

## Abstract

Lifestyle media have the power to impact women's understanding of environmentalism and what it means to be a woman environmentalist in the United States. Surveying popular women's lifestyle media sources in the U.S., I conducted a discourse analysis of various types of environmental narratives, seeking to understand how this media defined environmentalism and the environmentalist, and what the implications of these definitions might be for American culture. I tracked the intersections of gender, environmentalism, and mass media from an interdisciplinary, feminist perspective, drawing on theorists' conceptions of media framing to draw out recurrent themes. In surveying a range of lifestyle media sources, I found that media framing of environmental narratives leveraged the American cultural value of individual agency, focusing on the power of private sphere activities to foment change, and using class distinction and educational markers to link environmentalism to sophistication among one's peers. Media often framed environmental narratives in terms of motherhood archetypes, linking environmentalism to maternalism and implying that mothers bore unique social responsibilities for environmental action. Finally, environmental narratives in lifestyle media appeared to reflect an underlying effort on the part of media to depoliticize environmentalism, promoting environmentalism as a mainstream value and portraying women environmentalists as the embodiment of traditional American cultural values. Overall, I found that environmental narratives in lifestyle media framed women's environmental responsibilities in terms of long-standing, static conceptions of womanhood and motherhood, and similarly gendered notions of the social responsibility to care for one's family or community. Moreover, environmental narratives seemed

likely to reinforce hegemonic cultural conceptions of women's identities and social agency. These narratives therefore have the potential to fuel existing gender inequities tied to social expectations for the division of domestic labor. Despite these findings, there has been a general dearth of scholarship focused on the implications of such narratives, and the portrayal of women's environmentalism in popular mass media. The construction of environmentalism in women's lifestyle media will thus benefit from an analysis based in a feminist perspective, providing a basis for future scholarship on the cultural implications of saddling women with the burden of environmental care.