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Making Diversity Conform? An Intersectional, Longitudinal Analysis of LGBT-Specific Mainstream Media Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

This study introduces an intersectional analysis of explicit LGBT portrayals in mainstream advertising between 2009 and 2015. The analysis provides insights into the (in)visibility of the LGBT community over a period of significant social change. It finds that although the number of explicit representations of LGBT characters has risen dramatically, 230 out of 240 intersections of sexuality, class, age, and race remain invisible. In using a new ad format—human interest ads—advertisers move away from hypersexualization, toward real individuals' stories of love and families. Nonetheless, the analysis highlights how the erasure of multiply marginalized groups in mainstream advertising continues to perpetuate a heteronormative, domesticized version of "gayness" and discusses the adverse effects that lie herein. It is proposed that non-LGBT consumers are the underlying target group of LGBT-explicit advertising, causing non-target market effects that alienate large parts of the LGBT community despite their overt inclusion.

KEYWORDS

Advertising; content analysis; diversity; heteronormativity; intersectionality; LGBT consumers; media studies; polysemy

Twenty years ago, several articles in a special issue on marketing to the gay and lesbian market discussed these groups' responses to marketing communications. Contributors hailed advertising as an important agent in the assimilation of this marginalized subculture (Bowes, 1996; Peñaloza, 1996) and suggested that gay consumers are likely to prefer gay ad imagery (Bhat, Leigh, & Wardlow, 1996), a finding that has since been further investigated and used to explain gay consumers' high levels of brand loyalty (Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999; Oakenfull, McCarthy, & Greenlee, 2008; Tuten, 2005). The more the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT)[1] movement advances and market interest increases, however, the more important it becomes to understand the ways in which these consumers are represented in the media.

It is indisputable that the LGBT movement has taken immense strides over the past two decades. As a result, the depiction of this minority group in advertising has changed from covert targeting in print media to explicit imagery

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Color versions of one or more of the figures in the article can be found online at www.tandfonline.com/wjhm.

of LGBT characters in mainstream media, including prime-time television and national newspapers. Previous research on this topic was conducted at a time when such portrayals were essentially nonexistent in the media. Thus the literature to date has focused exclusively on gay-targeted publications or "gay-vague," purposefully polysemic representations in mainstream media (Ginder & Byun, 2015). Recent work criticizes such studies for making sexuality the sole dimension of analysis, thereby defining LGBT communities through sexuality alone and disregarding their inherent heterogeneity (Tsai, 2011, 2012). While a number of researchers have studied media texts through the lens of different social identity categories in isolation, an intersectional understanding that considers multiple categories remains conspicuously absent (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015).

This study contributes to existing literature through the introduction of an intersectional lens into advertising research. It thus follows existing calls for the introduction of intersectionality into media research (e.g., Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015; Gopaldas & Fischer, 2012). It first outlines existing studies on LGBT consumers and media representations targeted at this group. Recent advances in the LGBT social movement are then presented, leading to a discussion about the notion of intersectionality and its merits for advertising scholarship. The article then investigates how ad representations of LGBT characters in non LGBT-publications have emerged and evolved in the wake of recent social changes. Both a quantitative and qualitative intersectional analysis of LGBT-specific mainstream ad imagery between 2009 and 2015 are provided. The analysis highlights the importance of intersectionality as a tool to better understand diversity in media portrayals and raises questions about the intention and effects of LGBT-explicit advertising imagery. In targeting the "minority," might advertisers, in fact, be alienating it further?

Background

The emergence of gay targeted advertising

The Stonewall riots in 1969 amplified marketers' awareness of a sizeable gay and lesbian population (Peñaloza, 1996), resulting in companies employing niche marketing strategies to tap into what was perceived to be a "dream market" of early-adopters and trendsetters (Chasin, 2001; Sender, 2001). This image, however, was reserved solely for White gay men, who were regarded as profitable due to double income and lack of children (Lukenbill, 1995). It was this group that subsequently attracted interest from scholars and practitioners, spurring a narrow focus in both academic studies and media representations that prevails to this date (Ginder & Byun, 2015).

Branchik (2007) created a conceptual framework of gay marketing history and recognized three historical chapters: the "ridicule/scorn" period before 1941,

in which gay men were objects of stigmatization; the "cutting-edge" phase up to 1970, which saw their emergence as sophisticated trendsetters; and the "mainstream/respect" phase from the 1970s to 2005, which showed them in a number of diverse roles. This last label, however, is misleading. The few companies that ventured into mainstream advertising during these years were met with backlash, consumer boycotts, and even violence: a 1994 IKEA ad featuring a gay male couple was pulled after the company received bomb threats (McMains, 2014). Subsequently, marketing spending remained directed at gay publications, which thrived as a result (Peñaloza, 1996; Sender, 2003).

Accordingly, studies to date have focused on these gay publications, as exemplified by all recent content analyses of gay advertising imagery (Draper, 2012; Gill, 2009; Marshall, 2011; Saucier & Caron, 2008). Due to fear of alienating heterosexual consumers, marketers opted for an implicit, so-called *gay-window* advertising approach (Sender, 2003). Puntoni, Vanhamme, and Visscher (2011) defined gay-window advertising as characterized through "(1) the absence of explicit heterosexual cues, and (2) the presence of ambiguous cues that could be construed as depicting gay relationships or culture" (p. 27). It uses overt signifiers of gay culture, such as rainbows, as well as "purposefully polysemic" imagery or text that may be read as gay only by gay consumers (Puntoni, Schroeder, & Ritson, 2010; Tsai, 2012).

LGBT representations in the media

Both practice and consequently literature have focused on media portrayals of the gay male "dream consumer" (Ginder & Byun, 2015). Gay characters in advertising are typically Caucasian, "youthful, shirtless, hairless and muscular gay men" (Marshall, 2011, p. 4), from the upper middle class (Kates, 1999; Peñaloza, 1996), depicted as handsome trendsetters, or in a hypersexualized, overly effeminate and "sissified" way (Bergling, 2001; Tsai, 2004). This has raised concerns about the harmful body image these representations espouse within this group (Saucier & Caron, 2008).

To date, very few studies have explored lesbian portrayals in media (Capsuto, 2000; Ciasullo, 2001) or advertisements (Gill, 2009; Reichert, Maly, & Zavoina, 1999). This is attributed to their position as economically less powerful and their frequent association with feminist anti-capitalism (Clark, 1993). Ads that do depict this group tend to formulaically "straighten" lesbians to adhere to heteronormative forms of femininity (Capsuto, 2000; Ciasullo, 2001; Gill, 2009). As a result, these portrayals are characterized by the objectification of hypersexualized "lipstick lesbians" as a tool to appeal to the straight male gaze, mirroring "those women engaged in lesbian sex in mainstream heterosexual pornography" (Reichert et al., 1999, p. 124). As Ginder and Byun (2015) explained: "[T]he lack of female representation continues to propagate patriarchal dominance and a history of lesbian invisibility within the marketplace" (p. 825).

