BIPOC Communities in the Outdoors: Insisting, Resisting, and Persisting.

By

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Honours Bachelor Environmental Studies, Lakehead University, 2002
Bachelor of Social Work, Carleton University, 2012

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

in the School of Social Work

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary qualitative study explores how outdoor adventure functions as joy as resistance for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) *Instagram* users. Using digital ethnographic and reflexive thematic analysis methodologies, I examined a sample of *Instagram* posts with the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors and narratives of outdoor adventure described as joy as resistance. To analyse the data, I used an intersectional feminist theoretical framework grounded in Black and Indigenous, anti-racist, decolonial and feminist theories.

Instagram posts revealed four themes: 1) representation and underrepresentation; 2) challenging the dominant narrative; 3) dreaming, inspiration, healing, and wellness; 4) connection, family, and community. *Instagram* users asserted that outdoor adventure is any experience in the outdoors where reflection, connection and healing can happen.

Intersectional feminist, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive social work understands that social inequities are the result of historical and current social contexts of systemic oppression and ongoing violence. BIPOC communities experience marginalization and exclusion from opportunities, meaningful participation, and a thriving life. Therefore, engaging in acts to combat systemic oppressions and experiences that foster joy are vital to keeping resistance movements healthy, vibrant, and effective. Engaging in joyful acts of resistance that subvert dominant narratives is a gap in social work education and practice. The dominant narrative of outdoor adventure is both colonial and racist. Subverting dominant narratives through acts such as joyfully engaging in outdoor adventure for BIPOC communities can be a way to rejuvenate and care for our wellness through the ongoing collective effort to combat social inequities and create social change.

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Acknowledgements

I acknowledge and respect the Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimault) Peoples on whose territory the University stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

This study would not have been possible without the support of my thesis committee. Thank you for continuously expressing your excitement and providing much needed encouragement during unexpected life challenges and agonizing moments of doubt. I also want to thank Dr. Donna Jeffery for their support and contributions to this thesis.

I want to thank my dear friends and family for supporting me. Making sure I was nourished, witnessing the tears, and cheering each time I reached a milestone.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory of Anthony Baldwin Lewis, who supported me unconditionally and pushed me to do what that I truly wanted, regardless of what anyone thought.

To my dear friend Stuart Knaack, who nurtured my passion for stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) on many memorable adventures and gave me unconditional support and encouragement.

And to BIPOC outdoor adventurers defining who they are for themselves, finding community, and unapologetically living their authentic life. I see you; you inspire me every day and I am so grateful.

To the next generation of BIPOC outdoor adventurers: don't let anyone tell you can't or shouldn't go.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I am a Woman of Colour who loves the outdoors. I spent many years fueling my imagination and living vicariously through other people's experiences in the outdoors by attending the local annual screening of the Banff Mountain Film Festival (BMFF) World Tour. The BMFF World Tour is a collection of winning films from the annual Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival contest and are screened at various venues around the world. Most of the films centered the experiences of White able-bodied men or White able-bodied women exploring while People of Colour (POC) communities were often featured as a part of the outdoor adventure experience rather than leading their own adventures. For example, POC communities in the films were featured as part of the environmental/physical landscape, as cultural guides, or as being non-modernized. Other times they were featured to elicit praise of the adventurous nature of the White person. More recently, I noticed a shift in the films that featured White men climbing Mount Everest. Local Nepalese Sherpas (guides who regularly risked their lives to assist climbers climb Mount Everest) in the film were being praised and recognized for the number of times they had made the climb, and the film was raising awareness of the impact the tourism industry has on their families and communities. At the last BMFF World Tour I attended, before the COVID pandemic, I finally saw films that featured outdoor adventurists of colour. One film featured a young Woman rock climber of colour, and another film followed the life of a Black falconry expert. Films at the annual BMFF World Tour often featured a dominant narrative of outdoor adventure.

Media that features outdoor adventure has been widely criticized for only featuring White able-bodied people. In October of 2018, the CEO of Mountain Equipment Co-op, Canada's 'iconic retailer' of clothing and equipment for the outdoors, released an apology letter

acknowledging that they have consistently only featured 'predominantly White' models in their advertising. The CEO promised that MEC would strive to be representative of the diverse outdoor community that already exists (Scott, 2018). Jacqueline Scott (2018), a Black outdoors woman, an adventure blogger, and a doctoral student, said she realized that for communities of colour the barriers that exist to participating in outdoor adventure are cultural, rather than just economic or logistical. Scott asserted that the problem is largely about marketing and representation, using the notion of 'visual apartheid' (Brean, 2018). While advertising has been a problem, there has also been ongoing erasure of the contributions made by Black communities and other communities of colour to Canadian history of the outdoors which includes conservation, environmental education, and outdoor education (Scott, 2018). Scott uses the example of Harriet Tubman, the historical figure who is associated with assisting enslaved Black communities who were fleeing to safety in Canada via the Underground Railroad. For Tubman to make those numerous treks, avoid slave catchers, and use alternative routes, she would have needed outdoor survival expertise (Scott, 2018). Media and advertising have upheld a dominant narrative that ignores the histories of outdoor adventurists of colour and continues to exclude their experiences in the outdoors.

I am interested in exploring the experiences of outdoor adventurers of colour. Outdoor adventure exists in the context of ongoing colonialism and heteropatriarchy. Much of the research that focuses on POC communities in outdoor adventure either explores reasons for lack of participation, barriers, or recommendations for meaningful diversity practices. I want to know how POC outdoor adventurers have overcome and challenged systems of oppression to access outdoor adventure, the way that POC communities have thrived from spending time outdoors, and how they have built a more inclusive outdoor community. Ambreen Tariq, creator of the

Brown People Camping project in the United States, is attempting to challenge dominant narratives about experiences in the outdoor and build community with other POC outdoor adventurers (Kefauver, 2017). Tariq, a Woman of Colour (WOC) who grew up in a traditional Muslim family, shared in her interview with Outdoor Women's Alliance that she felt lonely as an adult rediscovering her relationship with the outdoors and not seeing people that looked like her (Kefauver, 2017. In the interview, Tariq said that the lack of diversity in the outdoor adventure community and industry needs to be acknowledged and embraced as an objective truth (Kefauver, 2017). The root of these disparities needs to be understood and addressed for the community who have a genuine connection to the land to grow, and because of that connection, will "love the land and defend its wellbeing" (Kefauver, 2017). As a WOC who loves the outdoors, I am interested in learning more about the complex experiences of POC communities in the outdoors.

I truly came to realize my love of the outdoors when I lived on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta'an Kwach'an Council in the Yukon. I experienced living in a cabin with no running water and a woodstove and learned how to rely on a woodstove as well as split wood for the first time. At the same time, I was excited at the opportunity to improve my skills as a stand-up paddleboarder (SUP) to navigate rivers, white water and support guided multi-day trips. Often, I was the only POC, and I was curious about the experiences and approaches of other POC outdoor adventures. I used the social media platform *Instagram* to search for POC outdoor adventurers. On *Instagram*, I found outdoor adventurists of colour and communities that I could learn from, engage with, and follow. Social media activists and influencers with *Instagram* accounts such as @browngirloutdoorworld, @brownpeoplecamping and @unlikelyhikers created textual and visual narratives of outdoor adventure that I had never

seen before. These narratives included body positivity, reflections on identity, being in outdoor spaces (commonly phrased as 'taking up space' in the outdoors) and decolonizing practices when accessing the outdoors. Most importantly, I noticed the common themes of experiencing unapologetic joy and exploring one's true self, aligning with one's deeply held values and fulfilling one's dreams and goals.

Research Question

As I continued to follow *Instagram* posts of POC outdoor adventurers, I began to compare their experiences to my own. I found that I could personally relate and wanted to know more. I felt so much joy and validation witnessing POC outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* enjoying themselves. I wanted to know more about POC outdoor adventurers' experiences and decided that my research question for my study would be: How does outdoor adventure function as joyful resistance for POC on *Instagram*?

In my research question I use the term People of Colour (POC) broadly to refer to anyone who identifies as non-White. Later in this study, I use the term Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC), Women of Colour (WOC) and other acronym variations. In the following section, I discuss the history of these terms, the tension that exists using these terms, and clarify the use of these terms in my study.

Use of terms POC and BIPOC

I first heard the terms POC and WOC while working at a grassroots feminist collective sexual assault center. I learned about the history of these acronyms from a video posted on YouTube of Loretta Ross, a Black activist and co-founder of the Sister Song Women of Colour Reproductive Justice Collective. Ross explained that the term Women of Colour (WOC) was created at the 1977 National Women's Conference in the U.S. to build solidarity amongst Black

women and other racialized and marginalized women to work in collaboration with one other as oppressed WOC (Grady, 2020; Kim, 2020; Starr, 2023). In a more recent interview with Ross, she talked about how POC communities often do not know the history or the power behind the term:

> Unfortunately, so many times POC hear the term POC from other White people that they think that White people created it instead of understanding that we self-made ourselves. This is a term that has a lot of power for us, but we've done a poor-ass job of communicated that history so that people understand that power. (Grady, 2020)

By sharing Ross's statement, Grady (2020) revives the history of these terms being created to build solidarity across racialized communities and activists of colour to collectively advocate for social change. There are many articles, podcasts and opinion pieces that explain the history of the term POC. The etymology of the term POC predates the term WOC and the explanation that Ross provided in the video (Grady, 2020). The use of the term People of Colour (as a broad category to refer to people who are not White) has been traced to the 17th (Garcia, 2020; Milteer Jr., 2022; Starr, 2023) and 18th century (Kim, 2020). Starr (2023) notes that, in the late 18th and early 19th century, the term POC referred to free and enslaved Black communities, communities with mixed racial ancestry and Indigenous communities. Milteer Jr. (2022) points out that the term POC was embraced by POC communities, often referring to themselves as Free POC, Men of Colour or Women of Colour. The term POC was revived in the 1970s with a broadened grouping of non-White people reflecting the demographic changes in the U.S. to include Asian communities, Latinx and other racialized groups (Starr, 2023). The term POC was revived again by Black, feminist, and progressive movements and used widely in social sciences, journalism, and everyday politics (Starr, 2023). References have been made to both the Black

Panther Party platform as well as Black activist and scholar Angela Davis for using the term POC in the early 1970s to discuss interracial solidarity before the term WOC gained spotlight at the 1977 National Women's Conference (Starr, 2023). These acronyms have a long history that includes WOC and POC communities defining their identities for themselves beyond the systemic restrictions of oppression (such as racism and sexism), building solidarity, bridging efforts to advocate for and create social change.

The use of the term POC has not always being helpful. PhD linguist student deandre miles-hercules explained that while sometimes solidarity and inclusivity can be useful there is a risk of erasure by not specifically naming the minority group(s) that disproportionately experiences certain social inequities or violence (Grady, 2020). During Black Lives Matter protests, Black activists raised the concern that the term POC erases critical differences in experiences of racialized violence (Kim, 2020; Starr, 2023). The erasure of specific experiences of Indigenous communities is another concern that has been raised about using of the term POC (Kim, 2020). For example, the disproportionate rates of police brutality experienced by Black communities or the disproportionate number of Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people who experience sexualized violence. While the origin of the term Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) is not clear, this term is now used more often to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous communities (Garcia, 2020; Grady, 2020). The New York Times traced the earliest appearance of the term BIPOC on Twitter in 2013 (Garcia, 2020; Grady, 2020). These acronyms ought to be used with caution and intention to make sure that social issues are not generalized while racialized groups unite to organize for social change.

I initially used the term POC in my research question to broadly refer to people and communities who identify as non-White. I felt this was appropriate since I was not focusing on

any particular racialized group of people while gathering my sample. When I finalized my sample, I noted which racial identifiers *Instagram* users shared in their posts. By using a broad term like POC, I risk perpetuating and continuing the colonial practice of erasure (Garcia, 2020). In this study, I refer specifically to Black and Indigenous communities in my sample and analysis because of the disproportionate experiences of systemic exclusion, discrimination, and violence in the outdoors as well as the unique links that these experiences have with colonialism. When I use the term POC in my findings and analysis I am referring to outdoor adventurers in my sample who do not identify as White and are not part of the Black or Indigenous communities. While I use the term POC, it is important to generalize the experiences of this diverse group. It is out of the scope of my study to examine unique experiences of each racialized group found in my sample. I intentionally use the following racial identifiers throughout my study:

- Indigenous outdoor adventurers/*Instagram* users: people who identified themselves using the word "Indigenous" and specifically speak to their experiences on Turtle Island (colonially known as North America) in their posts.
- Black outdoor adventurers/*Instagram* users: people who identified themselves using the word "Black" in their posts.
- People of Colour (POC) outdoor adventurers/*Instagram* users: people who identified themselves of being non – White and not part of the Black community or Indigenous community.
- BPOC outdoor adventurers/*Instagram* users: Black communities and People of Colour (does not include Indigenous people).
- BIPOC outdoor adventurers/*Instagram* users: Black communities, Indigenous communities, and People of Colour.

Language used in studies can perpetuate or subvert systemic oppressions (Mack and Palfrey, 2020). For this study, instead of only capitalizing racialized terms such as Black outdoor adventurers, Indigenous outdoor adventurers, and People of Colour outdoor adventurers I capitalize the word White to subvert the narrative that Whiteness is the norm as suggested by Mack and Palfrey (2020) who encourage grammatical equity practice. In this section, I provided a brief history of the terms People of Colour (POC), Women of Colour (WOC) and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC). I outlined the tensions that exist with respect to the historical and current uses of these terms in media, research, social sciences, and politics. I clarified how I used these terms and other variations in my study. The following section provides a brief overview of my study.

Brief overview of my study

I began my study with an interdisciplinary literature review that brought different bodies of literature and disciplines into conversation with one another to explore the following topics related to my research question: oppression and the body, the body and joy as resistance, outdoor adventure and the body, outdoor adventure as joy as resistance, and digital activism.

I used a combination of qualitative methodologies to answer my research question; digital ethnography and reflexive thematic analysis of 48 purposefully sampled *Instagram* posts (photo and text) that included the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors. A feminist intersectional theoretical framework with an emphasis on identity and the complex social context of outdoor adventure grounded the analysis and reflexivity in my study. My analysis relied heavily on the anti-oppression, anti-racist, liberation and resistance work by Black feminists, scholars and activists and the decolonizing work of Indigenous feminist scholars and activists that were highlighted in the literature review.

My use of an ethnographic, reflexive thematic analysis with a feminist intersectional theoretical framework required that I consider my positionality and relationship to the research question as well as the analysis throughout my research process. My positionality, my life experiences and current understanding of the sociopolitical context have a significant impact on my research analysis.

Positionality

I am a second-generation, cis queer, settler, and Woman of Colour with roots to the Gulf of Aden. My ancestors from the Gulf of Aden, experienced the trauma of colonization and Yemenis to this day continue to resist violent colonial interference. I have never had the opportunity to visit the Gulf of Aden to connect with family, the land, culture or learn a decolonial history about my ancestors. This has meant that I have had to re-imagine my Arabian and Muslim identity by dismantling the harmful western narratives while building a connection to land through outdoor adventure. During my outdoor adventures I feel like my authentic self could belong somewhere.

I grew up on the Unceded lands of the Algonquin Anishnaabe peoples (colonially known as Ottawa) and spent time with family and friends on the shores of the Kitche Zibi (colonially known as the Ottawa River). Graduating from high school, I decided that I wanted a career in the outdoors, so I moved to the territories of the Ojibwe people on the shore of the Gichigami (colonially known as Thunder Bay on the shore of Lake Superior) to complete a degree in environmental studies. At the very beginning of my degree, I learned that despite my love for the outdoors I was still very inexperienced being outdoors in comparison to my classmates. I often trailed behind classmates in our field school, struggling to find my footing when we were off trail and having to quickly learn orientation skills on the spot. I took advantage of opportunities

to go on outdoor adventures with friends as they arose. To participate in these adventures, I often borrowed gear from friends and learned outdoor skills along the way.

When I graduated and returned home, I longed to spend as much time as possible in local greenspaces, the lakes, and by the river. As mentioned previously, I sought inspiration for outdoor adventure by attending the annual local screening of the best of the Banff Mountain Film Festival (BMFF) World Tour. I also took any opportunity I could to canoe with friends, windsurf, kayak, mountain bike, cross country ski, snowshoe, camp, and swim. To go canoeing, windsurfing, and camping I relied on friends who were experienced and knowledgeable. These friends also had their own gear or could use their parents' gear or equipment. Often, I went on outdoor adventures on my own (hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, etc.) but never completely felt comfortable. I felt that I lacked the proper training or experience to be in the outdoors for longer than an hour at a time or too far from the shore if I was out on the water.

When I was a teenager, spending time in the outdoors on my own was the only place I felt comfortable and safe to be my authentic self. While outdoors, I felt liberated from the expectations of my parents and peers. I felt liberated from imposed gender roles and expression combined with the pressure to modify my body to achieve the desirable standards of beauty within the Yemeni diasporic community and Canadian identity. While spending time in the outdoors, I felt like my most authentic self because I felt confident to explore my interests and felt inspired, energized, and joyful despite the expectations of my peers and community. This liberation was often brief because peers of colour would often question my identity for wanting to spend time outdoors. I carry the painful memory of being told by a peer that I was doing

‘White people things’ and that it wasn’t normal for a Person of Colour. Despite the pressures to conform to limited gendered and racialized scripts, I continued to seek out outdoor adventure.

As an adult I worked in the anti-violence movement and enrolled in a social work program. These experiences expanded my definition of social work to include community-based social justice work, support work, activism, and social movement activism. My definition and practice of social work was grounded in the theoretical and analytical lens that I learned from Black feminist scholars and activists. I have found that despair, along with experiences of frustration and dismay are often experienced on a personal and collective level while doing social justice work. Spending time in the outdoors became my strategy for self-care as I began working in the movement to end gender-based violence. I found that after spending time in the outdoors I felt rested and energized to be able to continue my work supporting survivors of gender-based violence, facilitating support groups, and co-facilitating anti-oppression and anti-violence education. While continuing to work in the movement to end gender-based violence and engaging in outdoor adventure in the Yukon, I felt a new tension rising.

At this point in my life, I began to learn about the importance of providing a land acknowledgement as a first step of reconciliatory practice. I found this was common practice in workspaces and activist organizing spaces but was lacking in my experiences of outdoor adventure. Often, I felt uncomfortable because I was unsure of whose land I was on when I was hiking, mountain biking or on multi-day stand-up paddleboarding trips.

The outdoors is not a neutral space and approaches to outdoor adventure have been fraught with ongoing colonial practices and narratives. As a Woman of Colour in the outdoors, I often experienced feeling uncomfortable and lonely. Visual media (including advertisements) and popular narratives (through film, books, articles, etc.) of outdoor adventure have maintained

and perpetuated a narrative of the outdoors being dominated by White people and specific unwritten rules and expectations for engaging with the outdoors based on colonial approaches. Dominant visual media representations and narratives of outdoor adventure erase the history of land theft and displacement of Indigenous peoples in Canada. My personal desire to continue to engage in outdoor adventure and to see an increase in diverse representations of outdoor adventure needs to be balanced with reflection and intentional action on recommendations for reconciliation like land acknowledgments, calls for land back and Indigenous sovereignty, otherwise I risk upholding settler colonial practices of outdoor adventure.

By sharing my positionality, I demonstrate my commitment to practicing critical feminist intersectional self-reflexivity, acknowledging the subjectivity of my findings, and making transparent the influence of my personal experiences throughout the process of this study.
In the following chapter, I summarize the relevant interdisciplinary literature related to my research question.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide background on my literature search and an interdisciplinary literature review of five topics related to answering my research question. I begin by sharing my literature search below.

Literature search

Using terms like 'outdoor adventure', 'People of Colour', *Instagram*, and 'joy as resistance' to search in social work databases for previous studies related to my research question yielded limited results. These results often focused on outdoor education or the outdoors as part of a therapeutic process. Since these results were not directly related to my study, I chose to focus on critical literature related to the following key concepts embedded in my research question: the body, identity, the outdoors, and joy. Before expanding my research through library databases, I reviewed the work of key Black anti-racist feminist activists and scholars from my feminist community-based anti-violence work. While I had familiarity with these activists and scholars, it was on a superficial level. My study offered the opportunity to deeply explore and understand their work and contributions for social change. I explored their work to build a foundational understanding of these concepts and then expanded my literature review with subsequent research found through my search. The foundational understanding was based on exploring the relationship between identity and the complex socio-political and cultural context of outdoor adventure. I found that I needed to bring together bodies of work that included the body, identity, place-based theories, oppression, environmental justice, and joy.

Identity and the body are inextricably linked to experiences of oppression and joy. To understand the relationship between the body, identity, and joy, I used the works of bell hooks (1989), Sonya Renee Taylor (2021), and Rae Johnson (2007; 2018). I sought out Audre Lorde

(1984; 1988) and adrienne maree brown (2019) to ground my understanding of the links between identity, the body, and experiences of joy. To conceptually explore 'the outdoors' as a construction of colonialism and White Supremacy, I turned to groundbreaking work of Eve Tuck and Marcia Mckenzie (2014). Diversifying outdoor adventure and the narratives associated with outdoor adventure requires an approach that is intersectional and feminist as well as anti-racist and decolonial. For this approach, I turned to the expertise of Patricia Hill Collins (2000; 2015; 2019), Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) and Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005).

Through this initial review of texts and expertise, I identified five bodies of research that needed to be explored in more detail to address the complexity of the concepts that intersect in my research question. First, I examine the impact of oppression on the body. Second, building from the understanding that oppression is an embodied experience I seek to understand joy as resistance and the benefits thereof. Third, I discuss the impact of the existing dominant narratives of outdoor adventure and the experiences shared through previous research by and about People of Colour in the outdoors. Fourth, I theorize the possibility of the outdoors as being a site of resistance through the works of bell hooks (1989) and Gloria Anzaldua (1987). Finally, as my study involves the use of the digital space *Instagram* as the site for data collection, I discuss the use of digital spaces as sites of activism.

Oppression and the Body

To understand the impact of oppression on the body, I draw on the works of Christine Caldwell and Lucia Bennet Leighton (2018), Sonya Renee Taylor (2021) and Sue Johnson (2007; 2018). We are affected by the cultural norms within which we are socialized (Johnson, 2018). Intersecting forms of oppression (racism, ableism, classism, sexism, homophobia,

transphobia and many more) are pervasive systemic injustices that are perpetrated through cultural norms and uphold harmful attitudes and beliefs about social categories of difference.

Social categories of difference are built on the perceived physical attributes or expressions of our bodies (Johnson, 2018). The body is theorized as a means through which a sense of self and an understanding of identity is constructed (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018). Our bodies are literally a physical site of perceived intersecting social identities (Johnson, 2018). Taylor (2021) asserts that social, political, and economic issues we see today are about our bodies and are related to the effort to uphold systems of oppression. Social issues are directly related to the many ways our bodies are perceived and labeled with intersecting social categories such as, but not limited to, race, age, gender, ability, and sexual orientation (Taylor, 2021). Perceptions of the body that are linked to oppression create and uphold systems of oppression through complex and harmful experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and violence (Taylor, 2021).

The decisions we make about our bodies are also formed in part by messages received about bodies (Taylor, 2021). Johnson (2007) tells us that the body is a social symbol and signals to others who we are, regardless of the type of interaction. Not only are there established social norms about bodies, but there exists a socially constructed narrative that certain bodies are physically natural, psychologically healthy, and morally right, which in turn has implications for those who do not fit in those standards (Johnson, 2018). Bodies that are marked as physically natural, healthy, and morally right - White, masculine, heteronormative, and able - are privileged to feel at home and assert dominance in social interactions as well as environments (Ahmed, 2000) such as the outdoors. White, masculine, heteronormative, and able bodies also become the

standard to which all other bodies are compared for being natural, healthy, and morally right (Ahmed, 2000).

The outdoors is a space where the expectation to see White, masculine, heteronormative and able bodies creates a narrative that all other bodies are considered to be out of place. I explore this narrative in more detail later in the outdoor adventure and body section of this literature review. Razack (1998) tells us that our understanding of one another and ourselves is influenced by systems of oppression. Our behaviours towards one another and ourselves can reproduce social hierarchies, norms and narratives that are embedded in systems of oppression (Razack, 1998). Social norms and narratives about bodies are continuously reinforced by those around us and have implications as people experience pressure and attempt to modify their bodies (Johnson, 2018). How people feel about their bodies, how they treat their bodies, and what they know their bodies can do either directly challenges or upholds systemic oppressions.

Oppression has been theorized as a method used to immobilize, limit options, and control the behaviour of groups of people (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018). Oppression impacts the way people experience interactions with individuals, community, societal institutions, culture, and nature. Sara Ahmed (2000) points to the work by Rosalind Diprose who shared that imposed categories of difference through oppression are felt in encounters with one another through look and touch. Past and present social experiences and learned narratives inform how people understand the socio-political context. How a person understands themselves in relation to social context can determine what possibilities and/or barriers exist for present and future opportunities or experiences.

