

Stefan VASEV¹**THE CHANGES IN SEXUALITY INSIDE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES****Abstract**

In the course of the past few years, there has been quite the progressive development revolving around researching sexuality, both conceptually and methodologically. This breakthrough is mainly due to the fact that both science and research have taken a deeper interest in sexuality, the moral encompassing the subject of sexuality, the sexual and reproductive technologies, all without leaving behind the medical aspects of sexuality – aspects that have been the sole source of insight regarding human sexuality for centuries. Researching sexuality has been in the backlog of sociology for quite some time now, up until the last decades of the 20th century. There hasn't been a single leading sociologist that has put in the time and effort to put the spotlight on sexuality as an especially intriguing matter. For quite some time, the subject of sociology has been gathering information from other sciences that have been dealing with the issue of sexuality, rendering human sexuality as a rather marginalized subject in the field of social studies. Due to the turbulent times in the second half of the 20th century, the human sexuality became a matter that had started to attract the attention of the professionals in the sphere of science and research. Human sexuality became a gem to research – many social researchers started addressing the subject of human sexuality more often, which subsequently led to the matter becoming the trending subject in the field of social studies such as sociology, culturology, literature, and so on. Finally getting enough spotlight, the subject of human sexuality became a highly supported issue by the movements in the 20th century, i.e., the counterculture, feminism, the hippie movement, and all other democratic changes that didn't fit the pre-approved mould of society.

Keywords: sexuality; counterculture; society; culture; change.

Introduction

According to Herbert Marcuse, “*the abilities (both materialistic and intellectual) of modern society are prominently more expansive than ever before – meaning that the level of dominance over the individual is undoubtedly more massive than ever*” (Marcuse, 1977).

Sigmund Bauman, on the other hand, regarded the modern, multicultural, and heterogeneous society as a choice-rich society that offers a variety of social value systems that would enable the individual to have a choice. Modern-day living fits individuals perfectly – it enables them to choose their own orientation (Bauman, 2013).

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In the decades behind us as a society, a lot of social winds of change have altered the social and cultural norms that have been set in stone for the time being; the counterculture is regarded as the ultimate *culprit* among the many democratic movements that took place in the second half of the 20th century.

The counterculture is mainly comprised of people aged from 17 to 30, and those are the individuals that are mostly different from their social ancestors, in terms of taking a stand for a whole different way of living.

The youngsters that lived in the 60s and the 70s of the 20th centuries were mainly driven towards consumerism, pleasure, and personal satisfaction, i.e., perusing a rather hedonistic way of living.

In social terms, the counterculture was a heterogeneous group because it was inclusive of the hippie movement, the students, the working-class youth, the addict subculture, the artists, the philosophers, and many others (Kovačević, 2013).

The term *counterculture* refers to a culture (or a subculture) that acted in defiance of the current cultural norms, in an explicit or implicit manner. In essence, the counterculture was a way of expressing the desires and aspirations of certain social groups towards enabling a cultural shift. The hippie movement, as part of the counterculture in the 60s and 70s in the 20th century, was advocating for pacifism, sexual freedom, experimenting with narcotics, and so on; in other words, it was the complete and total opposite of the predominant culture and conservatism (Žegarac, 2016).

As a social movement, the counterculture is deeply separated from the mainstream social norms. In its core, the counterculture is a response to the predominant culture, standing against social control and the integration of the individual into the pre-approved social behaviour at any cost. The subculture was a form of protest of the youth, the wind of change that will stir conformity, and the socially acceptable way of living.

The post-war period that was the second half of the 20th century brought upon many social movements that yielded certain changes in the day-to-day living of the period – one of which is the counterculture. The newly-born counterculture didn't take long to assert a certain critical approach to the existing predominant culture².

² **Clarification:** The counterculture can also be perceived as a subculture due to the fact that there are indigenous styles connected to the movement itself, like a certain way of dressing, strutting distinct hairstyles, favoring a certain art form, a distinct taste of music, way of life, using certain slang, etc. However, the counterculture is, in fact, different from a typical subculture in its ideals and political standings – opposing the predominant culture through practicing certain political activities and protests, holding manifestations and demonstrations, as well as utilizing philosophy and literature to convey a message. Also, there have been records of the counterculture attempting to form its own alternative institutions (Kovačević, 2013).

