Wilderness Risk Management and YMCA Camp Outtripping Programs

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Abstract

Risk management has become a significant focus in outdoor programs. Managing risks in natural environments can be very complex, particularly since many of the risks which can cause loss are the same risks which can cause gain. The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of how risks are managed in outtripping programs through using three YMCA summer camps as a case study. The three camps are Camp Queen Elizabeth, John Island Camp and Camp Pine Crest. Outtripping programs are a significant focus at each of these camps. Data for this research were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with camp directors, assistant directors and outtripping staff, totalling 19 study participants. This research identifies three main short comings of the traditional approach to risk management: (1) risk management tools and techniques alone do not lead to a safe and valuable outtrip experience; (2) it adopts a partial definition of risk and risk management, which fails to place emphasis on the positive side of risk; and, (3) human factors are not adequately addressed in the process. Findings from this research show that wilderness risk management is a complex process made up of many interconnected components. The components that were identified in this research are grouped into three categories: program design, risk management tools and techniques, and human factors. Managing risk in a wilderness environment involves numerous uncertainties related to the environment, equipment and people. The risk management process is adaptive for both organizations and leaders and involves balancing the competing goals of safety, protection and adventure. Well-developed goals provide a foundation for outcomes based risk management. This research has produced a wide range of information which can be used by both academic and applied audiences to further strengthen the process of wilderness risk management.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Risk management has become a major component of many outdoor recreation organizations" overall management planning. Although risk has the potential to cause harm, it also has the potential to benefit people in significant ways. This is why risk management is an essential aspect of successful program operation. Risk management can provide a balance between the positive and negative sides of risk. The outdoor education and adventure industry uses risk as an essential tool to reach a wide range of program goals. High ropes courses are an example of programming commonly used by outdoor organizations which encourages children and youth to challenge themselves and experience risk within a context of managed outcomes. Managing risks in this environment is a complex process and so further understanding how this process works is a valuable area of research.

My interest in this topic has developed through my experiences as a canoe trip leader at Project CANOE and Camp Queen Elizabeth. Each season I have noticed improvements in staff training, safety gear and policies and yet it appears that the demands of managing risks keep growing. Considerable resources are invested in making programs as safe as possible, but such investment can also have unintended effects. It can be difficult to know where to draw the line between safety and danger.

The general approach to risk management in outdoor programs seems to focus largely on identifying hazards and then implementing the use of tools and techniques, such as policies and equipment, in order to treat those hazards. Yet, risk management tools and techniques alone do not guarantee that participants will have a positive and safe outdoor experience (Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). This thesis adopts a broad approach to examining the risk management

process in adventure focused outtripping programs at Ontario YMCA camps with the purpose of discovering the primary elements which make up that process. It identifies and explores traditional components of the risk management framework as well as moves towards understanding how those components function and uncovering additional components that influence the process of wilderness risk management. This research also takes into consideration today"s risk management needs, advancements and conditions.

1.2 Project Overview

This research explores wilderness risk management in camp outtripping programs. Three adventure focused YMCA camp outtripping programs have been used a case study and include: Camp Queen Elizabeth, John Island Camp and Camp Pine Crest. The primary focus of this research is to provide a greater understanding of the risk management process overall. This is accomplished through exploring YMCA camp directors" and outtripping staff members" perspectives and experiences with risk management at camps. Staff members are directly involved with the risk management process in the field, making them an extremely valuable source of information. It has been said that risk is an essential component of outdoor education and adventure programming (e.g. Boniface, 2000; Brown 1998; Cloutier, 2000). This research examines the use of risk in adventurous YMCA camp outtripping programs in order to provide context for understanding how components of the risk management process can be designed to support achieving risk-related goals. Four themes were developed to guide the collection of data. These themes are relatively broad and were designed to promote the emergence of additional concepts and sub-themes. Themes which were explored include goals, the role of risk and adventure in outtripping programs, factors which influence risk management and risk management related challenges.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to conduct an exploration of the overall risk management process occurring on adventure outtrips. Three camps were used as a case study and include YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth, Camp John Island and Camp Pine Crest. To understand risk management processes, many factors related to risk and wilderness risk management were explored. This thesis is founded on the view that risk management is a process, composed of many different sub-systems working together to influence the ways in which risks are managed.

1.4 Research Objectives

This research has four objectives:

1. To identify outtripping program goals and expected outcomes.
2. To understand how risk is viewed by outtrip leaders and camp directors.
3. To explore the major factors which influence and affect the risk management process on camp outtrips.
4. To discuss the main risk related challenges in camp outtripping programs.

Overall, this research provides information on the wilderness risk management process work and can be used by both academic and applied audiences to further strengthen risk management practices. This research aims to provide insight into ways in which risk management processes and practices can be designed with a focus on maximizing the benefits associated with risk in outdoor adventure programs.

1.5 The Study Setting

Summer camps represent one of the main types of outdoor recreation organizations in Ontario that are geared specifically towards children and youth. Within this category, the YMCA is one of the largest organizations. The YMCA operates 13 residential camps in Ontario, some of which are the largest camps in the province. YMCA camps are part of a collective organization that is governed by common policies and mission. Because of this, the three camps in this study

operate in very similar ways, allowing for findings and discussions to be made about YMCA camps in general. This study focuses on wilderness risk management in outtripping programs. Outtrips are a major part of the experience at the camps in this study. The three camps in this study offer the largest Ontario YMCA outtripping programs and are currently the only three Ontario YMCA camps that offer month long river canoe tripping programs.

YMCA outtrips involve travelling by canoe, kayak and/or on foot, for multiple days, into wilderness environments. Wilderness areas, for the purpose of this research, can be defined as areas where the provision of medical care is complicated by time, equipment and the environment (Wilderness Medical Associates, 2011). On some YMCA camp outtrips, definitive medical care can be days away. It is in these natural environments that an organization"s risk management process needs to be the strongest. There is typically little supervision and communication between the staff leading the trip and other support staff during outtrips. There are also fewer resources to use in the event that an incident occurs. Groups are on their own 24 hours a day, sometimes for weeks at a time. Because of these factors, there is no way to predict every detail of the experience.

Many of the dangers on outtrips are also the same attributes which contribute to making the experience valuable in relation to goals of challenge and adventure. Because of this, simply identifying hazards and eliminating them, does not necessarily lead to a successful program. Risk management essentially needs to focus on a wide range of goals. The risk management components used by the YMCA need to support staff members in being able to manage real risks in remote settings for an extended period of time. Essentially outtrips provide the ultimate test of the YMCA"s risk management process. It is for this reason that this research focuses on wilderness risk management and outtripping programs and uses YMCA camps as the case study.

It appears that little academic research has been conducted on camp outtripping programs. This is despite the hundreds of children and youth who participate in outtripping programs each summer. This thesis seeks to provide information on the most important and influential components of the risk management process based on the perspectives of staff members who have direct experiences with the process in the field. Ultimately, this information will aid the YMCA, as well as other outdoor recreation organizations, in understanding the risk management process and perhaps further strengthen risk management practices in other wilderness settings. The aim of wilderness risk management is not to eliminate risk from activities, but rather to ensure that it is managed in a way that reduces the likelihood of incidents, while meeting the program goals of the organization.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the relevant literature related to risk management and camp outtripping programs. Literature related to risk management at camps can be grouped into three main categories: organized camping in Ontario, risk in adventure programming, and risk management in organized camping and outdoor programs. The purpose of this research is to understand how risk is managed in outdoor programs, and so this chapter begins by reviewing literature related to organized camping in Ontario and risk in adventure programming.

2.2. Organized Camping in Ontario

Each summer, thousands of children and youth attend summer camps in Ontario. Today there are over three hundred day and residential camps in Ontario (Ontario Camps Association, 2011). The Ontario camping movement has grown tremendously over the last century and is still experiencing growth today (Ontario Camps Association, 2011). Traditional residential camps in Ontario tend to focus on nature based activities. This includes activities such as swimming, boating, hiking, crafts, campfires and wide variety of games and activities. At many camps these activities are designed to be fun, but they are also created with goals related to healthy child and youth development (Slee, 2009). Ontario summer camps have been successful in assisting in the learning and development of many children and youth for the following reasons: more time for learning, strong relationships between the teacher and learner, motivation and engagement, focus on experiential learning, and group and cultural relevance (Slee, 2009). The fullness of the camp experience is founded upon the history of summer camps and their development over time.

The camping movement in Ontario is rich in history and has existed for over 100 years. The first summer camps were established in the early 1900s. With rapid population growth in the urban settings of southern Ontario, people began to be drawn to the thousands of lakes and rivers in the northern parts of the province, which influenced the beginning of the camping movement (Burry, 1992). Many of the first pioneers of organized camping in Ontario belonged to the YMCA and various church groups (Burry, 1992).

The first canoe tripping focused camp in Ontario was established in 1903 on Lake Temagami. That camp was Camp Keewaydin and it is still in operation today. Keewaydin is largely responsible for promoting the use of wilderness canoe trips as an essential part of the camp experience. Soon after Keewaydin was established, other camps began operating in the Temagami and Algonquin regions of Ontario. Camps at the time were largely based on character development of the youth who attended them. The canoe trip was designed to develop a

> manlier heart and tougher muscles, the glory of the sunset and the freshness of the dawn, the moonlit stillness of the lake and the sweep of the river as it flushed and gurgled among the stones. A brief return to the evidence of nature, a brief enjoyment of skies and lakes and rocks and pine trees at their freshest and best. Then, with firmer grip and steadier purpose, back to the work or the waiting, back to the rush and bustle of the city (Jones, 1903 as cited in Hodgins and Irvine, 1992, p.145).

The Ontario landscape provides the perfect setting for camps and canoe tripping programs. Trips in the past were extremely challenging and were designed to force youth to work together and develop as a group within a demanding wilderness setting. In the beginning of the camping movement, it was common for canoe trips from Keewaydin and other camps to paddle the rivers of Northern Ontario into James Bay. These trips would involve running many rapids and even returning to camp by paddling back up stream (Hodgins and Irvine, 1992). All of this occurred at a time before safety equipment such as white water rescue gear, PFDs, satellite phones, and even extremely durable Royalex canoes were available. This was also a time before safety standards,

staff certifications and the formal term *risk management* existed for camps. Furthermore, the risk

of litigation was almost non-existent in comparison to today. Despite these differences,

managing risk was still part of these programs. The concept of balancing safety and danger is not

new (Curtis, 2005). Ontario camps have been managing risks for over a century.

Steven Gottlieb, who is the founder and executive director of Boundless Adventures,

provides an overview of how risk management has evolved at Boundless. He describes stages in

the evolution of risk management at Boundless. He describes the first stage as 1980s camping,

where rules and regulations were very relaxed and children and youth had a great deal of

freedom. In this stage it was found that risks in programs were not greatly benefiting participants

and many incidents were occurring. Emerging from this stage was the rigidity stage in the 1990s,

where safety became the focus. Rules and regulations were developed and enforced, many

programs were changed significantly and a significant focus was put on liability protection

(Gottlieb, 2004). It was found that this approach was not effective because many positive

program outcomes were being lost. In the final stage Cottlieb (2004) states that "we moved from

a set of policies designed to protect our own butts, to a set of policies geared towards protecting

our clients" butts" (p. 9). This approach encourages people to use their judgement and make

decisions which benefit the group in the best way possible. It will be important for this research

to take into consideration the evolution of risk management in the sense that managing risks does

not entirely rely on factors such as the latest safety gear or industry standards.

2.2.1. Ontario YMCA Camps

An organization that has been responsible for much of the evolution of organized

camping in Ontario is the YMCA. The YMCA of greater Toronto was the first to establish a

camp in the province. That camp is Camp Pine Crest and it is one of the largest Ontario camps in operation today. YMCA camps are based mainly on the traditional camp experience.

YMCA camps have documented goals related to the camper experience that can be divided into 5 categories, including: health and safety; individual growth; group development; skill development; and, building respect for the natural environment (Camp Queen Elizabeth, 2009). Along with these goals related to childhood development, there are also business goals related to operating in a sustainable way. These goals stem from YMCA core values.

Each YMCA camper is challenged to learn, grow and develop in spirit, mind and body (YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth, 2009). YMCA camp programs are built upon a foundation of four core values: respect, responsibility, caring and honesty. Each camp incorporates all of these values into each of their programs. Along with core values, all YMCA camps in Ontario participate in and strive to follow *Camp Quality Recommended Practices*, as developed by the YMCA. These practices are based on YMCA research which shows that they have a direct influence on the quality of a camper's experience at camp. The eight practices are listed below (Table 2.1).

The Quality Eight

1. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp is Fun**

   Fun is central to the camp. Fun at the camp is grounded in positive YMCA values.

2. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp is safe – socially, emotionally, and physically.**

   The camp focuses on all aspects of safety – social, emotional and physical. Participants feel safe at camp.

3. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp is a place of friendships.**

   The camp is a place for the creation and maintenance of friendships that last from a week to a lifetime.

4. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp is a place of caring, belonging, and responsibility.**

   Participants feel that they are part of something special. The camp has a caring and friendly environment. Participants are taught care and responsibility for themselves, others, and the camp. Participants know the rules and structure of the camp.

5. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp participants learn and are challenged.**

   Participants have opportunities to be challenged and to improve in spirit, mind and body.

6. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp treasures the natural world.**

   The natural world is a touch stone of the camp. Participants care for and value their natural surroundings.

7. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp meets personal life needs.**

   Participants have clean and inviting spaces to sleep, wholesome balanced and enjoyable meals, and clean washroom and washing facilities.

8. **The YMCA Resident Summer Camp is a place to return to.**

   Participants develop a committed relationship with the camp. Campers want to return each year. The camp develops connections with its alumni, parents and staff.

Table 2.1: Ontario YMCA Camp Quality Recommended Practices. (Adapted from Camp Queen Elizabeth, 2009)

Outtrips are one of the main program focuses at each of the camps in this study. At each camp, every camper has the opportunity to go on an outtrip during his or her camp experience. Outtripping programs are designed with progression in mind. The youngest campers start on overnight trips. As they get older, develop their skills and gain experience, they progress to longer trips each summer, working up to trip focused leadership programs, where they then have the opportunity to participate in a three weeks or longer outtrip. Leadership programs are different from regular camper programs because participants have increased freedom and responsibilities and begin to take on a role like staff at camp. This role typically includes duties

such as cabin placements, instructing younger campers and leading peers while on outtrips. Leadership programs are designed with the purpose of teaching campers how to be leaders at home as well as giving them the skills they need to become staff in the future.

Overall, YMCA camp programs have evolved over many years to become what they are today. The programs at each of the camps in this study are based on the same general beliefs and YMCA mission. Outtripping programs are a major focus at each of the three camps in this research project. Ontario YMCA camps are governed primarily by their own policies and mission. Each YMCA camp is also accredited by the Ontario Camps Association.

2.2.2. The Ontario Camps Association

The Ontario Camps Association (OCA) was formed in 1932 with the purpose of being able to discuss issues of common concern among Ontario youth camps. The OCA is a voluntary, non-profit organization that has members from camps, individuals and organizations which are dedicated to developing and maintaining high standards for camps as well as promoting the sharing of information and ideas. The OCA website describes the role and the purpose of the association. Currently, the primary goal is to help camps "enable children to learn new skills, make new friends and have fun in a safe, healthy and caring environment" (Ontario Camps Association, 2011). The OCA focuses on three main areas of interest: education, standards and informing the public. Although YMCA camps are governed mainly by their own policies, they do comply with and are influenced by the standards of the OCA

Creating and implementing accreditation standards is an important aspect of the OCA (Ontario Camps Association, 2011). In order to be a member of the OCA, camps must be accredited by the OCA. Currently there are over 300 camps in Ontario that have met the OCA's standards of accreditation. These camps adhere to over 400 standards that deal with all aspects of

camp operation. Standards can be divided into six categories, which include health and safety, leadership, food service and maintenance, staffing, programming, and administration. The standards are regularly assessed and revised and represent the minimum standard practices for running safe and effective camp programs.

2.3. Risk in Adventure Programming

Risk has been identified as an essential component of adventure programming (Cloutier, 2000; Hunter, 2007; Liddle, 1998; Martin et. al. 2006). For the purpose of this research, as it relates to the outdoor adventure industry, it is important to understand two main components of risk: loss and gain.

The first component, as described by Priest and Gass (2005), is that risk involves the potential to lose something of value. This loss may lead to harm that is physical (e.g., broken bones), mental (e.g., severe stress), social (e.g., embarrassment) or financial (e.g. broken equipment). Risk of loss does not solely relate to physical injury, but to these other aspects as well. It is important to note the difference between risk and danger. As defined by Priest and Gass (2005), danger gives rise to risk, but they are not the same thing. Danger can be further classified as either perils or hazards, both of which can result from human and environmental factors. Perils are defined as the source of potential loss, such as lightning. Hazards are defined as the conditions or circumstances that influence the likelihood of a loss occurring, such as thunderstorm containing the potential hazard of lightning. Danger refers to potential negative outcomes of a situation only, whereas risk involves both negative and positive outcomes.

