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Cut out: collaging against the invisibility of women in print climbing magazines

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ABSTRACT

Climbing magazines from the 1970s to the 2000s, originating as a product of male-dominated climbing cultures, provide a rich illustrative source for embracing visual methodology. Working as a multidisciplinary collective of four across history, art, sociology, we are using photomontage methods to interrogate the photographic representations, absences and stark invisibility of women and women climbers held within our climbing magazine collection. We engage collage as our means of working with the magazine imagery and representations therein. Situating art making at the kitchen table, Dada artist Hannah Höch (1889-1978) invites us to trespass towards a collective, resistant leisure activity. We do so by workshopping to deconstruct, disassemble and reassemble our visual artefacts to speak back and through the ways women's bodies are objectified, and materially and discursively play out against exclusive leisure. Identifiable representations of women appear in the magazines, which chime with the complexities of absence, sexualization, and conditional inclusion. We chat and discuss and unobtrusively transcribe our emergent commentaries. Our visual methodology therefore invigorates the examination of women's status within climbing culture past and present, across climbing and non-climbing audiences, revealing resonances between past and present attitudes to women, suggesting that representational strategies continue to impact discriminated groups.

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Introduction

Working as a multidisciplinary collective across history, art and sociology, we are using photomontage methods to interrogate the photographic representations, absences and stark invisibility of women and women climbers held within a climbing magazine collection spanning the 1970s to the 2000s. We engage collage as our means of working with the magazine imagery and representations therein. We workshop to deconstruct,

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disassemble and reassemble our visual artefacts to speak back and through the ways women's bodies are objectified, and materially and discursively play out against exclusive leisure sites and activities. Readily identifiable representations of women appear in the magazines, which chime with the complexities of absence, sexualization, and conditional inclusion. We provide an account of how our collage methods engage innovative and radical practice with the potential to reinvigorate visual methodology across leisure scholarship. This paper details our collage collective ways of working, emerging from and spanning our combined interests, knowledge and experience of archiving and historical analysis; women and climbing culture; collaging in arts-based practice; and feminist leisure scholarship.

Visual methods associated with historical and sociological research invariably seek to contextualize and establish an understanding of what can be seen. Namely, by asking the fundamental questions of who, what, where, why – and in the case of climbing – how these conditions are articulated through associated practices. For the purposes of our sense-making, this questioning extends to what material texts might also "tell" us about political and social attitudes. Critically, within this kind of analytical process, texts are typically left intact. In contrast, the departure for our collective has been to embrace the artistic politico-resistant medium of collage, notably inspired by the work of pioneering Dada artist Hannah Höch (1889-1978). In our hands, the context of climbing, whether textualized as elite, lifestyle or leisure pursuit, is re-examined via a visual methodology that incorporates professional arts-based practice, itself evolved from historically grounded creative artwork as leisure. We come to the magazines armed with insights derived from a diverse body of feminist scholarship that prompts and drives our critical engagement with our collection. Cutting magazines to collage is an act of resistance where we consciously trespass, and stamp upon contemporary historical representations of women in climbing, that is, by making decisive judgments about where to "make the cut" as a means of "enacting new cuts and reconfiguring entanglements" we "see" in our vast array of visual data (Barad, 2007, p. 384).

Formation: collection, collective and context

Our collection of magazines includes titles such as *High*, *Climber, On the Edge*, and *Rock & Ice*. Published from the 1970s to 2000s, they provide a rich illustrated source through which we embrace visual methodology. We hold the magazines privately, as an inherited, uncatalogued collection, initially stored in 18 boxes. The offer and acquisition of these magazines was underpinned by two members of the collage collective's previous research on women and climbing. This work examined how women have been objectified and marginalized in the proprietary print media through to how, of late, social media has enabled sportswomen to actively engage in self-documentation (Ankers, 2020; Osborne & Ankers, 2022). Whilst social media can arguably be acknowledged as a liberating technology in the hands of those who use it (Toffoletti, 2016), we know women climbers operate against a long-standing powerful legacy of gendered representations, just as women and girls do when participating in athletic activities generally, be that at elite or recreational levels (Bruce & Antunovic, 2018).

Even as more women have participated and become increasingly visible in recreational and professional climbing over time, they have been positioned as exceptional, usually

finding recognition via pioneering achievements or remarkable talent, but barely as a consistent, representative presence (Osborne, 2021). This underlines our overarching objective: to identify where and how women have appeared in these climbing magazines, deploying collage as a proactive method for critiquing the domination and appropriation of climbing culture by men therein. As generally initiated, edited, and populated by the activities of men, climbing magazines are a particularly potent expression of their patriarchal power within the pursuit.

Undoubtedly, a substantive run of magazines as a product of any sporting subculture represents a treasure trove for researchers. In addition to providing an insight into the preoccupations of commentators and participants, they are quite simply a visually appealing, tactile source. As such, they are highly collectible and, as photographic artist Mark Vessey observes, the accumulation of personal collections, especially over protracted periods of time, can be integral to the construction of an individual's identity and biography (Vessey & Manco, 2024). Furthermore, a collection can tell us something about the values and attitudes of the wider popular audience or subculture from which it has emanated in specific places, at specific times, and over time (Wheaton & Beal, 2003).

For climbing, "the something" about wider culture is already well established through academic research; namely, that since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century "climbing", first in the guise of Alpine mountaineering, then focussed to the ascent of outdoor rock faces, has been equated with men's innovation and excellence, thus serving to claim its evolution as a pursuit dominated by them (Moraldo, 2023; Roche, 2013). In the UK, the practical marginalization of women by men extended from seeking to protect women from the implied risk of participating in a pursuit focussed on the ascent of high places to the institutionalization of the practice through influential homosocial club formations (Dilley, 2007; Osborne, 2004). Thus, climbing culture has historically and consistently reproduced patriarchy in its social practices, and has symbolically cemented a misogynistic legacy through, not least, the naming (again overwhelmingly by men) of climbing routes. Such naming is also exposed as colonialist and racist, homophobic and/or ableist through critical social research (Wigglesworth, 2021).

