

A Research Approach based on Empirical Evidence for Female Sexual Response

Author: Jane Thomas, BSc

Twitter: <https://x.com/LrnAbtSexuality>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/learn-about-sexuality/>

ResearchGate: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jane-Thomas-18>

Author's website: <https://www.nosper.com>

Email address: jane.thomas@nosper.com

Location: United Kingdom

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18 Abstract

19 **Background:** Current beliefs set unrealistic expectations for female sexual response, leading
20 to misdiagnosis of female sexual dysfunction and unhelpful advice for couples.

21 **Aim:** To establish the need for empirical evidence to support an understanding of female sexual
22 response.

23 **Method:** A new research approach challenges preconceived ideas by establishing the realities
24 that couples face in their sex lives. This paper attempts to answer the following questions:

25 What assumptions are made about female sexual response?

26 What political and emotional influences affect sex research?

27 Why is female orgasm debated but male orgasm is never mentioned?

28 Who is qualified to contribute to our understanding of female sexuality?

29 What constitutes empirical evidence of responsiveness?

30 How can research into female sexual response be improved?

31 **Strengths and Limitations:** This approach provides a realistic account of female sexuality.
32 However, men's interest in female responsiveness and women's corresponding lack of interest
33 means that significant work is required to update current beliefs about female sexual response.

34 **Conclusion:** The belief that women should orgasm from intercourse is not supported by the
35 research and does not help couples understand a mismatch of sexual desire.

36 **Keywords:** female sexual dysfunction, anecdotal evidence, female sexual response, empirical
37 evidence.

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Introduction

In recent years therapists have recorded high levels of sexual dysfunction in women, often associated with a lack of sexual desire. This has raised concerns about potential misdiagnosis and the possibility that the definition of female sexual response needs to be updated. This paper highlights the problems created by the prevailing beliefs relating to female sexual response.

“it is time for the field to come together and resolve the differences about models of female sexual response and diagnostic consequences. We need to come to some consensus to move research and treatment forward. Scientific theories and theoretical models need to be probed and validated” (Balon, 2022, pp. 3-4)

Sexology still needs to establish itself as a credible branch of modern science. Sexologists use tiny samples to propose **conceptual models** and **speculative theories**, which are never proven. We must challenge the assumptions and contradictions. Even Cosmopolitan magazine has taken a stand and denounced the G-spot (Kiefer, 2020) as a fraud. Intercourse facilitates male orgasm but it does not follow that it should cause female orgasm (Hite, 1976). Men want intercourse and women, feeling obliged to satisfy male needs, want to know how intercourse could be more rewarding. This explains why only sensational theories that promote intercourse as a female pleasure (such as Masters and Johnson’s research) catch the public’s attention.

While women use orgasm claims to enhance their attractiveness, men use female orgasm claims to bolster their ego. Yet rather than accept that people are not always completely genuine, these claims are taken at face value. **Anecdotal evidence** for female orgasm comes from media portrayals and unsubstantiated orgasm claims. We need to explain what we observe in reality rather than relying on theoretical models. We must differentiate between activity that motivates a woman to enjoy her own response to eroticism and the mating activity that impregnates her.

The male experience sets expectations for women

Sexology should offer alternative perspectives. Men expect women to want intercourse but women are often held solely responsible for the consequences of male sex drive. For example, women are shamed for prostitution while male customers are anonymous. Men are rarely held responsible for unwanted pregnancies and abortion. Yet a new life is created by two people. To avoid this sexual reality, most adults acquire their knowledge of sexual pleasure from media portrayals and erotic fiction resulting in a gap between expectation and reality. The belief that women should orgasm with a lover is used to promote intercourse to women, who are guided by men's greater interest in sexual matters. But nothing that occurs naturally needs promoting.

The high levels of female sexual dysfunction (resulting from the current definition of female sexual response) appear to contradict the assumption that women orgasm from intercourse. Les Margolin (2022) notes: "The sexual response model appears to treat a husband's interest in sex as inherently normal and functional, and a wife's relative lack of sexual interest as inherently abnormal and dysfunctional" (pp. 1211-1212). Women are naturally unresponsive but, despite the lack of logical and scientific explanations, they are categorised as dysfunctional and humiliated by the implied sexual inadequacy. Women lack confidence given their passive role in intercourse but the assertion that women orgasm from intercourse causes endless frustration.

Impotency can cause a man to feel that life is hardly worth living. I have personally never had an orgasm with a lover and have concluded that sex is primarily a male pleasure. But I have never felt that my life is not worth living because sex, promoted as a pleasure, is only a duty. However, I am angry that the research highlighting female orgasm in the context of clitoral stimulation and female masturbation has been ignored by scientists for political reasons. Rather than reject valid research findings, sexologists should interpretate them in a way that provides the public with a consistent and unbiased account of sexuality based on scientific conclusions.

