A Multi-Dimensional Measure of Sexual Objectification in Intimate Relationships:

The Inventory of Partner Sexual Objectification (IPSO)

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The final version of the *Inventory of Partner Sexual Objectification (IPSO)* and scoring procedures are available as supplemental material and can be accessed free of charge by contacting the corresponding author.

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Abstract

In this study, we developed the Inventory of Partner Sexual Objectification (IPSO) and demonstrated its robust psychometric properties (i.e., high internal consistency, convergent and criterion validity) in a sample of 981 community participants in self-defined committed relationships. This theoretically-grounded and factor-analytically derived instrument consists of 29 items providing a multidimensional and hierarchical assessment of partner objectification. The IPSO includes one general scale of received sexual objectification (i.e., person feels reduced to their appearance and sexual attributes for the use of their partner) and three specific subscales reflecting unique manifestations of objectification in intimate relationships including body autonomy denial (e.g., partner expresses strong preferences about appearance), body neglect (e.g., feeling invisible and unattractive to partner), and (less) unconditional body appreciation (e.g., feeling attractive to partner regardless of societal standards, feeling valued as much for non-physical as physical attributes). Results demonstrate the potential for the IPSO to explain a range of individual and relational outcomes central to objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and intimate relationship frameworks. Results also show the distinctive nature of objectification in the context of intimate relationships and highlight the importance of striking a delicate balance between conveying respectful sexual interest and desire toward partners while not reducing them to their sexual function and appearance.

Keywords: Sexual Objectification, Dehumanization, Self-objectification, Body Image, Intimate Partner, Intimate Relationship, Couples, Sexual Satisfaction, Scale

Public Impact Statement: The Inventory of Partner Sexual Objectification (IPSO) is a new tool designed to understand how people feel objectified by their intimate partners—such as being overly attentive to sexual attractiveness or feeling undervalued for who they are as a person. This measure may help researchers, therapists, and couples explore how these experiences affect wellbeing and relationships, with the goal of promoting healthier, more respectful partnerships.

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> W, a woman, is going out of town for an important interview. M, an acquaintance, says to her, "You don't really need to go. You can just send them some pictures." If M is not a close friend of W, this is almost certain to be an offensively objectifying remark... Suppose, now, M is W's lover, and he says this to her in bed. This changes things, but we really don't know how, because we don't know enough. We don't know what the interview is for (a modelling job? a professorship?). And we don't know enough about the people. If M standardly belittles her accomplishments, the remark is a good deal worse than the same remark made by a stranger, and more deeply suggestive of instrumentalization. If, on the other hand, there is a deeply understood mutual respect between them, and he is simply finding a way of telling her how attractive she is, and perhaps of telling her that he doesn't want her to leave town, then things become rather different. It may still be a risky thing to say, far more risky than the very same thing said by W to M, given the social history that colors all such relationships. Still, there is a sense that the remark is not reductive—that instead of taking away from W, the compliment to her appearance may have added something.
>
> Nussbaum (1995, 271-272).

Sexual objectification occurs when someone is reduced to their appearance, sexual body parts, or sexual functions for use by others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and is communicated through gazes, comments, and physical contact that disproportionately focus on someone's appearance and sexual attributes (Kozee, et al., 2007). Theorists have noted the critical role of context (Nussbaum, 1995) in understanding potentially objectifying actions. Behaviors that emphasize appearance and sexuality from strangers or acquaintances reduce people to sexual objects due to the absence of humanizing information, including whether they like or want sexual attention in that moment. In contrast, such actions from intimate partners may connote a different meaning. Sexual attraction is a primary facet of many intimate relationships (Lawrence, et al., 2008), so a focus on appearance and sex may be expected and desired between partners. Further, intimate relationships often involve rich humanizing knowledge about each partner, and how this understanding is wielded may color how appearance and sex-focused behaviors are experienced in the relationship. Indeed, as Nussbaum's analysis at the outset suggests, there might be instances in which an appearance or sex prioritization adds to the partner or

relationship, rather than reduces some*body* to some*thing*.

Despite these possibilities, theory and empirical research on sexual objectification in intimate relationships remain limited, hindered by the absence of reliable, psychometrically sound instruments to assess objectification in this context. Existing measures, originally developed to assess objectification in other settings (e.g., self-objectification), are often adapted ad hoc. Researchers have reworded the instructions or items from the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS, Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015) and the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ, Strelan & Pagoudis, 2018) to focus on appearance preoccupation from intimate partners. However, these measures, which assess appearance surveillance or prioritization of attractiveness, have shown low reliability in the context of intimate relationships, likely reflecting differences in how partner objectification and self-objectification are experienced. Indeed, the reliability of the SOQ's rank-order response format for measuring self-objectification has been widely questioned, leading researchers to call for new measures with stronger psychometric properties (Lindner & Tantleff-Dunn, 2017). Although the partner version of the OBCS shows slightly improved reliability, its validity remains questionable as it offers a limited perspective on objectification experiences from intimate partners. Further, objectification, originally theorized as primarily targeted toward women by men (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), is also experienced by men (Davidson, et al., 2013), particularly those who are queer, transgender (Szymanski, et al., 2019), and/or do not identify exclusively as men or women (Pradell et al., 2024). This may be more likely in intimate contexts, where sexual attraction is central. Advancing our understanding of objectification and its impact on partners requires instruments tailored to the unique dynamics of intimate relationships. To address this gap, we developed the *Inventory of Partner Sexual Objectification* (IPSO), grounded in received experiences of sexual objectification from partners.

Sexual Objectification in Couples

Although limited, research on sexual objectification in intimate relationships highlights the damaging effects on partners and the relationship. People who habitually focus on their

partner's appearance also report consuming more objectifying media, more self-objectification, and less satisfaction with the relationship (Zurbriggen et al., 2011). Likewise, the receipt of such behaviors appears to be detrimental; participants report lower relationship quality and satisfaction when a partner frequently focuses on participants' appearance, and this is connected to individual body shame and lower sexual agency (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015; Ramsey et al., 2017; Sáez et al., 2019; see also Strelan & Pagoudis, 2018). Notably, available measures have primarily assessed preoccupation with appearance, so these effects may be even more pronounced if they also included a sexual focus.

In addition to undermining individual and relationship functioning, a preoccupation on a partner's appearance has been connected to control and violence in couples. For example, men's sexual objectification of women in general was associated with psychological and physical abuse toward one's intimate partner (Sáez et al., 2022). Likewise, people who value their partner's observable physical appearance attributes (e.g., attractiveness, sex appeal) compared to non-observable physical attributes (e.g., stamina, health) report more acceptance of violence within dating relationships (Pecini et al., 2023). When people adopt an appearance-focus of their partner (via experimental manipulation), they are more likely to aggress in a laboratory analogue for intimate partner violence (Sáenz & Haslam, 2024). Gervais and Davidson (2013) suggested that sexual objectifying behaviors that derogate or exert excessive control over a partner's attractiveness or sex appeal (e.g., calling a partner overweight or sexually undesirable) may facilitate these connections, though this possibility has not been directly tested.