Contemporary women climbers routinely navigate this discursively and physically exclusive terrain, and although increasingly visible within outdoor and indoor climbing spaces, the pursuit continues to position women climbers as other (Breitwieser & Scott, 2023; Rahikainen & Toffoletti, 2021). Representations of women within climbing culture resonate with themes identified in gender and sport research, which expose ongoing representational strategies within media that posit femininity and masculinity as binary opposites. Furthermore, although research on mainstream women's sport indicates some movement away from the objectification and sexualization of sportswomen in print media, shortfalls in the amount of coverage compared to sportsmen remain stark (Petty & Pope, 2018; Pope et al., 2023). This is compounded by the marginalization of women in sports media at editorial and managerial levels, as well as dominant representation tropes that may seek to offer new and resistive formations (Bruce & Antunovic, 2018).

Relative invisibility remains an issue for women climbers and is indicative of the constraints they are known to encounter when seeking to participate. For example, common gendered experiences reflect persistent heteronormative and disempowering behaviours, including receiving unwarranted advice from men, unwanted attention, being the object of the male gaze, and having one's ability underestimated (Ankers, 2020; Kiewa, 2001;

Plate, 2007). Mothers who climb face significant constraints, with childcare, cost, time pressure, risk and guilt identified as key factors reducing the scope of their involvement (Ankers, 2023; Doran & Hall, 2020). However, climbing has been established as an alternative sporting and serious leisure space for women, where societal expectations of femininity can be resisted and contested, and where "unconventional" femininities can be expressed and celebrated (Ankers, 2020; Dilley & Scraton, 2010). Even so, Breitwisser and Scott note that "fatness and femininity fail to fit climbing culture at a basic level" due to a continuing emphasis "on men, masculinity and thinness as proxies for performance and success" (2023, p. 152, 155). At best, these conditions marginalize non-normative bodies; at worst, they operate to exclude them. Meanwhile, elite-level women climbers encounter scrutiny in different spaces, including online. Their presence on social media reflects forms of gendered digital labour around the projection of achievements and lifestyles in line with postfeminist articulations of an empowered femininity (Hernández, 2021; Rahikainen & Toffoletti, 2021).

Feminist analyses attune us to the ways in which women's experiences of climbing are discursively constituted through their depictions and absences in climbing culture, but also through the exclusions and boundaries they face. The physicality of climbing exposes the ways in which different bodies come to matter, in the materiality of unequal access to the rock-face, equipment and labour. These inseparable material-discursive accounts invite us to attend to which specific boundary-making cuts are enacted and maintained – in leisure, in the depictions of leisure, and in our studies of it – through material-discursive methods (Barad, 2007). Barad (2014) also invites researchers to recognize that we are not outside, but *of* and in responsibility *with*, the phenomena we study, entangled within it even as we make our own cuts and draw on differences; what they call "cutting together-apart". This phrase emerges as part of Barad's larger agential realism project that troubles and enlivens notions of causality, boundary making and responsibility through a philosophy of intra-action (as opposed to the usual "inter-action" that implies pre-existing separateness and claims of scientific distance) to recognize the specific, local ways the researcher is already entangled in – and responsible to – their research material and communities of practice. As individuals within the collective, we come with different disciplinary perspectives and life experiences. We each feel differently about the decisive act of cutting the magazines, cutting up can certainly be understood as a subversive act – whether imposed on the "primary sources" of history, or the "raw data" of sociology. We are typically bound by the conventions of taking care of, and maintaining the integrity of our evidence, not least as a means of assuring our interpretive authority.

Barad proposes montage as a "diffractive" method of "reworking and being reworked by patterns of mattering" (2014, p. 187; 2017). They do this practically in some of their writing, cutting together quotes from seemingly disparate sources to construct (and deconstruct) their analysis. We extend this method directly into cutting together disparate visual representations of women and climbing as an analysis. Taking up a visual method like collage in academic work can feel quite new, and even transgressive, particularly when published examples are rare in a field like leisure studies and history. However, it is useful to see current methodological considerations within a much longer history of deconstructive and inductive analysis, of collage-as-research-method, and as part of leisure itself, both in relation to the doing and making and the critical reflection of the leisure practice and leisure meanings that are invoked.

Cutting and collaging as critical arts-based practice

Most academic histories of collaging start with the etymology of the word as a form of gluing together and its discovery by the artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in the early 1910s. Vaughan (2005) uses this as a starting point to consider how these early collages call assumptions of positionality and perspective into question. She traces them through politically motivated photomontage, to postmodern and visual turns in qualitative methodologies, connecting her own practice and emerging academic recognition of arts-based methods and practice-led research. Some accounts that start with 1911 Modern art, or with the famous men of the surrealist anti-war Dada artists miss the opportunity to draw in the longer, gendered, genealogy of collage, and its continued use not only in creative visual practice, but also in critical analysis and scholarly methods (Butler-Kisber, 2008; Gowrley, 2022; Gullion, 2023).

When we started exploring the ways that visual arts methods might enable us to confront the absences and portrayals of women and women climbers in our collection, one collage artwork became an anchor for our discussions. The piece by Hannah Höch (see Figure 1) shows two figures: one an idealized female form, pictured only as the silhouette cut-out of the paper surrounding where an image had once been; the second a much shorter figure cut-together from a child's body, but with a more adult head in an awkward enigmatic pose. The collage spells out its own title – *Die Gymnastiklehrerin (The Gymnastics Teacher)* – in individual mismatched letters cut from magazine headlines (Höch, 1925). Höch created the image in the mid-1920s, after several years of developing her photomontage collage methods, using her access to photomagazines through her job at Berlin publisher Ullstein Verlag. We can imagine her cutting out the gym-ready body with an eye to using cut-up body parts to create new characters and figures, before discarding the original in favour of the outline shape it left in the surrounding paper. Superimposing an absent figure onto an alternative background image starts to draw attention in new ways of attending to both the absence and to the context. Similarly, montaging an image of a child in the gym class – perhaps a self-portrait that captures an autobiographical memory of awkwardness and the interplay between power dynamics and body image – is a process that takes shape as cut-up elements come together into conversation with one another as they are intentionally moved across the page by the creator-artist.

