

Evolving Social Values: Intersectional Analysis of Same-sex and Interracial Couples in Magazine Advertisements

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Abstract

This study used a quantitative content analysis and qualitative image analysis to explore the representation and intersectionality of same-sex and opposite-sex couples with interracial and intraracial couples in advertisements from Canadian Living, Châtelaine, Cosmopolitan, Elle, Men's Health, Reader's Digest, and Sports Illustrated magazines between January 2021 to March 2024. Observations collected from a sample of 208 advertisements depicting two or more adults were used to tentatively suggest dominant Canadian social values towards same-sex and interracial couples. Advertisement images were coded for gender, race, the activity depicted, the physical touch between adults, and the presence of children. Results showed that representation of same-sex couples, both interracial and intraracial, was higher than the proportion reported in Canada in 2016. Similarly, the representation of interracial couples, both same-sex and opposite-sex, was higher than the proportion reported in Canada in 2021. These two findings suggest growing acceptance of same-sex relationships and interracial relationships. Interracial couples involving a White female partner occurred far more often than those involving a White male partner, suggesting social disapproval of unions between White women and visible minorities may no longer prevail. However, in advertisements with interracial or intraracial couples, depictions of physical intimacy favoured couples that were of the opposite sex. Advertisements with same-sex couples displaying intimacy were more often intraracial than interracial. Displays of intimacy from same-sex couples were almost exclusively between two women, and no interracial couples were engaged in very intimate touch. Results of the intersectional analysis finds a bias favouring intraracial, opposite-sex couples over both interracial, same-sex couples and interracial, opposite-sex couples unless the couples were engaged in simple touch, conveying friendship over intimacy. These biases suggest social approval of interracial relationships and same-sex relationships as long as they appear superficial or casual and potential social disapproval of relationships that are both interracial and same-sex. Only four advertisements depicted children with couples, and these showed a bias favouring opposite-sex, intraracial couples. The overall results from this study indicate that although there is increased representation of same-sex couples and interracial couples, advertisements may continue to reflect and perpetuate heteronormative and intraracial social values in concepts of relationships and family.

Introduction

Advertisements communicate stories, reflecting unspoken social norms and values through the ways characters look and behave, the roles they play, and the setting they are in. These subtle factors compound together, giving advertisements the power to reinforce stereotypes or behaviours that oppress certain groups and communities. When stories in advertisements

challenge dominant social values, they spark controversy. In June 2013, Cheerios suffered public backlash after airing a TV commercial with a white woman, her black husband, and their mixed-race child (ABC Action News, 2013, 0:23). To avoid negative responses, brands conduct market research, identifying their audience's cultural values through demographic data like ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political views. In Canada, the 2011 National Household Survey found 4.6% of couples were "mixed union," referring to common-law and married couples where at least one partner is a visible minority or where both partners are different visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2018, Box 2). This percentage of mixed union couples increased to 7.3% in 2016 (Aathavan, 2021, Table 1), which does not distinguish between couples which are the same-sex or opposite-sex. Statistics Canada (2023) estimates the percentage of visible minority populations in Canada will increase from 22.3% in 2016 to 28.4% by 2026. Leveraging research, brands tailor their advertising campaign narratives to match their audience's values. If Canada's racial diversity is growing, brands may increase the representation of interracial couples in advertisements.

Brands may also challenge dominant ideologies to communicate brand values and corporate social responsibility. In 2012, Ray-Ban launched its "Never Hide" campaign and featured a gay male couple holding hands in the city (Huffpost, 2017). When brands challenge the status quo, they can promote discourse about systemic social issues. According to Statistics Canada (2017), the number of same-sex couples increased by 60.7% from 2006 to 2016. In 2021, they represented 1.1% of all couples (Statistics Canada, 2023), which is assumed to refer to couples that are both interracial and intraracial. Social acceptance of same-sex relationships has likely increase from recent 2SLGBTQI+ (two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex) movements, encouraging more disclosure of same-sex relationships. Advertisement narratives reflect how social and cultural values are evolving.

Purpose

This study explored potential Canadian attitudes towards same-sex and interracial relationships by performing a quantitative content analysis and qualitative image analysis of magazine advertisements showing images of couples. The representation of interracial, intraracial, same-sex, and opposite-sex relationships was observed and measured in lifestyle, general interest, sports, men's health, women's fashion, and entertainment magazine genres. Interracial relationships were based on Statistics Canada's (2018) definition of mixed unions, referring to a couple "in which one spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not, as well as a couple in which the two spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups" (Box 2). An intraracial couple refers to couples in which both spouses or partners are White and couples in which both belong to the same visible minority group. Same-sex couples refer to couples consisting of two males and couples consisting of two females while opposite-sex couples refer to couples in which one partner or spouse is female and the other is

male. This study aimed to reveal attitudes across a broad Canadian demographic and differences in attitudes between demographics based on magazine genre readership. By qualitatively analyzing the images, this study discussed the intersectionality of race and sexual orientation and how they interplay with social concepts of relationships and family.

Through this analysis, this study hoped to answer the following research questions (RQ) about magazine advertisements:

1. How are same-sex couples depicted relative to their proportion in Canada (1.1%) based on the 2021 census?
2. How are interracial couples depicted relative to their proportion in Canada (7.3%) based on the 2016 long-form census?
3. Is there equal interracial and intraracial representation between same-sex and opposite-sex couples?
4. Is there equal same-sex and opposite-sex representation between interracial and intraracial couples?
5. Does the proportion of same-sex couples and interracial couples vary between magazine genre?
6. Does the proportion of same-sex couples and interracial couples vary if children are present in the advertisement?

The analysis of the results in this study was intended to compare how same-sex, opposite sex, interracial, and intraracial couples are portrayed in advertisements in relation to each other and between magazine genres. Observed similarities and differences are used to identify potential trends and correlations, but they do not present any causal claims.

Literature Review

Existing critical research studies, particularly queer and feminist criticism, have revealed how gender and racial stereotypes manifest in advertising. For example, visible minorities may play submissive roles to White counterparts in narratives. By analyzing advertising campaigns and ethnic tokenism, Rona (2023) identified ways stereotypes are perpetuated through physical representation of characters and the roles they play. Visible minorities often played comedic “unintelligent sidekicks to white protagonists,” and Asian women were often fetishized (Rona, 2023, p. 46). Brand campaigns have stereotyped ethnic traditions through cultural appropriation instead of representing ethnic communities authentically and respectfully (Rona, 2023, p. 47).

Media representation of interracial couples has also been studied. Chand (2020) studied historical portrayals of interracial couples in advertisements and interviewed interracial couples

to examine their reactions and responses to these historical portrayals. The author observed a disparity of interracial relationships depicting white women with Asian men (p. 7), speculating that interracial preferences may be motivated by goals to improve one's socioeconomic status (p. 8). Interviewed interracial couples viewed the historical portrayals as positive progress towards social change, but some participants observed persistent racial stereotypes (p. 21).

Stereotypes and misrepresentation of 2SLGBTQI+ people in advertisements have also been researched. Nölke (2018) performed a longitudinal, multimodal content analysis of advertisements in publications between 2009 and 2015 to study shifts in attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) people, coding for age, race, and class. Despite increasing representation of LGBT people, they were typified as trendy, hairless, and muscular; lesbians were hypersexualized to appeal to the male gaze; and bisexuals, transsexuals, lesbian families, and "butch" lesbians were absent or underrepresented (pp. 226-227). She found LGBT people were mostly White, middle-aged, middle-class gay men (p. 233). African American gay men were rare, and Asian gay men were hyper-feminine (pp. 237-238). Nölke believes brands may be alienating large parts of minority groups in their depictions of LGTB people.

Hackenmueller (2020) performed a content analysis on television commercials from 2019 to examine the representation of interracial couples. She examined characters' statuses and prominence compared to others, socioeconomic statuses, and the physical distance between characters. She found that 19% of couples were interracial, higher than the proportion in the United States (US) population (p. 31). However, only 30% of interracial couples had White female partners with non-White male partners, lower than the proportion in the US (p. 31). She found intraracial couples were depicted physically closer more often than interracial couples (p. 32). Between Disney, ABC, and Freeform television networks, Disney, who can influence childhood perceptions, had the least representation of interracial couples (p. 33).

Children learn about ethnicities through television. Strom (2002) compared the frequency of commercials depicting only White children, only interracial children, and mixes of White and interracial children by performing a quantitative content analysis on commercials aired on ABC, CBS, Fox, and Nickelodeon networks between 1997 and 1998. She found that 42% of the commercials depicted only White children, 1% depicted interracial children only, and 57% depicted both White and interracial children (p. 228), suggesting a focus on White audiences. Because toy commercials seemed to feature White children only, Strom wondered if brands believe "White children have greater buying power" (p. 233) than interracial children, perpetuating notions that interracial groups have lower socioeconomic statuses. If children see more interracial relationships, they may develop progressive views as they mature.

