

“WHERE DO I FIT IN THIS SPACE?”: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY FOR
WOMEN LEADERS IN BIKE SHOPS

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ABSTRACT

“WHERE DO I FIT IN THIS SPACE?”: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN LEADERS IN BIKE SHOPS

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The cycling field has always been dominated by white men, and even more so when discussing those in leadership positions. Additionally, researchers and practitioners overwhelmingly acknowledge that women are underrepresented in the professional bicycle industry. Thus, they continue to call for more diversity in the male-dominated bike industry and for greater representation of women leaders and role models. Yet, how could the bike industry attract and retain more women in leadership positions? One possible answer is through building meaningful and inclusive community. Studies suggest that community plays a key role in the retention of marginalized individuals. Accordingly, this study utilized McMillan and Chavis' (1986) *sense of community* conceptual framework to explore how women working in bike shops in leadership roles experience community through their workplace. For the purpose of this study, “woman” was any person who self-identified as such, and “leader” was defined as having managed one or more employees for at least a year within a bike shop. This research was guided by the current fourth-wave feminist lens. The design utilized collective memory work, a methodological framework grounded in social constructionism and critical interpretivism and founded on feminist ideals. Its findings speak to the women

who are, or someday might be, working in a bike shop, the owners and managers of that shop who are ready to support them, and then also for the many other people in similar marginalized positions in the bike and outdoor industries. In lieu of a traditional conclusion, two letters of support are offered: one for the woman working in a bike shop and the other for those in positions to continue welcoming a woman into this space.

Keywords: sense of community, bike shop, feminism, fourth-wave, collective memory work, women

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The morning's rays reveal a thick dust that blankets everything not getting wheeled in and out every day. I think I can fit my tea, mugs, jar of nuts, and salt and pepper on the sill closest to my corner. I reach through the bike rack in front of the window and run my finger across the ledge.

Bike-shop dust—darker and heavier than your norm. Years of lubricant, tube dust, and metal grindings form a hearty clump. I let it slide off to the floor.

Everyone, or should I say “all the guys” (I am the only woman in the shop), is at their workstand, heads down and already elbows deep in a repair. Their voices deafeningly silent under the cacophony of banging tools and screaming metal over the stereo.

It's my first day.

Where do I fit in this space? Is this even where I should be...?

My shoulders droop with the weight...

“Tamara....Tamara!” His voice jarred me out of my introspection.

“Your friend Susan dropped off some flowers and a card.”

He pointed to the front counter.

It read, “Tamara, I have been thinking about your new (ad)venture all week.

Wishing you joy & success. I picked this lavender from 3 different plants. One for you.

One for your partner & one representing your team. As I did, 3 bumblebees finished

gathering nectar from them. I think that's a great omen! ♥ and solidarity to you my

friend and fellow strong woman!”

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As a white woman, I am in the minority in the cycling field, both in recreation and sport, as well as working in bike shops. The bike industry is striving to increase diversity in this wider cycling field. To do so, it is important for researchers to learn about the experiences of women who are already working professionally within the industry. The challenge is that the cycling industry has always been dominated by white men, and even more so when discussing those in leadership positions (Hanson & Worthington, 2018; OIWC, 2012). Among all types of cyclists, women make up 42.6% of ridership (Storey & Hughes, 2021), yet there was an overwhelming acknowledgment that women are underrepresented in the professional industry (Cornish, 2015; Evans & Holz, 2017; Hanson & Worthington, 2018, OIWC, 2012). While I was unable to find an overall census conducted to explore statistics of women working in bike shops, estimates posed that woman, when compared to men, represent only 2% of mechanics (Dwyer, 2018), 10% of overall staff (Cornish, 2015), and, anecdotally, no more than 15% of those in leadership positions (OIWC, 2012).

Researchers and practitioners continue to call for more diversity, equity, and inclusion in the wider field of bikes (Avery et al., 2018; Camber Outdoors, n.d.; Gray et al., 2020; Mitten & Gray, 2018; Radical Adventure Riders, n.d.; Rao & Roberts, 2018). For example, the Radical Adventure Riders' (n.d.) Cycling Industry Pledge (CIP) has a network that "aims to foster empathy, understanding, and eagerness for the growth necessary to make progress toward true equity in cycling spaces. By signing the CIP, members are taking an active role in that progress" (para. 2).

One way to increase diversity for more women participants, as well as other marginalized individuals in the field, is by increasing representation of women leaders

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(Cornish, 2015; Gray et al., 2020; Rao & Roberts, 2018; Roberts & Henderson, 1997; Wright & Gray, 2013) and role models (Avery et al., 2018; Gray et al., 2020; Loffler, 1995; Warren, 2002). But how do we both attract and keep women leaders in the bike industry? One possible answer is through building meaningful and inclusive community.

Studies suggest that community played a key role in the retention of marginalized individuals within the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and outdoor education fields (Rao & Roberts, 2018; Spanierman et al., 2013). Spanierman et al. (2013) found that undergraduate women residing in STEM 'Living Learning Communities' were more likely to thrive in their program. One participant shared, "I can have great accomplishments in a field that was previously and still is dominated by men" (p. 319). The authors claimed the importance and timeliness of their study "as many universities seek to enhance the recruitment and retention of women and racial minorities in STEM fields" (p.320). Rao and Roberts (2018) surveyed Women of Color working in the outdoor education field. They noted that initiatives focusing on increased leadership diversity "create accessible opportunities...and establish a supportive community for professional development" (p. 829). Again, how do we both attract and keep women leaders in the bike industry? As there is a call for more diversity in the male-dominated industry and for greater representation of women leaders and role models, exploring the role that community has in recruiting and retaining women employees is one place to start.

To explore the nebulous idea of community, I used McMillan and Chavis' (1986) conceptualization of *sense of community*. They defined it as "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and

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a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). They suggested that sense of community is based on four specific criteria: 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs, and 4) shared emotional connection. Past literature has indicated that a sense of community can facilitate the attraction and retention of employees in sport and outdoor industries (Hall & Jostad, 2020; Kellett & Warner, 2011; McCole, 2015). Additionally, in more traditional workplaces, both Lambert and Hopkins (1995) and Pretty and McCarthy (1991) found this was particularly true for women.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how women working in bike shops in leadership roles experience community through their workplace. Specifically, my research question was, "How do women leaders working in bike shops experience community through their workplace?" As I sought to learn from women leaders working in bike shops, a *woman* was any person who self-identified as such, and a *leader* was defined as having managed one or more employees for at least a year within a bike shop.

As I studied how women experience community, and as feminism is philosophically grounded in community (Collins, 1990/2021; 2000; hooks, 2000; Parry & Fullagar, 2013; Parry et al., 2019), I used feminist theory to guide my inquiry. Mindful of my whiteness (Marcinik & Mattos, 2021) and the historical privileges it can provide, I was informed by fourth-wave feminist tendencies and guided by practices of historically-marginalized Black feminism (Collins, 2000) and Indigenous feminism (Aikau et al., 2015) when working with the women in my study. My hope is that the findings will be

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relevant to a broad readership including any marginalized individuals who are, or someday might be, working in bike shops or the greater outdoor industry.

I engaged with collective memory work for my study. Although elucidated in the third chapter, this methodological framework is grounded in a critical feminist worldview (Johnson et al., 2018). To further situate my question, I will begin with a review of the literature where I will unpack the state of the women in the bike industry, as well as anchor this research in sense of community and feminist theory.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the first section of this literature review, I will provide a snapshot of the number of women participating and working in the bike industry. While women are clearly underrepresented in the cycling field as a whole, women *working in* the industry are drastically underrepresented. Since research indicates that community is a critical factor in retaining and recruiting employees, I will next introduce *sense of community*, the conceptual framework in which my study is anchored. Finally, I will focus on the waves of feminist theories and highlight how I will be working within the tendencies of fourth-wave feminism and guided by practices of historically marginalized feminisms (Aikau et al., 2015; Collins, 2000).

Women in the Bicycling Industry

Women make up 42.6% of U.S. cyclists, with a recent increase included in this number being attributed to a surge in bicycle demand during the pandemic (Storey & Hughes, 2021). Yet women represent 51% of all Americans. Moreover, women are also underrepresented in the *professional* cycling industry (Cornish, 2015; Evans & Holz, 2017; Hanson & Worthington, 2018, OIWC, 2012), which encompasses bicycle manufacturing and sales (e.g., bike shops). These statistics are talking about women cyclists generally (all women who are participating in the wider cycling field in various ways), but how many women are working professionally in bike shops? We know that representation is critical in encouraging underrepresented group participation in a sport or activity (Gray et al., 2020; Roberts & Henderson, 1997; Rao & Roberts, 2018; Wright & Gray, 2013), so it is important to understand the number of women working in shops.

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While I was unable to find an overall census conducted to explore statistics of women working in bike shops, Jenny Kallista, the president of the Professional Bicycle Mechanics Association estimated that women represent only 2% of mechanics when compared to men (Dwyer, 2018). When looking at all positions within a shop held by women, the League of American Bicyclists found that number merely moves to 10% of overall staff (Cornish, 2015). When women are not only underrepresented in the field but critically underrepresented in the profession, what is being done to address this issue?

Researchers and practitioners continue to call for gender diversity in the bike industry (Avery et al., 2018; Camber Outdoors, n.d.; Gray et al., 2020; Mitten & Gray, 2018; Radical Adventure Riders, n.d.; Rao & Roberts, 2018). One organizational group, the Radical Adventure Riders (n.d.), wrote the “Cycling Industry Pledge” to focus on gender inclusion and racial equity. In 2021, the pledge had 160 committed members and included goals such as hiring diverse leadership teams, creating workplace culture that “enables challenging conversations about DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion]” (Radical Adventure Riders, n.d., para. 2), and for the bike industry to have a workforce where every interested person can see themselves represented. Another organization, Camber Outdoors (n.d.), initiated in 1996 as the Outdoor Industry Women’s Coalition, has conducted studies on the state of gender equity in the outdoor and cycling industries (Evans & Holz, 2017), as well as interviews with women leaders (Hanson & Worthington, 2018). They also currently operate a mentorship program to address the need for increased diversity in the outdoor industry (Camber Outdoors, n.d.). “To make its vision of ‘Everyone’s Outdoors’ a reality, the organization provides a framework of

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support to help its partner companies cast a wider net for talent and ensure that everyone—regardless of gender or race—feels welcome in the outdoor community” (Hanson & Worthington, 2018, p. 4). So, how can this *community* be defined?

Sense of Community

I used McMillan and Chavis' (1986) conceptualization of *sense of community* (SOC) in this thesis. They defined SOC as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 9).

Specifically, their definition of SOC included four criteria:

- Membership- “sharing a sense of personal relatedness” (p. 9) [included *boundaries, emotional security, sense of belonging & identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system*]
- Influence- “a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members” (p. 9)
- Integration and fulfillment of needs- “the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group” (p. 9) [included *reinforcement, that needs can be individual or shared, a status of membership, community success, reciprocity through competency, and shared values*]
- Shared emotional connection- “the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences” (p. 9)

Based off of McMillan and Chavis' (1986) work, Jason et al. (2015) researched alongside undergraduate students in a Midwestern university to assess SOC based on

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“an individual’s experience within a group from a variety of ecological levels: the self (the individual), the interactions with others (microsystem), and the organization (macrosystem)” (p. 983). Reflecting Glynn’s (1981) recognition of the connection between the value of SOC and an individual’s capacity to thrive within a supportive community, they found that each ecological level contributed uniquely. Yet the strongest SOC was indicated with all three combined. From here I will present how various other scholars encapsulated McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) SOC conceptual framework through their own research.

Community as a Critical Factor in Retaining and Recruiting Employees

Scholarly literature has established that developing a SOC is important in the workplace (Boyd & Nowell, 2018; Lambert & Hopkins, 1995; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991). It can be tied to feelings of support through structured policies and positions, workplace relationships, involvement, and a shared commitment between employer and employee. Lambert and Hopkins (1995), in their assessment of workers in a manufacturing facility, found that a well-defined support structure and relationship with peers are particularly important for women. Pretty & McCarthy (1991) established that “peer cohesion” (p. 359) predicted a SOC in women when they assessed the results from their Psychological Sense of Community Index survey of 700 employees within a public utility company.

The literature also indicated that a SOC contributed to a high level of employee retention and an increase in their quality of life (Hall & Jostad, 2020; Kellett & Warner, 2011; McCole, 2015). Hall and Jostad (2020) worked with four Outward Bound schools’ field staff to assess voluntary turnover and found, “when used as an alternative lens to

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explore the turnover of unique populations (e.g., transient and seasonal employees), SOC has been shown to be meaningful” (p. 343). Kellett and Warner (2011) examined the challenges for recruitment and retention of football umpires. “In Australian rules football... an umpire is expected to voluntarily invest (personal) time and resources into training” (p. 474). They discovered that “Common Interest (Sport Itself, Interaction with Football Community, and Social Spaces) enhanced the SOC when present” (p. 477). Finally, McCole (2015) inquired why some seasonal staff at ski resorts returned annually, while others finished the season and moved on. Looking at four separate US ski resorts, a major finding was due to the SOC that was established between staff during the season.

In this section, I have presented how a SOC is significant to women in the workplace and how it positively affects one’s choice to remain in a professional position. When women employees are drastically underrepresented in bike shops, it can be helpful to understand how they experience community through their workplace. As bike shops have been organized around the support of leisure through cycling, I will next introduce how community can be built through leisure.

Community Through Leisure

Research around SOC and various leisure and outdoor-minded communities focused on areas such as rock climbing, river rafting, and outdoor education. Rickly-Boyd (2012) described how, despite the impermanence of a home, rock climbers traveling to seasonal locales establish a SOC with other climbers, and Arnould and Price (1999) presented how a SOC increases on a longer river rafting expedition. Rao and Roberts (2018), surveying Women of Color working in the outdoor education field,

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posed that this SOC with other women positively affects their retention. Nevertheless, while representation for Women of Color has increased in the field, they still “expressed feeling isolated and *tokenized* in some organizations, reflective of a more limited diversity” (p. 821). In other words, Rao and Roberts (2018) found that some workplaces gesturally hire an underrepresented person to accomplish their goal of inclusivity rather than reshaping workplace culture to welcome and support all marginalized people. Having connecting SOC to the general leisure realm, I will now present the scholarly work that pointedly related it to bikes.

There is a growing body of literature assessing cycling and SOC. The findings across the following studies asserted that the use of bicycles positively engendered SOC. Paronen and Oja (1998) established a set of criteria for assessing the current state and future development of community. In surveying residents of a small municipality in Finland, they demonstrated it was necessary to evaluate wellness and physical activity, which included cycling for healthy leisure and exercise. Tsai (2014) worked with people living in Taipei's Beitou District who chose to bike as their mode of transportation within their local community and found that this, as well as other modes that facilitate social interaction, increased their SOC. In Pelzer's (2010) case study in Portland, Oregon—the first city to receive the highest award for bicycle-friendliness in the United States (The City of Portland, n.d.)—he specifically detected a SOC in the vast network of local cyclists due to their common “intense experiences of bicycling” (p. 9) when interacting with deep-seeded car culture. Following research that developed a scale for measuring in-store customer experiences (Bustamante and Rubio, 2017), Happ et al. (2021) found that staff members in sports retail stores, specifically, help

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shape SOC through the emotional connections they establish with guests, as well as offering a space for guests to interact with each other. This, in turn, facilitates desires by the guests to return. They concluded with a curiosity to explore these experiences in bike shops. Chen and Chancellor (2019) determined that SOC can be reinforced when designing an interdisciplinary approach between community development processes and the League of American Bicyclist's (2016) Bicycle-Friendly Community program. Lastly, in their study looking at how to make bike shops more welcoming to women, this same league found that women customers do connect better with women staff (Cornish, 2015). Additionally, "one of the keys to engage more women in bicycling is creating a SOC... more and more women are being drawn to bicycling because of the sense of identity to the community it creates" (p. 14). In a related manner, I wanted to explore how these women who work in leadership positions in shops experience community.

From here we can begin to see the reciprocal benefits of a SOC, representation, and retention in the outdoor industry. Yet a gap remains in the literature to explore how these affect women *leaders* in bike shops. Addressing this gap, Avery et al. (2018), Gray et al. (2020), Mitten and Gray (2018), and Rao and Roberts (2018) called for more research that included stories by women working in the outdoor field. As Evans & Holz (2017) demonstrated pervasive sexism and gender discrimination in the bike industry, let us turn to the province of feminism and historical feminist movements in the United States to see the community-focused ways these issues were addressed for women. In this study, I explored how women leaders working in bike shops experience community through their workplace. As feminist theory is philosophically grounded in community, I

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used a feminist lens to guide my inquiry. From here, I will introduce feminist theory and how I use it in this study.

Feminist Theory

Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. Practically, it is a definition which implies that all sexist thinking and action is the problem, whether those who perpetuate it are female or male, child or adult. (hooks, 2000, p. 1)

As movements involve collectives (groups of people working toward change), community has been used as a central tool against sexism in feminist mobilizations throughout the history of feminism in the United States. The story of normative American feminist theory has worked to separate the eras, or waves, of these mobilizations based on their specific goals and tendencies.

