

University of Groningen

## Empirically Supported Incentive Model of Sexual Response Ignored

Driscoll, Miriam; Basson, Rosemary; Brotto, Lori; Correia, Shauna; Goldmeier, David; Laan, Ellen; Luria, Mijal; Weijmar Schultz, Willibrord; Tiefer, Leonore; Toates, Frederick

*Published in:*  
Journal of Sexual Medicine

*DOI:*  
[10.1016/j.jsxm.2017.03.248](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2017.03.248)

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*  
2017

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Driscoll, M., Basson, R., Brotto, L., Correia, S., Goldmeier, D., Laan, E., Luria, M., Weijmar Schultz, W., Tiefer, L., & Toates, F. (2017). Empirically Supported Incentive Model of Sexual Response Ignored. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 14(5), 758-759. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2017.03.248>

### Copyright

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

### Take-down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

## Empirically Supported Incentive Model of Sexual Response Ignored



We were pleased to see further research on the variability, diversity, and fluidity of women's sexual response by Ferenidou et al<sup>1</sup> in their article "Sexual Response Models: Toward a More Flexible Pattern of Women's Sexuality." They found that most women in their sample (66.9%) reported their current sexual experiences to be consistent with a model that was labeled "linear" and a model that was labeled "circular." This is welcome empirical evidence to support the composite circular incentives model of sexual response evolving from the work of different investigators during the past few decades<sup>2</sup> depicted diagrammatically in multiple publications from 2001 onward by Basson<sup>3</sup> and reviewed by Toates<sup>4</sup> in 2009. This composite model reflects multiple reasons or incentives for sexual activity including a potential initial sense of sexual desire as a "sexual urge" (depicted diagrammatically as a beneficial but not essential "central" component to the circle). The model also reflects the variable order and merging of responsive or triggered desire and subjective arousal. Data confirm the presence of many variable reasons for sex and the overlapping of the states of sexual desire and subjective arousal from meaningful sexual stimuli.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we were puzzled why an evidence-based composite model that allows for beginning with some present sense of sexual desire and/or for beginning with a willingness to deliberately attend to sexual stimuli enabling arousal and subsequent desire was again "split" into two partial models.<sup>5</sup> The research participants in the study by Ferenidou et al were requested to identify which one part they recognized as reflecting their own experiences.

We were disappointed to note the same fundamental flaws that we identified in similar research published in 2015 by Giraldi et al<sup>5</sup>:

1. The circle depicted in this study by Ferenidou et al does not reflect the Basson model and should not be so labeled. The Basson model (subsequent to her initial partial model in 2000 that introduced the idea of acknowledging desire that was responsive to stimuli once sexual activity began) was depicted from 2001 onward as a composite—allowing for sexual behavior stemming from an already present sense of sexual desire and/or from other motivations. Basson noted that many of these other motivations are to do with enhancing or promoting intimacy, as later confirmed by large studies and by small ones, such as the one by Ferenidou et al.<sup>1</sup> Other motivations concern the expectation or anticipation of sexual pleasure, although in the moment of receiving the sexual invitation, or its initiation, the person is sexually "neutral" but is "open to" or wanting to become aroused and to sense desire

"soon." Thus, the observation that most women endorsed the two models that were offered strongly suggests that the composite Basson model (as opposed to the circle described by Ferenidou et al) would best reflect their variable, diverse, and fluid sexual experiences.

2. As we previously noted,<sup>6</sup> when dysfunction is identified or defined by low levels of seemingly unprovoked or "spontaneous" desire, as in instruments and discussions that assume only spontaneous desire as normal, then women mostly familiar with desire triggered from sexual stimuli will automatically be deemed dysfunctional. There is no recognition or measurement of their mostly responsive—or in Kaplan's terms "extrinsic" desire—when using these instruments.<sup>7</sup>

To conclude, our hope is that research into the complexities and variabilities in human sexual response will continue and that any models of response attributed to others are accurately replicated. We also suggest that other similarly complex models deserve further consideration including Metz and McCarthy's "good enough sex"<sup>8</sup> model, Kleinplatz and Menard's "optimal sexuality,"<sup>9</sup> and Ogden's multidimensional model.<sup>10</sup> We trust we have again clarified that sexual function cannot be accurately assessed if an important empirically based component is absent from the research tool used.

