The Sexual Revolutions of the 1960s in the US
"Movements" and "Revolutions"

- 1960s in the US: jokes and realities
- Legacy of the 1950s: conformity and rebellion (teenager)
- Social criticism: Whyte, Riesman, Beats
- Under the surface: race, ethnicity, gender
- 1960s criticism: Vietnam, Cold War, nature
- Social sciences: "conflict" histories, New Left
- "sex, drugs, and rock and roll"
- "movements" become "revolutions" from draft resistance through CRMs to feminism
Before the Sexual Revolutions

• sexual taboos: abortion, prostitution, etc.: sin, crime, or illness? cf. Freud
• language of abuse: perv, freak, deviant, faggot
• 1950s: Gay Rights Movement starts as homophile movement (ONE magazine)
• 1952: *Transvestia: Journal of the American Society for Equality in Dress*
• traditional roles: whose place where?
• drive-ins, double features and teenagers: sexual liberation and contraceptives
Reich and the Sexual Revolution

- Wilhelm Reich, Freud and psychoanalysis
- Authoritarian states suppress sexual drives and desire to promote "bourgeois sexual morality"
- Sanctity of marriage, lack of sexual education, persecution of "deviance", opposition to abortion (focus on the SU) = unnatural controls make people sick
- Arrested several times in the US, books burnt by authorities, etc.
The Kinsey Report(s)

- Alfred Kinsey: biologist and zoologist, studied human and animal sexual behavior at the Kinsey Institute
- *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948): instant bestseller, a media scientist
- 0-6 scale from hetero- to homosexuality, with X for sexual inactivity
- follow-up: *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953)
- homosexuality in the animal world demonstrated
- avoided "taboo" issues like transsexuality
Sexual Revolutions 1: Women’s Lib

- Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and "the problem that has no name"
- NOW (1966) and its BofR
- hippie communes and free sex and a new generation of contraceptives and condoms
- ERA second try, second failure
- abortion: Roe vs. Wade, 1973 SC decision
- radical feminism: Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (1970) and the "sexually expendable male"
- "The Redstockings Manifesto" (1969)
Sexual Revolutions 2: Hollywood

- film set the women’s movement back: male filmmakers and the female body
- Hays Code: no graphic sexual content or violence (1932-68)
- challenge from France: Godard, Truffaut
- softcore: 1974: *Emanuelle*
- emergence of hardcore, but in separate movie theaters: 1970: *Mona, the Virgin Nymph* and 1972: *Deep Throat*
- 1953: *Playboy* launched w. MM as centerfold (Hugh Hefner)
Sexual Revolutions 3: Gay Lib

- the last of the movements, confined largely to NYC and SF: "gay pride parades" and "coming out"
- language: queer, dyke, drag
- 1966: Vanguard (SF) and Gay Manifesto (Carl Wittman, 1970)
- persecution by police: Stonewall Riots, NYC 1969: national media attention
- backlash in the 1980s, revived in the 2000s: gay marriage, military service, etc.
Sexual Counterrevolution

- 1980s: Reagan and back to the 1950s + AIDS as God’s punishment for homosexuals
- Early 1990s: the ”rape” debates, and MC and PC
- 9/11: return of the Christian rhetoric: gay marriage, abortion (pro life vs. pro choice), ”don’t ask, don’t tell” in the military
- 2012 campaign: contraceptives, abortion, etc. again: mobilizes the conservative right
- key: private sphere elevated into politics: reason vs. ethics (or supposed ethics)
Additional Reading