97 **Pornography and fantasies set expectations for men**

98 Male expectations are influenced by beliefs in society and the performance of porno actresses.
99 These influences cause men to perceive a female partner as dysfunctional if she does not
100 respond as they hope. Men control the definition of female sexuality despite never having a
101 clitoris or a vagina and never being the receiver in intercourse. Yet men rarely know if their
102 partners masturbate and cannot name any female erotic turn-ons. Reliable contraception gives
103 the impression that women want intercourse in the same way men do. A man can note how a
104 woman behaves and what she says but he cannot know what she thinks and feels. Younger
105 men's sex drive prevents them accepting women's lower sexual interest but a more experienced
106 man may be willing to look for answers beyond the myths. Men with unrealistic expectations
107 struggle with their own performance goals and feel responsible for delivering female pleasure.

108 Orgasm is a response of the central nervous system (Kinsey et al, 1953). It is not a conscious
109 choice. No one needs to tell men how to orgasm because reaching orgasm is a reliable process
110 for a responsive person. Orgasm results from a proactive mental and physical engagement in
111 sexual activity. If women had orgasms with a lover, they would be able to explain their mental
112 arousal, the anatomy and the stimulation involved. Men would also be familiar with these facts.

113 Men's sex drive focuses them on the erotic rewards of relationships. But do men want orgasm
114 claims from women who are conforming to what is expected of them or would they prefer a
115 lover who has a positive attitude towards eroticism and invests in sex for her partner's sake?

116 As long as there are men who enjoy hearing women's orgasm stories, there will always be
117 women who tell them. But these orgasm claims are of no use to anyone. They cannot be
118 explained or even described in sufficient detail to be helpful. Nor do they help men understand
119 that women have emotional rather than sexual needs. A woman will stop investing in a man's
120 sexual needs, when she fails to obtain the emotional rewards she hopes for from a relationship.

121 **How unrealistic expectations impact relationships**

122 Intercourse is central to male reproductive function and contributes to men's sense of emotional
123 well-being. Male sexual function is defined in terms of intercourse because reproduction
124 depends on male arousal (erection) and orgasm (ejaculation). Female sexual function is also
125 defined in terms of intercourse, even though a woman can be impregnated without ever being
126 aroused or having an orgasm. Although women may enjoy the emotional reassurance of
127 lovemaking, their emotional well-being does not depend on genital stimulation. Men talk about
128 female orgasm more than women do, believing it to be vital to women's sexual willingness.

129 Even if you have the courage to ask women about orgasm (as I have done), they have no logical
130 explanations to offer. Those women, who boast about orgasm in line with beliefs in society, are
131 offended when asked to explain their orgasms. Women feel obliged to say that they orgasm to
132 meet male expectations. Even female sexologists refer me to a book rather than give personal
133 insights. I see no evidence for these orgasms that women cannot explain logically to another
134 woman. The determination to believe in these orgasms seems to overrule all rational objections.

135 Male orgasm is almost inevitable but it is not cited by men as their primary motivation for
136 engaging in intercourse. The assumption that anyone's orgasm is critical to a person having a
137 fulfilling sex life is unhelpful and it is not supported by research. By promoting orgasms that
138 are unachievable, therapists contribute to women and their partners feeling sexually inadequate.
139 Unrealistic expectations strain relationships, causing resentment and dissatisfaction when
140 couples fail to achieve what they are told should be possible. This leads to embarrassment and
141 a sense of shame, making it difficult for couples to communicate over intercourse frequencies.

We need to challenge beliefs and provide evidence

The assumption that women orgasm with a lover is fundamental to understanding female sexuality, yet it is never challenged. No one differentiates between the average woman and those women who promote orgasm to earn a living. An honest view of sex involves discussing all possible scenarios rather than restricting the discussion to lovemaking. Women may accept intercourse in a loving relationship and yet they feel violated if a man obtains intercourse from them without their consent. Educators need to explain how a woman can be aroused by the prospect of intercourse on one occasion but not on another, even with an attractive partner.

Our description of sexual response needs to be consistent. For example, male orgasm depends on **direct** penile stimulation, while women are assumed to opt for **indirect** clitoral stimulation (according to current theories justifying intercourse). William Masters et al (1995) confirmed: “certainly, it is easier for most women to be orgasmic during masturbation than during intercourse. [...] For most women, masturbation involves some form of stimulation of the clitoris, whereas with intercourse, the clitoris is only stimulated indirectly” (p. 587). Yet very few women comment on how intercourse differs from masturbation. For most women, intercourse is the only time their genitals are stimulated. They refer to lovemaking rather than show any knowledge of sexual techniques (erotic and physical stimuli) focused on orgasm. Women enjoy lovemaking as a means of expressing affection rather than achieving orgasm.

