



Deserving Desire: Women's Stories of Sexual Evolution

Beth Montemurro

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Women experience considerable changes in their bodies, lives, and identity between the ages of twenty and seventy, including marriage, motherhood, the dissolution of relationships, and menopause, all of which often impact sexuality. In *Deserving Desire*, Beth Montemurro takes a wide-ranging look at the evolution of women's sexuality over time, with a specific focus on the development of sexual subjectivity—that is sexual confidence, agency, and a sense of entitlement to sexual desire.

Detailed stories of the ninety-five women in this study explore how they become more comfortable with their bodies, when most begin to enjoy sex, feel confident and positive about engaging in it, and how they become sexual subjects in control of their bodies. *Deserving Desire* explores the complex multi-stage process in which sexual subjectivity evolves over a woman's lifetime. As girls, they learn about sex and how those around them—parents, peers, religion and media—regard sex. Physical and emotional transitions such as having a baby or ending a relationship further affect women's sexual confidence and desire. Montemurro emphasizes that sexual subjectivity is about feeling in control of sexual decision making and acting purposefully and confidently.

Though adolescent sexuality has been a major focus of sociological research, few studies have examined, as Montemurro does here, the development of sexuality through women's lives and the events that change the way women feel about themselves, their bodies, and their relationships.

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