In contrast to the lone figures of *The Gymnastics Teacher*, the collage *Cut with a kitchen-knife Dada through the last Weimar beer-belly cultural epoch in Germany (Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands)* (Höch, c. 1919) is a vast photomontage assembly of images, a project of political satire, cultural criticism, and ironic self-parody. Wartime pomp, mechanical utopianism, colonial othering, female objectification, contemporary theoretical figures, and art movement experimentation all meet in conversation across the page. Cut together from fragmented deconstructive reading and close consideration of images in a form of constant comparative analysis that welcomes the magazine, advertising and newspaper images into a material conversation. The title gives us a template for studying visual culture in this way because it repositions political analysis through cut-up collage forms and places it at the heart of the Dada art movement in Berlin over the subsequent years. Critically, it also sites this art making at the kitchen table (Sensemann, 1994). Höch cuts up figures with a kitchen knife, as a resistant threat to the public-facing beer-bellied

Figure 1. *Die Gymnastiklehrerin (The Gymnastics Teacher)* 1925, photomontage with collage 27.9 × 19.8 cm. Reinhold Brown Gallery, New York. All works by Hannah Höch ©2024 The Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS), London.

political pomposity of war-time Germany. This marks an explicit enactment of an art-cum-leisure activity unfolding in the gendered domestic domain of the kitchen and *at* the kitchen table. In *Cut with a kitchen-knife*, Höch's title infers the longer history of collaging as a feminized and domestic pastime with a political and cultural critique through the subversive surrealism of the emerging Dadaist art group of which she was a precarious woman member (Makela, 1996). This piece marks the moment magazine photomontage was taken up as a valued fine art practice, albeit one equated with the men at the forefront of the Dada movement.

Prior to the rise of Dadaism, in Europe collage was often dismissed as a women's leisure pastime or women's work, despite having a long rich history of techniques and forms since the moment printed paper became available (Gowrley, 2022). From the earliest medical paper craft, botanical "paper mosaics", the Valentine's cards industry, and scrapbooks, leisure and research method have been bound up and layered together in the possibilities and processes of collaging[1] (Elliott et al., 2022). We draw attention to these omissions and absences in the history of collage as visual method because, firstly, they are

an important part of understanding the processes when adopting them as research tools and, secondly, they can also be read through gendered climbing culture itself *and* the articulation of it in the magazine collection we are using these methods to study. In climbing magazines images of women climbers are often left absent by the magazine editors, but so too is the labour of women who make climbing possible.

Cutting at the kitchen table: theorizing the method

Drawing a direct analogy between collage and the steps of a single research method is unnecessary once the rigour and value of collage is reaffirmed in and through practice. This allows us to draw parallels between a number of "traditional" research methods and collage methods in different and productive ways. A form of rich creative and critical analysis, including scientific method, and a popular and approachable leisure activity, positions academic collaging methodologies as welcoming layering and superpositions with other method literatures. The social constructivist traditions of grounded theory for example, offer a language with which to describe experienced researcher practices, intuition and rigour. We make connections here between collage processes in research, grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001) that parallel these, and diffractive methodology (Barad, 2007). The methodology encourages researchers to theorize, raising up inductive categories from the ideas they are sorting into theoretical contributions by returning to conversations and extant data through close reading, constant comparative analysis and making memos on emerging concepts (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). Bailey and Woodall-Greene (2022), for example, have described their collaging in these memo making terms.

Barad (2007, 2017) develops the call for methods that can "carry over the principle of montage into history" (Walter Benjamin quoted in Barad, 2017, p. 30) as a materialist, diffractive methodology. As well as interrupting the framing and narrative of whole images, collaging disrupts their intended placement and presentation within a publication. Cutting up and sticking together also calls into question established boundaries, poses and materials, refashioning bodies while leaving a record of the constructed nature of the collagist's intervention. Many of the techniques and processes Höch adopted and evident in her work feel familiar to us as researchers in terms of the steps and processes of methodology. For example, the inevitable back and forth of revisiting within and between magazines to facilitate composition, or the satisfaction of recognizing an immediately pertinent text or textual fragment. However, rather than suggesting a strict one-to-one correlation between a particular research method step and collage making process, we can draw out the ways that collage making forms are deliberative processes that simultaneously invoke creative spontaneity.

As such, collaging can serve the researcher in terms of sampling, thematic coding, comparative analysis, category building, memo making, theorizing, and communication. Those processes, however, are not literal or necessarily explicit. Thus, as situated in the era of the "New Woman", it is unsurprising that some of Höch's most famous works explore how bodies are perceived and their relationships to one another, using material-discursive analyses derived from the deconstructive cutting of visual representations, particularly of women (Lavin, 1990; Makela, 1996; Mills & Boswell, 2004; see Figure 2). In other images, the figures are not fragmented; rather, the focus is on how they are brought into visual relationship with one another. Höch also inspires us to

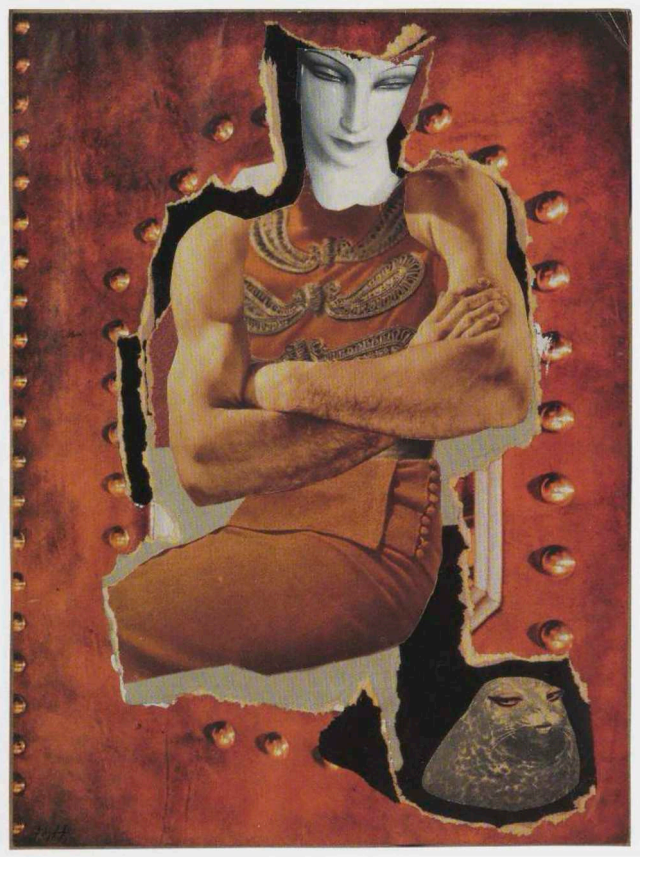

Figure 2. *Dompteuse (Tamer)* c. 1930/1963–6, photomontage with collage 35.5 × 26 cm. Kunsthaus Zürich. All works by Hannah Höch ©2024 The Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS), London.