In these next sections I will provide a fairly sweeping history of feminist theory through its first three waves and their critiques. My intention here is to provide context for the fourth wave, as this is where I anchored my study. While I will not unpack every wave, term or concept, and examples of feminist research within them, I will provide key citations and example research for the reader to explore more in depth if they wish. Following this, I will touch on my own process of anchoring myself within fourth-wave ideologies and next provide a more detailed discussion of feminist theory in this era, including representative studies and specific connections with my study.

The First Three Feminist Waves

Feminist theory has undergone several iterations, or waves. The initial two, surrounded specific, intentional, and collective efforts for the political and societal

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advancement of women. Contrastingly, the third and fourth have been more defined by their characteristics, or “dominant tendencies” (Parry & Fullagar, 2013, p. 572), and feature dialogues, critiques, and dissents around what feminism entails and who belongs.

First wave feminism took place across Western nations following the momentum of the abolitionist movement from 1830 until the success of women’s suffrage in the United States in 1920 (Hewitt, 2017; Siegel, 1997). Organized around women’s political, educational, and property rights as citizens, the ultimate focus became a woman’s right to vote for representation in her national government (Freedman, 1995). With “a belief in women’s unique identity” (p. 95), this period saw the formal establishment of women’s clubs and colleges. While the latter were “originally conceived as training grounds of piety, purity, and domesticity” (p.91), they offered women the skills to confidently demand better opportunities in the workforce. These institutions helped reinforce women’s solidarity, yet they largely steered a radical, yet still hegemonic, direction for first wave feminist work. Their racial makeup mirrored a segregated and racist society, where limited access to higher education ensured they remained predominantly white spaces. With their elevated freedom post-19th Amendment, the New Women’s focus shifted from maintaining separate gendered groups for explicit political and social action to “integration into a male world—sexually, professionally, and politically” (Freedman, 1995, p. 95).

Second Wave feminism and its focus on women’s rights, is often demarcated by Betty Friedan’s 1963 publication of *The Feminine Mystique* (Thompson, 2002). Her work brought awareness to the pervasive dissatisfaction women experienced post-

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World War II having been directed to return to their domestic sphere (Friedan, 1963). Consciousness-raising meetings became prevalent (Snyder, 2008; Thompson, 2002) as participating women “discover(ed) in these groups that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution” (Hanisch, 1970, p. 76). Subsequently, women rallied around *sisterhood* (Morgan, 1970) to mobilize with a larger multivocality (Siegel, 1997) against the common oppression of women at societal and institutional levels (Steinem, 1987)—this time with demands including equal rights and pay in work and rights over their own bodies and choices (e.g., abortion access, divorce, and laws against marital rape and domestic violence). The movement was deflated in the early 1980s by both the failed passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (Siegel, 1997) as well as the collective splintering in conversations around sexual choice, i.e., “pornography, prostitution, and lesbian sadomasochism” (Snyder, 2008, p. 179). Examples of second wave feminist leisure research include Schurr’s and Phillip’s (1971) study assessing the necessity of essential personality traits for women’s basketball officials and Deem’s (1982) exploration of domestic challenges to women’s leisure.

The third wave began as a swift reaction to claims of “postfeminism”—that the need for feminist work is over (Siegel, 1997). Rebecca Walker (1992), decrying then Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas for Anita Hill’s sexual allegations against him, wanted to sharply divert from the nature of conversations following the second wave. She claimed, “I am not a postfeminist feminist. I am the Third Wave” (p. 39). As the daughter of African American mother and American Jewish father, Walker helped boldly—and officially—reinsert the narratives of People of Color into dominant feminist

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discourse (Walker, 2000). With an intention to unify around postmodern and poststructuralist alternatives, including embodied, non-binary, and trans politics, to a controlling patriarchal society (Parry & Fullagar, 2013), Critical Race Theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) described concept of intersectionality spoke to the relational aspect of all types of oppression, including race and class. Additionally, Judith Butler (1990) argued the performative nature of gender and its specific distinction from biological sex. The rebellious nature of this wave, its application to "everyday feminism" (Schuster, 2017, p. 647), and its resistance in direct response to the second wave's theories and praxes, created a series of characteristics as described by Parry and Fullagar (2013): "(1) plurality and inclusivity, (2) personal narrative, (3) self-determination, (4) gender equality and sexual freedom, and (5) popular culture" (p. 572). Much of "third wave literature emphasized the importance of cultural production and critique, focusing particular attention on female pop icons, hip-hop music, and beauty culture, rather than traditional politics per se" (Snyder, 2008, p. 178). Research examples within the field of leisure include Spencer and Paisley's (2013) duoethnography of themselves as reflexive researchers studying how they each "perform femininity in the leisure setting of watching *The Bachelor*" (p. 697) and Kivel and Johnson (2009) discussing men's construction of masculinity as it is reinforced through media.

In the above presentation of the first three feminist waves, each has had its own distinct methods of community mobilization, rather than being comprised solely of individual movements, to address "sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks, 2000, p. 1). Yet it is important to understand how this community is created or not, and how it has included or excluded other groups of women in these spaces.

Critiques of the First Three Feminist Waves

Up to this point, I have presented what can largely be described as a normative American history of the first three waves of feminism. I will next discuss several critiques that include questioning the authority and efficacy of posing neatly divided waves, as well as appeals by marginalized feminisms to acknowledge a more accurate history of feminist movements in the United States.

Hegemonic Feminism and Critiques of the Wave Metaphor. ‘Hegemonic feminism’ (Sandoval & Davis, 2000) is:

white led, marginalizes the activism and world views of women of color, focuses mainly on the United States, and treats sexism as the ultimate oppression. [It] deemphasizes or ignores a class and race analysis, generally sees equality with men as the goal of feminism, and has an individual rights-based, rather than justice-based vision for social change. (Thompson, 2002, p. 337)

In the quote above, Thompson (2022) further critiques the hegemonic nature of white-centered feminist theories and how other marginalized feminisms have been forced into subordinated histories to them throughout the first three waves.

Feminist scholars have pondered the utility of the wave metaphor (Parry & Fullagar, 2013; Schuster, 2017; Snyder, 2008), and cited their true nature as anything but tidy, reductive, generational, and solely American. Yet the most blatant critique concerns the exclusion of collective BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities from the start and, thus, failing to co-create the movements within each wave since. This was particularly the case within the first two; it had begun to be addressed within the third and now this integration has been centralized within the

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fourth. Though when presented together, the four waves of feminism appear as a fairly linear, “grand narrative” (Parry & Fullagar, 2013, p. 574) for economically and racially privileged women (Thompson, 2002). “Working class women and [W]omen of [C]olor assume walk-on parts late in the plot, after tendencies and allegiances [within the waves] are already in place” (MacLean, 1999, p. 47). Ultimately, white middle-and upper-class women created a narrative for a US-focused feminism, and the rest of their women’s communities have been working to rewrite a more inclusive story ever since.

“Remaining mindful of the links between the struggles for freedom from racism and sexism is critical as future social justice coalition work depends on accurate—for better or worse—historical memory” (Springer, 2002). Thus, to build a more accurate historical memory, I will next present Black Feminist Thought and Indigenous feminisms and their critiques of hegemonic feminism.

Black Feminism ‘Calling America Out on Her Bullshit’.

I am doing what Black women do best. I’m calling America out on her bullshit about racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and a bunch of other stuff.... Black girl feminism is all the rage, and we need all the rage. Feminism can give us a common language for thinking about how sexism, and racism, and classism work together to fuck shit up for everybody. (Cooper, 2018, p.5)

In Cooper’s quote, she emphasized that, though she is a Black woman commenting on experiences of oppression, everyone—regardless of personal identity—can benefit from addressing oppression through the teachings of feminism. Additionally, with the longstanding history of hegemonic feminism having steered the conversation solely around predominantly white women and sexism, this impact on race and class has

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largely been ignored. But what exactly is Black feminism? Patricia Hill Collins (1990/2021) stated,

Taken together, the ideas of Anna Julia Cooper, Pauli Murray, Bell Hooks, Alice Walker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and other Black women intellectuals too numerous to mention suggest a powerful answer to the question "What is Black feminism?" Inherent in their words and deeds is a definition of Black feminism as a process of self-conscious struggle that empowers women and men to actualize a humanist vision of community. (p. 289)

As an academic social theorist, Collins further defined Black Feminist Thought as "consisting of ideas produced by Black women that clarify a standpoint of and for Black women" (Collins, 1986, p. S16). Though Black women together experience a particular type of oppression, how this oppression is experienced is unique and depends on each woman's situation and social constructs, and this oppression may even be taken for granted by them. She presented three key themes—"the meaning of self-definition and self-valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of redefining culture" (p. S24)—that are the foci for Black Feminist Thought. She later discussed how Black Feminist *Theory* necessitates a constant dialogue between those in academia and these scholars' common communities, particularly to involve Black women's rich oral tradition. Finally, she pointed to the cycle between theory/thought and a socially-just praxis (Collins, 1986; 1990/2021; 2000). The role of theory is to inform and be applied to action for socially-just change which will, in turn, inform the evolution of theory.

Examples of Black Feminist Theory in leisure research include Theriault and Mowatt's (2020) work highlighting Black American's historic and integrated relationships

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with wilderness, Pinckney et al.'s (2018) exploration of Black transgression of racism in online spaces, and Brown and Outley's (2022) assessment of the "racialized gendered oppression" (p. 13) Black women and girls experience in leisure spaces.

A crucial element of Black Feminist Thought's socially-just praxis is 'calling America out on her bullshit' (Cooper, 2018, p. 5), particularly in reference to the declared 'waves' of hegemonic feminism. What has been presented in the first wave as *all* women's suffrage via the 19th amendment is culturally inaccurate (Springer, 2002); middle- and upper-class, white women had the social means to benefit, whereas many other women were disenfranchised by the poll taxes and literacy tests (Brown, 2018). Black women, especially, experienced targeted terrorization and violence, and it was not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that it became legally safe for all People of Color to vote (Voting Rights, n.d.). Davis (1981) and White (1985) reminded us that the fight against gendered violence did not begin with the second wave but was all too prevalent for Black women as slaves. hooks (1994) depicted the true nature of *sisterhood* not as a basis for common victimization or oppression, but rather around political solidarity. Additionally, Springer (2002) contended that Black feminists began posing a third wave feminism in the early 1980s as a direct response to the exclusion of their work by the previous two waves. "Black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in the feminist movement from its start, but both outside reactionary forces and racism and elitism within the movement itself have served to obscure our participation" (Combahee River Collective, 2014, p. 272). While hegemonic feminism continued to focus on separatist strategies to advance women's rights (Freedman, 1995), Black women unified with the Civil Rights Movement, Black nationalism, and the work of the

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Black Panthers (Combahee River Collective, 2014), and promoted multiracial feminism (Thompson, 2002) alongside “autonomous Latina, Native American, and Asian feminist organizations” (p. 338). Respectively, many of these women were disinterested in the separatist women's groups that focused solely on gender equality, as they asserted women's oppression could not be disentangled from issues of race and class. Davis (2016) expounded on this importance of inclusivity,

What has kept me going has been the development of new modes of community. I don't know whether I would have survived had not movements survived, had not communities of resistance, communities of struggle. So whatever I'm doing I always feel myself directly connected to those communities and I think that this is an era where we have to encourage that sense of community particularly at a time when neoliberalism attempts to force people to think of themselves only in individual terms and not in collective terms...It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism. (p. 49)

While she, too, struggled to re-center Black feminist histories within the chronology of feminist history, Springer (2002) asked, “What might, for example, the inclusion of American Indian women's gendered resistance do to even my time line?” (p. 1062). It is from here that I now turn attention to Indigenous feminisms' critique of hegemonic feminism.

Indigenous Feminisms' 'One Finger Cannot Lift a Pebble.'

Indigenous feminisms confront the imperial work of those modes of indigeneity that operationalize genocide and dispossession by vacating the Indigenous from the Indigenous. Simultaneously, Indigenous feminisms confront the liberal work

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of those modes of feminism that incorporate normative gendered and sexed bodies into the imperial state as citizens. (Barker, 2015, p. 1)

Barker's first statement speaks to Indigenous feminism's effort to call out any work that claims to be indigenous that exists within a philosophical realm that is inconsistent with Indigenous epistemologies; to do so is tantamount to genocide. A link to the second statement can be found in Venaya Yazzie's, a Dine' and Hopi woman, assertion that "feminism is against our culture" (2018, para. 1). Hegemonic feminism has coopted Indigenous women's worldview as an alternative to the controlling structure of American society without equal representation by Indigenous women throughout the movement (Barker, 2015). "In response, many Indigenous women scholars and activists condemned feminism and feminists for their exploitation of Indigenous women and their ignorance of Indigenous cultures" (p.8). Indigenous resistance to oppressive, patriarchal culture in America began as soon as settlers arrived in 1492 (Smith, 2006), and a colonized history, including hegemonic feminism, has silenced Indigenous women's voices and ignored their experiences in the feminist story ever since. As suffragists were calling for full citizenry for women, Indigenous peoples were reeling from the violence of forced integration into American society or relocation to unfamiliar physical locations. Gender, sex, and sexuality were foreign concepts, and the notion of women's property rights negated Indigenous relationship and responsibility to the land.

"Indigenous feminisms rearticulate the futurity of indigeneity in political coalition with non-Indigenous peoples against the ongoing social forces of US imperialism, racism, and sexism" (Barker, 2015, p. 1). As a white, non-Indigenous woman, I am reminded and encouraged by the Hopi proverb, *One finger cannot lift a pebble*. I alone

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cannot honor decolonizing principles of Indigenous feminisms in my study, and I alone cannot address the challenges for women in the bike industry. I remained mindful of these ideas and shared them with my participants and audiences throughout my research. Additionally, as community is essential to all aspects of feminism, and as inclusive feminism is critical to communities, these two concepts are inseparable in my research with women and their experiences of community.

As described earlier in this section, my aim has been to outline feminist history through the first three waves in the United States to provide context for our fourth wave where I anchored my study. As this current era has both embraced and continues to grapple with critiques of hegemonic feminism theory, I have depicted viewpoints of two marginalized feminisms, as well. Before introducing the fourth wave, I wanted to honor that research and re-presentation of that research rarely travels along tidy, linear, non-emotional paths (Wilson, 2008), yet the delivery of an academic document generally demands quite the opposite. Consequently, I wrestled with how to rectify this discrepancy, and remain the embodied person that pursued a thesis synonymous with my life's passion. For this this next section, this next moment, I will intentionally include you, the reader, as part of my community that has journeyed thus so far with me.

A Warm Mess is Warming My Soul

At this point in my presentation of past research, I wanted to acknowledge and embrace my “warm mess” (C. Schultz, personal communication, May 15, 2022). It has been both a part of my research process and an honest sharing via the guidance through the concepts of the marginalized feminisms presented above. Through my research, I have been immersed in powerful and unsettling dialogues between Black

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Feminist Thought, Indigenous feminisms, and hegemonic feminism and am grateful for my discordant emotions as I recognize the gravity and responsibility of my feminist history as a white woman. These conversations also bring hope as I begin to re-center the principles of marginalized feminisms, elucidated later in the section on fourth-wave feminism, and then feel the beautiful correlations between them. As this review itself is praxis—an iterative process of research, review, and re-presentation of such information to myself and to you, the reader—I feel that it is important to express and be critical of this process of my warm mess. For this brief moment and again in the near future, I am entrusting my process of accountability in you. I am hoping that you can now sense that you part of my learning community.

Spending time with each wave has helped me understand ideologically where I am and why. I am now aware, not only what each era of feminist claimed to stand for, but also why fourth-wave feminism *anchors me* in my research on women leaders in bike shops and how they experience community through this place/space. I will expound on these ideas and connect my research design to the fourth wave in the following section. Alongside the idea of Hanisch's (1970) collaborative consciousness-raising groups, where the personal becomes political, I now appreciate that individual awareness is the first step in a collective process toward addressing a socially-just vision of community. Additionally, I hope that you have been able to take my example and this moment to reflect on your role as a reader through this process and your time with me. With recognition and gratitude, I shall now move on to presenting the fourth wave of feminist history and theory where I will connect its tendencies to my own study.

Actualized Within Fourth-Wave Feminism

The fourth wave has been marked by the prolific use of online spaces and social media for creating “hashtag feminist” movements, with #metoo as the most eminent example (Soucie et al., 2019). More than any other wave it has lacked a defined emergence, and scholars position it as early as 2011 (Baumgardner, 2011). Global in nature and by far the most intersectional in practice, this era has seen “four dominant tendencies: (i) blurred boundaries across waves; (ii) technological mobilization; (iii) interconnectedness through globalization; and (iv) a rapid, multivocal (i.e., humorous, angry, sad, reflexive) response to sexual violence” (Parry et al., 2019, p. 5), which I will detail in the following sections.

However, the complexity of this wave has also been critiqued. Fourth-wave theorists have presented its ineffectiveness as praxis for feminist mobilization (Berbary, 2019; Watson, 2019). Its pluralistic and multivocal nature (to be described more below), or the abilities to simultaneously express multiple and often conflicting viewpoints—even interpersonally—present a convoluted path toward social change. Additionally, predominant poststructuralist tendencies to identify both social constructions and how dominant powers shape how they are perceived, how they affect the body and our material lives, and the language used to describe these processes often obscure who can be a change leader (Berbary, 2019; Watson, 2019). In my study I opted to lean into these tensions.

