Shoot Brief for Contributors:

DIVERSITY
2021 UPDATE

DISSOLVE

INTRODUCTION

With the immense cultural shift emphasizing representation of all people, it's imperative that filmmakers mirror the diverse world we live in. At Dissolve we want to highlight an inclusive environment within our high-quality stock library of photos and clips. The film and television industry has increased the number of diverse individuals in productions, and this alludes to the changing times we are experiencing in the present time.

When you are shooting content for Dissolve, diversity should be a key consideration. We are actively seeking photos and clips that show diversity in a natural and authentic way. This includes content featuring People of Color, different cultural backgrounds, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people living with disabilities, people from all socioeconomic classes, and realistic portrayals of all body types.

The inclusion of all kinds of people in advertising, TV, and film — in a realistic way — is crucial to educating society now and generations to come. More and more accurate representation for more groups results in success for everyone. Avoid stereotypes, biases, and clichés. Portray every community in a way that is respectful, tasteful, empowering, and truthful. In this brief, we provide suggestions for how to achieve this in your footage.

RACIAL DIVERSITY

Content that ecompasses racial and ethnic diversity is essential. Our world is interconnected, therefore content that is representative and inclusive of different physical characteristics is imperative in the stock world. Audiences are diverse in appearance - we are physically distinguished by things such as skin tone, hair texture, and eye color. We all want to be represented in the media by people who look similar to ourselves.

Stock imagery is powerful in how it can be used in endless projects, and viewed by audiences from all over the world. Rogue One: A Star Wars Story actor, Riz Ahmed emphasized the need for self-reflection. He stated, "If you're used to seeing yourself reflected in culture, I really want you to take a minute to understand how much it means to someone who doesn't see themselves reflected back." He furthered this discussion as he said, "Every time you see yourself in a magazine or on a billboard, TV, film, it's a message that you matter, that you're part of the national story, that you're valued. You feel represented." Taking into account Ahmed's powerful words, it's not enough to simply seek to meet a superficial diversity quota — it must be authentic and genuine.

Speaking with Variety, Universal chairman Jeff Shell warned, "If you try to be diverse for the sake of being diverse, it's going to fail." Accordingly, at Dissolve we encourage you not to film your models in stereotypical or forced situations. They should be a seamless part of a scene or environment, engaged in realistic, everyday situations. These situations should never be based on assumptions about an individual's identity due to the color of their skin.

Not to mention, Metadata is important, too. Clients want specificity with their footage. Take notes about your models' background and provide as much information as possible with your footage. Be respectful of the language you use, and be sure to account for several distinguishing features for your models, if you are using physical appearance descriptors. Otherwise, you merge unique individuals together into a singular, oversimplified group that fails to recognize other factors of individual identity. (See "Metadata Tips" below for more details.)

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Portraying different cultures allows for the recognition that every human lives a unique experience, and views the world through their own cultural lens. From our religion, language, cuisine, social habits, and attire - it is important to acknowledge and portray these different ways of living. Every individual draws unique parts of their identity from their cultural environment. Dissolve strives to ensure that there is representation of each and every culture across the globe, and that we are able to encompass everyone's lived experiences in our libraries.

Some examples of events that can visually represent different cultures in action can include families celebrating Christmas at the dinner table, weddings, friends cooking together, architecture around the globe, dancing, or any range of clothing and dress. If you're portraying unique cultural or religious traditions, do so respectfully. Don't objectify or "other" people or their traditions. Be authentic, and ensure that you are basing your footage and photography from the insight of real people who have a genuine understanding of each tradition and experience. Steer clear from any stereotypical representations of people and their traditions that are based on any preconceived notions.

LGBTQ+

The LGBTQ+ community is fighting for greater representation in the media, and Dissolve is committed to helping that fight. It has never been more important to authentically represent the LGTBQ+ community. In 2016, Jill Soloway won an Emmy for Transparent — a series that helped revolutionize the portrayal of transgender people on television. In her acceptance speech, she urged creatives to keep fighting for more representation, as Soloway stated "It's a privilege, and creates privilege, when you take people of color, women, trans people, queer people, as the subjects of stories," she said. "You change the world, we found out."

At Dissolve, we encourage you to portray the LGTBQ+ community authentically and respectfully. We're looking for experiences that can be found in the LGTBQ+ community: date nights, getting ready for a night out, marriage, celebrations, household chores, running errands, eating together, or any other daily activity. Shooting the LGBTQ+ community doesn't mean you need to have a rainbow flag in every scene.

