ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Gender, Racial, and Ability Homogeneity and Disparity in Popular Outdoor Magazines: A Content Analysis of Images
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ABSTRACT: Evidence suggests advertising may reinforce stereotypes about the demographics of outdoor recreation participation in the United States (Martin, 2004). Addressing this concern, we conducted a content analysis of images containing people in three popular outdoor magazines - Backpacker, Climbing, and Rock and Ice, for the period between 2011-2014 - by quantifying who was represented, in terms of gender, race, and ability. In addition, in images depicting outdoor activities, we also analyzed images by risk level. Of the 2192 images we analyzed (published in the 48 issues that made up our sample), most represented white males or females. For instance, 95.7%, 98%, and 99% of the images depicting people in Backpacker, Climbing, and Rock and Ice, respectively, depicted white individuals. By contrast, a small percentage of images, ranging from 1-4.3%, portrayed people of color. Similar disparities were found for ability, as images overwhelmingly displayed able-bodied individuals. At the same time, disparities in gender representation were also high for the period, particularly in the case of Climbing and Rock and Ice, in which 29% and 24.5% of images, respectively, represented females. Similarly, in images showing outdoor activities, high-risk activities (e.g., ice climbing) overwhelmingly depicted white males doing these activities. In short, for the three magazines we examined, white, able-bodied males were disproportionately represented. By comparison, a 2013 study on the demographics of outdoor recreation participation nationally (Outdoor Foundation, 2014), revealed a much more diverse population. For instance, of the 143 million individuals who participated in outdoor recreation in 2013, 46% were females and 30% were non-white. While our study did not examine some of the most-widely circulated outdoor magazines, our findings may help explain assumptions some individuals hold about who participates in outdoor recreation activities, including the ways in which commercial media might influence these assumptions.