While gay and hyperfeminine lesbian media representations remain scarce, images of other parts of the LGBT spectrum, such as more masculine "butch" lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals are virtually invisible (Ciasullo, 2001; Serano, 2007; Tsai, 2004). This invisibility can either be absolute (i.e., no representations at all) or relative (i.e., no positive, reaffirming representations; Fryberg & Townsend, 2008). Tuchman (1979) termed this practice of excluding or trivializing minorities "symbolic annihilation." Examining the representations of transsexuals in advertising, for example, Serano stated, "popular media tends to assume that all transsexuals are male-to-female, and that all trans women want to achieve a stereotypical feminine appearance and gender role" (2007, p. 41). Male-to-female (MtF) trans hyperfemininity is thus used as a tool to reaffirm the gender binary, serving to symbolically annihilate trans identities as it trivializes trans femininity as unreal and artificial.

The importance of the media

Scholars' opinions on LGBT media and marketing representations are characterized by a seemingly unresolvable tension. Previous research has shown that membership of a stigmatized group can significantly influence consumer responses to ad imagery and content (Bhat et al., 1996; Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999). Peñaloza (1996) discussed the importance of market integration for the assimilation of gay consumers and asserted that: "[M]embers of social movements tend to have a heavily sensitized concern for the impact of marketing communications on group interest" (Peñaloza, 1996, p. 14). Studies suggest that gay consumers crave the feeling of social acceptance provided by their inclusion in marketing/media, rewarding companies with fervent brand loyalty (Kates, 1999; Tuten, 2005). This loyalty is supposed to emerge, even if portrayals are perceived as highly stereotypical and commercialized (Tsai, 2011). Consumers further use cultural texts, such as ads, to learn about socially accepted behaviors and to manage stigmatized identities (Levy, 1981), thereby informing their self-fulfillment and lived identities (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). Furthermore, LGBT media role models have been found to elicit feelings of pride.

Concurrently, however, this assimilationist view is strongly criticized, as it creates a hetero-normalized understanding of the LGBT community that contradicts modern queer activism (Kates, 2004; Sender, 2004). Queer theorists criticize the ways in which sexual orientation is used merely as an identifiable "descriptor" for market segmentation, thereby constructing a distorted gay and lesbian market that favors a certain, stereotypical type of gayness and negative depictions despite the diversity of those identifying as LGBT (Saucier & Caron, 2008; Tsai, 2004; Um, 2010). In 1999, Kates introduced queer theory into the advertising literature in his discussion of a Toyota ad that featured two men, a suburban house, a Toyota, and two dogs. In changing the gender of one of the characters to that of a woman, he exposed the heteronormativity of the image, or, as Kates called it, "the heterosexualisation of homosexuality" (Kates, 1999, p.

34). Many scholars have voiced their concern about the possibility of LGBT consumers internalizing such media representations into their self-concept (e.g., Peñaloza, 1996; Tsai, 2012).

Recent advances in the LGBT social movement

As Peñaloza stated, "marketing to gays/lesbians is best understood when situated within the socio-historical context of these movements" (1996, p. 20). Whereas previously brands have preferred gay-window advertising as "win-win targeting strategies" (Puntoni et al., 2011, p. 36), landmark changes in the societal landscape have led to a perceptible increase in LGBT-specific portrayals in marketing and media over the past few years (Branchik, 2007; Muller, 2015).

In 2010, Proposition 8, which prohibited same-sex marriage in California, was ruled a violation of the U.S. Constitution. This marked "a galvanizing, game-changing force for militant marriage equality activism from 2008 to the present" (Weber, 2015, p. 1149). Until 2012, visibility of gay public figures was very limited. The acceleration of marriage equality, however, led to an upsurge in openly LGBT celebrities and an influx of LGBT-specific representations in mainstream media, targeted not only at LGBT audiences, but also at the growing consumer base that is supportive of LGBT equality. We live in a time when "diversity" is hailed as a key competitive advantage: "Only by embracing diversity can marketing organisations stay relevant in today's rapidly evolving society" (Smith & Barrat, 2015). Last year, with equal marriage legal across all U.S. states, LGBT-specific mainstream ads broke records in digital engagement and were "the most effective and engaging ad campaigns of the year by the brands conducting them" (Muller, 2015). A 2015 Wells Fargo ad of a lesbian couple, for example, garnered nearly 4 million online views at the time of writing.

Intersectionality

Despite these changes, the literature has yet to examine LGBT-specific representations in mainstream advertising and the types of portrayals used following recent societal shifts. The focus of existing content analyses on sexuality as the sole locus of identity offers simplistic representations of the LGBT community that, despite other contributions, overlooks concerns of how sexuality intersects with other social categories.

Intersectionality denotes the study of the multiplicative nature of oppression (Luft & Ward, 2009). More specifically, it refers to "the intersection between gender, race, and other categories of difference, individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (Davis, 2008, p. 68). Kimberly Crenshaw (1989) coined and introduced the concept to feminist scholarship as part of Black

feminists' critique of the supremacy of White feminism. It is hailed as feminism's most important contribution and is increasingly used by scholars across social sciences. Nonetheless, it remains largely nonexistent in marketing and media studies.

Gopaldas and DeRoy (2015) recently compared a unidimensional approach to media imagery analysis, considering a single social dimension with an intersectional approach. Their article analyzed a sample of *Gentleman's Quarterly* (GQ) magazine covers to illustrate the superiority of an intersectional approach in exposing multiple points of marginalization. They expanded the previously introduced notion of symbolic annihilation with the concepts of "intersectional visibility," and "intersectional travesty" and concluded that "only an intersectional approach can expose instances of intersectional invisibility, that is, the low to zero visibility granted to intersections of historically oppressed identities (…). Only an intersectional approach can expose instances of intersectional travesty, that is, the ridicule, stereotyping, and generally inferior quality of representation granted to intersections of historically oppressed identities" (p. 25).

Although their work did not include sexuality due to a lack of instances in the sample material, it is clear that the literature can greatly benefit from an analysis that leverages the authors' approach to provide a more nuanced understanding of the diversity of LGBT representations.

Methodology

This study sought to revise and advance existing understandings of LGBT representations in advertising in several ways: first, by providing a longitudinal analysis to examine how representations are impacted by recent changes in societal attitudes; second, by focusing specifically on mainstream ads; and, third, by employing intersectionality as a concept that allows for a better appreciation of intersectional visibility within LGBT-specific ad imagery.

