appeared to account for a significant amount of variance in sexual satisfaction, as PPS was excluded because of its low significance. Possible explanations could include the strong relationship between the PPS and VF scales, supporting the idea that individuals draw from the verbal feedback given to them by their partners to formulate their partner's perceived satisfaction. Furthermore, perceived partner satisfaction is an opinion of an opinion, the root of which cannot be determined and therefore carries little weight when considering other variables of functioning.

After running a stepwise analysis for sexual satisfaction, and finding that verbal feedback accounted for a considerable amount of variance, a forward regression was run to see the extent. As studies commonly associate sexual satisfaction with body image, it was important to factor out the amount of variance accounted for by body image to show that what is commonly done is not enough. However, when conducting a forward analysis, verbal feedback actually accounted for more variance than body image regarding sexual satisfaction. Possible explanations include the idea of being sexually satisfied is more of a state rather than a trait. Literature supports that body image stays relatively stable over time (Tiggemann, 2004). However, sexual satisfaction can be contingent on a number of variables, making it more fluid in nature (Haavio-Mannila, &

Kontula,1997). Because verbal feedback is a more concrete measure, but also contingent on a variety of factors, it is possible that an individual would be more likely to draw upon the verbal feedback to determine sexual satisfaction.

Sheets and Ajmere (2005) investigated the relationship between verbal feedback regarding weight and relationship and health variables including relationship satisfaction, weight-loss attempts, and self-esteem. Results indicated that verbal feedback on weight (being told to gain or lose weight) did not relate to weight-loss attempts or self-esteem, but it did relate to relationship satisfaction. The interpretation of these findings is similar to the present study. While verbal feedback about the concept (weight/ body) did not lead to a direct effect on the concept (weight modification/ body image), it did affect a partner variable (relationship satisfaction/ sexual satisfaction).

The exploratory analyses and analyses conducted with the demographic variables yielded a few interesting findings. Consistent with previous findings suggesting that body image is consistent throughout adulthood, age did not significantly correlate with body image (Tiggemann, 2004). Age and relationship length were significantly intercorrelated, so it was not surprising that relationship length also did not significantly correlate with body image satisfaction. Previous literature has examined relationship length and relationship variables, including satisfaction, love, and commitment (Sprecher, 1999). Results suggest that over time the mean scores do not change, but the individuals' perceptions of their scores change (meaning they feel that their satisfaction has increased, without knowing their score is actually the same. With this in mind, one might believe that this would suggest an increase in partner opinion scores, or at least perceived partner satisfaction scores regarding body image, but this is not the case. The opposite was found. Literature also suggests that while constructs like body image stay relatively

stable throughout adulthood, individuals report that the importance and implications of body image decreases (Tiggemann, 2004), which may justify the incorporation of importance ratings in future studies.

Limitations

While the current study has many strengths, it is not without its limitations. Many of the limitations focus on recruitment, and some aspects of the measures and constructs. Participants were recruited solely through varying internet channels. This presents various problems in the generalizability of the findings. To begin, any individual without access to internet was not represented in the present study. Furthermore, only specific internet channels were used (a specific university email, Reddit, Facebook) limiting further the number of individuals even presented with the recruitment information.

For those who did have access to the recruitment information, participation in the study was strictly voluntary, with “sexual satisfaction” identified as being one of the variables. This presents potential problems when considering the type of individuals that would or would not volunteer for this type of study. While participation was anonymous, it is possible that some individuals may have chosen not to participate in the study because of the content. Potentially limiting participation further was the other identified variable: body image. Society generally focuses on how body image is a struggle mainly for women, with the expectation for men to not be vulnerable and express their body dissatisfactions or concerns. Therefore, it is also possible that men were deterred from participation because of the content or socialization.

The current study focuses on a specific target: adults (individuals over the age of 18 years) in heterosexual relationships lasting more than three months and involving sexual activity. With this in mind, a diverse sample is still feasible to be representative of the targeted

population. However, in the present study, while the sample was diverse in terms of participant's age, it was not diverse in other important areas. To begin, the majority of the sample identified as Caucasian. Varying relationship dynamics and reported body image satisfaction across cultures beckons the inclusion of a culturally diverse sample to be fully representative. Furthermore, the majority of the sample also identified as female, potentially presenting problems when interpreting results.

The sexual satisfaction subtest (SSS) of the Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (Allison, Alfonso, & Dunn, 1991) was used to measure participant's satisfaction with their sex lives. While this measure has been proven to have divergent validity and a strong reliability, it does only contain 5 items, all of which are vague in their interpretation. It is possible that a more widely used sexual satisfaction scale would have been more effective in detecting differences in sexual satisfaction.

Future Studies

The current study attempts to bridge the gap in the understanding of sexual satisfaction in relation to an individual's satisfaction with his or her body. However, because of certain constraints, further research would be beneficial to explain this relationship. The current study's aim was to incorporate the perspective of both partners in the relationship, using the participant's understanding or opinion of what those satisfaction ratings might be. The emphasis is not necessarily what the partner believes, but the perception of the individual as to what their partner believes. In this way, the participant is relying on their understanding to infer what his or her partner believes. Future research would be beneficial to incorporate what the partner actually believes, by including both partners in the study. With the inclusion of both partners, discrepancies between partner beliefs and perceived partner beliefs can be examined, which

could have numerous positive implications on body image satisfaction and relationship dynamics.

Conclusion

Relationships involve more than one individual, each bringing their own experiences, opinions, and values into the relationship. Since sex is considered to be one of the most intimate aspects of relationships, it is important to consider both partners' opinions when examining predictors of satisfaction or correlating variables. As evident in literature, there is clearly a relationship between an individual's body image satisfaction and his or her sexual satisfaction. However, this relationship has not considered the opinion of both partners. The findings of the present study support the idea that examining body image alone is not enough, as evident by the extended variance accounted for by the reported verbal feedback. However, these scores are all still from one individual, leaving room for improvement, like actually assessing verbal feedback or directly incorporating the partner's opinion.

Meltzer and McNulty (2010) found that women's body image was not only associated with their own satisfaction in their marriages and sexual lives, but also associated with their spouses' satisfaction. Therefore, studying the relationship of partner opinions on body image and the implications for sexual and relationship satisfaction has important implications significant for the couple as a whole. Markey and Markey (2006) stated that "sexual affirmation could be a therapeutic target for concrete work to reverse the devastating effect of body dissatisfaction on the most intimate aspects of the marital relationship," which calls for further investigation. Whether focusing on body image or sexual satisfaction, both partners in the relationship should be included because of the implications and the potential to increase positive change. Having positive communication, including support and verbal feedback, will lead to the initiation of and

carrying out healthier behaviors, especially in relationships with the feedback coming from the partner (Burke, & Segrin, 2014). The emphasis is on the idea of positive communication within the relationship, incorporating both partners. After all, it isn't always about what the reality is, but how it is perceived.

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