Cosmopolitan is read primarily by Generation Z, and 22% of the readership consider themselves part of the LGBTQ+ community (Statista, 2024). Saraceno and Tambling (2013)

performed a qualitative analysis of images in *Cosmopolitan* in 2009 to evaluate attitudes towards sexual orientation and gender identities, coding for gender, the activities taking place, and the level of intimacy exchanged. They found a heteronormative bias in advertisements favouring mixed-gendered groups that displayed more intimacy than same-gendered groups (p. 13). While relationships between women were hypersexualized, they found no intimate acts between two men, suggesting that “intimate men-men behavior is inappropriate” (p. 13). They believe gender norms are reinforced by presenting men as heterosexual and women as visual objects (p. 14).

Moss and Kiousis (2024) expanded scholarly research to include the influence of advertisements with interracial couples and biracial children on emerging adults. In a survey of adults between eighteen and twenty-five, Moss and Kiousis found that emerging adults viewed advertisements with multiracial families more positively than advertisements with White families (pp. 13-14). Positive receptions of advertisement may indirectly influence emerging adults to view the brand positively and purchase their products (p. 17). However, Moss and Kiousis admit that depicting multiracial families in advertisements may be an effective strategy for brands to reach emerging adults, but it may not apply to other age groups (p. 20).

Brands are participating in social movements and launching diversity and inclusion advertising (DIA) campaigns to connect with their diverse audience. Wilkie et al. (2023) used online surveys and interviews to understand public responses to DIA. They found that the demographic of people supporting DIA were mostly female and younger, wanting brands to demonstrate long-term commitment to “genuine interest in diversity and being authentic” (pp. 728-729). The researchers found that DIA opposers “likely consists of older White males” who feel that there is “overcorrection or an excessive focus on diversity” or lack of authenticity (p. 730). Due to diverse audiences within the same media channel, Wilkie et al. believe brands must tailor DIA campaigns to avoid excluding specific subgroups (pp. 735-736).

Gong (2020) discussed advertisers use of “gay window advertising” to encrypt homosexual images with subtext that only LGBT readers could understand” (p. 918) to avoid offending heterosexual audiences, but this strategy implies that intimacy between homosexual people should be hidden (p. 917). Gong proposed use of mixed sexual advertisements showing both heterosexual and homosexual couples. Gong facilitated five focus groups, three with homosexual members only and two with heterosexual members only, and conducted a survey with 283 participants. The focus groups acknowledged gay-themed advertisements promoted social acceptance of homosexuals, but participants raised concerns about offending people with negative attitudes towards homosexuality (p. 930) and advertisements that perpetuated stereotypes to appeal to heterosexual viewers (p. 931). The heterosexual focus groups preferred mixed sexual advertisements over homosexual advertisements, and homosexual groups acknowledged mixed sexual advertisements as a better alternative to “gay window

advertising” (pp. 932-933). Similarly, heterosexual survey participants viewed mixed sexual advertisements much more favourably than gay-themed advertisements, while homosexual survey participants viewed mixed sexual advertisements relatively equally to gay-themed advertisements (p. 927). Mixed sexual advertisements may help brands to promoting social acceptance of homosexual identities without offending heterosexual audiences.

Cowart et al. (2023) found that attitudes towards brands may decrease in response to racial diversity in advertisements if audiences suspect corporate ulterior motives to improve public image, drive profits, and pander to social movements without sincere alignment of core values (p. 6). Although Cowart et al.’s research focused on advertisements with non-romantic subjects, they found that survey respondents in the United States of America (USA) responded more positively to advertisements with monoracial Black and Latino models than interracial models, suspecting less ulterior motives and more organizational inclusiveness (p. 13). However, suspicion of ulterior motives was mitigated when the advertisements featured eight interracial models instead of two (p. 16).

Research Methodology

A qualitative image analysis was performed to evaluate the representation of interracial and same-sex couples in advertisements within magazines of different genres. Simultaneously, quantitative content analysis was performed on the advertisements to compare the frequency of interracial and same-sex couples to intraracial and opposite-sex couples, respectively. This study excluded images in magazine editorials. Advertisements were distinguished from magazine editorials based on the presence of a single brand or organizational name, an identifiable product or service being sold, and the absence of one or more named authors. This study was inclusive of advertisements from all industries as long as they met the image requirements described in the units of analysis section.

Units of Analysis

This study selected advertisements based on the following conditions in their images:

1. At least two adults must be depicted.
2. Images can be photographic or illustrated.
3. The adults must be the primary subjects (i.e., located in the foreground, not background).
4. Facial features of adults must be visible.
5. Children can be present.

Images with 5 or more adults present were excluded from the analysis unless at least two adults displayed intimacy. For images with multiple adults, the advertisement was coded and image analysis was performed based on the two adults who displayed the most physical contact or intimacy.

If the same advertisement appeared multiple times in different issues, they were coded each time they appeared. The names of the brand or organization in the advertisement was recorded, but the industries to which the brands or organizations belong was not identified or analyzed as part of this study.

Population

Advertisements were observed in magazine issues between January 2021 to March 2024. Table 1 shows the selected magazines in this study based on the highest consumption reported in Canada (Bashir, 2024) as they can influence a larger population. Magazines were also selected based on accessibility to archival issues.

Table 1. Magazine Genre and Publication

Genre	Publication	Archived Source
Lifestyle	<i>Canadian Living</i>	(Digital) Libby via Edmonton Public Library
Women	<i>Elle, Châtelaine</i>	(Digital) Libby via Edmonton Public Library
Men	<i>Men's Health</i>	(Digital) Libby via Edmonton Public Library
Entertainment	<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	(Digital) Libby via Edmonton Public Library
General Interest	<i>Reader's Digest</i>	(Digital) Libby via Edmonton Public Library
Sports	<i>Sports Illustrated</i>	(Physical) MacEwan Library

Coding Scheme

Adults in each applicable advertisement were coded for gender, race, and sexual orientation. The categories for these units of analysis accounted for the intercoder's limited training and experience and the limitations of accurate coding by visual image only.

Gender was categorized into male, female, and unknown based on typical visual cues, such as facial features, hair length, attire, build, and other physiological factors. For example, an adult with broad shoulders and a beard is coded as a man, and an adult with breasts who is wearing make-up is coded as a woman. With these categories, couples were categorized as

same-sex (women), same-sex (men), and opposite-sex. While there are many visual cues to identify gender, race is difficult to identify based on appearance alone.

Self report data on racial identity is unavailable in advertisements. Depicted adults may also have multiracial identities that are impossible to identify accurately without training. Due to the intercoder's inexperience in identifying race and the time limitations of this study, the categories of race were generalized based on Canadian ethnicities reported by Statistics Canada (2023). Race was categorized into the following groups:

1. White
2. Black
3. Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Southeast Asian (e.g., Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)
4. South Asian (e.g., Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka)
5. West Asian (e.g., Armenia, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran)
6. Other visible minority

These racial categories were used to identify intraracial or interracial couples. For example, an advertisement depicting two White adults or two Black adults was coded as an intraracial couple. An advertisement depicting a Black adult and a West Asian adult was coded as an interracial couple. Interracial couples were further coded as *White, non-White* to describe couples where one partner was White while the other was a visible minority and *non-White* to describe couples where both partners were two different visible minorities. Intraracial relationships were further coded as *White* to describe couples where both partners were White and *Non-white* to describe couples where both partners were the same visible minority.

In advertisements, adults must be identified as a couple to determine their sexual orientation. The "couple status" is based on how the two adults are interacting: the activities performed and the type of physical contact with each other. The categories for activities and physical contact are based on the study performed by Saraceno and Tambling (2013) who performed a pilot test of the coding scheme with other researchers (p. 6). Activities were categorized into:

1. Chores/Paid Work
2. Sports/Exercise
3. Relaxing (e.g., watching TV, reading)

4. Being out and about (e.g., driving, walking, shopping)
5. Posing for photo (e.g., modeling, photoshoot, group photo)
6. Friends/family hanging out (e.g., talking, standing, or sitting together)
7. Eating (e.g., restaurant, bar, kitchen table)
8. Dating/romantic time (e.g., gazing into each other's eyes, sitting or standing very close to each other, cuddling)
9. Having sex or very intimate contact (e.g., undressing each other, foreplay)
10. Unknown

Two adults, engaged in *Dating/romantic time* and *Having sex or intimate contact*, were given a strong “couple status.” However, the analysis also considered associating couples with two adults engaged in *Relaxing, Eating, and Sports/Exercise*, activities couples often do together.

This study assessed physical touch based on perceived intention. For example, one adult placing a hand on another adult’s chest was assessed as an intentional physical touch. However, two adults sitting next to each other and whose elbows are possibly touching was coded as *No touch*. Physical contact was categorized into:

1. No touch
2. Utilitarian (e.g., handshake, tackling in football)
3. Simple touch (e.g., team group hug, pat on the back, holding hands in a friendly way)
4. Intimate touch (e.g., hugging romantically, feeding each other, sexual stimulation through clothing)
5. Very intimate touch (e.g., undressing each other, kissing body, direct sexual stimulation)

Adults in advertisements engaged in *Intimate touch* and *Very intimate touch* were given a strong “couple status.” The analysis also considered associating couples with two adults engaged in *Simple touch* given that ethnicities publicly display affections differently. If there were multiple physical contact points between adults, the most intimate contact was coded.