The second aspect reflects the fact that risk can lead to not only negative outcomes, but also positive outcomes. These outcomes are not known for certain in advance. Neill (2003) and Curtis (2008) refer to two types of risk: the risk of loss (-R) and the risk of gain (+R). Too often

the focus of organizations, the media and the general public seems to be on the negative side of risk. Outdoor recreation and adventure programs typically involve activities with increased risk. The purpose, though, is not to "beat death" or "stare death in the face" but, rather, to experience the positive outcomes that can result from taking risks. Personal growth, development and learning are examples of some of the potential outcomes associated with +R.

Adventure programming relies on exploring the benefits associated with +R, of which an essential aspect is challenge. Challenge involves engaging personal competence in a risky situation. Priest and Gass (2005) state that risk is a part of every adventure experience as it creates uncertainty that makes an experience adventurous. If some level of risk is not involved, then adventure cannot occur. If participants in outdoor programs experience adventure, then they will also be exposed to risks. Otherwise, the experience would not be an adventure, but rather a relaxing vacation where participants may have had a fun time in a safe environment (Hunter and Kauffman, 2005). Barton (2007) describes a spectrum in outdoor activities ranging from recreation to adventure to misadventure. Hunter and Kauffman (2005) say that for outdoor adventure educators there is the assumption that simply having a fun vacation in the outdoors is not the main goal. The goal rather is to teach students to test the waters of capability, learn the potential, the thrill and the joy adventure can bring. Still in doing this, the students" safety must be a top priority. The goals of an organization will affect how risk is used and managed in an outdoor program. One particular goal of adventure programs may be for participants to experience peak adventure.

The adventure experience paradigm considers people"s perceived confidence levels verses their perceived risk levels (see Figure 2.1).
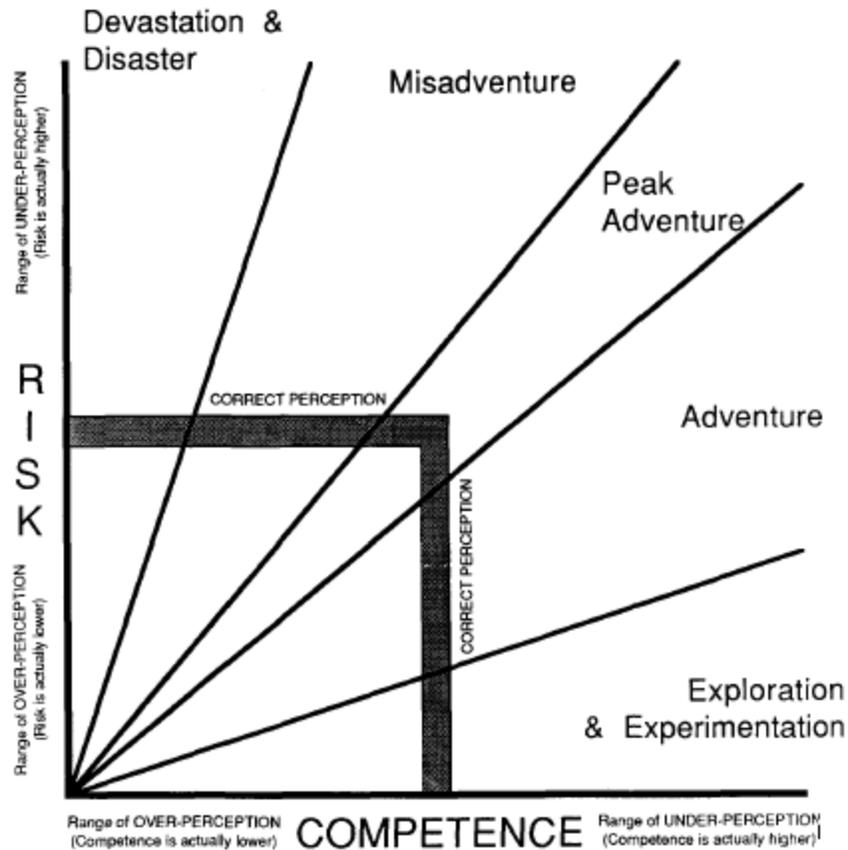
Figure 2.1: The Adventure Experience Paradigm. (From Carpenter and Priest, 1989)

When risk and competence are balanced, participants can experience peak adventure. This is where participants may become "lost in a euphoric or intense concentration. Likened to a momentary peak experience, they perform at their personal best and their experience becomes most memorable" (Carpenter & Priest, 1989, p. 68). Studies suggest that people are motivated to participate in adventure activities due to the intrinsic feelings of enjoyment, well-being and competence that they experience during those activities (Priest and Gass, 2005). In relation to many outdoor programs the goal is for participants to grow, learn and develop skills. In this context, if participants are not challenged enough, then the risk of having an unsuccessful program becomes very high. On the other hand, if participants face challenges which greatly exceed their competence levels, then the program runs the risk of physical and emotional harm to

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participants. The optimal way for an outdoor organization‟s directors and staff to reach their goals of child and youth development would be to adjust programs so that participants reach a state of peak adventure. This may involve creating different levels of challenge for novice to experienced participants.

Another area where risk related research has been focussed is determining and presenting the benefits associated with adventure in outdoor programs. This has become an important aspect of the outdoor adventure industry. In order for programs to be successful, directors are now being forced to prove their effectiveness. Research into the benefits of outdoor programs has been growing. Significant benefits in outdoor programs can be obtained through mastering a skill, assuming risk and being successful as a result of applying new skills (Hunter, 2007; Hunter and Kauffman, 2005). Ponton (1997) believes that risk assumption by youth is extremely beneficial. "Adolescents take risks as a way of developing themselves. They do this by taking on new challenges in areas that they often understand very little about, engaging in behaviours with results that range from devastating to extremely positive" (Ponton, 1997, as cited in Hunter, 2007, p. 22). Another positive aspect of adventure programs is that they can help foster connections between children and nature. Some believe that without this connection, children and youth may develop Nature Deficit Disorder.

Nature deficit disorder is a term that has been developed by Richard Louv (2008), the author of the book *Last Child in the Woods*. Nature deficit disorder refers to a large range of behavioural problems that are occurring within North American children due to a lack of time spent in the outdoors. Louv identifies less access to natural areas, the lure of the television screen and parental fears as being major contributing factors to this disorder. Louv argues that the large amount of media coverage on danger and negative outcomes today has led to fearful parents who

have scared their children out of the woods, while promoting a litigious culture of fear that prefers "safe" regimented sports over imaginative play (Louv, 2008). Louv believes that this is causing major issues in our society, especially in the development of children. If outdoor organizations, such as summer camps, claim to aid in the development of children, then risk becomes an integral component of their programs.

This section has identified the place of risk in outdoor and adventure programs. Through understanding risk and the associated positive outcomes which can occur, it is known that risk should not be eliminated from programs, but rather managed in a way which aids an organization in achieving its goals. Activities containing risk can be extremely valuable and enjoyable; however, they do expose participants to risk and danger and no benefits gained are worth a severely debilitating injury or death of a participant or staff member. So, deepening our understanding of the risk management process becomes extremely valuable.

2.4. Risk Management

Liddle (1998) defines risk management as the process of operating a set of controls and decision-making filters in order to avoid the loss of something valuable, be it a financially based asset, a physical or psychological injury, or death. There are countless situations which can result in a variety of losses. Managing risks in order to limit these losses has become a significant component of many organizations" overall management planning. It has become a significant aspect of management planning in the field of outdoor education and adventure, where many activities involve exposing participants to risks. Risks are inherent in outdoor adventure programs and so cannot be eliminated, which makes managing risks in those programs a complex task (Cloutier, 2000). The outdoor adventure industry is unique because exposing participants to risks is part of what makes those programs valuable. Because of this, Liddle"s

(1998) definition of risk management is too narrow as it only considers the negative aspects of risk. Adventure programs need to move away from focusing on negative risks to focusing on the positive side of risk and achieving the goals and objectives of adventure education (Zink & Leberman, 2001). The remainder of this chapter provides a review of the relevant literature related to risk management, risk management frameworks and selected components which make up risk management processes in outdoor programs.

2.5. Risk Management Frameworks, Theories and Models

There are currently a variety of frameworks, theories and models which aim to display and describe different aspects of risk management. Frameworks, theories and models are useful tools for managing risks because they provide valuable information, help determine the likelihood of a phenomenon occurring, and help explain how a phenomenon occurs (Ewert, 1987). The focus of this thesis is on the frameworks that can be applied directly to outdoor adventure programs. This section begins by looking at a general risk management framework and then moves towards risk management frameworks and models which have been designed specifically for the field of outdoor education and adventure programs. These frameworks can be divided into two main categories and include frameworks which aim to provide an overview of the entire risk management process and frameworks and models which describe certain aspects of that overall process.

2.5.1. A General Risk Management Framework

Increasing the effectiveness of risk management practices has become a major focus of many organizations. An effective way to work towards achieving this goal is through the development of models and frameworks. Many frameworks have been developed to match specific contexts within different organizations and fields. The most common approach to risk management involves risk identification, risks assessment, and the implementation of control, mitigation and prevention strategies (Cloutier, 2000; Hogan, 2002; Jackson, 2009). Figure 2.2 below illustrates a common risk management process.
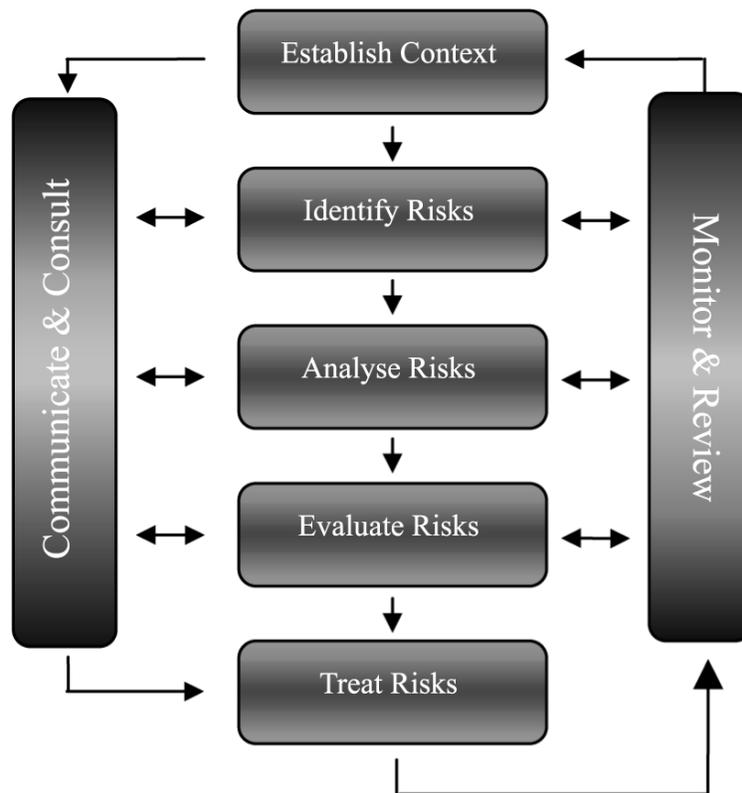
Figure 2.2: A common risk management process. (From Dalgleish and Cooper, 2005)

This example begins with establishing a context, which refers to things such as goals, environment and levels of acceptable risk. The next steps involve identifying which risks are present, analysing the significance of those risks and evaluating potential ways to deal with them. Risks are then treated with things such as safety equipment, policies or avoidance of certain areas or dangers. This particular example stands out because it shows both monitoring and communication occurring throughout the entire process.

Risk communication is an important aspect of an organization"s overall risk management process. Risk communication involves communication between stakeholders about the existence, nature, form, severity, or acceptability of risks (Alder and Kranowitz, 2005). This way, participants are fully aware of the risks they may be exposed to throughout a program. Open communication throughout the risk management process is also a useful way to help ensure that when new risks are identified, they are communicated to the rest of the organization and acted upon. The way that the process is functioning is constantly monitored and communicated throughout all steps of the process. Cloutier (2000) applies a similar approach to risk management in outdoor adventure programs.

2.5.2. Frameworks Designed for Risk Management in Outdoor Recreation

Cloutier (2000) describes risk management as a process which involves determining the levels of acceptable risk that an organization and its participants can be exposed to, identifying hazards to the business and participants, evaluating those hazards, selecting finance and control options, implementing mitigation strategies and planning appropriate responses for emergency situations. The process begins with the organization and its program goals. An important aspect of this stage is determining levels of acceptable risk.

Cloutier (2000) highlights the importance of determining acceptable levels of risk prior to creating risk management plans and programs. Acceptable risk or risk tolerance is defined as the amount of risk that an individual is willing to accept in order to reach a particular goal (Hunter, 2002). This also applies to groups and to organizations. The level of acceptable risk often shifts based on different goals. For example, on the last day of a canoe trip, a leader may risk paddling in rougher water in order to be on time for a pick up. Risk management plans should ensure that the organization, its employees and its participants are not exposed to unacceptable levels of risk and hazards, but at the same time, ensure that a valuable experience is still being delivered. Risk management plans include aspects which aim to prevent incidents from occurring, but also aspects which help deal with incidents when they do arise. Once hazards have been identified and evaluated, risk control techniques are implemented.

Risk control techniques are designed with the purpose of preventing or reducing the frequency of incidents. These techniques include exposure avoidance, loss prevention, loss reduction and loss sharing. Risk financing techniques include risk transfer through insurance, contract, participant assumption and risk retention by the organization.

Cloutier (2000) focuses on the practical application of each aspect of this process and how they are integrated. This process also aims to support the organization in achieving its goals. Jackson (2009) also adopts a broad level approach to risk management and focuses primarily on the highly integrated nature of the components which make up the risk management process.

In order to deal with the complexity and integrated nature of wilderness risk management, Jackson (2009) proposes the concept of systems based risk management for outdoor programs. A system can be defined as "an organized and highly integrated arrangement of parts operating towards a specific goal" (Jackson, 2009, p. 7). Jackson (2009), states that a key

concept of adventure program risk management is to understand it as a system. Risk

management is not set aside and considered separately from program operation, nor is it simply a

checklist of documents, waiver forms and first aid kits. Systems thinking is a way to organize the

complex processes which occur in outdoor education and adventure programs. It also takes into

consideration the integrated nature of the many parts which are required to operate successful,

quality programs (Jackson, 2009).

> Jackson (2009) states that

> As adventure and education based risk management evolves away from safety based prevention, control and mitigation practices and turns to a macro level systems analysis approach to safety, critical incidents and program quality management; a new paradigm or way of viewing risk management is emerging (p. 3).

A systems approach is particularly well suited for the outdoor adventure industry because it can

be outcomes focused. Outcomes are considered along with many other factors that influence risk

management. Figure 2.3 displays the interrelated systems that make up the risk management

process, as identified by Jackson (2009).
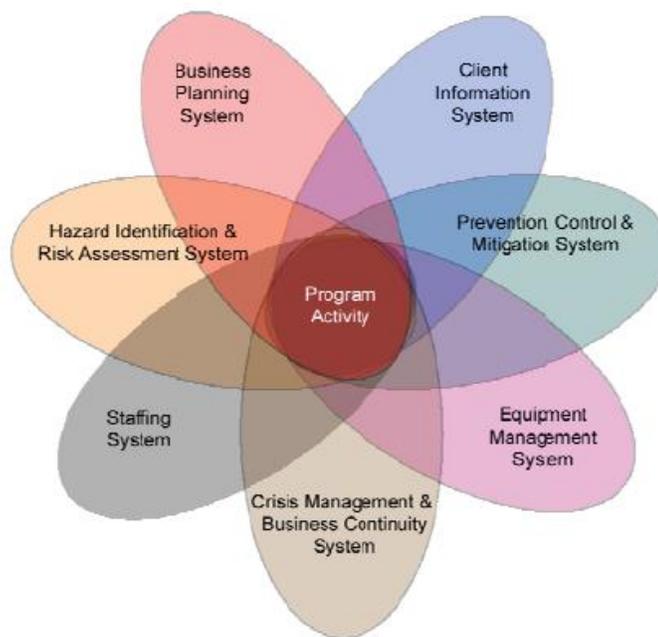
Figure 2.3: A Systems Based Approach to Risk Management. (From Jackson, 2009, p. 5)

Systems based risk management provides a mindset for assessing incidents so that active errors as well as latent errors are considered as potential causation factors. In outdoor program risk management, active errors tend to receive the greatest focus after an incident occurs. Active errors occur at the "sharp end" of risk management and are a result of immediate factors such as guide based slips, lapses, and mistakes (Jackson, 2009). Latent errors are referred to as the "blunt end" of risk management and are a result of errors in one or more of the systems that make up the risk management process. Examples include things such as poor condition of equipment, unclear polices or insufficient staff training. Reason (2000) states that often latent errors are overshadowed by active errors, when in reality, the reason for the active error could easily be traced back to system errors. In a systems approach, the entire risk management process is considered. Through assessing each system, an organization is better able to identify potential latent errors, which is believed to be the most effective way of limiting active errors (Jackson, 2009; Reason, 2000).