When talking about the predominant culture, or the ruling culture, as it also referred to as, we are mainly talking about a certain way of life that's been accepted by adults from an existing or ancestral generation. Hence, rejecting the predominant existing culture was actually a reaction to the crude standpoints regarding heritage and gender (in) equality, as well as swapping the existing social norms for sexual liberation and equality among sexes, normalizing the different lifestyles, stressing the need for a good time, i.e., making room for a completely new behavioural patterns among the youth.

As a social movement, the counterculture bursts into society in the era of post-industrialism, which renders the predominant culture a result of the industrial or technocratic society (Kovačević, 2013). The rebellion of the youth in that time of age was manifested through claims for more freedom and individual rights by entirely dismissing the already existing social structures, together with the predominant culture. All of the changes there were set out to cause a shift in the social norms of the time were also causing a sort of a moral panic between the so-called pillars of the predominant culture of the time.

One of the trademarks of the counterculture was the proclamation of the values of love, erotica, sexual freedom, and hedonism. The sexual revolution that emerged as a *by-product* of the counterculture was advocating for the omission of marriage – or better yet, what was socially acceptable to be called a marriage, and the traditional family structure. The reason why the subculture was so adamant for alterations in the social norms was the claim that all of the existing forms of “crowning the love” of two individuals was in fact incarcerating the sexual freedom. As an institution, family and marriage would inevitably rescind the sexual freedom and lead to a malfunctioning of the relationship, all due to the lack of releasing the sexual energy that each individual possesses. This notion was an utter divergence from the existing conservative (model) moral.

The Influence of the Sexual Revolution on the Newly-Found Views on Sexuality

As part of the counterculture, the sexual revolution is rooted in the post-war period. Globally speaking, the sexual revolution, as well as the counterculture, have greatly contributed to the revolutionizing changes in the realm of sexuality and the way it is perceived. Having in mind the period of massive social shifts, the sexual revolution can be regarded as an outcome of much larger social changes that took place in that period of time. Anyhow, it is without a doubt that the sexual revolution

is, in fact, an act of liberation of the suppressed sexual freedoms and taboos that have persisted in civilizations for centuries (Kodrnja, 1975).

In addition, according to Herbert Marcuse, the “*western civilization is entirely rooted in the repression of the erotic energy, shifting it upon the labour, all because of the necessity for pleasing the existential needs*” (Marcuse, 1985: 66). By comparing the notions of Marcuse and Kodrnja, one can safely conclude that the sexual revolution has benefited society by diminishing the sexual *don'ts* and taboos, making way for the sexual energy to flow freely – an aspect that Marcuse elaborates on in his “*Eros and Civilization*” (Marcuse, 1985),

The sexual revolution was adamant in resolving the issue of sexual freedom – an issue that has been buried deep down for centuries. To make sexual liberation a term that will be understood by everyone, the members of the counterculture needed to educate the general public on what the whole idea behind being sexually free actually is – liberating oneself from the feelings of guilt for having *overstepped* the sexual boundaries. However, there's a glimpse of partially retaining the patriarchal values in the concept of releasing the sexual energy (oftentimes linked to the sexual urge, generally known as sexual energy).

Bringing sexuality to, more or less, a level of absolution brought upon the resistance of conforming to the strict, traditional rules regarding pre-marital relations (including marriage, as well). Still, when it comes to the girls (for the boys, on the other hand, changing partners differs greatly from what is acceptable for the girls³), they take more time to decide whether to go ahead and change sexual partners (due to the fear of social labelling and being stigmatized), which can actually be connected to the historically embedded patriarchal moral that's still evident in today's society.

Be it as it may, love is still considered to be the main *trigger* that encourages young people to marry (Kodrnja, 1975).

Thanks to the sexual revolution, the newly-found *freedom* from the sexual harness of limitations unravelled the mystery surrounding sex, and, it wasn't long before a question emerged - Was the sexual revolution successful enough? Was it a *real* revolution? All of the *mist* around the concept of the sexual revolution had to do with the fact that patriarchal traits could still be found within the movement, only shaped differently. Hence, the sexual revolution, if it can really be called a revolution, should be the root cause for a completely new lifestyle.