Appearance-focused behaviors may arise from a range of people (e.g., intimate partners, friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances, strangers) in both public and private spaces, whereas a preoccupation with sex, a key component of objectification (Morris, et al., 2018; Riemer, et al., 2022), is more likely to emerge from intimate partners behind closed doors. In heterosexual relationships, a reduction to sexual utility has been identified as a key element of men's objectification of women. For example, studies have shown that some men report manipulating women to have sex with them and disregarding their sexual partner's pleasure (Riemer, et al.,

2022), and men who report frequently surveying their partner's bodies also report coercing their partner in sexual situations (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015). Likewise, sexual minority men report experiences connected to their sexual identity in which dates seem primarily interested in getting sexual access to their body, and such experiences predict their sexual risk behaviors (e.g., sex without condoms, Watson & Dispenza, 2014). Given the centrality of sexual prowess to the masculine gender role (Levant et al., 2020), even heterosexual men (particularly Black men, given hyper-sexualized roles) may experience instances of sex-focused objectification from partners. Despite the potential importance of sex valuation in objectification, particularly in intimate relationships, this feature is largely absent in existing measures of sexual objectification in couples (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015; Zurbriggen et al., 2011).

Relatedly, while objectification is often linked to negative mental health and relational outcomes, otherwise objectifying behaviors such as appearance compliments or sexual comments may be expected and welcome in some relationship contexts (e.g., sexual interactions). Gazes, comments, or physical contact emphasizing a partner's body and sexual appeal occur within a broader dynamic where partners have unique access to their partner's internal characteristics, unlike other sources of objectification. Indeed, feminist theorists suggested that an appreciation for a partner's sexiness might sometimes be a wonderful part of sexual life (Nussbaum, 1995), especially within a broader respectful relationship, and that attention paid to other aspects of the person (e.g., math ability) during sex would be absurd (Bartky, 1990). Consistently, Meltzer and McNulty (2014) asked people to report how much they felt valued by their partner for different attributes (e.g., humor, intelligence), including their body. They found that internal attribute valuation moderated the relation between body valuation and satisfaction; greater body valuation *increased* relationship satisfaction when partners also valued internal attributes. Body valuation only undermined satisfaction in the relationship when partners reported low valuation of internal attributes. This suggests that the effects of appearance or sex focus may be connected to adverse outcomes when a partner is perceived as hyper-focused on appearance or fails to consider a partner's humanizing internal attributes. Yet existing

measures of objectification in couples rarely provide this type of nuanced consideration, and interactive effects among multiple variables are difficult to model as an outcome.

Given the centrality of attractiveness and sex in most intimate partnerships (Lawrence et al., 2008), a complete absence of body focus may also harm both the individual and relationship. In such cases, partners may feel overlooked, worthless, or invisible. While objectification research often examines the impact of hyper-visibility (e.g., increased attention to sexual and appearance features), body invisibility is increasingly recognized as another symptom of objectification (Talmon & Ginzburg, 2016). The effects of body neglect may be particularly pronounced for women due to socialization experiences suggesting that their attractiveness is the central basis of their worth. While we are aware of no research that has directly examined this possibility, recent research suggests that partner disregard—interrupting or ignoring a partner—is experienced as dehumanizing in intimate relationships (Brock & Gervais, 2025). Meltzer and McNulty (2014) also found that higher body valuation positively correlated with greater valuation of non-physical qualities. Conversely, a lack of body valuation may lead partners to surmise that their non-physical, humanizing qualities are also devalued.

An underexplored possibility in the literature is that appearance and sex focus from intimate partners may, at times, validate one's worth as a sexually attractive person and counteract societal objectification—serving as a form of "de-objectification." This may occur when individuals feel unconditional body appreciation—i.e., feeling valued for their appearance and sexual function alongside their other internal attributes. In a society saturated with unattainable ideals of thinness and sexiness promoted by media, a partner's compliments about one's body may feel validating and humanizing, especially when paired with appreciation for non-physical attributes. While not explicitly tested in prior research, recent qualitative work found positive individual and relationship outcomes when people felt unconditionally accepted by partners, especially when they had experienced bodily changes that made the cultural ideal more unattainable (e.g., connected to weight, age, and pregnancy). Checkalski and colleagues (2025) noted that the field lacks a concept for a type of sexual attention that affirms humanity

and exists within mutual respect and consent. Such unconditional sexiness may counteract toxic societal standards and highlights the need for measures that assess potential appearance and sex focus that is de-objectifying within intimate relationships.

Overview of the Present Work

In summary, a measure of sexual objectification specific to the context of intimate relationships would advance the field. Items for the Inventory of Partner Sexual Objectification (IPSO) were developed to map onto multiple facets of objectification (Checkalski et al., 2025*;* Brock & Gervais, 2025; Meltzer & McNulty, 2014; Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015) from intimate partners. We first developed an extensive pool of 73 items capturing key components of objectification (e.g., myopic focus on appearance and sex; denial of body autonomy, body neglect, unconditional body appreciation; Stage 1). Next, we explored the factor structure of the items in a large sample of community participants from Prolific using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Guided by those results, we selected a subset of items to retain for further analysis (Stage 2). Then, we confirmed the factor structure from the EFA with the revised item pool in an independent sample of community participants (Stage 3). Given that objectification is posited to serve as a means of oppression to reinforce gendered social hierarchies in cisheteropatriarchy, particularly for cisgender women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and people from gender minority groups (Moradi, 2013), we considered measurement invariance across gender (i.e., cisgender men versus cisgender women, transgender, and nonbinary people) using multiple group analysis (Stage 4). While objectification of gender minorities and cis women differ, individuals in these groups are more oppressed than cis men under the current gender order. While trans men are men, they are subject to considerable societal objectification due to their trans status or via misgendering, in ways cis men are not (Velez et al., 2016). This approach also follows from work showing that trans and nonbinary people experience objectification in ways that are both overlapping and distinct from cisgender women (Anzani et al., 2021), but differ categorically from cis men. After eliminating items with potential gender bias, we conducted a bifactor analysis to examine the hierarchical structure of the revised scale (Stage 5). This was an

important step given objectification is expected to be multi-faceted, and different aspects of objectification in intimate relationships may also mutually influence one another (e.g., myopic focus on appearance and sex may facilitate body autonomy denial and vice versa). Increasingly, bifactor modeling is used to guide decisions about scoring in the case of hierarchical structures to produce reliable total and subscale scores (Reise et al., 2010; see also Brock et al., 2023).

Finally, given that there is no benchmark measure of sexual objectification in intimate relationships with strong psychometric properties, we tested convergent and criterion validity of the IPSO in the context of the most widely used measure that has been modified from other contexts to assess partner body surveillance—the OBCS (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015). Additionally, the measure of body and internal attribute valuation used by Meltzer and McNulty (2014) is not a measure of sexual objectification in a traditional sense (i.e., it has a single body valuation item and does not contain items assessing sex or appearance preoccupation), but valuation of the body and internal attributes could be helpful for better understanding body neglect and unconditional body appreciation elements of the IPSO. We anticipated moderate correlations between IPSO scores and more partner body surveillance which has been used as an indicator of objectification in intimate relationships (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015). We also anticipated moderate correlations between IPSO scores and more body and less non-physical valuation. However, we did not expect correlations with these measures to be so large to suggest that the IPSO is not a unique measure of partner objectification. We then examined whether IPSO scores were associated with constructs expected to be the consequences of objectification, along with several key relational outcomes. Specifically, as postulated by objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Ward et al., 2023), we expected IPSO scores to predict more self-objectification, depressive symptoms, body dissatisfaction, and sexual dissatisfaction. We also examined whether IPSO scores were associated with less relationship satisfaction, worse problem-solving, and more risk for violence in the intimate relationship. Given the absence of a gold standard measure of intimate partner objectification, no incremental validity analyses were warranted.

