

‘Games Climbers Play’: Critical Sensuality in Movement,
Ethics, and Sport

by

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ABSTRACT

Rock climbing access to public, protected, outdoor areas has increasingly become a matter of organized intervention. Tensions between the ‘spirit’ of a free, creative, and rebellious practice, and the challenges of growing a sustainable sport abound in climbers’ experience of their recreation. Climbing ‘well’ is thus a problematized experience – a site of subjectification in which who belongs in environmentally and culturally sensitive places is established through an ethical stylization of conduct. Exploring how dominating norms intertwine with liberatory possibilities in the ‘games’ of climbing ethics, I argue for *critical sensuality* as a conception of how critical work emerges as an aspect of climbing ‘well’. This position will be supported through consideration of Foucault’s genealogical account of ethics in conversation with phenomenological, feminist, and critical sport approaches. Further, fieldwork undertaken in contested climbing spaces will engage with the bodily experience of ethical subjectification, as co-generated in narratives, interviews, and climbing practice.

Keywords: sport; access; subjectification; ethics; liberatory practice; genealogy; phenomenology; rock climbing; leisure studies; environmentalism; place

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PROLOGUE

Midway up the Hueco Tanks classic “See Spot Run” I’m feeling pretty good about myself. This highball boulder problem (around 25 feet), is on my tick-list for this trip. First top-roped by Bob Murray, then bouldered by John Sherman without a crash pad (I currently have four under me), it’s an historic climb. This is to say nothing of the great movement, and the challenge of commitment up high. The guidebook description reads: “V6, ***, A desperate start followed by a mortifying top out.” My inflated ego comes from how easily the bottom section went. I had completed the most physically difficult moves (near my own ‘personal best’ in terms of grade) on my first try, stopping at this same midsection, and dropping, to gather more pads before going to the top. Now, resting briefly on a pair of uneven, but incut crimps, the importance of this problem fills my thoughts.

Then, I fumble the placement of my feet. The polished volcanic rock is slick where it hasn’t fractured, and I keep choosing the wrong chips and cracks – why do none of them feel ‘right’? I make the move to the next incut hold and suddenly my fingers feel weak and brittle, and my forearms are stiff. There is a cool breeze coming through the shaded corridor next to the boulder, but my back and shoulders are growing hot. The sweat of my fingers is compromising the friction I need to stay on the rock; the sharp, slightly gritty texture of the holds turning to butter. I can hear my spotters’ encouragement, but they don’t fully grasp just how quickly things have turned around.

I’m willing the next move to be less desperate than the last. Bringing my foot up to a solid indent, I bear down on my left hand, lock my shoulder, turn my hips, and stab

out for the next hold that in that moment, seems very far away. I should have been breathing. Down I go.

Luckily, I only suffer a bruised heel. The kind of bruise that goes to the bone and heals slowly. Despite this, I try a couple more times. Every move feels horrible now, and my entire body is shaking just five feet off the ground. Again, I drop to the pads. “Fucking hell!” I yell. “Just... fuck!”

Looking around, I notice a family with a couple young kids standing in the corridor, watching me climb, and waiting to pass through. I’m now thoroughly embarrassed. Not only have I failed to do this problem, testing myself against the legends and finding my mental strength wanting, but I’ve thrown a tantrum in front of these hikers, and probably supported a bad image of climbers in the park.

Though I’m sure these kids will ‘survive’ being subjected to my foul language, this image is important because climbing access is contested and fragile at Hueco Tanks. Today, I know I haven’t managed to climb ‘well’. Not only because I didn’t get to the top, but because the style in which I approached it, the way I conducted myself in this sensitive place, was lacking. The sensations of climbing and falling intertwine with an ethical knowledge of my self – both my body and practice altered together in facing the problem of access.

1 ROCK CLIMBING AND QUESTIONS OF ETHICAL PRACTICE

There were no hard and fast rules – the game was what we agreed it should be under the circumstances. There were (and still are) no national or international regulations or rankings. The sport belonged, on a very personal level, to those who practiced it. I hope it always shall.

-John Gill, *Stone Crusade*, 1994

Twenty years ago, a day out climbing meant you were unlikely to see another soul. Today, there are hundreds of thousands of climbers visiting our climbing areas – and they are showing the impact. Having a vague knowledge of minimum impact practices is no longer enough. It's time to elevate our game – and it starts with you.

-Access Fund, “*Why Care?*”, 2016

1.1. The Game is Changing?

John Sherman's history of North American bouldering, *Stone Crusade* (1994), begins with a foreward by John Gill, widely considered a ‘godfather’ of the discipline in America. Gill lays out a vision of bouldering practice, which spurns materialism, seeks validation in nature, and, above all, require the climber to enter into a relationship with the rock that is pure, and thus liberating. This ideal has been widely reproduced within the climbing community, and become a topic of scholarship (Lewis 2000; Access Fund 2014). The “game”, for Gill, belongs to the climber in and through practice – not only at the level of sub-cultural signifiers¹, but in a co-generated relationship to the rock, place, and context. In short, Gill describes his vision of bouldering ethics, the way in which a practitioner of the game plays well, and, in so doing, realizes an ethical self.

¹ Climber's, of course, recognize each other based on certain gear, clothing, language and so on. While these signifiers might identify a climber, it is another thing entirely to climb ‘well’ – with style, or ethically.

Since *Stone Crusade* was published, rock climbing has experienced substantial growth in participation, indoors and out. Numerous international competitions are increasingly organized and well-funded², and the commodifying effects of market opportunities are pervasive³. The “game” to which Gill refers is well on its way to emerging as a full-fledged sport, adopting and developing rules, standardized measurements, and organizational bodies. Yet, while organized sport undeniably provides a space of negotiation, friendship, joy, creativity, and challenge, it has also been employed to promote and obscure violent nationalism, marginalization and displacement, and the collusion of corporate interests with organizational elites (Erickson 2011; Hovden 2015). Perhaps most threatening to Gill’s vision, however, is the widespread loss of access to boulders, and entire outdoor climbing areas due to overuse, misuse, or simply the visibility of an increasing numbers of climbers. Sherman’s 1999 update to *Stone Crusade* describes this experience first-hand, calling for a resurgence of Gill’s ethic coupled with an acceptance of organized advocacy, particularly in public spaces. This intervention has come in the form of access organizations, such as the Access Fund, dedicated to keeping climbing areas open and relations with land managers harmonious.

In many ways, then, the challenges facing rock climbing as a practice are intertwined with, and exemplary of, more general issues of access and domination in recreation. Many climbing areas exist in public spaces set aside and managed due to cultural or ecological specificity, spaces exemplified by the Canadian and American

² See: International Federation of Sport Climbing world cup competitions; Sport climbing in Tokyo 2020 Olympics

³ Though professional climbers have appeared in commercials for shaving products, cars, vacuums, and so on for some time, it is the increasing commodification of the practice itself that has taken off in the most recent decade.

national park systems. These parks exist under the mandate of facilitating authentic natural and cultural experiences for all visitors, while simultaneously preserving the very ‘resources’ which ‘provide’ these experiences. Authenticity in this case derives from unmediated access to these resources – experiences of immersion in nature, and cultural history. Increasing visitation at parks places a strain on this mandate, as intervention into authentic experiences becomes necessary to mitigate the impacts of greater crowds. This mediation often takes the form of differentiated access to various areas, or experiences, of parks; the organization of recreating bodies producing ‘levels’ of standardized, commodified immersion which are deeply intertwined with social inequalities (Baker 2002; Erickson 2005). In this way, accessibility suggests both wider opportunities for participation, as well as conflicts of capacity and authenticity (Bourdieu 1984). Growth provides resources and diversity, but often comes with the valorization of measured and standardized achievement (Eichberg 1998). Within these contestations of access, in which they are increasingly visible, climbers strive to distinguish themselves as not only legitimate users of these spaces, but ideal stewards, deserving of authentic or ‘free’ experiences of nature.

Access to experiences of freedom then, is not only about recreation, but about who ‘belongs’ in these places. More accurately, the manner in which recreation is undertaken is very much about realizing oneself as belonging. Here, I follow Rojek and Erickson in understanding sport and leisure as “... about what freedom, choice, flexibility, and satisfaction mean in relation to... social formations” (Rojek 1995, cited in Erickson 2002). Our choices of recreation, and, more importantly, our choices in how to

pursue recreation, are bound up with relations of power; our sporting ethics about not only rules, but access to a legitimized form of living, and a relationship to truth.

As climbing emerges as a sport, the (ostensibly dichotomous) tensions between free practice and sustainable regulation inform ethics in an ongoing fashion, worked out and realized in the bodily practice of climbers in contested spaces. In negotiating the growth of this practice – which at once offers opportunity, conflict, and domination – what it means to “elevate our game” should be of great concern to those who would pursue climbing, or sport in general, as liberatory. The current formation of climbing ethics suggests both continuities and breaks with Gill’s vision, a complex assemblage of discourse which is realized through climbing bodies. In this problem space of access, in which ‘who belongs’ is solidified or contested through bodily experiences, we have the opportunity to identify and encourage an ethic of creativity, care, and respect. How to climb ‘well’, it seems, is very much open for debate.

1.2. Bouldering

Before continuing, it should be noted that there are many different styles or ‘games’ of rock climbing, many of which are considered semi-autonomous sub-disciplines. These sub-fields of the sport are distinguished in part by the medium (rock, ice, plastic), by the gear or style of protection used (crash pads, ropes and harnesses, bolts or cams, ice axes, etc.), and primarily by a combination of setting and geological features in conversation with the supposed ‘purpose’ or ‘goal’ of the practice. For example, alpinists may walk right by a talus field on their way to a summit, while boulderers remain in the talus seeing how low they can begin a particular problem on a twenty-foot boulder, considering the peak in the distance only as scenery. Certain geological areas

allow for certain types of climbing, and so the ‘goal’ or ‘purpose’ of any particular sub-discipline can only emerge in relation to these varied spaces. This is even the case with artificial climbing facilities that, despite aiming to replicate outdoor experiences in many respects, have developed their own particular style in relationship to what an indoor space allows for.

It is worth noting that there is, in many climbing minds, a hierarchy of these sub-disciplines, often based largely in the intertwining elements of the history of the sport, the ‘purity’ of ethical style in achieving the ‘goal’, and the relationship to ‘real’ rock. As described above, one of the central aims of this work is to describe and conceptualize the realization of these elements through the subjectification of the rock climber, but I have little interest (and even less authority) to comment on a hierarchy of styles. Though I hope to make a practical contribution to the pursuit of climbing ‘well’, it will not be through marking out one style as superior to others, but instead in examining the processes by which these distinctions come to matter and inform climbers’ relationships to rock and place. In the interest of scope, as well as in pursuit of my own particular interests within rock climbing, I have chosen to narrow my discussion below primarily to the sub-discipline of bouldering. This is not because bouldering is more ‘pure’ than any other form of climbing (though the assertion that it is, certainly is of interest), but due to my own relation to the sport, the particular opportunities that arose for fieldwork, and the position of bouldering within current and historic access issues. For the duration of this work I will use climbing and climber to refer to the practice in general, and bouldering and ‘boulderer’ to mark out a particularity of the sub-discipline.

In marking out what follows as a study on *bouldering* as a particular practice within the broader sport of rock climbing a few, brief, comments can be made.

Technically, no gear or protection is actually needed to boulder, though nearly all practitioners use some form of climbing shoe (snug fitting shoes which position the foot and toes such that large amounts of force and the balance of the body can be placed solely on the big toe, rubber is also strategically placed on the toe and heel of the shoe to increase friction). Crash pads are also a very common piece of gear – light weight, high density foam which can be folded and carried like an oversized back pack. Generally, aside from chalk, athletic tape, and brushes, these are the only pieces of gear used by boulderers. Sport climbing, the closest roped discipline to bouldering in comparison, requires a harness, rope, belay device, bolts, quickdraws, and a belay partner at minimum, in addition to shoes and chalk.

This difference in gear is due to the space and ‘purpose’ of the disciplines. While sport climbing takes place on relatively tall rock walls – cliffs, bluffs, quarry walls, ravines, and so on – bouldering is usually practiced on free-standing boulders roughly ten to twenty-five feet high (though exceptions certainly exist). The use of crash pads in the ‘fall zone’ is the most common way to mitigate the still potentially dangerous falls found in bouldering.

This relative ‘safety’ and brevity of time on the rock allows for a focus on difficulty and creativity of movement. The ‘purpose’ of bouldering has emerged as successfully completing the most challenging sequences possible, sometimes isolated into a single movement, hence the common usage of ‘problem’ to describe a specific sequence of moves. The geologic features of boulders allow for such a ‘goal’. While

other forms of climbing more often deal with vertical to slightly overhanging walls, bouldering regularly includes traversing completely horizontal roofs, or climbing radically overhanging faces. Though the ‘send’ or successful completion of a problem still requires roughly ‘getting to the top’, it is the isolation of these challenging movements that is the focus of the practice. This technical description is necessary, but lacks the embodied and bodily aspects that I am working to highlight in this work. To help somewhat, I have included a few photos of bouldering in practice, taken during my fieldwork. (Please see supplemental attachments 1, 2, and 3).

All this discussion of difficulty being said, ‘easy’ bouldering is prolific as well, largely dependent on the type of rock and the sort of movement it encourages. The open-ended North American difficulty ratings currently range from V0- to V16. With V0- resembling climbing a ladder with irregularly spaced and shaped rungs (again hugely dependent on rock type) and only a few V16 problems ever having been completed and proposed as such. The point here is that after a relatively short introduction, bouldering offers a wide range of challenges and possibilities even to newcomers. Further, the wide variety of rock and ‘styles’ (a simplistic example might be small, undercut holds versus large, sloping holds) of climbing allows for each practitioner to find their niche, complicating any objective notion of grades. What feels easy for a short, flexible body might be far more challenging to a tall, burly body.

This description of bouldering is useful in dealing with the particular language and assumptions that participants in my research bring to their narratives. However, it is also necessary to frame bouldering as a discipline with a particularly complex relationship to ethics and access. Lito Tejada-Flores proposes bouldering to be the most

complex ‘game’ in climbing, due to the number of prohibitions (particularly on gear) that are essential to maintain the challenge and thus, purpose of the game (1967). Ethics, then, are a particularly heated topic in bouldering, in which the challenge of climbing well lies not only in completing a climb, but adhering to rules and style that are by turns exacting, and often appear nonsensical. As Erickson notes, it is this importance of style which emerges from, and allows for, exclusionary assumptions about who is “properly”, and thus truly, climbing (2005: 382).

Despite this, bouldering has arguably emerged as the most accessible style of rock climbing, requiring minimal gear, protection, and commitment. Many (and certainly the most popular) bouldering areas are a short hike from a parking lot or road, and plentiful guidebooks, both printed and digital, exist. Indoor gyms often provide extensive space for bouldering, eliminating the need to go out of a city, or outdoors completely. Bouldering is also the discipline which many new climbers start with (alongside top-roping), and most practitioners engaged in other areas of the sport return to periodically, or for training purposes. The creativity and ‘problem solving’ aspect of bouldering also draws in a variety of bodies. Though success at the competitive or extreme levels of difficulty seems to favour (and shape) a narrow range of bodily forms, beginner to moderate problems often have numerous ‘solutions’, the challenge being finding the approach that works best for your own body.

Due in part to this relative accessibility, bouldering has seen a huge increase in the number of practitioners (as part of a general trend across all climbing disciplines), and been the site of the challenges that inevitably come with this sort of growth. Outdoor areas face capacity issues, where the visibility of climbers often leads to restrictions or

bans. What it means to be a climber has seemingly been opened for debate alongside these challenges of access, with a complex reconstruction of climbing ethics in which negotiations of openness, creativity, growth, sustainability, challenge, and respect play out in movement on rocks.

1.3. Questions and Thesis Statement

This thesis asks two main questions: First, how is an ethical sporting subject realized? Put differently, in relation to my case, how do climbers realize themselves as climbing ‘well’? The primary focus here is on the processes through which an ethic is ‘made real’ or experienced by practitioners, drawing on the sensuous and relational qualities of this embodiment. Secondly, how can this understanding of ethical formation inform sport as a liberatory practice? In other words, how can an understanding of climbing ‘well’ better inform climbing practice in the context of access concerns?

My work joins scholarship concerned with similar questions of climbing practice from a variety of theoretical perspectives. The climbing body has been shown to provide opportunities for freedom, but also embody the subtle deployment of normalizing power through aesthetics, movements, and values (Lewis 2000; Rossiter 2007; Chrisholm 2008; Robinson 2008; Dumont 2014; Dutkiewicz 2015). It is my aim that a focus on the problem space of access will provide an additional perspective on understanding this sort of complex embodiment in climbing disciplines.

Climbing, of course, is not the first or only movement practice to experience these sorts of tensions. Resisting the dominating power effects of modern sport while encouraging a progressive or liberatory practice has been an area of concern for many

scholars working within critical sport studies, feminist praxis, and Foucauldian thought (Shogan 1999; Markula and Pringle 2006; Haraway 2008; Chrisholm 2008; Sugden 2015). These works, however⁴, are often divided between phenomenological accounts of liberatory experience (Lewis 2000; Chrisholm 2008; Pettinen 2014) and a genealogical analysis of oppressively normalizing discourses (Eichberg 1998; Shogan 1999; Markula and Pringle 2006). While all share a focus upon the body in practice, the ontological and epistemological assumptions of these approaches (distinctions returned to in Chapter Three) lead to significant challenges in locating and encouraging practices of not only freedom, but the ethical *use* of this freedom in relations of power (Foucault 1990b). Through consideration of how phenomenological and genealogical approaches might blend together in theory and research practice (Wehrle 2016), I aim to build upon the significant contributions of both styles of research in realizing sport, and climbing in particular, as a liberatory practice.

This ‘mixed’ approach emerged through, and afforded opportunities in the course of fieldwork. Particularly, in interviews conducted at two contested bouldering sites, the centrality of the body in the meshing of liberation and domination through ethical practice became apparent. Halfway Log Dump (Bruce Peninsula National Park), Ontario, and Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site, Texas, were chosen as fieldwork sites due primarily to this contested status. While differences exist between these sites (Chapter Three provides a detailed discussion), both exemplify the relations through which access

⁴ Haraway (2008) is a notable exception. Considering the complex relations of domination, negotiation, and care involved in practicing competitive agility with dogs, Haraway presents an account of working through the embodied ethical dilemmas of sport.

emerges as a space of ethical problematization – a realm of experience that informs the way in which climbing is undertaken.

In these places, participants' understandings of climbing 'well' were inextricably bound up with bodily experiences of climbing itself; knowledge about how best to conduct oneself while climbing, as informed by a diverse array of discourse, was made sense of through movement and contact. The 'problem' of access, and the 'appropriate' ethical response considered not only on a cerebral level, but rendered meaningful through visceral experience. As such, any conception of climbing ethics had to take seriously the affordances of bodies in motion, as well as the specificities of the site in which ethical practice took place. Thus, I argue that an ethical climbing subject is realized in the sensuous appreciation of ethical problematization through bodily practice in place. In short, that climbing ethics cannot be fully understood without considering how they come to be 'known' on a bodily level through movement on rock.

Secondly, in light of the above, I suggest that consideration of *critical sensuality* in the realization of climbing ethics has implications for encouraging a liberatory practice in regards the 'problem' of access. To address the ethical challenges of access in a liberatory fashion, what is needed is not an 'alternative' ethic, but a cultivation of the pleasure that can be taken in climbing 'well'; a linking of the bodily experience of ethical practice with a critical evaluation of the use of freedom this experience implies. We do not need to abandon Gill's vision, or reject the Access Fund's, but critically evaluate what is best in each. To encourage this work, I call for the cultivation of a particular relationship to the site of ethical problematization exemplified in critical sensuality; an

orientation towards the tensions and challenges of sports practice which engages the sensuous pleasures of the climbing body in the pursuit of criticality and liberation.

In support of these claims, I will present research based in a genealogical analysis of climbing ethics as found in ‘prescriptive’ texts and guidebooks, alongside experiential narratives co-produced with climbers at Halfway Log Dump and Hueco Tanks. In the following chapter (Chapter Two), I provide a theoretical basis for this discussion, engaging with questions of power in the subjectification of the climbing body. I draw upon Henning Eichberg’s (1998) historical sociology of sport in order to frame the question of power in movement practices as a spatial and temporal concern. Eichberg’s “sportisation” provides a starting point in an appreciation of domination in sport, theorizing the sort of ‘growth’ that climbing has experienced as a matter of relations between bodies, measurements, and knowledges. Bringing Eichberg into conversation with Georg Simmel (1997) and Katja Pettinen (2014), the place of the senses in rendering this deployment of power/knowledge socially tangible will be highlighted further. This view of how power imbues the sporting body will be considered in relation to what Michel Foucault marks out as *ethics*, specifically how, “given a code of actions, and with regard to a specific type of actions... there are different ways to ‘conduct oneself’ morally, different ways for the acting individual to operate, not just as an agent, but as an ethical subject of this action” (1990b: 26). Shifting ethics from a concern for rules into the realm of practice allows for discussion of the experience of ethical subjectification, of the work done upon the self in realizing an ethical form. Finally, reviewing works by Debra Shogan, and Pirkko Markula and Richard Pringle on ethical practice in sport, I

argue for the insight and utility of bringing the affordances of place, objects, and the senses into any project of ethical and liberatory practice.

Following from this theoretical discussion, Chapter Three is focused on the ways in which a blended genealogical-phenomenological methodology took shape in the course of research and fieldwork. I examine how a learned sensitivity to bodily experiences of power and place emerged, and further informed the bringing together of Diane Chrisholm's (2008) contribution to feminist phenomenology with interpretations of Nietzsche's genealogy by Foucault (1998) and others. Addressing the opportunities (Wehrle 2016) and perceived incompatibility of these approaches (Large 2000), I argue that an appreciation of critical sensuality necessitates this sort of blended style of inquiry. Experiential accounts of fieldwork sites imbued with histories of meaning, coupled with usage of guidebooks, and the presence of guides – blending discourse into experience – provide the opportunity to discuss this mixed approach further, in the context of my specific case and methods.

Presentation and analysis of narratives co-generated in fieldwork will begin in Chapter Four, allowing for a grounded discussion of the theoretical and methodological claims made above. Accounts of ethical climbing practice will be drawn upon to address questions of *how* climbers come to realize themselves as climbing 'well'. A focus upon the sensuous and bodily experience of an ethical self will be returned to, highlighting the importance of specificity, relations of practice, and experiences of movement to the realization of power/knowledge in and through sporting bodies. While the chapter is organized around various themes that inform climbing ethics, analytical focus remains on practice and the stylization of conduct.

Having addressed my first research question, Chapter Five will consider how an understanding of the realization of climbing ‘well’ provides insight into the pursuit of liberatory sport practice. Further drawing upon fieldwork narratives, I will present three accounts of *critical sensuality* in ethical climbing practice. Focusing on *open norms of body practice, place-based knowledges, and mentorship and critical pedagogy*, I engage with the challenges and opportunities of encouraging sport, and bouldering, in particular, as liberatory practice. Returning to Foucault, Eichberg, and Markula and Pringle, in conversation with the works of Audre Lorde, I establish critical sensuality as a bodily pleasure taken in the conscious practice of bouldering ‘well’, characterized by the pursuit of individual fulfillment alongside a challenging of domination (Lorde 1984; Foucault 1990a: 157; Markula and Pringle 2006: 153). The place of critical sensuality in climbing ethics will thus be argued as an example of how practicing sport ‘well’ might take liberation as its central concern.

The paper concludes with possible ways forward in relation to climbing access, informed by critical sensuality, and directed towards encouraging what is most creative, open, challenging, and joyful in relations of movement practice. I will also discuss the limitations of this work and possible future directions for this style of inquiry, with particular concern for the sometimes strained negotiations between climbers, park staff, and Indigenous communities. It is in this set of relations that climbing may have the greatest challenge in pursuing a free practice that also minimizes domination.

Encouraging cases exist, however⁵, involving critical engagement with the problem space of access, and offering an enticing context for future work.

