



# **Sexidemic: A Cultural History of Sex in America**

*Lawrence R. Samuel*

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*Sexidemic* is the first real cultural history of sexuality in the United States since the end of World War II. For a people who supposedly love sex, the author argues, Americans have had no shortage of problems with it. Since the end of World War II, in fact, we've had a contentious relationship with sexuality, the subject a source of considerable tension and controversy on both an individual and societal level. Rather than being a simple pleasure of life, something to be enjoyed, sex has served as a challenging and disruptive force in many Americans' everyday lives for the last two-thirds of a century. Our love affair with sex has thus been a rocky one, filled with bumps in the road that have caused major instability across our cultural landscape. Our individualistic, competitive, consumerist, and anxious national character is both reflected in and reinforced by this "sexidemic," something few have recognized or perhaps want to admit.

By charting the cultural trajectory of sex in America since the end of World War II, *Sexidemic* reveals how the nation's continual woes with sexuality helped make us an anxious, insecure people. The sex lives of many, perhaps most Americans have been in a perpetual state of crisis, a constant source of concern. We've fretted over every dimension of it, with problems in both quality and quantity. With this unhealthy view of sexuality, it was not surprising that we felt we needed a variety of potions and gadgets to make it happen or be pleasurable. In tracing the cultural trajectory of sex in our society, Samuel illustrates our bipolar approach to sexuality: low libido and sex addiction emerged as common disorders, and sex scandal after sex scandal has made headlines, especially over the last couple of years. Only money has surpassed sex as a source of stress for Americans; indeed, sex has come to be seen and treated as a commodity.

In this timely work, the author traces the role sex plays in our society, how it shapes us and the world around us, and how we got where we are today in our views, treatment, and practice of sex and sexuality in our everyday lives.



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