



The Soul Beneath the Skin: The Unseen Hearts and Habits of Gay Men

David Nimmons

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This surprising and thought-provoking book begins with the obvious fact that Stonewall happened 30 years ago, and the perhaps less obvious fact that in the 30 years since an enormous number of social science studies have been done on gay men. Dave Nimmons proceeds to synthesize that information to reveal a number of unseen patterns of gay male behavior, truths about our lives we feel instinctively but have not named.

For instance, countless studies show that gay men have developed a culture in which public violence is almost non-existent, which is notable when you consider that violence in this society is almost entirely a male phenomenon. Even in intensely over-crowded gay bars and discos, with alcohol and testosterone saturating the atmosphere, fist fights are virtually unheard of. On in the area of volunteerism, study after study shows that gay men volunteer at a much higher level than any other segment of the population (and, very interestingly, our volunteerism is about evenly divided between gay and non-gay causes, as are our charitable contributions). Our patterns of intimacy and friendship are much more diffuse and extended than heterosexual patterns; sexual jealousy and exclusiveness are extremely different, as are our relationships with women and our pursuit of playfulness and sexual bliss. Altogether, these gay social innovations have no parallel in modern American culture; they describe a new kind of public ethics, one with deep implications for gay men and for the larger society.

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