work more abstractly, through the strategy of collecting categories of image fragments and assembling them together as collections, or into new visual forms. Her collection of material textures built into a composition, or a collection of women's eyes reshaped into a vase of flowers (for further visual examples of Höch's strategies, see Makela et al., 1996) inspire thematic coding and theoretical memo-making activities in the academic researcher. For example, in Figure 3 our climbing ropes and climbing holds arranged as a bouquet follow Höch, suggesting the visual potential of material fragments as material-discursive seeds that can be "picked up like crystals, and turned around and around allowing the light to diffract through them, seeing the overall pattern that is already inside each fragment but also watching entire constellations of insights flash up, if only momentarily" (Barad, 2017, pp. 37–38).

Meaningful qualitative research requires staying with the trouble (Haraway quoted in Reardon et al., 2015) and entails difficult and dedicated work. Part of the power of collage – how easy it feels to pick up in its playful intuitive, creative invitations – can also risk leading less experienced researchers to omit the necessary time and commitment needed to gather and analyse rich data about the studied phenomenon (Davis, 2008). Collage, like any research method process, requires practice and training to focus

Figure 3. Collage Collective, 2024. Taking inspiration from Höch's *Bouquet of Flowers*, c. 1930, we experimented with collecting fragments thematically and creating new forms. Here, the bouquet becomes a visual representation of a collective, busy, joyous female climbing space in a way not seen in climbing magazines of the time.

general skills, disciplinary knowledge, and intuitions to the specific research objectives and rigour of scholarly uses.

Cutting at the kitchen table: establishing collective practice

For our first few workshops, we met in different classroom spaces at Leeds Beckett University's campus before moving our practice to our homes. We were inspired by the history of collaging taking place "at the kitchen table" and we integrated our workshops with the making of soup and the sharing of food, each bringing items to contribute to our assembled lunches. We acknowledge our academic freedom, our ability to move between different locations and value the access we have to comfortable spaces for knowledge exchange and collage creation.

Nevertheless, a new method or process can still be difficult to start. A researcher needs to feel enough confidence to trust their tools and begin to think through the active "doing" of the work. Facilitated by Ben as an arts-based practitioner and researcher, at

our first meeting, we were able to experiment using pre-prepared image fragments from a range of (non-research specific) sources. During subsequent collaging "meetings", our collective approach continued to evolve; we began to outline, conversationally, the sorts of questions we wanted to ask of a large disparate, loosely chronological, not specifically organized, collection of climbing leisure magazines. We were enthused and excited about the potential of collaging in ways that chimes with Chilton and Scotti's (2014) account of snipping and gluing as acts of meaning making. Specific visual examples of how women's bodies were objectified through the visual language of climbing amplified the shock of the cultural and editorial norms in front of us. For example, in one advertising feature, cutting free images of a naked woman bound in climbing rope from the pages of the magazine disrupted the advertising framing and shifted the disturbing connotation (Osborne & Ankers, 2022).

Combined with several visual examples of the kinds of images that can be made, we explored the process of assembling new images from fragmented parts (see Figure 4), before moving on to seeking out new image elements, and practicing the mechanical skills of cutting, positioning, layering, and sticking. Simply assembling image fragments loosely on a table or blank sheet of paper quickly reveals the joy and energy of serendipity, creative leaps, and juxtaposition (see Figure 5). This might be considered as moving through inductive categorization into Peirceian "abductive reasoning" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 104).

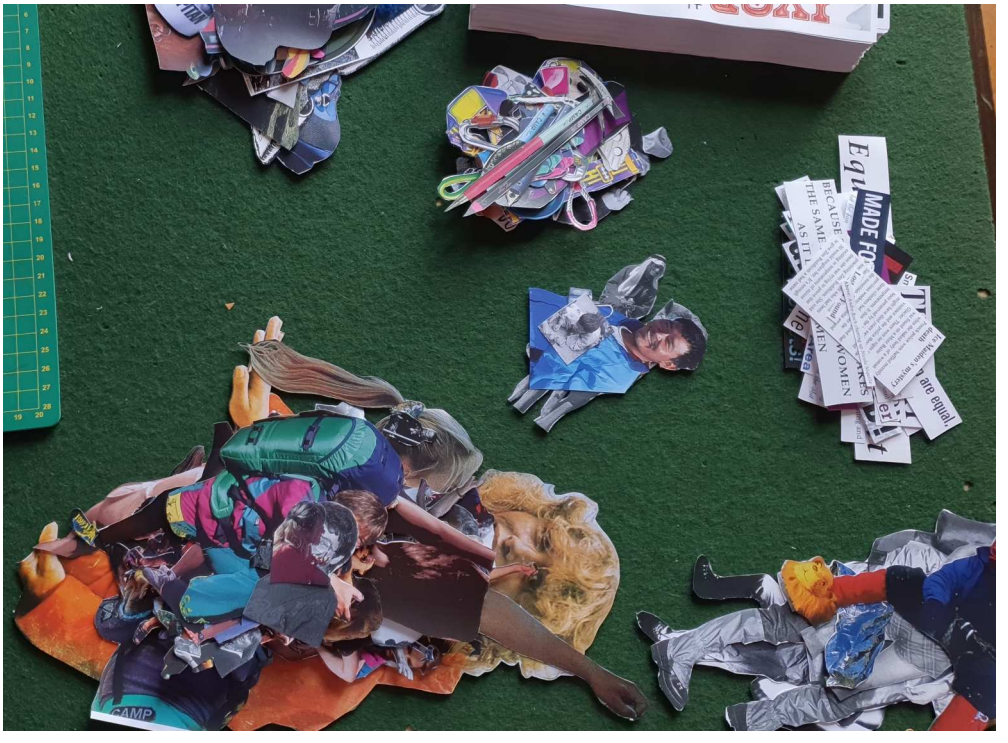

Figure 4. Collage Collective, 2024. Initial categorizing while cutting out fragmented parts of images. One approach to collage is to systematically look at each image in a magazine, selecting those of particular potential thematic or visual interest. Cutting out and initially sorting (coding) images spatially on a table allows for analysis to begin to emerge, and in turn creates a quick collage assembly process.