Lastly, the number of children were identified in advertisements. The categories for children were *No children, 1 child, and 2+ children*.

Sampling

Systematic sampling with a random start was used to select magazine issues from each publication. Google's random number generator was used to select a number between 1 and 2, which was associated with the first or second magazine issue of that year. The sample population consisted of the first or second randomly selected issue and every second issue following. This methodology was applied to each publication for each year, 2021 through 2024.

The advertisements collected within this time period across the selected magazines are not intended to provide a sample size large enough to achieve a 95% confidence interval. Because the number of advertisements contained in magazines varies, the total quantity of published advertisements within this time period is unknown.

Measurement and Intercoder Reliability

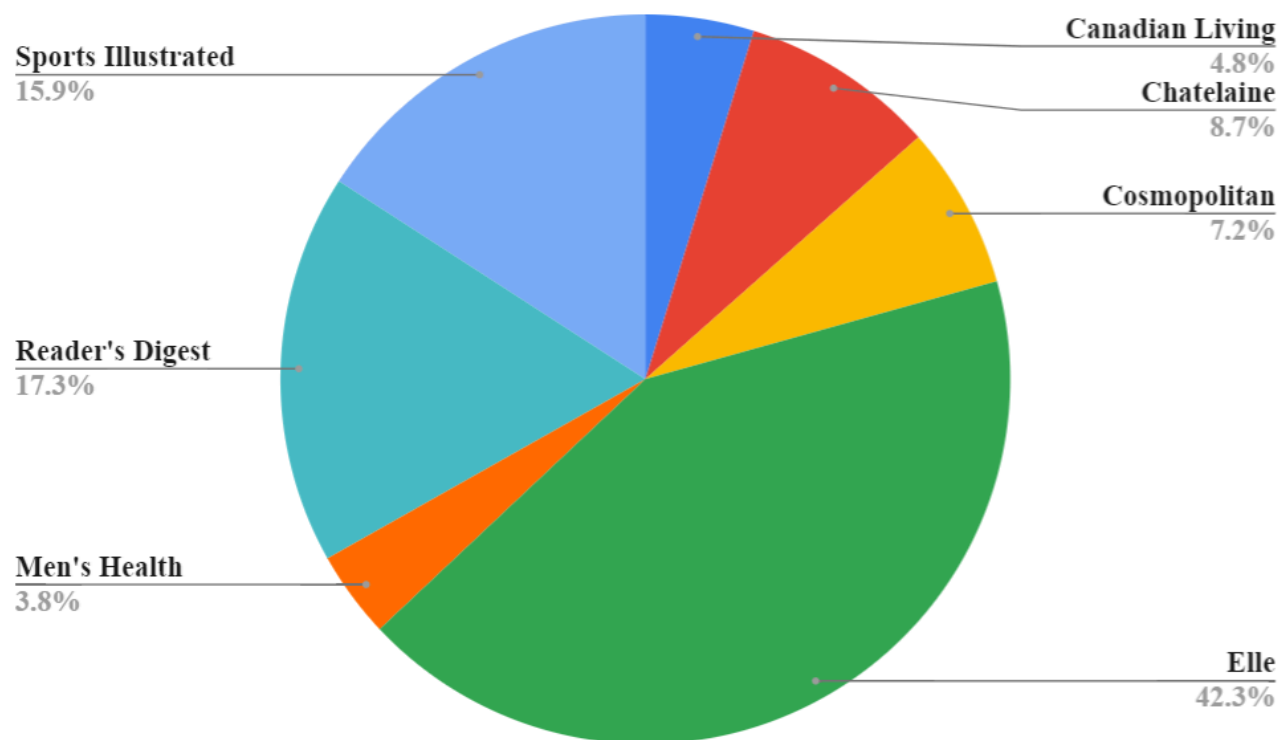
In this study, intercoder reliability tests were performed. Fourteen images from *Canadian Living*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Elle* were coded separately by the researcher and two testers (Tester A and Tester B). These images included both advertisements and editorials that depicted at least two adults. Editorials were included only for the purposes of coding images displaying sex and very intimate contact, which could not be located initially in advertisements. Merrigan and Huston (2020) deems "0.7 is the minimum acceptable level of intercoder reliability for content analytic research" (p. 149). Based on this minimum threshold, the intercoder reliability tests targeted 70% coding agreement between the researcher and at least one or more of the testers.

The researcher explained to Tester A the purpose, the units of analysis, and each of the categories. The researcher and Tester A coded the fourteen images independently, and each individual's results were compared. The categories coded by the researcher and Tester A all agreed by over 70% except for the physical touch category. Following a discussion with Tester A, the researcher revised the activity and physical touch categories to be more specific with clearer examples. The researcher provided more descriptive training to Tester B. The researcher and Tester B coded the same fourteen images independently. All coded categories for the images between the researcher and Tester B agreed by 70% or higher, meeting the minimum threshold of acceptable intercoder reliability and demonstrating the intercoder reliability of this study is high despite having one intercoder.

Results and Analysis

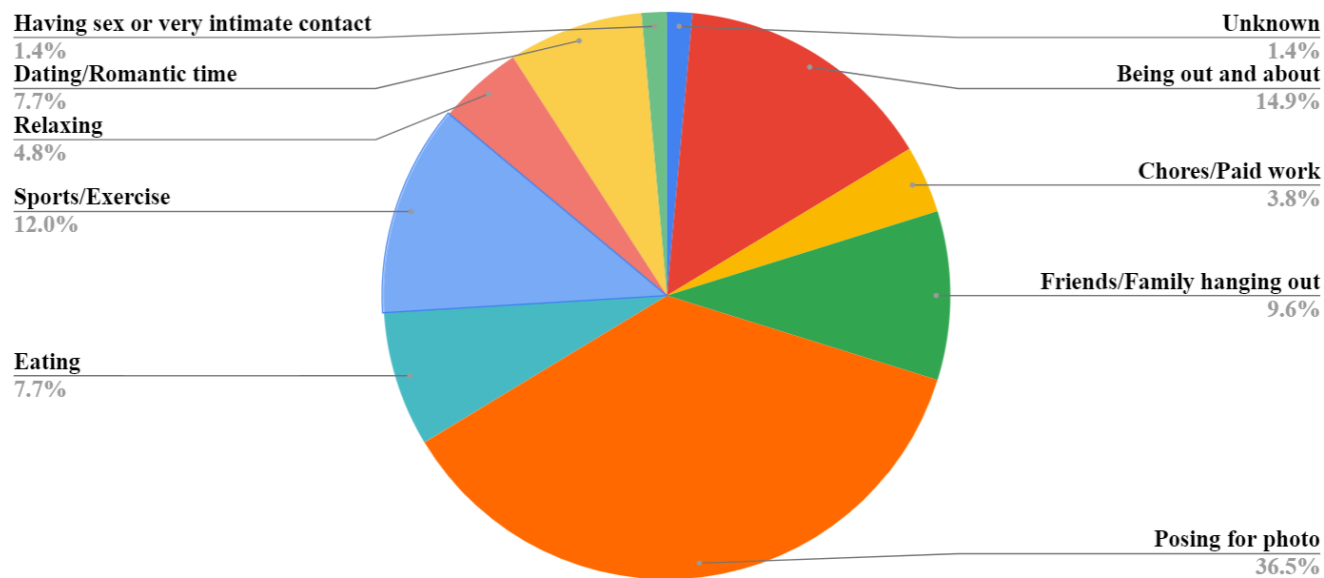
The researcher analyzed 208 advertisements from *Canadian Living*, *Châtelaine*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Men's Health*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Sports Illustrated*. Figure 1 shows the proportion of advertisements that met the image requirements from each magazine.

