

Women have a remarkable variety of orgasmic experiences: study

1 November 2016



Credit: Concordia University

The nature of a woman's orgasm has been a source of debate for over a century. Since the Victorian era, the pendulum has swung from the vagina to the clitoris, and to some extent back again.

Today, the debate is stuck over whether an orgasm can be produced through vaginal stimulation alone, or if arousal of the external clitoris is always necessary.

A new review by Concordia research published in *Socioaffective Neuroscience & Psychology* details the vast potential women have to experience orgasms from one or more [sources](#) of sensory input.

In the review, senior author Jim Pfaus, a psychology professor from the Faculty of Arts and Science, and his co-authors—Concordia graduate students Gonzalo Quintana Zunino and Conall Mac Cionnaith, as well as Mayte Parada from McGill University—look into the evolution of the clitoral versus vaginal orgasm debate.

They arrive at a new understanding of the female orgasm that incorporates the external clitoral glands,

the internal region around the G-spot, the cervix and sensory stimulation of non-genital areas such as the nipples.

"With experience, stimulation of one or all of these triggering zones are integrated into a 'whole' set of sensory inputs, movements, body positions, arousals and cues related to context," Pfaus says.

"That combination of sensory input is what reliably induces pleasure and orgasm during masturbation and intercourse. That said, we think it's likely this changes across the lifespan, as women experience different kinds of orgasms from different types of sensations in different contexts and with different partners."

The article explains that the distinction between different orgasms is not between sensations of the external clitoris and internal vagina, but between levels of what a [woman](#) understands a "whole" orgasm to consist of.

This depends firstly on her experience with direct stimulation of the external clitoris, internal clitoris and cervix. But it also relates to knowledge of the arousing and erotic cues that predict orgasm, knowledge of her own pattern of movements that lead to it and experience with stimulation of multiple external and internal genital and non-genital sites—for example, lips, nipples, ears, neck, fingers and, yes, toes.

"Orgasms don't have to come from one site, nor from all sites. And they don't have to be the same for every woman, nor for every sexual experience even in the same woman, to be whole and valid."

Pfaus hopes that this article will drive home the fact that the female [orgasm](#) is not simply a different version of the reproductive model of male ejaculation.

"Unlike men, women can have a remarkable variety

of orgasmic experiences, which evolve throughout the lifespan. A woman's erotic body map is not etched in stone, but rather is an ongoing process of experience, discovery and construction."

More information: James G. Pfaus et al. The whole versus the sum of some of the parts: toward resolving the apparent controversy of clitoral versus vaginal orgasms, *Socioaffective Neuroscience & Psychology* (2016). [DOI: 10.3402/snp.v6.32578](https://doi.org/10.3402/snp.v6.32578)

Provided by Concordia University

APA citation: Women have a remarkable variety of orgasmic experiences: study (2016, November 1) retrieved 23 October 2020 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-11-women-remarkable-variety-orgasmic.html>

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