Data selection

In this study, 185 ads that appeared in non-LGBT publications from 2009 to 2015 were analyzed. This timeframe was selected, first, because it builds on previously undertaken content analyses, which looked at timeframes up to 2010. Second, the Web site AdRespect.com, recognized as the most complete source for LGBT ads and used in previous studies (Branchik, 2007; Gill, 2009; Marshall, 2011), recorded an unprecedented spike in LGBT ads in 2009. It was the year prior to Proposition 8 being ruled unconstitutional, an event that accelerated the LGBT movement in its wake. This year thus marks an ideal starting point to analyze the effects of changes in societal attitudes. The sample is nonrandom in that a variety of search measures were employed to identify the majority of LGBT-specific ads across the world in the timeframe

under study. First, the 570 ads submitted to AdRespect in this timeframe were assessed. AdRespect includes information on whether an ad is published in media targeted solely at an LGBT audience or whether it has a broader reach. Those published only in LGBT publications were excluded from the analysis, as were vague ads, those that did not portray people, and ads for non-governmental organizations (NGOs); 171 ads fulfilled all criteria.

Ads on AdRespect are submitted by diligent readers and the editorial team. Due to the crowd-sourced nature, some ads may, inevitably, be absent from the database. The author thus conducted an additional search of LGBT news Web sites, ad agencies, and blogs to search for ads omitted in AdRespect. Examples include PinkNews.co.uk; Queerty.com; campaignlive.co.uk; and glaad.org. This search yielded 14 ads. The final data set thus included 185 ads from 22 countries—76% from the United States and 15% from the EU (Appendix 1). All ads apart from six were English-speaking or audiovisual. Retail ads accounted for 15%, fashion and packaged foods for 13% each, and travel for 11%, whereas alcohol brands accounted for only 3% (Appendix 2).

Data analysis

Following Gopaldas and DeRoy (2015), social identity dimensions that emerged from the data were first identified, resulting in a coding scheme similar to their study, including age, leanness, race, and physical ability, with the addition of class and LGBT membership. Due to negligible representations of non-lean bodies and the absence of disabled representations in the sample, these did not form a distinct category. Thus five coding dimensions remained, with a total of 16 categories among them.

(1) LGBT: Coded "gay male," "lesbian," "bisexual," "trans-men" (FtM), and "-women" (MtF) based on explicit body language (e.g., a kiss) or ad text. Trans portrayals, for example, were always explicitly labeled as such within the ad text. For celebrities, publicly available information on their preferred identity was used. Ads showing drag queens and crossdressers are included in the respective "trans" categories for reasons further discussed below.

(2) Age: Clustered into "teens" (13+), "young adults" (20+), "middle aged" (35+), and "mature" (50+), estimating age "to the nearest multiple of 5 based on their appearance" (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015, p. 10).

(3) Race: Characters' ethnicity was coded as either "Caucasian," "Afro-American," "Asian," or "Hispanic" based on skin color, language, and discernable accent, as well as explicit ad text.

(4) Class: While the meaning of social class remains contested in the social sciences, classes can be defined based on their relation to production to enable identification: the upper class owns the means of production,

while the working class manually sets them in motion, and the managerial middle class performs an administrative, supervisory role (Artz & Kamalipour, 2012). Following this distinction, portrayals were coded as "Working," "Middle," or "Upper Class." Those coded as working class, for example, were depicted in occupations traditionally considered as such (e.g., butler, construction worker), whereas those coded middle class were seen in management jobs or in a suburban setting including a large family house and car.

All ads were coded by the author in addition to a secondary coder. Category reliability lay at nearly 100% (Kassarjian, 1977). In addition, the author randomly asked 20 LGBT-identified participants from a different study for their assessment of the four characteristics in up to 10 randomly selected ads each. Coding reliability again lay at 96%, the difference between middle-aged and mature providing the greatest discrepancy at ca. 92%.

Multimodal analyses

This article provides a quantitative unidimensional analysis of the data set overall and over time, as well as both quantitative and qualitative intersectional analyses. Quantitative analyses provide numerical summaries of the codes in the data set (Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4), rounding percentages to the nearest 1%. Following Gopaldas and DeRoy (2015), the qualitative analysis involved an "iterative, dialogical, and comparative interpretation" (p. 11). Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software was used to code and organize ads into the 16 categories. For the unidimensional analysis, categories within each coding dimension were compared, whereas for the intersectional analysis, differences between the 240 possible intersections were observed.

The qualitative analysis is based on a variety of characteristics such as character appearance (e.g., body language, styling and clothing), attitudes and relationships, ad environment and background, and assessment of how characters' sexuality was made explicit. Together, this formed the basis for the resulting thematic categories.

Findings

Longitudinal analysis

Figure 1 illustrates the change in the number of LGBT-explicit imagery in mainstream ads. The graph clearly illustrates the jump in representations as marriage equality gained more traction in mainstream media. The drop in 2013 is potentially explained by the large number of companies that opted for symbolic ads in this year. Numerous brands joined the viral movement of changing Facebook profile pictures to the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC)

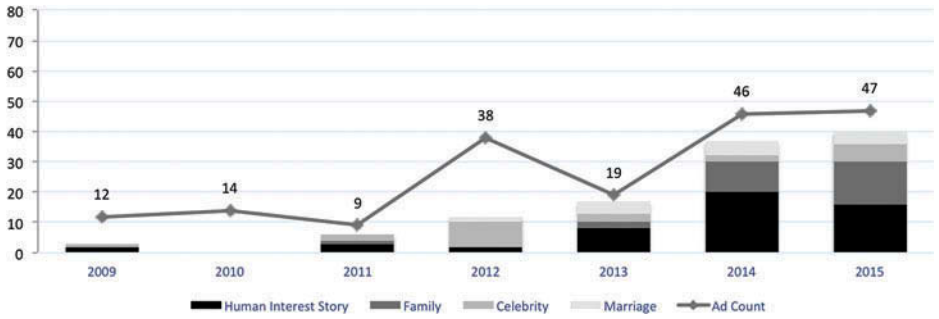

Figure 1. Number and type of representation in LGBT-explicit ads 2009 to 2015 (N = 185).

red equal sign, by publishing stylized versions of their logos or products in the same fashion. Hence, despite there being a drop in LGBT portrayals in this year, the number of mainstream ads that included LGBT symbolism increased year-on-year. The equal sign was subsequently voted "Symbol of the Year" in Stanford University's Symbolic Systems Program (McCarty, 2014).

Further, Figure 1 provides an overview of the ways in which characters' sexuality was made visible in these ads from 2011 onward. Ads started expanding the traditional "family" and increasingly used images of nontraditional families, gay wedding celebrations, and "out" LGBT celebrity endorsements. The bar chart in Figure 1 shows the number of instances in which these types of portrayals appeared. In instances where these common markers of sexuality were not used, the relationship between characters was made explicit through their body language. Moving away from the "intense gaze" and avoidance of same-sex touching previously used to create ambiguous relationships between characters in gay-window advertising (Gill, 2009; Ginder & Byun, 2015), ads increasingly used explicit kisses or intimate embraces to show LGBT affection.