I will unpack each of Parry et al.’s (2019) aforementioned tendencies below and illustrate how they supported my decision to situate this study within fourth-wave feminist ideals. Also, throughout these next few sections, I will be making references to

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collective memory work (CMW), the methodology used in my study, and will expound on this in the following chapter.

Blurred Boundaries (Between Waves). I chose to align my research with fourth-wave feminist tendencies and principles. Its history and incorporation of the critiques of the first three waves converge to inform a feminism that is by far the most intentional. Particularly, the fourth wave seeks to cultivate an inclusive feminism, to end oppression and work toward balance and model a community that is sustainable for all people (Davidson, 2019). In this study, my interest was in both emancipatory moments for women, as well as the construction of community that could include anyone, regardless of gender. Throughout research of the first three waves and their critiques, I recognized Parry et al.'s (2019) described "blurred boundaries" (p. 5). I found myself bleary-eyed, overwhelmed, and frustrated during my summer's task of literature reviewing to neatly present out feminist history through defined waves, especially as I recognized the power dynamics involved in the classification of these waves. I worked to find accounts and research by Black and Indigenous women to trouble the traditional stories within each of these eras. I was solaced in finding these marginalized feminisms were neither separatist nor individualistic in nature, but rather sought to actualize a holistic, inclusive vision of a feminist community, as well as focused on linking theories with praxes for how to inspire effective change (Aikau et al., 2015; Barker, 2015; Collins, 1990/2021; 2000).

Furthering the concept of "blurred boundaries" is the fourth wave's emphasis on continually critiquing or deconstructing past theoretical frameworks, including those focused on binaries or essentialist language (Berbary, 2019). Particularly within gender

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leisure studies research, this poststructuralist feminist trait works “through redeploying language, challenging status quo, and reconceptualizing stable identities as fluid ones, [and moves] towards creating spaces for alternative meanings, reverse discourses, and disruptive counterhegemonic narratives” (p. 14). In this regard, opportunities exist to “mis-repeat” (Berbary, 2019, p. 18) a performed gender (Butler, 1990) and—now with an intentional awareness to how gender performances are traditionally repeated in society—explore “exciting pluralist modes of unbecoming” (Berbary, 2019, p.29). While it was necessary in the design of my study to focus on “women,” I was guided by fourth-wave feminist critiques of gender and its push-back on the essentialization of gender as a social identity category. Understanding that language shapes perception and individual reality (Whorf, 2012), I chose a methodology that incorporated a stepped narrative analysis (Crawford et al., 1992/2021) so that my participants and I could, both separately and together, critique the traditionally binary *woman*, what *leader* entails, and notions of *community*. Through pointed questions on gendered expression and performativity, as well as how power dynamics shaped our experiences, we deconstructed our relationships to the ideas of “woman,” “leader,” and “community” rather than adhering to these terms as they are based in normative societal structures.

I designed a study around women that still leans on research discussing gendered characteristics in the workplace (Avery et al., 2018; Cornish, 2015; Dwyer, 2018, Evans & Holz, 2017; Gray et al., 2020; Hanson & Worthington, 2018; Mitten & Gray, 2018; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991; Rao & Roberts, 2018). I worked with women and their connection to their community in an industry that has a history of marginalization of all who are not white men. The focus on women was to explore individual and collective

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voice by those who self-identify as part of this group, but also to speak to those placed in this group by research that determined the high degree of gender discrimination (or even sexual harassment) against women in the bike industry (Evans & Holz, 2017).

I wanted to present my findings to the bike industry's women and other marginalized people, as well as to the wider industry, where, as aforementioned, it is still dominated by white men. In this sphere, language is often preset; to effectively communicate within requires a "deep interdisciplinarity" (Parry & Johnson, 2016, p. 283) and the ability to move between the language of different perspectives, especially when creatively finding ways to collaborate with potentially dissenting audiences. I was not looking to reconcile the tensions (Plummer, 2011) created by this "paradigm proliferation" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. ix) and this pluralistic tendency of our fourth-wave feminist era. Similarly, I was not interested in speaking solely in an academic language—specifically, the theory-heavy poststructuralist one that can abound in fourth-wave feminism—but rather wanted to align with fourth-wave praxes to converse in a way that respects emergent opportunities toward community-building. Therefore, I embraced Newbury's (2011) idea of *theoretical inconsistency*:

If I am committed to the ideas of social justice...then I must realize that not everyone will share my view of what this looks like. I must accept the fact that there will be readers who view my research from a drastically different theoretical orientation than my own. And if I wish to dialogue across the expanse that lies between our worldviews, then my work must hold some relevance to their own lives and work...And this may in turn create space for important generative

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dialogues and collaborations that previously did not take place, contributing to the potential of positive social change. (p. 340)

Continuing to carry the “blurred boundaries” theme, I resisted camping my study in any particular feminism until I experienced the fourth wave’s strength of discordant voices all demanding a just inclusion in our globalized society. This wave’s crashing power has run up against that of status quo patriarchal capitalism (Watson, 2019), and I, as a nascent owner of a small local bike shop, was enlivened—in this academic journey and beyond—to help redefine what a sustainable business can be. I was excited for the opportunity to hear the stories of other women in similar positions in the bike industry and, alongside them, potentially soften the traditional representations of “capital” and explore our community through bike shops.

Finally, I relished my position as a master’s student and so cultivated a blurring of academic work, professional work, and leisure. I also wanted to demonstrate that higher education, a livelihood, and passion can all be interchangeable. In a reminder of my earlier section on personal accountability, I want to, again, acknowledge my master’s journey—this collection of “blurrings”—has indeed been an arduous yet nourishing mess of “warm messes.”

Technological Mobilization. The fourth wave feminist tendency of “technological mobilization” (Parry et al., 2019, p. 5) relies on the use of social media and other online spaces to gather momentum, create a collective voice, organize for social justice, and recount methods for success (Soucie et al., 2019). Whereas in the third wave, some of these spaces were used for testing individual narratives and creating counternarratives to those being societally defined (Schuster, 2017), the fourth

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wave has seen much more collaboration within these spaces to listen, understand, and validate, particularly, those voices that have been silenced in the past (Soucie et al., 2019). These spaces have also served to reinforce a collective decentralization of leadership. They have been used as a podium to speak out on politics in business (Anderson-Lopez et al., 2021; Pearson, 2021; Saldanha et al., 2022), particularly with the increased anonymity provided by online spaces. Rather than strategic decisions steadily being managed hierarchically within a business, executives are finding themselves abruptly reacting to popular call outs by informal groups that have mobilized online.

In this study, I created coalition through use of digital technologies (Schultz & McKeown, 2018) that included social media, professional networking, and virtual conferencing platforms. I recruited women for my study through a snowball method (Goodman, 1961) using Facebook, LinkedIn, as well as text and email communications. I distributed and collected consent forms through the Qualtrics survey software. My participants and I collaborated in a Zoom work session, where we critiqued how we, as leaders in bike shops and in an industry dominated by men, experienced community through our workplace. Lastly, we used online spaces—Facebook and a bicycle industry trade magazine published online—to re-present the themes that emerged from this study to educate those within and inspire those that seek inclusion within the bike and outdoor industries.

Interconnected Through Globalization. With the increasing proliferation of social media in everyday life, a global audience has wider access and more direct interaction with subaltern voices and their experiences (Hutton & Fosdick, 2011).

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Whereas Crenshaw (1991) initially proffered the concept of intersectionality to address the multiple ways in which Black women's identities converge to illustrate the depth of oppression experienced by them, this concept has evolved throughout the fourth wave. The intersectional tendency now sways with greater awareness towards a more expansive and interconnected oppression (Watson, 2019). It seeks to understand the ways that dominant powers existing within hierarchies, patriarchies, colonization, and capitalism have subordinated individuals and collective groups of people across the globe. In feminism tradition, intersectionality now serves as a mechanism to unite around the multitude of expressions that oppression can take across race, gender, and class, as well as other common identities.

Though my study focused on women who work solely in the United States, the globalized and broadened conversations around oppression allowed us to more easily unearth the power dynamics that can be reinforced by the dominant hierarchies existing within bikes shops owned and managed by men. Additionally, I recruited the women for my study through the National Bicycle Dealer Association's first woman president, Heather Mason. Coming into her role during the pandemic and with an intention to reframe the bike industry as cooperative and supportive (NBDA, n.d.-a), she helped shift conversations from the individualistic and competitive natures that traditionally pervade capitalistic businesses. She had also organized an online series of collaborative learning events for women to discuss the unique challenges they face across this field dominated by men (NBDA, n.d.-b). Having participated in these events, I sought to further develop these conversations through a focused collective memory work session with several woman who serve, or have served, in similar leadership

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positions to me and, thus, potentially create a professional network that focused on solidarity.

A rapid, multivocal response to sexual violence/oppression. Primarily through the social media platforms of this fourth-wave feminist era, women and their allies can more quickly respond to sexual violence and oppression (Chamberlain, 2016) with accounts of their own personal experiences and solidarity for the wider political movement. Reactions to these everyday instances divert from the singular and primarily demanding tone of earlier feminist waves. As the virtual sphere can offer increased security and anonymity, voices present in various manners—including “employing humour, wit, and sarcasm” (Parry et al., 2019, p. 8)—both across individuals, as well as by the same person.

While this study did not explicitly focus on research around sexual violence or gender oppression, the opportunity for these ideas was present as we discussed being the only woman or the minority in a space and industry historically dominated by men. Additionally, while I could not offer anonymity for the women when they were participating in the study alongside each other, their stories and voices were presented so in the public sphere to address sexism and gender discrimination in the bike industry. I chose online spaces, specifically Facebook and the trade magazine *Bicycle Retailer and Industry News*, for readers’ ability to comment on our re-presented stories and to facilitate continued awareness and conversation around these issues.

Following the personal narrative and pop culture of third wave feminism, scholars within the fourth wave have been forced to reconcile ideas of what constitutes valid knowledge production beyond the traditional academic methods, so long as those

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productions do not invalidate feminist goals to end oppression for marginalized peoples (Parry & Fullagar, 2013). They also acknowledged that this social justice work is indeed messy and that this work cannot be honestly accomplished without respect for the whole or embodied self (Fullagar et al., 2019; MacKinnon, 2013; Parry & Fullagar, 2013; Watson, 2019). Truth—the fourth wave’s “multivocal response” (Parry et al., 2019, p. 5)—is built around how “complex social relations are ‘lived’ and are ‘felt’” (Watson, 2019, p. 64) through individual’s social, economic geographic, political position and their understanding of, reactions to, and relationship with the contained systems of power. Accordingly, descriptions of these experiences and an individual’s surrounding emotions are regarded as inherently valid (MacKinnon, 2013).

I chose a methodology that worked with descriptive stories of women’s personal experiences with community as this could bring affectual awareness (Johnson et al., 2018), or a sense of embodiment (Fullagar et al., 2019), to a variety of experiences of women in bike shops. With the fourth wave being particularly attuned to praxis, the intended collective consciousness-raising of women *leaders* was to bring a deeper mindfulness to how we manage with those working alongside us—this application can, in turn, affect our lived experiences in this space, as well.

Following the concept of embodiment, the fourth wave’s practical aspect moves beyond what constitutes as truth, into how that truth is to be used, and by whom (Dean & Aune, 2015). Contemporary knowledge locations have become more dispersed than those found strictly in academia. Therefore, a feminist academia is more compelled to learn *with* those outside of an institution—their communities—via input into the purpose,

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design, and content of their studies. The resulting theories are, thus, co-developed for both social understanding and change (Yuen, 2019).

I sought to build knowledge—and reinforce a community—through a network of women bike shop leaders. hooks (2013) described that, “to build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination” (p. 36). Accordingly, I looked to the scholars of marginalized feminisms to help guide how I could learn alongside a community of women bike shop leaders through this study. Integral to this attentive knowledge building is an acknowledgement of my position as a white woman in this research.

Whiteness

Reflecting back to Cooper’s “calling out” (2018) and more recent efforts toward “calling in” (Bennett, 2020; Ross, 2019), social justice activists continue their work to highlight unquestioned privileges held by those in dominant societal positions (Parry et al., 2019). Meaningful discourse has emerged through community-based campaigns such as #checkyourprivilege (Hill, 2022), which aimed to bring awareness to inherent privileges based on social identities. It is important to note as a white woman and feminist, my own position shaped my experiences. I was not in a marginalized group in terms of my race. I was marginalized in my gender, particularly as a woman working in the bike industry. As a white woman who was interested in emancipatory moments for all marginalized people, I both owned my whiteness and the privilege it afforded me.

I fully recognized the racial homogeneity in the cycling industry dictated who would be likely participants for this study and, thus, initiated my recruitment phase

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connecting first with the leaders of the organization Black Girls Do Bike (n.d.). When no women emerged from their activated networks, I specifically researched and then directly contacted Black and Brown women bike shop owners. The several women who responded all expressed interest in the study, particularly, as increasing access to bicycles for marginalized groups was in the direct mission for their shops. Yet, due to time constraints and emotional bandwidth, they were unable to participate.

As a white woman interested in building and sustaining community, I intentionally aimed to re-center, or specifically focus on, marginalized people (hooks, 1984) through the process of my research. Above and throughout my study, I called out my whiteness to counter the normalization of my race. Marcinik and Mattos (2021) described *whiteness* as that

which problematizes the forms of (re)production and strengthening of racism, in which white people occupy a symbolic place that is not established by genetic issues, but by social positions and places that are constructed to maintain certain logics of privileges, advantages and rights as a function of racial phenotypes. In this sense, whiteness is understood as a mechanism of racial hegemony that maintains and reinforces the dimensions of privileges of a certain racial group – white people. (p. 2)

Whiteness has been an implicit focus throughout American history, while “Black,” “Brown,” and “Color,” have stood as an “Other” in relation to this dominant, centered “white” (Marcinik & Mattos, 2021). As aforementioned, I was a white woman guided by fourth-wave feminist history and principles and, thus, had a responsibility to acknowledge that my historically dominant race provided advantages in my navigation

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of academic and professional spaces (Watson, 2019). In this regard, I chose to use a lower-case for the racial 'white,' while continuing to capitalize "Black," "Indigenous," and "People or Women of Color" to refocus and re-center away from a normalized and assumed or non-racialized "white."

Additionally, while I was unable to recruit a BIPOC-identifying woman to join this study, I leaned into the research on Black and Indigenous feminisms to continue re-centering their principles in feminist theory and for specific guidance on how to work alongside the women in this study. Throughout my study I found I more frequently engaged with this guidance when in a bulleted format and, thus, will present these bullet points for Black and Indigenous feminisms next.

Black Feminist Thought. As I am not a Black woman, I could not produce Black Feminist Thought or theory, rather I was humbled by how to conduct this research in a way that honors the principles of this historically marginalized feminism. I will introduce Collins' (2000) four dimensions of Black feminist epistemology below:

- "Lived experience as a criterion of meaning" (p. 257) elevates knowledge through personal experience over knowledge gained otherwise.
- "The use of dialogue to assess knowledge claims" (p. 260) validates through a process of reverent dialogue versus debate.
- "The ethic of caring" (p. 262) empathetically respects multiple truths, as well as the dependent and relational nature between those in dialogue.
- "The ethic of personal accountability" (p. 265) indicates the responsibility necessary when claiming or validating knowledge, including both the competencies as well as the errors.

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Indigenous Feminism(s). Similarly, as I am not an Indigenous woman, I cannot contribute to an Indigenous feminism. Rather, I listened to suggestions by those within how to research as a white woman in a manner that also aligns with Indigenous feminist principles:

- “Strive to bring people together to engage in critical learning and strategizing for radical social change and decolonization” (Aikau et al., 2015, p. 86).
- “Know when and where to step up and when and where to step back or step out” (p. 87).
- “Place matters” (p. 86). Not only is it necessary to understand the fluidity of ‘place,’ we must also respect our relationship and responsibility to it. This includes “turn[ing] our attentions in a material rather than a metaphorical way to the lands upon which we stand” (p. 86).
- “Praxis holds the seeds of liberation only when we engage in a process of ‘speculating about the seemingly impossible, the actual transformations of the structures of domination’” (Petti et al., 2014, as cited in Aikau et al., 2015, p. 88).
- “We have to engage our entire bodies: our physical beings, emotional self, our spiritual energy and our intellect. Our methodologies, our lifeways must reflect those components of our being and the integration of those four components into a whole” (Simpson, 2011, as cited in Aikau et al., 2015, pp. 87-88).

As my interest was to explore community through a collective consciousness-raising alongside the women in my study, I was grateful for Collins and Aikau, Goeman, and Morgensen as well as their direction for how we might appropriately build and validate our knowledge together in a way that honors the principle of these marginalized

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feminisms. Having now gained this deeper understanding, I looked to additional literature to see how scholars inclusively applied a fourth-wave feminist lens in their own research.

Fourth-Wave Feminist Research

Threads of fourth-wave tendencies and theories can be found in the research by Cousineau and Roth (2012), Bradley (2022), and Pruchniewska (2019). I will introduce each study and how they applied a fourth-wave feminist lens below.

