



# **Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America**

*Mary L. Gray*

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**Winner of the 2009 Ruth Benedict Prize for Outstanding Monograph from the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists**

**Winner of the 2010 Distinguished Book Award from the American Sociological Association, Sociology of Sexualities Section**

**Winner of the 2010 Congress Inaugural Qualitative Inquiry Book Award Honorable Mention**

From Wal-Mart drag parties to renegade Homemaker's Clubs, *Out in the Country* offers an unprecedented contemporary account of the lives of today's rural queer youth. Mary L. Gray maps out the experiences of young people living in small towns across rural Kentucky and along its desolate Appalachian borders, providing a fascinating and often surprising look at the contours of gay life beyond the big city. Gray illustrates that, against a backdrop of an increasingly impoverished and privatized rural America, LGBT youth and their allies visibly--and often vibrantly--work the boundaries of the public spaces available to them, whether in their high schools, public libraries, town hall meetings, churches, or through websites. This important book shows that, in addition to the spaces of Main Street, rural LGBT youth explore and carve out online spaces to fashion their emerging queer identities. Their triumphs and travails defy clear distinctions often drawn between online and offline experiences of identity, fundamentally redefining our understanding of the term 'queer visibility' and its political stakes. Gray combines ethnographic insight with incisive cultural critique, engaging with some of the biggest issues facing both queer studies and media scholarship. *Out in the Country* is a timely and groundbreaking study of sexuality and gender, new media, youth culture, and the meaning of identity and social movements in a digital age.

## Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America Details

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# **From Reader Review Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America for online ebook**

## **Danielle says**

This books was such a great read! I loved every part of it. I am so happy that someone did the research and gave LGBTQIA community members who live in rural areas a voice. It gave them an outreach and a platform to speak out against the injustice. I also love how they included recent pop culture events, such as the coming out of Ellen DeGeneres, which showed just how close in time this research was done. All in all, this was a fantastic read and I am so happy that I was given the opportunity to read it.

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## **Marissa says**

A bit dense and not a quick read, but the author raises & explores a lot of important points and has a good youth-positive perspective. Definitely recommend, especially if you tend to have an urban-centric view of culture.

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## **Sally Kenney says**

A little dense, and some concepts are not fully developed, but Out in the Country is nonetheless an important theoretical intervention. Gray decenters the politics of visibility, gay marriage, and urban areas for the LGBT movement. She smashes stereotypes about both queer youth and the passivity of media use. Her methods section should be a call to arms against IRB.

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## **Matt says**

Solid but perhaps overly academic, not an easy read.

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## **Elevate Difference says**

The town I grew up in—Athens, Georgia (pop. 100,266)—is generally known for two things: indie music (a la REM, Elephant 6, and Kindercore) and the University of Georgia, both of which play a major role in maintaining the town's liberal leanings. However, Athens doesn't lean too far. It's still a place where college football dominates from Labor Day to Christmas, and if you're not in church on Sunday morning, you are assumed to be riddled with sin.

Coming up in an environment rife with contradiction, I learned a lot about peaceful co-existence through plausible deniability. (He's not gay; he's just eccentric.) Sure, we had an annual human rights festival where the young and old listened to people like UGA law professor Eugene Wilkes speak about the need for student activism to combat the world's ills, but mostly they were there for the music. One can only ask so

much from a small town in the South, and once my identity as a radical queer feminist began to set in, Athens began to feel stifling. So as soon as I was able to, I did as gay rights icon Harvey Milk instructed, and fled to the nearest city.

The city, however, was not the activist paradise I'd imagined it would be. I did find a lot of feminists and socialists and anti-racists and queers with whom I could link arms and "fight the good fight," but I lost that sense of community I'd always known at home. What good was knowing someone would show up at a protest if you couldn't count on them to show up when your car dies and you need to get to work? What good were late night conversations about Spivak when you couldn't tell someone you were late with the rent (again)? I knew I'd lost something in the transition from small to large, and while I was happy with what I'd gained, I still questioned whether it was enough. I wondered if it were possible to reconcile being in a place where no one is a stranger with the benefits one gains when one is able to be anonymous.

Enter *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*. I recently interviewed Mary Gray for WireTap Magazine after reading her groundbreaking new book about the myths and mysteries of being queer in small town America. The book resonated with me deeply, as Gray (herself a former queer rural youth) explains how the current gay rights movement excludes rural LGBTQ issues and constructs a queer identity that increases rural queer invisibility. She provides strategies for altering the course to address their needs without requiring re-location (a luxury that is not always attainable or desired) or conformity to a falsely homogeneous queer standard.

Out in the Country was like a breath of fresh country air—just what this Georgia girl needed.

Review by Mandy Van Deven

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### **Mills College Library says**

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### **Michael says**

A must read for anyone interested in rurality, youth culture, gender and sexuality, or ethnography

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### **Lakulin says**

Though my expectations ran much higher based on the pre- and reviews by leading American Media Scholars, I do have to concede that this an important study, long overdue and hopefully triggering further research.

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### **laaaaames says**

I love THE CONCEPT of this book a lot. But honestly the book spent more time telling why things were

significant than just covering significant things. Also Gray seemed to be really happy twisting our expectations, but at times this seemed to bias her findings - or at least SEEMED to. Probably there IS plenty in rural America that's exactly what you'd expect out of it.

We spent time with such a limited number of people, and there didn't seem to be a lot of DEPTH in that time spent, except perhaps with Mary Bird, who is clearly awesome and doing a world of good.

Also, I get WHY Kentucky was chosen, but I don't believe rural=rural=rural. Would have really loved to see more places.

Really, this book seemed like the good outline or presentation to a book I'd like to read. Just wanted soooo much more out of it.

(read: 26)

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