Figure 1. Advertisement Distribution by Magazine



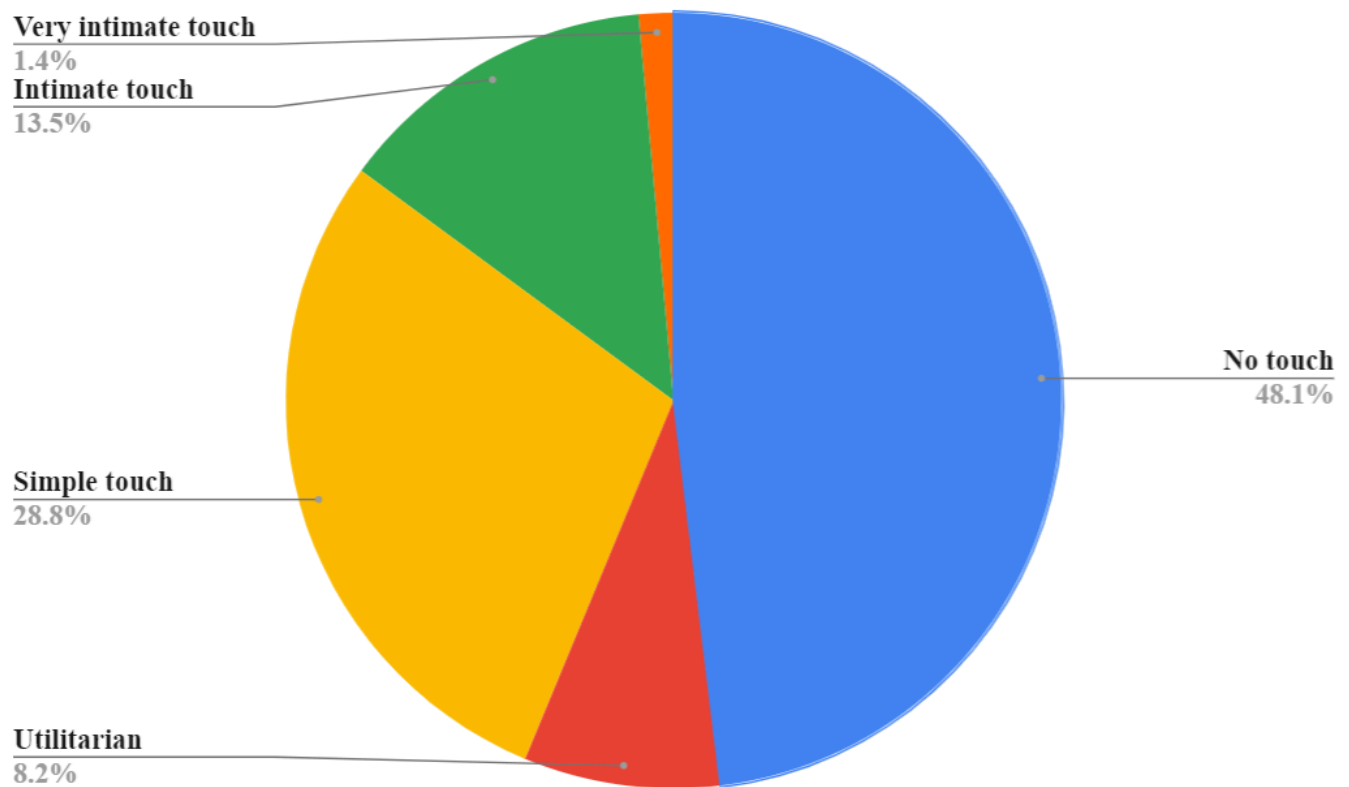
Canadian Living and *Men's Health* magazine had the fewest number of advertisements that met the image requirements. Advertisements in these magazines featured products without people or with one adult only. *Cosmopolitan* contained images depicting couples engaged in intimate acts that were disqualified because they existed in editorials, not advertisements. *Elle* magazine had the highest number of advertisements showing at least two adults from brands marketing women's fashion. However, most of these fashion advertisements depicted adults *Posing for photo* and did not qualify for "couple status" unless they were engaged in *Intimate touch* or *Very intimate touch*. Figure 2 shows the number of advertisements by activity.

Figure 2. Advertisement Distribution by Activity



The number of advertisements showing adults *Having sex or very intimate contact* was very low, which is not unexpected. There were more advertisements with adults engaged in *Dating/Romantic time*, which established the “couple status.” Similarly, there were very few advertisements depicting *Very intimate touch* as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Advertisement Distribution by Physical Touch



The proportion of advertisements showing *Intimate touch* and *Very intimate touch* are much lower than *No touch* and *Simple touch*. This study confirmed Saraceno and Tambling's (2013) methodology to identify "couple status" using both activity and physical contact as some adults in advertisements were dating without showing physical contact. This study found ambiguity in associating simple touch with "couple status." For example, if advertisements accurately and respectfully depict cultures that disapproves of public displays of affection, then adults may be a couple even if depicted with *No touch* or *Simple touch*.

Same-sex and Opposite-sex Relationships

Interestingly, this study found an equal number of advertisements showing two adults of the same sex and those showing two adults of the opposite sex (104 advertisements each). Table 2 in the Appendix breaks down the distribution of same-sex and opposite-sex relationships by activity and physical touch.

RQ1. How are same-sex couples depicted relative to their proportion in Canada (1.1%) based on the 2021 census?

The expected frequency of same-sex relationships is calculated by multiplying the total number of advertisements or the number of advertisements in each category by 1.1%. Focusing on activities that suggest “couple status,” *Having sex or very intimate contact*, *Dating/Romantic time*, *Eating*, *Sports/Exercise*, and *Relaxing*, there were more same-sex couples observed (7.7%) than expected (1.1%). Similarly, the observed frequency of same-sex couples (20.2%) associated with *Intimate touch* and *Simple touch* is significantly more than expected (1.1%). Table 3 summarizes the results of a chi-square test for significance performed on these findings based on the null hypothesis of the results reflecting the census values.

Table 3. *Chi-square Test Results for Same-sex Couple Representation in Advertisements*

	Degrees of Freedom	χ^2	p
Activity			
Eating, Sports/Exercise, Relaxing, Dating/Romantic time, Having sex or very intimate contact	4	425	< .001
Dating/Romantic time, Having sex or very intimate contact	1	45	< .001
Physical Touch			
Simple touch, Intimate touch, Very intimate touch	2	1914	< .001
Intimate touch, Very intimate touch	1	144	< .001

Table 3 shows that the observed frequency of same-sex couples is significant ($p < .001$), and the null hypothesis is rejected. The representation of same-sex couples in advertisements does not represent the proportion of same-sex couples in Canada reported by Statistics Canada. Restricting the “couple status” to portrayals of *Dating/Romantic time* and *Having sex or very intimate contact* or *Intimate touch* and *Very intimate touch* also does not reduce the significance of the observed frequencies. This suggests that brands may be overrepresenting same-sex relationships or that brands perceive there to be more same-sex relationships than what their audiences discloses to census surveys.

Almost all advertisements showing same-sex couples engaged in *Intimate touch* are between two women. Figure 4 below is an advertisement by Guess found in the May 2023 issue of *Elle* depicting two women engaged in *Intimate touch* while *Posing for photo*. The women pose

in a way that may draw attention to cleavage and bare legs. Although the women are intimately touching each other, their eyes are directed towards the audience.

Figure 4. Same-sex Couple Advertisement in Elle (Guess, 2023)



This bias supports findings made by Saraceno and Tambling (2013) that suggest same-sex female relationships are sexualized while intimacy in same-sex male relationships is not approved (pp. 12-13). This bias also supports Nölke's (2018) assessment that lesbians were hypersexualized to appeal to the male gaze (p. 226). Generally, same-sex female couples occur more often than same-sex male couples in these advertisements. However, Statistics Canada (2022) reports there are slightly more same-sex male couples (48, 655) than same-sex female couples (46,780). This underrepresentation in advertisements may suggest social disapproval of same-sex, male relationships and acceptance of same-sex, female relationships because of the appeal to a heteronormative male gaze.

Interracial and Intra-racial Relationships

This study found that 81 advertisements (38.9%) depicted *White* intra-racial adults, 34 advertisements (16.3%) depicted *non-White* intra-racial adults, 18 advertisements (9.6%)

depicted *non-White* interracial adults, and 73 advertisements (35.1%) depicted *White, non-White* interracial adults regardless of activity and physical touch. Table 4 in Appendix A summarizes the results for interracial and intraracial relationships across different activities and physical contacts.

Results in Table 4 show more advertisements depicting *White, non-White* interracial couples than *non-White* intraracial couples across almost all activities and levels of physical touch. Figure 5 below is a Rogers advertisement depicting an interracial couple coded as *White, non-White* and engaged in *Intimate touch*.

Figure 5. Interracial Couple Advertisement in *Châtelaine* (Rogers, 2023)

The advertisement features a photograph of an elderly Asian man and a younger woman of South Asian descent sitting closely together on a light-colored sofa. The man is wearing a grey t-shirt and blue jeans, and the woman is wearing a red patterned top and blue jeans. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The woman is holding a smartphone. In the background, there is a white shelving unit with various decorative items, including a bowl of lemons and a small clock. The overall scene is warm and intimate.

Ignite TV + Internet

Speak your mind.
Find your show.

Enjoy the ultimate entertainment experience with an Ignite TV + Internet Bundle.

Get the most captivating entertainment with endless content and an easy, personalized experience. Plus, use your voice to find what you're looking for in seconds with our amazing voice remote.

Visit Rogers.com or your local store for details.

ROGERS With you all the way.

The couple in Figure 5 is cuddling on the sofa and watching TV together, a relatable romantic activity to most demographics in North America. The higher number of advertisements with interracial couples than advertisements with *non-White* intraracial couples suggests that diversity and inclusion advertising strategies may prioritize interracial models despite Cowart et al.'s (2023) recent research indicating the potential association of interracial models with corporate ulterior motives (p. 12). However, Cowart et al.'s research tested responses to advertisements with Black and Latino models only, excluding responses to West Asian, South

Asian, and Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Southeast Asian models. Rogers advertisements observed in this study, such as the one shown in Figure 5, were found to depict models of West Asian and Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Southeast Asian models. Specific brands may select models of certain demographics to align with the perceived demographics of their customers.