One new ad style identified in this study is what may be called the *human interest* (HI) ad. HI ads break with traditional formats by telling the story of real LGBT consumers in a 2- to 4-minute-long video, as opposed to the more widely used 30-second spots. The emergence of this form of advertising may be linked to the rise of online video portals, such as YouTube and Vimeo. HI ads are increasingly found on online video platforms, often supplemented by stories of other non-LGBT consumers. They are often accompanied by print ads or television "trailer ads" that feature short cameos of the stories featured in the main ad and that invite consumers to "find out more online."

Although HI ads started appearing only in 2011, they have since become the predominant way of LGBT inclusion (Figure 1). Notably, all HI ads in the sample fit into the generic plot of "suffering, coming-out, and surviving" described by Plummer (1995): we see the story of a father who does not want to attend his gay daughter's wedding until finally accepting her (Expedia, 2012); learn about the perils of traveling from the experiences of a number of diverse couples (AirBnB,

2015); feel for the trans men who recount their stories of transition and road to acceptance (Google, 2015; Hallmark, 2015); and laugh with the gay African American fathers who show us just how "normal" their family routines are (Nikon, 2015). Plummer (1995) described these types of stories as "The Modernist Quest." They champion a modernist essentialism in which sexuality lies at the core of a person's personality. They are linear stories, used to illustrate how the characters have overcome great suffering and to prove the grand truth and underlying message of the vast majority of LGBT inclusive ads in the sample: "love is love" and same-sex love is just as normal and boring as any other. They are presented in the same "familiar *heterosexual* wholesomeness" (p. 31) that Kates (1999) noted in his queer deconstruction of the Toyota ad.

(1) Unidimensional quantitative analysis of ads' character diversity

A unidimensional quantitative analysis of character diversity across all ads over these 6 years reveals a well-known picture: LGBT characters in ads are mainly Caucasian (82%), middle-aged (MA; 59%), and middle-class (MC; 85%) gay men (61%; Table 1). Hispanic, mature, working-class (WC), FtM trans persons and bisexuals are the least represented groups. An analysis of sexualities between 2009 and 2015 further shows that FtM trans people started appearing only in 2015. MtF trans characters were included only sporadically over the years, and also received heightened visibility in 2015 (Table 2). This may be due to increased visibility of trans role models and contemporary debates, such as the public transition of Olympic decathlete and gold-medal winner Caitlin Jenner, formerly known as Bruce Jenner.

Table 1. Unidimensional quantitative analysis of ads' character diversity (n = 350).

Dimension	Percentage and Number of Representations	
Age		*[350]*
Mature	3%	[9]
Middle Aged	59%	[205]
Young Adult	38%	[133]
Teen	1%	[3]
Class		*[350]*
Upper Class	13%	[46]
Middle Class	85%	[299]
Working Class	1%	[5]
Race		*[350]*
Caucasian	82%	[286]
African American	10%	[35]
Asian	7%	[25]
Hispanic	1%	[4]
Sexuality		*[350]*
Gay	61%	[215]
Lesbian	32%	[111]
Bisexual	2%	[8]
Trans MtF/Drag	3%	[12]
Trans FtM	1%	[4]

Table 2. Unidimensional quantitative analysis of ads' character diversity (N = 350).

	Percentage and Number of Representations per Sexuality over the Years													
Dimension	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
Gay	47%	[9]	80%	[12]	72%	[13]	53%	[28]	57%	[25]	77%	[63]	55%	[65]
Lesbian	53%	[10]	13%	[2]	22%	[4]	42%	[22]	39%	[17]	16%	[13]	36%	[43]
Bisexual	0%	[0]	7%	[1]	0%	[0]	2%	[1]	0%	[0]	4%	[3]	3%	[3]
Trans MtF	0%	[0]	0%	[0]	6%	[1]	2%	[1]	5%	[2]	4%	[3]	4%	[5]
Trans FtM	0%	[0]	0%	[0]	0%	[0]	2%	[1]	0%	[0]	0%	[0]	3%	[3]
Total		[19]		[15]		[18]		[53]		[44]		[82]		[119]

Table 3. Intersectional quantitative analysis of ads' character diversity (n = 350).

	Upper				Middle Class				Working Class			
	Mature	Middle Aged	Young Adult	Teen	Mature	Middle Aged	Young Adult	Teen	Mature	Middle Aged	Young Adult	Teen
Gay												
Caucasian	1% [2]	3% [10]	1% [4]	0% [0]	1% [3]	28% [99]	18% [63]	0% [0]	0% [1]	1% [2]	1% [2]	0% [0]
African-American	0% [0]	1% [3]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [1]	1% [5]	2% [6]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Asian	0% [0]	0% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [2]	3% [9]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Hispanic	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [2]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Lesbian												
Caucasian	0% [0]	5% [17]	1% [2]	0% [0]	1% [2]	11% [38]	7% [23]	1% [2]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
African American	0% [0]	1% [3]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [5]	2% [8]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Asian	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [3]	2% [7]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Hispanic	0% [0]	0% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Bisexual												
Caucasian	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [2]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [5]	0% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
African American	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Asian	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Hispanic	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Trans MtF												
Caucasian	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [3]	0% [0]	0% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
African American	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	1% [4]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Asian	0% [0]	0% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [1]	0% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Hispanic	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [1]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Trans FtM												
Caucasian	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [1]	1% [3]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
African American	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Asian	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]
Hispanic	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]	0% [0]

Notes. Intersections with 0% representation are shaded in gray, those with N = 0 representation are shaded in dark gray, and those with 1% representation are in very light gray.

(2) Intersectional quantitative analysis of ads' character diversity

An intersectional analysis of all 350 characters within the ads illustrates a more nuanced picture of the lack of diversity within these ads. Out of the 240 possible intersections, 205 are absolutely invisible, a further 11 are relatively invisible (0%, $n = 1$), and nine are virtually invisible (1%, $n = 2$). Hence, 230 out of 240 intersections are invisible.

As suggested by the unidimensional analysis, middle-aged (35–50), middle class, White gay men encompass the bulk of representations at 28%. Their young-adult (YA) counterparts comprise a further 18%. Both together account for nearly 50% of all characters and 76% of all gay male characters. White, middle-aged Caucasian lesbians comprise 11%, young-adult 7%, across all portrayals. These two intersections make up 55% of all lesbian portrayals.

Interestingly, working-class representations are restricted to White gay men. Consistent with broader debates about sexism and ageism in the media, the same holds for mature portrayals, whose number remains negligible (Gill, 2009). Upper-class (UC) representations are largely female, mainly due to a number of print ads for designer brands that were identified as upper class (e.g., Alberta Ferreti, 2009). It is also important to note that the apparent racial diversity in the middle-class and middle-age MtF group stems from three ads aired more recently (Magnum, 2015; Smirnoff, 2015; Absolut, 2011). The findings therefore suggest that racial and class diversity are virtually nonexistent for the less accepted parts of the LGBT spectrum—trans and bisexual people.