⁵ The “Save Oak Flat” campaign begun by local climbers and the San Carlos Apache community, since taken up by the Access Fund, is one such example.

2 POWER, ETHICS, AND THE BODY IN SPORT

Though the remarks of John Gill and the Access Fund, which opened chapter one, share a prescriptive object: the ethical pursuit of rock climbing, they differ somewhat in the direction of their concern. While Gill warns against the potential of regulations and standards diluting the creativity and freedom of the practice, the Access Fund focuses on the potential loss of climbing areas themselves due to issues of environmental or cultural sensitivity. For the former, the stylization of conduct involves a refusal of organized sport in the idiosyncratic pursuit of “essence”; the latter, presupposing just such an organization, directs style outwards, to relations of knowledge production (Sherman 1999: xvii; Access Fund 2016).

Despite these differences, there is a continuity between these prescriptions: a central problematization of growth, capacity, and access. Elements of each stylization bleed into one another, constituting the ethical practice of bouldering as at once contradictory and consistent. Many climbers concede that a balance must be struck between growing the sport and preserving the ‘core’ practice. It is the negotiation of this balance, continually emerging in practice, that is the realm of liberation and domination, and thus, of ethical concern.

Describing this stylization of climbing practice in terms of a question of ethics brings to light various theoretical considerations. The first comes from the very ‘question’ of ethics. By troubling the assumption that the ethical and moral ‘naturally’ flow from the ‘normal’, it is possible to consider not only different rules which might exist within an ethical framework, but an altogether different organization and practical

engagement with ethics (Shogan 1999: 47). If we can question our ethical practice, then there is the opportunity to do more than refine rules of ‘fair play’ versus ‘cheating’, and to reconsider what it means to perform ‘well’ in sport. How, then, should ethics be thought of, if not as a ‘given’ or morally static category? How does an ethical framework emerge, if not as a natural extension of the ‘rules’? And, relatedly, if we wish to promote a critical ethics, focused on and realized in liberatory practice, how might this work be taken up? In order to address these questions, and set up my following discussion of ethical formation in bouldering, I will draw on the work of Michel Foucault concerning ethics, primarily *The History of Sexuality*, and two interpretations of his works from the perspective of critical sports scholarship by Shogan, and Markula and Pringle.

First, however, it will be useful to address a second question arising from a consideration of ethics and sport: that of normalizing power and the process through which sport so often becomes a site of both liberatory and dominating relations through its very practice (Edensor 2000: 82). Any critical reconfiguration of ethical focus must take this ‘knot’ of relations as its object or risk constituting ethical practice as a matter of cerebral reflection on what is ‘right’ (Markula and Pringle 2006: 88). Without conceptualizing the organization and deployment of power, the process through which experience is problematized into an ethical concern is obscured. The elaboration of the self into an ethical subject through practice occurs not only in an abstract fashion, but in an orientation to, and engagement with everyday life (Foucault 1990b: 23). If we are to ask, ‘how can sport be ethically practiced such that the result is liberatory?’ then we must also ask ‘what organization of power/knowledge informs the space of movement practices, and by what processes does such a complex deployment of discourses become

realized?’ Here, I will draw again on Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, as well as Henning Eichberg’s conception of “sportisation”, and “social sensuality” of movement practices. Brought into conversation with Georg Simmel, and Katja Pettinen, this discussion opens the way for a consideration of the bodily experience of processes of subjectification, and the way in which ethics, informed by a particular organization of power and problematization, come to be realized in the moving, feeling, sensing body.

2.1. ‘Sportisation’: Spatiality and Temporality of the Sporting Body

Concluding a consideration of space and time in sports practice, Eichberg remarks, “show me how you are running, and I can see something of the society in which you are living” (1999: 163). This statement is not meant to suggest an essential relationship between the ability of an athlete and categories such as race or culture, but to express the linkages between the conceptualization of time and space as they are valued in a given society, with the movements of the body. In modernity, as techniques emerged for reconceptualising time and space, primarily in the form of discrete and increasingly minute measurements, movement practices became organized through these techniques and subject to their affordances. Continuing with the example of running, the ability to accurately measure the speed of a running body, and compare speed amongst bodies, encouraged an organized and delineated space (ensuring equivalent conditions), a refinement of techniques (to pursue the limits of human ability), and a valuation of quantified achievement (establishing the legitimacy of the entire practice).

These technologies are similar to those described by Foucault as emerging with the concept of population: means of identifying, quantifying, and organizing all aspects of life in the pursuit of promoting (or discouraging) certain forms of living (Foucault

1990a: 139, 143). One's health, for example, could now be considered based on proliferating fields of knowledge production in which the referent for healthy was the 'norm', an abstraction of statistical averages with material repercussions (Foucault 1990a: 30; Markula and Pringle 2006: 66). Eichberg refers to this process within movement practice as "sportisation"; identifying a trend away from "body experiences", those practices "in nearest proximity to daily living", and towards the enclosure, standardization, and hierarchization of "fitness" and "achievement" (1998: 123, 126, 132).

This quantification of movement practices produced the 'average' capabilities of the human body, and by extension two categories of 'exceptional' capability – one interpreted as valuable and ideal, the other as substandard and lacking. The individual could come to know themselves in relation to the norm through their sporting practice, and of crucial importance in this organization of power, engage in work upon themselves in order to pursue the ideal, with the accepted techniques of knowledge and measurement as their guide and method (Foucault 1988a). Sport in the modern sense is not simply a question of 'leisure', but a significant field of experience for the elaboration of subjectivity through work on the self, and therefore, the reification of dominant forms of power/knowledge through the body (Eichberg 1998: 155).

In many ways, the organization of Olympic sport exemplifies the culmination of processes of sportisation. Performance is hierarchized based on precise measurements, with the ultimate goal being a bodily dedication to raising or lowering these numbers, based on the particular game that is played. In the interest of equalizing the 'field of play' and allowing for accurate measurements, the space of sporting practice is carefully

organized, constructed, and maintained to encourage linearity, acceleration, and uniformity. The Olympics, no doubt, present the opportunity for joy to be taken in sport, and for the impressive cultivation of talents. However, the techniques involved in the standardization required in modern sport also drastically limit who 'belongs' in the organized sporting space. Bodies that do not easily fit into the categories of play are medicalized, subject to public scrutiny, and often excluded. Neighbourhoods with winding streets and local particularities are displaced in favour of uniform structures with a singular purpose.

This sort of violence is embedded in the process of sportisation, and realised through sporting bodies. With sport climbing (combined lead, boulder, and speed disciplines) being accepted into the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, climbers will increasingly be subjects of, and subject to these normalizing techniques of self knowledge. Though the Olympics may seem far removed from the focus of this work, access concerns in outdoor climbing areas, they are tied together through the growing popularity of the sport and the ethical stylization of climbing practice that this growth has provoked. When determining who 'belongs' in spaces of climbing practice the propensity of these standardizing techniques to exclude, narrow, and limit through the imbuelement of bodies in movement should be of ethical concern.

Already, the significance of this conceptualization of power to a question of ethical formation and liberatory practice can be discerned. A style of running can be linked not only to dominant conceptualizations of space and time, but relatedly, to societal valuations which emerge through this measurement and organization of movement practice. Moral worth is conflated with achievement as the ideal athlete comes

to represent the morally sound individual by virtue of their quantifiable performance. Olympic athletes, for example, are lauded not only for their technical mastery of a discipline, but for the courage, determination, sacrifice, and dedication they show; a precise time or score ‘objective’ proof of moral superiority, at once legitimizing the measurement and the perceived values. Considering power as productive then, in part answers the question of how sporting practices are related to ethical questions of domination and liberation.

However, for Eichberg, concepts of fundamental importance to a given society, such as what counts as achievement, formed patterns or norms that “could readily be understood socially because of [their] base in bodily – spatial, temporal – experience” (1998: 159). The practice of sport then, is a process of rendering concepts as meaningful through bodily experiences; of constructing social identity and a relation to self as understood in bodily expression and sensation, encouraged and constrained by the affordances of place, the objects of play, and the organization of bodies in motion. In short, a process which expresses “social sensuality” (1998: 117).

An example from Eichberg’s own work may help depict how the process of sportisation is expressive of broader power/knowledge discourses, and how movement practices come to be experienced within spaces largely defined through these ways of knowing, reifying their valuation through ‘social sensuality’. *Jeu de paume*, a ball game resembling tennis and squash, experienced a surge in popularity and the construction of hundreds of enclosed, indoor courts from around the sixteenth to seventeenth century onwards. The assumption, Eichberg suggests, could be made that this shift indoors was in order to continue a game in rainy or cold weather. However, the majority of courts built

as this time lacked a roof and were enclosed using only walls (1998: 51). Though largely useless in keeping weather out, walls were effective at marking out the space in which a previously ‘open-air’ game might be played ‘properly’ – that is, with a standardized court, boundary lines, controlled access to the court, and specified rules of play (Eichberg 1998: 51).

This classed delineation of this space became entrenched within the play of the game as the walls (and later ceiling) became incorporated as a playing surface, along with a strict and standardized organization of zones within the court. This delineation of space demanded new techniques, strategy, and physical fitness of the body in practice – materially, and sensuously forming the experience of class through recreational movement practices (1998: 51). Who belonged in these exclusive spaces became a matter of regulation, of barriers and walls, but also of the bodily experience these enclosures allowed for and encouraged. The problem of access, a matter of embodied class: particular movements in particular spaces performed in repetition to the point of ‘natural’ bodily expression of superiority and belonging (1998: 51).

What can, in part, be drawn from this example is that what the body feels and how perception becomes experience will always be bound up in social-historical configurations; the sensuous body (re)constructs the world, but is always working in reference to the realm of what it is afforded or encouraged to feel. For example, the physical delineation of space described here would decrease the opportunity in which the eyes of different classes might meet in sport, as well as remove the space of ‘proper’ sport from the smells and sounds of the open air and street (Simmel 1997: 118-119, 176). In the face of increasing popularity of the practice, growing cities, and an emerging petty

bourgeoisie class, the sensuous experience of the upper class body, and the way in which it came to 'know' itself, was in part through organized movement within the enclosed space of the ball-court, which included physical barriers that marked these external pressures as corrupting to the self. Bourdieu remarks on this process in sport in a similar way, noting that the 'democratization' of a sport encourages practices of distinction such that, "the way it is played and the satisfaction it gives" become differently experienced by varied bodies (1984: 211).

A significant challenge to encouraging liberatory ethics in sport is the current propensity of movement practices, as they grow and are organized, to become informed by the techniques, logics, and knowledges at work in fitness and achievement sport – to become sportised (Eichberg 1998: 126). However, every concrete example of movement practice will involve the blending, mixing, and friction of these discourses with the creativity and joy of body experience, resulting in hybridized, dynamic body cultures (1998: 123). A focus on practice, on the *realization* of dominant and liberatory knowledges is then a source of concern as well as optimism, as it is the relations of body in motion to place, objects, and others – sensuous relationships – that render sport particularly 'power-full' in terms of subjectification. "Social sensuality" describes this aspect of subjectification in part. However, Eichberg does not linger on the senses and perception, and instead focuses on the broader, historical forces working upon and through sporting bodies. While keeping in mind the constitutive effects of power/knowledge discourses, further consideration of this sensuous realization of power in sport provides a useful means of engagement with the process of ethical subjectification.

2.2. Sensuality and the Sporting Subject

As movement practiced become ‘sportised’ the discourses drawn on to interpret bodily experience are increasingly formalized, technical, and scientific. These power/knowledges work upon the body, providing and shaping technologies of self formation that have their expression in practices. As Foucault describes, inquiry into this organization of power should not focus on representations or perceptions of bodies, but “...the manner in which what is most *material and vital* in them has been *invested*” (1990a: 152, my emphasis). What then, can be said of the affordances of the senses in this bodily expression of power/knowledge? If power is only realized through relations in practice, then the primary mode through which relations in sport take place – bodies in motion and contact – deserves greater attention in a consideration of the possibilities of sport to provoke critical reflection (Spencer 2014: 235).

This sort of appreciation for the sensuous body can be found in the works of Georg Simmel, who took seriously the place of perception in the (re)construction of social structures. Looking to interactions among bodies in social space, and the centrality of the senses in allowing for, or inhibiting social cohesion, led Simmel to formulate a hierarchy of the senses. As he notes, “...every sense delivers contributions characteristic of its individual nature to the construction of sociated existence...” (1997: 110).

For Simmel, the ways in which our immediate social interactions play out, whether with a family member or stranger, rely not on an internal and functional logic, but on the deep link between the senses, the environment, and social-historical configurations. Thus, how we experience solidarity (or fail to experience it) has much to do with the configuration of climate, availability of open spaces, discourses of civility

and manners, and the smell of bodies. Ultimately, “the social question is not only an ethical one, but also a question of smell” (Simmel 1997: 118). What might be added is that ethics, as a social question, is also a question of the senses. The affordances of bodily relations having deep implications for our sense of what belongs, is endangered, and is worth protecting (Duffy and Waitt 2013: 470, 476).

Here, the active (re)construction of social relations through the body, as opposed to a top-down imposition upon it, emerges. All the while the complexity of acting in resistance to domination, or at the very least in an ethical manner, comes to the fore. This is because, for Simmel, asking “*how* does the personality accommodate itself in the adjustment to external forces” (1997: 175 my emphasis), links the sensuous experience of daily life to the establishment of particular ways of being and understanding oneself in the world, particularly in relation to contradictory pressures on identity. While we need not consider the senses in terms of Simmel’s hierarchy⁶, the place of sensuous affect in constructing coherent forms of social life out of complex experiences contributes to an explication of often contradictory ethical practices (Edensor 2013: 451-452; Friedman 2011: 188).

Bringing these sort of insights to sport, Pettinen discusses the importance of relations of contact in sport from the perspective of Taijutsu practice and bodily appreciation of ‘judgement’ (2014). In a similar way to Eichberg, Pettinen marks out different forms of Taijutsu practice, one centred upon performance, linear testing,

⁶ Any hierarchy of the senses falls apart when taking Simmel’s own position on the relation between socio-historical context and the body seriously. Sensorial affordances are crucial to explaining social cohesion, but that does not suggest that these affordances always operate in the same way across contexts. Affordance should not be interpreted as synonymous with valuation (see Friedman 2011; Edensor 2013; Spencer 2014).

technical repetition, and competition, and another on cultivation of perception, non-linear teaching, creativity and intuition, and intersubjectivity (2014: 137). These differences primarily exist between North American and traditional Japanese practice, respectively, and while they can be in many ways read as indicative of cultural difference, Pettinen also highlights the ways in which variations in teaching provide alternative opportunities for contact and perception. The affordances of this contact and perceptive skill, in turn, realizes a form of bodily judgement, a sense of awareness and care for others and the contextual relations the body is engaged in (Pettinen 2014: 139).

This sense of bodily, contextual awareness, and the valuation of Taijutsu skill as such, is taught through storytelling. The practitioner engages not in endless repetition of standardized techniques, but in a cultivation of adaptation encouraged by diverse ‘stories’ of bodily variation that are purposefully disseminated by teachers (2014: 142). A sense of practicing Taijutsu ‘well’ thus involves “learning to consciously notice what is going on with one’s own body in relation to another body’s actions upon it”, to appreciate and respond to varied “aspects of embodiment” (2014: 143). As this style of skill cultivation does not adhere to linear progression and cannot be tested in standardized competition, the pleasure taken in enacting the art well involves two particular forms of bodily experience that Pettinen marks out. The first is strongly related to a sense of community and place, a pleasure taken in the bodily perception and experience of history, authenticity, comradery, and social cohesion. Serious practitioners of Taijutsu travel from across the globe to visit Noda, Japan, where the senior teacher of Bujinkan Taijutsu maintains the ‘centre’ dojo for this particular art. As students learn together in this

particular place the synchronization of movements and breathing is a tangible experience of the value of the stories and lessons of their art (2014: 144).

The second form of embodied pleasure Pettinen describes is also intersubjectively experienced, but emerges out of a sort of tension instead of harmonization. The dissonance which Western practitioners travelling to Noda feel between linear progression of skill in movement practices and cultivation of sensorial awareness can be a source of frustration, but also an opportunity for reflection and “sensorial awakening” (Pettinen 2014: 149-150). When a practitioner expresses skill through an awareness of not only their own body, but of their body in varied relations, the pleasure is not one of mastery over the physical, but a deep awareness of “mindbodies” in interaction (2014: 149). In this way, bodily pleasure in Taijutsu is experienced as both synchronization and tension, the realization of a style of being in tangible validation of, and dissonance to what is known. Pettinen thus indicates a cultivation of the self in which pleasure is derived not from achievement or quantified testing, but from bodily experiences of variation and critical reflection upon these variable relationships as an element of practice. Experiences of ‘judgement’ or of practicing Taijutsu in relation to a specific ethical form can be understood as involving not isolated cerebral learning of rules and techniques, nor of repetition and mastery over the body, but an active realization of power/knowledge through bodily movement.

It is important to avoid reducing this analysis of experiences of skill to a strictly subjective account. What Pettinen highlights is the *intersubjective* quality of becoming skillful, a process that cannot be accomplished or understood outside of the numerous and complex relations movement practice involves (2014: 152). If a focus on the feeling of

the body is to be meshed with a productive conception of power, then an insistence on this relational expression of power/knowledge is essential. The body does not hold power, or have a given truth as an essential quality, but is imbued with power and always becoming in dynamic relations (Foucault 1990a: 94). These works all encourage a view of subjectification that includes a careful consideration of not only practices, but of the bodily experience of these relations of becoming. Ethics, considered as a sense of how best to conduct one's life, is not only a matter of logical arguments or philosophical debates carried out in the mind, but an engagement with the world that is necessarily carried out through dynamic contact and relations. In questioning 'why' we act the way we do, the political causes we take up, or the deep sense of 'right' we feel, the affordances of the senses, and their relation to place must be taken into consideration.

These accounts offer a means of addressing questions of normalizing power in sport posed above, clarifying how forms of domination come to be embodied in sports practice. Eichberg's concept of sportisation is useful in describing the deployment of power/knowledge discourses which currently informs sports practice. Techniques of measurement, spatial delineation, and quantifiable testing increasingly inform the context in which sport is practiced. Through 'social sensuality' the discourses and values which these techniques afford are apprehended, and realized, through the sporting body. As Simmel suggests, the affordances of the senses are central to this process of blending diverse discourses and stimuli into a complex sense of self. As such, the relationship between the moving body and the place in which we must interpret our perceptions has profound implications for political action, and social cohesion. In resonance with

Eichberg, the experience of identity is a sensuous one, drawn from interactions that are largely defined by the organization of social space in which they occur.

Dominating norms seem to overwhelmingly inform our ethical choices, however, the affordances of the senses and place can also encourage experiences of resistance, the body being in many ways open to the tensions, contradictions, and surprises of the world in which it moves (Simmel 1997; Eichberg 1998: 123; Edensor 2000: 102).

Encouragingly, encounters with these tensions and the pleasures of resistance can be cultivated through sport, encouraged by teachers or mentors with an appreciation for the importance of the senses and place to an embodied sense of practicing sport ‘well’ (Pettinen 2014).

While this discussion provides insight into how an ethical orientation – a sense of how one should engage with the world – is ultimately realized through the body, the question of the *relation* of an ethical form to a particular problematization can be explored further. For Pettinen, the two styles of Taijutsu teaching emerge from cultural difference and are taken as given in a description of how they play out. If we are to question how these styles emerged as two particular ethical forms, two ways in which to conduct a relationship of self to self, then it may also be possible to look not only to alternative examples of ethics, but actively engage with the dominant ethical form of Western sports practice, and encourage its reconfiguration as a central element in participating ‘well’. In what follows I will focus on Foucault’s conceptualization of “problematization” as central to ethical elaboration, and the ways in which an understanding of intersubjective sensuality and “social sensuality” can be applied to works aiming to promote a liberatory sporting practice.

2.3. The Sporting Subject and Questions of Ethical Practice

In his study of Classical Greek ethics surrounding sexuality, Foucault contends that sexual austerity was not the result of detailed interdictions upon certain practices as might be supposed, but upon the intense *problematization* of aspects of daily life in the attempt to stylize one's conduct (1990b: 23-24). Drawing upon the productive model of power relations established in *Volume 1 of The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes the ways in which it was, in fact, those areas of life in which *free men* experienced the most freedom (in relation to their own bodies, their wives, boys, and the pursuit of truth) that the greatest ethical concern was addressed (1990b: 32). What was most important in this ethical form was not *what* was done in relation to the truth of one's soul, but a mastery, in the form of moderation, in the *use* of one's pleasures – specific actions were not strictly regulated, only the extent to which one allowed oneself to be 'carried away' by pleasure. The means by which one entered into an ethical relationship with the self was not absolute denial in pursuit of purity, but engagement with and reflection on one's pleasures (1990b: 64). As such, Foucault remarks that the primary difference between Classic and Christian ethics was not one of "tolerance" versus "interdiction", but of the varied ways by which one entered into a relationship with one's own conduct as an elaboration of self and access to truth (1990b: 251).

This consideration of ethical form is relevant to liberatory sport practice in so far as sport constitutes a similar experience of freedom to those described by Foucault as central to Greek thought, in which the question of how one is to make use of one's liberty is central. This is not to suggest that the method and discourses of problematization and conduct are identical, but to highlight why inquiry into the form problematization may

yield greater insight than a surface description of moral codes and rules. Just as Eichberg's sportisation is not a uniform, linear process, sporting bodies are not 'dupes' to dominant discourses of power/knowledge (Foucault 1990a: 157). There is always room for resistance in power relations, and often in sport a process that resembles sportisation comes with a backlash, a questioning of what it means to engage in a particular movement practice 'well'.

Certainly in rock climbing, as mentioned previously, the dual pressures of growing participation and increasing commercialization have been met with a range of ethical responses, each emerging not only as an ideal representation, or moral codes and rules, but practical advice, techniques, and tools with which to engage in these 'problems'. The goal of access organizations and of the ethic they espouse is not only to create a list of interdictions and regulations for climbers in contested spaces, but to encourage climbing as an ethical practice in the very freedom for which it allows. Climbers, a generally privileged group, are confronted with the question of how best to engage with the pleasure they take while climbing in areas that are often environmentally sensitive, culturally and historically significant, and the subject of ongoing contestation. Without that experience of freedom (always intertwined with conflict), there is also no ethical experience which might suggest the challenge of acting 'well'. As with the Greek problematization of sexuality, the problematization of access in climbing practice remains in some ways about a stylization of engagement with the world, not about enclosure, standardized rules, and precise measurements in the pursuit of purity. As such, applying Foucault's approach to ethical elaboration as problematization has much to offer

in understanding the complex ways in which modern sporting subjects come to be realised.

Looking into problematization also allows for taking the next step in ethical practice, not just describing alternative ethical forms but encouraging critical engagement with one's conduct as a central element in acting 'well'. As Foucault describes, while a particular problematization of sexuality might not restrict certain practices (and so appear 'tolerant'), it is the underlying impetus for ethical concern which must be interrogated to gain a more in depth understanding of the power relations at play. Classical Greek sexual ethics were an "ethics of men made for men", established by free citizens and designating the realm of ethical concern as focused on the actions of those who lead, as opposed to those who are led (1990b: 83). This problematization of freedom acts as an imposition upon conduct, but more importantly, in a productive sense, it provides the moral grounds for privileged access to wisdom, knowledge, and truth, as well as to positions of influence (such as leadership roles in the governance of a city). Entering into a stylization of the self is thus a process of forming oneself as a legitimate participant in relationships of power. While excessive use of pleasure as misuse of freedom was morally denounced, this was not to reign in the powers of male citizens, but often re-established a natural "order" to power relations (1990b: 90). When considering the potential for sport as liberatory practice, what must be considered is not just the surface rules, nor the perceived level of 'tolerance', but the ways in which certain sporting experiences become the object of ethical concern, and the stylized practices which emerge as a means of addressing these experiences in such a way as to form oneself as ethical. The space in

which conflicts, tension, and problems of identity can be a source of critical reflection, as opposed to retrenchment of dominant norms, might then be perceived.

