

DOES COMMITMENT MODERATE THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN BODY
IMAGE AND SEXUAL SATISFACTION IN ROMANTIC PARTNERS?

By

CHARLIE VENTURA CHAMPION

A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College

In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree
With Honors in

Psychology

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

MAY 2014

Approved by:



Dr. Emily A. Butler
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Abstract

This study investigated the role of commitment in romantic relationships and its relation to body image and sexual satisfaction. Research suggests that body image and sexual satisfaction are positively correlated, and this study examines commitment as a moderator because commitment significantly predicts sexual satisfaction. The two hypotheses were: 1) at low levels of commitment, individuals' body image will be positively correlated with one's own sexual satisfaction but at high levels of commitment body image will not significantly predict sexual satisfaction, and 2) at low levels of commitment, if a participant perceives the partner's body negatively, he/she will report lower satisfaction, but at high levels of commitment, perception will no longer predict sexual satisfaction. Couples were given a survey that contained questions about self/partner body image, commitment, and satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Hypothesis 2 was supported. At low commitment, when the participant reported perceiving the partner's body negatively, he/she reported lower sexual satisfaction. If he/she reported high commitment, then perception of partner's body no longer predicted sexual satisfaction. This information could be beneficial to couples therapy as it points to the importance of commitment and could inspire a shift toward emphasizing the maintenance of commitment in romantic partnerships.

Does Commitment Moderate the Association Between Body Image and Sexual Satisfaction in Romantic Partners?

Considering the amount of attention that sexual satisfaction and body image get in the media, it is surprising that very little is known about how they are related to each other. There is constant media pressure to look good, have a good-looking partner and be sexually satisfied individuals, yet we don't fully understand how these aspects work together and whether other factors, such as relationship commitment, can play a role. It's been shown that sexual satisfaction is associated with relationship satisfaction (Ferris et al., 2011) and previous studies have also shown that there is a significant positive relationship between sexual satisfaction and body image variables (Meston, Pujols, & Seal 2010). The present research extends this prior work by investigating whether the association between sexual satisfaction and body image is moderated by commitment. For example, could men and women with low body image, but who are highly committed to their romantic relationship, still have high sexual satisfaction? All of these variables are likely to impact quality of life, making it important to understand the complexity of their interactions. Further, most research looks only at actor effects and little has been done yet on partner effects in regards to body image. In other words, the present research not only looks at how one's own body image predicts his/her sexual satisfaction (actor effect), but also how one's view of their partner's body influences one's sexual satisfaction (partner effect). Studying these processes in the context of relationships emphasizes the importance of considering the interconnectedness and interdependence that exists in romantic partnerships (Campbell, Kashy, 2002).

Sexual Satisfaction

Sexual satisfaction was defined in the present study by how satisfied one is with his or her sexual relationship and how satisfied one is with his or her partner as a sexual partner (adapted from Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, 1986). It's been found that sexual satisfaction is positively correlated with happiness and satisfaction with life, showing that sexual satisfaction is a significant predictor of quality of life (Dogan et al. 2013). Women with satisfying sexual relationships consistently report high relationship satisfaction (Rosen and Bachmann, 2008). Among married couples, sexual function and satisfaction were predictors of relationship satisfaction for both men and women (Heiman et al. 2011).

Body Image

Body image can be defined as “a person’s perceptions, feelings and thoughts about his or her body, and is usually conceptualized as incorporating body size estimation, evaluation of body attractiveness and emotions associated with body shape and size” (Grogan, 2006). Most of the current research focuses on young women, but research on men is beginning to emerge (Grogan, 2006). There is a significant positive correlation between satisfaction with self-image and happiness (Pan et al. 2002) and much research has discussed the importance of body image as a major contributor to women’s happiness (Stokes and Frederick, 2003). Conversely, it’s been found that overweight perception (i.e., poor body image) is correlated with increased risk of suicidal ideation for girls (Seo and Lee, 2013). This body of research shows how strongly body image affects quality of life. These issues have not yet been studied in the context of relationships in which the effects for both male and female partners are examined, but the present study takes this into account and examines these partner affects.

