

Sexual Wisdom of Women in the Baby Boomer Generation.... And Beyond

Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality

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Who Are The Baby Boomers ?



- **Born in 1946-1964; we are now 45-63 years old**
- **By the year 2011, the (oldest) baby boomers will begin to turn 65 creating an explosion in the population of senior citizens.**
- **The oldest members of this generation were in their 20's during the heyday of the '60s sexual revolution**
- **Women over 65 are the fastest growing segment of the population.**
- **By the year 2030, 68 million people will be over 65 comprising 20% of the US population!**
- **Two-thirds of these will be women.**

The Sexual Revolution - 1



What was it?

- A drastic relaxation in general standards of sexual behavior encompassing changes in sexual thought (e.g., sex can be pleasurable) and codes of behavior
- Occurred in the 60's to 70's
- Was helped by easier access to contraception
- Was helped by the financial independence gained by women as they entered the work force during & after WWII
 - So there was both individual equality and biological independence

The Sexual Revolution - 2



The author, Joni Baird, at the 2009 NRLC convention in North Carolina.

Other contributing factors

- Access to the Pill
- Abortion was legalized
- Access to Erotic material
 - “No evidence that exposure to explicit sexual materials led to any criminal or negative behavior among youth and adults” (President’s Commission on Pornography and Obscenity, 1967)
- More openness around the topic of sex (The Hite Report, 1976)
 - Women did not orgasm because of intercourse
 - They require direct clitoral stimulation
 - Masturbation = Easier Orgasm
 - Older women were as sexual or more sexual
- Gays and lesbians gained more rights
- Lives improved for women, people of color, and homosexuals

Baby Boomers' Attitudes and Expectations

(cartoonist: Walter Handelsman)



Health and Well-Being Matter to this Generation

- Baby Boomer's have *Expectations* – they will not settle for being invisible as their predecessors did
- Physical Well Being
- 60 is the new 40
- Activity, education and greater affluence
- Re-Defining Retirement
- The generation that embraced therapy
- The “New Sexual Revolution”: Aging and Sex !

‘Sexy grandma’ is **not** an oxymoron!*

*O’Donnell, 2009

movie: “When Harry Met Sally”



Selected Sex and Aging Research Studies*

- ----- ~1892-1920 – survey of 45 “Victorian” wives
- Davis – 1929 (n=2200 women, 40’s and 50’s)
 - Factors in the Sex Life of 2200 Women
- Kinsey – 1953
 - Sexual Behavior in the Human Female
- Masters and Johnson – 1966
 - “Human Sexual Response”
- Hite – 1976 (n = 38, 55+)
 - The Hite Report
- Starr-Weiner – 1981 (n = 532 women, 60-91)
 - Sex and Sexuality in the Mature Years
- Laumann et al – 1994
 - Social Organization of Sexuality: sexual practices in the U.S.
- AARP – 2004 (n=1682 adults, 45+)
 - Lifestyles, Dating and Romance: A Study of Midlife Singles – Research Report
- Ellison and Zilbergeld – 2000; (n=314 women, 55+)
 - Women’s Sexualities
- Cain et al – 2003 (n=3262, 42-52)
 - NIH SWAN Study (multi-ethnic)
- DeLamater – 2007; (n=1344, 45+)
 - Sexual Behavior Later in Life
- Lindau et al – 2007 (n= 1550 women, 57-85)
 - A Study of Sexuality & Health among Older Adults in the U.S.
- Hoffer – 2009 (n=167 women, 60-75)
 - Preliminary Sexological Profile of Women between 60 and 75 Years Old

* mostly heterosexually-oriented studies

Starr-Weiner Report -1981

Demographics/Data Collection

- **Ages 60-91**
- **N=533 women (in addition, 273 men in this study)**
- **14% response rate**
- **None in institutions**
- **Health: 72% (good), 25% (fair), 3% (poor)**
- **Survey handed out personally at lectures**

Starr-Weiner Report: main findings

- **Strong interest in sex**
- **“Sex is vital for physical and mental well-being”**
- **Majority feel sex is as good now as when they were younger**
- **Many women AND men feel sex is better in the later years**
- **Orgasm still an essential part of sex**
- **Most women are orgasmic**
- **Masturbation is acceptable**
- **Co-habiting without marriage is acceptable**
- **Many vary sexual practices to achieve satisfaction**
- **Many feel oral sex is the most exciting**
- **Most enjoy nudity with their partners**
- **The ideal or fantasized lover for most, especially women, is close to their own age**
- **Most expect to remain sexual as they grow even older**
- **Average frequency of intercourse in this cohort was 1.4x/week – similar to the rate Kinsey reported for 40 year olds!**

Ellison-Zilbergeld Survey 1994*

- **n = 314 women over 55 (11% of 2,632 surveyed)**
 - 191 ages 55-64
 - 79 ages 65-74
 - 44 ages 75+
- **>83% Caucasian, heterosexual, college-educated**
- **Available sexual partner**
 - 73% ages 55-64
 - ~65% ages 65+
 - ~half ages 55-64 had difficulty finding a partner in past year