Method

Participants

Participants (n = 981) ranged in age from 18 to 85 years old (M = 39.36, SD =12.59). At the time of study completion, 46.8% of participants identified as a cisgender woman, 44.1% as a cisgender man, 2.1% as masculine of center, 1.9% opted to describe in their own words, 1.2% identified as feminine of center, 1.1% as agender, 0.9% as a transgender man, 0.5% as genderqueer or gender non-conforming, 0.4% as a transgender woman, 0.3% as non-binary, 0.3% as trans masc, 0.1% as a demigirl/demiwoman, and 0.1% as bigender. Participants were asked to categorize their gender as either trans/transgender (i.e., people who were assigned a sex at birth that does not accurately represent their gender), cisgender (i.e., people who were assigned a sex at birth that accurately represents their gender), neither cisgender nor transgender, or unsure, and 90.8% of participants selected cisgender, 4.1% selected neither cisgender nor transgender, 4.0% selected trans/transgender, 1.0% selected unsure, and 0.1% declined to answer. Participants endorsed all sexual identities that were applicable to them, and 79.8% identified as heterosexual/straight, 13.6% as bisexual, 3.0% as pansexual, 2.1% as gay, 1.5% as queer, 1.2% as asexual, 1.2% as lesbian, 0.8% as demisexual, 0.7% as questioning/unsure, 0.4% opted to describe in their own words, 0.2% identified as same gender loving, 0.1% as aceflux, 0.1% as graysexual, and 0.1% declined to answer. Notably, 3.7% of participants endorsed more than one sexual identity. More than half of the sample identified as White (63.4%), 18.9% identified as African American or Black, 4.8% endorsed Hispanic or Latino/a ethnicity but no race, 3.1% identified as Asian, 0.8% opted to describe in their own words, 0.4% identified as American Indian or Native American, 0.4% as Arab American or Middle Eastern or North African, and 0.1% as Pacific Islander. Additionally, 4.3% of participants endorsed more than one race. Overall, 9.1% endorsed Hispanic or Latino/a ethnicity.

Regarding relationship characteristics, all participants were in current self-defined committed relationships at the time of study completion, ranging in length from less than one month to 62.17 years, with an average of 12.84 years (SD = 10.89 years). Most participants (88.8%) reported currently living with their partner, and those who reported cohabitation had

been living together for an average of 12.81 years (*SD* = 11.03 years). Participants were asked to select all relationship descriptors that apply to their current relationship, and 92.8% selected monogamous, 4.1% open, 4.0% consensually or ethically non-monogamous, 1.2% polyamorous, 0.9% opted to describe in their own words, and 0.4% swinging. Notably, 91.2% of participants described their relationship as only monogamous. Endorsed annual income categories ranged from $10,000 or less to more than $150,000, with the modal annual household income being more than $150,000 (11.6% of the sample). When asked to describe their household's standard of living using the following scale: very poor (1), poor (2), getting by (3), living comfortably (4), well off (5), and very well off (6), the average response was 3.67 (*SD* = 0.85).

Procedure

All procedures were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Participants were recruited through Prolific for a study described as investigating social attitudes and interactions. Eligibility criteria included being in a self-defined committed relationship, age of 18 or older, speaking English, and residing in the U.S. Participants consented and completed the study online (via Qualtrics) on their own device. To reduce participant burden and for cost efficiency with large samples required for analyses, the study was structured using a planned missingness design (Ender, 2010). Specifically, all participants completed the IPSO item pool but were randomly selected to complete a different set of convergent and criterion validity measures (Form A or B; see Measures section to identify which measures were included in which form). Participants who completed the study within the allotted time and passed at least two of the three attention checks were paid $6.00 and comprised the final sample.

Measures

Partner body surveillance and related features. We assessed partner body surveillance with a version of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996, Form B), a measure of self-objectification that has been modified to assess experiences of partner objectification (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015; Zurbriggen et al., 2011). The partner version of

the OBCS is an 8-item measure that assesses the degree to which people perceive their partner as preoccupied with their appearance (e.g., During the day, my partner thinks about how I look many times). Participants rated their agreement with each item on 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree, 2= moderately disagree, 3= mildly disagree, 4= neither agree nor disagree, 5= mildly agree, 6 = moderately agree, 7= strongly agree*). Mean scores were created with higher scores indicating more experienced objectification from partner *(M* = 3.25, *SD* = .93). Similar to past research (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015), internal consistency was poor in this sample (α = .64).

We also assessed the degree to which partners were perceived as valuing participants' body compared to other internal aspects using the body valuation and non-physical valuation by partner measures (Meltzer & McNulty, 2014, Form A). Specifically, people were asked to rate how much they think their partner values their a) body and b) 13 other non-physical attributes (e.g., intelligence, creativity, humor, loyalty) on a 100-point scale (0 = *not at all* to 100 = *completely*). We included the body valuation rating score (BV, *M* = 65.61, *SD* = 30.55) in analyses and created a mean non-physical valuation score (NPV, *M* = 73.43, *SD* = 23.80) with higher scores indicating more valuation. Internal consistency for the 13-item non-physical valuation measure was excellent (α = .95).

Self-objectification. To assess the degree to which people held self-objectifying beliefs and engaged in behaviors that prioritized their attractiveness and sex appeal, participants completed the Self-Objectification Beliefs and Behaviors Scale (SOBBS; Lindner & Tantleff-Dunn, 2017, Form A). The SOBBS is a 14-item measure that contains items indicating that one has internalized a view of the body as a sexual object for consumption by others, focusing on appearance over bodily function (e.g., How I look is more important to me than how I think or feel; I consider how my body will look to others in the clothing I am wearing). Participants rated their level of agreement on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Internal consistency was excellent (α = .93), and mean scores were created with higher scores indicating more self-objectification (*M* = 2.48, *SD* = .91).

Depressive symptoms. To assess the degree to which people were experiencing symptoms of depression, participants completed the General Depression scale of the expanded form of the Inventory of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms (IDAS-II; Watson et al., 2012, Form B). The General Depression scale of the IDAS is a 20-item scale assessing recent feelings and experiences of depression (e.g., I felt discouraged about things). Respondents reported the degree that they had these experiences during the past two weeks (1 = *not at all,* 2 = *a little bit,* 3 = *moderately*, 4 = *quite a bit*, 5 = *extremely*). Internal consistency was excellent (α = .95) and higher mean scores indicated more depressive symptomology (*M* = 42.91, *SD* = 16.99).

Body dissatisfaction. To measure the degree to which participants were dissatisfied with their bodies, they completed the Body Dissatisfaction scale of the Eating Pathology Symptoms Inventory (EPSI; Forbush et al. 2013, Form A). The Body Dissatisfaction scale of the EPSI contains 7 items indicating dislike with shape, weight, and appearance (e.g., I did not like how clothes fit the shape of my body; I did not like how my body looked). Scores also represent a higher-order shared dimension among eating disorder symptoms. Respondents indicated how frequently they have experienced body dissatisfaction (0 = *never* to 4 = *very often*) over the past four weeks. Sum scores were created with higher scores indicating more body dissatisfaction (*M* = 10.27, *SD* = 7.45), given excellent internal consistency (α = .91).