Both Cloutier and Jackson aim to display the bigger picture of risk management. They both present valuable concepts related to wilderness risk management. A wide range of models have been developed which focus on specific aspects of the overall risk management process.

2.5.3. Models Designed for Risk Management in Outdoor Recreation

Several models have been developed which aim to display and describe different aspects of the risk management process in outdoor education and adventure environments. This section focuses on the models which are the most relevant to this research project. This includes: The Accident Matrix Model, the severity/frequency matrix, the Risk Analysis and Management System and the Risk Assessment and Safety Management Model.

The Accident Matrix Model was developed by Meyer (1979) and refined by Williamson (1984, 2007). The Accident Matrix Model specifically relates to outdoor programs. Figure 2.4 displays the Accident Matrix Model and the potential causes of accidents in outdoor programs.

Potentially Unsafe Conditions	Potentially Unsafe Acts	Potential Errors in Judgement
Due to:	Due to:	Due to:
- Falling Objects - Inadequate Area Security - Weather - Equipment/Clothing - Physical/ Psychological Profile of Staff and/or Participants	- Inadequate Protection - Inadequate Instruction - Inadequate Supervision - Unsafe Speed (Fast/Slow) - Unauthorized/ Improper Procedure	- Desire to Please Others - Trying to Adhere to a Schedule - Misperception - New or Unexpected Situation - Miscommunication - Disregarding Instincts

*Figure 2.4: The Accident Matrix Model. (*Adapted from Curtis, 2008)

The Accident Matrix Model is a useful tool which can be applied in the risk identification stage of the general risk management framework for identifying potential hazards. The model states that there are three categories of factors which can cause incidents in outdoor programs. The three categories are: unsafe conditions, unsafe acts and errors in judgement. This model displays human factors as playing a significant role in causing incidents in outdoor programs. Typically, objective or environmental factors, such as rapids or a portage trail, receive a great deal of focus when an incident occurs but, in reality human causation factors typically play the more significant role (Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). When considering risks, human factors need to be considered alongside environmental factors.

Once potential program hazards are identified, it can be difficult to know which ones are the most significant and where resources should be invested in order to minimize the possibility of an incident occurring. A risk management severity/frequency matrix can be used to rank the significance of negative risks and hazards. Cloutier (2000) applies the severity/frequency matrix

in the risk evaluation stage of the risk management process. This method is relatively simple and involves members of an organization using their professional judgement to estimate the frequency and severity of loss for each hazards occurrence, in relation to their organization‟s programs and likely experiences (Cloutier, 2000). Figure 2.5 displays an example of a severity/frequency matrix.

	High Frequency	**Low Frequency**
High Severity	Bear Contact	Loss of Insurance Loss of Permit Drowning
Low Severity	Burn	Axe Injury

Figure 2.5: Risk Management Severity/Frequency Matrix. (Adapted from Cloutier, 2000)

Potential risks which fall into the *high frequency/high severity* quadrant are the most significant. Dangers in this category require extensive documentation, careful monitoring and would typically be avoided whenever possible. The next level of importance is the *high frequency/low severity* quadrant and the *low frequency/ high severity* quadrant. The final level of importance would be the *low frequency/ low severity* quadrant. The Risk Analysis and Management System builds upon this basic theory and relates specifically to the identification and assessment of risks in outdoor adventure programs.

The Risk Analysis and Management System (RAMS), or a modified version of it, is commonly utilized in outdoor programs (Hogan, 2002). It was developed by William Fine in 1971 (Dickson, 2001). The RAMS process is applied at the organization level. Instead of only considering the severity and frequency of hazards, the RAMS model calculates a *risk score* (R) through considering the interconnectedness between the *consequences of an incident* (C), the *level of exposure* (E) and the probability (P) of that incident occurring. The RAMS formula is:

$$R= C*E*P$$

Fine (1971, as cited in Dickson, 2001) provides a table of scores for each value that could be plugged into this formula. The resulting *R* value would then fall into one of three action categories ranging from most important to least important. An issue with this model is that it implies that an absolute measure of risk levels can be calculated with a simple formula. However, "the process of risk identification and risk management is an incredibly subjective process" (Dickson, 2001, p. 32) The values obtained by the RAMS equation represent an individual"s or a group"s perception of risk at a given point in time (Dickson, 2001). Also, RAMS begins with the identification of all the possible risks related to an activity, which is an unattainable goal in adventure programs (Zink and Leberman, 2001). Safety factors which can be put in place to minimize hazard factors are not included in the RAMS model.

Curtis (2008) developed the Risk Assessment and Safety Management (RASM) model. This model takes into consideration factors which can be put in place to minimize risk levels. Previous models focus on negative causation factors of loss and do not completely address potential solutions and tools used to prevent accidents (Curtis, 2008). The RASM model provides a comprehensive tool which considers not only what can go wrong, but also what can go right. Figure 2.6 displays the RASM model. The model shows that a program"s risk level depends on a balance between hazard and safety factors. Each of these factors is divided into three categories and includes equipment hazards, environmental factors and human factors.
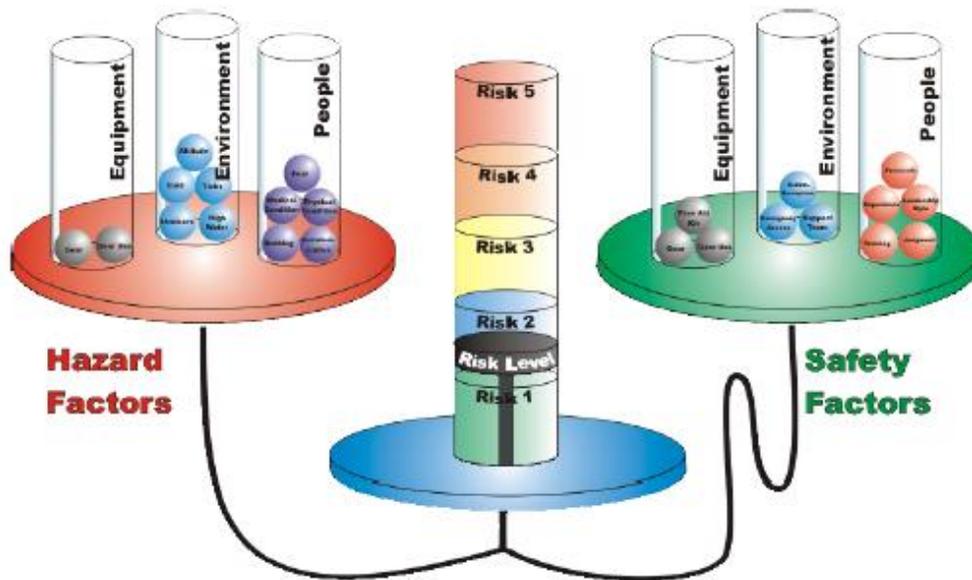
Figure 2.6: The Risk Assessment and Safety Management Model. (From Curtis, 2008)

The RASM model adopts the definition of risk presented by Priest and Gass (2005): the potential to lose something of value. Yet, assessing every potential loss, from drowning to torn clothing, may involve inefficient use of resources and has the potential to overshadow more serious hazards (Hogan, 2002). Hogan (2002) says that "routine procedures I would argue don"t necessarily need to be comprehensively documented" (p. 75). All risks are still considered, but the ones that do not involve the risk of death or debilitating injuries are the responsibility of the leader and do not necessarily require extensive planning or documentation.

Overall, the models discussed above provide useful tools for identifying, analyzing and evaluating potential risks involved with a program or activity. Hazards and scenarios which are likely to cause death or debilitating injuries were identified as being the most important to consider and directly plan for. Other risks do still need to be considered because incidents in the outdoors are almost never caused by a single factor, but rather by a chain of events and factors involving the exposure, probability and consequences of the risks present (Dickson, 2001). There is no perfect way to precisely rank each negative risk; however, the severity/frequency matrix

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and RAMS model do provide useful tools for gaining a general understanding of the most effective ways to invest resources. Directors and program leaders from organizations which offer outdoor programs put in place a variety of risk management tools and techniques in order to treat and manage specific risks. Literature related to the most common tools and techniques is discussed throughout the following sections.

2.6. Components of the Risk Management Process Used to Treat Risks

The risk management process involves many different factors. The frameworks and models discussed in this chapter display a number of these components and help describe how they are linked. This section explores literature related to the most common components used to treat risks in outdoor adventure programs. Steve Gottleib explains that risk management at Boundless Adventures depends on

> effective hiring, intensive training, maintaining top quality equipment, engaging a watchdog to keep the system in a state of perpetual re-assessment and recording everything. It is predicated on empowering trusted staff members to be free thinkers, licensed to make their own calls according to the needs at hand (Gottleib, 2004, p. 11).

It appears that limited academic research has focused on assessing which components of the risk management process are the most significant within a wilderness context. Many studies have focused on certain aspects of the risk management process which relates to the treatment of risks (e.g. Elliot et al. 2003; Holdon, 2003; Hunter, 2002). The remaining sections of this chapter explore literature related to a number of tools, techniques and factors which influence the risk management process. This includes incident review and documentation, insurance and litigation, equipment, staff, participants, camp culture and social processes, and the risk gap.

2.6.1. Incident Review and Documentation

Reviewing incidents and maintaining detailed records and documents related to outdoor program operation is an important part of risk management (Elliot et al., 2003). Despite major

developments in risk management, incidents still occur every season. All outdoor activities have an element of uncontrolled risk which could lead to negative outcomes (Ajango, 2005). However, minimizing the number and frequency of incidents is an attainable goal that outdoor organizations should continually pursue. A common method used to help reach this goal is to review and learn from incidents that have occurred in the past.

Incident reporting has become a common practice for many organizations (Schimelpfenig & Williamson, 1999). The purpose of documenting incidents can fall under two main categories. The first being a way to develop detailed records and reduce liability and the second being a tool to improve an organization‟s risk management policies. It is known that analyzing incident reports is useful when creating risk management plans, and ultimately ensuring a successful program (Lawton and Parker, 2002; Meyer, 1981; Schimelpfenig and Williamson, 1999).

Many studies (e.g. Barst, 2007; Davidson, 2004; Elliot et. al. 2003; Leemon, 1999) have focused on determining the frequency and type of accidents in outdoor programs and attempted to identify the reasons why those accidents have occurred. These studies have identified a number of factors which can be used to help increase the effectiveness of risk management. For example, Elliot et al. (2003) examined incident data and found that incidents are more likely to occur late in the afternoon. This was likely a result of participants and staff being tired and under nourished at this point in the day. Through the analysis of incident data, Brown (1999) identifies three main points:

1. The risk of serious accidents in the outdoors is very low.
2. Injury rates in organized outdoor programs are substantially less than in many organized sports.
3. The most common cause of accidents is the human factor, with adverse weather also being significant and equipment failures rare.

These factors are significant in the sense that they help educate the public around adventure programs and help eliminate myths about outdoor activities being extremely dangerous. Point 3 also stands out as it explains that human factors are often the cause of incidents in the outdoors. Yet it appears that this factor does not receive significant focus in standard risk management frameworks (e.g. Dalgleish and Cooper, 2005). In the outdoor industry, many incidents have been explored and analyzed in great detail (e.g. Ajango, 2005; Raffan, 2002). In relation to Ontario canoe tripping programs, the incident which has likely received the most attention is known as the Timiskaming Disaster.

The Timiskaming Disaster occurred in 1978 with a group of students from Saint John's School of Ontario. This is the most significant disaster in the history of Ontario outdoor education and adventure programs. A group of 27 boys and four leaders was travelling in four large canoes on their way north to James Bay. While attempting to cross Lake Timiskaming near the Kipawa River, one of the group's canoes capsized. Rescue efforts resulted in the other three canoes also capsizing. Cold water immersion and hypothermia resulted in the deaths of 12 boys and one leader by nightfall (Raffan, 2002). It was found that in this incident there was not one single factor to blame, but rather the combination of many individual factors. The Ontario canoe tripping industry was greatly affected by this tragedy and a great deal was learned from it (Raffin, 2002).

Ajango (2005) reviews two other incident case studies from the USA, with the goal of learning from those incidents and reducing the likelihood of similar incidents occurring in the future. The first study involved a near drowning of a 12 year boy during a whitewater rescue drill and swimming exercise. The second involved a severe storm on Mount McKinley and the near death of a client, who was part of a climbing expedition. Both victims sustained life altering

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injuries and were supervised by group leaders or guides. A key aspect of these incidents is that there was no single reason, person or mistake that was solely to blame as the cause. Reviewing these examples further supports the concept that in outdoor programs incidents are rarely a result of one single factor, but rather a combination of many factors. Bad luck was said to have played a large role in causing both of these accidents. Managing for specific hazards related to bad luck is nearly impossible and, so, Ajano (2005) highlights the importance of developing ways to deal with emergencies when they do arise. It is recommended that organizations develop strong crises response plans so that if an incident does occur, it can be dealt with in the most effective way possible.

Overall, it is evident that analysing incident data is a useful tool that can be used by organizations to strengthen their risk management practices. Reviewing incident data also highlights the complexity of risk management in outdoor programs. An untested staff and crisis management system is of unknown worth and may be at risk of a major system failure (Jackson, 2009) and so reviewing incidents benefits the risk management process significantly.

2.6.2. Insurance and Litigation

Insurance can act to protect an organization in the event that a major loss occurs. Cloutier (2000) states that insurance is one of the most important and common risk management tools available. Insurance can be very expensive, especially when the risks associated with a program are perceived to be much higher than they actually are. Insurance can help replace lost or damaged property as well as provide the financial resources that are required in the event that an incident results in a potential lawsuit.

Over the last few decades there has been a rise in litigation involving adventure based outdoor recreation, especially in North America (Attarian, 2002). Reasons for this relate

primarily to vast increases in participation rates and to society in general becoming more litigious. With this comes an increase in the number of participants who do not have a thorough understanding of the associated risks of a program and a resulting increase in the number of opportunities for litigation. Chisnall (2004) raises several interesting thoughts related to this issue. For instance, if a participant breaks an arm playing a contact sport, it is simply considered part of the program. But if a similar injury occurred while rock climbing or whitewater paddling, the program would immediately fall under a legal and administrative microscope. It appears as if many risk management plans are designed primarily to protect the organization and that participants and staff come second (Gottleib, 2004). Cloutier (2000) states that participant and staff safety should always be of primary importance.

2.6.3. Equipment

The quality and type of equipment used in outdoor recreation is evolving extremely quickly. Included with this are advances in safety equipment, especially related to technology. More specifically, satellite phones, cell phones and GPS locator units such as SPOT detectors are now frequently found on many wilderness adventures. Carrying these devices on trips allows group leaders to directly contact medical help from almost anywhere, resulting in faster response times. This allows leaders to stay in the field and assist injured participants. Communication devices also allow leaders to directly contact doctors, base camps or other valuable information sources. Ultimately, this can help increase the safety of participants in emergency situations. However, Holden (2003) identifies three arguments which show the potentially negative sides of communication technology. The first is that groups may rely on the safety net provided by electronic communication devices, and enter remote settings ill prepared. The second is that technology may take away from a group‟s wilderness experience. One of the potential reasons

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that people venture into the wilderness settings is to take a break from modern technologies. For some, the last thing they may want to hear is a phone ring while paddling a calm wilderness lake. And lastly, it has been suggested that leaders may make riskier decisions when they carry communication technology (Holden, 2003).

Holden (2003) states that programs need to develop sound philosophies related to the use of modern technology. However, due to liability being such a significant pressure in adventure recreation, many organizations are being forced to carry communication technology in their programs. This is despite some having mixed opinions about the place of communication technology in wilderness areas.

Risk homeostasis is a theory which may help explain why increased technology or equipment may not guarantee to reduce incident rates in all cases. Risk homeostasis theorizes that people have a fixed level of acceptable risk and that at any moment in time they compare their perceived level of risk to their acceptable level and adjust behaviours in an attempt to eliminate any differences (Wilde, 1998). Wilde (1998) proposes that when safety factors are increased, people are willing to take more risk and ultimately injury rates remain unchanged. Wilde"s research is related to the automobiles and traffic incidents. This hypothesis has been applied to outdoor recreation activities in relation to the increased use of cell phones, avalanche transceivers and other technological advances (Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). Risk homeostasis suggests that carrying these devices lowers a person"s perception of risk, resulting in an increase in the level of risk he or she is willing to take. Based on this concept, one potential way to increase safety levels in programs is to encourage individuals to decrease their exposure to dangers and hazards and adjust their perceptions of risk, rather than focusing solely on

advancing safety equipment. Risk homeostasis supports the understanding that human factors

play a highly influential role in the process of wilderness risk management.

2.6.4. Human Factors

In relation outdoor program risk management, Leemon and Schimelpfenig (2005) define

human factors as the negative attitudes and behaviours which can lead to an incident as well as

the positive attitudes and behaviours that can proactively manage risk and reduce incidents.

