

Jon Knowles

How Sex Got Screwed Up

The Ghosts that Haunt Our Sexual Pleasure - Book One

SERIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

"I highly recommend this book. It is an essential reading for professionals in the field of sexology and the many related fields of cultural anthropology, and social and political science. Knowles research is solid with informative footnotes, appendices, and an extensive bibliography. Actually, it has great appeal to anyone intrigued by the meaning of sexuality and curious to learn more about why we feel and act the way we do about sex."

Carol Cassell Ph.D.

Former president, The American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT) and health scientist with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Summary

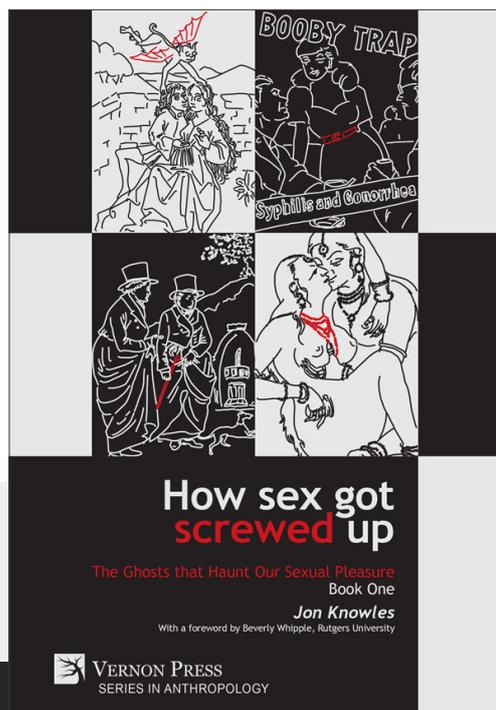
The ghosts that haunt our sexual pleasure were born in the Stone Age. Sex and gender taboos were used by tribes to differentiate themselves from one another. These taboos filtered into the lives of Bronze and Iron Age men and women who lived in city-states and empires. For the early Christians, all sex play was turned into sin, instilled with guilt, and punished severely. With the invention of sin came the construction of women as subordinate beings to men.

Despite the birth of romance in the late middle ages, Renaissance churches held inquisitions to seek out and destroy sex sinners, all of whom it saw as heretics. The Age of Reason saw the demise of these inquisitions. But, it was doctors who would take over the roles of priests and ministers as sex became defined by discourses of crime, degeneracy, and sickness.

The middle of the 20th century saw these medical and religious teachings challenged for the first time as activists, such as Alfred Kinsey and Margaret Sanger, sought to carve out a place for sexual freedom in society. However, strong opposition to their beliefs and the growing exploitation of sex by the media at the close of the century would ultimately shape 21st century sexual ambivalence.

Book One of this two-part publication traces the history of sex from the

Stone Age to the Enlightenment. Interspersed with 'personal hauntings' from his own life and the lives of friends and relatives, Knowles reveals how historical discourses of sex continue to haunt us today. This book is a page-turner in simple and plain language about 'how sex got screwed up' for millennia. For Knowles, if we know the history of sex, we can get over it.



About the author

Jon Knowles's interest in sex and society was crystallized in 1981 with the onset of the AIDS pandemic. Knowles formed part of the initial group of people trained by Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) to care for people living with AIDS in New York City. For 13 years Knowles witnessed first-hand the pain and suffering caused by individual and societal fears of sex and sexuality.

In 1983, he got a position as a temp with Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA). Owing to his invaluable experience and knowledge of AIDS, he was later offered a full-time position as PPFA's sexual health writer. During his 30 years at PPFA, Knowles contributed greatly to its print and online media presence.

In 1994, Knowles joined the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality (SSSS) to supplement his knowledge about sex and sexuality. Through GMHC, PPFA, and SSSS, he heard thousands of stories about how people cope with their sexuality and their sex lives. In his research, Knowles looked to find answers to the questions: Why health professionals saw sexuality mostly as a risk behavior? Why most people seemed ambiguous about their sex lives? And why the increasingly powerful, conservative right was so negative about human sexuality? After 22 years of research, his answers are in this book.

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SUBJECTS Sociology, Sexuality, History

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