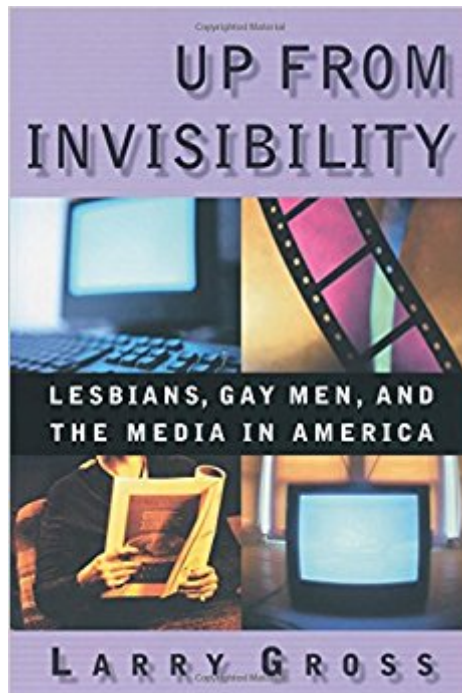




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Up From Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, And The Media In America



Synopsis

A half century ago gay men and lesbians were all but invisible in the media and, in turn, popular culture. With the lesbian and gay liberation movement came a profoundly new sense of homosexual community and empowerment and the emergence of gay people onto the media's stage. And yet even as the mass media have been shifting the terms of our public conversation toward a greater acknowledgment of diversity, does the emerging "visibility" of gay men and women do justice to the complexity and variety of their experience? Or is gay identity manipulated and contrived by media that are unwilling and perhaps unable to fully comprehend and honor it? While positive representations of gays and lesbians are a cautious step in the right direction, media expert Larry Gross argues that the entertainment and news media betray a lingering inability to break free from proscribed limitations in order to embrace the complex reality of gay identity. While noting major advances, like the opening of the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookstore the first gay bookstore in the country or the rise of The Advocate from small newsletter to influential national paper, Gross takes the measure of somewhat more ambiguous milestones, like the first lesbian kiss on television or the first gay character in a newspaper comic strip.

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Customer Reviews

In this era of Ellen and Will and Grace, it's hard to remember that only half a century ago gays could not appear on screen unless they were killed or otherwise punished by the end of the film. Up from Invisibility: Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America looks at the mass media's relationship to homosexuality from mid-century to the present day. Communications professor Larry Gross at the

Annenberg School shows how Stonewall, the AIDS epidemic and the much-vaunted purchasing power of '90s "guppies" have influence the media representation of gays. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Coverage of the Stonewall riot, the AIDS crisis, outing, and the media furor surrounding Ellen DeGeneres's coming out are just a few of the events touched on by Gross (communications, Univ. of Pennsylvania), coeditor of *The Columbia Reader on Lesbians and Gay Men in Media, Society, and Politics*. Gross considers how cultural, political, and commercial factors have influenced or been reflected in the portrayal of gay and lesbian people in the mass media during the last 50 years. In some cases, as in his extensive discussion of the *New York Times*, he observes how changes in key personnel can dramatically affect the coverage of gay and lesbian issues. Gross acknowledges progress from the time when gay characters could only be portrayed as victims or villains but also notes the continuing pervasiveness of stereotypes and the pressure to assimilate to the majority's norms in order to be represented. Filled with detailed examples, this scholarly study is engaging and readable. For all libraries. Debra Moore, Cerritos Coll., Norwalk, CA Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

If you're wanting to examine exactly how LGBT issues have been affected by the media, this book is by no means an encyclopedia filled with in-depth information. If you do, however, want to start understanding -- or if you're new to media studies or [gay] studies -- then this is the book for you. It lays the information out concisely (and, from what I can tell, accurately), and it never weighs itself down by stiling its language to impress the reader. A quick, simple, yet informative read.

There is no doubt that Larry Gross is a top scholar in the field of Gay Media Studies. Having just completed my own thesis and graduate work in the area, I found this work by Gross priceless because he makes the material readable, enjoyable and understandable for anyone. Looking at Gay representation in Mass Media from a variety of different perspectives, Television, Print Media, Film and briefly touching on gay visibility on the Internet. It is amazing that although I have been studying this material for 6+ years, Gross brought new insightful information to me on the material that I haven't heard or read before. This is must read and worthy personal library addition to anyone interested in Gay Studies. When we realize how far we have come, Gross is quick to remind us how far we have to go.

This book is a fascinating, well-written survey on how the LGTB community has been treated (or not) in the media in recent decades. While by no means comprehensive, the wealth of material covered will certainly satisfy (if not aptly enrage) the average reader. The main problem with the book is that the material presented enrages the author himself too much. While the material covered is ostensibly presented as dispassionate reporting, the author's footnotes and editorial asides intrude too much in leading the reader into what he/she is supposed to think. Lest we miss yet another insult to basic human rights or cowardice on the part of the powers that be, these points are repeatedly underlined. So what appeared as a sociologic survey transforms into a book of personal essays. This is unfortunate because it is easy to be convinced of the authorial point of view if the facts are allowed to speak for themselves. Nonetheless worthwhile reading if not the book it hopes to be.

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