Human factors also influence positive outcomes associated with risk in outdoor programs. This

research groups human factors into three categories: staff, participants and social and cultural

processes.

A number of sources state that outdoor leaders play one of the most significant roles in

managing risks in outdoor programs (Barton, 2007; Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). Outdoor

leaders require a wide range of skills and experience in order to facilitate highly successful

outdoor programs. The outdoor leader"s ability to apply good judgment and to make appropriate

decisions in a natural environment is the cornerstone skill of outdoor program risk management

(Galloway, 2002; Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). Judgement "involves experience, skills and

knowledge of the activity, people, environment and equipment involved" (Haddock, 1993 p. 24).

Natural decision making environments include ill-structured problems, uncertain dynamic

environments, shifting or competing goals, action/feedback loops, time stress, high stakes,

multiple players, and organizational goals and norms (Galloway, 2002). In a wilderness context

all of these things are present. Also, there is no direct supervision or support for outdoor leaders

once they are in the field. So, an outdoor leader"s decision making skills and judgement becomes

vital. Expert leaders know when to rely on policies and procedures and when independent

judgement and decision making is appropriate (Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). This concept reflects situational leadership.

Situational leadership can be defined as "a set of strategies that allows individuals to lead successfully by varying their behaviour from one situation to the next, so as to provide appropriate leadership actions at appropriate times" (Hersey, 1993 as cited in Gookin & Leach, 2009). Situational leadership is an essential characteristic for outdoor program leaders. A leader's perception of risk is another factor which greatly influences how risks are managed in outdoor programs.

How an outdoor leader perceives risk levels in a particular situation can greatly influence how effectively those risks are managed (Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). Hunter (2002) believes that incidents are most likely to occur when an individual underestimates the level of risk and overestimates her personal capacity to deal with that risk. For example, if a canoe trip leader perceives there to be little danger in canoeing across large sections of open water, then they are more likely to attempt large crossing and expose their participants to higher levels of risk. This concept can be linked to the Adventure Experience Paradigm where a person's competence levels need to be balanced with risk levels. Hunter (2002) conducted research on pilots and found that risk misperception, not high risk tolerance, was a significant factor in leading to dangerous aviation scenarios. Although attempting to change people's risk tolerance levels may have positive effects on risk management, this would be very difficult to do and so training pilots in risk recognition skills was found to be the most effective technique (Hunter, 2002). Although Hunter's research focuses on pilots, his findings can be applied to the way trip leaders make decisions in the field. Developing decision making skills generally takes a great deal of time and experience.

A specific issue related to staff and outdoor program risk management is the difference between novice and expert leaders (Aberle, 2005; Galloway, 2002). Generally, novice leaders will require more time to make decisions and may only consider a limited number of factors in comparison to expert leaders (Galloway, 2002). Galloway (2002) suggests that training for decision making in natural settings should include training for ill-structured problems, heavy workloads, time stresses and high stakes and with multiple players and organizational norms. Figure 2.7 shows the effects of different levels of competence, which an outdoor leader may have.

The Competency Quadrant (Raiola, 1986)

Unconscious Incompetence	Conscious Incompetence
Lack skills but unaware	Lack skills but aware

Level 1

Level 2

Unconscious Competence	Conscious Competence
Beyond aware, state of flow	Skills present, use is mechanical, rigid
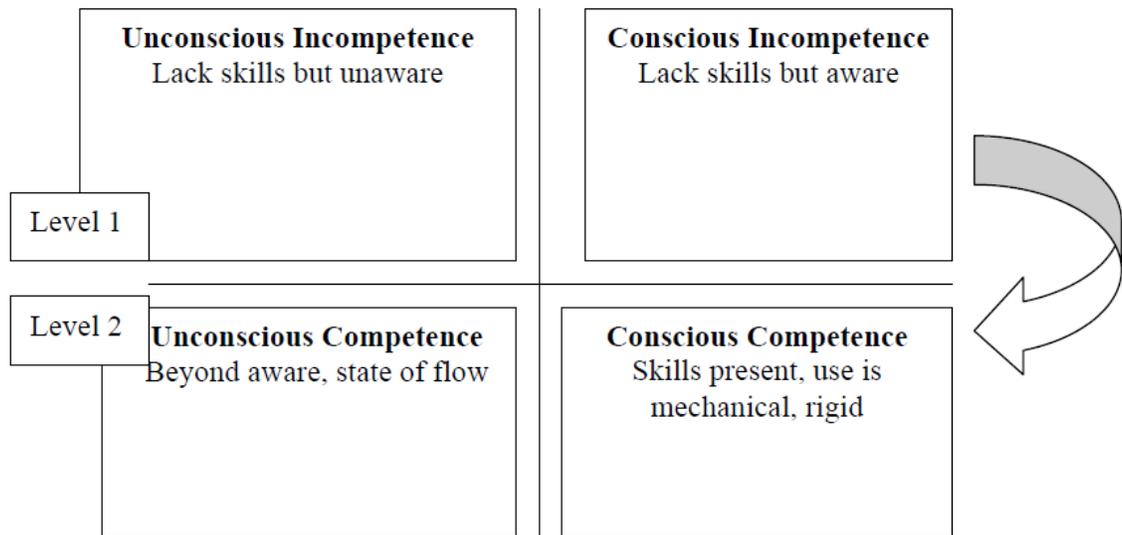
*Figure 2.7: The Competency Quadrant. (*From Raiola, 1986, as cited in Aberle, 2005)

These different levels can be applied to novice and expert leaders. An expert leader would typically demonstrate unconscious competence for most situations. A beginner may display unconscious incompetence, which could be very dangerous in terms of risk management in complex environments. If staff members lack skills, it is important that he or she is at least consciously and accurately aware of their skill levels and the potential risks that exist within their program. Certifications and staff training are ways to assist outdoor leaders in acquiring the skills they require to effectively manage risks (Barton, 2007).

Issues related to individual staff certification have become a common theme in outdoor programs (Holden, 2003). For some areas, such as first aid training, certification has been accepted as the most effective method of staff training. On the other hand, for other areas, such as canoeing, individual experience and in-house staff training may be more effective. Certifications are an effective way to help ensure a standard level of performance and also provide opportunities for staff to acquire skills which an organization may not have the resources to provide. Exploring YMCA camp staff member"s perspectives on certifications and training is an important aspect of this research. In general, it appears as if a very limited number of studies have focused on understanding risk management through the experiences of outdoor leaders.

Zink and Leberman (2001) appear to provide the only example of where the experiences of outdoor leaders were utilized to understand aspects of outdoor program risk management. Zink and Leberman (2001) compare the differences between outdoor instructors" perceptions of risk and risk management and the definitions and managerial practices surrounding risk and risk management. Zink and Leberman (2001) believe that current risk management plans are too prescribed and that definitions are limited and do not reflect the actual experiences of instructors. The emphasis of current risk management is on loss avoidance, whereas the experiences of the

instructors in Zink and Leberman (2001) suggest that their emphasis is equally on the positive outcomes of activities. All of the instructors in the study identified risk as being an essential part of their lives. Adventure was an essential focus of the program, but instructors made sure to keep risks at a perceived level of control. Several of the concepts discussed above could also be applied to outdoor program participants.

Participants also greatly affect how risks are managed in outdoor and adventure programs. Many people want to experience and gain from adventurous activities offered by an organization; however, exposure to any real harm is often viewed as unacceptable (Allen-Craig, 2002). As a result, risk management becomes very complex. Matching participants to programs and ensuring that participants are fully aware of the risks in those programs is a crucial piece of effective risk management (Cloutier, 2000). Ensuring that participants have adequate skills, competencies and experience for a program is essential (Ajango, 2005). This includes judgement and decision making skills (Leemon & Schimelpfenig, 2005). Considering the skill levels of participants becomes particularly important in higher risk activities. For example, having participants who have never canoed before paddle in a technical whitewater environment would have a very high likelihood of an incident occurring. Participants need to possess certain skills and knowledge prior to participating in a program of this level. Participants also play a large role in shaping a camp‟s culture.

A factor which has a significant effect on how risks are managed in a camp setting is camp culture and group norms. For the purpose of this research culture can be defined as the set of key values, beliefs, understandings and norms shared by members of a group or organization (Daft et. al., 2009). Developing and maintaining a culture where members of an organization value and contribute to achieving the same goals plays a critical role in success. (Daft et. al.,

2009; Hitt et. al., 2009). Culture can dramatically influence peoples" behaviours, both positively and negatively (Hitt et. al., 2009). Johnston and Churchill (1992) identified the roles of individuals, groups and society in shaping norms and goals for risk management. Because of this, culture is an essential aspect of risk management that must be examined. Dickson (2006) conducted research on injuries amongst telemark skiers and determined that the most effective way to reduce injury rates would be to change aspects of skier culture. This concept can likely be applied to numerous other fields of research.

Social norms theory states that a group"s behaviours are often influenced by how individuals perceive other members" behaviours and those individuals often have misconceptions of the group"s true norms. Individuals" behaviours are often negatively affected through trying to conform to false norms (Berkowitz, n.d.; Kahneman & Miller, 1986). This can sometimes lead to increased risk taking and exposure to dangers. This has often been the case at colleges and universities related to drug and alcohol use (Perkins, 2002). If groups are presented with accurate information related to norms, behaviours may shift in a positive direction. Risk management norms at each camp will have a significant influence on how risk is managed. For example, if some staff members allow campers to go paddling without PFDs, other staff may perceive this to be a norm and do the same, despite knowing that camp policies state that campers must always wear PFDs while in any watercraft. By reinforcing policies and ensuring that the norm is to follow camp policies, camp staff will be more likely to adhere to camp policies.

Overall, there is a wide variety of risk management tools and techniques used by an organization to treat and manage risks in wilderness settings. There are also a vast number of factors which have a significant effect on the risk management process. A factor which has not fully been considered in any of the models or frameworks discussed so far is the risk gap.

2. 7. The Risk Gap

Curtis (2010) describes the risk gap as being the gap between program preparedness and a program‴s activity level bar. The gap represents the reality that regardless of how well an organization prepares and implements risk management strategies, there will still always be the potential for an incident to occur. Although the risk gap cannot be fully eliminated, it can be managed and reduced. This can be accomplished through lowering a program‴s risk levels and/or increasing program preparedness. Figure 2.8 provides examples of potential programs and the risk gap.

Generally, a program with the highest activity level bar has the greatest potential for gains in participants and program outcomes (Curtis, 2010). Essentially, program preparedness needs to be balanced with program activities and goals in order to effectively manage the risk gap. Curtis refers to a variety of factors which make up program preparedness. The stronger these factors are and the more of them that are in place, the higher a program‴s activity level bar can effectively be. The examples used in this case include both risk management tools and techniques which could be put in place by the organization, such as protocols and training, as well as human factors, such as judgement and field experience. It is a combination of these factors which is said to result in effective risk management (Curtis, 2010).
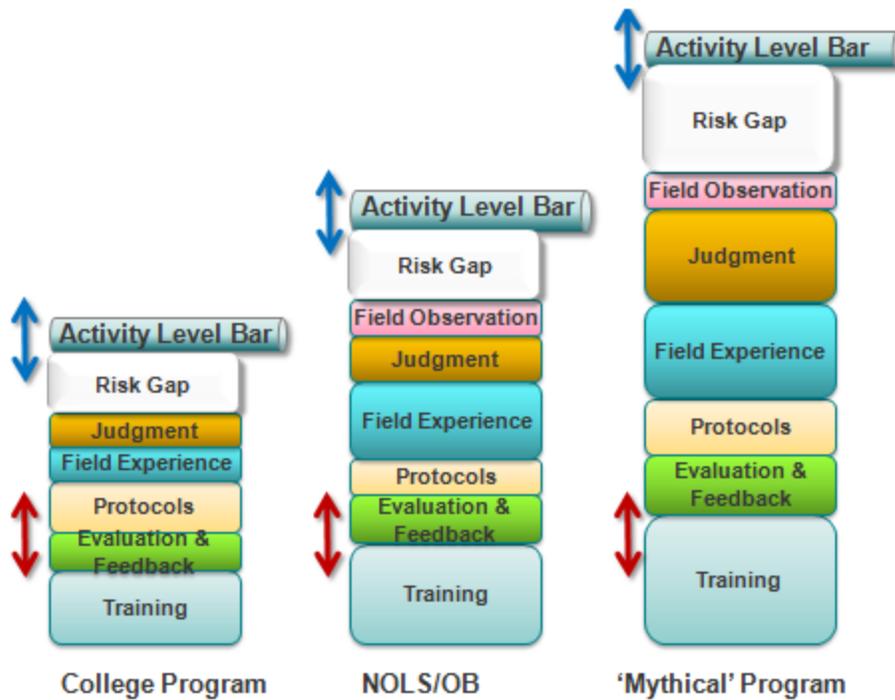
*Figure 2.8: Managing the Risk Gap: Hypothetical Examples. (*From Curtis, 2010)

2.8. Conclusion

The summer camp experience has been a significant aspect of the lives of many Ontario residents and people from around the world. Additional research in this field has the potential to strengthen the benefits gained from those experiences. This research focuses on outtripping programs as they make up a significant portion of the Ontario YMCA camp experience, and have received little focus from a research perspective in the past. It is evident that adventure during a camp experience can be very beneficial for the development of children and youth. Specifically related to risk management, research has focused mainly on developing tools and techniques which can be used by an organization to manage its risks. Few studies have attempted to explore which aspects of the entire risk management processes are most important from staff members" perspectives. This study aims to address these gaps and aid in the process of continually developing the ways in which risk is managed in outdoor adventure programs.

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It is also evident that developing models and frameworks which describe the risk management processes occurring in outdoor adventure programs is a valuable area for additional research. Outdoor adventure settings have several unique attributes which make designing frameworks specifically for that environment particularly valuable. Examples of attributes relate to the unpredictable nature of wilderness settings include inherent risks and the significant effect of human factors. The current risk management frameworks focus primarily on minimizing negative risks, opposed to maximizing positive program outcomes. They appear to adopt a partial definition of risk management, as many factors are not considered. This thesis aims to combine various aspects of these frameworks and models with results from this research project, to develop information and concepts which can be used to develop future frameworks which address some of the current gaps.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This study adopts a qualitative approach to exploring the wilderness risk management processes occurring in outdoor programs. Three YMCA summer camps in Ontario were chosen as a case study. The purpose was to explore staff members" perceptions, opinions and experiences related to the most influential risk management factors in their outtripping programs. This chapter provides a description of the methods which were used for this research project and covers the qualitative approach, a personal reflection, case study descriptions, sampling, data collection and analysis techniques.

3.2. Qualitative Research Approach

As this study is largely exploratory in nature, a qualitative research approach has been adopted. Qualitative methods are often used as a tool to understand a specific topic about which little is known (Hoepfl, 1997). A qualitative approach allows for in depth exploration of issues and concerns amongst interviewees (Creswell, 2009). Interviews and focus groups were conducted in order to obtain information for this study. Qualitative methods are particularly useful when looking at social phenomena, as they incorporate the complex and dynamic nature of social environments (Hoepfl, 1997). Few studies have identified and examined the most influential factors in the process of risk management in outdoor programs and so qualitative methods are the most appropriate method of inquiry for this research. In qualitative research it is necessary for the researcher to situate himself within the research project.

3.3. Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be defined as an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction, especially in relation to the researcher, at every step of the research

process (Malterud, 2001). Through reflexivity, researchers aim to increase self awareness and monitor and control their potential biases (Johnson, 1997). In order to limit my potential bias in this study, I have assessed my views and biases throughout the research process. A key aspect of qualitative research is that the researcher becomes part of the study and can immerse themselves within the field of research. (Creswell, 2009). In this study, I have researched a very specific group of which I am a part. This applies mainly at Camp Queen Elizabeth (CQE), where I have worked as a leadership trainer for three seasons. As a leadership trainer at CQE, it is particularly important that, in addition to keeping campers safe, I set a positive example and teach campers about the importance of following camp‟s risk management practices. Because I was an outtrip leader at CQE and was responsible for facilitating data collection there, my leadership could have indirectly affected the results of those sessions. In the end, I am not able to be an objective researcher in this study. However, I aim to understand my potential biases and to explain my position within the research topic. To aid in this, I completed a journal prior to collecting data.

3.3.1. Personal Reflection

This section outlines my personal views, beliefs and experiences regarding risk management and YMCA camp outtripping programs. It was written prior to collecting data from study participants and has helped me become more aware of my own views. It is hoped that this reflection also assists me in accurately interpreting the views of others. My experience with YMCA outtripping programs and risk management has undoubtedly supported my understanding of the risk management processes occurring at each camp. I strongly believe that there is no way I would have been able to accurately interpret the views of others without being a part of this environment.

At the time of completing the final draft of this section, I was half way through my second summer working at Camp Queen Elizabeth. During my first summer I was a Leadership I: Delaware Trainer. In this program, campers developed their leadership and technical skills during two weeks in camp and two weeks on a canoe trip in Temagami, Ontario. During summer 2010, I led CQE"s Venture Leader in Training (LIT) program, which included 25 days of whitewater canoeing on the Bloodvein River. In summer 2011, I led another five week Venture LIT program, which involved 24 days of whitewater paddling on the Missinaibi River. Throughout my time at CQE I have become immersed in the culture of the camp. My observations and views are based on my experiences at CQE, but also on the other outdoor programs I have been involved with.