In that sense, the sexual revolution should have brought upon substantial changes in the relations between men and women – relations that have been built upon the

³ **Clarification:** Unlike for the women, for the men there was (is) a different aspect involved when it came to changing partners; in other words, a guy would be considered more of a man if he managed to conquer more women to engage with sexually, whereas the women would be socially branded and stigmatized if they did the same.

freeing from the absurdity of sexual prejudice, as well as the clear advocacy for sexual reciprocity and social equality between the males and the females (Kodrnja, 1975). Although the sexual revolution was more of a task rather than actual reality, still, there were certain tendencies that pushed forward the idea of sexual liberation.

As more and more research regarding sexuality took place, new outtakes on sexuality started to emerge. It was 1974 when the American Psychiatric Association had finally taken homosexuality out of the category of pathological disorder (Bullock, 2006). The Cultural studies and the Humanities studies started dismissing the outdated view on homosexuality and stopped referring to it as taboo, but rather persisting on conveying more research on the variety and diversity in sexuality and sexual orientations and politics. Under such circumstances, sex was no longer perceived as a sin or a crime, but quite the contrary – as something that connects individuals in the whole system of social interaction.

Sexologist Alfred Kinsey was at the forefront of numerous research in the world of sexuality, which is one of the reasons he is considered a pioneer in the exploration of the facts surrounding sexual liberation. Through empirical research. Kinsey's data was packed with crucial information on the sexual life of individuals. It was Kinsey that marked the new dawn of scientifically important sexuality – his research was probably the first of its kind to deal with the sexual behaviour of individuals. However, although Kinsey's work is now considered revolutionary, he and his associates were greatly opposed by the religious organizations, rendering his work as immoral, going as far as claiming that his scientific work might just be the end of society as we know it.

Kinsey led a research session on almost 18.000 people that partook in a social experiment, providing answers to socially-related inquiries. According to the results, a whopping 70% of men answered to have visited a prostitute to satiate their sexual urge, whereas a mind-boggling 84% have stated that they have had sexual relations before entering marriage.

Unfortunately, thanks to Kinsey's research data, we are able to conclude that the double standard for moral was still evident – the fact that 40% of the men wanted to marry a virgin. Kinsey's research data (according to him, 90% of people masturbate) revolves around yet another aspect – masturbation is deeply rooted in people as a sexual practice, and a way of granting self-pleasure, and despite the existing religious and medical limitations (based on wrongly constructed concepts), oral sex has been a predominant sexual practice (citing Giddens, 2003 / citing Bataille, 2018).

Regardless of whether the timeline of these research done by Kinsey contributed to the acceptance or rebuttal of the matter at hand, it goes without question that Kinsey's utterly professional array of research did contribute to the alteration of the

explanation and meaning of sexuality, and the emergence of the sexual revolution. It is precisely the sexual revolution that will bring upon the much-needed change in the cultures around the world. Today, there almost isn't a culture (a society) that hasn't been affected by the changes inflicted by the sexual revolution.

Moreover, there are other social movements that have also contributed to the magnitude of the changes in the realm of sexuality, such as those connected to feminism and counterculture, i.e., the hippie movement, which have also essentially aided the birth of some new forms of lifestyles, shattering the existing sexual norms. Such movements were making it loud and clear that the sexual freedom is bound to happen, elevating the essence of sexuality to an act of pleasure, rather than a means for reproduction (Giddens, 2003).

So, the 20th century, other than making itself remembered as the turbulent era of ravaging war (mostly infamous for the two World Wars), will also be reflected upon as an era of rather deep cultural and societal changes that would inevitably lead to a whole new perspective on society, revolutionizing the social and cultural studies. The leading manifestations in the 20th century during the sexual revolution would aid in the demystifying of societal taboos, enhance social mobility, and shine a light on contraceptives, as well as decriminalize abortion – all of which would lead to the act of sex finally getting unchained from the stereotypes regarding the strictly divided gender distinctions, unplanned pregnancies, social bias and shaming, STDs, and the hypocrisy of the so-called morae pillars of society⁴.

As years go by, this radical change would only expand beyond the worldly borders, which would inevitably lead to a completely new reality in the realm of sexuality, reaching every individual, globally. Thanks to the globalization that practically didn't leave many unaffected, the newly-adopted views on sexuality and the rather fresh cultural norms would spread like wildfire. Due to the technological advancement, almost everyone on the planet got acquainted with the sexual revolution and the changes it caused.