Oppression affects how people conceptualize their sense of self, community, and what to expect from various environments (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018). Experiences of oppression are

social because they involve interactions between bodies and active differentiation in relation to each other's bodies (Ahmed, 2000). People give meaning to themselves, others, and the world around them as they interact with other people in social environments, such as the outdoors (Pike and Weinstock cited in Pike and Beames, 2013). These social relationships that influence identity are characterized by subordinate/dominant power relations in society (Moosa-Mitha, 2015). Power relations impact the ease with which people can move through the world and their sense of importance. Ahmed (2000) points out that White, masculine, heteronormative able-bodied people are privileged and take up spaces of power in society and culture to have their needs and interests met. In comparison, racialized people's experiences of oppression socialize them to believe that their health, votes, work, safety, families, and lives do not matter, or at least not as much as those of White men and women (brown, 2019). This socialization impacts how a racialized person feels about themselves, what opportunities they believe are available, and their ability to thrive (Taylor, 2021).

Rae Johnson (2018) says that oppression is an embodied experience of shaming. Media and social norms, reinforce standards established by intersecting systems of oppression which can cause a rift between the sense of self and the body thus creating a disembodied experience (Caldwell and Leighton. 2018). This rift and disembodied experience between the self and body is a painful experience that creates deep feelings of shame, impacts sense of self, and negatively impacts a racialized person's wellbeing. People with bodies that do not fit the socially constructed dominant form (white, able-bodied, thin) experience pressure to alter their bodies to conform. According to Caldwell and Leighton (2018), this pressure requires that marginalized folks either adapt to white European cultural norms or actively fight stereotypes. Caldwell and Leighton (2018) referred to Black feminist author bell hooks' warning in an article by Lion's

Roar Staff (2014) that when BIPOC communities engage in practices to conform their body to a socially constructed and dominant form they are disconnecting from their own bodies and upholding white supremacy.

People's energy and sense of self can be diminished by dealing with the everyday social, political, and economic barriers in place through the systems of oppression (Taylor, 2021). In this sense, day to day social interactions may include experiencing multiple microaggressions and pushing back against oppressive boundaries that are set up by race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality etc. (hooks, 1989). Pushing back against oppressive boundaries and limitations that are established can be liberating. There is liberation and joy in intentionally defining identity for oneself, building community, and actively seeking out experiences beyond what has been defined through limited lenses of oppression.

The Body and Joy as Resistance

Rae Johnson (2018) asserts that experiencing intersecting forms of systemic oppression is an embodied experience. These experiences are manifested and mediated through the body as trauma. Johnson tells us that oppression affects body image, body movement and constriction, and alters how we understand ourselves or who we perceive ourselves to be. Johnson (2018) also emphasizes that experiences of oppression are relational since they are the result of bodies interacting with one another in a socio-political context.

Experiences of systemic oppression that impact our bodies, influence our approaches to social justice work as well. In her collection of essays, *A Burst of Light,* Audre Lorde (1988) wrote about the pressure she felt to comply and accept the suggested clinical and western medical cancer treatment for her body. Lorde expressed that the choices she made regarding her cancer treatment were political acts of reclaiming her racialized body. In her writings, Lorde

emphasized the importance of recognizing the power of a racialized body, breaking the silence about painful experiences, and determining care for her body on her own terms. This is what she meant when she said, "caring for oneself as a political and revolutionary act" (Lorde, 1988). As a Black woman, Lorde (1988) was exercising her bodily autonomy in direct resistance to the White dominated health care system. Lorde also emphasized that determining and choosing to live by what is affirming for oneself is critical and an expression of joy when she said:

> "…learning to fight despair in all its manifestations is not only therapeutic. It is vital. Underlying what is joyful and life affirming in my living becomes crucial" (p.162)

The frequent experience of coming up against systemic barriers, exclusion and violence while attempting to educate, validate, advocate, build community, build, and engage alternative strategies, and inspire transformative change is exhausting in this work.

Intentionally seeking out joy as part of a therapeutic personal and collective social justice approach requires energy and can be challenging. Lorde (1988) insists that part of working towards social change must include BIPOC communities honouring and caring for their bodies. A disembodied practice (separating the self from the body) would not include considering or being aware of the impact social justice work has on the body over time. If experiencing systemic oppressions is a negative embodied experience, then actively resisting can negatively impact the body as well. Disembodied practices in social justice work can fail to liberate BIPOC communities from internalized experiences of trauma and violence. Audre Lorde's idea of self-care has been taken up by many queer, feminist, and activist circles and defined as the intentional practice of preserving and caring for oneself in the face of a world that is hostile to your identity, your community and way of life (Spicer, 2019).

In a society that is shaped by violence, racism and oppression, conscious acts and expressions of joy are vital forms of resistance to harmful dominant narratives (Lu and Steele, 2019). Power and pleasure overlap and reinforce one another, rather than oppose one another (Trumbull, 2018). Lorde's (1984) earlier quote asserted that when we tap into the power of joy and continuously seek out that feeling, we are taking care of our wellbeing in the most authentic way. Feeling good is not frivolous but rather it is freedom, accessing and experiencing pleasure is the point (Msosa, 2018). Experiences of joy and pleasure transcend experiences of systemic oppression. adrienne maree brown (2019) emphasizes that practicing self-care – for oneself and collectively with others - is political resistance and cultivates resilience. To be able to choose our joy and how we experience it, is the freedom that so many are fighting for (Lee, 2018). Joy can restore abundance to a place where false scarcity has been imposed (Lee, 2018). Audre Lorde (1984), through her monumental essay *Uses of the Erotic,* tells us that:

> "Once we know the extent of how acutely and fully we are capable of feeling that sense of satisfaction and completion … we can observe which of our various life endeavors bring us closest to that fullness" (p.54).

This feeling of fullness and joy is experienced in the body. This is the embodied experience of joy and pleasure as resistance.

In the context of this study, reclaiming joy and pleasure should not be confused with the experience and expected outcome of happiness. Ahmed (2010) has explored the relationship between happiness, privilege, and the prescribed ways to attain happiness. Often in literature, and other forms of media, the featured experiences of happiness tend to reflect the face of privilege (Ahmed, 2010). Happiness in many ways has been prescribed to us and this predetermination tells us where and how to find happiness and teaches us what we value rather

than simply what is of value (Ahmed, 2010). For example, in the Canadian cultural context the dominant narrative represents the outdoors as a place to rest and rejuvenate, have meaningful connection, and experience happiness with friends, family and loved ones. Parks Canada, a Department of the Government of Canada committed to protecting representative and diverse examples of natural landscapes, boasts that national parks offer the following:

> "Each national park is a haven for the human spirit. …They provide opportunities to connect with nature, people and the events that define people on these lands." (Parks Canada, 2022)

Experiences of joy in the outdoors are complex, considering this narrative ignores historical and colonial roots as part of nation-building, settlement, and the construction of the Canadian identity. Nation-building and the construction of a Canadian identity includes racialized narratives about who belongs in the outdoors and in the nation. Experiences of outdoor adventure as joyful resistance for BIPOC communities may be both joyful in that they resist dominant narratives and harmful stereotypes while at the same time are in direct tension with maintaining harmful colonial narratives.

Outdoor Adventure and the Body

Social arrangements have been mapped onto "natural environments" (Kafer, 2013). Wilderness and outdoor adventure spaces, including parks, are social and cultural constructs (Cronon, 1995 cited in Mawani, 2007). The experiences that people can have in the natural environment are constructed, shaped by, and experienced through assumptions and expectations about gender, sexuality, class, race, and nation (Kafer, 2013). Patterned behaviours that uphold racialized and other socially constructed spaces often continue without intervention or rupture (Harrison, 2013). Dominant narratives about outdoor adventure create expectations of which

bodies will be seen in the outdoors, what activities count as adventure, and what clothing or gear is necessary. When people do not see themselves reflected in experiences such as outdoor adventure, judgements and conclusions are drawn about this absence (Taylor, 2021). Narratives of outdoor adventure bring our attention to the socialization and categorization of bodies, with dominant assumptions about some bodies belonging in the outdoors and others that do not. Razack (2002) notes that oppression includes spatial constructions of belonging, resulting in barriers and exclusion of bodies. The outdoors is an example of a social construction where the White, masculine, heteronormative and able body can move with ease and has the most privilege (Ahmed, 2000).

This ease of access and privilege within outdoors spaces creates a dominant White settler narrative of outdoor adventure that facilitates and maintains unquestioned access and occupation of these places. The prominent narrative and imagery of national and provincial/territorial parks as untouched forests and natural continues to obscure and protect colonial violence (Mawani, 2007). Marketing and advertising of these parks and wilderness spaces has predominantly built imagery and an imagination of parks as pristine and untamed spaces, which in turn increases their commodity value (Mawani, 2007). Wilderness areas and parks (constructed as the space where outdoor adventure happens) are designated and safe guarded through rules and regulations that prohibit and control people's presence, but more specifically the presence of Indigenous people (Mackey, 1999). For new parks to be established, Indigenous communities were (and continue to be) forcibly and violently removed and the evidence of their communities ever existing in those spaces is destroyed (Kafer, 2013). Parks and outdoor spaces are therefore not only contested places with erased histories, but they are also spaces where new narratives are crafted to include messaging of who is most welcome and expected to enjoy these spaces.

The Canadian identity has been constructed and understood in a way that assumes Whiteness as the norm along with a deep desire to explore and safeguard the outdoors. Razack (2002) points to a national mythology of Canada being a vast and open land of lakes, dense forests, and the modern-day voyageur in their canoe. For example, Parks Canada states that the nation's designated green spaces reflect "the beauty and infinite variety of our land" and are a "source of pride for Canadians and integral part of our identity" (Parks Canada, 2022). Narratives of Canadian wilderness, that frame national parks as natural or pristine, erase the violent colonial origin stories that underpin the establishment of Canada as a nation-state (Mawani, 2007). Carolyn Finney (2014) points to national parks in the U.S. as places where cultural identity and specific histories collide to create a collective national consciousness and identity. In Canada, Razack (2002) shares that narratives about the Canadian wilderness are part of nation-building through mythology or national stories to build a sense of community and belonging among citizens. This intersection of national identity and dominant narrative of the outdoors, in Canada and the U.S., ultimately serves to uphold and maintain the colonial project of land theft and erasure of Indigenous communities. These dominant narratives of history, identity, nationhood, and outdoor adventure are then represented in advertising, film, and public digital spaces, such as *Instagram*.

Representation and underrepresentation become "stories we tell about ourselves, each other, and the places we live" (Finney, 2014, p. 3). Representation is influenced by historical colonial processes that solidified power relations that ensured a structure of class was established, an erasure of certain historical events, and harmful narratives of race and gender (as well as other social identities) providing a "revised" version of the past and shape today's lived reality (Finney, 2014). Historic colonial processes included intentional racialized and gendered

reconstructions of place and space in Western cultures for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to learn where they belong or do not belong (Bird, 2002 cited in Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 83). In the U.S., Finney (2014) asserts that the dominant narrative of outdoor adventure is "informed by White, Western European or Euro-American voices", inextricably linked to the colonial practice national identity building, and intentionally excludes African American communities' identities and experiences of the outdoors (p.3). Writing in the Canadian context, Scott (2022) notes that excluding the experiences of Black communities and other communities of colour in the outdoors creates geographies of absence that are ultimately tied to emphasizing Whiteness as the norm.

Our experiences in the social world and the meaning we attribute to our experiences are influenced by who we interact with and where we have interactions with one another (Hill Collins, 2019). The process of making meaning of experiences, is dynamic and fluid as our relationships with one another and with social institutions that continuously shift and change (Hill Collins, 2019). Meaning making of experiences in the outdoors brings together social location, social interactions, and history. Razack (2002) emphasizes the point that if we want to understand bodies in specific spaces, a mapping of spaces in relation to systemic oppressions such as racism is critical.

While everyone participates in making meaning of their experiences of the outdoors, Finney (2014) points out that in the U.S. meanings that "gain traction" (in the attempt to define who people are or to "shape a narrative") are the ones that are believed to reflect a collective national identity (p. 77). For example, in the U.S., imagery of the outdoors has been used to build a narrative to connect "national identity and human spirit" to ingrain the notion that the "American landscape" ought to be preserved as it can "save the American soul" (Dunaway, 2005

cited in Finney, 2014, p. 76). In Canada, greenspaces and parks have been coded as "integral" to the Canadian identity and as a source of pride to create a collective sense of belonging (Mawani, 2007, p. 722).

The attempt to build a collective sense of belonging was exclusively for White men. Canada's geographic location and climatic conditions were essential in building an identity to embody the narrative of a "True North Strong and Free" (Razack, 2002, p.3). Scott (2022) points to outdoor recreational clubs that were created to ensure that White men upheld the valued masculine tropes of being strong and tough despite the luxury of city living. Historically, spending time outdoors was encouraged to rejuvenate one's body and maintain the vitality of one's masculinity (Scott, 2022). Women and BIPOC communities were not encouraged and had limited access to the outdoors (Scott, 2022). Finney (2014) states that a collective national identity that includes the outdoors continuously excludes the legacy of land theft and forcible removal of Indigenous communities as well as the enslavement and indenturing of Black communities. Without examining these realities, Finney (2014) asserts that Americans will not be able to fully define themselves individually or collectively. Indigenous scholars have clearly stated that outdoor spaces are places with deep ancestral ties, histories, and meaning (Tuck and Mackenzie, 2014).

Research has shown that Black communities are the least likely to engage in activities outdoors (Scott, 2022). Ethnicity-based arguments are often used to emphasize choice and agency when examining the participation of BPOC communities in the outdoors. Studies have repeatedly stated that economic barriers are the main reason why participation in the outdoors is low among POC communities and even lower for Black communities (Finney, 2014). Scott (2022) states that barriers and constraints such as cost, lack of skills or the fear of violence are

directly linked to social constructions of who belongs and who does not belong in outdoor adventure. Meeker (1984 cited in Finney, 2014, p. 30) reminds us that when it comes to accessing the outdoors, African Americans may be influenced by anticipated or previous experiences of racism in the outdoors.

Scott's (2022) study on young Black skiers in Canada notes that while there is an anticipation of experiencing racism, it is not the first consideration. The first consideration with respect to safety is the concern of unfamiliarity with wild animals, the weather and skills needed (Scott, 2022). In their study on Black skiers Harrison (2013) states that ethnicity-based arguments often ignore the impacts of past and present experiences of racist discrimination on participation. Scott (2022) asserts that outdoor activities are socially constructed based on gender and race. Experiences of violence and discrimination have been recounted by Black and Indigenous communities who attempted to access greenspaces (Harrison, 2013). Youth in Black communities have shared that they avoid natural spaces in urban centers since their presence often invites questions, suspicion, and harassment by policing services (Scott, 2022).

Lack of information and knowledge about the outdoors are a significant barrier for BPOC communities (Scott and Tenneti, n.d.). In their study *Race and Nature in the City,* Scott and Tenneti (n.d.) note that barriers to knowing about the outdoors were related to transportation, clothing, cost, and terms associated with the outdoors. Other forms of knowledge and information such as expected behaviours and hidden obligatory social codes have also been identified as barriers to accessing various outdoor sports for BPOC communities outdoor (Bourdieu, 1978 cited in Harrison, 2013). These behaviours and social codes are learned through experience. Scott (2022) shares in her research that skiers of colour first learn to ski from friends or school trips whereas White skiers are more likely to learn from family. Studies have noted that

immigrants prefer outdoor activities such as picnics, barbecuing with family and friends over solo experiences in the outdoors such as skiing, or hiking (Scott and Tenneti, n.d.).

Unfamiliarity with expected behaviours and social codes can create situations where BPOC communities are at risk of experiencing adverse treatment or humiliation. In a study on outdoor adventure that focused on the experiences of POC communities in group settings, participants shared they felt tokenized and pressured to assimilate (Rao and Roberts, 2018). One study that focused on outdoor education also found that while increasing racial diversity affects group dynamics, White students benefitted more than racialized students (Paisley et. al., 2014). Researchers have concluded that to simply make space for racialized communities does nothing to challenge the racist processes or institutions that have been established in outdoor settings that ask racialized communities to conform to White norms (Paisley et. al., 2014).

A national survey conducted by Mountain Equipment Coop in 2018 revealed that People of Colour on average spent more time outdoors and engaged in a broader range of outdoor activities than White people who participated in the survey (MEC, 2018; Scott and Tenetti, n.d.). The results from this study are significant since it directly challenged the myth that the outdoors is dominated by White people and created a drive towards greater inclusion in advertising and marketing of outdoor adventure experiences and gear (MEC, 2018). A study that examined racialized students' experiences of outdoor adventure (and education) shared the following list of recommendations and areas for future research:

> reconceptualizing meanings of outdoor places and concept of adventure linked to colonial processes and Indigenous sovereignty; socialization and intersectionality of race, class, gender and other identities; post-structural feminist frameworks including social network analysis; experiences of biracial and multiracial populations; attitudes

> and perceptions of ethnic minorities regarding how they are influenced by racialized constructions including and how different cultural groups experience the outdoors; critiques of the visual and media images of outdoor leaders and participants; attention to social justice theory and practice in outdoor adventure therapy; understanding how to make all Outdoor Adventure Education programs multicultural. (Warren et al., 2014, p. 97)

In other studies, Women of Colour outdoor adventurists emphasized the desire to be able to gather and connect through social networks to share experiences, ideas, advocacy, and support (Rao and Roberts, 2018). This desire shows deep yearning for community, shared learning and representation across geographical barriers and feelings of isolation.

Researchers have identified experiences of racism as a significant factor that contributes to the lack of representation of Black communities in the outdoors (Finney, 2014, p. 9). Researchers have noted that Black communities often expressed fear of travelling through unfamiliar and/or rural areas of the U.S. considered to be more hostile their presence (Finney, 2014). While these barriers and experiences of violence exist for BPOC communities, Harrison (2013) has pointed to the works of sports sociologists and cultural geographers, who suggest that sports and leisure field [such as outdoor adventure] are not only spaces where there is a maintenance and ongoing production of power relations (gender, race, class etc.) but are dynamic spaces of resistance (p.320).

Outdoor Adventure as Resistance

Phiona Stanley's (2020) study provides an example of how outdoor spaces can be sites of resistance. Stanley's netnography investigated the social media activism on *Instagram* of hikers who challenged the dominant narrative of this outdoor experience, focusing their sample on

hikers of colour, self-identified queer hikers, women hiking solo and fat hikers. Stanley conducted a discursive analysis of the multimodal content of 60 Instagram accounts and posts published from 2015 to early 2019. Stanley noted the assumption or stereotype that only people with certain kinds of bodies (able-bodied, white, and thin) can enjoy outdoor activities, such as hiking. While hiking can be a source of self-actualization, wellbeing, redemption and enjoyment for anyone, Stanley found that dominant narratives and representations provided in media do not include a diverse representation of who and which bodies enjoy the outdoors. Stanley's research highlighted and deconstructed the narrowly defined socially construction of outdoor adventure only being possible for people who are fit, muscular, male, white, young, and able-bodied. This social construction of the expected body in outdoor adventure culture creates a parallel depiction of a deviant body, one that does not belong (Stanley, 2020).

Stories and narratives that are ultimately shared through visual and textual representation of outdoor adventure create experiential expectations and even socio-political contextual understanding (Finney, 2014). Theorist Stuart Hall (1997 cited in Finney, 2014, p. 6) insists that representation be "investigated" to effectively expose the problematic and political nature of representations that may be widely accepted as the norm. BPOC communities participating in outdoor adventure could be presented as a right or expression of freedom. Prilleltensky (2008) warns that these expressions of freedom could be critiqued as accepting and following dominant norms rather than subverting them. According to Prilleltensky (2008), the perceived freedom to participate can be challenged by the narrow range of socially sanctioned options or opportunities available. As previously discussed, BPOC communities experience this limited range of opportunity to engage in outdoor adventure. Increasing the diversity of participants in outdoor

adventure programs cannot be seen as the sole means for achieving social equity (Paisley et. al., 2014).

The outdoors is a space where, as bell hooks (1989) said, stories of oneself and community can be "interrupted, appropriated and transformed" (p. 36). The outdoors is a place of struggle and tension and provides BIPOC communities "a new location from which to articulate [their] sense of the world" and "affirms and sustains subjectivity" (hooks, 1989, p. 36). Gloria Anzaldua's conceptualization of the intersection of social identity and places as "transnational" (Anzaldua in Dua et al., 2005, p.4) and "borderlands" (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 5) can be used to describe the outdoors. Settler nation-states are "transnational spaces" where feelings connected to citizenship, nationality, and other identities (such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) come into conflict with one another (Dua et al., 2005, p. 4).

Gloria Anzaldua (1987) uses the metaphor of "borderlands" to describe spaces where hierarchical power relations and socially constructed categories of belonging and identity intersect. Anzaldua (1987) argues that borderlands provide the opportunity to "understand and reject, to love and detest, to be loyal and question, and above all to continue to seek enlightenment out of ambiguity and contradiction of all social existence" (p. 5). People who are marginalized through intersections of perceived or prescribed definitions of social identity, power and belonging can experience the outdoors as a "site of resistance" (hooks, 1989, p.36) through examining and redefining their identity, relationship, and experience of the outdoors. Examining these intersections and experiences of identity in the outdoors, narratives of oneself and community can be redefined and shared. Social media has increasingly become a space where people are connecting beyond the confines of geographical barriers to redefine identity

while building networks of support and archives of alternative narratives of experiences of the outdoors.

Digital Activism

Social media researcher, Manual Castells is often quoted when the use of social media activism is discussed (Lupton, 2015). Castells (2012 cited in Lupton, 2015, p. 148) explained that digital spaces such as social media connect users and create the opportunity to build "new public spaces" that challenge established power structures that influence and determine widely accepted narratives. Widely accepted narratives such as socially constructed norms, stereotypes and expectations are challenged, resisted, and subverted in these powerfully connected spaces (Florini, 2019; Trott, 2021). There are two characteristics that are unique to digital media activism that are important to highlight. The first characteristic is the ability of digital media users to access a diverse range of messages shared (Jackson and Foucault Welles, 2015; Trott, 2021).

Digital media users can strategically circulate narratives, analysis of current events, and share the content of other users bypassing the need for traditional media outlets (Jackson and Foucault Welles, 2015; Florini, 2019). These narratives shared online collectively produce consistently emerging and non-dominant forms of knowledge (Jackson and Foucault Welles, 2015; Trott, 2021). Researchers have found that when counter and non-dominant narratives are linked using hashtags, they have the power to redefine social issues and reshape meaning of social realities online and offline (Jackson and Foucault Welles, 2015; Trott, 2021).

The second unique characteristic of digital media activism is that people can represent their own values and interests while challenging traditional structures of leadership in activism (Jackson and Foucault Welles, 2015; Trott, 2021). Hashtag activism and connective action have

reshaped social justice activism and movements by expanding the possibilities of outreach, advocacy, and strategy (Tufecki, 2018 cited in Storer and Rodriguez, 2020).

Scholars warn that we cannot rely solely on online activism for social change to occur and that in person and offline tactics are still needed (Tufecki, 2018 in Storer and Rodriguez, 2020). Scholars also argue that digital spaces like social media do not create community but rather "networked individualism" (Florini, 2019, p. 13). Networked individualism means that through social media the individual is the focus with the ability to reach beyond the confines of geography and temporal limitations to form networks with other individual social media users with similar beliefs or interests (Florini, 2019, p. 13). The issue here is that while networks and ideas are being built people are not gathering intentionally to discuss and organize for social change. Scholars Lance Bennett and Alexandra Sergerberg also warn that a move away from "collective logics" to "connective logics" is more focused on the individual and personalized content of the social media user (Florini, 2019, p. 14). This means that individual needs and wants can be prioritized as most important rather than finding the common experiences that are connective and collectively experienced amongst a group to guide efforts and organizing for social change.

Connective and collective action have been fundamental liberatory practices used by Black communities and particularly U.S. Black feminists. Florini (2019) and Steele and Lu (2018) have linked current connective spaces online to past efforts to create safer spaces for Black communities to interact with one another away from the watchful and controlling White gaze. Florini (2019) shares examples of the formation of "hush harbors" in slave quarters, woods, and praise houses where Black community members interacted with each other, and examples that continue in the traditions of Black community churches and barber and beauty

shops of today (p. 73). Using digital spaces such as social media for the creation of "Black social enclaves" is different as these discourses online are visible and accessible by outsiders (Florini, 2019, p. 79).

Conclusion

This literature review brought together different bodies of literature that relate to my research question. This chapter provided a nuanced discussion for understanding the complex intersection of outdoor adventure and one's sense of self through five topics. First, intersecting forms of systemic oppression target certain bodies as not belonging in certain places such as the outdoors. This categorizing and conceptualization of bodies has the potential of impacting a person's sense of self, perceived identity, and feelings of comfort in places like the outdoors. Second, experiences of systemic oppression including microaggressions affect people emotionally, manifest physically in the body and impact wellbeing and overall health. Resisting negative messaging from systemic oppression is vital and not only life affirming, but self-affirming. Life affirming and self-affirming activities and beliefs are also critical to experiencing joy which is different from happiness. Third, there are dominant narratives about who we expect to see having adventures in the outdoors. The outdoors is not a politically neutral space. Outdoor spaces function as an ongoing exclusionary colonial construction maintained through narratives of Canadian identity and continues to undermine Indigenous communities' sovereignty. Studies in this literature review that focus on BIPOC communities' experiences in the outdoors often outlined the barriers to accessing the outdoors or experiences of discomfort in the outdoors. Building on Stanley's (2020) study on resisting dominant norms of outdoor adventure, my study seeks to understand how outdoor adventure functions as joy as resistance for BIPOC *Instagram* users. Fourth, the possibility for outdoor adventure being an act of resistance was examined

through the work of bell hooks (1989) and Gloria Anzaldua (1987). Outdoor places are spaces where social identities come into conflict with one another and offer the opportunity to reshape one's understanding of themselves and their community. Finally, since my study uses social media as a site for data collection and analysis, digital activism was examined. Activism has changed over the years to include the use of platforms to share information, create alternative forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. In the following Methodology chapter, I share my methodology, theoretical approach, sample gathering process, and analytical approach.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I outline the methodology I used for this study. My methodology begins with a discussion of the feminist intersectional theoretical approach and framework I used to ground my analysis of the data collected from *Instagram* posts. I outline the ethical considerations of using *Instagram* as a site for data collection. From here, I share the multi-phased process of collecting data and creating a manageable sample size for this study. I describe the purposeful sampling method and multi-stage sampling process used in my collection of data. Finally, this chapter outlines the reasons I chose a digital ethnographic and reflexive thematic analysis for this study.

