

“IT’S JUST LIKE THE SILENCE IS VIOLENCE”: GENDER INEQUITY IN THE OUTDOOR  
WORKPLACE

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of  
Western Carolina University in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Experiential and Outdoor Education

By

Abby Bradley

Director: Dr. Callie Schultz

Assistant Professor in Experiential & Outdoor Education

Human Services

Committee Members: Dr. Paul Stonehouse, Assistant Professor in Experiential & Outdoor

Education, Human Services

Dr. Corey W. Johnson, University of Waterloo

March 2022

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# GENDER INEQUITY IN THE OUTDOOR WORKPLACE

## ABSTRACT

### “IT’S JUST LIKE THE SILENCE IS VIOLENCE”: GENDER INEQUITY IN THE OUTDOOR WORKPLACE

Abby Bradley M.S.

Western Carolina University (March 2022)

Director: Dr. Callie Schultz

Outdoor education and leisure spaces claim to promote social development, relationship-building, and social justice as their foundational aims, but these opportunities seem to be available only for a select, dominant few (Allen-Craig et al., 2020). Gender inequity is one of the key issues the outdoor field is facing, which prevent these spaces from being inclusive (Newbury, 2004). This is especially true with regards to those that work in the outdoor field, who are faced with discrimination (Kennedy & Russel, 2020; Suen et al., 2020), lack of job opportunities (Gray et al., 2017; Peterson et al., 2019), and exclusion (Allen-Craig et al., 2020; Newbury, 2004) solely based on their gender. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the way gender inequity is experienced by non-dominant workers in the outdoor field. I intended to answer the following question:

How do cisgender women and non-binary individuals within the outdoor field remember their experiences of workplace gender discrimination?

I explored this research question using collective memory work (informed by feminist theory) as a methodology and written narratives and a focus group as methods. Findings were all centered

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around Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performance and the power that comes from conforming (or failure to conform) to these performances.

*Keywords:* gender inequity, outdoor field, workplace

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

*We were preparing for our closing circle ceremony and campfire after a long 24 days together in the woods. I was assigned to build the campfire with two boisterous teenage boys in my backpacking group.*

*“I want to be in charge of actually starting the fire,” said one of the boys proudly as we were collecting firewood.*

*“Me too!” exclaimed the other.*

*“Of course!” I said, more than willing to give them the responsibility. It was the last night of our expedition and frankly, I was exhausted.*

*An hour later, the rest of the group slowly started to trickle in. Still with no fire, I offered the boys my help and advice.*

*“We know what we are doing!” They snapped.*

*“Yeah, we don’t need your help. The wood is just wet...that’s all.”*

*I shrugged at their reply and kept a close eye on my watch. The two boys finally gave into their frustration, handed over the matches, and quietly crept down to sit on a log without saying a word. By this point, the entire group was there waiting—all eyes on me to perform. I flicked the match against the box, held the flame under the newly constructed frame I built, and had a campfire worthy of our sacred ceremony in no time.*

*“Wow, we should really reconsider putting Abby up higher on our outdoorsmen list after this fire she built,” announced one of my backpacking students to the group, gawking at my blazing campfire.*

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*Everyone shook their head in agreement as my coworkers and I looked at each other quizzically. Our group had made a list of all five instructors in order of the “best” outdoorsperson, placing my two male coworkers in the first two spots and myself in third above my two female coworkers.*

In the above story, the list and rank unfortunately came as no surprise. Throughout the trip, I had experienced microaggressive remarks, such as how I could “hang with the boys” and that I was good “for being a woman.” When the group got together and compiled the list solely on the basis that the top two were men that fit their idea of a “rugged outdoorsman,” it felt like they used my identifying gender (against me) as an indicator of my outdoor prowess (less than that of a man). I had more skills and experience than all my coworkers that summer; however, because of the gender with which I identify and express (cisgender woman), I was ranked below men, both on a hypothetical list and in society more broadly.

Gender discrimination, inequity, and marginalization are widespread issues that have been the focal points of social justice discussions for decades (Jacobs, 2020). The United States, like most cultures, has a long history as a patriarchal society. Civilization is structured under “ideas about the nature of things, including men, women, and humanity, with manhood and masculinity most closely associated with being human and womanhood and femininity relegated to the marginal position of “other”” (Johnson, 2018, p. 364). The origins of this patriarchal society are derived from biological perspectives: females bear and tend to children, and males, since they cannot give birth, are meant to work and provide for their families (Szoltysek et al., 2017).

Exemplifying this current patriarchal system is the workplace, which is designed in nearly every facet possible to benefit men, who most hold positions of power. Women are given less opportunity for promotion, paid considerably less than men, and taken less seriously within



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the workplace environment (Warren et al., 2019). The outdoor workplace is no different, where non-dominant genders (such as women, non-binary, genderqueer, and transgender individuals) can experience discrimination because of the way they perform (or, importantly, don't perform) expected gender roles (as evident in my narrative). The outdoor field similarly is prey to a patriarchal hierarchy. More research is needed to understand how “the presence of women and gender others in masculine spaces destabilizes the gender constructions rooted within these terrains” (Jacobs, 2020, p. 7) and how the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity contributes to the gender inequity laden in outdoor spaces in particular. With this in mind, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways gender inequity is experienced by gender non-dominant workers in the outdoor field.

### **Gender Inequity in the Outdoor Field**

The outdoor field is composed of organizations based in the natural environment “as the products they provide equip people to spend time in nature” (Gilbride et al., 2014, p. 4). Three white men, Kurt Hahn, Paul Petzoldt, and John Dewey are often hailed in outdoor literature as being key influencers of this field even though other individuals, in particular women, have made equal contributions and are often disregarded in the field's history (Warren et al., 2019), Ignoring the historical and present contributions of cisgender women and other non-dominant gender individuals upholds the patriarchal structure within the outdoor field through the continuation of male-exclusive models.

Even though gender inequity runs rampant in the outdoor workplace, it is a field that upholds “relationship building” (Allen-Craig et al., 2020) as one of its key values and programmatic outcomes (a stereotypically female gender role). This is in conjunction with the other values of the outdoor field: challenge, risk, and adventure. These values are stereotyped as

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masculine norms, are rooted in military and masculine-based history (such as the idea of a rugged frontiersman attempting to tame nature) and are given more preference within the outdoor field (Kennedy & Russel, 2020; Warren et al., 2019). When an individual expresses their gender using traditionally “feminine” qualities such as gentle, sensitive demeanors in outdoor spaces, they are often considered incompetent (Rogers & Rose, 2019) and not suited for the outdoors (Warren et al., 2019).

Additionally, studies show that participants with 15+ years of experience in the outdoor workplace witnessed more men being favored over other genders in hiring, promotion, and assignment of leadership roles within the workplace (Warren et al., 2019). People who identify as a non-dominant gender have also reported having less expected of them (Warren & Loeffler, 2006) or hold less responsibility than their male counterparts, such as being assigned to travel shorter distances or carry less weight in the backcountry workplace when capable and willing, which stems from a lack of respect and undervaluing them as leaders (Newbury, 2004). This can result in individuals masking their abilities and letting men take control of the workplace environment and positions (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Studies also show that women tend to be evaluated more critically, regardless of the quality of instruction. For example, Peterson et al. (2019) found that students are more likely to have a negative and implicit gender bias towards female instructors compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, individuals identifying as men and who perform their gender in traditionally masculine ways are still considered to be the most qualified individuals within a majority of the outdoor workplace (Rogers & Rose, 2019). This implicit and explicit reinforcement/privileging of men can result in misogyny.

### **Misogyny in the Outdoor Field**

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Acts of misogyny in the outdoor field are increasingly being researched (Johnson & Samdahl, 2005; Rogers & Rose, 2019). Misogyny is the belief that women are inferior to men and “thus should be dominated and/or controlled by men” (Johnson & Samdahl, 2005, p. 332). Many women experience misogyny, whether perpetrated by individuals, their workplace, or society more broadly (Allen-Craig et al., 2020; Gray et al., 2017). Gray et al. (2017) found that speaking out can be a powerful act that brings attention to the injustice, but can also create strains between colleagues, a loss of job opportunities, and mental strain from feminist fatigue (fatigue of being the only one addressing the issue). This fear of raising concern for gender inequity within the workplace and society prevents people from creating dialogue or taking action (calling out sexism, partaking in protests, etc.), which worsens the problem (Gray et al., 2017). Since gender inequity is prevalent and embedded within current individual, institutional, and societal norms, more awareness of this injustice is needed.

Including the voices of these marginalized populations within academic literature can uncover these issues and inform multiple audiences that may not be aware of the gender inequity present in the outdoor workplace and beyond. While numerous studies address accounts of gender oppression, most of them focus on cisgender women (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Beyond cisgender women, non-dominant genders make up 4.5% of the United States population, but are underrepresented, by ratio, within academic research (Suen et al., 2020). Although cisgender women are an equally important demographic for gender inequity research, further research is needed to include more non-dominant gender voices within the literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways gender inequity is experienced by gender non-dominant workers in the outdoor field. My research question for this study is as follows:

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1. How do cisgender women and non-binary individuals within the outdoor field remember their experiences of workplace gender discrimination?

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Literature Review**

I will begin with an overview of feminist theory, which guides my study. I will then follow with a review of the literature to define key terms and situate my study within outdoor and leisure research. Finally, I will focus on the numerous ways gender inequity has been perpetuated within the outdoor field and its workplace throughout its history.

### **Feminist Theory**

Fundamentally, feminist theory is a focus on gender and/or other intersecting oppressed identities of an individual and societal perception of these identities (Marshall & Rossman, 2018). Feminist theory focus is in relation to one's culture and with the main aim of dismantling the patriarchy (Marshall & Rossman, 2018). Specifically, feminist theory-informed qualitative research prioritizes the individual and their feeling of placement within society over the ideas created about them by society (Hansen & Johnson, 2018). In doing so, feminist theory-informed qualitative research creates a platform for oppressed voices to be heard within the literature and challenges societal notions and policies (Marshall & Rossman, 2018). In outdoor spaces, it has been used to identify and amplify the awareness of the issues ingrained within the field such as discriminatory hiring practices like the "glass ceiling effect" (Allin & West, 2013), sexist educational practices such as the idolization of masculine teaching styles (Kennedy & Russel, 2020), and sexist media representation (McNiel, 2012).