I have found that masturbation works every time (from seventeen) but nothing works with a partner (from eighteen). Experts have told me that I am perfectly normal. I was angered by the gap between expectations set and reality. The experts had no explanations so I have approached the public on the basis that anyone who can orgasm would be able to explain the erotic turns that cause their arousal, the anatomy involved in orgasm and the stimulation technique.

Current conceptual models set incorrect expectations

We still lack educational materials and self-help information that provide a realistic, unbiased view of human sexuality and explain its role in relationships. If we value women's orgasms more when they occur with a lover than if they occur alone, we should provide a scientific justification for this preference. We can accept a range of women's sexual experiences but, if they are being recorded by scientists in terms of arousal and orgasm, they must be credible.

Scientists research female sexual response because, contrary to erotic fiction, in real life women do not orgasm as reliably as men do. But we should distinguish between understanding female sexual response and promoting intercourse as a female pleasure. Shere Hite (1976) noted: "We have arrived at a point in our thinking as a society where it has become acceptable for women to enjoy sex, as long as we are fulfilling our roles as women – that is, giving pleasure to men..." (p. 61). Historically, men have defined women's responsiveness but in more recent times many female sexologists also contribute to the research. Moreover, billions of women are presumed to have a daily experience of orgasm. Yet, female sexual response remains poorly understood.

It is assumed that a woman needs academic qualifications to advise on orgasm but the sexology profession should welcome contributions from women with a range of sexual experiences. The only qualifications a woman needs to research female sexuality is a determination to provide explanations for women's behaviours and responses. Evidence for female sexual response should come from women who are confident to talk about their arousal (as a response to erotic stimuli) and orgasm resulting from activity they initiate themselves. Not all women are familiar with orgasm (Kinsey et al, 1953) so we cannot know if a woman has the relevant experience. To advise on orgasm, a woman should know how to masturbate to orgasm. To advise on sexual pleasure, she should also have experience of a sexual relationship where she and her partner have explored a variety of sex play and have communicated over sexual pleasuring techniques.

A more realistic understanding of sexual response

“The history of science is part of the history of the freedom to observe, to reflect, to experiment, to record, and to bear witness” (Kinsey et al, 1948, p. v). Curiosity is fundamental to scientific research, yet many people reject the reasoning and research findings that explain sexual responsiveness. Science involves asking difficult questions and challenging emotional beliefs. Scientists should reveal truths that illustrate the misconceptions and ignorance in the popular beliefs rather than propose theories that support traditional beliefs about women’s sexual role. Given the scarcity of funding, a cost-effective approach is helpful. We can use logical deduction to draw conclusions from the following sources of **empirical evidence**:

(1) **Interpreting the previous research findings relating to female sexual response**, by suggesting possible political bias and erroneous assumptions made.

(2) Explaining the **biological precedents that provide evidence of female sexual response**, by understanding the nature of intercourse and how sexual responsiveness arises.

(3) Discussing **men and women’s sexual behaviours that reflect responsiveness**, by distinguishing between the behaviours that indicate a high and a low sexual responsiveness.

(4) Identifying **the key characteristics of human sexual response**, by analysing male sexual response in explicit detail and comparing it with the female equivalent.

(5) Defining **female sexual response as a mental response to erotic stimuli**, by specifying women’s explicit orgasm techniques and comparing them with the male equivalent.

(6) Considering **female sexual response as an emotional response to a lover**, by listening to what women say about lovemaking and orgasm.

210 The benefit of this approach is that it provides a comprehensive and consistent description of
211 sexuality that differentiates real life from myths and wishful thinking. We must substantiate
212 orgasm claims by establishing that women understand what is involved in sexual response. We
213 must consider the political and emotional pressures on women to say that they orgasm. It's not
214 that women are necessarily lying; there is simply no adequate definition of what is involved in
215 sexual response. Nor is there any research that establishes the facts of female sexual response:
216 when it occurs, how it occurs and how common it is in the population. People are silent on
217 sexual topics because they lack confidence in their understanding, which is based on something
218 that does not exist. They cannot justify their emotional beliefs logically. My work has gained
219 support, even from men, because some people want logical explanations they can relate to.

220 **Conclusion**

221 (1) **Anecdotal Evidence** of female sexual response includes sexual bravado and pornography,
222 which make it difficult even for scientists to accept the reality of women's sexuality.

223 (2) **Unrealistic Advice** does not help couples understand how to make the most of their sexual
224 relationship by accepting that men and women enjoy different emotional and sexual rewards.

225 (3) **Empirical Evidence** of female sexual response includes interpreting the previous research,
226 biological precedents, sexual behaviours and the characteristics of sexual response.

227 (4) **A Realistic Account of Sexuality** needs to describe sexual response explicitly and provide
228 explanations for what we observe in our adult culture and couples' sexual relationships.

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