Commitment, Relationship and Sexual Satisfaction

Commitment, in the context of romantic partnerships, can mean “the behavioral inclination to maintain the relationship” (Schoebi, Karney, and Bradbury, 2012). It is an important aspect of relationships because it affects satisfaction. Research suggests that people feel more positively about their relationships and more likely to stay in relationships when they express higher levels of commitment (Weigel, Brown, and O’Riordan, 2011). It’s also been found that commitment plays a crucial role in relationship dissolution because it’s been found that the likelihood of divorce increases when commitment declines, but commitment can also stabilize declining partnerships (Schoebi, Karney, and Bradbury, 2012). Highly committed partners have also been found to be more resilient to negative interactions within their partnerships, again showing the beneficial effects of commitment (Li and Fung, 2013). Commitment is also a predictor of sexual satisfaction (Sprecher, 2002). Intimacy, sexual frequency, and commitment were all found to be important factors related to loving and satisfaction for both men and women (Yela, 2000).

Body Image and Sexual Satisfaction

Previous research has shown that there is a positive correlation between sexual function, sexual satisfaction, and body image (Meston, Pujols, Seal 2010). In one study particularly concerned with women, it was found that body appreciation (i.e., positive body image) was associated with healthy sexual functioning. In addition, body mass index (BMI) did not moderate the relationship between body appreciation and sexual functioning (Satinsky et al. 2012). This supports the idea that body image is a more powerful predictor of sexual satisfaction than body weight. In another study, after controlling for BMI, it was found that positive body image was associated with higher sexual satisfaction, and BMI didn’t predict sexual satisfaction for women

(Bass, Warehime, 2008). Very little research on this topic has been done with a focus on men, but one study found that feeling more masculine was related to being more sexually satisfied (Bridges, Daniel 2012). It seems likely that a man who feels very masculine would have a more positive body image; therefore supporting the idea that positive body image is correlated with high sexual satisfaction.

The present study bridged the gap between much of the current research done separately on men and women by investigating how these variables function together within romantic partnerships. In a study using both singles and romantic partners, it was found that concerns about one's appearance (i.e. negative body image) impaired sexual satisfaction and were positively related to sexual problems for both men and women (Keifer, Sanchez, 2007). It was also found that being in a relationship correlated with less self-consciousness (Keifer, Sanchez, 2007), which was important to note for the present study because it could have affected the associations amongst the variables. For example, increased commitment might help to reduce self-consciousness, which could contribute to sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, body image is not just an individual issue in which one's body image effects one's own sexual satisfaction. In studying couples, it is critical to note how they feel about themselves and also how they feel about their partner. Current research on romantic partners shows that how one perceives their partner's body is important to predicting their own sexual satisfaction (Zhaoyang & Cooper 2013).

Intersection Between Body Image, Commitment, and Sexual Satisfaction

There appears to be a gap in the literature discussing the role of commitment in the relationship between body image and sexual satisfaction. We know from previous research that commitment is positively associated with sexual satisfaction and that it's a strong predictor for

many relationship factors (e.g. sexual/relationship satisfaction, divorce likelihood, etc.). We also know that body image of oneself, how one views their partner's body and sexual satisfaction are positively correlated but we don't yet know whether a powerful third variable, such as commitment, can alter that relationship by possibly overriding the effects of body image. Because commitment has been shown to affect relationship and sexual satisfaction, commitment could override the relationship between body image and sexual satisfaction such that body image would no longer predict sexual satisfaction at high levels of commitment.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Is the relationship between body image and sexual satisfaction moderated by commitment in romantic partners? I predicted that the answer is "yes." The hypothesis was that at low levels of commitment, individuals' body image would be positively correlated with their own sexual satisfaction but at high levels of commitment their body image would not significantly predict their sexual satisfaction. A second hypothesis was that at low levels of commitment, how the individual perceives the partner's body would be positively correlated with the individual's (i.e., the actor's) sexual satisfaction, such that if an actor perceives the partner's body negatively, he/she will report lower satisfaction, but at high levels of commitment the actor's perception will no longer predict the actor's sexual satisfaction. Most current research, particularly on body image, has focused on women, so I predicted that these associations would appear more strongly for women.