Specifically, intersectionality and feminist theory has been used in leisure literature by framing leisure as a political endeavor, demanding "that we more thoughtfully consider multiple

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identity categories and assess how leisure can prohibit or encourage justice for both for individuals (with unique identity compositions) and collective groups (with common cultural experiences)” (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 395). Previous studies such as Scranton and Watson’s (1998) study on intersectionality’s (specifically gender and race) effect on urban leisure spaces or McDonald’s (2014) research on gender, sexuality, and race with regards to sports leisure are examples of how feminist theory has been used in academic literature. This style of research connects to my study as gender inequity is an issue contained within the patriarchy. Finding ways that diverse groups of individuals experience these accounts of gender discrimination and collaborating on solutions to further dismantle the patriarchy contribute to this mode of research directly. Therefore, my study is based on and rooted in feminist theory-informed qualitative research.

### **Gender**

United States society is filled with hierarchies that are the result of historically predetermined constructs, which are still being reinforced, regarding an individual’s membership in a number of identity categories (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, etc). Certain identity groups have greater power in society than others and are labeled as “dominant”; everything else falls into “subordinate” groups (Pascoe, 2007). Gender is no exception to this cultural tendency. Gender is a social construct containing “the production and normalization of masculine and feminine” (Butler, 2004, p. 42) characteristics. Gender is different than sex, as sex is biological, and gender is cultural. Gender may or may not correspond with one’s biological sex assigned at birth and can be expressed in a variety of different ways (Suen et al., 2019). When a person identifies with the same gender identity commonly associated with their sex assigned at birth, they are labeled cisgender (Suen et al., 2020, p. 2,302). Non-dominant genders

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contain individuals that do not identify as cisgender men. Examples are cisgender women, transgender men, nonbinary, or genderqueer. They are considered “non-dominant” by patriarchal societal standards and hierarchy in comparison to cisgender men.

Socially constructed norms on how one *should* “do gender,” or perform their “gender roles” as a gendered subject have always been present. These norms are societally prescribed, hierarchal responsibilities that are expected of an individual once their gender is assigned at birth (Lorber, 2018). For example, in the U.S., one of the first signs of gendering individuals is how parents dress up their children in ways that display their gendered categories, such as using blue tones for boys and pink tones for girls (Lorber, 2018). From here, the individual is forcibly labeled based on societally prescribed gender roles, with their daily gendered performances either reinforcing or resisting socially constructed gender norms (Humberstone, 2000; Newbury, 2004).

### ***Gender Roles and Stereotypes***

Starting as soon as an individual enters the world, they are treated differently based on their assigned sex at birth (Humberstone, 2000). Those assigned females at birth are expected to behave with passivity, grace, and maternal instincts (Jacobs, 2020), while those assigned males at birth are expected to act with assertiveness, competitiveness, and a vigorous work ethic (Humberstone, 2000). We can see this when we think about toys that are designed specifically for boys, such as cars or wrestling figures, and girls, such as baby dolls and makeup kits. These social constructs control how “accepted” (often with real physical repercussions) an individual is in society based on how closely they conform to the norms and perform the “correct” gender roles (Newbury, 2004). Any deviation from gender identity and performance norms can result in violence or discrimination, as it is thought to take away from “the functioning of a well-ordered

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society” (Pascoe, 2007, p. 19). Examples of this are public and private workplace harassment (verbal, physical, or sexual), employment discrimination, and violence (Butler, 2004).

In addition to these workplace dangers, “societal structures [remain] strongly cisnormative” (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017, p. 109). Genders and corresponding gender roles outside the traditional binary “man” and “woman,” have rarely been studied and are still relatively new topics within academic research (Jacobs, 2020). This leaves genders beyond the binary largely ignored in academic literature, outdoor leisure, and society.

### *Gender Performance*

Societally prescribed roles and stereotypes can lead individuals to feel they need to perform certain ways based on their gender. From the way we converse, appear, and conduct ourselves, gender is naturalized over time based on these cultural norms. This can also be coupled with gender expression, which is how one presents themselves (i.e. through clothing, haircuts, behaviors) based on their gender (Pascoe, 2007). These covert expectations and behaviors are upheld by individuals to conform to societal ideals on gender. Resistance to this can result in disciplinary or oppressive actions. For example, in Berbery’s (2012) study of sorority women, participants felt that they needed to monitor each other’s behaviors within their social group. This then led to self-surveillance in which women would analyze what their peers were saying and perform only what was considered acceptable through the sorority’s standards (Berbery, 2012). These performances are typically covert, and individuals can be unaware that the way they are acting adheres to society’s ideals of femininity and masculinity. Resistance to prescribed gender performance, however, may be a freeing experience for some. Newbery (2004) reported women feeling that the outdoors is one of the only spaces they feel they can best resist these norms, as the outdoors is often seen as a wild space.



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### **Hegemonic Masculinity**

Societal notions push for gender expression that matches both an individual's assigned sex at birth and gender identity. Here, we have the concept of hegemonic masculinity, wherein those assigned male at birth and act with the masculine standards set by society for men can have more potential to succeed over all other sex and genders (Newbery, 2004). It is a construct that changes based on cultural, societal relations, and historical context (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). Current masculine culture rewards aggression, competition, and achievement of goals (Humberstone, 2000). This social hierarchy can also be detrimental to cisgender men that do not fit the exact mold. For example, gay men, since they do not conform to heteronormative masculine ideals, may be oppressed based on their identity under hegemonic masculinity standards (Johnson, 2008).

The idea of "traditional" femininity is also a social construct relating to gender expression that has the potential to devalue women and whomever else expresses their gender in this way (Johnson & Cousineau, 2019). Acting in a "dialectal relationship" (Johnson & Cousineau, 2019) to one another, those with masculine identities are assumed to be tough, assertive, and stoic, while feminine identities are told the opposite. According to sex-role theory, because they are born female, women are expected to act passive, polite, and be accommodating (Newbery, 2004). Starting at childhood, cisgender women or other non-dominant gendered individuals (who act masculine outside of their set gender stereotypes) will face equal or more oppression than cisgender men (Warren & Loeffler, 2006) For example, a person who identifies and presents as a woman and who acts masculine may get called a lesbian, dyke, or butch, and can be labeled as overbearing or aggressive (negative connotation). We are constantly praised as children for conforming behaviors and subject to disciplining for non-conforming behaviors.

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However, if women are supposed to act passively throughout their lives, they let men take all the positions of power and authority that control their rights.

The publicity of hegemonic masculinity and the gender inequity issues contained within it largely came to fruition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it was pointed out that the former laws and policies oppressed non-dominant genders such as woman's suffrage, labor rights, and unequal access to healthcare and education (Jacobs, 2020; Parry et al., 2019). Those in positions of power, such as policymakers and politicians, are, and always have been, predominantly white males who control the capitalist patriarchal structures and are responsible for laws that largely benefit certain groups (Humberstone, 2000). The feminist movement, where women (and today, the movement importantly encompasses a variety of marginalized identities, not just gender) fight for equal rights, works to shift this imbalance (Jacobs, 2020). However, those participating in the feminist movement often receive backlash and accusations of self-interest, even if they are acting on behalf of other oppressed individuals (Allen-Craig et al., 2020). Additionally, many cisgender men are unwilling to give up their privilege and its advantages (Allen-Craig et al., 2020). This plays a huge part in their disinterest in involvement with feminism, despite it being an issue that affects all of society including themselves (Allen-Craig et al., 2020). Even though many drastic changes have been made in favor of non-dominant genders, there is still so much work to do to dismantle the patriarchy and ideals of hegemonic masculinity throughout society. Within the realm of the outdoor field, masculinity is the dominant gender expression: individuals who identify as men, present as men, and express their gender in masculine ways (Kennedy & Russel, 2020). Within all outdoor spaces, hegemonic masculinity is one of the main causes of gender inequity.

### **Gender Inequity in the Outdoor Workplace**

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Outdoor leisure came into fruition in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when family dynamics shifted in response to the industrialization and urbanization of society (Browne et al., 2019). Children, in particular young boys, were sent to outdoor programs in an attempt to relieve mothers' homemaker responsibilities. Since the home was seen as a feminine space, young boys and men were encouraged to remove themselves as much as possible (Browne et al., 2019). Additionally, the male role of a "breadwinner," working father emerged due to business demands during this time, perpetuating the idea that men should be in positions of power and wealth above women (Johnson & Cousineau, 2019). This resulted in programs such as summer camps, Boy Scouts, and other outdoor leisure pursuits being created for young men and centered around masculine ideals (Browne et al., 2019).

Much of the outdoor field also has roots in the military, meaning it was created and suited for masculine cisgender men (Warren et al., 2019). Many of the values, ideals, and activities (such as challenge courses and climbing walls) are drawn from the military (Warren et al., 2019). This masculine-focused notion percolates throughout the outdoor field, even though studies have shown that many women describe these activities differently by focusing on discovery through state-of-mind and comfort in nature rather than risk (Gray et al., 2020; Kennedy & Russel, 2020; Rogers & Rose, 2019).

### *Gender inequity in outdoor field founders*

Additionally, the outdoor field is considered to have predominantly male founders that are credited with developing it. Kurt Hahn and Paul Petzoldt are two of the biggest names in the field, both of whom happen to be white cisgender men (Warren et al., 2019). Women are disregarded within outdoor spaces, even though their influence or impact is just as noteworthy (Gray et al., 2017). Also, in current major outdoor education conferences, Gray et al. (2017)

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found that female speakers only comprised 4% of national conferences and 13% of state conferences. This absence in professional outdoor spaces can create the assumption that there are barely any non-dominant gender outdoor leaders. Hegemonic masculinity and gender inequity will continue in the field as long as we have heroes that exemplify them and disregard non-dominant gendered voices.

### *Gender inequity in outdoor skills*

As mentioned earlier, many outdoor programs affirm values of action, challenge, risk, adventure, and leadership which are typically considered masculine traits (Kennedy & Russel, 2020). Outdoor institutions utilize these values in their programs, which advantages those that act upon them. Adventurous activities such as rock climbing, backpacking, and whitewater kayaking are strewn throughout outdoor programs, and those that have the physical ability to perform them are valued within the field (Gray et al., 2020). These technical skills are often equated with masculinity, ranking them higher in the outdoor workplace and thereby take curricular priority over lessons over relational content, which is often seen as feminine (Gray et al., 2020). This sexism is prevalent even in the wording of “hard” technical skills and “soft” relational skills (Gray et al., 2020). This points to linguistic sexism and gendered hidden curriculum that is taught and accepted within the outdoor field.