My research relied heavily on the expertise and years of intersectional feminist, anti-oppression and anti-racist work for community liberation and resistance by Black feminist activists and scholars and the decolonizing and resurgence work of Indigenous feminist activists and scholars. The following section outlines in more detail my feminist intersectional theoretical framework that guided my research.

Intersectional Feminist Theoretical Framework

My conceptual understanding and analysis of race, identity and oppression is rooted in my experience working for a grassroots feminist collective providing support and advocacy to survivors of sexualized violence. This collective of feminists, most specifically the Women of Colour, taught me how to conceptualize and articulate the impacts of intersecting systems of oppression (colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy) on a person's lived experience. The lessons I learned about intersecting of oppressions were based on the works of Black feminist scholars and activists such as Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Angela Davis. My experiences at this grassroots feminist collective, engaging in activism, and

seeking higher education have been foundational in shaping my analysis and understanding of the socio-political context and my place in it.

People's experiences are complex because of intersections of identity, oppression, and social context. It was critical to engage these concepts throughout my research in addition to concepts of anti-oppression and resistance. To bring these concepts into my study, I used an intersectional feminist theoretical framework grounded in the works of Black feminist scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Patricia Hill Collins (2000, 2015 and 2019).

The term intersectionality is used to describe the interlocking of social locations of a person's identity (such as race, socioeconomic status, sexuality, gender, age, ethnicity, citizenship, and ability) that account for personal or a social group's social experiences (Collins, 2015). Social categories of identity reciprocally construct and shape the complex experience of social inequality (Collins, 2015). Crenshaw (1991) critically analyzed the ineffectiveness of the movement to end gender-based violence as it did not include an intersectional analysis of race and gender which resulted in the further marginalization of Women of Colour in BIPOC communities. Crenshaw (1991) emphasized that while social locations are "constructions", they have real impacts on those who experience the harmful biases and stereotypes associated with these categorizations. People's social locations interlock or intersect in a myriad of ways, sometimes offering moments of privilege but most often compounding and complicating experiences of systemic violence. Experiences of power and privilege are not static but fluid in the context of interacting social locations, time, and place. Crenshaw (1991) reminds us that the issue is not only that these social locations exist but that they have values attached and these values in turn create social hierarchies.

Intersectional theory sits within broader theories of social identity and contributes to anti-oppressive theories. Moosa-Mitha (2015) states that anti-oppressive theories reject the assertion that there is any sort of universal truth that would overcome any perceived difference. Moosa-Mitha explains that instead of seeking universal truths, anti-oppressive theories focus on experiential truths to amplify narratives and analyze experiences within the social context. She notes that anti-oppressive theory strives to de-center what has been socially defined as the norm and brings attention to the power that exists in the social margins. Therefore, the researcher using anti-oppressive theoretical frameworks must be reflexive in their self-knowledge and recognize that knowledge is not neutral or abstract (Moosa-Mitha, 2015). Without critical self-reflection the researcher risks upholding the status quo that they seek to challenge (Collins, 2019).

I chose an intersectional feminist theoretical framework for my study because identity plays a key part in people's experiences in the social world, whether they are experiences of oppression or intentional acts of resistance. Using an intersectional feminist theoretical framework addresses the complexity of intersecting socially constructed locations with socially constructed contexts or places that in turn can expand, shape, restrict or liberate a person's understanding of their identity. By using an intersectional feminist theoretical framework, the complexity of identity, place, social contexts of multiple forms of oppression and responses to oppression can be explored. Social media and the outdoors are socially constructed places. Socially constructed places are political, meaning that there are power dynamics and social inequities involved in how these spaces are built and maintained. Power dynamics exist in socially constructed places that uphold structural oppressions which in turn, impact people's use of social media and experiences of outdoor adventure.

Patricia Hill Collins (2019) recommends using intersectionality as a theoretical framework when focusing on social action as a way of knowing and responding to experiences of oppression. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework has been used to study power relations, rethink social problems, and understand how intersecting identities produce distinctive social experiences for specific individuals and social groups (Collins, 2015). Black feminists' intersectional analysis provides critical intellectual grounding in resistant knowledges, as Black women experience race with other intersections of identity in gender-specific ways within a context of settler colonialism (Hill Collins, 2019).

My study is focused on the outdoors; therefore, including the socio-political context of the outdoors is necessary. As previously mentioned, dominant narratives of the outdoors are socially constructed and uphold colonial practices, White supremacy, and nation building. The experiences of BIPOC communities in the outdoors are interwoven with place, identity, relationships to land and social context. While power dynamics and social inequities in outdoor adventure are uniquely experienced by racialized groups, these experiences occur on stolen land. Indigenous feminists theorize that analyses of gender, relationship to land, and decolonizing settler colonialism are critical in any place-based theorizing such as adventuring in the outdoors. Therefore, I include the work of Indigenous feminist scholars and activists to guide my theoretical framework with a decolonizing lens.

Colonizing practices disproportionately impact Indigenous women in communities. Decolonial and Indigenous feminisms emphasize connection with land and the continued lack of access to land as a political issue (Green, 2017). Therefore, decolonizing practices must involve re-establishing connection and relationship to land for Indigenous women. Green (2017) emphasizes that building towards a decolonial future requires "revitalization of traditional ways"

that can be found through relationship with land (p.25). Starblanket (cited in Green, 2017, p. 28) shares that for Indigenous communities, land holds cultural memory, guidance to ways of knowing and being, and ultimately defines the "contemporary possibility" of a contemporary identity. Coulthard and Simpson (2016 cited in Green, 2017) explain that for Indigenous communities "relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledges that inform our political systems, and though which we practice solidarity. To willfully abandon them would amount to a form of auto-genocide" (Green, 2017, p. 254).

Tuck and Yang (2012, p. 6) posit that settlers have "colonization stories" whereas Indigenous communities have "creation stories" of how "they/we have come to be in a place" versus "they/we came *to be a place*". When it comes to settler colonialism Tuck and Yang assert that what is most required and valuable is land. Tuck and Yang (2012, p. 7) emphasize that decolonization, regardless on differing opinions on how to achieve this, within a settler colonial context requires "repatriation of land" and dialogue on how relationships to land are differently understood and enacted. BPOC outdoor adventurers need to consider if their interest in supporting Indigenous peoples reflects what Tuck and McKenzie (2014) refer to as "recolonization" rather than "decolonization".

In this section, I outlined my reasons for using an intersectional feminist theoretical framework to analyze my data to answer my research question. In the following section, I outline my methodological approach to gathering my data and reflexive thematic analysis.

Methods

For this study I used the qualitative methodology of digital ethnography and purposefully sampled collection of *Instagram* posts associated with the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors. This methodology and study builds on a similar research study examining *Instagram* posts by Stanley

(2020) and the methodological framework for collecting and analyzing data from online platforms developed by Hine (2015), Pink (2007), Caliandro (2018) and Costello et al. (2017). My approach to collecting a data sample from *Instagram* relied on the work by Laestadius (2016). To analyze the data, I used Braun and Clarke's (2019) approach to reflexive thematic analysis. In the following section I will discuss my approach to using *Instagram* as a site for data collection, digital ethnography, and the appropriateness of using a reflexive thematic analysis.

Digital Ethnography

Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms in the world (Laestadius, 2016). Laestaduis explains that *Instagram* has a highly visual culture, conveying messaging and narratives through shared photographs, text and hashtags referred to as 'posts'. Hashtags are a distinctive feature of *Instagram* used to provide context or express the participation or membership to a community (Laestadius, 2016). *Instagram* posts create an archive of shared ongoing narratives of the self, like a journal or personal blog (Palmer, 2010). As an online community, *Instagram* users can create their own shared sense of practice, space, and identity by using hashtags (Laestadius, 2016).

Instagram is described as a culture that conveys meanings through photographs with text and hashtags to provide context (Laestedius, 2016). According to Pink (2007), images and photos, like those shared on *Instagram,* reflect personal identities, narratives, lifestyles, and communities situated in a moment in time, space and sociopolitical context emphasizes the validity of using an ethnographic approach. It has been suggested that studies that focus on content analysis of online communications, such as those found in *Instagram*, are better classified between discourse analyses and ethnography (Costello et. al., 2017).

Ethnographies are used across different disciplines and are defined as a research approach to experiencing, interpreting, and representing culture (Pink, 2007). Tuck and Mckenzie (2014) remind researchers that ethnographies have also been interested in the physical settings of relationships and place as part of experiencing, interpreting, and representing culture since the methodology was put into practice. Experiencing, interpreting, and representing culture requires that the researcher recognize and reflect on their influence, worldview, and biases. Ethnographic studies cannot claim to be objective or precise accounts of reality (Pink, 2007).

Within the methodology of ethnography there are subareas and differing methods of data collection. Field work, whether it's online or in a physical setting, has been integral to ethnography (Tuck and Mckenzie, 2014). Following the tradition of ethnography, I include both photography and textual content in my data collection (Hine, 2015; Tuck and Mckenzie, 2014). When digital tools such as *Instagram* and the third-party service Picodash are used for data collection the more accurate term to describe this methodology is digital ethnography (Tuck and Mckenzie, 2014).

My research can be described as passive and observational because the posts collected were historical and I did not engage directly with *Instagram* users. Costello et al. (2017) describe passive approaches to research online as being "non-participatory" since the researcher is observing and data gathering without directly interacting with the community (p.6). While I did not engage directly, I kept a journal to record my field notes. Field notes are a conventional tool used by ethnographers to keep a record of the analysis process, thoughts about what observations may mean, changes to research direction or new ideas, and frustrations or concerns (Hine, 2015). Throughout data collection and analysis phases of my study, I tracked my thoughts, observations, and reflected on my personal use of *Instagram* and hashtags, and my relationship to the outdoors.

Field notes are critical for tracking ideas and maintaining transparency for the reflexivity shared and deferred analysis at a later time (Hine, 2015). I share my personal and critical reflexive analysis of the findings in the Implications for Social Work Chapter, separate from the reflexive thematic analysis in the Findings chapter.

Data Collection

I drew heavily on the recommendations for best research practices by Linnea Laestadius on using *Instagram* as a site for data collection. Laestedius (2016) outlined three options for data collection using *Instagram*: 1) Using technical experts to directly extract the data directly from Instagram; 2) Using a third-party service or tool to access Instagram data; or 3) A more labour-intensive approach of manually collecting the data from Instagram using screen shots or other information gathering techniques. For my study, I chose the second option outlined by Laestadius (2016) of using a third-party service called Picodash to gather posts for a sample to be analyzed. I will discuss the use of Picodash for my study later in this chapter.

In addition to Laestadius's (2016) recommendations, I used Palinkas et al.'s (2015) purposeful sampling method to choose the hashtags for this study and determine a final sample size to be analyzed. Palinkas et al. (2015) describe purposeful sampling as a qualitative research method to select cases that are information rich when resources are limited. Purposeful sampling has been used in similar *Instagram* and social media studies to determine a research sample (Gibbs et al., 2015; Laestadius et al., 2016; McKeown and Miller, 2020; Shanahan et al., 2019; and Stanley, 2020). To choose a sample from a collected data set, Palinkas et al. (2015) suggest using a multi-stage sampling process which involves adding or removing posts to make up for any unforeseen issues or opportunities after the data collection was initiated or created (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Laestedius (2016) notes that it is critical to examine both visual and textual content when analyzing *Instagram* posts to fully make sense of the data collected. Analyzing the imagery and textual content of posts would be a rich and thick data approach by looking at context, description and perspectives found (Laktzo-Toth et al., 2016). To consider the visual and textual as a unit, Laestedius (2016) recommended using smaller sample sizes.

For my data collection strategy, I used Picodash and manually reviewed the data set provided in the form of excel sheets to assess if the post meets the criteria for the study. The criteria went through several phases and is discussed in more detail where I outline the four cycles of data collection. Picodash is a commonly used tool that gathers posts from *Instagram* and one can see the use of this service in the studies of Boling (2020), Clarke et al. (2018), McCrow and Young (2021), McKoewn and Miller (2020), Johnson and Romney (2018), and Romney and Johnson (2020). Picodash, formerly named Gramfeed, has been approved by *Instagram* to provide "social media management and advanced Instagram search functionality to help Journalists, Researchers, Publishers, and Brands to curate and manage Instagram content" (Picodash, n.d.). Unlike McCrow-Young (2021) who shared that they were not able to specify a date range for data gathering through Picodash, I emailed Picodash directly to request search results for a specific date range. Like McKoewn and Miller's (2020) study the search results of posts per hashtag requested were provided in excel spreadsheets and included usernames, date, time, photo, textual captions, and other hashtags used for each post. Picodash was used to search the *Instagram* database and export posts to a sortable spreadsheet in several studies (Clarke et al., 2018; McCrow and Young, 2021; Johnson and Romney, 2018; Romney and Johnson, 2020).

The Initial Data Collection Plan

Like the study by Romney and Johnson (2020), I used specific date ranges and aspired to choose dates that represented four seasons for my data collection. I wanted four seasons to have a sample that was representative of a wide range of activities and environmental conditions that would challenge the idea of who is in the outdoors doing which activities and under what conditions. To capture the full range of seasons I decided to choose dates that coincided with the solstices, equinoxes, and Earth Day. The solstices, equinoxes and Earth Day are personally important to me when it comes to relationship with land, and I wondered if these were also considered significant days for BIPOC outdoor adventurers.

I had also initially planned to study the top 25 posts from each season from 12 purposefully sampled hashtags that I had selected for review. While 25 posts per hashtag may seem like a large number, Laestadius (2016) recommends a large sample size as well as a month-long window between the initial collection of data and the analysis of the collected data. The twelve hashtags I had originally chosen were associated with *Instagram* accounts that I had already been following through my own account that I had hoped would offer the most diversity of experiences of racialized people in the outdoors. The *Instagram* accounts that I was following had hashtags associated with them and I discuss these below.

Instagram Algorithms and Bias. Before I share the hashtags chosen in this methodological process, I pause here to acknowledge and discuss *Instagram*'s use of algorithms in curating timeline posts for their users. The works of Gillespie (2018 cited in Leaver et al., 2020) and Noble (2018 cited in Leaver et al., 2020) warn researchers that the way that algorithms are created and used on platforms like *Instagram* perpetuate inequalities by functioning on the "cultural assumptions and social norms" expressed by users on their platforms. The initial set of hashtags chosen for this study occurred after *Instagram* shifted in 2016 to an algorithmic process

that curated posts to appear on users' timelines rather than the original chronological appearance of posts on timelines (Leaver et al., 2020). In a 2018 briefing for technology reporters *Instagram* shared that timeline feeds were now "unique" to each user based on three categories: "interest, recency and relationship" (Leaver et al., 2020, p.18). Leaver et al. (2020) provide a brief description of each of the three categories below:

- Interest – how much *Instagram* perceives a user will want to see a post based on past viewing of similar content;
- Recency – how new the post is; and
- Relationship – how close a user is to the user posting the content. This is determined by a range of things, including frequency of past liking, comments and being tagged in photos together (p. 18)

Leaver et. al. (2020) also reminds us that there are other algorithms that are included in how user's *Instagram* timelines are curated based on data collected on how many people an *Instagram* user follows, how much time they spend on *Instagram*, and offering suggestions of other accounts that an *Instagram* user might want to follow.

I chose a range of hashtags from accounts that I already followed and chose other accounts that I explored from suggestions curated by *Instagram*'s algorithm based on my personal use of *Instagram*. My goal was to have a sample with a diversity of experiences in outdoor adventure that centered the experiences of BIPOC *Instagram* users and were inclusive to the intersections of gender expression and sexualities. Hashtags that were initially chosen for this study because of my familiarity with the kinds of posts that included these hashtags and included the following features: self-identified BIPOC *Instagram* users engaged in outdoor adventure, the identification of place, and shared narratives of their experiences. The original hashtags proposed

for my study were: #colourthetrails, #nativewomenswilderness, #diversityinnature, #redefineoutdoors, #queernature, #diversityinadventure, #wilddiversity, #wecoloroutside, #takingupspaceoutdoors, #brownpeoplecamping, #browngirloutdoorworld, #diversifyoutdoors.

Like studies by McKoewn and Miller (2020) and Boling (2019) I used the exported excel spreadsheets from Picodash to filter through posts to choose which posts would be excluded from the sample. Excluded from my study sample are posts from accounts that were private or that exclusively advertised events, outdoor gear or for outdoor adventure companies. I also excluded posts that shared videos rather than photos. While this was a labour-intensive process, as a researcher I gained what Laestedius (2016) would refer to as deep familiarity with the data that would ultimately benefit in the analysis of the sample.

Picodash charged fixed amounts for the number of posts of hashtag search results. I went to the Picodash website to determine the predicted cost of gathering search results for the each of these hashtags within the specific timeframes I was looking for and it proved to be both too large of sample size to analyze and too costly. The number of hashtags was then purposefully sampled again, reducing the number of hashtags to six, keeping in mind my intention to maintain a diversity of experiences and the high number of posts associated with hashtags. The second list of proposed hashtags were: #colourthetrails, #browngirloutdoorworld, #nativewomenswilderness, #colortheoutdoors, #outdoorasians, and #muslimhikers.

The Second Round of Data Collection

In July 2021, I emailed Picodash to request search results for the following 2020 dates: April 20-24, June 20 to 30, September 20 to 30 and December 20 to 30. I also requested search results for the following dates in 2021: March 20 to 30, April 20 to 24, and June 20 to 30. Search results from Picodash were emailed to my personal email account in the form of excel

spreadsheets. Over the summer of 2021, I reviewed the excel sheets and created an initial sample size of 530 posts. There were three criteria used to determine which posts would be included in the sample. The first was that posts should not be associated with a private account, advertisement for gear or event. The second was that textual content in the post should include words that expressed joy including but not limited to: happy, joy, excited, love, and grateful. The third was that posts should include photos rather than videos. The sample sizes for each hashtag were the following: #muslimhikers (251 posts), #colourtheoutdoors (103 posts), #nativewomenswilderness (92 posts), #browngirloutdoorworld (51 posts), #colourthetrails (29 posts) and #outdoorasians (4 posts).

Considering the timeframe available to complete this thesis and the intense work pressures at the time I decided my sample size was too large and unevenly represented a diversity of experiences. The list of above of hashtags and number of associated posts found, shows the unevenness of the experiences available to analyze through the hashtags that I had chosen. I was concerned that these posts would not portray the diversity of experiences of BIPOC outdoor adventurers. I purposefully sampled my list of hashtags again and their associated accounts to figure out how to make the sample size smaller while trying to maintain diversity of experience.

I decided to look at the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors from my initial list of 12 hashtags for this study. The hashtag #diversifyoutdoors is connected to the *Instagram* account @diversifyoutdoors and the webpage www.diversifyoutdoors.com. This webpage is run by a coalition of digital influencers, affinity groups, and allies promoting diversity in outdoor recreation and conservation. Many of the digital influencers contributing the blog page section of the website were also in my original list of hashtags that were associated with *Instagram*

accounts. I checked on *Instagram*, logging in with my personal account, to see how many posts were already associated with this hashtag and the number was higher than all the other hashtag posts from my original lists combined.

The Third Round of Data Collection

I submitted a new request to Picodash for search results of the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors and hashtag #outdoorasian for the time periods of June 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021 and May 1, 2021 to July 31, 2021. Picodash informed me that the total number of posts was 113 000 and these were sent in 10 excel sheets for the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors. Since there were many posts available and a range of diversity in representation of the influencers associated with the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors, I decided to focus on solely purposefully sampling the results Picodash provided from this hashtag. I reviewed the posts from June 22 to 26, September 21 to 25, and December 21 to 25, 2020 and March 22 to 26 and June 21 to 25, 2021. Each of these weekdays, Mondays to Fridays, coincided with the solstices and equinoxes. In February 2022, I realized I had made a mistake in my data sample collection and missed several days of the week in another excel sheet. This was a significant and further setback of ten weeks in the progression of this study.

Overall, I collected 271 posts based on visual and textual content that could be associated with joyful resistance. All the photos elicited feelings of joy whether it was a landscape or a person in the photo doing the activity, or the photo taken as a selfie with a big smile on their face. I found that it was in the textual component of posts where people shared the complexity of the experiences they were having. *Instagram* users were reflecting on the joy they felt in relation to the experience of being outdoors. While I was looking for expressions of joy as resistance it was important to note that there are many words that people use to express joy and resistance.

There were very few that used the exact phrase “joy as resistance”. I discuss the nuances of joy as resistance in my literature review and provide examples of the many ways people talked about joyful resistance in the findings and analysis section of this study. For example, posts in my sample that expressed joy as resistance often included a combination of the following words: “being happy” and “happiness”, “smile”, “grin”, “resistance”, “fight back”, “love”, “excitement”, “thanks”, “heal”, and “enjoy”.

Finalizing the Data Collection into a Sample

An important consideration that I had to make when finalizing a sample size was that I was a solo researcher. Many social media studies involving *Instagram* have more than one person collecting and analyzing the data. Having multiple researchers involved meant their sample size could range anywhere from 500 to 600 to thousands of posts. Accepting the reality of my capacity for analyzing a sample size alone, I revisited the sample I collected and decided to focus on the week of June 22 to 26, 2020 and once again used a purposeful sampling method like Laestadius et al. (2016), McKeown and Miller (2020) and Stanley (2020). I decided to focus on this week for three reasons: 1) it would only be manageable to focus on one season, 2) I found that the month of June yielded a higher number of posts in previous attempts to gather data, and 3) this week was close to the summer solstice. I revisited my sample of 271 posts and only kept *Instagram* posts that were shared between June 22 to 26, 2020, which reduced my sample to 84 posts. I reviewed these 84 posts again to remove duplicate posts, posts with very little text, and posts that included a narrative that indirectly expressed joy as resistance. The result was a sample of 57 posts.

Laestadius et al. (2016) found that their sample size decreased by 22 percent because of deleted posts or accounts that changed to private. Studies that use *Instagram* posts include the

practice of reviewing the data set to only include the most updated post and remove deleted or private posts from the data collection as part of their methodology (Laestedius, 2016). During the week of August 1, 2022, I reviewed all the posts in the sample to make sure the posts were still available, similar to the studies by Laestadius et al. (2016) and Mckeown and Miller (2020). I removed the posts that were no longer available or the accounts of the person posting were now private. This resulted in a final sample of 48 posts.

Ethical Considerations

On *Instagram* most of the accounts are open and public facing with personal accounts using pseudonyms or partial names, not requiring confirmation of friendships by users to create a connection which is different from Facebook (Stanley, 2020). This means that *Instagram* accounts can "follow" or "be followed" based on common interests, discoverable through hashtags or by searching related accounts that are offered or suggested by *Instagram* (Stanley, 2020).

Respecting privacy, anonymity and abiding by *Instagram'*s Terms of Use policy are ethical considerations I explored before establishing a method to gather my data collection. Websites that require registration, such as *Instagram,* are largely copyrighted which raises the legal issue of ownership of the data and whether posts and textual content can be used legally or ethically for research (Stevens et al., 2015). The Terms of Use on *Instagram* prohibits the large scale saving of media files from the platform (Highfield and Leaver, 2014). This meant I could not use my personal account to access and save search results of *Instagram* posts using the specific hashtags I wanted to use for my study. Instead, I followed the methodology used by researchers Boling (2019) and Laestedius et al. (2016) who used authorized third-party sites such

as Picodash or Iconosquare to search *Instagram* online and collect data without logging into their personal accounts.

The UVIC Human Research Ethics Office confirmed that my research project did not require a formal ethical review since the data collected by using a third-party site only included posts that originated from public facing accounts on *Instagram*. At the same time, my research is guided by ethical guidelines that required that I maintained the privacy and anonymity of *Instagram* users in my analysis of *Instagram* posts collected. For guidance, I followed recommendations of the Stevens et al. (2015) study on the ethics of using internet sites for data collection in research. At the time of their research, there was a lack of consensus on how to ethically proceed using online platforms for data collection. They recommended consulting a few guidelines for ethical online research, specifically the most updated guidelines suggested by the Association of Internet Researchers. Drawing on Stevens et al. (2015) work, I focused on three main ethical considerations in my research: informed consent, the distinction between public and private space online and protection of the person/data.

Informed Consent

I collected my data from compiled search results of various hashtags through a third-party service and did not recruit or contact any research participants since the data was readily available on the *Instagram* platform. The posts collected through the third-party service for my study were shared publicly. Publicly shared posts on social media sites such as *Instagram* have been compared to other information that has been shared on public media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or blogs on the internet (Beninger, 2016). This means that posts are available to be viewed without requiring access through membership or passwords and can be used for research without the need for consent (Beninger, 2016). I use the words “made publicly

available" to raise awareness of the fact that by using a hashtag *Instagram* users make their posts public even if their personal account is private.