Cousineau and Roth (2012) worked with a young adult staff at a co-ed, residential summer camp in Ontario, Canada. They were interested if a gender bias for men in leadership positions relaxed when the overnight structure necessitated more of a nurturing role from the managing staff. Via an intentional feminist design, they assessed hegemonic masculinity and its contribution to patriarchal power systems. The discourse analysis from their focus groups exposed a sustained bias toward men in hierarchical positions despite the added element of caretaking, which is traditionally biased towards women. Finally, they stressed the higher power and privilege afforded to men when evaluating for leadership roles. In fourth-wave fashion, Cousineau, who identified as a man, pushed who could conduct supportive feminist research. “The allowance (or affordance) of men to engage fully with, and contribute to, feminist theorization would allow men to more wholly critique and/or engage with gender spaces and social roles, and provide new avenues for expression of self and development of social norms” (Johnson & Cousineau, 2019, p. 137). Through their study, Cousineau and Roth (2012) troubled stereotypical gender norms and demonstrated that men in leadership positions can, indeed, be seen as nurturing. Reflexively, they acknowledged their role as a

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participating interviewer in the focus groups had a meaningful effect on the participants and the study, itself. Additionally, they critiqued discourse around the socially constructed idea of “leader” and how this was subject to interpretation by the individuals in the study.

Bradley (2022) extended research beyond women to include genderqueer, non-binary, and transgender individuals in their study exploring how non-dominant genders experience gender inequality in outdoor workplaces—an industry still very much dominated by men. Following her included narrative in the study she described how she both outwardly presented and self-identified as a woman. In this regard, she was seen by her peers in outdoor work setting as having less developed outdoor skills, as they expressed wonder and microaggressions over her ability to start a fire. For her study using collective memory work as a consciousness-raising methodology (Johnson et al., 2018), Bradley intersectionally gathered four other participants who all contributed narratives on experiences of sexism while working in the outdoor industry. These narratives were analyzed by the group in an online Zoom session where they identified themes of their “interconnected” (Parry et al., 2019, p. 5) experiences. The group collectively felt that these experiences had been negatively shaped by a society structured around a patriarchal power. Other common threads focused on “tokenism, and the pressure to perform...[their] prescribed gender script” (Bradley, 2022, pp. 55-56). Though not explicitly invoking *fourth-wave* feminism, Bradley clearly exhibited a contemporary feminist lens as she mobilized via an online space to specifically co-create knowledge around the interpretations of the lived and felt experiences by those in her study. Lastly, bringing awareness to praxis, she suggested a mindful effort to

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confront internal biases, including non-dominant genders, to help shape more inclusive outdoor workplaces.

Pruchniewska's (2019) research with women who participate in private women's professional groups on Facebook found a link between the consciousness-raising groups of the second wave and the emphasis on the fourth wave to blend both individual empowerment and collective action via online feminist movements (Parry et al., 2019). These Facebook groups were not overtly labeled feminist spaces nor was participation limited to self-claimed feminists, rather they demonstrated everyday feminist actions that improved working conditions for women and addressed gender inequality. "A challenging of gendered, ingrained structures of power, even if slowly drop by drop, is still beneficial to the wider feminist project" (p. 1376). Recruitment for women participants was through social media, and interviews were conducted over Skype, Zoom, Facebook Messenger, and purposefully created private Facebook groups. These online platforms served to gather data both synchronously and asynchronously, as well as balanced individual and group interactions. Pruchniewska (2019) recognized that the internet typically perpetuated dominant societal power structures, and thus, it influenced those in marginalized groups to self-select which spaces they felt comfortable participating. This idea was reflected in the groups where middle-class, heterosexual, and white identities prevailed. "Despite providing new tools for feminist practices, then, online groups for women also reproduce problematic offline patterns of unequal power relations based on cultural features such as race and sexuality, limiting their potential for an inclusive, intersectional feminist project" (p. 1368). Additional limitations mentioned focused on the intentional design of a study around feminist ideals. These

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included the necessary time and emotional labor by contributing women, the lack of truly private or confidential space due to the surveillance practices of Facebook, and unavoidable contribution to their capitalistic business practices. Lastly, Pruchniewska (2019) addressed the importance of men's inclusion in feminist conversations, especially when men are generally in positions of power in the workplace; to change a patriarchal system requires awareness and participation more effectively by all those within it and, particularly, those most upholding the structure.

As Berbary (2019) suggested that we approach "ways of thinking to build connections rather than barriers...[and] turn ways of thinking into ways of acting that are more useful to humanity" (p. 30), I was counseled by Cousineau and Roth (2012), Bradley (2022), and Pruchniewska (2019) in how they applied an inclusive fourth-wave feminist lens to their research. Now having the additional guidance through the literature on sense of community, feminist theory, and specific suggestions by marginalized feminisms on how to work with the women of my study, I will now conclude this chapter.

Conclusion

Though real work is being done to address inclusion of marginalized voices, the results are far from complete (Watson, 2019). It takes diligence to balance, listen, theorize, and put into practice the constant realizations along the way. In this respect, I'm attracted to the beauty of fourth-wave feminism. It accepts that, while any perfection is an illusion, the best path towards it challenges the perceived balance and steadily works to illuminate subtle ways that a feminist-embracing society could be better for all community members (hooks, 2013). Why did I ask my single research question "How do

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women leaders working in bike shops experience community through their workplace?”

Women and Gender Studies scholar Penny Weiss (1995) answered:

We need very much to know what it is in communities—what practices, structures, and values –have made them or allowed them to be exclusionary, devouring, and violent, and what has made them or allowed them to be sustaining, empowering, and respectful of individuality. (pp. 4-5)

When women are drastically underrepresented in the bike industry, and research indicated that community is a critical factor in retaining and recruiting employees, SOC’ could be a guiding conceptual framework through which to explore community. As community is essential to all aspects of feminism, and as feminism is critical to communities—regardless of gender—I appreciated the opportunity to work alongside inclusive fourth-wave feminist ideologies. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how women leaders in bike experience community through their workplace.

In this study I engaged with collective memory work, which I will outline in the next chapter. This methodological framework is grounded in social constructionism and critical interpretivism (Johnson et al., 2018) and is based around a collective consciousness-raising experience (Dunlap & Johnson, 2018).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY & METHOD

Collective Memory Work: Both a Methodology and a Method

In the previous chapter, I connected this study's design to fourth-wave feminist theory. Numerous references were made to the methodology, which I will now expound upon here. In order to answer my research question, "How do women leaders working in bike shops experience community through their workplace?," I used collective memory work (CMW) as a methodology in this study.

The history and design of CMW inherently recognizes the existence of power dynamics within social constructs. It is specifically non-hierarchical as it decentralizes the authority of the single researcher in the data gathering and analyzation processes (Johnson et al., 2018). This method was founded by Frigga Haug in 1970s/80s Germany. It is grounded in social constructionism, where knowledge is created by the culture in which we exist (Burr, 2015), and critical interpretivism, which values subjectivity and assesses societal oppression (Ryan, 2018). It was a feminist response to reconcile the unique ideological position of women, based on their gender, in Marxist theory (Johnson et al., 2018). CMW assumes the self is constructed by societal norms and power structures. Additionally, it seeks to unearth these relationships in the language used in the memory work itself (Grimwood & Johnson, 2021), as this language is a signifier of hegemonic, or dominant, theoretical norms (Ives, 2015).

CMW gathers short, themed and descriptive memories from individuals that are then analyzed and interpreted by the entire group for deeper contextual meaning (Bryant & Livholts, 2007; Johnson et al., 2018). This process has been described as a

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“powerful consciousness-raising experience” (Dunlap & Johnson, 2018, p. 30). CMW offers continuity from the methodology as it also guides the method for generating data, as well as how that data is collaboratively analyzed (Johnson et al., 2018).

Based on the history of this methodology, the bulk of the research has naturally been on women. Two of these inquiries have assessed leisure and tourist experiences. McCormack (1998) recontextualized the concept of leisure for women through the CMW process itself, while Small (1999) worked with several groups of girls and women ages 12 to over 65 years to understand how their experience as tourists adjusted over the years. Kern et al. (2014), as women academics in a university setting, wondered,

So what is it that keeps us here? What produces those moments of loving our jobs that are assumed to create a deep emotional attachment to academic work for many in the profession? Is the joy of teaching and research enough to keep us coming back day after day while the grind of university practices attempts to roboticize us? (p. 835)

Lastly, Boucher (1997) facilitated nine workshops for six Australian women, including herself, “to develop theories about how they socially construct leadership in organizations” (p. 149). In the following section I will provide an overview of the methods for CMW, the choice of and roles for the participants, the generation of data, and how that data will be analyzed.

Collective Memory Work as a Method

In this section I will first provide an overview of the collective memory work, and then I will present how I will incorporate these actions into my study. CMW has a

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defined protocol (Bryant & Livholts, 2007; Johnson et al., 2018), and my adapted steps were as follows:

Table 1: *Adapted Steps to the Collective Memory Work Protocol*

Step 1-	I determined a small group of participants.
Step 2-	I identified a common theme.
Step 3-	Each participant, in third person, wrote a short, detailed, descriptive memory related to the common theme. Writing in third person was “to create distance and make the later work with stories easier” (Breiter & Witt-Löw, 1991/2021). Interpretations of the memories were to be avoided at this stage.
Step 4-	All participants read everyone’s memories. (This is where the data generating ended; analysis began with the next step.)
Step 5-	Participants collectively discussed, critically analyzed, interpreted, and assigned ideological contexts (based on cultural/social constructions) to the memories. Commonalities and differences were also identified.
Step 6-	The memory can then be rewritten, or re-presented, this time in a “thick” description (Geertz, 1973) that incorporates the interpretations as well as the initial descriptions.

Co-researcher Selection

As a portion of the data collection and analysis are performed collaboratively, the CMW participants are instead referred to as “co-researchers” (Kivel & Pearce, 1998).

Though I have designed this study and, thus was the primary researcher, I also

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contributed with a memory narrative and in the workshop. In this setting, and in fourth-wave feminist fashion, we, as co-researchers, all held equal power over our collective data generation—the stories—and our analysis of them. These values aligned with historical critical and non-hierarchical nature of this methodology (Johnson et al., 2018).

I worked with four other women as this typical number was both large enough for a varied collection of memories, as well as small enough to keep our discussions intimate (Johnson & Oakes, 2018). We each identified as a woman, were over 18 years of age, lived in the US, were fluent in English, and worked in a bike shop in a leadership position, where we have served as a manager of at least one employee for a year or longer. The following is a table that lists the women’s pseudonyms, the roles they had within a bike shop or greater bike industry, and the states in which they reside.

Table 2: *Participant information*

Pseudonym	Professional Role	Resident State
Claire	territory sales representative for a bicycle brand	Colorado
Felice	inventory buyer and database manager of a multilocation bike shop	Massachusetts
Laurel	leadership team of an outdoor shop	Oregon
Skyler	bike shop manager	South Dakota

I recruited via snowball sampling—a particularly effective method where each willing participant helped recruit additional potential participants (Goodman, 1961). I generated interest through word of mouth, professional colleagues, guests of the shop where I work, social media postings, and networks within the US-based National Bicycle

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Dealers Association (see Appendices A through D). I held an informational session over Zoom with each potential participant to review the study design, the CMW method, and our roles and address any questions about the process.

Generating the Collective Memory Data

In CMW, data is generated by both the participants in the form of a narrative as well as their dialogue during the CMW session itself (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). To initiate the first data set, I discussed with my co-researchers that we would all contribute a memory that would be shared with the group (Johnson et al., 2018). As my research question was, “How do women leaders working in bike shops experience community through their workplace?,” the topic of our written memories was ‘an experience of community through the bike shop.’ The prompt to my co-researchers was as follows:

Please describe a memory where you experienced community through working at the bike shop. Narratives should be detailed, descriptive, and avoid any interpretations or analyzation at this time. Write one to two pages, double spaced, in third person. If necessary, use a pseudonym within the narrative.

Please email your complete narrative back to me within one week.

At the end of the week, I double checked that the narratives were free of any identifying information and then emailed them all back out to the group. In this email I also sent a set of questions (see Appendix E) that helped critically guide through a lens of curiosity inspired by fourth-wave feminist ideals, as well as prepared us for the specific steps that we would follow in our CMW session (Crawford et al., 1992/2021). We then had one week to spend reading over the individual memories before we were to meet over a group Zoom call.

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We had all contributed a memory narrative, and as co-researchers we held equal power over this collective data generation—the stories—and our analysis of them (Kivel & Pearce, 1998). The second set of data was spurred by our dialogue during our CMW session over Zoom as we analyzed each of our narratives and the collection, as a whole (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). I completed the generation of the second data set by creating transcriptions of these conversations.

Analyzing the Memory Work Collectively and Individually

The CMW analysis process is not a typical researcher-focused one; participants were also co-researchers during the initial analysis phase of the narratives—the first data set (Kivel & Pearce, 1998). In the CMW method, two sets of data are generated, and two analyses follow. I will first discuss the first analysis below and then expound on the second data set and second analysis phase, as well as my roles within them, later in this section.

To analyze the narratives, as the primary researcher, it was my role to facilitate our group analysis process. Based on our predetermined schedule, this took place one week after I emailed them to the group. Whereas a traditional CMW session will take place synchronously with all participants (Johnson et al., 2018), due to unforeseen circumstances, I conducted two separate sessions. Dunlap & Johnson (2018) described the CMW process as a “powerful consciousness-raising experience” (p. 30). So the women could more fully benefit from this opportunity, I emailed back out both audio recordings and transcriptions of our conversations after completing the second session. Both sessions took place over Zoom and together totaled 5.5 hours. As CMW can create a community of practice (Singh & Johnson, 2018), participants chose to display

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their actual names on Zoom, identified their narrative after the discussion, and exchanged personal contact information after the sessions were complete. As suggested by Crawford et al. (1992/2021), our analysis process followed the six steps in the table below:

Table 3: *Adapted Steps to the Collective Memory Work Analysis Process*

	Crawford et al. (1992/2021), pp. 175-176	My Adapted Steps
Step 1-	“Each memory-work group member expresses opinions and ideas about each memory in turn, and	First we each, individually, expressed opinions and ideas about each memory in turn, based on the guiding questions sent ahead of time.
Step 2-	looks for similarities and differences between the memories and looks for continuous elements among memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent. Each member should question particularly those aspects of the events which do not appear amenable to comparison. She or he should not, however, resort to autobiography or biography.	After we spent time with each memory individually, we collectively looked for similarities and differences between the memories, as well as congruent themes and anomalies of these themes. We expressed what was missing from the narratives that were indicative our collective experiences.
Step 3-	Each memory-work member identifies clichés, generalizations, contradictions, cultural imperatives, metaphor . . . and	Next each memory-work member broadened out the analysis of the memories to make larger cultural meanings of what we experienced.
Step 4-	discusses theories, popular conceptions, saying and images about the topic.	Each member examined what was not written in the memories (but what might have expected to have been).
Step 5-	Finally, each member examines what is not written in the memories (but what might be expected to be), and	Finally, we identified if there was anything we had not discussed or any ideas/theories/takeaways that we wanted to add in?

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Step 6-	rewrites the memories” (pp. 175-176).	Throughout the CMW session, we reassessed our memories with the interpretations added. Additionally, I will re-present sections of our memories and our identified themes in bike industry social media channels and publications.
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To guide the discussions during the work sessions, I followed the same guiding questions that I emailed to the participants alongside the collection of our narratives.

The process of reworking the initial illustrative memory with the collective group added rich interpretation and thus created a credible thick description (Geertz, 1973) of our experiences as women leaders in bike shops. The initial memories that were purely written in a descriptive format were re-presented in our dialogue with their interpretations. “This allows for a new version of the memory to be added to the discursive space around group meaning” (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 13).

After the CMW sessions, where we analyzed the narratives together, I, as the primary researcher, performed a secondary analysis of them as well as analyzed the transcriptions of our conversations—the second data set. Whereas the group assessed the narratives using “theories of everyday living” (C. Johnson, personal communication, December 7th, 2022), I specifically examined our memories and the transcriptions for elements related to McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) SOC conceptual framework as well as themes from fourth-wave feminist theories. I recorded each location where these concepts were present and would use these annotations later to organize and describe how the women experienced community through their workplaces. Finally, as the

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designer of this study, I gave each narrative a title and chose the content from these analyses to present in the findings and discussion in the following manuscript.

Ethical and Political Considerations

To develop trust and rapport with participants, from the outset, I was clear in setting expectations of participants as co-researchers in both the original recruitment information, as well as the consent form and description of procedures (Coes et al., 2018). Additionally, I had more details for the potential participants about the specific procedures of CMW in an informational meeting over Zoom before we began writing. I guided my co-researchers through the established methods for creating our collective memories and ensured they understood the opportunities for our individual and shared roles in this study. I was also clear in my roles as the primary researcher in the guidance through the CMW method, the secondary analysis process, and the choice for what would, ultimately, be presented for this thesis.