Figure 5. Collage Collective, 2023. Sorting and composing images. Quickly arranging images in relation to one another allows juxtaposition and serendipity into the thinking process. Here, the foregrounding and repetition of small images of (background) women combined with expressions of pleasure in the faces of models in adverts for base-camp bedding to become dreams of enjoyment and success in climbing.

Workshops should be flexible and open-ended, allowing participants to move back and forth between group discussion and more individual ways of working (Abranches & Horton, 2024). The "non-linear nature of collaging" allows participants to "layer and juxtapose the different elements of the story in unique ways, with a focus on time, politics and affects" (Abranches & Horton, 2024, p. 81). Following Höch's early surrealist play, we focused first on faces and figures. As for Höch's critical work, this allowed us to already be thinking about gendered bodies, identity performativity and the discourses and materiality already at play in relations between images (Lavin, 1990) as well as written text (see Figure 6).

As well as faces and bodies, initial activities taken from Höch's repertoire of strategies include making scenes, collections, objects and abstract patterns or compositions. It can be tempting to leave chosen images intact. Sometimes it felt important to leave a body whole, but often our hesitancy to cut bodies into fragments pointed to a power in the authority of advertising or editorial framing and composition that we had to actively unlearn to overcome and transgress. It is important for researchers to question the framing, assumptions, responsibilities, omissions, and claims of authority in the studied texts and communities, but also in their own stance as researchers. The decision to cut up magazines might seem straightforward, but due to the imperatives of academic

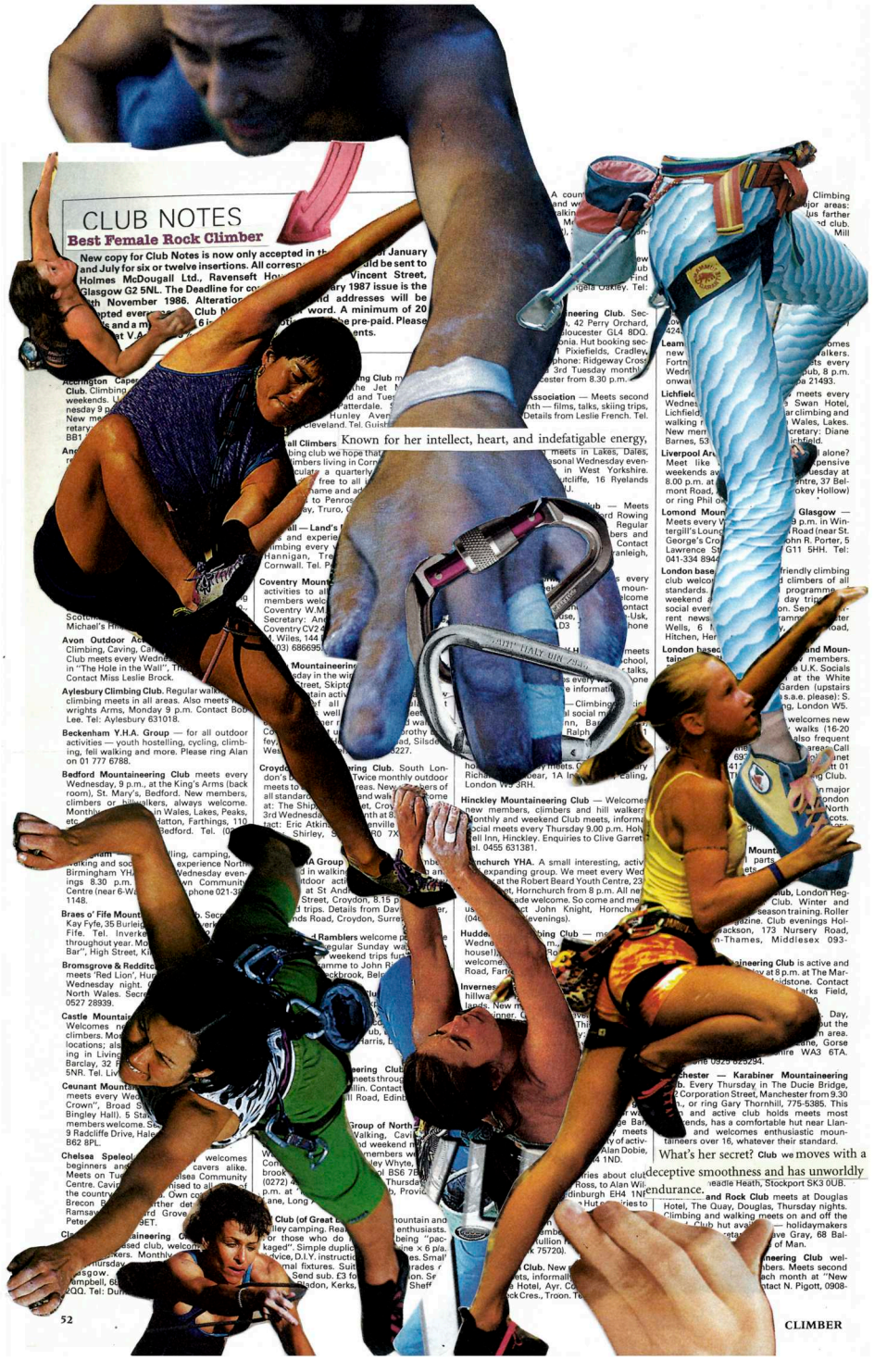

Figure 6. Collage Collective, 2024. The dynamic stances of women climbers found in more recent climbing magazines are brought into collective composition that evoke community and grasp the text as a material-discursive substrate, as we also grapple with the gendered language and phrasing we find.

preservation, archives and libraries, such artefacts take on a sacredness that must be unlearned to overcome, particularly for those experienced in accessing and utilizing archives as part of their history based disciplines. An antidote to this was that once the magazines had been checked and re-checked as duplicates against existing archive holdings the act of cutting felt possible.