### *Gender inequity in outdoor programs*

Studies have shown that women who participate in all-women outdoor programs have reported more positive outcomes than women that participate in mixed-gender programs (Allen-Craig & Hartley, 2012; Whittington et al., 2011). Dominant behaviors of cisgender men tend to silence the voices of non-dominant genders within different outdoor education programs. In these spaces, women participants take more passive roles and allow men to take more leadership

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opportunities within groups (Whittington et al., 2011). This can be detrimental to an individual's experience and can prevent someone from engaging in future outdoor opportunities or physical activities (Sirard et al., 2006).

Additionally, there is also a lack of research on non-dominant genders beyond cisgender women participating in single-gender programs. Few programs are available for people who identify outside of the heteronormative male and female groups. Most recreational spaces conform to cisnormative assumptions about their participants (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017). To create successful opportunities for all genders would be to reform mixed-gendered learning environments so that they eliminate bias and oppression once and for all (Whittington et al., 2011).

### *Gender inequity in outdoor media*

Another facet of gender inequity and marginalization is the representation of different genders within the outlets of outdoor media, a \$400 million market (McNiel et al., 2012). The many ways that different genders are portrayed in these media give clear indications of the patriarchal values within the outdoor field. McNiel et al. (2012) found that compared to men, women are only in a quarter of advertisements in outdoor media. When represented, women in advertisements are typically portrayed taking a passive, backseat role while men are most often glorified as the rugged, leading stars (McNiel et al., 2012). Women are shown in clean outfits and usually modeling easy-to-use equipment or clothes, rather than taking part in a physically demanding activity. Additionally, although it is hard to infer one's identity from a photograph, there were no other genders represented in numerous, popular outdoor media outlets (McNiel et al., 2012). The type of portrayal and general lack of representation within outdoor media is one of many reasons why non-dominant genders are not participating in outdoor education or

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recreation compared to men (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010). They may feel excluded from participating in outdoor activities if they see that no one else has similar identities to them within the field.

### *Gender inequity in outdoor participation*

Two other societal reasons that women don't participate in outdoor activities or programs are because of money and safety (McNiel et al., 2012), both directly tied to experiences with men and the patriarchy. Money constraints may prevent women from recreating in the outdoors because they simply cannot afford to participate, considering the cost of gear and lessons (McNiel et al., 2012). Women make less money compared to men in the United States workforce; because of this, they are at a financial disadvantage.

The situation becomes even more complicated when women have children, as they have less leisure time for outdoor activities because of the pressure to perform caretaking responsibilities (McNiel et al., 2012). Again, men are typically relieved of this responsibility, allowing them more time and experience in outdoor recreation and education. With less non-dominant gendered individuals participating in outdoor education programs, there is less representation of cisgender women and other non-dominant gendered role models and leaders, allowing men to take continually the majority of the power.

Lastly, physical safety is a prominent concern, as women are taught to be fearful of public places, especially the outdoors (McNiel et al., 2012). Non-dominant genders are subjected to numerous dangers in the outdoors due to the violent actions of men, which can instill fear of its spaces (McNiel et al., 2012). Transgender individuals face an additional barrier when it comes to privacy within outdoor programs. Many people who identify as transgender face additional challenges with proper bathrooms, changing rooms, and shower facilities hindering their

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participation in frontcountry outdoor spaces (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017). This is mostly due to the cisnormative assumption that there are no transgender individuals within one's community, and therefore there would be no need for such private space on their behalf (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017).

### *Gender inequity in work performance evaluation*

There are numerous, conflicting arguments about how cisgender women should behave in the outdoor workplace, so as to appease societal gender norms. Being labeled "feminine" is seen as weak in the outdoor field and beyond (Newbery, 2004). Direct, assertive leadership is thought to be the most effective, and many women choose to adopt this pattern even if it is not their typical leadership style or personality (Kennedy & Russel, 2020). Because of this bias, women may tend to work harder compared to their male coworkers or act more masculine (Newbery, 2004; Peterson et al., 2019). However, in performing the latter, non-cisgender males can face ridicule for being "too masculine" and not obeying the gender norms of society (Gray et al., 2020). They are put into a double bind, where they have to either adhere to submissive, heteronormative ways of femininity or overcompensate to prove themselves worthy at the risk of backlash for not complying with societal gender norms (Newbery, 2004). Men, on the other hand, can adopt societally labeled feminine qualities or leadership styles and still be perceived by the field as qualified (Rogers & Rose, 2019). It is clear that the double-standard experienced in the outdoor field needs to be dismantled.

Non-dominant gendered individuals also tend to be evaluated more critically, no matter the quality of their instruction (Peterson et al., 2019). Participants more frequently trust and prefer within the outdoor field (Shooter et al., 2012). This is typically due to either their masculine teaching style or the perception of them having higher technical skill ability compared

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to their coworkers who identify as a non-dominant gender (Shooter et al., 2012). As mentioned, individuals that identify as a non-dominant gender can feel forced to lead in a more masculine fashion to be judged as competent, especially in the field of outdoor education field (Kennedy & Russel, 2020). Their decision-making skills are often ignored due to gender beliefs, especially with risk management. More high-risk and dangerous expeditions are led by men than women because of this distrust (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). This supports the idea that most evaluations of outdoor leaders are primarily based on societal biases of hegemonic masculinity as the most effective in positions of power.

Lastly, this criticism of work performance also pertains to the evaluation received about a cisgender woman's body and physical ability (Newbery, 2004). Society believes a woman's body should be slender and less muscular than a man's, making people question their ability to perform physically demanding tasks. Because of this, many outdoor pursuits programs think that women should do less than their male counterparts in the wilderness, i.e. carry less, travel shorter distances, etc. (Newbery, 2004). This idea of giving women less responsibilities in the field can result in fewer work opportunities because of the perceived limits in their abilities, giving men more power and contributing to the continuation of the patriarchy.

Similar to other workforces, individuals that identify as a non-dominant gender are rarely promoted or able to assume leadership roles within outdoor education because of these criticisms (Allen-Craig et al., 2020). There are plenty of non-dominant genders in starting positions within the outdoor field, such as camp counselors and instructors (Gray & Mitten, 2018). However, most administrative positions are filled by white cisgender men (Gray & Mitten, 2018). This leaves a majority of other individuals that identify as a non-dominant gender to be faced with diminished value and general non-existence within administrative roles.



### **Conclusion**

Since its founding, gender inequity has been a current growing issue within the outdoor field and is the result of larger sociocultural processes and beliefs. As a result, there are many ways that non-dominant genders have been and can be subjected to discrimination and inequity within the outdoor workplace. These contributing factors range from a lack of representation within outdoor media (McNiel et al., 2012), to sexist language embedded within outdoor verbiage (Peterson et al., 2019), as well as devaluing non-dominant genders as leaders (Shooter et al., 2012). Many researchers have explored the problem and attest to the enormity of the issue, especially with regards to misogyny and sexism. However, concrete examples from firsthand accounts, research on other genders such as nonbinary or genderqueer individuals, and suggestions regarding how outdoor programs might become a more inclusive environment are lacking. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways gender inequity is experienced by gender non-dominant workers in the outdoor field.

### **Collective Memory Work**

Collective memory work is a qualitative, discursive methodology that focuses on individual lived experiences in relation to society (Johnson et al., 2018). Developed by Frigga Haug (1997) during the feminist movement of the 1980s, it is based on the theoretical foundation of feminist theory and sheds light on oppressed identities and their discrimination from socially constructed, hegemonic powers. The process of collective memory work seeks to analyze individual experiences and memories, placing them in relation to others who also feel the dominance of a hierarchal society (Haug, 1997). It is also a form of participatory action research (PAR), wherein participants and researchers collaborate on behalf of social justice issues during the research process (Johnson et al., 2018). This collaborative effort is key to collective memory work, placing all participants and the primary researcher as co-researchers as they interpret and analyze the data together (Johnson et al., 2018). Within outdoor literature, its intention is to work towards a more equitable field by providing platforms for diverse voices to be heard and allowing the space for brainstorming solutions wherein the social construction of identities will not discriminate against individuals within the workplace.

Collective memory work is typically implemented through a combination of individual written narratives, focus group interviews, summative reported findings, and a collaborative written or art piece that reflects the whole accumulation of interpreted participant experiences (Johnson et al., 2018). These methods are recursive and adaptable with regard to research design

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and are selected based on the nature of the collective memory work study. For example, choosing to represent the data as a collaborative written narrative or as a documentary.

Typically, the first step of collective memory work is writing narratives, which are short, detailed accounts of one's personal experience centralized around a phenomenon (Johnson et al., 2018). These narratives are intended to be written using third person pseudonyms "to decontextualize the stories so we can treat them as anyone's stories and make sense of them within social discourse even though we know someone around the table wrote each one" (Johnson & Oakes, 2018, p. 139). Participants write individually with the intention of the narratives being analyzed later with a group of people that may have similar or contrasting experiences with the same phenomenon.

Narratives can hold a certain power within research in making sense of experiences, interactions, and ideas. This method of inquiry is central to comprehending accounts of discrimination in that personal storytelling takes precedence over the "larger, cultural (public) narratives...that have been accepted as conveying Truth about the way a society works" (Hardin & Whiteside, 2009, p. 257). It places the individual's story as central to their experience. Through collective memory work, participants are seeking out the moments within their memories of experience where individuals or institutions in their lives acted based on cultural norms, or as Dunlap & Johnson (2018) call it "societal choreography" (p. 31). Here, participants are also examining how it affects them (as they perform or fail to perform their identifying genders roles).

Focus groups are typically the next step in collective memory work research, wherein collaborative efforts are used to make sense and meaning of narratives both individually and across all narratives (Johnson et al., 2018). This process typically goes from individual analysis

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of each narrative to collective analysis of all narratives together, and finally to larger social discourse connection (Johnson & Oakes, 2018). Focus groups are a way for participants to find similarities and differences (especially with regards to one's intersectionality) between experiences of the same phenomenon. During the focus group, participants may notice themes (ex. workplaces being uncomfortable with nonconforming gender presence or a lack of gender representation within an outdoor institution). Guiding questions are often used to help facilitate and direct conversations so that richer data may arise, but they are not used as the sole talking points within the focus group discussion, as relevant sub-conversations or diversions may occur. These guiding questions are open-ended so participants have the freedom and opportunity to provide deeper, qualitative data with their responses.