Sexual dissatisfaction. To measure the degree to which people were unhappy with the sexual aspect of their relationship, participants completed the Sexual Dissatisfaction scale of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory—Revised (MSI-R; Snyder, 1997, Form B). The Sexual Dissatisfaction scale of the MSI-R contains 13 items indicating problems with the sexual relationship (e.g., I am somewhat dissatisfied with how we discuss better ways of pleasing each other sexually). Participants answered whether each item is generally true (coded as 1) or false (coded as 0) in their relationship. A sum score was created with higher scores indicating more sexual dissatisfaction (*M* = 4.26, *SD* = 3.63), given good internal consistency (α = .86).

Intimate relationship satisfaction. Global relationship satisfaction was assessed with the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI; Funk & Rogge, 2007, Form A). The CSI contains 32 items

and participants rate their degree of happiness in the relationship, time spent together, affection, and connection, among other key features of relationship satisfaction on Likert-style scales. We followed standard scoring procedures (see Funk & Rogge, 2007, for more details), creating sum scores with higher scores indicating higher levels of relationship satisfaction (M = 125.87, SD = 32.84, Form A). Internal consistency was excellent in this sample (α = .98).

Intimate partner violence victimization and dysfunctional communication. Frequency of intimate partner violence victimization in the current intimate relationship over the past year was measured with the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-R; Straus et al., 1996, Form A). Specifically, participants reported the frequency of aggressive behaviors directed toward them by their partner (1 = *once in the past year,* 2 = *twice in the past year,* 3 = *3-5 times in the past yea*r, 4 = *6-10 times in the past year,* 5 = *11-20 times in the past year*, 6 = *more than 20 times in the past year,* 7 = *not in the past year, but it did happen before,* 0 = *this has never happened*). Consistent with recommended scoring procedures, items were recoded to reflect the midpoint of each response option (e.g., 5 was recoded as 15). Participants report the frequencies of experiencing psychological (e.g., insults and swearing), physical (e.g., hair or arm twisted), and sexual (e.g., forced to have sex without a condom) abuse. Psychological abuse items were summed to obtain a score of frequency of psychological IPV victimization (M = 15.01, SD = 25.14, α = .80). Given the relatively low frequency of physical IPV, injury, and sexual coercion, we computed a binary score indicating whether any of these forms of aggression had occurred in the past year (0 = did not happen in the past year, 1 = happened in the past year, 36.7% had experienced at least one of these forms of IPV). Participants also completed the Problem-Solving scale of the MSI-R (Snyder, 1997, Form A), which contains 19 items assessing poor conflict resolution (e.g., arguments frequently end with feeling hurt or crying). Internal consistency was excellent (α = .91), and sum scores were created with higher scores indicating more problem-solving deficits (M = 5.91, SD = 5.39).

Transparency and openness. This study's design and its analysis were not preregistered. Research materials and data to inform meta-analyses and replication studies can be

requested by contacting the corresponding author. Code for the primary analyses can be accessed in the supplemental materials.

Scale Development Stages and Results

Stage 1: Item Pool Generation for Factor Analysis

Consistent with recommendations made by Clark and Watson (1995; 2024), we conducted a comprehensive literature review on objectification in the context of intimate relationships and generated an initial item pool capturing multiple dimensions of experienced partner objectification. This was guided, in part, by a qualitative analysis (Checkalski et al., 2025) suggesting that body valuation in intimate relationships often mirrors broader patterns of sexual objectification, including preoccupation with appearance and sex (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Kozee et al., 2007). Participants also reported feeling objectified when partners ignored their attractiveness or sexual desires and when they were denied autonomy over their appearance (e.g., received suggestions about clothes, eating, and exercise from partner). In contrast, participants also described instances of "unconditional body appreciation:" body valuation characterized by unconditional acceptance of attractiveness and sex and holistic valuation of physical and non-physical attributes. This pool was broad, comprehensive, and included numerous face valid items (e.g., "My partner frequently sexually objectifies me in ways that make me feel uncomfortable") to ensure strong convergent validity with current conceptualizations of objectification. Three of the coauthors with extensive expertise in the area met on several occasions to operationalize specific behavioral manifestations of objectification in the intimate relationship context. The remaining co-authors and members from their labs reviewed the pool and provided feedback. Next, expert reviewers were invited to review the items and provide feedback, which was implemented. The final item pool consisted of 73 items (see Supplemental Table 1). Ultimately, we aimed to reduce this large item pool to a smaller subset of items comprising a psychometrically strong self-report questionnaire of partner objectification.

Stage 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis

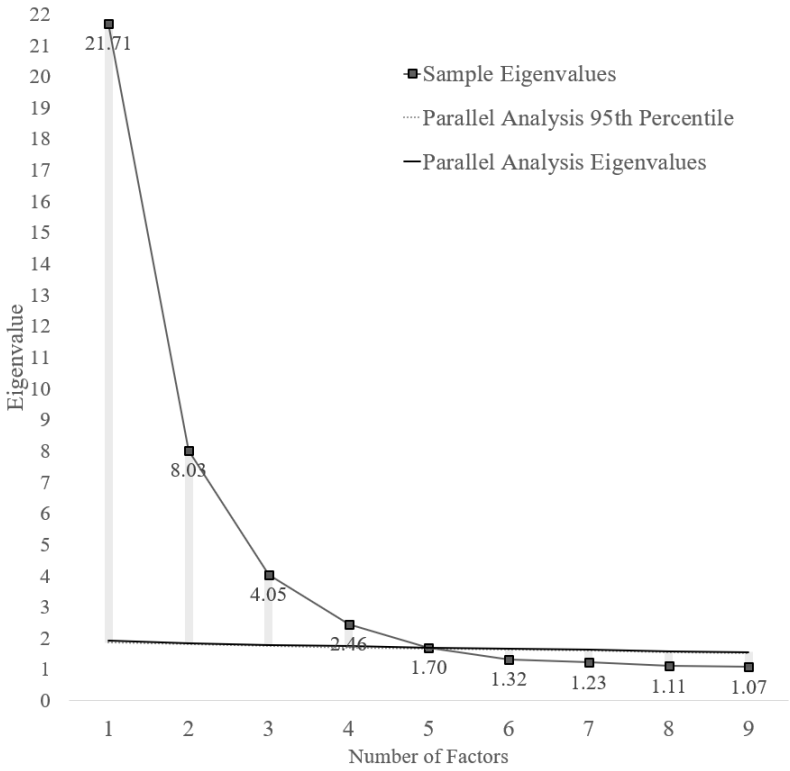

Figure 1. Results of parallel analysis suggesting that a 5-factor model is an optimal fit to the data. The *X*-axis (number of factors, observed range 1 to 73) has been truncated to clearly visualize the cross-over point between the sample eigenvalues and the eigenvalues from the parallel analysis. This is the point that signals the optimal solution which, in this case, was five factors. However, after closer examination, the fifth factor only contained one salient item. As such, we ultimately retained a 4-factor solution.

