

# The Big “O:” The Influence of Gender Roles and the Sexual Double Standard on Female Orgasms

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## Introduction

Previous research has indicated an “orgasm gap” between men and women, with heterosexual women experiencing orgasms 65% of the time, compared to 95% of heterosexual men (Frederick, St John, Garcia & Lloyd, 2018).

Sexual attitudes like permissiveness and sexual assertiveness have been linked to higher rates of sexual satisfaction (Haavio-Mannila & Kontula, 1997), and sexually assertive women tend to experience more orgasms (Hurlbert, 1991). Sex-related shame and guilt may also affect sexual satisfaction, as women who have less sex-guilt have more positive self-schemas (Abdolsalehi & Beckman, 2013).

Sociocultural attitudes like endorsement of gender roles and the sexual double standard (SDS) can also potentially impact sexual satisfaction. Gender roles may socialize women to not feel agency over their sexuality, hindering their satisfaction (Wiederman, 2005; Kiefer et al., 2006). Moreover, endorsement of the SDS may lead to reduced sexual communication and assertiveness (Greene & Faulkner, 2005). Sexism has also been found to be associated with lower sexual assertiveness (Fitz & Zucker, 2015).

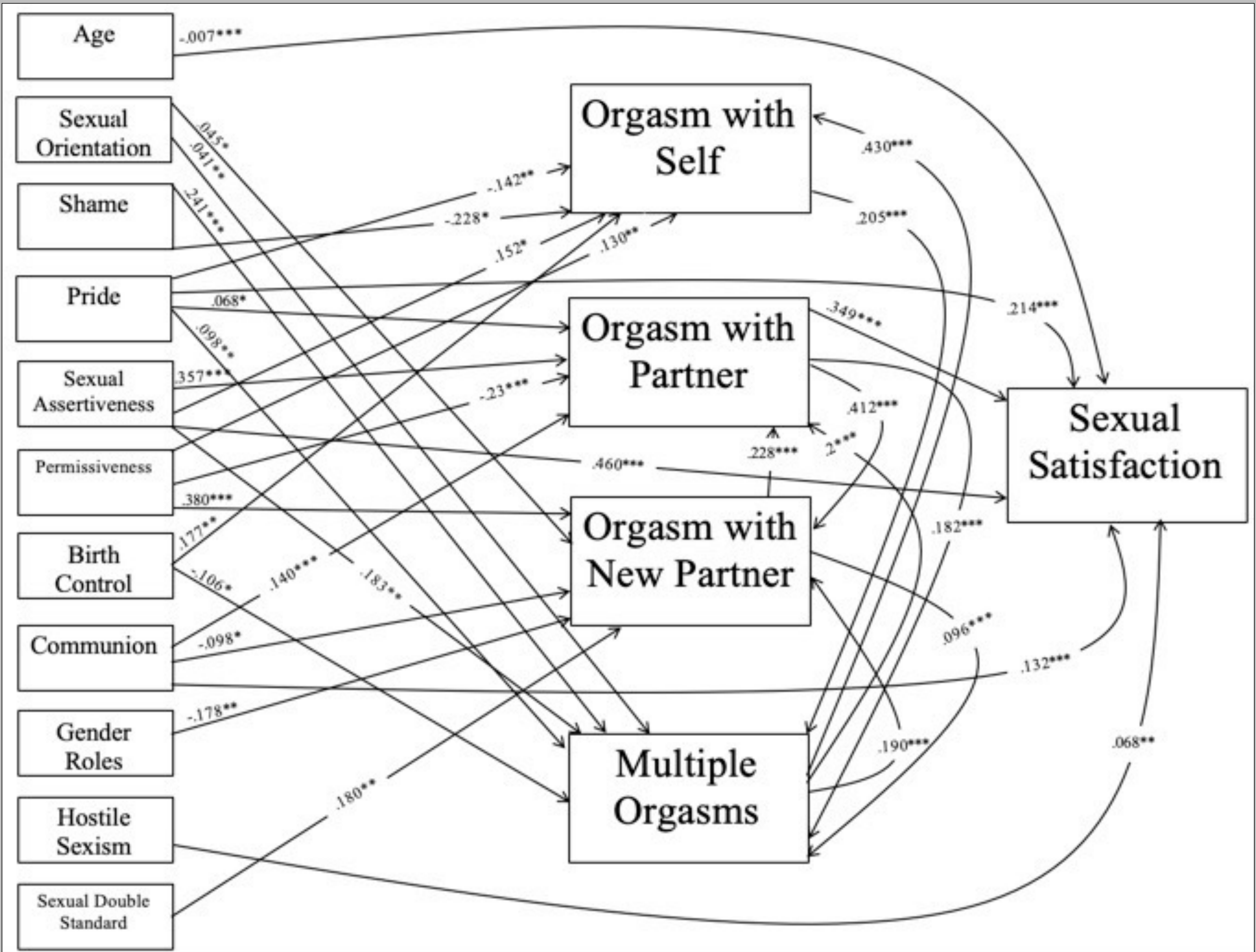
Personal factors such as age, sexual orientation, relationship status and religious beliefs can also impact sexual satisfaction. Lesbian women orgasm more than heterosexual women (Frederick et al., 2018). Women in monogamous relationships have higher sexual satisfaction than their casual-sex counterparts (Lehmiller, VanderDrift & Kelly, 2014). Religious married individuals tend to experience more satisfaction and less sex-guilt than religious single individuals (Hackathorn, Ashdown & Rife, 2016).