I will now turn to two interpretations of Foucault's work on ethics from scholars of sport in order to place the conceptual tools described above into usage in a sports context, but also to consider what an attunement to the sensual aspects of subjectification and sportisation can offer to attempts at ethical transformation and liberatory practice.

Debra Shogan, in her analysis of the relations of power surrounding high-level athletes, suggests that, "ethics is concerned with how one might confront the technologies and discourses of a discipline in its construction of identity" (1999: 90). Shogan remarks that, for sport, this would mean engaging with the ways in which high-level, competitive sport normalizes male, white, straight, and 'fit' bodies and marks others as physically, but also morally, lacking (1999: 58, 91). Access to the space of sport, as well as the positive moral valuation of sporting practice is then limited based on this norm. As athletes have 'hybrid identities' and varied forms of embodiment, they will necessarily fail to fit the norm at all times, despite their status as professional or expert athletes. These "gaps" between embodied experience and dominating norms is the space in which Shogan identifies the violence done to many athletes and participants of sport, but also the opportunity to challenge these same norms (Shogan 1999: 92). Drawing attention to these gaps should be the work of the sports ethicist, while working within them to extend the space for varied embodiments should be the project of the critical athlete, work they will accomplish largely through "refusal" of dominant norms (1999: 92).

Shogan takes Dennis Rodman as an example of this sort of embodied refusal (1999: 94-95). Rodman's non-normative engagement with categories of gender and race, as well as the assumed style of play in competitive basketball, sheds light on these normative categories as societal impositions upon bodies, instead of indicators of worth, skill, and morality. While this refusal may not directly alter the rules and organization of the game, the 'unofficial' rules of who belongs in high-level sport are disrupted. This reflection on refusal is certainly useful to imagining sport as a liberatory practice, particularly in Shogan's acknowledgment of ethical knowledge as a cultivated skill in which, "regular attention to ethical values and regular repetition of what counts as an ethical response produces ethically skilled people" (Shogan 1999: 75). However, this 'regular attention' seems to largely be conceived of as a solitary, though embodied practice. Due to a focus on high-level athletes much of Shogan's analysis revolves around individual characteristics which might lead to "something new" in sport (1999: 99). Here, refusal as a technique of resistance places so much weight on individual performance that it remains unclear under what conditions critical reflection and acceptance of difference might occur amongst general participants of an organized sport (1999: 97).

If we consider these "gaps" as the space of problematization, the bodily experiences of tension which produce an ethical response, then they can also be understood as provoking a response not just on the part of the athlete, but from those who actively construct sport ethics. Shogan marks out the issue with this response being one of interpretation in terms of cheating versus fair play, a narrow commitment to the rules. Bringing in Eichberg's conception of sportisation also suggests that the space in which these gaps might become critical thought and action are further constrained by dominant

modes of spatial and temporal organization. Those involved in high-level or achievement sport are constrained to a greater extent in the ways in which they might experience sport as liberatory due not only to discourses or norms, but the ways in which these norms constitute and are reinforced by the bodily experience of such achievement-based spaces.

Further, as Shogan states, an ethical position is a practice of cultivation, as repeated experiences of gaps and ethical response (1999: 75). Instead of a focus on repetition, the sensual possibilities of these ethical experiences can be explored. As Pettinen argues, an alternative dissemination of critical ethics in practice may not rely on a cerebral accumulation of experience, but in the encouragement of a lived pleasure taken in the blending of movement with varied context and relations (Pettinen 2014: 149). A focus on the modes and method of teaching, including the affordances of sensual experience in place, of those in a position to normalize this sort of liberatory practice deepens our ability to understand possibilities for ‘refusal’, and how they might be considered a central aspect of movement practice itself.

Markula and Pringle approach the question of liberatory practice in sport from just this perspective, focusing on the place of “instructors” in re-producing and challenging an ethic (2006: 161). These ‘teachers’ are in a privileged position in regards this reconfiguration as they are, in many cases as part of a transaction, expected to embody and pass on the means by which new participants conduct themselves ‘well’. In a similar way to Shogan, Markula and Pringle note that “the sporting disciplines not only produce winners and ‘moral characters’, but also losers and the debauched, but more often subjects that are respectfully fragmented” (Markula and Pringle 2006: 47). Again, these ‘fragmentations’ or ‘gaps’ in the self can be the space in which expert knowers

might cultivate critical thought and a rethinking of normative sports practice. The authors look to model this rethinking along the lines of “the aesthetic stylisation of the self” identified by Foucault as a cultivation of ethical practice as the critical, relational use of freedom (2006: 147). Of central importance here is the organization of this ethical work around constant aesthetic re-stylization throughout one’s life, as opposed to a search for a singular truth (2006: 149).

Inquiring into the possibilities of this critical pedagogy, Markula and Pringle looked, respectively, to their own and others’ teaching style of a pilates-hybrid class, and of engagement with students in a sports sociology class focused on New Zealand rugby. The pilates-hybrid was marked out by the authors as a form of ‘mindful’ fitness which might be more encouraging in terms of critical reflection and a lack of measurement and competition. However, teachers of the classes largely failed to consider the practice outside of normative ideals of what might be considered ‘fitness sport’, drawing on discourses of slim, fit, healthy, and morally ‘good’ bodies in order to draw participants into the course. Markula herself struggled with the question “when does a search for the practices of freedom turn into masked governance through biopower and the endless quest for the ‘true’ self?”, expressing the challenge of encouraging critical thought during mindful practice without rendering that mindfulness in terms of a singular Truth to be found buried within oneself (Markula and Pringle 2006: 157).

In drawing out a critical discussion of rugby with research participants as well as students in the classroom, Pringle aimed to encourage a consideration of the ‘gaps’ between the nationalistic, hyper-masculine image of rugby in New Zealand with experiences of injury, fear, pleasure, and increasing female participation. Those involved

evoked a complex blending of discourses in order to make sense of visceral bodily experiences in a way which did minimal ‘damage’ to their sense of self (2006: 116). In this way even “injury [in sport] becomes more constituting than threatening” (Young et al. 1994, cited in Markula and Pringle 2006: 112).

In regards to the ‘crisis’ of increasing female participation, most participants were hesitant to fully support the trend, but ultimately expressed a general liberal acceptance of ‘freedom of choice’ to play (Markula and Pringle 2006: 128). As the authors point out, an acceptance of injury or of ‘tolerance’ for female participation does not suggest critical or liberatory thought (2006: 130). Instead, this liberalism allows for tolerance without any profound alteration in the ways we know and ‘feel’ the self. As with climbing, access becomes organized around an ethic, a proper way of playing, as opposed to a general rule of inclusion.

Most of Markula and Pringle’s participants were very uncomfortable with these changes, and it seemed near impossible to question or alter their embodied position due to the dominant status of the discourses they invoked, regardless of how contradictory and filled with ‘gaps’. However, in conclusion, the authors nonetheless encourage the work to “develop a specific pedagogical strategy designed to encourage the games of truth surrounding sport to be played in an equitable manner” (Markula and Pringle 2006: 193).

This sort of commitment is absolutely necessary. By pursuing a critical practice based in sensuous experience I do not aim to suggest a spontaneous or automatic critical response can be produced through a certain sensory experience. As described by Pettinen,

alternative forms of practice and mastery, considered here as an ethical stylization, emerge through the skillful direction and organization of movement and relations in particular places, *as encouraged by teachers*; seemingly spontaneously, but also the result of considerable ethical concern. Following Shogan, and Markula and Pringle, I suggest that this sort of challenging, disruptive, ongoing work should be understood as central to practicing sport ‘well’, a drawing on and eliciting of pleasures that emerge in the realization of a sporting self. What I argue is helpful to this project, is a closer examination of the affordances of place and sensuality in the realization of an ethical subject. Further, a broader discussion of Foucault’s approach to problematization helps to draw out the challenges to, and opportunities for liberatory practice.

Examining pilates classes, Markula hoped to find opportunities for critical pedagogy and sports practice. While the hybrid style of the classes – named “Hybrisie” – was designed with the intent of encouraging a focus on the self, being highly adaptable to varied bodies and fitness levels, and promoting a bodily awareness which can be brought into the ‘rest’ of one’s life, ultimately, no significant promotion of critical practice was found outside of the concept put forward by the designer of the classes (Markula and Pringle 2006: 161, 166). The explanation for this dissonance between concept and practice is suggested as both the lack of knowledge and experience on the part of practitioners (though the authors do not blame them for this), as well as the mediation of marketing in aligning the practice with dominant norms of ideal bodies (Markula and Pringle 2006: 174-175). The imperative to ‘sell’ the practice as a commodity no doubt restricts the space for non-normative experiences. However, looking to the actual environment in which the practice takes place provides further explanations.

The space of the gym is organized in accordance with the description of ‘fitness sport’ described by Eichberg (1998: 123). Clients enter a physical space imbued with scientific and medical knowledges of health and ‘wellness’, and the means with which to measure themselves according to these discourses. This space is separated from the outside world, filled with those who are not similarly concerned with health and fitness, and delineated within into different rooms with specific courses taught and practiced in each (Simmel 1997: 118-119; Eichberg 1998: 149-150). As discussed, this separation is not only appreciated on the ‘level’ of the mind, but experienced in relation to the discourses of ideal bodies as commodities which Markula is concerned with. The relationship to self that is promoted is one of measurement in pursuit of a pure, true self, the details of what practices are done supersedes any consideration of how the practices are undertaken on an ethical, relational level (Foucault 1990b: 253).

This delineation of space discourages contact with the outside and ‘others’ and is replicated in the organization of the body and movements the class involves. Pettinen locates the intersections of pleasure in movement with critical awareness in the contact of mindbodies – in the cultivation of a sensorial awareness of variation and context (Pettinen 2014: 143). While classes were directed towards a cultivation of the mind-body, the focus on the individual, particularly as removed from other participants, was most often interpreted within a search for the truth of the self (Markula and Pringle 2006: 163, 167). Certainly this focus on the individual body might encourage a sensorial engagement with ‘gaps’ of identity, but lacking critical direction from instructors, and more importantly, a space in which variation, creativity, tensions, conflicts, and sensuous

exploration might be commonly encountered, participants were unlikely to challenge normative ideals of the body and sports practice.

What then, can we make of the challenges of encouraging critical thought in the classroom and research interview? Participants had both a committed ‘instructor’, as well as a space in which their sensuous experiences of sport might be cultivated into a critical reflection on normative sports practice. This reflection is important, especially in terms of sharing stories of non-normative experience with others, exposing gaps in identity which may be in common, and bringing awareness to those who may feel the sense of fragmentation to a lesser degree (Markula and Pringle 2006: 209). Many participants had already encountered these gaps and tensions in their sporting practice, and drawn on the discourses available in order to make sense of them. In short, their commitment to these (often normative) ways of knowing had already calcified into a self which they deeply embodied. What opportunities then are there for disrupting normative ‘solutions’ to problems at the moment of tension and conflict? Those in a position to alter ethical formation can encourage a rethinking of past ethical experiences, but also structure practice such that achievement or fitness means little unless accompanied by a critical approach to sporting relationships. This is the process described by Pettinen in which an alternative pedagogy of movement suggests an alternative relationship to the self and to the world. The means and criteria against which the ethical subject forms themselves are shifted, and ultimately what is altered is a relationship to truth (Foucault 1990b: 229, 233).

For practitioners of sport to take up critical thought as an element of their practice then, it is necessary not only to present alternative ways of being, but to encourage

engagement with the gaps between norms and experience, highlighting the violence done to bodies through everyday sporting practice (Shogan 1999; Markula and Pringle 2006). Bringing these gaps to light can be a process of reflective pedagogy or of the cultivation of an ethical form – a relationship of self to self, expressed in practices, which values a critical orientation towards movement above normative ideals. What the ‘experts’ Markula and Pringle describe have access to in comparison to new or recreational practitioners is not only “knowledge and experience”, but a relationship to the problematization of their own experiences, and of the elaboration of the conflicts and contradictions of the sport into “a domain of moral experience” (Foucault 1990b: 24; Markula and Pringle 2006: 175). Without an awareness of how an area of life becomes the object of ethical concern, critical engagement will be restricted, likely limited to the taking up of alternative relations to truth, as opposed to the ongoing work of “recreating oneself” in relations (Shogan 1999: 90).

As discussed, considering the affordances of the senses and the organization of space and time within sport can be useful in just this sort of project, and in approaching the question of how liberatory practice might not be only an individual pursuit, but a collective commitment. In what follows I will turn towards my own research on ethical formation in bouldering practice in order to consider how a critical impulse can be realized as central to the pleasurable experience of the sport. Relatedly, how a close relationship to the site of problematization (access), through ethical experiences of tension, as well as ‘expert’ cultivation of particular forms of practice through pedagogy, mentorship, and prescriptive texts, can provide opportunities for liberatory practice. First, however, I will review in greater detail the methodology and methods employed in this

work, with a particular focus on the challenges of bringing a post-humanist, productive view of power together with a style of inquiry that relies heavily upon phenomenological approaches.

3 METHODOLOGY AND METHOD: GUIDEBOOKS, GUIDES, AND PLACE-BASED INTERVIEWS

This work draws on research and thinking in some ways divided on the concept of the subject in relation to power, and the means by which this relationship might be understood (Large 2000: 34). This is an ontological distinction, but also one of methodology and epistemology – of the nature of truth, and how we might have a relationship with it. As discussed in the previous chapter, the theoretical mixing of a Foucauldian socio-historical account of power with a bodily, perception-based appreciation of the sensual subject can be managed through taking seriously the generative quality of the relational body, moving in space. However, a more in-depth methodological engagement with the challenges and opportunities of drawing on both genealogical and phenomenological approaches will be pursued below, making a case for their careful usage in an analysis of ethical practice.

These theoretical and methodological conclusions were formed in an iterative fashion as I undertook research, fieldwork, transcription, and analysis; they emerged in part out of the narratives and surprises of talking to people that in some ways I felt I already knew. In many ways, my original theoretical groundwork has been both solidified and disrupted in a process of working through what I was told, read, and felt in the course of research, compelling me to think through the links between concepts more completely as I at times, strained to apply them to what I found in the field. In short, the practical challenges of this project have been central to the development of my theoretical grounding, interpretations, and conclusions. Here I will discuss how questions of ‘*how* to recognize the formation of an ethical subject’ actually played out in the field, and the

ways in which pursuing a methodology that appreciates both broad discourses of power/knowledge as well as specific, bodily experience shaped my developing work.

3.1. Subjectification and Phenomenology: Power in Practice

As I began thinking about the possibility of working with rock climbing and ethical practice as a research project one article stood out as particularly resonant with my experience, and generative in terms of further, critical thought. Diane Chrisholm's (2008) "Climbing like a Girl" presented the case for a feminist phenomenology of rock climbing, drawing on the auto-biographical work of, and an interview with, Lynn Hill, an incredibly talented and relatively famous rock climber. Hill uses climbing to travel the world and make bold first ascents (usually almost exclusively made by men), challenging gendered assumptions of her body's capabilities. Chrisholm's work not only spurred my interest in sport as potentially liberatory, describing Hill's relationship to rock as one of feminist practice, but provided a compelling argument for phenomenology as methodology; for beginning critical thought with the body in practice as opposed to external, presumptive categories (2008: 11).

Engaging with the ways in which women pursue 'free movement' is argued by Chrisholm to overturn some previous approaches to feminist phenomenology in which the category of 'woman' is taken to exclusively shape action. Beginning with the body in practice does not preclude an appreciation of domination or social constraints of gender, but provides a space in which a relational, negotiated, and vital description of movement practices can be gained (Shogan 1999: 47; Markula and Pringle 2006: 99; Chrisholm 2008: 18). An analysis of narratives focused on the relational body, accompanied by my

own participation in the practice, could yield an understanding of the experience of ethics (or how one should move), which categories might preclude (Monaghan 2001: 332).

Despite this encouraging perspective on phenomenological inquiry, there remained some challenges to taking up the sort of methodology Chrisholm described as a sole path into a consideration of sporting ethics. The description of Lynn Hill's climbing as indicative of women's 'ascent' brought to mind the unequal organization of power relations that is bound up in any ethical practice (Foucault 1988b: 45; Foucault 1990b: 215). Subjectification based on the assumption of abundance operates in part through taking the pursuits of freedom, pleasure, and the proliferation of life itself as objects of concern (Foucault 1990a: 142; Foucault 1990b: 32). If we consider sport and climbing as just this sort of pursuit, then it becomes a potentially problematized space in a formation of ethics of how to conduct oneself, and by extension, who should live and in what ways within the current deployment of dominant power/knowledges. Chrisholm's work is a vital analysis of the bodily realization of resistant ways of being. Bracketing the intertwined domination within this realization, however, leaves many power relations of access unexplored.

Privileged women's 'ascent' through the free movement of climbing is then the beginning of further inquiry into ethics, but not a resolution. While phenomenological accounts potentially illuminate "subjugated" or non-normative knowledges which exist as a form of resistance to domination (Markula and Pringle 2006: 201; Chrisholm 2008: 19), it is possible for a focus on the "natural intelligence" of the body to obfuscate the power relations which inform the liberty of 'free movement', supporting a search for an essential truth, and an essential self (Large 2000: 37; Chrisholm 2008: 17).

It is just this sort of project that a genealogical approach is opposed to. As Large describes, Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* was not concerned with the material existence of Truth, but with exposing the place of *social relations* of power and domination in the attribution of extra-moral values to a metaphysical force (Large 2000: 39-40). As Foucault elaborated, the question of how to conduct oneself – that is, the question of ethics – emerges through broad techniques of subjectification in which the content or rules are of less consequence than the methods or forms the realization of the ethical self might take (1990b: 26). Taking sexuality (or in this case, sport) as a given field of human experience in which ethical concern consists of prohibition or tolerance overlooks the social emergence of sexuality as a collection of *problematized practices*. For Foucault, presenting a genealogical account of the organization and deployment of power/knowledges upon bodies informs the deciphering of sexuality as a pathway to Truth (Foucault 1990a: 156).

The objects of genealogical inquiry emerge from this perspective on truth. Instead of pursuing a linear history with a pre-defined logic, genealogy concerns itself with the reconstruction of concepts – the ways in which those areas of knowledge considered to be eternal or the result of a complete revolution in thought emerge in a rhizomatic fashion through revisions, struggle, co-option, contradiction, and accident (Foucault 1998: 370). Texts which indicate “descent” and “emergence”, express not beginnings and ends, but a continual concern for how concepts might be realized in practice given shifting social contexts (Foucault 1998: 373, 376). As such, genealogical analysis focuses on those documents that describe not what happened, but *how* what was happening was classified, ordered, explained, and understood. Not as a “history of mentalities”, but of practices

with power-effects upon bodies (Foucault 1998: 375; Foucault 1990a: 97). Specifically, in regards to a genealogy of ethics, “prescriptive texts” (ie., those that problematize certain relations of power and argue for the stylization of conduct in response) are most illuminating in examining an organization of power and a relationship to truth (Foucault 1990b: 13-13, 32).

Due to these ontological and epistemological differences, genealogy and phenomenology might be viewed as methodologically incompatible, at best, and at worst, fundamentally opposed or “never [to] meet” in their most extreme expressions (Large 2000: 42). While this may be true for the genealogy of Nietzsche and the phenomenology of Levinas that Large describes, the question of *how* liberatory experiences might be cultivated in sport requires just such a challenging encounter of thought. For both Foucault, and Merleau-Ponty (whom Chrisholm draws upon), a focus on the relational body in practice is essential to any appreciation of power and resistance (Chrisholm 2008: 11; Wehrle 2016: 57). This body is not only worked upon and inscribed by power, but activates and realizes this power in everyday life, providing opportunities for resistance (Edensor 2000: 100).

The genealogical tracing of descent and emergence allows for a recognition of those discourses that inform our orientation to the world, while a phenomenological appreciation for the affordances of the body clarifies just how these discourses become embodied and ‘made real’ or how they can be so ‘dangerous’ (Wehrle 2016: 57, 61). This blended analysis of both prescriptive texts and narrative accounts allows for a consideration of how broader organizations of power emerge in and through local and specific objects, spaces, and experiences. This perspective has consequences not only for

an understanding of power – bound up with the affordances of place and perception – but also for an approach to ethical practice. The problematized space of ethical stylization is one of *experience*, in which the sensations, movements, feelings, and bodily effects of power relations are made sense of. If what we ‘know’ to be true on a bodily level is so deeply tied to potentially dominating knowledges, then it is also these sites of bodily experience that must be the focus of our ethical concern. For climbers then, ‘free movement’ can be viewed as both the bodily experience of pleasure and resistance that it is, as well as a result of histories of access contingent upon power relations seemingly far removed from the touching of rock. It is the satisfaction that might be taken from the active pursuit of the former in relation to the latter that I see as the realm of critical sensuality. In what follows, I describe the elements of climbing practice that brought the visceral and situational qualities of “social sensuality” together with a critical perspective on the “truth games” of subjectification, allowing for such a perspective on liberatory practice (Foucault 1990a: 6; Eichberg 1998: 117).

3.2. Climbing Elements and Synergy of Methodology and Method

In working through a combined genealogical inquiry blended with interviews and reflections on my own experiences, it was also necessary to establish which elements of rock climbing in particular would serve this approach best. Owing in part to some lucky circumstance, I decided on a genealogical analysis of climbing guidebooks, access organization publications, and selected climbing media and expert discussions, mixed with semi-structured interviews in bouldering areas known for being sites of access challenges. The interviews, and my experience of these contested places, were complicated (and made more interesting) by the opportunity to act as a volunteer site host

at Halfway Log Dump, and the requirement of being guided throughout most of Hueco Tanks. Here, I will briefly discuss each of these elements and the synergy they allowed for between the theoretical and methodological aspects of my work, research practice, and fieldwork.

a. Contested Sites

Traveling to and conducting interviews in bouldering areas served a number of purposes and greatly enriched both the co-generated narratives I took part in, as well as my own sense of how ethics, practice, and place emerge together. Following the lead of place-based leisure studies, I looked to relationships of place for the impetus of ethical concern and political action (Thompson, Hutson, and Davidson 2008: 25; Hutson, Montgomery, and Caneday 2010: 419) As described by Eichberg, “the space of the games and festivals is the place, and the place, with its unique quality and ecology, is therefore the configurational correlate of what in the temporal dimension is the event” (Eichberg 1998: 158). To better understand a political or ethical stance, immersion in place can provide an experience of meaning-making as a relationship to the affordances offered by the specificity of a particular site, the way in which the configuration of space, time, and objects in varied environments encourages or dissuades certain forms of being. As noted, place is intertwined with ‘event’, understood here as both the diverse climbing experiences participants drew upon in describing an ethical self, and from a genealogical perspective, the broader ‘site’ at which a particular problematization of access gives rise to a form of subjectification (Foucault 1991: 76-77). Considering contested sites in terms of place and event allows for the linkage of specifics of bodily experience with the

emergence of broader organizations of power/knowledge, and the exposure of both as contextual, contingent, and non-linear (Foucault 1998: 375-376).

Throughout this project I experienced these benefits of proximity to contested sites in a number of ways. First, these sites encouraged discussion of the bodily and sensuous aspects of climbing movement and outdoor spaces. I was able to experience the feeling of a particular rock variety, the smell of varied flora, and the challenging movement involved in notorious, ‘classic’ problems, and then discuss these sensuous features of place and ethics with climbers experiencing them alongside me. The impact of this grounding in place cannot be overstated as it in part allowed for my current conception of sensuality in the formation of an ethical subject.

Secondly, exploring and climbing in these places allowed for proximity to the objects of climbing ethics. Reading about tick marks, chipping, and social trails I was able to observe and experience these ‘faux pas’ in practice. In interviews I was able to direct participants’ attention towards these potential breaches of ethics and elicit a response. Providing a concrete example, one of specific, local concern at either area often allowed for a deeper conversation. Proximity to ‘classic’ problems was also a highlight which encouraged discussion of what constituted an ideal problem, as well as what would be considered the best style in solving it.