Miriam Driscoll, MD, FRCP<sup>1</sup>,  
 Rosemary Basson, MD, FRCP(UK)<sup>1</sup>, Lori Brotto, PhD<sup>1</sup>,  
 Shauna Correia, MD, FRCP<sup>1</sup>,  
 David Goldmeier, MD, FRCP(UK)<sup>2</sup>, Ellen Laan, PhD<sup>3</sup>,  
 Mijal Luria, MD, FRCP<sup>4</sup>, Willibrord Shultz, MD, PhD<sup>5</sup>,  
 Leonore Tiefer, PhD<sup>6</sup>, and Frederick Toates, PhD, DSc<sup>7</sup>  
 University of British Columbia  
 BC Centre for Sexual Medicine, UBC Hospital  
 Vancouver, BC, Canada  
 St Marys Hospital, London, UK  
 Department of Sexology and Psychosomatic  
 Obstetrics and Gynecology, Academic Medical Center  
 University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
 Obstetrics and Gynecology  
 Hadassah University Hospital  
 Mt Scopus, IL, USA  
 Obstetrics and Gynecology  
 Universitair Medisch Centrum Groningen  
 Groningen, The Netherlands  
 New York University School of Medicine  
 New York, NY, USA  
 Department of Biological Sciences  
 The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

**Corresponding Author:** Miriam Driscoll, MD, FRCP, University of British Columbia, BC Centre for Sexual Medicine, UBC Hospital, Purdy Pavilion, 2221 Wesbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 2B5, Canada; E-mail: [Miriam.Driscoll@vch.ca](mailto:Miriam.Driscoll@vch.ca)

*Conflicts of Interest:* The authors report no conflicts of interest.

*Funding:* None.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jsxm.2017.03.248>

## STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

### Category 1

#### (a) Conception and Design

Miriam Driscoll; Rosemary Basson; Lori Brotto; Shauna Correia; David Goldmeier; Ellen Laan; Mijal Luria; Willibrord Shultz; Leonore Tiefer; Frederick Toates

#### (b) Acquisition of Data

Not applicable

#### (c) Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Not applicable

### Category 2

#### (a) Drafting the Article

Miriam Driscoll; Rosemary Basson

#### (b) Revising It for Intellectual Content

Miriam Driscoll; Rosemary Basson; Lori Brotto; Shauna Correia; David Goldmeier; Ellen Laan; Mijal Luria; Willibrord Shultz; Leonore Tiefer; Frederick Toates

### Category 3

#### (a) Final Approval of the Completed Article

Miriam Driscoll; Rosemary Basson; Lori Brotto; Shauna Correia; David Goldmeier; Ellen Laan; Mijal Luria; Willibrord Shultz; Leonore Tiefer; Frederick Toates

## REFERENCES

1. Ferenidou F, Kirana PS, Fokas K, et al. Sexual response models: toward a more flexible pattern of women's sexuality. *J Sex Med* 2016;13:1369-1376.
2. Both S, Everaerd W, Laan E. Desire emerges from excitement: a psychophysiological perspective on sexual motivation. In: Janssen E, ed. *The psychophysiology of sex*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; 2007. p. 327-339.
3. Basson R. Human sex-response cycles. *J Sex Marital Ther* 2009;27:33-43.
4. Toates F. An integrative theoretical framework for understanding sexual motivation, arousal, and behavior. *J Sex Res* 2009;46:168-193.
5. Girdali A, Kristensen E, Sand M. Endorsement of models describing sexual response of men and women with a sexual partner: an online survey in a population sample of Danish adults ages 20–65 years. *J Sex Med* 2015;12:116-128.
6. Basson R, Toates F, Laan E, et al. Problematic endorsement of models describing sexual response of men and women with a sexual partner. *J Sex Med* 2015;12:1848-1850.
7. Kaplan HS. Hypoactive sexual desire. *J Sex Marital Therapy* 1979;3:3-9.
8. Metz M, McCarthy B. *Enduring Desire: Your Guide to Lifelong Intimacy*. London, UK: Routledge; 2010.
9. Kleinplatz PJ, Menard AD. Building blocks toward optimal sexuality: Constructing a conceptual model. *The Family Journal* 2007;15:72-78.
10. Ogden G. *Expanding the Practice of Sex Therapy: An integrative Model for Exploring Desire and Intimacy*. New York: Routledge; 2013.