EXPANDING ADDICTION:
Critical Essays
Edited by Robert Granfield and Craig Reinarman

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Room shows how the concept of addiction was a culturally-specific frame for understanding drinking problems in early 19th-century America, one which offered a secular equivalent for possession as an explanation of how a good person can behave badly and how a hero can triumph over an inner demon.

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Alexander locates addiction in an individual’s response and adaptation to the lack of psychosocial integration and a resulting sense of cultural dislocation that are characteristic of modern capitalist societies.

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Philippe Bourgois

Following up on his classic ethnography of crack use in New York City, Bourgois analyzes heroin addicts’ experience of methadone programs, showing the power relations that shape drug treatment in the U.S. which tend to make it a hostile exercise in disciplining unruly pleasures and controlling economically unproductive bodies.

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15. Social Capital and Natural Recovery: Overcoming Addiction Without Treatment
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20. **Constraint theory: A Cognitive, Motivational Theory of Dependence**
   Richard Hammersley

Hammersley provides a novel new approach to addiction, arguing that it is not so much the presence of some factor that predisposes some people to addictive behavior but rather the lack of compelling constraints in their daily lives.
   Velibor Kovac

Kovac outlines a grand interdisciplinary synthesis of the many theories and models of what is called addiction. He makes a compelling case that these approaches are not mutually exclusive but rather all interact and contribute pieces of the larger puzzle.

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Preface

The concept of addiction has gone viral, taking in more and more behaviors, at the same historical moment that public understanding of the location of addiction has narrowed to the neurological. We think this leaves out crucial pieces of the puzzles now lumped under the heading of “addiction,” as if that were one thing. We assembled this anthology in the hopes of reintegrating the social, political, and cultural components of addiction to show how various modalities of addiction have been and are being constructed.

While there is a voluminous literature in the fields of alcohol and drugs, deviance, and mental health, the sociological analysis of addiction remains underdeveloped. The chapters we have assembled for this anthology present alternative perspectives to the dominant views of addiction typically represented in psychology, medicine, and the neurosciences. Most of the chapters were written by sociologists who were influenced by pioneers in critical addiction studies such as Alfred Lindesmith, Howard Becker, Robin Room, and others. These authors tend to see addiction not merely as an individual pathology, but rather as a social, historical, interactive, and political phenomenon. Some chapters were not written by sociologists but nevertheless raise critical questions about the etiology, progression, and treatment of addiction. Each of the authors in their own way also raise important questions about social policy regarding addictive behaviors. We selected their work because it provides robust interpretations of both addictive experiences and how such experiences are conceptualized, interpretations that highlight the contextual and sociologically contingent nature of addiction.

We have organized this book into four parts. We begin in Part I with the historical examination of the genealogy of the concept of addiction as a distinct disease. First and foremost, addiction is
a concept that is applied to a set of behaviors that are considered “deviant” by a significant number of people. It is also a concept that has not remained stable over time. Peeling back history, we see that addicts have been described as sinners, as criminals, or as having a sickness, most recently a brain disease. More often than not, these viewpoints have overlapped. What is important as a starting point in understanding addiction is not the “truthfulness” of any particular perspective, but rather a recognition that both addiction and concepts of addiction are subject to the winds of historical change.

The chapters in Part II consider the location of addiction. From where do addictive behaviors emanate? For years, this simple but fundamental question has been of central concern among scholars in the neurobiochemical sciences as well as those in the psychosociocultural sciences. While some scholars see the potential for an integrated approach (Rose, 2012), the field of addiction remains mostly divided into these two intellectual landscapes, although unevenly. Nancy Campbell, a leading figure in the history of addiction, has argued that placing addiction in the brain has effectively displaced it from the social body. Writing about the rise of the “chronic relapsing brain disease” (CRBD) perspective, Campbell (2010) notes that this view has “provided scaffolding for a new optics that reorganized the federal research apparatus, reorienting it toward neuroscience with the goal of pinpointing molecular ‘targets’ for medications development. The new optics did not solely consist of deployment of neuroimaging technologies, for it was not simply a new way of seeing, but a new way of explaining what was seen.” The chapters in this section raise vital questions about the location of addiction, questions which push beyond the brain/environment binary to conceptualize addiction in a more critical and synthetic way (see Kovac’s “multi-sourced model” of addiction in Chapter 21).
The chapters in Part III focus on the social responses to and treatment of people classified as addicts. Assorted religious, legal, and medical constructs have all influenced societal responses to substance misuse and addiction. Casting deviant substance users as “sinners,” “criminals,” or “sick” has determined how they were treated -- stocks and pillories, incarceration, therapy, or medication. These chapters demonstrate that the choice among these various approaches has not been driven by science so much as the institutional and ideological interests of the professions and agencies of the state with the power to define “legitimate” or “deviant” use of consciousness-altering substances. Social responses to the use of and addiction to drugs are never solely about drugs; they are guided by normative assumptions that impute moral character to those defined as addicts. However noble the intentions of those who intervene, all forms of addiction treatment are deeply imbued with power relations; hidden beneath the surface of “helping those in need” lie the usual class, racial, gender, and other disparities. This section explores an assortment of these power issues as they are revealed through the financial interests of the treatment industry, the ideological and class-based assumptions embedded within treatment approaches, the bio-politics of treating/controlling addicted persons, and the subjugated knowledge and practices employed by those who forego addiction treatment but still manage to exit addiction.

Finally, in Part IV the chapter authors broaden the focus by examining how addiction has expanded into numerous other areas of life. They explore how the logic of the disease concept of addiction has come to be applied to sexual desire, gambling, compulsive computer use, and even our dependence on other human beings. The section ends with two unusual theoretical approaches to addiction, each outlining a conjuncture model of addiction that synthesizes many other approaches.
As the editors of this book, each of us sociologists who have worked in the field of drug use, treatment, and policy for over thirty-five years, we know the power that a sociological understanding can have in providing a more holistic view of addiction. Like most sociologists, we were raised on C. Wright Mills, who taught us that what appear to be personal troubles are invariably linked to public issues. To understand the personal experience of addiction we must grapple with the public conditions under which addictions arise. In selecting the chapters for this book we hope to give you, the readers, a sense of how sociologists think about addiction so that you may judge for yourselves the value of such an approach.

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