

FEMALE COITAL ORGASM AND MALE ATTRACTIVENESS

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Female coital orgasm may be an adaptation for preferentially retaining the sperm of males with "good genes." One indicator of good genes may be physical attractiveness. Accordingly, R. Thornhill, S. W. Gangestad, and R. Comer (1995) found that women mated to more attractive men reported an orgasm during a greater proportion of copulations than did women mated to less attractive men. The current research replicates this finding, with several design variations. We collected self-report data from 388 women residing in the United States or in Germany. Results support the hypothesis that women mated to more attractive men are more likely to report an orgasm at the most recent copulation than are women mated to less attractive men, after statistically controlling for several key variables. Discussion addresses (a) the inability of the present research to specify the causal link between female orgasm and male attractiveness and (b) the proactive nature of female sexuality documented in recent research guided by an evolutionary perspective.

KEY WORDS: Evolutionary psychology; Female coital orgasm; Male attractiveness.

Female coital orgasm may be an adaptation for preferentially retaining the sperm of males with "good genes" (Baker and Bellis 1993; Thornhill et al. 1995). One indicator of good genes may be physical attractiveness, a heri-

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table component of developmental stability (Gangestad 1993; Gangestad et al. 1994). Accordingly, Thornhill et al. (1995) found that women mated to more attractive men reported an orgasm during a greater proportion of copulations than did women mated to less attractive men. This relationship remained after controlling for several potential confounds, including the man's age and the duration of the couple's relationship. The current research is an attempt to replicate these findings, with several design variations.

Thornhill and colleagues (1995) assessed male attractiveness by securing ratings from independent observers. In the current research, women provided ratings of their partner's attractiveness in response to two probes: physical attractiveness and sexual attractiveness. Previous work suggests that women's relationship satisfaction predicts female coital orgasm (e.g., Singh et al. 1998; Trudel et al. 1993). Thornhill et al. (1995) did not include a specific assessment of women's relationship satisfaction as a potential confound of the link between female coital orgasm and male attractiveness. In the current research, we assessed women's relationship satisfaction using two probes: overall relationship satisfaction and emotional satisfaction. We examined the link between female coital orgasm and male attractiveness after controlling for female relationship satisfaction.

Thornhill and colleagues (1995) examined the link between male attractiveness and the proportion of copulations that included female orgasm. In the current research, we examined the link between male attractiveness and the likelihood that female orgasm occurred at the most recent copulation. The analyses conducted by Thornhill et al. (1995) included male age and relationship duration among the potential confounds of the link between female coital orgasm and male attractiveness. The current research also addresses these variables as potential confounds.

In summary, the current research attempts to replicate with several design variations the findings of Thornhill and co-authors (1995). We test the hypothesis that women mated to more attractive men (relative to women mated to less attractive men) are more likely to report an orgasm at the most recent copulation, controlling for women's relationship satisfaction, relationship duration, women's age, and men's age. To test this hypothesis, we collected self-reports from 388 women living in the United States or in Germany.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were 388 women in committed, sexual, heterosexual relationships. Participants were drawn from universities and surrounding