

# Love and sex: the 60's and 70's effect



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## Love and Sex: The 60's and 70's Effect

In March of 1965, America officially entered the Vietnam War and in August of 1965, the Voting Rights Act was signed by Lyndon B. Johnson. There is no question that the Vietnam War and Civil Rights movements were intertwined. However, this paper focuses on the sex movements that developed and became apparent during the 1960's and 70's. In 1960, the birth control pill went on the market, within five years 6 million American women were taking it (Kohn, 2015). Women were liberating themselves in the bedroom, they had more control over their bodies and began to have sex sooner in life and more often. This was termed sexual liberation (Kohn, 2015). In addition to women's movements in the 1970's, non-heterosexuals also began to come forward, seeking acceptance, and pushing for more rights.

In a book review of "Those Girls, Single Women in Sixties and Seventies Popular Culture" by Katherine Lehman, Meredith May discusses how Lehman focuses on Hollywood portrayals of women over time. In the late 50's and early 60's she notices that films with women in promiscuous roles are met with strict censorship (May, 2012). In the film "Where the Boys Are", women were actually punished for their sexual transgressions with rape or assault (May, 2012). Abstinence was taught to teens at the time with consequences of pregnancy and future rejection of a spouse for not being a virgin (Zubin & Money, 1976). As mentioned above, birth control wasn't on the market until 1960. When women started to take control of their reproductive health with contraceptives, they were able to have sex for pleasure. Women began to seek out sex casually. Pre-marital sex and even extra-marital sex became much more accepted and discussed (Kamil, 2015). In 1972, the book "The

Joy of Sex” by Dr. Alex Comfort was first published. The book was written to empower both men and women in their sex lives and bring light to the fact that sex can be explored positively (Comfort, 1972).

The interest in this topic sprung from a recently released Netflix original “ Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes”. Not only does this series portray the series of crimes that Ted Bundy committed, but it also dives into the history and current events during that time. Especially the Women’s Liberation Movement, it mentions that women were burning their bras in protest and were seeking equal status to men. Since Ted Bundy’s crimes were spread across the country, occurred over multiple years, and were covered on television nationwide, it only seems relevant to discuss how the fear he invoked on women affected rape culture and women’s liberation.

As mentioned above, women were becoming more and more liberated in their sex lives, having sex casually and for pleasure. The film “ Looking for Mr. Goodbar” showed widespread fears of feminism and punished women characters for pursuing sex in the masculine matter that men do (May, 2012). Due to the fact that women were seeking sex from men, those who were opposed began to blame women when they were victimized. Many films of the time period showed that women were asking for it when attacked or raped (May, 2012). At the time rape wasn’t as clearly defined as it is today. Criminalization of marital rape in the U. S. didn’t occur at all until the mid-1970’s and was not illegal in all 50 states until the early 90’s. The article titled “ Sex Abuse and ‘ That 70’s Excuse’”, discusses the views on sexual assault at the time one man interviewed stated that at the time it was all casual and spontaneous and didn’t seem wrong referring to relations he had

<https://assignbuster.com/love-and-sex-the-60s-and-70s-effect/>

with male students (Kamil, 2015). With the growth of experimentation with drugs, they too became the excuse for rape and sexual assault (Kamil, 2015). This '70's excuse' was used by Bill Cosby in recent years to attempt to defend the use of Quaaludes with women he had sex with (Kamil, 2015). With the use of recreational drugs during sex, laws and expectations have changed for the definition of consent with a sober state of mind. Rape isn't caused by women using drugs or walking alone at night, it is the combination of psychological, sociological, and biological factors that go into what makes someone a rapist (Wiest, 2016). It is amazing to think that a whole gender had to change its actions due to a fear of becoming a victim. Following the first few victims of Ted Bundy, news coverage advised young women to stay out of alleys, travel in groups of twos or threes, and use only the front doors (Berlinger, 2019). After a woman was murdered on her way home from work in the U. S., the idea to 'take back the night' occurred (Bruley & Forster, 2016). The idea spread to Europe and in the late 70's and early 80's there were torch lit, nocturnal 'reclaim the night' marches held in red light districts all across the UK (Bruley & Forster, 2016). Although we should be able to walk where we want and do we want without a fear of attack, serial rapists like Ted Bundy have changed what is defined as 'safe'; the Chi Omega attacks have forever changed housing rules for sorority women. Rape culture changed significantly in the 60's and 70's, people were more educated on what is and isn't rape, a benefit to every woman who has been a victim of marital rape. You cannot be high or drunk to give total consent. Lastly, it is not the victim's fault they are attacked or raped.

