

Guides, Gear, and Ethics:

Perceptions of Risk

in the

Canadian Alpine Journal

By

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in partial fulfillment for the requirements
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**Guides, Gear, and Ethics:
Perceptions of Risk
in the
*Canadian Alpine Journal***

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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree
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Abstract

In my thesis, I look at perceptions of risk, using the term as a culturally defined concept, in the sport of mountaineering in twentieth century Canada. The *Canadian Alpine Journal*, which is the voice of the Alpine Club of Canada, is my primary source. The *CAJ*, established a discourse on risks in mountaineering, reflecting the values of the mountaineering community and reinforced the rules of conduct for mountaineering. Over the twentieth century, mountaineers have used guides or gear to protect themselves from the risks of mountaineering. I argue that as climbers shifted from relying on guides to relying on their own mountain skills and their gear their perceptions of risk also changed.

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* Up until the 1960s the photographs in the *Canadian Alpine Journal (CAJ)* were not given a separate page number. For this reason, I will give the numbers of the two pages between which the photos appeared. All of these photos have been altered in some manner by cropping, sizing, and adjusting the contrast or brightness. They, therefore, do not appear as they originally did within the pages of the *CAJ*.

Figure One:



CANADIAN PACIFIC

The Route Through the Canadian Rockies

The climbers find in the Canadian Rockies the supreme difficulties and delights that tempt men to the mastery of mountains. Snow-capped peaks, moraines, glaciers; all the charm and hazard of the Swiss mountains are here, but multiplied. The Canadian Rockies have been well termed

Fifty Switzerlands in One

This famous Alpine region is reached only by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Swiss guides are to be found at all the mountain hotels.

Send 4 cents postage for booklet, "The Challenge of the Mountains."

C. E. E. USSHER,
Pass. Traffic Mgr.
Montreal, Canada

**CANADIAN
PACIFIC
RAILWAY**

Canadian Pacific Advertisement, *CAJ*, 1911, 200.

This advertisement targets mountaineers. It is interesting in that it appears to relate "supreme difficulties" with "delights" and "charm" with "hazard". The advertisement also notes the ubiquitous "Swiss guides are to be found at all the mountain hotels." It appears to advertise the risk of mountaineering and the safety of the CPR services and guides.

Figure Two:



**“Edouard Feuz of Interlaken
The Crack Swiss Guide of the Selkirks”**

Rev. J.C. Herdman, “The Ascent of Mt.
Macoun,” *CAJ*, 1907, 104-5.

The CPR imported the Feuzes from Switzerland to guide its clients in the Canadian Rockies. It can be suggested the CPR along with the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) was attempting to create a certain image of the professional mountain guide. The woollen clothing, the rope, and the ice-axe are signs of a mountaineer.

Figure Three:



“Many Feet above Paradise Valley”

“Report of the 1907 Camp,” *CAJ*, 1908, 328-29.

In the early period, mountaineers climbed in hobnailed boots. Hobnails were hammered into the sole of the boot for traction on rock and snow. The equal mix of women and men in this photograph is representative of the near equal mix of men and women in the ACC.

Figure Four:



“Snow School group learning knots”

J.J.G. McCue, “Mount Assiniboine Camp – 1952,” *CAJ*, 1953, 170-171.

The ACC adopted a policy for educating its members in the skills for mountaineering. These skills were taught during annual ACC Summer Camps in rock and snow schools. Here, ACC members are learning how to tie knots. The mix of men and women in this photograph is indicative of the mixed membership of the ACC.

Figure Five:

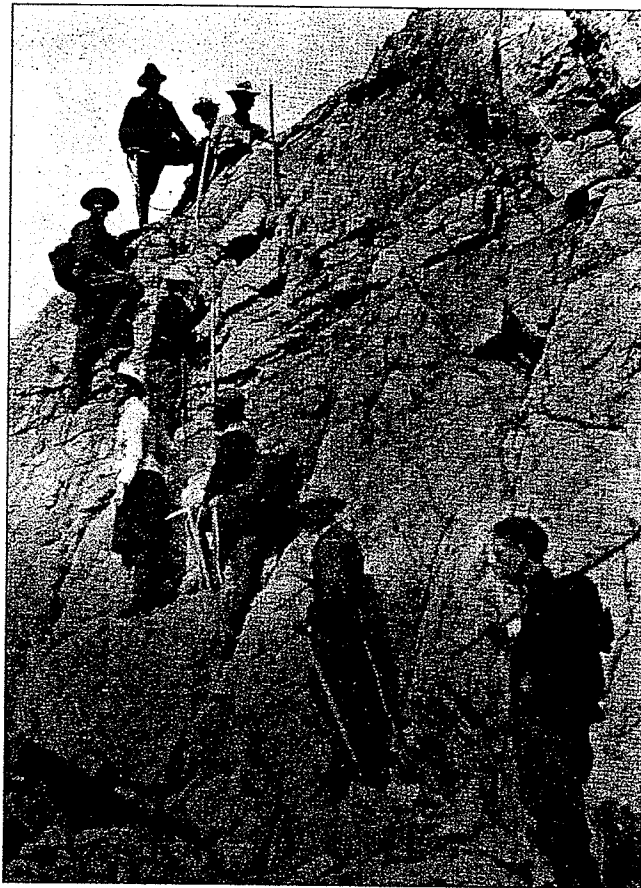


“Making good steps at Snow School”

J.J.G. McCue, “Mount Assiniboine Camp – 1952,” *CAJ*, 1953, 170-171.

In snow school ACC members learned how to travel on snow slopes and how to safely cross glaciers. Cutting steps was an early technique to ascend slopes covered in snow. It required considerable effort and time. Crampons reduced the need to cut steps, allowing mountaineers to ascend snow and ice with more security and more speed.

Figure Six:

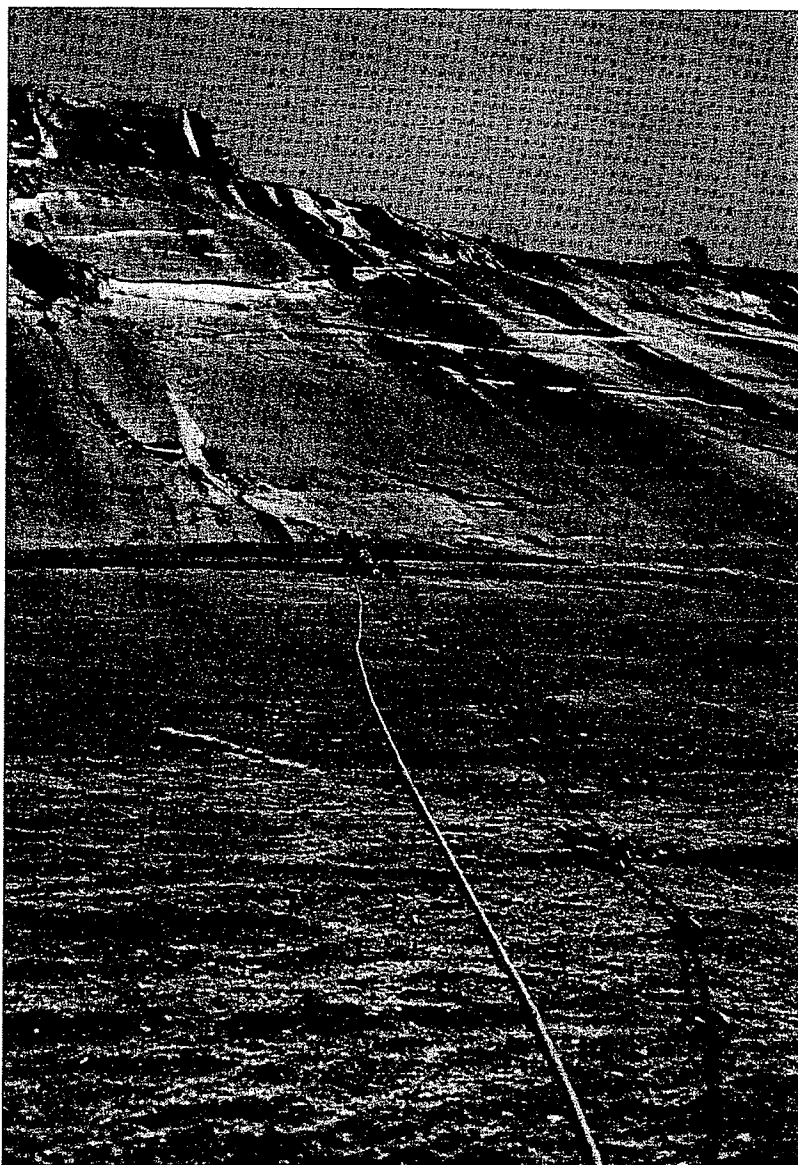


“A Piece of Rock Work”

M.P. Bridgland, “Report of the Chief Mountaineer,” *CAJ*, 1907, 170-71.

This illustrates early mountaineering. Usually mountaineers found the least difficult route to the top. This route looks a little exposed but relatively easy. Yet the mountaineers still believed they require being roped together as a fall may be fatal. Routes like this are still climbed to this day. Many early routes are still considered difficult and committing. The man at the top, next to the two women, looks as if he might be a guide. The second climber from the top, the woman, shows how the rope was just tied around the waist of a mountaineer, which was the accepted method of tying into the rope.

Figure Seven:



“Jim Baldwin on the bolt ladder of the Grand Wall”

Ed Cooper, “The Grand Wall, ten years later,” *CAJ*, 1971, 51.

As all the natural lines were climbed, climbers sought new lines, sometimes on blank faces. Aid climbing allowed climbers to go where cracks were either too small or nonexistent. Holes were drilled into the rock and bolts were placed in the holes. The climber pulled on gear attached to the bolts.

Figure Eight:



“Hugh Neave on the Flake By-pass on CB, Scarface”

Hugh Neave, “Kamloops Report,” *CAJ*, 1979, 84.

Initially, pitons were driven into cracks to protect the climber from falling. Pitons altered the climb by damaging the rock. As technology changed and climbers became aware of the damage caused by pitons, traditional protection emerged. Traditional gear, or trad gear, are metal wedges of various shapes and sizes that can be placed and removed from a crack with minimal to no damage to the rock. In this image, Neave is following a “natural line” and not aid climbing. His trad gear is visible, hanging from his left side. Also visible are his Vibram soled boots and his sit harness. Wearing a sit harness meant that the climber no longer needed to tie the rope around his or her waist, as illustrated in Figure Six.

Figure Nine:



“Clean climbing on Clean Crack, 5.11”

Robin Barely, “Squamish Commentary, 1974-1977,” *CAJ*, 1978, 10.

The sit harness is visible in this photograph. The difficulty of the route is different from that of Figure Eight. In this image, the climber is wearing shoes more specific to rock climbing and would not necessarily be suitable for mountaineering routes. Figures Six through Nine show the development from mountaineering to rock climbing and the change in attire, equipment, and routes.

Introduction:

Creative people who can't help but explore other mental territories are at greater risk, just as someone who climbs a mountain is more at risk than someone who just walks along a village lane.

-- R. D. Laing

Researching this thesis has perhaps shaped my own perception of the critical importance of risk in mountaineering. In late May 2004, I found myself standing before a cliché, hermetically sealed display case in a tourist information centre in the mountain village of Lake Louise. Preserved in the controlled climate of the display case sat a single leather hobnailed mountaineering boot and a length of hemp rope. Margaret Atwood would have understood. Margaret Atwood wrote a poem, "At the Tourist Center in Boston", about her experience in an American tourist information centre. She saw Canada through the eyes of the American tourist campaign. She did not recognise the American image of Canada. She asks, "Whose dream is this, I would like to know:/ is this a manufactured/ hallucination, a cynical fiction, a lure/ for export only?"¹

Look at these outmoded remnants of a time long past. This is what *they* used to use. I was seeing my newfound sport through the eyes of the tourist campaign that had put together this exhibit. I could not help but entertain the idea that my modern Salomon Protrek 7 light mountaineering boots, coupled with 12 point crampons, might give me an advantage. I took in more of the display. To my right hung a picture of a guide. My memory has faded and I cannot remember if it was the Austrian Conrad Kain or one of the Swiss Feuzes, standing next to a client. Trained almost since they could walk, these

¹ Margaret Atwood, "At the Tourist Center in Boston," *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 4th ed. Eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996), 1784-5.

guides were imported from Europe, Switzerland in particular, by the Canadian Pacific Railway to guide its clients through the mountains of Western Canada. The guidebook's convenient rating scale suggested that our objectives, Mts. Athabasca, Andromina, and Columbia, in comparison to other mountains, were relatively easy. I had also spent some time on the internet reading accounts of these climbs, which seemed to confirm the guidebook's ratings. We, three buddies and I, despite our lack of experience, figured that we did not need the aid of a guide. Our combined knowledge and skills included camping, first aid, orienteering, hiking and scrambling, ice and rock climbing, with a recent course on cliff rescue, and mock crevasse rescues at our climbing wall. Another, yet unpractised, skill set came from various how-to books. So marked the beginning of our overly-ambitious week of mountaineering fun.

What I have learned is that climbing mountains is an inherently risky endeavour. Numerous hazards comprise the risks that confront climbers. Hazards in mountaineering are grouped into two categories. Category one includes objective hazards, for example, weather, terrain, glaciers, altitude, time of day, and so on. These are the physical hazards of mountains. The second category consists of subjective hazards, which come from within the climber, including physical and psychological condition, ability, aptitude, and assessment of objective hazards based on past experience. How the climber melds these hazards will directly impact the climber's risk assessment and, thus, management, which shapes the climber's mountain experience and determines success or failure.²

My introduction to mountaineering touches on themes that I will analyse in my thesis, namely the changing role of guides and use of equipment or gear. Before I return

² *Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills*, 6th ed. Eds. Don Graydon and Kurt Hanson, (Seattle: The Mountaineers, 1997), 441-4.

to this, it is useful to study how scholars have examined risk, as well as address the historiography of Canadian mountaineering, which allows me to place my study in context.

While researching risk, I found numerous avenues worthy of study. Originally, of the many topics that I wanted to cover, I had intended to analyse why people climb. I wanted to look at how risk affected choosing to climb. Do climbers climb just for the risk? Or do people climb because it allows them to make friends, exercise, play outside, and so on? Do these people then see climbing as risky? How does gender influence this? As an historian, I particularly wanted to see if these motivations changed over time. I could then, maybe, look at how this fits in with perceptions of wilderness and civilization, the role of leisure and recreation, gender constructs, and so on. But this topic will have to wait for further study. I begin this introduction with an examination of motivations for climbing. A brief look at the literature on why people take risks is useful. It introduces my subject matter, that is, the climbers. More importantly, it is a component of the larger theme of risk and is a good introduction to how I use risk in this essay. To round out the introduction, I conclude with a historiography of Canadian mountaineering.

Looking at the works of psychologists is a starting point for examining why people climb. Psychologists explain the motivations for climbing in terms of personality traits. The concept of sensation seeking predominates the studies. As defined by one psychologist, sensation seeking is "the need for varied, novel and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to undertake physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences."³ Rock climbers, along with those participating in other risk-taking

³ D.W. Robinson, "Stress Seeking: Selected Behavioural Characteristics of Elite Rock Climbers," *Journal of Sport Psychology*, vol. 7, no. 4, (1985), 400.

activities, rate high on assessments of sensation seeking. Interestingly, participation in one risky activity, such as climbing, does not mean that a person will participate in other risk-taking activities, which are viewed as deviant, such as drug use,⁴ even though climbing culture and drug culture are sometimes intertwined. However, sensation seeking may motivate an individual to participate in a wider range of risky sports, just for the sake of seeking risk instead of interest in the sport *per se*.⁵ Those high in sensation seeking may also have a different view of novel, potentially risky, experiences, seeing them as exciting. Thus their perception of risk may be different from those ranking low in sensation seeking.⁶ Another trait is that of trait anxiety, a measure of anxiety levels. Climbers rank low in levels of anxiety, which may explain why climbers can maintain composure during the stresses of climbing,⁷ or at least some semblance thereof. The motivations to climb lie within the individual.

While studying intrinsic rewards in athletes, a psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, happened upon a phenomenon that he calls the "flow experience." Not all athletes reach the flow state. It occurs in activities, even chess, in which the participant can take action. By taking action, the climber seeks a degree of uncertainty and a chance for solving new problems. There is little reward in only climbing one route over and over. While in this state of uncertainty, focus is centred on climbing. Feedback is immediate. Either the climber makes the move or does not. Sense of time may alter

⁴ Marvin Zuckerman, "Sensation Seeking and Risk Taking," *Emotions in Personality and Psychology*, Ed. Carroll E. Izard, (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), 167-8, 183-6

⁵ Rowland, Franken, and Harrison found that high sensation seeking individuals participate in more varied risk sports for shorter periods, however Cronin argues his findings suggest the opposite. Guy L. Rowland, Robert E. Franken, and Kimberley Harrison, "Sensation Seeking and Participation in Sporting Activities," *Journal of Sport Psychology*, vol. 8, no. 3, (1986), 218-19. Christopher Cronin, "Sensation Seeking Among Mountain Climbers," *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 12, no. 6, (1991), 654.

⁶ Zuckerman, 173.

⁷ Robinson, 403.

and the climber may lose awareness of the surroundings, to be transfixed and consumed by the motion of her/his body on the rock. There is a sense of control and confidence. After having achieved the flow state, the climber feels "validated", life is worthwhile and has meaning. It can liberate climbers from what they may see as the drudgery of their normal, workaday life.⁸

It is the prospect of death, or suffering through a rigorous, high altitude mountaineering expedition, that can make this all the more intense. Some individuals take pleasure in the stresses of rigorous activities or those involving inherent risks of bodily harm. A goal achieved through hard work, focus and sometimes suffering makes it that much more valuable. Suffering may also lead to a euphoric state. In seeking death and suffering, the actor must feel some sense of control. They have taken control. They have chosen to act, to put themselves in danger. Without the danger, the risk of death, the activity loses its meaning and it no longer rewarding. It is the individual who generates this meaning, that is, this definition of reward. It is for these reasons that David Le Breton believes that some individuals are attracted to extreme sports. It allows them to symbolically play with death.⁹

In the event of risk becoming real in the form of an accident or fatality, members of the subculture may blame the victim. The notion of acknowledging the inherent risk of the sport is put aside. The death is attributed to something within the victim. For example the victim had poor judgement, lacked the necessary skills, and so forth. This

⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety: The Experience of Play in Work and Games*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1975), 74-101. For more on the flow experience see: Richard G. Mitchell, Jr., *Mountain Experience: The Psychology and Sociology of Adventure*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983), 153-69. Mitchell, a sociologist, also says people are driven to climb because they feel alienated from their work because it is too taxing, challenging or stressful or conversely experience anomie because their work is too easy and not stimulating mentally or physically. Mitchell, 173-83

⁹ David Le Breton, "Playing Symbolically with Death in Extreme Sports," *Body and Society*, vol. 6, no. 1, (2000), 1-11.

allows them to deal with the trauma of the loss.¹⁰ It also suggests a skewed perception of risk.

So where does this leave the relationship of the individual to society? Michael Apter, another psychologist, argues everyone needs excitement of some sort. Without excitement, individuals become bored and may take to deviant and destructive forms of excitement. Is it necessary then to impose state or socially enforced acts of excitement? Apter says yes. Society needs positive ways to excite individuals; an example is the running of the bulls.¹¹ But Csikszentmihalyi gives a more measured response and says no; people cannot be forced into it. There is the chance some would exercise resistance by not participating in the exciting activities.¹² The individuals who do participate in risk-taking activities do have a different perception of risk. Climbers, in particular, have a different perception of risk. This different perception of risk and relationship with risk is a defining characteristic that sets them apart as a subculture.¹³

Sport sociologists have also looked at risk and managing risk. Comparisons have been drawn between risk-taking sports. For example, separate studies of cycling and high school wrestling injuries have shown that risk, through actions, words, coaches,

¹⁰ Kenneth J. Doka, Eric E. Schwarz, and Catherine Schwarz, "Risky Business: Observations on the Nature of Death in Hazardous Sports," *Journal of Death and Dying*, vol. 21, no. 3, (1990), 221-23.

¹¹ Michael J. Apter, *The Dangerous Edge: The Psychology of Excitement*, (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1992), 7, 20, 21, 175-97. Robert Chisnall, "Upsetting the Applecart, Part Four: Overseers and Gate Keepers," Risk Management for Canadian Educators, Quebec, 2004.

¹² Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, 100.

¹³ Peter Donnelly, "Sport Subcultures" *Exercise and Sport Sciences Reviews*, vol. 13, (1985), 539-78. Trevor Williams and Peter Donnelly, "Subcultural Production, Reproduction and Transformation in Climbing," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 20, no. 1/2, (1985), 3-15. Kevin Young and Peter Donnelly, "The Construction and Confirmation of Identity in Sport Subcultures," *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3, (1988), 223-240. In "Sport Subcultures," Donnelly defines "[a] subculture [as] 1) an identifiable group within a culture or across cultures, 2) composed of smaller groups and individuals, 3) whose members are similar in values, norms, beliefs, dress, attitudes, language, etc., that are somewhat different from the cultures in which they exist, 4) and which dominate their life style and allocation of resources. 5) Subcultures are formed around activities that have scope and potential, 6) and are actively created and maintained by their members, 7) by face-to-face interaction and other forms of communication", 561.

media, fellow participants, and such, have normalised risk. For wrestlers, the significance of injury has been minimised by prompt and increasingly effective medical treatment. This treatment may entice a wrestler to continue in spite of pain.¹⁴ In cycling, by normalising risk, accidents and close calls are viewed as commonplace. Risks do not deter riders, yet they are not cycling for the sole purpose of seeking risk. Riders do try to manage the risks, before and during a ride, by choosing where and when to ride and with whom they ride.¹⁵

Adventure programmers and tour businesses have a keen interest in factors that may alter perceptions of risk. The application is two-fold. By pinpointing the factors that change perception of risks, the adventure programmers and participants can pay closer attention to these factors. By prevention, they can halt the sequence of events that lead groups to take on too much risk, which might eventually lead to an accident.¹⁶ This presents a conundrum because adventure programmers are trying to market, or expose people to, risk. Questions arise as to how much risk is ethical. Is there any justification for putting people at risk, and can all the risks really be managed?¹⁷

¹⁴ Timothy J. Curry and Richard H. Strauss, "A Little Pain Never Hurt Anybody: A Photo-Essay on the Normalization of Sport Injuries," *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2, (1994), 195-208.

¹⁵ E. Albert, "Dealing with Danger: The Normalization of Risk in Cycling," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 34, no. 2, (1999), 157-71.

¹⁶ Michael Helms describes a "risky shift." At times, decisions are made as a group. The more experienced or knowledgeable members tend to influence the final decision the most. These members also tend to have a different perception of risk and might be more likely to take more significant risks. As a result the less experienced members take on more risk than they would have otherwise. Moreover, since the group made the decisions, the responsibility for the outcome are distributed over the group as opposed to on one individual. There is less consequence for the outcome. Michael Helms, "Factors Affecting Evaluations of Risks and Hazards in Mountaineering," *Journal of Experiential Education*, vol. 7, no. 3, (1984), 23-4.

¹⁷ Robert Chisnall, "Upsetting the Applecart, Part One: The Public and the Media," "Upsetting the Applecart, Part Two: Practitioners: Technical Standards," "Upsetting the Applecart, Part Three: Practitioners: Instructor Conduct and Qualifications," "Upsetting the Applecart, Part Four: Overseers and Gate Keepers," Unpublished paper presented at conference Risk Management for Canadian Educators, Quebec, 2004. Thomas James, "The Paradox of Safety and Risk," *Journal of Experiential Education*, vol. 3, no. 2, (1980), 20-23. Simon Priest and Rusty Baillie, "Justifying the Risk to Others: The Real Razors Edge," *Journal of Experiential Education*, vol. 10, no. 1, (1987), 16-22.

These examples of risk-taking are a basis for a definition of risk that I use in this essay. At this point I need an operational definition, or at least some discussion of, risk. What is risk? In terms of insurance and business, risk is spoken of in terms of chance, uncertainty, probability, and loss and the varying degrees to which these terms can be defined or measured and related to one another. Risk needs to be defined so that it can be measured. Being able to measure it means that it can be used to determine the amount of reward one receives for taking risks, such as investing. The difficulty lies in separating risk, which is believed to be objective, from uncertainty, which is believed to be subjective. In tracing the "evolution of the concept of risk", Oliver Wood settles on a definition of risk that excludes uncertainty. He concludes, "[t]he 'chance of loss' definition . . . seems to describe most suitably what is meant by risk."¹⁸ Though not a definite answer, it relates risk with chance and loss.

It is clear that risk is both an individual and a social factor. Among the sociologists who have studied risk, the work of Ulrich Beck cannot be overlooked. His is a grand theory, an overarching metanarrative. Industrial society is becoming a "risk society."¹⁹ Industrialisation has increased the production of goods. With these goods, "bads" are also produced, such as pollution, toxic waste, as well as social problems. These "bads" are difficult to control and contain within national boundaries. Therefore, these hazards affect everyone, regardless of socio-economic status or geographical location. Even those who created the "bads" are subject to the effects.²⁰ Risk society

¹⁸ Oliver G. Wood, "Evolution of the Concept of Risk," *Journal of Risk and Insurance*, vol. 31, no. 1, (1964), 89-91.

¹⁹ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Trans. by Mark Ritter. (London: SAGE Publications, 1992), 9-16, 1-8.

²⁰ Beck, 36-44. The international scope of risks are also explored by a proponent of Beck named Joost Van Loon, in his *Risk and Technological Culture: Towards a Sociology of Virulence*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.

theory claims that it is no longer viable to speak about the organisation of society solely in terms of class. It is more useful to use risk as a new foundation for analysis.²¹

An aim of modernity, claim Beck and others, was the institution of control over uncertainties in the world.²² Risks are far reaching and it is often difficult to gauge their impact, especially long term. By attempting to control the risks, other risks are generated, or neglected, undermining the illusion of control promised in modernity. In seeking answers and placing blame, the risks are exposed to the public, making risks an everyday topic. These risks, nuclear radiation or ozone layer depletion for example, are not measurable by the lay person. The lay person then must rely on expert knowledge for identifying and defining risks. The faith of the lay public in expert knowledge, namely scientific authority, has eroded. The lay public see that even experts disagree on risks and lack the ability to manage the risks. And it is the experts with science and industry that have created these very risks.²³

Sociologist Niklas Luhman argues that it is almost impossible for experts to identify all the risks. Investing time and resources to identify and address one risk draws attention away from other risks. It is not possible to identify and measure every risk at the same time. Unintentionally, potential risks may be overlooked. By the time the risk arises, it may be too late to deal with it.²⁴ By the very attempt to manage risk, more risks are created. In all, this leaves the lay public seeking new ways to structure and interpret their lives.²⁵

²¹ Beck, 91-102. Van Loon, 26.

²² Beck, 51-2.

²³ Van Loon, 3.

²⁴ Niklas Luhman, *Risk: A Sociological Theory*, (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), 44,48. Frank Furedi, *Culture of Fear: Risk-Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation*, (New York: Continuum, 2002), 57, 62-3.