Finally, experience in these contested areas served to familiarize me with the actors and points of contention in a way that was much harder to grasp externally, but also made connections between local concerns and wider politics evident. Participants expressed a heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to access issues while in areas at

risk of strict regulation or closure. Although some political issues were more quickly taken up than others (environmentalism as opposed to Indigenous land claims), many climbers drew links between local issues and broader patterns of domination.

Experiencing first-hand the line-up of cars trying to get parking anywhere in Bruce Peninsula National Park or the process of obtaining reservations for tours of Hueco Tanks provided an opportunity to make sense of the ways in which ethics, access, endangerment, sport, and power/knowledge all become bound together in a bodily sense.

By conducting this research in outdoor areas I was not aiming to take a side in privileging outdoor over indoor or gym climbing. However, it must be acknowledged that this privileging was an unavoidable outcome of locating climbing ethics as primarily an issue of outdoor spaces. While compelling discussions of liberatory practice might be undertaken in a gym setting I have chosen to engage with these outdoor sites in order to address particularly contentious aspects of access concerns, to draw on climbing history which is overwhelmingly focused on the outdoors, and consider the specificity of local knowledges related to certain places (Thompson, Hutson, and Davidson 2008; Choy 2011). As a climber myself, I have also taken the concerns of access organizations seriously and aim to direct this work towards a critical engagement with the challenges and opportunities found in outdoor climbing spaces. In attempting to more fully express this bodily sense of contested place I will briefly describe both sites and some of their particularities.

Halfway Log Dump, Bruce Peninsula National Park, Ontario

About three feet tall throughout the time I've known it, the cedar I'm standing over at the Terminal Beach area at Halfway Log Dump (HWLD) has been snapped at its base, flattened against the white, fist-sized pebbles of the beach. The cedar, which might have grown there for a surprising length of time (many on the Niagara Escarpment live for hundreds of years without gaining the imposing stature of other trees that age), lived under a similarly diminutive, yet resilient boulder problem titled "Zavitz", presumably named after an early developer of bouldering in the area. The tree and problem shared such close quarters, in fact, that it was somewhat tricky to place a crash pad under a climber without rubbing against the cedar in question, and required some coordination to prevent the almost inevitable falling body from landing on the tree.

I want to give the climber(s) (and it almost certainly was a climber) who snapped this tree the benefit of the doubt and assume this is what happened; that an awkward fall led to this scene. Then again, the guide to the area specifically mentions the fragility of the cedars, the tenuous status of climber access to the beach, and the accident of proximity that requires additional care when attempting "Zavitz" in particular. The break could have happened any time in the past couple weeks, the boughs have only just begun to brown and the site gives the impression of fresh destruction, too blunt and linear to be the result of anything on this beach but humans. The timeline causes me additional anxiety because I am the volunteer site host at HWLD over the weekend, and though the break probably didn't happen during the first few hours of that Friday, I still feel as if the damage has been done 'on my watch'. Though it is an exaggeration, all the work done to secure climbing access to the beach and improve climbers' behaviour and reputation with

the Park seems directly at risk with this one blunder, so visible, preventable, and to most outside of the sport, completely senseless.

This is not the first incident at HWLD, and by far not the most damaging to climber-Park relations. The entire area was closed to climbing for roughly a decade (2000-2010) after Park staff discovered climbers had been aggressively ‘cleaning’ moss and lichen from boulders in the forest below the cliff and creating social trails diverging from the marked Bruce Trail. Though development of problems and routes went on for a considerable time before this closure, most went unrecorded and the history of climbing at the beach was minimal. After extensive negotiations and co-operation between Park staff and the newly created Ontario Access Coalition, the beach was reopened to bouldering, while the forest and cliffs remained off-limits. A public PDF guide was created for the area, in which access concerns are central, the unique or threatened flora and fauna of the Park highlighted, and a focus on respect for the place and other user groups share primacy with the technical climbing information. Access also comes with the stipulation of ongoing environmental impact assessments by the Park, and a voluntary site host program during the busy summer weekends.

The boulders themselves are smooth limestone blocks, which long ago separated from the cliff face above the beach (part of the northern extent of the Niagara Escarpment which about 100 km south wraps around my childhood home on its meandering path south-east to the famous waterfalls which share its name). They now sit below on the pebble and rock shelf beach, some partially submerged in Georgian Bay when the water level is high. (Please see supplemental attachment 4). Features or ‘holds’ are sparse and smooth at HWLD, the soft limestone having been worn down by water and weather,

encouraging powerful climbing movement with often perplexing and unlikely options for foot placement. Pockets are common, as are rounded edges, with many large features containing small cedars, the ‘threatened’ Lakeside Daisy, and other varieties of flora. Unlike most climbing areas, HWLD is primarily a summer destination (bugs and humidity often render other Ontario areas less ideal during the warm months) with the notoriously cold lake quickly refreshing anyone climbing too hard. The place has a generally relaxed atmosphere, maybe due to the tropical impression the water gives (belying its actual temperature), or the fact that visitors are often sparse - on a number of occasions I’ve found the place deserted. As mentioned, this atmosphere is reflected in the guide to the area, with sparse problem descriptions and imprecise grading overshadowed by consideration and appreciation of the space in its entirety.

While most of the year the space remains peaceful, summer weekends often bring huge numbers of visitors to the Park, including a growing number of climbers. Parking lots for the main attraction: The Grotto, a cliff side beach with caves and underwater tunnels just north of HWLD, are perpetually filled on long weekends with lines extending along the entrance to the Park. In recent years, hundreds of cars are regularly turned away by staff before 10am on these sorts of weekends, and often directed to HWLD. Garbage cans overflow and crevices along the beach become convenient receptacles instead. Turtles and snakes die in increasing numbers on the roads around and leading into the Park. Social trails spring up and erosion becomes a concern. The minimal composting toilets fill up, and aren’t used properly – visitors in need turn to the side of the trail. Fires are built on the beach, music blares, chalk and athletic tape get left under boulders, and off-limit boulders invariably get climbed on.

Bruce Peninsula National Park (BPNP) is located at the end of a long peninsula with only one small town nearby. Once the parking lots fill up there isn't anywhere to go but sit and wait in line, or turn around and join the traffic back to the metropolitan areas to the south. The Park in general lacks the staff or resources to fully manage such an influx of visitors, and simultaneously has a mandate to encourage outdoor experiences and engagement. In short, BPNP is facing the same challenges of capacity and access that many parks do. Though not on the scale of parks like Jasper, Banff or numerous others in the United States, BPNP contends with similar issues, relative to size. While climbers are a small contingent of the growing crowds, they are a particularly conspicuous group. The practice itself, as well as the gear (crashpads in particular) draw interest, and confusion from park staff and other user groups. This visibility is heightened at HWLD where the presence of climbers has not been established so definitively as in other spaces; climbers stick out of the crowd as oddities.

Through my fieldwork at HWLD I aimed to explore the active reconstruction of what it meant to be a climber in a particular place, a place that, importantly, I would consider my 'home crag'. Starting from a roughly 'clean slate' the Ontario Access Coalition, in co-operation with the Park, has engaged in creating the conditions in which climbers do not just recreate in the Park, but take on an ownership and a stewardship role, as a central aspect of their own climbing identity. The formation of an ethics here seems fresh, an ongoing example of the work put into responding to the cracks in climber identity, addressing the contradictions of the practice, and attempting to reform what it means to climb 'well' on the beach of HWLD as encompassing much more than getting to the top. My own climbing story has been realized through bouldering at HWLD where

these techniques and knowledges of climbing ‘well’ were brought to bear upon and imbued my climbing body. Returning to HWLD as a researcher and a site host also provided a chance to reflect upon the flow of power through my chosen practices, and my role in the reconstruction of climbers visiting that place.

While an engaging picture of the formation of climbing ethics through access challenges came out of my research at HWLD, the local specificities of these challenges and ethical forms also became apparent. Climbing at HWLD had a particular history, and climbers had a particular relationship to the space and land managers. A relatively small-time area in the climbing world, what happens at HWLD, though hugely informative, might not fully represent the more complex challenges of climbing access and ethical practice. Comparison to a space considered a bouldering ‘mecca’, with a richly entangled climbing history, could provide this sort of context. With this goal in mind I traveled to Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site, located near El Paso, Texas in order to speak with members of the Climbers of Hueco Tanks Coalition, as well as climbers visiting the Park.

Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site, Texas

Sitting just below the apex of West Mountain, one of four distinct formations of volcanic granite in Hueco Tanks State Park, it is easy to understand the deep significance the place holds for various peoples and groups. The ‘mountains’ are, in fact, small in comparison to those on the horizon, and miniscule to those I know exist to the west, framing El Paso, Texas, not to mention the ranges beyond. In a small tour group, we hiked up the irregularly piled domes in search of the hidden gems of the mountain known

to have the least traffic. The almost sickly-sweet aroma of desert flora feels different in the shade of the peak, mingling with the muted odours of my own sweat, and the clumps of mountain goat droppings in the nearby cave.

The boulder problem we hiked up to climb is, of course, located in the roof of this cave, a horizontal line of deep huecos ending at the lip of the cave with a committing throw over the top to better holds. A typical problem in Hueco Tanks; big moves between good holds with a landing you'd rather not test out. As I climb, the exertion of my body exists in relation to mingling smells, the coolness of the rock, the genuine encouragement of quick friends, rendering the movements a recreation of my feeling of what it means to be a climber, and what it means to climb in this place where shared and mixing histories are lived through and with the rock. (Please see supplemental attachment 5).

What the rock at Hueco Tanks has is a unique concentration of *huecos*, bowl-like features in the rock which collect and hold rainwater for extended periods of time. Compared to the ranges in the distance, more impressive in scale, Hueco is a (relatively) vibrant place, one sensually full of life. The concentration of water and flora allows for a larger and more stable population of critters, from rats to mountain lions, and, of course, humans.

Inhabiting the area for time immemorial, a number of Indigenous peoples, most prominently the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo (Tigua Pueblo), continue to consider the place of sacred importance. Evidence of this history is found on the rock itself in the form of a high concentration of vivid and detailed pictographs and rock paintings. The area has likely always been contested, and certainly in recent history. The pictographs, etchings, a

broad range of artifacts, oral histories, and eventually written records all attest to the continual mixing, trading, co-habiting, conflict, and consensus that has gone on around the volcanic domes for some time. While the State of Texas was able to purchase the land after plans by a developer to create an oasis resort failed, management of the park continues to be contentious and access to the place tentative. The same huecos that allow for flora and fauna also, incidentally, provide some of the most unique rock climbing features on the continent. With the popularity of bouldering taking off (at least in the American South-West) in the mid 1980's, Hueco Tanks has become a common destination, with an influx of bodies which neither the Park, nor the local environment could manage. Generally considered to be a practice which encouraged respect for nature and a laid-back, yet counter-cultural attitude, the damage to the fragile ecosystem and to cultural history by climbing (among other activities) was a rude awakening for the community.

This contradiction between the laid-back practice and overwhelming numbers led to conflict with not only the Park staff, but also with the Tigua peoples, as well as other 'naturalist' visitors, leading to a new Public Use Plan in 1998 with revisions in 2000 (Texas Parks and Wildlife 2000). This Plan limited the number of visitors allowed on each mountain, and required guided tours be arranged for access to three out of the four areas. The limits exist for all visitors to the park, not only climbers, and on weekends and during the 'high' season (November to March), it is often necessary to reserve access, weeks, to months ahead.

Reactions to the limitations produced an organized effort by climbers to retain access to the place through improving relations with park staff. Relatedly, their actual

practice of rock climbing in the space had to re-evaluated, bringing it more in line with the environmental stewardship (somewhat) idealised to be a central aspect of the sport. These efforts were both resisted and encouraged by various Park officials, with the latter group quickly recognizing the utility in allowing self-governed climbers to act as volunteer stewards, the ‘eyes and ears’ of a resource-tight park staff. Alongside a growing ubiquity of difficulty grades, quality ratings, and roughly standardized ‘rules’ of style, came an explicit adoption of ‘leave no trace’ practices, trail maintenance, organized clean-ups, and community norms regarding alteration of rock. These elements coalesced through guided tours, guidebooks, and the sociality of rock climbing into a rough set of values that could, and often are, described as climbing ‘ethics’.

As I argue here, ethics in this case does not refer to an abstracted code of valour, but an ongoing stylization of practice in sensuous relation to the world. A generally accepted climbing ethic has emerged as the standard by which a practitioner is considered to be a part of the community. The process through which the organized climbers of Hueco Tanks came to be recognized as stewards of that place has also been replicated across the United States and Canada. However, more recently, a renewed wave of interest in climbing at Hueco (entwined with the resurgence of ‘green’ and alternative sport as a path to normative health, fitness, and well-being) has coincided with a review of the Public Use Plan, as well as the use of digital enhancement to uncover previously ‘invisible’ rock art in the interest of cataloguing the Park’s ‘resources’. As such, Hueco Tanks remains a contested place, a site in which climbing ethics are continually challenged and reconstructed.

b. Access Coalitions

Emerging from these sort of contestations, climbing access coalitions, broadly committed to maintaining good relations between climbers, land managers, and other user groups, are usually formed by local climbers in response to restrictions on access or outright closures. Both the Ontario Access Coalition (OAC) and Climbers of Hueco Tanks Coalition (CHTC)⁷ emerged as relationships frayed between climbers and land managers in their respective locales. As such, these organizations are actively involved in altering the way climbers practice in outdoor, often public, spaces and so in recreating what it means to climb well. This reconstruction involves more than just climbers' behaviour, and extends into forming relations between land managers, relevant experts (environmental, cultural, historical), other user groups, local businesses, and the perceived 'interests' of the space and rock. This approach has been generalized into larger, national organizations including the American Alpine Club and Access Fund most prominently, with the increasingly common outcome of outright land purchase. What it means to climb well has become, through these organizations, related directly to access concerns and placed in relation to a wide community of climbers, establishing a norm of conduct in relation to a norm of endangerment, or what is at risk (Choy 2011).

An analysis of the work of access coalitions, in relation to particular places, is useful in establishing both the genealogical 'event' of access concerns as a matter of climbing ethics, as well as the space and discourse through which the problematization of what it means to climb well is undertaken (Foucault 1990b: 10). Here, as above, 'event'

⁷ As alluded to earlier, I chose these two groups based on my relationship as a volunteer guide (OAC), and for the historical significance of their work (CHTC). Both groups also maintain active relationships and negotiations with park staff and land managers respective to their geography.

is used in a genealogical sense, to indicate the complex, contingent, and non-linear emergence of a particular form of subjectification or the shifts in ideas about ideas (Foucault 1998: 376). There is no singular moment in which climbing ethics and access became bound together, or any guarantee that in every conception of ethics access is the defining characteristic. However, an ‘event’ is a useful tool in marking out ongoing socio-historical shifts in the way subjects are formed.

Problematization of the climbing ‘self’ forms the second aspect of access organizations drawn on here (Foucault 1990b: 10). In the remaking of what it means to climb well, these groups actively normalize and disrupt assumptions about what the practice of a climber includes. In a critical relationship to problematization there is the possibility of critical and liberatory emergence (Markula and Pringle 2006: 180), and thinking through access with this process in mind I aim to consider the work of access organizations as central to the question of organized sport as liberatory.

Through interviews with volunteers from these groups I expected that a sort of “official discourse” might be established regarding climbing ethics (Larner 2000: 14). In fact, this ‘party line’ more often came from climbers not involved with access work, as well as the larger, national organizations’ publications. What I gained, instead, was a more complete understanding of what it means to enter into a critical relationship with a contested place and the complex experience of ‘working things out’ when varied interests are at stake (Haraway 2008). This analysis of the work of access organizations allowed for an appreciation of the potential of liberatory and dominating practice as emerging together and the sensuous, bodily experience which made these seeming contradictions possible. Through their guiding work, volunteering, and negotiating I was also witness to

the potential for critically engaging with this complexity and working to maximize what was most liberatory, free, and respectful in climbing practice.

c. *Guidebooks*

My previous discussion of the importance of access organizations in the current formation of climbing ethics suggests that, despite a ‘pure’ or ‘natural’ ideal, climbing in outdoor areas is always mediated in some way. While ethical discourses which might influence a climber’s relation to a particular place are prevalent in the climbing media, advertisements, and access organization materials, my own focus on the ethical body in practice made two relationships of mediation especially useful as objects of research. Guidebooks created for climbing areas, as well as volunteer and paid human guides are intimately involved in the experience of a certain place, both involved in the reconstruction of ethics in relation to that place as climbers actually climb.

Guidebooks weave together often competing and conflicting discourses into a documentation of climbing practice, informing and legitimizing a certain approach to climbing ‘well’, particularly to those who are new to the sport, or unfamiliar with a particular area. In many ways, guidebooks represent a fundamentally practical “prescriptive text”, in which how to most expediently enjoy climbing in an area is blended, and made one in the same with rules of conduct, and an incitement to enter into an ethical relationship with oneself (Foucault 1990b: 12-13). It is worth mentioning that Sherman’s *Stone Crusade* cited above, is at once a practical guidebook, a narrative of bouldering history, and a reflection on ethical practice.

Though some guidebooks remain simple drawings or basic descriptions of problems, many include detailed descriptions, full colour photographs, grades, quality ratings, climbing history and articles by locals, geological and cultural history, advertisements, information on directions, camping, local food options, ‘rest day’ entertainment, and potential access concerns. Simply put, anything a visiting climber might need to know has become included within the pages of guidebooks, simultaneously drawing crowds and seeking to organize, educate, and provoke self-governance amongst them. Of particular interest is the local specificity that is included in many guidebooks. Often compiled and written by local climbers, the information presented to a visitor can integrate local rules, standards, and ethics alongside an article describing the first ascent of a famous, hard problem. Access organizations themselves are often involved in, or sponsor guidebook production, and likely those writing it at least care about maintaining access to the place, especially if visiting climbers have been a point of contention with land managers. As prescriptive texts, then, guidebooks can be considered as emerging in the tensions of sportisation and access, being themselves, “...objects of a ‘practice’ in that they were designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out...” in regards the best means of climbing ‘well’ within this conflicted context (Foucault 1990b: 12).

d. Guides

Although mediated access by human guides is less common than usage of guidebooks, they are more likely to be present in areas that face the most significant access challenges and strictest regulations on climbers. In places like Hueco Tanks, for example, access to the majority of the Park is only possible with a recognized and trained guide in order to limit and organize the movements of climbers in the fragile area. As per

the 2000 public usage agreement, guides might be volunteers associated with an access group, the Park, or commercially licensed to escort clients (Texas Parks and Wildlife 2000: 11). As might be expected, the distinction was potentially an important one in my own experience, though most guides acted in both a volunteer and commercial capacity at different times and carried their style or guiding philosophy between roles. Volunteers were nearly always climbers, but were technically not allowed to climb while on tour. Commercial guides, on the other hand, had no such restriction. Both types of guides were encouraged to provide an experience of the natural and cultural ‘resources’ of the Park beyond bouldering. Reporting group movements to Park staff was mandatory for all guides and no climbers were allowed out of their sight at any time. Importantly, both volunteer and commercial guides were intimately familiar with Hueco Tanks and many were either locals or had spent numerous ‘seasons’ (the cooler months roughly November to March) there. In this case, the regulatory gaze enforcing a particular climbing ethic is assumed to be constant, though the enforcement of some rules was often relaxed.

Guides in less strictly regulated spaces, like Halfway Log Dump, were not formally expected to watch all climbers at all times or provide any particular ‘experience’ of the place. The primary role was more of supplementing climbers’ own knowledge of the place and the proper climbing ethic within the Park. While guides here represented the local access organization, they have no direct connection to the Park, and lack any authority to direct or admonish climbers’ behaviour beyond that provided through extensive experience in the place and an alignment with power/knowledge discourses legitimized in the climbing community or in the Park space.

Mediated access thus comes in various forms for climbers, ranging from information provided in a guide which must be read and appreciated, to human guides who are expected to be surrogates for park rangers. In practice, these two forms of mediation work in conjunction, along with numerous other sources of information describing what it means to climb ‘well’. My interest in these two forms, in particular, is related to their closeness to and layered mediation of the actual climbing body, as well as their ability to provide an intimate experience of a place; to actively form a relationship and guide the bodily realization of a particular form of climbing ethics. As such, while guiding and conducting research simultaneously, I have had the opportunity to contribute to the sort of knowledge dissemination described by Markula and Pringle as central to the encouragement of critical ethics (2006: 200). These themes of critical pedagogy will be returned to, and elaborated upon, in Chapters Four and Five.

3.3. Method

In many ways, I was fortunate to have a number of separate trips in which I conducted fieldwork, all separated by a few weeks or months. This space allowed for an iterative research process, continual reworking of my interview questions, fieldwork approach, and the introduction of new ideas. I was site host at Halfway Log Dump the weekends of August 8th to 9th, and September 5th to 7th, conducting my interviews while also volunteering. I was also able to travel to Hueco Tanks in November 2015 for roughly a week, November 8th to November 16th, at the beginning of the busy season.

Through an analysis of guidebooks created to help climbers navigate these two sites, I aimed to gain an impression of what climbing practice and discourse looked like in a normative sense prior to entering the field. The Halfway Log Dump guide is

available for free online from the Ontario Access Coalition website, and I have a number of copies marked with my own notes and descriptions. Though previous ‘home-made’ guides may exist for the area, the OAC itself remarks on the lack of information regarding the history of climbing at the beach in their justification for (re)naming all the problems. A new, independent guidebook has now been published (2016), but was unavailable at the time of my fieldwork. The author has highlighted a commitment to working with the OAC and maintaining a focus on access concerns and so it is unlikely that the information provided in the guide I used will have been diminished in any way.

Having a longer history and much greater popularity, multiple versions and editions of the guidebook to Hueco Tanks have been published, alongside numerous free sources of information, which can be found online. The most recent guidebook was published in 2004, but somewhat perplexingly, I was only able to purchase an older 1995 version by a different author. The 2004 version being out of print was selling for upwards of \$200 USD used. Luckily, I was able to borrow a copy of the 2004 guide in order to take down some notes and make comparisons to the older version.

Both guides were used ‘in the field’ to plan and organize trips, familiarize myself with the locale, optimistically make personal climbing goals, and then navigate each space once in them. Previous experiences at Halfway Log Dump made personal use of the guide minimal during my fieldwork there, though I used it to direct and educate visitors in my role as site host and have made extensive use of it on previous trips. Contrary to my expectations, I also made limited use of the guidebook during my time at Hueco Tanks, instead, relying primarily on volunteer guides and locals I met while

climbing. While I had read the guide extensively prior to entering the field (and return to it often to remember the trip), once in the place and actually climbing I barely opened it.

Although this lack of use might seem to discount an extensive analysis of guidebooks, the information they provide did much to construct the place and the local climbing ethic before I had ever entered the space. Additionally, as I have noted before, guidebook use is more common when visiting areas that lack human guides. For example, when visiting Bishop, California⁸ for the first time, I was nearly inseparable from my guidebook – not being able to rely on a human guide and finding the vast majority of people were also visitors to the space. Though the impression of a place constructed through a guidebook is often subject to change while actually practicing climbing (highlighting the importance of contesting a ‘linear’ transmission of knowledge), the ubiquity of, and focus on guides as effective means of managing growing numbers of ‘new’ and visiting climbers leaves them relevant to any discussion of the formation of climbing ethics (Pettinen 2014: 140-141).

