



Sexual Forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England: Age, Crime and Consent in the Courts (Genders and Sexualities in History)

Victoria Bates

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Sexual Forensics in Victorian and Edwardian England brings together the rich histories of childhood, crime, forensic medicine and sexuality. It puts the body at the centre of the modern history of sexual offences and shows that medical testimony in such cases was grounded in ideas about sexual maturity, which was a more ambiguous and flexible concept than the legal age of sexual consent. Sexual forensics opened up space for moral questions in the courtroom, particularly around the difficult question of when a 'child' became an 'adult'. It both responded to and reinforced age-based and gendered stereotypes of victimhood. This study makes an important contribution to histories of medicine and sexuality, and helps us better to understand the roots of 'rape myths' that still circulate today.

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