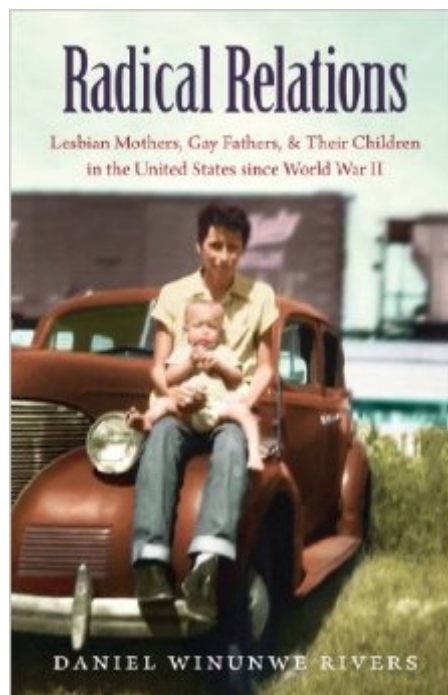


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Radical Relations: Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers, And Their Children In The United States Since World War II (Gender And American Culture)



Synopsis

In *Radical Relations*, Daniel Winunwe Rivers offers a previously untold story of the American family: the first history of lesbian and gay parents and their children in the United States. Beginning in the postwar era, a period marked by both intense repression and dynamic change for lesbians and gay men, Rivers argues that by forging new kinds of family and childrearing relations, gay and lesbian parents have successfully challenged legal and cultural definitions of family as heterosexual. These efforts have paved the way for the contemporary focus on family and domestic rights in lesbian and gay political movements. Based on extensive archival research and 130 interviews conducted nationwide, *Radical Relations* includes the stories of lesbian mothers and gay fathers in the 1950s, lesbian and gay parental activist networks and custody battles, families struggling with the AIDS epidemic, and children growing up in lesbian feminist communities. Rivers also addresses changes in gay and lesbian parenthood in the 1980s and 1990s brought about by increased awareness of insemination technologies and changes in custody and adoption law.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As gays demanded equal treatment under the law and to be accepted in mainstream society, gay parents experienced discrimination well into the 1980s (and beyond since new discrimination appeared as gays made substantial progress). Daniel Rivers's remarkable study on gay parents and their children from World War II to the present day shows how lesbian mothers and gay fathers went from hiding and living double lives to challenging the traditional view of the family, which had

the full backing of the federal government. Paralleling with the modern LGBT freedom struggle, advocates for gay parental rights took direct action in the late 1960s. Before then, most gay right groups merely discussed the validity of tackling such an issue (these groups were pretty moderate unlike many gay liberation era groups who were inspired by 1960s radicalism). Rivers also seeks to show that gay parental activism contributed to a "family revolution," adding to our understanding of the various social changes that occurred in the 1960s and to the reproductive rights revolution (or sexual revolution). Even when lesbian mothers and gay fathers had successfully divorced their heterosexual spouse, they still lived in fear of having their children taken away from them. Children were at the center of the debate on gay parenting. Just like today, many people believed that a child might suffer from psychological harm if they lived in a same-sex household. The fear that the child might become gay themselves, a belief that still has support from a good percentage of the population today, also decreased the likelihood that the parent would keep custody of their children. Even as gays came out in increasing numbers, some gay parents could not fully come out of the closet.

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