Interviews largely took place in the field, split between the two sites. Twelve interviews were conducted in relation to Halfway Log Dump, with ten at the site and two via email correspondence. Ten participants were visiting the beach to climb, and two were additionally involved with the Ontario Access Coalition as volunteers. Six interviews were held at Hueco Tanks, all while climbing in the space. Two of these interviews were with representatives of the Climbers of Hueco Tanks Coalition, and three

⁸ Bishop arguably contends with Hueco Tanks for most well known bouldering destination in North America. When access became contested at Hueco, Bishop, and other areas, garnered increased attention. A different kind of rock is found in Bishop than in Hueco (and free standing boulders are generally larger), encouraging a different style and relationship to climbing ‘well’. Here, the interrelations of place, access policy, movement, and ethics can be seen.

with authorized guides. Access coalition members were approached prior to fieldwork through respective organization websites and facebook pages. Interviews with climbers not directly associated with an access group were initiated in the field, with semi-structured, recorded discussion following from informal conversation, based on participant interest. Elements of place, climbing ethics, and access influenced this ‘selection’ process as my own choice of where to climb in an area, the movements of guided groups, the direction of established paths, and the obstacles of boulders, cliffs, and flora all mediated my interactions. While all participants were asked to provide a narrative describing their own climbing ‘story’, the ways in which they understood themselves as a climber, participants involved with access organizations or guiding were further asked to discuss their motivations, and the means and methods by which they carried out their work. A number of revisions to my interview questions occurred between each span of fieldwork, directing the conversation away from abstract queries to experiences of ethical practice.

Though not always explicitly established, most participants identified with or ‘fit’ a socio-economic status common amongst climbers; most were white, roughly middle class, educated at a post-secondary level, and self-described ‘outdoor’ people. However, many participants could not be described in *exactly* this way, highlighting the ‘gaps’ which exist between a normative sporting body and those engaged in climbing practice (Shogan 1999: 92). These gaps were a point of conversation in some interviews, but were not focused on as a rule, leaving space for participants to establish the importance of these tensions to their own experience of ethical practice. Interviews ran roughly twenty to eighty minutes, with discussions generally longer at Hueco Tanks and with access

organisation volunteers. Alongside these interviews, detailed notes were taken during fieldwork, with particular attention paid towards my own experience of place, use of guidebooks, and interactions with climbers and guides, as well as my general observations of climber behaviour in these regards. While I did not set out to frame these notes in terms of sensorial experience as a research strategy, my participation in the practice, alongside the climbers interviewed, allowed for a bodily apprehension of our discussions and my notes. What became clear was that shared sensorial experience was in many ways the means by which climbing ‘well’ was described and ‘known’ (Spencer 2014: 236); this insight came to direct my ongoing work.

Upon returning from the field, interviews were transcribed in full using InqScribe software. I decided upon complete transcription (though not to the extent of linguistic studies), in order to encourage familiarity not only with those themes that resonated with my own experience, but also with those that challenged my assumptions about the field and my participants. With a similar goal in mind, interviews and notes were coded according to emergent themes identified through common, repeated keywords or lines of discussion (Charmaz 2008; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). In this way, my understanding of ethical problematization in climbing was grounded in these diverse narratives of practice, as opposed to entirely upon my own assumptions. Attention was paid to “discursive formations” which were at times composed of multiple and contradictory responses, leading not to an emergence of objective ‘truth’ but an impression of the process through which subjects made sense of their ethical experiences and conduct (Markula and Pringle 2006: 106).

While an effort was made to follow these emergent themes and alter the direction of my work in response to participant narratives, as co-generated ‘data’, themes were also largely the result of my own research interests, direction of questioning, and methodological approach. As with any research, establishing the objective nature of data is a project, as such these emergent themes should be appreciated as co-generated discourses which were at times, ‘surprises’ (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012), and not as the singular truth of a sporting subject (Doucet and Mauthner 2008: 404). What engagement with these surprises did allow for was a somewhat nimble approach to research, in which the complexity of narratives was not entirely beholden to a pre-formulated understanding of climbing ethics, and as a result, the grounded experience of working out an ethics in practice could be appreciated more fully.

In the following chapter, these themes that emerged in the process of research will be discussed, drawing on the words of participants, as well as guidebooks, and access organizations. Pseudonyms have been assigned to participants in the interest of anonymity, however, some descriptive information (such as participation in an access organization, or status as a guide) has been retained due to its significance to the study. It has been the aim of this chapter to provide a review of the methods undertaken in generating these narratives, and an exposition of the methodological relationship between my approach to fieldwork and my theoretical background. The importance of bringing together genealogical analysis of texts and experiential narratives based upon the body has been described, highlighting the sensuous realization of discourse and the ways in which overlooking either element can lead to an incomplete consideration of ethical subjectification and the power relations involved.

Importantly, this chapter has also engaged with the iterative and relational process of research in a way that recalls the process of subjectification discussed in chapter one. In my overlapping and competing roles as researcher, climber, guide, and visitor I experienced a continual ‘becoming’ in each of these positions as I engaged with the research process. What follows then, is just as much a discussion of my own realization as an ethical subject, as that of the participants interviewed. Though there remain clear disparities in the distribution of the flows of power, these inequalities did not remain static (while I was a visitor to Hueco Tanks being guided by local climbers for instance) (Markula and Pringle 2006: 199). It is these complex power relationships that I have laid the methodological groundwork for exploring here, and it is my hope that this orientation to research allows for an appreciation of the critical and liberatory potential that comes with this complexity.

4 CLIMBING ‘WELL’ AND THE FORMATION OF AN ETHICAL SPORTING SUBJECT

Having established a theoretical and methodological connection between genealogical analysis of power, and a phenomenological consideration of bodily affordances, in what follows I will draw directly on participant observation, interviews, guidebooks, and guiding in order to return to the first of my organizing questions. As such, this chapter will be primarily concerned with how an ethical sporting subject is realized; or, how climbers realize themselves as climbing ‘well’. Here, climbing ‘well’ is argued to be a sense of pleasure and fulfillment taken from embodying ethical practice in movement. ‘Well’, indicating technical competency (following the rules, expressing skill, and achieving goals), blending with an appreciation of the affordances of a body moving on rock.

Works by Foucault, Eichberg, Pettinen, Shogan, and Markula and Pringle continue to be instructive in my interpretation of these narratives, however, I would like to highlight here how the narratives themselves influenced the direction of my work, and my interest in the relationships between feeling bodies and discourses of power/knowledge. My understanding of the realization of an ethical subject emerged from these conversations in which senses, movement, place, and discourse could not be isolated and remain meaningful. Here climbing ‘well’ is described in participants’ own words, revealing the complexity of ‘leisure’ and the importance of bringing a critical perspective into what counts as ethical practice in the problem space of access. In the quotations that follow, participants will be referred to by pseudonyms, and the

interviewer by ‘Int’. Hueco Tanks will be indicated by ‘HT’; Halfway Log Dump, by ‘HWLD’.

4.1. Actors, Modes, and Technologies of Ethical Formation

Before directly addressing the themes of ethical formation, I would like to review a few central elements in the transmission of how to climb ‘well’. These elements have been described elsewhere (most notably guidebooks and guides in Chapter Three), however, I would like to situate them within the narratives of participants, as well as my own experiences in order to more fully mark out their place in this process. I will be engaging with *community and access organizations, guidebooks, guides, and practice* in order to frame the discussion of themes, which follows. These elements might be framed as actors, modalities, and technologies of ethical formation, with each actively reproducing one another. A potentially notable absence from this discussion might broadly be considered ‘media’. While there are certainly interesting aspects of climbing media to consider (especially as the practice is increasingly commercially viable and marketable), for my focus on ethical formation and access the elements considered were found to be much closer to the site of problematization.

a. Community and Access Organizations

In order to frame any discussion of ethics in climbing, it is first necessary to loosely define the climbing ‘community’. Arguably, sports and recreational activities exist through and reproduce a form of community, regardless of geographic dispersion or diversity amongst practitioners. These communities, put simply, are based in a shared practice or a love for a practice, which can be tied to any number of specific characteristics of a group, say nationality, but in many cases transcend these boundaries.

This is certainly true of climbers as well. Despite increasing diversity in composition and style of practice, as well as the tensions of capacity and access, a strong sense of community continues to exist. In their narratives, nearly all participants mentioned that the community, the people they share a practice with, were central to their development in climbing and enjoyment of the sport. At times this social aspect seemed to trump even the climbing itself:

Jeremy: For me... the people I climb with I consider a, you know, extended range of my family... To me, it's a community involvement where... we treat each other like family members and care for each other as such. (Guide - HT)

Nick: The people to me is what climbing embodies. It's just the atmosphere. Whether it's in a gym or outside on the rock. Like, we just met yesterday, and we talk like friends... (Climber - HWLD)

It would be a mistake to assume that these unexpectedly strong communities emerged out of an inherent quality in sport. Though tempting, this would resemble the claims Sugden, Erickson, and others (Erickson 2011; Sugden 2015) have argued against – those invocations of sport as an uncomplicated solution to all conflict, where community is not related to an ethical question of inclusion/exclusion, but assumed to be a ‘natural’ human quality (and so used masks exclusion). A more insightful explanation might be found in works like that of Hawkins (2016), who describes the political companionship of Argentinian soccer clubs as the fostering of social and political memory – a *project* of solidarity based in experiences and narratives of place, practice, and endangerment.

With these critiques in mind I approached discussion of the climbing community as an element of the work of an ethical discourse, an aspect of how to climb ‘well’ which requires effort to sustain. This is not to suggest that the experiences of friendship, comradery, and partnership that climbers’ narratives described are false or somehow

calculated, but quite the opposite. These relationships are power-full because they emerge in sensuous, deeply affective experiences of practice, keeping in mind that they are not the only possible outcome. Here, I will discuss the climbing community in terms of the expectation of a shared ethic, a sense that climbers had common values and in many ways stood apart from other recreationists and the general public.

Deb: It's interesting because there is some common core there. There's that old book called *The Games Climbers Play*⁹, and there's so many different games. Trad climbing, sport climbing, bouldering, gym climbing, comps... and yet you know, you can get people like us, who are in our fifties, and we're hanging out at the climbing gym with people who could be our grandchildren... and you all have something in common. Which is just you like to do this relatively silly thing! Which is to climb! (Laughter) A relatively pointless endeavour, but we all find value in it, even though, everybody finds that in a different way. (Climber - HT)

Rachel: I'm a nurse too and so I meet a lot of people, and I see a lot of people and how they go about their day to day lives, and rock climbers are just so different. Like I've gone on vacations with my other friends, and just the way that they look at travelling to new places is completely different. Something about being a rock climber just makes you different. (Climber - HT)

Participants generally agreed that most climbers shared a common set of values. These shared values included what climbing was really about, and relatedly, what was at risk of being lost. As discussed by Tim Choy (2011), the emergence of an ethical self and community lies in part in defining what is at risk, what is endangered. For Choy's participants, various types of environmental activists, understandings of endangerment were constructed through "ecologies of comparison", an articulation of specificity of a place, critter, or object that came to define the activists themselves and entwine them within specific power relations (Choy 2011). All climbers I spoke with discussed the

⁹ As a point of clarification, this book (1978) is not the same as the article "Games Climbers Play" by Lito Tejada-Flores (1967) cited elsewhere. Both, however, share an interest in the variety of styles broadly considered climbing, and the ways in which these styles are distinguished.

importance of outdoor climbing spaces and maintaining access to these sites. Outdoor areas were undoubtedly cast as endangered, with particular concern for those places with rich climbing history, ‘classic’ climbs, and ‘good’ rock, or unique features. It is telling that, when pressed, climbers more often expressed the sentiment that ‘there are always other boulders’ while at Halfway Log Dump than at Hueco Tanks. Hueco is not only more heavily regulated and at risk of closures, but is historically significant to climbers. To climb in an ethical way, to climb well, was to, at minimum, do nothing to damage these places and, relatedly, the access relationships involved.

It is no surprise then that access organizations feature prominently in the reformation of climbing ‘well’. To recall the statement by the Access Fund found in the epigraph, “Having a vague knowledge of minimum impact practices is no longer enough. It’s time to elevate our game – and it starts with you” (Access Fund 2016). A loss of access is placed squarely on the shoulders of those who fail or refuse to acknowledge their responsibility while climbing. A set of ‘environmental’ knowledge separate from climbing is not enough – the game itself must include a consideration of environment in relation to access in order to be practiced ‘well’. Access organizations often provide the means and space for climbers to emerge as stewards of a place in an organized, and thus recognized, way. As described by Jacob, in the recognition of endangerment also comes the impetus to organize,

Jacob: The local group here, like, we're here all time, all year long. We use this Park and we see these issues with how people treat the Park, what's wrong with the Park... before we started the Coalition, a small group of local climbers would come out and do the cleanup on our own right, get whoever to come out and do it. Then in, what was it? 2007-2008 when they closed Mushroom, that's when it became "oh we need to do something, let's do something!" so we started the

Coalition, right? So that's when we came together, started having meetings and discussing what we saw as problems as climbers. (Guide – HT)

Various climbers, particularly locals, have always cared about the places they climb and their access to those spaces, however, access organizations provide the mechanism through which a sort of knowledge about climbing well could actively produce ethical sporting subjects on a more general level, especially among new and visiting climbers. Access organizations, in their capacity as stewards and gatekeepers (and increasingly landowners) of important climbing destinations are in the position to reproduce and recreate the response to endangerment, and the ethics in which this response is based. Importantly, the closure of the Mushroom Boulder (one of the more iconic pieces of rock in bouldering) encouraged the organization of local climbers with an intimate relationship of care to the place and the relations found there.

b. Guidebooks

Guidebooks are one of the most direct material means through which the sort of organized knowledges discussed above comes to influence individual climbers. The often aesthetic presentation of directions, problem names, grades, quality ratings, history, ecology, geology, and so on provides a ‘complete’ representation of a space. Community specific representations such as grades are blended in with GPS coordinates, maps, ecological and geological information, and other more commonly recognized measurements and knowledges. In many ways guidebooks are collections of “immutable mobiles” described by Latour (1986). No matter how ‘subjective’ a numeric grade or three-star quality rating is known to be, a guide renders it standardized and accessible to the entire climbing community. Guidebooks accumulate and disseminate the ‘relevant’ aspects of a place to climbers, in the process solidifying these elements as ‘relevant’ and

objective. In terms of what sort of knowledge informs climbing ethics, guidebooks are a technology of amplification as well as silencing. A guidebook, for example, might only give high quality ratings to tall or dangerous problems or include extensive commentary on chipping rock without addressing the presence of pictographs.

Here, I would like to highlight the way these affordances are experienced, and so address the process of determining ‘relevance’ and ‘objectivity’ in the realization of ethics. Guidebooks were almost uniformly praised in regards to the dissemination of access information or points of concern:

Phil: I think it also helps with people following the right path and not to deviate, so I think a guide is actually pretty important especially on specific details to access points. DO NOT go here, DO NOT do this. (Climber – HWLD)

Emmanuel: Guidebooks are very useful definitely... they are a way to promote rock climbing and safe climbing, and a way to promote like, the proper way of climbing. Because usually a lot of the guidebooks, they have the rules of the area, and the overview of the area, so I think they can be pretty useful. And they're useful tools to promote, yes. Because most of the people I know use them. (Climber – HWLD)

Participants also discussed the usefulness of guides when travelling, planning for training or specific goals, or finding the ‘highlights’ of an area:

Craig: If I'm going on a trip, you know? It makes it really efficient to make plans, right? As opposed to just going to an area and just trying to... explore and find things, right? So as an efficiency it's great.

Int: So do you think it affects your experience or relationship to the area? Like when you've, when you're describing efficiency.

Craig: It depends on the experience you're looking for. If I want to just like, go for a training session and I want to do 4 by 4s, 5 by 5s, whatever right? You can do that a lot easier with the guidebook, especially if you're new to the area. (Climber – HWLD)

Alternatively, these sort of plans might go awry, or be forgotten when actually climbing:

Rachel: It's kind of interesting, I have a lot of guidebooks, and I look at them at home and then I never bring them with me.

Int: (Laughter) Okay.

Rachel: My plan always changes completely once I get to the place. I use them to like, kinda make goals, and things to check out, and you know, I'll pick like a handful of problems at each grade and I'll go and look at them, as you know, the group allows.

Int: In terms of those plans changing, you kind of have, come in with a preconceived idea of what is important, what you want to do?

Rachel: Mhm.

Int: What makes that change? Like what... are you just drawn to different things once you're actually in the place or?

Rachel: Yeah! Yeah, if I see a beautiful line, like I care about that more than, you know, something that I think I could send and is popular. (Climber – HT)

Something to consider regarding guidebooks then is that these technologies, measurements, and knowledges are only ever realized to any extent *in practice*. The affordances of guidebooks, in short their 'efficiency', encourage a certain type of practice, but to be effective they must also resonate with the experience of varied bodies moving in specific places. One area in which this blending of ethics discourse with expedience as well as local, specific knowledges occurs is in the detailing of access issues:

Mark: For example, we're going to Red Rocks in another ten days, and the bouldering in Calico Basin, it used to be that the locals did not want you to park at the dead end... and that was kind of an important part of the guidebook. "Do not drive up the dead end and park there, don't taunt the dogs when you walk past the guy's", You know, "there's one big yard with chain link, with dogs, and for god's sake just walk past." So stuff like that. Uh, just simple stuff like that can go such a long way towards maintaining a decent relationship with the locals.

Int: Yeah, that's interesting. The guidebook helps you become drawn into a relationship with the space. You're talking about pretty intimate details, all in the interest of getting to the best spots.

Mark: You're basically getting intimate, local knowledge. If it's done right. (Climber – HT)

The information presented in the guide is central to the realization of an ethical climber as intimate, local knowledge and relations of access are compiled and rendered efficient. The experience of climbing ‘well’ in a place comes to involve this awareness of surroundings and relations. Knowledge of the parking rules and dogs both allows for a more enjoyable climbing experience, but also an accelerated sense of stewardship, ownership, or respect for the place that has been gained through long-developed, local knowledges.

c. Guides

Guidebooks are widely used by climbers of their own volition. However, some climbing areas also require human guides for access or draw on volunteers during particularly busy times. In these cases, a mediated experience of a place is not optional. Guides cannot be left at home, in a backpack, or ignored like guidebooks. Often representing access organizations or land managers, guides are imbued with some authority in relation to visiting climbers. Through their experience and knowledge of a certain area and practice they are mentors and have a normative influence on visitors and newcomers. In Hueco Tanks, the extensive closures and restrictions on access have provided unique opportunities for guides to take up this role of educating and responsabilizing climbers on tours:

Jacob: We got in doing the guide training, [the Park does] several guide trainings a year. So we got in on that to help them do their bouldering section of the tour. That's where we really get to talk individually to the climbers and be like "these are the ethics, this is what we expect of you, this is what you have to do. You have to know the cultural history, you have to respect this, and..." So there was that shift that I'm talking about, right?

Int: Yeah.

Jacob: From nothing, to slowly seeing something out, to where we are right now. Where we have our, our hands in the Park, and we can actually, kind of make other climbers think about these issues and they spread that on. So it's this teaching thing that we're doing. So my biggest thing during the guide training is I talk about the multi-user aspect of the Park. [There are] multi-use area[s] because you get hikers and Native Americans going through there, and there's also climbing there.

Int: Mhm.

Jacob: And so my big thing is... I tell everyone 'I really don't want you climbing here, ever'

Int: Right.

Jacob: But if you do climb here, pick up your trash, clean up your chalk, clean the holds, because they're going to see that as us disrespecting their area, right? So just take extra care when you're there, and if you can, avoid it. And that's always my big message to people, like, try and just be respectful that everyone else that's going to be using that is not a climber. 'Cause they're going to see all this other trash, or chalk everywhere, and we don't want that. (Guide – HT)

Guiding provides not only an opportunity to directly inform climbers' practice with a particular set of ethics, but also align the 'community' with the goals of land managers and in doing so position climbers as acceptable, or even ideal, stewards. To climb 'well' is often an experience of power flowing through these relations of land managers, guides, and climbers – imbuing the body in practice with a sense of ownership, as well as care.

While guides might externally appear to be 'policing' climbers, or alternatively, subject to the whims of 'clients', participants also discussed a more complex relationship of negotiation:

Roger: The only thing I think of the most is that as a guide, people follow your lead... If you don't care about the area, then nobody will care about it, but if you say this is really important, we have to do this, people tend to... Especially because it's so heavily regulated I try to really allow people to have the freedom so they can experience nature. On a tour I turn my radio way down, just so they can hear the birds, they can hear the wind, you know, have more of that intimate connection. I think that, if you can do that for somebody, if you can give them a few minutes in nature, they are probably going to pick it up by themselves, just through their own experience. (Guide – HT)

Guiding is not just about policing or serving clients, but sharing a particular knowledge of, and relationship to a place and practice. The aspects of the area that guides have come to care about, those aspects that have been seminal to their own experience as a climber, will come to the fore in tours. Here, guiding is also expressed in a sensuous fashion by encouraging a certain hearing and feeling while climbing. This ‘free’ experience ultimately supports the regulations that are in place, grounding the need for rules in the endangered quality of these same pleasurable experiences.

Guides then are active in encouraging the experiences that inform climbing ethics in relation to access. Negotiating the experience of their ‘clients’ such that a full understanding of climbing ‘well’, beyond accomplishment, emerges in the practice:

Jeremy: I feel we have a responsibility. Besides just you know, taking clients to the rock climbs they want and their projects, there's a responsibility to show off other parts of this park. That's the natural resources, the wildlife, the cultural resources that are here, you know, stop and take five minutes to enjoy a piece of rock art and reflect. Give a little tribute to the history of this place. Point out any cool wildlife as you come across it, so clients get kind of this more, you know, full, rounded experience.

Int: Right.

Jeremy: So guides are... they either do it out here, or they don't, you know? Since this area's been so contested with policy and such a lot of guides are actually being more conscious about educating their clients as they come through the park nowadays. (Guide – HT)

Unlike guidebooks, which allow for a standardized message that, in an increasingly effective and aesthetic presentation, blends the relevant details of an enjoyable climbing trip with an ethical orientation, human guides are fallible, and some do not share this commitment to a certain form of ethics. However, they also have greater opportunity to actively encourage an ethical form through negotiation, and a freedom from reliance on the elements of “sportisation” which guidebooks reproduce in their very modality. The

affordances and opportunities of this position will be further explored in chapter four, with consideration of guides as mentors in critical practice.

d. Practice

Finally, I will briefly describe the importance of practice to the formation of an ethical sporting subject. In the realization of discourses presented by access organizations, guidebooks, and human guides there must always be an actual practice of climbing. This is not to suggest a body that knows itself prior to or outside of these power/knowledge discourses, but instead highlight the importance of relationships, sensuality, and movement to this very realization. Climbing practice itself should be considered in these terms, not as a solitary exercise or innocuous recreation, but as a particular articulation and appreciation of bodies in relations that are always imbued with and expressive of power (Foucault 1990a: 94; Pettinen 2016: 149).

I use practice then to indicate a distinction from sport. As discussed, sport describes a specific spatial and temporal organization of bodies and relations according to broader relations of power and domination (Eichberg 1998: 149). Practice, alternatively, might describe a more open form of movement, not removed from power relations, but engaged with them in ways which suggest resistance, or alternative knowledges (Eichberg 1998: 123). For example, climbing as sport distinguishes between male and female competitors in organized competition in order to support 'fair' measurement of achievement. Climbing as practice does not necessarily rest upon this formal distinction, as pleasure is derived in relationships between varied bodies on varied rock. This does not mean gendered power relations are not found in climbing practice, the reality is quite the opposite, but that sport relies upon these relations of normative categorization to be

coherent, while a practice need not. Of course, as explored here and elsewhere, contemporary movement practices are bound up with and usually understood in sporting terms (Eichberg 1998). Removing sport from practice, even if it was desirable, is a project in pursuing a purity that never existed (Haraway 2008). What might be pursued, instead, is encouraging a means of ‘working things out’, engaging critically with sport such that the open and liberatory aspects of practice are amplified in our movements and games.

Participants described a practice of relations in numerous ways, all grounded in a sensuous negotiation of body, rock, and place. Practice is the space in which ethics imbues movement, movement rendering ethical self-knowledge as a visceral sense of climbing ‘well’:

Deb: I mean I was a beginner so you know, (laughter) so I was just climbing what I could climb as an excuse to be outside... and sort of shake off the office. But then we came to Hueco and, we were pretty much just warming up first day, at the Mushroom Boulder, and I got on this problem called the Local Flakes, V3?

Mark: Two.

Deb: So V2.