In addition, gender representation and gender expression in the media is continually evolving. Deliver an array of representation of marginalized groups when it comes to gender in media- this can include non-binary and androgynous individuals. Stray away from in-your-face symbols or stereotypes. Footage is subjective — different people will pull different moods, messages, and concepts from the same clips.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People living with disabilities make up a large percentage of the global population. According to data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are approximately 61 million adults living with disabilities in America alone. Nearly one in four adults in the USA is living with a disability, and that number is predicted to grow substantially over the coming years. Before you portray a disability, take the time to educate yourself about the condition. Disabilities take different forms — in addition to physical challenges, they include mental issues such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and the full autism spectrum.

Stock footage and photography have been guilty of oversimplifying disabilities — sometimes even straying into the ridiculous. As the blog Autostraddle observes, a common trope is to portray people in wheelchairs who later abandon them altogether. It's a strange, insulting trend. It's your job to avoid this tendency. For example, to portray a woman with postpartum depression, it would be easy to show an overly sad woman sitting next to a crib, her head in her hands. This is misleading.

The same topic is better explored using a more nuanced image — for example, a tired mother driving in the rain with a child in the backseat. Sometimes a subtle image is the most powerful. Avoid ill-advised and offensive images by working with models with all kinds of disabilities and portraying them in a way that is empowering, authentic, respectful, and representative. Ask them about their lives and for their own suggestions on how they want to be shown in your footage. Shoot a normal day in their life, showing both their daily challenges and accomplishments.

WOMEN

Women empowerment is an incredibly important topic that should be celebrated and recognized. Misogyny and the objectification of women are unfortunately prevalent occurrences in mainstream media culture. Because of this, there is a growing hunger for media that empowers women and represents their lives in meaningful, accurate ways.

When portraying women, avoid outdated stereotypes like the housewife, the shopper, the harried mother. For instance, in "The Problem with Women in Stock Photography," written by Erin Ollila, she searched for women working out and was disappointed by the results: "... if you search 'women fitness' you'll find many sports bras with ample cleavage and women exercising with excess makeup." This is neither authentic nor a stereotype we want to perpetuate.

Therefore, Dissolve wants to showcase women in positions of power, women working as scientists or in tech, work-from-home business women who also happen to be mothers, women serving in the military, a woman coming home to greet her stay-at-home husband — our customers are hungry for this kind of imagery. Women should always be portrayed accurately, with all age groups represented.

BODY POSITIVITY

At Dissolve, we appreciate and respect diversity and are inclusive of bodies in all shapes, sizes, and abilities. Over the years, through the different forms of media consumed, we often come to a crossroads in life with the expectations of a "norm" for how bodies should look and operate. Conclusively, Dissolve wants to urge you to consider casting diverse body types when choosing your models.

The average clothing size for women in the United States is 16, and 67% of American women are over size 14. In other words, the so-called "plus-sized" models of the fashion industry are the norm. To reflect this, look for models of all body types, and portray their physical features in a positive light. Don't portray your subject as being uncomfortable with themselves. The media choices that you make as a contributor can ultimately help promote body inclusivity and also radiate body positivity.
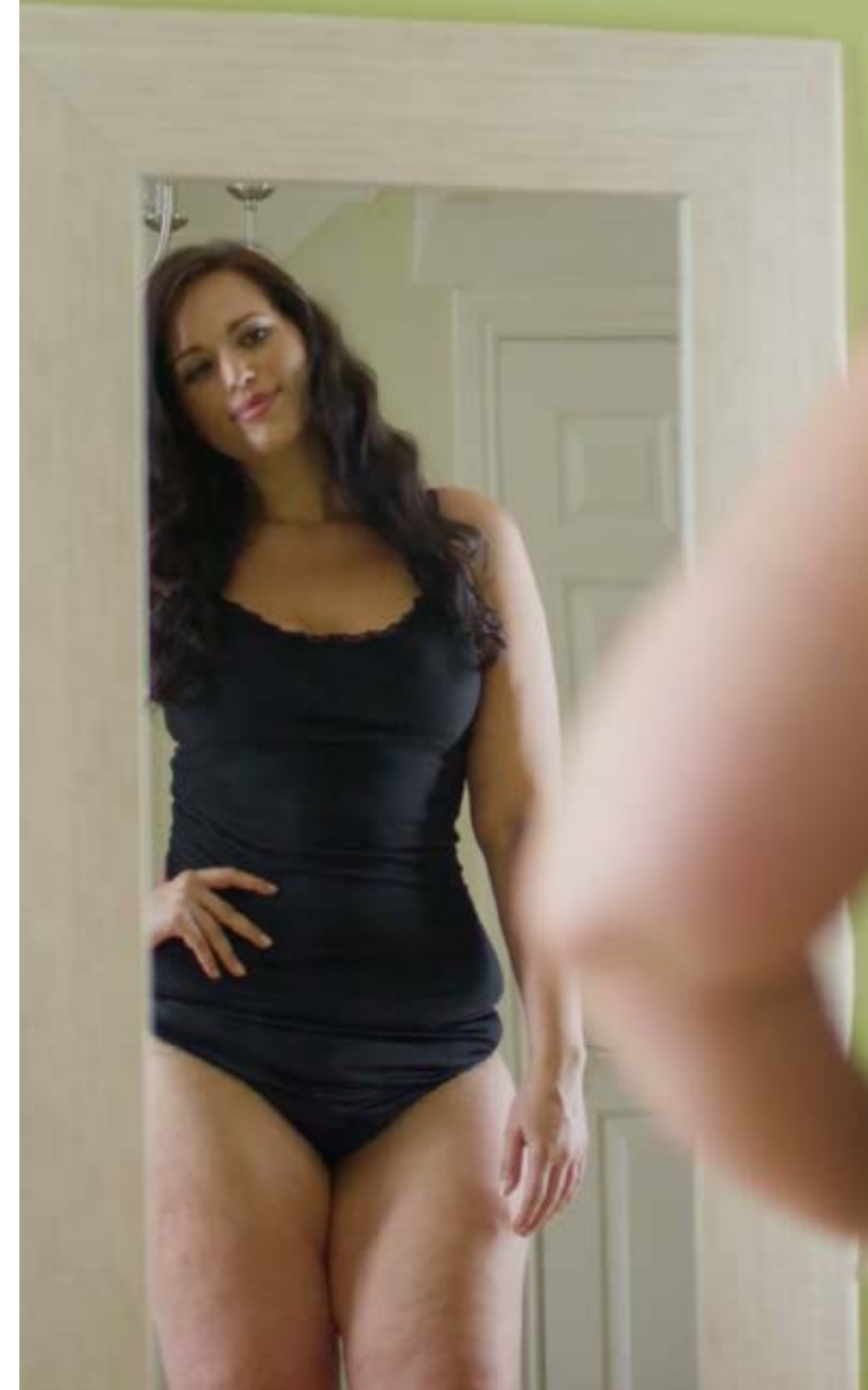
SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