In collage making, one can set out to make an image, but as with any semi-structured methods the maker is drawn back into conversation with the material as they look for the fragment parts you seek, and different contexts collapse together (Dalton, 2023). As a collective, we are also drawn into conversation with each other: we come to the site of research with a wealth of life experiences and disciplinary intuition. We were, and are, able to share craft and skilful preparation that Ben's arts-based labour provided. Dynamic and dialogic encounters within the collage collective enrich the scope of multidisciplinary, and potentially trans-disciplinary research methods in leisure and sport scholarship (Wheaton et al., 2024). Three out of the four of us have undoubtedly benefited from a process which began from "having a go" at collage to learning and developing new forms of visual arts critical practice. Meanwhile, for our arts-based practitioner and theorist, shared insights from leisure and sport scholarship invoke possibilities for grounding theory in visual approaches. Our practice contributes to and draws from analyses of gender and sport media where representations are critiqued (Bruce & Antunovic, 2018). These are sensitizing conditions that open space for discussion and themes to emerge from our new analytical undertaking. Holbrook and Pourchier (2014) position collage undertaken as part of inquiry as analysis that is "rigorous" yet "tentatively fabricated" (p. 754).

Material conversations, coding, and not coding

What then does it look like to be in material conversation with a magazine collection and the climbing communities around them? Clarke (2003) encourages researchers to spatially map out an early situational analysis of their prior assumptions and knowledge. This might be a conscious act, but it is something when working collectively that may well evolve in situ. The organizing of assumptions, hunches and examples spatially began to emerge across the tables where we were working through our initial experiments with the form and processes of collage. For us, it meant approaching the magazines with initial questions and assumptions but remaining open to a creative iterative process that might take us in unexpected directions. Conversing through image making – finding, cutting and layering – involves asking questions of the source material, but then making do with what images can be found, and discovering chance insights or directions of exploration along the way (see Figures 7 and 8 for examples of the ways ideas and images are emerging). As you bring two image fragments together, the expression on the face you have created may lead you somewhere new; it speaks to the visual conventions of the magazines and historical cultural moments, but also your contemporary assumptions and theoretical intuitions as a researcher. The lack of control in the size difference between the body and arms you have found, for example, suddenly evokes a notion of upper body strength helpful for climbing and the gendered reading of those muscles that earlier climbing magazines rarely permitted women to display.

A systematic approach to initial data collection and simultaneous analysis is to take a magazine and work page by page or image by image. With a particular focus on how

Figure 7. Collage Collective, 2023. Making the pervasive innuendo explicit through our memo-making process. We found macho sexualized posturing and branding common in climbing culture, from climbing route naming to product advertising.

women are represented, we followed this process by looking to collect every image of a woman in a sample set of magazines from our collection. Each image is cut out and placed into groupings and piles on the table as categories begin to emerge (Figure 4). Images are moved and re-evaluated as piles grow too large, or adjacent images take on collective meanings. This process accords to some extent as a form of emergent "line-by-line" coding (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001, p. 166). Images can be cut out whole to concentrate on questions of framing and context, or already cut into figures, objects, or fragmentary parts – in a process that begins to disrupt and analyze framing. A systematic approach invites the researcher to attend to each image in turn in the source material. We found that beyond our initial scope of women's bodies other images and words fell into our attention through this process, including emerging codes of "exclusive equipment", macho language, and so on. At times, we were concurrently drawn to other routes to draw out our subject matter. For instance, someone deciding to take readers' letters from within a magazine and read them aloud; the discursive terrain of men's conquests of the rock providing a narrative soundtrack as we cut and sorted. As we developed a growing familiarity with the collection, and for those of us new to collaging as a research method, a dynamic flow between conversational and systematic approaches continued.

The process of finding and cutting images can be approached holistically, greedily almost, or staggered into stages; a spectrum between conversation and more mechanical process that involves a trade-off between efficiency and open-endedness. Searching for a particular image, for instance, "I want a rock that has been photographed and framed like a phallus" because of the implicit ubiquity of the form throughout the magazines – means