However, bearing in mind the cultural relativism and the fact that although certain cultures accept the dominant western culture, there are still significant variations or other elements revolving around the native culture of oneself. Hence, despite the forceful dominance of globalization and acculturation, there is still a substantial number of societies that have persisted to stay true to their native culture and social

⁴ **Clarification:** Regarding STDs, there have been certain ideological and political manipulations of people's sexual orientations in today's modern world. There have been cases of different speculations and manipulations of medical data that HIV/AIDS is the outcome of being homosexual, more precisely, having gay relations (sexual contact between two men) which inevitably led to the development of a myriad of stereotypes about the sexuality of people with HIV or AIDS for being homosexual. Fact-based medicine shows that STDs are not the outcome of the sexual orientation, but rather the consequence of practicing unsafe sex, regardless of the gender.

norms, greatly differing from what's acceptable in the western cultures. There are cultures that cherish the traditional views on sexuality, and such standpoints are deeply rooted in people that belong to those cultures.

There are still societies that are culturally blind, meaning the everlasting traditional power relations, masculine dominance, sexism, misogyny, and heterosexism are still prevalent. Anthony Giddens' "Runaway World" argues that between all the changes that have been brought upon the world, none has been as important as the one that's been going in during our own lifetime, referring to the changes in sexuality or the *blueprint* of marriage and family. Giddens shared his thoughts about the world being amidst changes (apropos the changes occurring in the late 20th century) that will have everyone changing their way of thinking, whether it's an opinion of themselves, or the way others are perceived by someone.

There are only a handful of countries in the world that haven't been involved in a heated discussion about gender equality, about regulating sexuality, and about the future of the concept of family. For the first time ever, sexuality is something that is to be discovered, shaped, and altered. In the past, sexuality was something that was only perceivable by those in marriage and legitimacy, but now, it's a brave new world of sexuality that has very little to do with the prerequisites of the past. For Giddens, China is a shining example of a social and cultural system that had made the process of divorcing that much harder, but after the cultural revolution, China got on board with the change and altered the judicial system to a more liberal version regarding marriage (Giddens, 2003).

The Cultural Revolution in China led to alterations in the stances regarding homosexuality, rendering a more tolerant outlook and a more accepting society for the individuals that didn't conform to heterosexuality (Vrangelova, 2006).

Today, China has its own sex-themed park, but it was a bumpy road for China. Namely, before it was fully built in 2009, the works on the park were paused due to explicit and vulgar features, and the authorities concluded such display of sexuality would have a rather negative impact on the youth, and all people, in general. Still, the Chinese people are now more than open to sexuality and changes than ever before. The idea behind the sex-themed park was to make new sexual practices known to people, mainly through photographs, sculptures, and other features, as it has been known to have happened in the past, too.

The sex-themed park in China was envisioned as a place dedicated to people in love, people that are starting to enjoy each other's sexual energy together. Much alike the sex-themed park in China, there's a sex park in South Korea that's been open since 2004. (The Guardian: China's first sex theme park closes before it opens, 2009). The sex park in South Korea was designed to display scenes of sexual intercourse

and other illustrations focused on the sex lives of everyday people, even showing sex scenes from famous movies. Moreover, there were also phallic or phallic-like sculptures, which isn't at all odd because the main theme of the sex park was to be a crossing point for art and love, sex, and erotica.

Regarding the phallic (penis) sculptures, South Korea is also home to a special theme park, known as the penis park, displaying numerous theme sculptures of phallic, anthropomorphic form. This is only another beneficial element for today's liberal views on sexuality – the fact that the eastern cultures are more inclined toward the sole pleasure of sexual activities, rather than imposing bans and limitations on sexuality for the purpose of reproduction.

Regarding today's views on homosexuality, all of them are pretty much heavily influenced by medicine and natural sciences, as well as by the religious organizations. Most cultural systems of today are under the belt of the heteronormativity, favouring heterosexuality as the dominant socio-political driving force that's the *architect* of the gender norms and the acceptable criteria regarding individual behaviour as part of a social group.

The dominant heteronormative culture perceives heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexuality, while the difference in the sexuality of an individual could easily lead to an identity crisis regarding sexuality, almost entirely identifying the gender with the sexual orientation. That's the pivotal moment that leads to the distinction between a man and a woman – making it *clear* what the genders are supposed to be sexually attracted to, providing *facts* about the sexual orientation. For instance, if a boy acts all feminine (like a girl – being forced to conform to certain culturally acceptable norms), regardless of his sexual practices, he is labelled as gay, a homosexual (Butler, 1999).

