

Power of the Female Orgasm:

A Nationally Representative, Dyadic Study of Newlywed Orgasm Experience



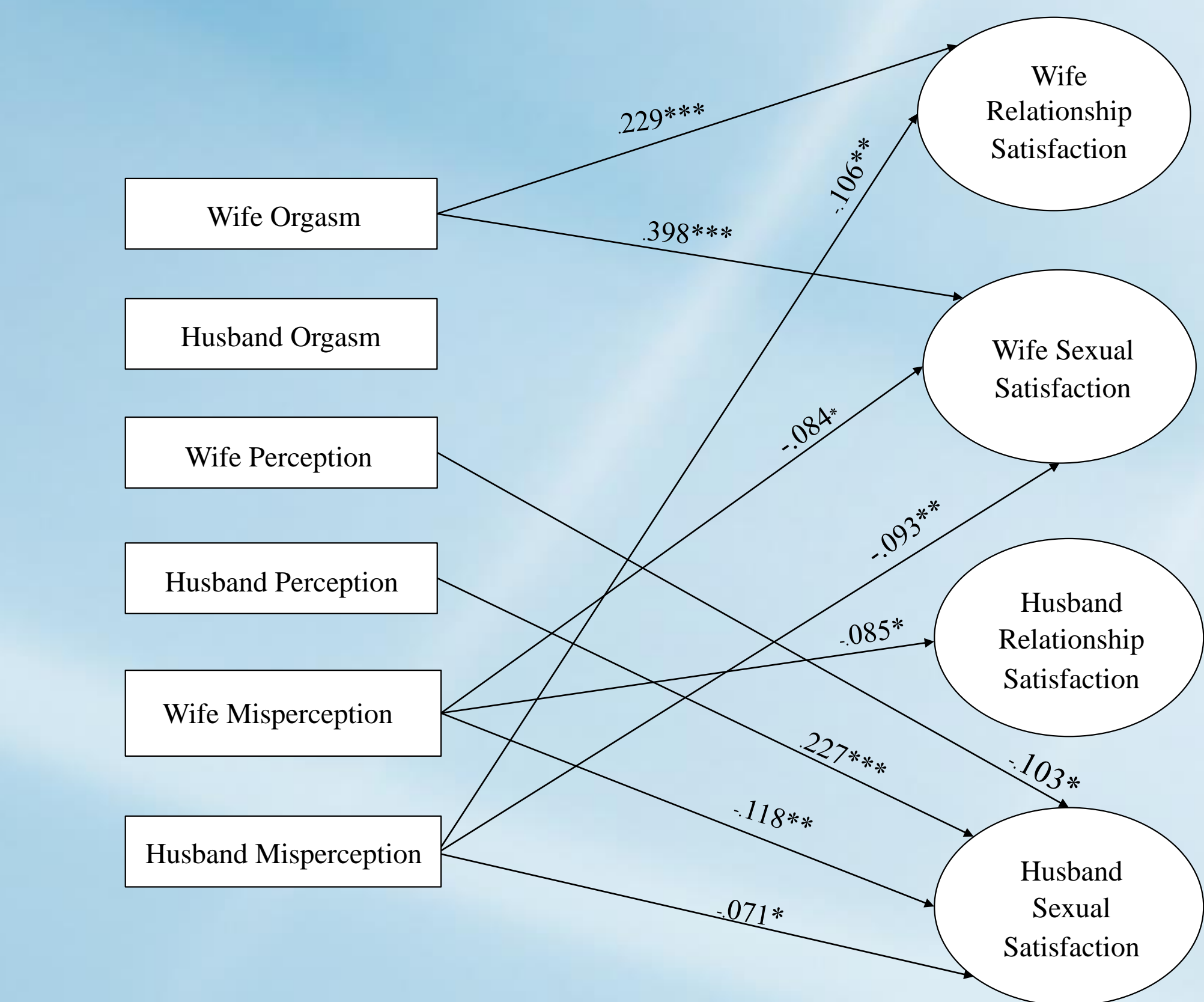
Introduction

- Orgasm is often viewed as a goal for sexual activity (Operman et al., 2014) and a source of intense pleasure in a sexual relationship (Fahs, 2014).
- Self-reported orgasm plays a role in positive relational experiences, as it is often reported as a primary object of sexual desire (Mark et al., 2014).
- Helping a partner reach orgasm is also a fulfilling aspect of the relationship (Opperman et al., 2014).
- Past research on sexual desire (Willoughby & Vitas, 2012) suggests that misperception of a partner's orgasm may also uniquely influence relationship well-being.
- By simultaneously evaluating self-reported orgasm, perception of a partner's orgasm, and misperception of a partner's orgasm, we hoped to clarify the relative importance of each aspect of orgasm experience, even when accounting for sexual communication and other controls.