²⁵ Van Loon, 3, 41.

Sociologist Frank Furedi argues that people now blame traditional structures of power, that is the political system, which was previously seen as a check and control on science and industry. Instead people are turning to special interest groups or nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) for answers and direction and to help shape policy. A reliance on non-elected groups threatens democracy because a select few are looking to change the policies of those who were elected by the public. Even though voter turnout is low, these NGOs or special interest groups represent fewer individuals. In part, these interest groups are also perpetuating the state of fear of risks.²⁶ Sociologist Joost Van Loon theorises that a state of urgency exists. He relies on the principal tenets of Beck's risk society mantra. Van Loon argues that technology is advancing exponentially and so are the risks or hazards, for example pollution, with them. But with advancing technology there is also the capability of more quickly identifying risks. This exponential increase in technology and thus risks creates a state of urgency.²⁷

Beck does not seem to be as fatalistic. His theory suggests advocacy groups are sites of resistance and provide the lay public with power and agency.²⁸ Modernity has changed the private sphere and individuals' lives. "Traditional" foundations "such as marriage, the nuclear family and lifetime employment" are being rearranged and redefined. As these, and other, foundations crumble, the individual is forced to use other things with which s/he can define her/himself. As a result, the individual re-enters him/herself and the individual becomes the primary agent. Responsibility is placed on the individual to seek, make sense of, and act on the knowledge of risk. This is where interest groups play a role. Corporations, governments, and interest groups use mass

²⁶ Furedi, 173-182, 188-192.

²⁷ Van Loon, 4.

²⁸ Van Loon, 4-5.

media for disseminating information on risk. The messages each group conveys, despite the biases, manifest a public sphere in which risk is discussed. The individual, partially left to the mercy of the biased messages, is still able to configure an understanding of risks with which s/he is faced.²⁹ The result of living in this risk society though is that people become risk adverse, cannot deal with uncertainty, and view risk as negative or associated with danger.³⁰

One problem with these risk society theories is that they tend to neglect subcultures that involve risk takers. The theories state that people are becoming risk averse, and that, conveniently for me, Frank Furedi, one theorist, uses climbing as an example. Furedi claims that climbers continue in the sport because they can seek security in improved gear.³¹ Climbing, and other risky sports, are an exercise in practising safety. How does this explain sensation seeking individuals and the flow theory? John Tulloch and Deborah Lupton surveyed individuals by asking them to define risk. The answers included uncertainty, something to fear, negative outcomes, physical harm, and probability. But some participants surveyed did answer that risk could be a positive thing. Does this answer contest risk society theory?³² If it does, and to a degree it appears to, what else is there in the study of risk?

The answer lies in an anthropological approach to the study of risk. The work of Mary Douglas, anthropologist, and Aaron Wildavsky, political scientist, is a useful starting point. (Tulloch and Lupton draw on Douglas and Wildavsky for their critique of risk society theory.) Douglas and Wildavsky identify two general types of risks:

²⁹ Beck, 87. Van Loon, 5-6.

³⁰ Furedi, 1-18. Van Loon, 1-44. John Tulloch and Deborah Lupton, *Risk and Everyday Life*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 2-11, 16-25.

³¹ Furedi, 4.

³² Tulloch and Lupton, 17-19.

voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary risks are acceptable to the individual because s/he chooses to put him/herself at risk. Conversely, involuntary risks are not as acceptable because the individual had no choice in facing the risk.³³

Voluntary risks are viewed as less threatening than involuntary risks. Yet, as with Luhman's theory that not all risks can be calculated, Douglas and Wildavsky contend that it is not possible to know everything. The individual may be exposed to more risks than s/he realises; "risks are hidden". Douglas and Wildavsky explore how risks are identified, defined, and brought to the attention of members of a culture, which is not an objective neutral process. They claim that probability theories and the scientific method are practised under the guise of objectivity. Since not everything can be known, probability theory and scientific method cannot factor in everything and is not an objective process. The scientist or probability theorist selects the factors that s/he wishes to measure. Moreover, s/he selects the risk to study. Therefore "risks are selected."³⁴ This selectivity is supported by the suggestion that even the experts disagree about what constitutes a risk. The disagreement bears resemblance to risk society theory.³⁵ The selection process requires "moral judgements", and the morals are founded in the value system of the culture. These judgements are political as well in that these judgements affect relations between individuals and/or groups of people.

Douglas and Wildavsky acknowledge that technology does shape risk, though not in the same fashion as Beck and proponents believe. As an example, Douglas and

³³ Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 16-21.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 7-8, 29-32.

³⁵ Experts setting climbing safety standards also disagree on topics ranging from the proper spelling of the name of a knot, and, more related to risk, to the proper use of a piece of equipment. Robert Chisnall, "Upsetting the Applecart, Part Two: Practitioners: Technical Standards," Risk Management for Canadian Educators, Quebec, 2004. Chisnall, "Upsetting the Applecart, Part Three: Practitioners: Instructor Conduct and Qualifications," Risk Management for Canadian Educators, Quebec, 2004.

Wildavsky use the impact of technology on the environment. The concept of the environment, namely nature, is a cultural construct and culturally defined. The discussion of technology will then be discussed in terms of the cultural definition of nature. Neither technology nor nature are neutral objective concepts. It is similar for people who participate in sports that involve risk-taking. Participants describe risk-taking experiences in terms of controlling or testing the body, exploring the self, communing with nature or natural environments, and so on. Body, self, and nature are cultural constructs. The manner in which the participants view their body, self, or nature will shape their definitions and perceptions of risk. The body is a framework with "defined" boundaries. Risks are shared because members of a culture come from the same value system and are likely to define cultural constructs in a similar fashion.³⁶

Taking a cultural perspective entertains the notion that perspectives on risk are open to change over the years or even daily. Changes can occur not only within the culture or subculture but also for an individual. In the individual, perceptions of risk may change with age, having a family, and also from activity to activity. There is recognition of the fluidity between groups or subcultures and the dynamism of an individual's perception as s/he moves from one group to another.³⁷ For example, an individual may weigh different factors for risk assessment while driving her/his family to buy organic groceries than when climbing.

A risk is something that has yet to happen. It is not "real"; it is "becoming-real".³⁸ The story of my first lead fall, though anecdotal, helps to illustrate the point. I had redpointed the route on lead before and knew the moves. Somehow, I lost the

³⁶ Douglas and Wildavsky, 32-40. Tulloch and Lupton, 32-36.

³⁷ Tulloch and Lupton, 16-40, 132-4.

³⁸ Van Loon, 2.

sequence and climbed right, instead of left. I ran out of hand holds. Hanging on to the last and terribly nasty holds, I tensed up and thought over and over, "I am going to fall." I had not fallen, yet, nor was I falling but that was the risk: falling. I peeled off. A split second later and 12 feet lower, I came to a rest. My belayer, rope, harness, and last quick draw caught me. I felt a sudden relief. I had fallen and I was no longer falling. Surprising myself, I felt calm. I no longer faced the risk of falling. It was done. I was safe, more or less, for the rope could still break, my belayer could still drop me, or the quickdraw or bolt could fail. Centring on my calmness, I gripped the rock, placed my feet gently on the footholds, and continued the climb, undaunted. Yet Douglas concludes, "[b]ut it [risk] is not a thing, it is a way of thinking, and a highly artificial contrivance at that."³⁹

I do not want to entangle myself in this debate. I am not schooled in sociological and anthropological study and my understanding of the theory is only rudimentary at best. What I want to derive from this intellectual *mêlée* is that Douglas and Wildavsky and Tulloch and Lupton show that a component of risk is culturally and/or socially constructed or defined. Risk can be given meaning, in part, by the cultural or social values of a culture, or subculture. The value system of a culture can shape perceptions of risk, and those perceptions and definitions of risk change over time. Risk is historical.

One of the themes in this thesis is the exploration of the climbing subculture and its values, beliefs, and so on, and how they influence perceptions of risk, thus affecting the actions of the members of the subculture. These values do change over time and, therefore, so do perceptions of risk. In the early era, from the turn of the century to about the end of World War Two, mountaineers used guides. By the second era, after 1945,

³⁹ Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 46.

climbers had learned mountain craft and relied on new developments in climbing gear and new techniques to pioneer new routes. Technological developments were also a catalyst for change. In the third period, climbers observed that the technology damaged the rock. Debate ensued over the proper use of climbing equipment. Objective hazards are not the only risks facing climbers. Not abiding by social, or subcultural conventions, can also pose risks.

Other forms of risky behaviour has drawn the recent attention of social and cultural historians. This work examines personal behaviours involving sex, drinking, and gambling. Two such books stand out. The first is Craig Heron's social history of drinking in Canada, *Booze: A Distilled History*.⁴⁰ Gambling is the focus of study in the second source. In her book *At Odds: Gambling and Canadians, 1919-1969*, Suzanne Morton explores the risk-taking activity of gambling, with a focus on how its meaning was defined through race, class, and gender.⁴¹ Both of these studies were nominated for a major Canadian Historical Association Award in 2004. Could the works by Heron and Morton be an indication of greater interest in risky behaviour in Canada?

Heron's and Morton's studies trace the history of a risk-taking activity. Though different, but not necessarily separate, activities, gambling and drinking have underwent a variety of formal regulations, re-evaluations by health officials, and diverse interpretations by the general public.⁴² It could be argued that the change in perception of

⁴⁰ Craig Heron, *Booze: A Distilled History*, (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2003).

⁴¹ Suzanne Morton, *At Odds: Gambling and Canadians, 1919-1969*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). Morton has also explored gambling and gender in another work titled: "A Man's City: Montreal, Gambling, and Male Space in the 1940s," *Power, Place, and Identity: Historical Studies of Social and Legal Regulation in Quebec*, Eds. Tamara Myers, Kate Boyer, Mary Anne Poutanen, and Steven Watt. (Montreal: Montreal History Group, 1998), 169-82.

⁴² Heron, 371-388. Morton, *At Odds*, 197-201.

the activity could indicate a change in the perception of the risk posed by the activity. Therefore, perceptions of risk are open to change over time.

The rest of the chapter will explore themes that arise in the historiography of mountaineering and rock climbing, with a concentration on the Alpine Club of Canada and Canadian mountaineers. It will begin with the climbing narrative and its close relation the biography or autobiography. Chronologically, the accounts in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* are perhaps the start of the historiography in Canadian mountaineering and the ACC. However, the *CAJ* itself and the accounts within it will be addressed in more detail in Chapter One. Non-academics and academics alike, who not uncommonly are mountaineers themselves, have written narratives and biographies. Simple in format, these sources either focus on a particular mountain or climb or on an individual or group of individuals. Writer and mountaineer Paddy Sherman, in his *Cloud Walkers*, writes about six climbs in Canada on Mts. Logan, Waddington, Slesse, Robson, Fairweather and Howson, spanning a period from early to mid 19th century. Phil Dowling, mountaineer and contributor to the *CAJ*, elected to focus on mountaineers, nine in total. These range from American-born Charles Fay, active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, to the new generation of climbers of the 1970s, including Brian Greenwood and Dick Culbert. This list in addition includes the guides Ed Feuz, Jr., Conrad Kain, and Hans Gmoser. Of these nine, only one woman, Phyllis Munday, receives attention. To extend the gendered coverage, outdoor enthusiast and Park Ranger, Cyndi Smith, compiled a work chronicling the contributions and adventures of women in the out of doors. Mountaineering historian PearlAnn Reichwein and scholar of leisure Karen Fox have compiled the diaries of a mountaineer from Winnipeg, Margaret Fleming. Their published primary source,

Mountain Diaries: The Alpine Adventures of Margaret Fleming, 1929-1980, contributes a useful source for studying gender and mountaineering.⁴³

Unlike its British counterpart, the Alpine Club, the ACC broke down one gender barrier and accepted women members. At the first summer camp, women made up one third of the ACC membership.⁴⁴ Phyllis Munday's contribution to mountaineering in Canada makes her a prime target of study. Kathryn Bridge, historian and archivist, details the life of Phyllis Munday in the biography *Phyllis Munday, Mountaineer*. Along with her husband, Don Munday, who served as ACC president, they explored extensively in the Coast Mountains of British Columbia. Of their numerous adventures and explorations, attempting the first ascent of Mt. Waddington stands as a significant contribution to mountaineering in the Coast Range and a high point in her personal achievement. Active in the ACC, Munday volunteered at the summer camps as first aid and snow and ice instructor and guided new members on graduating climbs. She sat on the ACC executive and served as the *CAJ* editor, from 1953 to 1969, contributing her own tales of adventure and exploration.

Gender is a factor in perception of risk.⁴⁵ It would not be difficult to frame a study in gender based on the accounts in the *CAJ*. An article "Mountain Climbing for Women", by Mary E. Crawford, appearing in the "Scientific Section" of the *CAJ*, focuses

⁴³ Paddy Sherman, *Cloud Walkers: Six Climbs on Major Canadian Peaks*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1965), Phil Dowling, *The Mountaineers: Famous Climbers in Canada*, (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1979), Cyndi Smith, *Off the Beaten Track: Women Adventurers and Mountaineers in Western Canada*, (Jasper: Coyote Books, 1989), and *Mountain Diaries: The Alpine Adventures of Margaret Fleming, 1929-1980*, Eds. PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 2004).

⁴⁴ This number rose in the years to follow. Reichwein's data indicates that between 1922 and 1956 women comprised approximately 40% of the ACC membership. PearlAnn Reichwein, "Beyond the Visionary Mountains: The Alpine Club of Canada and the Canadian National Park Idea. 1906 to 1969," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 1995), 368.

⁴⁵ Tulloch and Lupton, 20-22, 33-4. J.H. Kerr, and J. Vlaminkx, "Gender Differences in the Experience of Risk," *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 22, no. 2, (1997), 293-95.

more on the physical aspects of mountaineering and the resultant health benefits. Risk is mentioned in relation to danger. Crawford says that there is no need to fear the dangers of mountaineering because "there are guides, men of experience, whom she has only to obey, and who will show her the right thing to do." Clearly, at least in the early era, managing risk resided in the man's sphere of responsibilities. Facing dangers for women mountaineers was seen as beneficial. "I am convinced that making a fairly dangerous climb, where every sense must be alert and cool, makes a woman more fearless in attempting difficult tasks in her ordinary life."⁴⁶ There was some acceptance for women to take risks. Women frequently contributed accounts to the *CAJ* from day one, some of which depicted first ascents. Even though this topic of risk and risk-taking offers a fertile ground for a discussion of gender, gender and masculinity will not be explicitly explored in this study. This is not due to the lack of feasibility in studying the topic of gender and recreation. Shirley Tillotson's *The Public at Play: Gender in the Politics of Recreation in Post-War Ontario* demonstrates the viability of examining the topic of gender and recreation.⁴⁷

Canadian historians have studied the themes of gender and masculinity. To put these studies in context, it might be useful to start with a more general, yet brief, look at leisure studies and sports history. Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet's preliminary study of leisure in early 20th century Alberta is one starting point. They argue that, though not homogenous in aims and beliefs, the English-speaking upper classes in Alberta acted as a hegemonic force in shaping leisure. More than just what one did while not at work, leisure was a cultural and social construct that reflected the contemporary views, in this

⁴⁶ Mary E. Crawford, "Mountain Climbing for Women," *CAJ*, 1909, 87, 90.

⁴⁷ Shirley Tillotson, *The Public at Play: Gender in the Politics of Recreation in Post-War Ontario*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

case, of the English-speaking elite of Alberta. Leisure time had to be useful. In the eyes of employers, leisure should alleviate stress and re-create the individual so that he or she could return to work refreshed and, thus more productive. Leisure was not a reward for working hard, but something to increase production. Moreover, through sport, or even hanging out in pubs, leisure activities created a social opportunity to impart values onto an individual, such as the rules of fair play and values characteristic of manliness and masculinity.⁴⁸ Sports historian, Bruce Kidd, focusing more on organised sport, argues that the hegemonic force of sports organisations, through amateur and professional sport, took to "The Making of Men".⁴⁹ Morris Mott's look at early 20th century Winnipeg, reveals a fear of the negative effects of city life on manliness. The solution lies in physical activity in the outdoors.⁵⁰

In his article on mountaineers in post-1945 British Columbia, Christopher Dummitt would extent this fear of city life to postwar Vancouver. Living in a suburban environment with white-collar jobs forced the middle class men into a routine and confronted them with the distractions of children and chores of daily life. Thus they had lost control and power through the ennui of routine. The remedy lay in joining the ranks of the BC Mountaineering Club (BCMC) and testing themselves in the mountains. Facing the risks of mountaineering allowed these men to make decisions that mattered and, in doing so, take control of their emotions and body as well as the situation at hand. This back to nature approach may appear to be antimodernist, yet Dummitt pegs

⁴⁸ Wetherell, Donald G. and Irene Kmet, *Useful Pleasures: The Shaping of Leisure in Alberta, 1896-1945*, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1990), xvi-xxiv, 7-9, 21-22, 81-3, 101, 123-86, 343-71.

⁴⁹ Bruce Kidd, *The Struggle for Canadian Sport*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 44-93.

⁵⁰ Morris Mott, "One Solution to the Urban Crisis: Manly Sports and Winnipeggers, 1900-1914," *Urban History Review*, vol. 12, no. 2, (1983), 57-70.

mountaineers as modernist, displaying the same characteristics of the modernisers these mountaineers were trying to escape.⁵¹

Through organising a club, formally and informally, the BCMC members were able to, control the mountain experience. Within the club they imposed rules and regulations and control over membership. They sought untouched wilderness. Yet, by preserving wilderness areas, they took on the role of managing it. For example, by creating a system of trails they were able to regulate where people could go. By speaking in terms of grading trails or routes, they were creating hierarchical systems of classification. In doing all this, they recreated the organisation and restrictions, only different in kind, from which they were trying to escape in modern life. They believed risk could be controlled. It could be controlled with rational planning and by learning skills to make one an expert. The situation could be made safe with the proper state of mind and with technique.⁵² Relying heavily on technique is synonymous with modernity. This theme of modernity will be revisited in Chapter Four, the debate on ethics. I centre on risk, which will be examined throughout the thesis.

The focus returns to Phyl Munday. In the 1930s, she extensively explored the Waddington Range with her husband Don Munday. These explorations offer insight into a unique perspective on gender. Karen Routledge analyses Phyl Munday's unique experience of "Being a girl without being a girl". While mountaineering, Phyl Munday challenged female gender norms. When in the mountains, she shed the constricting attire of women's clothes, donning more functional pants. On approaches, she helped haul gear. On rock, she displayed confidence and courage and proficient climbing skills and

⁵¹ Christopher Dummitt, "Risk on the Rocks: Modernity, Manhood, and Mountaineering in Postwar British Columbia," *BC Studies*, no. 141, (2004), 10-18, 27-29.

⁵² Dummitt, 3-29.

ability. In the words of Ed Feuz, she was “[a] strong woman, as strong as any man.”⁵³ She was a worthy player of the “climber’s game”. But Phyl Munday did not consider herself a feminist. She still played the “woman’s game”. For example, around camp, she tended to the domestic duties of cooking and cleaning. While on the mountain, she allowed the men to make the major decisions. As Feuz’s comment suggests, she gained the admiration of her male counterparts. Yet they tended to view her as an exception to their preconceived notions of gender, which means that Phyl Munday did little to challenge gender norms. It is striking how, away from the watchful eye of societal norms, Phyl Munday could conduct herself in a way considered masculine, yet still chose the role of wife and stereotypical woman. Mountaineering allowed her this opportunity. It would be interesting to explore this further to see if other women mountaineers had similar experiences and maybe female athletes as well. Especially since Wetherell and Kmet point out that women whose occupations, such as farmers and hunters, were physically demanding rejected the notion that women pursue non-physically demanding leisure activities.⁵⁴ With Phyl Munday’s experience, Routledge points out how gender constructs are arbitrary.⁵⁵

A mountaineer from Winnipeg, Margaret Flemming may shed some light on the subject. Reichwein and Fox write about her experiences. She joined the ACC in 1929. Single and employed as a schoolteacher, she had the time and funding to actively pursue mountaineering. She did not try to lead a dual life of mountain woman and city woman. Instead she blended her identities to her own ends, on her own terms, yet still within the

⁵³ Dowling, 145.

⁵⁴ Wetherell and Kmet, 381.

⁵⁵ Karen Routledge, “‘Being a Girl without Being a Girl’: Gender and Mountaineering on Mount Waddington, 1926-36,” *BC Studies*, no. 141, (2004), 31-58.

bounds of the ACC. In doing this she managed to indulge in her intellectual, social, and traveling and mountaineering interests. All these were important to her and she did not climb for the sake of climbing itself. She met climbing partners with a similar attitude towards climbing. With such partners she did not face gender stereotypes and climbed as an equal partner, exercising the ability to make decisions on the climb. As the first woman editor of the *CAJ*, from 1942 to 1952, she also defined this role on her own terms, distributing the duties over a board of editors instead of taking on sole responsibility as senior editor. Flemming differs from Munday in that Flemming did not try to live in two worlds. Flemming defined herself by choosing to blend her identities.⁵⁶

The first ACC summer camps drew hundreds of members, with extensive impact on the surroundings. This draws attention to another theme from the works on the ACC, that is, conservation. In the ACC Constitution, two mandates appear contradictory. One mandate promotes "the opening of new regions as a national playground" while the other calls for "the preservation of the natural beauties of the mountain places". Both PearlAnn Reichwein, a historian, and Margaret Johnston, a geographer, frame this apparent contradiction in the larger scope of developing park policy within Canada, by focussing on the period up to 1930, the inception of the National Parks Act.

The ACC rallied around the issue of the proposed hydroelectric and irrigation development in the Waterton and Spray Lakes area. The proposed damming of these areas would irrevocably alter the recreational potential. The ACC saw itself as a primary user of this, and any, mountainous region, and thus felt it had a vested interest in halting the project. Arthur Wheeler, the first president of the ACC and by now the ACC

⁵⁶ PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, "Margaret Flemming and the Alpine Club of Canada: A Woman's Place in Mountain Leisure and Literature, 1932-1952," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, (2001), 35-60.

honorary president and *CAJ* editor, proved to be a passionate, persuasive defender of these natural spaces. Other ACC members, for example James Outram, who in a three summer extravaganza made numerous first ascents, the most significant were Mts. Assiniboine, Columbia, Forbes, and Bryce, also held sway with prominent people who could shape the outcome of this contested issue. The Commissioner of Dominion Parks, J.B. Harkin drew on Wheeler's and the ACC's recommendations while considering the eventual decision to preserve these areas. The ACC's vision of use and conservation are echoed in the 1930 Parks Act.

Reichwein is quick to point out, not surprisingly, that all ACC members did not see eye to eye on the matter. Some members supported the industrial development, but with little effect. These campaigns honed the lobbying skills of the ACC, crystallised its stance on use and conservation, and put itself on the map as a special interest group with some clout. Unfortunately, in its conservation campaign, the ACC had embittered the federal Conservatives, who after victory in the 1930 election, cut federal funding to the ACC. This marked a shift in ACC interest, from that of conservation to recreation, with an interest in pioneering and exploring new routes.

This introduction has presented my methodology. Mountaineering has attracted the attention of historians who have used mountaineering to explore themes of risk and modernity, gender, and land use and conservation. But, I am framing my work within the theme of risk as a cultural construct, which is based on the works of sociologists and anthropologists. In the following chapter, I introduce my subject, the Alpine Club of Canada, and the major source, the *Canadian Alpine Journal*.

Chapter One:

The Alpine Club of Canada and the *Canadian Alpine Journal*

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

-- William Shakespeare

I use the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (CAJ) as my primary source because it served as the voice of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) and because it offers a rich selection of articles that seemed to address a full range of topics, including risk, in significant and historically changing ways. I ended up concentrating upon three periods: 1907-1917, 1950-1960, and 1970-1980. Articles from years outside these three periods will also be drawn on when they are pertinent to my topic. The changes in mountaineering did not occur overnight and these periods have rough boundaries, but they are functional in that they provide many insights into the changing mountaineering milieu.

The first issue was published in 1907, one year after the inception of the ACC. Up until 1969, the CAJ changed little. It measured 22 by 17 cm (8 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches), about the size of *Reader's Digest*, and ranged from about 150 to 200 pages per annual issue. Articles were grouped by topic and the structure varied over the decades. At various times the CAJ contained some or all of the following sections: Mountaineering Section, a Scientific Section, indicative of the ACC's interest in promoting scientific study and exploration, a section for book reviews, an In Memoriam section, an Official Section for news from the club executive, and Ski and Winter Mountaineering Section. For the sake of focus, I have not researched ski or winter mountaineering. Articles were written by members or sometimes reprinted from other alpine journals, either from North

America or Europe. Black and white photos and/or hand sketches accompanied articles. Maps were also not uncommon. The advertising is noted by its absence. From time to time, an advertisement found its way onto the last page of the journal. By the 1940s, the *CAJ* ran no advertisements. Margaret Fleming, *CAJ* editor from 1942 to 1952, remembers years later the difficulties of securing advertising for the *CAJ*.¹ The majority of the ads were for the CPR and its rail services and its chateaus in the "Canadian Alps". Other ads sold gear and outfitter services. For an example of an advertisement from the *CAJ* see page v. There was also indirect advertising. In their accounts, mountaineers regularly expressed gratitude to and thanked those who helped them along the climb, such as, the CPR, the friendly staff at CPR hotels, the guides and outfitters, helpful staff at various cafés or restaurants, pilots of air taxi services, and labourers of remote work camps, and so on. Most likely genuine, these acknowledgements also indirectly advertised these services with first hand descriptions of their quality. This indirect advertising continued into the 1970s.

By the 1970s, the format of the *CAJ* had changed dramatically. It measured 28 by 21 cm (10 ¾ by 8 ¼ inches), roughly the size of *Maclean's*, and weighed in at around 100 pages per annual issue. It had a general table of contents, under which the bulk of the accounts fell. Mountaineering and climbing accounts took precedence, yet articles of an academic nature also appeared, including topics on altitude sickness, "Psychopathology in Alpinism", land use and preservation, and ACC and mountaineering history, to name a few. A second section was reserved for trip reports and accounts, which were grouped by mountain region within Canada or by foreign locale. Again for focus, I rely primarily on

¹*Mountain Diaries: The Alpine Adventures of Margaret Fleming, 1929-1980*, Eds. PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 2004), 193.

feature articles and not so much on trip reports. Since its first publication, poetry had intermittently appeared in the *CAJ*. An editorial and letters to the editor section were new to the 1970s issues.

The style of writing had also changed by the seventies. Early accounts were highly formulaic. Accounts unfolded in the same basic order: route or mountain history; trip planning and members of the climbing party; travel to the mountain; the ascent, retold in a linear framework, detailing when climb started, travel times, rests, elevations, route descriptions, gear used, whether the party reached the summit or not, and then the descent; and finished with a reflection on the climb. Historian David Robins notes that early mountaineers were climbing in the name of scientific study. Thus the accounts were written in the style of a scientific report, retelling the story sequentially from start to finish. Robins disagrees with Peter Donnelly over the scientism in early mountaineering. Donnelly argues early mountaineers climbed in the name of science to give some credibility to a seemingly ludicrous and unproductive endeavour. Whereas Robins contends that early mountaineers, even though their scientific practices may seem crude by contemporary standards, genuinely climbed in the name of scientific study.² I tend to agree with Robins because many climbers appeared to be amateur scientists and would have written in a style applicable to their interests. Whatever the reason, this scientific format persisted for sometime after mountaineering gained acceptance as a recreational activity.