A set of procedures, based on Crawford et al. (1992), is typically used in the analysis of collective memory work. They are as follows:

1. Each memory work group member expresses opinions and ideas about each written memory in turn.
2. The collective looks for similarities and differences between the memories. The group members look for continuous elements among the memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent. Each member should question those aspects of the events that do not appear amendable to comparison, without resorting to biography.
3. Each member identifies cliches, generalizations contradictions, cultural imperatives, metaphor, etc. This is one way of identifying the marker of the "taken-for-granted" social explication of the meaning of recurring events.
4. The group discusses theories, popular conceptions, sayings, and images about the topic, again as a way of identifying the common social explication of meaning around the topic.
5. The group also examines what is not written in the memories (but that might be expected to be). Silences are sometimes eloquent pointers to issues of deep significance but are painful or particularly problematic to the author" (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 12).

These procedures were followed during my collective memory work focus group analysis.

After the conclusion of the focus group, the primary researcher may choose to work alone or in collaboration with the participants to further interpret the focus group data with regards to

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representation (Johnson & Oakes, 2018). Although there are a variety of methods on how to represent the data, analysis is often reported as either summative findings (observations, direct quotes, or behaviors) from the focus group in a discussion section or presented as a fictional, collaborative written narrative created by the participant group, combining the themes and personal stories from all the participants (Johnson et al., 2018). Other methods include creating a poem, media piece (eg. documentary), or public presentation. Data reporting selection is based on the opinions and preferences of the primary researcher (and sometimes the participants) as to what will best represent their research findings.

Through collective memory work, the power of narratives and subsequent collaboration from the voices of the oppressed can contribute to outdoor education and recreation literature. It is a suitable methodology for my focus on gender inequity in the outdoor field as it served as a useful process for making sense of participant's discrimination experience and provided the platform for these diverse voices to be heard. Previous collective memory work research has also focused on issues of individuals experiencing discrimination due to their gender identity (Dunlap & Johnson, 2018; Johnson et al., 2014; Singh & Johnson, 2018) and gender nonconformity (Eaker et al., 2018). Gender discrimination research, beyond cisgender women, is an emerging field, and my research hopes to contribute to the nascent literature.

Lastly, collective memory work's roots and placement in feminist theory align with the theoretical framework of my study. Haug's (1997) creation of collective memory work was originally intended to serve populations of women whose voices had been previously silenced from the patriarchy. However, collective memory work has now expanded as a methodology beyond focusing solely on women's experiences. It now includes topics such as individual experiences of racial, sexual, and even masculine identities (Coes et al., 2018; Gulley et al.,

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2018; Hansen & Johnson, 2018). With a feminist foundation, collective memory work is an ideal methodology to utilize when working with any discriminated populations in making sense of their identity in relation to societal structures that act to oppress them. As such, collective memory work is a powerful tool in my research.

### **Methods**

Collective memory work provides guidelines for researchers to collect data through participant memories and analysis (Johnson et al., 2018). According to its creator, Haug (1997), collective memory work typically takes place in a series of steps: a written narrative by participants under a pseudonym, a focus group of those participants and the researcher listening to one another's stories, and an analysis of the memories through group interpretation. I utilized Haug's (1997) series, but also added some adjustments (using a virtual platform for collecting narratives and consent forms (Qualtrics)) and a virtual video platform (Zoom) for the focus group) that better suited my research design.

### **Personal Narratives**

The first step in the collective memory work process, once the participant group was secured (see section below on participant selection), was to give the participants a prompt for their personal narrative (Johnson et al., 2018). This prompt was meant to help guide the writer and elicit pertinent memories. The language of the prompt is one of the most important aspects of the research, as it provided the foundation for thought and memories that were evoked, discussed, and analyzed throughout the research (Hansen & Johnson, 2018). The prompt was as follows:

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*“Think about a specific time when you experienced discrimination based on your identifying gender within the outdoor workplace. Write a short but detailed narrative about this experience.”*

Participants were aware of the narrative requirements before the study within the consent form they signed. The requirements were also included in the email sent through Qualtrics with the prompt. The writing guidelines were as follows:

1. Narratives should be 1-2 pages double-spaced to allow for substantial detail but also provide time for the other participants’ stories during the focus group.
2. Narratives should be written in the third person using a pseudonym. This is to both offer anonymity, as well as allow analysis to focus on the issue through a societal lens and not exclusively the individual experience. Additionally, it provides the opportunity for participants to better see their experiences within other narratives.
3. Narratives should provide detailed accounts of a memory so that the group can visualize the scene and interpret as much as possible.
4. Narratives should be factual and as objective of a memory as possible for the group to analyze together.

These guidelines were adapted and based on Haug’s (1997) *Four Basic Rules of Memory Writing*.

Once the prompt was received, the participants individually created a narrative of their memory. Due to time constraints, participants were given one week to formulate their narratives. This timeframe gave participants ample time to select their story and determine how they wanted

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to tell it. Additionally, this timeframe respects the other responsibilities participants have beyond generously contributing to this research.

Upon completion, all narratives were sent directly to all participants via a software called Qualtrics, so that they could begin processing others' stories and thereby come to the focus group ready to discuss. In addition, participants received my list of guiding questions that were used to guide the focus group. Individual formulation of ideas and comparisons to their own narratives may have started in this stage, but prior notetaking or documentation was not required at this time. Participants were given at least one week to read the other participants' narratives. This reflection time provided participants the opportunity to prepare for a deep dive into gender inequity experiences, especially if the narratives were particularly emotion-evoking and participants needed that time to decompress (Hansen & Johnson, 2018).

### **Data Analysis**

**Focus group.** The bulk of the data analysis was completed in the form of a virtual focus group via a video chat platform (Zoom). Although this may have taken away from the community aspect of collective memory work as opposed to meeting in person (where connections may be formed more organically), it ultimately helped with commitment to the study as there was more flexibility for participant involvement (removing travel requirements). Virtual platforms also remove geographical sampling barriers, giving myself as the primary researcher more opportunities to reach a wider audience of participants. The virtual focus group took place at a predetermined date according to participant availability. It was approximately 2.5 hours long, so that conversations could be held in-depth, and participants had plenty of reflection and talking time. It was also recorded so that I was able to watch it at a later date for transcription and actively participate while the focus group was taking place.



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Focus groups are a key point in collective memory work, as they aim to find meaning along multiple, similar experiences (Gulley et al., 2018). During the focus group, each story was discussed individually, in no particular order. I intended to set the tone of the focus group by introducing myself and explaining why I had chosen this topic for my research. Vulnerability is one of the main pillars in creating a community where participants feel free and open to share their opinions, thoughts, and ideas. As the primary researcher, I wanted to model this vulnerability. Each participant then introduced themselves and why they chose to take part in the research. Here, participants self-elected to break anonymity to better form bonds within the focus group community. Although I received a narrative and consent form from four participants, the participant pool for the focus group only contained three other members, as there was no further communication from the fourth participant.

I also created guiding questions beforehand to present to the participants. These questions were sent to the participants alongside the narratives, so that they had time to start developing thoughts and opinions as they read through the other narratives prior to the focus group. The guiding questions were not meant to control the conversation, but to guide topics of discussion for participants. The guiding questions were as follows:

- 1) What is this narrative about? What is the author trying to portray?
- 2) How does gender role socialization influence the author in this story? Other people in the narrative?
- 3) How is hegemonic masculinity present in this narrative, if at all?
- 4) Is there anything you can relate to in this narrative?
- 5) What was this person's experience of gender discrimination like? How are outdoor spaces a key component, if at all?

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6) How does intersectionality or power vs privilege come into play, if at all?

The main form of data analysis came with the discussions and topics that emerged through the discourse that were then analyzed both collaboratively and subsequently through my own observations. Within the focus group, participants became part of the research team, co-analyzing the narrative data together to identify themes and meanings (Eaker et al., 2018). Participants, then, are not only the creators of the data, but also its analyzers (Gulley et al., 2018). This responsibility included taking part in deep interpretation, specifically looking at the language within the narratives as means to find threads, similarities, and contrasts (Eaker et al., 2018). Since the focus group went through each individual narrative as well, deeper meaning and ideas in each story were analyzed and documented as key findings. Specifically, themes we found were surrounding Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performance and how it is perpetuated within outdoor spaces. All of this is represented and reported as part of the data analysis. Again, I used Crawford et al. (1992)'s framework to assist in the data analysis procedure.

A chat box feature was also available to the participants as a secondary means of communication. This feature allowed participants to type out their thoughts, feelings, or comments during the discussion. I found this to be a helpful tool, especially if a participant was not comfortable verbally communicating and would rather relay information through text. Both verbal and written discussions were included as key parts of the data and its transcription.

Through listening to each other's experiences, participants can make sense of the everyday realities of identifying as an oppressed, non-dominant gender in the outdoor field. This dialogue can be an empowering experience for some participants as the collective memory work methodology aims to be a framework for communal experience and a catalyst for positive social

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justice change (Gulley et al., 2018). My own participation in the discussions was self-monitored, so that I could still contribute without taking over the conversations. By moderating my contribution, I better presented myself as a co-researcher. As mentioned earlier, the researchers are the instruments for qualitative analysis and reflexivity is crucial to determine the credibility of the data and findings (Pillow, 2003). I intended to be conscious and introspective during the entire research process.

**Field notes.** With prior approval from participants, as the primary researcher, I recorded the session to review the conversations later, comparing the findings to my own field notes I took during the focus group. The field notes I took during the focus group session consisted of quotes and observations about the group, including tone and feelings.

However, one deficit about using a virtual platform for the focus group is that I was not able to observe full body language to take notes, which I find to be a valuable piece that was missing. Virtual platforms typically do not convey the whole body, but facial expressions and emotions were viewed and recorded. With this said, my field notes acted as a useful tool in including my interpretations of interactions, expressions, etc. once the focus group was over.