Method

- Sample drawn from CREATE, sample of 2,187 newlywed couples.
- The final analytic sample included a nationally representative sample of 1683 heterosexual couples.
 - Couples who did not complete sexuality questions did not differ on age, race, education, or religiosity.
- Assessed self-report orgasm, perception of partner orgasm, and misperception of partner orgasm. Misperception indicated the discrepancy between how often the individual reported his or her partner is having orgasm and how often the partner actually reported being orgasmic.
- Sexual Communication: Husband $\alpha = .76$ Wife $\alpha = .81$
 - "I talk openly with my partner about our sexual relationship"
- Relationship satisfaction (CSI): Husband $\alpha = .93$ Wife $\alpha = .94$
 - "How rewarding is your relationship with your partner"
- Sexual Satisfaction: Husband $\alpha = .85$ Wife $\alpha = .83$.
 - "...amount of love and affection in your sexual relationship"
- Control Variables: Age difference, race, education, religiosity.

Figure 1. SEM assessing orgasm variables, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction



$\chi^2 (317) = 969.926, p < .001, CFI = .957, RMSEA = .035$
All analyses controlled for age difference, race, couple religiosity, and couple education.

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Key Findings

- Forty-two percent of husbands misperceive how often their wives are orgasmic.
- Wives' orgasm (wives' self-report of frequency, and husbands' perception of frequency), has a unique positive association with sexual satisfaction.



Wife Report		Husband Report		Wife Perception		Husband Perception		Wife Misperception		Husband Misperception	
0-20%	13%	0-20%	1%	0-20%	2%	0-20%	7%				
21-40%	8%	21-40%	1%	21-40%	1%	21-40%	7%	Under	6%	Under	17%
41-60%	12%	41-60%	3%	41-60%	2%	41-60%	13%	Accurate	86%	Accurate	58%
61-80%	18%	61-80%	8%	61-80%	6%	61-80%	23%	Over	8%	Over	25%
81-100%	49%	81-100%	87%	81-100%	89%	81-100%	50%				