Societies of today might as well be described as heterosexist, mainly because of the fact the core system of values, viewpoints, prejudice, and behaviour are in favour of the heterosexual individuals. Heteronormativity (heterosexism) is founded on the idea that the heterosexual relations and behaviours are the only ones that are normal, healthy, ethical, and natural – placing heterosexuals at the pedestal of sexuality, being superior to all others (non-heterosexual individuals).

Heterosexism advocates for all non-heterosexual activities to be labelled deviant or abnormal. Even though humankind has greatly evolved throughout the years, there are still societies that are regarded as homophobic, mainly because of the collective or individual fear, hatred, or loathing toward homosexuals.

The notion of homophobia is most often based on stereotypes and prejudice, and, in its essence, it is an irrational hatred toward diversity (sexual diversity, that is), which is also sometimes closely connected to a person's religious or political views.

The abovementioned examples of homophobia are the reason why individuals that don't fit it the traditional sexual behaviour is facing social branding, marginalization, or social exclusion, altogether. That way, the viewpoints on sexuality by certain societies of today can be compared to those of the past, in the period of cultural misogyny and sexism (mostly in medieval times) (Žegarac, 2016).

The Role of the Mass Culture in the Creation of the New Viewpoints on Sexuality

The term *mass culture* refers to the mass communication media. The representatives from the Birmingham School boldly dismissed the term *mass culture* because they believed it carried a certain tone of repulsion toward the *mass* and *their culture* (Atanasova, 2012). From that point of view, the term *mass culture* was believed to lack precision, giving off a sense of being monolithic and homogenous, neutralizing the cultural contradictions, whereas the term *popular culture* allowed for defining and questioning the cultural contraries, anew.

As a culture that's been a preferred form of behaviour for many, the popular culture represents the quantitative index of interpretation of the culture. The interpretation of the culture includes research on the range of creative industries, the movie industry, the publishing industry, the book-selling industry, the music business, the comic book industry, and the incidence of music festivals. A wholesome interpretation of a culture would be incomplete without the research on the market values of the works of art and other creative works, the influence they have on the audience, as well as the screen time they get (Atanasova, 2012).

All of the abovementioned point in the direction of the many changes that affected the current form of the mass culture – marking the period of total reshaping of the human needs. The appearance of mass media signalled the arrival of a certain form of liberation of culture, all with the purpose of diminishing the social and cultural differences between certain social groups and classes.

Mass media are the *culprits* behind the rate of internationalization and cosmopolitanism of the cultural values. Still, according to certain contemporary scientists, the mass culture is nothing more than a *catastrophe* for the cultural values; moreover, the intellectual circles were divided on the viewpoints regarding the *apocalyptic* or *integrated* process of the mass culture into societies (Peroux; Dibie, 2018).

It becomes evident that the mass culture was, indeed, the *culprit* for the unification of different cultures, i.e., the homogenization. The revolution that took place in the

sphere of mass communication in times when the capitalist society was predominant yielded the creation of a different lifestyle (Koković, 1997).

It can be easily concluded that the mass culture was the first universal (global) culture in the history of mankind that had — with respect to the technological advancement, communication technology, and the means for mass diffusion — penetrated the fortified cultural boundaries and expanded to an international cultural phenomenon of a global scale (Morin, 1979). What's more, according to Morin, the positive shift toward the advancement of gender roles was made possible because of the *establishment* of the mass culture.

In the words of Morin, “*the feminization of the societies that have managed to achieve a certain degree of materialistic progress is manifested by a particular swap of values. While women were no longer sticking to ladylike job, and were able to do a man's work, they were also become more present in the social circles, and didn't shy away from taking initiatives in their private lives, whereas the men started to adhere to a more sentimental behaviour – a weaker, more gentle one*” (Morin, 1979:167).

Therefore, with the development of mass culture — also referred to as mass communication, the sexual revolution became a rapidly expanding change that brought upon new ways of rationalizing in almost every society and culture; in its core, the sexual revolution awakened the dormant needs for a shift in the sphere of sexuality. In the second half of the 20th century, the media also became affected by the new wave of sexual revolution. Undoubtedly, the mass media was highly influential over the population, setting the trends on the sexual symbols, and stressing sexuality as an essential value. All of the changes brought upon society resulted in individuals devoting more time on their personal sexual preferences — people were staring to contemplate sexuality more, they practiced what they craved, and stood by their beliefs, unlike before.

