

The Inhibition of Sexual Pleasure and Its Associations with Cultural Messages

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Abstract : Sexual pleasure consists of the positively valued feelings induced by sexual stimuli, but it is also weighed down by pop-psychological baggage, and subjected to cross-cultural and cross-historical variation. Social and individual interpretations of what can or can't be considered as pleasurable are intertwined with culture's predominant values, norms and beliefs. For each culture, sexual norms work as a guide to be followed in order to model socially accepted behaviors. Therefore, cultural messages regarding sexuality are usually directed to restrict men and women from enjoyment, sexual satisfaction and specifically orgasm. Given that sexual pleasure hasn't been recognized as an accepted topic of open discussion, particularly for women, people have to eventually complement their knowledge using their own experience filling in the blanks from what little has been said. Thus, this research aims to identify which are the particular social messages associated with the easing or inhibition of sexual pleasure. Three hundred Mexican men and women ages 25 to 35 years old answered a self-report survey composed by the Inventory of facilitators and inhibitors of sexual pleasure and the Sexual premises questionnaire via pencil-paper and online. Results show a high endorsement to double standard messages associated with higher levels of sexual pleasure inhibitors like feeling pressured to have sexual activity, guilt and inability to reach orgasm, in contrast with people who endorse more permissive norms and beliefs, feeling connected to their sexual partners and confident with themselves. These results illustrate that the shaping of sexuality, from experience to society, is comprised of an important relationship between culture and sexual pleasure.

Keywords : culture, sexual double standard, sexual norms and beliefs, sexual pleasure

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