



Sex Addiction: A Critical History

Barry Reay, Nina Attwood, Claire Gooder

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The concept of sex addiction took hold in the 1980s as a product of cultural anxiety. Yet, despite being essentially mythical, sex addiction has to be taken seriously as a phenomenon. Its success as a purported malady lay with its medicalization, both as a self-help movement in terms of self-diagnosis, and as a rapidly growing industry of therapists treating the new disease. The media played a role in its history, first with TV, the tabloids and the case histories of claimed celebrity victims all helping to popularize the concept, and then with the impact of the Internet.

This book is a critical history of an archetypically modern sexual syndrome. Reay, Attwood and Gooder argue that this strange history of social opportunism, diagnostic amorphism, therapeutic self-interest and popular cultural endorsement is marked by an essential social conservatism: sex addiction has become a convenient term to describe disapproved sex. It is a label without explanatory force.

This book will be essential reading for those interested in sexuality studies, contemporary history, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, media studies and studies of the Internet. It will also be of interest to doctors and therapists currently working in this and related fields.

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