In the following, a number of important sample intersections is discussed. For many of these, the sample size is small, which may raise concerns about statistical significance. Nonetheless, considering the visible trend of highly similar representations across all intersections, even a limited number of ads provides an insight into how the market is likely to portray those subgroups in the future. In addition, the fact that these identities are symbolically annihilated by the market should not be used as the reason for a comparable exclusion in academic literature.

(3) Intersectional qualitative analysis of ads' character diversity

The Dominant intersection: Caucasian, middle-class, middle-aged gay men (N = 99)

The majority of portrayals in the dominant intersection adhere to the "Neil Patrick Harris" (NPH) type ($n = 64$). Neil Patrick Harris is an openly gay actor, singer, and producer, best known for his portrayal of Barney Stinson on the television show *How I Met Your Mother*. He is represented in a 2014 London Fog ad with his husband, an ad that epitomizes the dominant representation of gay men in this intersection (64%) and across all male intersections (54%). NPH characters are stylish and successful, always dressed in a suit or smart trousers and shirt. They are well-groomed, lean, and confident "'metrosexuals,' a neologism combining metropolitan and

heterosexual to denote men who are meticulously groomed consumers of fashion" (Gopaldas & DeRoy, 2015, p. 18). NPHs are usually portrayed with their partners, who also always fall into the NPH category, and increasingly in more domestic family situations (e.g., The Huffington Post, 2012; MarketingUp, 2014).

In this intersection, two other representations were found: The Hipster (n = 9) and the Bear (n = 13). The Hipster is similar to the NPH: a stylish, lean, metrosexual man. However, he sports a more modern, laid-back appearance, with layered clothing such as a crisp T-shirt, flannel shirt or jumper, and skinny jeans (e.g., Banana Republic, 2014). While only sporadically making an appearance before 2014, the hipster portrayal has been gaining popularity, becoming the second-largest type of portrayal of gay men across all intersections (n = 45; 21%).

Bears, on the other hand, are markedly different from the previous types. They are "stocky, bearded gay [men] dressed in a traditionally masculine style, wearing perhaps a flannel or denim shirt" (Manley, Levitt, & Mosher 2014, p. 90). They are hirsute and, apart from butch lesbians, the only non-lean representation across all intersections (e.g., AirBnB, 2015). It is notable that Bears only started appearing in 2014 and only in ads showing real middle-aged LGBT characters, usually as part of a fleeting image within a greater diversity of characters. Their inclusion may have been sparked by the emergence of the so-called "lumbersexual" as the male fashion trend in 2014 that closely resembles Bears (Baxter, 2014).

Sample gay male intersections

White, middle-class, young adult gay men (N = 63)

The second most prevalent intersection shows little difference from the dominant one, with the exception of the relative invisibility of the Bear (n = 3) and greater balance between NPH (n = 26) and Hipster (n = 27). Perhaps younger representations are slightly more likely to be portrayed as trendy, laid-back hipsters than their older counterparts (e.g., JCrew, 2011; Matalan, 2015).

African American, middle-class gay men (N = 11)

A finding contrasting previous work (e.g., Bush, Smith, & Martin, 1999; Martinez & Sullivan, 1998) is that African American men are not portrayed as more "brutish" and hypermasculine compared to White men. While they are usually more muscular, the analysis shows that, across all ages, they are also mainly represented by the NPH type (n = 7; e.g., Nikon, 2015). This finding is, however, weakened by the near invisibility of African American gay men in general.

Asian, middle-class gay men (N = 11)

Despite the small sample, the NPH type is still dominant among gay Asian portrayals (n = 5). Asian gay men are, however, portrayed as decidedly more effeminate than any other ethnicity, and the image of the gay man as fashionista or sissy appear more frequently (50%). Previous literature suggests that homophobia is more prevalent in Asian countries and that Asian gay men are stereotypically perceived as more effeminate in both straight and gay subcultures (Eguchi, 2011; Han, Proctor, & Choi, 2014). Ads published in Asian countries especially used Asian gay men as a humorous element, depicting them as either predators or sissies (e.g., Chewy, 2012). Ads played into what has been termed "sissyphobia" (Bergling, 2001). They construct gay Asian men as overly feminine in masculine power structures (e.g., Eguchi, 2011). Other characters' outrage and phobia against them is used as a stylistic humorous device, contributing to their continued racial stigmatization. Overall, the use of the stereotype of the hyperfeminine gay man was always coupled with humorous ad content, consistent with previous findings on the occurrence of gender stereotypes only in humorous advertisements (Eisend, Plagemann, & Sollwedel, 2014).

Mature gay men (N = 7)

Across the sample, the invisibility of mature characters is striking. In this intersection, racial and sexual diversity is inexistent. Mature characters exist only in the form of upper- or lower-class, White, gay men. The upper class is represented in the dominant NPH style, conforming to the stereotype of the rich, well-groomed dream consumer. Notably, the only two lower-class mature representations portray its subjects preying on unsuspecting younger men, playing on harmful pedophile stereotypes pervasive in society (e.g., Halford, 2013).

Upper-class gay men (N = 20)

Among the few upper-class male representations there is a notable prevalence of more effeminate characters. The fashionista as a type appears only in upper-class representations and denotes more effeminate men with an interest in designer fashion, a nasal voice, and a penchant for gossip (e.g., WestPac Bank, 2010). This applies equally to the few African American portrayals (e.g., GoDaddy, 2010).

Lesbian portrayals across intersections (N = 111)

Akin to portrayals of gay men, lesbian portrayals do not vary substantially, and there is a trend away from a focus on sexuality and toward a focus of love, relationships, and "mundane normality" depicting lesbians as "just like everyone else" and lesbian love as no different from heterosexual love. They can be divided into four different types: femmes (57%), lipstick lesbians (18%), domestic femmes (10%), and soft butches (15%).

Intersectional femme (N = 62)

The femme clearly emerges as the main lesbian depiction. Femmes adhere to heteronormative ideals of femininity, but they are desexualized compared to lipsticks. They usually dress in smart, form-fitting clothes, wearing light makeup. Most are depicted with shoulder-length hair or occasionally, a pixie crop (e.g., Aetna, 2015), in a committed, loving relationship with another femme (e.g., Virgin Money, 2014), laughing and showing physical affection to each other. The femme is the only portrayal that is represented in nearly every intersection.

Upper-class, young-adult lipstick lesbians (N = 20)

Hyperfeminine, hypersexualized lipstick lesbians are not the dominant type as suggested by previous studies (e.g. Ciasullo, 2001; Gill, 2009; Jenkins, 2005; Wilkinson, 1996). Lipsticks are long-haired, long-legged women, wearing tight, revealing clothes and bold makeup. They are of the upper or middle class, portrayed as unattainable, sophisticated women, uninterested in anything but their female counterpart. They adhere to heteronormative ideals of beauty as part of storylines for the "straight male gaze" (Ciasullo, 2001; Gill, 2009): they first attract male attention to then end up with another lipstick, much to the equal dismay and enjoyment of their male onlookers (e.g., XXL All Sports United, 2012). Over the time period studied, these portrayals have become less pervasive.