Accounts from the 1970s were written in different and various formats. Content expanded to include a more human element to the climb, revealing the feelings and

² David Robins, "Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class: The Victorian Mountaineers," *Theory, Culture, and Society*, vol. 4, no. 4, (1987), 588-89.

emotions of climbers, as well as delivering it in a more humorous light. Climbers and mountaineers now coloured their stories with profanity and tales of late night drinking escapades and recreational drug taking, mention of which seemed taboo in early times.³

These changes reflect the changing mountain climbing community. An exploration of these changes will help me explain why I concentrate on the three periods. The work of Canadian mountaineering chronicler Chic Scott aided me in selecting my periods of study. According to Scott, echoing most overviews, 1886 to 1926 were the "Glory Days" of Canadian Mountaineering.⁴ Yet, 1907 is a logical starting point for my study. As mentioned earlier, foreigners shaped early mountaineering in Canada. I choose to focus on Canadian climbers. The founding of the ACC, with the publication of the *CAJ*, is a convenient locus for exploring the accounts of Canadian mountaineers. It marks the inception of the ACC and a time in which a nascent club was trying to establish itself and Canadian climbing community. The defining characteristic, upon which I wish to focus, of the "Glory Days" is the heavy reliance on the use of guides. In Chapter Two, I explore how mountaineers viewed guides, and defined the role of guides, especially as protectors against risk.

³ Robins, 589. Chic Scott, *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering*, (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 1999), 167. Bruce Fairley and David Harris, "Accidents," Moira Irvine, "Introduction: The Accident on Mount Lefroy," Charles Sproull Thompson, "Mt. Lefroy, August 3, 1896," Bruce Fairley, "Introduction to 'Shattered Dreams'," Richard Howse, "Shattered Dreams," David Harris, "Introduction to 'Jimmy and the Kid'," Steve DeMaio, "Jimmy and the Kid," David Harris, "Introduction to 'The Third Party'," John Lauchlan, "The Third Party," Bruce Fairley, "Introduction to 'Where Heathen Rage'," David Dornian, "Where Heathen Rage," David Harris, "Introduction to 'The Wild Thing'," Barry Blanchard and Peter Arbic, "The Wild Thing," in *Canadian Mountaineering Anthology: Stories from 100 Years on the Edge*, Ed. Bruce Fairley, (Vancouver: Lone Pine Publishing, 1994), 71-2, 73, 74-8, 79, 80-87, 88-9, 90-3, 165, 166-9, 191, 192-8, 260, and 261-5. Gordon Smaill, "Squamish Hard Core on Cassin Ridge, Mt McKinley," *CAJ*, 1978, 38-9. Paul Piro, "Ten Years After," *CAJ*, 1971, 50. Paul Starr, "Reflections on the Death of a Friend," *CAJ*, 1971, 53. Bill Davidson, "Gibraltar, or Nine Nightmarish Nights on Nothing," 1972, 16-7.

⁴ Scott, 38.

Scott contends Canadian mountaineering stagnated from 1926 to 1950. This is not to say that nothing significant happened. The work of the Mundays in the Coast Range can attest to that. It appears that, compared to the Europeans, Canadian mountaineers, fell behind. In Europe, in particular, new techniques and equipment were embraced and climbers put up new, more technical routes. Since most of the mountains had first ascents, mountaineers were seeking new ways to climb already climbed mountains; the new equipment and techniques fostered this. Canadian mountaineers did not embrace new equipment and techniques to the degree the Europeans did, opting for exploration over climbing new technical lines on already climbed peaks.⁵ Gina LaForce, in a version of her Master's thesis printed in the *CAJ*, argues that the ACC ebbed because it was unable to attract new members, with new attitudes and lacked a willingness to adopt new techniques.⁶ An old guard reigned.

One such character, who exerted considerable control, was Arthur Wheeler. He served a short term as the first president and his influence continued as a long-standing editor of the *CAJ*. He had a strong character and a proclivity to dictate. His bias permeated almost every aspect of the ACC while he served as the honorary president up until 1943, a year before his death.⁷ Wheeler's passing is one of the reasons why I selected the 1950s. With the loss of such an influential character, there is potential for a fresh perspective in the ACC. Reichwein warns of subscribing wholeheartedly to LaForce's conclusions. Reichwein suggests that sport has cultural underpinnings and can be a defining site of class relations. The ACC's British counterpart, the Alpine Club, fell

⁵ Scott, 105-6, 165-66.

⁶ Gina L. LaForce, "The Alpine Club of Canada, 1906 to 1929: Modernization, Canadian Nationalism, and Anglo-Saxon Mountaineering," *CAJ*, 1979, 43-45.

⁷ LaForce, 39-47. Esther Fraser, *Wheeler*, (Banff: Summerthought, 1978), 25, 42, 49, 63, 96-7. Scott, 66.

subject to conflicting opinions over the value and aim, defined along cultural lines, of mountaineering, which manifested in discord between classes and members of the Alpine Club. This disharmony led to disarray and lack of direction over a period from 1860 to 1914. This may explain the stagnation within the ACC as well.⁸

By the 1920s and 1930s, however and unlike the ACC, European mountaineers embraced change and new techniques, pioneering new routes. Scott attributes an influx of British and Europeans in the 1950s to the start of a new era in Canadian mountaineering. Climbers numbered among the post-1945 immigration wave and they introduced new mountaineering skills, equipment, ambition, and direction to Canadian climbers.⁹ Employing gear and techniques shifted how climbers protected themselves from risks. Chapter Two and Three will explore this shift. Guideless climbing became the norm, leaving climbers to learn mountain craft. The ACC adopted a mandate to educate mountaineers, conducting rock and ice schools at the annual summer camps. The new skills and techniques allowed climbers to send routes on the sheer faces of the mountains. Previously it had been common practice to follow gullies, chimneys, and ridgelines, known as “natural” lines.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi notes a bifurcation in mountaineering by the 1950s. Early mountaineers scaled the faces as a means to an end. They desired to experience the mountain as a whole. A new group emerged whose legions scaled rock faces and cliffs as an end in itself. They did not even require a mountain, only a cliff of significant

⁸ PearlAnn Reichwein, “Beyond the Visionary Mountains: The Alpine Club of Canada and the Canadian National Park Idea. 1906 to 1969,” (Ph.D. Thesis, Carleton University, 1995), 42-45. Reichwein bases her argument on the work of David Robins in “Sport, Hegemony, and the Middle Class: The Victorian Mountaineers,” *Theory, Culture, and Society*, vol. 4, no. 4, 588-89, who relies on the cultural theory of Antonio Gramsci.

⁹ Scott, 107, 165-66.

height. The top of the route was the goal, not the summit of a mountain.

Csikszentmihalyi also points out a difference in attitude towards gear. The old group hung on to gear, replacing it only as it wore out. The new group, enamoured with technology, avidly consumed the latest gear, replacing older gear at the drop of a hat as new models or styles came on the market. This new group bears a closer resemblance to contemporary rock climbers. Csikszentmihalyi's findings are a little questionable because his argument lacks clear sources and may be only based on personal experience and knowledge.¹⁰ The point to be made, though, is that a new variation on a theme emerged more closely resembling rock climbing.

This divergence presents a methodological problem. I want to explore the overall perception of risk conveyed in the pages of the *CAJ*, not compare the perception of risk between the two types of climbing. Each discipline has a crossover of skills and practitioners. In some cases, people who mountaineer also rock climb and vice versa. The overlap in interest may be one of the reasons why the *CAJ* has run accounts of both types of climbing. Also since both types of accounts run in one publication, readers may have read both types of accounts and there is the chance ideas, attitudes, and perceptions commingled, influencing each other.¹¹

This brings me to the 1970s. I selected this decade for several reasons. The dramatic change in format of the *CAJ* speaks to changes within the ACC. These changes did not occur overnight. The changes had roots in new and daring ascents of the 1950s and 1960s. The opening article of the 1970 *CAJ* depicts the story of Les MacDonald's

¹⁰ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "The Americanization of Rock-Climbing," *The University of Chicago Magazine*, vol. 61, (1969), 21-26.

¹¹ Les MacDonald says that rock climbers admired the mountaineers. Les MacDonald, "Oh, Canada," *CAJ*, 1970, 2. This admiration may have motivated them to read mountaineering accounts.

introduction to the ACC after his immigration from Scotland. After his arrival in Vancouver, his search for fellow climbers led him to an ACC meeting. During the meeting, held in an art gallery, his spirits sank as he endured slide shows “of flora and fauna, pack horses, raising the flag, and church services at camp, followed by picture postcard scenes of scenes of lakes at 6 different times of the day, and clusters of climbers clad in what could easily have been imported regalia from Zermatt, circa 1926!”

New equipment, specifically pitons, were mentioned in awkward tones and soccer featured as a topic of conversation rather than mountaineering. A product of the post-1945 Britain scene that had experienced change, MacDonald found the ACC antiquated. He recognised that some Canadians were breaking new ground, but they seldom aligned themselves with the ACC. MacDonald, in concluding, proposed a new mandate for the ACC for the 1970s: organise climbing expeditions or explorations of new territory to entice new and younger members into joining the ACC, with the intent of “harnessing [their] latent energy and vitality” to initiate change and bring the ACC up to speed.¹²

The new editor of the *CAJ*, Andrew Gruft, supported MacDonald’s views. In the 1971 *CAJ*, Gruft conceded that the ACC “was conceived in different times, and organized in a way that may no longer be relevant for today’s purposes.” In Gruft’s mind “today’s purposes” for the ACC are to take an active leadership role in directing Canadian mountaineering, keeping the community up to date on the latest news and developments and coordinating expeditions, thus facilitating an active community.¹³

¹² Les MacDonald, “Oh, Canada,” *CAJ* 1970, 2-3

¹³ Andrew Gruft, “Editorial,” *CAJ*, 1971, 94.

Whether or not the ACC was successful will not be assessed in this thesis.

However, the change in the *CAJ* attracted the attention of the climbing community. In 1971, Gruft claimed that the

response to the new journal was really exciting. We were deluged with favourable comments and letters from members and non-members, young and old, overwhelmingly in favour of the new format. Perhaps it is significant that we received orders from stores as far a field as California, and that the first issue is now completely sold out, making it a collector's item.¹⁴

Clearly readership increased and the ACC was off to a fresh start. The theme pervading the writings in the 1970s is a debate over ethics. It is on this debate that I will focus my attention in Chapter Four. The debate on ethics centres on the use of gear.

The first ascent of Mont Blanc in 1786 marked the symbolic beginning of the development of mountaineering as a sport, marking a switch from exploring mountains in the name of science to taking to the mountains for the purpose of recreation. As the virgin peaks in the Europe, the Alps in particular, were climbed mountaineers sought new conquests. Moreover, mountaineering was organised. In 1857, the Alpine Club was founded in London, England, and other "[a]lpine clubs were soon founded in Switzerland (1863), Italy (1863), Austria (1869), Germany (1874) and France (1874)."¹⁵ Clubs were founded in North America as well, for example, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) (1876) in Boston, Massachusetts and the American Alpine Club (AAC) (1902). The ever-westward push of the Canadian Pacific Railway opened up a new mountain playground in the Canadian Alps, the Rockies. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Canadian Rockies earned a reputation as a popular location for mountaineers, a

¹⁴ Andrew Gruft, "Editorial," *CAJ*, 1971, 94.

¹⁵ Peter Hansen, "Partners: Guides and Sherpas in the Alps and Himalayas, 1850s-1950s," *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*. Eds. Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés, (London: Reaktion, 1999), 217-218.

reputation still extant to this day. At this time, as well, the first steps were taken to develop a Canadian mountaineering community by the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), Canada's first mountaineering club.

A short-lived precursor to the Alpine Club of Canada assembled in 1883. Sir Sanford Fleming, surveyor for the Dominion Land Survey and first engineer-in-chief of the CPR, his son S. Hall Fleming, and Principle George M. Grant of Queen's University, comprised the executive along with Major A.B. Rogers, also a noted explorer and surveyor, and his nephew as members. Under the employ of the CPR, they were exploring the area presently known as Roger's Pass to confirm a viable route through the range, reported by Major Rogers. Upon summitting, the party toasted and declared the formation of a Canadian mountaineering club. Nothing more came of this club.

Historian Raymond Huel argues this event took place at a time in which some Canadians were trying to assert an identity for a then nascent nation state. Canadian nationalists, aware that British traditions permeated Canada in politics and culture and economic and military support, sought a separate Canadian identity. At the same time, Canada feared the influences of the Americans to the south. The British and Americans had a presence in the mountaineering community as well. British or American climbers, usually in the presence of one or two Swiss guides, made significant first ascents in the Canadian mountains. Thus, Fleming and his compatriots felt it a national duty to establish a Canadian alpine club, impermanent as it was.¹⁶

¹⁶ Raymond Huel, "The Creation of the Alpine Club of Canada: An Early Manifestation of Canadian Nationalism," *Prairie Forum*, vol. 15, no. 1, (1990), 25-26. Margaret E. Johnston, "A Club with a Vision: The Alpine Club of Canada and Conservation 1906-1930," *Park News*, vol. 21, no. 3, (1985), 6. See also Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

An Irish immigrant of English background, Arthur Wheeler, took up the mantle shortly after the turn of the 20th century. He was introduced to the mountains during his employment as a surveyor. The job required that he climb the peaks to conduct phototopographical surveys. Invigorated by Canadian nationalism, he too felt discouraged that Canadian peaks were falling to the British and American mountaineers, especially since his fellow Canadians exhibited little concern. Initially, around 1901-02, Wheeler found Canadians unresponsive to his idea to form a Canadian club. Wheeler then approached Professor Charles Fay, the president of an American club, the Appalachian Mountain Club. Fay had plans in the works for a larger club encompassing more than the Appalachian region, a US-wide alpine club, now known as the American Alpine Club (AAC). By 1905, Wheeler suggested establishing a Canadian chapter of the AAC.

Quick to respond to such an unpatriotic idea, the *Manitoba Free Press* printed an article written under the pen name of "M.T". Wheeler explained the response: "Amongst other matters it took me roundly to task, declaiming my action as unpatriotic, chided my lack of imperialism and generally gave me a pen-lashing in words sharper than a sword."¹⁷ Not uncharacteristic of the time, the pen name belonged to that of a woman named Elizabeth Parker. Parker had ventured to the Rockies over several years for health reasons. In doing so, she developed a love for the mountains and regaled the readers of the *Free Press* with details of her excursions. A group of kindred spirits emerged, for Parker also believed that the mountains of Canada were a great asset and should be made available to Canadians. Parker's nationalist zeal seemed to keep Wheeler in check each time he suggested teaming up with the Americans to form a North American alpine club.

¹⁷ Originally in the *Free Press*, 10 April 1926, but from Scott, 67.

Parker and Wheeler solicited the support of key individuals in positions of power. Wheeler contacted officials of the CPR, selling the members of a Canadian alpine club as a ready body of customers for the CPR rail lines and tourist accommodations, and officials within the Dominion Land Survey. J.W. Dafoe of the *Free Press*, though not a mountaineer, supported Parker and printed articles promoting a Canadian club. The *Calgary Herald* and the *Vancouver Province* also ran articles endorsing a Canadian alpine club, especially in terms of the potential for generating revenue from tourists. The church backed the notion too, finding a voice in a Calgary clergyman, Dean Paget. Church involvement, the concept of Muscular Christianity, and recreation and leisure will be discussed later in this chapter. Parker even sent a letter to Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, who replied with only moral support. A meeting was held in Winnipeg on 27-28 March 1906, with delegates from across Canada in attendance. Despite the absence of mountains in Manitoba, the organisers chose Winnipeg because of its central location and because the CPR had granted free fare to the delegates. This meeting marked the founding of the Alpine Club of Canada.¹⁸

Shortly thereafter, a constitution was drafted, which, in part, committed the ACC to cultivating and protecting Canada's "mountain heritage." The constitution does not define the vague, yet sweeping, term "mountain heritage". The ACC's constitutional mandates do, however, suggest some sort of definition.

The objectives of the club are:

- (a) The promotion of scientific study and exploration of Canadian alpine and glacial regions.
- (b) The cultivation of art in relation to the mountain scenery.
- (c) The education of Canadians to an appreciation of their mountain heritage.
- (d) The encouragement of the mountain craft and the opening of new regions as a national playground.

¹⁸ Huel, 27-36. Johnston, 6-7. Scott, 67-68.

- (e) The preservation of the natural beauties of the mountain places and the fauna and flora in their habitat.
- (f) The interchange of literature with other alpine and geographical organizations.¹⁹

The ACC, therefore, was not simply for promoting recreation and leisure. It strove to involve itself in the arts, literature, and scientific studies. Wheeler resided as its first president and Parker served as its first secretary. Originally its headquarters were in Winnipeg. But, a few years later, the headquarters had moved to its current location of Canmore, Alberta.²⁰

To uphold its constitutional mandate and to initiate budding mountaineers in the splendours of the mountains, the ACC held annual summer camps. Unless bestowed with the title of honorary member, candidates had to qualify for member status by climbing a peak of at least 10 000 feet in elevation. The camps were geared to this end and held in a mountain setting in Alberta or British Columbia. Funding came from the federal government and, depending upon location, the provincial governments of Alberta or BC. The CPR organised outfitters and cooks, reduced rail rates for climbers and campers, and provided guides. Guides led groups of climbers on graduating climbs and instructed climbers in rock and ice schools. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), known as the Northwest Mounted Police until 1921, supplied the tents. With 150 to 200 in attendance, ACC summer camps took on the appearance of tent cities, with the warm, relaxing comfort of the tea tent welcoming climbers after a day of climbing.

Other amenities included the flame of an eternal campfire around which climbers and

¹⁹ "Constitution," *CAJ*, 1907, 178-81.

²⁰ The brief description of the ACC history is the result of a compilation of several sources. These sources are: Mary Andrews, "Passport to Paradise: The Alpine Club of Canada summer camps," *BC Historical News*, vol. 24, (1991), 19-27, Huel, 25-43, Johnston, 6-10, PearlAnn Reichwein, "At the Foot of the Mountain: Preliminary Thoughts on the Alpine Club of Canada, 1906-1950," *Changing Parks: The History, Future and Cultural Context of Parks and Heritage Landscapes*, Eds. John S. Marsh and Bruce W. Hodgins, (Toronto: Natural Heritage/ Natural History, 1998), 160-76, and Scott, 66-9.

guides would spin tales of daring do and, on Sundays, attend sermons. Originally the place for adults, by 1937 the *CAJ* and other sources suggest younger climbers attended these camps. Complaints, however, arose over the insatiable appetites of these little mountaineers. Perhaps not for this reason alone, younger members were not allowed to attend camps again until 1974, when the ACC held Family Camps to accommodate members with families. By 1967, the camps were much smaller than the hundreds of attendees in the early years. This does not indicate that membership had waned. More likely, the ACC was practicing a more environmentally friendly, tread lightly philosophy.²¹

In the early years members were primarily English-speaking Canadians of British heritage who resided in urban centres and who were well educated. One study that has surveyed the membership concludes that “[o]ccupationally the ACC was in the main composed of white collar professionals with a heavy representation of school teachers, university faculty and staff barristers, engineers and medical professionals, and a sprinkling of artists, businessmen, civil servants, and clerics.” Unlike its British counterpart, the ACC admitted women from its inception. Women have represented an average of 40 per cent of ACC members.²² One characteristic that has carried through is the higher levels of education, English-speaking, and prevalence of the middle and upper class membership.²³

²¹ Andrews, 24, 25, 27.

²² Reichwein, “Beyond the Visionary Mountains,” 86-9. Women mountaineers are the focus of other works by Reichwein, these works include: “Guardians of the Rockies,” *Beaver*, vol. 74, no. 4, (1994), 4-13 and with Karen Fox, *Mountain Diaries: The Alpine Adventures of Margaret Fleming, 1929-1980*. Eds. PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, (Calgary: Historical Society of Alberta, 2004) and “Margaret Fleming and the Alpine Club of Canada: A Woman’s Place in Mountain Leisure and Literature, 1932-1952,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, (2001), 35-60.

²³ Robert D. Bratton, George Kinnear, and Gary Koroluk, “Reasons for Climbing: A Study of the Calgary Section,” *CAJ*, 1979, 55.

A note can be made on the ACC allowing women members. If Esther Kafer is a typical example, women may not have always felt welcome in the mountaineering community. As will be mentioned in Chapter Three, women members were excluded from the more difficult climbs. Margaret Flemming, by choice, sometimes excluded herself from club organised trips, and felt more comfortable with a few select friends as partners. There is evidence of women being accepted into the community. Esther Kafer's husband organised an expedition to climb the main tower of Mt. Waddington. He invited Esther along. Unfortunately, she "was a little apprehensive about being the only woman and ... wondered whether [she] would be able to keep pace and do [her] share of the back-packing."²⁴ The interesting point about this is that she did not mention that she was apprehensive about the risks entailed in the climb. Her concerns were based more on her physical abilities than her mental state when it came to dealing with risk. On a positive side, though, her "fears were groundless and one of [her] most cherished memories [was] the companionship and the sense of belonging [she] experienced during those happy days."²⁵ The expedition was also a success and she became the first woman to make the ascent.

Changes in the Canadian mountaineering community were slow to come. I have argued that three periods stand out. The writings in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* reflect the tone of the periods and afford insight into how climbers perceived risk. The first period begins with the inception of the Alpine Club of Canada. It is defined by climbers relying on guides to protect them from the risks of mountaineering. By the 1950s, the beginning of the second period, mountaineers were accepting the use of new climbing

²⁴ "First Woman Up the Main Tower of Waddington," *CAJ*, 1963, 34.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

equipment and techniques, with a marked decline in the use of guides. The final period for study begins in the seventies. In this period climbers became aware of their impact of the gear on the rock, with a resultant debate on the ethical use of gear. The following three chapters in my thesis are arranged thematically around these three periods, focusing on guides, gear, and finally the debate on ethics.

Before examining risk in mountaineering, I would also like to explore some theory on reading and analysing print sources. Diving into Ferdinand de Saussure's tool kit, I found semiotics. Adapted from linguistic studies, it offers a structure of analysis and vocabulary for studying non-linguistic "signifying systems" each with their own language and rules governing that language. The terms used are text, sign, signifier, and signified. The text is the site of study, which must take into account its historical context. Texts are encoded with a message. The reader can interpret the text, or decode it, in three basic manners: the preferred reading, which is a literal translation of the intended message; the negotiated reading, in which the reader accepts the intended message yet its interpretation is shaped by the reader's current frame of mind; and the oppositional reading, while the message is understood the reader does not agree with it. Texts are thus polysemic in nature and are open to a change of interpretation over time.²⁶

My text is the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and the articles contained within it. Within the text are signs, "the smallest unit of communication within a language system", which "must have a physical form, it must refer to something other than itself, and it must be recognized as doing this by other users of the sign system." Meaning is manufactured and conveyed by combinations of signs, regulated by the codes and conventions of the

²⁶ Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 1998), 12-22, 32-37, 81-121.

given culture or subculture. Signs are broken down into two inseparable components, the signifier, "the physical form of the sign" and the signified, "the mental concept referred to by the signifier." Roland Barthes takes this further, theorising that signs can become more particular to a given culture because they are ascribed meaning in layers; a sign can be a signifier for a following sign. The connection between the signified and signifier are culturally constructed and open to diverse and changing interpretations.²⁷ My study is also an exercise in semiotics. I use semiotics to analyse how climbers relate to the equipment they use or their guide. By analysing what climbers use to keep themselves safe, I am able to examine their perceptions towards risk.

The readers of a print source are not passive receptors. Michel Foucault argues that, even though the reader may be influenced by the content of what she reads, she still has the power to interpret the intended message for herself.²⁸ Readers filter the messages in print media through the values and opinions already acquired from other institutions, such as church, family, social clubs, and so on. Print media therefore has only limited power in shaping readers' beliefs, opinions, values, or attitudes.²⁹ As well as bringing

²⁷ Turner, 14-19. See also Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 109-59, for a more detailed discussion on semiotics and myth.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 119, 131 and Paul Rutherford, *Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 90, 92.

²⁹ Paul Rutherford, *The Making of the Canadian Media*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978), 35-36. This is based on the work of media historian Paul Rutherford and his studies on daily and weekly newspapers. He argues that even though limited mass media has several powers. "First, the mass media cannot alter, either dramatically or quickly, an individual's decided views about well-known issues. Indeed, the media seem most effective when they endeavour to reinforce existing opinions. Second, over time, the media do have a wide variety of social, as distinct from personal, effects: agenda-setting (ordering the priority of issues or values in the public domain), mobilization (calling the people to arms), stereotyping (fixing images of particular ideas, events, or occupations), conferring status (the creation of heroes and villains), manipulation of mood (emphasizing some collective emotion, such as optimism or resentment), and socialization (the education of people in the 'proper' ways of thinking and behaving). . . Third, whatever the place or time, the mass media are a leading agency of 'legitimation.' They manufacture images of reality that justify certain sets of values and patterns of authority." Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 7-8 and Paul Rutherford, *The Making of the Canadian Media*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson,

together an imagined community of readers,³⁰ print sources can create a public sphere in which opinions and values can be shared and contested, from which the readers can take what they wish. Sociologist Mark Stranger's article on risk perception suggests that surf magazines influenced surfers' attitudes towards risk.³¹

The *CAJ* emerged at a time in which the print industry was experiencing a shift. Around the turn of the twentieth century, magazines became more niche oriented, targeting the "lifestyle" interests of readers, as opposed to the traditional standard fare of politics. By catering to the readers' interests and concerns, these "lifestyle" magazines had a more narrow focus, conveying opinions, values, beliefs, and attitudes that may have stood outside of the dominant culture, and thus may have attracted a smaller readership than daily print media. As a result, a "lifestyle" magazine may have actually had more influence over its readership than a general-interest magazine or newspaper.³² As limited as it may have been, the *CAJ* aimed to affect its readers. This effect would likely extend to shaping and reflecting perceptions of risk.³³

1978), 30-34. The reason this quotation did not find its way into the text is that its usefulness can be called into question. The second point, to a degree, is a contradiction of the first point and the third point overpowers the first. But this quotation does suggest that mass media has some sort of effect.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (New York: Verso, 1991), 1-46.

³¹ Mark Stranger, "The Aesthetics of Risk: A Study of Surfing," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 34, no. 3, (1999), 273-274.

³² Minko Sotiron, *From Politics to Profit: The Commercialization of Canadian Daily Newspapers, 1890-1920*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 93-155. Fraser Sutherland, *The Monthly Epic: A History of Canadian Magazines, 1789-1989*, (Markham: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1989), 113-37. Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 139-151. Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," *New Left Review*, no. 82, (1973), 10-12.

³³ This brief on semiotics and reading texts has been influenced by Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 16-23.