Prior to working at CQE, I spent the previous three summers working at Project CANOE (Creative and Natural Outdoor Experience). Project CANOE is a tripping organization based in Temagami, Ontario that takes youth with a variety of difficulties in their lives on extended wilderness canoe trips. Most youth on the trips were from urban neighbourhoods of Toronto and London, Ontario. I have also had the opportunity to lead a canoe trip, a hiking trip and two winter camping trips in addition to other outdoor activities as part of my graduate assistant work at Lakehead University. In addition to this, I worked as an outdoor center staff member at Camp Pine Crest for 1 winter week in 2011 and during the 2011 fall season. This, along with my life long experience of canoe tripping and outdoor activities, has an effect on the ways in which I view risk and risk management.

The following sections outline my views in relation to each of the main theme areas that I will be exploring with interviewees. The four theme areas are: program goals, views on risk and adventure, factors which influence risk management, and risk management related challenges.

3.3.2. Outtripping Program Goals

The outtripping programs I have been involved with have a wide variety of goals. Today, it seems as if goals related to safety are the primary focus. It appears that some aspects of programs have become too safe because of this. Truly adventurous experiences may be becoming constrained by relying too greatly things such as rules and regulations, certifications and strict equipment standards. Often, it seems as if program specific goals are viewed as being separate from risk management. The emphasis seems to be mainly on safety and liability factors. It appears that substantial resources are invested into elements such as liability protection. This investment limits the resources which could be invested into programs. When I lead outtrips I consider safety alongside program goals. I believe that personal development occurs most substantially as a result of taking on challenges. And with those challenges, comes risk.

3.3.3. Views on Risk and Adventure

It appears that the barriers related to running adventurous activities are growing. The accessibility of adventure seems to be declining, despite significant advancements in things such as equipment and staff training. The exact reasons for this are not clear. The demand for adventurous programs however seems high, especially from the perspectives of youth participants. During my experience at CQE, river trips have been consistently filled in well under one hour of registration opening, including a large number of people on waiting lists. Expanding these programs is understandably a challenge, as whitewater paddling is a very serious activity, which should not be taken lightly. It also requires substantial resources to be able to offer programs of this magnitude. I believe that expanding these programs would be very beneficial for the camp and all the campers involved. I know that the adventurous activities that I often participate in have impacted me in many positive ways.

I definitely have a passion for canoeing in remote areas and paddling white water. I also do a great deal of rock and ice climbing. I feel like I gain a great deal from these activities. Not only are they fun and help with physical fitness, but also mental fitness. I do not see these as extreme sports, nor do I see myself as a person who takes unnecessary risks. In these activities I like to challenge myself, but in a way where safety measures are taken seriously and used in ways that allow me to push further.

3.3.4. Factors which Influence Risk Management

In my experience, there are many factors which are involved in the risk management process occurring on outtrips. It seems like the focus of organizations is typically on specific risk management tools and techniques. However, when I am leading a trip, I know that these things are only a piece of the larger risk management puzzle.

Much of how I manage risk on outtrips comes from my own experiences. These experiences shape how I perceive risk and how I manage those risks. Having to balance positive and negative risk in my mind at the top of a large set of rapids has been challenging at times. I have experienced having to think logically and let participants experience environments which I view as risky. On occasion, I have found it challenging to convince myself that +R outweighed –R, even in situations where I know it is very safe and that the chance of an incident is very low. It is understandable why the outdoor industry have become focused largely on safety. The extreme physical and emotional pain felt by all of those involved with a death or debilitating injury can be truly life changing. However, I have always seen in participants" faces and actions after completing a large rapid that it is valuable to them in truly tremendous ways. This is what makes managing risks so complex. There"s a lot to gain, but to do it safely, takes a very strong risk management process.

3.3.5. Risk Management Challenges

I have noticed several challenges related to running outtripping programs. Cost in my mind is likely the largest barrier in expanding and/or enhancing a tripping program. Things like equipment, staff and insurance all cost a great deal of money. Because of this, it appears that the accessibility of opportunities for children and youth to experience peak adventure or adventure are declining. The rivers have not seen much change in hundreds of years, and yet it seems to be more difficult to run them. In my opinion, staff members do not necessarily need to spend thousands of dollars on courses to be able to maintain high levels of safety on a trip. It may sound absurd, but I believe that risk management is an area where organizations could spend less to help increase the accessibility of adventure programs.

Through summarizing my views and experience I hope to have shown the reader that this thesis was written by someone who has a wealth of experience related to wilderness risk management and YMCA camp outtripping programs. Also, being aware of my opinions, views and potential biases related to YMCA camp risk management assists me in more accurately analyzing the views of study participants. To assist in this, I purposefully looked for, considered and assessed additional themes outside of the ones I have identified in this section throughout this thesis.

3.4. Case Study

As outlined previously, this study includes three Ontario YMCA camps as a case study. By including three camps, this study was able to explore the views of a variety of staff members, as well as obtain a sufficient number of perspectives on the risk management process occurring at YMCA camps. Although interviewees" perspectives are based on three different camps, all three are YMCA camps which have very similar programs, values and goals. This has enabled

me to explore a variety of staff members' perspectives, while still being able to make representative conclusions about YMCA camp outtripping program risk management. These particular camps were selected because they have the largest outtripping programs out of all Ontario YMCA camps and they are currently the only three YMCA camps that offer whitewater canoeing as part of their programs. The purpose of the following section is to provide an overview of each camp and the outtripping program which they offer. The camps are Camp Queen Elizabeth, John Island Camp and Camp Pine Crest.

Camp Queen Elizabeth is associated with the London YMCA and is located on Beausoleil Island in Georgian Bay, near Honey Harbour, Ontario. Camp Queen Elizabeth was established in 1953. Outtripping is a large component of the CQE experience. Outtrips are a part of all campers experience at CQE. Trips range from overnights on Georgian Bay, to longer trips in places such as Algonquin, Killarney, Lake Huron, Temagami and the French River. CQE also runs a month long Venture Leader in Training (VLIT) tripping program, which has travelled to the Missinaibi River, Albany River, Bloodvein River and Woodland Caribou Provincial Park. During the 2011 season, CQE expanded this program and for the first time ran a second Venture LIT program. CQE's outtrips are primarily canoe trips, but has included Lake Huron and Georgian Bay sea kayaking trips in the past.

John Island's outtripping program is very similar to CQE's. John Island offers a wide range of shorter trips as well as longer more advanced trips. In the past John Island has been able to offer a slightly larger and more advanced outtripping program than CQE. John Island is associated with the Greater Sudbury YMCA and is located in the North Channel of Lake Huron, near the town of Spanish. John Island was also established in 1953.

Camp Pine Crest is associated with the Greater Toronto Area and is located in Torrance, Ontario. Pine Crest offers the largest and most advanced Ontario YMCA camp outtripping program. Pine Crest offers a wide variety of trips, including some of the most advanced and remote canoe tripping rivers in Canada. Camp Pine Crest has programs for three age groups which involve paddling whitewater. Pine Crest"s Senior Adventure Leadership trips have travelled along advanced rivers such as the Seal in northern Manitoba, the Coppermine in Nunavut and the Horton River in the Northwest Territories.

3.5. Sample Selection

This research works towards understanding the risk management process at three Ontario YMCA camps through utilizing information provided by people who are directly involved with the process in the field. In order to gain an understanding of how risk is managed in YMCA camp outtripping programs, a purposive sample of camp staff was selected. This includes camp directors and outtripping staff. Exploring the perspectives of both outtripping staff and directors provides information directly from the field, as well as from a camp management perspective. These perspectives are essential for understanding the overall risk management process occurring on outtrips. Potential interviewees were selected based on their job and experience levels in order to gain a comprehensive overview of the risk management process used at YMCA camps. Because this study focuses on risk in a complex environment, staff members with the most experience were required in order to provide the wealth and depth of information that was essential.

3.5.1. Roles of Administration, Directors and Trippers

The YMCA camps in this study operate with a standard structure of administrators, directors, trip staff and participants. In basic terms, each camp has staff members, who lead trips

and support campers, who are then supervised by the camp director and assistant director. The directors are then supported and supervised by YMCA administration staff. YMCA administrative staff are not present at each camp and nor do they directly influence the daily operations of the camp.

Based on information from this research, it is evident that directors have a great deal of responsibility and decision making power at each camp. They hire staff, organize budgets, complete final reports, approve programs and provide leadership and support for their staff team. This general structure is the same for each of the camps which participated in this study. John Island and CQE each have one director and one assistant director. At Camp Pine Crest, directors" roles are slightly different. At the time of this research, Pine Crest has a camp manager who oversees the entire camp and supports a director, who then supports two assistant directors. Both Pine Crest and Camp Queen Elizabeth underwent slight management shifts for the 2011 season. This includes CQE hiring a second assistant director and Pine Crest hiring a total of four assistant directors, one of whom is responsible for directly overseeing their outtripping program. These additional positions are likely to further strengthen camp outtripping programs in future years.

Outtripping staff are hired for the summer season and act as leaders on outtrips. There are generally 7 - 10 staff members at each camp who lead Leader in Training outtrip programs. Staff members typically have to have experience being camp counsellors before they can progress up through leading Leader in Training outtrip programs. The standard YMCA camp outtrip has two leaders who are responsible for 7 to 12 campers. While on trips, leaders become primary care givers and are responsible for the well being of each of their campers, in an environment where there is no direct supervision of the leaders. The outtripping staff members in this research have

all led leadership programs. These programs typically involve higher levels of adverse risk, but at the same time, the potential for positive program outcomes is greatly increased. The following section provides details on the specific techniques used to gather information for this research.

3.6. Data Collection Techniques

This study involved the use of semi-structured interviews and focus groups in order to obtain information from YMCA camp outtripping staff and directors. Focus groups were determined to be the most effective method of data collection for this research, largely because this technique promotes information sharing and discussion between interviewees. In order to avoid potential power dynamic conflicts between directors and outtripping staff members, separate interviews were conducted with camp directors. The logistics of conducting a focus group with all directors was not a logistically feasible option during the summer research season. Focus groups and interview techniques are discussed in greater detail in this section. Prior to conducting interviews, a number of YMCA documents were reviewed in order to provide additional context for conducting those interviews.

3.6.1. Documentary Analysis

In order to further develop my understanding of YMCA camp risk management processes, a number of YMCA camp documents were reviewed. Staff manuals, policies and procedures and camp advertisements are examples of documents which I was interested in reviewing. As an example, camp advertisements were useful to review because they outlined each camp‟s program and associated goals. Documents are also one of the main ways each camp informs participants and guardians about what to expect in YMCA programs. Documents have been a valuable source of information which has strengthened my understanding of each camp and their programs.

3.6.2. Focus Groups

Focus groups are a commonly used method of gathering in depth information from a group of people. The purpose of a focus group is to explore participants" attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions on a topic that would not be feasible using other methods (Gibbs, 1997). Focus groups are especially useful for gathering a wide variety of perspectives on the same topic (Gibbs, 1997). The optimum group size for focus groups is from 4 to 8 (Kitzinger, 2005). In focus groups, it is likely that topics will trigger ideas from other group members and ultimately develop the most comprehensive information. People"s attitudes and knowledge may not be fully captured in direct interviews with reasoned responses. Focus groups incorporate multiple forms of everyday communication such as anecdotes, jokes and slang, which may provide more information related to what people „know" (Kitzinger, 1994). It is important that the researcher allows for conversation to occur between participants and that those conversations are incorporated in the research findings (Creswell, 2009; Gibbs, 1997; Kitzinger, 1994). It is also important to consider not only the people who are talking, but also those who are not talking and potential reasons for why they may not be participating. Methods for obtaining the opinions of everyone in the group include directly asking each person"s views, ensuring that everyone speaks in turn, and/or providing time after the interviews where respondents can discuss their views with the interviewer in a one-on-one environment. As a moderator, I needed to be flexible and constantly assess and adjust the focus group environment so that everyone"s honest opinions and views could be heard.

Another issue of common concern with focus groups is that a group"s responses may be constrained by group standards and norms. Some participants may not share their true thoughts and beliefs due to discomfort as a result of deviating from the group"s norms. However, other

methods, such as interviews, do not totally eliminate this issue. Focus groups also have the potential to overcome this issue because in some situations, some group members may be able to „break the ice" for shyer participants related to controversial topics and create a supportive environment where everyone"s voices are heard (Kitzinger, 1994). In addition to this, since the focus groups were with leaders in a camp context, there seemed to be few issues with staff sharing their views with others. To assist in understanding the perspectives of each interviewee, I provided time after each focus group for individuals to approach me and share their thoughts and ideas in a one on one environment.

3.6.3. Semi-Structured Face-to-Face Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from the camp directors at CQE and John Island. In order to avoid possible power dynamics, face to face interviews with directors and assistant directors were held separately. A semi-structured approach allowed for comparability across the interviews, while still encouraging the emergence of new ideas and perspectives (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002).

3.6.4. Semi-Structured Telephone Interviews

For a number of reasons, I was unable to conduct interviews at Camp Pine Crest in the summer of 2010. Pine Crest has a very large and strong outtripping program and so exploring their outtripping staff members" perspective on risk management is an important part of this study. In order to acquire information from Pine Crest staff members, three telephone interviews and one face-to-face interview were conducted. Although, not as ideal as face-to-face interviews, phone interviews provide an almost equal and reliable method of data collection (Fenig, 1993; Greenfield, 2000). When analysing the data I did not identify any major differences between

face-to-face and telephone interviews. Also, the fact that I had positive pre-existing relationships with each of the Pine Crest staff member likely contributes to the quality of those interviews.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

To begin data collection, I obtained ethical approval from Lakehead University"s Research Ethics Board. In order to obtain approval from the YMCA and each camp, I contacted the director of each camp through e-mail (Appendix A). I coordinated and arranged a majority of the interviews through the director at each camp. In the original e-mail, sent to each director, was a letter describing my research project (Appendix B), which was then passed on to outtripping staff and the assistant director. Consent forms (Appendix C) were explained to and signed by each interviewee prior to conducting interviews and focus groups.

In order to protect the anonymity of each interviewee, names have not been used. Mentioning specific roles and specific camps are also avoided where possible to help increase the anonymity of each participant. This was completed because of the small sample size and nature of the study setting. Consent forms, digital recordings and transcripts are kept in a location only accessible by me, as the primary researcher, and my advisor Dr. Margaret Johnston and will remain this way at Lakehead University for five years, as required by the Tri-Council Policy.

3.8. Research Schedule

Data were gathered during the summer and fall seasons of 2010. Interviews with directors and assistant directors, as well as focus groups with outtripping staff at CQE and John Island, were conducted during the last three weeks of August 2010. This was the most appropriate time because camp staff members had the ability to reflect on a season of work, as well as still be immersed in camp culture. Research occurred at CQE and John Island camps,

when people were still directly involved with the risk management process. Visiting interviewees in the environment which they are being interviewed about helps to provide more comprehensive information (Creswell, 2009). Interviews with Pine Crest staff were conducted during early fall 2010.

3.9. Study Participants and Sample Size

Overall, the views of 19 YMCA Camp staff are included in this research. These 19 individuals have a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge related to YMCA camp outtripping programs. Many of these staff members have spent numerous summers attending their respective camps and working towards becoming a camp staff member. The directors are extremely knowledgeable and experienced in their field. Outtripping staff members have led numerous trips, in some of the most unique and remote areas of Ontario and the rest of Canada. An overview of study participants is provided in table 3.1 and table 3.2.

Directors and Assistant Directors	Camp	Interview Method
D1	JIC	Face-to-face
D2	JIC	Face-to-face
D3	CQE	Face-to-face
D4	CQE	Face-to-face
D5	CQE	Face-to-face
D6	CPC	Telephone
D7	CPC	Telephone

Table 3.1: Overview of study participants: Camp Directors.

Details are not provided about directors in order to help protect their anonymity. There were five female and two male directors who participated in this research.

Outtrip Leaders	Camp	Program Level	Gender	Interview Method
L1	JIC	2	Female	Focus group 1
L2	JIC	2	Female	Focus group 1
L3	JIC	2	Female	Focus group 1
L4	JIC	2	Male	Focus group 1
L5	JIC	2	Male	Focus group 1
L6	CQE	1	Female	Focus group 2
L7	CQE	1	Female	Focus group 2
L8	CQE	1	Male	Focus group 2
L9	CQE	1	Male	Focus group 2
L10	CQE	2	Female	Focus group 2
L11	CPC	2	Male	Face-to-face interview
L12	CPC	3	Male	Telephone interview

Table 3.2: Overview of study participants: Outtrip Leaders.

Program level that outtrip leader lead during the 2010 summer season:
Level 1: Leading 4 week leadership program, including a 2 week flatwater canoe trip.
Level 2: Leading 5-7 week leadership program, including a 3-5 week whitewater canoe trip.
Level 3: Leading 7 week program including a 4+ week arctic whitewater canoe trip.