Middle-aged, middle-class domestic femmes (N = 11)

Increasing LGBT family portrayals have also led to the emergence of a variation of the femme—the Domestic Femme (DF). Although feminine in appearance, she dons more relaxed, less form-fitting clothes. She is always coupled with another DF, undertaking activities typically conducted by married couples, such as being caring mothers or doing chores in the household (e.g., Tylenol, 2014; Wells Fargo, 2015). Likely due to the connection to motherhood, this type is restricted to middle-aged, middle-class women. Furthermore, they are usually White, apart from one Amtrax ad showing an African American portrayal. Thus younger, non-White, non-feminine lesbian mothers are intersectionally invisible. Compared to their male counterparts, lesbian families are only rarely depicted, suggesting that same-sex families are a White male phenomenon.

Middle-class, young-adult butch lesbians (N = 17)

The soft butch is characterized by a more masculine, dapper appearance and short hair. She usually wears dark clothes, resembling either the male hipster or a more alternative lifestyle, and always appears alongside another soft butch or femme. Soft butches originally appeared in 2013 in the first Indian ad to feature a same-sex couple, and since the end of 2014 as part of eight ads

that show a diverse amalgamation of people in brief instances (e.g., Similac, 2015).

They are described as "soft" given an inherent femininity due to the use of light makeup in all portrayals, despite more masculine clothes and hairstyles. Consequently, no butch portrayals challenged gender notions excessively. While soft butches were represented by all ethnicities apart from Hispanics, they are always depicted as young adults. The absence of older butch portrayals is an indication that "butchness" is seen as a temporary phase a woman may pass through in their youth, which is not likely to last into full adulthood.

Racial diversity among lesbian portrayals

Regarding racial diversity, it is striking that out of 27 non-White lesbian portrayals, 16 were aired in 2015, indicating a possible positive development. No notable variations in the types of portrayals across ethnicities were found.

Bisexual portrayals across intersections

Middle-class, caucasian bisexual men: Middle-aged (N = 2), young adult (N = 6)

Over the past 6 years, bisexual representations in ads have appeared biannually but represent only 2% of all 350 characters during this time. As asserted by previous research, they are solely shown as the promiscuous male, shown flirting or kissing several characters of both sexes, and often also as an adventurous daredevil (e.g., jumping out of planes; Tsai, 2004). A few ads overtly portrayed a character who is cheating on his partner, using bisexuality as a humorous twist (e.g., IKEA, 2010). The latest two ads to feature bisexuality did so in a narrative that maintained a person's freedom to choose to love whichever gender they preferred, in accordance with the dominant "love is love" narrative in other LGBT-explicit ads (e.g., Lynx, 2015).

Trans portrayals across intersections

Young adult, middle-class, caucasian trans men (N = 4)

Trans men have only started appearing in ads mid-2015 and are restricted to young adult, middle-class, Caucasian portrayals. They were introduced in a HI ad for Hallmark that describes a trans man's transition journey, a format picked up later by Google (2015) and Airbnb (2015). All cases adhere to the previously described dominant gay male types—NPH and hipster—and show the subjects engaged in stereotypically male activities, such as weight-lifting, fishing, and shaving. Nonetheless, it is noticeable that both Google and

Table 4. Intersectional qualitative analysis of ads' character diversity (N = 350).

	Upper Class				Middle Class				Working Class			
	Mature	Middle Aged	Young Adult	Teen	Mature	Middle Aged	Young Adult	Teen	Mature	Middle Aged	Young Adult	Teen
Gay												
Caucasian	NPH or Predator*	NPH, rarely Sissie	Fashionista or Hipster			NPH * occ. Bear* or Hipster	NPH or Hipster*			Predator*		
African American		Fashionista or Sissie*				NPH* more Muscular	NPH occ. Muscular or Hipster					
Asian						Predator or Hipster	NPH occ. Sissie*					
Hispanic							NPH					
Lesbian												
Caucasian		Femme or Lipstick	Lipstick*			Femme* occ. Domestic Femme or Lipstick	Femme rarely Butch or Lipstick	Femme				
African American		Femme, rarely Butch				(Domestic)* Femme	Femme or Butch					
Asian						Femme	Femme occ. Butch or Lipstick (2)					
Bisexual												
Caucasian						Promiscuous	Promiscuous; Adventurous					
Trans MtF												
Caucasian						Drag Queen*						
African American												
Asian							Deceptive					
Hispanic												
Trans FtM												
Caucasian							NPH or Muscles*					

Notes. Intersections with 0% representation are shaded in gray, those with N = 0 representation are shaded in dark gray, and those with 1% representation are in very light gray.

Airbnb included "before-transition" photos and bare-chested images that focused on the breast surgery and muscle build-up.

Middle-aged, middle-class trans women (N = 12)

With regard to trans women, with the exception of two recent ads displaying celebrities Geena Rocero (Marriot, 2014) and Jazz Jennings (CleanandclearUS, 2015), the sole form of representation was that of the drag queen. These are male characters dressed and behaving in an exaggerated female fashion. They usually wear high heels, a short dress, and a wig, alongside copious amounts of makeup. Ads usually portray them as hypersensitive, catty entertainers or pitted against each other in comical storylines (e.g., Starbucks, 2014). Trans women are thus invisible both in absolute and relative terms, due to the lack of representations, as well as their likely association with drag queens by unknowing audiences.

Discussion

Previous research identified a pattern of hypersexualization and ridicule of gay characters in advertising. The foregoing findings clearly identify a shift away from these types of portrayals, likely due to the shift in attitudes toward homosexuality. Two common, recurrent themes run through the majority of LGBT-inclusive ads in the sample: "love is love" as well as "all types of families are wholesome." As a consequence, advertising has moved toward the depiction of committed relationships. In addition, the use of human interest ads has allowed for the inclusion of more nuanced, diverse, and multidimensional characters. The longitudinal analysis illustrates, however, that the majority of these changes did not occur until late 2014, likely in the wake of landmark changes in legalization surrounding same-sex marriage around the world.

Intersectional invisibility of age, class, and race

A clear advantage of this intersectional analysis of advertising imagery is the possibility to interrogate representations at a multidimensional level that accounts for a number of categories of difference. As Herz and Johansson (2015) emphasized, heteronormativity has yet to be discussed in an intersectional framework. By looking in detail at each individual intersection, a more nuanced picture of the ads under study emerges that allows for criticism at a deeper level.

With regard to race, the near absolute invisibility of Hispanic characters and the lack of racial diversity among minority sexual identities is a cause for concern. Non-White LGBT identities have often been associated with triple oppression: oppression by society in general, by the respective ethnic community, and by the racism of the White LGBT community. For African

Americans this includes the culture of homophobia within their communities (Bush et al., 1999; Martinez & Sullivan, 1998), while Asians face stigmatization resulting from the femininity associated with homosexual men (Han et al., 2014). This latter stereotype was visible in sissified ads from Asian countries and points to lingering homophobia that needs to be addressed.

