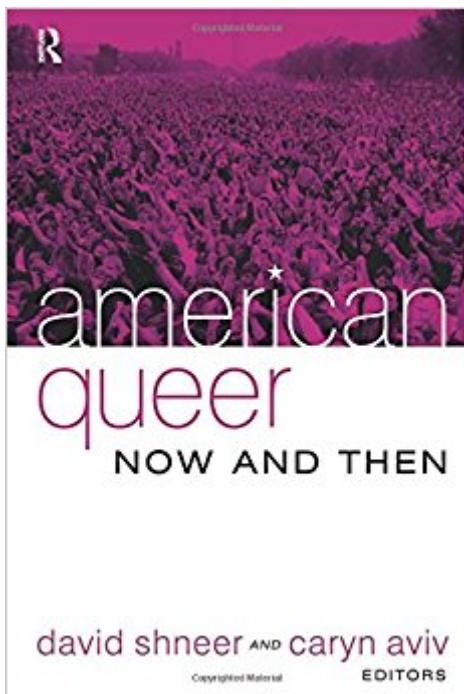


The book was found

American Queer, Now And Then



Synopsis

queer [adj]: 1 differing from what is usual or ordinary; odd; singular; strange 2 slightly ill; 3 mentally unbalanced 4 counterfeit; not genuine 5 homosexual: in general usage, still chiefly a slang term of contempt or derision, but lately used by some as a descriptive term without negative connotations --Webster's Dictionary queer [adj]: used to describe a 1 body of theory 2 field of critical inquiry 3 way of proudly identifying a group of people 4 way of seeing the world 5 sense of difference from the norm -- David Shneer and Caryn Aviv, Queer in America, Now and Then Contrasting queer life today and in years past, this landmark book brings together autobiographies, poetry, film studies, maps, documents, laws, and other texts to explore the meaning and practice of the word queer. By this Shneer and Aviv mean: queer as both a form of social violence and a call to political activism; queer as played by Robin Williams and Sharon Stone and as lived by Matthew Shepard and Brandon Teena; queer in the courthouses of Washington D.C. and on the streets of hometown America. Contextualizing these contemporary stories with ones from the past, and understanding them through the analytic tools of feminist social criticism and history, the authors show what it means to be queer in America.

Book Information

Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (March 24, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1594511721

ISBN-13: 978-1594511721

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #304,456 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #117 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Gay & Lesbian Studies #127 in Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > Bisexuality #138 in Books > Gay & Lesbian > History

Customer Reviews

David Shneer is Associate Professor of History and Director of the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver. Caryn Aviv is a Marsico Lecturer and an affiliated faculty with the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver. Together they have coauthored Queer Jews (Routledge, 2002) and New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora (NYU, 2005).

Good value, delivered promptly.

Queer America has been well examined by editors Shneer and Aviv who arranged the book into nine theme based chapters. Each is comprised of an eclectic selection of works including plays, book excerpts, medical articles, court rulings, autobiographies, and other essays that tie in with each chapters theme. The first chapter defines how Queer individuals were viewed as deviants by the dominant culture in American society in the early 20th century. A medical journal published in 1916 reflects the professional view of homosexuals as perverts and pederasts. A significant study by Kinsey (1948) was the first empirical research done on sexuality that discussed the notion that male homosexuality was actually more common than believed. This study helped to transform gender roles and perhaps was the start of a declining stigma against sexuality in general. Gay history scholar George Chauncy (1994) wrote a book that focused on the subculture from 1890-1940. Myths include the false belief that men were isolated, invisible to society, and had internalized society's typical view of them as sick. Many derogatory labels were described, some including, queer, homo, dyke, fairy, faggot, prostitute, flamer, trade, and pansy. The next chapter explores how society has looked at biological sex in comparison to gender identity and roles. In 1968 the DSM II had categories for homosexuals and transsexuals and in the 80's also included gender identity, and gender role disorders. Not only were these individuals not accepted by society, but were viewed as if they could be "cured". It was not until 1973 that experts found that homosexuality did not meet the criteria to be considered a mental illness. Gender, race, social class, and ethnicity have always shaped how particular places have been associated with certain groups. The third chapter emphasizes how areas like Greenwich Village, Harlem, New Orleans French Quarter, and San Francisco had supported these minority cultures. Specifics included bars, dancehalls, bathhouses, and underground clubs. In the 30's and 40's, bars were the only places lesbians could go to meet women. An essay by Wayne Myslik (1994) claimed that Queer spaces were often easier targets for hate crimes to occur. This chapter also addressed the Womyn's festival that takes place in Michigan every year since 1976 and the importance it has had for liberating women and strengthening their counterculture. The 4th chapter deals with how sex has been morally and politically regulated. Men specifically have had more autonomy in society so have been able to express themselves easier than women. The bathhouses in NYC were especially popular and were identified as extremely promiscuous. It was not until the AIDS epidemic that these bathhouses were later viewed as "death factories". Technology's advancement has provided

opportunities to meet other people in boundary free environments like the internet. Families and relationships was the topic of the next chapter and how they have transformed since the 70's to include alternative families. Traditional gender roles were transformed dramatically during the Civil Rights and Women's movements. Queers no longer had to live two separate lives in which they tried to conform to society's rules. The 90's marked public support for anti-discrimination but the majority opposed gay marriages, adoption, and legal property rights. Queers saw themselves as socially disfranchised by being excluded. The family institution continues to become more diverse and is breaking away from patriarchal supremacy. As the nuclear system became less and less common society became more accepting of the idea of civil unions and marriages among Queers. In 2000 Vermont became the first state to legally recognize civil unions between gay or lesbian couples. Four years later Massachusetts had the first legal same sex marriage. The 6th chapter illustrates how influential the media has been. Two of the more famous publications include *The Well of Loneliness*, and *The Stone Wall*. The play *Angels in America* was commended for portraying the AIDS crisis during the mid-eighties. It is especially impressive how the coming out of celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres in 1997 became a historic event for the lesbian community. Anti-Queer violence and social control is the topic chapter 7. At first violence was at the hands of the state and politics but once anti-discrimination acts and laws were enforced, the violence was more directed by society as explained by the editors. The most recent famous case of a hate crime was the death of Mathew Shepard who died in 1998. Minorities who go against the dominant cultures view of acceptance will always be suspect to abuse until their culture is better understood and less feared. The next theme discusses Queer activism that has been challenging society and its institutions for equality. It is unclear where the Queer culture would be today without founding groups like the Mattachine Society (1950) and The Daughters of Bilitis (1955). A revolutionary moment and turning point were the 1969 Stonewall Riots which marked the beginning of the liberation movement. Society was also more accepting because of women's liberation and sexual freedom. The AIDS epidemic changed the zeitgeist of the 80's. Priorities switched from sexual freedom to love and community. Lesbians also fought against the traditional patriarchal oppression they felt they were up against that included rigid sex roles and male supremacy. The final chapter closed with the future of Queer America and the dilemma that some feel is inevitable (Gamson 1995). Identities are necessary in terms of politics but at the same time are equally damaging and restrictive. While the Queer culture does not want to be oppressed or discriminated against, they also do not want to be considered equal to heterosexuals in all aspects. What constitutes a male or female?? As technology and culture continues to expand in and become more diverse, so will our values, beliefs,

morals, identities, gender roles and perceptions of them. I think this book focused a lot of personal accounts and opinions. I also would have liked to have had more of a biological or evolutionary approach that would have countered the feminist view that seemed to attack men as individuals and their planned agendas. Sociology after all is not interested in the individual, but the group as a whole. Overall, the book was filled with excellent personal accounts that were organized well with an emphasis in hist

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