Methods

Participants and Recruitment

The participants were 91 heterosexual couples (182 individuals), most of who were in their first year of living together. Two couples had been living together for more than two years and one couple did not live together but lived close by and spent the majority of their nights and meals together. All participants were older than 18 and both partners were required to participate. Exclusion criteria included: Couples with children, current major physical or mental health problems, lifetime diagnosis of a psychiatric disorder (including eating disorders), current enrollment in a weight reduction program or medications intended to influence weight loss or gain, or on a prescribed therapeutic diet. Participants were recruited through ads posted on Craigslist and university listservs and flyers posted at churches, a county marriage license building, and local business, as well as through word of mouth.

Demographics

The average age for men was 26.7 years, and the average age for women was 25.3 years. Out of the 182 participants, 35% identified as European, 1.6% as African American, 2.7% as Asian American, .5% Pacific Islander, 32% non-Hispanic white, 7% as Hispanic and 20% as other. Sixty eight percent of participants reported yearly income of \$0-\$25,000, 15% reported \$25,000-\$50,000, 11% reported \$50,000-\$75,000, 3% reported \$75,000-\$100,000, .5% reported \$100,000-\$150,000, 1% reported greater than \$150,000 and 2% did not report. One point six percent of the participants reported highest education of less than high-school, 13% reported high-school, 2% reported professional program, 46% reported some college, 28% reported undergraduate degree, 9% reported graduate degree and .5% did not answer.

Procedures

Participants completed a baseline survey, baseline lab session, daily diaries, and a follow-up interview. The measures for this study come from the baseline survey.

To complete the baseline survey participants logged-in to a password protected website using an assigned ID number. This was preceded by a disclosure form informing them about the procedures for this portion of the study as well as their rights to voluntary participation and confidentiality. The survey questions ranged from topics concerning health behaviors to relationship quality, and were a subset of the larger NIH funded Love, Anger, and Food (LAF) study. Specifically, the questions used for this present study were about sexual satisfaction and frequency, how one feels about both their body and their partner's body, and level of commitment to the romantic relationship. Participants were instructed not to discuss the questionnaire with their partner until after completion. This baseline questionnaire took approximately 1 hour to complete.

Measures

Sexual Satisfaction

Two questions measured how sexually satisfied one was. "How satisfied are you with your sexual relationship with your partner?" and "How satisfied are you with your partner as a sexual partner?" (adapted from Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, 1986). Response options ranged from "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied" on a -3 to 3 scale. The mean of these two items was used to create a sexual satisfaction scale for the analyses (women, $\alpha = .79$ men, $\alpha = .74$).

Body Image

Eight weight satisfaction questions measured body image. Four questions measured how one feels about their own body: “How satisfied are you with your current weight?”, “How satisfied are you with your overall appearance?”, “How satisfied are you with the amount of fat on your body?” and “How satisfied are you with the shape and tone of you muscles?” Four questions measured how one feels about their partner’s body: “How satisfied are you with your partner’s current weight?”, “How satisfied are you with your partner’s current overall appearance?”, “How satisfied are you with the amount of fat on your partner’s body?”, and “How satisfied are you with the shape and tone of your partner’s muscles?” (adapted from the Weight and Lifestyle Inventory, 2002). Response options ranged from “very unsatisfied” to “very satisfied” on a -3 to 3 scale. The mean of the first four questions were used to create a body image scale (women, $\alpha = .89$ men, $\alpha = .90$). The mean of the last four questions were used to create a partner body image scale (women, $\alpha = .90$ men, $\alpha = .95$).

Commitment

Seven questions measured the level of commitment one felt towards their partner. “I want our relationship to last for a very long time,” “I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner,” “I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future,” “It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year,” “I feel very attached to our relationship—very strongly linked to my partner,” “I want our relationship to last forever,” “I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship” (Rusbult 1998). Response options ranged from “very much disagree” to “very much agree” on a -3 to 3 scale. Questions 3 and 4 were reverse scored. The mean of these seven questions were used to create a commitment scale (women, $\alpha = .74$ men, $\alpha = .82$).