Mark: Yeah, 'standard' for the grade (laughter), but it's hard.

Deb: And I couldn't do, I could maybe do like the first two moves, and first two moves, and fall. First two moves and fall... and I'm getting frustrating thinking, 'oh my gosh! I'm going to be here all week and I can't even do a V2? It's going to be a long week!' (Laughter).

I: Right!

Deb: But then I got that next move, and then I couldn't do the next one. Kind of a one-two-three-fall. One-two-three-fall. Then I got the fourth one, start all over again. Get the fifth one, and at that point something in my brain kind of switched gears and said "I don't want to do those first four again, so I'm just going for the top, this is going down right now because I don't want to ever do those first couple moves again!"

I: Right.

Deb: When I topped that one off, I think that's when I got the idea of bouldering as its own separate sport. As opposed to just going out and noodling around on easy climbs with no ropes. And that's a pretty, it's a fun feeling, when you try something that you can't do and just as you're about to walk away and give up, you know something changes, and you're like "ah!" - wait a minute, one more try, I think I'm going to get it this time. So that was an interesting experience for me, [it] kind of, gave me this concept of bouldering as a separate thing, of working the project, even though it was only a V2. (Climbers – HT)

Here, the standardized V-scale comes together with climbing history (again, the singular Mushroom Boulder), a commitment to challenge, and a pleasure in puzzling out “Local Flakes”. The rock at Hueco is often sharp, particularly these sort of small, “flake” features, and clearly the experience was not entirely pleasant, however, the ultimate realization of bouldering *as its own separate sport*, and the climber as practicing it well only comes through the ‘working things out’ between bodies and rock.

In the next section I will further discuss these ethical themes that climbers described as central to their practice of climbing, and their knowledge of climbing ‘well’. Retaining my focus on the ‘how’ of ethical formation as opposed to the ‘what’, the narratives and discussion which follows considers how these ethical themes play out in practice, as a stylization as opposed to a set of rules, in regards to particular spaces and relations.

4.2. Themes of Ethical Formation: ‘Games Climbers Play’

While climbers generally produced a coherent and somewhat normalized narrative across interviews, they also discussed and debated the many contradictions of the practice and the constant work in reconstructing the ethical climbing self, providing a broad and complex set of co-generated observations which I have loosely organized and present here. For the sake of clarity, and to make the challenge of describing and

conceptualizing the construction and realization of climbing ethics a more manageable task, I have broken these narratives into themes. However, it is important to keep in mind the intertwining of these discourses and their complex, messy realization in practice. As remarked previously it is my aim that through drawing on narratives of experience alongside a linking of dispersed and sometimes contradictory discourse, and by recognizing the importance of these two elements of practice as inextricably enmeshed, that a compelling and thorough description of the formation of an ethical subject might be achieved.

The aspects of this formation in and through climbing practice that most prominently featured in participants' narratives include: a) environment and stewardship; b) climbing history; c) challenge and grades; d) movement and aesthetics; and e) community and mentorship. As gestured towards by a few of the participants, the expression of these elements as ethics might broadly be described as "games climbers play". This phrase is used by Loti Tejada-Flores to suggest the simultaneously arbitrary and engaging quality of climbing rules or ethics (1967). Interviewed in Hueco Tanks, Mark reflected on this quality of the 'game':

We all see some inherent value in this game. And it just goes to show, I think, I mean to those of us involved at least it's, it's silly and sort of meaningless but it's a, it's an unusually interesting game. (Climber – HT)

Mark's statement reflects the complexity of a practice that is simultaneously meaningless and meaningful, a perspective that resonates with a focus on the 'game' or *how* the process of ethical formation plays out as opposed to attempting to nail down exactly what sort of self or identity is produced. As noted by Foucault, a discussion of ethical themes should not be read as "codifying... conduct in a precise way, but for

‘stylizing it...’ (1990b: 93). Ethics in ‘games’ as in climbing are constituted by and, in turn, constitute far more than insular rules. So describing what a climber *is* will always be a practice in presenting contradictions, qualifications, and diversity as truth, while describing how a climber *moves, relates, and conducts themselves* in relation to these themes or realms of experience, allows for insight into how ethics might form out of this complexity. As I will attempt to draw out through the narratives below, climbing rules and broader ethical questions intertwine in practice, with the embodied play of the game, the sensuous realization of the climbing self, being central to the working out of an ethical sporting subject.

a. Environment and Stewardship

Environmental themes were a near constant in my discussions with climbers about access challenges and sporting ethics. It became clear early on that conflicts of access and the response by climbers and access organizations were and remain heavily focused on perceived environmental impacts. This might be unsurprising considering the sites I visited are located within state-managed public parks, historically concerned with preservation and conservation of unique or fragile environments, flora, and fauna. The conflicts that arose between climbers and park managers then, often resulted from the very visible presence of climbers in proximity to protected cultural or ecological ‘resources’. Further, an affinity with nature features prominently in the historical conception of the climber, making any accusation of disregard for the environment particularly destabilizing to the way the community perceives itself. This substantial category of climbing ethics might then be broken down further into discourses of

common-sense, ecological or scientific knowledges, historic ties, and place-based knowledges.

The theme of common-sense environmentalism emerged as an expression in climbing of more broadly accepted tenants of outdoor ethics. Ranging from condemnation of littering, to staying on the trail, to how to relieve yourself in the woods, these rules were generally considered to be common knowledge for anyone that has spent time in the 'outdoors'. While many of these expectations of outdoor etiquette had a basis in further scientific discourses, most climbers did not feel a need to engage with a more complete explanation for their behaviour. As such, this aspect of environmentalism in climbing ethics could be largely considered beyond contention:

Jess: It's more, kinda like a natural thing from growing up being outside where you don't want to be hurting the, you know, really ancient cedars, and rare plants, and leaving litter all over the place. I don't know if it's necessarily me being access conscious when I'm doing those things... they affect access, and I'm aware that they affect access, but its more just feels like the right thing to do.
(Climber – HWLD)

Knowledge of these rules established the climber minimally as someone who had experience, cared about, and had basic knowledge of their impact on the outdoors, but not specifically as a climber. Considered to be so broadly known and practiced this knowledge only served to mark out those who had no outdoor or wilderness experience:

Mia: I feel like some climbers have some level of responsibility. But I mean all the people that just come here for the weekend, they don't care... they might not care, not everyone but some of them, obviously, because we've picked up so many bottles yesterday.

Jess: I feel like there's a lot of gym climbers too that are just not used to engaging with the outdoors and don't even realise like... don't fucking shit on a trail!

Mia: (Laughter)

Jess: Like some things that you think are logical that people just don't know what to do. Maybe they just aren't used to navigating the outdoors like that? They need to learn that sort of thing. (Climbers – HWLD)

'Tourists', 'city people', or 'gym climbers' then represent those groups that lack this basic knowledge, with the implication that while they may enjoy nature, they struggle with or are oblivious about how to care for it. Straying from established trails, for example, has a clear impact on outdoor spaces that does not require any significant knowledge of ecological science to recognize. The pitfall of basing ethics in this sort of common-sense is the processes of distinction and exclusion that operate alongside the desired behaviour (Bourdieu 1984: 211). As discussed, this distinction operates not only at the level of representations, but in the comportment of the body in relation to time, space, and objects, and a sensuous experience of belonging in a place (Bourdieu 1984: 207; Eichberg 1998: 41). 'City people' or 'gym climbers' might very well be tourists with no interest in caring for the natural spaces they consume. However, a lack of exposure to the 'correct' knowledges and behaviours is more likely to come from a deficit in opportunity, or a different way of approaching environmental knowledge, than a complete disregard for the value of nature:

Jeremy: Managing access, and managing the cultural and natural resources in this Park, and the recreation opportunities is always something that just seemed natural for me to fall into. I think a lot of that also comes from, as a youth growing up, having a connection to the outdoors where, I didn't live the life of you know, in front of the TV, playing video games all the time. I was outdoors with my father, and other friends, and families. Out camping every other weekend, or every weekend. I always had more of this connection to the outside world than just, you know, stuck in the city. (Guide – HT)

While many climbers described this sort of emergence of environmental knowledge in their own lives, it is important to recognize these experiences as a privilege.

What is most encouraging in regards to this theme is the common response I received to a pointed question regarding the status of ‘bad’ climbers in the community:

Int: So do you feel, the individuals, some of them you were describing that come outdoors and break all the rules, knowingly or not, would you describe them as rock climbers? Or what kind of space are they in?

Rachel: I think that they're new (laughter).

Int: Okay, they're just not...

Rachel: They're just new, they don't know yet.

Int: Okay. What do you think they need?

Rachel: You know, I've been wanting to do for a long time, like, um, like trail days and clean up days, but with some kind of incentive, something that would really get people out there. [Help them] recognize the issues, and recognize what's contributing to them. And I think at that point, you know, you start to take more ownership in the place. You care more and you just become more aware. (Climber – HT)

Overwhelmingly, respondents hesitated to exclude those lacking this common sense knowledge from the community and preferred to frame the issue within a problem of mentorship and education. These badly behaved climbers were not cast out, but instead considered not fully formed – they remained climbers, but were not climbing ‘well’. While the potential problem of moralizing ‘common-sense’ into an ethics of exclusion persists, climbers seemed to be actively resisting the temptation to turn distinction into a discriminatory judgement, at least when it came to other climbers. A resonance can be found here with Foucault’s discussion of the *enkrateia/akrasia* dualism of Classical Greek thought, in which the opposite of struggling to be moderate in the use of pleasures was not deliberate bad choices, but failing despite oneself, “because [one] has not given [ethical principles] sufficient thought” (Foucault 1990b: 65) While a moralizing judgement might be made against these ‘bad’ climbers, there is room left for their

education and the gaining of ethical experience. These tensions of exclusion and mentorship will be further explored below.

As described, many common-sense expressions of climbing ethics were closely related to broader discourses of environmentalism. However, the difference is evident in the extent to which a rule or behaviour included in climbing ethics requires drawing on the concepts, language, and assumptions of particular scientific disciplines. During interviews and throughout guides and education material, scientific discourse was utilized when addressing climbing-specific or localized ethical conflicts. While littering is considered wrong in a common-sense way, pretty much everywhere, arguments against ‘stashing’ crash pads in alpine bouldering areas draw on less ‘obvious’ evidence for legitimacy:

Mark: Stashing pads - everybody gets tired of carrying the pad. If you've got a highball boulder problem and everybody knows that there are about five pads stashed over there in the woods, you're going to go run and add it to the stack but, is that ethical or not? The rangers say no. Um, wildlife can eat it, start to use it for nesting, you know, it can change the natural environment that way, but from a climber perspective, I don't know if a lot of people think of that as an ethical issue.

Deb: Their original concern, one of the things they said was ‘well we found some of these stashed pads chewed on by marmots and pikas and it's bad for the animals, and well, all I can say is over the years I've seen a great many stashed pads, and uh, not really ever seen one that was all chewed up. So, you know you have to wonder. You're never going to get some empirical evidence on that since you're, you know, there's just not much of it going on. (Climbers – HT)

Again, and to a greater extent, access to these discourses both marked climbers out as appropriate stewards of natural spaces, but did not fully exclude those who had no exposure to these knowledges from the community. Importantly, by drawing on these forms of knowledge, legitimized through the techniques, measurements, and discourses of objective science, climbers could embody an alignment with park staff and experts or

challenge the monopoly over this knowledge through climbing practice. As described above, the lack of conclusive, objective evidence that stashing crash pads in alpine areas is detrimental to local rodents challenges the rules of park staff. Based in their own version of ecological science climbers approach the rule as not entirely binding.

The means or style in which the rule of environmental concern might be carried out varies greatly within the problem space of access. In Hueco Tanks, specifically, environmental science knowledges were taken up by the climbing community and access organizations resulting in volunteer restoration and trail-building programs to prevent damage to flora and minimize erosion. Much of this work was instigated by the access groups themselves, drawing on the Park's own conservation mandate in order to establish their role as stewards:

Jeremy: I think one of the big ones, that would be up in the New Meadow, where King Cobra and Lobster Claw and that stuff [is]

Int: Okay.

Jeremy: The Park, when we originally proposed [restoration] to them, they were kind of astonished that this area was so bad, as it was.

Int: Right.

Jeremy: But they were also very accepting of us. It was one of the first projects we actually proposed to them like "hey this needs to be resolved, it's getting worse, it's pretty much decimated, but we think if we take, you know, these steps, this course of action..." And we drew up plans and proposed them, "we'll fund all the materials, all the research to do this" and, you've seen how that place rehabilitated itself. (Guide – HT)

In this example, it is easy to view access organizations as operating in a governmental sense at the extremities of the state to reproduce climbers as active bearers of knowledge/power through their volunteer work (Rose, O'Malley, and Valverde 2006). This interpretation is supported by the challenges many managed parks and public spaces

have in effectively ‘policing’ visitors in vast wilderness spaces. Importantly, however, this work is taken up in ethical elaboration of the self in relation to the problem of access; governing oneself in this way involves some proximity to the space of problematization. As such, land managers and climbers exist within a power relationship in which diffuse power/knowledges attributed to the state are ‘up for grabs’, somewhat open to challenge and strategic co-option (Foucault 1990a: 96, 99-101). The question for liberatory practice then is to recognize when this strategic use of normalized power/knowledge enables domination and to engage with the consequences of such a domination.

The way to climb ‘well’ in relation to scientific or environmental discourses is complex and uneven. Imbuing climbing bodies with scientific knowledge/power can often produce a practice that considers proper trail-building, based in scientific measurement and techniques, a central aspect of climber identity. However, access to the scientific ‘game’ can also provide climbers the opportunity to contest the rules and ethics of their practice, though willingness to pursue this sort of contestation seems to be closely tied to the probability of restrictions on access.

What seems most important here, despite the conflicting ways access to this knowledge plays out, is that scientific discourses (particularly environmental or ecological sciences) are a central aspect in the formation of climbing ethics. Whether the science behind the rule in question is accepted or contested, it is ultimately the language, assumptions, techniques, and measurements of scientific discourse which imbue the climbing body in practice (Markula and Pringle 2006: 55). This access to knowledge has proven to be a useful tool in encouraging respect for fragile environments, or in recruiting volunteers to rehabilitate damaged areas, however, with the acceptance of a world view

dominated by scientific knowledge also comes the potentially violent normalization described by Foucault, Shogan, and others (Foucault 1990a: 144; Shogan 1999: 67, 69, 71; Markula and Pringle 2006: 61-62). Just as the ‘sportisation’ of climbing reflects and recreates broader societal trends towards measurement, consumption, and achievement, an unquestioned alignment of climbing ethics with scientific ontology may have considerable implications for the creative, transgressive, and free elements of the practice (Eichberg 1998: 135).

Encouragingly, an alternative theme informing climbing ethics can be found alongside scientific discourse, emerging out of the practice itself and related to the transition from climbing to climbing ‘well’. Many participants described a sort of placed-based knowledge that informed their practice of climbing ethics and precipitated the reconstruction of the climbing subject:

Roger: I've only understood more of my impact the more time I've spent in nature. I'm more aware of my impact. And that makes me want to change the way that I do things. You know, okay, insect repellent. I don't want to wear insect repellent because... just the idea of introducing that, into this natural environment, that's not good for the frogs and stuff.

Int: Yeah.

Roger: It just bothers me, it's like it shouldn't really, but it does... More and more I'm hesitant to kill insects even, because they are just such a part of a beautiful life cycle. (Guide – HT)

While this statement could easily draw on scientific knowledges, instead Roger first describes his environmental awareness as a result of paying attention to the place, and his own impact on it. His idea of climbing ‘well’ increasingly includes a consideration of harm and care, a critical attenuation to how practice draws him into relationships that are not at first obvious and are certainly not convenient.

Rachel: I love the character of Hueco, and I'm happy that it has such a sacred and spiritual quality for so many people. Because even though it means something different for them, it still preserves you know the character of it that I love um, yeah like these plants! Like, I was asking my friends yesterday, "is there anywhere else that Ocotillo grows?" 'Cause that is the coolest plant ever!

Int: Right!

Rachel: (Laughter). I mean, you know, I love the paintings and the pictographs. I mean all the things make this place... it smells different here, the weather is different here, the dust storms. (Climber – HT)

Rachel points to a possible elaboration of this theme, including not only dominant environmental discourses, but also a sense of respect for what the place means to other user groups. Climbing 'well' involves an appreciation of the specificity of the place, the unique qualities that come to be meaningful for many visitors to the Park. This appreciation is cultivated across a number of visits, realized in the sensuality of the place: the smells of desert blooms, sand blown in the eyes, sweating fingers gripping sharp rock, adjusting to the cool and dark of caves – slowly picking out the details of ancient artwork. (Please see supplemental attachments 6 and 7).

These knowledges of specificity are certainly learned through scientific, ecological, and historical/cultural discourses. However, the narratives I produced with climbers also suggest an alternative form of knowing alongside these established knowledges (Choy 2011). Being in the place and being attentive to the place draws climbers into a relationship, and importantly, one that is acknowledged. The roles of objective observer or passive tourist appreciating the 'highlights' at the very least become complicated by a sense of interconnection, a responsibility to a place and relationships that encourages stewardship in a different way than a normative environmental discourse.

b. *History*

Jacob: There's definitely something about... touching a rock that, you know, some historical climber touched... people that kind of started the climbing thing, you know, knowing that you're in the same spot that they were, 80 years ago, 60 years ago, or whatever, is pretty amazing. (Guide – HT)

Of importance to a number of climbers in their understanding of climbing ‘well’, though certainly not all, was the influence of climbing history. ‘History’ for climbers is in many ways similar to conventional historical narratives of Western societies – a series of achievements by privileged individuals measured in terms of date, objectively measured challenges, and (re)naming of their objects. There are certainly climbing legends, forebears of the sport who are described in terms of their vision, strength, courage, and eccentricity. The routes and problems established by these legends are revered as classics, and benchmarks of skill – essentially required for anyone ‘serious’ about climbing. These ascents are noteworthy for the danger involved (crash pads were not commonly used in bouldering until the mid to late 90’s), the ground-breaking level of difficulty, or the creative and aesthetic vision involved in completing them. In short, these legends, and the ascents they are known for, represent, to many, what it means to climb ‘well’, and to realize yourself as climbing so:

Deb: Everybody loves to do the area classics, even though you know they're going to be hard, I think they are frequently harder than their grade, for whatever reason. Because it's a classic, yeah you want to say you did those things. Another Font example: everybody wants to do “Marie Rose”. It's not the best climb there, I think these days particularly people are into more powerful, compression oriented things.

Mark: But it was first...

Deb: And it's this sheer slab.

Mark: It was done by Pierre Allain in 1947 or something, I mean yeah! It's neat, that means something!

Deb: If I didn't get scared two-thirds of the way up of it and you know, and slip off, I'd love to top it off someday, just to say I did, even though it's not the type of climb that I enjoy at all.

Mark: Well I've certainly, I actively seek Gill problems. I still haven't made it up to Sylvan Lake and The Needles to climb some of his problems but did some in the Tetons, have done many of his problems at Horse Tooth, and yeah, there's, to me it adds a little element, the history. (Climbers – HT)

In this way, strict ethics of 'pure' climbing blend with 'leave no trace' and minimum impact environmental ethics. An idolization of personal challenge and courage has been the impetus for inspired ascents and physical and mental prowess. A consideration for the future of a particular problem has led to care for an entire place and the relationships within it. However, in the same manner these legends and classics also reinforce the normalization of privileged men having access to nature, to the marginalization of everyone else (and at times to the detriment of these men should they pursue these 'bold' ethics to the point of injury or death) (Erickson 2005: 382). It is also worth noting that in my limited pool of participants, these histories and classic problems seemed more often to be important to male climbers as grounds for ethics and their own practice.

In many similar ways, the influence of climbing history, as a commitment to preserving a particular style of climbing 'well', is complex and often contradictory. Presenting icons like John Muir as entwined within the history of climbing allows for a closer alignment with the conservation efforts of parks and environmentalists. However, this alignment can simultaneously justify the continued marginalization of Indigenous peoples in favour of privileged settlers as environmental stewards, and the silencing of alternative ways of knowing and engaging with the land (Macnaghten and Urry 2000: 167). Encouragingly, climbing history just as often suggests an open, contingent, and

irreverent approach to these ‘legends’ that suggests never considering yourself too seriously, or your sport, too rigidly. It is possible then, that an engagement with climbing history as an aspect of ethical elaboration might allow for opportunities to challenge the image of climbing as unchanging, linear, and ‘natural’.

c. Challenge and Grading

Climbers also discussed ethics in terms of pursuing personal challenges and the relation of this pursuit to difficulty grades. Many asserted that grades or objective measures of success were not the most important aspect of climbing, and that working out the puzzle or overcoming a mental block provided a greater reward beyond chasing numbers:

David: I dunno whether it's a competition for oneself or against others. It's just, it's not as much for me I guess. I like being able to just be creative and approach a boulder, see what's on it, see what's attractive uh, regardless of the grade, regardless of whether it's been sent before or not. (Climber – HWLD)

Roger: The projects that I'm proud of are ones that um, especially if it's mental. If there's a mental reason I can't do something, because I'm afraid, and I can battle that. (Guide – HT)

Challenge is related to ethics then in seeking to preserve the difficulty of a given problem as it ‘presents’ itself. Of course, different problems in different styles may suit a particular body, or the weather may allow for, or discourage a send, but it is expected that no boulderer will purposefully alter the challenge provided by the rock (and the contrivances of the community). It is widely accepted that actions like chipping the rock, using a rope and protection, or starting one move ‘too high’ invalidates an ascent. Of course, this sort of thing only ‘really’ matters (in terms of external benefits like sponsorship) if someone is claiming to have completed an exceptionally difficult or impressive problem considered at the cutting edge of the sport. The average climber that

sullies the challenge of the rock might face the disapproval of some members of the community, but ultimately has little to gain or lose monetarily, for example. This aspect of ethics relies on the importance of challenge to the climbing self, to the stylization and realization of the body as a climbing body. To climb 'well' is to undertake the process of the challenge and 'rise to the level of the rock, not bring the rock down to your level' (Sherman 1995: 11).

Roger: There's something I'm working on now with my body, that I can only describe as like flagging a foot and developing inertia off your body, while it's still in space, you know? Where you're kinda like, you're just kinda like (imitating movement). And you know you can get your body to move. And it's an interesting thing, but it's something that I'm deficient at. I tend to just move really, really statically... But there's four or five problems, kind of all over, and each one of them - that's my problem. It's like, how do I work on that? What do I have to do to do that? Personally I kinda like that. (Guide – HT)

This aspect of climbing ethics might seem to conflict with evidence of Eichberg's 'sportisation' as increasing valuation of measurable achievement (Eichberg 1998: 123). However, the expression of challenge becomes far more complex when the prolific usage of grades is considered. For the sake of simplicity, I will focus only on the V-Grade (or Hueco) difficulty scale for bouldering, though numerous incarnations exist, and each distinct sub-discipline has at least, and often more than one specific scale. As described previously the V-grade scale is meant to provide numerical representation of the consensus difficulty of any particular boulder problem. The scale is open-ended, beginning at V0- or VB and continuing upwards, currently topping out at V16 (though claims regarding the upper grades are often contested). The number grade attributed to a particular problem roughly corresponds to the perceived difficulty of the most challenging movement in the sequence, which can vary considerably amongst climbers and bodies. The consensus aspect of the grading scale then is central to understanding

this contestation. While very few climbers would suggest the scale is objective in the strong sense, it is generally expected that once enough climbers complete and legitimate the grade, it is accurate.

Grades are useful to climbers for many reasons, most compellingly in the case of safety – bouldering a twenty-five-foot face becomes more reasonable when the climber can be fairly certain the hardest aspect of the climb will likely be within their abilities. Grades are also useful in setting goals, measuring progress, and identifying an interesting (in relation to skill) problem quickly. Guidebooks, created in order to expedite these goals, alongside others, quickly picked up the scales and now almost universally assign every problem a grade alongside a quality rating.