In the subsample of participants who completed *Form A* (*n* = 493), we conducted an EFA with oblique (geomin) rotation with the 73 items generated in Stage 1. See Supplemental Table 2 for the interitem correlation matrix. The scree plot and parallel analysis (Figure 1) suggested a 5-factor solution was an optimal fit; however, only one item had a salient factor loading (≥ |.40|), to the fifth factor (Item 51 – *"My appearance disgusts my partner"*) and additional items appeared to cross-load to other factors. Given the fifth factor did not appear to be a viable factor, we retained the 4-factor solution (see Supplemental Table 1). A close review of items with salient factor loadings (≥ |.40|) to ***Factor 1 (F1)*** suggests that this factor reflects ***general objectification*** in the form of myopic attention to appearance and sex (i.e., a preoccupation with the body). For

example, items capture partner commentary about appearance and sex and objectifying gazes that made the person uncomfortable or occurred at inappropriate times or in inappropriate contexts. Further, the face valid items loaded to this factor, aligning with sexual objectification as reduction to appearance and sex appeal, which are manifestations not specific to couples and widely supported in the literature (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Items with salient loadings to ***Factor 2 (F2)*** reflect ***body autonomy denial*** including partner expressing strong preferences about the person's appearance (e.g., clothes, body hair, piercings or tattoos, diet) and that compliments were conditional on whether the person "looked their best." ***Factor 3 (F3)*** was positively valenced and reflects a sense of ***unconditional body appreciation*** from partner. For example, items include partner finding the person attractive and sexy no matter what and the person feeling appreciated for all attributes, both physical and non-physical. ***Factor 4 (F4)*** included items reflecting ***body neglect*** by partner such as the absence of appearance compliments or concern about sexual desires. Factors had small to moderate and significant ($p < .05$) correlations in the expected directions (i.e., F3 comprised positively valenced items and had negative correlations with other factors): F1-F2 = .48, F1-F3 = -.23, F1-F4 = .22, F2-F3 = -.13, F2-F4 = .39, F3-F4 = -.35.

Next, we closely reviewed the EFA solution to identify items for possible deletion. We considered (1) saliency of factor loadings (i.e., 5 items were dropped due to factor loadings < |.40|) and (2) cross-loadings and conceptual overlap (i.e., 6 items were dropped given notable cross-loadings and conceptual overlap across multiple factors). Further, consistent with our aim of reducing the item pool to a manageable number of items for routine administration, we also closely reviewed the items for possible redundancy, and 23 items were dropped due to overlapping content with retained item(s) that had similar loadings to the same factor. When making decisions to drop redundant items, we also considered clarity and generalizability of items to different groups and people – e.g., "My partner suggests foods I should eat to stay or look attractive, even when I don't ask" was retained instead of "My partner encourages me to lose weight" given that weight loss is not cross-culturally valued and less applicable to some

social groups (e.g., men) and individuals (e.g., *gaining* weight might be connected to sex appeal for some). We also omitted Item 51 given this originally loaded to the fifth factor in the 5-factor solution and appeared to reflect something qualitatively different and more extreme than the other items on F4 (body neglect). We omitted Item 60 ("My partner would want to be with me even if I looked completely different") given over 6% of participants were not sure how to respond, and we tried to omit items that were more hypothetical in nature. Further, only one face valid item, loading to F1, was retained – "My partner frequently sexually objectifies me in ways that make me feel uncomfortable". The other face-valid items were on the extreme end of appearance and sex preoccupation reflecting literal treatment as a sexual tool, which we thought was unlikely to occur in most intimate relationships, and endorsement of such items may be heavily influenced by social desirability concerns. These omissions resulted in an item pool of 30 items for the subsequent confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Stage 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In an independent subsample of participants who completed *Form B* (n = 488), we tested a 4-factor latent variable using the MLR estimator in Mplus 8.2 to address non-normality with the 30 items from Stage 2. Item 1 was set as the scaling indicator for F1 (*general objectification*), Item 21 for F2 (*body autonomy denial*), Item 28 for F3 (*unconditional body appreciation*), and Item 41 for F4 (*body neglect*). Global fit was borderline acceptable (CFI = .89, RMSEA = .051, SRMR = .072); however, we reviewed residual output to identify potential sources of misfit. Respecifications involved correlating residuals of similarly worded items (i.e., Items 43 & 44; Items 28, 31, & 35; Items 33 & 34). Although this overlap could indicate redundancy, a careful review of these items did not reveal any candidates for deletion (i.e., each item was capturing an important feature of their respective factors). This respecified model demonstrated adequate global fit (CFI = .92, RMSEA = .044, SRMR = .062) and was the basis for the subsequent tests of measurement invariance. All factor loadings were significant and exceeded |.40|.

Stage 4: Testing for Measurement Invariance and Differential Item Functioning

Recognizing that objectification in patriarchal cultures subjugates cisgender women

(Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and people from gender minorities (e.g., transgender, gender fluid, non-binary individuals, Moradi, 2013) to cisgender men, and that these cultural dynamics may influence the intimate relationship context, we assessed measurement invariance between cisgender men and people from other gender identities following procedures recommended by Brown (2015). First, we tested for *configural invariance* (i.e., same form) across gender groups. The 4-factor model for cisgender men (n = 209) had adequate fit (CFI = .91, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .077), factor loadings were significant ($p < .001$) and exceeded |.40|, and factor interrelations were moderate to large and in expected directions but did not exceed .80 (Brown, 2015), providing evidence of factor discrimination (F1-F2 = .74, F1-F3 = -.39, F1-F4 = .49, F2-F3 = -.40, F2-F4 = .49, F3-F4 = -.65). The 4-factor model for cisgender women and people from gender minorities (n = 279) had acceptable global fit (CFI = .89, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .072), factor loadings were significant ($p < .001$) and exceeded |.40|, and factor interrelations were moderate to large and in the expected directions but did not exceed .80, suggesting they are distinct (F1-F2 = .51, F1-F3 = -.66, F1-F4 = .58, F2-F3 = -.33, F2-F4 = .48, F3-F4 = -.65).

Next, we tested for *metric invariance* by comparing the global fit of a baseline model with all parameters free to vary across gender groups to a model with the loadings fixed to be equal. A chi-square difference test, implementing the scaling correction factor for the MLR estimator, was not significant, suggesting that fixing the factor loadings to be equal did not result in a significant decrement to model fit, $\chi^2(26) = 15.23$, $p = .95$. Further, fit was adequate (CFI = .90, RMSEA = .050, SRMR = .076) and factor loadings were significant ($p < .001$) and exceeded |.40|. Then, we tested for *scalar invariance* by comparing the model from the previous step, with fixed factor loadings, to a model with fixed factor loadings *and intercepts.* These additional model constraints significantly reduced the fit of the model, $\chi^2(26) = 67.74$, $p < .001$, suggesting that at least one intercept (i.e., score on an item when the latent construct is zero) differed across groups. As suggested by Brown (2015), we conducted posthoc analyses to evaluate differential item functioning with a *multiple indicators, multiple causes* (MMIC) model (a) regressing the factors on a binary grouping variable (1 = cisgender men, 0 = cisgender women and gender

minorities), and (b) fixing effects of the grouping variable on all of the items/indicators to zero, and (c) identifying modification indices exceeding 4.0 as evidence of salient group differences in item functioning. Results indicated invariance for only one item (43 from F4), raising concerns about potential gender bias in that item. Accordingly, this item was omitted from further analysis given other items captured similar content but did not demonstrate differential item functioning.