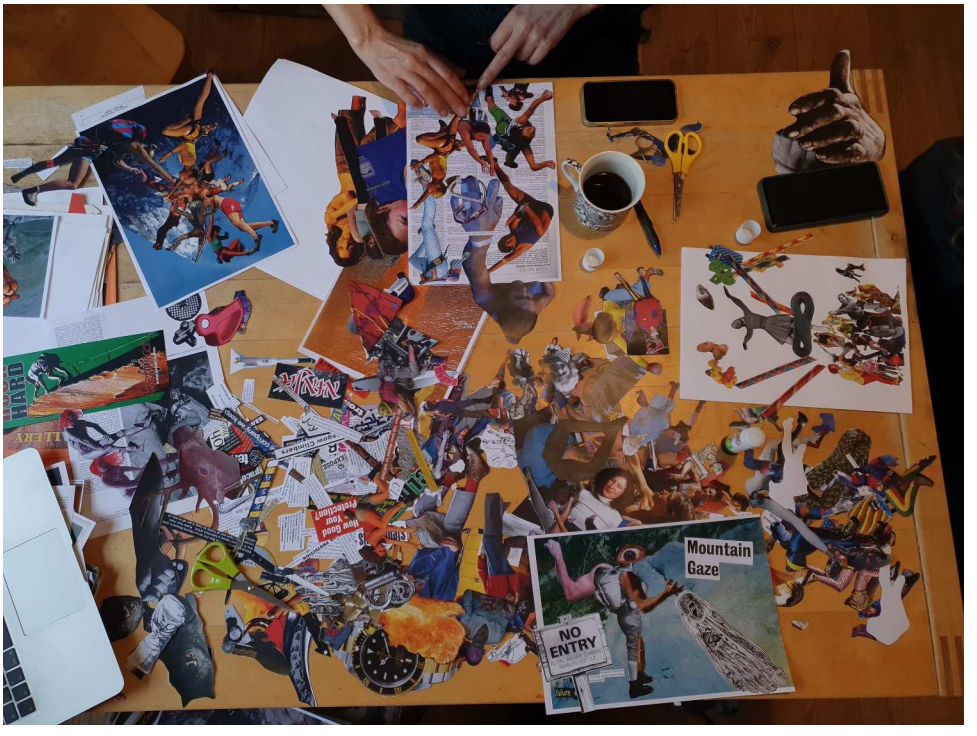

Figure 8. Collage Collective workshop at the kitchen table, 2024. Images emerge as categories on the table evolve and are shaped and re-shaped by finding (mess), sorting (order), and elements are gradually fixed in place. Collage affords both individual reflection and collective collaboration.

"flicking through" many magazines. This is a good way of getting a feel for the setting as a whole and building up an intuition for the material. But it takes time to find and to compromise on what to keep and what to discard in the process of cutting out. To describe the action denotes the critical and political acts of collaging; what happens in a moment is recognition of the pervasiveness of heteronormative presence in leisure spaces that can be demonstrated in visual form.

A more systematic approach could include bookmarking every image of potential interest first, photocopying them (this allays having to think about preservation or choosing between images and/or text on back-to-back pages), then doing all the cutting and initial sorting. Then, returning to collections of images and coding as an emergent process of specifying, summarizing and synthesizing initial ideas into emerging categories as the images are re-sorted. That was quite often not how we found we worked. Collage lends itself to trying out how ideas fit. Fluid and potentially playful or humorous, and yet attentive to nuance. An act of leisure and of resistance. Our experience in reading images was brought into conversation with the images that emerge, and the fragments that enable and constrain them (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). In the collaging process, we can return to the source material in search of a specific image or fragment in a process akin to theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). If the collage is driven by an emerging category, this return to the magazines can fill in gaps in examples through comparative analysis or move towards theoretical saturation of the

image as a memo of nascent theory building through elements that visually elaborate the theme (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). In the creation of a scene or figure, or visual story, returning to source material can feel like further semi-structured conversations. As researchers' ideas develop, and intuitions focus, they can become more selective, working emerging theoretical categories into narrative.

Part of theorizing and constructing a conceptual framework is about how ideas and examples are presented to readers. Intuition about how visual conventions are read, and audience expectations, come into play when constructing an image. Olufemi (2021) reminds us of the importance of speculative methods of images and narrative in speaking to the women largely missing from the archives, looking for the traces that haunt the collections. We can visually attend to those absences, but also more creatively construct imaginings and reworkings of images of women who were there but were not recorded. The art of making collages is an analytical process, by their very production (Culshaw, 2019) and we embrace the "act of taking-apart-putting-together" (Gullion, 2023, p. 76) that collaging allows us.

The use of women's bodies as objectified, sexualized framing in advertising images is a recurring theme. It is shockingly clumsy and predictable, made even more obvious when these images are cut out and collected, brought into conversation with each other, and juxtaposed with images of expert women climbing. In some earlier magazine issues, women were placed seemingly as rewards – in sleeping bags or bound up in climbing ropes – and were the only images of women we had available to work with. When trying to visually imagine women's climbing bodies otherwise, fragmenting and deconstructing the images into parts allows us to re-work them against the constraints and framing of the dominant male gaze (Figure 9). Mixing in masculine body parts, and more-than-merely-human prostheses allows collage makers to attend to missing and hidden bodies, including queerness and disability in climbing media.

And still, at times, dare we say it, we found ourselves deriding our collage making as "not a real research method" or "just playing around with the images", a familiar feeling for experienced researchers in the midst of field research and the messiness of analytical method. We are reminded by Barad (2007, p. 281) that we are not engaged in "any old playing around" but rather the responsibilities to specific material and conceptual arrangements, attending to rigor, as discipline expects. We intentionally moved some of our collaging to the kitchen table. Inspired by Höch's "kitchen knife" that situates her critical analysis and Dadaist art making in the gendered domestic setting of the kitchen, the kitchen knife also suggests a DIY ethos, making do – quick and easy – with (research) tools that are to hand. This DIY element of collage permeates its later history through punk zine making (Triggs, 2006). It offers a freedom of letting go of what constitutes meaning making in research and encourages dialogue across disciplinary interests that is not seeking definitive accounts or "answers".

Meeting in each other's homes, and making collages at the kitchen table, allowed us to attend to the activities and messiness of care work, leisure time and life, and to read these through the subject and method of our study. It spoke to the women, also to those indigenous women and men making base camps, carrying supplies, and preparing the food that are all necessary for many climbers to climb high mountains. It allowed us to attend to the women absent from climbing magazines because they are spending time in heteronormative contexts, such as at home preparing food and caring for children, but also

Figure 9. Collage Collective, 2024. Women's bodies are imagined in new stances and seen in new relations to one another and the context of the climbing equipment they were often originally employed to sell. Following Höch, we deconstruct and construct bodies and belongings into new relations of belonging – cutting together and apart as a single creative endeavour.

writing newsletters and sorting out equipment, opening "free time" for men who choose to climb. We did not use kitchen knives for cutting, but did often turn to our children's, grandchildren's, and childhood scissors and glue sticks which were readily on hand, and our own hobby supplies, as well as more professional craft tools such as scalpels and cutting mats.

A key property of collage is that it is visibly fabricated (Holbrook & Pourchier, 2014). Author and audience both know that this is a (re)construction because we can see evidence of how it is made and an interplay between the differences in material, print technique, cultural moment, and in the adjacent pieces, as well as reading the new composition as a de/coherent whole. Collage is honest in its construction and deconstruction in a way that photoshopping or "AI" image making is often not. This seamfulness speaks to the presence of the hand and intentions of the researcher, as well as the compromises in conversation with their materials.

