

# **INSTRUCTOR MANUAL**

**Discussion Guide & Test Questions For** 

**BECOMING CLITERATE:** WHY ORGASM EQUALITY MATTERS—AND HOW TO GET IT BY DR. LAURIE MINTZ

#### INTRODUCTION

This study guide is designed to help educators use Dr. Laurie Mintz's book to enhance critical thinking and awareness of women's sexuality, particularly of the cultural mores surrounding and inhibiting women's sexual pleasure. The book and study guide can be used in classrooms and brown-bag-lunch-type meetings at the community college, college, and university levels and in a variety of community settings.

Becoming Cliterate (HarperOne, 2017) is a combination of feminist/cultural analysis and prescriptive self-help aimed at closing what researchers have termed the "orgasm gap," which is the consistent finding that young adult men are having significantly more orgasms than are young adult women (e.g., Frederick, St. John, Garcia & Llloyd, 2017). While Becoming Cliterate is written in an entertaining and accessible format for a lay audience, it is heavily steeped in academic science and research, with works from various fields integrated including, but not limited to, anthropology, biology, psychology, sociology, and women's and gender studies.

This study guide consists of three topic-related discussion sections (as well as one section with a variety of miscellaneous discussion questions) which can be used together or independently in any order and adopted to any size group. The final section includes several multiple choice test questions on the book. Please note that the chapters covered are noted throughout this guide, as instructors may choose to assign only portions of the book. Please also note that not all chapters are equally covered in the discussion topic and test questions. Instructors desiring further guidance with additional chapters are welcome to contact the author of Becoming Cliterate, Dr. Laurie Mintz, at mintzl@ufl.edu.

#### **TOPIC 1: REASONS FOR THE PLEASURE GAP (CHAPTER 1)**

In Becoming Cliterate, Dr. Mintz lists several reasons for the pleasure gap including, but not limited to:

- What she terms the #1 Lie About Getting Laid, or in other words, false images of women having orgasms from intercourse alone;
- The sexual double standard:
- Media images of sexy women which cause women to attend more to how they look to others versus how they feel, thereby placing emphasis on being sexually desirable versus their own sexual desires;
- Women's body image self-consciousness during sexual intimacy;
- The sex-negative focus of our sex education programs;
- Lack of training in sexual communication.
  - Can you think of other reasons for the pleasure gap?
  - 2. Do you disagree with any of these reasons that Dr. Mintz cited, or in other words, do you view all of the aforementioned reasons as accurate reflections of our current culture?
  - 3. Do you think that what Dr. Mintz cited as the #1 reason is actually the top reason—false images of women having orgasms during intercourse? Or would you pick something else as the main culprit?

## **TOPIC 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT, CURRENT DAY CONTEXT,** AND FUTURIST VISION (CHAPTERS 3 AND 10)

In Becoming Cliterate, Dr. Mintz includes a chapter that puts the devaluing of women's most reliable route to orgasmclitoral stimulation—in a historical context, and she also outlines the present-day context surrounding this issue. She also includes a chapter on the future, in which she encourages readers to spread the word about orgasm equality, so that someday the concepts in this book will no longer be considered radical.

- 1. After writing this book, Dr. Mintz was interviewed by a magazine reporter who asked, "How can we still be dealing with this in a post-sexual revolution society?" If you were Dr. Mintz, how would you have answered this question?
- 2. This same reporter asked Dr. Mintz, "What would you say to critics who point out that there are many more important equality-based issues to fight for?" Do you see a connection between other women's issues and orgasm inequality, including the wage gap and the orgasm gap, and sexual violence and the orgasm gap?
- 3. Dr. Mintz also presents a vision for the future and actions that individuals can take to spread the word about orgasm equality.
  - a. Do you think this future of orgasm equality is within our reach?
  - b. Do you have any other ideas on how to create a future in which the orgasm gap no longer exists?

# **TOPIC 3: LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS (CHAPTER 2)**

In Becoming Cliterate, Dr. Mintz includes an entire chapter focusing on linguistic analysis—specifically, how the words we use are male-centric (e.g., sex = intercourse) and how they relegate women's most reliable route to orgasm to nameless invisibility (e.g., calling all of women's sexual anatomy a "vagina").

- 1. What was your overall reaction to these concepts?
- 2. Do you believe, as Dr. Mintz does, that language reflects culture but that language can also change culture—and thus that changing our language will help bring about attention to women's most reliable route to orgasm and help with the goal of achieving orgasm equality?
- 3. Do you intend to change your language after reading this book? If so, how? If not, why not?