Chapter Two:

Guides

That wonderful world of high mountains, dazzling in their rock and ice, acts as a catalyst. It suggests the infinite but it is not the infinite. The heights only give us what we ourselves bring to them.

-- Lucien Devies

Professional guides were an integral part of the mountaineering experience in the first decades of mountaineering tales in the *Canadian Alpine Journal*. Guides were responsible for the safety of their clients and served as an authority on mountaineering. They made the decisions about the route, the schedule, the equipment and clothing, how and when to use that equipment, and even where to place one's hands and feet. Most importantly, these decisions determined the risks that their clients would face. Guides were also seen as guarantors of a safe return. They were an invaluable asset without whom success would be questionable. This chapter explores the role of the professional guide. Guides mediated the mountaineering experience and shaped the perceptions of risk of mountaineers. Clients used guides to protect themselves from the risks of mountaineering at the same time as protecting themselves from risks of challenging social conventions.

In their biography of mountain guide Edward Feuz, Jr., American born Andrew J. Kauffman and William L. Putnam, prominent members in both the North American and international climbing communities,¹ place the origins of "modern" mountain guiding

¹ Andrew J. Kauffman (1921-2003) is the first American mountaineer to reach 8,000 metres, which he achieved on the 26,470 "Hidden Peak", or Gasherbrum I, in Pakistan. He served as president of the Harvard Mountaineering Club, as director and vice president of the American Alpine Club (AAC) and, as

after the Napoleonic Wars, in the 1820s, a period in which tourism grew along with changing attitudes towards nature and a lust for travel and adventure. Due to a newfound opulence and the freedom to return to mainland Europe, the British expanded the range of their travels into the mountains of foreign countries, Switzerland in particular. Lacking knowledge of the country and the skills to travel in mountainous terrain, the British turned to the locals for guidance. Originally, local hunters and shepherds had the knowledge of the landscape and the skills to travel in an alpine setting that the British required. Ergo, the locals became guides for the tourists.

Shortly after the influx of British climbers, a formalised profession analogous to the guild system emerged. Prospective candidates apprenticed as porters and were then tested by established senior guides. After the new guide successfully passed, he carried a *Führerbuch*, a guide's book, in which clients detailed the performance of the guide. The *Führerbuch* served as a reference tool for future clients.² By 1856, according to historian Peter Hansen, the Swiss government took authority of regulating these guide's books, formalising the guiding profession.³ The first guide to reach Canada was the Swiss Peter Sarbach. Sarbach guided a party whose members included world-renowned mountaineer J. Norman Collie and Charles Fay, first president of the American Alpine Club (AAC),

an honorary member on the French Groupe de Haute Montagne and the Himalayan Club of India. He frequently climbed in the Canadian Rockies.

Bart Barnes, "Leading Mountain Climber Andrew J. Kauffman II," www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A3932-2003Jan2¬Found=true.

William L. Putnam (1924 -), is known for numerous first ascents in the Canadian Rockies. He was the President, Treasurer, and Vice President of the AAC. He holds honorary memberships in the ACC, AAC, Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Union Internationale Des Associations D'Alpinisme (UIAA).

Jim McCarthy and Ernst Haase, "Bill Putnam Honorary Member UIAA," www.uiaa.ch/article.aspx?c=231&a=156.

² Andrew J. Kauffman and William L. Putnam, *The Guiding Spirit*, (Revelstoke: Footprint Publishing, 1986), 25-29. Peter H. Hansen, "Partners: Guides and Sherpas in the Alps and Himalayas, 1850s-1950s," in *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, Eds. Jas Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés, (London: Reaktion, 1999), 216.

³ Hansen, "Partners," 216.

on the first ascent of Mt. Lefroy in 1897. By 1899, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) hired Swiss guides Edouard Feuz, Sr. and Christian Hasler, who stood at the ready to guide the CPR clients in the Canadian Rockies.⁴ Over the years, more Swiss guides followed, along with an Austrian, Conrad Kain, in 1909, “the most celebrated figure in the history of Canadian mountaineering.”⁵ Canadian Pacific’s control of the guides ended in 1955, in part due to dwindling revenues from its hotels.⁶ By the fifties, guided climbing had fallen out of practise amongst the climbing elite.

The sociologist Erik Cohen explores the origins of guiding and the dynamics of the roles guides play. Cohen’s findings converge with Kauffman and Putnam in placing the origin of guiding in locals leading early explorers. Cohen terms these guides as the “Original Guides”. This was a phase in which the primary role of the guide is that of leadership. The key responsibilities of these “original guides” are several. They direct the trip by drafting an itinerary or schedule and selecting the areas to visit and the routes by which to travel. This may include gaining access to novel locations. They control the group by “shepherding” and keeping the clients out of harm’s way. While overseeing the group, guides manage tension levels within the group, promote group cohesion, garner morale, and encourage client participation. Clients with original guides were explorers and were seeking a more direct experience. With a professional tour, clients are seeking a less direct experience, much more mediated by the guide. The role of the guide thus changes, to become, in Cohen’s words, “professional”.

⁴ Chic Scott, *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering*, (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 1999) 46-52, 55-56. Lynn Martel, *Route Finding: 40 Years of Canada's Mountain Guiding Association*, (Calgary: McAra Printing, 2003), 4-5.

⁵ Scott, 76.

⁶ R.W. Sandford, *The Highest Calling: Canada's Elite National Park Mountain Rescue Program*, (Calgary: McAra Printing, 2002), 5. Martel, 10.

At the "professional" level some sort of regulation emerges through governmental or industry standard, and a bureaucratic structure emerges, such as in the form of a guiding company. Tours are standardised and advertised to a mass market and guides receive training, yet require less skill than original guides. Guiding companies shoulder the responsibilities of structuring tours by planning the schedules and coordinating the amenities. Guides were no longer in charge of planning tours. They simply led clients on a pre-arranged, standard tour. Original guides, however, needed a great deal of specialised skills, since they could not rely on the support of a guiding company. They were solely responsible for orchestrating the tour from start to finish. The guide's role is thus as a mediator, and is accountable for organising amenities and services, selecting key attractions, explaining the attractions, and interpreting the local customs, culture, and so on.⁷

Fitting data into a model, such as Cohen's, can be akin to fitting a round peg into a square hole. It may fit, but not perfectly. Such is the case with guides in Canada. The experience of mountain guides in Canada is slightly different because Swiss guides were already recognised as professionals before they came to Canada. They took on the task of pathfinder or mentor since they often took clients up unclimbed mountains. They did not necessarily serve as a "cultural broker" that is, pointing out and explaining points of interests and mediating culture as "typically" a professional guide would. The CPR had an established tourist campaign and transportation and hotel system, that is, the infrastructure required for "professional tour" guides. But the guide was only one component in this. Once away from the trains and hotels, the clients were solely in the

⁷ Erik Cohen, "The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role," *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 12, 6-22, 24-7.

hands of the guide who relied primarily on his own abilities and little on a formalised and routine tour. A rigid routine would be difficult to achieve anyway due to the unpredictability of adequate climbing conditions. This does not quite fit the level of development that Cohen sees as necessary for the “professional” level of guiding.

I would like to use professional to define a guide who has training and infrastructure (such as, the CPR tourism promotion) behind him. Guides are professionals regardless of duties or clients’ expectations. I would rather rely on the definition provided by the *Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences* that states:

All professions are thus occupations but not all occupations are professions. A profession is an occupational group that is largely self-regulating. Such a group has the legitimate authority (usually delegated from government) to set its own standards for entrance, to admit new members, to establish a code of conduct, to discipline members and it claims to have a body of knowledge (achieved through education) which legitimizes its autonomy and distinctiveness.⁸

Furthermore, Cohen’s definition of mediator does not satisfy me. I would like to argue that any time a guide guided, he would mediate the experience. I am using a more broad definition of mediate than Cohen. In finding routes, directing clients as to where to place their hands and feet, suggesting what equipment to bring, and so on, the guides directly influenced the experience of the clients. By assessing and dealing with risk the guide serves as a mediator between the client and the risk.

Mona Gleason’s work on the role psychology played in “normalising the ideal” family image in postwar Canada is useful because it explores the process in which professionals regulate authority and exercise power. She writes that a “psychological discourse” emerged, in which “discourse denotes statements, practices, and assumptions that share a linguistic coherence and work to identify and describe a problem or an area

⁸ Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences, “profesion,” socialsciencedictionary.nelson.com/ssd/SocialDict.jsp

of concern”, that “signified professional practices, popular writings, conventions, standards, attitudes, and assumptions that developed within the discipline and resulted in a particular version of the normal postwar family.” She draws upon Michel Foucault’s suggestion that the public has agency in this power relationship as well, because they can interpret the discourse themselves. Professionals thus regulate as opposed to control. Through successful regulation, in which the public participates in and consents to the power of professionals, a hegemonic discourse exists, which produces and reproduces normalised ideals of that which is acceptable and what is not.⁹

The rise of professional mountain guides mirrors the rise of the profession of psychology. Formal training, the CPR tourist campaign, the Alpine Club of Canada and its voice in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and the writings of mountaineers, as well as social settings such as ACC Summer Camps, are examples of structures through which ACC created and purveyed power and established a discourse of safety and risk.

Michael Helms also points out that an “informal communication” arises out of these things that create the overarching discourse, namely print, and audio/visual media, and conversations amongst climbers, which forgoes relying on “hard evidence”. He terms it “hazard folklore”. This “hazard folklore” selects and gives meaning to certain accidents and their associated hazards. Accidents will either receive attention and analysis or will be dismissed as “freak or chance occurrences.”¹⁰ Although accidents are

⁹ Mona Gleason, *Normalizing the Ideal: Psychology, Schooling, and the Family in Postwar Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 7-8.

¹⁰ Michael Helms, “Factors Affecting Evaluations of Risks and Hazards in Mountaineering,” *Journal of Experiential Education*, vol. 7 no. 3, 23.

not the focus of this essay and surely could be analysed in a future work, Helms findings provide an example in which accidents and hazards are selected and given meaning.¹¹

With the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the inception of the ACC, the CPR imported the Swiss guides to guide tourists in the CPR's new mountain playground, the "Alps of Canada",¹² that is the Rockies. Up until this time, the climbers, mostly from abroad, climbed with guides that they had brought with them from Europe. Guides became a permanent fixture in mountaineering, working out of the CPR hotels and sometimes in the off-season returning to their homeland. Hansen astutely comments that the CPR commodified the guides. They were packaged in stereotypes and shipped around the globe in a fashion similar to the other CPR freight.¹³

Upon arriving in Canada, guides became a component of the CPR's tourism campaign. They were showcased across Canada in their mountaineering regalia of Norfolk tweeds, nailed boots replete with puttees, ropes, mountaineering axes, and pipes, as they were carted westward on the CPR line.¹⁴ For an image of a Swiss mountain guide see page vi. The CPR even tried to maintain a settlement of stereotypically Swiss styled houses for the guides just outside of Golden, BC. They called it Edelweiss. In 1911, six houses were erected just west of Golden on marginal land with a full view of the CPR lines. The guides found the location impractical, grew discontented, and some left. When the CPR discontinued its guiding services, in the mid 1950s, it also abandoned its

¹¹ Douglas and Wildavsky explore the cultural origins of how risks are selected and given meaning in their *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 29-48, 186-198.

¹² The CPR in its tourism campaign sold the Rockies as the "Alps of Canada." See: E.J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada: The CPR and the Beginnings of Canadian Tourism*, (Banff: Altitude Publishing, 1983).

¹³ Hansen, "Partners," 219.

¹⁴ Kauffman and Putnam, 49-50. Hansen, "Partners," 219.

“Swiss village.” Despite this, descendants of the guides still populate Edelweiss. Edelweiss never met the aspirations of the CPR and stands today as a tourist attraction.¹⁵

Cohen and others do not examine when the tour guide becomes part of the attraction. This theme of antimodernism in mountaineering in Canada is open for further study and other examples will be identified throughout this paper but will not be fully explored. From the example of the Swiss guides and the CPR tourist campaign, parallels can be drawn with the “Folk” in Ian McKay’s *Quest of the Folk*. McKay explores how Helen Creighton’s search for, and publication of, folk songs and Mary Black’s folk handicraft revival normalised an idyllic, “essentially” folk image of Nova Scotia. These folklorists cast aside the extant modernity in the province. Employing the theory of hegemony, McKay suggests that the Nova Scotians were not without agency in this normalising process.¹⁶

McKay concludes his book by analysing the tale of a “Folk” Nova Scotian discontented with the folk life. When tourists employ his services, despite himself, he takes them fishing and entertains them at length by singing folk ballads.¹⁷ The parallel between the Folk and the Swiss mountain guides is that an outside force, through marketing and tourism, packaged and sold an idealised image. Hansen argues that in tourist campaigns guides were commodified.¹⁸ Implicitly Hansen seems to believe that this commodification is a negative phenomenon. Maybe it had a dehumanising effect.

¹⁵ John Marsh, “The Rocky and Selkirk Mountains and the Swiss Connection 1885-1914,” *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 12, no. 1, 428.

¹⁶ Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 43-213, 295-306.

¹⁷ McKay, 310-11.

¹⁸ Hansen, “Partners,” 219.

Regardless, the mass marketing of guides accentuated the guide's power as a sign of safe mountaineering and what it meant to be a mountaineer.

An article on contemporary white water river guides explores the nature of the product that guides provide in a risky sport. The focus is on the relationship between the clients and the guides. The authors, Jean-Pierre Mounet and Pierre Chifflet, both sociologists, raise two issues: to what degree are the clients dependent on the guides, and to what extent are the guides able to make the sport safe for the clients. The authors note that outdoor activities offer the individual a range of freedom to explore new territory and to test one's abilities, all of which encapsulates an element of uncertainty and risk. When a guide is employed, it suggests that the individual lacks the requisite skills to successfully or safely undertake the outdoor activity. The question then raised is are clients, by depending on a guide, relinquishing the freedoms associated with outdoor sports in favour of a product that, by attempting to minimise risk and maximise client safety, is restrictive in character? Essentially, are the clients facing the sport through their own agency or do the guides have it as coordinated as much as it can be, considering the chance for accidents, to the point where guides are providing a standardised experience?

The authors' analysis leads them to conclude that the river guides do provide a standardised product. The guides were responsible for selecting the type of boat appropriate for the particular river, setting a standard for the use of equipment. On the river, the guides would steer the clients through the rapids on predetermined trajectories. Lastly, the guides also determined where and when the clients would land for rests and portages, all of which set a standard for how the clients travelled on river. Furthermore,

the clients reportedly had a different perception of the risk because the presence of guides reduces or eliminates the risks, making it safe, whereas the guides admit to seeing the river as dangerous. Since they run the rapids numerous times daily, however, the guides feel comfortable with the risks; through familiarity they have security. Posed with the question as to whether they would guide a river that was new to them, the guides felt it would be too risky.¹⁹

The example of river guides parallels that of mountain guides. One problem arises though. Accounts in the *CAJ* tend to focus on first ascents. It would be reasonable to suggest that first ascents are not representative of the common mountaineering experience. More than likely, the majority of climbers ventured up established routes in the presence of guides. The remainder of this chapter will explore the relationship between the clients and the mountain guide, which parallels the example of river guides and their clients.

Guides exemplified what it meant to be a mountaineer. Tales of their aptitude on rock, their superior route finding acumen, their sound decision-making skills, their composure under pressure, and their friendly, helpful demeanour all abound in the articles in the *CAJ*. On a sketchy descent one client recalled, "[the guide's] words to me were reassuring and made me feel like a Swiss guide myself."²⁰ Of note here is that the client, instead of using mountaineer, described himself as a "Swiss guide". Numerous responsibilities, apart from climbing, fell on the guides, requiring a broad range of skills. As a result, the guides were described almost in mythic proportions.

¹⁹ Jean-Pierre Mounet and Pierre Chifflet, "Commercial Supply for River Water Sports," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 31, no. 1, 233-54.

²⁰ J.C. Herdman, "The Ascent of Mt. Macoun," *CAJ*, 1907, 107.

Mountaineering involves the journey to the mountain itself, which is wrought with many potential perils, putting the skills of the guides to the test.²¹ Guides possessed first aid knowledge. Climbers travelled on “pony” back in pack trains to reach the mountains. Accidents happened. One report recounted a client falling from a pony after mounting it and starting it by unintentionally poking it with an ice axe or crampon point. After the client fell, “[h]e rose at once, dancing around in agony, but Edouard [Feuz, Sr.] immediately divining that his shoulder had been dislocated, with a powerful pull, snapped it back into position.”²² River crossings were also common. “Konrad is a grand climber and a magnificent guide under all conditions. He will, moreover, attempt anything, but this was his first raft.”²³ The raft only held one at a time instead of the desired three. Conrad met with similar luck on a different expedition. “While resting on this ledge, Conrad was industrious as usual and found a very good specimen of fossil, but unfortunately we failed to stow it away and it was lost.”²⁴

Despite their mythic qualities, mountain guides were after all only human. Another human side shows through in their sense of humour, which may have been used to abate, or create, the hardships of expeditions. For example, Edward Feuz, Jr. played a trick on Jean Parker. He awoke her in the morning, claiming it was 7:30 am, far too late to start the climb, to Parker’s disappointment. “However, this was one of the guide’s jokes, and it was only a quarter past four.”²⁵ As well, Feuz, Jr. told stories of entertaining visitors with his ice skating abilities on the rink he and other guides built in the winter,

²¹ These perils are not focus on for this essay. Instead, this essay will focus more on the events on the mountain.

²² Walter D. Wilcox, “An Early Attempt to Climb Mt. Assiniboine,” *CAJ*, 1909, 15.

²³ Arthur Wheeler, “The Alpine Club of Canada’s Expedition to Jasper Park, Yellowhead Pass and Mt. Robson Expedition, 1911,” *CAJ*, 1912, 26.

²⁴ A.H. MacCarthy and B.S. Darling, “An Ascent of Mt. Robson from the Southwest,” *CAJ*, 1914-15, 39.

²⁵ Jean Parker, “The Second Ascent of Mt. Tupper,” *CAJ*, 1909, 28.

the off season, in front of Chateau Lake Louise. These soft skills were only a small component of the skills that guides needed.

The guides' skills were important for meeting the clients, spending time with them while not climbing, and trekking with the clients to mountain. Once on the mountain, the guide's ability to climb either on rock or on snow and ice came to the fore.

J.W.A. Hickson, on an ascent of Pinnacle Mountain, described the guide's work on

Pinnacle Mountain:

Advancing gingerly with cat-like tread, and avoiding any spring or jerk which might detach the insecure footholds and leave us hanging precariously, Feuz [Jr.] picked out places here and there which offered the chance of a support, and we were glad when we found a piece of rock an inch or two wide and a few inches long on a part of which a nailed boot-edge could obtain a transitory grip. It is remarkable how very small a projection, if not slippery, will suffice for a temporary hold.²⁶

Hickson's words suggest admiration for Feuz's climbing skill and his discerning eye for what would work as a hold. On snow slopes, upward and downward travel often involved cutting steps into the snow, which was time-consuming and required a certain level of skill. This skill did not go unnoticed, as illustrated in A.H. MacCarthy and B.S.

Darling's praise for guide Conrad Kain on an attempt of Mt. Robson.

Labouring under this added difficulty [of a blizzard and flat light], it was truly marvellous to see Conrad, during the occasional glimpses I had of him ten feet ahead of me, cutting steps and working his way down with that wonderful assurance that he never seems to lack under any circumstances, and that fills one with so much confidence in him...²⁷

Not surprisingly, as these examples suggest, guides climbed more proficiently than their clients. The point to be made, though, is that with their climbing skills, guides gained the confidence of their clients, who then might be put more at ease in potentially dangerous

²⁶ J.W.A. Hickson, "The Ascent of Pinnacle Mountain and Second Ascent of Mount Daltaform [*sic*]," *CAJ*, 1910, 49.

²⁷ A.H. MacCarthy and B.S. Darling, "An Ascent of Mt. Robson from the Southwest," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 46.

situations. This also meant that clients relinquished some of their agency in determining the climb and, as a result, depended on the guide, who was directly responsible for the safety of his clients.

At times, the client required little climbing skill. Guides boasted that they could get anyone to the top of a mountain with the right amount of assistance from the rope.²⁸ Again the guide's ability is mentioned, but something more is suggested in the following example on an ascent of Mt. Assiniboine:

As the rope was now all paid out, Bryant and I had to advance directly in to the track of falling stones, while Feuz [Sr.], with cat-like tread and careful balance, and with absolutely no hand holds, merely precarious resting places for his hands on loose stones, which we feared to dislodge upon us, crept higher, and at length reached a fairly clear place. Then, assisted by the rope, we came up one at a time.²⁹

To return to the theme of climbing ability again, the mention of Feuz having "cat-like tread" suggests an almost superhuman ability, that he climbed beyond the capabilities of the normal person. The climb on Mt. Assiniboine, however, better illustrates the theme of clients depending on their guide. Assistance from the rope usually indicates that a climber's skill level does not match that of the climb.

Other climbers, in more explicit terms, also recounted relying on the guide hauling on the rope. Herschel C. Parker, on an ascent of Mt. Hungabee recalled "[a] short space of breathless effort, a strong pull on the rope from Christian, [the guide] and I stood by his side at the top of the chimney."³⁰ Similarly, J.W.A. Hickson on a first ascent of Mt. Douglas, wrote "[t]his rope was tested, used by the leader, and after Feuz [Sr.] had ascended, let down to me. I was very glad of a strong pull: indeed it was

²⁸ Kauffman and Putnam, 113-114. Hansen, "Partners," 219.

²⁹ Walter D. Wilcox, "An Early Attempt to Climb Mt. Assiniboine," *CAJ*, 1909, 21.

³⁰ Herschel C. Parker, "The Ascent of Mt. Hungabee," *CAJ*, 1907, 82.

indispensable.”³¹ This suggests that the guides were taking on more risk than their clients. They were putting themselves in more danger by taking the sharp end, while the clients had the luxury of not worrying, as much, about the potentially fatal risk of falling, even though they also faced risks, such as falling rock. It is also striking how it appears that it is common practice for guides to haul clients and for the clients to still claim they were mountaineering and making first ascents.

But there was more to guiding than being able to climb. Guides took on the task of finding a route up the mountain, often including across glaciers. If it was a first ascent, the guide utilised route finding skills not necessarily possessed by the client. If not on a first ascent, guides would be working from their memory of the route, which the client would not have had. Describing the approach to Mt. Ball, John D. Patterson wrote:

The guides, yesterday so cheerful and talkative, were now as silent almost as the trees around us. Earnest work was ahead, and it was delightful to observe their keen eyes noting every fragment of the mountains appearing through the open spaces. No one had ever gone that way. Landmarks might be valuable before the day was done.³²

Yet again, the guides are described through simile. They are “silent almost as the trees”, thus acquiring qualities surpassing those of the average individual. More to the point, though, is that the task of remembering landmarks fell on the guides. Patterson realised the value of remembering landmarks. Yet it appears that he did not feel he needed to try. He left his safe return in the hands of the guides.

Assessing a route from a distance can be deceiving since the finer details and potential hazards may not be visible. Committing to a new route therefore presents unique challenges in route finding. Furthermore, the route used for the ascent may not be

³¹ J.W.A. Hickson, “Two First Ascents in the Rockies,” *CAJ*, 1911, 45.

³² John D. Patterson, “The Ascent of Mt. Ball,” *CAJ*, 1907, 87.

used for the descent, again calling on the guide to navigate new terrain. A.M. Gordon, Alex Dunn, and A.O. MacRae wrote of their experience descending Mt. Marpole with guide Eduoard Feuz. "From time to time Edouard would reconnoitre: standing on edges of a cliff overhanging space, he picked out the route, and we got down as easily and safely as if we had been walking on the prairie."³³

Drawing again on MacCarthy and Darling's experience on Mt. Robson with Conrad Kain illustrates how guides were relied on to find the way.

Without Conrad we might have gone badly astray, and I have never seen him to better advantage than during the descent of the first five hundred feet, cutting steps through the heavy fall of fresh snow, in the teeth of a blizzard that the rest of us could only fight against with averted faces, and yet finding his way without mistake.³⁴

Riddled with crevasses and the looming threat of falling seracs, glaciers can present mountaineers with various objective hazards that take a trained, experienced individual or team to safely assess and to divine a path. That trained individual, in the early period of mountaineering in Canada, was the guide. After a long day on Mt. Whitehorn, a group, guided by Kain, still had to cross a glacier to return to camp. One member of the group, W.E. Stone, recalled the crossing:

It was slow and careful work to find our way safely through the maze of crevasses, and by the time we had descended to the more level icefield, the darkness had obscured all details of the glacier surface and it became necessary to proceed with the utmost caution. By this time daylight had vanished and we had only the half light of the snow to relieve the darkness. The evening glow on Robson's summit was long gone, and our anxiety grew in proportion to the difficulties of the situation. Conrad's skill or instinct in avoiding the crevasses is best evidenced by the fact that for an hour or more we hastened down over this unknown glacier without mishap or appreciable delay.³⁵

³³ A.M. Gordon, Alex Dunn, and A.O. MacRae, "The Ascents of Mts. Marpole and Amgadamo," *CAJ*, 1907, 116.

³⁴ A.H. MacCarthy and B.S. Darling, "An Ascent of Mt. Robson from the Southwest," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 47.

³⁵ W.E. Stone, "A Day and Night on Whitehorn," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 61.

These examples demonstrate the clients' total reliance upon the guides for their well-being, which is representative of the early 20th century ethos of the role of the guide. In treacherous situations guides persevered and solved the problems associated with route finding.

Instinct and route-finding skills can account for a large share of safe passage, yet chance also plays a factor. Decisions made while travelling in mountainous terrain require a certain degree of prediction based on educated guesses and calculated risks. The clients appeared to be less aware of this factor of chance and appeared to believe that the guides had full control over the situation. The clients felt secure in the guide's skills, which brought them back "without mishap or appreciable delay" or created a comfort zone in which they felt as safe as they would be on prairie landscape. Clearly, the guides signified safe passage in the mountains.

Guides were looked to for determining when to continue with a climb or when to retreat. They were responsible for assessing the risk of the situation. A.T. Dalton on the first ascent of Mt. Garibaldi related his experience:

What we saw there sickened the bravest of us. We were on the edge of a thin toppling precipice of rotten lava, overhanging a horrible green glacier a thousand feet below, with empty space beneath it again. A cry was raised to return, but our guides were firmer now, and we had to go on.³⁶

Dalton felt he was in a risky situation. The guides, on the other hand, held a contrary perception of the risks before them and felt confident enough to push the group onwards. One of the many skills guides developed was the quick assessment of the climbing ability of the client. The decision to proceed or retreat could be based on this. Since the group

³⁶ A.T. Dalton, "The First Ascent of Mt. Garibaldi," *CAJ*, 1908, 209.

proceeded, suggests that the value placed in the guide's judgement outweighed that of the clients.