* published in 2000

Ellison-Zilbergeld Survey continued

- **Most Important Factors in Sexual Satisfaction**
 - **Feeling close to my partner before sex**
 - **Emotional closeness after sexual activity**
 - **Feeling loved**

 - **Manual stimulation of my genitals**
 - **One or more orgasms**

- **See 16-page Questionnaire at**
 - **www.womenssexualities.com**

Hoffer - Sexological* Survey - 2009

Preliminary Data on Women Age 60-75

- n = 167 respondents
 - white (97%), graduate degrees (83%), heterosexual (94%)
- Over 2/3 reported that sex is somewhat, or very, important to them
- Age at which these women first masturbated to orgasm ranged from as early as 5- 62 years of age
- Age of first intercourse ranged from 15-30
- Some women had up to 180 partners - average was 13.2 partners

*Sexological perspective – the study of *what* people do sexually and how *they feel* about it

Hoffer- 2009 (continued)

PLEASURE

- **Use of Vibrators and Other Aids**
 - 57% had used vibrators and/or other aids
 - 95% found them helpful
 - >80% were familiar & comfortable* with all types of erotica
- **Anal sex was tried by >86% and enjoyed by ~ half of the women**
- **Masturbation**
 - In the last 4 months, 71% self-pleasured
 - 77% engaged in fantasy while masturbating
 - < 3% experienced shame or guilt about masturbating
- **G-spot**
 - 85% of the women believed the G-spot exists
 - But only 46% believed that they have one
 - 67% looked for theirs, but of them, only 51% sure they found it
 - ~ 1/2 felt their G-spot was important to their sexual satisfaction

Hoffer- 2009 (continued)

- **Would you say your level of sexual satisfaction has been:**

---Very much above average	33%	---Somewhat below average	13%
---Somewhat above average	42%	---Very much below average	12%

- **Age of peak satisfaction**

---15-29	12%	--- 45-59	29%
---30-44	44%	--- 60-75	15%

- **The two most common regrets were**

- **“Too inhibited” & “Not assertive enough about my own needs”**

- **Would you like to improve on certain aspects of your sex life?”**

- **I'm fine 'as is'**
- **Want to improve certain aspects but doubt it is possible**
- **Want to improve certain aspects and should be possible**
- **Want to improve certain aspects and don't know how**
- **Would be interested in resources that address this issue**

- **Over 79% indicated 'room for improvement' and wanted resources**

- **Nearly 25% doubted it was possible to improve their situation**



HIV/AIDS and Other STI's among Older Adults

- Although there have been general increases in STI rates across all age ranges, they are most prominent among older people.
- In the UK (2008, 19 clinics), STI rates more than doubled among people ages 45 and older in less than a decade
 - From 1996 to 2003, total cases of chlamydia, genital herpes, gonorrhea, syphilis and genital warts increased from 344 cases in 1996 to 780 in 2003 in this same age group
- As many as 1/5 of Americans have genital herpes....and up to 90% of them don't know it
- In the USA (2005), according to the CDC on AIDS, persons aged 50 and older accounted for
 - 15% of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses
 - ~ 1/4 persons were living with HIV/AIDS (increased from 17% in 2001)
 - Nearly 20% % of all AIDS diagnoses
 - 29% of persons living with AIDS
 - 35% of all deaths of persons with AIDS
- Statistics (2008) from the national HIV Wisdom for Older Women program show:
 - ~ 18% of AIDS cases in US females are in women older than age 50
 - In last 10 years, AIDS in women over 50 has tripled
 - Heterosexual transmission rates in this age group have increased up to 106%
 - Older African-American women are especially hard hit
 - In 2001, they comprised 11% of the population of women >50
 - But they accounted for 65% of the HIV cases in this age group

Common Attitudes on STI's in Older Women (Hoffer Sexological Survey - 2009)

- Not surprisingly, few (36%) ever had had an STI
 - Of those who did, 75% were successfully cured
- Only 30% expressed **current** concern about STI's
 - Nearly 80% had no testing in the past 10 years....
 - Nor had their partners
- Of those who expressed concern, < 20% used some form of contraception
 - Most common: condoms
 - Douching (!!) was the 2nd most common method*
- These women are at risk.

*Koblin B, Holt R, Smith C, Brown-Peterside P, Holte S, Marmor M. (1998)

Why?? Factors that contribute to the problem

- **Condom use (if any) is inconsistent**
- **Small tears/abrasions during unprotected coitus increase risk**
- **Providers often too embarrassed to discuss sex with “elderly”**
- **Early symptoms often similar to those of aging (fatigue, rashes, dementia, weight loss)**
- **Societal issues:**
 - **Double stigma: a sexually-transmitted disease along with ageism**
 - **Social bias: “wasteful” allocation of resources & help**
- **Educational programs seldom targeted at older women...how often does a wrinkled face appear on an HIV prevention poster?**

Medications that Can Cause Sexual Problems* – 1

* Altman, A., & Hanfling, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Sexuality in Midlife and Beyond*. Boston: Harvard Medical School.