More broadly, grades allow for the construction of climbing history and progress in a fashion amenable to conventional sport frameworks, and power/knowledge discourses expressed through objective measurement. Quantifying the achievements of pro climbers and the progress of the sport is much more effective through objectifying and numerically grading it. Climbers featured in the media, as well as those I spoke with all associated their climbing in some way with grades. Even those who consider scales and measurements to be ‘corrupting the soul’ or overshadowing the true value of the practice (a group which includes the V-scale’s ‘creator’ John Sherman) have to reckon with grades, and often described climbs in relation to a numerical value:

Jess: When I have [guidebooks] I love using them, and I climb with them, and I like seeing the grades, and like, I dunno, I get a little caught up in it. (Climber – HWLD)

Nick: I feel grades will give people a good idea of what they’re attempting, but they shouldn’t hinder your want, your desire to try a... like, maybe the name sounds cool, but it’s a V8 and it’s hard! So not everyone is gonna try, but you should at

least go over and kinda feel the edges and see what you think, right? (Climber – HWLD)

I am not highlighting this conflict in order to mark out climbers as hypocrites or to make an argument for or against grades. In any case, the point would be moot. Grades are a part of climbing, woven into the history, the documentation, the knowledge and construction of areas and problems, as well as the individual practice of realizing oneself as a climber. It is instructive on this point that my earlier description of bouldering as a practice itself included a synopsis of its grading style, aligning bouldering with sports more likely recognizable to the reader and reconstructing a version of bouldering's 'purpose'. I certainly recognize that there is more to climbing than pursuing ever higher grades, but I do remember my first completion of a V5 in detail. Many other climbers remember or look forward to similar achievements – achievements that can't be reduced to the number that in part renders them memorable:

Craig: I had like a really great day here this season. I did The Crab on my first try of the day.

I: Nice!

Craig: And then went and found, what's it called? Some other V10 that's the only other here.

Int: Stingray?

Craig: Stingray! Yeah so had to search, found it, then was able to climb it that day... so that was, that was a pretty good day.

Int: Yeah, no kidding!

Craig: Yeah not too often you get two V10s in a day, so...

Int: Yeah, right on! So, we're talking about grades, but not necessarily just about grades, more about that personal challenge to you?

Craig: Yeah, like a challenge. I'm still progressing as a climber, and getting better. That's very attractive, when you're in a sport and you get better at it all the time, right? So I felt like I was I'm getting better. And it's not always stronger too, it's believing that you can do it. (Climber – HWLD)

Grades relate to ethics then as a quasi-objective representation of a commitment to preserving the challenge of a problem, a representation that through this link to the precise, calculated measurement of sportisation suggests a cohesive reckoning of what climbing is about. Grades render the practice of ‘bringing oneself up to the challenge of the rock’ into recognizable terms and features centrally in the current formation of climbers’ knowledge of themselves and their community. Currently, climbers seem to have it both ways – grades exist to be taken seriously, respecting the consensus of the community and the coherence of the sport, but also should be recognized as failing to define the practice. As noted, grades operate as immutable mobiles, but are also subject to the experiences of varied bodies through which they are relativized (Latour 1986). Climbing ethics, seen through this analysis of challenge and grade, appears again to be complex and conflicted, being reproduced as sport through normalizing discourses and techniques, while also reasserting an aversion to this process. Importantly, ethics in climbing is played out and realized in the practice itself when competing discourses of measurement and free movement are reified as true in the process of working out a problem on rock.

d. Movement and Aesthetics

Rachel: I like prominent features, definitely. Um, so if there's like an arete, where you get to do like compression moves up the whole thing and like, lots of toe hooking. Yeah, if there's just like some strange feature on there (laughter). Just like, "oh, I have to get up that line so that I can grab that hold, I really want to put my hand on that hold!" (Climber – HT)

Mark: I've always come from more of the Gill perspective. His ideal was that like a gymnast, you haven't done a trick... until it's wired. You're ready to do a trick in public when you've done it five hundred times, and that vision of being able to do something and absolutely float it. It's almost kind of denigrated by a lot of people in climbing. "well you just have it wired" well yeah, I worked to get it wired! ... That was the point, to wire it. That was fun, and it looks really great now, and it feels really great because it's easy. Just like a gymnast doing some

really involved trick that they make look really, really easy because they've crashed five hundred times, (laughter), and then did it five hundred times.
(Climber – HT)

Movement and aesthetics featured prominently in participants' discussions of climbing 'well' or in a fulfilling way and were nearly always intertwined. Taken together, a consideration of these elements as an expression of an ethic was practiced through a heightened awareness of the relationship between body and rock. In practice, a climber might be most concerned with touching a particular rock formation or feature, the 'flow' or attractiveness of a certain line, attempting problems that played to their strengths or forced them to address their weaknesses, or in perfecting a particular sequence until it felt effortless. Climbers generally wanted to appear controlled and confident in their movements, and though a 'desperate' send was still legitimate (and potentially made a good story later!), a send in style was preferable.

This care taken in movement could be associated with an adherence to gendered movement expectations – that men will be aggressive and controlled (allowing for dynamic or risky movements as long as they are enacted with confidence) and that women will be technical, careful, and controlled (favouring slow, 'pretty' movements that minimize a display of exertion). Certainly climbing is not immune to this sort of gendered body spatialisation (Erickson 2002; Erickson 2005: 383) and just as in many sports the distinction between recognizing generalized physiological difference (i.e. differences in hand size as compared between two sexes) and problematically reducing social and gendered roles to these differences (i.e. all women are good at climbing thin holds because of hand size and thus should limit themselves to that style) is not always critically addressed. In this way, the aspect of climbing ethics that involves aesthetic

movement involves the incorporation and embodiment of normative gender and a dichotomisation of sex into aesthetic categories.

As discussed previously, an alternative interpretation of gendered movement in climbing can be drawn from Lynn Hill. Hill uses her body, with its particularities and differences, in order to climb, recognizing the societal gendering of that body as informing but not limiting its capabilities (Chrisholm 2008: 32-33). Aesthetic movement as an aspect of climbing ethics interpreted through Chrisholm's account would then focus not on movement as fitting or defying a norm, but instead on an attentiveness and consideration for the relationship between a particular body and the rock. A controlled, effortless style emerges with the body in motion, with the ability of a particular climber to express their desire to move through space.

My conversations included evidence that both interpretations of aesthetic movement in climbing are essential to a full picture of the complex way 'style' informs ethics. However, climber's descriptions of the place of style in their own experience of climbing well more closely resembled the description I have drawn from Chrisholm and Hill (though a few mentioned a difference between outdoor and gym climbing in this respect). In addition to Chrisholm's account I would emphasize the importance to boulderers of not only moving through space towards a goal, but in considering the minutia of each moment, of expressing a care for the body and rock. This care is concerned not only with the appearance or 'goal' of the body, but with a detailed sensuous appreciation of the qualities of the rock itself. When Rachel describes wanting to touch a particular hold or formation on the rock she is expressing an interest in the aesthetic qualities of her body in relation to that formation: of the feel of the texture, the

unique shape, the incorporation of the feature into the movement of the body, and the complex orchestration of the sequence. To climb well in this aesthetic sense is not to climb ‘like a woman’ or climb only for the ascent, but to appreciate the affordances of the rock and your body in relation. In this way, the body in aesthetic motion expresses a practice of care.

Mark further describes this sort of practice, considering complete mastery to only exist in continual refining of movement. A number of motivations may exist for attempting a specific problem, but to ‘float’ it indicated the highest level of care for aesthetic movement and embodied climbing well. In fact, similar to the view of those lacking common-sense environmental knowledge, climbers that concerned themselves too greatly with reaching the top at any cost or ignored the affordances of the rock (i.e. powering through an intricate foot sequence) were considered lacking maturity in climbing practice, regardless of the grade they completed.

I see this aspect of climbing ‘well’ as exemplary of both a sensuous description of the formation of sporting ethics, as well as an encouraging indication of the potential for climbing to be realized as a liberatory practice. However, care must also be taken to direct critical thought towards the conditions under which the climbing body expresses its ‘freedom’, sensitive to how this ethical practice might recreate power relations based in domination.

e. Mentorship

Last, mentorship emerged as a significant theme in the formation and practice of climbing ethics. While mentorship could very well be considered a technique or mode of

ethical formation, interviews suggested that it was also something that all climbers of certain experience should *do*, not just trained guides, experts, or access organizers. As such, mentorship will broadly be considered here as intertwining the deployment and practice of climbing ‘well’.

Mentorship was discussed by Jacob as an experience of learning what to climb and in what style through the influence of more experienced climbers:

Jacob: Almost every climb I've sent – like every hard climb I've sent is meaningful right? Because you've put a lot of time and effort into it. “New Religion” is actually really cool because I did it with [DG], who's another ‘old timer’, and I always wanted to climb really hard in front of him. (Guide – HT)

While every challenging ‘send’ has value, “New Religion” stands out because of the presence of an ‘old timer’, a climber who has the experience of the practice and place to validate the send as ‘hard’ and meaningful. In this way, similar to a guidebook, places are populated with meaningful problems, boulders, and areas, as well as objects beyond those pertaining directly to climbing. As one of my guides, Jacob took on the mentor role while showing me around certain areas of Hueco Tanks, allowing for certain experiences of place as I climbed or attempted to climb, those problems that he viewed as ‘classic’, fun, and/or significant. In this way, mentorship affords experiences of co-generated meaning-making in place – imbuing my practice with elements of climbing ethics, while reinforcing in both of us the importance of mentorship to the practice itself.

This co-generation of meaning extended beyond what counted as climbing ‘hard’ or passing down classic problems. Mentorship increasingly refers to aligning new climbers with the projects and ethics of access organizations:

Jeremy: There's a big push on, 'we need to educate the people coming from the gyms to the crags', educate them in outdoor ethics, how to be a steward of the environment, how to, you know, respect thy neighbour or the climber next to you while you're, both enjoying the same area. What those education campaigns are bringing up, we see it out here, you know? Those types of issues, new people coming outdoors, being outdoors for their first time. If they don't have that mentorship role, someone to actually help them and develop those ideas, and hold them to a set of ethics and standards...

Int: Mhm.

Jeremy: They don't develop them, you know? So earlier today, when we were down... I chastised all those climbers for their tick marks.

Int: Yeah.

Jeremy: So, you know, that's an ethical issue nowadays, tick marks. So if you use them, you erase them when you're done. Not everyone likes seeing that shit on the rocks, you know? (Guide – HT)

Mentorship is not always a pleasant experience, but one of presenting the opportunity to climb 'well' according to an ethical standard. Chastising climbers for leaving tick marks not only encourages a consideration of impact, visibility, and aesthetics, but actively alters the relationship of climbers to rock. As Sherman puts it in the Hueco Tanks guidebook (1995):

Instead of relying on these 'rookie stripes' to point out holds, develop an eye for the subtleties of the stone. Know that the crux foothold lies three inches left of that quarter-sized patch of lichen. Zero in on that hairline seam that intersects a handhold right where you want your ring finger to land. Rely on your sense of feel to tell you how your hand should settle onto each hold... Furthermore, by keying into Nature's varied clues you develop a more agile memory and the ability to read the rock quickly. (P. 10)

Climbing 'well' means picking up on the ethics described by mentors, incorporating them into practice, and passing them on to new climbers, either directly or by example. Accepting that tick marks are 'rookie stripes' means going along with a certain ethical form based in aesthetics and access concerns, and the act of climbing without these marks is an experience of climbing well through an appreciation of

“Nature’s varied clues” and the ‘pure’ style of previous generations of climbers, solidifying that ethical form in movement and pleasure.

Some participants were quick to point out that mentorship need not be restricted to the influence of one climber from a previous ‘generation’, but includes the general ethical form of the community:

Mark: I think there's a lot of types of mentorship. Basically, a sense of community. You can be mentored by reading... you don't necessarily get mentored in proper climbing ethics by some older individual

Int: Right.

Mark: You're getting it from the community. Reading the intro to the guidebook, seeing things, just understanding that crag cleanups go on...

Int: Mhm.

Mark: "Yeah this is part of what we do", people go out and volunteer their time to work on trails, to pick up trash, there's a lot of little factors that go into fostering an awareness of what's appropriate behaviour and what's not. If that's a mentorship, it's kind of broad in scope. It's not just one person to another. I think the community mentors new arrivals. (Climber – HT)

Here, the responsibility to mentor is spread across every climber of some experience. Part of climbing ‘well’ becomes serving as a role model as best you can at all times.

Mentorship in climbing then is broadly the experience of incorporating ethics informed largely by access concerns into the practice. Nowhere is this more striking than in the impetus for climbers to become not only stewards of a place, but outdoor behaviour mentors to the general public:

Emmanuel: A lot of the people that come to protected areas, natural areas, like a provincial forest, they don't know sometimes a lot about like, how to protect the area, all the issues and effects that your presence in the natural area can have. So I think like, as climbers, you want to be able to pursue [climbing in these areas], so you have to... be responsible and show people how you should take care of the area, and that sort of thing. Uhm, be proactive in engaging too. (Climber – HWLD)

Helping those that lack the proper etiquette in protected and natural areas can be viewed as a development in what it means to be a climber and to climb ‘well’. Again, as climbers, it is not enough to know environmental best practices, but to “elevate our game” and respond to the pressures of access by recreating climbing practice as stewardship (Access Fund 2016).

4.3. Climbing ‘Well’: The Sensuous Realization of an Ethical Subject

In this chapter, through the use of guidebooks, co-generated interview narratives, and my own climbing experiences I have described some of the ways in which climbers come to realize themselves as ethical sporting subjects. Climbing ‘well’ involves active consideration of environment and place, climbing history, challenge, movement and aesthetics, and mentorship. This complex knot of entangled discourses is expressed through community and access organizations, guidebooks, human guides, and realized in practice. This realization has been the focus of my analysis, drawing out the narratives that mark generative experiences of power imbuing the sensuous body in movement, emerging through a space of problematization, and the practices through which an ethical relationship to the sporting self might be taken up.

The affordances of rock and place as they relate to the feeling body in motion are the sites in which power invests the climbing body. The importance of the senses in this process are worth noting. Without the pain of worn-down fingertips forced to grip sharp, flakes of volcanic rock because ‘the next go will be a send for sure’, how would a climber make sense and meaning out of an ethical commitment to ‘challenge’? What is knowledge of protecting unique flora without the scent of its blooms? Or of cultural ‘resources’ without the taste of the cool, dusty cave in which they were created?

This is not to argue for a return to the material or ‘real’ world in studies of power or to further distinguish who ‘belongs’ in certain spaces, but to highlight the way in which ‘relations’ – the space in which power operates – are as much about touching, smelling, and hearing as measurement, representation, and discourse (Simmel 1997: 118; Eichberg 1998: 159). In fact, it is the enmeshing of these elements, in practice, which indicates how a coherent ethical subject can emerge from such complex and often contradictory experiences. Here, I have described just such a complex ethical stylization of climbing practice, with includes liberatory possibilities as well as potential harm, exclusion, and unexamined support of dominating norms.

If exploring and encouraging the potential for climbing to be a liberatory practice is my goal, then a description and judgement of its (current) ethical form is not enough (Markula and Pringle 2006: 143). The pleasure of movement or the affordances of guidebooks do not guarantee a progressive or liberatory practice; the moments when sensuous ethical experience provides and accentuates an opportunity for resistance, otherness, and creativity must be sought out and encouraged in active recreation of what it means to climb ‘well’ (Shogan 1998 92; Markula and Pringle 2006: 149).

Consideration of how these ethics come to be so embedded in practice, through the sensuality of subjectification, allows for discussion on the possibility of just such a critical practice grounded in bodily pleasure. This will be the topic of the final chapter.

5 CRITICAL SENSUALITY

Dominating forms of power/knowledge have been shown to enter and be realized through our sporting practices. Our very experiences of sporting ‘well’, those visceral and deeply formative constitutions of self, are imbued with moments of freedom, but also enact oppressive and exclusionary norms. Sporting ethics simultaneously encourage and obfuscate this process, based in a problematization of practice interpreted through “sportised” measures of fitness and achievement. As such, considerable challenges exist for those actively attempting to alter this version of sporting ethics. Though Markula and Pringle suggest that, “knowledge and experience seem to allow for the critical thought acquired for practices of freedom” (Markula and Pringle 2006: 175), as they discovered, fitness instructors of a yoga/pilates hybrid program (Markula included) struggled to generate a critical orientation to fitness practice in their clients and students, if they considered attempting this at all. In this case, fitness practice failed to encourage critical reflection because even when the ‘mindfulness’ and experience of instructors was expressed in practice, it existed within an organization of power directed towards a knowledge of a ‘true’ self, informed by normalizing scientific discourses of the healthy or ideal body (2006: 161). The space in which ethical problematization of the sporting self might occur seemed to be already closed, in deference to these established forms of disciplining the body.

What might be missing here is a consideration of how the sensual pleasure of sporting practice can allow for critical engagement beyond a potentially subversive moment and drawn upon, encourage an active awareness of the use of one’s own freedom. As noted by Markula and Pringle, “The problem of freedom... is not solved by

liberating one's self, but rather it constitutes a moral problem: how will one practice one's liberty?" (Markula and Pringle 2006: 147). As such, this study is not an exercise in endlessly debating whether or not a practice is entirely liberatory, but of examining its capacity for producing a sensuously critical subjectivity. No performance or practice will be without processes of distinction and normalization, but the potential to continually *critically engage with the experiences of pleasure allowed for* suggests a movement practice with the capacity to produce a sensuously critical subject. It is just this sort of work that the climbing community must take up in order for the complex elaboration of our ethical 'games' to encourage both individual freedom and collective liberation. In what follows, I address the second question informing this research, and present cases of critical sensuality in bouldering practice, marking out its emergence in proximity to the problematized space of access, as well as some opportunities for its future cultivation.

5.1. Critical Sensuality in Climbing Practice

Mark: To me climbing is, it's a little bit more of a dance, or a martial art. What people say about yoga, I don't, I've done very little yoga, but when they talk about 'their practice'...

Int: Mhm.

Mark: Well yeah, climbing is my 'practice'. Whether it's something that you can completely float, because you have it wired, or whether it's something that you, that you get out by the skin of your teeth and every move was utterly desperate, and it really wasn't pretty but you, (laughter), you got it done. Um, it's all different elements of that practice and the moment. I'm always learning more about climbing. I'm not getting any stronger, but I'm always learning new tricks and mental tricks too, not just new technique. Learning how much more I can actually do, if I just set my mind to it and really focus. That's just a really neat... feeling that there is a little bit, a little bit of power in that, and just knowing that you can will yourself up something. (Climber – HT)

Despite the challenges to the pursuit of organized sport as progressive noted above, the possibility remains of cultivating *critical sensuality* in movement and sports

practice. As described in Chapter Four, the process of ethical subjectification through sport is deeply based in the senses, movement, articulation, and perceptions of the body. This sensuous realization of discourse is the site of power relations, where power/knowledge flows through the sporting subject in sporting movements, allowing for domination, but also possibilities of moving otherwise. While a project of producing progressive sport as entirely free of domination or norms may not be possible, encouraging ethical practice as taking pleasure in a critical orientation towards the power relations expressed in movement may allow for a commitment to a liberatory form of sport (Markula and Pringle 2006: 126). As described by Mark above, there is “a little bit of power” found in the process of pushing what the climbing body is capable of. This power should not be understood as just a personal achievement over the challenge of the rock, but a realization of what it means to climb ‘well’ – the imbueing of the sporting body with potential that also renders an ethic and way of knowing tangible. Here I would like to explore how this potential might come to be articulated in the form of a critical and liberatory practice.

I am encouraged in this respect by Audre Lorde’s conception of the “erotic” as the source and experience of creativity, critical thinking, and liberation through our most passionate endeavors (Lorde 1984: 56). For Lorde, this meant her practice of poetry, through which she bodily experienced the pleasures of critique, subversion, satire, care, anger, sadness, and joy. Through a full engagement with our pursuits in the world, Lorde argued that the erotic would be a source of inspiration for critical practice, “a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives” (Lorde 1984: 57).

With this bodily knowledge comes “a grave responsibility, projected from within each of us, not to settle for the convenient, the shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe” (Lorde 1984: 57).

For Lorde, the erotic is a form of power that is of the body; a sense of “it feels right to me” drawn on in practice (1984: 56). While this conception differs somewhat from my depiction of the sensuous subject, in so far as Lorde’s erotic suggests an essential, human quality, I also believe it has useful resonance. Here, the erotic is “what occurs in the encounter between performative subject-bodies and other bodies” (Cover 2003: 68). This general definition expresses how the erotic is always already happening, in all the mixings of the world. To conceive of the pleasure taken in practice in this way is to recognize the possibilities of that power which flows through all bodies in subjectification.

Bringing this sense of the erotic to Eichberg’s body cultures, the sensual development of achievement sport, fitness sport, and body experience as forms of identity all hold the potential for liberatory practice. However, the spread of achievement as the defining characteristic of movement practices potentially limits the exploration of ways of being to the normalizing referent of “higher, faster, stronger” (Eichberg 1998: 123). To enter the critical space of the erotic in movement practices does not require a strict denunciation of all standardization, organization, or measurement in sport (as if this was possible), but instead, the encouragement of sport as a critical practice, engaged with the world of contradictions of which it is a part, and the forms of problematization which give rise to an ethic. While the sensuality of sport can operate in the naturalization and normalization of particular subjectivities, it is also the way in which the body might come

to feel and ‘know’ itself as a critical actor. Foucault describes the Classical Greek concept of *sophronsyne*, the stylized moderation shown in the *usage* of pleasure that distinguishes the fully realized ethical subject (1990b: 37). This state of *sophronsyne* suggests that the ethical subject “derives pleasure from the moderation [they] display”, as opposed to that taken in bodily pleasures themselves (1990b: 65). Similarly, climbing ‘well’ might come to mean deriving pleasure from critical engagement with one’s own practice. However, instead of a mastery of moderation, critical sensuality suggests a perpetual engagement with the challenges of ethical practice. In this practice of sensorial ‘openness’ to the world, pleasure in sport comes from reveling in variation, chance, creativity, and care (Edensor 2000: 102). In order to ground this discussion of critical sensuality in my own research I have addressed three areas in which I encountered the possibility of liberatory practice coupled with a deeply-experienced bodily pleasure in criticality.

5.2. Open Norms of Body Practice

Deb: Bouldering, I love bouldering for the diversity, you can see. People wander into the gym who are, you know, big, tall, heavy, and they're throwing down just as well as tiny little gymnast ten-year old pixies (laughter). You can get people who are, you know, fifty-five, sixty who are still throwing down. It's a very democratic sport, I think. And I think that's also motivating, that's part of what makes it fun, is just watching the different sizes and shapes. (Climber – HT)

Deb’s statement could very easily be described as a general ‘acceptance’ or liberal ‘tolerance’ that is considered usual within the climbing community. This reading would focus on the “democratic” element of the sport, in which all are welcome to participate if they so choose. This focus on ‘tolerance’, however, precludes a deeper discussion of ethical formation and the consideration of climbing ‘well’ (Foucault 1990b: 187). The problem of access (though diminished with the space of the gym) makes an unquestioned

acceptance of anyone who ‘wanders’ into a climbing space unlikely. This is not to suggest climbers aren’t friendly, but instead that climbing ‘well’ is not just a matter of showing up.

Instead, by focusing on the elements of bodily practice, pleasure, and relation to self in this passage, a more complete and more encouragingly liberatory picture of climbing ethics emerges. First, the ‘tolerance’ for different bodies can instead be read as an aesthetic appreciation for the way in which varied bodies learn to conduct their relationship with rock (and in this specific example, plastic). Bouldering ethics are ‘democratic’ in so far as different “sizes and shapes” are invited to pursue this relationship, without strict rules about how exactly to move or solve the problem, but instead the expectation that a certain stylization – epitomized in an aesthetics of care for one’s particular body moving on rock – would be the goal.