Even when a guide's judgement came into question, the clients were not confident enough to question the guides. Clients knew that a disparity existed between the knowledge and judgement of a guide and that of a client. In telling their ascent of Mt. Robson, MacCarthy and Darling wrote:

The weather looked hopeless, and Walter [one of the guides] declared it would be absurd to go on, but MacCarthy and I were keen to do so, and besought Conrad [Kain] to continue upward, for a time at least. He and Walter thereupon held a brief parlay in their mother tongue, and, I suspect, dwelt with scorn upon the hopeless and unreason stupidity of amateurs; but presuming, I am sure, that we should soon be quite satisfied to turn back, they agreed to ascent further.³⁷

Carrying on the conversation presumably in German, excluded the clients from the decision-making process. This is not a matter of language barriers inferring with communication rather it suggests that the guides alone were ultimately responsible for judging whether or not it was safe to continue. It illustrates that guides signified the authority on risk assessment.

MacCarthy and Darling were not successful in their attempt on Mt. Robson. In that same year, 1913, MacCarthy returned with W.W. Foster and guide Conrad Kain to make the first successful ascent. Kain wrote an account of this ascent. It offers a glimpse into the decision-making and risk-assessment process of a guide. Kain sets the scene: "[a]s it was late, I proposed to descend by the glacier of the south side, for greater safety. Besides the question of time, it seemed to me too dangerous to make our descent over the route of ascent." Having assessed the situation, Kain presented the factors he weighed for making decisions while guiding.

³⁷ A.H. MacCarthy and B.S. Darling, "An Ascent of Mt. Robson from the Southwest," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 41.

As the guide with two *Herren* [clients], one has to take such dangers more into account than do amateurs, for upon one's shoulders rests the responsibility for mens' lives. Also as a guide one must consider his calling and the sharp tongues that set going on all sides like clockwork when a guide with his party gets into a dangerous situation.

Kain felt that it was necessary to exercise caution, more caution than would an amateur mountaineer. This calculation suggests that guides were conservative in assessing risk. They would not take unnecessary risks; it may cost them their career. In the end, Kain decided it would be best to bivouac.³⁸

Clients owed their success and safe return, which can be success in and of itself, to the presence of guides. Climbers depended on the presence of guides for their success and believed that if a guide accompanied them it would almost guarantee their chance of success. A.H. MacCarthy told of his plans for first ascents of Mts. Farnham and Farnham Tower.

Upon our arrival [sic] at the Ranch we were most agreeably surprised to find a telegram from Conrad Kain saying that he was leaving Yoho Camp on his way to New Zealand and, as his steamer was delayed in sailing, could spare us a few days in case we needed his services; a sheer bit of luck indeed, for we felt Conrad was exactly the known quantity to solve our problem.³⁹

Similar praises are recorded in the account of the ascents of Mts. Marpole and Amgadamo. "We cannot speak too highly of the skill and care shown by our two young guides. Without them the expedition would have been impossible. Owing to them it was an unqualified success."⁴⁰ Speaking in the metaphoric terms of a mathematical equation, MacCarthy reduces Kain to a "known quantity", which suggests he is referring to Kain as a constant instead of a variable. This might suggest some uncertainty about the outcome

³⁸ Conrad Kain, "The First Ascent of Mt. Robson, The Highest Peak of the Rockies," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 23.

³⁹ A.H. MacCarthy, "First Ascents of Mt. Farnham and Mt. Farnham Tower," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 115.

⁴⁰ A.M. Gordon, Alex Dunn, and A.O. MacRae, "The Ascents of Mts. Marpole and Amgadamo," *CAJ*, 1907, 117.

of the climb. The constant is success. In contrast, the climbers on Mts. Marpole and Amgadamo at least recognised that guides did bring with them “skill and care” to turn the impossible into the possible. Reflected in the literary devices the authors used, it can be argued that the climbers directly linked guides with successful summit bids.

Mountaineers headed off into the mountains without guides as well. Equally telling of the importance of guides are accounts of climbs made without guides. These accounts often mentioned how the company of a guide or two would have been safer. Guides were still mentioned in these accounts. Often, climbers expressed how grateful they would have been had they employed a guide or two. Eyeing up Crow’s Nest Mountain, P.D. McTavish, wrote,

From the Crow’s Nest branch of the Canadian Pacific railway, the mountains looked truly majestic, and often I had cast longing eyes upon [Crow’s Nest Mountain]. True, Mr. Tom Wilson, the well-known mountaineer of Banff, accompanied by two Swiss guides, had reached the top; but the difficulties they had encountered did not tend much to encourage the novice. My friend, Mr. Keith Whimster, and I talked the matter over, and it was finally arranged that we should make the attempt.⁴¹

McTavish did not mention what he and Whimster discussed in order to reach their decision to climb, but it did not result in taking a guide. McTavish’s statement indicates awareness that guides play a role in overcoming difficulties that may thwart an attempt by novices.

As noted already, guides were responsible for finding the route up the mountain. One climber, G.R.B. Kinney, who found himself without a guide, recounted his folly in not taking a guide. Relying on his own route finding abilities he chose a more difficult route, putting himself at greater risk with potentially fatal consequences.

⁴¹ P.D. McTavish, “The Climb of Crow’s Nest Mountain,” *CAJ*, 1907, 109.

By making a detour, I could have found an easier way, but, having no guide and never having been there before, I began to climb the wall of rock immediately in front. It was a most difficult climb. The short day was nearly ended, the warmth of the sun had given place to a raw, cold wind, and my pack being large and heavy got in the way. Nearing the top of this almost vertical cliff, my numb fingers slipped and I barely escaped a sheer fall of fully one hundred feet.⁴²

Kinney put himself in a situation that he believes he could have avoided had a guide accompanied him. Drawing on the previous examples of Dalton on Mt. Garibaldi or MacCarthy and Darling on Mt. Robson, even had the guide put Kinney in a situation he perceived to be dangerous, potentially Kinney would have accepted it and been put at ease because he would have respected the judgement and abilities of the guide to protect him from the risks. Either way, a guide ensured safety.

Long time editor of the *CAJ*, Arthur Wheeler took advantage of Kinney's "solitary stroll to the fossil bed on Mt. Stephen" turned solo ascent. Following Kinney's account, Wheeler inserted a brief "Editor's Note", or disclaimer, on guideless climbing.

So far as we are aware only four climbs, other than Mr. Kinney's, have been made of Mt. Stephen without the aid of Swiss guides, . . . Never before or since has the climb been made by one man alone, and at a time of year when the conditions are such as to be almost prohibitive. For this reason, if no other, the fact is remarkable.

The mountain has now become the stock climb from Mt. Stephen House, the Canadian Pacific Railway Company's tourist hotel at Field, BC. When making it, one and often two Swiss guides are employed. The magnificent view from the summit more than repays the exertions of the climb.⁴³

It was not common for the editor to comment after an account. This practice suggests that this was an exceptional case and he was trying to make a point. Wheeler did praise Kinney, but had praise been his sole intent, it cannot fully explain why he continued by saying that guides were always employed for this climb. It could be, as mentioned in the introduction, that the *CAJ* also served the purpose of an advertisement for the CPR tourist

⁴² G.R.B. Kinney, "Mt. Stephen," *CAJ*, 1907, 120.

⁴³ G.R.B. Kinney, "Mt. Stephen," *CAJ*, 1907, 118, 122.

ad campaign for its guides and its rail services. It is more likely that Wheeler was suggesting unguided climbing was dangerous, that is, perceived to be more risky.

Guided climbing eventually waned by the 1950s, the details of which will be explored later in this chapter, making it more acceptable for guideless climbing. During the decline of guided climbing, a group of women set out for a two week climbing trip. As mentioned before, there were all women climbs by the 1920s,⁴⁴ so this trip was not unconventional. The women still felt at a slight disadvantage, though, because there was “not a capable male rope leader in the party.”⁴⁵ They addressed their concern by hiring a guide. The guide failed to show on the day of the climb. They also hoped they could team up with some more experienced climbers in the area, but none were present. Disappointed, yet not deterred, the party changed its objectives to match their skill level. These climbs still tested their abilities and mountain craft acumen, which entailed sections of roped climbing over rock and ice and assesses the avalanche hazard. At one point the author of the article, Cora Sutter, found herself in a chimney that led to the summit that “proved to be the most terrifying moment of [her] life.”⁴⁶ Sutter overcame her fear and successfully led the party to the summit. This “most terrifying moment” may have been terrifying with a guide as well. Just because a guide may be able to better secure against risk does not mean that a client will not experience fear or a sense of being at risk. In all, having climbed several peaks, their week ended in success. These climbs met the 10 000 ft elevation criterion for graduation climbs and some of the members gained status as full ACC members. All this suggests that the climbs that they had

⁴⁴ Karen Routledge, “‘Being a Girl without Being a Girl’: Gender and Mountaineering on Mount Waddington, 1926-36,” *BC Studies*, no. 141, (2004), 38.

⁴⁵ Cora Sutter, “Lady Climbers in the Tonquin and Mount Robson Region,” *CAJ*, 1944-45, 65.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 68.

selected, despite not having a guide, were still serious climbs. This climbing trip suggests that the experiences of Margaret Flemming and Phyllis Munday extended to other women in the mountaineering community.

Despite of all the skills the guides possessed, they also were not qualified enough to climb solo. Conrad Kain's solo adventure on Mt. Whitehorn offered an example.

I had absolutely no pleasure in that climb. The time was too short and the dangers were too great. Two days later I went over the glacier and saw my tracks, and I think there was only one chance in a hundred of anyone coming through safe. I was appalled when I saw the dangerous crevasses. It was one of the craziest and most foolhardy undertakings that I ever made in the mountains, and all my life I shall remember the ascent of Whitehorn.⁴⁷

In her biography of Wheeler, Esther Fraser draws attention to Kain's solo ascent. She writes that Wheeler and Kain had a disagreement over his ascent. Kain felt frustrated with the lack of climbing on their expedition and, against Wheeler's wishes, alleviated his frustrations with the first ascent of Mt. Whitehorn, solo at that. Upon Kain's return, Wheeler reprimanded him. Kain excluded from his account Wheeler berating him for climbing solo.⁴⁸ Perhaps Kain felt it best not to rock the boat for fear of losing his guiding status, which may explain why Kain deems it as "one of [his] craziest and most foolhardy undertakings".⁴⁹ This suggests that Wheeler was influential in shaping the content of the articles in the *CAJ*. The content in this case conveys the message that climbing solo is too risky, which is similar to the example of Kinney's solo ascent.

The beginning of the 1950s marks a second era of study for this thesis. Accounts of guided climbing in the *CAJ* had already dwindled. This trend also continued into the 1970s. Several reasons can be suggested for this trend. For financial reasons, by 1955

⁴⁷ Conrad Kain, "First Ascent of Mt. Whitehorn," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 51.

⁴⁸ Esther Fraser, *Wheeler*, (Banff: Summerthought, 1978), 92-93.

⁴⁹ Conrad Kain, "First Ascent of Mt. Whitehorn," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 51.

the CPR discontinued its guiding service. No formal guiding service emerged until 1963 with the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. Moreover, due to the ever-increasing number of recreational tourists, mountaineers may no longer have opted to partake of the CPR amenities, such as hotels and transportation, and, as such, may also not have employed CPR guides. This diminished the influence of the CPR in the mountaineering community.⁵⁰

The demographics may also have changed. Traditionally the professional and upper classes had predominated in the mountaineering community. With the change in demographics within the climbing community, the working classes were taking up mountaineering. These lower classes simply may not have been able to afford the services of a guide. Victorians, and Edwardians too, held beliefs regarding proper gentlemanly conduct. One rule delineated between being an amateur and being a professional. To be a professional was ungentlemanly, as represented in Hebert Spencer's "To play a good game of billiards is the sign of a well-rounded education, but to play too good a game of billiards is the sign of a mis-spent youth."⁵¹ As social mores changed, this Victorian ideal of the gentleman sportsman had fallen out of favour.⁵²

In spite of this trend, accounts of climbs involving guides found their way into the *CAJ* in the post 1945 era, yet not in the same numbers as in the first era. In the event that a guide accompanied climbers, the guide often did not serve as a leader but just as another member of the party, indicating a change in the role of guide. What did not

⁵⁰ Martel, 10-12.

⁵¹ Quoted in Peter Donnelly, "Climbing is Non-Competitive: The Second of Four Fallacies," *Mountain*, vol. 81, 28.

⁵² Peter Hansen's work on the British climbing community suggests that social and cultural conventions have shaped the sport of mountaineering. See: Peter H. Hansen, "Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 300-324.

change was how climbers described the guides' abilities. In one such example, a guide accompanied Murray Toft and his party on an ascent of Mt. Victoria.

Now Fred had been a guide back in Switzerland and had such routes to his credit as the north faces of the Matterhorn and the Gletscherhorn. His supreme skill on ice reminded the rest of us of our ignorance as he moved delicately across the wall and gazed up into the corner. After chipping a step or two and placing a screw Fred prepared to move up. He wrapped his bear-like arms around an ice block before him and stood up. Unfortunately the block did not hold and Fred fell out backwards into space. Dangling for a moment from the screw he took a closer look at the corner. Without a word he was up again and beyond his last high point. He moved into the corner and out of sight.⁵³

Over seventy years after the first guides arrived in Canada, the disparity in skill levels between a climber and a guide still receives attention. Their "supreme" skills set them apart from the average climber. Yet again, guides are described with similes, imbuing them with extra human qualities. Toft's tone also smacks of admiration for Fred's composure after taking a fall in stride and, "without a word" or hesitation, to return to the climb. In all, this account bares striking similarity to accounts from the first period, suggesting the mountaineering community still revered guides as almost mythic in abilities.

Guides took on more responsibilities for risks than the client. Guides mediated the experience for clients, accepting the choices and risks taken. The perception is that risk is minimised with the presence of a guide. P.D. McTavish, in concluding the account of his three unsuccessful attempts on Pinnacle Mountain in 1908, wrote, "[w]hen a party of mountaineers, protected from danger by a careful guide, spend a day on a mountain that tries all their skill and constantly taxes their ingenuity, every moment is replete with pleasure."⁵⁴ This quotation suggests that the climbers took some

⁵³ Murray Toft, "Mt. Victoria," *CAJ*, 1970, 42.

⁵⁴ P.D. McTavish, "Three Attempts on Pinnacle," *CAJ*, 1908, 203-4.

responsibility for climbing the mountain. It required “their skill” and “their ingenuity”. However, they still relied on the guide to protect them from danger. There was a perception that the presence of the guide created that safe environment for them, in which they could test their skill and ingenuity. The safe environment also allowed them to relax enough to enjoy the experience. J.W.A. Hickson on the successful ascent of Pinnacle Mountain and Mt. Daltaform [*sic*], two years after McTavish’s attempts, offers a similar example. He surmised, “[b]ut there is practically no danger; when one is firmly held on the rope by guides, whose caution and resourcefulness, here as elsewhere, were admirable, and have fully justified the confidence which I have always reposed in their ability.”⁵⁵ Hickson described more reliance on the guides. In combination with the rope, the guides’ “caution and resourcefulness” almost eliminate danger.

Paul Fussell’s work on British travel writing in the interwar period explores the development of the tourist and the tour guide. He argues that modern tourists search out structured guided tours for the ease and convenience. Gone are the days of exploration and informal guiding. The professional guide and tourist companies govern everything and the contemporary tourists merely follow along.⁵⁶ Paul Beedie isolates three periods in the British mountaineering scene. The first period, up to 1930 is defined by the middle to upper classes employing professional guides. A deluge of working class people taking up mountaineering marks the second period, from 1930 to 1970. Instead of relying on guides, this new group took it upon themselves to learn mountaineering skills. By the 1970s, another type of mountaineer came into the picture. In this group, the people are

⁵⁵ J.W.A. Hickson, “The Ascent of Pinnacle Mountain and Second Ascent of Mount Daltaform [*sic*],” *CAJ*, 1910, 52.

⁵⁶ Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 37-50.

unable to find the time to learn the skills and compensate for this by hiring guides.

Beedie defines them as adventure tourists.⁵⁷ This parallels the changes in tourism as suggested by Fussell. Though the periods may not coincide exactly, a similar trend may have also occurred in Canada. This trend is reflected in the decline in the very mention of guides in the *CAJ* accounts by the 1950s. However, by the 1970s, accounts in the *CAJ* continue to exclude the use of guides. It appears that the climbing community by then had a higher regard for climbers who eschewed the use of guides and who had mastered the skills of the sport. It may be suggested that there is more interest in elite climbers, or those going guideless, who are pioneering the sport.

To conclude, in the early era of mountaineering in Canada, mountaineers were dependent on guides. Guides assessed and managed risks. They made all the decisions and therefore mediated the experience for the clients. Social convention dictated that climbers should not be too competent, and thus not genteel. Mountaineers faced the risks of mountaineering through a guide. Hiring a guide also protected them from the risk of breaking social conventions. The change towards guideless climbing was well underway by the 1950s.

⁵⁷ Paul Beedie, "Because It's There: Adventure Tourism and Changes to the Social World of Mountaineering," *Journal of the International Council for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport, and Dance*, vol. 36, no. 4, 44.

Chapter Three:

Gear

I have climbed several higher mountains without guide or path, and have found, as might be expected, that it takes only more time and patience commonly than to travel the smoothest highway.

-- Henry David Thoreau

Mountaineers have always relied on some form of technology to travel and climb in the mountains, be it footwear, crampons, rope, ice-axes, or pitons. Accounts in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* are full of descriptions of how climbers use gear. In the first era, climbers used the gear under the direction of the guide. As guideless climbing gained popularity and acceptance, the role of the guide changed. The Alpine Club of Canada also took an active role in training its members. Guides were called on to instruct at ACC summer camps. Mountaineers also learned through informal means, for example, from fellow climbers or from how to books. I argue that as a result, climbers were left to their own knowledge, skills, and judgement when facing the risks of climbing. When assessing risks, climbers often spoke in terms of gear.

Accounts often include mention of the type of footwear required for a safe ascent. In the first period hobnailed boots were the standard. See page vii for a picture of mountaineers sporting hobnailed boots. The nails provided traction in the rocky, mountainous terrain. The traction provided by the hobnails did not go unnoticed. Climbers, such as E.W.D. Holway on a first ascent in the southern Rockies, often describe of the performance of their footwear. Holway wrote, "[t]his route can only be followed when the rock is free of snow, as the holds are only the friction of the open

hand; the stone is schist, however, and the bootnails hold well.”¹ Nailed boots were not suited to all conditions though. In one scenario, Edouard Feuz, Sr., a guide, found himself in a tricky chimney with smooth, slippery, yet friable sides. To make matters worse, the belayer was not at a sound stance and a lead fall may have pulled him off as well. Furthermore, had the belayer held the fall without being pulled off, there was a chance that the sharp rocks may sever the rope. J.W.A. Hickson, wrote, “[t]his was, for the reason just stated, a work not only of real difficulty but of considerable danger Fortunately, he [the guide] had lowered down changed his heavy nailed boots for a pair of strong, but light cotton soled ones (an improvement on the roped kind) and which undoubtedly contributed to our success.”² Although the objective hazards of Hickson’s situation had not changed, the perception of the dangers confronting them changed with the security of the cotton-soled shoes. It was less dangerous, or safer, for the guide to climb in the cotton-soled shoes. Clearly climbers were aware of the capabilities of their footwear. Proper footwear added security, and thus safety. Hickson’s example also marks a beginning of a theme to be developed in this chapter and Chapter Three that gear and success are intertwined.

When conditions warranted it, for example, travel on glaciers or on sections of steep ice or hard-packed snow, climbers used crampons. Essentially crampons are a series of metal spikes on a frame that affixes to the bottom of a boot to provide traction on ice or hard-packed snow, conditions which are often impassable or treacherous without crampons. In the early years of mountaineering crampons were considered unsportsmanlike, yet some early mountaineers still used crampons. According to Chic

¹ E.W.D. Holway, “The First Ascent s of Beaver and Duncan,” *CAJ*, 1914-15, 100.

² J.W.A. Hickson, “Two First Ascents in the Rockies,” *CAJ*, 1911, 46-7.

Scott, crampons did not gain full acceptance in the Canadian mountaineering community until the 1950s.³ When climbers used crampons, they spoke in praise of the security and stability. "Thanks to our crampons the glacier caused us little delay..."⁴ Another climber writes, "I have worn crampons so seldom that tramping securely up a steepish slope of hard ice still gives me a sensation of pleased surprise."⁵

Ice-axes are also found in a climber's arsenal to surmount the challenges of snow and ice by providing a third point of contact as well as a tool for cutting steps in the snow pack. "As we approached the top of the chimney the snow increased in quantity and steepness, becoming almost perpendicular, so our ice-axes were called into use."⁶ Sometimes conditions did not call for the use of ice-axes, "[w]e recognized the wisdom of the guides in leaving the axes behind, for, with them, we should have been greatly hindered."⁷ Yet, without the proper gear, climbers found climbing a little more daunting. In one example, a member of the climbing party chose to not continue to the summit and stayed behind with the ice-axes and rope. Those who carried on "soon repented of [*sic?*] [their] folly for the summit was much further than it had appeared to be and rose in a snow peak above and to the left of the point [they] had seen. However, [they] made [their] way up and then traversed to the left reaching the summit without mishap, but finding it necessary to exercise some care."⁸

The previous example shows that climbers also relied on a rope. Initially ropes were made of hemp, manila, or flax or a combination of two or all three of these fibres.

³ Chic Scott, *Pushing the Limits: The Story of Canadian Mountaineering*, (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 1999), 107, 165.

⁴ G.W. Culver, "The First Traverse of Mount Victoria," *CAJ*, 1910, 92.

⁵ A.L. Mumm, "An Expedition of Mount Robson," *CAJ*, 1910, 6.

⁶ P.D. McTavish, "Three Attempts on Pinnacle," *CAJ*, 1908, 198.

⁷ Jean Parker, "The Second Ascent of Mt. Tupper," *CAJ*, 1909, 29.

⁸ J.E.C. Eaton, "An Expedition to the Freshfield Group," *CAJ*, 1911, 10.

Strength, weight, durability, weave, ability to stretch and return to near original condition, and handling characteristics especially when wet and or frozen were factors that determined the quality of the rope. These factors have also carried through to the present. In the 19th and early 20th century some mountaineers advised against the use of rope. Hickson's example with Feuz Sr. illustrates the reasoning behind this; that is, if the leader fell, or for that matter anyone on the rope team as well, he or she could pull the rest of the climbers with him/her to an untimely demise. Moreover, climbers attached themselves to the rope by wrapping loops around the midsection and securing it with a bowline knot. In the event of a fall, the force would be loaded over a small area, that is the waistline, causing at least discomfort and at most internal injuries and/or broken bones. It was not until 1970 that the sit-harness was invented. A sit harness, including a waist loop, has leg loops that distribute the force generated in a fall over the waist and legs thus allowing for far less a chance of injury from the harness in a fall. For an image of how the rope was tied around the waist of early climbers see pages ix and x. For an image of a sit harness see pages xii and xiii.

Changes in rope construction occurred after World War II. Nylon replaced the natural fibres, while kernmantel construction became the norm, now more closely resembling the ropes used today. In addition to this, theory pertaining to belaying and anchoring changed. With the introduction of pitons, traditional protection, and bolts, climbers could attach themselves more securely to the rock, thus decreasing the chance of joining their rope-mates in a fall. By the 1960s, belay devices were invented that aided in arresting the fall of a climber. In all, the early years of mountaineering were marked with the adage that the leader must not fall. Improved equipment and belay and anchor

techniques allowed mountaineers to seek out lines that may push them to their limits and result in falls with a decreased chance of injury and/or death.⁹ It might be worthwhile to mention now that one factor affecting the perception of risk in climbing is a climber's over-reliance on gear.¹⁰ This theme of climber's perceptions with regard to risk and equipment will be revisited throughout the thesis.

Despite the drawbacks to the initial ropes and belay techniques, mountaineers still felt security from the rope. This may have been because mountaineers did not know any better, but that would seem unlikely because there was a chance that mountaineers would have read the mountaineering literature and during ACC Summer Camps would have been exposed to the notion that roped climbing may not be the safest. Climbers turned a blind eye to the potential hazards of roped climbing because it appeared that they fully trusted a guide when using the rope. This returns to the argument in Chapter Two that guides were extraordinary in their mountaineering abilities and as a result mitigate risk. The importance of the rope itself could not be overstated. As A.H. MacCarthy related, "Conrad [Kain] had declared we should treat the rope as we would treat our mother."¹¹ This suggests that the rope, although requiring respect, is a strong and invaluable piece of equipment when used properly. That proper use eased the minds of climbers. In one example, a group of climbers found themselves "in almost complete darkness. Several times we had gone over 'jumping off' places on the ridge, not knowing whether we were going down four feet or forty, but, as we were still roped, the danger was not so great as

⁹ R. A. Smith, "The Development of Equipment to Reduce the Risk in Rock Climbing," *Sports Engineering*, vol. 1, (1998), 28-32.

¹⁰ Michael Helms, "Factors Affecting Evaluations of Risks and Hazards in Mountaineering," *Journal of Experiential Education*, vol. 7, no. 3, (1984), 23. R.A. Smith, 27.

¹¹ A.H. MacCarthy, "First Ascents of Mt. Farnham and Mt. Farnham Tower," *CAJ*, 1914-15, 123.

might be imagined.”¹² In another example, J.W.A. Hickson wrote, “There were no difficulties on this portion of the climb, but shortly before reaching the trough, Feuz [Sr.], whose caution is proverbial, insisted that he and I should rope together.”¹³ Climbers have an awareness of the gear. The suggestion to rope up also illustrates how gear equals safety. That is, safe mountain travel means roping together and trusting the guide that he is making the right and the safest decision. In doing this, the *CAJ* was creating a discourse on safety, stating what is acceptable, namely, roping up. Still, in this first decade, these quotations indicate that proper gear use and when and how to bring it into employ fell under the responsibilities of the guides. The guides ultimately were the bastions of safety and mediators of risk.

The annual ACC summer camps are examined by Mary Andrews. She states that instructional seminars were held at all the summer camps.¹⁴ The purpose of these camps was to train new members so that they could climb a peak of at least 10 000 feet, and thus, qualify as a full member. For each summer camp an attendee wrote an account. None of the accounts of the summer camps from the first period of this study, make note of climbers attending seminars, except for one which mentioned a first-aid course. Moreover, climbers, in accounts from the first decade, do not express an eagerness to practice skills learned at summer camps or elsewhere. The accounts from the fifties were different.

By the 1950s, the ACC had adopted a policy for educating its members. ACC president E.O. Wheeler, son of Arthur O. Wheeler, in an address from the president,

¹² J.P. Forde, “The First Ascent of the North Tower of Mount Goodsir,” *CAJ*, 1910, 67.

¹³ J.W.A. Hickson, “Two First Ascents in the Rockies,” *CAJ*, 1911, 45.