Informed consent is required to use information that is posted privately or on platforms that restrict membership (Beninger, 2016). I triple checked each post in my data collection to remove posts by users whose accounts were set as private. I checked posts in the initial sample and as additional precaution, I checked a month later that the posts collected for the final sample were not deleted or associated accounts had been made private before formally analyzing the content of the image and text as suggested by Laestadius (2016).

Distinction between public and private spaces online

As previously mentioned, *Instagram* provides the option for users to make their accounts public, which makes them 'followable' by anyone; or private requiring permission to view their posts and follow the content posted. When an *Instagram* user includes a hashtag in their post, that post becomes publicly visible to anyone who follows or searches the hashtag regardless of privacy settings of the *Instagram* user's personal account. This shows the complexity of how discourse online can inhabit private and public space at the same time (Stevens et al., 2015).

Some researchers have argued that studying messages posted online is no different than studying tombstones or graffiti, given that while the content may be personal, that does not make it private (Stevens et al., 2015). I do not agree with this approach since many people may not realize that their private photos or posts are made publicly accessible by including hashtags in their posts. Considering privacy and ethics, Stanley (2020) focused on the distinction between public and private spaces, informed consent as well as protection of the privacy and anonymity of users included in their data. Data was exclusively drawn from publicly facing accounts while anonymizing comments and posts by changing usernames, anonymizing sources, and checking

the searchability of comments (Stanley, 2020). I used a practice like Stanley and other social media studies upholding the ethical consideration of informed consent (Gibbs et al., 2015; Laestadius et al., 2016; Shanahan et al., 2019), in that I did not include posts from private accounts.

Protection of the person

Protection of the person refers to the responsibility of the researcher to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants in research (Stevens et al., 2015). Since I did not seek informed consent of persons posting publicly on *Instagram*, protecting the person in the analysis of the data collected was critical. Following the guidance of Stevens et al. (2015) any identifiable information was not included in the data in my research findings and thesis. In similar studies using *Instagram* posts, researchers (Gibbs et al., 2015; Laestadius et al., 2016; Shanahan et al., 2019) shared that they practiced this ethical standard of anonymizing all data presented in a way that the post could not be traced back using any internet search tools and data collected was securely stored and only accessible by the researchers.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

To analyze my data, I used qualitative and inductive reflexive thematic content analysis as laid out by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2019). Thematic analyses are commonly used to identify patterns or themes in data (Cartwright, 2020). Braun et al. (2019) conceptualize themes as uniting data that might otherwise be seen as disparate and capturing the implicit and explicit of meaning. As previously mentioned, in the spirit of feminist social work practice I also provide a critical self-reflection in the final chapter of this thesis. My critical self-reflexivity provides a discussion of my thoughts, feelings and reflections on the photos and textual

narratives shared by *Instagram* users, re-examining my own experiences in the outdoors, oppression and the body, and joy as resistance.

Journey through the Sample

Once I finalized my sample size of 48 posts, I began the inductive analysis which meant that I allowed the themes to 'emerge' while being reflexive of my subjectivity as a researcher, in the following three ways. First, I looked at the photo and text, describing what I saw in the photos and determining themes from the text associated with the posts, highlighting powerful statements, and taking note of my personal reactions to the posts (including memories that came up). Four main themes arose in this analysis: lack of representation, challenging the dominant narrative, wellness, and community building. Second, since I am a visual learner, I took another three weeks to create mind maps of each of the themes and the associated textual content. Third, I took an additional two weeks to review the sample again to search how *Instagram* users in the sample described themselves racially, by gender expression or identity, sexuality, and any other social location. This proved to be more difficult than anticipated. I looked at the words *Instagram* users in the sample used directly in the textual content of the post to describe their race and gender identity. When information was not clear or available about the *Instagram* user's racial or gender identity, I looked at the other hashtags included in the post for identity markers. If there was no information in those hashtags, I looked at their publicly accessible personal accounts to see if there was additional information in their profile description. Many times, I would find pronouns but no specific mention about their gender identity. I also found that other social identity markers were also not available in the posts of this sample, such as ability, age, sexuality, and more.

In November 2022, I reviewed the sample again to find what words were used to describe the outdoors, including the other hashtags in the posts. Once I identified the most frequently used words, I went back to the data again to make note of the words associated with these most frequently used words. I share what these words are in my Findings and Analysis chapter. There were posts that did not use words to describe the outdoors but focused on the activity instead. Activities that were most frequently mentioned in posts were: hiking, cycling and mountain biking.

Braun and Clarke (2019) stress that the strength of reflexive thematic content analysis is the flexibility available in the approach and the thoughtful engagement of the researcher with the data collected and the reflexivity required in the analysis process. The data collected is analyzed to identify and understand the patterned themes, and then coded. The coding process is an iterative process, developing and evolving as the researcher becomes more familiar with the data collected (Braun et al., 2019). Braun et al. (2019) emphasize that the goal of coding is to provide a compelling and coherent interpretation of the data with the researcher functioning as a storyteller who is immersed in the data analysis influenced by their own positionality and theoretical frameworks.

Braun et al. (2019) stress that using this methodology requires being transparent and reflexive of the context and realities of the researcher and how this influences the meaning making process of analyzing the data. Thematic analysis is not committed to any one specific theoretical framework and can be used within different theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clark, 2006). Using an ethnographic approach, I identified common patterns or threads in the data and analyzed the structures that emerged from the data while sharing my reflections of the process and experience (Hine, 2015). Once the themes were identified, I turned to my field notes again

and wrote a reflexive intersectional analysis of the themes found. The field notes, as previously mentioned include my thoughts and observations.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodological approaches I used to answer the question: how does outdoor adventure function as joy as resistance for People of Colour on *Instagram*. To answer this question, I used a digital ethnographic and reflexive thematic analytic methodology grounded in intersectional feminist theory. As subject for my analysis, I gathered a sample of 48 posts from *Instagram* that included the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors from June 22 to 26, 2020. For this digital ethnographic study, determining a manageable amount of data required a few steps. First, I needed to understand the ethical considerations of gathering and analysing data collected from *Instagram.* Second, I needed to use Picodash, a third-party service, to comply with *Instagram* user policy in gathering potential posts to use in my sample. Lastly, I purposefully sampled the data to a manageable size of 48 posts. In the next chapter, I share findings, themes, and reflexive thematic analysis of my data sample.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, I share the four main themes that I found in the textual content of *Instagram* posts in my research sample, and for each theme I provide examples and my analysis. A brief visual analysis of the photos included in the *Instagram* posts is also provided. As discussed in the previous chapter, the posts collected in my sample were from publicly facing accounts on *Instagram.* While these posts and accounts are publicly shared, maintaining the anonymity and privacy of the *Instagram* users in my sample follows recommendations for best ethical practice.

The examples I share are coded by race and gender and include an assigned number rather than referring directly to the *Instagram* user. To determine coding, I followed the terminology and language shared in the posts by *Instagram* users or in their publicly available *Instagram* accounts. The following coding system is the result of that process:

- POC: Person of colour *Instagram* user who specifically included the words Person of Colour or People of Colour or did not specify their race.
- WOC: Woman of Colour *Instagram* user who identified themselves as women and included users who did share their specific racial or ethnic identity in their posts or *Instagram* accounts but used the term Woman of Colour or used hashtags that used the words woman and/or People of Colour.
- BW: Black woman *Instagram* user who specifically included the words Black woman, Black girl etc. in their post.
- BM: Black man *Instagram* user who specifically used this language in their post.
- LX: Latinx *Instagram* user who used the words Latino or Latinx in their post.
- LW: Latina woman *Instagram* user who used this language in their post.

- IW: Indigenous woman *Instagram* user who used this language in their post.

In the analysis sections of each theme, I use the above acronyms and the following acronyms. The acronyms below were previously shared in the introduction section of this study. In the analysis sections of this chapter, I specifically use the following acronyms:

- WOC: Woman of Colour outdoor adventurers identified as women and shared common reflections or experiences.
- BPOC: Black and Person of Colour outdoor adventurers in my sample shared similar experiences or reflections of their time in the outdoors (does not include Indigenous *Instagram* users).
- BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour outdoor adventurers in my sample who shared similar experiences or reflections of their time in the outdoors.

As discussed in the introduction chapter, using acronyms that group BIPOC communities together when advocating for social change or raising awareness about collective experiences of oppression and inequities is a practice that has caused tension among activists and scholars. For my study in particular, Stanley (2020) emphasizes that while it is important to note commonly shared experiences in studies involving social media, the experiences should not be simply understood as homogenous or used in a way that would generalize experiences as being universal across diverse groups of people. I will discuss the problem with homogenizing groups and generalizing experiences in more depth in the reflexive thematic analysis chapter of this study.

The 48 posts included in the sample of this study were collected from the week of June 22 to 26, 2020. Many of the posts collected in my sample were by *Instagram* users in the United States. When analysing the textual content of posts for this study, it was clear that *Instagram* users were impacted by the socio-political context of this point in time. Several factors

influenced the visual and textual content of posts during this week including: the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on their personal lives, the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by policing services, the artistic and community reflections as well as tributes to George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, and Black Hikers Week in the United States of America (more commonly referred to as the United States or U.S. in this study). I found that Black Hikers Week was mentioned more often than any other of the significant events shared and I discuss the significance of this in the following section.

Significance of Black Hikers Week and Black Feminist Thought

Black Hikers Week

The dates I chose to gather my data unexpectedly coincided with Black Hikers Week in the United States and is important to discuss for several reasons. First, most of the posts in my sample were by Black outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* (37 out of 48) and many of these posts (23 out of 37) specifically mentioned Black Hikers Week in their textual content. Second, and most importantly, Black Hikers Week is an annual social media campaign that was founded by a trio of Black women and outdoor adventurers: Debbie Njai founder of Black People Who Hike, Zenovia Stephens, and Nailah Wylie. They were inspired by Black Birders Week (Deas, 2020; St Louis American, 2020), an event that was created in response to the racial profiling experienced by Black birder Christian Cooper in Central Park in New York and drew international attention to the violence experienced by Black communities in public spaces like the outdoors (Deas, 2020; St Louis American, 2020).

Black Hikers Week is curated and dedicated to highlighting individuals and communities seeking to change the narrative of outdoor adventure as well as encouraging and empowering Black communities to get outside and experience the health benefits of the outdoors (Deas, 2020;

Gates, 2020). Black Hikers Week is a week of celebrating, uplifting, and amplifying Black communities in nature. Each day of the week themes are curated, and people are encouraged to post online a photo, share their experiences through narrative or storytelling, and include the hashtag #blackhikersweek. Themes for the 2020 Black Hikers Week were the following: 1) share the story of how they got into hiking, 2) waterfalls, 3) Black health matters, 4) underrepresentation, 5) share a favorite way of centering oneself and practice of radical self-care.

My sample and Black Hikers Week

As previously mentioned in the section above, most people in my sample of *Instagram* posts (37 out of 48) identified as a Black person either in the textual content of their post or using other hashtags. Twenty-five posts were by Black women on *Instagram* who used words like 'Black woman', 'Black girl' or other hashtags such as, #blackgirlhike, #blackgirltrekking, #blackmomsexplore, #blackgirlsinflora, #blackgirljoy, #blackgirlhealing, #blackoutdoorswoman, and #blackgirlshike. Few *Instagram* users specifically used language to identify themselves as Black men (12 out of 37), however they included hashtags such as #blackguystraveltoo and #blackgirldad in their posts.

There were two posts by Indigenous women outdoor adventurers and another 9 posts by a diversity of other POC outdoor adventurers. Most of the posts from POC *Instagram* users identified as women by using descriptions such as 'Latina', 'brown girl', 'Asian woman' and 'Woman of Colour' in their posts. Other Instagram users in the sample used racial identity descriptors: 'Latinx', 'Latino', and 'South Asian'. Most posts included subsequent hashtags in their textual component. The most commonly used hashtags in association with the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors were: #blackhikersweek, #blackhikers, #blackpeoplewhohike,

#blackgirlstrekking, #unlikelyhikers, #unlikelyhiker, #blacklivesmatter, #blackjoy, #outdoorafro, #blackinnature and #wecoloroutside.

For my study, the works of Black feminist scholars and activists were foundational for my theoretical framework. This initial finding of having a sample with a majority of posts by Black women during Black Hikers Week emphasized the importance of using and centring a theoretical framework that was grounded in Black feminist thought and activism throughout my analysis.

Black Feminist Thought, Activism and Black Hikers Week

Black Hikers Week is an example of Black feminist activist organizing. As long as communities of Black women continue to experience subordination within intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation persist, Black feminism as an activist response to these oppressions will always be needed (Hill Collins, 2000). Hill Collins notes that if intersecting oppressions did not exist, Black feminist thought, and similar oppositional knowledges would be unnecessary. According to Hill Collins, Black feminist thought as a critical social theory, aims to empower communities of African American women within the context of social injustice sustained by intersecting oppressions. Black women in the United States (U.S.) cannot be fully empowered unless intersecting oppressions themselves are eliminated, and Black feminist thought supports broad principles of social justice that transcend U.S. Black women's particular needs (Hill Collins, 2000). In the analysis of my data, I significantly draw on the work of Hill Collins as a critical theoretical foundation for my study.

It is not surprising that most of the posts in my sample were by Black women outdoor adventurers in the U.S., considering it was Black Hikers Week, and historically Black women in the U.S. have been at the forefront of self-affirming and community building movements (Hill

Collins, 2000). In the U.S., and arguably anywhere else, Black women's lived experience of anti-Black racism is different from that of other racialized women's experiences because of the combined experiences of sexism and economic barriers (Hill Collins, 2000). The lived experience of Black women in the U.S., according to Patricia Hill Collins (2000) accumulates into a distinctive collective theorizing and understanding of experiences and the socio-political context.

As previously mentioned, when I began this study, it was important to me to include a diversity of BIPOC outdoor adventurers' experiences in my sample. When I chose the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors I was confident that this would be the case. The unexpected result of the dates coinciding with Black Hikers Week and the sample of posts being mostly by Black women outdoor adventurers encouraged me to pause and reconsider my approach to analyzing the sample as well as critically reflect on important questions and challenges raised for me as a researcher.

First, as someone who is Yemeni, Canadian and a brown woman, much of the lived experiences shared through narrative and storytelling by Black women outdoor adventurers in the U.S. differs from my experiences. Second, my theoretical approach was grounded in intersectional feminist analysis built on the work of Black feminists and since the findings were primarily informed by the experiences of Black women *Instagram* users, I needed to intentionally decenter my positionality to my research question and take a deeper dive into Black feminist theory and activism. Decentering myself required that I reflect on my understanding of the relationship between my identity, my experiences, the social context to my research question, and the work of Black feminist theorists and activists. Decentering myself also meant that as a researcher I need to acknowledge that I am, once again, primarily learning from Black feminist

activists and outdoor adventurers. Third, while making sure that the voices and experiences of Black women outdoor adventurists are centered, I also needed to incorporate the contextual reality that outdoor adventure happens on stolen land. With this contextual reality in mind, I chose to amplify Indigenous women's voices from the sample, including Indigenous feminist theory in my analysis. Finally, seeking a diversity of representation meant that I needed to look not only at commonly shared experiences but also the differences, and the impacts of these differences shared through people's experiences of interacting with one another, colonialism, and the other social contexts rather than generalizing these experiences to any group. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) emphasizes that, "each group speaks from their own standpoint and shares their own partial, situated knowledge" and experiences (p.270). Each groups' knowledge about socio-political context and their experiences are "unfinished", therefore only offering a part of the larger picture (Hill Collins, 2000). What makes an analysis intersectional, aside from examining context and power, is being better able to consider the input and knowledge of others without diminishing experiences (Hill Collins, 2000).

In this section, I discussed the significant impacts on my study of having Black Hikers Week unexpectedly coincide with my dates to collect data and having a majority of posts by Black women outdoor adventurers in my sample. I discussed the importance of centering Black feminist thought and activism, and how this challenged my analysis as a researcher. In the following section, I briefly provide the visual findings of my sample before discussing the four themes gathered from the textual content of posts and my analysis of each theme.

Visual Analysis of Photos

Instagram provides users the option of including more than one photo in their post. Some *Instagram* users in my sample included a series of photos of their most recent or past experiences

in the outdoors. These photos were either selfies (photos that are taken by the *Instagram* user of themselves) or photos of the *Instagram* user taken by someone else in outdoor places such as lookouts, snowy mountain ridges or summits, on a trail, by waterfalls, by rivers or streams. Most of the photos were not selfies and there was no information that explained if a camera was set up on a timer to take the photo or that someone else took the photo. Some *Instagram* users included a thank you or photo 'credit' to the person who took the photo in their post, but the majority did not include a photo credit. In photos that featured one person, there was no explicit textual content that indicated whether they were in the outdoors alone or with others.

The photos in my sample made me feel joy for several reasons. First, I found that I felt joy when it appeared that *Instagram* users in my sample had friends or adventure companions take pictures of them or they intentionally asked someone to take photos so they could share their experience with others who use and follow the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors. Second, many of these photos inspired a feeling of great appreciation for experiences in the outdoors. The photos that affected me this way often included people as the main subject looking out into the distance over a forested valley from a look out. Thirdly, photos with BIPOC outdoor adventurers and posing together, jumping, making expressive faces, or laughing elicited intense feelings of joy. Finally, those who posted selfies looked so happy, and this happiness and joy was contagious as well as inspiring. Seeing how much joy *Instagram* users were experiencing made me want to be outdoors. As a researcher who loves the outdoors, analysing photos was almost as painful as it was joyful. I felt so inspired by *Instagram* users in my study that I often experienced a nagging restlessness. I longed to adventure in the outdoors and share these experiences on my social media account. In this study I do not share examples of photos since I focused on the textual content of posts. I will however share a description of the photo that most deeply affected me.

I was most impacted by a photo that showed the side profile of a man of colour sitting on what looked like a signpost stump on the side of a trail in a wooded area. Their face was tilted up towards the sky, eyes partially or fully closed, and it looked like they were smiling while they exhaled smoke. The *Instagram* user included the following quote Audre Lorde's (1988) book *A Burst of Light*: "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare". The joy I felt from this photo was based on my perception that what was captured in this photo was a sense of calm and ease. Reading Audre Lorde's words amplified the way I felt and provided depth as well as meaning to the experience being shared by the *Instagram* user. This quote by Audre Lorde emphasizes that for BIPOC communities taking care of oneself and one another, living fully, and living in alignment with one's true self are acts of defiance in the face of systemic oppression (Act Build Change, 2023).

Being able to witness BIPOC communities in the outdoors enjoying themselves, sharing their experience and their insights through personal storytelling on *Instagram* was a powerful experience. I felt inspired, energized, and grateful to *Instagram* users in my sample who encouraged other BIPOC *Instagram* users and in their respective communities to access the outdoors. I also felt thankful for BIPOC outdoor adventurers who set the example that taking care of one's emotional and physical self can be achieved through spending time outdoors. Ultimately, taking care of oneself by spending time in the outdoors, encouraging others to do the same, and sharing experiences with others on social media is an act of resisting systemic oppression.

In this section, I shared a brief analysis of the visual component of *Instagram* posts in my sample. While the photos were powerful and elicited feelings of joy, I found deeper meaning and rich narratives in the textual content shared by BIPOC outdoor adventurers on *Instagram*. In the

next section, I share my general findings and discuss the four themes that I identified while analysing the textual content of posts in my sample.

General Findings

As mentioned previously, I found the textual component of posts to be rich with narratives of BIPOC communities' experiences of outdoor adventure. I noticed that *Instagram* users most frequently used the words "outdoors" and "nature" when referring to the spaces they were in. The words "outdoor" or "outdoors" was often paired with "adventure" or "spaces" in posts. The textual examples in the posts often included topics such as accessibility to the outdoors, the experience of being outdoors, and recommendations for the outdoors industry to be accountable for perpetuating the exclusion of BIPOC communities in the outdoors. *Instagram* users shared that visible representation of BIPOC outdoor adventurers is important, their love of the outdoors, the outdoors is "not welcoming, enjoyable or safe for everyone", and their experiences of feeling not "accepted or comfortable among the crowd". *Instagram* users who used the word "nature" to describe the outdoors also included words such as "therapeutic benefits", "getting through", "heals or healing me", and "health benefits". The concept of "reconnection" was most frequently mentioned in posts that included "reconnection with the self" or "reconnecting with nature". Other words used, less frequently, to describe outdoor places were "recreation", "the elements", "land", "greenspaces', "woods", "water", "scenic routes", and "wild".

As mentioned earlier, I identified four themes in my data collection. The most prevalent theme that I found in my data, across race and gender, was that outdoor adventure was defined as experiences in the outdoors or nature where reflection, connection and healing can happen. Finding this overarching theme of how BIPOC communities defined outdoor adventure was

unexpected and felt liberatory. BIPOC *Instagram* users often shared that adventure is not simply defined by experiencing intense activities such as kayaking, summiting mountains, multiday treks, or camping trips. Through the process of analysing my data, my definition of outdoor adventure expanded to include activities in urban green spaces such as walking around the lawn of one's home, cooking, time spent on local farm areas, fishing, setting up hammocks and resting in favorite green spaces.

I also found that BIPOC *Instagram* users in my sample did not simply define the outdoors as greenspaces, or rural or remote spaces. Therefore, my definition of the outdoors for this study also expanded to include the experiences shared by Black outdoor adventurers in my sample on road trips to remote places to access the outdoors. Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have expressed that land is not only "green spaces outside or outside the urban" so when it comes to examining or defining land and place, urban spaces must be included (Tuck and McKenzie, 2014, p. 58). *Instagram* users provided an expansive experience of outdoor adventure which directly challenges the dominant social and cultural narrative that outdoor adventure occurs in the wilderness. This finding also challenges the constructed and expected behaviours or experiences associated with outdoor adventure.

Like Stanley's (2020) study, my findings show that *Instagram* can be an effective way to share experiences and amplify the voices of outdoor adventurists seeking to challenge as well as change the dominant visual and social imaginary of outdoor adventure. It is possible to create and share powerful alternative narratives about outdoor adventure by using a social media platform such as *Instagram.* The participation of BIPOC *Instagram* users in initiatives like Black Hikers Week and posting with the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors contributes to manifesting an alternative narrative and imagery of outdoor adventure.

As mentioned previously, I found four themes in the analysis of my sample of posts that referred to outdoor adventure as being joyful and an act of resistance. The following four themes are: representation and underrepresentation; challenging the dominant narrative; wellness and dreaming; and community and connection. In the following sections, I discuss and analyse these four themes that are inextricably linked to one another and include my concluding thoughts for each theme. I will share unedited excerpts from the narratives shared by BIPOC outdoor adventurers in my sample. I provide a critical reflexive analysis of my findings and analysis in Chapter 6.

Theme: Representation and Lack of Representation

The theme of BIPOC communities' representation and lack of representation in the outdoors was most prominent and many of the posts mentioning this were from Black *Instagram* users participating in Black Hikers Week. In their posts, *Instagram* users commonly shared the following reasons for the lack of representation in outdoor adventure: feeling discomfort in the outdoors, having their identity questioned, and overcoming barriers or exclusionary practices connected to historical, nationalistic and colonial projects. In the section that follows, I provide more detail on these shared experiences and give textual examples that illustrate the perspectives of *Instagram* users in my sample.

Outdoors as "Unsafe" and "Unwelcoming"

A significant number of *Instagram* users shared their perspective on the lack of representation in the outdoors. Black outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* participating in Black Hikers Week attributed the lack of representation to Black people feeling "unsafe" or "unwelcome" in outdoor adventure. The following examples from Black women and a Woman of Colour in my sample illustrate these feelings:

"...the pleasure of being outdoors can often be marred by looks or comments directed at you for looking 'out of place', cause yoi [you] to not feeling welcome in these sorts of spaces. There is often times the threat of violence as was the case of #christiancooper who just wanted to live his best life and birdwatch in peace. This is a massive barrier to black people going and enjoying the outdoors; missing out on the therapeutic benefits and beautiful experiences being in nature has." (BW24)

"I've certainly never seen a duo like us doing anything challenging in the outdoors before, ever. And while it has never stopped me, how many people does it hold back ever even starting?" (WOC7)

"I don't meet a lot of people who look like me out on the trails and that's for a variety of reasons. Some outdoor hobbies can be prohibitively expensive and sometimes POC may not feel comfortable or welcome in certain environments." (BW74)

These examples express how fear and weariness can perpetuate and maintain exclusion from outdoor adventure. The way people see and understand who they are can be significantly impacted by other people's perceptions and biases (hooks, 1994 cited in Finney, 2014). Finney (2014) explains there is "power in representation" (p. 3) which shapes how people understand their identity and relationship with the outdoors. Finney (2014) asserts that fears, anxieties, and desires (specifically that of Black communities in the U.S.) are directly related to how representation can shape practices and beliefs. I discuss this point further in my concluding thoughts section.