When shooting stock content, it can be tempting to use clean, modern, and upper-middle-class locations and stereotypically happy, well-styled models. While footage of sleek kitchens, fancy condos, and the people who might inhabit them is useful, there is a lack of stock footage representing other socioeconomic situations.

When you select your locations and models, consider all classes. Authentic representations of low-income neighborhoods, working-class families, and less-privileged people are all valuable additions to a stock portfolio. However, it's critical that you represent them without exploiting or dehumanizing them.

SHOOTING TIPS

Diversity in every respect is of huge value to your footage: age, ability, race, culture, body type, sexual orientation, gender expression, and socioeconomic class.

Always ask yourself and your models if the situation you're shooting feels natural. If the answer is no, it's not going to look authentic and natural to the viewer either. Customers want relatable, authentic footage.

Represent your models in a respectful, positive light.

Consider their heritage, background, and lifestyle when shooting.

Respect them as individuals — don't lump them in with a larger group or oversimplify their traditions.

Listen to your models' suggestions for achieving a more authentic shoot.

Don't shoot the most obvious scenario. This will help avoid stereotypes.

Obtain a model and property release for every shoot.

Shoot 4K whenever possible.

METADATA TIPS

Unless it is directly related to the content and subject of the clip, leave references to ethnicity out of clip descriptions.

In keywords, when possible include gender, ethnicity, and age group (e.g., "teenagers," "Hispanic," "mature adults").

Do not guess any person's ethnicity, gender, or disability — get it straight from your model's mouth and mark it on the model release so the information is accurate and retrievable at the end of a busy day.

When writing clip descriptions, focus on what the clip is of, rather than what it is about. For example, "Man in wheelchair traveling to work on a train" as opposed to "Disabled man dealing with the day-to-day frustrations of getting to work on public transit."

When keywording ethnicity, be accurate and specific. For proper terms, refer to the Glossary of Terms Relating to Ethnicity and Race.

When keywording disabilities, refer to the Glossary of Disability Terminology.

When keywording sexual orientation and gender identity, refer to the LGBT A-Z Glossary.

SOURCES CITED

"Here's the speech I gave at Parliament yesterday...," Riz Ahmed's Facebook page

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Disability Impacts All of Us, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

How to Be Disabled, According to Stock Photography, Autostraddle

The Problem with Women in Stock Photography, Skyword

What's "Average"? Size 16 Is the New Normal for US Women, Today

FURTHER READING

Brands Are Throwing Out Gender Norms to Reflect a More Fluid World, Adweek

Study Shows Advertising Is Still an Obstacle to Raising Kids Without Gender Stereotypes, CNW

Changing the Face of Beauty