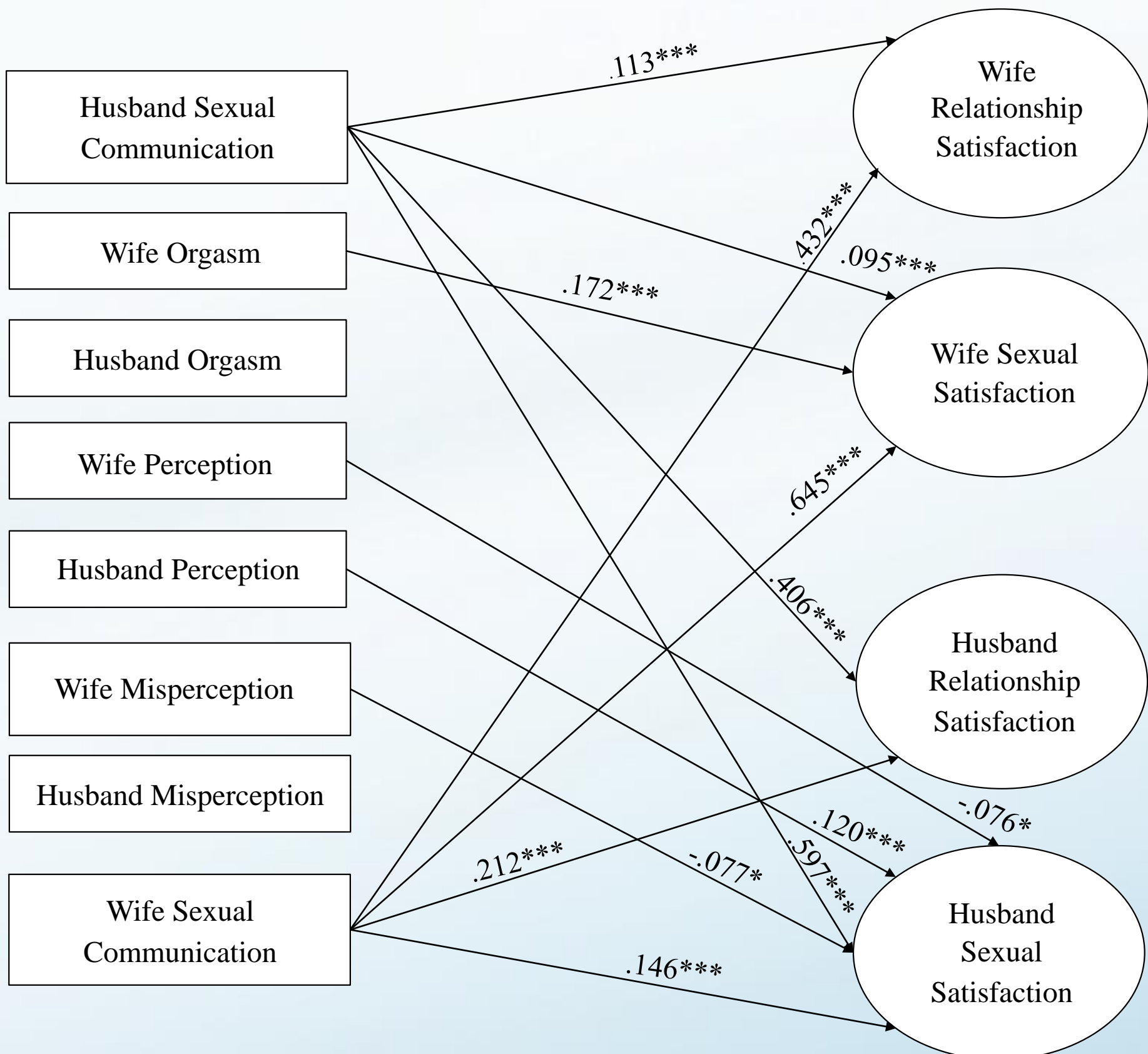
Results

- For the measurement model, Modification indices suggested one error correlation for two items of men's relationship satisfaction that substantially improved model fit. The final measurement model fit the data adequately ($\chi^2 (89) = 588.523, p < .001, CFI = .963, RMSEA = .053$), with all factor loadings above .65 for both husbands and wives
- In the first SEM, Figure 1 shows all significant pathways. The model had good fit and explained moderate variance of wives' relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .139$), wives' sexual satisfaction ($R^2 = .232$), husbands' sexual satisfaction ($R^2 = .176$), and small variance for husbands' relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .071$).
- Next, we added husbands' and wives' sexual communication to the model. Figure 2 shows all significant pathways. The model explained moderate variance of wives' relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .335$) and husbands' relationship satisfaction ($R^2 = .312$), and high variance for wives' sexual satisfaction ($R^2 = .619$), and husbands' sexual satisfaction ($R^2 = .566$).

Discussion

- Woman's self-reported orgasm plays an important role in her own sexual satisfaction, yet not as important of a role in her overall relationship satisfaction.
- The association between wives' self-reported orgasm and her own sexual satisfaction was much smaller in the model that included sexual communication. This could possibly be due to sexual communication facilitating a higher likelihood of orgasm (Kelly et al., 2004)
- Men's perception of wives' orgasm being positively associated with their own sexual satisfaction lines up with previous research suggesting men rate pleasing their partner as a high priority in their sexual experience (Mark et al., 2014), and that helping their partner achieve orgasm acts as a masculinity achievement (Chadwick & van Anders, 2017).
- Misperception of both husbands' and wives' orgasm was a problem in the initial model, but largely disappeared when sexual communication was added. Lack of sexual communication could be part of the reason misperceptions of orgasm negatively influence satisfaction.

Figure 2. SEM assessing orgasm variables, sexual communication, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction..



$\chi^2 (341) = 1005.249, p < .001, CFI = .959, RMSEA = .034$
All analyses controlled for age difference, race, couple religiosity, and couple education.