### **Participant Selection**

The participants for this study were non-male identified individuals who currently work, or have worked, within the outdoor field, and who have experienced sexism in their jobs. This means that those who identify as cisgender men were not be able to participate, as that population perpetuates and benefits from socially constructed gender hierarchies. My population selection process was snowball sampling. Here, I reached out to peers and former colleagues that fitted my participant requirements and may have been interested in taking part in this study. Individuals contacted for interest also asked other individuals they know and believe may fit the

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participant criteria (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This method was ideal as the population for this study is very specific and networking can help facilitate this process. It also can be useful if they are all individuals within the same network so that trust and rapport may be easier to establish within the group (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). However, this was not required for my study.

There were four participants total in my study as this number has been shown to be ideal for collective memory work focus groups: it is small enough to provide intimacy and gives time to hear and analyze each other's stories, but also contains enough members to contribute to rich conversations (Gulley et al., 2018). With the intention of getting mixed perspectives, the participant selection was not limited to one gender. This specific participant pool contained two self-identified cisgender women and two nonbinary individuals from different facets of the outdoor field. These four individuals collectively worked for various summer camps, backpacking programs, mountain biking companies, conservation projects, among other avenues.

As some of the participants were already individuals with whom I have previously established relationships or were colleagues with those individuals, rapport was not difficult to establish with myself as the researcher. This is one of the strengths of using personal networks for participant recruitment (Hansen & Johnson, 2018). Although it still may be difficult for some participants to form trust with each other due to the personal and sensitive nature of the material, this did not seem to be an issue. I also had some participants that were outside of my network, recruited through others using snowball sampling. Through shared experiences, participants found commonality, community, and allyship with each other and myself.

Participant sample selection in this study was intentional, as the individuals needed to fit both the description of the participant pool and be willing to engage in discourse of their own memories and that of others within the group. Their role was vital to the study of collective

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memory work, as they acted as collaborators of the research as they generated and analyzed data alongside me (the primary researcher) (Johnson et al., 2018). This methodology aimed to flatten the power hierarchy as the researcher and participants became co-creating partners in the research. As co-researchers in a qualitative study, the participants (alongside myself) played a major role of this research as the data analysis instrument. We also were actively engaged in participatory action research (PAR) by connecting our analyses to the larger social issues (Johnson & Oakes, 2018). These responsibilities were communicated to the participants both in the consent form they signed, as well as during the focus group held via virtual platform (Zoom) so that everyone was aware of their role and the requirements within this study. Additionally, participants were made aware of any emotional risk that might have come with participating in a collective memory work study.

### **Personal Reflexivity**

As a white, queer, cisgender woman with a career in the outdoor field, I have experienced accounts of discrimination based on my gender from former coworkers, administrators, and individuals I have served. People often comment on my backcountry abilities, exclaiming that they underestimated me. This form of microaggression stems from deep-seated ideologies of hegemonic masculinity and disbelief of a woman's capability and competence within outdoor spaces (Kennedy & Russell, 2020).

Although these experiences, and the ones that have affected my colleagues, are part of the reason that I want to study this topic, I must be cognizant about how my identity (as researcher and participant) can also influence my research. As a feminist qualitative collaborative researcher, I had to constantly examine my position as both researcher and participant throughout the study. To accomplish this self-evaluation, I used Pillow's (2003) four reflexive strategies:

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reflexivity as recognition of self, reflexivity as recognition of others, reflexivity as truth, and reflexivity of transcendence— all of which are discussed below.

Reflexivity of self is when the researcher understands “their own capacity to be known and reflected upon” (Eaker et al., 2018, p. 51). This is primarily executed in the form of introspection on behalf of the researcher. Reflexivity as recognition of others requires the researcher to contemplate and truly understand the experiences of their subjects to capture them accurately in their research (Eaker et al., 2018). Reflexivity as truth is the idea that credibility can be transferred through research (Eaker et al., 2018). Examining researcher bias, assumptions, and influence on data at every point throughout the research is crucial with this strategy. The final strategy, reflexivity as transcendence, “occurs when the researcher allows for authentic self-appraisal” (Eaker et al., 2018, p. 52). It is the summative strategy that allows the researcher, researcher, and the participants to be the most accurate representations of the study. These four strategies were discussed with my participant group and within my written work where I found appropriate throughout my research journey.

I also anticipated intersectionality playing a role within my research, not only for my participants, but also for myself. Although I have been oppressed due to my gender, there are other ways that I am a part of socially constructed dominant groups. As a white, able-bodied individual from an upper-middle-class background, my position in society has remained privileged in many ways. This reflexivity is reflection of self, wherein I examine my identity, its development, and its impact throughout the research process (Pillow, 2003). This positionality is something I needed to consider when writing my own narrative for the study, especially since this narrative will set the tone for the entirety of the focus group. Constantly examining my stance in this collaborative research as I work towards dismantling hierarchies that come with the

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position of power as a researcher, added depth and perception to the data analyzed (Cornforth et al., 2009). This was especially true as it related to feminist theory.

Within collective memory work, the researcher's role is partially shared with the participants in data generation and analysis (Johnson et al., 2018). Although I was the main facilitator of the research, I had four participants actively involved in the creation of their own narratives and in analyzing them during the focus groups. While I also shared my own narrative and provided guiding questions, I encouraged the participants in the focus group to have the freedom to shape the conversations and interpret the experiences as they see them (Dunlap & Johnson, 2018). Although my story was included in the focus group of narratives, we did not have the time to interpret it together. I took part in interpreting my experiences post focus group, using the conclusions we came to. Therefore, my role as the primary researcher was to help facilitate the conversations and document the ideas, so that the discussion is mostly participant-led and there are as few power dynamics as possible. Reflexivity in this way included thoughtful and intentional examination of the research questions, narrative prompts, and guiding questions presented to the participants during the focus groups. This is also a form of reflexivity as reflection of self (Pillow, 2003).

### **Ethical Considerations**

An ethical consideration is that targeted actions of discrimination are heavy and sensitive topics that may cause varying levels of discomfort to the participants or myself as the researcher. This may come from personal experiences of vulnerability within the group or reactions from other participants' narratives, opinions, beliefs, or discussions. Constant reminders throughout the research regarding the nature of the study topic were necessary to provide awareness for the participants so that minimal risk is involved. This was also mitigated by fostering a community

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atmosphere throughout the process and sharing ways to cope with these emotions. While I am personally not trained in therapy, I have previous experience working in wilderness therapy settings and former CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) training for de-escalation. Although this experience may be helpful, it was crucial that I was attentive to not overstep my qualifications and realize when a situation moved beyond my area of expertise.

Participation in this research was completely voluntary and participants could have chosen to end the study at any point. Although pseudonyms were used in the narratives and offered throughout the entirety of the study, collective memory work calls for vulnerability and familiarity among participants to ensure understanding of everyone's experiences. Therefore, complete anonymity in this research was not offered. Participants were aware of this limitation in the consent forms they signed beforehand. They were also asked to respect the confidentiality of all participants involved. For all these reasons listed above (minimal emotional risk, vulnerable methodology, lack of complete anonymity) and being a human-based research study, my study required Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

Despite these drawbacks, there are benefits and advantages in participating in collective memory work studies. Storytelling surrounding social justice issues can be therapeutic and can initiate self-healing for participants and provide a sense of community for those that share similar experiences (Coes et al., 2018). Singh & Johnson (2018) note that "by keeping collective stories at the center of conversations, research such as this can empower individuals to stay connected and take action toward creating positive social justice change" (p. 110). Looking at their memories and experiences as a community was a cathartic release for some and provided validation that they are not alone in their oppression (Coes et al., 2018). Also, as the focus group worked towards making sense of their experiences relating to their discrimination in society, this



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experience benefited participants in the future, as it offered ways to cope or resist the oppression (Coes et al., 2018). Hopefully, through this process and by adding this study to the literature, the benefits heavily outweighed any risk involved.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

My subsequent data analysis after the focus group was based on collaborative group thoughts, my field notes, and observations after watching the recordings. This was written as a summary or description of the findings so that the analysis is not limited to one reporting method (Coes et al., 2018). It contained direct quotes, ideas, theories, similarities, among other content that arose. The final summative piece was sent to each of the individuals to check for agreement and provide space for input as the final effort from the co-researcher participants before I published the findings here. This procedure of member checking added to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study so that the results could be reported with participants agreeing on the accuracy of representation. Member checking was done to add qualitative trustworthiness and credibility to the research by incorporating multiple people in the analysis and editing of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Previous collective memory work studies have used member checking to establish credibility so that one co-researcher does not interpret on behalf of the whole group (Coes et al, 2018). Member checking for accuracy is also important for participatory action research (PAR) and social justice research as it centralized participants as equal and vital parts of the data generation and analysis in the study. Through collaborative efforts, I hope my participants felt that they strived together towards a social justice means and contributed to a positive change through creating awareness of gender inequity issues in addition to developing ideas on how to dismantle the patriarchal standards and norms within the outdoor field and beyond.

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As part of the EOE thesis handbook, I have chosen the manuscript thesis format option. This option requires chapters one, two, and three, plus chapter four written as a full-length manuscript aimed at a specific journal and formatted as such. With this said, the next chapter will be my complete manuscript. I have chosen to submit to the Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education which requires authors to submit a manuscript that is no more than 8,000 words (including the reference list and abstract), written in APA format.

**“It’s just like the silence is violence:” Gender inequity in the outdoor workplace**

Abby Bradley, Western Carolina University  
Callie Schultz, Western Carolina University  
Corey W. Johnson, University of Waterloo  
Paul Stonehouse, Western Carolina University

For consideration in The Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education

Word Count: 7,183

**Abstract**

Although much research has focused on gender inequity within the outdoor workplace, little has emphasized genders beyond the binary. Centering women and nonbinary individual voices and their oppression within outdoor research is needed to create a more inclusive field. The purpose of this study is to explore the ways gender inequity is experienced by non-dominant workers in the outdoor field. This research uses a collective memory work (CMW) methodology informed by a feminist lens. Personal narratives based on personal discriminatory experiences are examined within virtual focus groups where data analysis is conducted collaboratively. The participant pool contains five individuals who either identify as cisgender women or gender nonbinary. Similarities in oppressive experiences center around the idea of gender performance and gender role socialization. This includes ways that individuals conform or resist these societal acts based on their assigned gender at birth, unfair gendered workplace evaluation, and continuous microaggressive remarks. Increasing awareness of the ways gender inequity is present in the outdoor workplace is a necessary step in dismantling oppression and thereby creating a more inclusive field.

