



## **Relationship satisfaction in heterosexual couples: The role of media models and body surveillance**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Body surveillance is a process by which an individual thinks about how his/her body looks to an outside observer and is more concerned about how his/her body looks than how it feels. Literature has provided convincing empirical evidence for the relationship between viewing sexualized media models and body surveillance, not only among women, but in the last decade even among men. The present study aims at extending previous research in the context of heterosexual relationships by 1) investigating the effect of media models also on surveillance of the partner's body; 2) assessing whether body surveillance, surveillance of the partner's body and surveillance from the partner may affect relationship satisfaction. Participants were 219 heterosexual romantic couples (mean age = 22.38 years old, SD = 3.71, age range = 18 - 41). Results showed that internalization of media standards affected body surveillance in both men and women, and for men only it was positively related to partner's body surveillance and negatively to relationship satisfaction. For both genders partner's body surveillance had a negative influence on relationship satisfaction, whereas for women only surveillance from the partner decreased relationship satisfaction. Implications will be discussed.

**Keywords:** sexualization processes; body; mass media; romantic relationships; gender