The sprouting changes in the sphere of sexuality were mostly becoming evident because of the mass media influence i.e., it is through mass culture that sexuality became a thing to be experienced (Kodrnja, 1975). The pornographic magazines grew bigger in size, the daily newspapers were abundant in sex articles, but the pornographic videos were also becoming a part of the daily habits of almost every individual living in a mass culture-affected society.

The sexual reformers turned to visual representation of sexuality by utilizing films — sexuality and sexual education needed to be shown in a whole new light. The global blockbuster movies were abundant in sexually-charged scenes — the actors were engaged in sexual role-play, and the world devoured every second of it.

The depiction of sex was nothing less than omnipresent — people could witness instances of sexual nature in movies, ads, magazines, and in pop culture (Dibie;

Peroux, 2018). The sex symbols that are usually a part of marketing materials are only there to take on a commercial role, aiming for the mass consumption of a particular product. Bottom-line, sex-themed imagery was a way for increasing sales.

To put it plainly, *sex sells* – that's what marketing executives believed and propagated. Sexuality drives more sales, rendering it as a tool for advertising of a particular product, and erotica became an inseparable part of marketing (Filipović, 2008).

While the means for mass communication started to further develop, a whole new outlook on sexuality was taking the world by storm. With the visualization of the sex act, professional pornography found its way into the day-to-day lives of the individuals in the sexually-revolutionized societies.

The porn industry, as a *product* especially devised for the purpose of profitability⁵, has rendered modern societies unable to cut ties with the adult film industry. In the modern society of today, pornography is something that's uncontrollably consumed as video content (especially by the younger population), intending to stimulate the sexual urges of individuals. By all means, pornography is far from being a novelty.

Visualizing a sexual act depicted by explicit sex scenes, is something that has been present throughout the years, centuries ago. There are archeological findings that reveal the depiction of the sexual act as a stimulant for copulation – according to historians. The unearthed artefacts showcased sexual intercourse portrayed on cave walls, stones, or other surfaces thematically designated to copulation.

The majority of the scientists began analysing the need for pornographic content for the purpose of sexual stimulation; results showed that besides annihilating personal intimacy, pornography is also powerful enough to cause substantial psychological consequences like addiction, as well as social repercussions for the consumer, such as acquiring a twisted representation of the sexual activity (Filipović, 2008).

The omnipresence of the visual representations in our day-to-day lives has contributed to the labelling of the cultural concepts of manhood and womanhood; in other words, manhood and womanhood were perceived a certain way.

The aspects of the visual representations in modern-day societies have shaped the ideals of the *perfect man/perfect woman* through the commercialization of the wardrobe, style, beauty and care products, and so on. These visual representations of the new *men* and *women* have entirely altered the traditional concepts for manhood and womanhood⁶ (Djordjević, 2012).

⁵ Clarification: The first silver-screen porn movie in the USA grossed more than \$1200 in only 4 days. The first-ever porn-packed movie containing explicit scenes of sexual nature (actual sex on film) was called "Deep Throat" and it aired in front of a large audience.

⁶ Clarification: In both the traditional and the contemporary representation, the ideal behind *manhood* and *womanhood* has been completely and utterly changed. The short hair, the masculine physique, and the hairy body

It becomes evident that, from a cultural standpoint, visualizations for the purpose of marketing (or, visual representation, in general) have taken the central point in the architecture of entire concepts, ideas, and lifestyles for the creation of the image of oneself. Hence, the communication of the contemporary visual representation encompasses the social values and ideologies about what comprises a nice life – a trait that is considered a basic paradigm in advertising – to gain the attention of the viewers/consumers, to enter the diegetic world of the ad (Atanasova. 2012).

The Influence of the Feminist Movement on the Changes in Sexuality

When it comes to feminism as a cultural and societal movement, as well as a political one, it is regarded as an inevitable outcome of the social turmoil happening in the second half of the 20th century (besides it having its own history during the period it firstly became evident). The history of feminism is a long and turbulent one - with periods of massive and prominent movements to such that went by almost unnoticed, although many women have confessed to have been utterly consumed by their devotion to the movement that they had eventually went through change in their personas.