This study had the potential to create a community of practice during the process of group analysis, as this collective experience was described as a powerful networking tool (Singh & Johnson, 2018) should participants choose to reveal themselves. The participants had the choice whether to connect in our memory work session using their actual name or a pseudonym, and by video or by audio alone. While I could offer anonymity in the final written document, I could not guarantee this in the group discussions. We, as co-researchers, interacted collaboratively in an emotionally intimate environment. Though this study took place over Zoom, it could be an intense, perhaps even triggering process (Morisse et al., 1982/2021). I conducted research with human subjects and, thus, needed and received IRB approval for this study.

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Based on Hamm's (2021) work, these summative findings will be presented in a manuscript as well as in the popular sphere through bike industry trade magazines. I incorporated my co-researchers into discussions of how to best present our memories, interpretations, and analyses outside of the standard text.

Personal Biography (Researcher Positionality, Subjectivity, & Reflexivity)

Over my twenty-three years in shops, I have worked to steadily increase intentional connections with my greater community. As of this past fall, I now own my own bike shop. I wanted to better comprehend my process of community connecting, but also how other women may or may not experience something similar. I looked to understand what creates community for women leaders so I could incorporate this information in the way I design, manage, and mentor at the new shop.

I intentionally chose CMW as a methodology for its relationships to researcher positionality, subjectivity, and reflexivity. First, I wanted to work with a methodology that offered both mutual and intimate emotional connection, thus providing the opportunity to build community through the process of research. As I am not one who has ever successfully learned to separate out a non-emoting, professional self, I wanted to work within a methodology where it was safe to bring my entire self to the research. I found security in Johnson et al.'s (2018) description of the embodied process that can enable the participants to become much more aware of themselves. Additionally, I had been inspired by the words of Fullagar et al. (2019), "The turn to affect in leisure studies acts as a politics of hope...as a generative, productive account of leisure practices that can forge new pathways, embrace uncertainty, and also work *with* power as productive force for change" (p. 42). Second, and relatedly, I appreciated the feminist roots of

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CMW and was intrigued how it neatly aligned with my fourth-wave theoretical lens.

Third, I specifically sought a methodology that both incorporated and decentered my voice and interpretations as a member of the academic community and as someone who has worked in the bike industry for near a quarter century. Often people with long tenures can overpower the validity of other opinions due to the strength of their tenure alone (Draeger, 2009). Finally, researcher reflexivity was integrated within the method of CMW itself (Johnson & Oakes, 2018).

Trustworthiness and Credibility

According to Hope and Waterman (2003), the pluralistic nature of action research, of which the method of CMW is related, directly negates the request for validity by positivist worldviews. With the epistemological stance that the self is socially constructed by its location, the interpretation by the individual for the self is inherently valid.

As the author of this study, it was my role to accurately represent the processes that my co-researchers and I experienced to complete the collective memory work. One product of this work was the “consciousness-raising” described by Dunlap and Johnson (2018); this created a widened perspective for the participants and me to reflect on our experiences through our bike shops. By accurately representing ourselves, our thoughts, and our experiences for ourselves, we accurately represented them for the scientific community. This would belie the concept and the process of how CMW served its participants and how the subsequent presentation of the research will serve the academic community. The critical lens through which the work was performed validated the individual memory (Snelgrove & Havitz, 2010). Further, trustworthiness was built in

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my process by member checking in intentional reflective moments throughout the work session. To ensure credibility, I was guided through the method of CMW by previous scholars and their clearly defined protocol for the process (Bryant & Livholts, 2007; Johnson et al., 2018).

Per the Western Carolina University Experiential and Outdoor Education Handbook, I have chosen to complete the manuscript thesis format option. This option requires Chapters One, Two and Three plus a full-length journal manuscript formatted to the requirements of a specific journal. The following chapter contains my complete manuscript, which I have chosen to submit to the Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership. This journal requires authors to submit a manuscript that is generally 6,000-9,000 words (including the tables and reference list) and written in APA format.

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CHAPTER FOUR: “WHERE DO I FIT IN THIS SPACE?”: THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY FOR WOMEN LEADERS IN BIKE SHOPS

**“Where Do I Fit in This Space?”: The Role of Community for Women Leaders in
Bike Shops**

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“Where Do I Fit in This Space?”: The Role of Community for Women Leaders in Bike Shops

Abstract

The cycling field has always been dominated by white men, and even more so when discussing those in leadership positions. Additionally, researchers and practitioners overwhelmingly acknowledge that women are underrepresented in the professional bicycle industry. Thus, they continue to call for more diversity in the male-dominated bike industry and for greater representation of women leaders and role models. Yet, how could the bike industry attract and retain more women in leadership positions? One possible answer is through building meaningful and inclusive community. Studies suggest that community plays a key role in the retention of marginalized individuals. Accordingly, this study utilized McMillan and Chavis' (1986) *sense of community* conceptual framework to explore how women working in bike shops in leadership roles experience community through their workplace. For the purpose of this study, “woman” was any person who self-identified as such, and “leader” was defined as having managed one or more employees for at least a year within a bike shop. This research was guided by the current fourth-wave feminist lens. The design utilized collective memory work, a methodological framework grounded in social constructionism and critical interpretivism and founded on feminist ideals. Its findings speak to the women who are, or someday might be, working in a bike shop, the owners and managers of that shop who are ready to support them, and then also for the many other people in similar marginalized positions in the bike and outdoor industries. In lieu of a traditional

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conclusion, two letters of support are offered: one for the woman working in a bike shop and the other for those in positions to continue welcoming a woman into this space.

Keywords: sense of community, bike shop, feminism, fourth-wave, collective memory work, women

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Introduction

The morning's rays reveal a thick dust that blankets everything not getting wheeled in and out every day. I think I can fit my tea, mugs, jar of nuts, and salt and pepper on the sill closest to my corner. I reach through the bike rack in front of the window and run my finger across the ledge.

Bike-shop dust—darker and heavier than your norm. Years of lubricant, tube dust, and metal grindings form a hearty clump. I let it slide off to the floor.

Everyone, or should I say “all the guys” (I am the only woman in the shop) is at their workstand, heads down and already elbows deep in a repair. Their voices deafeningly silent under the cacophony of banging tools and screaming metal over the stereo.

It's my first day.

Where do I fit in this space? Is this even where I should be...?

My shoulders droop with the weight...

“Tamara....Tamara!” His voice jarred me out of my introspection.

“Your friend Susan dropped off some flowers and a card.”

He pointed to the front counter.

It read, “Tamara, I have been thinking about your new (ad)venture all week. Wishing you joy & success. I picked this lavender from 3 different plants. One for you. One for your partner & one representing your team. As I did, 3 bumblebees finished gathering nectar from them. I think that's a great omen! ♥ and solidarity to you my friend and fellow strong woman!”

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I identify as a white woman, and as a woman, I am in the minority in the cycling field, both in recreation and sport, as well as working in bike shops. The bike industry is striving to increase diversity in this wider cycling field. To do so, it is important for researchers to learn about the experiences of women who are already working professionally within the industry. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how women working in bike shops in leadership roles experience community through their workplace.

The challenge is that the cycling industry has always been dominated by white men, and even more so when discussing those in leadership positions (Hanson & Worthington, 2018; OIWC, 2012). Among all types of cyclists, women make up 42.6% of ridership (Storey & Hughes, 2021), yet there was an overwhelming acknowledgment that women are underrepresented in the professional industry (Cornish, 2015; Evans & Holz, 2017; Hanson & Worthington, 2018, OIWC, 2012). While I was unable to find an overall census conducted to explore statistics of women working in bike shops, estimates pose that woman, when compared to men, represent only 2% of mechanics (Dwyer, 2018), 10% of overall staff (Cornish, 2015), and, anecdotally, no more than 15% of those in leadership positions (OIWC, 2012).

Researchers and practitioners continue to call for more diversity, equity, and inclusion in the wider field of bikes (Camber Outdoors, n.d.; Cornish, 2015; Radical Adventure Riders, n.d.). For example, the Radical Adventure Riders' (n.d.) Cycling Industry Pledge (CIP) has a network that "aims to foster empathy, understanding, and eagerness for the growth necessary to make progress toward true equity in cycling

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spaces. By signing the CIP, members are taking an active role in that progress” (para. 2).

One way to increase diversity for more women participants, as well as other marginalized individuals in the field, is by increasing representation of women leaders as role models (Cornish, 2015; Gray et al., 2020; Rao & Roberts, 2018). But how do we both attract and keep women leaders in the bike industry? One established answer is through building meaningful and inclusive community.

Rao and Roberts (2018) suggested that community played a key role in the retention of marginalized individuals after surveying Women of Color working in the outdoor education field. They noted that initiatives focusing on increased leadership diversity “create accessible opportunities...and establish a supportive community for professional development” (p. 829). Again, how do we both attract and keep women leaders in the bike industry? As there is a call for more diversity in the male-dominated industry and for greater representation of women leaders as role models, exploring the role that community has in recruiting and retaining women employees is one place to start.

In order to explore the rather nebulous idea of community, I used McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) conceptualization of *sense of community*. They defined it as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 9). They suggested that sense of community is based on four specific criteria: 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs, and 4) shared emotional connection. Past literature has indicated that a sense of

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community can facilitate the attraction and retention of employees (Hall & Jostad, 2020; McCole, 2015). Moreover, both Lambert and Hopkins (1995) and Pretty and McCarthy (1991) found this was particularly true for women.

As I studied how women experience community, and as feminism is philosophically grounded in community (hooks, 2000), I used feminist theory to guide my inquiry. Mindful of my whiteness (Marcinik & Mattos, 2021) and the historical privileges it can provide, I was informed by fourth-wave feminist tendencies (Parry et al., 2019) when working with the women in my study. My hope is that the findings will be relevant to a broad readership including any marginalized individuals who are, or someday might be, working in bike shops or the greater outdoor industry.

My research question was, “How do women leaders working in bike shops experience community through their workplace?” As I sought to learn from women leaders working in bike shops, a *woman* was any person who self-identifies as such, and a *leader* was defined as having managed one or more employees for at least a year within a bike shop.

To examine women’s experience of community in bike shops, I used collective memory work (CMW) as a methodology. Although elucidated in a later section, this methodological framework is grounded in social constructionism and critical interpretivism (Johnson et al., 2018). To further situate the research question, I will begin with a review of the literature on the status of the women in the bike industry, a sense of community, and feminist theory.

Literature Review

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Women in the Bicycle industry

Women make up 42.6% of U.S. cyclists (Storey & Hughes, 2021). Yet women represent 51% of all Americans. Moreover, women are also underrepresented in the *professional* cycling industry (Cornish, 2015; Evans & Holz, 2017; Hanson & Worthington, 2018, OIWC, 2012), which encompasses bicycle manufacturing and sales (e.g., bike shops). These statistics are talking about women cyclists generally (all women who are participating in the wider cycling field in various ways), but how many women are working in bike shops where they are able to connect directly with those who ride? We know that representation is critical in encouraging underrepresented group participation in a sport or activity (Gray et al., 2020; Rao & Roberts, 2018), so it is important to understand the number of women working in shops. While I was unable to find an overall census conducted to explore statistics of women working in bike shops, Jenny Kallista, the president of the Professional Bicycle Mechanics Association estimated that women represent only 2% of mechanics when compared to men (Dwyer, 2018). When looking at all positions within a shop held by women, the League of American Bicyclists found that number merely moves to 10% of overall staff (Cornish, 2015). When women are not only underrepresented in the field but critically underrepresented in the profession, what is being done to address this issue?

Researchers and practitioners continue to call for gender diversity in the bike industry (Camber Outdoors, n.d; Cornish, 2015; Radical Adventure Riders, n.d.). One organizational group, the Radical Adventure Riders (n.d.), wrote the “Cycling Industry Pledge” to focus on gender inclusion and racial equity. For 2021, the pledge had 160 committed members and included goals such as hiring diverse leadership teams,

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creating workplace culture that “enables challenging conversations about DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion]” (para. 2), and for the bike industry to have a workforce where every interested person can see themselves represented. Another organization, Camber Outdoors (n.d.), has conducted studies on the state of gender equity in the outdoor and cycling industries (Evans & Holz, 2017), as well as interviews with women leaders (Hanson & Worthington, 2018). They also currently operate a mentorship program to address the need for increased diversity in the outdoor industry (Camber Outdoors, n.d.). “To make its vision of ‘Everyone’s Outdoors’ a reality, the organization provides a framework of support to help its partner companies cast a wider net for talent and ensure that everyone—regardless of gender or race—feels welcome in the outdoor community” (Hanson & Worthington, 2018, p. 4). So, how can this *community* be defined?

Sense of Community

I used McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) conceptualization of *sense of community* (SOC) in this study, which they defined as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 9).

Specifically, their definition of SOC included four criteria:

- Membership- “sharing a sense of personal relatedness” (p. 9) [included *boundaries, emotional security, sense of belonging & identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system*]
- Influence- “a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members” (p. 9)

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- Integration and fulfillment of needs- “the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group” (p. 9) [included *reinforcement*, that needs can be individual or shared, a *status of membership*, *community success*, reciprocity through *competency*, and *shared values*]
- Shared emotional connection- “the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences” (p. 9)

Working through McMillan and Chavis' (1986) conceptual framework, Jason et al. (2015) developed the Psychological Sense of Community survey. They assessed SOC based on “an individual’s experience within a group from a variety of ecological levels: the self (the individual), the interactions with others (microsystem), and the organization (macrosystem)” (p. 983). They recognized the connection between the value of SOC and an individual’s capacity to thrive within a supportive community. I will next present how various researchers have used the SOC conceptual framework within their work.

Community as a Critical Factor in Retaining and Recruiting Employees

Developing a SOC is meaningful to employees in the workplace and a critical factor in employee recruitment and retention (Boyd & Nowell, 2018; Hall & Jostad, 2020; McCole, 2015; Rao and Roberts, 2018). It can be tied to feelings of support through structured policies and positions, workplace relationships, involvement, and a shared commitment between employer and employee, and these features were particularly important to women (Lambert & Hopkins, 1995; Pretty & McCarthy, 1991). In the outdoor field in particular, a SOC contributed to a high level of employee attraction and retention through its increase in their quality of life (Hall & Jostad, 2020; McCole, 2015).

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Rao and Roberts (2018), surveying Women of Color working in the outdoor education field, posed that this SOC with other women positively affects their retention.

Nevertheless, while representation for Women of Color has increased in the field, they still suggested a mindfulness to not “tokenize”—gesturally hiring an underrepresented person to accomplish a goal of inclusivity—and to rather reshape workplace culture to welcome and support all marginalized people. They also called for more research that included stories by women working in the outdoor field. This study will both offer these stories as well as practical suggestions for reshaping workplace culture in bike shops to be more welcoming to women.

Community Though Bicycling

Research has shown that the use of bicycles positively engenders SOC by facilitating social interaction within cyclists’ local community (Tsai, 2014). Additionally, experiences while cycling have served as a common ground for a vast network of cyclists (Pelzer, 2010) and as the subject of community development processes (Chen & Chancellor; 2019). Happ et al. (2021) found that staff members in sports retail stores, specifically, help shape SOC through the emotional connections they establish with guests, as well as offering a space for guest to interact with each other. This, in turn, facilitates desires by the guests to return. Relevant to this present study, they concluded with a curiosity to explore these experiences in bike shops. Specifically, when assessing how to make bike shops more welcoming to women, the League of American Bicyclists found that women customers do connect better with women staff (Cornish, 2015). “One of the keys to engage more women in bicycling is creating a SOC...more and more women are being drawn to bicycling because of the sense of identity to the community it

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creates” (p. 14). Yet, a gap remains in the literature to explore how SOC affects women *leaders* in bike shops. As Evans & Holz (2017) demonstrated a pervasive sexism and gender discrimination in the bike industry, let us turn to the province of feminism as a community-focused means to address these issues for women.

Fourth-Wave Feminist Theory

Simply put, feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. Practically, it is a definition which implies that all sexist thinking and action is the problem, whether those who perpetuate it are female or male, child or adult. (hooks, 2000, p. 1)

As movements involve collectives people working toward change, community has been used as a central tool against sexism in feminist mobilizations throughout the history of feminism in the United States. The story of normative American feminist theory has separate eras, or waves, of these mobilizations based on their specific goals and tendencies (Davidson, 2019). As my study was anchored in the current fourth wave, I will give a quick contextual history and examples of leisure research of the prior three.

The first wave of feminist history organized around women’s political, educational, and property rights as citizens and the ultimate focus became a woman’s right to vote (Freedman, 1995). Leisure literature during this era included assessing the value of women’s increased leisure time post-Industrial Revolution (Pruette, 1924) and the benefits of non-competitive, recreational sport for women (Kellor, 1906). The second wave focused on women’s reproductive and workplace rights (Siegel, 1997). Examples of second wave feminist leisure research include Schurr’s and Phillip’s (1971) study

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assessing the necessity of essential personality traits for women's basketball officials and Deem's (1982) exploration of domestic challenges to women's leisure. The third wave shifted to a focus on "everyday feminism" (Schuster, 2017, p. 647) and challenged societal standards of sexuality and gender. Examples within this wave's field of leisure include Spencer and Paisley's (2013) duoethnography of themselves as reflexive researchers studying how they each "perform femininity in the leisure setting of watching *The Bachelor*" (p. 697) and Kivel and Johnson (2009) discussing men's construction of masculinity as it is reinforced through media.