Type of Medication	Uses	Examples Generic (Brand) Name	Possible Sexual Side Effects
Ace inhibitors	Heart disease	Captopril (captoten), enalapril (Vasotec), ramipril (Altace)	Low libido, erectile dysfunction
Antidepressants	Depression	Citalopram (Celexa) fluoxetine, (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil), sertraline	Low libido, erectile dysfunction, Female arousal problems,
Antifungals	Fungal infections	amphoterecin B lipid complex injection, (Abelcet) itraconazole (Sporanox), Ketoconazole (Nizoral)	Erectile dysfunction
Antihistamines	Allergies	Cyproheptadine (Periactin), diphenhydramine (Benadryl), hydroxyzine (Atarax)	Vaginal dryness, erectile dysfunction
Anti-ulcer drugs	Acid reflux, heartburn, ulcers	Cimetidine (Tagamet), famotidine (Pepcid), ranitidine (Zantac)	Low libido, erectile dysfunction
Beta blockers	Heart disease, high blood pressure	Penbutolol (Levatol), propranolol (Inderal), timolol (Blocadren)	Low libido, erectile dysfunction, female arousal problems, orgasm difficulties
Calcium-channel blockers	Heart disease	Diltiazem (Cardizem), nifedipine (Procardia), verapamil (Verelan)	Erectile dysfunction

Medications that Can Cause Sexual Problems*- 2

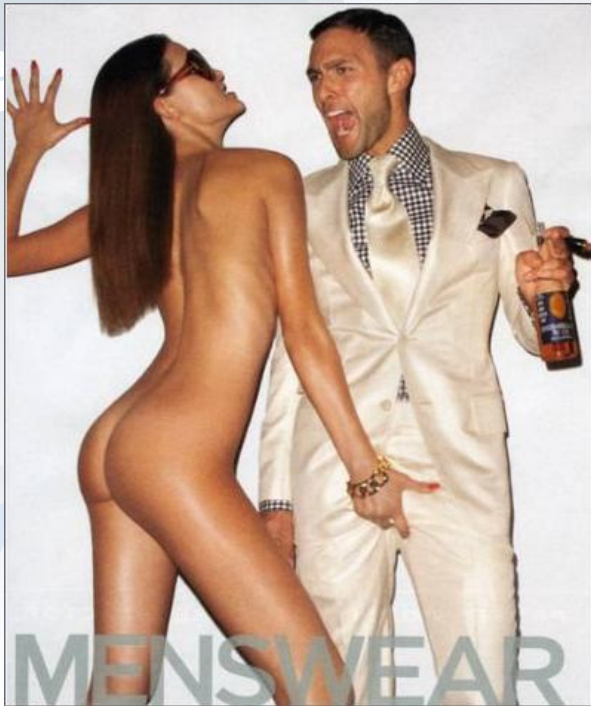
* Altman, A., & Hanfling, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Sexuality in Midlife and Beyond*. Boston: Harvard Medical School.

Type of Medication	Uses	Examples Generic (Brand) Name	Possible Sexual Side Effects
Cholesterol-lowering drugs	High blood lipids	lovastatin (Mevacor), niacin, simvastatin (Zocor)	Erectile dysfunction
Diuretics	High blood pressure, Fluid retention	Chlorothiazide (Diuril), chlorthalidone (Thalitone), spironolactone (Aldactone), furosemide (Lasix)	Erectile dysfunction, female arousal problems, orgasm difficulties
Nitrates	Chest pain	isosorbide dinitrate (Isordil), isosorbide Mononitrate (Imdur, Ismo)	Erectile dysfunction
Tranquilizers	Anxiety	Chlordiazepoxide (Librium), diazepam Valium), thioridazine (Mellaril)	Low libido, erectile dysfunction, female arousal problems, orgasm difficulties
Miscellaneous	Anti-androgens, anticholinergics,		Erectile Dysfunction
	Some anti-cancer drugs, estrogens, finasteride (Proscar and Propecia)		

How Do We Define Sex?



The model we learn !



The manufacturing
orgasm view of sex

An alternative definition of sexual success

Creating mutual erotic pleasure so that you and your partner each end up feeling good about yourself, the other, that you had a good time, and that you enhanced your relationship.

Common Physical Changes During Sex in Older Women

- Increased time from arousal to orgasm
- Fewer contractions/orgasm
- Decreased intensity of orgasm
- Shrinkage of the clitoris
- Decreased vaginal elasticity and lubrication
- Lack of increase in breast size with stimulation
- Decrease in tactile sensation and capacity for orgasm

Satisfying Sex

(artist: Alex Gray)



- Nice-to-have ingredients
 - Arousal
 - Desire
- Must-have ingredients
 - Interest
 - Consent
 - Relationship

Bill and Desiree: Love is Timeless

(movie by Comstock Films)



How Do We Honor Our Own Sexuality?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

(Photo by Edvard Koinberg)



And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight inside the bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom... -Anais Nin

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