



Making Out in the Mainstream: GLAAD and the Politics of Respectability

Vincent Doyle

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Making Out in the Mainstream is the first full-length study of LGBT media activism, revealing the daily struggle to reconcile economic and professional pressures with conflicting personal, organizational, and political priorities. Documenting the rise and evolution of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Vincent Doyle presents a nuanced perspective on the complexity, contradictions, and ambivalences of advancing social causes through popular media. Based on participant observation, in-depth interviews, and archival research carried out at GLAAD's New York and Los Angeles offices from 2000 to 2001, Making Out in the Mainstream analyzes the GLAAD Media Awards and the organization's responses to controversial public figures such as Dr Laura Schlessinger and Eminem, and programs such as Queer as Folk. Doyle argues that the earlier political strategy of coming out to the mainstream, intended to dismantle closeted life and create a mass movement, has been supplanted by the market-oriented "making out" in the mainstream, which privileges respectable images of homosexuality in the pursuit of political and economic gain. He shows how this emphasis on respectability clashes with the development of a diverse movement that campaigns for greater inclusion and he offers a sophisticated appeal for more complicated understandings of assimilation and anti-normalization. Painting a complex portrait of a prominent gay and lesbian organization during a period of rapid social change, Making Out in the Mainstream reveals not only the limitations of "mainstreaming," but also its political possibilities.

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