In its core, feminism is about depicting and bringing forward the factual social position of women, i.e., the suppression of women in society. How well a woman will be perceived by society will depend on the cultural assumptions regarding genders (Jordan; Weedon; 2000). Feminism can also be defined as a “*theory about the political, economic, and social equality of the genders*” (Dibie; Peroux, 2018: 558).

In the contemporary world, depending on the environment, the concept of feminism was differently perceived – thus instigating greater or smaller societal changes. The emergence of feminism is considered a result of the century-long “male assumptions” of women being instinctively prone to the concept of home and motherhood (Dibie; Peroux, 2018).

Regarding female sexuality, the pages of history that are predominantly written by male authors are entirely based on the wrong perception revolving around female sexuality and feminine subjectivity, in general. The viewpoints on female sexuality were not, in fact, derived from actual experiences of women. It was considered

are no longer the trademarks of a “real man”; today, such representations and “ideals” have been deeply altered. Today, a man takes care of his hair using a multitude of hair gels and hairsprays, he cares about his body image, facial hair is no longer neglected but trimmed and maintained, and the body hair is taken care of by waxing or otherwise removing it. Womanhood, too, has been subjected to changes, but nothing as radical as those of the men. (Djordjevic, 2012).

that (mainly by theological followers) the woman, being created after the man, was significantly inferior in a multitude of ways; the beliefs about female sexuality went as far as to involve medicine for providing anatomical evidence of feminine inferiority, further crediting the claims.

When it comes to the sexual practices, one of the most prominent social standpoints dealt with the notion that every intention veiled by the aim to induce an orgasm in a woman should be forbidden because it led to insanity. A woman would most often be associated with witchcraft and spell-bounding during intercourse (Dibie; Peroux, 2013).

Due to the pressure set by the church and the religious authorities in historical (medieval) societies, there were two predominant sexual behaviours for women – one was *acceptable*, the other was to be *condemned*. The first one, the acceptable sexual behaviour for women, referred to the one consumed in marriage for the purpose of procreation (marriage was to yield reproduction); the second one, on the other hand, was a sexual behaviour driven by passion and corporal pleasure – and that was to be *condemned*. Every aspect of sensual passion out of wedlock was considered a sin, and the woman involved was facing grave judgement coming from the whole society (Dibie; Peroux, 2015).

However, some anthropological data point in the direction of different facts – in some cultures, the girls were not only allowed to engage in premarital intercourse, but such practices were also considered a part of the courtship. Due to men and women engaging in sexual relations before marriage, the couples grew fonder of each other, developing a feeling of closeness and mutual understanding – which eventually led to a steady romantic relationship or marriage between a man and a woman – the sole sexual act rendered those sentiments.

On the other hand, in other cultures, there's data of brides-to-be being subjected to a "test" to prove their virginity, and if a woman failed, she would be killed on her first wedding night. In certain cultures, a single, unmarried woman was severely judged and bore the "seal" as a woman of great shame and immorality. In different cultures, however, unmarried women were accepted and not subjected to any social judgement (White, 1949).

By the end of the 18th century, Mary Wollstonecraft (the leading figure of the classical liberal feminism in the first wave of feminism) started the feminist tradition of questioning the biological renditions and the entirely wrongful perceptions of the female sexuality, or the female nature. The feminist women/men that begun unravelling the tangled history of the woman completely rebutted the misconception about women – about themselves. The feminists persisted in forwarding the fact that men and women share the same human nature, in fact, they claimed that being

a housewife a mother are acquired traits and that femininity and masculinity derive from culture, and not nature. Therefore, every meaning attached to the nature of the woman is a result of the culture (Jordan; Weedon; 2000).

As a social movement and a scientific theory, feminism is founded on the renditions of the inferior position of the woman in society, the gender inequality. The theories of gender inequality are mainly comprised of contradicting statements, although every feminist approach stresses the discrepancy between men and women in society, still, their notions differ in the interpretations of the causes leading to such inequality, as well as in the existence of possible solutions. The opposing fractions in the feminist movement that dealt with gender inequality were a result of the different ideological and political interpretations (Giddens, 2003).

