Gendered Silence: Examining Sexual Socialization, Gender-Role Self-Concept, Self-Silencing and Menstrual Attitudes

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Introduction

Comprehensive sexuality education

Includes puberty, menstruation, relationships, identity-formation; science-based

- Grozelle, 2017; Proulx et al., 2019
- Baker et al., 2014; De La Rue et al., 2014; Sosa-Robi et al., 2017
- Bourke et al., 2014; Rohrbach et al., 2015

Restrictive sexuality education

Includes strict abstinence until marriage, not inclusive of SGM, not based in science

- Natarajan et al., 2022; Reynolds, 2013; Schmitt et al., 2020

Theoretical Frameworks

Foucauldian Self-policing
- Foucault, 1979

Purity Culture Discourse

Social Constructionism
- Burr & Dick, 2017

Literature Review

Negative menstrual attitudes
- Davies et al., 2022
- Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2020

Positive menstrual attitudes
- Hawkey et al., 2017
- Mondragon & Txertudi, 2019

Gender socialization
- Frank & Thomas, 2003
- Ussher, 2004

Menstruating = woman = secret
- Puzio & Best, 2020
- Sveinsdottir, 2017
- Frank, 2020
- Bobel & Fahs, 2020
- Forbes et al., 2003

Gender & self-silencing
- Abrams et al., 2019
- Ramirez-Ortiz et al., 2019
- Maji & Dixit, 2019
- Jack & Ali, 2010

Sexual socialization
- Harvey et al., 2023
- Fletcher et al., 2015
- Stewart et al., 2022
- McAllister et al., 2022
- Trinh & Ward, 2016

Objective

Evaluated the relationships among sexual socialization from parents and peers and an individual's gender-role self-concept, self-silencing behaviors, and menstrual attitudes

Hypothesis

We expected to see more traditional gender-role self-concept, self-silencing behaviors, and negative menstrual attitudes in participants with more conservative sexual socialization

Method

Demographic Questions

- Age
- Class year
- Gender identity
- Sexual identity (orientation)
- Race/ethnicity
- "Do you identify as disabled?"
- Relationship status
- Currently sexually active?
- Elementary school attended
- School sexuality education type
- "I currently menstruate," "I have menstruated before but do not currently," & "I have never menstruated"

Variables and Measures

- **Menstrual Attitudes: Beliefs about and Attitudes Toward Menstruation Scale (BATM) (Marvan et al., 2006)**
  - 5 subscales: Secrecy, Annoyance, Proscriptions/Prescriptions, Disability, Pleasant
- **Gender-role self-concept: Traditional Masculinity and Femininity Scale (TMF) (Kachel et al., 2016)**
- **Self-silencing: Silencing the Self Scale (STSS) (Jack & Dill, 1992)**
  - 2 subscales: Externalized Self-Perception, Silencing the Self
- **Sexual Socialization Instrument (SSI) (Lottes & Kuriloff, 2020)**
  - 2 subscales: Parents, Peers

Participants' Demographics

N = 215

Characteristic	n	%
Age		
18	34	15.8
19	79	36.7
20	49	22.8
21	30	14
22	8	3.7
23	5	2.3
24	1	0.5
29	1	0.5
Class Year		
First Year	29	13.5
Sophomore	91	42.3
Junior	59	27.4
Senior	31	14.4
Other (e.g. Fifth Year)	5	2.3
Race Category		
White (non-Hispanic)	152	70.7
White (Hispanic)	18	8.4
Black	12	5.6
Asian	12	5.6
South Asian	11	5.1
Middle Eastern/Arab	1	0.5
Only Response	2	0.9
Multiracial	7	3.3

Characteristic	n	%
Sexual Identity		
Asexual	1	0.5
Bisexual	30	14
Demisexual	3	1.4
Gay	1	0.5
Heterosexual/Straight	145	67.4
Lesbian	8	3.7
Pansexual	4	1.9
Queer/Questioning/Unsure	4	1.9
Insufficient Data	19	8.8
Disability Identity		
Yes	4	1.9
No	209	97.2
Prefer not to answer	2	0.9
Elementary school		
Public	194	90.2
Private	20	9.3
Other	1	0.5
Sexuality education received at school		
Comprehensive	60	27.9
Comprehensive with abstinence emphasis	91	42.3
Abstinence only	20	9.3
I don't know/I don't remember	34	15.8
None	10	4.7
Relationship status		
In a romantic relationship	96	44.7
Not in a romantic relationship	119	55.3
Sexually active	121	56.3
Not sexually active	94	43.7
Menstrual experience		
Currently menstruate	190	88.4
Have menstruated, not currently	23	10.7
Never menstruated	1	0.5