This study is situated in fourth-wave feminism (Parry et al., 2019). The key tendencies of the "fourth wave of feminist theory are (i) blurred boundaries across waves; (ii) technological mobilization; (iii) interconnectedness through globalization; and (iv) a rapid, multivocal response to sexual violence" (Parry et al., 2019, p. 5), which I will detail next. Throughout this literature review, I will reference the collective memory work (CMW) methodology used in my study which will be elucidated further in its own section. Threads of fourth-wave tendencies and theories can be found in the following research. Cousineau and Roth (2012) demonstrated a sustained gender bias for men and masculinity in leadership positions even in caretaking roles, which are generally seen as more feminine. Bradley (2022) explored how non-dominant genders (i.e., genderqueer, non-binary, transgender) experience gender inequality in outdoor workplaces. Pruchniewska (2019) researched unintentionally consciousness-raising in private women's professional groups on Facebook.

Parry et al.'s (2019) first described tendency of fourth-wave feminism is a blurred boundaries across the waves of feminism. While recognizing the power dynamics

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involved in the classification of waves, fourth-wave feminism challenges the idea of feminist history as divided between neatly defined eras (Davidson, 2019). With an emphasis to continually critique past theoretical frameworks, it centers the voices of marginalized women who trouble traditional stories within. Particularly within leisure studies research, this era accepts Butler's (1990) described performative nature of gender and, thus, offers opportunity to "mis-repeat" (Berbary, 2019, p. 18) societal gendered norms. The second tendency of technological mobilization speaks to way that social media and other online spaces are used to gather momentum, create a louder collective voice, organize for social justice, and recount methods for success (Soucie et al., 2019). Fueled by the increased anonymity online, these spaces have served to reinforce a decentralization of leadership and have been used as a podium to speak out on politics in business (Saldanha et al., 2022).

The third tendency—interconnected through globalization—seeks to understand how dominant powers existing within hierarchies, patriarchies, colonization, and capitalism have subordinated individuals and collective groups of people across the globe (Watson, 2019). Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) continues to serve as a mechanism to unite around the multitude of expressions that oppression can take across race, gender, and class, as well as other common identities. Parry et al.'s (2019) final described tendency of fourth-wave feminism is a rapid, multivocal response to sexual violence/oppression. Primarily through efficient social media platforms, truth and validity are built around how "complex social relations are 'lived' and are 'felt'" (Watson, 2019, p. 64) through individual's social, economic geographic, political position and their understanding of, reactions to, and relationship with the contained systems of power.

Integration within Fourth-Wave Feminist Theory

Throughout this research, my interest was in both emancipatory moments for women, as well as the construction of community that could include anyone, regardless of gender. While it was necessary in the design of my study to focus on women, I was guided by the concept of gender and current push-back on its essentialization as a social identity category. Through pointed questions on gendered expression and performativity, as well as how power dynamics shaped our experiences, the women of this study and I deconstructed our relationships to the ideas of “woman,” “leader,” and “community” rather than adhering to these terms based in normative societal structures.

In this study, I created coalition through use of digital technologies (Schultz & McKeown, 2018) that included social media, professional networking, and virtual conferencing platforms. Though this study focused on women who work solely in the United States, the globalized and broadened conversations around oppression allowed the participants and I to more easily unearth the power dynamics that can be reinforced by the dominant—though often understated—hierarchies existing within bike shops owned and managed by men. This study became an extension to the work of the first woman president of the National Bicycle Dealer Association. With an intention to address the marginalized position of women in bike shops, she organized collaborative learning events for women to discuss their unique challenges (NBDA, n.d.). As hooks (2013) described that, “to build community requires vigilant awareness of the work we must continually do to undermine all the socialization that leads us to behave in ways that perpetuate domination” (p. 36), I sought to build knowledge—and reinforce community—through a network of women bike shop leaders.

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When women are drastically underrepresented in the bike industry, and research indicated that community is a critical factor in retaining and recruiting employees, McMillan and Chavis' (1986) *sense of community* could be a guiding conceptual framework through which to explore community. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore how women leaders in bike experience community through their workplace. Community is essential to all aspects of feminism, and feminism is critical to communities—regardless of gender—thus, I collaborated with inclusive fourth-wave feminist ideologies in this work.

Methodology and Methods: Collective Memory Work

In the previous section, I connected this study's design to fourth-wave feminist theory. Numerous references were made to the methodology, which I will expound upon here. I used Collective Memory Work (CMW) as a methodology in this study. CMW is inherently non-hierarchical, critical, collaborative, embodied, and decentralizes the authority of the single researcher in the data gathering and analyzation processes (Johnson et al., 2018). It was initiated by Frigga Haug in 1970s/80s Germany as a feminist response to reconcile the unique ideological position of women, based on their gender, in Marxist theory (Johnson et al., 2018). Grounded in social constructionism and critical interpretivism (Johnson et al., 2018) and designed around a collective consciousness-raising experience (Dunlap & Johnson, 2018), it seeks to unearth relationships in the language used in the memory work itself (Grimwood & Johnson, 2021).

CMW gathers short, themed and descriptive memories from individuals that are then analyzed and interpreted by the entire group for deeper contextual meaning

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(Bryant & Livholts, 2007; Johnson et al., 2018). Based on its feminist theoretical background and ability to create community in the process, this methodology was particularly relevant to my study with professional women leaders and how they experience community through their workplace. The CMW methodology provides researchers with guidance on the stepped method for generating data, as well as how that data is collaboratively analyzed. (Johnson et al., 2018).

Participant Selection

I recruited via snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961) by professional colleagues, social media postings, and networks within the US-based National Bicycle Dealers Association. I worked alongside four other women for both a varied collection of memories, as well as to keep our discussions intimate (Johnson & Oakes, 2018). We each identified as a woman, were over 18 years of age, lived in the US, were fluent in English, and worked in a bike shop in a leadership position where we have served as a manager of at least one employee for a year or longer. The following is a table that lists the women's pseudonyms, the roles they had within a bike shop or greater bike industry, and the states in which they reside.

Table 1: *Participant information*

Pseudonym	Professional Role	Resident State
Claire	territory sales representative for a bicycle brand	Colorado
Felice	inventory buyer and database manager of a multilocation bike shop	Massachusetts
Laurel	leadership team of an outdoor shop	Oregon

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Skyler	bike shop manager	South Dakota
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Generating the Collective Memory Data

In CMW, data is generated by both the participants in the form of a narrative as well as their dialogue during the CMW session itself (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). To initiate the first data set, I discussed with my participants that we would all contribute a memory that would be shared with the group (Johnson et al., 2018). The prompt to them was as follows:

Please describe a memory where you experienced community through working at the bike shop. Narratives should be detailed, descriptive, and avoid any interpretations or analyzation at this time. Write one to two pages, double spaced, in third person. If necessary, use a pseudonym within the narrative.

Please email your complete narrative back to me within one week.

Participants had seven days to email me their narrative responses to the prompt. After receiving the narratives, I checked that they were free of identifying information and then emailed the collection back out to the group. In this email I also sent a set of guiding questions where the first six were intended to critically assess through a lens of curiosity inspired by fourth-wave feminist ideals, and the second six were inspired by Crawford et al.'s (1992/2021) steps for the CMW analysis, which I will describe further in the next section. The questions were as follows:

For each memory individually:

1. What is this narrative about? What is the author trying to portray?

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2. What's something interesting about this narrative that you want to know more about?
3. How did you feel as you read this memory?
4. How would you describe the sense of community in this narrative?
5. How do you feel that gender at a bike shop played into this memory, if at all?
6. How do you feel that power dynamics of being a leader at a bike shop played into this memory, if at all?

For the collection of memories as a whole:

7. How are our memories similar?
8. How are our memories different?
9. What are continuous elements among memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent? In other words, do you notice any characteristics to the stories that could be related but it's hard to describe how? Or are there any reoccurring themes?
10. Are there any unique occurrences or parts to the stories that stand out that don't seem to fit along with any themes you noticed from question #9?
11. What's not represented in the narratives that's indicative of your experiences of being a woman leader in a bike shop?
12. What else do you notice that we haven't addressed yet?

We then had one week to read over the individual memories before we were to meet and discuss them over a group Zoom call.

We had all contributed a memory narrative, and as co-researchers we held equal power over this collective data generation—the stories—and our analysis of them (Kivel

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& Pearce, 1998). The second set of data was spurred by our dialogue during our CMW session over Zoom as we analyzed each of our narratives and the collection, as a whole (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). I completed the generation of the second data set by creating transcriptions of these conversations.

Analyzing the Memory Work Collectively and Individually

The CMW analysis process is not a typical researcher-focused one; participants were also co-researchers during the initial analysis phase of the narratives—the first data set (Kivel & Pearce, 1998). In the CMW method, two sets of data are generated, and two analyses follow. I will first discuss the first analysis below and then expound on the second data set and second analysis phase, as well as my roles within them, later in this section.

To analyze the narratives it was my role as the primary researcher to facilitate our group analysis process. Based on our predetermined schedule, this took place one week after I emailed the narratives to participants. Whereas a traditional CMW session will take place synchronously with all participants (Johnson et al., 2018), due to unforeseen circumstances, I conducted two separate sessions. Dunlap & Johnson (2018) described the CMW process as a “powerful consciousness-raising experience” (p. 30). So the women could more fully benefit from this opportunity, I emailed back out both audio recordings and transcriptions of our conversations after completing the second session. Both sessions took place over a group Zoom call and together totaled 5.5 hours. As suggested by Crawford et al. (1992/2021), we discussed, critically analyzed, interpreted, and assigned ideological contexts to each memory based on cultural/social constructions. Commonalities and differences across the collection were

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also identified. I directed the CMW sessions using the same guiding questions that I emailed to the participants alongside the collection of our narratives. As CMW can create a community of practice (Singh & Johnson, 2018), participants chose to display their actual names on Zoom, identified their narrative after the discussion, and exchanged personal contact information after the sessions were complete.

After the CMW sessions, where we analyzed the narratives together, I, as the primary researcher, performed a secondary analysis of them as well as analyzed the transcriptions of our conversations—the second data set. Whereas the group assessed the narratives using “theories of everyday living” (C. Johnson, personal communication, December 7th, 2022), I specifically examined our memories and the transcriptions for elements related to McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) SOC conceptual framework as well as themes from fourth-wave feminist theories. I recorded each location where these concepts were present and would use these annotations later to organized and describe how the women experienced community through their workplaces. Specifically for this manuscript, I will be focusing on SOC in the following section. Finally, as the designer of this study, I gave each narrative a title and chose the content from these analyses to present in the findings and discussion in the following section.

Findings & Discussion

Throughout our collection of narratives and CMW sessions, we wove meanings of our experiences as women leaders in bikes shops. I have anchored my study in a fourth-wave feminism that celebrates the concept of embodiment (Fullagar et al., 2019), where it is no longer necessary to separate the mental and emotional selves. In this section, I intentionally sought ways to permit you, the reader, to experience this

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research beyond reading it. “The turn to affect in leisure studies acts as a politics of hope...as a generative, productive account of leisure practices that can forge new pathways, embrace uncertainty, and also work *with* power as productive force for change” (Fullagar et al., 2019, p. 42). These words remained salient as I explored how the women participants and I experienced community through our bike shops, a space where women are not traditionally well represented (Cornish, 2015; OIWC, 2012).

In this next section I will present the findings of this study to address the research question, “How do women leaders working in bike shops experience community through their workplace?” In this setting we sensed community through our relationships: with ourselves—in our minds and through our bodies—as well with coworkers, our guests, and other women in our wider bike field. A fourth-wave feminist lens guided how I designed this study beyond the specifics of the CMW method, including how I interacted with the women throughout the study, as well as how I extended this lens for them to critically analyze our experiences. Additionally, it will help shape how I present this research in more practical ways directed towards the bike industry. Yet, for the purpose of this manuscript, I will discuss our experiences focusing on McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) four described criteria of SOC—1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs, and 4) shared emotional connection—and describe how they emerged through our stories. I will connect the elements with our different memories in italics, and then, in addition to connecting directly with you, I will attempt to elucidate each in a manner that remains true to the tone in which each narrative was initially presented. Supporting theory will also be incorporated within.

SOC Element 1: Membership

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“More of a ‘Shop Mom’ Than She Realized” (Claire’s Narrative)

When she walked into the shop it felt like home, it was where she had spent more time since moving across the world than any other place. Joe was in the back clearing the broken-down boxes from their suppliers, packing them in the recycling. He always gave her the biggest hug in the morning and asked how she was doing. He felt like a little brother, and they propped each other up when things got hard in their personal lives. Mike and Matt were in the service area, they always came in early to get production work taken care of before ringing phones and walk-in’s distracted them. She walked over and gave them each a hug, asking about their kids and giggling about the antics their children got up to.

It was the calm before the chaos, moments with her bike family before the doors opened and customers became the focus of every team member until the doors closed at the end of the day.

Summers were chaotic, the flow of traffic through the doors throughout the day was constant. She would look around and see that each and every member of her bike family was juggling at least four customers and making each of them feel valued. The hours flew by and most of the team didn’t even stop for lunch. She got on the phone and ordered them takeout. She guesses she was more of a “shop mom” than she realized.

When she left her whole world behind and moved to the US, she gravitated to where she felt accepted, to a language that was global to her... bikes. She’d always loved them, but here, it was a way to find a new community, a new family, a new sense

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of belonging. When you decide to make a fresh start, dive wholeheartedly into your passion, right?!

This passion created a huge community, both within the shop, and with customers who were drawn to her, they wanted to know where she came from and what it was like, why she left and what made her leap.

In her narrative, Claire illustrated the “membership” criteria of SOC. The setting is in the bike shop in the morning before customers arrive, and her coworkers are the established members. McMillan and Chavis (1986) described membership where members “share a sense of personal relatedness” (p 9) and it could be found with the following attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system. In Claire’s case, the “relatedness” is the collective of her “family members.” In this section, I will address how she interacted with each attribute in the narrative.

In our conversations about this narrative, Felice described Claire’s role as “the den mother” and commented how she thought “a lot of us experience that sense of family and caretaking...with me, they’ll give me hugs, but some of them have their own little handshakes in the morning. It’s kinda like home number two.” The boundary for this membership was the shop—the “home number two”—where Claire’s narrative centered “moments with her bike family before the doors opened and customers became the focus.”

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After McMillan and Chavis' (1986) identification of boundaries, the next attribute of membership was emotional safety. We can see Claire experiencing this when she asserted in our conversations,

You spend more time with some of the people you work with than your own family at home. And if you don't have that dialed-in to a place where it feels safe, that you can have good days and bad days and not hold the grudge, then you have a problem. You're going to have to work with resentment.

She added,

It's got to be a place that you feel like you can grow. You can be honest. You can be vulnerable. Because if you can't or you're afraid to be vulnerable in a space like that or belittled, or what have you, then it's never going to be a safe space for you.

Skyler further described the emotional security within the bike family,

[Claire] portrayed the rhythm and comfort of family, first and foremost. Because you have that kind of cadence and language that you have with your everyday family. You expect the same things...It just seems warm and cozy. It didn't seem competitive. [She] seemed to have a position of...hmm, I don't want to say, honor, but to be respected and treated like not "one of the guys." It didn't seem like that at all to me, but you know, "one of the bike shop people," and they kind of felt like an equal to me.

I illustrated the following attribute of membership, a sense of belonging and identification, which also reflects "mutual responsibility, support, reliance, and cooperation" (Jason et al., 2015, p. 997). "The writer seemed to embrace the

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matriarchal role. They were really concerned and caring; they mentioned a hug. That's very warm and what you would attach, usually, to a motherly figure." Skyler agreed and added, "I feel like we kind of all tend to adopt that role. I don't know why." "And it isn't to direct people around, it is to nurture, to be supportive, to take care of—so everything functions smoother."

In hinting at an additional aspect of membership: personal investment, Claire described her contributing leadership efforts and how they shaped her perceptions in that space. "It was fully accepting of whom everyone was and the value they all bring. Because it's different; everybody brings something unique to the table, to the community, to the shop."

Finally, membership can be indicated by a common symbol system—a recognizable item of similar value (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In Claire's narrative, we can see the identification of bikes for this purpose. Bikes were a language that spoke "community" for her, even in new spaces. Skyler reflected on this, "You know, bikes are kind of synonymous everywhere. I mean, a bike is a bike—it's two wheels with a chain and gears, sometimes. So, I think that [Claire] thought that [she] could experience that same sense of a community in the bike industry or in a bike shop, too."

To transition to the next narrative and assess membership through another facet of community, Claire emphasized, "it's still important for me to build that community of people that I work with. It's really important. I think it's one of my foundation steps that I like to put in place when I start a new role."

"Is This Even Where I Should Be...?" (Tamara's Narrative)

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(A contrasting example of membership can be illustrated through my memory which was the opening narrative for this paper. Please take a moment to revisit this section before moving onwards.)