Interviews and a focus group with study participants from CQE were conducted in early August at Camp Queen Elizabeth. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with the camp director, assistant director and the head of Children and Youth Services at the YMCA of Western Ontario. The director at CQE was taking on this role for the first time and so the head of Child and Youth Services, played an important additional role at CQE that summer. It is for this reason that that individual"s views were also included in this research. All interviews and the focus group session occurred at CQE.

Later in August, I made a trip to John Island Camp and spent the day there learning about the camp and conducting interviews. This was mid-session and so I was able to experience a piece of what John Island life involves. The staff who I interviewed had returned from a month long canoe trip only a few days prior and their campers were still at camp. In addition to spending the day getting to know a number of John Island staff, in the past I have taken paddling

and first aid courses with most of the staff I interviewed. Due to technical difficulties, the interview with the assistant director did not record properly. Conducting this interview and reviewing field notes, did still aid my understanding as a researcher, of John Island"s programs. Specific quotes from this interview are unusable.

In order to collect information from Camp Pine Crest, semi-structured telephone interviews with the camp manager, director and one outtripping staff member, as well as one face-to-face interview with another outtripping staff member, were conducted in the fall of 2010. The outtripping staff member who I interviewed over the phone is the most experienced canoe trip leader in this study. In the past, I have also spent a number of days at Camp Pine Crest taking courses as well as working there. These experiences have helped me gain a greater understanding of Camp Pine Crest as well as build relationships with the people who I interviewed.

Overall, this selection of YMCA Camp staff has provided a wealth of knowledge and valuable information related to risk management in outtripping programs.

3.10. Data Collection and Primary Themes

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the main themes I explored at each camp. These themes were flexible in design and used with the aim of not limiting the emergence of additional themes. The four themes are:

1. Programs goals and expected outcomes.
2. Views on and use of risk and adventure in outtripping programs.
3. Factors which influence and affect risk management.
4. Risk-related challenges

These themes provided a guide to direct interview questions. Each of these themes was explored during each interview. Camp directors and outtripping staff were asked the same general questions related to these themes to allow for potential comparisons to be made between the two groups. See Appendix D for interview guide.

The primary focus of this research is on understanding factors which influence and affect the risk management process. The additional themes help support understanding the risk management process overall. The purpose of looking at goals and risk and adventure was to gain a greater understanding of the benefits associated with outtripping programs and how those benefits are achieved. This information then aids in understanding how risk management processes can be designed in a way which supports achieving goals.

3.11. Data Processing and Analysis

This section provides an overview of the methods which were used to process and analyze the data collected for this research. Each interview and focus group session was digitally recorded and then transcribed by hand. Transcribing the material helped increase my familiarity with the views and opinions of each interviewee. This has been very helpful in interpreting the material.

Once interview and focus group recordings were transcribed, the analysis section of this research project began. Transcripts were coded by hand in order to increase my understanding of the data and to ensure that I could extract the relevant themes and relationships. This is a common technique in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Interview questions were originally grouped into four main themes, which corresponded with the four main research objectives of this study. These themes also acted as a framework to begin organizing and analysing the data. The transcribed interviews were reviewed in detail. Specific responses were colour coded in relation to each theme. Additional themes and colours were added for responses that did not fit into one of the four original theme categories. Track Changes in Microsoft Word were used to add comments and assign a specific code to each quotation. Track Changes were also useful for noting when a code fell into multiple themes. Each of the codes were then written out on a cue

card and grouped into general themes. Laying out all of the cue cards allowed me to visualize where codes fit into the different themes and cross link certain codes and concepts. Some specific codes were then grouped into more general codes. For example, *Satellite phones*, *GPS, SPOTs, PLBs and Cell Phones* were all grouped into the code of *Technology,* which then fell under the broader code of *Equipment* and the theme *Risk Management Tools and Techniques*. Themes and codes which were directly related to the topic of this research project were then focused on. In the end, four main theme areas were developed and include: program design, risk management tools and techniques, human factors and risk management related challenges. Some codes and responses were put aside for future projects.

3.12. Validating the Findings

As the sole researcher in this project, I collected, analyzed and interpreted the data on my own. An issue which may emerge from this is research project is the validity of my results. To overcome this issue, I have displayed my results and the process of reaching conclusions in a clear and concise way. Malterud (2001) states that declaring that a qualitative analysis was completed, or stating that categories emerged when the material had been read by one or more persons, is not enough to explain how and why patterns were identified. My analysis of the data is well thought out and well organized so that the reader can easily follow my interpretations. All steps are open and displayed in a way that no key findings are left out. As discussed in the reflexivity section of this chapter, I have attempted to limit my personal bias through completing a journal on my personal views, beliefs and experiences with YMCA camp risk management. Malterud (2001) states that these techniques allow researchers to account for their biases, rather than eliminate them.

3.13. Conclusion

In order to explore the risk management process occurring on camp outtrips, this study adopts a qualitative research approach. Three Ontario YMCA summer camps, which focus on adventurous outtripping programs, were used as a case study and include Camp Queen Elizabeth, John Island Camp and Camp Pine Crest. Face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews and focus groups were used to collect information from camp directors, assistant directors and outtrip leaders. This study includes the views of 19 YMCA camp staff in total. Interviews and focus groups were semi-structured and explored four main themes: Programs goals, views on risk and adventure, factors which influence risk management and risk management related challenges. The overall focus is on the risk management process occurring in YMCA camp outtripping programs. Interviews and focus groups were coded and grouped into four emergent theme areas. This has produced a great deal of information, which is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the key findings of this research project. Further to the original four themes of this research project, numerous additional themes and sub-themes have emerged that assist with understanding the process of wilderness risk management. Risk management was found to be a very complex and dynamic process. It is made up of many sub systems and is affected by many different factors. This chapter examines the factors which interviewees focused on and is divided into four sections: (1) program design; (2) risk management tools and techniques; (3) human factors; and, (4) risk management related challenges.

4.2. Program Design

The following section explores study participants" perspectives on program design and its role in the overall risk management process. Goals, the outtrip environment, risk and adventure, and a progression stood out as being important aspects of program design which are directly related to risk management. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the factors which interviewees discussed.

Program Design
- Outtripping program Goals
o Protecting the organization
o Safety
o Camper growth and development
- The Outtrip Environment
o Well suited for achieving program goals
o Location
- Risk and Adventure on Outtrips
o Views on risk
o Balancing risk and safety levels
o Remote areas
o Trip length
o Whitewater
- Program Progression
- Resources
- Activities

Table 4.1: Overview of components and factors involved with program design.

4.2.1. Outtripping Program Goals and Expected Outcomes

This section examines the goals and expected outcomes of YMCA camp outtripping programs. Table 4.2 displays a complete list of the goals and expected outcomes that were directly discussed by interviewees. These goals have been grouped into three categories: protecting the organization, safety, and camper growth and development.

Outtripping Program Goals at Ontario YMCA Camps

- Protection for the Organization
    - Sustainable use of financial resources
    - Insurance
- Safety
    - Physical safety
    - Mental and emotional safety
- Camper Growth and Development
    - Personal Growth
    - Growth of spirit, mind and body
    - Fun
    - Expand comfort zones
    - Opportunity to overcome challenges
    - Skill development
    - Feelings of accomplishment
    - Confidence
    - Knowledge of self
    - Judgement and decision making
    - Independence
    - Responsibility
    - Leadership
    - Connection to nature
    - Group and community development
    - Provides groups with the opportunity to create their own culture
    - Break down of gender barriers

Table 4.2: Program goals and potential outcomes of YMCA camp outtripping programs.

It is interesting to note that interviewees focused primarily on camper growth and development as the primary goal of outtripping programs. It is apparent that each camp makes countless decisions each season which involve considering the long term success of programs and the organization. Yet, goals specifically related to protecting the organization were only mentioned a few times by interviewees. Also, it was evident that providing a safe and supportive outtrip environment for campers and staff is an exceptionally important goal at YMCA camps. During interviews, study participants referenced safety; however, it was rarely the primary topic of discussion. In relation to goals, camper growth and development received the greatest focus.

It is evident that the YMCA camps in this study have a wide range of goals related to the growth and development of the campers in their outtripping programs. Interviewees explained that outtrips are designed with the purpose of providing campers with a fun, positive and challenging experience that fosters growth and development. Goals in this section have been divided into three categories that include goals related to personal growth, connections to the natural environment and group and community development.

Personal growth and development is a significant part of the outtrip experience. This growth is supported through program design and facilitation. "Saying that just because kids are at camp, doesn't mean they're going to have a positive experience no matter what you do" (D7). At each of the camps in this study, programs are carefully designed with the purpose of ensuring that each camper can have a positive experience, where they can grow and improve as an individual. Outtripping programs aim to aid in the growth and development of a wide range of personal skills and characteristics within each camper. Interviewees also suggested that on their most advanced outtrips a camper's growth is often compounded due to the significance of those experiences. Additional explanation for this relates to the unique challenges provided by the experiences.

When discussing what makes the outtrip environment particularly valuable, challenge was identified by almost every interviewee. Interviewees explained that outtrips provide countless opportunities to challenge campers in a vast number of ways. Interviewee D3 discussed the impacts of an outtrip,

> They are so dramatically impactful and you can see the results even on an overnight. Kids come back and they have been forced to grow in some way, shape or form. Whether it's being out of their comfort zone, whether they had to paddle with someone they didn't get along with. Those things are tricky! [...] and so outtrips are one of the most valuable things we do.

With overcoming challenges, comes an expansion of one''s comfort zone. Study participants

explained that on an outtrip, campers are able to do new things in a way that is not necessarily

stressful, and allows them to learn a great deal from outtrip experiences. Outtrips provide many

unique situations which involve both physical and mental challenges. Overcoming a certain

challenge can result in a sense of accomplishment, which can be very valuable to a person''s self

esteem. Interviewee L7 reflected on her experience as a leadership participant:

> When I was in Del I felt like I accomplished a lot and everything that I did I felt like I
> accomplished something new and I think that in people of that age, it''s an important age
> to do it, it instils confidence that they may not have known they had.

Several interviewees mentioned that skill development was an important goal related to

overcoming the challenges associated with outtripping programs. Developing leadership skills

was one particular example which stood out.

Leadership is a significant focus of YMCA camp outtripping programs. Interviewee L2

said that "Leadership is definitely a main focus there; it is a counsellor in training program".

Interviewee D4 explained that YMCA camp outtrips "gives you that opportunity to live as a

team and develop leadership amongst your peers."

Another goal which was mentioned by almost all study participants was for campers to

develop a strong connection to, and appreciation for, the natural world.

> As the world is changing, we find that tripping is more and more important just to teach
> children about living naturally and being comfortable in the wilderness and being
> comfortable in the outdoors and something as simple as carrying a canoe on your head.
> Kids are just in awe of that. So it''s really about empowerment and showing kids that
> there''s a different way to live. (D6)

Interviewee D7 explained why Pine Crest focuses on outtripping: "we really want to provide that

unique natural focus and so the best way for us to do that is to provide outtripping experiences."

Outtrips provide participants with an opportunity to directly experience the natural world. For the

longer leadership focused trips, YMCA campers not only get to experience natural settings, but some of the most spectacular and remote settings Canada has to offer. In these environments, a strong sense of community often develops amongst group members due to the trip length and remoteness.

Developing a strong sense of community within each outtrip group is another example of a goal which was focused on by most interviewees. On outtrips each group member is required to work and live together in a small, independent community. It is evident that positive community development is a significant aspect of the outtrip experience. Interviewee D6 thought that

> First and foremost, trips provide an intense environment for character building and group development and so the results that we've found over the years and history has shown basically that that is the key bonding experience for groups

Interviewee D7 explained:

> I just recently finished interviewing all the summer staff and you can tell, like you can spot the folks who have been on an adventure trip together because they have this bond, they have this connection together and they look so comfortable and so confident together

Overall, the interviewees in this study believe that outtrips have the potential to provide a truly valuable experience for children and youth. The outtrip environment was described as being particularly well suited for achieving these goals.

4.2.2. The Outtrip Environment

Interviewees described the outtrip environment as being particularly well suited for achieving program goals. Interviewees expressed that many of the positive outcomes provided by an in-camp experience can be further developed on an outtrip. Interviewee L11 said that "the in-camp kids, they don't get exposed to as much risk, I mean they've got a safety net." On

outtrips, many of the safety factors which are present in a camp environment are removed, typically creating a more intense environment.

Several interviewees expressed that the simplicity of the outtrip environment is another aspect which contributes to achieving program goals.

> The sense of personal challenge and accomplishment and group challenge and accomplishment that you get from an outtrip is unique to that environment and the group dynamic that you get when a group is truly working on its own as opposed to at camp where it is mixed within all sorts of other groups and dynamics. (D4)

The trip environment can often be far removed from a camper"s typical lifestyle and extra social stimuli. Interviewee L9 shared some thoughts:

> At that age, when so much of your life consists of what you possess and what you have and the things that you own and then you go on trip and you have so little and that mindset changes from not what I have, but what I can do type of thing [...]. Something that you can"t really accomplish anywhere other than on that trip. It"s so remote that it forces you down to that simplicity.

The aspect of YMCA camp outtripping programs providing campers with a unique social environment that facilitates positive, enjoyable and truly beneficial experiences was said to be accomplished through having groups spend an extended period of time living together, creating their own culture and being detached from many external factors. Choosing an appropriate outtrip location is an essential part of supporting these goals.

Based on interviews, it is apparent that the location of outtrips is an integral risk management factor to consider when designing programs. Interviewees mentioned many specific aspects of the outtrip environment which are important to consider. Examples include: access, class of moving water, weather, animals, distance from base camp, beauty of the area, history of the area and human presence. Choosing an environment that appropriately balances program outcomes and risks is a goal that the YMCA aims to achieve. In a practical sense, several

interviewees mentioned that groups have to go further north or to more remote locations to

experience a wilderness setting and its associated benefits.

> I guess you could get into the argument that the longer trips require a river that is
> unaltered and part of the wilderness and those things aren't available in close proximity
> to civilization in such a way that say the Seal River is. (L12)

Generally, remote areas tend to have increased risks. Non remote areas however, also have risks.

Interviewee D6 explained that

> The trips that we do in really populated areas and the biggest threat that we have is not
> animals, it's not cold, it's not the water, its people. So having trespassers or drunken
> people camping with our kids or getting confrontational, that's a huge risk for us.

Level of remoteness is a factor that directors and staff both invest a great deal of thought into

when designing programs.

> The thing that is most stressful is making sure that you chose a route that is reliable and
> has enough access to be safe, but enough remoteness to be sort of a challenging and
> flashy trip that people wanna go on. (D6)

YMCA camp trip locations have shifted in the past and continue to shift each season in order to

achieve this balance. Interviewee L4 said

> Yeah, I think about risk and how I feel like every year at this camp they make the big
> outtrip less risky and what difference does that make? And less risky in the sense that
> they don't go as far and you have more time to do shorter distances. [...] we do our best to
> make sure that trip is every bit as a challenge for them as any other trip we've run in the
> past.

At interviewee L4's camp, a wide range of factors led to the decision to shift trip locations to

areas with more manageable risks. One of the most influential factors in this shift was the

challenge of finding campers who had the required knowledge and abilities to run more complex

and higher risk rivers. Many aspects of the risk management process were described as being

exceptionally dynamic. This was an additional factor that was mentioned by several

interviewees. For example, interviewee D1 said that

You're always going to have things changing right, you're gonna have changes all the time. Like why does this trip work awesome one year and then doesn't the next. And everything from your campers, to your leaders, to water levels, to a new boat, to different types of stoves, to types of training. It's the biggest challenge and be the biggest failure but can also be the biggest success and that's just being consistent with our outtrips.

Overall, the outtrip environment has many unique attributes which affect both program goals and the ways in which risks are managed within that environment.

4.2.3. Risk and Adventure

Exposure to higher levels of risk and adventure is used by the YMCA camps in this study to maximize the potential positive outcomes associated with their programs. In general, outtripping was viewed as the riskiest program that the camps in this study offer. Interviewee D3 said that "The YMCA for the most part, we're a risky business and as far as camping goes, we are the riskiest piece of the business that we do." Risks are said to be an inherent part of outdoor adventure programs. Interviewee L11 said that "over the last few summers children have gotten hurt in rapids, due to no fault of the camper, due to no fault of the tripper it's just the nature of the program." Interviewee L9 said that "there's always gonna be risk on trip, no matter what. But it's what you do to minimize that risk as much as you can." YMCA camps put a great deal of thought and planning into outtrips where risk levels are increased. Interviewee D3 discusses the type of risks that YMCA camps aim to use:

The challenge that is there has a high perceived risk and a low actual risk and those are the sorts of risks that the Y kind of likes, right? They get people out of their comfort zone and they get people challenging themselves and learning about themselves and feeling like they've really accomplished something. But in an environment that's, not entirely controlled, but highly controlled.