Stage 5: Final CFA and Bifactor Analysis

After removing item 43 with potential gender bias, we reran the 4-factor model with the revised pool of 29 items which demonstrated adequate fit (CFI = .92, RMSEA = .045, SRMR = .061). All factor loadings were positive and significant at $p < .001$, and exceeded the recommended threshold of |.40| for identifying indicators that are substantively meaningful (Brown, 2015). Factor correlations were moderate to large (F1-F2 = .64, F1-F3 = -.53, F1-F4 = .52, F2-F3 = -.36, F2-F4 = .48, F3-F4 = -.64). The 4-factor model was superior to a unidimensional model (CFI = .65, RMSEA = .093, SRMR = .111), $\chi^2(6) = 560.77$, $p < .001$. Nonetheless, given the large correlations among the factors, we also tested a bifactor model with the variance from the 29 items split between each respective factor and a general factor. Bifactor modeling is particularly useful in the context of scale development given results can guide decisions about scoring in the case of hierarchical structures (Reise et al., 2010). The bifactor model demonstrated superior fit relative to the 4-factor model, $\chi^2(23) = 82.25$, $p < .001$, and global fit was adequate (CFI = .94, RMSEA = .041, SRMR = .064). Model results are reported in Table 1. It was notable that F1, consistent with traditional operationalizations of objectification as preoccupation with attractiveness and sex, collapsed in the bifactor model with the majority of item variance loading to the general factor, and mostly small and non-significant loadings to the specific factor. In contrast, loadings of those items to the general factor were significant and salient. This suggests that items from F1 reflect *general* objectification (i.e., common across all 29 items), but nothing specific. In contrast, the remaining items had significant loadings to their respective factors (F2, F3, and F4), and to the general factor, suggesting they reflect *specific* features of objectification in intimate relationships and that there could be utility in computing

subscales for these factors.

In addition to global fit statistics and factor loadings, we computed several indices specific to bifactor models for informing scale evaluation and scoring decisions (Rodriquez et al., 2016; Table 2). These indices were computed using a calculator developed by Hammer (2016). With regard to the general factor, the *explained common variance* (EVC) suggests that around half (51%) of all common variance across items was explained by the general factor. The general factor demonstrated excellent internal consistency as evidenced by Omega = .87, a model-based estimate of internal reliability for each scale. We also evaluated the *relative* omega (OmegaH divided by Omega), which reflects the percent of reliable variance in the multidimensional composite; however, this was modest (.47). These results provide some support for the computation of a reliable total score across the 29 items; however, as previously indicated, it was notable that items from F1 emerged as largely indicative of the general factor. Further, a review of *individual explained common variance* (IECV) values for each item (Table 1) suggest that items from F1 might be optimal for measuring general objectification. Specifically, IECV values that exceed .80 suggest that the general factor explains over 80% of the variance in those items and that those items are the strongest indicators of the general dimension of intimate partner objectification (Stucky & Edelen, 2015). Thus, items from F1 hold promise for a relatively brief (8-item) higher-order scale of *general* objectification.

Multiple indicators also point to multidimensionality of the item pool. Reise et al. (2013) suggest that when the *Percent of Uncontaminated Correlations* (PUC) is less than .80, ECV (general factor) is greater than .60, and OmegaH (general factor) > .70, then the instrument can be viewed as primarily unidimensional despite the presence of some multidimensionality. In our model, PUC was .76; however, ECV was only .51 (less than the .60 threshold) and OmegaH was .41 (less than the .70 threshold), suggesting this measure is multidimensional. A closer examination of the remaining subfactors (F2-F4) provides further evidence that items loading to those factors are tapping into *specific* features of partner objectification and support the utility of computing subscale scores based on those factors. For **F2** (*body autonomy denial*), loadings were

significant and salient (≥ |.40|). Omega (.89) and relative omega (.60) were high suggesting excellent internal consistency and a notable percentage (60%) of reliable variance in a corresponding subscale composite that is independent of the general factor. For **F3** (*unconditional body appreciation*), loadings were significant and most were salient (≥ |.40|; all exceeded .30). Omega (.88) and relative omega (.65) were high suggesting excellent internal consistency and a notable percentage (65%) of reliable variance in a corresponding subscale composite that is independent of the general factor. For **F4** (*body neglect*), loadings were significant and salient (≥ |.40|). Omega (.75) and relative omega (.72) were high suggesting good internal consistency and a notable percentage (72%) of reliable variance in a corresponding subscale composite that is independent of the general factor. Finally, following guidelines by Dueber and Toland (2023), we also examined the within-domain ECVs (i.e., explained common variance of a specific factor relative to all explained variance for items loading to that factor) and OmegaH for the specific factors. When Omega is greater than or equal to .80, which was the case for F2 and F3, ECV > .30 and OmegaH > .20 are considered sufficient indicators of dimensional uniqueness. The ECV was .59 for F2 and .64 for F3, exceeding the recommended .30 threshold. Further, OmegaH was .53 for F2 and .57 for F3, exceeding the recommended .20 threshold. When Omega is less than .80, which was the case for the smaller F4, ECV > .45 and OmegaH > .25 are considered sufficient indicators of dimensional uniqueness. For F4, the ECV was .70 and OmegaH was .54 exceeding the recommended thresholds. Thus, these metrics provide evidence of dimensional uniqueness and provide strong support for computing subscale scores for F2-F4.

Modeling the Hierarchical Structure. Bifactor results suggested a hierarchical, multidimensional structure, similar to that of other widely used questionnaires of multifaceted constructs such as the IDAS for measuring internalizing symptoms (Watson et al., 2012). Thus, as a final step, we tested a second-order CFA with F2, F3, and F4 loading to a higher-order general factor, and each of the items from F1 directly loading to that general factor. This model fit the data well (CFI = .91, RMSEA = .048, SRMR = .075). Results are reported in Figure 2. Factor loadings to each of the specific factors were significant and salient (ranging from .45 to

.80), and each of the specific factors had significant and salient factor loadings to the general factor (F2 = .65, F3 = -.56, F4 = .56). Further, items from the original F1 had significant and salient factor loadings to the general factor (ranging from .59 to .78). Thus, there is strong support for a hierarchical structure to the IPSO with 8 items forming a *general* scale of partner objectification, and three specific scales measuring distinct manifestations of objectification in couples (i.e., body autonomy denial, unconditional body appreciation, and body neglect). See Figure 2 for a depiction of the hierarchical structure with items and factor loadings.

Stage 6: Validity Analyses

Consistent with the planned missingness design of this study, we conducted validity analyses with the combined sample (n = 981) collapsing across *Forms A* and *B.* Although participants were randomized to complete each form, we screened for systematic differences on key demographics (i.e., gender identity, age, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic minority status, income status, relationship duration) using independent t-tests for continuous variables and chi-square tests for categorical variables. There were no significant differences between forms (ps > .05), indicating no systematic pattern to missingness) and, therefore, no auxiliary variables were required for subsequent analyses. We used the MLR estimator in Mplus to address missing data and non-normality. Mean scores on IPSO scales were computed for subsequent analysis.

Convergent validity. In the absence of a benchmark measure of objectification in intimate partners, we examined measures that have been used on an ad hoc basis to assess myopic focus on the appearance or body in the couple context. First, we examined correlations with the modified OBCS which assesses perceived body surveillance by partner. Correlations with the general and specific scales on the IPSO were significant, and in the expected directions, and ranged from small to large in magnitude (Table 3). We also examined correlations between IPSO scales and two closely related constructs – non-physical valuation (NPV) by partner and body valuation (BV) by partner. The general scale had a significant, negative correlation with non-physical valuation, but not physical valuation. A closer examination of the specific scales also suggests that unconditional body appreciation is associated with both NPV and BV. Indeed,

these correlations were moderate in magnitude, reflecting the content of items on the specific scales (e.g., "My partner appreciates all of my attributes—the physical and non-physical ones"). Similarly, body neglect was associated with *less* valuation – both physical and non-physical – reflecting the invisibility and disregard inherent to that scale.