Other *Instagram* users shared that the lack of representation and feelings of discomfort in the outdoors are inextricably linked to displacement, histories of erasure, and systemic barriers in place for BIPOC communities wanting to access the outdoors. The quotes below from a Black

woman and a Woman of Colour *Instagram* user are examples of linking the lack of representation in the outdoors to historical legacies of exclusion:

> *"... Discrimination, historical trauma, socioeconomic inequality have limited outdoor access to Black and Indigenous people of colour, but we belong here too!!..." (BW5)*
>
> *... Know that every time you post about retreating to the outdoors as your 'safe space' or your 'escape' that it has not been a safe place for Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of colour. Stop and listen before you say that the outdoors doesn't discriminate because the people who have been underrepresented in these spaces will tell you about how they've felt unwelcome to the places they've sought to heal in too. (WOC79)*

Lack of representation was also linked to how people conceptualized their identity and having to consider the risk of experiencing harmful perceptions and stereotypes while spending time in the outdoors. Harmful stereotypes and expectations have been used to continuously exclude BIPOC communities from the outdoors. Finney (2014, p. 71) asserts that identity and representation are intertwined as sites of "ongoing struggle". Finney explains that the struggle between identity and representation manifests in having to resist limited representations and expressions of identity such as having expressions of identity validated and seen. Lack of representation is linked to limiting the presence of Black community in spaces and constructing the presence of White men as the norm (Finney, 2014). This construction of racialized spatiality is a product of the colonial project, which I will discuss in the following section.

Exclusion as Part of the Colonial Project

BIPOC *Instagram* users consistently shared that they rejected the narrative of the outdoors being a neutral space where systemic oppressions and violence are not perpetuated. They noted the existence of nationalistic and colonial efforts to erase historical connections of

BIPOC communities to the outdoors. These efforts also continue to reinforce barriers for BIPOC communities, and their respective communities, wanting to access the outdoors.

Beliefs and expectations about who spends time in the outdoors, how that time is spent, which activities are defined as adventurous, how to access the outdoors, and the relationship to land all depend on a socio-political context rooted in colonial interference and violence. Colonial interference establishes narratives by White people as dominant and the norm, which have been maintained by outdoor organizations, industry, and enthusiasts. When BPOC on *Instagram* explained how exclusion from spending time in the outdoors is enforced, they provided examples of recent racial profiling and violence against Black communities in the U.S. The examples shared were the following: the murder of Ahmaud Arbery out running in his neighbourhood of Satilla Shores in Georgia, the violent racist harassment of Christian Cooper "trying to live their best life" bird watching in New York City's Central Park and a White person calling police to remove Black families barbecuing at Lake Merritt in Oakland, California. According to POC outdoor adventurers in my sample, these examples made it clear that specifically seeing a Black outdoor adventurer spending time or enjoying themselves in an outdoor setting is unwelcomed and results in violent punishment.

Instagram users often shared their frustration that outdoor organizations do not address the issue of exclusion and instead have said, "they are not political". When an outdoor organization asserts that they are not political they directly implicate themselves and maintain a narrative that the outdoors is a neutral space. *Instagram* users demanded that the outdoor industry take responsibility and contribute to creating a future where BIPOC communities can exist freely in the outdoors and commit to decolonizing narratives of adventure and relationship

to the outdoors. The following are examples of statements by *Instagram* users discussing colonial exclusion and demands for the outdoor industry to take responsibility:

> *"We live in a world where seeing a Black person occupying an outdoor setting is an act of rebellion, yet so many outdoor organizations ignore this issue, and when confronted, they say, "we're not a political organization, so we don't involve ourselves in those matters." We know that's a farce. The outdoors has always been a political issue, since the day colonizers set foot on this continent and enslaved Black and Indigenous folks to make it exactly what you see today – a mecca for white people and white tourists to enjoy, free rein." (POC 82)*
>
> *"We've always been there, and now I'm starting to see more women of colour who look like me doing rad things in the back country. Thank you, thank you, thank you." (WOC6)*
>
> *"… We have been talking about the erasure of black and brown bodies from the outdoors and I am so happy that @blackpeoplewhohike curated this week of awareness and community!" (BM9)*
>
> *"It is here, a point of convergence: of time, knowledge, story and becoming, that we unfold colonial damage on Indigenous Lands and their Peoples, so that we may lift ourselves up and emerge into reclaimed ascents. Not of conquest, but of remembering." (IG51)*

While BIPOC communities experience exclusionary colonial and racist practices, the experience of this violence is different among groups who are racialized. Outdoor enthusiasts of colour need to recognize the ways that they too can perpetuate and uphold white supremacy. Our experiences are relational and the meanings we make of our experiences in the outdoors are dynamic and fluid based on social location, interactions, and history. For example, Women of

Colour on *Instagram* reflected on their privilege of accessing the outdoors without experiencing the same fear of racist violence that other racialized groups face on a regular basis, specifically referring to Black and Indigenous communities. Women of Colour *Instagram* users shared in their reflections that while out on their adventures they had not noticed or questioned why they previously hadn't seen Black outdoor adventurers. At the same time, Women of Colour outdoor adventurers shared that they often had to resist pressures to conform to North American standards. They worked on healing from their internalized racism of conforming to scripts of Whiteness and feeling ashamed of being a Person of Colour. Feeling pressure to assimilate while in the outdoors, is an experience that outdoor adventurers of colour have shared in a previous study by Rao and Roberts (2018). Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us that conceptualizations of a place like the outdoors include racialized constructions. Finney (2014) also asserts that constructions of the outdoors are related to nation building that intentionally excluded Black people and Indigenous communities. The following are some examples of what WOC shared:

> *"I have noticed before that I rarely see Black people when I'm in the mountains…but admittedly I never thought twice about it. I now understand it's a by product of systematic racism. Some people experience personal or generational trauma of not feeling safe outdoors. Some people shy away from these activities because they don't feel accepted and comfortable among the crowd of other hikers/mountaineers/climbers. Some people don't have the means to do these activities. (AW20)*
>
> *"… I however, was taught all the wrong things, to be ashamed and to try harder to be whiter. Why did our society make me think as a child that being white was better than being brown? All the years of white washing me is probably the only reason I can stand at the rim of the Grand Canyon whenever I want, why I live and explore in Southern*

Utah, why I climb and canyoneer, why I live in a built out bus wherever I want. America you tried to wash me of my roots and I am here to tell you it's not working anymore!" (WOC29)

Some Black women and Women of Colour outdoor adventurers emphasized the importance of recognizing and respecting Indigenous communities' historical and ongoing relationship with land, practicing land acknowledgements, and educating themselves on the history of places they visit as part of their approach to outdoor adventure. Learning and raising awareness on the intersections of climate and racial justice were responsibilities that Black women and Women of Colour outdoor adventurers also felt were important to include when sharing experiences of outdoor adventure. Posts by Indigenous women on *Instagram* highlighted the normalized and problematic colonial and racist narratives of conquest or exploring what is unknown. Indigenous women outdoor adventurers reminded all outdoor adventurers who follow the #diversifyoutdoors hashtag that outdoor adventure happens in places that are known and are "places of knowing" for Indigenous communities. Not acknowledging Indigenous communities' relationship to land and refusing to raise awareness of environmental racism are clear examples of how BPOC outdoor enthusiasts perpetuate white supremacy and maintain colonial erasure of Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States. Kimmerer (2013) shares that Elders have expressed concerns that non-Indigenous communites are often transient and do not build an intentional relationship to land that shows that they care about the future of land, and the lives that depend on it. Wilson (2008) explains that, for Indigenous communities, their relationship and experience on land creates a grounded sense of self and belonging. I share the following quotes as a powerful summary:

"In a time of great forgetting, many turn to the 'outdoors' for 'conquest', for adventure in the 'unknown', forgetting that this 'unknown' is a place of great knowing, and inter-personal kinship between Indigenous Nations and their home lands. For the unrecorded, erased or extracted knowledge that brings our own People to summits around the world, our own Land-quests are grounded in the Stories we come from and the Stories we become. Stories that teach us not enact relationship on the Land, but rather with the Land." (IW51)

"I can't be an outdoor enthusiast in Manitoba without acknowledging that all my favorite parks, lakes and rivers are on Indigenous lands… It is thanks to these ancestors and their present-day relatives, that I have the privilege of living on and enjoying these lands." (BW27)

"We all love and respect the outdoors here, so taking the time to educate ourselves after each hike should be second nature, I think. I really like the Native Land app for this, and I highly recommend it." (BW5)

Histories of exclusion are based on the practice of nation building that relies on establishing an identity of how belongs who does not belong. As discussed, the outdoors are spaces where the presence of some identities is unexpected. In the next section, I will discuss what *Instagram* users shared about identity and outdoor adventure.

Identity

BPOC outdoor adventurers overwhelmingly expressed a desire for change that would make the outdoors a more welcoming and enjoyable space for all. BPOC *Instagram users* often emphasized that BIPOC communities have the right to enjoy the outdoors just as much as anyone else. The following statements by *Instagram* users exemplify this desire for change:

"I have stood up for and spoken loudly about diversity on every platform I am given. Still, the outdoors is not a place I seek to escape my realities. There, I confront them head on. In the outdoors I am constantly reminded that what is most personal, most sacred to me is and has always been political. My politicised body does not bring the politics to this space. The politics are always already there. I don't have the option to "leave the politics out of it" or treat the wilderness as "an escape from politics". I am the embodiment of your politics and mine and often, it's target. My health and safety depend on my awareness of this basic fact at all times. I do not have the privilege of escape." (POC84)

*"...let's keep the moment going to change this [making outdoors spaces safe and enjoyable]: Learning *all* facets of our history. Listening without gaslighting. Using our platforms to amplify Black voices in our communities. Protesting. Supporting and donating to organizations and individuals that promote Black, Indigenous and other underrepresented groups in white- and/or male-dominated spaces. Keeping those conversations about racism and privilege going with our friends, coworkers, and families. And taking a step every day to become anti-racist." (WOC18)*

Predominantly Black outdoor adventurers in my sample shared that because of their love of the outdoors, they experienced their identity being questioned by members of their own community. Many Black *Instagram* users described this experience as having to answer questions from members of their community as well as defend their identity against stereotypes by people of all races about their love for the outdoors. My data includes a post shared by a BIPOC collective of passionate cyclists. I felt it was important to include this post because this collective specifically highlighted the privilege of being seen as an outdoor adventurist without

the layering of racialized perceptions or stereotypes. BPOC *Instagram* users shared examples of White people overtly questioning their presence in the outdoors saying that "they must be lost". This is an example of the impact that histories of exclusion in outdoor adventure have, creating the narrative that BPOC communities do not intentionally access and enjoy the outdoors.

Hill Collins (2000) shares that there is a link between "what one does, and one thinks" (p.24). This is to say that how we understand who we are influences and directly informs the types of recreation that we engage in. The liberatory practice of making oneself seen and heard outside of the confines of stereotypes can be a challenging and isolating experience. Experiences of Black women outdoor adventurers shared through their participation in Black Hikers Week and collected in my sample can create, what Hill Collins (2000) refers to as, a shared body of knowledge and collective experience. At the same time, it's important to recognize that Black women outdoor adventurers in this sample have diverse experiences and to interpret their experiences differently. This emphasizes Hill Collins' (2000) point that "no homogenous Black women's standpoint exists, there is no essential or archetypal Black women whose experiences stand as normal, normative, and thereby authentic" (p. 28). Hill Collins (2000) asserts that what is more accurate is that even through there is no homogenous standpoint there are commonalities and that "a Black women's collective standpoint does exist" which is linked to a specific socio-political context and changes as the "legacy of struggle" shifts in response (p. 28). I share the following excerpts from posts in my sample that illustrate how BPOC outdoor adventurers have had their identity questioned while in the outdoors:

> *"…I've heard comments my entire life about 'being white' or 'not really black' from all races of people. It always bothered me to have my blackness questioned simply because of how I speak, the music I listen to, or the activities I enjoy. For the longest time this*

kept me from certain activities I feared would further invalidate my blackness such as rock climbing, camping, mountain biking, and really any other outdoor sport." (BM36)

"What a privilege to only think about bicycles. To be seen only as a cyclist. We love bicycles and we WANT to love the cycling community. But how can we love something that doesn't love us back? Like many social movements, womxn of colour are at the forefront of these critiques … It is through an intersectional lens that we, as a biking community, become stronger … but there's a cost Womxn of colour receive more backlash. …" (BIPOC Collective 31)

"I finally came to the realization that people's inability to see outside of a media-fueled stereotype didnt make me any less black. It definitely didnt stop the racist comments or microaggressions. There's a million + ways to be black in their world and I've luckily been able to connect with other BIPOC individuals who enjoy the same activities and encourage me to show up as I am in the outdoors". (BM36)

Black *Instagram* users shared their desire to see BIPOC communities in the outdoors and for BIPOC communities to challenge barriers such as lack of previous experiences in the outdoors, limited access to resources, and the feeling like they do not belong in the outdoors. This desire was also shared by BIPOC community collectives and groups that coordinate events like Black Hikers Week. For example, the previously mentioned BIPOC community collective stated they exist to make a safer and inclusive space for BIPOC "first time adventurers, neighbourhood adventurers and all the people who do not feel represented by ads from outdoor companies". BIPOC outdoor adventurers also expressed a deep desire to inspire others, especially future generations, to enjoy the outdoors while raising awareness to increase diversity and inclusion in the outdoors. Many *Instagram* users felt that the simple act of being in the

outdoors and sharing their experiences with other BIPOC *Instagram* users could have a significant impact. I share the following examples from *Instagram* users in my sample who expressed the desire to see more BIPOC communities in the outdoors:

> *"…hiking became something I did once a week and still continue to do. After a couple of weeks in I realized the lack representation and wanted to inspire other black folx to get out too and so @blackpeoplewhohike was birthed." (BW50)*
>
> *"…I've realized that seeing someone who looks like me in these remote, sublime spaces is powerful. Representation matters. Black stories of land matter. Black bodies in green spaces matter." (BW32)*
>
> *"It's important to highlight people of colour in adventure sports photography. The truth is that there are still very few of us in this space. When you are a minority among minorities, it becomes increasingly more difficult to connect with others and be seen. But as a photographer, I realized simple images can increase representation, inspire others, and, tell our story. … There is a deeper connection and hope behind each frame." (BM40)*
>
> *"… when I look around and feel like I don't belong in this world, I remind myself that by simply being there I am changing the dynamic. By participating I can show that the outdoor recreation IS a place for everyone." (LXW12)*
>
> *"Rock climbing is way for us to reclaim our relationships to the lands and waters. … When we remember that we belong to the land, we can remember that we belong to one another. We recognize that ongoing histories of gendered colonial violence impact each body, culture, and experience differently. For indigenous communities, our well-being cannot be divorced from the wellness of the land and waters." (IG67)*

Lack of representation solidifies and perpetuates harmful stereotypes and narratives which create significant barriers to accessing the outdoors as well as people perpetuating microaggressions that contribute to BIPOC communities feeling discomfort and being excluded. Harrison's (2013) study used the term "racial spatiality" to describe where certain racialized bodies are expected and where the presence of racialized bodies causes "disruption and demands explanation" (p. 317). While there are many documented impacts of microaggressions in the context of outdoor adventure, microaggressions function as a reminder that BIPOC outdoor adventurers do not belong or are different (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018). In the next section I provide my concluding thoughts on the theme of representation and lack of representation from my findings.

Concluding thoughts

Dominant narratives are created and reinforced using imagery, by not one but many images, to support a regime of representation. Carolyn Finney (2014) argues that regimes of representation create, support, and legitimize dominant narratives that can be difficult to change (p. 71). However, through initiatives like Black Hikers Week and the widespread use of the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors on *Instagram*, the dominant narrative of who is in the outdoors and how outdoor adventure is defined is challenged. BIPOC *Instagram* users often encouraged other BIPOC community members to spend time in the outdoors, alone or with others. Seeing BIPOC outdoor adventurers' experiences in the outdoors through the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors on *Instagram*, made me feel that I was not alone and that my identity and my relationship to the outdoors was something to be celebrated.

In this section, I discussed the most prominent theme in my findings of representation and lack of representation in the outdoors. The data showed that this lack of representation of

BIPOC outdoor adventurers exists because BIPOC communities feel unwelcome and fear for their safety in the outdoors. BIPOC *Instagram* users most often shared that these fears were based on racialized violence, barriers and exclusion that is based on the colonial practice of nation building, and the harmful experience having one's identity questioned not only by White people but people in their own communities of colour. Lack of representation also indicates the existence of a dominant narrative of outdoor adventure and the need to challenge this narrative. In this next section, I share the second theme found in my sample: challenging the dominant narrative.

Theme: Challenging the Dominant Narrative

BPOC *Instagram* users actively resisted and pushed back against dominant narratives of who belongs in the outdoors by documenting and sharing their experiences and perspectives with others who followed the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors on *Instagram*. In this section, I discuss the following three subthemes related to challenging the dominant narrative: outdoor adventure is for White men; the need to redefine the outdoors; and the desire to create a different narrative of the outdoors.

The Outdoors is for White Men

Many *Instagram* users in my study felt that sharing their posts with other people who follow the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors was a direct way to challenge the dominant narrative that outdoor adventure is exclusively for White men. Their posts also challenged the belief that only White people have generational experiences of spending time in the outdoors. As previously mentioned, *Instagram* users criticized media and the outdoor industry for consistently featuring narratives that were narrow and limited in scope as well as perpetuate the stereotype of who spends time outdoors and how that time is spent.

Black women and Women of Colour outdoor adventurers in my sample emphasized that outdoor spaces and adventure have been experiences reserved for White people, and particularly for White men for far too long. They expressed the desire to see more BIPOC communities in the outdoors, and that safe spaces would be needed as part of those experiences in the outdoors. Black women and Women of Colour *Instagram* users often shared they felt like an outsider and felt tired of being the only Person of Colour on their outdoor adventures. The following are examples of what Black women and Women of Colour outdoor adventurers in my sample shared:

> *"... I've been told pretty consistently that I do, "white people stuff". I understand that this idea comes from a long history of lack of exposure, lack of resources, lack of a safe space and general feeling that Black folx don't belong in outdoor spaces due to systemic racism. ..." (BW57)*
>
> *"... We saw 21 people total, I counted (because I do these things). All white. Almost all men. Who knows if they thought anything?..." (WOC7)*
>
> *"... I've noticed this at nearly every class, on nearly every climb, with nearly every group. Often, I look around and find myself surrounded by a sea of fit white males and question what I've gotten myself into. ..." (LX12)*
>
> *"... My first multi-day ultra. First 100K trail race. First time I thought to myself 'Oh, there's no other black or brown people. ..." (BW13)*

Researchers such as Finney (2014) and Harrison (2013) have noted that Black communities' participation in outdoor adventure and environmental activism in the U.S. or Canada, has been made invisible by the mainstreaming of a dominant narrative. For example, Derek Martin's study (2004, in Finney, 2014) found that media images in magazines

overwhelmingly display a "racialized outdoor leisure identity that views outdoor enthusiasts as strong, young and white" (p.27).

The constructed and perpetuated dominant narrative of outdoor adventure that asserts that outdoor adventure is for White men is inextricably linked to the colonial histories of land theft and erasure of Indigenous communities on Turtle Island (colonially known as the U.S. and Canada). The colonial process of nation-building included the social and cultural creation of parks and wilderness spaces across Turtle Island (Dua et al., 2005). The social and cultural construction of parks, wilderness, and the outdoors required forcibly removing Indigenous communities and limiting access through laws that criminalized the presence of Indigenous communities on their own lands as "squatters, poachers, and trespassers" (Carruthers, 1995; Mawani, 2005; Newmann, 1995; Spence, 2000 cited in Mawani, 2007, p. 722). In the context of Canada, settler colonialism involved the gendered practice of severing the relationship of Indigenous women from land both socially and legislatively (Green, 2017). This severing of relationship to land disproportionately affected Indigenous women and provided the opportunity to build the dominant narrative of the outdoors only being for White men.

Social and cultural processes are complicated for immigrants and diasporic communities since they are implicated in the ongoing displacement of Indigenous people (Dua et al., 2005). Tuck and McKenzie (2014) noted that subsequent generations of "settlers" from diasporic communities arrive in the settler nation-state, for a variety of reasons, but the main reason continues to be the need for space and land. For example, I can imagine that for my family having to leave their ancestral lands was traumatic and the only option available to survive was to move to another colonialized land. It would have been challenging, for my family being displaced to a land where the natural environment was unrecognizable and the weather

conditions were vastly different, to figure out where and how they would survive and belong. An additional layer to this complicated relationship to land for immigrants and diasporic communities is the hidden and erased exploitation and exclusion of other POC communities, such as the enslavement of Black communities and exploitation of Chinese labourers (Dua et al., 2005). Histories of exploitation and exclusion of Black and Chinese communities was also effective in maintaining the dominant narrative of the outdoors being for White men.

As previously mentioned, BIPOC *Instagram* users challenged the narrative that only White people have generational experiences in the outdoors. *Instagram* users who participated in Black Hikers Week shared that their experiences in the outdoors began with hiking when they were kids. Black outdoor adventurers shared that they did not use the term hiking to describe their time in the outdoors as kids until more recently. Black *Instagram* users shared their childhood memories of being outdoors with their family locally or with extended family, in another country, while learning more about their culture. Black outdoor adventurers who now have kids of their own shared that spending time in the outdoors as a family is a priority. The following examples show this theme of being in the outdoors as children:

> *" I guess you can say that my love for hiking began at birth. I was born on mountainous island in the Caribbean and we walked everywhere out of necessity, it wasn't called 'hiking' though." (BM37)*
>
> *"I hiked before I knew what *hiking* was. As a child, escapes into the woods were almost a daily summer adventures." (BW39)*
>
> *"I started hiking before I knew what hiking was. Growing up on a farm it was second nature to #wander in the wild. … To be honest, growing up I never thought of my roaming it [the family farm] as hiking." (BW42)*

As they transitioned out of childhood, *Instagram* users, took a lengthy pause from spending time in the outdoors. Black women *Instagram* uses specifically spoke about barriers to outdoor adventure that emerged as they grew up and were expected to embrace new responsibilities, including school and/or sports, work stress, and/or relocation to new country. Women of Colour *Instagram* users also talked about accepting new responsibilities as they grew up, which prevented them from accessing the outdoors. Black women and Women of Colour outdoor adventurers reconnected with the outdoors as adults or by going on adventures with their own family. The following examples best illustrate these shared experiences:

> *"My adventures started before I can even remember. As a child growing up in Jamaica, I would go down to the river or up the mountains. After moving to the states thirty one years ago, I began hiking and camping again as a way to take a break from my struggles of fitting into a new culture." (BM25)*
>
> *"… Unfortunately the responsibilities of life kicked in at a very young me and being outside was put on the back burner. I worked a lot all through school and after and didn't make (or take) the time to get outside because I was burned out. What I didn't realize was that maybe getting outside would have helped to give me a reset and lessen the stress I carried." (BW49)*

Women of Colour outdoor adventurers emphasized that, contrary to the dominant narrative of the outdoors being dominated by White men, they have always had a presence in the outdoors. Women of Colour *Instagram* users said they had to resist or push back against barriers to outdoor adventure such as race and gender as well as body size and ability. To overcome these barriers, they had to research how to access the outdoors, learn what they needed while they were in the outdoors (such as food, water, clothing, gear), and accepted that sometimes they would be

the first or only adventurer of colour in those places. The majority of BPOC outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* stated that seeing images of BIPOC communities finding joy in nature were a source of "undeniable joy". The following are examples shared by a Black woman and a Woman of Colour outdoor adventurer about resisting barriers:

> *"I look around and find myself surrounded by a sea of white males and question what I have gotten myself into. The outdoor industry wasn't built for curvy women of colour. Finding gear that fits my body is difficult, and finding other minorities to look up to and inspire me is even harder. But, when I look around and feel like I don't belong in this world. I remind myself that by simply being there I am changing the dynamic. By participating I can show that outdoor recreation is for everyone." (WOC12)*
>
> *"Being an outsider my whole life, I've always tried to cultivate a 'I don't care what people think I should do attitude. So what if I don't see dark skinned people out here? I'll be the first. But I don't want to be the only. And that's why I'm loving this week so much. These images of Black and Brown people finding joy in nature makes my heart soar…" (BW80)*

Reconnecting with the outdoors as adults, having to push back on pressures to assimilate, and taking the initiative to learn about outdoor adventure are examples of conscious acts of resistance by BIPOC communities to experience the benefits of being outdoors. Scott and Tenneti (n.d.) noted that being out in nature for Black outdoor adventurers can be an experience that is both joyful and filled with tension because of the fear of experiencing race-based violence. Lu and Steele (2019) asserted that conscious acts against systemic oppressions and experiencing joy are vital acts of resistance. Black women and Women of Colour *Instagram* users seeking experiences of joy by intentionally making outdoor adventure a consistent activity in their lives,

despite exposure to microaggressions and violence, is a clear example of Audre Lorde's (1984) assertion that seeking out joy is taking care of one's wellbeing in the most authentic way.

Instagram users challenged the dominant narrative that outdoor adventure is for White men by sharing their childhood experiences of the outdoors, reconnecting with the outdoors as adults, and taking the initiative to learn how to access the outdoor adventure regardless of barriers associated with body size, financial cost, gender, ability, etc. The data shows that the presence of BIPOC communities in the outdoors and sharing experiences on *Instagram* can contribute to redefining narratives of outdoor adventure.