Data Analysis

Variations of dyadic multilevel models were used to test each hypothesis, in which there was a focal predictor, outcome and moderating variable. Specifically, these models investigated how the moderating variable moderated the association between the predictor and outcome variables, while taking into account that the participants were in a romantic partnership and therefore not independent. The predictor was either own or partner body image, the outcome was sexual satisfaction, and the moderating variable was commitment.

The statistical analysis program R was used to analyze the data. I began by reading the data into R and getting the histograms and boxplots of the variables I used to ensure that there were no outliers or anything else abnormal about the data. Also, histograms and boxplots are used to determine whether variables are normally distributed and hence valid for use as outcomes. Next, I separated the data file into men and women to examine descriptive statistics for both sexes separately. After creating the new data frames, I ran a reliability analysis on items all meant to measure the same thing. This determined whether each item of the measures reliably measured what it was supposed to measure. For example, there were 7 questions asking about level of commitment, so the reliability analysis determined how well those questions all worked together to accurately measure commitment level. An alpha value of .8 or greater meant the items reliably measured and if the alpha value was less than .8 then an item might have been dropped from the measure. Also, two items within the commitment scale needed to be reverse scored.

Next, the items that reliably worked together were incorporated into a scale, which is a new variable that strongly and empirically measures that variable (e.g. commitment). Scales for commitment, body image, and sexual satisfaction were created. From the histograms, it was

found that my outcome variable, sexual satisfaction, was not normally distributed and was extremely positively skewed (based on a -3 to +3 scale). Because of this, I created a binary version of the sexual satisfaction variable in which 3 meant “satisfied” and less than three meant “unsatisfied.” These new scales became the measures I used in my dyadic multilevel models.

I ran simple correlations to determine if the variables I assumed were correlated in my hypotheses were actually correlated and in which direction (e.g. positively or negatively). Once it was determined that my assumptions were correct, meaning the variables were correlated, I analyzed further by using dyadic non-linear regression to determine if body image (own or partner) predicted sexual satisfaction and if commitment moderated that association. Separate models were used to assess actor and partner body image effects. In order to account for the fact that these participants were romantic partners (i.e. to account for statistical non-independence) and that the outcome was binary, I used dyadic non-linear regression, allowing for partner’s residuals to be correlated.

Due to the outcome being a binary measure, interpretations were in terms of probabilities and odds-ratios, which meant the intercept estimate was translated into the probability of reporting sexual satisfaction and the effect of sex was translated into the relative odds of being satisfied for men versus women. Then, the effect of the predictor and moderator variables were translated into relative odds ratios, or the predicted change in the probability of one reporting sexual satisfaction as the predictor or moderator changed by one unit.

In order to interpret the interaction effects, I created a commitment high variable and a commitment low variable by centering. This is done by subtracting the centering score (first and third quartile numbers) from the original variable in order to decompose significant interactions. I also created high and low variables by centering for both body image predictor variables (self

body image and how one views his/her partner). Interactions were decomposed by running models including high commitment with high body image (or high perception of partner), low commitment with low body image (or low perception of partner), high commitment with low body image (or low perception of partner), and finally low commitment with high body image (or high perception of partner). The intercepts of these interactions were used to create graphs.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) for all variables separated by sex.

Table 1:

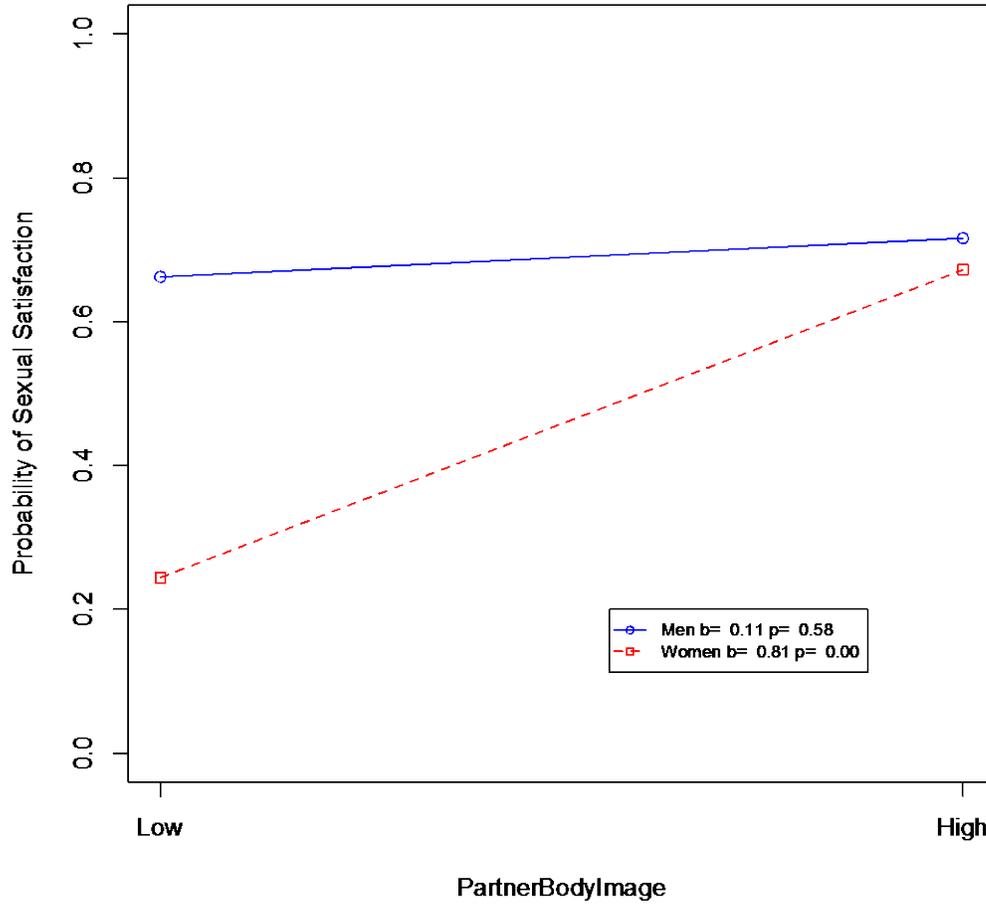
<u>Variable</u>	<u>Men</u> <u>(Mean, SD)</u>	<u>Women</u> <u>(Mean, SD)</u>
Sexual Satisfaction	2.1 (1.1)	2.5 (0.9)
Self Body Image	0.2 (1.7)	-0.4 (1.6)
Perception of Partner's Body	1.8 (1.6)	1.7 (1.4)
Commitment	1.6 (0.8)	1.7 (0.6)

Before testing my hypotheses I investigated a series of simpler models in which I predicted sexual satisfaction from self body image, perception of partner's body, and commitment one at a time in interaction with sex. These analyses showed that sex (e.g. gender) significantly predicted sexual satisfaction. The probability for men reporting being sexual satisfied was about 67% and women were less than half as likely to report being sexually satisfied, with a probability of about 46%. These analyses also showed main effects for each of the predictor variables for men and women. Accounting for sex differences, self body image was positively correlated with sexual satisfaction ($b = .22$, $z = 1.89$, $p = .05$). The translated slope, calculated as $e^{.22}$, shows that for each 1-point self body image goes up, the relative odds of the

person being sexually satisfied increases by 1.24, or in other words, the odds the person is satisfied goes up by 24%. How one views his/her partner's body was also positively correlated with sexual satisfaction ($b = .38$, $z = 2.94$, $p = .003$). The translated slope, calculated as $e^{.38}$, shows that for each 1-point increase in how one views his/her partner's body, the relative odd's of that person being sexually satisfied goes up about 1.46 points or, the odds he or she is satisfied goes up by 46%. Commitment to the relationship was also positively correlated with sexual satisfaction ($b = 1.24$, $z = 3.80$, $p = .000$). The translated slope, calculated as $e^{1.24}$, shows that for each 1-point commitment to the relationship goes up, the relative odds of sexual satisfaction goes up 3.45 points, or in other words the odds that person is satisfied goes up 245%. Further, there was a significant interaction between sex (i.e. gender) and how one perceives his/her partner's body ($b = .70$, $z = 2.13$, $p = .03$). Figure 1 shows this interaction. For women, a higher evaluation of their partner's body predicts greater satisfaction (women, $b = .81$, $z = 2.26$, $p = .001$), but there is no effect of partner body on men's satisfaction (men, $b = .11$, $z = 1.12$, $p = .58$). Looked at another way, when men and women perceive their partner's body negatively, women have a significantly lower probability of reporting sexual satisfaction than men ($b = 1.81$, $z = 3.22$, $p = .001$). However, when men and women perceive their partner's body positively, their gender no longer predicts their probability for reporting sexual satisfaction ($b = .21$, $z = .41$, $p = .68$).