Criterion validity. Both the general and specific scales demonstrated excellent criterion validity, and some specific scales appear to be more informative for understanding certain outcomes relative to others, providing further evidence of their unique utility. The general scale had significant correlations with all outcomes from objectification theory and key indicators of relationship functioning. The largest links were observed for self-objectification, (lower) global relationship satisfaction, problem-solving deficits, more frequent psychological victimization, and being a victim of physical aggression, injury, or sexual coercion.

Body autonomy denial was significantly associated with self-objectification and sexual dissatisfaction, but not body dissatisfaction or depressive symptoms; denial was significantly associated with all of the key couple research outcomes – less global relationship satisfaction, more problem-solving problems, and greater IPV. Both the unconditional body appreciation and the body neglect scales were correlated (in the expected directions) with all criterion measures; however, the magnitude of those correlations suggest that these specific scales might vary in the degree to which they explain outcomes. Specifically, body appreciation had large correlations with relationship satisfaction and (less) problem-solving deficits. Body neglect had a large correlation with sexual dissatisfaction which is to be expected given this scale contains items reflecting problems with sexual desire (e.g., "My partner initiates sex less often than I want").

Discussion

Despite the potential for sexual objectification to manifest in intimate relationships and lead to deleterious individual and relational outcomes, no existing measure has specifically been developed and validated to assess objectification in this unique context. Here, we developed the Inventory of Partner Sexual Objectification (IPSO) and demonstrated its robust psychometric properties. The final version of the IPSO consists of 29 items and includes one general scale and

three specific scales. The higher-order general scale reflects global objectification – i.e., myopic focus on attractiveness and sex—that follows from more general constructs (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and related measures of sexual objectification (Kozee et al., 2007; Riemer et al., 2022). Three specific scales reflect unique manifestations of objectification in couples, including body autonomy denial, body neglect, and unconditional body appreciation. We now turn to a detailed discussion of the results from each stage of analysis that led to the final scale.

After careful development and curation of the item pool (Stage 1), an EFA (Stage 2) suggested a 4-factor structure in a large community sample. After a close review of this solution, we removed items that a) had no salient loadings, b) cross-loaded with multiple factors, c) were often specified as inapplicable or confusing by participants, and d) shared content redundancy with other items. This led to a final pool of 30 items that was used in a subsequent CFA (Stage 3) with an independent sample. After correlating residuals of similarly worded items, we observed good model fit for the 4-factor model, which was superior to a unidimensional model, and each factor had substantive meaning. Specifically, the IPSO's first factor (i.e., **general objectification**) captures a myopic focus on the body, including both attractiveness *and sex* (which is notably absent from existing partner objectification measures). Indeed, participants reported that their partners disregarded their thoughts and feelings through behaviors such as ogling, excessive appearance compliments, and disproportionate sexual advances, leaving participants feeling uncomfortable or undervalued as multifaceted human beings.

The second factor, **body autonomy denial**, reflects experiences in which a partner had a conditional focus on appearance, such as disapproval when participants did not "look their best." This factor also includes behaviors that undermine autonomy, such as expressing strong preferences about clothes, body hair, or tattoos and suggesting ways a partner could look better. Denial of self-determination is central to treating a person as a sexual thing (Nussbaum, 1995) and may be connected to self-objectification and maladaptive outcomes (Gervais & Davidson, 2013). More generally, behaviors that express conditional regard or deny a partner's autonomy (e.g., bossing them around) have been identified as dehumanizing and erode satisfaction between

partners (Brock & Gervais, 2025; see also Brock et al., 2023). To our knowledge, however, this is the first study to quantitatively document body autonomy denial from intimate partners.

Turning next to the **body neglect** factor, these items captured participants' desires for more frequent appearance compliments or sexual initiation from partners. Both general objectification and body autonomy denial involve a disproportionate body emphasis, and, at first blush, reducing this focus might counteract objectification. In many contexts (e.g., work) or relationships (e.g., strangers), an absence of appearance or sexual attention can be beneficial. For example, employees may interpret the absence of appearance-focused comments from a boss as a sign of respect for their intellect and professional contributions. Yet, in an intimate relationship, where attraction and sex are often central, neglect of appearance and sexual desires could be highly problematic because it may convey invisibility or perceptions of worthlessness.

A final factor emerged, with *negative* associations with the other factors, reflecting **unconditional body appreciation**. Items loading on this factor indicated that participants felt that their partners found them attractive and valuable, regardless of appearance (e.g., "My partner finds me attractive no matter what") or sex intentions ("My partner values me even when I don't want to have sex"), with *lower* scores on these items reflecting more objectification. Participants also expressed that their partner appreciated all attributes—physical and non-physical. While people may desire to be loved "inside out," this factor suggests that whole person appreciation may go both ways and also occur "outside in." Both terms communicate a balanced valuation for internal and external features, but when a partner expresses unconditional positive regard for their body—irrespective of attractiveness or sexual function—individuals may interpret this as holistic appreciation, encompassing all of their humanness. This finding aligns with past research connecting body and non-physical attribute valuation with greater relationship satisfaction (Meltzer & McNulty, 2014) but extends it by showing the importance of unconditional body regard in intimate relationships. Further, in a culture saturated with unattainable ideals of attractiveness and sexuality perpetuated by social and mainstream media (Ward, 2016), couples may create a microculture of body acceptance. Such a relational

microclimate could counteract the broader cultural climate of rampant sexual objectification. Notably, items on this subfactor did not simply represent the absence of body preoccupation, control, or neglect; instead, they conveyed active, unconditional body regard. In intimate relationships, where appearance and sex are often central, partners might buffer against the larger toxic cultural environment, affirming the value of their partner's body in the context of being a multifaceted person with inherent worth.

In Stage 4, we examined whether there was measurement invariance between cisgender men, and cisgender women as well as people from other genders identities. The configural and metric models indicated the same structural model and similar factor loadings across gender groups. However, the scalar model showed group differences on some item responses when the latent construct was zero; however, only one item was identified as contributing to significant invariance. The wording of the eliminated item was identical to another item but focused on attractiveness compared to sexiness. Given the cultural context in which the appearance of cisgender women and gender minorities is persistently dissected, base rates of objectification likely vary by gender, influencing how different groups interpret the scale in this unique relational context. For instance, a cisgender woman accustomed to frequent appearance-based evaluations in public might barely notice a partner's occasional body comment, whereas for a cisgender man, such behavior may stand out as novel and salient due to its rarity in other areas of life. The final version of the IPSO, with the potentially biased item removed, could be a useful tool for researchers interested in examining objectification differences between cisgender women and men and exploring objectification dynamics in queer and trans couples.

The IPSO was developed as a multidimensional measure based on the nuanced facets of objectification that may emerge in intimate relationships. Thus, in Stage 5, we used bifactor analysis to examine the hierarchical structure of the IPSO and the potential utility of subscale scores. Results provided strong evidence that the IPSO is a hierarchical measure with most of the items on factor 1 (general objectification) loading on a higher-order general dimension, while items on factor 2 (body autonomy denial), factor 3 (unconditional body appreciation), and factor

4 (body neglect) represent unique elements of objectification occurring in intimate relationships. Results of a second-stage CFA provided further support for this hierarchical structure, with significant and salient factor loadings of each of the specific factors and the eight general objectification items to a general objectification factor (see Figure 2).