Jason et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of the integrated individual in the ecological layers that comprise community. This level “involves identity and importance to self, and taps concepts such as emotional commitment, emotional connection, emotional compensation, commitment, engagement, influence, and meaningfulness” (p. 977). Thus, in this next section, I will be expressing my relationship to membership and its existence via a personal reflection that centers my present embodied self as I was moving through the described memory. Since I am still working to understand the gravity of my experience and to better allow you to join in my reflection, I will write the following section in present tense:

To contrast my narrative with Claire’s, I feel that my experience of membership was starkly different. I reflect on my own memory through statements that indicate detachment. “Incongruent, heavy, bobbing alone in a huge sea.” “I don’t know if this was a good idea.” In this setting, the shop space still defines the boundaries, yet my mind sets an even greater one. Not only was I not given any direction, but also, I remain in a mental and emotional space where I did not ask for any. I am not shown a physical place to set my belongings, and I confine my own self to the smallest and unaffectioning space of my mind.

I feel so different that I try to minimize my own existence here. My shoulders droop with the weight—not from my loaded backpack—but from the emotional weight of

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entering this unfamiliar space. “Also, [I’m] stepping into that role where, on top of being the only woman, [I] have the task of creating a community and creating a team.”

My lack of a sense of belonging and identification clearly exemplify where my membership is absent. Whereas “sun” generally elicits warmth, the sun here serves to illuminate how different I am. Even the “blanket” of dust is foreign in its “hearty clump” and demonstrates a warmer collective where I am yet not included. I become more defined by what I am not: loud—I am not banging tools, the screaming metal music. My only spoken word is “Pardon,” while “*Where do I fit in this space? Is this even where I should be...?*” keeps me silent to all but myself. “The harm which comes from the pain of rejection and isolation created by boundaries will continue until [I can] clarify the positive benefits that [my] boundaries provide [in this space]” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). At this point, I can only invest in my own emotional security as I physically try to home my belongings in small niches.

The flowers—symbolic expressions of femininity—communicate alongside the note of celebration and encouragement. They also speak a language of thoughtfulness where words have not yet fully formed. Rob, now my partner both within and outside the shop, directs my attention from my established community toward his.

In sum and illustrated by Claire’s and my memories and our respective conversations, positive membership must be experienced for SOC to be present. The attributes of boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, and a common symbol system all help to indicate the element of membership.

SOC Element 2: Influence

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In this next narrative, Felice leans into her ability as a staff member to influence her guests, or members of the wider cycling community, in ways that positively and reciprocally gave her meaning beyond the boundaries of the bike shop. To demonstrate this second element of community, I will first direct you to the Psychological Sense of Community survey (Jason et al., 2015). In the manner intended by the creators of this tool, I have added in the details to apply to the specific location—the bike shop environment—and specific people within—the staff members and guests. Please read through the follow nine statements, and keep them in mind as you next read Felice’s narrative:

- I think this bike shop is a good bike shop.
- I am planning on returning to this bike shop.
- For me, this bike shop is a good fit.
- Staff members and guests can depend on each other in this bike shop.
- Guests can get help from staff members if they need it.
- Guests and staff members are secure in sharing opinions or asking for advice.
- This bike shop is important to me.
- I have friends in this bike shop.
- I feel good helping the bike shop and the guests, OR I feel good helping the bike shop and the staff members.

“You Take Care of Your Customer One Day; the Customer Becomes a Friend For Life.” (Felice’s Narrative)

She has always told her newbies “Be nice to people. Eventually they move”.

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She is still friends with her first high end mountain bike sale. This woman customer came in and was looking at a basic mountain bike. She was going to start adventure racing. She told the woman all about what adventure racing entailed. She was new in the industry but knew that the basic mountain bike would die. Minutes of talking to her convinced her to buy a more appropriate, yet pricier mountain bike. The woman raced, kept winning and kept coming back to get her bike fixed. She was blowing other competitors out of the water. So many times seeing the woman's bike in the shop getting fixed, but every one of those times made her feel like she did good.

Next, this customer wanted a road bike. She sold her a nicer road bike. They were one of the few dealers of this brand at the time, and she was selling those suckers like hot cakes. Next, the woman's cousin needed a bike. She's pretty sure soon thereafter another relative or 6 needed bikes.

Life happened, and her customer had to make a life change. She packed up her stuff and took off in a Sportwagon.

This is one of those times when she thinks about how much she enjoys someone's company, even sporadically, but she's not sure that it will happen again.

Then fast forward a few years. She got a message from her customer—who had moved to a small town in Mexico—that said that SHE was coming to visit her there. Hello passport. Hello, amazing vacation with sweet people. Mountain biking on a pump track in a mangrove, puppy adoption, ziplining in the rain forest and eating fresh French pastries on the beach. Please open a file about crazy life circumstances. Moments like this are truly life changing. You take care of your customer one day; the customer becomes a friend for life.

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No matter how long she works in the bike industry, she will be astonished. The people who we talk to every day will make a difference in our lives forever even if we don't realize it.

Please take a moment to reflect back to the six questions above. Do you agree or disagree with each, and how strongly? For us—the five participant women who were staff members in bike shops—we could certainly sense the power of community here. We felt the momentum, the thrill, the warmth, and the love. The growth of the small interactions was exciting and tingly!

As it was important to Felice to weave a lesson through her memory, and as collective memory work serves as a pedagogical tool to elevate awareness for a deeper understanding of our experiences (Johnson et al., 2018), I drew on the field of experiential education (AEE, 2023) to continue this thread of learning for the reader. This study sought to recenter the exploration of SOC through a feminist lens, and so I invoked hooks (2010) to reveal the purpose of embodied experiential learning, “knowledge rooted in experience shapes what we value and as a consequence how we know what we know as well as how we use what we know” (p. 185). Moses (2023) presented that a contrasting experience to one’s own position can increase empathy for others, and so offered next is an alternative vision to Felice’s narrative to demonstrate the lack of SOC when power of influence is disregarded.

The following are a series of statements made by the women in my study throughout the conversations in the CMW sessions. Please note that they have all been direct accounts heard while working in bike shops or communicated by guests of the

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shop. These were chosen as they present antithetical experiences to Felice's story. As you read them, imagine you are the guest in this situation, or your coworker is making these statements to you.

- *“Oh, I know the perfect bike for you. I’m gonna let you tell me what you want, but I’m gonna tell you what I’ve already been thinking since you walked in the door.”*
- *“Your job is to continue to support a customer coming in for the sake of having them continue to come in.”*
- *“Oh, you want that? You got it.” “Easy in, and easy out.”*
- *“To prove they were the expert, they would over explain things and focus on just the technical aspects of the bike.”*
- *“It’s ok to take advantage of the customer. They have the money and are there to buy the bike.”*
- *“Oh, you don’t want that bike. You need this bike. You’ll be so fast.”*
- *[Eventually the request of the customer becomes] “Well, how much of a discount are you going to give me?”*

After reading this list, take a moment to reflect again on the Psychological Sense of Community survey questions (Jason et al., 2015). Moreover, how does your body feel as you read these statements?

Have you had similar experiences as a guest of a retail establishment where you needed to trust strangers to make a financial decision? This vulnerability can be unsettling especially when we are forced to navigate the transactional power dynamics between money, product, and knowledge (Happ et al., 2021). For this reason, as a

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customer, it *can* sometimes be easier to just buy things online whenever feasible. Yet, as Felice shared, these interactions—when approached with trust, care, and dignity—can reset the boundaries of our community from strictly within the bike shop and transform our membership beyond measures we might even think possible. Skyler agreed, appreciating “the butterfly effect happening here” and how this approach can truly demonstrate the power of human interaction.

To reflect on McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) second element of SOC—influence—we can see the differences members can make for each other in the community space and even in their greater lives. Additionally, when that influence is steered beyond a transactional end, it can recontextualize the traditional power dynamics in retail settings between guests and staff members. When valuing each other as humans with shared passions and a sense of adventure, we can collectively bring more meaning to our lives through a bike shop.

In this next narrative, I will highlight the third element of SOC—integration and fulfillment of needs—and discuss how it plays out in Laurel’s experience within an organizational hierarchy.

SOC Element 3: Integration and Fulfillment of Needs

“Lack of Clarity in the Job Description” (Laurel’s Narrative)

About one month ago her company was internally interviewing four current bike shop employees for the position of assistant manager. She was tasked with hosting all four interviews in one afternoon and then to inform a debrief session one week prior to upper management making their final decision. This was not forecasted ahead of time so much as requested the day before she was to conduct the interviews.

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The bike shop manager was not included in this process to avoid potential projected bias. In hosting these four interviews she felt somewhat unprepared to handle each employee as there was a lack of clarity in their job description. She created a few additional questions last minute to help gather feedback from each candidate asking them to describe what they understood the job description to be. Each response was different, and all agreed they were not given a job description prior to the interview. Following the interviews and debrief session she was approached by one employee who came over to the Outdoor store to talk casually. They walked to a private area within the store, and he expressed his lack of enthusiasm about the position. This employee had shared with her before his frustrations regarding his personal experience as a bike shop employee with former manager experience at another specialty store. His frustrations were, she felt, professionally expressed and reinforced a common theme among current and former bike shop employees. The Bike shop manager often lacked success in connecting with his employees in a way that maintained mutual respect and transparency. A few days later this candidate withdrew his interest in the position.

My intention through this next section was to mirror the detached tenor of Laurel's passage. As she was unable to directly communicate her personal needs in the narrative, I will also discuss her role in illustrating the third element of SOC—integration and fulfillment of needs—by often and intentionally writing in a passive voice. Whereas I based the previous analysis of my narrative around introspection, I will depict this one more practically to highlight how needs can (or cannot) be met by community (or a lack

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thereof) through the workplace. When presenting SOC in the workplace, Boyd and Nowell (2018) focused on the idea of a felt responsibility as the reinforcing factor to act for the gain of personal and organization needs as resources. They described how, if the individual and organization's values and duties align, the individual's needs (both psychological and physiological) can be met. In such an environment, "members will experience greater psychological well-being...they would be more likely to engage in a variety of important pro-organizational behaviors such as organizational citizenship and leadership" (p. 27). Unfortunately, Laurel and the person she interviewed lacked a supportive workplace structure that included "mutual respect and transparency."

Through the CMW session, the women sensed a submissiveness in the way that Laurel wrote her narrative. Though we did not explicitly "deconstruct" (Hamm, 2021, p. 57) the texts with a hermeneutic focus—where we would look for the hidden meaning in way it was written—hers was unique in this regard. The words were dominated by her expression in passive voice ("she was tasked with," "she was approached by"), and the memory efficiently moved through a series of pragmatically described events. Instances where her emotion could be recognized were not forwardly presented at the beginning of the sentences, rather they were overshadowed by an opening phrase. This highlighted that the emotional labor in her work was unrealized or unacknowledged by all. An overarching value seemed to be given to a lack of emotion and, rather, "professional" expression, and these values became a "common theme among current and former bike shop employees."

In this narrative, Laurel acted as both a manager and a non-manager and faced paradoxical needs by others. She had to express what Cousineau and Roth (2012)

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described as masculine-linked traits: “emotionally distant,” and “task-oriented” (p. 427) versus feminine-linked traits: “passive, nurturing” (Bradley, 2022, p. 58) depending on which role she was forced to play in her organizational hierarchy. In addition to the task of pivoting between her professional roles and needs of being manager and subordinate, she likely experienced the pervasive gender bias that is common in the workplace and is linked to gender stereotypes in public spaces (Bradley, 2022; Gray et al., 2020). As a manager, which is traditionally seen as a position for a man, her gender was incongruent with this position. Whereas, as a subordinate, her gender more aligned with the default preference for women. The presented challenge of gender bias remains salient in the bike industry, as noted by the other women in this study, and is experienced at all levels in the organizational hierarchy—especially when the workplace structure is composed of predominantly men (Cornish, 2015; OIWC, 2012).

Yet, perhaps more challenging for Laurel can be illustrated through the concept of “performing gender” as a response to the stereotypical roles that US societies assign to women (Butler, 1990). In addition to responding to the needs in her conflicting professional roles, she was faced with the time and emotional challenges of performing both “woman as subordinate” (to complete the interviews and inform a debrief) and “woman as care-giver” (to support the employee and workplace structure) (Bradley, 2022; Cousineau & Roth, 2012; Gray et al., 2020). As seen in this narrative, the performed and assumed traditional women’s gender roles, provided they are identified as positive by both the woman performing and the recipient, can build community—even when juxtaposed to a breakdown of community. Yet the inverse can also hold true for either actor or recipient when these performances are perceived as negative.

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Building on the idea of social performance, Alexander (2011) noticed that “powerful social actors” can intuit how to perform in practical ways. Returning to how Laurel wrote this narrative, this is elucidated in the two points where she was the subject of the sentence: 1) where she inserted her own clarifying questions in the interviews, and 2) where she joined with the other employee to listen to his needs. One created small moments of resistance, and the other, a community with “mutual [values] of respect and transparency.”

With the spectrum of roles and performances that women play—or are pressured to play—in bike shops, vast opportunities exist where a woman can respond to individual and community needs (Boyd & Nowell, 2018), and this can further reinforce or detract from a SOC. Moreover, with specific awareness of these performances and the stereotypical way that gender is presented in society and in bike shops (Gray et al., 2020), oftentimes she can choose whether to “mis-repeat” (Berbary, 2019, p. 18) her gender—or “reconstruct more equitably” (p. 20)—as an act of resisting dominant gender discourses. These resistances are not large overthrows of power, but rather are small points of resistance across multiple points of oppression that eventually can add up to create larger scale transformations” (p. 18). In other words, the potential is possible for her to affect a more socially just environment for her and her organization (Gray et al., 2020). Individuals and organizations can be set up for the greatest community success when their collective needs are met. From here, I turn to the fourth and final element of SOC—shared emotional connection.

SOC Element 4: Shared Emotional Connection

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“People Will Show Up Because of the Space They Have Created” (Skyler’s Narrative)

She had invited her customers to join her on a birthday ride via Facebook, choosing her favorite route that she had only ridden solo up to that point.

She has worked in the cycling industry for over 6 years now. There have been many opportunities during her time as an employee at her shop that have left her overwhelmed with emotions of gratitude, community, and acceptance. She wants to share the first moment that has set the stage for the years following. It has allowed her to really feel like their customers are more than customers—they are truly family.

She started working at her shop with little to no knowledge of the technical side of cycling, mechanics, bike brands or anything. She applied originally looking for a sales job and to pick up some mechanical training along the way. During her interview with the owner, he saw the passion she had for riding and offered her a full-time mechanics position. It was hard to take the position knowing so little, but to have someone have faith in her abilities in such a specialized industry was new, so she accepted. During her first few years there was a lot of self-doubt, a lot of worry that she wasn’t quite doing her job right or that customers didn’t take her seriously, but she kept muddling through. She would say that changed in July of 2018 on her birthday.

As she became more confident as a cyclist, she wanted to ride further. An employee shared a very simple 40-mile route with her, and she started doing that regularly. The highway was straight, rolling, and beautiful. There were fields on either side and in the summer sunsets, crops would wave beautifully in the golden light. She

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was at peace every time she biked that route, and when her birthday rolled around, she knew she wanted friends to enjoy the ride with her.

She scheduled a Facebook event on her personal page. Over the years she had grown to meet so many other cyclists that she asked the owner if she could share the event on their business page, not as a sponsored event, just as an open invitation. To her surprise she was loaded down with well wishes, RSVPs, and sweet comments from customers she had hardly spoken to. She was even more surprised when the time of the ride came and there were almost 30 people there waiting for her. Some even had gifts and cards, but all just wanted to ride together for the special occasion. After the ride was over, they decided to ride downtown for drinks and there was hardly enough room for them.

She was honestly blown away; she had never had such a large group get together for such a small simple thing. They rode together for hours as the sun slowly set over the rolling hills. She was able to bounce back and forth between different groups of riders to chat, and she couldn't keep the smile off her face. That day created a bond between some very real friends. That day, the guy she had a major crush came and rode too, and now they are married. To say that moment changed how she views working in the cycling industry would be an understatement. It totally transformed her. She feels like she can brainstorm new things, invite people, create new rides and events, and people will show up because of the space they have created in the bike community. She feels the trust it has created between them, which has only grown and shown itself in new and unexpected ways!

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For this next section, I have chosen to further celebrate human interaction with an exploration of the fourth and final element of community—shared emotional connection—through a dialogue. My hope is that, in this format, we (the women in this study) might be more likely to share an indirect emotional connection with you, the reader. For this dialogue, I have gathered direct excerpts from our conversations in the two memory work sessions and incorporated theory as seamlessly as possible. Rather than cite in the traditional manner, contributing scholars will use their first names throughout the conversation. References to McMillan and Chavis, 1986) will be “Davids” and Happ et al., 2021 will be “Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike & Martin.” For direct quotes I will still indicate the page number.

Tamara: Shall we begin?

Welcome to you all, Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike, and Martin! With your work on guest experiences through sports related retail and recognizing the reciprocal benefits of human interaction there, I am glad you all could make it. I recognize the time difference from Austria, so we appreciate y’all for being so accommodating.

Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike, and Martin: Through our study we had expressed a specific interested in learning how these ideas play out in bike shops, so we are excited to hear more.