Redefining the Outdoors

Many *Instagram* users expressed the need to "rethink", "redesign", and "redefine" outdoor culture. For many, redefining the outdoors meant challenging the narrow definition and dominant narrative of outdoor adventure as participating in activities such as kayaking, hiking or camping, accessing remote locations, and having all the latest gear. *Instagram* users asserted that experiences of outdoor adventure are also not limited to the most intense challenges possible, such as reaching the summit of a mountain. Many provided examples of how BPOC communities spend time outdoors in ways that subvert the dominant narrative of outdoor recreation such as: gardening in one's backyard, picnicking or BBQing at a local park or walking around one's neighbourhood. Regardless of the activity, attaining the possible health benefits was a strong motivator for spending time in the outdoors.

Black outdoor adventurers in my sample declared that people should be able to choose the experience they want and the pace that is most appropriate for themselves. Outdoor adventure does not require being in competition with anyone or vigorous physical activity. Spending time in a greenspace is enough to gain health benefits. *Instagram* users asserted that

redefining, rethinking, and redesigning outdoor culture could create a more inclusive space that would send the message that the outdoors is for everyone, and anyone can enjoy the outdoors. The following examples illustrate how *Instagram* users mentioned redefining the outdoors:

> *"I think fondly of the memory of him [father] doing his laps around the house and I'll always be content knowing that we don't have to make it to the highest mountain top or deepest forest to reap the benefits of nature. If we do great but a walk around the house will do." (BW49)*
>
> *"What I appreciate about hiking is that with marked trails, you get to choose. YOU decide how easy or difficult you want the experience to be. Then the trail will meet you where you are." (BW55)*
>
> *"For many, the outdoors and being outdoorsy is associated with outdoor sports, mountains of the latest gear, remote locations, etc. Being outdoorsy is so much more than summiting a mountain in a high tech outfit. We know that nature provides multiple health benefits and it doesn't matter if you're gardening in your backyard, grilling out with family at your local park, walking through your neighbourhood." (BW45)*
>
> *"My hope is that by redefining the outdoors culture we can make it a safer and inclusive space for BIPOC, first time adventures, neighbourhood explorers, and all the people who don't feel represented by ads from outdoor companies" (BW45)*
>
> *"…when I look around and feel like I don't belong in this world, I remind myself that by simply being there I am changing the dynamic. By participating I can show that outdoor recreation IS a place for everyone." (LW12)*

"There are a lot of complicated feelings towards the outdoors in the Black community but I firmly believe there are SO MANY benefits to our health with regular nature exposure." (BW69)

Indigenous women outdoor adventurers in my sample shared a different narrative of the outdoors. They talked about the outdoors as a colonially constructed place to explore and outdoor adventure as an exertion of dominance over place. The outdoors was also described as a place where the harmful impacts of colonialism can be undone. The experiences of Indigenous women on *Instagram* being outdoors were healing and were intentional acts of "remembering". They asserted that through this act of "remembering" the connection to one another in relationship to land, we can also understand how ongoing histories of colonialism affect us all. An Indigenous community organizer explained that outdoor activities such as rock climbing are a way for Indigenous outdoor adventurers to "reclaim [their] relationship to the land" (IW). The following is a powerful quote about redefining the outdoors:

"In a time of great forgetting, many turn to the "outdoors" for "Conquest", for adventure in the "unknown", forgetting that this "unknown" is a place of great knowing, and inter-personal kinship between Indigenous Nations and their home-lands. For the unrecorded, erased and or extracted knowledge that brings our own People to summits around the world, our own Land-quests are grounded in the Stories we come from and the Stories we become. Stories that teach us not enact relationship on the Land, but rather that within the Land. It is here, a point of convergence: of time, knowledge, story and becoming, that we unfold colonial damage on Indigenous Lands and their Peoples, so that we may lift ourselves up and emerge into reclaimed ascents. Not of conquest, but of remembering." (IW51)

Indigenous women outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* emphasized that ways to redefine the outdoors involved discarding colonial narratives of exploration and dominance over the outdoors, being able to reclaim their relationship to land and engaging in practices to undo colonial harms. Indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson (2008) articulated that knowledge is held in relationship to one another and in relationship to land. Relationship to land shapes Indigenous reality by defining place, the self, traditions, spirituality, and relationship to others. Indigenous women outdoor adventurers asserted that Indigenous community members could strengthen their shared relationships, sense of self and belonging by spending time outdoors. In the West the colonial project sought to transform the spatial image and disconnect Indigenous communities from the land. This forced disconnection was culturally devastating, resulting in the loss of songs and stories that Indigenous communities used to track their histories and practice ceremony (Wilson, 2008). In terms of resistance, Simpson (2017) suggested that a way Indigenous communities could actively resist colonial occupation would be to find ways to recreate "circumstances in which story and ceremony takes place" (p.153). Simpson (2017) explained that recreating circumstances for ceremony and enacting them on the physical land that is occupied is an act of rebellion. Johnson (2018) theorized that experiences of oppression affect how we understand ourselves and who we perceive ourselves to be. For Indigenous women outdoor adventurers in my study, accessing outdoor adventure is part of resistance and resurgence work; through acts of joyfully decolonizing by accessing homelands, reconnecting with cultural memory, and connecting with community. These acts of resurgence and resistance are examples of intentional self-care and community care despite being in a world that is hostile to their community and way of life.

Indigenous women outdoor adventurers warned that when adventure in the outdoors is approached as a "conquest" or as an attempt to overcome the limits of nature, this is acting in direct opposition to the concept of being in relationship to land and is an example of enacting colonial violence upon land. Relationships to the outdoors that are based on narratives of conquest or expedition can be described as extractive experiences of outdoor adventure. Simpson (2017) reminds us that extraction is, in practice, a corner stone of capitalism, colonialism and settler colonialism. This kind of approach to the outdoors is "taking something, whether it's a process, an object, a gift, or a person, out of the relationships that give it meaning, and placing it a non-relational contest for the purpose of accumulation" (Simpson, 2017, p. 202).

For BPOC outdoor adventurers in my sample, redefining the outdoors has meant determining for themselves the kind of adventure they would like to have, focusing on wellbeing and making the outdoors more inclusive by challenging dominant narratives. Redefining, rethinking, and redesigning the dominant narrative of outdoor adventure to create inclusive spaces for BPOC communities requires an intersectional approach that is grounded in decolonizing practices that demonstrate solidarity with Indigenous communities in their fight for sovereignty across Turtle Island. Tuck and Yang (2012) remind BPOC communities that any approach to address social inequities must apply an analysis of settler colonialism and decolonial approaches of "deoccupying" land (p.19). Ambivalence by Settlers of Colour (immigrant or displaced communities of colour) communities and descendants of enslaved and indentured peoples about their relationship to the lands they are occupying contributes to colonial violence and demonstrates the lack of solidarity with Indigenous land rights efforts (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

Redefining the outdoors for BIPOC *Instagram* users is a powerful act of joyful resistance. As discussed in this section, there are different ways that groups redefine the outdoors that are based in historical and the current socio-political context. For Indigenous women outdoor adventurers, they redefined the outdoors as a place of healing, remembering, and undoing the harms of colonialism. BPOC outdoor adventurers redefined the outdoors as any activity in any greenspaces that promotes wellbeing. Any efforts to diversify the outdoors by BPOC communities without including an analysis of settler colonialism will only frustrate Indigenous efforts for sovereignty. The direct impact of redefining the outdoors is the creation of a different narrative and experience of the outdoors.

Creating a Different Narrative and Experience of the Outdoors

Instagram users who were not exposed to the outdoors as children, shared that their experiences with the outdoors began in adulthood and took it upon themselves to learn about the outdoors, the activities possible, and the recommended gear. Black *Instagram* users, who participated in Black Hikers Week mentioned their preparation for outdoor adventure included researching and resisting the pressure of using expensive or specific gear. In their posts, Black outdoor adventurers often talked about adventuring solo because friends were not interested in regularly planned outdoor adventures. The experience of venturing into the outdoors alone and not waiting for anyone else to join them was most often shared by Black men outdoor adventurers. Thinking about racism was also mentioned as part of the process of preparing for every hike, road trip or trip to the airport for BPOC outdoor adventurers. The following examples describe these experiences:

> *"When I moved to Montreal I was surprised that none of my black friends had any interest in hiking. So when I decided that I wanted to go hiking I had no one to help me. I*

had to do all the research and then try and convince someone to join me. What ended up happening most of the time is that I would just go alone because the few friends that could go would only want to go about two times a year but I wanted to go every week." (BM37)

"We didn't have any fancy gear, we didn't know all of the right lingo. But we wanted to get out and explore everything our new home had to offer us." (BW53)

In this section I discussed the theme of challenging a dominant narrative of outdoor adventure and three subthemes. Firstly, the dominant narrative asserts outdoor adventure is for White men. Second, to challenge this dominant narrative BPOC on *Instagram* need to redefine the outdoors. Finally, redefining the outdoors will make space for creating a different narrative and experience of the outdoors. In the following section, I provide my concluding thoughts.

Concluding thoughts

BPOC communities redefining and creating a new narrative about outdoor adventure that is inclusive of diverse experiences will require an approach that is decolonial or reconciliatory in action to support Indigenous communities. If this approach is not included when building a new narrative, there is a risk of maintaining settler colonialism and "recolonizing" the outdoors as well as ignoring the sovereign rights of Indigenous communities (Morgensen, 2009 cited in Tuck and Yang, 2012). Narratives of outdoor adventure presented by BPOC on *Instagram* without an analysis or recognition of stolen lands will only create a Setter of Colour narrative of outdoor adventure. I noticed that very few posts by BPOC *Instagram* users included a land acknowledgement (6 out of 48). BPOC outdoor adventurers who did include a land acknowledgement often provided the reminder that the outdoors are lands that have been stolen and forcefully taken through colonization.

While land acknowledgements are important, they represent a small first step in the decolonizing process. Tuck and Yang (2012) warn against decolonizing approaches that only focus on raising or expressing "critical consciousness" (p. 21). Decolonizing efforts that solely focus on critical consciousness raising can be problematic, as they have been found to either ease "settler feelings of guilt or responsibility" or they are articulated in a way that is complementary to human rights or civil rights (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 36). These approaches move away from the goals of unsettling outdoor spaces and restoring land ownership to Indigenous communities (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

Many BPOC *Instagram* users expressed a desire to diversify representation in the outdoors. It would be problematic, if anti-racist efforts are made to increase representation in outdoor adventure without considering how this effort could simply solidify the existing colonial and white supremacist approaches to the outdoors. We (BPOC outdoor adventurers) put ourselves at risk of causing more harm and not allying with Indigenous communities seeking sovereignty. Believing that we (BPOC outdoor adventurers) belong, that everyone deserves to feel safe outdoors, and enjoy the wellness benefits without considering a decolonial approach to outdoor adventure ultimately excludes Indigenous communities' opportunities to enjoying the outdoors, makes Indigenous struggles invisible and contributes to ongoing colonization of these spaces. Diasporic stories are complex, including experiences of being enslaved or indentured as well as other harmful impacts of colonization such as forced displacement. The complexity within diasporic stories includes the international displacement of Indigenous communities and it is important to consider this for future studies as it is beyond the scope of my study. A deeper dive into the diasporic communities could explore the lived experiences, perspectives, relationship, and responsibilities of internationally displaced Indigenous communities to local

Indigenous communities and land. Taking the time to examine or re-examine one's relationship to land, Indigenous communities, and settler colonialism can be a start.

Challenging dominant narratives of the outdoors being for White men, redefining the outdoors and creating an experience for oneself have been shared by *Instagram* users in my sample as being joyful and important acts of resistance. Aside from feelings of joy, through creating new narratives and challenging the existing narratives, *Instagram* users also talked about the wellness benefits of being in the outdoors where dreaming, being inspired, healing, and wellness can happen.

Theme: Dreaming, Inspiration, Healing, and Wellness

Many BIPOC outdoor adventurers declared that spending time in the outdoors benefitted their health. I found the following four subthemes in relation to outdoor adventure contributing to one's health: spending time outdoors to deal with anxiety and depression, finding one's voice and stepping out of comfort zones, the outdoors as a space to dream of a thriving life, and health benefits outweighing anticipated risks associated with being outdoors. In this section, I discuss each of these subthemes separately because each of them is distinctly important and provide a cumulative analysis of these subthemes as they are inextricably linked to one another.

Spending Time Outdoors to Deal with Anxiety and Depression

Many Black women and Women of Colour *Instagram* users in my sample, disclosed that being in the outdoors during the "hardest of times" helped to reduce their feelings of anxiety and depression. The "hardest of times" were also described as the pandemic and the associated new financial insecurities as well as dealing with daily stressors and overworking. Black women outdoor adventurers talked about "hitting a wall", "being under a lot of stress" or the number of friends and family dealing with anxiety and depression in their lives. Women of Colour outdoor

adventurers philosophized about the existence of a parallel between the sometimes-tumultuous experience of outdoor adventure and the "highs and lows of life's journey". I offer the following examples of what Black women and Women of Colour outdoor adventurers in my sample shared:

> *"I started hiking on my own as a way to get outside and reduce my anxiety. I find hiking incredibly meditative. Hiking has gotten me through some really tough times. …" (BW83)*
>
> *"We've finally been getting back outdoors again and on these days I feel so full of joy and so free – breathing in the fresh mountain air, trudging uphill for hours, climbing over rocks, and sliding around in mud and snow. Carrying a pack full of gear, food, and water on my back seems to relieve some of the heaviness that weighs down on me from all the hurt and "bad news" in the world." (AW20)*
>
> *"Twelve years ago I embarked on a new journey of self-healing which lead me to weaning myself off of pharmaceuticals (I fully support anyone that uses over the counter medications to help aid with their mental health) This new journey has lead me on even more adventures outside to naturally self-medicate and to remain balanced throughout life!" (BM25)*

Many *Instagram* users shared that they often spent time outdoors to manage stress, anxiety, and depression. While spending time in the outdoors, *Instagram* users noticed an improvement in their self-confidence which manifested as finding their own voice and stepping out of their comfort zones.

Finding One's Voice, Stepping Out of Comfort Zones

Time spent outdoors and engaging in outdoor adventure was often described as a way to "unplug", try new things, and step out of their comfort zones. Many Black women outdoor

adventurers who participated in Black Hikers Week shared that their first experience, as adults in the outdoors changed their lives. Many Women of Colour outdoor adventurers expressed a slightly different experience than Black women *Instagram* users in my sample, sharing that being in nature changed their lives. I can only speculate that the reason why Women of Colour and Black women outdoor adventurers in my sample had different experiences is because Black Hikers Week asked participants to share their first experience of being outdoors. For Black women and Women of Colour *Instagram* users, being outdoors offered the opportunity to learn the depth of their own strength, gain new perspective, challenge their thinking, and find their voice. Many Women of Colour outdoor adventurers said they gained new perspectives and insights about who they are and how outdoor adventure as a form of play can be self-care. For some, being outdoors was a powerful experience that made *Instagram* users feel inspired, spiritually reconnected, and that they could "reclaim" the parts of themselves they felt had been "muted" or hidden. Black women outdoor adventurers shared that while being in nature, they did not feel shy about being themselves. A community organizer in my sample shared that the outdoors was a space where they felt that they could be their most authentic self, and their experiences in the outdoors helped them "take up space" in other parts of their life where they did not feel comfortable before. The following are examples from Black women and Woman of Colour outdoor adventurers that illustrate finding one's voice:

> *"Taking up space never felt so damn good! I want other women of color to finish a hike with me feeling as good as I do. But, most fucking importantly, I want other women of color to walk into the woods with confidence and come out feeling like they can take up space in other parts of the world. Nature is for everyone, especially you." (Community Organization66)*

"I didn't know it then, but that [first] trip was a turning point in my life. After college I struggled with anxiety and depression, trying to find how I fit in this world. Spending time on the trail helped me to learn the depth of my strength. Being surrounded by nature healed me, it gave me a new perspective on life and helped me to realize that I have lots of options. To this day my courage still surprises me, and it all began with that first backpacking trip." (BW81)

"Hiking isn't about competition or keeping up with what you saw someone else do. It's personal. Being out there silences the "noise". You can find your own voice again or simply listen to the elements around you." (BW55)

"My passion for hiking arose last year when a friend inviting me out hiking for the first time. Around this time, I was working almost 6 days a week and under a decent amount of stress. That first experience on the trail was life changing. I immediately experienced a piece of mind; calming, relaxing yet exhilarating." (BW50)

Black women *Instagram* users spoke about the importance of self-actualization, as an after effect of spending time in the outdoors. They described self-actualization as feeling more confident, finding their voice, and being more honest with oneself about their dreams and goals. Self-actualization, according to Patricia Hill Collins (2000) is one of the distinguishing features found in Black feminist thought. Black feminist theorists such as bell hooks (1989) and Audre Lorde (1984; 1987) are often quoted for their insistence that by defining oneself, Black women outdoor adventurers (and other BIPOC communities) liberate themselves from imposed oppressive stereotypes. Hill Collins (2000) insisted that Black women intellectuals from all backgrounds "must aggressively" speak for themselves and create their own goals as these are critical for empowerment (p.36). She emphasized this point because self-definition is a direct act

of resistance "rejecting, externally defined, controlling images of Black womanhood (p. 114). These individual acts of resistance can cumulatively imply a collective consciousness that defines acts of resistance and empowerment (Hill Collins, 2000). The powerful impact of self-actualization, liberation, and resistance are explained in the following statement by Audre Lorde (1984):

> That self-connection is a measure of joy which I know myself to be capable of feeling, a reminder of my capacity for feeling. And that deep and irreplaceable knowledge of my capacity for joy comes to demand from all my life that it be lived within the knowledge that such satisfaction is possible and does not have to be called marriage, nor god, nor afterlife. … Once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, we begin to demand of ourselves and from our life-pursuits that they feel in accordance with that joy which we know ourselves to be capable of. (p. 57)

Outdoor adventure provided BPOC communities with the opportunity to push themselves outside of their comfort zone. Many POC *Instagram* users posted that their experiences had been "exhilarating" and calming or relaxing at the same time. Black women outdoor adventurers had taken the time to research the benefits of hiking and spending time in the outdoors. Community organizers in my sample were inspired to share the outdoors with others in the community one they found scientific evidence of increased health benefits such as battling cancer, improving blood pressure, and relieving anxiety as well as depression. They also felt it was their "life's purpose" to create events and encourage community members to engage in the outdoors. Time outdoors as a community could bring joy to people's lives and improve overall community health and wellness. Some examples of how stepping out of one's comfort zone and into the outdoors can improve one's health are the following:

"I think it is so important that POC get outdoors. I truly believe that nature is therapeutic and our people especially need this outlet. For that reason I started @blackpeoplewhohike. It's not about a group people but more so a movement. Let's get outside, lets get active and lets experience nature for all that it has to offer. Nature changed my life and I want to continue to change the lives of others." (BW78)

"The high that I ride after having a grand ol' time outside is, simply put, amazing. I am fueled by endorphins and it is truly therapeutic. I find it really sad that not everyone is able to experience the healing power of being outdoors." (AW20)

"My outdoor-focus got more serious as my depression and anxiety increased. This type of outlet greatly helped by recharging my introverted personality and allowing me to stay engaged with society and my peers. With my time in the great outdoors, along with medication, life was great." (BM25)

"I seemed to fall into a series of several bad relationships as quickly as I fell out of the outdoors. Physical, emotional, and psychological abuse were all present in one way or another. I finally hit that wall (or the ground) and decided No Moe. I was worth more than that, and I needed to find my happy again. So I hike. And I don't compromise when it comes to spending time in nature." (BW54)

Increased self-confidence, finding one's voice, and stepping out of comfort zones created space for BPOC community members to be more honest with themselves about what was most important. By being honest with themselves, BPOC *Instagram* users declared that they would establish and work towards goals to fulfill their dreams and thrive.

To Dream of a Thriving Life

By reconnecting or reclaiming the parts of themselves that they had muted or hidden, BPOC *Instagram* users felt they were able to be more "honest" with themselves and began to establish everyday practices that aligned with reaching their dreams and goals. The following are examples of what they shared:

> *"Being whoever the fuck I want to be out in the nature doesn't just bring me closer to me but helps me take up space in other parts of my life. I'll admit at first I didn't know exactly what I was doing but I knew the focus was "WOC". Nature. Writing. … Because the hiking, journaling and connecting with myself spiritually out in nature all helped me to reclaim parts of myself that were already there. … We need safe spaces like these to be ourselves in, especially since nature has for too long been a white-male dominated space." (CommunityOrganization66)*
>
> *"I hike for the fresh take. I hike knowing and looking forward to the moment nature will surprise me, make me question everything I know, confirm something I just learned, or just confuse me. I love finding out answers to my questions, and also sitting with not knowing. I also love the conversations that happen in my head on solo hikes, or with friends. I feel like there are jokes that are extra funny on trail. Like there is food that is only good on camping trips." (BW47)*

BPOC *Instagram* users also expressed that being in the outdoors was therapeutic, "vital", "meditative", "blissful" and a way to get their joy back. The following are examples of what *Instagram* users said:

> *"Here's what I believe:*
>
> - *JOY is an act of rebellion for womxn of color & your joy matters*
> - *There is power in taking up space in places that are not traditionally "for us"*

- *We deserve revolutionary self care*
- *When we show up fully as who we are without apology and without shrinking, we change our communities and our world for the better." (BW61)*

"Being outdoors is vital for me for so many reasons – it allows me to truly unplug from daily stressors from work, an opportunity for me to try new things/experiences on a regular basis, and often pushes me to step outside of my comfort zone and be challenged! Being outside and in the mountains has offered me new perspectives, reminded me of what's important and a heightened sense of gratitude, and has helped me strengthen by relationships by sharing those experiences with loved ones – plus who doesn't love some beautiful views, especially those hard earned ones." (AW62)

Black men *Instagram* users often described the outdoors as a place where they could build connection, find inspiration, and gain strength. They explained that outdoor adventure helped them to work through their feelings of inadequacy and fear of failure. Many *Instagram* users noted that time spent in the outdoors was a way to naturally care for oneself and described as "self-medicating" and maintaining a wellness "balance". A Black man outdoor adventurer in my sample shared the following:

"I was tired of feeling like I wasn't enough. Tired of believing I wouldn't amount to much. Tired of doing the same old things with the same old people. I needed a change – to do something I had never done and see something I had never seen, and I wasn't going to wait on anyone to come along." (BM34)

BPOC outdoor adventurers often talked about a strong relationship between self-care and resistance. Outdoor adventure energized them and instilled a confidence to exist without "apology or shrinking" and how this creates an opportunity to finally feel like they were thriving.

As previously mentioned BPOC *Instagram* users declared that thriving individually, also has the power to positively change and shape communities. I provide the following examples of what BPOC outdoor adventurers shared about relationship between outdoor adventure, self-care, and the ability to thrive:

> *"Getting outdoors shouldn't be a privilege. We're so lucky to have a beautiful backyard in BC and playing in it can be a form of self-care. And sometimes self-care is an act of resistance." (BW74)*
>
> *"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare. – Audre Lorde" (BM71)*
>
> *"I realized this was a place where I could truly be myself. I didn't have a tidy appearance or "mind my manners" (Had to be respectful of course, ass whoopings still exist in El Campo) but I was free … my sprit felt free listening to birds and basking under the light of the sun." (BW45)*

BPOC *Instagram* users shared that taking up space in places that they were not "traditionally" expected to be or welcome, could be an experience that was both difficult and powerful. They emphasized they would "no longer compromise" spending time outdoors, regardless of any fear or anticipated violence, because of the widespread benefits experienced.

Health Benefits Outweigh the Anticipated Risks

Some *Instagram* users asserted that while they had yet to experience overt racism while outdoors, they still anticipate having to experiencing it. They also talked about navigating the tension between experiencing joy and managing anxiety-inducing situations, such as anticipating hostility in small towns that border national parks or popular recreation areas. Black women *Instagram* users, more than any other group, shared that overcoming fears of experiencing

microaggressions or macroaggressions was a part of their process of preparing to access the outdoors. Black women outdoor adventurers overwhelmingly asserted that if outdoor adventure makes a person "happy" or improves their wellness, then time and energy should be put into having that experience on a regular basis. The following quotes express the tension between accessing the outdoors for the benefit of their health while at the same time anticipating experiences of harm:

> *"For me, the benefits have always outweighed the fear, and my Mama has always said that it's okay to show up in spaces where I may not see other people who look like me. Especially in nature. Racism has not been absent in my life by any means. I think about it before every hike, before every trip to the airport, or road trip across the state or country, etc." (BW65)*
>
> *"Black people should be able to safely navigate & peacefully enjoy Mama Nature without having to worry about dealing with the disturbing stress that accompanies being made the targets of profiling, harassment, microaggressions, & threats of/actual violence against our multifaceted beings. Earth is our home, too, & we belong here just as much as anyone else." (BW69)*
>
> *"This solo road trip was tainted by the anxiety of driving thru Northern Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana and Wyoming alone as a black female. …" (BW78)*
>
> *"… in the small towns that cushion these wild spaces, I have [had bad experiences in regards to race]. We still travel through them often en route to new adventures. When we stop – I always have my favorite place in any given town to go for a snack before going home – and often that place is my "favorite place" because I've been there before and I know I will be treated with kindness. …" (BW65)*

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, experiences of systemic oppression can negatively impact the body. Drawing from the findings in my sample and using theories on joy by Lee (2018) and Lorde (1984; 1988), I argue that joyful experiences of outdoor adventure can positively impact the relationship one has to their body and the overall wellness of BIPOC communities. Lee (2018) tells us there are sensory benefits of being in the outdoors. According to Lee, anxiety and stressful overthinking can be reduced through time spent in the outdoors, regardless of the activity or actual space. Research shows that "small bursts of positive emotion" can help build strength and improve wellbeing for people to continue to actively resist oppression (Lee, 2018). Small bursts of positive emotion or sensory joy are momentary flashes of what a socially just future can feel like and can drive the passion as well as the energy to continue the fight against systemic oppressions in all its forms (Lee, 2018). Hill Collins (2019) reminds us that "experiences of the social world are always subject to interpretation and reinterpretation; identities are social phenomena and never finished" (p. 173). Making sense of the social world requires imagination, critical thought, and action (Hill Collins, 2019). Tuck and Yang (2012) emphasize that Indigenous people want to feel the sensory feeling joy as well.

