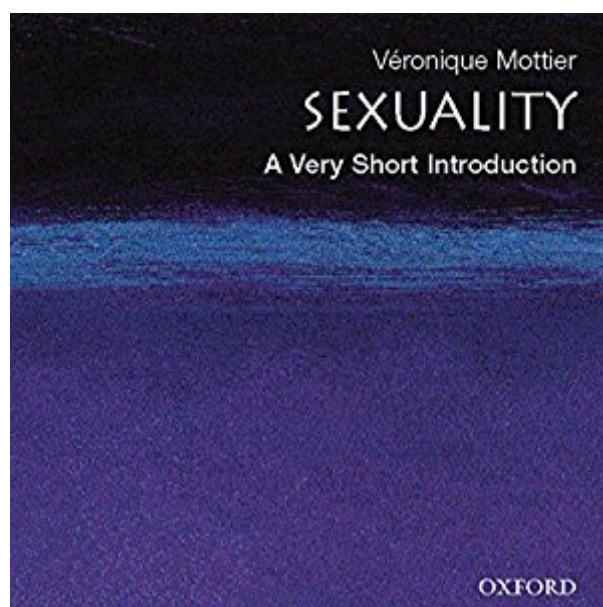


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# Sexuality: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

Is our sexuality determined primarily by our genes? Or is it shaped by the social norms and expectations we happen to be born into? This Very Short Introduction provides an accessible, thoughtful and thought-provoking introduction to major debates around sexuality in the modern world, highlighting the social and political aspects of sexuality. It critically explores different ways of defining and thinking about sexuality and shows that many of our assumptions about what is "natural" in the sexual domain have, in reality, varied greatly in different historical or cultural contexts. The volume also examines ways in which governments have tried to regulate citizens' sexualities in the past - through policies and laws concerning public health, HIV/Aids, prostitution, and sex education - paying special attention to the particular zeal with which women's sexuality has been policed. The volume concludes by discussing political activism around sexuality more widely, focusing on the ways in which feminists, lesbians, and gay men, as well as religious fundamentalists, have transformed our ways of thinking about sexuality in the past few decades.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've been looking for a one-volume text on the topic of sexuality that would include all aspects of this human phenomenon. OKAY, a tall order, maybe an impossibility. This book takes pretty much for granted the social-construction perspective and relies heavily on the work of Michel Foucault. Among the many debates in the field of sexuality, the one that most intrigues me is the biology versus culture debate. Is gender inborn or culturally determined? Or a choice? Is sexual orientation

something you're "born with" (as Lady Gaga would have it) or simply a historico-cultural phenomenon? It should be obvious that the truth is not at one pole of these binaries. Some of us certainly experience our sexuality as pretty much fixed from a very, very early age, and others seem to be able to shed identities almost at will. But a book on "sexuality" would give some space to essentialists, those, for example, who search for an explanation for hetero-and homo-sexual tendencies in brain chemistry or in events that occur in the womb, as well as those who emphasize culture. The author brings up the famous speech of Aristophanes in the Plato's Symposium, where he rather baldly and boldly posits the existence of people who yearn for the opposite sex, the same sex, or both, as being pretty much part of human nature. But our author does this to point out that Aristophanes is a comic writer and Plato was probably having some fun. This is pretty much typical of her approach, I'm afraid. Of course, the cultural explanation has much to recommend it--I just wish the author had been a bit less biased in its direction. The book has a European feel to it (the spelling is British rather than American), and thus privileges at least a bit, the European discussion rather than that in the U.S.A.

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