**Keywords**

Collective memory work, gender inequity, outdoor workplace, performance theory

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### Introduction

This narrative, written in first person, is an experience that I (Abby) encountered leading a wilderness expedition trip for teenagers:

*We were preparing for our closing circle ceremony and campfire after a long 24 days together in the woods. I was assigned to build the campfire with two boisterous teenage boys in my backpacking group.*

*“I want to be in charge of actually starting the fire,” said one of the boys proudly as we were collecting firewood.*

*“Me too!” exclaimed the other.*

*“Of course!” I said, more than willing to give them the responsibility. It was the last night of our expedition and frankly, I was exhausted.*

*An hour later, the rest of the group slowly started to trickle in. Still with no fire, I offered the boys my help and advice.*

*“We know what we are doing!” They snapped.*

*“Yeah, we don’t need your help. The wood is just wet...that’s all.”*

*I shrugged at their reply and kept a close eye on my watch. The two boys finally gave into their frustration, handed over the matches, and quietly crept down to sit on a log without saying a word. By this point, the entire group was there waiting—all eyes on me to perform. I flicked the match against the box, held the flame under the newly constructed frame I built, and had a campfire worthy of our sacred ceremony in no time.*

*“Wow, we should really reconsider putting Abby up higher on our outdoorsmen list after this fire she built,” announced one of my backpacking students to the group, gawking at my blazing campfire.*

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*Everyone shook their head in agreement as my coworkers and I looked at each other quizzically. Our group had made a list of all five instructors in order of the “best” outdoorsperson, placing my two male coworkers in the first two spots and myself in third above my two female coworkers.*

In the above narrative, the outdoorsmen list and gendered rank, unfortunately, came as no surprise. Throughout the trip, I had experienced insensitive remarks about my gender, such as how I could “hang with the boys” or was good “for being a woman.” When the group got together to compile their list, their ranking was guided by an unconscious construct of what a “rugged outdoorsman” looked like. It felt like my gender was used against me and my assumed rank less than that of a man. Despite having more skills and experience than my coworkers, my expressed gender ranked me below a man – not just on the alleged list, but in society more broadly.

While numerous studies address accounts of gender oppression, the focus is mainly on cisgender women (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Beyond cisgender women, non-dominant genders make up 4.5% of the United States population but are underrepresented within academic research (Suen et al., 2020). Theoretically informed by feminism, this study explores the ways gender inequity and hegemonic masculinity is experienced by gender non-dominant workers (cisgender women and non-binary individuals) in the outdoor field. The research question for this study is as follows:

1. How do cisgender women and non-binary individuals within the outdoor field remember their experiences of workplace gender discrimination?

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I begin by detailing the conceptual framework including my operationalization of feminism and a review of the literature. Next, I explain my rationale for and execution of collective memory work methodology, followed by the findings and implications for practice and future research.

### **Background**

#### **Framework: Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory is a focus on gender and/or other intersecting oppressed identities of an individual, including societal perception of these identities (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Feminist theory-informed qualitative research considers this intersectionality and prioritizes the individual and their feeling of placement within society over the ideas created about them by society (Hansen & Johnson, 2018). In doing so, feminist theory-informed qualitative research creates a platform for oppressed voices to be heard within the literature and challenges societal norms and policies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In viewing issues through multiple lenses (individual, local, global), we acknowledge how the intersection of race, class, heterosexism, sexism, and transgender oppression is laden within gender inequity and can utilize feminist tools to dismantle it. This study is rooted in feminist theory to accomplish this.

#### **Review of the Literature**

##### ***Defining Gender***

Gender is a social construct containing “the production and normalization of masculine and feminine” (Butler, 2004, p. 42) characteristics. Gender may or may not correspond with one’s biological sex assigned at birth and can be expressed in a variety of different ways (Suen et al., 2019). When a person identifies with the same gender identity commonly associated with their sex assigned at birth, they are labeled cisgender (Suen et al., 2020, p. 2,302). Non-dominant genders contain individuals that do not identify as cisgender men. Examples are cisgender

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women, transgender men, nonbinary, or genderqueer. In comparison to cisgender men, they are considered “non-dominant” by patriarchal societal standards and hierarchy.

### *Gender Roles and Stereotypes*

Starting as soon as an individual enters the world, they are treated differently based on their assigned sex at birth (Humberstone, 2000). Those assigned females at birth are expected to behave with passivity, grace, and maternal instincts (Jacobs, 2020), while those assigned males at birth are expected to act with assertiveness, competitiveness, and a vigorous work ethic (Humberstone, 2000). These social constructs control how “accepted” (often with real physical repercussions) an individual is in society based on how closely they conform to the norms and perform the “correct” gender roles (Newbery, 2004). Any deviation from gender identity and performance norms can result in violence or discrimination, as it is thought to take away from “the functioning of a well-ordered society” (Pascoe, 2007, p. 19). Examples of this are public and private workplace harassment (verbal, physical, or sexual), employment discrimination, and violence (Butler, 2004).

### *Gender Performance*

Societally prescribed roles and stereotypes can lead individuals to feel they need to perform certain ways based on their gender. From the way we converse, appear, and conduct ourselves, gender is naturalized over time based on these cultural norms. This can also be coupled with gender expression, which is how one presents themselves (i.e. through clothing, haircuts, behaviors) based on their gender (Pascoe, 2007). Resistance to gender performance can result in disciplinary or oppressive actions. For example, in Berbery’s (2012) study of sorority women, participants felt that they needed to monitor each other’s behaviors within their social group. This then led to self-surveillance in which women would analyze what their peers were

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saying and perform only what was considered acceptable through the sorority's standards (Berbary, 2012). These performances are typically covert, and individuals can be unaware that the way they are acting adheres to society's ideals of femininity and masculinity.

### *Hegemonic Masculinity in the Outdoor Field*

Hegemonic masculinity has been the focal point of social justice discussions for decades (Jacobs, 2020). The United States, like most cultures, has a long history as a patriarchal society. Civilization is structured by “ideas about the nature of things, including men, women, and humanity, with manhood and masculinity most closely associated with being human and womanhood and femininity relegated to the marginal position of ‘other’” (Johnson, 2018, p. 364). Patriarchal values are present in the workplace and are influenced by biological roles between the sexes: females bear and tend to children, and males, since they cannot give birth, work and provide for their families (Szołtysek et al., 2017). As a result, workplaces become male dominated, and men continue to maintain positions of power within them. Non-dominant genders experience lower pay, receive fewer opportunities for promotion, and are taken less seriously within the workplace than men (Warren, et al., 2019). Unfortunately, these injustices are no different in the outdoor workplace, where individuals can experience discrimination because of the way they perform (or, importantly, don't perform) expected gender roles (as evident in my narrative).

### *Gender Inequity in the Outdoor Field*

Outdoor fields came into fruition in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as family dynamics shifted in response to the industrialization and urbanization of society (Browne et al., 2019). Children, in particular young boys, were sent to outdoor programs in an attempt to relieve mothers' homemaker responsibilities. Since the home was seen as a feminine space, young boys and men



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were encouraged to remove themselves as much as possible (Browne et al., 2019). Programs such as summer camps, Boy Scouts, and other outdoor leisure pursuits were created for young men and centered around masculine ideals (Browne et al., 2019).

Three white men, Kurt Hahn, Paul Petzoldt, and John Dewey are often hailed in outdoor literature as being key influencers of this field even though other individuals, in particular women, have made equal contributions and are often disregarded in its history (Warren et al., 2019). Relevant to our purposes here, ignoring historical and present contributions of cisgender women and other non-dominant gender individuals upholds the patriarchal structure within the outdoor field through the continuation of exclusively male models.

Contradictorily, even though gender inequity runs rampant in the outdoor field, “relationship building” (Allen-Craig et al., 2020), a stereotypically female gender role, is a key programmatic outcome. This value sits in tension, alongside the field’s other more competitive values: challenge, risk and adventure, for instance – common to the outdoor field. These masculine norms, rooted in military history (e.g., a rugged frontiersman taming nature) are frequently given more preference within the outdoor field (Kennedy & Russel, 20220; Warren et al., 2019). Whereas in outdoor spaces, when an individual expresses their gender using traditionally “feminine” qualities such as gentleness or sensitivity, they are often considered incompetent (Rogers & Rose, 2019) or not well-suited for the outdoors (Warren et al., 2019). Additionally, Warren et al. (2019) found that participants with 15+ years of experience in the outdoor field witnessed more men being favored over other genders in hiring, promotion, and assignment of leadership roles within the workplace.

Similar to other workforces, individuals that identify as a non-dominant gender are rarely promoted or able to assume leadership roles within the outdoor field (Allen-Craig et al., 2020).

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There are plenty of non-dominant genders in starting positions within the outdoor field, such as camp counselors and instructors (Gray & Mitten, 2018). However, most administrative positions are filled by white cisgender men (Gray & Mitten, 2018). Similar studies reveal that women tend to be evaluated more critically, regardless of the quality of their instruction. For example, Peterson et al. (2019) found that students are more likely to have an implicitly negative gender bias towards female instructors compared to their male counterparts.

Additionally, individuals identifying as men and who perform their gender in traditionally masculine ways are still considered to be the most qualified individuals within a majority of the outdoor workplace (Rogers & Rose, 2019). Direct, assertive leadership is thought to be the most effective, and many women adopt this form, even if it is not their typical leadership style (Kennedy & Russel, 2020). Because of this bias, women may tend to work harder compared to their male coworkers or act more masculine (Newbery, 2004; Peterson et al., 2019). However, in performing the latter, individuals can face ridicule for being ‘too masculine’ and not obeying the gender norms of society (Gray et al., 2020). They are put into a double bind, where they must either adhere to submissive, heteronormative ways of femininity or overcompensate to prove themselves worthy at the risk of backlash for not complying with societal gender norms (Newbery, 2004). This implicit and explicit reinforcement/privileging of men through hegemonic masculinity can result in gender inequity in the outdoor field.