In this section, I discussed my findings within the theme of dreaming, inspiration, healing and wellness as well as four subthemes that are inextricably linked to one another: 1) spending time in the outdoors as way to handle anxiety and stress; 2) finding one's voice and stepping out of comfort zones; 3) increased confidence and finding one's voice meant that BPOC communities could dream and build a thriving life; and 4) the health benefits outweighed the anticipated risks associated with being outdoors. In the following section I provide my analysis and concluding thoughts.

Concluding thoughts

The strong and consistent message from *Instagram* users in my sample is that time spent in the outdoors is beneficial for one's overall health. Many posts show how spending time in the outdoors improves BPOC *Instagram* users' ability to handle daily stressors and offers an opportunity to safeguard the overall wellness of BPOC communities dealing with systemic oppression. The ability to handle daily stressors increased *Instagram* users' confidence. The increase in confidence resulted in BPOC *Instagram* users prioritizing themselves, which meant that they were more honest with themselves about their dreams or goals and then align their daily practices to feel like they were thriving. These wellness benefits accumulate and outweigh the risks of anticipating systemic harms while being outdoors.

Systemic oppressions, often expressed as microaggressions, send the message that people are not valued, are different or do not belong (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018). Research has demonstrated that regardless of intention, magnitude or means, there are serious health impacts on the body from experiencing social inequalities, both mentally and physically (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018). People's ability to thrive and to access opportunities as well as how people feel about themselves is impacted by experiences of systemic oppression and social inequities of exclusion (Taylor, 2021). The way we internalize or conceptualize who we are is impacted by our interactions with others and expectations of the context or environment we are in (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018).

BPOC outdoor adventurers expressed that spending time in the outdoors was a way to deeply self-actualize, connect with family and build community. BPOC *Instagram* users shared that while individual wellness is important, the wellness that can be experienced collectively inspired them to encourage others to engage in outdoor adventure as an act of community care and wellness. While experiences of self-actualization and connection were shared across racial

groups, they were different in meaning and impact. For example, self -actualization and community building by BPOC *Instagram* users sounded very similar to what Indigenous women in my sample shared. However, the difference is that self-actualization and community building for Indigenous women *Instagram* users in the outdoors, as previously discussed, is complex because it includes healing and undoing the harms of colonialism. Building community and making connections often included being outdoors with family. In the next section, I will discuss the theme of connection, family, and community. Like the four subthemes of wellness, the narratives shared about connection, family, and community are interwoven so I provide my analysis cumulatively within the concluding thoughts section.

Theme: Connection, Family and Community

BPOC *Instagram* users in my sample whose connection to the outdoors began when they were children or with parents shared three types of memorable experiences: 1) going on hikes with family members; 2) sending time with extended family members in places of origin to maintain a link to their culture; or 3) traveling with family to places of origin for periods of time to experience their culture. *Instagram* users who have families and children of their own now, said they are continuing the tradition of being outdoors as a family to maintain a connection with each other.

Many BPOC outdoor adventurers spoke about finding community, spending time with family, and connecting with oneself in the outdoors. Some emphasized that being in the outdoors in a group with other BPOC outdoor adventurers made them feel more comfortable. Many expressed gratitude for being able to connect with other adventurers of colour and felt they were in community rather than being alone. For example, connection with others encouraged the following *Instagram* user to be present and authentic to who they are:

"There's a million ways to be black in this world & I've luckily been able to connect with other BIPOC individuals who enjoy the same activities & encourage me to show up as I am in the outdoors. My hope is that more black people (especially kids) begin to receive representation." (BM36)

Women of Colour *Instagram* users claimed that their experiences of outdoor adventure reminded them of what is important, strengthened their sense of gratitude, and solidified their relationships with loved ones by sharing experiences in the outdoors. Black women *Instagram* users often expressed that they felt inspired to build connection and wanted to support others to feel safe in the outdoors. The connections built through shared experiences of outdoor adventure also created opportunities to learn from one another. I share the following quotes from Black women outdoor adventurers, who participated in Black Hikers Week, as examples of building connection to oneself, family, and community while outdoors:

"I join this [Black Hikers Week] collective act of belonging-as-resistance." BW32

"Community is everything and one thing that I am grateful for is having people in my life that I can share the outdoors! … I urge everyone to take part and actively get to know a lot of the black hikers this week … who knows maybe our paths with cross on the trail!" (BM9)

"Being an outsider my whole life, I've always tried to cultivate a 'I don't care what people think I should do' attitude. So what if I don't see dark skinned people out here? I'll be the first. But I don't want to be the only. And that's why I'm loving this week so much These images of Black and brown people finding joy in nature make my heart soar." (BW80)

"I am privileged that I have access to tons of outdoor space and travel. I share my love of hiking with my daughter, my students and my clients. I am brainstorming ways on sharing it with the broader community, too!" (BW83)

BPOC *Instagram* users shared that outdoor adventure provided an opportunity to reconnect with oneself and build new connections with friends and family. In this next section, I provide my cumulative analysis and concluding thoughts.

Concluding thoughts

BPOC *Instagram* users asserted that they valued their childhood experiences of outdoor adventure and their connection with family locally and abroad. They articulated how experiences in the outdoors contributed to their personal processes of self-actualization and meaning making. Black women outdoor adventurers in my sample were inspired to create safe experiences in the outdoors to improve and maintain wellness, make space for others to self-actualize, and build community.

BPOC *Instagram* users commonly mentioned having to overcome feeling like they did not belong that were based on stereotypes about race, questioning or doubting what their body could physically do, and dealing with the challenge of finding appropriate gear to fit their bodies. The social construction of certain bodies as acceptable, capable, healthy, attractive, or deviant can have a dehumanizing impact and these impacts are metabolized in the body (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018). Rae Johnson (2007) tells us that systemic oppressions are experienced as trauma and are held in the body. These traumatic experiences of being subjected to harmful oppressive stereotypes can manifest as a split between the self and the body (Caldwell and Leighton, 2018; Johnson, 2007). This split can cause a tremendous amount of internalized shame and can negatively affect self-confidence. Audre Lorde (1988) urges us to reach into that "deep

place of knowing and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there" and liberate ourselves through seeing who we really are (p.101). Seeing who we really are and liberating ourselves can create a healing bridge between the self and body as well as being oneself back to living authentically and thriving.

Hill Collins (2019) says that for social change to happen, community is necessary. Black feminist thought stresses that having dialogue within community is critical for developing new knowledges to inform the action we take to create change (Hill Collins, 2000). Black Hikers Week and other outdoor BIPOC community groups provide examples of how communities "think and do politics" (Hill Collins, 2019, p. 184). One of the distinguishing features of Black feminist thought is understanding that the self is not found by isolating oneself from others, but rather that the "self is found in the context of family and community" (Washington, 1984, p. 159 in Hill Collins, 2000, p. 113). The potential for connection through community often inspires people into action (Hill Collins, 2019, p.183). Hill Collins (2019) theorizes that community spaces, used by the Black community, are places where members can analyse their intersecting experiences of oppression, resist them, and share different tactics or approaches. Through dialogue and connection with family, friends, and community, new knowledges can emerge through validation (Hill Collins, 2000). At the same time, Hill Collins (2000) warns us that maintaining the "heterogeneity of Black womanhood" is critical in creating collective efforts to resist oppression (p. 36).

Hill Collins (2019) observes that communities can be re-imagined in many ways by using a lens of anti-racist and feminist inclusion, from the micro to the macro level. Black Hikers Week provides an online space for an open community dialogue (through the sharing of images and textual content) for participants to share and conceptualize their own experiences in relation

to the experiences of others. Researchers and theorists have explained that using online spaces to share narratives and experiences of Black communities is linked to oral traditions rooted in African American histories. Lu and Steele (2019) explain that using digital technology to share oral or textual dialogue is deeply rooted in African American community resistance as a tactic to define oneself and community against harmful media messaging and stereotyping. Florini (2019) explained that by using social media, individuals can shape their networks and interactions based on identity markers whether it is race, gender, sexuality, etc. Sharing experiences through community-centred social media events such as Black Hikers Week, can be a powerful way to inspire others to act and/or seek out more connections and create and redefine narratives and identities.

Instagram users sharing their experiences, stories, and images with the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors is an example of collective community action against historical social inequalities, exclusion, and erasure of BIPOC communities in the outdoors. It has been profound for me to witness the creative possibility of intersectional inclusion in outdoor adventure, the willingness of community members to share their experiences using hashtag #diversifyoutdoors and find a collective voice of BIPOC community joy while adventuring in the outdoors. As Lorde states (1984):

> "It is necessary to teach by living and speaking those truths which we believe and know beyond understanding. Because in this way alone we can survive, by taking part in a process of life that is creative and continuing, that is growth (p. 43)."

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed my findings and analysis of the four main themes. My final sample of 48 posts was smaller than originally anticipated but rich with textual content to

conduct a reflexive thematic analysis. Most posts in this sample were by Black women outdoor adventurers participating in Black Hikers Week during the week of June 22 to 26, 2020. As previously discussed, there were several significant contextual factors at this time that influenced the content of my data such as the COVID 19 pandemic and the murders of Breanna Taylor and George Floyd. Photos associated with *Instagram* posts were not only selfies, but photos of the *Instagram* user taken by another person or photos of the landscape. While I certainly experienced feeling joy while looking at photos, it was the textual narratives and experiences of BIPOC *Instagram* users that elicited the most powerful sense of joy as resistance.

The four main themes from my study on how outdoor adventure functions as joy as resistance for BIPOC on *Instagram* were the following: 1) representation and underrepresentation; 2) challenging a dominant narrative; 3) dreaming, inspiration, healing, and wellness; and 4) community, family, and connection. Seeing BIPOC *Instagram* users enjoy the outdoors alone or in community was powerful. *Instagram* users identified that a tension exists between anticipating racialized violence, seeking the benefits of outdoor adventure, and experiencing outdoor adventure as joyful resistance. Without representation of BIPOC communities in the outdoors these places continue to feel unsafe and unwelcoming through unaddressed histories of exclusion. BIPOC communities can redefine the dominant narrative of outdoor adventure and re-create the experience of the outdoors using anti-racist and decolonizing approaches as outlined in this chapter. Spending time outdoors, regardless of the activity or where, is beneficial for individual or collective BIPOC community wellness. Wellness includes reducing stress and anxiety which in turn makes space for BIPOC communities to dream, reset and set goals for themselves. Pushing boundaries through outdoor adventure can increase BIPOC individual and collective community confidence and appreciation for themselves. Outdoor

adventure provides the opportunity to self-actualize, reconceptualize the self and community, and connect with loved ones.

Outdoor adventure is defined by BIPOC *Instagram* users as going beyond stereotypical or expected activities such as hiking, kayaking, or camping. Outdoor adventure can be expansively conceptualized as adventure in the outdoors and can include activities such as: spending time in urban green spaces, cooking in local parks, time spent on family farms, fishing, relaxing in hammocks, and road trips to remote places. Reconceptualizing adventure in the outdoors must first and foremost be grounded in decolonizing approaches that support Indigenous people's sovereignty. Adventure in the outdoors happens when people can comfortably choose the way they are going to spend time in the outdoors without fear of racism, experience personal growth, reflection, and connection to oneself or community, and have opportunities for healing, and maintaining personal and community wellness. In the following chapter, I discuss implications for social work.

Chapter 5: Implications for Social Work

In this chapter, I discuss implications for social work that emerge from my study. My findings show that when BIPOC outdoor adventurers share their experiences of outdoor adventure on *Instagram* and use the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors, they are creating non-dominant and resistant knowledges that are available to other *Instagram* users, redefining their identity and sense of self through outdoor adventure, and building communities of resistance. This study has implications for intersectional feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial social workers (including social justice workers, support workers, equity educators, and activists) who currently use or may consider using outdoor adventure as a means of self-care and/or community building. Acts of self-care and community building are related to a person's identity, how they understand who they are in the socio-political context, and their understanding of who they are in relationship to other people. I chose an intersectional feminist theoretical framework because of this complex link between identity, experiences of oppression and acts of self-care. The findings of this study emphasize the necessity for social workers to continue to learn and reflect on the critical analysis of Black and Indigenous feminists, scholars and activists and act accordingly. My study requires that postsecondary Schools of Social Work include a decolonial approach for students to reflect and explore their relationship to stolen Indigenous land as part of education on positionality and situating oneself through a lens of power and privilege. Learning about social inequities and working in solidarity across various identity groups is critical to developing an approach to social work practice that is intersectional, feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial. Digital technology has been increasingly used as a tool to access alternative news and knowledges of social inequities and to build connections beyond the barriers of physical geography. In the following section, I discuss three important issues that emerged from my findings that social work educators and

practitioners ought to consider about self-care and community building, situating oneself, and digital social justice work: 1) defining a relationship to the outdoors and land, 2) the significance of non-dominant resistance knowledges, and 3) the concept of digital spaces as new publics, hashtag activism, and spaces for self-actualization and resistance.

Defining a Relationship to the Outdoors and Land

Social work (including social justice work, support work or activism) can negatively impact one's wellbeing if strategies of self-care and community-care are not encouraged, created, or maintained. Engaging in outdoor adventure to maintain wellness was a strongly articulated narrative by *Instagram* users in my study. Maintaining wellness as a benefit of engaging with the outdoors was experienced at the personal, familial, and larger community level. This personal and community benefit varied amongst BIPOC *Instagram* users depending on their life experiences, the context, and their relationship to the outdoors. What mattered most was the spent time in the outdoors, not the activity itself that they participated in. BPOC outdoor adventurers asserted that the outdoors is not a neutral place that is devoid of experiences of systemic discrimination. Choosing to care for oneself and the broader community through outdoor adventure is to choose joy as resistance.

Time spent outdoors provided opportunities for reflection and introspection for BIPOC *Instagram* users. BPOC outdoor adventurers shared that this improved their self-confidence, and they felt that it was possible to apply this new self-confidence in other areas of their life. They incorporated what they learned about themselves while outdoors into what they believe and know about themselves to live more authentically and to align their everyday practices to achieve their personal goals. Indigenous women in my sample made it clear that their relationship to the outdoors was a complex experience of resistance and wellness by reclaiming and reviving

Indigenous knowledges and practices. For Indigenous women outdoor adventurers, reflection and introspection were related to healing, remembering knowledges that were taken, and undoing other harms by colonialism to strengthen one's sense of self while hostility continues to exist against Indigenous people. Experiences of outdoor adventure are acts of joyful rebellion, reconnection with community and culture, and redefining oneself.

A critical starting point for practicing intersectional anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work is learning that who you are and how you have come to understand who you are is impacted by many social factors. As discussed in the Literature Review, social factors that impact how we understand who we are include harmful social constructions, perceptions, and internalization of messaging about our bodies. Our interactions with people are impacted by power and complex positionality including relationships to land. How social workers understand their positionality has a direct impact on how they address social inequities and work with marginalized communities. My study emphasizes that social workers should apply an intersectional feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppression and decolonial analysis to their practices of self-care and their experiences in the outdoors. Social workers who access the outdoors without critically reflecting about how their experiences are related to their positionality, the wider socio-historical and political contexts, and their relationships to land, are likely to perpetuate the dominant narrative of the outdoors that is colonial and racist instead of subverting it.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, colonial processes of racialization and gendered reconstructions of place and space are the foundation of the dominant narrative of outdoor adventure and create narratives about where people belong and where they do not. It is important that social workers deeply explore their relationship to the outdoors through Indigenous feminisms as a foundational exercise to positioning oneself that includes relationship to land. In my study, Indigenous women

outdoor adventurers asserted that relationships to the outdoors based on expedition and conquest are extractive and perpetuate violence on the land. Colonizing practices disproportionately affect Indigenous women, and so connections with land and access to land are political issues that require an approach that is decolonial and informed by Indigenous feminisms (Green, 2017).

Tuck and McKenzie (2014) remind researchers that meanings attributed to place tend to influence the development of self. When we take the time to develop knowledge of ourselves in relation to the colonial system of domination, including our practices on land, we can then examine the narratives we perpetuate and reflect on our approaches to outdoor adventure. If we, as BPOC communities, do not do this we also risk behaving as a model minority in the outdoors. The goal of model minority behaviour for BPOC communities is to live up to the standards and expectations established through white supremacist and colonial practices rather than challenging or subverting them (Thobani, 2007). As previously discussed, diasporic communities exist on colonial lands as a direct result of harmful and violent colonial interference in their places of origin and is therefore important that diasporic communities of colour act in allyship with local Indigenous and Black communities.

Drawing on Tuck and Yang's (2012) work, I offer the following suggestions for BPOC outdoor adventurists to reflect on their approaches to experiencing joy as resistance in the outdoors to avoid perpetuating colonial harms and avoid behaving as model minorities: research which Indigenous community's territory you are visiting before or while adventuring in the outdoors by using the app or website https://native-land.ca; take the time to learn about the treaties and history of the places you are visiting directly from Indigenous communities, and provide land acknowledgements in any posts you share about your adventure and consider using Chloe Veltman's (2023) article *So you Began your Event with an Indigenous Land*

Acknowledgement. Now What? and Ka'nhensi:io Deer's (2021) article *What's Wrong With Land Acknowledgements and How to Make Them Better*; consider carefully the language that you use to describe your adventure using resources such as Jocelyn Dockery's (2017) *5 Ways to Decolonize Your Canoe Trip* blog post for Nature Canada or Erin Berger's (2023) *Changing the Face of the Outdoors* blog post for REI, avoiding colonial descriptions such as pristine, untouched, and exploring; consider including a critical self-reflection exercise that locates or positions you and your relationship to land; learn about local Indigenous communites if possible, donate to causes directly related to resurgence programs and projects, land back and land protection causes, and/or engage in community solidarity practices led by, or in collaboration with local Indigenous communities such as land restoration and sovereignty initiatives.

For intersectional, feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial social workers, a meaningful effort to eradicate social inequity includes defining one's relationship to land and the outdoors as a critical practice for supporting the Indigenous sovereignty movement. Defining or redefining this relationship through an intersectional, anti-racist, feminist and decolonial lens will lead to developing non-dominant narratives and resistance knowledges. I will discuss non-dominant and resistance knowledges in the next section.

Non-dominant Narratives and Resistance Knowledges

Accepted dominant narratives of the outdoors have impacted BPOC communities' experiences of outdoor adventure in many ways. Dominant narratives are rooted in negative attitudes and beliefs that maintain systemic oppressions. The intersectional analysis of Black feminists', scholars and activists provides an intellectual grounding for resistant knowledges that disrupt dominant narratives. Relationships to land and place-based theorizing, as previously discussed, needs to be grounded in the Indigenous feminisms. Social workers need to consider if

concepts of power, intersectionality and social identities are presented and explained in a way that perpetuates harmful narratives. For example, intersectionality of social location and power are often presented in a way that inadvertently expresses that marginalized individuals and communities are only in a position of disempowerment by virtue of their social identity. This is a very simplified way to understand power.

Power is complex, it has many forms and shifts based on the context or situation. Power is an active relational experience that is based on how individuals treat each other and how those with privilege deny their power of their lived experiences to marginalize or disempower others through actions based on harmful attitudes and beliefs about the body. For example, BPOC outdoor adventurers noted that they had to overcome the feeling that they did not belong and would question the physical ability of their bodies when they did not seem to fit the stereotype of having to be thin and muscular to participate in outdoor adventure. Oppression affects how we understand who we are, where we think we belong, and how we feel about ourselves (Taylor, 2021). Stories that we internalize about ourselves, each other and place are impacted by representation and a lack of representation. *Instagram* users in my study, emphasized that there is power in representation. By spending time in the outdoors BIPOC outdoor adventurers were directly challenging and changing the dominant narratives of the outdoors.

My study emphasizes the need for social workers to reconsider the way that concepts of intersectionality and power are discussed and recommends incorporating the analysis of Black feminist scholars and activists about non-dominant and resistant knowledges that are often overlooked in the conceptualization of social location in relation to power, other people, and land. Dominant narratives of outdoor adventure are socially constructed and narrowly define who is in the outdoors and what experiences or activities count as outdoor adventure. My study

focuses on the experience of joy in the outdoors as resistance for BIPOC communities subverting exclusionary dominant narratives, redefining themselves, caring for their personal wellbeing (and that of the community), redefining outdoor adventure, and living authentically. *Instagram* users shared that acts of resistance to systemic oppression include taking care of oneself by spending time in the outdoors and encouraging others to do the same. According to BPOC outdoor adventurers, engaging in outdoor adventure improved their ability to handle daily stressors that were caused by having to deal with systemic oppressions and contributed processes of self-actualization.

My study is only a small part of the emerging field of research that focuses on the body, identity, oppression, joy as resistance and digital activism. As previously, mentioned experiences of systemic oppression impact our bodies, how we understand who we are and our approaches to social work practice to address systemic barriers, exclusion, and violence while validating, educating, advocating, and building community. Lorde (1998) asserted that tactics for social change should include strategies of self-care, which can be any act that provides care for our bodies and that honours who we truly are despite restrictive stereotypes that are rooted in systemic oppressions. BIPOC outdoor adventurers emphasized that joyfully engaging in outdoor adventure and subverting dominant narratives was a way to rejuvenate and care for our wellness through the ongoing collective effort to combat social inequities and create social change. Learning to recognize and engage in joyful acts of resistance that subvert dominant narratives is a gap in social work practice and education. My study emphasizes that engaging in acts to combat systemic oppressions and experiences that foster joy are vital to keeping resistance movements healthy, vibrant, and effective.

My study validates BPOC outdoor adventurers' experiences of harm that are rooted in dominant narratives and are perpetuated within their own communities. Pushing back against oppressive boundaries is a form of resistance to live one's best joyful life and liberate oneself from these negative narratives. On *Instagram* BPOC outdoor adventurers shared their experiences of resisting histories of exclusion, redefining how they understood their racial identity, and explaining themselves to other BPOC community members creating what Hill Collins (2019) would refer to as non-dominant and resistance knowledges.

Non-dominant and resistant knowledges are found when we take an intersectional analysis to lived experience, which includes taking the time to examine the social context and to resist harmfully upheld social constructions of identity as well as relationship to land. Future social work research can centre BIPOC community narratives to disrupt the dominance and overrepresentation of White narratives. Without taking the time to critically reflect on the dominant narratives, social workers may unconsciously reinforce harmful social norms and narratives (Razack, 1998).

In her TEDtalk, *The danger of a single story*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) explains that when a single story or narrative is repeatedly shown over time and in various contexts, a dominant narrative is created. Narratives that are abundant and dominant impact how people feel about themselves, what they think is possible and where they believe they belong. Adichie (2009) emphasizes that there is power in terms of how the stories are told, when and how they are told, and how many of these stories are told. Social workers interact with stories and narratives socially, professionally, and academically. Adichie (2009) offers a reminder that there is power in defining the story of a person or group through the telling of someone's story. By including non-dominant and resistant knowledges in curriculum, social workers can also

avoid limiting and perpetuating narratives that focus on the marginalizing and disempowering experiences of BIPOC communities.

Understanding the complexity of how social locations and power relations interlock creates knowledge that assists marginalized communities to conceptualize and articulate their experiences. This is resistance, this is power. Within marginalized communities there are dominant knowledges that are harmfully projected onto BIPOC communities. For example, BPOC *Instagram* users disclosed that the dominant narrative of the outdoors being for White people was upheld by their own communities of colour, and harmfully challenged their identity, and often meant they were alone in their experiences of the outdoors. The ability to conceptualize and articulate one's experience creates the opportunity to connect with others and take meaningful action. In the context of my study, BIPOC outdoor adventurers could articulate the barriers that they faced and took measures to overcome them, whether it was learning about the outdoors, gaining outdoor skills, or building community to access the outdoors as a group.

As social workers we need to consistently unpack the knowledges we carry as they may be steeped in dominant knowledges whether they are social, political, familial, or academic. As previously mentioned, socialization impacts how a person might feel about themselves, the opportunities available, and ability to experience joy. BIPOC *Instagram* users in this study defined their own experiences, redefined who they are, and what it means to be a BIPOC outdoor adventurer. The result of these efforts is an ongoing digital archive that is being built of BIPOC community narratives and experiences which creates non-dominant and resistance knowledge for generations of BIPOC outdoor adventurers to come. Seeking out alternative knowledges and ways of being that challenge the status quo are critical for informing a social workers

professional practice and research endeavors to ensure that they are intersectional, anti-racist, feminist and decolonial. In the next section, I discuss the use of digital spaces.