Balancing risk and safety stood out as being a significant aspect of program design.

Several interviewees stressed the importance of achieving this balance. Interviewee D6 said that

The challenge for us is really do we push that, do we push it to be more of a little bit harder program, because we know the benefits of challenge and kids being put in a

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situation which moves them further, or do we keep it as a variety camp and it"s sort of a soft trip?

When thinking about the balance, Interviewee L11 felt strongly about "just knowing that you"re keeping them [campers] in a situation where they"re not going to be having their lives threatened." Interviewees from each camp said that they are constantly assessing program goals and how and why they run programs. Interviewee L12 said:

> I would say that they are doing their best to manage risk, but they"re not letting it suffocate them, which is the way you should be going about it. Yeah, you want to manage the risk, but at some level you have to retain some of the risk because that"s the value of the program.

This helps support the idea that program design and well established goals are important aspects of risk management. It can be challenging to push programs in a direction where risks are increased. Study participants described a number of forces which push programs in the opposite direction. For example, interviewee D4 said that

> In terms of the pendulum, like some things you"re able to continue to push it further along, lawyers, regulations, government, insurance companies push it. But I think the Y is at a point right now where they"re realizing now that the goal of the Y is to build healthy people and it does need to be a balance between risk management and appropriate challenge in a lot of our program areas.

The YMCA views the offering of longer trips, travelling in remote areas and paddling whitewater as an appropriate way to increase challenge levels in their most advanced outtripping programs.

It was believed by many study participants that campers are attracted to and benefit from those more intense, more remote trips.

> So running a river further north, the days are you know two hours longer. Where every day the group will be that much tighter and they learn to deal with hard social situations that much better because everyone will be that much more tired and that much more dehydrated or what have you. But yeah I think if you increase the risk that way, that will increase the bind between the group. (L4)

Not only are some YMCA camp outtrip groups traveling in very remote areas, but they are also paddling rivers in those environments. And with river paddling, comes the added challenge of moving water.

Whitewater canoeing was believed by interviewees to be an excellent way to increase challenge and excitement levels on outtrips. Whitewater has associated risks, but also has the potential to have positive impacts on campers. Interviewee D1 explained that "we wouldn't be doing whitewater if we didn't see the potential plus side to it right." Whitewater provides a step in the progression of YMCA camp outtripping programs. It is not used in all programs, but only when the increased challenge is deemed important for a particular group.

> I would say that the Y is... I don't know if passionate is the right word but, the Y is committed to providing challenges for young people in all sorts of different environments. And I don't see whitewater as a standalone entity. I see it more as one element of challenge that is appropriate for a particular group of people. At our camp, we see as, at least for right now, as an appropriate challenge for leadership participants. (D4)

The main role of whitewater, at the camps in this study, is to use it as a tool to increase challenge levels on certain outtrips. "In terms of participants it's that next step of challenge, like a lot of progression in camp is just the length of trip and not necessarily the challenge" (L6). Whitewater is a unique way to increase the level of challenge on trip. Several interviewees described paddling whitewater as a great way to get kids engaged, having fun and being active. Each participant on a river canoe trip has the opportunity to learn and develop specific skills. Developing these higher level skills is thought to be very positive for campers. Interviewee L7 provides a quote which summarizes much of what interviewees discussed:

> Challenge, success and skill development is really empowering and whitewater in particular, when people are learning and developing those skills, they're forced to use technical skills, they're working with each other, they're challenging themselves, they're having fun and appreciating the wilderness, fostering a connection and bond with the outdoors. Tons of communication, it's the whole package.

Whitewater is a unique type of challenge. It requires a different mindset than say, a long portage would. Interviewee D5 said that "Yeah, there"s totally is a mental aspect. Sometimes it"s even just as simple as thinking about how you"re going to go down and there"s a different thought process to it." Because of this mental aspect, it forces participants to stay engaged and gets them functioning at a higher cognitive and social level. Having a progression built into programs was described as playing a significant role in preparing groups for taking on higher risk trips.

4.2.4. Program Progression

YMCA camp outtripping programs are designed with a progression in mind so that both participants and staff are prepared and have adequate experience to embark on more challenging outtrips.

> It doesn"t matter the age of the camper or camper group, every camper will get an outtrip experience and it"s a progressive model where our littlest kids just go on an overnight and our oldest groups go on a week canoe trip and then at a leadership age they have the potential of doing one of our extended Venture trips. (D3)

When discussing river trips at camp, interviewee D1 said that

> It would be obviously for kids who 95% of them have gone through that progression and adding to that skill set and adding to the challenge of it and adding to that personal awareness of it and self-recognition and self-recognition within a group setting.

At the camps in this study, progression is a significant part of program design, which aids in the development of campers" skills, experience, and knowledge which are needed to maintain high levels of safety while on advanced outtrips.

4.3. Risk Management Tools and Techniques

Generally, risk management tools and techniques are the components of the risk management process that an organization has direct control over and puts in place to manage the risks within their programs. This section presents study participants" views and ideas related to risk management tools and techniques. Interviewee L8, along with others, commented that risk

management tools and techniques should be designed as tools to assist staff in making decisions and not simply replace the need for them to make those decisions. "I think as an industry thing overall, I"d say we"re replacing knowledge with equipment and rules" (L8). Truly effective risk management involves the combination of many factors. This research project does not go into significant detail in relation to each tool and technique, but rather focuses on the areas that were the most significant based on the interviews that were conducted. The risk management tools and techniques discussed in this section include rules and regulations, documentation, equipment, insurance and liability planning, staff training and certification and staff structure and support networks. Table 4.3 lists the risk management tools and techniques which were discussed by interviewees. Tools and techniques not discussed directly in this section received little focus from interviewees. For example, it is evident that insurance and liability planning is an essential aspect of YMCA camp risk management however, it was only mentioned a few times by interviewees.

Risk Management Tools and Techniques
- Rules and Regulations
- Documentation
- Equipment
- Planning
- Insurance and liability planning
- Accreditation
- Staff training and certification
- Staff structure
- Staff hiring techniques

Table 4.3: Common risk management tools and techniques used by Ontario YMCA camps to manage risks in adventurous outtripping programs.

4.3.1. Rules, Regulations and Policies

Rules and regulations were described as playing a particularly significant role in the process of wilderness risk management at the camps in this study. Although there are different

definitions for rules, regulations, policies, procedures and guidelines, this section groups these

factors together into one main theme in order to ease the overall understanding of their influence

on the risk management process. Typically, rules and regulations are highly valued.

> And as far as an organization like the YMCA, they have some very set policies on what needs to be in place in order for a program to run and so yes in terms of policies and procedures it is right up there. In terms of the value that we put on those written documents. (D3)

Rules and regulations have evolved significantly throughout the history of YMCA camping.

"Like cliff jumping was a discovery activity" (D5). Today, children would be sent home if they

were caught cliff jumping at interviewee D5‟s camp. For some areas, it is easy to understand

why rules and regulations have been increased. "You have to realize that you‟re playing with

people‟s lives and that‟s what you try and get across. If in the worst case scenario and you‟re not

wearing a life jacket and something happens..." (D1). Rules and regulations are obviously

important, but there does need to be a balance. Interviewee L11 said that sometimes "they‟re too

black and white. They don‟t really leave room for that grey area that is the outdoors."

> The outdoor environment was described as being very complex, with many uncertainties

and so, general sweeping polices were viewed as not always being effective.

> We need to put value on the fact that a situation is not always predictable and we don‟t necessarily know how something is going to unfold. So we have to trust the fact that our staff know our policies and they know our procedures, yet they know that the association will have their back if they need to make a judgement call that goes against policy because they have analyzed the risk, they have decided that it would be riskier to follow protocol. (D3)

Just like many aspects of risk management, the addition of safety measures is not always a

simple task. These additional measures can sometimes be accompanied with unintended effects.

Interviewee L11 reflected on a situation that he experienced:

> This summer I had two girls that were like "oh have you seen the blueberry bushes over there?" and I was like "where!?" And just walked over and started eating them and they

were like "awwww can we have some"? And I was like "of course"! And they said that their counsellors had told them that they were never allowed to eat blueberries. And I understand why, they would say that I guess. But why wouldn"t they have said like just check with me first. That way I can make sure that you are eating blueberries.

It can be valuable for participants to experience eating natural foods. This can help build a connection to, and appreciation for, the natural world. This is an example of where a safety policy may be competing with a program goal. Although policies affect groups while they are on trip, there are also several additional policies which affect the planning stage of programs.

Several interviewees stressed the importance of policies which influence the trip planning stage of programs. For example, at interviewee D7"s camp each child and his/her guardian must attend an information session.

Your child cannot come on the trip if you don"t show up or if you don"t have an alternative information night set up. So the parent and the child have the opportunity to talk to the trippers themselves, if they are available for the spring dates and then if not, the director is there. And to really make sure questions are answered and you see some photos and you here some stories and you get as much information as possible in order to finalize and make your decision.

Overall, rules and regulations play a significant role in the risk management process. Designing rules and regulations is complex and can have unintended negative effects when they are not designed carefully and monitored. Rules and regulations are often kept track of and explained through the use of documentation.

4.3.2. Documentation

YMCA camp risk management involves many written documents. Examples of documents include staff manuals, participant waiver forms, route cards and incident report forms. Interviewees mentioned that documents can be used to communicate with and inform parents, campers, staff, administration and the general public about various aspects of an

outtripping program. It is important however, to be efficient with documentation. interviewee D3 explained that

> Well, this is an interesting time, the camping world along with, my God, anyone that works with children and youth. When you think of the school board, think of how hard it is for teachers to get a field trip coordinated because of the paper work, because of the cost of insurance. I mean you have to jump through so many hoops to get kids outdoors.

Documentation was described as being a constraint at times but, extremely valuable at other times. Incident reporting was viewed as a particularity useful type of documentation.

Interviewees discussed several past experiences and incidents which had an influence on how their camp views and manages risk. Having a clear way to assess and review incidents was viewed as another important part of the risk management process. The process of gaining an accurate and real understanding of incidents is an excellent learning tool. Interviewee L4 reflected on one particular example that he uses as a learning tool:

> I think another factor that affects risk management is.... Like if I say Sea of Despair right now, I think we all know about one kayak trip that went out in 1998 where everyone flipped and some kids washed up on adjacent islands and its things like that and keeping those experiences in the back of your head. And we both told that story on our trips this year and stuff that has happened on trip. Not to scare the kids but just to make them aware of those situations and just how close it is.

This point illustrates that incidents do not need to be viewed solely as program setbacks. Instead, they can be viewed as situations that provide an organization with experiences they can use for learning. Another tool which interviewees described as being influential in advancing programs is equipment.

4.3.3. Equipment

Interviewees expressed that having proper equipment plays an essential role in how risks are managed on outtrips. Equipment ranges from safety specific gear, such as first aid kits, to non safety specific gear such as tents, stoves and even food. Interviewee D5 stated that "having

the proper equipment is a huge thing, especially when you"re running river trips." Canoe trips

can be very equipment intensive. Equipment has improved significantly over time, which

appears to be valuable overall. A few interviewees mentioned that in some case, increased safety

equipment has the potential to support advancing programs through negotiating some of the risks

associated with more adventurous activities.

> Like it can give better peace of mind in the field, before going into the field knowing that you"re going to have the best equipment that is going to benefit you if you need it. Like our program is going to be a lot more exciting and a lot stronger through that. (L11)

In relation to risk management, the type of equipment that interviewees described as evolving the

most rapidly is technological devices.

Technology was discussed by almost every interviewee in this study. The type of

technology discussed was wireless communication devices and global positioning systems

(GPS). Carrying a communication device on all outtrips has become the standard at the camps in

this study. At interviewee L7"s camp "in the past 5 years, every trip has had a cell phone and

any trip longer than 5 days has had a sat phone." Having communication devices at D5"s camp,

is something that is no longer an option.

> To be honest, we wouldn"t send a trip out without one and we have come down to that many times in the last few summers, where someone is waiting for a sat phone or we have to order extras to make sure that every single trip goes out with some kind of communication device.

Having communication devices on trips can obviously be a huge benefit. "Technology does give

you the freedom to do a lot more risky activities" (D7). They are extremely useful in the event

that an incident occurs on a trip. Interviewee D5 provided an example:

> Like when we had to E-vac in the middle of the night. If we didn"t have that sat phone, what would have happened? And for parents to know that we send out some sort of communication device with all of our trips and for the organization to know that we do that as well, that one out of every 5 trips that actually needs it for it for some sort of emergency situation, is it worth the risk and is it worth the money.

Interviewee D5 raised an interesting point here on how parents may be more likely to sign their

child up for an outtrip if they know safety factors such as communication devices are in place.

Although business goals were not identified as the main purpose of carrying communication

devices on outtrips, it is an influential factor none the less. Communication devices on outtrips

have many benefits, but they can also have potential drawbacks.

Communication devices are another example of a risk management tool that can have

unintended negative effects. One point which was raised by several study participants was that in

order for technological devices to be effective, they need to add to an outtrip leader‟s skills and

abilities, rather than replace the need for them to rely on those skills and abilities. Interviewee D1

said that

> If you equip people with the only way possible to communicate is through an emergency
> process, they freak out. You know and it‟s not the proper way, you‟re not allowing for
> any learning processes right and experience. The next time someone spills boiling water
> on their leg, they‟re going to know what to do. And it‟s not to call 911 or call camp right
> away, they deal with it first.

Interviewee D1 elaborated by saying that: "And again, what you‟re eroding there is common

sense right, if you had the device, maybe you wouldn‟t rely as heavily on common sense. Which

seems to be being lost in everything in this day and age."

As technology progresses we will begin to see even more options for communication

devices in the field. SPOTs are an example of the most recent new device on the market.

Interviewees, who discussed SPOTs, primarily viewed them as an inefficient use of resources as

they do not allow for two way communication and problem solving with outside resources.

Interviewee L12 explained his view on the best role of technology on outtrips:

> I would say I‟m in favour of that technology as long as it‟s used appropriately and it‟s
> used effectively. All the sat phone does is make you safer out on that trip and I mean you
> do need to do it with the understanding that it‟s not a crutch that you can then use to

make poor decisions that you wouldn't have done before hand because now you've got that phone available.

Another example of a form of technology that was described as becoming more and more common on camp outtrips are Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Interviewee L11 said

I know that a lot of people think that we should probably start taking GPS and I got challenged by that from the helicopter pilot that flew into the Bloodvein. He was saying, "you know you guys should be carrying a GPS". While I can give you a 16 digit grid coordinate, which will be the exact same as what you get in the GPS. [...] And I found that interesting to be challenged on that.

Due to the nature of the trip environment, it is evident that trips cannot solely rely on electronic devices for something as important as navigation.

4.3.4. Staff Training and Certification

Both staff training and certification are important risk management tools. The outtripping staff members in this study all go through a great deal of training and are required to poses a number of certifications and qualifications in order to lead trips. This section begins by examining the role of on-site staff training in the risk management process.

Staff members at YMCA camps participate in training sessions at the beginning of every season. These training sessions are typically run by senior staff and directors at each camp. The importance of staff training according to the interviewees follows. In relation to safety management, interviewee D5 said that

I think a big part of it comes down to the staff and the training that you're willing to give your staff and also that you're willing to put your staff through and also it comes down to just the competency and the general trust that you have in your staff.

Interviewee D1 discussed the importance of well developed staff training for outtripping staff:

Umm obviously those things need to be in place, you can't just say here you go, take these kids right, take the lives of these 20 kids and play roulette with them. But they're trained enough to know how they're doing it.

Outtrip leaders play a significant role in the risk management process and so regular training and practice was believed to be an essential component of risk management. Interviewee L6 said that she really would not have been comfortable in her position without the training that she has completed: "For me it"s training. Staff training, my own training. My own training is what has allowed me to be comfortable in my position. I don"t think I would have been comfortable otherwise." Staff training can be in the form of formal sessions or courses, but it can also occur in less formal ways. For example, camp Pine Crest has a component of their staff training where Adventure Leadership staff spend a weekend together on the popular Madawaska River.

> Yeah, so we camp at paddlers Co-op and have fun and then paddle the next day. And I think that"s a really good bonding experience and a lot of really good discussions take place and teaching and I think that"s a good form of managing risk as all these staff are sharing good ideas and bouncing them off each other. (L11)

Staff training trips are popular amongst YMCA camps and have proven to be an effective way of preparing staff. In addition to staff training, outtrip leaders are required to poses a range of certifications in order to lead trips.

Certifications are currently receiving a substantial amount of focus at the camps in this study. At the camps in this study, the current certification system was described as working fairly well. Through certification courses, trip leaders are able to develop many of the skills which are required to safely lead advanced outtrips. Interviewees from each camp stated that their camp administration recognizes the difficulties associated with obtaining certifications and provides assistance for their staff members. This includes many accessible courses being offered at Pine Crest and each camp covering at least half of the cost of the required certifications. In order to lead a river trip for a YMCA camp, staff members require a number of certifications.