RQ2. How are interracial couples depicted relative to their proportion in Canada (7.3%) based on the 2016 long-form census?

The expected frequency of interracial relationships is calculated by multiplying 7.3% by the total number of advertisements and the number of advertisements in each category. The number of interracial couples engaged in *Dating/Romantic time* and *Intimate touch* was significantly higher than expected. Interracial couples *Eating, Sports/Exercise, Relaxing, and Dating/Romantic time* represented 13.5% percent of the advertisements compared to the expected 7.3%. Table 5 summarizes the results of a chi-squared test performed on these observations based on the null hypothesis of the frequency reflecting the proportion in the 2016 census.

Table 5. Chi-square Test Results for Interracial Couple Representation in Advertisements

	Degrees of Freedom	χ^2	p
Activity			
Eating, Sports/Exercise, Relaxing, Dating/Romantic time, Having sex or very intimate contact	4	143	< .001
Dating/Romantic time, Having sex or very intimate contact	1	13	< .001
Physical Touch			
Simple touch, Intimate touch, Very intimate touch	2	119	< .001
Intimate touch, Very intimate touch	1	70	< .001

The observed frequency included *White, non-White* interracial couples and *non-White* interracial couples. Table 5 shows that the observed frequency of interracial couples is significant ($p < .001$), and the null hypothesis is rejected. The representation of interracial couples in advertisements does not reflect the reported proportion of interracial couples in

Canada even if the criteria for “couple status” is restricted to portrayals of *Dating/Romantic time* and *Having sex or very intimate contact* or portrayals of *Intimate touch* and *Very intimate touch*. However, the expected frequency is based on data collected in 2016, several years past the time when the magazines were published. Due to increasing immigration, the number of interracial relationships in Canada is likely to have increased since 2016, so the expected proportion of interracial couples is likely higher. There were equal amounts of *Intimate touch* between intraracial and interracial couples. However, there was no representation of interracial couples engaged in *Having sex or very intimate contact* and *Very intimate touch* and significantly few instances of interracial couples engaged in *Dating/Romantic time*. This supports Hackenmueller’s (2020) observation that intraracial couples were often depicted physically closer to each other than interracial couples (p. 32). Figure 6 depicts an advertisement depicting an intraracial couple engaged in *Having sex or very intimate contact* and *Very intimate touch* observed in *Men’s Health* magazine.

Figure 6. Advertisement With an Intraracial Couple Engaged in Very Intimate Touch (Roman, 2021)

When was the last time you were excited to have sex?

If it's been a while since you couldn't wait to jump in bed with your partner, you're not alone. Erectile dysfunction (ED) affects an estimated 30 million men in the US. And many won't get the treatment they need—that's where we come in.

Feel confident in the bedroom again with Roman. Connect with a US-licensed healthcare professional and get ED meds discreetly delivered to your door, if prescribed.

Get \$15 off your first month of ED treatment.

Scan the QR code or visit us at getroman.com/menshealth

roman

QR code

In this advertisement, both partners are categorized as *Black* although the woman in the photo might be mixed race. However, the potential for the woman being a mixed race is not enough to demonstrate social acceptance of strong, non-superficial interracial relationships. Overall, there are fewer *non-White* than *White* intraracial couples and fewer *non-White* than *White, non-White* interracial couples, suggesting a bias favouring representation of White people in relationships.

A higher number of interracial couples where one partner is White is observed over the number of interracial couples where both partners are different visible minorities. No recent statistical data is available to compare this observation in advertisements to the actual prevalence in the Canadian population. Of the four advertisements showing *White, non-White* couples engaged in *Dating/Romantic time*, there was equal representation of *White* females to *White* males. Twelve advertisements were found depicting *White, Non-white* interracial couples engaged in *Intimate contact*.

Of the twelve advertisements showing a *White, non-White* couple engaged in *Intimate contact*, ten (83%) of those couples had a White female partner. This finding contrasts with the underrepresentation observed by Hackenmuller (2020) (p. 31). Five out of these twelve interracial couples involved a *Black* partner and a *White* partner and four out of these five interracial couples involved a *Black, male* partner with a *White, female* partner. Figure 7 shows an advertisement with a Black adult and a White adult engaged in *Intimate touch* observed in *Elle*.

Figure 7. *Interracial Couple Advertisement in Elle (Guess, 2021)*



In this advertisement, the White woman is leaning and touching the Black man suggestively, and the Black man may appear to be undoing his suit jacket. No known media reports about public backlash in response to this advertisement could be found on the internet. This finding suggests that it may no longer be taboo for a visible minority to date a White woman, conflicting with Chand's (2020) assessment (p. 12).

RQ3. Is there equal interracial and intraracial representation between same-sex and opposite-sex couples?

The results were filtered for opposite-sex couples and same-sex couples. Then the frequency of intraracial and interracial relationships was measured between each instance and summarized in Tables 6 and 7 below.

Table 6. Frequency of Intraracial and Interracial Relationships Observed in Same-sex Couples

		Intraracial			Interracial	
	Count	White	non-White	Total	White, non-White	non-White
Activity						
Eating	7	0	0	0	7	0
Sports/Exercise	6	4	0	4	1	1
Relaxing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dating/Romantic time	3	2	0	2	1	0
Having sex or very intimate contact	0	0	0	0	0	0
Physical Touch						
Simple touch	35	22	1	23	9	3
Intimate touch	7	3	1	4	2	1
Very intimate touch	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sex	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 7. Frequency of Intraracial and Interracial Relationships Observed in Opposite-sex Couples

		Intraracial			Interracial	
	Count	White	non-White	Total	White, non-White	non-White
Activity						
Eating	9	3	1	4	5	0
Sports/Exercise	19	12	2	14	3	2
Relaxing	10	4	2	6	4	0
Dating/Romantic time	13	5	4	9	3	1
Having sex or very intimate contact	3	1	2	3	0	0
Physical Touch						
Simple touch	25	14	4	18	7	0
Intimate touch	21	4	6	10	10	1
Very intimate touch	3	1	2	3	0	0
Sex	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6 shows that there are fewer same-sex, interracial couples than same-sex, intraracial couples. Table 7 clearly shows that there are far more opposite-sex, intraracial couples than opposite-sex, interracial couples. There are almost no interracial, same-sex couples engaged in activities or levels of physical touch that strongly suggest they are a couple. Figure 8 provides an example of one of the few advertisements depicting a same-sex couple with two males.

Figure 8. Intraracial, Same-sex Couple Advertisement in Men's Health. (Geico, 2021)



The two men in Figure 8 are gazing at each other fondly, smiling, and standing very close to each other. Both men are White. Although they are preparing dinner together and there is an open bottle of wine, there is no clear physical touch. The lack of physical touch minimizes clear evidence that they are a couple that perhaps was intended to avoid negative public response. The intersectional analysis of race and sexual orientation from Tables 6 and 7 suggest that race and sexual orientation, that is, visible minorities and nonheteronormative statuses, compound together to further negatively impact their representation in advertisements.

RQ4. Is there equal same-sex and opposite-sex representation between interracial and intraracial couples?

The results were filtered for intraracial couples and interracial couples. Then in each instance, the frequency of same-sex and opposite-sex relationships was measured and summarized in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8. Frequency of Same-sex and Opposite-sex Relationships Observed in Intra-racial Couples

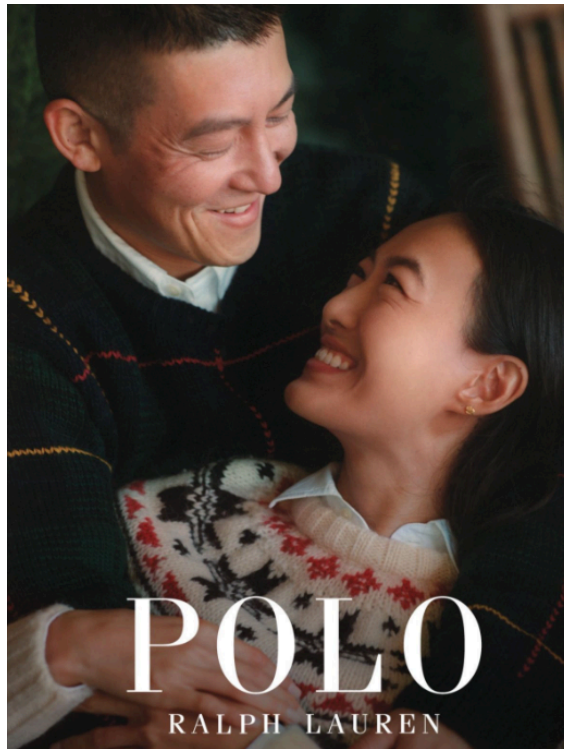
	Count	Same-sex			Opposite-sex
		Men	Women	Total	
Activity					
Eating	4	0	0	0	4
Sports/Exercise	18	2	2	4	14
Relaxing	6	0	0	0	6
Dating/Romantic time	11	2	0	2	9
Having sex or very intimate contact	3	0	0	0	3
Physical Touch					
Simple touch	41	1	22	23	18
Intimate touch	14	1	3	4	10
Very intimate touch	3	0	0	0	3

Table 9. Frequency of Same-sex and Opposite-sex Relationships Observed in Interracial Couples

	Count	Same-sex			Opposite-sex
		Men	Women	Total	Man-Woman
Activity					
Eating	12	1	6	7	5
Sports/Exercise	7	1	1	2	5
Relaxing	4	0	0	0	4
Dating/Romantic time	5	0	1	1	4
Having sex or very intimate contact	0	0	0	0	0
Physical Touch					
Simple touch	19	0	12	12	7
Intimate touch	14	0	3	3	11
Very intimate touch	0	0	0	0	0

Table 8 shows that intraracial couples are typically depicted as opposite-sex couples based on *Dating/Romantic time*, *Having sex or very intimate contact*, and *Intimate touch* unless the touch is likely to suggest the adults are friends. Only two advertisements showed same-sex adults engaged in *Dating/Romantic time*. Table 9 shows that interracial couples engaged in *Dating/Romantic time* and *Intimate touch* are typically opposite sex couples. Only where activities and physical touch do not give a strong “couple status,” such as *Eating* and *Simple touch*, are more interracial, same-sex relationships observed. Figure 9 shows an advertisement from *Elle* magazine with an intraracial, opposite-sex couple.