¹⁴ Mary Andrews, “Passport to Paradise: The Alpine Club of Canada summer camps,” *BC Historical News*, vol. 24, (1991), 19.

stated the importance of instructing ACC members. He states, "[t]here are good reasons why a proportion of the annual camps of the [ACC] should be in well-known and previously visited areas; these are primarily connected with the instruction in the art of mountaineering."¹⁵ Wheeler returned to this issue several times over his presidency. Two years later, Wheeler reiterated his goals, "I believe that the [ACC] perhaps does more than any Club in the world to encourage the budding mountaineer and I ask all our members to further this, one of our major aims, 'The encouragement of mountain craft and the opening of new regions as national playgrounds.'." ACC members, thus, had the option of attending rock school and ice school while at the ACC summer camps. In rock school, budding mountaineers were taught navigation skills, river crossing techniques, as well as rope work, which included knot tying, belaying, and rappelling. See page viii for a picture of climbers learning how to tie knots. Skills taught in rock school were expanded upon in ice school, in which members were instructed in the use of crampons and ice-axes, glacier travel, crevasse rescue, step-cutting, and glissading. For a picture of an ACC member cutting steps see page ix. Accounts of these schools found their way into the pages of each issue of the *CAJ*, in the fifties. Camp attendees also learned first aid.

Climbers were now heading off into the mountains with skills for which they formerly had relied on the guide. Climbers wrote about their new skills, praising them and expressing an eagerness to practice them. Herman Genschorek wrote a chilling account expressing gratitude for his first aid lessons.

About half-way down the ice it happened. My companion Ian Kay had slipped and was very rapidly gaining momentum on the steep ice. His ice-axe was torn from his hands. At express speed he thumped into the rocks of the outcrop

¹⁵ E.O. Wheeler, "Reconnaissances for New Camp Areas," *CAJ*, 1952, 85.

seventy feet below. By this time somersaulting through the air, he bounced out of sight. Everything happened so quickly. From now on working under pressure I completed cutting my way down the ice lest the same thing happen to me. I found Ian in a semi-conscious state lying in the opening between the rock and the snow. How invaluable were our first aid classes, conducted by Phyl Munday during the previous winter for the Vancouver Section! First aid was administered to the best of my ability.¹⁶

Genschorek left Ian, and then went down for help. By saying "to the best of my ability", suggests Genschorek may not have had full confidence in his training. Yet they had felt confident enough to climb without a professional guide, who would have been fully trained in wilderness first aid. The presence of a guide no longer reduced the risk.

In the first period, with a guide, glacier travel entailed a follow-the-leader style of travel. Clients were lead on a safe path divined by the guide. After attending ice school, in the 1950s, mountaineers possessed the skills to travel safely on glaciers. George Whitmore recalls his experiences with his companions on the glaciers in coastal BC. "Will and Dick talked of climbing a peak on the Iroquois Ridge, but it seemed that they had spent a good part of the day exploring crevasses and practicing rescue techniques."¹⁷ The necessity to practice their crevasse rescue skills illustrates the importance placed on these skills. It suggests that Will and Dick realised that they were reliant on themselves, not a trained guide, for their safety. In a similar example, John Dudra, writes of an eagerness to practice ice skills. "The rest of the day was spent in making a traverse of Munday glacier to the southwest ridge to have a look at Noch Valley and to try out new ice and snow techniques!"¹⁸ The newness of their skills suggests that they were still amateur mountaineers, having not put their skills to use without the supervision of an instructor. Having acquired the skills though, they felt they were prepared to face the

¹⁶ Herman Genschorek, Jr., "First Ascents in the Tantalus Range," *CAJ*, 1950, 111-2.

¹⁷ George W. Whitmore, "South of Bella Coola - Three Years," *CAJ*, 1957, 19.

¹⁸ John L. Dudra, "The First Ascent of Mt. Saugstad," *CAJ*, 1952, 15.

hazards of the mountainous terrain. These examples demonstrate a shift in the use of mountain guides. Instead of relying on the guide, they now relied on their own skills and faced the risks unmediated. Climbers were independent of guides, and therefore dependent on themselves.

In the fifties, climbers still spoke of their footwear, at times in great detail. Nailed boots were still used, but advancements in technology offered alternatives, primarily rubber-soled boots. For example, Leonard Taylor wrote:

We used nailed boots through the climb and on only two occasions did one of us wish we had running shoes. Al wore box-toes U.S. Army boots with tricouni edge nails. On one occasion when mounting a narrow 45-degree shelf he was unable to get his boot toe in the only available toe hold. The hand of the man behind finally gave him the necessary foothold after he had done some fancy and fatiguing skating. Howard had tricounis in soft-toed, ten inch boots. These did not give him the firm grip he wanted on a false start up a smooth slab. I wore ankle-length, soft-toed boots with Swiss edge nails and at no time did I lack confidence in my footing.¹⁹

Yet, nailed boots were not always functional on the new routes climbers sought; that is, climbers were venturing out of the gullies and chimneys and on to sheer faces. Climbers found that the new terrain presented challenges that the old equipment could not overcome. A. Melville and I. Kay write, "The first pitches consisted of sedimentary rock cliffs easily climbed and presenting no obstacle to tricouni nails. But as we reached a contact point, the rock changed to solid granite and we could see that we were in for a battle. The whole face was much steeper than we had anticipated."²⁰ Whereas, with rubber-soled boots, mountaineers were able to climb with more confidence. P. Robinson writes, "[t]he following day the same six of us enjoyed a perfect final day climbing Bugaboo Spire. Three of us led the famous gendarme and found it very exciting but not

¹⁹ Leonard H. Taylor, "The Second Ascent of the Snow Peaks," *CAJ*, 1950, 81.

²⁰ A. Melville and I. Kay, "Fire Lake - An Airborne Weekend," *CAJ*, 1951, 84.

extremely difficult with Bramani [rubber] soles."²¹ For an image of rubber-soled boots see page xii.

Gear, by the fifties, affected the difficulty of a climb. Part of the difficulty would also be the risk involved in a climb. By decreasing the difficulty some of the risk is reduced. In tricky situations, Bramani soles were also a key for security and success. "The Bramanis held on delicate friction as the leader moved up until the rope could run through a sling hooked around a fortunate chockstone."²² Mountaineers were now not speaking in terms of the skill of the climber yet the capabilities of the gear, suggesting they felt a reliance on the gear.

Climbers also resorted to using sneakers to negotiate challenging sections of rock. "The rock had become hard fine-grained granite by the time we reached the base of the summit tower. Here, only about three hundred feet below the top, the ridge became a narrow and nearly vertical wall, with sheer drop-offs on either side. Sneaker climbing was necessary from here on."²³ This example does not quite illustrate the security these climbers felt from their footwear. It does illustrate the awareness of the usefulness of other types of footwear. The following example contrasts this in that it juxtaposes the security the climbers felt in their sneakers other than that of nailed boots.

Upon investigating the other side of the notch we discovered a back-door route onto a less precipitous east-west knife edge ridge. With the confidence provided by sneakers on our feet instead of nailed boots Ian and I grappled with excellent rock abounding in good holds.²⁴

Had the climbers not donned sneakers they would have found the rock less favourable and thus climbing it more risky. Perhaps they may not have had the confidence to climb

²¹ P. Robinson, "A Week in the Bugaboos, September, 1953," *CAJ*, 1954, 104.

²² John D. Mendelhall, "First Ascents West of the Mistaya," *CAJ*, 1953, 70.

²³ F.L. Dunn, "The Windy Range in 1952," *CAJ*, 1952, 113.

²⁴ Herman Genschorek, "First Ascents in the Tantalus Range," *CAJ*, 1950, 110.

it at all. It can be suggested that they perceived the situation as an acceptable risk or just less risky with the security of their gear, in this case, sneakers.

Crampons were more commonly used in Canada by the 1950s.²⁵ It used to be the fashion to literally cut steps up snow and ice slopes. This labourious process consumed copious amounts of time and steps could not be cut when the snow or ice froze solid. Crampons offered an alternative to step cutting, which still had its place, and allowed for passage on steeper and hardened ice and snow. Two separate accounts provide an example for when crampons were used and the result. Oscar A. Cook wrote:

Kicking steps in the snow brought us to within one pitch of the summit. As I started to lead, I discovered ice under a couple inches of snow. This no longer permitted kicking safe steps so I found a belay spot and told Bill, who had the pack, to put on crampons. This he did and at 1:30 P.M. we were on the top of the mighty Mt. Waddington.²⁶

In a second account, John L. Dudra wrote:

Where we finally emerged back on the ridge the face route ran out and the ridge ended in a vertical buttress, towering immediately above us. This meant a traverse to the right of the buttress over fifty-degree glare ice. We soon had on the crampons, carried for such predicaments.²⁷

Both of these groups encountered conditions that they believed were not safe to pass without crampons. The objective hazard of the ice added risk to the climb. To change the perceived danger of the hazard, the ice itself had not changed, the climbers donned crampons and felt safe enough to pass the hazard. The choice to use the gear fell on the mountaineers, not a guide. By relying on the gear, the climber's perception of risk shifted. These examples suggest another shift. Mountaineers defined successful ascents

²⁵ Scott, 107, 165.

²⁶ Oscar A. Cook, "In Munday's Land," *CAJ*, 1951, 9.

²⁷ John L. Dudra, "The First Ascent of Mt. Saugstad," *CAJ*, 1952, 16.

in terms of the gear used and their own judgement, whereas in the first period guides were viewed as the key to success.

The reliance climbers had on crampons can also be illustrated in accounts in which climbers did not bring crampons. In one example the climbers found themselves in a situation in which “[a]ll the rocks were thickly glazed with ice, but after some slow and careful climbing we emerged on the lower edge of the steep snow patch.” The author of the account, Norman Brewster, assessed the situation, concluding, “[a]pparently the loose or unconsolidated snow had all slid off over the cliffs as the surface here was a very tough and uniform snow-ice, and we began to regret having left our crampons behind.”²⁸

In a similar situation, finding themselves without crampons, A.C. Fabergé recounted:

The bare ice here was plainly visible, it was clearly not a sound route without crampons. Even if this were overcome, it would still only place us at the base of the rock tower. With these factors against us, and the additional one of the impending storm, we turned back.²⁹

Again, the icy conditions were deemed risky. In the latter situation, the viability of the route depended upon, not only the weather imposing a time limit, but crampons. Lacking what had become accepted as the proper gear, the climbers felt it unsafe to continue.

One novice mountaineer, Genevieve Simpson, expounded on her time at an ACC summer camp. In ice school Simpson was exposed to crampons for the first time. “Why, with those magic ice-claws on you feet, an ice-axe in your hand, and a stout rope around your middle, you were master of the ice world! You were an ethereal being, you were Mind over Matter, you were Superman!” Surely a little indulgent in hyperbole, it still stands as an illustration of the safety and security climbers felt from their gear. Simpson

²⁸ Norman Brewster, “In the Adamant Range,” *CAJ*, 1951, 32.

²⁹ A.C. Fabergé, “Neptune and the Windy Range,” *CAJ*, 1951, 49.

felt, suggestive of the Superman analogy, stronger, faster, and impervious to any threat. Returning from the summit, Superman's knee started aching. "'Superman' was only mortal after all!" The camp doctor diagnosed the pain as bursitis. "It occurred to me that since variety is the spice of life, it was undoubtedly a welcome relief to him to treat something besides blisters. Feet get very monotonous."³⁰ Putting it all together, with the security of the gear, climbers at ACC camps were only prone to blisters and, at worse, bursitis. The inherent risk of potentially fatal injuries was put aside as climbers relied on the security of the gear.

By the 1950s, climbers were adding pitons to their racks. Pitons came on the scene shortly before the First World War.³¹ At first, mountaineers shunned the use of pitons, but pitons slowly, yet steeped in controversy, gained acceptance. The ethics of piton use will be explored further in Chapter Four. Pitons are metal spikes of various shapes and sizes and metals that are hammered into cracks in the rock or ice. Depending how they were driven in, they can be removed. These pieces of protection, if placed properly in sound rock, provide bomber anchor points for the rope while leading or belaying, adding, what the climbers felt to be, an element of safety. They could also be used as direct aid. Numerous accounts illustrate climbers using pitons for safety. Pitons protect a leader. "The next few hundred feet were negotiated by scrambling up the steep rotten rib with an occasional piton or sling for safety."³² "Using two pitons for safety, we climbed 60 feet up the nose of the ridge . . ."³³ "Three high-angle leads provided rock

³⁰ Genevieve Simpson, "Freshfields Camp, 1949," *CAJ*, 1950, 66-7.

³¹ R.A. Smith, pg. 32.

³² Gibson Reynolds, "King Peak-Yukon Expedition, 1952," *CAJ*, 1953, 26.

³³ Fred D. Ayres, "The First Ascent of Mt. Erasmus," *CAJ*, 1951, 41.

climbing reminiscent of Yosemite Valley, with several pitons for safety.”³⁴ Pitons serve as attachments for belay anchors. “The rock was so unstable and rotten at this point that we had to use an ice-piton to assist a belay.”³⁵ “A steep and very exposed knife-edge arête led up to a vertical ice buttress, and a lot of step cutting and driving of ice pitons was necessary to get all men safely across.”³⁶ Pitons signified safety.

One account stands out as it directly relates the use of pitons to risk in mountaineering. The leader was in a cruxy overhanging position. “I was looking directly at the top of my belayer’s hat. I drove a piton into a crack and snapped in; there are plenty of unavoidable risks in climbing, why add more?”³⁷ With gear mountaineers believed they could control the risks that they faced. It suggests that climbers were not seeking danger with reckless abandon. That in the name of safety, climbers were able to legitimise the use of pitons. They were speaking in terms of keeping themselves safe as opposed to seeking risk and a thrill. This point will be further explored in Chapter Four.

As the mountains saw first ascents, climbers, to keep an old medium new, sought new lines up these previously climbed mountains. These routes were often more challenging than the first ascents and moved out on to the “blank” faces. To tackle the blank faces climbers relied heavily on pitons, sometimes for direct aid. Contemporary climbers are now freeing these old aid routes. Improvements in climbing shoes, namely sticky rubber; improvements in climbing ability; developments in traditional gear; and utilizing piton scars for placements and/or hand holds, among other factors has allowed

³⁴ Gilbert Roberts and David Sowles, “Stanford Coast Range Expedition, 1954,” *CAJ*, 1955, 12.

³⁵ Ralph Hutchinson, “Mount Raleigh,” *CAJ*, 1960, 34.

³⁶ Paddy Sherman and Fips Broda, “Fairweather, The Centennial Summit,” *CAJ*, 1959, 8.

³⁷ Richard Irvin, “The Saga of the Ragged Four,” *CAJ*, 1952, 97.

contemporary climbers to free these old routes, that is, climbing them without pulling on gear. For images of the early routes compared to more modern routes see pages x, xi, xii, and xiii.

Yet in the 1950s climbers still relied heavily on pitons. On an exploration and climbing trip in the Kemano region of the Coast Range, BC, Sandy Lockhart described his dependency on pitons.

We tried it by the northwest face, the northwest ridge, after traversing the Third Jaw; from the southwest ridge after traversing the First Jaw; from the southeast face. But always there was defeat. But after investing a small fortune in part ownership of the Stubai piton works, we attacked the northwest face, forcing 200 feet to the first ledge in five hours. Attaching a fixed rope we retired and returned the following day to force another few feet. This continued at intervals for some time, and we began to refer to the face as 'Old Iron Sides.'³⁸

This account illustrates the sheer volume of pitons some routes required. It also touches on consumerism, "investing a small fortune", in a successful climb, which will be addressed in Chapter Four.

The following account is a more personal experience with placing pitons. John D. Mendelhall reported:

Above towered the castle's keep. A loose, narrow, three-inch crack curved up, overhanging a bit at the top. Ungallantly leaving the heavy pack for Ruth, I ascended easy rock and placed a shallow anchor piton at the base of the cliff. My companion was belayed up and anchored. Two more pitons, and the base of the crack was reached. Extensive 'gardening' therein failed to produce trustworthy holds; piton four went in an inch, and number five, a foot above, was no better. After several vain attempts, piton six finally penetrated an inch.

The leader was now beneath the slight overhang, and it was obviously safer to apply pressure slowly to such sorry pitons than to risk a fall and jerk on them. Accordingly, two slings were snapped into the highest carabiner. As my weight was gingerly transferred to the loops, the piton was eyed with distrust, but it held. Another loose piton was placed, and the writer breathed more freely, reasoning that some should hold.³⁹

³⁸ Sandy Lockhart, "Kemano Climbing and Exploration," *CAJ*, 1959, 23.

³⁹ John D. Mendelhall, "First Ascents West of the Mistaya," *CAJ*, 1953, 69.

The detail with which Mendelhall recalled his experience is striking. Perhaps the event proved to be a little too traumatic, earning it a permanent place in his memory.

Mendelhall has illustrated for the readers when it is acceptable to place pitons. When a placement cannot be trusted, do not rely on just one piece of protection. It may be necessary to place a small array of pitons to ensure safety.

Mendelhall's example gives the appearance that the men led the riskier pitches, perhaps because men knew how to use gear and had the mental stamina and focus to maintain the presence of mind in stressful situations. It is true that over the 20th century mountaineering clubs, the ACC and the BC Mountaineering Club stand as examples, dissuaded women from participating in what were believed to be the more difficult or risky climbs.⁴⁰ It has been suggested that this was due to notions of femininity that subscribed to the belief that women were of the weaker sex and should not or could not be as athletic as men.⁴¹ Yet by the 1920s, women were organising all-female climbing trips with articles of all-female climbs appearing in the *CAJ* by the 1930s, which suggests that women were competent mountaineers.⁴²

The literature on two mountaineers, Margaret Flemming and Phyllis Munday, who are mentioned in the Introduction, attest to the mountaineering abilities of women. On one lead, Phyllis Munday was struck by rock fall. She maintained her composure, fearing that if she let go she and her husband would both fall.⁴³ And Flemming, who also switched leads with her climbing partners, embraced her smaller feminine physique,

⁴⁰ Christopher Dummitt, "Risk on the Rocks: Modernity, Manhood, and Mountaineering in Postwar British Columbia," *BC Studies*, no. 141, (2004), 19-20. PearlAnn Reichwein and Karen Fox, "Margaret Flemming and the Alpine Club of Canada: A Woman's Place in Mountain Leisure and Literature, 1932-1952," vol. 36, no. 3, (2001), 41-42.

⁴¹ Routledge, 55.

⁴² Routledge, 38. Reichwein and Fox, 46.

⁴³ Routledge, 47-48.

believing that being lighter and smaller made it easier for her to tackle the more technical rock sections.⁴⁴ To lead sections, these women would have had the focus to maintain composure in stressful situations and to master the skills to use climbing gear. These women would have had a similar relationship to gear as that of their male counterparts, even though they may have been an exception to the norm.

Without pitons, climbers felt they were at a disadvantage, which determined the success of summit bids. One climber writes on an ascent of Mt. Gilbert, "[t]hey had a splendid day's climbing, and were stopped within a hundred feet or so of the summit only by lack of a couple pitons."⁴⁵ Another climber, Leon Blumer, recounted his climb of University Peak in Alaska:

Straddling the ridge was an enormous ice tower fronted by a crevasse. The first 25 feet was over-hanging; the next 25 was about 80 degrees, all of hard blue ice. We had only four pitons, and there was no alternative on the sides of the ridge. Above this, the ridge broadened into steep slopes of very apparent avalanche danger. After much thought, we turned back.⁴⁶

Although not the only factor in the equation, the lack of pitons played prominently in the evaluation of the hazards and risks that faced the climbers.

In another account a climber, John L. Dudra, in the Badshot Range found himself at the crux without a piton for protection but pressed on anyway.

From here a spectator can have a first class view of the scree slopes 2,000 feet below. But my mind was occupied by the unhappy situation ahead, as I considered the last obstacle Badshot presented. The crack on the right was too wide for pitons and too narrow to permit a body. Otherwise the wall was smooth.

The crack was the only key to the top. After losing a number of years off my young life, I made the top by continuous use of pressure and jam holds.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Reichwein and Fox, 36, 41, 45.

⁴⁵ Paddy Sherman, "Mt. Gilbert - By Helicopter," *CAJ*, 1955, 3.

⁴⁶ Leon Blumer, "University Peak in Alaska: John McCall Memorial Expedition, 1955," *CAJ*, 1956, 37.

⁴⁷ John L. Dudra, "The Badshot Range," *CAJ*, 1952, 132.

As with the other examples, Dudra had an awareness of the gear. Each time climbers meet an objective hazard they face risk, the gear they have, do not have, or chose to use is a subjective hazard and the confidence and security they feel from the gear is a perception of how they are dealing with the risk confronted by them by the objective hazards.

The *CAJ* published an article in 1953, by John L. Dudra, entitled "In Defence of a Piton", which was just that. He and his parents moved to Vancouver from his home country formerly known as Czechoslovakia and climbed extensively in the Coast Mountains. Chic Scott claims, "[h]ad he lived. John Dudra would have done a great deal to revolutionize Canadian mountaineering." Regrettably, Dudra met an early death at the age of 32 in a plane crash.⁴⁸ Scott's claim may be founded upon the *avant-garde* words of Dudra's defence of the piton. Dudra contends that "[t]he users of climbing hardware are one group receiving a great deal of criticism lately . . . Many words have been written in mountaineering literature condemning the piton and its user, but [he has] yet to read one for its defence." As "one of the so-called fanatics who pound steel into rock walls when necessary", Dudra feels justified in "championing the cause" of using pitons.⁴⁹

The *CAJ* in this period, had little to say shunning the use of pitons. Only one example comes close. A group of climbers attempting an ascent wrote of previous attempts by other climbers. Frank Smythe⁵⁰ had made previous attempts and finally

⁴⁸ Scott, 226.

⁴⁹ John L. Dudra, "In Defence of a Piton," *CAJ*, 1953, 150.

⁵⁰ Frank Sydney Smythe (1900-1949): this British colonel drew attention to his mountaineering abilities after two noteworthy seasons in the Alps. He was part of the British Everest Expedition in 1933, with numerous other Himalayan climbs to his name. His climbing exploits span the globe. He was also a photographer and a prolific author, writing over twenty books in his short lifetime. "Smythe, Frank,"

succeeded, finding it necessary to place one piton. The authors comment that Smythe “was crestfallen as he had used his only piton in all of his years of climbing.”⁵¹

Ironically, Dudra lists Smythe as one who uses pitons in his climbs outside of his native Great Britain. This discrepancy opens questions regarding the *CAJ*, its readers, the larger climbing community, and pitons and technological advancements in climbing gear.

Clearly, other alpine journals and literature may contain disparaging remarks against pitons. It appears that, as will be explored in the following discussion of Dudra’s defence, piton use was at the forefront of new techniques in mountaineering. It was advancing, or at least changing, the sport. Since few articles speak against the use of pitons, it can be argued that the *CAJ* and its contributing writers were not conservative when it came to employing new technology in mountaineering.

Apparently there was a segment of the community that wrote against piton use. It might be trite to argue that the climbing community is not homogenous and that different styles and opinions exist. But this might be the most plausible explanation for the differing attitudes towards pitons. Exploring the differences between climbing communities and their origins might warrant further research.

Dudra set up two dichotomies in his defence of pitons. The first dichotomy sets the expert climbers, who were seeking new routes and mountains, against those following established routes or “hill-rambling”. Dudra argued that a different definition of equipment use exists between these two groups, although both speak in terms of “artificial aid”. Furthermore, those climbers not opening up new routes appear to “never stop to ponder” the equipment, for example, nailed or vibram or Bramani soled boots,

<http://www.peakfinder.com/people.asp?PersonsName=Smythe%2C+Frank> and “Colonel Frank Smythe,” <http://www.zipworld.com.au/~lnbdds/home/smythefrank.htm>.

⁵¹ Richard Irvin, “The Saga of the Ragged Four,” *CAJ*, 1952, 96.

ice-axes, or crampons, they use in terms of “aids, artificial though not considered so, which help the climber to make his ascent easier and safer.” Considering the previous discussion on footwear and crampons and other gear, Dudra was not entirely accurate in this statement. At one time, crampons were considered unsportsmanlike. Now Dudra himself used them as an example, almost unknowingly, of equipment that has gained acceptance as standard mountaineering gear. Climbers are aware of the gear they use and the safety it ensures; however, Dudra may be correct in that these items had lost their “artificial” moniker as their use had become more commonplace and, thus, more acceptable. Dudra posited that some form of gear will always be required. “If we were to take away all aids we would be tackling a mountain with bare hands and feet regardless of circumstances of conditions.”⁵² A little extreme, this just may be indicative of the passion in his argument.

Dudra continued by suggesting that climbers “frown on ‘hardware climbers’” because they are “unsportsmanlike, especially if pitons are being used for direct aid.” Without the aid of pitons though, Dudra insisted some climbs would be impossible. And that those using pitons are not compensating for a lack of climbing and mountaineering skill by using pitons, since they are “certainly better than the average hill Rambler.” Moreover, Dudra suggested that hammering pitons is an exhausting endeavour, yet he seems to have some admiration for this. A climber using pitons “pays his own penance in the amount of hard work he is forced to do.” It should be noted that by the 1960s and continuing to this day, climbing ability or maybe the sheer tenacity and daring of climbers has improved to the point where old aid routes are being freed or aided clean.

⁵² John L. Dudra, “In Defence of a Piton,” *CAJ*, 1953, 150.

"Then why do they bother with artificial aids?" Dudra answers that it "lies in the climber's desire to scale the unclimbed and the unexplored."⁵³

This leads to the second dichotomy, that of climbing styles and ethics in Britain, the Alps, and abroad compared to that in Canada. A minor theme of Canada as the unexplored colony crops up here. According to Dudra, English climbers adamantly spoke against the use of pitons, particularly in Great Britain, since "[v]ery little of the rock in England warrants the use of pitons". Yet, "well-known English climbers such as Smythe, Odell and Barford had used pitons while climbing in other lands and were not ashamed to admit it." This does not explain why Richard Irvin's group wrote that Smythe was "crestfallen" after having used a piton on a climb in Canada. Dudra felt that piton use in remote areas is justified. "Yes, indeed, the margin of safety had to be far greater on an isolated 10,000-foot peak, than on a short rock climb which is likely to be only a short distance from civilization."⁵⁴ Here, again the piton is a sign of safety and security, but also it serves as a sign of evolution and progress, which is where Dudra steers his defence. Aided "extensively" by pitons, climbers in the Alps had ascended, according to Dudra, every "last face", establishing "breath-taking routes [that] would not be in existence today without the aid of pitons." North American climbers were facing a future when all the peaks will see a first ascent. Dudra concluded his article by stating that

[m]ost people will be content to go up mountains the easy way as some do today, but there will be others who feel that unclimbed faces should be explored and

⁵³ John L. Dudra, "In Defence of a Piton," *CAJ*, 1953, 151.

⁵⁴ This topic of advancements in rescue techniques and protocol in remote settings, for example, helicopters and formalised rescue programmes and organisations that narrow response times and encroaching civilization, with roads, and improved communications, with radios and cell phones, again reducing response time, and hut systems merits further research in first defining what it means to be remote and second how climbers deal with remoteness, do they still take the same risks?

vertical spires climbed regardless of their forbidding appearance. It is simply a matter of mountaineering evolution, or that which has happened in the Alps will in due time happen here. All ridicule, sarcasm and contempt that has been heaped on a technical mountaineer cannot stem the tides of time. The steel peg will survive until it is replaced by something different, or else mountaineering will undergo a drastic change.⁵⁵

Speaking in terms of “evolution” illustrates a theme of progressiveness in Dudra’s argument. He realised that the sport of mountaineering is not static, that new technology and ways of thinking about techniques and gear have shaped, and will continue to shape the sport. The interesting point is that he appears to believe that technology is driving the change in mountaineering. “The steel peg,” he predicts, “will survive until it is replaced by something different....”