Tamara: And, Davids, I’ve been inspired by your achievements to gather all things “community”—the vast research by many scholars—so we can have a better understanding of it and to build more towards it. Community has been central to my life through the bike shop, and, as we’ve felt through their stories, it’s been

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quite meaningful to the women here, as well. We are humbled that you all are here with us this eve.

Daids: Thank you for the offer. It is our pleasure. Well, we'll let you take the lead as we are interested to hear how you all experienced community, and specifically the emotional connection through community in Skyler's story.

Tamara: We've all seen how human interaction can both build and detract from community, and so I wanted to thank you, Skyler, for your willingness to offer your memory for this conversation. We can all learn from your honesty and how that vulnerability brings us together.

To start us off, Daids, do you mind sharing your concise presentation of "emotional connection?"

Daids: Sure! We said, "strong communities are those that offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share and ways to resolve them positively, opportunities to honor members, opportunities to invest in the community, and opportunities to experience a spiritual bond among members. It is the definitive element for true community" (p. 14).

Tamara: Alright, y'all, let's jump right in! How did you see these ideas emerge from Skyler's story?

Claire: Skyler, you actually remind me of some of the brand ambassadors I've worked with in the past. You started at a bike shop and knew nothing and gradually built this community. You all just love riding, and your energy is exuberant. You create this cocoon of warmth that people want to be a part of, and you don't even realize

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you're doing it. Yeah, so valuable. Shops don't realize how valuable it is—well, the good ones do. Yeah. And people who do this are very rare.

Skyler: It was just such a raw moment where I wasn't really thinking about the ride and showing up with a caring bunch of people just waiting for me. I was crying, so I really wasn't thinking too much about anything else.

Tamara: Also, the owner trusted you enough to give you a position that you really had no training for, and not just a sales position, but a mechanic position. He put trust in you, and you put trust in having this community share a special day with you. But on the flip side, there didn't seem to be any other support of you. You muddled your way through, as opposed to someone teaching you.

Claire: Well, pair that up with being new and all the self-doubt. There was uncertainty in that position.

Tamara: But also, there's often not an intentional mechanism for supporting new people in shops.

Felice: I don't think that a lot of guys know how to bring a woman into the space, and so it's awkward for them, as well.

Tamara: So, prior to this conversation, we had already collectively discussed lots of ways that would have made us feel more comfortable and supported in our shop space. Would y'all be ok if I incorporated these ideas into a general letter to all shop owners and managers?

Felice: That's a great idea. To a degree, we all have been in a lot of those positions—maybe not all of them, but a lot of those situations. During these stories, there were many times where I definitely was like, "Oh, I've been there!"

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Skyler: Well, the thing is like. I just want to feel like we're bonding.

Dauids: In these examples, the specifics of the interactions may have determined whether there was a reinforced emotional connection or if you were still determining your emotional security as a member in this space.

Skyler: Thanks. It helps me see it with new eyes. And I really enjoy that.

Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike, and Martin: One thing that we noticed was how sports-related shops can tap into the emotion that the sport creates and how this can build opportunities for meaningful interaction between all people when in the shop, across and between staff members and other guests. But we weren't even thinking about the culmination on a ride with guests.

Claire: This bike shop owner—he's smart. He allowed you to lead. There's a good power dynamic in your store. Whoever your bike shop owner is, he understands what he needs and what you bring.

Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike, and Martin: Wow, when positive experiences affected your guests' satisfaction and then they recommend you to their friends, these results would have to be exponential!

Skyler: I'm smiling. You can see it. I'm smiling.

Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike, and Martin: You've definitely "awoken emotions of happiness" (p. 322)!

Skyler: Yes, and that has influenced my life outside of the typical bike store. The bonds that I was able to create with the customers are why I do what I do.

Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike, and Martin: Well, with the pressure of online retail, shops like yours will certainly have an advantage.

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Tamara: If y'all are serious about conducting research on in-store customer experiences in bike shops, please let us know. It'd be fun to combine these ideas with a quantitative study, as well.

Dauids: We often discuss how a sense of community's power lies in its viability as a unifier and, specifically, as an alternate focus to a capitalistic and individualistic culture. It redirects to one that is "based instead on caring and a willingness to share [a] vision and ideals" (p.17). We could see the growth of these ideas through a bike shop and learn how commonly transactional experiences can be reframed.

Tamara: Thank you all, this conversation has been amazing! It's feels wonderful to hear your validation. We have so much gratitude to y'all for sharing your research.

Dauids- We do appreciate the welcome and for all your openness. It was neat to experience our own emotional connection here as we interpreted your memory together.

Elisabeth, Ursula, Mike & Martin- Yes, and we are excited to help build that awareness for how you make people feel *in* the shop and *through* the shop.

Skyler: It was nice seeing you all this eve. Thank you and good night!

In this section and through the dialogue between us and the scholars, I have hopefully demonstrated the emotional connection that can be crafted when human interaction is approached with intention and openness. McMillan & Chavis (1986) described shared emotional connection as "the definitive element for true community" (p.14). To cultivate an environment where staff members and guests in bike shops are more apt to experience a SOC, we can start to see how specific attention to each the

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four elements—membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection—can create a reciprocal dynamic that allows each of the others to more likely thrive.

Conclusion

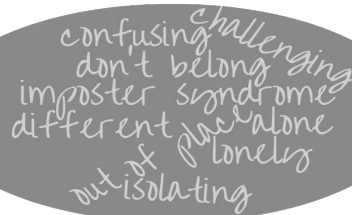
Though McMillan and Chavis (1986) established a comprehensive definition and theory of SOC, related lived experiences can be perceived and felt quite differently across members. Mindfulness to this is critical when designing policies and structures that engage members in processes that build or maintain community (Lambert & Hopkins, 1995). To invoke this process, all parties must approach with an open communication founded on honesty and vulnerability (Gray et al., 2020). In this light and in lieu of a traditional conclusion, I would like to close with a practical offering by us—women leaders working in bikes shops who have experienced community through our workplace—to you. Following are two letters, crafted by ideas and words from our collective research, specifically for: (1) the woman who is, or someday might be, working in a bike shop and (2) the owners and managers of that shop who are ready to support her, and then also for (3) the many other folks in similar marginalized positions and (4) anyone hoping to learn from our collective experience. We appreciate you all!




To the woman who just stepped into work at a bike shop:

We appreciate you! You are stepping into a space where you are likely the only one, or at least in the minority, representing your gender. You are a trailblazer and can also make a difference for those women that come alongside and after us.

What this experience can feel like, especially if you don't have a role model or mentor:



confusing
don't belong
imposter syndrome
different
out of place
isolating

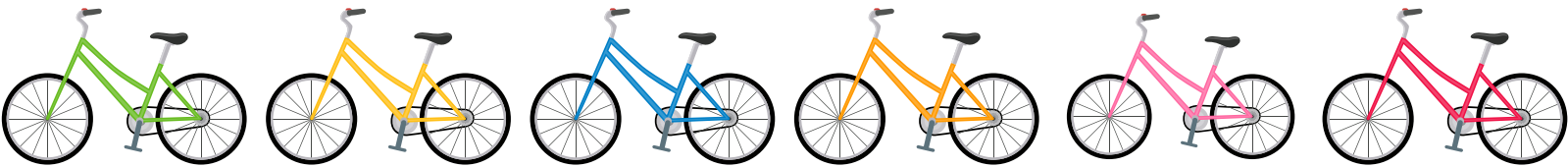


celebrate your difference!

- You have a completely different perspective, different experiences, different ways to listen and communicate. This is valuable! Be confident in your voice.
- It can be hard to figure out how to be a woman in a bike shop. We are often pressured how to be a woman in often conflicting ways (e.g., subordinate, nurturer, change maker). What other ways do you notice? Can you lean into the various ones at various times to best thrive in this space?
- You don't have to muddle your way through. Trust that your team is there to help you out, and you may need to communicate when you need it. It can also be helpful to ask for a regular meeting schedule for check ins; then you don't have to wait until you encounter a challenge to request one.
- You don't have to know all the answers, just where and how to find them. It can be easier and more fun to guide someone through your mutual passion. You may find the best way for this is through honesty, listening, and questions.
- Experiencing gender bias is real. Share your stories. Find a mentor, and, in time, please aim to be one.
- DO NOT tolerate sexual harassment. Request a plan for how to handle this before it might happen.
- Offer support around each other, including guests of the shop who are women. All of this translates to them, as well.
- Strive to be a leader—you can shape more around you than you might realize.
- Please show this letter to those who can best support you. High fives and cheers!

-Tamara and the women who helped explore the idea of community through a bike shop





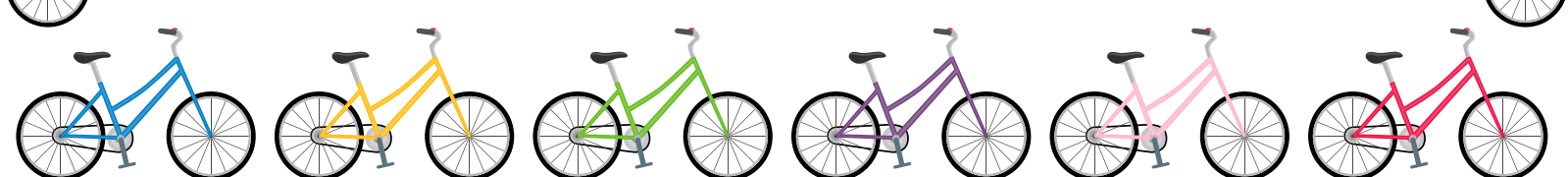
To those wanting to welcome the woman working in your shop:

We appreciate you! Also, with the pressure of online retail, this could be serendipitous! Women tend to create community with those around them—with coworkers and guests—and this can lead to more meaningful experiences for those in your shop.

The idea for this letter emerged through the conversations of five women bike shop managers. While there can be similarities between women working in shops, more importantly, not all women’s experiences in bike shops are the same. Identities like race, sexuality, and ability, among others, significantly impact a person’s experience. We would like to share a list of some things we have learned and ways we wished we were (or have been) supported, especially when we were new to the shop:

- Been shown places for our personal belongings and food, as well as the bathroom and first aid kit. Cleanliness can matter immensely in these locations.
- Been introduced to the physical space in our preferred order—us be guided first, or us explore first.
- Job descriptions are incredibly helpful for setting expectations. It situated us better when each staff member introduced themselves and their roles. And then hearing what our roles were and what our roles were not.
- A plan in the case that we experienced sexual harassment—by guests or staff.
- It could be hard for us to figure out how to be a woman in a bike shop, as society can pressure us in often conflicting ways (to be bold, diminutive, patient, nurturing). In addition to our job, it can be difficult to manage these, as well.
- Specific mechanisms for supporting us—to let us learn, as well regular check-ins for how to best help us grow.
- Acknowledgement of the good work we have done.
- Communication and feedback were better when there was openness to hearing them, as well. A humble request for them was even better. Best yet, was when there were regular, scheduled meetings specifically for this.
- Communication of goals and values that aren’t the traditional business ones.
- Cultivation the sense of belong by rallying around the fun of bikes!

These were some things that did (or could have) made us more comfortable and helped everyone experience a greater sense of community in this space! Thank you for reading. Cheers! -Tamara and the women who helped her explore the idea of community through a bike shop



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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FACE-TO-FACE SCRIPT

Hey Heather,

I am looking to recruit 4-7 women to participate in a study for my Experiential and Outdoor Education master's thesis at Western Carolina University. The study will take place this fall/winter. I am passionate about working to make our industry more inclusive for women. As you might be aware, women are underrepresented in bikes shops and across the whole bike industry, especially at a leadership level. In general, women leaders have been increasing their representation in the outdoor community, resulting in greater participation from women in the industry. However, there are significantly fewer women in leadership roles in the industry than men. A sense of community has been shown to help with the retention of women in leisure, sport, and in the workplace. Therefore, my thesis research will explore how women leaders in bike shops experience community through the workplace. Please let me know of anyone interested in participating, please have them reach out to me directly. The time commitment in this study is rather minimal and can lead to personal encouragement and inspiration. I can also pass along a recruitment email with more details. Thanks!

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APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT PHONE CALL SCRIPT

Hey Heather,

I am looking to recruit 4-7 women to participate in a study for my Experiential and Outdoor Education master's thesis at Western Carolina University. The study will take place this fall/winter. I am passionate about working to make our industry more inclusive for women. As you are aware, women are underrepresented in bikes shops and across the whole bike industry, especially at a leadership level. In general, women leaders have been increasing their representation in the outdoor community, resulting in greater participation from women in the industry. However, there are significantly fewer women in leadership roles in the industry than men. A sense of community has been shown to help with the retention of women in leisure, sport, and in the workplace. Therefore, my thesis research will explore how women leaders in bike shops experience community through the workplace. If you know of anyone interested in participating, please have them reach out to me directly. The time commitment in this study is rather minimal and can lead to personal encouragement and inspiration. I can also follow up with a recruitment email with more details. Thanks!

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APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL LETTER

Subject: Thanks for your interest in the study The Role of Community for Women Leaders in Bike Shops!

Hi [potential participant],

My name is Tamara Sanders, and I am currently working on my Experiential and Outdoor Education master's degree at Western Carolina University. I also own my own bike shop in Carrboro, NC and am passionate about working to make our industry more inclusive for women. As you might be aware, women are underrepresented in bike shops and across the whole bike industry, especially at a leadership level. In general, women leaders have been increasing their representation in the outdoor community, resulting in greater participation from women in the industry. However, there are significantly fewer women in leadership roles in the industry than men. A sense of community has been shown to help with the retention of women in leisure, sport, and in the workplace. Therefore, my thesis research will explore how women leaders in bike shops experience community through the workplace.

I am contacting you, as a leader in the bike industry, to see if you are interested in being a part of this study.

If you agree to participate, here is what the time commitment will look like:

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I will have a one-on-one Zoom meeting or phone call with each interested participant where I will discuss the study, participant expectations, and provide opportunity for questions. Once the participant group has been determined, everyone will be emailed instructions for writing a short narrative on an experience with community through your bike shop. You will have at least one week to write this narrative. The collection of the narratives will have all identifying information removed and then be sent back out to the group where everyone will read and begin thinking about each other's experiences. You will have at least a week for this step, as well. From there, we will all attend a recorded collective Zoom work session to discuss, interpret, and analyze each of the narratives. This Zoom session is estimated to take about 3 hours.

Please note: Audio/visual recordings will be collected during the collective Zoom work session and will be used to help with the transcription of this collective Zoom work session. The recording will be stored on a password protected computer and then destroyed after transcription. The recording will not be shared with the general public. You do have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of this study, though you may opt of using your camera during the collective Zoom work session.

In order to participate in this study, participants must be:

1. at least 18 years of age;
2. self-identify as a woman (this includes transgender women);
3. live in the United States;

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4. be fluent in English;

5. and currently work in or have previously worked in a bike shop in a leadership position where they have served as a manager of at least one employee for a year or longer.

If you are interested and meet the criteria above, please reply to me at tbsanders1@catamount.wcu.edu. Please note that your interest in participating does not yet mean that you are enrolled in this study, nor does it obligate you to participate in this study. Our next step would be to set up a one-on-one Zoom meeting to discuss the study, participant expectations, and provide an opportunity for your questions.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity!

Tamara B. Sanders

Experiential & Outdoor Education MS Student

Western Carolina University

Tbsanders1@catamount.wcu.edu

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APPENDIX D: SOCIAL MEDIA RECRUITMENT POST

Are you a woman leader in a bike shop?

Are you interested in helping make the bike industry women inclusive for women?

Consider joining my study!

I am currently working on my Experiential and Outdoor Education master's degree at Western Carolina University. I also own my own bike shop in Carrboro, NC and am passionate about working to make our industry more inclusive for women. As you might be aware, women are underrepresented in bikes shops and across the whole bike industry, especially at a leadership level. In general, women leaders have been increasing their representation in the outdoor community, resulting in greater participation from women in the industry. However, there are significantly fewer women in leadership roles in the industry than men. A sense of community has been shown to help with the retention of women in leisure, sport, and in the workplace. Therefore, my thesis research will explore how women leaders in bike shops experience community through the workplace. If you are interested in participating, please reach out to me directly. The time commitment in this study is rather minimal and can lead to personal encouragement and inspiration. And if you might know of other interested women, feel free to share this post. High fives!

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APPENDIX E: COLLECTIVE MEMORY GUIDING QUESTIONS

For each memory individually:

1. What is this narrative about? What is the author trying to portray?
2. What's something interesting about this narrative that you want to know more about?
3. How did you feel as you read this memory?
4. How would you describe the sense of community in this narrative?
5. How do you feel that gender at a bike shop played into this memory, if at all?
6. How do you feel that power dynamics of being a leader at a bike shop played into this memory, if at all?

For the collection of memories as a whole:

7. How are our memories similar?
8. How are our memories different?
9. What are continuous elements among memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent? In other words, do you notice any characteristics to the stories that could be related but it's hard to describe how? Or are there any reoccurring themes?
10. Are there any unique occurrences or parts to the stories that stand out that don't seem to fit along with any themes you noticed from question #9?
11. What's not represented in the narratives that's indicative of your experiences of being a woman leader in a bike shop?

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12. What else do you notice that we haven't addressed yet?