Conversely, ads published in Western markets applied the dominant Caucasian portrayal types across every racial intersection. The relative similarity of representations used across ethnicities can thus be criticized for furthering assimilation solely into a whitewashed version of Black and Asian LGBT identity, in tune with non-sexuality-focused studies of race in the media. This is cause for concern, given that advertising and the media have been attributed greater socializing effects for ethnic minority groups (Bush et al., 1999). More empirical research into consumer responses to these ads is thus needed to make an informed judgment of whether they chime with the reality of non-White LGBT identities.

In addition, as a benefit over previous studies, the intersectional analysis demonstrates that any portrayal whose appearance and lifestyle does not adhere to the "dream consumer" image remains invisible. Throughout the sample, LGBT identities that challenge traditional notions of gender, such as butch and trans, are used only sporadically. The absence of racial, class- and age-based diversity, as well as non-lean representations, is likely to reinforce the marginalization of non-White, non-lean, working-class, and mature LGBT people.

Older generations who have grown up in less accepting environments are not as likely to be part of an LGBT community and to have dependencies (Cronin & King, 2010). While this may not apply to all, many older LGBTs have been found to be socially isolated due to an internal struggle with their sexuality or gender identity. Positive media portrayals would likely enhance their feelings of self-worth. Instead, they are presented with an apparent gerontophobia within advertising that excludes them from the sexual revolution and provides a harmful dichotomy of mature LGBTs as male, Caucasian, rich, and upper-class or as working-class predators.

For teenagers, who are passing through their formative years and therefore may turn to media representations to explore and to form their identity, advertising offers a similar dilemma (O'Donohoe, 1997). Teens are presented with an adult way of being, focused around domestic relationships and consumption that may not chime with their own experiences, as well as with a monolithic range of LGBT identities that limit the options they see for their self-development. This may cause distress to those who cannot envision a possibility to meet the standards of the appearance and lifestyle set for them. There is thus a need to better understand LGBT teens' use of advertising and its impact on self-development and identity.

A similar picture is the case for working-class LGBTs. Previous studies have affirmed that they face both material and emotional costs due to the struggle of managing both a "deviant" sexuality and class membership (Taylor, 2009). In addition, LGBT spaces are traditionally "classed," in terms of location and inaccessibility for those who do not possess sufficient means. The ads in this study not only fail to use representations that reflect this reality, they present a lifestyle that is defined by consumerism and thus largely unattainable for this group. It is thus likely that ads fail to engage this intersection and may even lead to feelings of insufficiency and resentment at the privileged construction of LGBT identities.

Body image and gender identity

The absolute invisibility of non-lean characters, with the exception of a handful of bear and butch characters, raises further concerns about the body image espoused in these ads. Existing studies have ascertained that mainstream gay culture upholds the lean and youthful body as a status symbol (Hutson, 2010). Due to these expectations, gay men and lesbians have been found to be at higher risk of being dissatisfied with their body, of displaying lower self-esteem, and of developing harmful eating disorders (ibid; Levitt & Hiestand, 2005). The perpetuation of only lean and beautiful NPHs, hipsters, and femmes in mainstream ads may add to pressures to conform across all intersections under study and may cause overweight LGBT people to feel doubly marginalized. The absence of non-lean femmes and the use of mostly larger butch women may fuel societal stereotypes of butch women as unattractive and chubbiness as non-feminine. In addition, the prevalence of femmes over butches in advertising might promote intragroup marginalization. While butches face higher levels of societal marginalization, femmes are often oppressed within the LGBT community. They are accused of adopting a heteronormative appearance to "pass" as straight and see their sexuality questioned constantly in both hetero- and homosexual spheres (Levitt & Hiestand, 2005). Hence, current LGBT-specific ads may promote this type of intragroup sentiments and resentment against femmes as inauthentic, capitalistic, and heteronormative, while concurrently hindering the acceptance of butches in society.

The question of inauthenticity also arises when considering existing trans portrayals. The three ads that include FtM characters clearly construct a heteronormative image of maleness, based on muscularity and traditionally male leisure activities. More importantly, however, a definite focus is placed on the transition process to obtain this image. These ads can thus be understood as normalizing trans men and aiding their assimilation into society, but might also be accused of emphasizing trans maleness as artificial.

The use of drag queens over trans women emphasizes the argument that ads espouse trans characters as artificial. In this context, drag performers were recently banned from an anti-commercialist Pride celebration in the United Kingdom, to avoid the trans community feeling offended by acts that were perceived to ridicule gender identity (Harris, 2015). There was a polarized response to this decision, which mimics an ongoing debate among academics. While some scholars assert that drag reinforces the gender binary by appropriating "traditional femininity and institutionalized heterosexuality," queer theorists such as Butler and Halberstam see it as "a transgressive action that destabilizes gender and sexual categories by making visible the social basis of femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, and presenting hybrid and minority genders and sexualities" (Taylor & Rupp, 2004, p. 115). While this article is not the place to attempt the resolution of this complex debate, it is clear that advertising not only symbolically annihilates trans women, it conflates them with an identity that represents an entirely different understanding of gender identity and is thus potentially harmful to their self-identity and acceptance within society. This divide is a classic example of the tension between assimilationist and radical viewpoints.

Heteronormativity and non-target market effects

Within the overall sample, however, gay and lesbian portrayals still far outweigh all other representations, making other parts of the LGBT spectrum intersectionally invisible. Gay identity in ads continues to infer "a monolithic identity, rather than a range of possible gay identities based on the interaction of sexual orientation with other group factors (race, class, gender, etc.)" (Martinez & Sullivan, 1998, p. 246). The findings thus further illustrate the ways in which advertising perpetuates certain types of sexualities and gender representations, while others are symbolically annihilated, thus reinforcing a hierarchy of respectability in which only a certain type of heteronormative gayness is accepted (Kates, 1999; Warner, 2000).

Such heteronormative media portrayals have been fiercely criticized and opposed by proponents of the LGBT movement, as it forces individuals to blend in, thereby creating a threat to homosexual lifestyles (Herz & Johansson, 2015). This raises the question of whether the LGBT imagery used currently in mainstream ads really appeals to the LGBT community (e.g., Bhat, Leigh, & Wardlow, 1998) or whether this multicultural advertising strategy creates involuntary non-target market effects for those LGBT consumers who do not adhere to the heteronormative standards set out in it—namely, those who fall into the intersections that remain invisible. Through these ads, advertisers might thus be alienating large parts of the minority group they are portraying, which prompts the question: Whom are advertisers actually trying to appeal to?

