Representations of sexuality in the media

Media representations of sexuality have historically been mostly heterosexual, with LGBT representations being largely invisible.

EX: Batchelor et al (2009) found that when gay representations did appear in the mainstream media, they weren't generally 'integrated' into plot lines, but rather gayness was part of the plot, seen as a source of anxiety, or as a target of teasing or bullying.

EX:Dyer (2002) observed that 'the person's person' alone does not show that a person is gay, and that the media have constructed stereotypical signs of 'gayness' which include certain facial expressions, vocal tones, stances or clothing.

Craig (1992) identified three media signifiers of gayness
1. **Camp** – the 'flamboyant figure of fun' – a 'non-threatening' representation of gayness, lying somewhere between male and female and one of the most widely found representations
2. **Macho** – An openly sexual look which exaggerates aspects of traditional masculinity, as exemplified by the village people.
3. **Deviant** – where gay people are portrayed as evil or devious, possibly as sexual predators or who feel guilty about their sexuality. Such representations seem to construct homosexuality as morally wrong. Research conducted by Stonewall (2011) concluded that the LGBT community were being subjected to symbolic annihilation. They found that LGBTs were disproportionately consigned to the status of comedic relief – their characters presented as something to laugh at or deride. This was especially found to be the case with representations of lesbianism, frequently presented as over-sexualised and exotic, for male's viewing pleasure.

Out of a total of 126 hours of television programmes analysed:
• 5 hours and 43 minutes focused on LGBT related issues or characters
• 46 minutes portrayed them realistically or positively.

Stoenewall noted that the majority of the coverage represented gays in particular as:
1. Unhappy and distressed about their sexual orientation
2. As people who had been bullied and rejected by their families
3. There was very little reference to lesbians or transsexuals.

Changing representations of LGBTs in the Media

There are several examples of contemporary shows which have LGBT characters , and in which sexuality is largely incidental to the plots in the show, and only part of the character's identity, rather than them being subsumed by it, as was so often the case in early representations.

The LGBT community and new media

The representations of LGBTs on new media are generally more positive than in mainstream media, possibly because the content is user-generated.Social media sites have been used to generate support for same sex marriages and companies such as Facebook and Twitter seem to be broadly supportive of the LGBT community.