

## **The Cultural Construction of Sexuality**

Edited by Pat Caplan  
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### **Cover Blurb**

How do we interpret sexuality? *The Cultural Construction of Sexuality* confronts the nature of the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality. Ten studies look at a wide range of cultures, from America, Britain, and Italy in the West, to Jamaica, Kenya, Fiji, and India, in the Third World. A variety of manifestations of sexual behaviour is examined, showing that sexual behaviour and ideology differ considerably cross-culturally. Indeed, sexuality cannot be treated as a 'thing in itself', as it often tends to be in the West; it can only be properly understood with reference to the economic, political and other factors to which it is linked, as well as to its historical context.

### **Preface**

This book arose out of a seminar series organized in 1984 in the Anthropology Department of Goldsmiths College as one of the regular inter-collegiate seminars of London University. The topic of sexuality was chosen because there seemed to be little attempt to grapple with their concept within anthropology, even though in recent years there has been a flood of academic writing on the subject of sex and sexuality by sociologists, historians and psychologists...

Because sexuality is such a broad topic, it would be impossible to cover all aspects of it in a single volume. This collection does not, then, purport to be comprehensive. The articles included in it are diverse both in their subject matter and in their theoretical concerns, but from them emerges a number of common themes. The first three articles are by social historians who consider sexuality in western society (Weeks, Seidler and Jackson). The remainder are by anthropologists who direct their gaze mainly at non-western societies...

In a circular to the participants, I expressed the hope that the seminar series would explore sexuality from both an empirical and a theoretical viewpoint, and relate it to gender power, class, state, kinship, and marriage as well as to symbolic systems, in specific historical contexts. I also hoped that the series would avoid the obvious pitfall of becoming a compendium of bizarre exotica, but would aim at an understanding of how and why sexuality is constructed the way it is.