In recent years, a number of studies have advocated for research into "multicultural" advertising that aims to simultaneously speak to a number of different

target groups to efficiently address an increasingly multicultural audience (Johnson & Grier, 2011). Existing studies have asserted that homosexual imagery leads to negative effects on heterosexuals' attitude toward and feeling about an ad (Hooten, Noeva, & Hammonds, 2009; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004; Oakenfull et al., 2008). Nonetheless, this effect is mediated by individuals' general attitude toward homosexuality (Bhat et al., 1998). Due to social and legal changes in recent years, it is safe to assume that the sentiment "love is love" now reflects the values of large parts of the consumer base where these ads are being aired. In 2015, for example, the Ad Council released a campaign that reflects this ideology titled "Love Has No Labels." Using a simulated X-ray machine, passersby could watch dancing skeletons that were later revealed to be people of different backgrounds. The campaign became "the second most watched social and community activism ad of all time" (Nudd, 2015) and was followed up with a second campaign titled "Love Is Love" at New York Pride.

By using heteronormative imagery of LGBT couples and families, advertisers may thus be creating a commonality and congruency to heterosexual sympathizers' ideologies and values. This value congruency thereby creates a cultural identification intended to moderate the effect of viewers' differences to the portrayed characters (see, for example, Defever, Pandelaere, & Roe, 2011; Johnson & Grier, 2011). This suggests that heterosexuals are the underlying target group of LGBT-explicit ads and further explains the continued absence of bisexual characters who, due to the stigma of promiscuity, might challenge the value of long-term commitment. In addition, such ads might appeal to the growing number of "heteroflexible" consumers, such as straight men who sleep with other men, who, as sociologist Jane Ward (2012) argued, construct their practices not as a threat but a reinforcement of hypermasculine heterosexual ideals.

These ads could thus be interpreted as proof of the instability of the construct of heterosexuality that needs ongoing affirmation to remain in existence (Yep, 2003). In a study of African American media representations, Clark (1993) described a phase of "regulation," during which characters were portrayed in roles that sustain the social order, such as police officers and nurses. Similarly, in times when the status of LGBT individuals—and, indeed, identities in general—is ambivalent and uncertain (e.g., Bauman, 2013), these ads appear to provide a reassurance to non-LGBT audiences that LGBT families and marriages are not a threat to society.

At the same time, however, younger LGBT generations have been described as following more neoliberal politics, a *homonormativity*, in Lisa Duggan's (2003, p. 50) words, "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption." Using homonormativity as a framework thus raises the question of how the ads analyzed in this study may be read by LGBT individuals who are more accepted in society and often live in such heteronormative ways. It may be that the perpetuation of such images ultimately

leads to intragroup stigmatization as their fragile acceptance within society is threatened by those who do not adhere to the norms reflected in the media. This is further amplified by the use of human interest ads that show LGBT consumers who have adopted such a lifestyle and may serve as real-life role models for spectators. Similar to queer theorists' critique of the equal marriage movement, one could thus state that the ads in the sample create a "depoliticised assimilation to heteronormativity and the taking up of a privatised, consumerist, neoliberal "homonormativity" (Weber, 2015).

Conclusion

The study demonstrates the biased and reductionist picture of LGBT identities espoused by traditional segmentation practices. Despite positive developments in terms of the number and form of LGBT-specific mainstream ads, the intersectional analysis highlights the invisibility of the majority of identities within the queer spectrum and the subtle derision of the most vulnerable groups within it. This article thus expands concerns about the assimilationist power of media portrayals and considers its effects on a range of intersections instead of the community as a whole. Contrary to being in the mainstream/respect phase purported by Branchik (2007), we are now in a phase of "reassurance" maintained through a neoliberal homonormativity that upholds a strict hierarchy of accepted queerness under the veil of acceptance of the politically correct slogan "love is love."

Future research needs to take into account the rapidly changing societal landscape and its effect on LGBT individuals' media experience. Scholars might investigate LGBT consumers' attitudes to the types of ad portrayals identified in this study, bringing us closer to a more nuanced understanding of the effects of intersectionality on consumers' ad responses. Scholars may also be interested in researching the use of and responses to human interest ads, as well as their potential in creating deeper attachments with ads' characters. Moreover, a comparison between LGBT portrayals in advertising and general media may further deepen our understanding of LGBT (in-)visibility. Lastly, scholars may want to investigate consumers' attitudes toward portrayals of intersections that remain absolutely invisible, such as intersex or asexual characters, thereby potentially facilitating their assimilation and acceptance in the marketplace.

Note

1. Sexuality and gender identities are complex, dynamic, and contingent, based on constant processes of negotiation. The use of the proper terminology is a highly contested terrain and opinions differ across academia and in practice. In this article the term *LGBT* is used as it encompasses the four categories that ultimately appear in the

analysis. The acknowledgment that LGBT advertising does not encompass the full variety of sexual and gender subjectivities is further critiqued in the discussion section.

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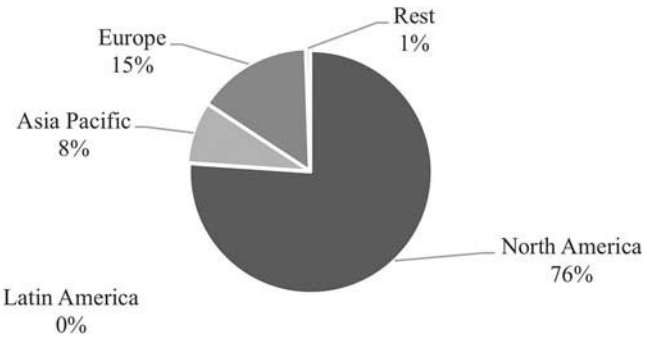
Appendix 1: Regional Split of Ad Sample 2009 to 2015 (*N* = 185)



Nvivo Query Data	
US	135
Canada	4
Australia	7
Austria	1
Brazil	1
China	3
Finland	1
France	2
Italy	5
India	2
Malaysia	1
Netherlands	1
Norway	2
Portugal	1
Singapore, Vietnam	1
Spain	1
Sweden	3
Thailand	1
UK	9
UK (excl. Ireland)	2
US/RUSSIA	1
Worldwide	1
North America	140
Asia Pacific	15
Europe	28
Latin America	0
Rest	1
Total	184
Data for Appendix 1	
North America	76%
Asia Pacific	8%
Europe	15%
Latin America	0%
Rest	1%

Appendix 2: Spread of Categories Across Sample (*n* = 185)

Category	Percentage
Retail	15%
Fashion/Apparel	13%
Packaged Foods	13%
Travel incl. Transport	11%
Financial Services	7%
Dot-com	7%
Miscellaneous	4%
Personal Products	4%
Telecommunications	3%
Alcohol/Entertainment	3%
Non-Alcoholic Beverages	3%
Automotive	2%
Pharmaceuticals	2%
Household Products	2%
Restaurants	2%
Insurance	1%
Jewelry	1%
Technology	1%
Telecommunications	1%
Appliances	1%
Cameras/Film	1%
Health Organizations	1%
Home Decor	1%
National Politics	1%
Athletics/Fitness/Sporting Goods	1%

Based on Nvivo