When we look at examples, such as Figure 10, of collaging text, placing one quote fragment after another, in connections and contrasts, Barad (2007, 2014, 2017) speaks of a diffractive methodology that reads texts through each other, attending to specific material arrangements of conceptual apparatuses, and to differences that matter.

Unlike visual methods that capture imagery, and then turn quickly to traditions of text and writing for their analysis processes, collage holds analysis techniques and insights in visual forms longer. The indeterminacy of how images are read are a productive part of how they communicate the intersections and superpositions found in our studies. The

Figure 10. Collage Collective, 2023. Images of women's climbing history combine with literature on metaphors of journey, body and landscape. Although we mostly worked only with the text and images found in our climbing magazine collection, another strategy in this method is to draw quotes directly from (feminist studies) literature into visual conversation and memo making as well.

narrative and aesthetic conventions of images can organize and integrate categories and ideas. Looking again to Höch for inspiration, it is also clear that some collages can communicate complex critical analysis directly in visual forms. Imagery prompts response, reaction, revolt; audience receptiveness to our collages may well be a further future intention but it is beyond our scope here.

Discussion

As we have sought to illustrate, processes within collage practice are well established, and their research purpose, rigour, methodological and theoretical underpinnings can be

readily identified. Through our specific collaging, working collaboratively as a "collage collective", we have brought together history and socio-cultural leisure studies with arts-based visual methods to examine representations of women and climbing in print magazines. By aligning aspects of these different literatures and disciplinary bases, we can look for points of synthesis, similarity and connection, but also telling juxtapositions and points of difference as a means of offering a deep critique of our print collection. We can explore representations and extrapolate meanings that at times have a common ground but that also diverge and are transient (particularly if and when images are arranged but not "stuck" in place). The visual examples incorporated here offer expressions of theorizing women's positionality in sport and physical activity contexts; they are created, literally and figuratively, by taking up Hannah Höch's assemblage methods as a critical (diffractive) practice of reading the images in the magazines and attending to differences that matter. Our individual decisions about where to "make the cut" (Barad, 2007) are methodologically liberating and we believe offer great potential for renewed interest in visual methodologies within and across leisure scholarship. Here, we reinvigorate (and encourage) a (re)turn to visual methods of practice-led critical art methodology that positions image making as analysis in situ; the kitchen table metaphor brought to life wherever we arrange our workshopping.

We also hope to have shown that collaging offers exciting opportunities for different ways of knowing within visual methodologies scholarship. While activities potentially associated with leisure may risk being dismissed as less rigorous or legitimate in some way (Johnson, 2014), the generation of new ideas, intertwined with image making and the scrutiny of established concepts and theorizing, provides scope for reimagining and re-imaging women's presence in climbing. Adopting arts-based practice alongside informed exposure to Hoch's work effectively enabled our collaging against the invisibility of women in the climbing magazines, creating our own images to critique and account for their absence and marginalization. In multiple ways, the playfulness of cutting up and re-making is "liberating". The invitation to cut and collage was an exciting way of directly confronting representations in the collection and the patriarchal legacy it represents. Collage, as a dynamic visual method, made us think of resistance and trespass in how women climbers struggle for access and to be recognized, of how climbing is a leisure activity that will often go where the rock is, no matter the enclosures around it, but also as an important aspect of undertaking research.

Being and working in a space where art, history, socio-cultural analysis, and leisure inform and evoke responses to our practice generates ideas and forms unlikely to otherwise occur in isolation. What we understand as "live sociology" (Back, 2012) is context-specific and shifting; boundaryless digital platforms, for instance, are an exciting point of departure for researchers. However, the decision and act of us working together in person is profound; a key facet of cutting and collaging and any associated meanings and possibilities that are sometimes literally thrown together, emanate from the sharing and the physicality of being together. Giving ourselves time to work with the method and practice of collaging has allowed us to think deeply and exchange thoughts about the ways women are made invisible in climbing and the outdoors, how they are sexualized and commodified, and has given us space to challenge these representations in new ways. Significant therefore is "the freedom and time to engage in thinking, to immerse oneself in experiential encounters, to synthesize information and reflect upon

it – this is how new ways of knowing are formed" (Hartman & Darab, 2012, p. 59). We appreciate that in the current academic output pressured and broader economically driven climate, the ability to engage in slow scholarship (Harland, 2016; Hartman & Darab, 2012), and/or to be able to work freely in different contexts (at the kitchen table) is contingent upon our variously privileged circumstances, be that time, physical space and other resources. There is an element of DIY here that is refreshing when we reflect on our emerging visual methodology. Ross (2023) for example, reworks an existing research zine collage, cutting and sticking together a review and reflective reanalysis, showing collaging as far from being an exclusive activity, because the DIY stylistic conventions of collage in zine making allow for forms of outreach to non-academic audiences.

Beyond cutting and pasting, possible "publication" and communication of findings, collage can also serve other purposes such as review, meta-analysis, and outreach. We intend to continue collaging our collection to explore further layers of reworking and have been inviting others to cut and stick with us in our continuing efforts to confront and re-image representations of women in print climbing magazines. From climbing walls to classrooms we are engaged in ongoing opportunities to facilitate collage in leisure contexts and about leisure contexts, employing meaningfully a visual methodological approach that is simultaneously playful and potentially profoundly critical. Generating imagery through collaging prompts ongoing reflections on how we produce data, code and categorize, and contributes to renewal and revalorsiation of visual methods in leisure scholarship. The legacy of media representations of women who climb, as indicated by a rich seam of contemporary feminist scholarship, reinforces the need to challenge barriers old and new that still exist. It also signals to other researchers the value of collage as a method for critically engaging with the representations of other marginalized groups. Collaging can be used in theorizing and writing but also helps us to recognize all theorizing and writing as embodied, fragmented, fabricated assemblages and products of ongoing engagement with the world.

Note

1. The longer history and artistry of paper layering can perhaps better be understood in terms of artisanal paper craft and repair starting in China (Elliott et al., 2022), and the layering found in shadow puppetry, but also in longer histories of layering and assembly found in appliqué and ragdoll fabric work (Vaughan, 2005), as well as use of precedents like papyrus, starting in ancient Egypt.

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