Figure 9. Intraracial, Opposite-Sex Couple Advertisement in *Elle* (Ralph Lauren, 2021)



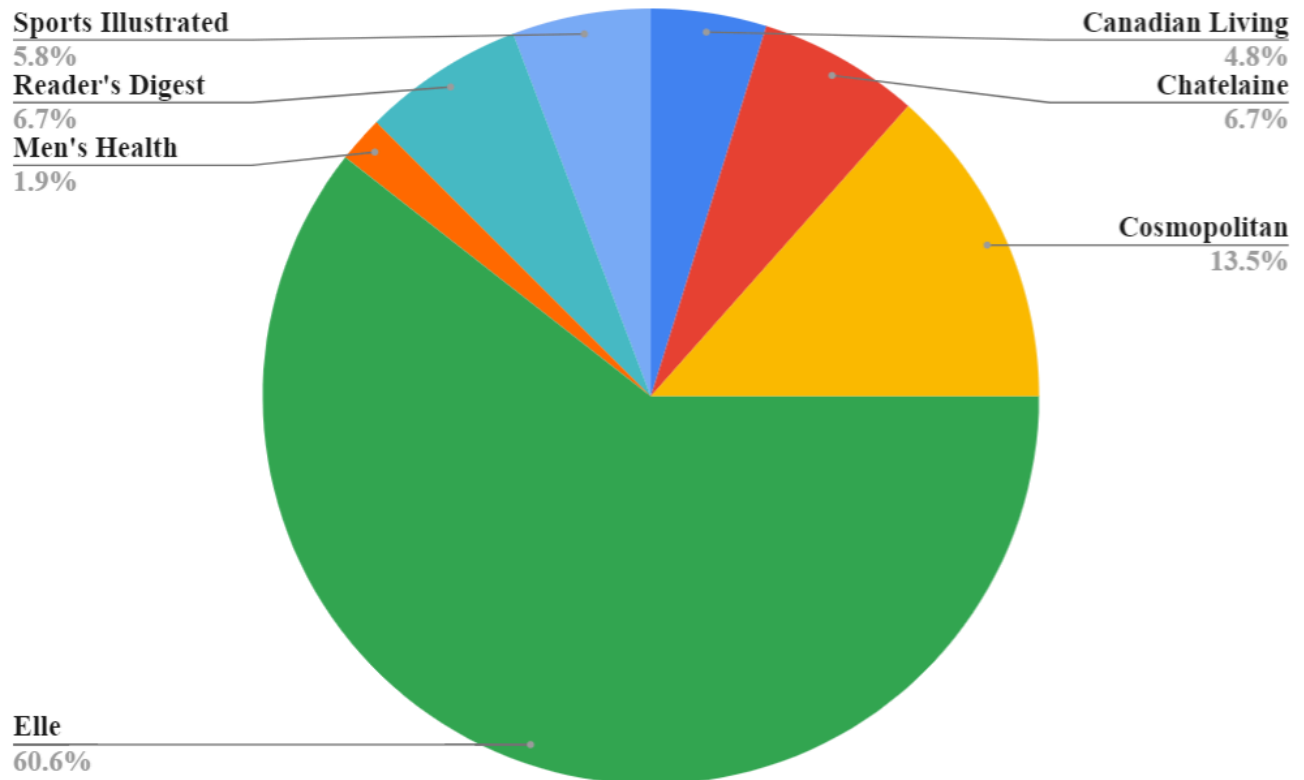
This study found very few opposite-sex couples and no same-sex couples that include *Chinese/Japanese/Korean/Southeast Asian* individuals. This disparity may be due to fewer models of that descent. In Figure 9, the Asian intraracial couple engaged in *Intimate touch* in the Ralph Lauren advertisement does not display significant skin. This advertisement suggests that brands may try to respect cultural etiquettes. Presence of this advertisement supports Cowart et al.'s (2023) findings that advertisements with monoracial nondominant models mitigates negative impact on public perception of the brand's sincerity towards diversity and inclusion values (p. 16).

Overall, an intersectional analysis of race and sexual orientation from Tables 8 and 9 suggest that the combination of visible minority and nonheteronormative statuses exacerbate the underrepresentation of interracial, same-sex couples in advertisements.

RQ5. Does the proportion of same-sex couples and interracial couples vary between magazine genre?

The proportion of advertisements showing adults of the same sex also varied significantly between magazine. Figure 10 shows that *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan* had the highest proportion of advertisements depicting adults with the same sex regardless of activity or physical touch.

Figure 10. Proportion of Advertisements Showing Adults of the Same Sex Across Magazines



During the data collection process, the researcher noted that there may be no correlation between magazine genre and the number of advertisements showing adults of the same sex versus opposite sex. Most adults in advertisements in *Elle* and most other magazines were female. However, *Men's Health*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Canadian Living* showed the fewest number of adults of the same sex within one advertisement. A higher representation of two or more females within one advertisement may be due to more female models over male models in the advertisement industry. *Elle* and *Cosmopolitan* also have a female audience, and their advertisements focus on women's clothing. Based on this information, this study cannot make conclusive observations by comparing the proportion of advertisements showing adults of the same sex versus opposite sex across different magazines.

The frequency of advertisements showing two or more adults of different races also varied by publication, but in all publications, depictions of two adults of the same race occurred far more often than adults of different races. Figure 11 compares the number of advertisements

showing two adults of different races across each magazine regardless of activity or physical touch.

Figure 11. Distribution of Advertisements Showing Adults of Different Races Across Publications

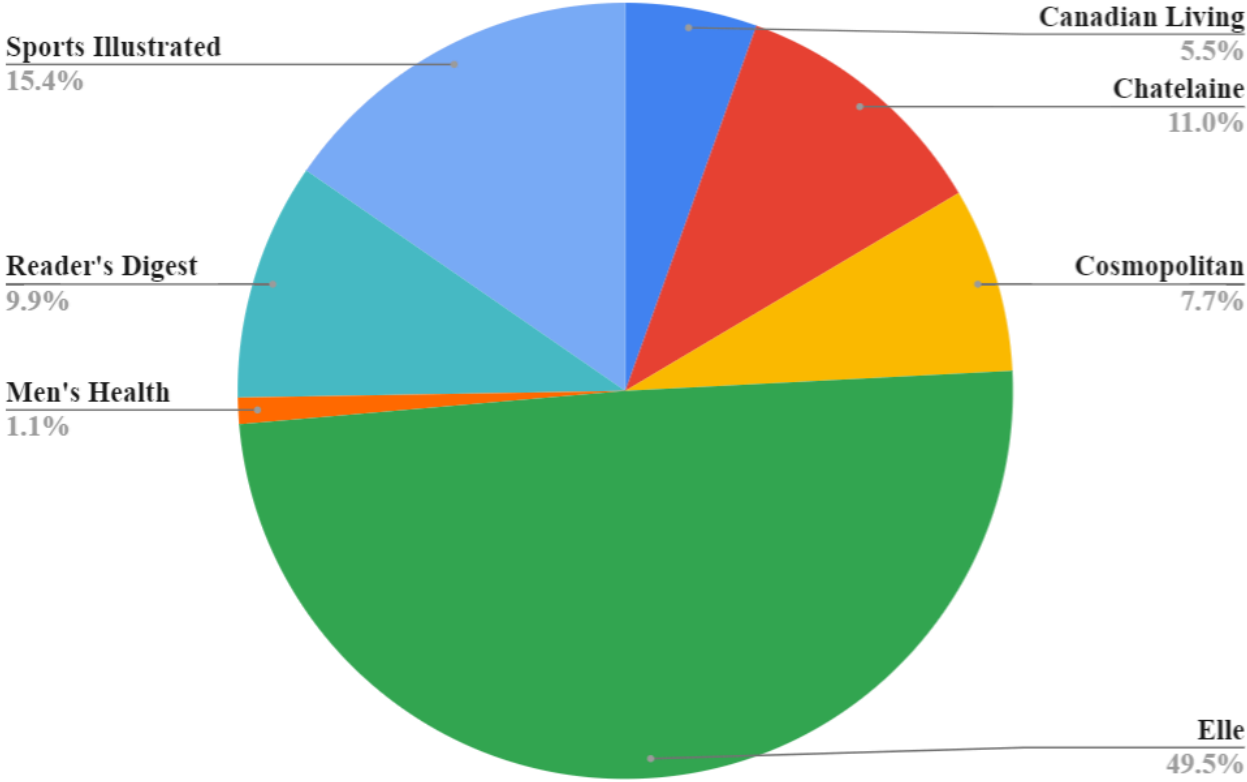


Figure 11 shows that *Elle*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Châtelaine* contained a higher proportion of advertisements showing adults of diverse ethnicities, suggesting that brands in these magazines recognize a racially diverse readership. *Men’s Health* and *Reader’s Digest* has 7.6 and 3.8 times more advertisements showing adults of different races than those showing adults of the same race, suggesting a bias favouring interracial relationships.