Digital spaces

In the field of social work, identities, positionality, community, socio-political context, social action, and social movements are key foundational concepts. As such, I argue that digital spaces must be considered as important places of discourse, analysis, sharing of non-dominant knowledges and building social movements. For example, social work educators can include examining the influence and power of social media, social media posts, accounts by educators or alternative news sources who use social media, and social movements online as part of curriculum. Social work students can be encouraged to include social media as a source for gathering experiences or participants for their studies.

Accessing digital spaces, such as *Instagram*, has become a normalized part of everyday life for many people. I have noticed this considerable shift over the last ten years, even for myself. I wonder how much these digital spaces influence and impact how people understand who they are and the world that they live in. Social media is flooded with videos, posts and narratives on critical race theory, social justice history and current events as an alternative source of news and education.

In the past ten years, I have witnessed an expansion of tactics used to raise awareness of social issues and build movements. Tactics have moved from primarily using newsletters, zines, essay writing and books to the live and dynamic use of technology including social media platforms for quick dissemination of ideas, information, and contextual understanding. Researchers from various disciplines have investigated the significant impact and increased use of digital spaces such as social media platforms for the social action, organizing and movements

(Lupton, 2015; Storer and Rodriguez, 2020). Marginalized groups use the internet, including social media platforms, to create communities of support to resist stereotypes and stigma as well as engage in social action (Lupton, 2015; Yang, 2016). The field of social work has been responsive to these changes and has incorporated concepts and terms such as digital advocacy and activism into research practice (Reamer, 2019; Young and Ronquillo, 2022).

Hashtag activism. Researchers have noted that hashtags are being used to amplify the voices of marginalized or silenced groups in movements and to connect through hashtag activism (Clark, 2016; Yang, 2016). Hashtags are words, phrases or phrases that are intentionally created that connect online activists, build community, engage conversation, or flag the presence of a movement in digital spaces like social media (Boling, 2019; Yang, 2016). Hashtags can be searched and followed making it easy for social media users to connect and share personalized narratives, perspectives, action, and news within a networked community (Boling, 2019; Clark, 2016). Researchers have referred to this activism as connective action or hashtag activism because it focuses on ongoing communication among users rather than traditional organizational structures (Clark, 2016; Yang, 2016).

Black Hikers Week (hashtag #blackhikersweek) and the creation of hashtag #diversifyoutdoors are examples of combining online and offline tactics as well as building collective knowledge as a group. *Instagram* users are sharing their perspectives, experiences, and knowledge online through the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors network actively challenging stereotypes of who is in the outdoors while taking care of their wellness individually and collectively. I use the word collectively here to refer to *Instagram* users who are coordinating events through specialized weeks like Black Hikers Week and encouraging other BIPOC *Instagram* users to access the outdoors and to connect in person.

Identity, resistance, and digital activism. It is important for social work curriculum, practice, and research to include digital spaces as spaces where concepts of identity, positionality, community, socio-political context, social action, and social movements are being reshaped. Social identities and the expression of these identities through style and idiom in the everyday are political because they have direct or immediate consequences for individuals with marginalized identities (Florini, 2019). Florini asserts that for people of marginalized identities, the expression of "style and idiom" is layered through everyday activities that are performed or exemplified (p. 70). Florini explains that for Black communities in particular "seemingly apolitical, mundane, or everyday activities are often defacto political because they resist white normativity" (p. 70). When the narrative of outdoor adventure is dominated by White men, BIPOC communities accessing and enjoying themselves in the outdoors becomes political. I argue that how to be in the outdoors as a BIPOC outdoor adventurer is also exemplified through style and idiom shared through the narratives in *Instagram* posts. Through the connectivity of these hashtagged posts, an imagined collective emerges through the "intersection of people, technology and practice" (Florini, 2019, p. 70). Through this connective action, rhetoric about oneself and strategies [of being in the outdoors] can be shared and interpreted (Florini, 2019).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed three main areas that social workers (including social justice workers, support workers, equity educators, and activists) should consider. Intersectional anti-racist and anti-oppressive social work practice must begin from a foundational experience of situating oneself in relation to land through the lens of Indigenous feminisms. I recommend that social workers revisit their understanding of intersectional approaches and consider the existence of non-dominant knowledges within marginalized experiences, without this practice social work

risks perpetuating harmful stereotypes. As demonstrated in this study, dominant knowledges and narratives are pervasive and harmful, they limit BIPOC communities' experiences and opportunities to access outdoor adventure and the associated benefits. BIPOC outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* created an archive of non-dominant knowledge and inspiration for approaching outdoor adventure with an intersectional, feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial lens.

Social workers must learn from and incorporate Black feminist scholars' and activists' analysis of non-dominant and resistance knowledges in discussions of intersectionality and power and the role of digital activism in organizing for social justice. This study and my recommendations are located within this emerging field of study and practice of new media literacy in social work (Reamer, 2019; Young and Ronquillo, 2022). How people understand who they are and the world they live in today is increasingly influenced by digital spaces. Technology and connective networks or new publics can shape who we connect with, who we listen to and how often. Technology has changed how we understand safer spaces and how we engage in dialogue in these spaces to define or redefine who we are and make sense of our experiences individually and collectively. Black communities on *Instagram* who participated in Black Hikers Week and Indigenous and People of Colour *Instagram* users that included the hashtag #diversifyoutdoors shared their experiences with other *Instagram* users, used the space to dialogue with one another, and connect as a larger community that is excluded from dominant narratives of outdoor adventure. Digital spaces have changed how we organize, whose voices are heard and has extended the reach of social justice messaging. Finally, digital spaces are where socio-political context, news and analysis on social issues is ever emerging and being shared on grander scale than ever before. Social workers are encouraged to explore the impact

and influence of social media on movements, activism, and the people's understanding of the socio-political context.

The next chapter provides my final thoughts. In this chapter I share my recommendations for future research, critical self-reflexive analysis, and conclusion.

Chapter 6: Final Thoughts and Conclusion

The findings and analysis in this study should not be used to generalize the experiences of BIPOC outdoor adventurers in the outdoors. The perspectives and experiences shared in the sample collected are complex because they intersect with socially constructed meanings of identity, land, and the use of digital spaces to share knowledge and experiences. In this chapter, I share the limitations of this study, my recommendations for future research, a critical self-reflection, and concluding thoughts.

In the following section of this chapter, I provide the limitations of my study as well as my recommendations for future research in the following three areas: 1) expanding beyond an analysis of the intersection of gender and race in outdoor adventure, 2) approaches to decolonize outdoor adventure and 3) the impact of digital spaces on identity and understanding of social context.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The findings and analysis in this study do not, and should not be used to, generalize the experiences of BIPOC communities in the outdoors. My research focuses on non-dominant narratives of outdoor adventure through the experiences of BIPOC *Instagram* users. The perspectives and experiences shared in the sample collected are complex because they intersect with narratives of the outdoors, social identity, and personal lived experiences. While I can personally relate to many of these experiences, I cannot claim them as my own since my personal lived experience, positionality and understanding of the socio-political context are different.

This study focused heavily on the intersection of race and gender in the outdoors and the textual content of *Instagram* posts. Not looking at visuals is a limitation of this study and future

research should consider analysing the images associated with *Instagram* posts. Other intersections of identity that I have seen expressed in narratives of outdoor adventure through my own use of *Instagram* include citizenship, migration, ability, spirituality, and 2SLGBTQIA+ social locations and these are not explored in my study because of capacity and time constraints. In my sample there were no identity markers shared in posts of people who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+. For future research in this area, I recommend an intentional purposeful sample of 2SLGBTQIA+ BIPOC communities. The lack of 2SLGBTQIA+ BIPOC communities' voices in this study is a significant gap and an important area that would benefit from future research.

Researchers assert that digital spaces like social media have become prominent in social justice activism and that the strategy, how and what mechanism, should be examined (Lupton, 2015, p. 148). In other words, examining the ways that digital social media facilitates social movements and activism through its networks (2012 in Lupton, 2015, p. 148). In this study, I do not delve into the strategies of digital activism or intentional *Instagram* use by BIPOC communities aside from seeking connection and sharing knowledge.

In my study, it was clear that being in the outdoors was a place where BIPOC outdoor adventurers could redefine who they are, self-actualize and feel more confident in other aspects of their life. There is an intersection between identity in the outdoors and identity online that was not explored in my study. This would be an important area of inquiry that would benefit from further research. Social media has become one of the most common ways that people express who they are, what they believe in, and more importantly where people get alternative and non-dominant messaging. Over the last few years, we have seen the increased use of social media as an alternative news source and the dissemination of emerging critical intersectional analysis as well as misinformation and networks that promote violence against marginalized identities and

groups. Researching the intersection between technology use, identity and socio-political understanding is a broad area that could benefit from more critical examination and in-depth discussion, especially in equity or anti-oppressive practices of using intersections of identity to situate oneself or positionality.

Studies that focus on Indigenous approaches to the outdoors are often based on re-establishing the relationship between youth and the land and approaches to outdoor education, for example Miller (2019), Ritchie et al. (2015) and Walker (2022). There are many Indigenous *Instagram* users sharing their experiences of outdoor adventure, redefining the outdoors, and challenging the dominant narrative. For example, some Indigenous *Instagram* influencers are @queerquecha, @nativesoutdoors, @nativelikewater, and @nativewomenswilderness. A future study that explores the representation of Indigenous outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* would also be beneficial.

Future research is also needed to explore recommended practices of decolonization used or modeled by non-Indigenous outdoor enthusiasts in Canada. Providing land acknowledgements and emphasizing the importance of learning the Indigenous and colonial history of outdoor spaces by *Instagram* users are examples that would fall into the category Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to as taking a harm reduction approach to decolonizing. These are solutions that only scratch the surface of the recommended acts of reconciliation, demands for Indigenous sovereignty and efforts to return land to Indigenous nations. Based on the findings of my study, I recommend future qualitative research that includes interviews with outdoor enthusiasts of colour to explore their perspectives about their identities, relationships or connection to land, connections to other outdoor enthusiasts, use of social media, and decolonial practices.

In this section, I provided the limitations of my study and recommendations for future research. The recommendations included: intentional purposeful sampling of 2LGBTQIA+ BIPOC outdoor adventurists on *Instagram*, studying the intersections between technology use, identity, and socio-political understanding, intentionally purposefully sampling Indigenous outdoor adventurists on *Instagram,* exploring decolonizing approaches to outdoor adventure used by BIPOC communities, and qualitative research that includes interviews with BIPOC outdoor adventurists to explore their perspectives of their identities, relationships or connection to land, connections to other outdoor adventurists, use of social media and decolonizing approaches to the outdoors. I share my critical self-reflection in the following section.

Critical Self-Reflection

Braun and Clarke (2021) assert that an analytic approach to research requires multiple cycles of reviewing data, reflecting, questioning, reading, and writing. To examine biases or assumptions that can influence the analysis of data, Braun and Clarke (2021) encourage researchers to include the practice of reflexivity as part of their process. As a researcher, I bring my own experiences, positionality, and understanding of outdoor adventure to this study. I kept a journal of my personal thoughts and reflections of the narratives I analysed in my data sample to align my research process with the traditional practices of ethnography, social work research and feminist intersectional approaches. Through this study, I shared what I predominantly learned from the narratives shared by Black women outdoor adventurers, feminists, scholars, and activists.

At first, I was surprised to find that BPOC outdoor adventurists on *Instagram* had a broader definition than activities such as kayaking, backwoods camping or hiking to the top of mountain or lookout. Reflecting on this finding, I did not realize that I had internalized a limited definition

and narrative about outdoor adventure as well. At the same time, I felt relieved to find this broadened definition that included many recreational activities in the outdoors and reflected on experiences I had with family. When I was a child, my family would often attend family and community gatherings at local parks, lakes or beaches for a barbecue and socialize. My father taught me how to swim and to skip stones on these bodies of water. I would say that my family has a longstanding relationship with the outdoors, especially bodies of water. I believe that this relationship to the outdoors comes from the time my parents spent on the Gulf of Aden and on the beaches of Cairo as young adults.

I felt that my personal experiences were validated by *Instagram* users who shared their experiences of being told that they were 'whitewashed' or that they had internalized this messaging. Despite having my own experience of spending time with family in the outdoors at beaches or going to summer camp with other Muslim community members in rural Ontario, my love for the outdoors was considered strange. As a teenager, I was told by friends and community members that I do "White things" or that I am more white than brown since I love being in the outdoors so much.

Because of this study, I understand now that people in my community were affirming that access to outdoor adventure is a race-based privilege of Whiteness (Harrison, 2013). Peers and community members often accused me of wanting "to assimilate and blend in – become white" (Harrison, 2013, p. 318). As I reflect on my experiences in the outdoors with family or the Muslim community this assumption that I wanted to blend in makes me angry. As previously mentioned, much of my childhood was spent either with the Yemeni or Muslim diaspora at local parks, barbeques at the beach and swimming in lakes, going to an outdoor summer camp with other Muslim kids in the community (praying outdoors, having campfires, swimming, hiking,

canoeing, and fishing) and winter ski trips with other Muslim kids in the community. The consistent goal of these organized gatherings was to build connection and community. The truth of the matter is that like many *Instagram* users in my study, outdoor adventure has been a consistent part of my experience growing up.

Like *Instagram* users in my sample, I redefined my identity which included deconstructing the internalized harmful messages about my body and found a deeper and holistic appreciation for myself by spending time in the outdoors. Going on adventures in the outdoors I would determine the way I showed up, with whom, and how I chose to share photos or stories about that experience with anyone else. For a time, I actively sought out other BIPOC outdoor adventurers on *Instagram* for inspiration and guidance on what being outdoors can look and feel like while also welcoming and celebrating a diversity of bodies in the outdoors. The messaging from BIPOC *Instagram* users in my sample made it clear that I don't have to be the best and I don't have to choose the hardest route or adventure. This message liberates me from the colonial narratives of exploring, the pervasive 'go big or go home' attitude and the pressure to be unstoppable against obstacles that have been so dominant in outdoor adventure. Over the years, it has been humbling to know that people (BIPOC community or not) in my personal social circles have looked to me for inspiration or learn more about accessing the outdoors. BPOC *Instagram* users have emphasized that representation matters, being outdoors and sharing my experiences through social media has made a difference.

I felt moved by the assertion by BIPOC outdoor adventurers that simply being outdoors that was important. It did not matter what the activity was, the health benefits of spending time outdoors are vast and so are the ways one can enjoy the outdoors to gain those benefits. Just being outdoors, directly challenges the 'go big or go home' mentality that I have been used to

seeing in outdoor industry media and expressed by other outdoor adventurers. The overarching message that adventures in the outdoors could be defined as any experience that was joyful, increased wellness, deepened self-awareness, and offered the opportunity for reflection was profound. This meant that I could determine for myself what an adventure in the outdoors could be. When I go to local parks now, I notice people enjoying their time outdoors in a variety of ways and appreciate that they are enjoying themselves or with friends and family whether it's biking, sitting by the water with friends or family, walking or hiking, paddling, swimming, or fishing.

I was surprised to find that there were *Instagram* users who, like me, felt afraid to spend more than an hour at a time in the outdoors because of a lack of knowledge about the outdoors, acceptable gear, or commonly used terminology. I attended the annual Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour for many years and internalized the belief that I could not consider myself outdoorsy because of the activities and level of intensity I chose for my adventure in the outdoors.

When stand-up paddleboarding became a central focus in my life, I intentionally began searching the *Instagram* platform for representations of racialized, diverse gender, and queer identities in the outdoors. Like many *Instagram* users shared in my study, seeing diverse representations of identity and bodies adventuring in the outdoors in a variety of ways makes it less intimidating to want to access the outdoors. The perspectives of BIPOC outdoor adventurers in my sample inspire and guide me as I continue to reflect and develop my approach to adventuring in the outdoors by defining what outdoor adventure looks and feels like for me and sharing that experience with others in person and online. I was heartened by *Instagram* posts that asserted that expensive or impressive gear are not necessary. *Instagram* users encouraging other

BIPOC outdoor adventurers to take their time and not to compare one's journey to anyone else's is messaging that I had not heard before.

When I started to go on multi-day stand-up paddleboard adventures on rivers with friends, I was just beginning to learn about land acknowledgements. I noticed that outside of my paid work as a social worker, I did not hear land acknowledgements while on organized adventures outdoors. Reflecting on my river paddling trips, I often felt unsure about whose territory we were on. From now on, when planning for similar adventures, I will ask the following questions and seek out the answers as part of my pre-trip planning process: whose lands and waters were we passing through?; what are the dominant and non-dominant stories that adventure guides who take people along these same water routes share?; what are the decolonized and revitalized Indigenous stories of the places we passed through along the river?; and what are the local Indigenous initiatives can I support?

My experience of the outdoors is shaped and influenced by Yemeni and Canadian cultural expectations and social norms that sometimes differ and other times align or reinforce each other. Other times these cultural norms and expectations are in tension with one another. For example, when I lived in a cabin with no running water and a wood stove, I was told that I was living my best life and embodying admirable strength and grit through a Canadian cultural narrative that romanticized settler life in the 'northern wilderness'. At the same time, I experienced disapproving Yemeni diasporic ideals of being a single woman, living far from family, and being uncivilized. Like Harrison's (2013) assertion, that Black communities sometimes avoid the outdoors to not be negatively associated with stereotypes. I believe that the Yemeni diasporic standards express the intentional efforts of Arabian diaspora to avoid being

associated with the outdoors to be considered modernized rather than fulfilling the harmful British colonial narrative of Arabs being savage, uncivilized, or barbaric.

I refuse to believe that we (coastal Arabs from the Yemeni diaspora) do not have a relationship to land, that we did not read the tides or that we did not understand anything or know anything about fish migrations, that we did not know anything about the healing properties of local plants or that we did not spend time in or on the water in a way that brought us joy. Like some *Instagram* users in my sample shared, I have anxiously wondered about having to either explain my presence or love of the outdoors or have my racial identity overlooked and considered irrelevant to my experiences in the outdoors by White people and communities of colour. While I experience the outdoors as a place of liberation it is also a place where BPOC communities, including myself, can perpetuate settler colonialism.

The final reflection I will share is grounded in Tuck and Yang's (2012) *Decolonization is not a Metaphor* article. BPOC outdoor adventurers' approaches to diversify representation in the outdoors must include a decolonial lens and practice. This article reminds immigrant, migrant, or refugee communities of colour that they are on Indigenous lands claimed by the colonial settler nation-state and are part of a "settler-native-slave" triad (p. 17). Tuck and Yang emphasize that settlers of colour in this context are "invited" to be a settler in some scenarios and criminalized in others (p. 17). According to Tuck and Yang, pressures of assimilation and the promise of multi-culturalism can be seen as a "colonizing trick … to attainment of equal legal and cultural entitlements, is actually an investment in settler colonialism" (p. 18). Accessing outdoor adventure, without incorporating an analysis of settler colonialism or engaging in actions to actively decolonize, serves to "reform the settlement and incorporate Indigenous peoples" into

this multicultural settler promise that excludes Indigenous communities and "is invested in settler futurism" (Tuck and McKenzie, 2014, p. 70).

In this section I provided my critical self-reflection of the findings of this study including reflections documented from my study journal of my personal reactions, experiences, and analysis of the findings. The following section is the conclusion that summarizes my study.

Conclusion

For this study, my research question was: How does outdoor adventure function as joyful resistance for People of Colour (POC) on *Instagram*? I want to note here, once again, that the use of the term POC in my research question was used more broadly to refer to anyone who identifies as non-White. As this study progressed, by gathering and analyzing the data collection, it became clear that using the broader term Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) was more appropriate. Broad terms such as POC and BIPOC are continuously shifting to be more inclusive and build solidarity in movements to address racial discrimination and violence. Therefore, careful consideration on the use of terminology is critical in research.

Previous studies on outdoor adventure and BPOC communities often discuss the lack of representation and lower participation rates. I wanted to understand the joyful experiences that BIPOC outdoor adventurers were having in the outdoors despite this lack of representation. *Instagram* users in my sample resoundingly shared that outdoor adventure was an experience of self-reflection, growth, and shift in perspective.

As discussed in Chapter 3, while gathering my data sample it was unknown to me that I had chosen a week that coincided with Black Hikers Week which resulted in a sample with many posts by Black outdoor adventurers, and specifically Black women outdoor adventurers. Through my analysis of the data collected I found four themes that describe how outdoor adventure

functioned as joy as resistance for BIPOC *Instagram* users: lack of representation, challenging a dominant narrative, wellness, and connection. As previously mentioned, it is important to note here that as a researcher I predominantly learned from the experiences shared on *Instagram* by Black women outdoor adventurers.

Firstly, *Instagram* users in my sample explained that by engaging in outdoor adventure they joyfully resisted a lack of representation by media while challenging racialized identity stereotypes and accessing the outdoors despite histories of exclusion that are based on the social constructions about bodies proving to themselves and others they belong in the outdoors. Secondly, by being outdoors and sharing their experiences on *Instagram* users joyfully challenged a dominant narrative of outdoor adventure predominantly being for white men, actively redefined the outdoors, and created an experience of the outdoors that reflected their own lived experience and the socio-political context. Thirdly, spending time outdoors was an intentional practice of personal physical and therapeutic care and wellness which contributed to the presence of joy in their lives. *Instagram* users disclosed that regularly spending time outdoors increased their confidence in expressing their authentic selves in other areas of their lives. The increased confidence led to personal decisions that truly aligned with their desires and goals which resulted in an overall sense of thriving and joy. The physical and therapeutic wellness benefits of being in the outdoors, for BIPOC outdoor adventurers, outweighed any anticipated fears or risks associated with experiencing discrimination or violence. These wellness benefits transcend experiences of oppression and are vital in the ongoing struggle to address social inequities. Finally, *Instagram* users explained that their desire to encourage friends, family and broader their community to engage in outdoor adventure arose from overall personal wellness benefits experienced being outdoors, including self-actualization. Wellness and self-actualization

while in community with other BIPOC outdoor adventurers was powerful for *Instagram* users as it created a collective feeling of belonging and experiences of joy in the outdoors. As mentioned previously, the findings of this thesis should not be generalized as the experiences shared in my sample are limited demographically, temporally, and contextually.

For BPOC communities, joyful experiences and wellness benefits of outdoor adventure are complex because the outdoors is not a neutral or safe space. Indigenous women on *Instagram* made it clear that relationship to the adventure in the outdoors was a complex experience of resistance and wellness by reclaiming and reviving Indigenous knowledges and practices. Approaches to outdoor adventure that are not grounded in anti-oppressive, anti-racist or decolonial practices can be harmful and maintain the colonial narrative of the outdoors. As mentioned earlier, it is important that the relationship to the outdoors is explored through Indigenous feminisms as a foundational exercise to the intersectional, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practice of positioning oneself. Our interactions with people are impacted by the complex dynamics of power and positionality including relationship to land. Social workers must understand their positionality and deconstruct social norms in the everyday, making sure to incorporate Indigenous feminisms. By taking the time to deconstruct social and societal norms social workers can experience this joyful resistance in aligning with one's truest self and engaging in meaningful self and community care. Engaging in this meaningful self-care and community care is critical for a lengthy career in social work and social justice work.

My study validates the experiences of BIPOC outdoor adventurers experiencing harmful dominant narratives perpetuated within community and efforts to liberate oneself to live one's best and joyful life, and to thrive by resisting these narratives. Liberating oneself from the constraints of harmful social constructions is the essence of anti-oppression work and sharing

these experiences via the connectivity of hashtags on social media creates non-dominant and resistance knowledges that can be shared. Non-dominant and resistance knowledges can be found when we take an intersectional analysis to lived experience that includes examining social context, ability to resist harmfully upheld social constructions of identity, and relationship to land.

Social media platforms such as *Instagram* are alternative spaces where identity is not only shared but is influenced and shaped. *Instagram* is used by some members as an alternative source for information on current events, a space for dialogue, community building, and a space for sharing of non-dominant perspectives, strategies of resistance, and lived experiences linked by intentionally created hashtags. This study demonstrates the importance of exploring *Instagram* and other social media as sites for social work research on identity expression and validation, social justice movements, and non-dominant narratives and other resistant knowledge projects and theorizing by Black feminists, scholars, and activists. Including these non-dominant narratives and resistance knowledge projects are critical for social workers to develop a meaningful practice that is an intersectional, feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial approach to addressing social inequities that does not perpetuate societal harms.

I came to this research topic as an Arabian queer settler cis woman who craves adventure in the outdoors. I personally use *Instagram* to share my experiences and searched for other BIPOC outdoor adventurers to ease the feeling of isolation I often felt and for guidance on how to approach outdoor adventure that was not based on a dominant narrative of whiteness and colonial hetero masculinities. From this research, I have found personal clarity, validation, and relatable experiences as well as four recommendations for possible future research that would expand this study beyond its limitations, including the analysis of the visuals in the *Instagram*

posts. The first recommendation for future research is based on limited focus of race and gender as an intersection with outdoor adventure in this study. I recommend purposefully sampling and analyzing the experiences of 2SLGTBQIA+ BIPOC communities in the outdoors. Since social media has become one of the most common ways that people express who they are and a source for alternative and non-dominant messaging, my second recommendation focuses on studying everyday use of social media and its impact on shaping identity and knowledge of social context. The third recommendation for future research would be to explore recommended decolonial practices of outdoor adventure modelled by BIPOC communities. Finally, I recommend future qualitative research that includes interviews with outdoor enthusiasts of colour to explore their perspectives of their identities, relationships or connection to land, connections to other outdoor enthusiasts, use of social media, and decolonial practices.

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