Subscale Descriptives

Scale	M	SD	Cronbach's α
TMF	5.6	0.96	0.89
SSI-total	2.66	0.49	0.77
SSI-parent	2.3	0.64	0.701
SSI-peer	2.899	0.56	0.69
STSS			
STSS-ESP	3.43	0.92	0.84
STSS-STSS	2.64	0.78	0.85
BATM			
BATM-SEC	1.79	0.47	0.75
BATM-ANN	3.76	0.58	0.86
BATM-PRS	1.96	0.73	0.87
BATM-DIS	2.75	0.9	0.81
BATM-PLT	3.03	0.62	0.67

SSI – Sexual Socialization Instrument, STSS – Silencing the Self Scale (Subscales: Externalized Self-Perception, Silencing the Self), BATM – Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Menstruation (Subscales: Secrecy, Annoyance Proscriptions/Prescriptions, Disability, Pleasant)

Bivariate Correlations

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Traditional Femininity	213	5.6	0.96	-									
2. Silencing the Self - Externalized Self-Perception	214	3.43	0.92	-0.034	-								
3. Silencing the Self - Self-Silencing	213	2.64	0.78	-0.056	.530**	-							
4. Believing Menstruation is Secret	213	1.79	0.47	.213**	0.05	.226**	-						
5. Believing Menstruation is Annoying	214	3.76	0.58	0.02	.273**	.233**	.242**	-					
6. Believing Menstruators Have Proscriptions and Prescriptions	212	1.96	0.73	0.116	0.062	.143*	.435**	.290**	-				
7. Believing Menstruation is Disabling	213	2.75	0.9	0.089	0.115	0.089	.197**	.590**	.350**	-			
8. Believing Menstruation is Pleasant	213	3.03	0.62	0.095	0.008	-0.044	0.067	-.189**	0.026	-0.041	-		
9. Permissive Parent Sexual Socialization	213	2.3	0.64	0.02	-0.061	-0.064	-0.091	-0.104	-0.087	-0.062	-0.026	-	
10. Permissive Peer Sexual Socialization	208	2.899	0.56	0.01	.185**	0.102	-0.048	0.048	-.205**	-0.09	0.071	.337**	-

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Multivariate Regression

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects[a]

Source	Dependent Variable	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[j]
SSI_PARENTMEAN	TMF_Mean	.725	.001	.124	.064
	STSS_ESP_Mean	.148	.011	2.112	.304
	STSS_STS_Mean	.317	.005	1.008	.170
	BATM_SEC_Mean	.333	.005	.941	.162
	BATM_ANN_Mean	.100	.014	2.727	.376
	BATM_PRS_Mean	.756	.000	.097	.061
	BATM_DIS_Mean	.345	.005	.895	.156
	BATM_PLT_Mean	.398	.004	.718	.135
SSI_PEERMEAN	TMF_Mean	.902	.000	.015	.052
	STSS_ESP_Mean	.001	.053	10.745	.903
	STSS_STS_Mean	.068	.017	3.376	.448
	BATM_SEC_Mean	.499	.002	.459	.103
	BATM_ANN_Mean	.122	.012	2.417	.340
	BATM_PRS_Mean	.004	.041	8.317	.818
	BATM_DIS_Mean	.436	.003	.609	.121
	BATM_PLT_Mean	.224	.008	1.488	.229

Discussion

Permissive parent sexual attitudes – permissive peer sexuality attitudes

- McAllister et al., 2022
- Landor et al., 2011; Rodgers et al., 2011

More permissive peer sexual attitudes predicted more self-silencing based on other's perceptions

- Deutsch et al., 2014; Martens et al., 2006
- Kreager & Staff, 2009; Kreager et al., 2016; Vrangalova & Bukberg, 2015

More permissive peer sexual attitudes predicted lower endorsement of menstruation restrictions

- Grossman et al., 2018; Rubinsky & Cooke-Jackson, 2017, Rubinsky et al., 2020

Discussion continued

Limitations

- Homogenous Sample
- Time
- Self-silencing measure

Future Directions

- Participant sexuality attitudes versus behaviors
- Media influence – Tripartite Model
- Peer definition

Thank you!

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