Gear took on a different meaning for mountaineers as they shifted to guideless climbing in the fifties. It was once the role of the guide to mediate risk for the clients. Without guides, mountaineers were left to learn the skills of mountaineering. A new role emerged for the guide as that of instructor. Climbers also learned the ways of mountain craft from fellow mountaineers and from the climbing literature. With this shift, climbers were independent of guides and relied on their gear to protect them from risks. In the previous era, climbers spoke of success, safety, and risk in terms of the presence of a guide. By the 1950s, climbers were speaking of success, safety, and risk in terms of gear. This is a trend that carried through into the 1970s.

⁵⁵ John L. Dudra, “In Defence of a Piton,” *CAJ*, 1953, 151.

Chapter Four:

Ethics

The means by which we live have outdistanced the ends for which we live. Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.

-- Martin Luther King, Jr.

A man without ethics is a wild beast loosed upon this world.

-- Albert Camus

By the seventies, climbers became acutely aware of their impact on the environment. This was due not only to the decline of guiding and the development of more effective climbing equipment, but also the broader impact of the environmental movement. This awareness sparked charged discussions and debates within the climbing community, which centred on the use of gear. The debate was not new to the 1970s, but now it received more attention within the pages of the *Canadian Alpine Journal*. Climbers described this debate as a matter of ethics, principles to rules that promote the responsible use of gear so as to minimise impact on the environment. I argue that pressure to abide by these principles changed climbers' risk assessment and perception of risk. To follow the rules also meant that a climber may forgo climbing safely and thus put the climber at more risk.

By the 1960s and 1970s, climbers learned their skills from mountaineering courses, fellow mountaineers, and/or how to books and climbing literature. The novice of one group, Gil Parker, saw his climbing trip as a learning opportunity. He left the major decision making to the more experienced climbers.

This suited me fine; I was here to learn. As youngest of the party, at 40, I was dubbed 'Boy'. The average age was 52, weighed by Roger's 71 years. Yet there was little disparity in condition and no lack of ambition or purpose. There was experience to be gained, my own knowledge to be given, often where I made better use of modern equipment. And this surprised me. But I also learnt that one has resources of body and spirit that have to be husbanded and that the most valuable quality is patience.¹

Surprised as Parker was, his experience demonstrates the manner in which mountaineers acquire knowledge. In this informal setting, Parker not only learned new skills, he passed on his own knowledge as well.

Passing on knowledge and experience did not always require direct interaction. Climbers could draw on the climbing literature. A veritable cornucopia of information, the writings of other climbers contained details on location of the mountain and climb, sometimes with a map, route description, possible hazards, difficulty, potential for new lines or first ascents, and so on. Surely the exact method of researching climbs differed from climber to climber, and mountain to mountain for that matter. Chris Jones, in researching his next adventure, pondered:

When do climbs begin? Not when we rope up at the start, surely, but when the idea of the climb first begins to intrigue us. Maybe we have read about the route in a journal, or have seen a peak in the distance that excited us . . . By early 1970 Canada was again luring me, and I began to comb old journals for new routes.²

Jones resided in United States, which suggests that the *CAJ* then reached an international community. The literature entices and marks a starting point for researching climbs.

Neglecting their homework, one party felt intimidated by their chosen climb. "A closer look at the 1970 *CAJ* would have given us more information but then we might never

¹ Gil Parker, "Neophyte on Noel," *CAJ*, 1978, 42.

² Chris Jones, "The West Face of North Howser Tower," *CAJ*, 1972, 2. Other, among many, examples include: Robert Kruszyna, "Ridge Country," *CAJ*, 1971, 32 and Donald G. Reid, "Selkirk Inspiration," *CAJ*, 1976, 36.

have come here!”³ This parallels the experience of the early days of mountaineering when climbers went without a guide.

Mountaineers were now making their own choices based on their own knowledge and experience, facing risk in a less mediated form, that is, without a guide. They were directly accountable for the consequences as well. One such account, by Les MacDonald, illustrates the process of making decisions and the dire results.

But 16 hours is still a long day. which [*sic*] way down? With visions of walking over the grand wall in the dark, I opted for the gully. It will be quicker too. Every experience in life, and every book I had ever read on climbing said it wasn't, and it wasn't!

We slipped, slithered, cursed and bumped into each other all the way down. I commandeered the flashlight as the leader of the trip, and was the only one who fell badly – over a waterfall and onto my head.⁴

This example may suggest that, without guides, climbers were prone to make unwise decisions, leading to minor mishaps. This is not the case. By this period, and the 1950s too as mentioned before, accounts in the *CAJ* document guideless climbs that were successes in either reaching the summit or with the party returning home safely, regardless of learning their mountaineering skills from a professional instructor, fellow mountaineers, or a book. It is notable that MacDonald did not express regret in not having hired a guide.

In a similar example, climbers relied on their own judgement. Ian Turnbull described an accident on Mount Waddington. It was “[a] small slip on a traverse along a rock ledge where neither his rope nor partner could wholly protect him – such an unwarranted consequence.”⁵ The partner arrested the fall and the rope held, leaving Turnbull to lament, “[s]uch a small error of judgement, the ones we can't guard against

³ Peter Jordan, “Chilko Lake,” *CAJ*, 1975, 40.

⁴ Les MacDonald, “The Complete North Arête,” *CAJ*, 1972, 43.

⁵ Ian Turnbull, “A Perspective of Waddington,” *CAJ*, 1975, 15.

with a multiplicity of belays because we must take some measure of risk in climbing these mountains; and always we do so in the full confidence of our own abilities and reflexes.”⁶ Safety was viewed as the product of “a multiplicity of belays”, namely gear and its use, not as the result of a guide’s extraordinary abilities in hauling the climber to the top.⁷ The responsibility of employing gear and risk management rested on the shoulders of the mountaineers.

Whether tramping up a mountain route or scaling a big wall, climbers, as in the previous decades, wrote about their gear. It could be as simple as racking up for a climb, “[o]ut came the ice screws and karabiners and Charlie adorned himself to lead . . .”⁸, or organising it, “[a]fter a meal in the Lodge, we hauled all our gear into one of the campsite shelters and sorted it out under the suspicious gaze of the happy campers . . .”⁹ to a brief mention such as, “Chouinard Hexentrics and hooks got me over it, but God was it freaky . . .”¹⁰ or “I started jamming when the topo says ‘nail’. A pin goes in with a smothered thud and I run out of the iron that I need. Oh, for a breath of the Orient. What a long strange trip . . .”¹¹

The more detailed accounts afford deeper insight into the relationship climbers had with their gear. On Warbler Ridge, Mt. Logan, Frank W. Baumann, details his reliance on his ice-axe, rope, protection, and crampons.

⁶ Ian Turnbull, “A Perspective of Waddington,” *CAJ*, 1975, 15.

⁷ Choices in mountaineering balance safety with expediency. Establishing a belay may not always be feasible. The choice is to either take the time and risk not making the summit or descent, due to impending darkness or foul weather or travel fast, without belays, and reach the summit or return to safer ground before night fall or poor weather strikes.

⁸ Murray Toft, “Mt. Victoria,” *CAJ*, 1970, 42.

⁹ John Moss, “East Face of Mount Babel,” *CAJ*, 1970, 38.

¹⁰ Billy Davidson, “Tis-sa-ack,” *CAJ*, 1973, 21.

¹¹ Neil Bennet, “The Quest for the Clean Break,” *CAJ*, 1971, 36. As noted in the Introduction Chapter, climbers wrote about drug use.

The climbing progressed smoothly. Find the narrow, snow-covered rift where the cornices pulled away from the ridge and walk beside this, using your ice axe on the cornice for balance. Once in a while forward momentum would be rudely interrupted – one would step into the rift and momentarily drop until caught by the rope.

Or the cornice would abruptly break off, leaving one scrambling to unstick an ice axe before being pulled by the falling part into the void too. The snow and ice was still ideal, hard stuff that would take crampons well. Sometimes though it would get crumbly – rotten ice that would not hold protection anchors and could easily leave one an exhausted, blithering idiot after only six metres of progress. At times the precariousness of our position left us breathless. We were balancing along a catwalk of snow that dropped 1800m on one side and 2500m on the other.¹²

The way gear is referred to indicates that it was an integral part of the mountaineering experience. Focusing on its presence, even if briefly, suggests that climbers were aware of their gear.

The relationship with gear went beyond an awareness of its presence. Creative use of new gear opened opportunities for changes in style and techniques. These changes meant that climbers could advance onto more difficult terrain. One such development emerged over gear designed for climbing sections of ice.

It was on this climb that we first used in earnest a technique unwittingly evolved through my own lack of boldness. On two previous occasions, faced by pillars of brittle vertical ice, and lacking the guts to frontpoint up them, I had attached aid slings to the shafts of both Terrorclimbs and had found that, even on vertical ice, I could relax and spend as much time as I wished clearing rotten ice and placing each axe alternately to my complete satisfaction. On Weeping Wall (600ft, grade 5) where we frequently encountered as much as three feet of loose powder snow overlying rotten 70°, 80° and 90° ice, the technique proved invaluable and was to become the key to the harder climbs which were to follow.¹³

Out of his “lack of boldness”, Bugs McKeith developed a new way of using gear, namely his ice tools. Attaching aid slings meant he could hang from his tools without the effort of constantly gripping his tools, which allowed him to rest during a climb. As a result, he

¹² Frank W. Baumann, “Warbler Ridge: A New Route on Mt. Logan,” *CAJ*, 1978, 8.

¹³ Bugs McKeith, “Winter Ice Climbing in the Canadian Rockies,” *CAJ*, 1975, 8.

changed his relationship with his gear by becoming more dependent on it. Without his technique for resting on his tools, he might never have gained the boldness, let alone stamina or skill, to climb the harder routes. McKeith justified his dependency by explaining that it allowed him to climb harder routes, dismissing any sense of guilt. This demonstrates how developments in the use of gear occur and how they gain acceptance.

Gear did not only compensate for a lack of boldness. In seeking new routes, climbers ventured farther into the backcountry, away from the trappings of civilization. The key here is that climbers were in remote locations, far from the quick response times of emergency services. It could take days for a rescue. This weighed on the minds of climbers. On the remote Mt. Eon, south of Mt. Assiniboine, Bob Kruszyna had just finished leading a pitch and encountered difficulties throwing the rope to Harriet, his second.

By the time I ran out of Chouinard's costly handiwork Harriet had in frustration clambered up the lower part of the chimney to pluck the dangling bait. Doubtless she could have completed the pitch unroped, but given our isolated circumstance such a risk was simply unacceptable.¹⁴

Similarly, on Mt. Sir James McBrien, in North West Territories, Galen Rowell found his remote locale affected his use of protection.

In Yosemite I would have gladly risked a fall, but I had nagging doubts about the consequences of even a sprained ankle when we had no contact for at least four more days. A rescue of one person by the other would be nearly impossible. And so I began the lead with involuntary twitchings in my feet and several pitons for protection.¹⁵

The risks of climbing in remote areas, in this particular example the delayed rescue times, played into the risk assessment of climbers. Unwilling to take unnecessary risks, climbers relied more on their gear and equipment for security. The unnerving perception

¹⁴ Bob Kruszyna, "Unfinished Business," *CAJ*, 1975, 30.

¹⁵ Galen Rowell, "The East Ridge of Mt. Sir James McBrien," *CAJ*, 1973, 42.

of remoteness appears to justify a more liberal use of gear, namely, Rowell hammering in "several pitons for protection." What is emerging is that climbers are speaking of using gear in terms of reducing the risk, that is staying safe, yet are still able to walk a fine line of when gear might determine success, that is, adding certainty to the success of the climb.

Climbing alone also influenced the manner in which climbers used gear. It is almost needless to say that on solo ascents climbers are dependent on their own skill and knowledge. At least two in a party increased safety. Attitudes towards soloing changed by the 1970s. Climbing and exploring mountainous areas solo gained acceptance, with numerous articles described solo adventures.

There are examples from the 1970s suggesting that on these solo ventures climbers found safety in gear in lieu of a partner. Crossing a glacier, one solo climber, David P. MacAdam remembered, "[b]eing improperly equipped for crevasse rescue I chose a route along a jumble of moraines, but it was difficult not to yield to the seemingly easier route up the glacier."¹⁶ Little to nothing can arrest a fall into a crevasse of a solo climber. Of note is that he mentions not the lack of a partner(s), which would increase the likelihood of a crevasse rescue, but the gear for crevasse rescue. Also, to return to the point that climbers were educated in mountaineering skills, this case crevasse rescue, it appears that this climber knew the fundamentals of crevasse rescue and glacier travel by demonstrating the knowledge of the importance to avoid the dangers of crevasses.

On a solo attempt of Mt. Edith Cavell, P.J. Dearden, fell into complacency. He recounted this error:

¹⁶ David P. MacAdam, "Lone Wanderer at Pagnintung," *CAJ*, 1972, 52.

One small slip while traversing the couloir and the subsequent rapid self arrest (the former due to excessive cockiness and screwing around), served to get my adrenalin pumping and made me take the climb much more seriously . . . I sat down and took stock of the unexpected situation. Soloing is great but the risk is also greatly increased and I did not like the looks of the final stretch one bit. It looked steep, difficult to solo, and most of all, very dangerous. But long and careful evaluation [of what he does not mention] convinced me that I could at least attempt it and if necessary turn back.¹⁷

Unfortunately, when tragedy strikes, sometimes it is too late to turn back. Dearden succeeded in passing the difficult section. He continues, "[t]he last few metres of the ridge appeared gradually to get easier so after I had passed the difficult areas I stripped my heavy pack of all non-essentials (there was a lot of safety gear I carry when soloing to give me peace of mind in case of trouble) and moved up to the summit quite quickly."¹⁸ When climbing solo, climbers took extra precautions to make up for the absence of a partner. Dearden carried extra gear. This shows how gear could replace the company of a partner.

Aid climbing, known as a game of inches, can be a labour and gear intensive climbing process. As the name implies, aid climbing involves using the gear to climb sections that might be otherwise too difficult to climb free. Climbers are pulling on gear, either the fixed protection of bolts or removable pitons and traditional gear, not on the rock to make upward progress. Glen Woodsworth described the tedious, gear-intensive, repetitive, process of aid climbing.

The climbing was largely overhanging and vertical aid: place a piton, clip in a carabiner and a tape sling and climb up. Clip the climbing rope into the 'biner, move up the lower tape. Climb as high as possible in the slings, select a piton, reach up and hammer. We gained elevation slowly and with difficulty through the continuous repetition of these small steps.¹⁹

¹⁷ P.J. Dearden, "Alone on Edith Cavell," *CAJ*, 1976, 8-9.

¹⁸ P.J. Dearden, "Alone on Edith Cavell," *CAJ*, 1976, 9.

¹⁹ Glen Woodsworth, "University Wall," *CAJ*, 1970, 8.

Though other accounts include descriptions and dilemmas of aid climbing, Woodsworth's account of their ascent on the University Wall, on the Squamish Chief in BC, provides some philosophical reflections on aid climbing. Since aid climbing is gear intensive, gear took on a different meaning.

The sounds of pitons being driven provided background music as we [Tim Auger and Glen Woodsworth] discussed whether future climbers will view the present Age of Aid as a pathological result of man's increasing alienation from other people and his increasing fascination with his machines. This climb was a good example. It seemed as if we had brought many of the undesirable features of our technologically-oriented society with us to the Dance Platform; to me University Wall was a very apt name.²⁰

Aid climbing gear signifies that which is not natural. It is based upon technology and acquired skill. Often it was asserted that climbing should be natural and provide a chance to commune with nature. In a study of ACC members that appeared in the 1979 *CAJ*, the primary motivation for climbing was to get away from the cities and into the out of doors.²¹ Clearly, finding oneself in nature, yet unable to free oneself from the trappings of city life concerned climbers. For an image of aid climbing see page xi.

The concerns about being detached from nature were echoed in Woodsworth's reflections as well.

As we prussiked I shouted up to Dan that we seemed more dependent on our equipment than on our own skills, or at least we were more intimately associated with it than with the rock we climbed; it had been 60 feet since I had last touched rock. Frank Smythe wouldn't have approved of this climb! Dan didn't answer, being too absorbed in transferring from one rope to the next at the station above.²²

In his article titled "The Climbing Body, Nature and the Experience of Modernity", Neil Lewis explores motivations for climbing in terms of the effect of modernity on the human

²⁰ Glen Woodsworth, "University Wall," *CAJ*, 1970, 8.

²¹ Robert D. Bratton, George Kinnear, and Gary Koroluk, "Reasons for Climbing: A Study of the Calgary Section," *CAJ*, 1979, 55-6.

²² Glen Woodsworth, "University Wall," *CAJ*, 1970, 8.

body. Lewis argues that modernity strips humanity of human embodied agency. He believes that climbing is an act that challenges modernity. For example, Lewis claims, the conventions of modern society dissuade physical contact in everyday interactions. Essentially, people are allowed to look but not touch. Climbers on the other hand rely extensively on tactile contact with their medium, that is the rock. Relying on more than just sight, climbers are able to draw the world into them and themselves into the world, unlike their metropolitan counterparts, who roam in a state of malaise, "estranged" from their surroundings.²³ Since Woodsworth expressed concern over his dependence on gear, and subsequent lack of contact with the rock, it may allow for the suggestion that there is some merit in Lewis's argument.

Woodsworth and his climbing partners were not alone in noticing the influence of gear on climbing. Discussing the ethical use of equipment was not new to the 1970s. R.L.G. Irving's article, "Trends in Mountaineering", appearing in the 1957 issue of the *CAJ*, addressed the ethical use of gear, although it was not the first to do so. Irving argued that mountaineering is a perfect opportunity to commune with nature. Using more and more gear, however, disconnects the mountaineer from nature. Mountaineers are more likely to see nature as something that can be conquered with technology and no longer as an escape from technology and civilisation.²⁴

The article that stands out in the 1970s is the often-cited "Games Climbers Play", by Lito Tejada-Flores, an American climber, photographer, and filmmaker. This was reprinted from another North American mountaineering journal *Ascent*. The article reached a larger readership than just the *CAJ* readership. The goal of his article is not to

²³ Neil Lewis, "The Climbing Body, Nature, and the Experience of Modernity," *Body and Society*, vol. 6, no. 3-4, (2000), 67, 70-6.

²⁴ R.L.G. Irving, "Trends in Mountaineering," *CAJ*, 1957, 53-63.

define climbing, but to offer a new way of conceptualising the sport; that is, as a “collection of differing (though related) activities, each with its own adepts, distinctive terrain, problems and satisfaction, and perhaps most important, its own rules.” These activities can be arranged hierarchically according to the “field of play,” which is the factor that determines the rules.²⁵

Climbing, Tejada-Flores contended, is a game because there is no “necessity” to do it; no extrinsic value is derived from climbing. Essentially, it serves no greater purpose and is only conducted for the sake of itself. “Field of play” means the environment in which one climbs, ranging from the boulders of Fontainbleau, France to the Khumbu Icefall at the base of Everest. It takes different skills and gear to solve the challenges of these “fields.” To optimise personal satisfaction from solving these challenges, Tejada-Flores notes, “a handicap system has evolved to equalize the inherent challenge and maintain the climber’s feeling of achievement at a high level in each of these differing situations.” This handicap system is expressed as rules based on “a series of ‘don’ts’: don’t use fixed ropes, belays, pitons, a series of camps, etc.” The rules “are designed to conserve the climber’s feeling of personal and moral accomplishment against the meaninglessness of a success which represents mere technological victory.”²⁶

Starting with the “bouldering game”, Tejada-Flores, says that this game has the most rules, which preclude the use of almost all gear, “ropes, pitons, and belayers.” The reason for this is that “boulders are too accessible; they don’t defend themselves well enough.” For example it would be “absurdity” to surmount a boulder with a ladder, while it would be more acceptable to use the same ladder to cross a crevasse in the

²⁵ Lito Tejada-Flores, “Games Climbers Play,” *CAJ*, 1970, 46.

²⁶ Lito Tejada-Flores, “Games Climbers Play,” *CAJ*, 1970, 46.

Khumbu Icefall defending Everest. The reasoning behind this is that the ladder, in each case, affects the certainty of success. "Thus the basic principle of a handicap is applied to maintain a degree of uncertainty as to the eventual outcome, and from this very uncertainty stems the adventure and personal satisfaction of climbing."²⁷

Tejada-Flores continues by describing a hierarchical "spectrum" of games, arranged according to the number of rules. As stated before, the number of rules is indirectly related to the "field of play"; the farther away and/or better defended a goal the fewer rules need apply to maintain the challenge and thus the satisfaction. At one end, with the most rules, is the bouldering game and at the other is the expedition game. In between fall the crag climbing, continuous rock climbing, big wall, alpine climbing, and super-alpine games, in that order. Tejada-Flores writes that the purpose of this hierarchical ranking is not to judge the various games, but to provide a paradigm with which climbing ethics can be discussed. Using this paradigm then, climbers are ethical when they abide by the rules of the game which they are playing, whereas it would be unethical to co-opt rules from a game higher on the spectrum. Thus, regarding the "bolt controversy", Tejada-Flores argues that bolting is not unethical in and of itself. Bolting is only unethical when the rules of the game forbade the use of that device, such as in bouldering. Furthermore, climbers have met with failure, even when bolting and due to the excessive effort and time involved in bolting; it may not always be practical. Thus, "the question [of bolting] becomes meaningless" and should not be the focus of the ethics debate.²⁸

²⁷ Lito Tejada-Flores, "Games Climbers Play," *CAJ*, 1970, 46.

²⁸ Lito Tejada-Flores, "Games Climbers Play," *CAJ*, 1970, 46-7.

The question that might best be asked is who sets the rules and how do the rules change. Neither the minority comprised of "those fainthearted types who desire to overcome every new difficulty with some kind of technological means rather than at the expense of personal effort under pressure" nor the few highly skilled elite, those using less technology and thus better style, set the rules, but the average climbers set the rules, approving through practice and repetition. It is the role of the majority to accept the rules in which a "good climber" makes a first ascent. By accepting the given rules, it sets a style that then serves as the "ethical minimum", which also delineates the game to which it belongs.²⁹ However, since few climbers are now able to make "significant first ascents", does the original style dictate the style for future ascents? Tejada-Flores says no. For example, the first ascent of the Eiger Northwall went up in a storm. Tejada-Flores contests it would be ludicrous to expect future climbers to climb it only in stormy conditions.³⁰

The role of the elite, therefore, is to foster the evolution of the climbing-game(s), by climbing with better style than the majority, where style is "the conscious choice of a set of rules for a given climbing-game." Good style occurs when a climber follows the "classic" rules of the ascent, and bad style is applying rules from a higher game to an ascent that does not require it. It is even better style to apply the rules of a lower game, which is the root of evolution. The role that the elite play in this evolution is to "demonstrate the feasibility of new standards by climbing with consistently superior style

²⁹ Peter Donnelly and his colleague's work on sub-cultures further explore how practices gain acceptance in sport sub-cultures. See: Trevor Williams and Peter Donnelly, "Subcultural Production, Reproduction and Transformation in Climbing," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 20, no. 1/2, (1985), 3-15 and Kevin Young and Peter Donnelly, "The Construction and Confirmation of Identity in Sport Subcultures," *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 5, no. 3, (1997), 223-240.

³⁰ Lito Tejada-Flores, "Games Climbers Play," *CAJ*, 1970, 47.

... And this, aside from suffering the wiles of equipment-mongers, is the only way that such changes can come about." Yet this leadership in the evolution is only indirect. It is the role of average climbers, most likely not able to follow the original style, to accept and validate the style of the climb. "A kind of group prudence is at work here, rejecting individual solutions whose extremism puts them beyond the reach of the majority of competent climbers climbing at any given period." As a result, "the rules of all the climbing-games are changing constantly, becoming ever more restrictive in order to preserve the fundamental challenge that the climber is seeking from the inroads of a fast changing technology."³¹ Gear signified more than safety, success, or compensation for a climbing partner. It also signified the elements of a hotly contested debate on ethics. It took on more meaning than its potentially destructive, climbing altering, characteristic, to become the vocabulary in which climbers discussed the style in which they climbed, that is the ethics by which they abided.

Fred Becky, one of the lucky few to make a living from climbing and mountaineering, in "On Ethics for the Non Elite", echoes similar concerns as Tejada-Flores. Due to an increase in the number of climbers and mountaineers, Becky sees the chance for a damaging impact on the rock and the surroundings. In the light of this increase, Becky calls for some sort of authority to regulate the issues arising from the "confrontation with ethics". Similar to Tejada-Flores, Becky focuses the attention of the ethics debate to the use of gear and over dependency on gear. "Yvon Chouinard laments that faith in equipment has replaced faith in self and that the common man is bringing the climbing art down to his value level." Becky stresses the importance of the elite. "There is a value in a certain elitism; where else is the leadership? The rocks of the world have

³¹ Lito Tejada-Flores, "Games Climbers Play," *CAJ*, 1970, 47.

their limits. Why not do in style what you can?" Climbers do not have to be good to enjoy their experience. But when they venture onto climbs beyond their ability and use the destructive methods of pounding pitons and bolting to compensate for lack of ability, they "ruin the classic nature of the perishable route . . . Chouinard's characteristic emphasis on prescriptive ethics is not intended to discourage and humiliate today's climber in the shadow of yesterday. But it is true that before technical inventions one had to rely solely on personal courage, awareness, and be without the benefit of books, topos, and rescue."³²

Yvon Chouinard, of French-Canadian ancestry, made a name for himself as a climber and as a self-taught blacksmith and manufacturer of climbing gear and is best known for his ice climbing equipment. He is also the founder of the Patagonia clothing company and Black Diamond Equipment. Bringing Chouinard into the fray is interesting because he is partly responsible for distributing gear to the masses. Yet at the same time, he is promoting a value-laden message, which is to use gear ethically. He is prescribing restrictive practices for the use of the gear that he manufactures and sells. Clearly more elitist than Tejada-Flores, Becky's argument maintains the focus of the debate on ethics on the use of gear.

Bruce Fairley, mountaineer, author of guidebooks, and pioneer of several winter first ascents in the Rockies, raised the ethics debate again, in the 1980s. Fairley derived his inspiration from a trip in the Coast Mountains in which technical ascents were eschewed over simply travelling through the mountains. Around camp one night, the members of the party discussed the difference between the love of climbing and the love of being in the mountains. Fairley reflects, "I wondered if I was worrying too much

³² Fred Becky, "On Ethics for the Non Elite," *CAJ*, 1975, 58.

about achievement, losing the sense of beauty in the mountain environment through an obsession with technique.”³³ With this new perspective and a keen interest, Fairley dove into researching the debate surrounding climbing ethics, especially since elite climbers “were dying by the score.”³⁴ “The price of climbing in the forefront of modern alpinism has now become the willingness to risk one’s life in the pursuit of greater and greater difficulties.”³⁵ This death toll, especially in the expedition game, surely, thought Fairley, should “at least provoke a little intellectual soul-searching in the journals.” To his dismay, the debate in the journals appeared to centre on bolting, not the loss of lives. As a result Fairley tables two questions. Is it “right” that the bolting issue, excessive gear use, is still dominant in the ethics debate? And, do climbers’ values differ from those of modern society? More precisely, are climbers the self-described nature lovers that are in the outdoors to escape the technology of modern society or have they, unwittingly, through the use of gear come to represent that which they claim not to be, that is, dependent on gear and a cog in modern society?