Figure 1

Gender Moderating Partner Body Image and Sexual Satisfaction



Hypothesis 1: At low levels of commitment, individuals' body image will predict their own sexual satisfaction but at high levels of commitment their body image will not significantly predict their sexual satisfaction.

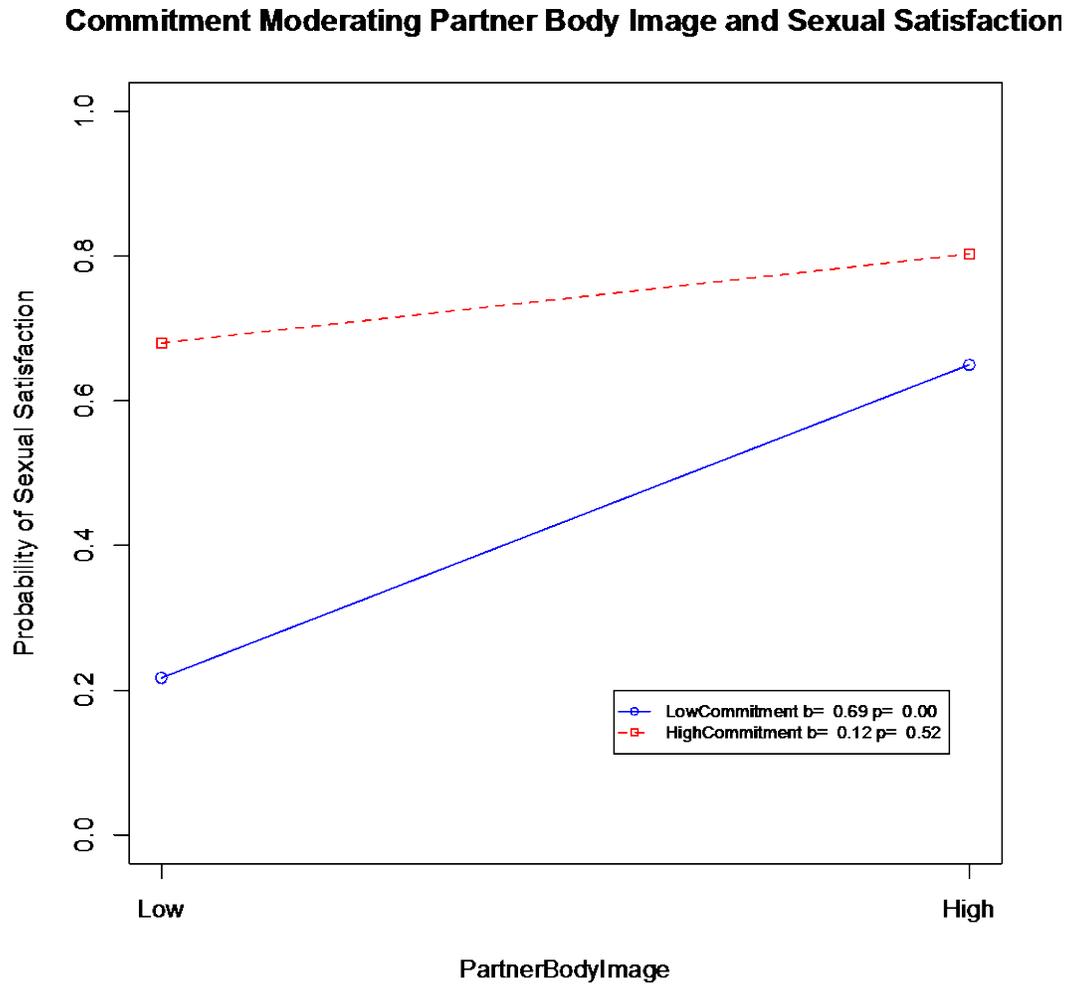
I tested the first hypothesis by using dyadic nonlinear regression to determine whether commitment moderated the association between one's own body image and one's own sexual satisfaction. Specifically, I predicted satisfaction from own body image, commitment, and the interaction of own body image and commitment. This hypothesis was not supported. While I found that separately, commitment and one's own body image significantly predicted sexual satisfaction (see Preliminary Analyses), these two variables did not have a significant interaction ($p > .05$).