The eight general objectification items appear to be common to all manifestations of objectification in relationships, in the form of body preoccupation, and can be used as a global measure, whereas the body autonomy denial (eight items), the unconditional body appreciation (nine items), and body neglect (four items) subscales can be used when researchers have questions connected to these unique manifestations of objectification in relationships. Researchers wishing to use the general scale and specific scales should *proceed with caution*; inclusion of the general scale with the specific scales may partial out meaningful objectification variance, rendering specific scale results uninterpretable (i.e., they might not reflect "objectification"). See Supplemental Materials for the IPSO and detailed scoring instructions.

Finally, in the absence of a benchmark measure of intimate partner objectification, traditional convergent validity analyses were not warranted. Nonetheless, the IPSO demonstrated good convergent validity with several measures that have been used to approximate key features of objectification of intimate partners. As expected, the general and specific scales correlated with partner body surveillance (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015) as well as body and non-physical valuation (Meltzer & McNulty, 2014), but these associations were moderate in size, highlighting the IPSO's distinctiveness. The strongest correlation was between perceived body surveillance, as assessed with the modified OBCS (Ramsey & Hoyt, 2015) and body autonomy denial scale. This finding aligns with overlap in focus on appearance-related perceptions, as the OBCS captures perceptions of persistent partner surveillance while the body autonomy denial scale captures the potential for this to translate into controlling behaviors. Additionally, measures of body and non-physical valuation were most strongly and positively associated with unconditional body appreciation, while also being less connected with body neglect. This supports prior research showing that in satisfied couples, body valuation and internal attribute

valuation often go hand-in-hand (Meltzer & McNulty, 2014). Conversely, greater general objectification was connected to less non-physical valuation, consistent with work connecting objectification with dehumanization in partners (Brock & Gervais, 2025; Saez et al., 2022).

The IPSO also demonstrated strong criterion validity with constructs central to objectification theory (i.e., self-objectification, body dissatisfaction, depression, and sexual dissatisfaction, Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and related aspects of couples functioning (i.e., relationship satisfaction, intimate partner violence, and problem-solving communication problems, Brock et al., 2021; Meltzer & McNulty, 2014; Saez et al., 2019). It was notable that IPSO scores on the general and specific scales were all associated with self-objectification, but that the strongest links were with the general scale and specific body autonomy denial scale. The prioritization of one's appearance and sexual utility by an intimate partner is associated with a similar myopic focus on the self, a hallmark of self-objectification (Lindner & Tantleff-Dunn, 2017). There was also evidence that some specific scales on the IPSO might be more informative in explaining outcomes than others (pointing to its multidimensionality). Body neglect emerged as the strongest predictor of depressive symptoms and sexual dissatisfaction, underscoring how a partner's inattention to the body can undermine psychological wellbeing and sexual fulfillment. In contrast, unconditional body appreciation had particularly strong associations with relationship satisfaction and (fewer) problem-solving deficits, suggesting that respectful body affirmation is a salient feature of partner objectification driving relationship adjustment. While related to self-objectification and sexual dissatisfaction, body autonomy denial was unrelated to body dissatisfaction or depressive symptoms. Conditional regard and controlling behaviors may undermine body satisfaction and contribute to depression for some, but not all individuals.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Feminist scholars (Bartky, 1990; Nussbaum, 1995) have long argued that the intimate relationship context is a central vehicle for sexual objectification with potential harms to individuals, relationships, and society, but a focus on the effects of objectification from partners is largely lacking in the psychological literature. A challenge is that objectification in intimate

relationships is more nuanced than in other contexts, making it elusive to conceptualize and measure. For instance, while appearance or sex focus from strangers is likely harmful, some level of body valuation is expected in many intimate relationships. However, the present research suggests that problems may arise when there is disproportionate emphasis on or neglect of the body. Striking a balance between hyper-visibility and invisibility and making partners feel "seen," but not reduced, appears to be critical. Attending carefully to a partner's desire for such attention is a crucial part of achieving this balance. Intimate partners also exert a disproportionate amount of control over one another compared to other relationship types. Yet, if this influence is wielded toward appearance in overly controlling ways, then such actions may veer into objectification through denial of body autonomy. Finally, it has been difficult for researchers to pinpoint when appearance and sex focus might be within bounds (Nussbaum, 1995)—the present research suggests that attending to partner preferences for affirmation of the body along with the whole person is key. The IPSO may lay the groundwork for further theoretical and conceptual development in objectification and intimate relationship research.

This work also has some practical implications. It identifies potential areas of objectifying dysfunction—such as general objectification (i.e., preoccupation with the body), body autonomy denial, or body neglect—that clinicians can assess using the IPSO. These facets could serve as starting points for interventions aimed at reducing objectification and improving relationship functioning, depending on the specific manifestations in a relationship. Striking a balance between too much and not enough focus on the body should factor prominently in these interventions. Additionally, individual-focused practitioners working with clients in intimate relationships could explore whether appearance and sex focus from partners exacerbate issues posited by objectification, including depression, eating disorders, and sexual dysfunction. Conversely, clinicians might leverage unconditional body appreciation as a strategy to mitigate these challenges and promote well-being. Finally, individuals may use the IPSO to reflect on whether objectification may be present in their own relationships.

Limitations and Future Research

The present work is not without limitations. Despite a robust approach to examining the psychometric properties of the IPSO, the data were cross-sectional, so causal inferences cannot be made. For example, while partner objectification may undermine relationship functioning, relationship dysfunction might also justify subsequent objectification. Future longitudinal or experimental designs is needed to further examine causal ordering of these variables. Relatedly, we assessed objectification experiences in individuals in self-defined committed relationships, but did not assess this from both partners, and thus the relational dynamics are unclear. Assessing both received and enacted objectification from both partners—or multiple partners in the case of consensual non-monogamy—may be critical to answering these questions.

Constraints on generality. Although this is a community sample, participants were largely White, cisgender, heterosexual individuals recruited from Prolific. While care was taken to generate items that were applicable and inclusive across social identities and types of relationships, there may be more unique manifestations of partner objectification that are missing from the present work. For example, the items focused on sex may be less relevant to coupled individuals who experience little or no sexual attraction. Relatedly, sexual prowess appears to be more important for men in some racial or sexual minority groups than others. Not all men are equally vulnerable to societal objectification—take for example the hypersexualization of Black men or gay men (Shemeka et al., 2024; Moradi, 2013). Given connections between masculine gender role, promiscuity, and virility, men may feel objectified when they are unable or unmotivated to perform sexually in ways prescribed by the masculine gender role. Future research with large samples of people from marginalized groups will be critical for assessing how objectification in couples is used to oppress people at a societal level.

Concluding thoughts. The intimate relationship context may be a powerful way through which sexual objectification, in the form of global sex and attractiveness preoccupation, and more specific manifestations of body autonomy denial and neglect, is perpetuated, yet it might also be a location of liberation through unconditional affirmation of the body and entire person. The IPSO captures this multifaceted and nuanced consideration of objectification in intimate

relationships. We hope it will be useful as researchers continue to extend and elaborate our understanding of sexual objectification and relationship functioning.

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