For a framework and potentially drawing on his law school years, Fairley draws on the philosopher Jacques Ellul for a definition of technique. Fairley describes technique as “an attitude, a way of perceiving and organizing our lives.” Technique thus creates a “standardized programme” for the way things should be done. It controls things through uniformity and predetermined courses of action, which eschew the spur-of-the-moment and the natural. Fairley notes that climbers use “technical” to describe routes that require artificial protection or aid. When tackling the issue of technical, Fairley

³³ Bruce Fairley, “Mountaineering and the Ethics of Technique,” in *Canadian Mountaineering Anthology: Stories from 100 Years on the Edge*, Ed. Bruce Fairley, (Vancouver: Lone Pine Publishing, 1994), 230.

³⁴ Fairley, “Mountaineering,” 230.

³⁵ Fairley, “Mountaineering,” 231.

contends that climbers appear to enter an ethical quandary when they reach to their rack for a piece of protection as it determines the style, in Tejada-Flores's definition, in which they are climbing. Is it ethical to aid a difficult move at the risk of a fall and injury or death?³⁶

To answer this question, Fairley stresses the importance of considering the whole climbing community. Drawing on Leo Strauss for the definition of what is ethical, Fairley defines ethical as that which is good for everyone. Although it may constitute bad style to aid a move, it is not unethical as long as the climber does not alter the climb and thus ruin or change the experience for the next climber. This differs from Tejada-Flores's belief that rules of higher games should not be applied to lower games. Fairley, however, separates style and ethics. Instead of using a piton, which expands the crack and forever changes the climb, or chipping a hold, Fairley points out that the climber can use a chock or a cam, otherwise known as clean aid. Fairley believes the average climbers would agree with him. There are, unfortunately, an elite few who desire to impose a "code of protection" that dictates climbing in the best possible style in order to derive the most from the experience and to prevent less experienced or talented climbers from invading and over-developing the sport.³⁷ This is elitist thinking and is an unethical use of the ethics debate. A game of one-upping pervades.³⁸ In contrast, Becky would seem to promote this line of thought.

Fairley fears that in seeking technique, climbers miss the "spiritual" aspect of climbing. Supported by examples from *CAJ* editor, 1970 to 1973, Andrew Gruft, Fairley

³⁶ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 232-3.

³⁷ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 232-3.

³⁸ Bruce Fairley, "Introduction to 'Mountaineering and the Ethics of Technique'," in *Canadian Mountaineering Anthology: Stories from 100 Years on the Edge*, Ed. Bruce Fairley, (Vancouver: Lone Pine Publishing, 1994), 229.

contends that it may be equally, if not more, satisfying for a less skilled climber to send a route in "poor" style, as long as they do not alter the climb, than for an expert climber in better style. Fairley believes that the latter climbers describe their climbs in terms of technique, that is, summitting and success, difficulty, efficiency, and so on. Fairley calls for a re-evaluation of climbers' values in their climbs and thus the manner in which climbers describe their climbs, not as a "mere technological achievement".³⁹

Fairley also draws on the ideas of George Grant. Grant theorizes that scientific methods applied in the search for knowledge, has become a conquest of "power over wonder". Fairley argues that accounts of ascents focusing on technique and the latest gear predominate in the climbing literature, to the neglect of the "spiritual" aspect of climbing, "the human story is insufficient", as well as the coverage of "history, science or poetry is small." "The equating of mountaineering conquest with spiritual victories is seen as somewhat old fashioned and even embarrassing." The "human dimension" only receives attention when it is related to a death. Even then, especially during the expedition game, death may be viewed as merely "a logistic problem."⁴⁰ This attitude puts aside the human side of the relationships between expedition members. The success of the expedition supersedes everything, meaning "human relationships at best are non-committal and utilitarian".⁴¹

Another scholar of climbing, Peter Donnelly, argues that climbing relationships are just that: "non-committal and utilitarian". In studying climbing, he has located what

³⁹ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 236.

⁴⁰ The subject of death and dying in mountaineering could warrant further research, using the work of Sherry Ortner, sociologist, on Sherpas and high altitude mountaineers as a starting point. Sherry Ortner, *Life and Death on Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Another source on death in "extreme" sports is Kenneth J. Doka, Eric E. Schwarz, and Catherine Schwarz, "Risky Business: Observations on the Nature of Death in Hazardous Sports," *Journal of Death and Dying*, vol. 21, no. 3, (1990), 215-23.

⁴¹ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 237.

he believes to be fallacies in the portrayal of climbing, one of which is that "[c]limbing leads people to form close friendships." He traces the origin of this fallacy to the mid-nineteenth century and the rise of Muscular Christianity, which extolled the virtues of camaraderie formed through battle and, on a smaller scale, sport. Friendships thus "result[ed] from struggle, common cause, and mutual dependence." Climbing was believed to embody these elements and is thus a hearth for friendship. Donnelly claims this is fallacious. He argues that climbers' relationships are based more on completing a task than genuine human interest and interaction. Donnelly's personal experience and research has led him to believe that climbers are a heterogeneous group divided along lines of ability, nationality or regionalism that preclude most interactions.

The staunch individualism of climbers has wreaked havoc on expeditions because the individual climbers may put their own interests before that of the party. When, climbers do make lasting bonds, as in marriage, their partners possess the same individualism as well as a realism that may allow them to reduce the relationship to a functional basis to protect oneself against the possibility of loss. Lastly, modern equipment and techniques have created the perception of a safety net so that the lives of the party no longer solely rest on the fellow members. Falls are less likely to pull the entire party to its doom. Therefore the relationship with life and death, the commitment levels, between partners has changed, reducing "the feeling of mutual dependence." Donnelly is not pessimistic in his perception of climbers' relationships. There are climbers that have made and will continue to make lasting, meaningful relationships with

fellow climbers.⁴² The return to recognising a human value, such a friendship, appears to be one of Fairley's motivations for championing the shift in focus away from technique.

Comparable to "power over wonder", Fairley wants to draw attention to "the idea of simplicity." Fairley, not in the elitist tone of Becky, also quotes Chouinard's less-is-more philosophy. Chouinard is quoted as saying: "[d]eclining a possible technology is the first step toward freedom from this bondage – and returning human values to control." Focusing on gear can remove the human element. By limiting gear use, climbers have to rely more on their "personal qualities like initiative, boldness, and technique . . ."⁴³ Essentially, when a climber focuses too much on gear and technique, he or she is distracted and loses focus on him or herself and the surrounding mountain environment. Fairley believes that a focus on the individual and the mountain environment is an important component of the mountaineering experience.⁴⁴

A degree of irony exists in Fairley's argument. He is accusing some climbers of falling into trap of technique, when by employing theory in his argument he is, in a way, doing the same. Theory is technique by another name. This is not meant to discredit Fairley's argument, but to demonstrate the ease with which someone can depend on technique. "The argument would be that only first-hand experience of life on the edge can render one competent to discuss these questions. The point has some validity. But my point is equally valid – how many of the best climbers have read Jacques Ellul or

⁴² Peter Donnelly, "Climbing Leads People to Form Close Friendships: The Last of Four Fallacies." *Mountain*, vol. 83, (1982), 45-49.

⁴³ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 237.

⁴⁴ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 237.

F.H. Bradley?"⁴⁵ He has placed the theories of Ellul and Bradley to support his argument much in the same way a climber would place a piece of protection to secure his ascent.

In concluding his argument, Fairley stipulates that climbers through their increasing obsession with gear and technique are, unbeknownst to them, influenced by overarching trends in modern society. These are trends that they are trying to escape. Basically, their approaches to climbing are similar to contemporary values in technique. Whether this benefits the "good" of all, Fairley refuses to judge. However, biased towards the older, human values in climbing, he does call for a re-evaluation of the values conveyed in mountaineering literature, for example, minimising ecological impact by packing out garbage. Fairley has not lost faith in the climbing community and does offer examples of climbers, such as his buddies on the Coast Mountains trip, who are not guilty of technical obsession.⁴⁶

In an article titled "Bongs, 'Biners, and Big Business", Eric Almquist revisited the theme that climbers are caught up, knowingly or not, in the larger plagues of modern society. Almquist raises two issues, the conspicuous consumption of climbing gear and the role of climbing schools. He first tackled conspicuous consumption. The number of companies manufacturing and selling climbing gear has grown in number since the sixties, according to Almquist. Indicative of this is the increase in advertising in climbing magazines, designed to "appeal to equipment freaks and fashion consciousness." Almquist paints a disheartening picture. When one runs out to purchase the latest gear at one of the numerous equipment retailers, wading through the throngs of fellow consumers, one is confronted by pushy salespeople pointing out "what 'you *should* buy',

⁴⁵ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 239.

⁴⁶ Fairley, "Mountaineering," 240.

and 'you'll want', and what is 'nice to have'." With such pressure, people purchase equipment most likely extraneous to their needs. As a result, they attire themselves in the latest mountain apparel and appear better suited for an expedition to Patagonia while simply running out for groceries.⁴⁷ However, there is early evidence that may suggest earlier roots to conspicuous consumption; for example, A.O. Wheeler, whether mountaineering or not, took pride in wearing his tweeds.

Climbing schools added to Almquist's concerns. These schools educated the masses who become the ready consumers for the latest gear. "The climbing school ensures a future market for technical gear."⁴⁸ Almquist suggests that conspicuous consumption may not be prevalent in Canada, but it is just around the corner. However, this is only of minor concern. The primary concern lies in the impact that the increasing number of climbers have on the climbing areas. Almquist believed the sport was "already overcrowded". As businesses, climbing schools in particular, seek to capitalize on consumer climbers, "certain moral issues get 'overlooked'." Almquist recommended that manufacturers, retailers, and consumers should ponder some points. Basically, he was calling for everyone to be aware of the potential damage wrought on climbs due to an increasing climbing population and, as he saw it, for climbing schools to more accurately market climbing. Currently, Almquist posited, schools, as well as magazines, were glamorising the sport, "play[ing] up the romanticism, heroism, and beauty of the sport rather than the fear, danger, pain, effort, and regret."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Eric Almquist, "Bongs, 'Biners, and Big Business," *CAJ*, 1973, 53.

⁴⁸ Joy Parr explores how business relations of this type might develop. She argues that the electric companies joined forces with the appliance manufactures to design products that consumed electricity for the benefit of the electricity companies. Joy Parr, *Domestic Goods: The Material, the Moral, and the Economic in the Postwar Years*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 257-9.

⁴⁹ Eric Almquist, "Bongs, 'Biners, and Big Business," *CAJ*, 1973, 53.

Another fallacy, identified by Peter Donnelly, is that climbing is not dangerous. Surely danger is an inherent part of climbing. Unlike Almquist, Donnelly does not trace the origins of the fallacy to climbing schools marketing a safe product. However, he does argue that there is a myth of sorts perpetuated by the climbing community, which has misrepresented the inherent dangers of climbing.⁵⁰ Almquist called for a re-evaluation of the role of gear. He chastised an article in *Esquire* that focused more on gear than climbing, "as if the equipment *is* the sport."⁵¹ It can be argued that in the name of marketing goods, gear and apparel companies are in a position in which they can change the perception of risk in climbing. Moreover, climbers, in debating ethics, have focused the debate on gear and are wary of the impact of commercialism on their sport. The risk lies in succumbing to commercialism and missing the human values of climbing.

It is in this milieu of the debate on ethics that climbers relate to their sport. Fairley is correct in saying that climbers face an ethical dilemma when they reach for their rack or bolting kit. As noted in Chapter Three, to keep previously climbed mountains new, climbers sent new lines. They sought out routes with sections lacking cracks with nothing but blank faces. One way to protect these sections was by bolting, drilling holes in the rock and screwing in a bolt. If placed properly, bolts are permanent, ensuring almost infallible protection.

The issues surrounding the ethics debate are present in the writings of the climbers. Dave Jones recounted an ascent of an alpine rock route:

We hum and haw about the route but finally conclude that it has to go straight up. John tries several starts but all are oozing with slime. It is getting late as he experiments with a combination of rurs and logan hooks. After two hours of

⁵⁰ Peter Donnelly, "Four Fallacies," *Mountain*, vol. 80, 38-40.

⁵¹ Eric Almquist, "Bongs, 'Biners, and Big Business," *CAJ*, 1973, 54.

stalemate, reluctantly we place a bolt. It leaves a bad taste as we were using mostly nuts up to this point. This gets us over the crux, but the sun is setting.⁵²

As in the previous two chapters, the climbers are speaking of using in gear in terms of safety. The bolt has allowed them to summit without being trapped on the route overnight. Jones had exhausted all options. Rurps are postage stamp-sized pitons that may penetrate less than a centimetre into fine, almost nonexistent cracks and hooking itself can be tenuous. Still the "bad taste" suggests that Jones feels he could have climbed in better style, which illustrates the influence of the debate on ethics on the practices of climbers. This suggests that that one bolt signifies the debate on ethics. Jones perceived a risk of being stranded on the climb over night. But the "bad taste" suggests he perceived a social risk constructed by the values in the climbing subculture. This social risk motivated him to climb on questionable protection. It leaves a question as well. Why did they even carry a bolt kit if they wanted to climb in the best style? Maybe personal safety is more important than the recognition of climbing in the best possible style.

This ethical dilemma confronting climbers also factored into route finding, especially as climbers put up new first ascents.

There were three possibilities, two of which could be seen and a third which was to a certain extent blind. Route 1 was perhaps the quickest and most certain way but would involve at least one bolt and several pins. Route 2 was possibly quicker, with more free climbing but potentially more dangerous, yet would not, hopefully, require any bolts. These two routes led to a recess. Route 3 led further rightwards onto what they hoped would be easier ground but would still require some hard climbing lower down.

Chris opted for route 2. Fifty feet later he was reassessing the situation. "A bolt?" the crowds below cried. "Yes" he answered, with shaking legs, and in it went. A permanent record of one's incompetence", [*sic*] to quote the man who placed this particular bolt. But I say, "Better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all". [*sic*] And to quote an Old English Sheepdog, Dougal (of a

⁵² Dave Jones, "Ohno Wall, Moby Dick," *CAJ*, 1973, 15.

British TV children's show), "Where would we all be if none of us tried to scale the heights? Wallowing about in the foothills of life, that's where". [*sic*]⁵³

Chris hesitantly resided to bolt. His shaky legs suggest that he was freaking out or at least a little nervous. Chris believes bolting signifies one is less of a climber and that he is somewhat incompetent. When it comes to risk assessment though, Chris's decision to bolt demonstrates that he did not want to pay with his life for the fame of a bolt-free first ascent. Bolting gives one the confidence and security to seek out the unexplored. This example is interesting because the views of the two characters differ. Chris thinks bolting is unethical. While the author feels there is room for interpretation of ethics. Ethics can be open to compromise when making a first ascent, particularly when it involves playing it safe.

Opinions contrary to Trevor Jones on Goat Butte cropped up in the debate on ethics. Doug Scott's testament on climbing new routes stands in contrast to Jones's:

We had all been climbing long enough to know that the essence of mountaineering lies in pioneering first ascents in good style. The mixed rock and ice faces of the European Alps had all been climbed by the 1950s. In Yosemite Valley, that Mecca of American rock climbing, all the natural lines had been ascended by the mid 1960s. There has been no significant contribution made to climbing in these areas since. In fact the search for new routes has resulted in a decline of climbing standards and disregard for climbing ethics. There are of course exceptions, but generally the modern pioneers in these areas have gone where no truly natural line exists; beyond the crack and crevice and out on to the areas of blank rock. Progress here is only possible by drilling bolts. There is no skill in this, and a persevering climber can go anywhere without fear of retreat. Slowly the truth has dawned that drilling removes uncertainty as to the outcome of the climb, and therefore the challenge.⁵⁴

The self-proclaimed authority they assert is interesting. The years they spent practicing the sport and their accomplishments, they feel, gives their voice authority. They are still centring the ethics debate on bolting. Bolting, instead of allowing for exploration and

⁵³ Trevor Jones, "Goat Butte – Visited, Revisited and Climbed Finally," *CAJ*, 1978, 20.

⁵⁴ Doug Scott, "The Big Walls of Baffin," *CAJ*, 1973, 2.

pioneering, has actually held back the sport, in terms of ethics. To them, mountaineering requires skills in not only placing gear but in facing fear. Mountaineering is not worthwhile without uncertainty. There perception of risk is uncertainty. This risk is a necessary component in mountaineering and bolting has taken this away. It is interesting that they do not mention the impact of pitons on the climb. This is the other side of the debate, climb as you will but it is unethical to alter the climb for the next party. By not eschewing pitons, Scott's crew may not be as ethical as they would like to think. Scott's piece is also an example of rhetoric that might shape the perception of other climbers.

Athletes' perceptions of risk are a combination of dealing with risk to their body, namely physical harm, and the risks of not meeting perceived social expectations. These social constructs are manifested in sport ethics and are reinforced, intentionally or not, by coaches, other athletes, family, sponsors, media, and so on. Sport ethics are idiosyncratic to each sport subculture since each subculture has its own value system. Striving to meet these ethics can lead to positive deviance. "Although the sport ethic emphasizes positive norms, the ethic itself becomes the vehicle for transforming behaviours that conform to these positive norms into deviant behaviours that are prohibited and negatively sanctioned within society and within sport organisations themselves."⁵⁵ When overconforming to a sport ethic, the athlete is playing to meet the ethic and loses track of playing the game for the sake of playing or for fun. As a result, the athlete's perceptions of risk are altered. For climbers, this could mean climbing more technically demanding routes with less and less gear, which may be completely feasible with the rise in skill levels of climbers. However, it may force a climber to use less protection, which would

⁵⁵ Robert Hughes and Jay Coakley, "Positive Deviance Among Athletes: The Implications of Overconformity to the Sport Ethic," *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol. 8, no. 4, (1991), 307.

likely decrease the probability of successfully arresting a fall. This climber would be taking unnecessary risks to just to feel accepted within the sport subculture. Within sport subcultures, the use of gear speaks like a language, confirming identity and status. As such, it will also shape the members' perceptions of risk.⁵⁶

To conclude, by the seventies mountaineers recognised more explicitly that there were different types of risk beyond just the risk of physical danger. In particular there was the risk of altering climbs, and there was the risk of succumbing to technique and a subsequent neglect of human qualities, to commercialism, and to positive deviance. A debate ensued in the 1970s over the ethical use of gear. It affected how climbers related to gear and how they used that gear. This debate shaped mountaineers' perceptions of risk. It defined risk as something beyond physical harm. Breaking social conventions also posed risks. Climbers might be more willing to compromise personal safety to abide by the rules of the game.

⁵⁶ Robert Hughes and Jay Coakley, 307-25. Trevor Williams and Peter Donnelly, 3-15. Kevin Young and Peter Donnelly, 223-240.

Conclusion

We do not belong to those who only get their thought from books, or at the prompting of books, -- it is our custom to think in the open air, walking, leaping, climbing, or dancing on lonesome mountains by preference, or close to the sea, where even the paths become thoughtful.

-- Friedrich Nietzsche

The wind roared around us. As if to remind me of its presence, with every gust, it gave me a nudge. In late May 2004, we were hunkered down between the summits of the Silverhorn and Mt. Athabasca and felt just a little intimidated by the wind. While we considered our options, the wind tossed around dinner plates of consolidated snow. Well outside of our comfort zone, we decided to descend.

Just as we were turning around, the couple behind us had caught up to us. I struck up a conversation, somewhat of a yelling session, with the climber in lead. I explained that we felt a little intimidated by the gale force winds. He replied with, "yeah, this is just typical New Zealand weather." Well at least somebody on this mountain had some experience. I looked down and saw he and his partner were wearing crampons. With our lack of experience, we were left labouriously cutting steps up the soft snow in the couloir. I asked, naively, if the crampons had made the ascent easier. "Yeah, they're the shit!" he replied. How else was he supposed to get his point across over this wind? Feeling a tug on the rope and at the urging of our last man on the rope, I cut the conversation short and started down the couloir.

Safely back at camp that night, the couple, Aaron and Jen, visited with us. We played cards over hot chocolate and tea. It turned out that Aaron works as a guide in New Zealand, a certified New Zealand Mountain Guide. He and Jen were on an abridged

world tour, hitting climbing hotspots in Canada, Greece, Thailand, and Australia.

Conversely, we were a ragtag group of amateurs from Winnipeg out for the week.

Free of judgment and any condescension, Aaron discussed glacier travel with us. It seemed to me that he accepted that we were learning by doing, applying the skills we had learned from books and then implementing them as we went. Perhaps we had shown sound judgment in choosing Mt. Athabasca. That is, we had selected an "easy" mountain and had not bitten off more than we could chew. During our discussion with Aaron, he also taught us a handy-dandy method for carrying the rope while roped up, called the Kiwi coil. I still smile at the thought of having learned the Kiwi coil from a Kiwi. Aaron's teachings instilled some confidence in us and we made a half-hearted, unsuccessful attempt on the President, in Yoho National Park, despite the Kiwi coil and using our crampons as soon as the snow-covered slopes began to steepen.

My experience illustrates an overarching theme in this thesis, that is, the shift from guides to gear and with it, one of the new roles for guides, that of an instructor. As for perceptions of risk, my experience has shown me that gear and technique can alter my perceptions of risk.

There is something to be learned from how perceptions of risk in Canadian mountaineering have changed. The accounts in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* reflect these changes. In the first era, guides, particularly Canadian Pacific Railway Swiss guides, managed the risks for its more adventurous clients. Guides mediated the mountain experience, leaving mountaineers with little responsibility for risk. Perceptions were also shaped by Victorian conventions of the ideal gentleman, which reinforced the necessity for employing a guide. Risk was spoken of in terms of guides.

By the 1950s, the CPR could no longer afford to house guides at its mountain hotels and discontinued its guiding services. Social conventions also changed. Members of the less wealthy classes took up mountaineering too and may not have been able to afford the services of guides. These all contributed to the decline in guiding services and the use of guides. Mountaineers were left to learn the skills necessary for mountaineering on their own, learning from books, schools, or fellow mountaineers. With improvements in gear, namely rope, footwear, protection, and so on, mountaineers could tackle more challenging terrain. The discourse of risk centered on gear. Gear still figured prominently in shaping perceptions of risk in the 1970s. However, for mountaineers two concerns arose over the use of gear. One, excessive amounts of gear could be used to climb almost any route, given considerations such as time, weather, and so on. Gear, especially pitons or bolts, could add certainty to success and reduce risk, which takes away from the mountain experience. Two, gear, namely pitons and bolts, altered the route by damaging the rock. This damage took away from the experience of subsequent climbers. A debate over ethics ensued and with it rules to the mountaineering games, which served as guidelines for selecting the appropriate style by which to climb. Climbers felt pressure to abide by these rules. Their risk management, for example choosing to bolt or not, and thus their perception of risk, was based on these ethics.

Selecting the themes of guides, gear, and ethics has allowed for a clear account of changing perceptions of risk in mountaineering. Over the 20th century, these themes were influential in shaping mountaineers' perceptions of risk. As social conventions and equipment changed, so did perceptions of risk. This change suggests that risk is historical. To some degree my experience is the sum of this shift in perceptions of risk.

We elected to forego a guide. We studied our how-to books and trip accounts for our guidance, and we figured our gear would help us tackle the obstacles presented by Mt. Athabasca.

Using a cultural approach to the study of risk, the model explored by Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky allows for significant historical insights into the Canadian mountaineering community or the society of mountaineers. The cultural approach precludes a study that may just detail a shopping list of objective hazards that confront climbers. It does not paint all modern individuals as risk-averse, which climbers appear not to be. It allows for further examination of the social and cultural forces that play into climbers selecting what is a risk, for example, not being a gentleman, or having a negative impact on the environment and altering climb for future parties. It also allows for an analysis of climbing equipment and guides and the significance they have to the climbing culture. Guides and gear are more than just items to protect climbers against objective hazards. They also reflect the value system of the climbing subculture.

As for the relationship to technology and modernity, Christopher Dummitt argues that climbers are not actually getting away from it all, but bringing modernity with them.¹ Therefore modernity shapes mountaineers' attitudes towards and perceptions of risk. In particular, the risks associated with mountaineering can be controlled by perfecting techniques through training. Risk can be contained or measured within the parameters of grading systems and membership in clubs. Dummitt contends that implementing technique, measuring climbs or hiking trail through grading, and forming clubs are trappings of modernity, essentially a form of ordering and controlling.

¹ Christopher Dummitt, "Risk on the Rocks: Modernity, Manhood, and Mountaineering in Postwar British Columbia," *BC Studies*, no. 141 (2004): 10-18, 27-29.

I agree with Dummitt's argument that a system emerged, through organised clubs and grading scales, which shaped perceptions of risk. I think that, using the British Columbia Mountaineering Club as an example, any time a system emerges to assess and control risk it is defining risk. This system is often based on climbing techniques and gear. As gear and techniques change, so too does the system. Therefore, perceptions and definitions of risk are open to change. The studies of Craig Heron's *Booze* and Suzanne Morton's *At Odds* explore a similar system of control. Their studies look at the regulation of alcohol and gambling, respectively, along with the changing public perceptions of these risk-taking activities. Their findings suggest that perceptions of these activities have changed. I would argue that this demonstrates a change in the perception of the risk of the activity, which suggests that risk changes over time.

A key conclusion that emerges from this thesis is that, trite as it may be, perceptions of risk do change over time and differ between individuals or groups, which opens risk to historical analysis. Furthermore, the study of risk in mountaineering in an historical context or framework is still wide open. John Tulloch and Deborah Lupton argue that gender, age, and family life affect perceptions of risk.² Admittedly the themes of gender, age, and family relations are neglected in my study. A future study could return to the themes in more depth. Maria Coffee's award winning book *Where the Mountain Casts Its Shadow*, would provide helpful insight into how responsibilities, or lack thereof, towards families influence mountaineers.³ More work can be conducted on modernity and technology to see if the changes in climbing technology and attitudes

² John Tulloch and Deborah Lupton, *Risk and Everyday Life*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2003), 16-40, 132-4.

³ Maria Coffey, *Where the Mountain Casts Its Shadow: The Dark Side of Extreme Adventure*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003).

towards gear mirrored those of the dominant culture, exploring the fears of the effects of technology or the dehumanising effects of modernity.

When I next find myself confronted with the choice to proceed or turn back, I will think back to this thesis and reflect on the many that have gone before me and the many that will go after me and embrace the notion that the contemporary perceptions of risk may seem unfounded in the years to come. What does change in perceptions of risk mean? I think it means that not everyone is becoming risk averse. As with gambling or drinking, there are those who will continue to climb, whether in, as Dummitt would suggest a futile, defiance of modernity or to reach a flow state or because of a genetic predisposition. Lastly, maybe some activities will always be deemed risky.

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