## Overview and Hypotheses

This study examined the relationships between the frequency of orgasms and sexual satisfaction in women and different sexual and sociocultural factors. The predictor variables were sexual factors (sexual attitudes, sexual assertiveness, & sexual shame and guilt), social factors (belief in traditional gender roles, endorsement of the SDS, & sexism), and personal factors (age, sexual orientation, relationship status & religiosity).

Our hypotheses were as the following:

- Sexual satisfaction will be positively correlated with freq. of orgasms (H1).
- Permissive sexual attitudes (H2) and sexual assertiveness (H3) will be positively correlated with freq. of orgasms.
- Belief in traditional gender roles (H4), endorsement of the SDS (H5), endorsement of sexism (H6) and feelings of shame and guilt associated with sex (H7) will be negatively correlated with freq. of orgasms.
- Lesbian women will be more likely to experience frequent orgasms (H8).
- Women in more committed relationships will be more likely to experience frequent orgasms (H9).
- Religiosity will be negatively correlated with freq. of orgasms (H10).
- Does age have an affect on orgasm frequency and in turn sexual satisfaction? (RQ1)



## Method

Only female participants (N=1043) were recruited from MTurk. The median age was 38.00 ( $M = 40.51$ ,  $SD = 12.67$ ). Participants were mostly White (78.5%), heterosexual (62.6%), and married/living with partner (54.1%). Participants completed nine scales measuring different forms of personal and social sexual attitudes, gender roles, sexual satisfaction, sexism, religiosity, and shame and guilt surrounding sexual encounters:

- ❖ State Shame and Guilt Scale (Marschall, Sanftner & Tangey, 1994)
- ❖ Hurlbert Index of Sexual Assertiveness (Hurlbert, 1991)
- ❖ Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (Hendrick, Hendrick & Reich, 2006)
  - Permissiveness (“casual sexuality”)
  - Birth control (“responsible sexuality”)
  - Communion (“idealistic sexuality”)
  - Instrumentality (“biological/utilitarian sexuality”)
- ❖ Gender-Based Attitudes Toward Marital Roles (Hoffman & Kloska, 1995)
- ❖ Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1997)
- ❖ Scale for the Assessment of Sexual Standards among Youth (Emmerink et al., 2017)
- ❖ Centrality of Religiosity Scale (Huber & Huber, 2012)
- ❖ New Sexual Satisfaction Scale (Stuhlhofer, Busko & Brouillard, 2010)
- ❖ Orgasm Questionnaire
  - Frequency of orgasm with self
  - Frequency of orgasm with partner
  - Frequency of orgasm with new partner
  - Frequency of multiple orgasms

## Results

Only the frequency of orgasm with a familiar partner predicted sexual satisfaction. Orgasm with self, orgasm with a new partner or frequency of multiple orgasms did not relate to sexual satisfaction.

Orgasm with self can be predicted by sexual factors like sexual assertiveness, sexual attitudes related to permissiveness and birth control, shame, multiple orgasms, as well as lower feelings of pride.

Orgasm with a familiar partner can be predicted by sexual assertiveness, less permissiveness, higher feelings of communion and pride, orgasm with a new partner and multiple orgasms.

Orgasm with a new partner can be predicted by fluid sexual orientation, permissiveness, lower feelings of communion, less gender role beliefs, higher SDS endorsement, orgasm with a familiar partner and multiple orgasms.

Multiple orgasms can be predicted by fluid sexual orientation, shame, pride, assertiveness, less favorable birth control views, orgasm with self, orgasm with partner, and orgasms with a new partner.

These results indicate the multivariate of factors that can affect female orgasms and in turn their sexual satisfaction.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Age	-															
2. Sexual Orientation	-.23**	-														
3. Marital Status	.28**	-.16**	-													
4. Shame	-.23**	.25**	-.09**	-												
5. Guilt	-.22**	.23**	-.12**	.88**	-											
6. Pride	.05	.03	.03	-.22**	-.14**	-										
7. Assertiveness	.02	.03	-.03	-.41**	-.37**	.43**	-									
8. Permissiveness	-.26**	.27**	-.17**	.19**	.18**	.03	.11**	-								
9. Birth Control	.11**	-.06	.03	-.22**	-.23**	.07*	.16**	.10**	-							
10. Communion	.10**	-.07*	.12**	-.02	.01	.31**	.19**	-.13**	.12**	-						
11. Instrumentality	-.21**	.16**	-.09**	.20**	.20**	.13**	.01	.47**	.06	.07*	-					
12. Religiosity	.18**	.06	.13**	.12**	.14**	.11**	-.11**	-.41**	-.11**	.25**	-.14**	-				
13. Gender Roles	-.05	.01	.08**	.35**	.37**	.04	-.21**	-.14**	-.30**	.19**	.15**	.35**	-			
14. Hostile Sexism	.08*	-.06	.14**	.21**	.23**	.09**	-.15**	-.15**	-.22**	.14**	.12**	.28**	.59**	-		
15. Benevolent Sexism	-.01	-.05	.06	.17**	.21**	.11**	-.13**	-.26**	-.19**	.29**	.12**	.41**	.61**	.52**	-	
16. SDS	-.04	.12**	-.002	.50**	.51**	.02	-.34**	-.03	-.30**	.11**	.22**	.29**	.68**	.53**	.57**	-

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level  
\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level