The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) took place from the late 60's until the 80's, it is believed that this arose from the 'new social movements' of the 1960's (Bruley & Forster, 2016). According to Zubin and Money (1976), the first formal sign of the new age of feminism was the establishment of the Kennedy Commission on the Status of Women, brought on by the post-Sputnik concern for fuller utilization of womanpower as a resource in order to meet the nation's technical and professional needs. As is the case in most wars, women assumed the role of the man in the household while the man was off to war and many joined the work force. However, when the men returned they were given their jobs back. As Bruley and Forster state (2016), women were frustrated and angry by their continued second-class status in the post war world. Following the Kennedy establishment, in the spring of 1966 many women felt that the government was dragging its feet in terms of improving the economic and legal status of women (Zubin & Money, 1976). In the fall of 1966, less than one hundred women came together in Washington to found the National Organization for Women (NOW) (Zubin & Money, 1976). Within four years of the organization being founded, it had several thousand members and one hundred chapters across the country (Zubin & Money, 1976). The organization's emphasis on the economic, legal, and political rights of women was a major attraction for women seeking the same things.

The history of the WLM has been since distorted by media portrayals of 'bra burning' feminists protesting about beauty contests in metropolitan areas leading to criticisms of the movement being urban, racist and classist (Bruley & Forster, 2016). The movement wished to reach outside of the white

middle-class women, Bruley and Forster (2016) mention that two thirds of the Black Panthers membership were women who were seeking women's rights as well as black rights who should have had a place amongst WLM. To this day the Women's Liberation Movement and the National Organization for Women continue to develop history and women's culture (Bruley & Forster, 2016).

In 1969, after a New York gay bar was raided by police, protests broke out and became what is known today as the Stonewall Riots (Kohn, 2015). These riots are viewed as the first formal development of the gay rights movement. In 1970, the first gay pride parade was held in New York City to commemorate the Stonewall Riots (Kohn, 2015). In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association finally removed homosexuality from the official list of mental disorders (Kohn, 2015). Despite the fact that homosexual marriages were illegal at the time, many long-term same-sex relationships of the time period used the word ' marriage' to describe their romantic and sexual lives (Vider, 2017). For many same-sex couples, being married and able to share a home meant avoiding the more public forms of ' queer life' where there was more threat of arrest or public exposure (Vider, 2017). This priority of the sanctity of marriage is thought to have shaped the ' homophile' movement, a group of organizations and activists invested in improving the legal and social position of gay men and lesbians (Vider, 2017). Living long-term with a same-sex partner in the 60's was viewed as a courageous act since it defied social conventions (Vider, 2017).

As Sally Kohn says the greatest thing about the 1970's was that it defined desire, desire for individual, bodily autonomy, self-expression, and pleasure

<https://assignbuster.com/love-and-sex-the-60s-and-70s-effect/>

but also a desire for society to fully reflect and respect people's freedoms. She goes on to state that wherever we as a society are now, with respect to women's rights, LGBT rights and sexual freedom it is as a direct result of the 1970's (Kohn, 2015). In a class with discussion of sexuality and sex, this generation is very important to reflect on when assessing the changes over time. LGBTQAI+ would not be as expanded as it is today without the movements of the time period. Without birth control invented in the 1960's, we may have never made such discoveries about sex that are so lovely illustrated in "The Joy of Sex". History is important in every realm of life, marriage, society, and even the bedroom.

- Berlinger, J. (Director). (2019). *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes* [Motion picture]. United States: Netflix.
- Bruley, S., & Forster, L. (2016). Historicising the Women's Liberation Movement. *Women's History Review*, 25 (5), 697-700. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2015.1132872>
- Comfort, A. (1972). *The Joy of Sex* (5th ed.). London, Great Britain: Modest Securities.
- Kamil, A. (2015). Sex Abuse and 'That 70s Excuse.' *Time. Com*, N. PAG. Retrieved from <http://proxy.culver.edu:2048/login?url=https%3a%2f%2fsearch.ebscohost.com%2flogin.aspx%3fdirect%3dtrue%26db%3dulh%26AN%3d110651018%26site%3dedu-live%26scope%3dsite>
- Kohn, Sally. "The Seventies: The Sex Freakout." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 21 July 2015, [www.cnn.com/2015/07/21/opinions/kohn-seventies-sexual-revolution/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/21/opinions/kohn-seventies-sexual-revolution/index.html).

- May, M. L. (2012). Those Girls, Single Women in Sixties and Seventies Popular Culture. *East Texas Historical Journal* , 50 (2), 138–140.  
Retrieved from <http://proxy.culver.edu:2048/login?url=https%3a%2f%2fsearch.ebscohost.com%2flogin.aspx%3fdirect%3dtrue%26db%3daph%26AN%3d79191199%26site%3dedd-live%26scope%3dsite>
- Vider, S. (2017). Lesbian and Gay Marriage and Romantic Adjustment in the 1950s and 1960s United States. *Gender & History* , 29 (3), 693–715. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.12312>
- Wiest, J. B. (2016). Casting Cultural Monsters: Representations of Serial Killers in U. S. and U. K. News Media. *Howard Journal of Communications* , 27 (4), 327–346. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2016.1202876>
- Zubin, J., & Money, J. (Eds.). (1976). *Contemporary Sexual Behavior: Critical Issues in the 1970s* (3rd ed., pp. 145-173). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.