Hypothesis 2: At low levels of commitment, how the individual perceives the partner's body will predict the individual's (i.e., the actor's) sexual satisfaction, such that if an actor perceives the partner's body negatively, he/she will report lower satisfaction, but at high levels of commitment the individual's perception will no longer predict the actor's sexual satisfaction.

To test hypothesis 2, I used a dyadic nonlinear model to determine whether commitment moderated the association between how one views his/her partner's body and one's own sexual satisfaction. This hypothesis was supported and significant for both men and women, with gender of the participant not affecting the results. Specifically, the interaction of partner body image and commitment was significant, pooling across men and women ($b = -.66$, $z = -1.99$, $p = .04$). As seen in Figure 2, at low levels of commitment, if the participant viewed their partner's body negatively, he/she reported being less sexually satisfied ($b = .69$, $z = 1.99$, $p = .003$). However, if he/she reported having a high level of commitment to the relationship, how he/she

perceived the partner no longer significantly predicted sexual satisfaction, ($b=.12$, $z= 1.13$, $p=.52$).

Figure 2



Discussion

This study began by asking the question, does commitment moderate the association between body image and sexual satisfaction in romantic partners? Broadly, the answer to this question is yes, but only when “body image” is defined as how the participant views their partner’s body.

H1: At low levels of commitment, individuals’ body image will predict their own sexual satisfaction but at high levels of commitment their body image will not significantly predict their sexual satisfaction.

Though it was found that one’s body image does predict one’s sexual satisfaction, this relationship was not moderated by level of reported commitment to the relationship. Based on the literature, I predicted that because commitment significantly and consistently predicts sexual satisfaction, it could potentially override the effects of one’s body image. Though previous research has shown commitment to be a strong predictor of sexual satisfaction, there is the possibility that one’s body image is so tightly correlated with their sexual satisfaction that a third variable cannot override this association. There is a significant body of research on how body image predicts sexual satisfaction even more so than BMI. Because of this, it is maybe not so surprising that commitment was not a significant moderator. Main effects were found for both body image and commitment, meaning they both separately predicted sexual satisfaction. These main effects support current literature and knowing that they are both strong predictors but do not interact could be valuable for future research.

H2: How the individual perceives the partner’s body will predict the individual’s (i.e., the actor’s) sexual satisfaction such that if an actor perceives the partner’s body negatively, he/she

will report lower satisfaction, but at high levels of commitment the individual's perception will no longer predict the actor's sexual satisfaction.

Though less research has been done on this combination of relationship factors, a few studies have pointed to the idea that how one perceives his/her partner is important for his/her sexual satisfaction. Based off of this, and the literature on commitment, I predicted that how one perceives his/her partner would significantly predict his/her sexual satisfaction and this association would be moderated by level of reported commitment. Consistent with this hypothesis, when both men and women reported perceiving their partner's body negatively, they reported lower sexual satisfaction. However, if they also reported high commitment, then perception of partner's body no longer predicted sexual satisfaction.

Based on the literature, I originally predicted that this interaction would appear stronger for women. Previous studies on body image have focused almost exclusively on women, with only a small emerging literature on men. However, in the few studies that have looked at couples, body image affected men and women similarly. Based on this, I could have predicted that how they viewed their partner's body would affect them similarly as well. Men and women in romantic partnerships are constantly influencing and affecting each other, so intuitively it makes sense that men and women may not act as differently as they would outside of the context of relationships.