Further, considering ethical subjectification as a relations of the self to the self, or the process and principles on which a subject comes to realize themselves as ethical (Foucault 1990b: 6, 29), Deb’s description of bouldering marks out an aesthetic appreciation and pleasure taken in watching other climbers climb ‘well’ *because of* and not despite the variation found in the practice. For Deb, the way to climb well, to recognize oneself as a boulderer, is to enjoy difference in the pursuit of an ethical form. In the same conversation, Deb also described how taking pleasure in watching alternate methods of problem-solving motivated her and impacted her own approach, encouraging her to test out varied forms of movement and style. This is neither climbing according to a predefined category or to the ‘strengths’ of one’s own body, but taking sensual pleasure in appreciating the movement of others and testing those forms of movement out oneself,

quite literally stretching, bending, ‘muscling’ through, and floating into a consideration of climbing “otherwise” (Shotwell 2011). Here, those bouldering, as well as those watching, mutually constitute experiences of pleasure which at once fit, mix, and transgress normative understandings of climbing ‘properly’ (Ferreday 2008: 62). Critical sensuality emerges through the body in a community of movement; the pleasure gleaned through bodily practice resulting in critique enmeshed with a deep fulfillment (Klein 2014: 182-183; Ferreday 2008: 59).

In terms of the problematization of access, I recognize critical sensuality here as bodily pleasure taken in the appreciation of different bodies coming into a relationship of care to rock, movement, and place. What is required in this ethics of care is not particular, measureable bodies or specific, detailed rules of movement, but a stylization of movement which can be sensually expressed, appreciated, and shared. This openness in ethical formation is important to a progressive approach to access concerns which often involve the determination of which bodies ‘belong’ in a place and what ‘style’ of movement should be looked to as ideal. Additionally, in terms of encouraging liberatory sporting ethics, it is central to the realization of climbing as a critical practice, one in which pleasure is taken in creativity and difference. In this way, within the problematization of access there is the opportunity to challenge what bodies and movements we perceive as ‘right’ or ‘beautiful’ in outdoor places through a sensuous appreciation of ethical practice.

5.3. Place-Based or Local Knowledges

Rachel: I love the character of Hueco, and I'm happy that it has such a sacred and spiritual quality for so many people. Because even though it means something different for them, it still preserves you know the character of it that I love. Um,

yeah like these plants! Like, I was asking my friends yesterday, "is there anywhere else that Ocotillo grows?" 'Cause that is the coolest plant ever!

Int: Right!

Rachel: (Laughter) I mean, you know, I love the paintings and the pictographs. I mean all the things make this place. It smells different here, the weather is different here, the dust storms. (Climber – HT)

Returning to a statement by Rachel, the importance of entering into a close relationship with local specificity can be seen as central to developing an ethical self. Appreciating place involves respecting the numerous relations that one enters through climbing practice. While respect and care can be expressed in standardized rules (leave no trace, for example), it is a willingness to draw the particularities of a place into the pleasure taken in practice that stands out here.

Approaching Eichberg's discussion of the spatialization of sport from an analysis of the sensuality of movement in place is also instructive, encouraging a consideration of what opportunities for pleasure the space of Hueco affords, and the discourses which inform this pleasure (Eichberg 1999: 152). As a thriving outdoor space with a rich cultural, and geological history isolated in a desert, Hueco, and the 'things' which make Hueco unique provide the opportunity for generative sensuous relations that are different than that of an organized sporting space. Further, through contact with the unique, unfamiliar, and challenging the body is immersed in a space of perception in which fear and pleasure might mix, where we might experience on a visceral level the contradictions in our sense of 'right' or 'safe' and examine them (Edensor 2000: 102; Edensor 2013: 456). This is not to argue for an essential transformative power of nature, but for an acknowledgement of the local specificity that is embedded in the problematization of

access, and the possibilities found in working out ethical relationships in this problem space with these ‘objects’ (Macnaghten and Urry 2000: 179).

For Rachel, smell in particular is singled out. The smell of changing weather, specific plants, the dust and rock all contribute to a ‘spiritual’ quality – an appreciation of what makes this place special, unique, and of importance to varied peoples. Local specificity, which might be understood through different discourses of ecological, cultural, and historical fragility, is experienced through the body in practice, reifying what is at risk as an element of ethical climbing. In regards to liberatory practice, I find this place-based ethical formation encouraging not only for exhibiting the development of a relationship of respect based on more than ‘rules’, but also due to the way in which varied forms of appreciation are mingled and valued. Rachel does not reduce her enjoyment or respect for a place to one category of understanding, but draws on a relationship to place to engage with the complexity of knowledges and discourses surrounding her experience. In short, it is this experience of place that can provoke critical engagement.

Roger: [An ethic] is hard to teach, it's much easier to experience. You need that interaction, you need to um, be a part of it... for certain years or many years to be able to watch the cycle of things before you realize just how fragile the environment is that you're in. Maybe it's not being taught enough, maybe it's not being experienced enough. Those same problems are universal, especially in our industrial society. People just, they have no idea where their water comes from, where their food comes from, how animals are treated. They're just oblivious to that, we just don't draw those questions. (Guide – HT)

Roger describes a similar process of ethical formation. Here, coming into a relationship of care for a place involves “interaction” for “many years”. It is this local, place-based knowledge that climbing ethics has generally depicted as the ideal, with guidebooks and guides directed towards informing interaction with a place such that a

care for specificity (at least to the extent that access concerns are mitigated) no longer requires “years”. Roger sees beyond this directed ethical development, however, and remarks on the process through which interaction leads to a sense of responsibility or embeddedness on the part of the climber. This sense of embeddedness might be understood as a particular relationship of self to self, precluding the possibility of turning away from the problem space of access, and ultimately one’s relationship to broader ethical concerns.

Here, the formation of an ethical self is accomplished through a practice of critical embeddedness, and the pleasure taken in climbing ‘well’ involves pleasure in critically approaching the particular relationship to the world that is the result of its very practice. As with open norms of body practice, place-based knowledges suggest an ‘opening up’ of the world to the climbing body. As one comes to know themselves as climbing ‘well’, interaction with the problem space of access allows for an opportunity to realize the flows of power which imbue the ethical sporting body in the form of critical practice. This liberatory moment, as discussed above, is not guaranteed, and must be cultivated. It is with this challenge in mind I will turn to a final example of critical sensuality in ethical climbing practice: guiding, mentorship, and critical pedagogy.

5.4. Mentorship and Critical Pedagogy

Jeremy: I feel we have a responsibility, besides just taking clients to the rock climbs they want to and their projects, there's a responsibility to show off other parts of this park. That's the natural resources, the wildlife, the cultural resources that are here. You know, stop and take five minutes to enjoy a piece of rock art and observe it and look at it, and reflect, what were these people doing back then and how were they living? Think about them, you know, give a little tribute to the history of this place... point out any cool wildlife as you come across it, so clients get kind of this full rounded experience... Out here guiding is a little

different, we're not, per se, rock climbing guides at let's say Red Rocks, where it's like, 'okay I'm here, my main goal is to get you up these five pitches.'

I: Right.

Jeremy: Here, I think it's just a little bit different of an environment... there's so much more here, so why not take the few more minutes to provide more of a well rounded experience, and mostly educate people. (Guide – HT)

I return to Jeremy's description of guiding practice in Hueco Tanks in order to address the place of guides as disseminators of ethical knowledge and in generating the space for critical sports practice. Appealing to local specificity, Jeremy encourages his clients to appreciate the park as an entirety, co-generating the place as meaningful beyond the specifics of climbing. I interpret this 'responsibility' (encouraged in guide training/certification but not strictly enforced) as the result of engagement with the problem space of access, the formation of an ethical subject through the questioning of 'how to make use of one's liberty?' As a (mandatory) guide to a bouldering 'mecca', this 'liberty' can be very directly understood as a place of privilege in establishing norms of climbing conduct, and a key position in the flows of power into climbing bodies within the Hueco Tanks. Making use of this position, Jeremy is active in the constitution of what it means to climb 'well' and an ethical interpretation of the bodily pleasures of climbing.

This transmission of ethical experience is accomplished through negotiating the desires of clients to see the classics and send their projects with the responsibility to populate the place of the park with more than boulder problems. Direct intervention on behalf of the guide (taking a detour on the hike to a particular boulder in order to spend some time in a cave with rock art) mixes with a more indirect encouragement to engage with the place ("what were these people doing back then and how were they living?"). The accomplished guide is able to work with the themes of climbing 'well', blending the

history and classic status of certain climbs with a respect for the place in which that history and specificity is then experienced in movement. A “tribute” to history means a potential engagement with the ‘games of truth’ that surround contested spaces like Hueco Tanks (Markula and Pringle 2006: 193). Viewed in relation to the problem of access, an awareness of the mixings of peoples in a space is potentially generative in troubling the assumption that climbing has little impact on environments and others.

Similarly, the position of guiding also allowed for the troubling of the calcification of the sportising elements in climbing into an achievement-based practice. As mentioned previously, at times the classics highlighted in guidebooks would become too busy, so guides would lead clients to obscure or ‘new’ areas. By quickly getting to know clients and their preferred ‘style’, guides were able to draw on their intimate knowledge of the place and rock in order to bring clients to problems that they experienced as just as good or better than the classics. In these cases, grade was reinterpreted as challenge appropriate to skill, star or quality rating shifted to pleasurable movement and aesthetics, and the dimensions of a known space were reconfigured to include surprises, hidden ‘gems’, and the entirety of what the place had to offer beyond just climbing. The variation in climbing ‘stories’ encouraged in this way suggests an alternative form of knowledge acquisition in which engagement in relations, not repetition and standardization, forms the basis of skill and enjoyment (Pettinen 2014: 142). This is not to suggest that guides avoided popular problems or cared nothing for grades, but that they were capable of problematizing for themselves what it means to climb ‘well’ in a place and, for their clients, provide a space of experience that encouraged this same critical approach to climbing practice.

Importantly, this opportunity for critical practice was not accomplished solely through direct rules or strict disciplining of climbing bodies. Guides preferred to provide the conditions in which clients themselves might take up a relation to themselves as climbers, a relation in which the formation of an ethical subject can take place:

Roger: Especially because it's so heavily regulated I try to really allow people to have the freedom so they can experience nature. On a tour I turn my radio way down, just so they can hear the birds, they can hear the wind and hear, you know, have more of that intimate connection. I think that, if you can do that for somebody, if you can give them, like, a few minutes in nature, they are probably going to pick it up by themselves, just through their own experience. (Guide – HT)

Markula and Pringle highlight the importance of this strategy to a critical pedagogy which seeks to minimize domination, noting that the aim of a pedagogue (or guide) should be encouraging critical thought, not telling students that their sense of self was 'wrong' (2006: 200). Doing so ignores the complex ways in which sporting bodies form themselves as practicing 'well', discounting the intertwining of ethical themes drawn from varied knowledge discourses that require critical engagement and not further edicts of truth. This consideration of pedagogical practice hints at the way in which bodily experience renders an ethical position, a relation of self to self, as deeply felt and difficult to challenge. In the case of challenging gendered knowledges about rugby which Markula and Pringle address, it is not just a discourse or logic that must be argued against, but the way in which that discourse has, for example, imbued the broken leg of a sporting body, investing the pains and pleasures of that experience with a visceral sense of rugby as a 'manly' pursuit. What is needed is not just an alternative discourse, but the conditions in which that alternative discourse might inform experiences and cultivate a problematization of the self (Markula and Pringle 2006: 203).

The above statement from Roger speaks in part to this strategy of cultivation. By allowing clients to sensually appreciate the natural elements of the park, the importance of access concerns and the necessity of the guiding program are allowed to ‘speak for themselves’. Again, this is not a description of an essential transformative quality of nature, but of cultivating bodily experiences that open a problematizing relationship to self. The ‘restrictions’ on access are already apparent to climbers. What is needed to alter their sense of climbing ‘well’ is an experience that renders an ethical form sensuously meaningful and encourages engagement with these restrictions as an element of their climbing practice, through the specificity and allowances of a particular contested place.

A final comment in regards to critical sensuality relates to the pleasure that many guides took in their role. Encouraging others to climb ‘well’ became an element of their own climbing practice that further engaged them with the complexity of climbing ethics and access. Due to access issues, problematization of the climbing self was a common step (though not absolutely necessary) in coming to guide others, and directing new climbers towards this same relationship of self to self elicits a sense of accomplishment. While site host of Halfway Log Dump, in my capacity as both ‘guide’ and researcher, I was able to share knowledge I have gained through numerous trips and years of experience in the place. I felt imbued with power, drawing on varied discourses to explain the importance of protecting threatened species like the Lakeside Daisy, my encounters with rattlesnakes, helpful beta (a possible solution to a boulder problem), the climbing history of the place, and the ongoing relations with park staff. This does not mean I ‘held’ power over other climbers (though I was in a position of some minimal authority), it was in the process of passing on that knowledge, of bringing my particular

relation to place and ethics into practice, that I felt power operate (Foucault 1990a: 94-95).

It was also the case, however, that I took great enjoyment in learning from other climbers and observing alternate styles of climbing problems I knew very well. An example of climbing ‘well’ in the open sense, regardless of fitting my assumed style, informed my subsequent appreciation of varied bodies, and the dynamic aesthetics of climbing. Being witness to these alternative ways of practicing our shared sport meant, in my roles as ‘guide’ and researcher, not only appreciating it in the moment, but taking further pleasure in sharing this open vision of climbing practice. I was in the position therefore, to have some influence on the encouragement or ‘refusal’ of certain discourses that direct and restrict conduct and ways of being (Shogan 1999: 91; Markula and Pringle 2006: 175) making the ethical choices of mentors and guides of particular interest in any attempt to construct an organized liberatory practice.

5.5. Climbing Access Challenges and Critical Sensuality

So, if encouraging ethical practice within *organized* sport, and not just an individual relationship to movement practice is the goal, a number of challenges have to be addressed. First, ethical practice cannot be viewed as a solitary, cerebral exercise that takes place in the mind or soul. To begin an ethical project in this way directs attention towards an internal struggle for truth, as opposed to an appreciation of the complexities and moral challenges, which the use of liberty brings (Markula and Pringle 2006: 157). Thus, the relations, sensations, bodies, and contestations of which sport is composed must be considered the objects of ethical concern.

Secondly, the affordances of the modes, techniques, and space of ethical dissemination and realization should be examined, with a sensitivity for the extent to which dominating norms proliferate (Eichberg 1998). Finally, the capacity for practitioners of a sport to actively engage in critique of their own practice, and the organization of that practice, must be encouraged. As noted by Shogan, “ethics involves facing up to the continual task of reinventing ourselves” (1999: 90). To perform this task in such a way as to minimize domination is particularly challenging for organized sports that have defined themselves in relation to a singular history. Nevertheless, an ethical organization of sporting practice requires this sort of openness, creativity, and self-critique.

As ‘sportisation’ and growing popularity have changed the context of ethical problems that climbers must consider, clinging to a ‘pure’ ethical form will do little to promote liberatory practice, or even a ‘free’ experience. Instead, this approach can alienate new climbers, and undermine the pursuit of a creative, diverse, challenging experience. Continual work done upon what constitutes ethical practice can maximize what is best in climbing ethics, while also addressing and challenging the elements that can operate as exclusionary or oppressively normalizing. This is the crucial work that draws upon the pursuit of freedom espoused by Gill, while recognizing the need to curb this pursuit in the context of access issues; that utilizes the organizational techniques of access groups to promote inclusion and negotiation, without basing the practice in standardization, measurement, and achievement.

Engagement with the processes of ethical formation in climbing can provide the opportunity to construct the practice of climbing ‘well’ as a pleasure felt in a critical

relationship to self and sport. This relationship is a co-option of that power that imbues bodies in movement, directed towards reflexive practice. As argued above, through an examination of relations of bodies in movement, being in place, and critical mentorship, I see critical sensuality as a concept that can help determine what this pleasure might look like in sport practice, and how it might be encouraged in the formation of ethical sporting subjects.

6 CONCLUSIONS: CLIMBING ‘WELL’ AND PROGRESSIVE ORGANIZED SPORT

In the course of this study, I have engaged with climbing ethics as a process of relational, sensuous, and place-based realization of power/knowledge discourses through a particular problematization of access. How to climb ‘well’ has been argued to be a stylization of conduct – a form of engagement with the power relations that inform access issues such that an ethical subject might emerge. This ethical stylization exists not only as theoretical or cerebral pondering, but also as a response to everyday ‘problems’ of practice, and the complex relations of sensuous bodies. In climbing, this ethical subjectification involves both the embodiment of constraining norms, as well as opportunities for liberatory practice; our ethical ‘games’ involving ‘games of truth’ alongside bodily experimentation. While it is possible to approach these tensions from a perspective which highlights the ‘external’ context of domination in sport or, alternatively, the ‘internal’ agency of the body in practice, it is useful to blend these forms of inquiry, drawing on both prescriptions and experiences of ethical practice.

Through this theoretical and methodological synthesis, analysis of guidebooks, and interpretation of participant narratives I argue for a consideration of critical sensuality in an approach to promoting climbing, and possibly sport, in general, as a liberatory practice. As described in Chapter Five, critical sensuality in practice is a form of ethical work based in creativity, variation, fulfillment, and care. To climb in this way involves taking pleasure in not only bodily freedom, but in the critical evaluation of this use of freedom such that a minimum of domination occurs in the relationships that make up the practice. In short, critical sensuality suggests a form of reflexive subjectification; a

bodily engagement with the process by which a self emerges. While this reflexive practice might seem to suggest an excessive self-surveillance, an overwhelming pessimism that drains the fun and spontaneity from sport, I have made the argument for the incorporation of criticality into the broad range of pleasures sport can provide. Climbing has been shown to bring practitioners into complex experiences of joy, comradery, and freedom. What I suggest here is that a truly fulfilling *use* of this freedom must contend with the forms of domination that emerge simultaneously. While this personal fulfillment is an essential aspect of this work, I also aim to provide grounded strategies through which critical sensuality might be encouraged in the problem space of access. It is to this pragmatic aspect I turn with my remaining comments and conclusions.

6.1. ‘Growing the Sport’ and Ongoing Challenges of Critical Practice

The tensions emergent in a growing, ‘sportising’ practice are at once troubling, often being the site of violent normalization, but also provide the opportunity to engage with a problem space in an ethical fashion, entering into a relationship with our selves such that resistance and liberatory change is possible. While it may be comforting to reject the organization and popularity of climbing and retreat to a ‘pure’ bouldering ethic, this stylization of practice has been shown to operate upon its own processes of exclusion and denial, and should not be confused with a critical approach to the practice.

Many boulderers and climbers I spoke with pursue their practice within this complex middle-ground, seeking to blend what is best in the ethical formulations of climbing into their relationships surrounding access and sport. Here I will add my own voice to theirs, suggesting that land managers and those responsible for public lands seek out input from climbers when access becomes an issue. For example, consulting with

climbers on issues such as erosion can help in identifying causes and solutions. Damage to flora that contributes to erosion might be revealed as being tied to the ‘classic’ status of a particular problem in the area. As described, how to climb ‘well’ includes experiencing the movement and challenge of such classics, explaining the problem’s popularity, and the trampling of flora. What is needed is not necessarily a ban on climbing in the area, which will likely provoke resentment on behalf of climbers, but an alteration in conduct when climbing these classics. Climbing well on this problem can come to involve care for the surrounding flora, blending environmental concern into ethical practice. Guides and guidebook authors are in the best position to disseminate this ethic, bringing an awareness of access concerns directly into new and visiting climbers’ experiences of place. This stylization of conduct in response to an ethical problem will prove far more effective than a general rule or antagonistic ban.

For access organizations, guides, and guidebook authors¹⁰, critical sensuality as a concept marks out a potential space in which we, as a community, can improve access negotiations, as well as the pursuit of our sport as liberatory. These ethical concerns are inextricably linked, inter-relations of respect and care being necessary to continue our practice in fragile and sacred spaces, but also to recognize when the pursuit of access realizes the violence of domination. Support should be given to guiding programs that not only provide a ‘gym to crag’ experience, highlighting general rules and safety concerns, but also those which encourage a critical knowledge of the specificities of a place as integral to climbing practice. Standards, grades, and ‘classic’ status can be used

¹⁰ The burgeoning accessibility of user-created guides online makes this distinction of ‘guidebook’ author, though still relevant, a category which many climbers are actively involved in.

strategically to bring new or visiting climbers into an awareness of relations of access, and an appreciation for the challenges involved – drawing on the power imbued through a discourse of achievement and shifting it towards critical reflection and ethical practice.

Further, just as dominating norms can be realized through our individual practice, in pursuing access as a community, we must consider the power effects of this pursuit of freedom. Establishing ourselves as ‘real’ outdoors people and stewards of fragile spaces is both useful in securing access and protecting endangered species and unique landscapes. However, this project can also deny access to other groups. While very few climbers would explicitly disregard these claims to place by others, as I have argued, forms of knowledge that we draw upon and ‘make real’ through our ethical practice can implicitly silence other ways of knowing and being. As such, I would urge the climbing community and access organizations, in particular, to seek out those voices most often discouraged from participating in sport, and experiencing the outdoors, as well as those marginalized within these spaces. Approaching an Indigenous community with claims to an area of land before or simultaneously with state land managers, marks out a commitment to various experiences of land, and an unwillingness to forget histories of violent annexation. Consultation with local communities during the creation of guidebooks can smooth relations between locals and visitors, as well as inject a “destination” climbing trip with an appreciation for the relations of responsibility international travel should require.

While these sorts of commitments and interventions may, at times, restrict or compromise access, it will be the result of an ethical choice in the use of our freedom as climbers. Critical sensuality describes the blending of this ethical choice with the

pleasure taken in the movement, challenge, creativity, and interactions found in sport. Proximity to the problematized space of access can, through the affordances of those objects and senses brought into relation, encourage experiences of critical sensuality, and contribute to the realization of a liberatory ethics. Drawing upon this conception of climbing ‘well’, it is my hope that far more often than a loss of access, engagement with these tensions will result in climbing again belonging to those who practice it; a belonging based not in exclusion, but in the formation of an ethical, and critical, relationship to the self. As our sport grows, engaging with the knot of complex relations surrounding access only becomes more challenging, however, this engagement is where the opportunity to “elevate our game” in a fulfilling and liberatory fashion might ultimately be found.

6.2. Limitations and Future Research Possibilities

While there are undoubtedly numerous areas in which this work could be expanded upon, there are two directions of inquiry that I feel would contribute significantly to both an understanding of ethics as practiced in sport, as well as relationships of access. First, future work might continue the sort of genealogical inquiry begun by Foucault, Eichberg, Markula and Pringle, and others, exploring the ways in which sport itself became a problematized field of experience, and so a site of the ethical elaboration of the self. While Eichberg marks out the investment of the sporting body with knowledges of population, health, and achievement, a further discussion of the ways in which ‘leisure’ has emerged as a means of knowing oneself, of entering into a relationship with truth, would be of worth. Continuing with a concern for space and time,

the concept of 'free time' and the valorization of its 'proper' use may provide insight into just how certain sports, such as climbing, came to merge moral valuation with adventure.

The second field of concern involves an elaboration of the relationship between climbing ethics and Indigenous knowledges. It may be apparent that some of the encouraging elements of climbing practice, as well as my conception of critical sensuality, bear a resemblance to Indigenous appreciations of place, environment, and relationships of reciprocity, in various forms. As noted above, there is a very real possibility (and clear evidence) of climbers drawing upon these traditions as stewards to support their own claims to access above these very Indigenous peoples. Though this appropriation is almost certainly unintentional, this does not mean it is not happening.

In arguing for my position on critical sensuality, I encourage just this sort of challenging work, and so should also be sensitive to the exclusionary power of my own theorising. However, the complexity of this challenge in climbing access did not emerge in my research until late in the process of fieldwork in Hueco Tanks, restricting my ability to speak with the parties concerned, other than climbers themselves, at any length on the topic. It is my hope that my review of ethical formation in bouldering found here might encourage interest in these sort of challenging relations from critical sports scholarship, and provide a basis in which those examples of partnership and solidarity between climbers and Indigenous communities might be taken as a goal of ethical practice.

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