Table 10 shows the age of people with whom the magazines are popular (Statista, 2024; Spearman, J., Gewiese, J., Rau, S., & Lindt, M., 2024; Korhonen, 2024).

Table 10. Magazine Readership – Most Likely Age Group

Magazine	Age Group
<i>Canadian Living</i>	12-27
<i>Châtelaine</i>	12-27
<i>Cosmopolitan</i>	12-27
<i>Elle</i>	28-43
<i>Men's Health</i>	28-43
<i>Reader's Digest</i>	60-78
<i>Sports Illustrated</i>	28-43

This study found that although *Elle*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Sports Illustrated* are popular with an older readership, they contained a significant number of advertisements with same-sex and interracial subjects. While Moss & Kiouis (2024) found that emerging adults between eighteen and twenty-five viewed interracial advertisements positively, this study's finding suggests that brands may believe people above twenty-five years old also support interracial and same-sex couples. Observations of increased racial diversity shown in Figure 10 in *Sports Illustrated*, which has a male-dominant readership (Statista, 2024, p. 6), partially conflicts with Wilkie et al.'s (2023) suggestion that opposers of diversity and inclusion advertising campaigns consist of older, White males (p. 730). This study finds White, middle-aged males may support diversity and inclusion, but cannot verify this support by *older*, White males. This study also excluded age as a unit of analysis.

RQ6. Does the proportion of same-sex couples and interracial couples vary if children are present in the advertisement?

Very few advertisements in this sample included children. Seven advertisements showed two or more adults with *1 child*. Six advertisements showed two or more adults with *2+ children*. The absence of children may be due to the magazine audience and their interests. Magazines that target a parenting audience with archival issues were unavailable. The frequency of same-sex, opposite-sex, interracial, and intraracial relationships in advertisements with and without children and regardless of activity are compared in Tables 11 and 12 below.

Table 11. Frequency of Same-sex and Opposite-sex Adults in Advertisements with Children

	Count	Same-sex			Opposite-sex
		Men	Women	Total	
No children	195	10	94	104	91
1 child	7	0	0	0	7
2+ children	6	0	0	0	6

Table 12. Frequency of Intraracial and Interracial Adults in Advertisements with Children

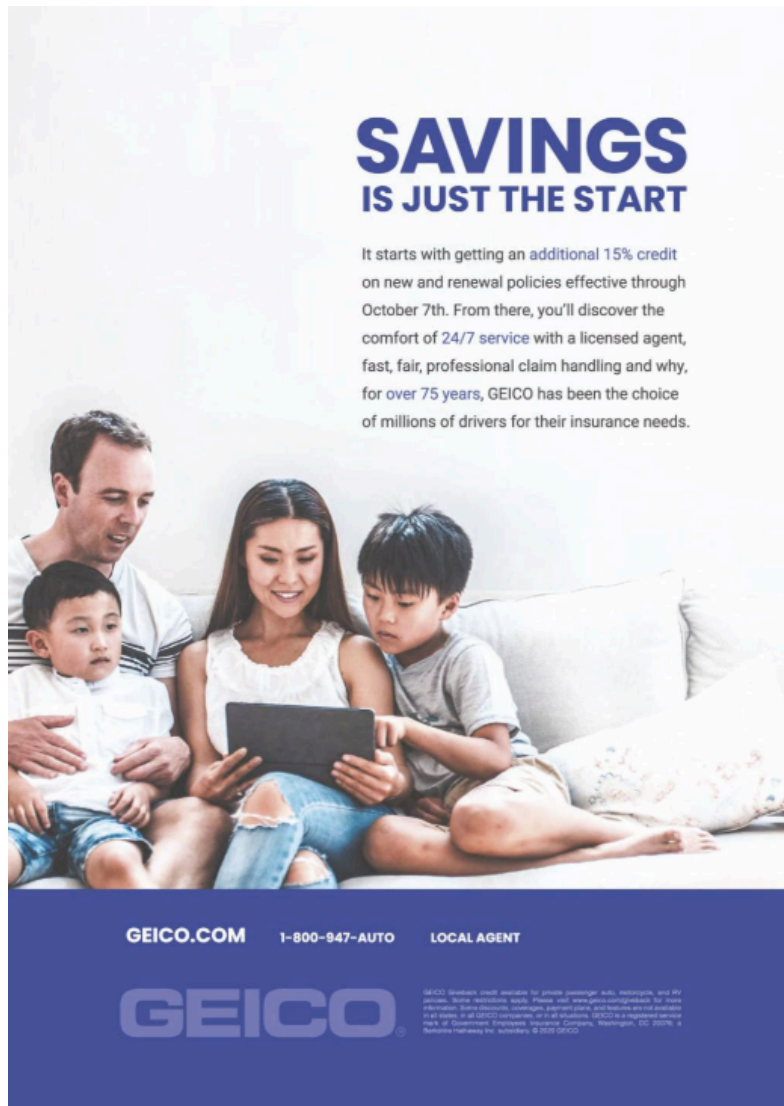
	Count	Intraracial			Interracial		
		White	non-White	Total	White, non-White	non-White	Total
No children	195	76	31	107	71	17	88
1 child	7	1	5	6	0	1	1
2+ children	6	4	0	4	2	0	2

Table 11 shows that advertisements showing two adults of the same sex with any children is absent. Table 12 shows that the interracial couples are underrepresented in advertisement images with children. In advertisements with children, only four included adults engaged in *Eating*, *Relaxing*, and *Simple touch* that may suggest the adults are a couple. The relationship in these four advertisements is summarized below.

1. Opposite-sex, *White* intraracial couple engaged in *Eating*.
2. Opposite-sex, *White* intraracial couple engaged in *Simple touch*.
3. Opposite-sex, *non-White* intraracial couple engaged in *Simple touch*.
4. Opposite-sex, *White, non-White* interracial couple engaged in *Relaxing*.

Most of these advertisements only showed intraracial couples. Only one advertisement, which was observed twice in separate issues of *Reader's Digest*, depicted an interracial couple with children shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Interracial Couple Advertisement with Children in Reader's Digest (Geico, 2021)



**SAVINGS
IS JUST THE START**

It starts with getting an additional 15% credit on new and renewal policies effective through October 7th. From there, you'll discover the comfort of 24/7 service with a licensed agent, fast, fair, professional claim handling and why, for over 75 years, GEICO has been the choice of millions of drivers for their insurance needs.

GEICO.COM 1-800-947-AUTO LOCAL AGENT

GEICO

GEICO Insurance credit available for private passenger auto, motorcycle, and RV policies. Some restrictions apply. Please visit www.geico.com/credit for more information. Credit discounts available only on new policies. GEICO is a registered service mark of Geico Indemnity Company, Washington, DC 20007. A National Automobile Underwriter. © 2024 GEICO

If advertisements reflect social norms, then these observations suggests that society may not expect or approve of same-sex couples nor interracial couples raising children. However, this suggestion is weak considering very few samples with children were available.

Discussion

The quantitative content analysis of advertisements across *Canadian Living*, *Châteline*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Men's Health*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Sports Illustrated* magazines showed

how brands are demonstrating their commitment to diversity and inclusion through higher representations of same-sex couples and interracial couples in advertisements than the proportions reported in Canada in 2021 and 2016, respectively. However, the qualitative analysis of the advertisements suggests biases favouring representation of White people in intraracial and interracial couples, biases favouring same-sex female couples over same-sex male couples, and biases favouring representation of *White, non-White* interracial couples over *Non-white* intraracial couples. Given the Government of Canada's (2022) projection that approximately 38.2% to 43.0% of the population will be part of a visible minority group by 2041, brands could connect better with Canadians by leveraging advertisements showing *non-White* intraracial couples more, which made up 15.7% of the advertisements with couples. If the population of visible minorities rises, the likelihood of *non-White* interracial couples may increase in Canada and decrease the public perception of corporate ulterior motives from advertisements with interracial couples. Brands can further demonstrate diversity and inclusion values with advertisements containing *non-White* interracial couples, as well as increasing the diversity of models beyond Black and Latino demographics to Indigenous, West Asian, and other underrepresented visible minority groups.

