



Ecstatic Science & the Erotic Brain

by Bex vanKoot

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You can blame it on hook up culture. You can call out a sex-ed epidemic, or invoke the wild mystery that is the female body, but when the pants and the inhibitions drop, all that really matters is that women are not having the orgasms they deserve.

Orgasm inequality is a problem of the casual dater, or so the stats would have us believe. The fewer times a hetero couple has had sex, the more likely they are to report a wide disparity between the number of times he has orgasms and how often she comes with him. According to a study by Paula England at the New York University, women in hookups are less than half as likely to orgasm as their partners. Even women in relationships didn't quite find themselves on par with their lovers.

And the sad truth of the matter might be even more depressing.

She's Faking and She Doesn't Even Know It

A lot of women admit to faking orgasm. At least half of us have belted out the tell-tale moans when we didn't mean it.

But what if we're also calling it "orgasm" because we don't even really know what that means anymore?

Sex educators and advice writers have been talking about the virtues of the "vaginal orgasm" for

decades without any proof that it actually exists. And not only has popular culture continued to encourage women to seek the intercourse-centric achievement which they are unlikely to ever reach, now we're coming up with a new kind of orgasm for every possible sexual and even non-sexual activity! Like the sensation you get when having your nipples rubbed? That's an orgasm! Get off on deep yogic breathing? Orgasm! Feel great after an intense workout? ORGASM!

Ecstatic Science: what is an orgasm?

If you are a man in possession of a penis, you probably know exactly what I mean when I say "orgasm" - at least when it comes to your own body. But imagine a strange new world for a minute. Visualize yourself in a reality where there are a dozen different kinds of orgasms that a man can experience: ejaculation caused by a finger in the butt, the extreme pleasure of having your nipples rubbed or your ears nibbled, the wonderfully erotic feeling of having your taint massaged.

Those all feel good, right? Sometimes even really good. So what if, in this crazy new world, everyone talked about all these different ways of having "orgasms" as if the plain old joy of rubbing your dick just wasn't good enough?

This is the world that women live in.

When we are speaking scientifically, the word "orgasm" means a specific, clinically measurable thing - the clenching and releasing of pelvic muscles resulting in endorphin release. This has been the medical definition since before Masters & Johnson's groundbreaking studies began fifty years ago and continues to function as the primary

clinical definition, despite modern critics and controversy, because it can be applied equally to people of all genders.

This is how orgasms function.

The human body has two sets of muscles responsible for the reproductive functions relating to sex. There are the muscles that clench in a rhythmic and uncontrollable fashion during orgasm, and the muscles that are used to push during ejaculation. In men, these two groups tend to fire simultaneously or very close together. For women, while it's possible to experience both orgasm and ejaculation at the same time, it's much less common.

According to the best and most extensive sexual researchers in the past century, now immortalized for the small screen, Masters and Johnson found that the only kind of physical activity to cause orgasm in women is stimulation of the clitoris. Even the small percentage of women who the scientists showed were able to orgasm during penetration were found to do so from the less-intense indirect stimulation of the clit caused by friction during thrusting!

So why are magazines and blogs and TV shows and movies putting so much emphasis on all these other kinds of "orgasms" that have absolutely nothing to do with orgasm at all? Vaginal orgasms, g-spot orgasms, nipple orgasms, energy orgasms. If we want to get clinical, none of these things are orgasms. Not one. But here's the weird thing...

Just because they aren't "orgasms" in the clinical sense, it doesn't mean they aren't pleasurable, climactic, even ecstatic. Which is why scientists



have been able to show that lots of other kinds of pleasure, like the sensation of a great workout or some amazing breathing, can look identical to an orgasm on a brain scan.

The Erotic Brain: your pleasure potential

There are two major steps to ensuring orgasm equality and pleasure equality in modern sexual relationships. 1) Make sure everyone understands what it takes to give a woman an orgasm. 2) Stop focusing so hard on orgasms as the ultimate purpose of sex, allowing both men and women to open themselves up to a vast ocean of pleasure!

Sounds simple, doesn't it? That's because it is! So how can you contribute?

1 Give women orgasms.

If you are a woman, learn how to give yourself an orgasm if you don't know already. Touch your clit. Try out different vibes and other sex toys. Find out if you need intense direct clitoral stimulation, or mild indirect stimulation, or something somewhere in between. When you know exactly what works for you, share it with your partner!

Have your lover watch you masturbate. Better yet, masturbate together. Take the chance to learn more about what your partner likes at the same time! Then switch roles and be sure to give each other lots of feedback. If your partner is a woman, watch and listen and learn. Take direction. Encourage her to give it to you. Take some initiative and make sure you a) know where the clit is and how to find it, and b) understand the different ways of touching a clit that could be pleasurable to a woman. Try some of them out!

2 Stop worrying about orgasms so much

If your sex life adheres rigidly to a routine that involves one or both of you having an orgasm every time you have sex, try to lighten up a bit about it. Plan some time together where you focus on experiences that aren't entirely about the big finish. One of the major factors in orgasm inequality, according to the research, is the likelihood that guys just don't care as much about their partner's orgasms as they do about their own.

Women learned long ago that orgasm isn't the only pleasure that sex can offer. This is why we keep having casual sex with guys even though most of them don't give a damn whether we orgasm or not. It's time that men caught up to the same lesson. Learn what other kinds of climactic experiences your lover can have with non-clitoral stimulation. Look into tantric practices that encourage "orgasm" (not the clinical kind) without ejaculation, helping many men to let go of their goal-oriented approach to sex.

3 Stop Faking It, Be Authentically Orgasmic

Most importantly, call an orgasm an orgasm. And call all the other awesome, sensual, erotic and ecstatic experiences you have by some other name. Cumming, gushing, climaxing, reaching it... If you need to call it anything at all, call it what it is. In an ideal world, maybe it wouldn't matter what words we use to describe the hot fun we're all having. But in this reality, most women are not getting the good times they deserve. And you do deserve it! It's time to demand what's yours.

If we want men to step up and realize that giving pleasure makes for better sex, even with casual partners, we need to stop accepting the lie that intercourse can be everything to everyone, stop perpetuating the idea that what makes sex real sex is a man's orgasm. Oral sex, manual stimulation, mutual masturbation, sex toys? Know what you need and ask for what you want. Grab your orgasm by the reins and take control of your own pleasure, for all our sakes.

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