



A HOMAGE TO SERVICES LOST: RISK, YOUTH WORK AND THE GREAT OUTDOORS

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VIGNETTE...

- that forms my “guiding interests and sensitizing concepts” (Charmaz 2006), meet ‘Niki’

Against a background of high profile cases over the last few years:

- Cairngorms mountaineering tragedy (1971)
- Land’s End tragedy (1985)
- Austrian Alpine fall (1988)
- Lyme Bay canoeing disaster/ M40 minibus crash (1993)
- Stainforth Beck drowning (2000)
- Glenridding plunge pooling incident (2002)

THE DEBATE?

“culture of caution” around risk in the outdoors (Thom, Sales and Pearce 2007, p.1)

What is justifiable from an educational point of view and what risks do workers face in the light of much (unjustifiable) fear of being sued or worse (Fulbrook, 2005)

How far should we expose young people to risk (Baillie 2012)?

Youth work aims – to promote autonomy and support transitions to adulthood SO how do we help young people to learn to manage risk?

Is the job of the worker is to expose young people to risk?

What does this mean for the worker/ manager in a setting?



WHAT IS CLAIMED?

Risk as an all-pervasive phenomenon in the Western post modern or late modern world

(Giddens (1991, 1994, 1999); Beck (1999) Bauman (2007) Power (2004, 2007))

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

- 1. there appears to be a gap in the understanding of/ theorisation of the purposes of outdoor education from a youth work perspective**
- 2. the notion of risk in outdoor education is one that is not sufficiently explored within the youth work field.**

AIMS

- **To contribute to the debate about the purpose and underpinning theorisation of outdoor education in a youth work context.**
- **To explore perceptions, approaches and understandings of what constitutes acceptable practice in terms of risk in the outdoors in a youth work context and what the value of risk is here.**
- **To explore what impact there might be for young people to engage in outdoor education in light of the recent cuts to youth work provision.**

OBJECTIVES

- **To explore youth workers' and youth work managers' beliefs of the purposes/ rationale of outdoor education.**
- **To explore youth workers' and youth work managers' beliefs and practices about risk in relation to taking young people on trips and visits in the outdoors.**
- **To explore the processes by which youth workers and youth work managers come to decide what levels of risk are acceptable in relation to taking young people on trips and visits in the outdoors.**
- **To explore youth workers' and youth work managers' understanding of the value (or otherwise) of risk in outdoor education.**
- **To explore youth workers' and youth work managers' perceptions of the recent reduction to youth work provision and its impact on young people.**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- **What are the perceived risks vs benefits / value of outdoor education from a youth work perspective?**
- **How do youth workers/ youth work managers come to ascertain whether risks are worth taking in this context?**
- **How have the recent cuts to Youth Services impacted on young people's opportunities to engage in outdoor education?**

SO FAR...

Focus on:

- 1. *understanding practices related to risk in outdoor education in youth work settings in a single case study of one youth centre.***
 - 2. *evaluating the research design and methods of data generation/ analysis used in terms of their potential efficacy for the main study.***
 - 3. *recognising any ethical/ practical and technical issues that may need addressing in the main study***
- Case study**
 - Intensive interviews**
 - Semi structured questions (with prompts!)**
 - Sampling of artefacts...**
 - Use of Grounded Theory for analysis**

INITIAL FINDINGS

- **Risk is worth it in practitioner's views!**
- **Rich wide ranging understanding of benefits of outdoor education**
- **Risk assessment a complex, multi-layered phenomenon**
- **Links between safeguarding and risk assessment**

QUESTIONS?



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