Same-sex marriages were legalized in Canada in 2005 (CBC News, 2015), and the legalization of same-sex marriages was further solidified in the USA when the *Respect for Marriage Act* was passed in 2022 (Duignan, 2022). In 2022, Statistics Canada (2022) reported that approximately 4% of Canadians above 15 years old identified as a non-heterosexual. Increasing awareness, tolerance, and acceptance of non-heterosexual identities and relationships have been fueled by 2SLGBTQI+ social movements, gay pride festivals, and social responsibility initiatives undertaken by organizations. Same-sex relationships may be further normalized when celebrities, musicians, and athletes come out as gay, such as Megan Rapinoe, prior captain of the US national soccer team, and Carl Nassib, who played in the NFL (Olito et al., 2023). Based on these trends, brands may not need to resort to "gay window advertising" to avoid public backlash from advertisements openly depicting same-sex couples. Brands can distinguish themselves apart from competitors by publishing advertisements that provide strong indications of same-sex couples, particularly same-sex male couples, displaying intimacy.

A very small portion of advertisements showed same-sex, interracial couples, suggesting that the combination of visible minority and nonheteronormative identities seem to negatively compound their underrepresentation. If audiences suspect ulterior motives with interracial models, they may also suspect ulterior motives with depiction of interracial, same-sex couples in advertisements. However, Cowart et al. (2023) suggests that perception of ulterior motives may be mitigated when advertisements depict multiple interracial models (p. 16). Brands can explore public responses to advertising depicting multiple couples of which one couple is both same-sex and interracial and over time, shift towards advertisements showing a single same-sex interracial couple.

Limitations

By examining advertisements across popular magazines of varying genres, this study reveals trends and patterns in the depiction of same-sex, opposite-sex, interracial, and intraracial couples to suggest possible correlations with dominant social norms and values. However, this study lacks a sufficient sample size nor does it have a representative sample to support any causal claims.

This study aimed to explore Canadian attitudes towards same-sex and interracial relationships through advertisement depictions of couples. However, the magazines sampled are distributed across North America, so attitudes and social norms interpreted from magazine advertisements may reflect those in the USA instead of Canada, or they may reflect a blend of Canadian and USA attitudes and social norms. The number of different magazines sampled was limited due to time constraints and accessibility to archival issues. Additionally, the comparison between the representation of interracial couples in advertisements to the current proportion in Canada is unfair due to unavailable statistical data between 2021 and 2024. Potentially, the number of interracial couples may be undercounted based on the limitations of the intercoder to identify visible minorities based on image alone. A more rigorous study should involve multiple intercoders to validate the reliability of the results. The researcher also suspects that the ratio of same-sex female couple to same-sex male couple representations is skewed due to more female models than male models and more advertisements for women's fashion in the sample. A future study should include GQ magazine, which may include advertisements for men's fashion. The researcher also suspects there are advertisements with adults that could have been given "couple status" based on the image's setting despite the absence of activities and physical touch that determined "couple status." For example, two adults sitting on a cruise together without touching may likely be a couple. Figure 13 shows an advertisement with two men who aren't touching but are dining together in a restaurant.

Figure 13. Advertisement Showing Two Men Engaged in No Touch



VISITDALLAS & FIND YOUR ALL

Although the two men are not touching, they might be on a potential date given the restaurant setting and their attire. They could have been coded as engaged in *Dating/Romantic time* and given a stronger “couple status.” Therefore, a future study that codes for setting can help ensure the data collected from the sample will capture all advertisements with couples.

The researchers and both testers in this study are straight and unable to identify cues through “gay window advertising” that indicates two individuals in an advertisement are in a relationship. Potentially, the observed quantity of same-sex couples may be underrepresented if any advertisements used “gay window advertising.”

This study did not categorize and analyze multiple couples within the same advertisement. If advertisements contained two or more couples, this study coded them based on the two adults showing the highest level of intimacy. Very few advertisements depicted multiple couples, but this study did not record the exact quantity nor the sexual orientation and race of those couples. Advertisements can show multiple couples that depict both interracial

and intraracial couples and same-sex and opposite-sex couples. Identifying and analyzing advertisements with multiple couples may support findings from Cowart et al. (2023) and Gong (2020) that these advertisements are intended to reach both heterosexual and homosexual individuals more effectively and reduce suspicion of corporate ulterior motives. However, the low number of advertisements with multiple couples suggests that brands have not leveraged mixed sexual advertisements as Gong (2020) recommends to “gain acceptance from homosexual consumers while minimizing the risk of backlash from heterosexual consumers” (p. 933).

Overall, given the large number of advertisements that can exist across all available magazine publications, the sample size of 208 advertisements is too small to make general, representative findings.

Conclusion

Advertisements reflect their audience’s social norms and expectations. Out of 208 advertisements from *Canadian Living*, *Châtelaine*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Men’s Health*, *Reader’s Digest*, and *Sports Illustrated*, 7.7% and 20.2% of the advertisements depicted same-sex couples based on engaged activities and physical touch, respectively, exceeding the 1.1% proportion of same-sex couples reported in 2021 in Canada. Same-sex, female couples occurred more often than same-sex, male couples, suggesting biases against same-sex male couples. Same-sex, female couples were also shown in intimate acts more than same-sex, male couples, suggesting approval is motivated by heteronormative values. Interracial couples appeared in 13.4% and 15.9% of the advertisements based on engaged activities and physical touch, respectively, exceeding the 7.3% proportion reported in 2016 in Canada. Interracial couples expressed less intimacy than intraracial couples. However, interracial couples involving a White women occurred more often than those involving White men, suggesting social approval for visible minorities to date White women. In the intersectional analysis of race and sexual orientation, very few advertisements showing same-sex, interracial couples were found. Interracial couples are typically engaged in casual activities and physical touches, such as *Eating* and *Simple touch*, over intimate activities or touches. Results show biases favouring intraracial over interracial opposite-sex couples. No credible correlations between same-sex and interracial couples were found with magazine genres. Advertisements with children only depicted opposite-sex, intraracial couples. An intersectional analysis of race and sexual orientation portrayed in advertisements suggest that the combination of marginalized racial groups and nonheteronormative groups compound together to negatively impact their representation in media. This study encourages brands to depict interracial and same-sex relationships broadly to avoid excluding subgroups. There is opportunity to emphasize same-sex male relationships and both *non-White* intraracial and interracial relationships in advertisements to reflect increasing racial diversity in Canada and growing acceptance of non-heterosexual identities and relationships.

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Appendix: Interracial, Intra-racial, Same-sex, and Opposite-sex Codebook

Table 2. Same-sex and Opposite-sex Relationships Observed Across Activity and Physical Touch Categories

	Item	Same-sex				Opposite-sex	
		Men	Women	Total	Total	Observed	Expected
		Observed			Expected		
	Count				Expected	Observed	Expected
	208	10	94	104	2	104	206
Activity							
Unknown	3	0	1	1	0	2	3
Being out and about	31	0	13	13	0	18	31
Chores/Paid work	8	1	3	4	0	4	8
Friends/Family hanging out	20	2	12	14	0	6	20
Posing for photo	76	1	55	56	1	20	75
Eating	16	1	6	7	0	9	16
Sports/Exercise	25	3	3	6	0	19	25
Relaxing	10	0	0	0	0	10	10
Dating/Romantic time	16	2	1	3	0	13	16
Having sex or very intimate contact	3	0	0	0	0	3	3
Physical Touch							

No touch	100	8	42	50	1	50	99
Utilitarian	17	0	12	12	0	5	17
Simple touch	60	1	34	35	1	25	59
Intimate touch	28	1	6	7	0	21	28
Very intimate touch	3	0	0	0	0	3	3

Table 4. *Interracial and Intra-racial Relationships Observed Across Activity and Physical Touch Categories*

	Item	Intra-racial			Interracial			Total	
		White	non-White	Total	White, non-White	non-White	Total		
	Count	Observed			Expected	Observed			Expected
	208	81	36	117	193	73	18	91	15
Activity									
Unknown	3	1	1	2	3	1	0	1	0
Being out and about	31	10	9	19	29	11	1	12	2
Chores/Paid work	8	1	3	4	7	3	1	4	1
Friends/Family hanging out	20	13	4	17	19	2	1	3	1

Posing for photo	76	25	8	33	70	32	11	43	6
Eating	16	3	1	4	15	12	0	12	1
Sports/Exercise	25	16	2	18	23	4	3	7	2
Relaxing	10	4	2	6	9	4	0	4	1
Dating/Romantic time	16	7	4	11	15	4	1	5	1
Having sex or very intimate contact	3	1	2	3	3	0	0	0	0
Physical Touch									
No touch	100	31	21	52	93	37	11	48	7
Utilitarian	17	6	1	7	16	8	2	10	1
Simple touch	60	36	5	41	56	16	3	19	4
Intimate touch	28	7	7	14	26	12	2	14	2
Very intimate touch	3	1	2	3	3	0	0	0	0