I also had some unpredicted findings, some of which supported the current literature and one of which was surprising. Although my interaction hypothesis was not supported for self body image (i.e. hypothesis 1), the main effects of self body image, perception of partner's body and commitment that would be expected based on the literature did appear. However, I also found that gender moderated the association between how one views their partner and one's

sexual satisfaction. The results suggest that when women view their partner's body negatively, they have a significantly lower probability of reporting sexual satisfaction than men. However, this gender difference dissipates when men and women view their partner's body positively. I did not explicitly predict sex differences, but if I had I would have actually predicted the opposite of what the results show. Physical attraction is usually discussed as being more important for men's sexual satisfaction than women's, so this finding is a bit surprising.

Implications of the Research

The results of this study could have important implications for couple's counseling. Being aware that commitment to the relationship so strongly influences sexual satisfaction could lead to a focus on helping couple's to understand their commitment level and using techniques to strengthen it. Activities for building and maintaining commitment could be implemented. The lack of sex difference in the impact of commitment on the association between perceptions of partner's body and sexual satisfaction could undermine popular stereotypes because there's an idea that commitment is more of a women's issue, or a quality they place more importance on. However, this study shows that commitment affects men and women equally in that both men and women equally have a higher probability of reporting sexual satisfaction if they report high commitment. This could also be important for couple's counseling in that men and women can be worked with similarly and taken on as a unit as opposed to using two different approaches.

Limitations

The first limitation to this study is the self-report questionnaires that the couples took because they may not be completely valid for a few reasons. The participant might feel pressure to answer in a certain way, especially for questions with high face validity that make it obvious how a "good" partner would answer. There is also the possibility that the participant could report

in a way that makes them appear how they wish they were, or their ideal self. Further, the couples weren't supposed to share answers with each other, but this could have happened and resulted in them influencing each other to change their answers.

The study also didn't control for possible sexual or mental disorders such as depression or anxiety, which could contribute to less sexual/relationship satisfaction. The participants in this study were fairly high functioning couples, so we should also be careful about generalizability because these results really only generalize to a small group of couples, possibly not couples in general.

Another variable not controlled for that could have made a difference was age, because older couples may feel more committed based on the social pressures that accompany their stage of life and/or wanting to settle down and have kids. Finally, relationship length was also not controlled for. In the same vein as age, longer relationship time could be associated with higher commitment due to the idea that commitment grows the longer that partner's are together. If a couple has been together longer, they may be considering marriage and kids; all factors that promote commitment.

Potential Future Studies

The baseline survey that the couples completed contained many items that were not examined in this study. In addition to sexual satisfaction, body image, and commitment questions, questions were asked about health habits and stress. There is potential for the main effects and interactions of these variables with the variables analyzed in this study to be explored. Health and diet habits could greatly contribute to body image and certainly to how one view's his/her partner. It could be assumed that the healthier one eats or the more one exercises, the more their partner finds him/her attractive. However, it would be interesting to see if this idea

holds. Adding to this, it could be examined whether how much one exercises or how healthy one eats contributes to his/her sexual satisfaction. Healthy eating and exercise could impact sexual satisfaction by making one not only more physically fit, but possibly contributing to a more positive body image, which the present study shows predicts sexual satisfaction. Further, it could be interesting to explore the impact of stress on health habits, body image and sexual satisfaction. A future study could expand on the idea that stress often leads to worsening health habits, and then see how body image and how one views their partner's body changes as a result of different types of stress (i.e. work-related, relationship stressors, etc.)

Conclusions

Research has shown that sexual satisfaction, body image, and commitment are all important factors contributing to quality of life, particularly in romantic relationships. However, previous literature had not looked at how these three factors work together. The present study addressed this gap and found that the association between how one perceives his/her partner is moderated by level of commitment to the relationship. This new information could be beneficial to couples and therapists as it points to the key role of commitment and could inspire a shift toward emphasizing the fostering and maintenance of commitment in romantic partnerships.

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