### **Gaps in the Literature**

While the powerful act of speaking out can bring attention to this injustice, voicing these concerns often creates strain between colleagues, a loss of job opportunities, and mental stress from “feminist fatigue” (Gray et al., 2017) This fear of raising concern for gender inequity, prevents people from engaging in dialogue or taking action (calling out sexism, partaking in

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protests, etc.), which only serves to worsen the problem (Gray et al., 2017). Jacobs (2020) suggests, more research is needed to understand how “the presence of women and gender others in masculine spaces destabilizes the gender constructions rooted within these terrains” (p. 7). Including the voices of these marginalized populations within academic literature can uncover these issues and inform multiple audiences that may not be aware of how the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity contributes to the gender inequity laden in outdoor spaces.

Additionally, “societal structures [remain] strongly cisnormative” (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017, p. 109). Genders and corresponding gender roles outside the traditional binary “man” and “woman,” have rarely been studied and are still relatively new topics within academic research (Jacobs, 2020). This leaves genders beyond the binary largely ignored in academic literature, outdoor education and leisure, and society. Therefore, this study explores the ways gender inequity is experienced by gender non-dominant workers (specifically cisgender women and non-binary individuals) in the outdoor field.

### **Methodology and Methods: Collective Memory Work**

Collective memory work is a qualitative methodology that focuses on individual lived experiences in relation to society (Johnson et al., 2018). Developed by Frigga Haug (1997) during the feminist movement of the 1980s, it is based in feminist theory and sheds light on oppressed identities and their discrimination from socially constructed, hegemonic powers. This feminist foundation works to be a method of “highly gendered exploration” (Johnson et al., 2018), making it an exemplary methodology for this nature of research.

Collective memory work derives from critical interpretivism as an epistemological framework (Johnson et al., 2018). Here, memories and experiences “position the knower and the researcher in interpretive spaces, where the meaning of the memory rests in how the individual

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ascribes meaning to the memory” (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 8). Most importantly, the efforts within this methodology are collaborative and are key to collective memory work, constituting all participants and the primary researcher as co-researchers as they interpret and analyze the data together (Johnson et al., 2018). As co-researchers in a qualitative study, the participants and I were the instrument in data analysis.

According to its creator, Haug (1997), collective memory work typically takes place in a series of steps: 1) a written narrative by participants under a pseudonym, 2) a focus group of those participants and the researcher listening to one another’s stories, and 3) an analysis of the memories through group interpretation. I utilized Haug’s (1997) series, but also added some adjustments (using a digital platform for collecting narratives and consent forms (Qualtrics) and a video platform (Zoom) for the focus group) that better suited the research design.

### **Participant Selection**

Participants were selected using the snowball sampling method (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This process began through conversations via phone or social media with my immediate social circle/professional network. I then followed up with potential participants either by phone or social media (namely Instagram messaging). The criteria for participants were individuals who did not identify as men, who currently work, or have worked, within the outdoor field, and who have experienced gender discrimination in their jobs. There were four participants total in the study as this number has been shown to be ideal for collective memory work focus groups: it is small enough to provide intimacy and gives time to hear and analyze each other’s stories, but also contains enough members to contribute to rich conversations (Gulley et al., 2018). With the intention of getting mixed perspectives, the participant selection was not limited to one gender. This specific participant pool contained two self-identified cisgender women and two nonbinary

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individuals from different facets of the outdoor field. These four individuals collectively worked for various summer camps, backpacking programs, mountain biking companies, conservation projects, among other avenues. Additionally, they also came from a variety of states including North Carolina, Arizona, and California (with outdoor work experiences in many other states as well) – providing the study with a generalized national perspective.

### **Data Generation: Creating Recalled Narratives**

The first step in the collective memory work process, once the participant group was secured, was to give the participants a prompt for their personal narrative (Johnson et al., 2018). This prompt was meant to help guide the writer and elicit pertinent memories. The prompt I provided was:

“Think about a specific time when you experienced discrimination based on your identifying gender within the outdoor workplace. Write a short but detailed narrative about this experience.”

Creating writing guidelines, adapted and based on Haug’s (1997) *Four Basic Rules of Memory Writing*, I asked participants to write:

1. 1-2 pages double-spaced to allow for substantial detail but also provide time for the other participants’ stories during the focus group.
2. Narratives should be written in the third person using a pseudonym.
3. Narratives should provide detailed accounts of a memory so that the group can visualize the scene and interpret as much as possible.
4. Narratives should be factual and as objective of a memory as possible.

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Due to time constraints, participants were given one week to formulate their stories. This timeframe gave participants ample time to select their story and determine how they wanted to tell it.

Upon completion, I sent individual narratives directly to participants so they could begin processing others' stories and thereby come to the focus group ready to discuss. While reading over other participants' narratives individual formulation of ideas and comparisons to their own narratives may have started in this stage, but notetaking or documentation was not required at this time. Participants were given one week to read the narratives.

### **Collective Analysis: Interpreting the Recalled Narratives**

#### ***Focus group***

The bulk of the data analysis was completed in the form of a virtual focus group via a video chat platform (Zoom). At 2.5 hours long, the focus group provided for in-depth conversation and plenty of reflection time. Such focus groups are a key element of collective memory work, as they aim to find meaning along multiple, similar experiences (Gulley et al., 2018). During the focus group, each story was discussed individually, in no particular order. Here, participants in the study self-elected to break anonymity to better form bonds within the focus group community. Although breaking anonymity centered the stories more so around the individuals, it also resulted in a connection beyond the study. Participants chose to exchange social media accounts and personal information sharing to stay in touch after the course of the study.

The main form of data analysis came with the discussions and topics that emerged through the discourse that were then analyzed both collaboratively and subsequently through my own observations. This responsibility included taking part in deep interpretation, looking at the

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language within the narratives as means to find threads, similarities, and contrasts (Eaker et al., 2018). Specifically, participants gave sentiments about relating to other's narratives with regards to tokenism, the pressure to perform, among others. They also compared the way people acted within outdoor spaces to ideas about how society is patriarchally structured. Since the focus group went through each individual narrative as well, deeper meaning and ideas in each story were analyzed and noted as key findings.

Once the focus group was over, I transcribed the audio and video recording using a software called Descript and documented the collaborative findings. I, then, as the primary researcher, grouped the similarities we found and related the findings to theoretical perspectives (e.g., gender performance, gender role socialization). Due to the collaborative nature of CMW research, the findings were then sent to all the participants to establish credibility and trustworthiness as a form of member checking. All of this is represented and reported as part of the data analysis.

### **Findings**

#### **Gender Performance**

Central to all the narratives, our discussion, and analyses were ideas surrounding *gender performances* (Butler, 1990). Our stories and experiences revealed that gender performance in the outdoor workplace is structured around its masculine laden space (Jacobs, 2020) and that within these spaces are perceived positions of male power (Alexander, 2011, p. 4). The gendered power performance is not static and therefore constructs meaning based on the environment the individual is in (in this case the outdoor workplace) (Alexander, 2011). Most importantly, we found that our gender in outdoor spaces were a constant navigation of how much of ourselves we can truly bring into the workplace. Working in a culture with strict masculine roots and

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foundations forces non-dominant gender individuals to either conform to their prescribed gendered script or face consequences such as the ones we endured, discussed next.

I have chosen to structure the findings as a series of 2 (gendered) performances. These performances are woven representations of our collective memories and analyses of our experiences in the outdoor workplace as cisgender women and nonbinary individuals. Theory is layered into conversation with these performances.

### ***Performance 1: The balancing act between tokenism and role model***

*[Mattie] had not been included in three very important conversations that then led to the expulsion of a camper from the program. Not only that, [Matie] heard from the campers that the reason [they] had not been included [was] because the other trip leaders were uncomfortable in [their] presence. [Mattie] had been left out of a very important discussion regarding one of their favorite campers because their fellow trip leaders were not capable of seeing [them] as anything other than their gender expression(nonbinary). After this whole ordeal, [Mattie] realized that discrimination of non-binary persons in the outdoor industry is much more covert. It is being ignored, not included, avoided, and marginalized because people do not know how to speak to you, how to include you, or how to treat you as what you are, a person.*

In this performance, participants spoke about how they were always conscious of the way that they were acting out their gender. Butler (1990) states we show our gender through “stylized repetition of acts” (p. 519) and that the “construction [of one’s gender] compels one’s belief in its necessity and naturalness” (p. 522). It is always a conscious decision we are making; specifically, this gendered decision revolved around not wanted to be viewed as the “token” woman or non-binary person but also wanting to be that person as a role model for future



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women/non-binary individuals (because representation matters). In this constant conscious limbo of self-disciplined performances, we discussed having to censor parts of our “selves.”

With already prescribed gender roles and performances, it can be especially difficult to exist in a space when you are gender non-binary. Since there are fewer non-binary members in the outdoor community, Mattie claimed that being the only person of a specific gender identity can be “very isolating” and that “no one’s on your side.” This could be due to others being uncomfortable with genders beyond the binary as there is no script for their gender performance already written by society.

Luria mentioned that being a model of gender representation can be a positive experience, especially as it relates to marginalized identities. They recalled their past job working as a garbage truck driver where they would often get comments from young girls joyfully pointing out to their guardians, “there is a female driver!” These encounters made them feel “encouraged” that they could be this model of female representation within the outdoor field for younger generations. Mattie agreed, saying that they wished they had a model authority figure when they were younger. They claimed they want “to protect the kids...who end up in those situations.” Mattie also added “not having someone be that ally in a position of authority [for kids] makes me want to be that person in the future.”

The air was heavy as Mattie mentioned “something that I kind of miss from presenting female is having those little girls look up to you and be like, “Oh my God, a girl can do that!” because I no longer represent myself that way. And I kind of get worried that they’re going to think I’m a man and be like, “Oh, it’s just another dude.”” Giving up their femineity is hard because they want to be a good role model for female-presenting individuals. Should they

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identify how they want to identify (nonbinary) or is it more important to push back and support women's representation in the outdoor field?

Working as an instructor (especially with youth) can also bring about role dualism, where women are tokenized as the “mother-figures” and men as the “father-figures.” The father figures are typically men who create the structure (rules, logistics, schedule, etc.) and maintain a high level of responsibility within a group. The mother figures are typically those who are feminine, passive, nurturing, and, as Mattie and Maggie noted within their personal experiences, seen as the individual to talk to for any emotional need. However, this puts women in a tough situation as being labeled “feminine” is viewed as being weak in the outdoor field (Newbery, 2004).