As a movement, feminism is comprised of an array of different movements focused on the battle for dismissing the submissive role of women in society. However, feminism is more than a movement – it expanded to an entirely theoretical approach that dealt with the prejudice toward women in an intellectual manner. The main goal of feminism is to shine a light on the actual nature of women and rebutting the utterly wrongful presumptions and theories rendering women inferior to men, in both science and society (Gjurovska, 2008). Hence, feminism, as a theory, becomes closely connected to many social sciences like philosophy, sociology, politics, medicine, and economy that help it alter the wrongful representation of women and the history behind the gender. It becomes evident that feminism caused an empirical explosion in the science sphere, rendering much-needed alterations of theories. As a powerful movement, feminism managed to reach almost every discipline, with the core purpose of revisiting the traditional depictions of women persisting in the world of science (Dibie; Peroux, 2018).

The feminist approaches and goal differ from one to the other, which makes the concept of feminism a plural movement and a scientific theory. Some feminist approaches delegate the exposure, challenge, or transformation of patriarchal, racist, and heterosexist societies, while other advocate for the creation of alternative theories that would act as the foundation of what living in a society should look like.

According to Jordan and Weedon, “*the feminist cultural politics can be divided into 5 extensive perspectives (theories) with the main assumptions considered as theorizing, complicating, and acting on the grounds on the way women perceive hegemonic culture, and on the goals of the feminist cultural politics; such perspectives include the liberal, the Marxist, the post-modern, the black, and the third-world feminism*” (Jordan; Weedon; 2000: 46).

Feminism, regarded as a movement, takes on the role of racial and class *avenger*; for instance, a black feminist movement emerged as a result of the invisibility of the

black women and the racism of the white feminist movement. A myriad of black women commenced a *battle* on their own for double liberation – for being black and for being women. Black feminists advocated for the dismissal of the racist/sexist repression; some analysis state that these women have even been subjected to triple discrimination in today's societies, only because of the fact they are black women of a lower social class in society (Kolozova, 2003).

Today, feminism greatly influenced a change in numerous scientific theories – some of them even becoming declared as decadent. For instance, present-day sociologists are becoming more vocal about the fact that gender inequality is a direct result of the discrepancies in the social status, the power, and the dominance of men over women.

Now, the feminist theory is an entirely developed aspect of sociology that explains the process of gender inequality in every sphere of social cohabitating. The feminist theory is a new form of studying women, either explicitly or formally presenting the broad ideas for the basic traits of social existence and human experience, interpreted from a woman's point of view (Ritzer, 1997).

Conclusion

A scientific debate on sexuality as a social and cultural reality can be beneficial for the persisting concepts leading to the fact that individuals in society are shaped according to cultural context. Moreover, the social regulation of the sexuality has its own history and is different from the development stages of the society and the cultural history of mankind.

Michel Foucault believed that the research on sex and sexuality was practically nonexistent until the first half of the 20th century. According to Foucault, the inception of the repression toward sex probably happened in the 17th century. In the era of the inception of capitalism, sex became highly scrutinized because it couldn't be paired with work, i.e., the working class was not allowed to indulge in unproductive activities. Hence, Foucault viewed the 17th century as the entrapment era for sexuality – sex was not to be talked about, and the only acceptable, legitimate cause for having sex was marriage (Foucault, 2003).

The construction of the sexual behaviour is the outcome of the social divisions of the male and female social roles (dispersion of labour, history of the sexual behaviour, polygamy, monogamy, kinship, etc.). Through the development of the social reality of humankind, numerous different cultures emerged, and each bore its own institutional ban or acceptance of the sexual flexibility among people; there

have also been cases of societies and cultures that have altered their standpoints on the values of sexuality and sex in general.

According to research (archeological, anthropological, historical, social, etc.) on the variability of the sexuality, almost every culture and society has experienced it. The results pointed at the direction of the need for taking context into perspective – sexuality was oftentimes regarded as a taboo or a sin. However, with the nature of things, sexuality can't be limited (mainly because it's utterly intimate) with labels like universal, permanent, constant, or unable to change, regarding the history of societies. Subsequently, the forging of limitations on sexuality can lead to a false or a misinterpreted representation of the human experience.

With all aspects in mind, we can safely conclude that sexuality must be treated as a phenomenon or as an integral part of the social existence. Pressured by the massive social changes brought upon societies by the counterculture, the feminism, and the hippie movement, as well as the beginning of the era of mass consumerism, social media, and the means for communication, among other things, contemporary societies went through substantial changes in the realm of sexuality and the sexual lives of people.

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