#### TOPIC 4: MISCELLANEOUS ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Why do you think Dr. Mintz includes a chapter for men? (Chapter 11)
- 2. What were your reactions to the four new sexual scripts Dr. Mintz presented to replace what she refers to as our current cultural script? (Chapter 7)
- When Dr. Mintz was writing this book, she commonly received two opposing reactions: a) that the book wasn't needed, as the material in it was already known or common knowledge and that b) the concepts in the book were quite radical. Why do you think people had such opposing reactions to the book? Did you consider the ideas common knowledge, radical, or perhaps some of both?
- 4. Why do you think Dr. Mintz combined both self-help and feminist/cultural analysis? Would the book had been more or less effective if she'd only included one or the other?
- 5. Do you have any critiques of Becoming Cliterate—for example, topics you felt should have been included that were not and/or disagreement with any of the points made or their presentation?
- 6. Is there anything else about the book that you would like to discuss or point out?

### TEST QUESTIONS FOR BECOMING CLITERATE

- Which of the following is NOT a cultural reason cited in Becoming Cliterate as underlying the orgasm gap? (Chapter 1)
  - a. False images of female orgasm in mainstream movies and porn.
  - Slut shaming.
  - c. The vast majority of men not caring about female pleasure.
  - d. Lack of information on sexual communication and sexual pleasure in sex education programs.
- 2. Which statement about female genital anatomy and sexual arousal is FALSE? (Chapter 4)
  - a. The glans of the clitoris has 6,000-8,000 nerve endings.
  - b. It's abnormal for the inner lips to be asymmetrical.
  - c. During sexual excitement, the vaginal canal changes shape (i.e., it "tents," meaning it narrows in the front and lengthens and widens in the back).
  - d. The majority of the clitoris is internal.
- 3. There has been much debate over the years about if there are different kinds of orgasms. What does Becoming Cliterate present as the answer to this debate? (Chapter 4)
  - a. All orgasms are clitoral.
  - **b.** There are different types of orgasm: vaginal, clitoral, and blended.
  - c. All of women's anatomy should be considered one functional unit and so this is an irrelevant question.
  - d. All of the above are legitimate arguments and scientists are still debating.
- 4. Becoming Cliterate prescribes "mindfulness." What is mindfulness? (Chapter 5)
  - a. Focusing completely on what is happening in the present moment.
  - **b.** Consciously thinking about how you want your sex life to be.
  - c. Telling your partner how to pleasure you.
  - d. All of the above are true.
- **5.** According to Becoming Cliterate, masturbation: (Chapter 6)
  - a. Is unimportant in terms of a woman learning what she needs to orgasm.
  - b. Has a lot of research supporting its benefits (e.g., helping people de-stress and sleep better, decreasing pain).
  - Is frowned upon in all religions, including in new-age spirituality writings.
  - d. All of the above are true.

- 6. According to Becoming Cliterate, which is **NOT TRUE** about vibrators? (Chapter 9; also mentioned in Chapters 6 and 11)
  - a. They can be incorporated into partner sex.
  - **b.** Women who use them have easier and more frequent orgasms.
  - They can cause clitoral nerve damage if used improperly.
  - They are not addictive.
- 7. Which was **NOT** one of the three top communication skills described (i.e., "the three skills that can change your life for the better")? (Chapter 8)
  - a. Don't ask questions that aren't questions.
  - **b.** Start sentences with "I" rather than with "you."
  - c. Talk about sexual problems as soon as they occur (e.g., in the midst of sex, in the bedroom, as it happens).
  - d. Communicate about communication.
- 8. What does Becoming Cliterate claim is a woman's most important action step for orgasm with a partner? (Chapter 7)
  - a. Getting the same type of stimulation used when pleasuring themselves.
  - **b.** Using a vibrator during partner sex.
  - Masturbating three times a week.
  - d. Touching themselves during intercourse.
- 9. Which assertion was **NOT** made in Becoming Cliterate? (Chapters 9 and 10)
  - a. We need to stop making penis-size jokes.
  - b. Being interested in kinky sex is rare and often problematic.
  - Believing you have to orgasm is a sure-fire way not to orgasm; pressure and sex don't mix well.
  - d. The Netherlands has a more progressive sex education system than the United States.
- 10. In Becoming Cliterate, Dr. Mintz argues we should define "making a sexual debut" as: (Chapter 10)
  - a. When you have your first orgasm with another person.
  - **b.** When you have penile-vaginal intercourse for the first time.
  - When you have your first orgasm by yourself.
  - d. This concept is not discussed in the book.