When male authority figures act assertively or enforce rules, they are still able to maintain a level of respect with their participants (Kennedy & Russel, 2020). We found that masculine gender performance creates an illusion of power over a group of people because masculine culture is already instilled in outdoor spaces. However, if a female-presenting individual acts in the same manner, they can be targeted for not performing the feminine gender norm (Gray et al., 2017). Alexander (2011) argues that “even performances of resistance depend on and redeploy dominant, hegemonic codes” (p. 22). Choosing one's gender performance in an outdoor space is a losing game for women and non-binary individuals, where men have the freedom to act and remain in societally perceived positions of power.

Luria responded by writing in the chat: “It has made me question my motives in wanting to be in forestry as a career, if this is something I truly want or if it's me signaling to other queer Asian women that they can be in this field.” We all agreed with Maggie's sentiment that it is “a lot of energy to present yourself to be different...from others.” But is it up to us to be the ones representing a group of people? Do the positives outweigh the negative backlash we receive in

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the field? Is it worth all the emotional work and effort? What can organizations do to help break down these barriers and take the load off the marginalized individuals?

Within the past few years, attempts have been made by outdoor workplaces to broach the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). However, although some organizations have good intentions, there are many DEI fails that impact the program, the workers, and the participants they serve. As Mattie put it in their narrative, *“While these initiatives are commendable and are an important step in the right direction, they often lack a tact that is applicable to the real world and place the burden of educating the masses on the minority group.”*

We noticed that some of our organizations fall prey to picking and choosing which oppressed identities to educate their staff on in trainings, while (either covertly or overtly) ignoring others. These “oppression Olympics” are often the current trend on what marginalized group happens to be spotlighted on news outlets. For example, Mattie spoke of an incident their partner encountered working at a summer camp that had DEI trainings centering exclusively on race. When the agency was asked if they could have a pride week to celebrate gender and sexuality within the camp community, they refused and stated they could only “focus on one issue at a time.” Mattie, upon hearing this from their partner and reflecting, questioned the organization by responding “Are there not gay black kids? Is that not allowed? They can only be one? How could they say they could only be focused on a race issue right now?” The idea of intersectionality clearly does not ring for some programs and trainings can be more of a disservice than anything.

There are outdoor organizations claiming they are inclusive with DEI being their goal, but not willing to put in the work. This sometimes falls on individuals that are being

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discriminated against, tokenizing them and their identities. There was a palpable feeling of dismay as Mattie recollected a memory they had this past summer working for an outdoor program:

*At [an] orientation, a DEI training was held and we all discussed how to include marginalized groups into the fold so they were not left out. It seemed as though this training was primarily targeted at M and the one other LGBTQ+ identifying trip leader...Both of us were asked to contribute educational pieces to the training, including how to treat non-binary campers and staff, as though we were leading the training. Neither of us were told ahead of time that we would be involved in the DEI training and we were both pressured to contribute.*

Luria responded to the narrative saying “It’s almost like they’re outing the person without their consent. And that’s very jarring.” Tokenizing individuals and making them the sole representative of minority groups can add unneeded performance pressures and have serious mental consequences. It can also do more harm than good when the individual’s identity is outed to a group of people without their consent.

Maggie responded to Mattie’s narrative by claiming “as the people who are at the privileged demographic, they should do the work and know and research and realize that...it shouldn’t be the marginalized person speaking about their existence. Like they can’t speak on the entire identity.” The participants and I noticed that people are often hesitant to learn about oppression and marginalization, especially if they are in the dominant group. Maggie also added, “the outdoor industry is still holding on to that white male fragility of not wanting to do the unlearning within themselves to feel comfortable and recognize that everyone can be different and have our own ways of expressing ourselves.” Most often, we noticed, the responsibility is left to those that are marginalized to raise awareness, falling on them to speak up when they’re

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hurt or to try to change other people's thinking and actions (Gray et al., 2017). If it doesn't directly affect them, it is not an issue.

Often organizations seem to create a façade of being inclusive, as if they are just checking off the box for being accepting while doing the bare minimum. The conversation turned to us questioning how many organizations can get out of lawsuits and how much of that is contributed to the individuals in power. We assumed, based on our past experiences, that many organizations have people in power or control that are probably white, male, and cisgender (the dominant trio). This feeds into the nuance of who has power in the outdoor field and who will be believed when something is said. We then collectively connected these issues of power to a broader societal standpoint, mentioning that our judicial system has many barriers for marginalized individuals to have fair trials to begin with. As Maggie accurately put it "the outdoor industry is a microcosm of the world."

### ***Performance 2: Performing "team" over self; Censoring myself to assimilate to the team norms***

*It was Ann's first job out of college, as a forestry tech in the Sierra Nevadas. She was the only female out of the 6 interns. It was fine at first, the guys were generally helpful, if not a little patronizing. She did have the most experience in the field out of them all according to her supervisor. Knowing she had the full support of her supervisor, she brushed the patronizing off as well-meaning camaraderie. Over the summer, the other interns took more serious and riskier behavior to rouse a response from Ann. They became more serious in not letting Ann take leadership roles, preventing her from driving, and dismissing her concerns when they disobeyed tasks. Specific things that the interns said include "We don't want you to drive the work truck because women drive too cautiously," "God why can't you be submissive like the other girls,"*

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*and “We could have a lot more raunchy jokes without women getting in the way” among several other comments.*

When the issue was brought to their supervisor’s attention, the remarks were dismissed, and the aggressors were kept on the workforce because the organization “needed the labor.” Because the organization deemed it was necessary for the individuals to remain, Luria (under the pseudonym Ann) was forced to feel uncomfortable in her workplace. Even when many outdoor workers *do* speak out about their unfair working conditions, some organizations are seemingly only interested in monetary gains, with little regard for those participating in or working for their programs (Kirk & O’Connell, 2012). As a result, issues such as workplace gender discrimination can get ignored, downplayed, or dismissed.

This situation was compared to an experience Maggie had with a participant who was making racist remarks but was kept on the trip because their family were big donors to the company. This downfall between discourse places the group as higher priority over the individuals that make up the team. It flattens everyone to make them a team but overlooks their individual needs and differences. This ultimately results in discrimination ending in censorship, where nondominant gender individuals are expected to “shut up and be a part of the team.” Prioritizing the business’s success and income over the individual’s experience and well-being will only feed into the perpetuation of gender marginalization and power dynamics within the outdoor field.

Additionally, despite all that arises within the outdoor field, the demands of the job present difficulties when addressing issues, especially for instructors leading expeditions. Wilderness-based contexts and a rigid itinerary can present challenges such as unpredictable weather conditions, poor group dynamics, and lack of opportunities to rest all which instructors

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are expected to cope with and handle (Kirk & O'Connell, 2012). Maggie stated "it's so hard to take care of yourself and take care of anything other than what your goals are within the group and your participants." This heavy burden and responsibility placed on field instructors can be detrimental to the group in the long run as they spend so much time taking care of others and committing to the logistics of the program that they cannot perform to the best of their abilities or take care of themselves. For example, Mattie's narrative was centered around being left out of important conversations by their male staff team members in fear that Mattie would "bring gender into it" but not taking the time to address the issue because Mattie "barely had time to think and be alone with [their] thoughts." Maggie, who worked for the same organization, responded she "can't even imagine having to exist in that space and have that weight of not feeling included based on your identity" and that it is difficult to have "the mental capacity to even begin to process or even know how to take on [a] male power within the community." Luria also mentioned that they understood the feeling of "preserving their energy by not speaking up." Although the outdoors can be framed as being a freeing space (Newbery, 2004), many feel the weight of it "being so urgent...that we can't have these important conversations" needed to make it more inclusive of others.

### **Discussion and Implications for Future Research**

While looking at the stories and experiences, the four participants and myself discussed ways we believe the outdoor field can be more gender inclusive. Few researchers have attempted to suggest ways for combatting the issues of hegemonic masculinity and gender inequity within the outdoor workplace. To begin to dismantle harmful societal views and gender stereotypes, we first have to look at our own awareness and biases. Starting with the individuals who are learning or participating in outdoor programs, Peterson et al. (2019) suggest that the first step is to

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become aware of the bias that is placed on masculine identities within the outdoor workplace.

This can be exemplified through teaching individuals to be aware of the oppression that they are exhibiting, motivating them to not rely on it, and suggesting alternatives to their gender stereotypes.

Outdoor programs can have teachings and trainings for their staff on gender equity so that it is a frequent conversation with universally understood concepts (Gray et al., 2020). This professional development can be a means to encourage calling out sexist behaviors, promoting societal self-reflection of instructors and participants, and creating lessons from non-dominant perspectives (Warner & Dillenschneider, 2019). This way an outdoor facility can have all voices and individuals involved with the necessary reform for a gender-equitable education. Proper DEI work trainings with well-informed facilitators can assist in this endeavor, so that experiences such as Mattie's can be avoided.

Lastly, future research on other gender identities (transgender, genderqueer, etc.) is needed to bring more diverse voices to the conversation. There can be many issues (and solutions to the issues) that we may not be aware of and bringing more audiences can help bring these to light. Ultimately, it is the programs and the systemic field that need to change to best suit and be of service to all genders, instead of all genders adjusting themselves to fit into male-centered programs, cultures, and identities (Warren et al., 2019).

### **Conclusion**

In this study, five narratives of gender discriminatory workplace experiences brought awareness to the many issues within the outdoor field. Emanating from these narratives was the idea of gender performance, and whether individuals conformed or contradicted those deemed “societally acceptable.” Through collective memory work, participants felt the power of



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collaborative efforts in social justice research. Although collective memory work can be seen as an emotionally risky methodology (Coes et al., 2018), individuals reported leaving the space feeling “heard,” “seen,” “inspired,” “connected,” and “appreciated.” The benefits of collective memory work seemed to heavily outweigh the risks taken in being vulnerable about past traumatic experiences to a group of unfamiliar people. One individual even tearfully mentioned they are “getting kind of far removed from what [they are] trying to achieve” and “being in this conversation with [everyone] reignited what it is [they are] trying to do.” In recollecting their memories of oppression and discussion of similarities in these experiences, the group felt empowered to continue advocating together for gender equality within their lives, jobs, and the greater outdoor field.

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