> If you are going to lead any adventure trip at Pine Crest, you need to have NLS (National Lifesaving Society Lifeguard), SRT (Swiftwater Rescue Technician), ORCKA (Ontario Recreational Canoe and Kayak Association) I and II for tripping and whitewater and

WFR (Wilderness First Responder) and your gun licence [Gun licence for Senior Adventure Leadership only]. (D6)

ORCKA (Ontario Recreational Canoe and Kayak Association) offers a wide range of certification courses for canoe trip leaders. Making ORCKA courses mandatory for all outtrips is viewed by many as being unnecessary.

> In terms of some of the stuff that ORCKA wants it's just absurd. I mean they want them to be trained professionals in order to take kids out on a two night overnight and that's just not realistic. [...] And if they feel as though that's what's going to uphold them in court of law, I'd go down fighting cause there's a certain line that you have to draw on how much training you do and how much communication do you send out and everything and at what point are you becoming inefficient with how much you're doing and when you've crossed that line. (D1)

Increased certifications may make it easier to ensure that trip leaders have adequate skills, however this requires a great deal of financial resources. For interviewees who were leading remote and higher risk outtrips, these courses were believed to be extremely valuable. This is in addition to in house training and experience. The interviewees who lead advanced outtrips value the courses that they have taken tremendously. For example, interviewee L2 said that "I really like getting the chance to take those courses. Like I wouldn't have been able to do it on my own." Staff members need to feel confident when leading advanced canoe trips. Offering courses to make up for less confident, skilled or experienced staff is a valuable option. Certification courses can contribute greatly to a leader's skills and ultimately to a successful outtrip.

> If I had been freaking out on every single rapid that we did, then obviously the kids would have picked up on that. It really helped to get a few good paddles in beforehand. And just make sure that I was feeling comfortable and so the kids would also. (L1)

Overall, both staff training and certifications were considered to be valuable components of the risk management process. Interviewees did mention that organizations should not lose value in on-site training and staff experience through increasing the number of certifications that

staff are required to have. Staff structure was another factor which can be controlled by the organization and affects risk management.

4.3.5. Staff Structure and Support Networks

Staff structure and support networks play an important role in the overall risk management process. At the camps in this study, there is a direct line of communication and support between directors and outtrip leaders. Interviewee D7 explained that

> There is more of a direct line in the hierarchy at Pine Crest down to tripping. It"s more of an efficient communication. For example, there"s tripping and then there"s let"s say the water front. The water front director, and we have 12.5km of water front property, so percentage wise it represents more than our tripping program, but that water front director reports to seasonal program coordinator, who then reports up to someone else who is full time. Versus all tripping staff report to someone who is full time directly. So we kind of rein that in a bit. We make sure there are fewer steps to a decision.

This basic structure is the same for all three camps in this research project. In the 2011 season, Camp Pine Crest added a new year round Wilderness Expeditions Coordinator, who is responsible for directly overseeing their outtripping program.

> So our OP [Outdoor Pursuits] director is no longer a seasonal staff. That changes over every year. So with that year round person, we can put our resources into support vs. maintenance and scrambling and making this work and so we"ve got that in place. (D7)

The way in which staff roles are structured impacts the risk management process. The camps in this study have found that a direct line of communication between directors and trip leaders is one particular factor which contributes to the effectiveness of their risk management process.

4.4. Human Factors

Interviewees described a wide range of human factors that have a significant influence on the risk management process. Many believed that human factors have the greatest influence on wilderness risk management. The human factors which were identified in this research project can be group into three categories: staff, campers and social and cultural processes. Table 4.4

displays the human factors which were directly identified by interviewees in this research project.

Human Factors
- Staff
o Staff experience
o Staff skill
o Common sense
o Judgement
o Decision making
o Novice staff
- Participants
o Parents and guardians
- Staff culture and social processes
o Trust

Table 4.4: Human factors which influence the wilderness risk management process.

4.4.1. Staff

Interviewees expressed that the staff leading outtrips essentially have the greatest influence on the risk management process. It was found that trip leaders take on a tremendous responsibility over the wellbeing and safety of their group. Interviewee L9 described the role of a trip leader: "When you go out on trip, you"re not a counsellor any more, you"re a tripper. You"re the primary care giver; you don"t have the same support network as at camp". Program success relies substantially on the competence of the staff leading that program. Interviewee L12 said that "I think those programs are... their success and failure totally rides on the staff members leading those programs." This is especially the case in a wilderness context where environmental factors can often be very dynamic. Due to the environment and length of programs, schedules and plans are often shifting due to uncertainties. Because of this, interviewees stated that an

outtrip leader's judgement and decision making abilities becomes vital. Interviewee L12

provided an example of how complex decision making on an outtrip can be:

> On one occasion I was having an interview for camp and I think it was the assistant
> director at the time who was conducting my interview and he asked me "what goes
> through your head when you walk up to a rapid or paddle up to a rapid and you're about
> to go down?" and I like spelled it out for him, like all the different things that cross my
> mind and stuff like that and he goes, like 10 – 15 minutes later when I was done talking,
> he was like "you really actually consider all of that at the top of a rapid"? And I was like
> "yeah, those are all of the things I consider and it's not like it takes me 10 - 15 minutes to
> make those decisions, but it takes me that long to explain the decision making process".
> Like those are the decisions I make in 30 seconds or less or even sometimes those are
> split decisions that you make when you find yourself in the middle of a rapid.

In relation to managing risks, interviewee L4 explained that "I think it lies within the leader.

Because I mean even if you have a big bubble suit and everyone does a trip with their necks

immobilized, you can still hurt yourself." The camps in this study rely immensely on their staff

to run successful programs. Several interviewees explained that finding and developing excellent

staff members is a priority at each camp. This includes administrative, director and trip leader

roles. Interviewee D4 said that

> It's not just the staff who are running the trips, but also the management is a huge factor
> in how people are trained and the whole mind set around tripping and around risk
> management. That all filters down.

The entire network of staff plays an important role in risk management. With competent and

experienced people and strong support networks in place, camps can offer more advanced

programs. Interviewee D5 explained that

> Because those valuable people who you know you can trust and there's absolutely no
> worries about them doing the wrong thing or making the wrong choice. That allows you
> to run programs and I think that's a big part.

A characteristic which was described as making an effective outtrip leader was experience.

Real world experience was described as being an essential characteristic for an effective

outtrip leader to possess. Interviewee D5 discussed how staff members gain a great deal by

completing their first outtrips:

> They get that feeling when they're like, oh my God, I am just here with my co-
> counsellor. And I have all of their lives in my hand. And I think a lot of that comes from
> that feeling. And you don't fully understand how important it is to be able to manage risk
> and identify risk, until you get out on trip for the first time. It's an ongoing process for
> sure.

Staff training becomes increasingly relevant when staff have their own experiences that they can

reflect on. Interviewee D4 said that "When I'm managing risk, so much of it comes through my

own lens of all of the experiences that I've had." When an organization puts safety tools and

techniques in place, staff members need to have the knowledge and experience required to use

them. Interviewee L11 explained that "certain things you learn from experience. Or even if the

camp provides that stuff, will the tripper know how to use it?" And so, staff training on the

specific risk management procedures and practices is very important. Along with experience,

outtrip leaders were described as requiring a wide range of skills to successfully manage risks on

outtrips.

Interviewees expressed that there is a lot more to trip leading than simply having strong

set of technical skills. Common sense is an example of a leader trait that was discussed as

playing a vital role in a staff member's ability to effectively manage risks. Interviewee D1 said

"I'm more than happy in a court of law to defend common sense versus on course training."

Having staff involved in the development of risk management systems can also be very

beneficial. Interviewee D1 elaborated that "Of course I'll be sending them with things that I feel

pertinent and I'm always gaining feedback from them and I'll always want to gain feedback from

them. You know, what things do they think would have helped, what wasn't useful? And we're

always involving that training process." Interviewee D4 helped bring these points together:

> I think you can totally train people on risk management and you can put policies and procedures in place, but ultimately you do need to have the right people in the right positions making those decisions and it is so cumulative and it's way more than just the sum of the parts it's all of it together into the system and the culture and the people.

Overall, it is evident that human factors play a significant role in the risk management process.

4.4.2 Campers

Risk management at YMCA camps is primarily designed to help ensure the safety of

campers. Interviewee D7 explained that "While my personal philosophy on risk management is

that you really have to discuss risk management with kids present. Like when you're having a

meeting about it you have to remember who you are dealing with." Campers' wellbeing was

described as being central to risk management. Campers however, can have considerable effects

on the risk management process. Interviewee D1 said that risk management involves:

> A bit of everything right, being as prepared as possible. And giving the kids the knowledge and the simple things of say at least one canoe lesson before each kid goes on trip. Giving them that basic skill set and knowing what the capabilities are and the leaders know each kid and they're not going out there with the winds blowing all of a sudden and you know you've got the wrong kids in the wrong canoe right.

Campers have direct influences on their own safety as well as the safety of the group.

Interviewee D1 discussed campers more specifically:

> I mean you've got kids making unwise choices in everyday situations, let alone in a more extreme situation. So I mean that's what that programs for, to teach them skills and then take that leap into that second year program once they've got a good head on their shoulders, knowing that they've spent a month at camp and they're now in a leadership role. Talking about managing risk, we wouldn't be managing risks very well by putting that group out on a whitewater trip. You'd be asking for something to happen, unfortunately so.

When camper skills are not sufficient, programs either need to shift and/or participant training

systems need to be in place. Interviewee D7 explained that: "The moment a trip doesn't become

enjoyable or match the needs and skills of your participants, then you"re kind of wasting your

time." Outtripping programs are dynamic and so need to be adaptable to meet the needs of

campers. Interviewee D1 recalled noticing changes within campers at his camp over the last few

years:

> While that"s just it, the group last year, we did a day of flat water ORCKA and 7 of 10 of them held a paddle like this [holding the paddle shaft, not the T-grip] Haha and you want these kids to go down whitewater? The skill set is just not there. And I"m not just gonna put any freaking kid down a rapid.

Interviewee L2 described her approach to working with campers and keeping them safe:

> So it"s all, I like to hope, in the leadership development and instilling that sense of caution and that sense of danger. Which again, like a lot of the kids don"t have, at that age. Just trying to get that in. I think that"s where most risk management comes from.

Providing campers with the skills and tools they need to assess and manage their own risk was

viewed as a superior method of risk management. This is opposed to trying to keep them safe

with things such as rules and safety equipment alone. The idea of focussing on things such as

campers" decision making skills, judgement and common sense becomes increasingly important

as campers advance through programs.

Several interviewees said that leadership programs are designed to provide each camper

with the skills they need to become competent future staff members. Providing them with

practical experience to develop their risk management skills was emphasized as being

particularly important. Interviewee L11 said that "Yeah, keeping your participants engaged in

gaining that experience so that they will be really confident staff members is the most important

thing." A lot of staff members" risk management skills are developed while they are campers.

Interviewee D5 said that "99.9 percent of our staff are people who have been to camp before. So

having them have those skills already, or having them have that knowledge already is something

we definitely rely on." Interviewee D7 also supported this by saying

I would feel comfortable with a 17 year old leading a trip if they have been a Pine Crester since they were 8. They have had 9 years, where hopefully every one of those years the leadership of the camp was preaching good leadership and good risk management and doing good trainings that they had a strong trip leader every year and that they had good role models.

Overall, it is apparent that campers make up a complex component of the risk management process, which should be considered thoroughly.

4.4.3. Social and Cultural Processes

Interviewees referred to many social and cultural factors which influence risk management. This section does not aim to list every social process which may be occurring, but rather provides a few examples which were discussed by interviewees. These processes have been broken down into two general categories and include camp culture and culture outside of the camp setting. It was found that an organization can have a much greater influence on its own culture, which is the main reason for why these two areas have been separated.

Interviewees mentioned that culture outside of camp and societies view of outtripping and adventure can greatly influence what can be offered in programs. Interviewee D1 shared an analogy of a phenomenon that often seems to occur in the outdoor education industry:

And a neat analogy for in life or on trip the higher you wanna go, the more you can accomplish, but the further you fall... in all regards. And this comes up all the time. Especially in risk management where you reach a point and you just have to say nah. Throw in an anchor and play it safe...instead of going that extra foot and falling two.

Specifically related to risk management and the outdoor adventure industry, safety has been identified as the primary concern. An organization‟s risk management process faces external pressure from society in general. For example, when discussing the use of SPOTs for tracking groups, interviewee D1 said

Now we need to take a step back from that. And start realizing where we lost track of common sense and where we‟re just going overboard now. Risk management and common sense is this huge benefit to them but if we‟re not careful and we get so divulged

into the pressure of society that we lose track of why camping is here, than it can lose its place significantly.

Interviewee L12, identified another challenge: "I think it"s always hard to bring something back, like once something is deemed risky it"s hard to justify changes." Culture outside of camp can put a great deal of pressure on organizations to make certain decisions. This pressure is not static from year to year. An organization"s risk management process essentially needs to be able to adapt to meet these changes. Interviewee D4 explained that

> As Canada changes in terms of a demographic of, physical activity and that sort of thing is part of it is a part of it, but the cultural, I don"t know if that"s the right word, but ethnic demographic changes, you get more kids coming who can"t swim, so a flatwater trip where they"re wearing a life jacket is appropriate, whereas a moving water trip is not, for someone who doesn"t have the swimming skills.

At each of the camps in this study, changing characteristics of participants has greatly influenced the programs they run and how they approach managing risks in those environments. Many study participants expressed that in-camp culture also has a significant effect of risk management.

The place of risk management in a camp"s culture can greatly influence its effectiveness. Interviewees expressed that risk management seems to work most effectively when it is viewed as a positive aspect of a camp"s culture. Having a supportive and knowledgeable staff team was viewed as being essential. Interviewee D1 discussed the value in having the CEO of the YMCA who has an understanding of the camping environment:

> Because he knows the complexity of the camping environment. He knows it"s different from say a tread mill that can only break in a few different ways. So he doesn"t go head over heels when he gets a parent calling and saying their kid was bullied because he knows there"s a lot more to it right.

In addition to information sharing within each camp, it can also beneficial for information sharing to occur between camps. Interviewee L10 said that

The community of camp and that's really been a huge resource for me in making sure that I'm connected to not only YMCA camps but tripping camps in Ontario, making sure that the issues that are coming up for everyone are considered and that we stay current.

Incidents and past experiences were described as having a noteworthy impact on a camp's risk culture. Interviewee L12, discussed how even incidents outside of his camp, had an effect on his programs:

The actions of other groups who lead programs similar to that don't necessarily go by the same standards of staff training and equipment and such and sometimes have accidents or run into issues, that don't necessarily apply to programs that are run at Pine Crest, but do ultimately affect it because they're viewed as one in the same by those who aren't directly involved.

Interviewee L11 provided another example of how culture can affect programs:

While, like I said before, we're running a lot more. Which is really cool. And it means that a lot more staff are going to be getting trained and become competent with those skills, which I think is really important.

In relation to in-camp culture, trust was identified by almost every interviewee as being one of the most influential human factors in the process of wilderness risk management.

Trust plays an important role in the overall risk management process at YMCA camps. This is especially the case in outtripping programs. When discussing the most important factors which influence risk management, interviewee D6 said that

It's a lot of trust for sure 100% in the staff. And that's why, the staff don't necessarily love it, but that's why I spend a lot of time interviewing them and working with them while they're at camp.

The YMCA is an organization which functions based on strong networks of trust. Interviewee D4 said,

And so the Y is great in the fact that its put so much trust in the directors and in the leaders and in the trippers and because those people are passionate and articulate, we're able sell all of the benefits and the CEOs of the YMCA world really do put all of the trust in those folks.

Decisions are made every day at YMCA camps which would not be possible without existing

trust between administrators, directors and trip staff. Interviewee D1 added that: "If you"re

unable to place trust in the abilities and common sense of those staff, then you"re either sending

out the wrong people or you need to be doing something else." A majority of interviewees

emphasised the need for trust when running outtripping programs. Attempting to eliminate the

need to trust staff members, could result in disastrous consequences. Interviewee D3 explained

that

> In our staff we entrust the fact that we trust our staff to assess that risk and if they know
> doing that portage, I am more likely to have an end result that is harmful to someone that
> is in my care, do a risk assessment, we trust your judgement. I would put trust on a higher
> level than policies and procedures knowing that they need to be known inside and out and
> yet we cannot predict every single situation, there as so many unknowns right.

Without trust, staff would not be able to use their judgement and could be forced into

circumstances where safety cannot be maximized. When networks of trust are strong, it can

contribute to an organization"s ability to strengthen and advance its programs.

> [...] because we have people who we trust and we know will run a successful and safe trip
> and with those people we can expand the program and I think that is really the biggest
> thing that influences what you can run. (D5)

At interviewee D5"s camp, knowing that they have staff members who they have complete trust

in, was described as being a highly influential component in expanding their outtripping program

and running a second month long river canoe trip.

Overall, interviewees discussed many human factors which were believed to greatly

influence the process of wilderness risk management on outtrips at YMCA camps. These factors

involve staff, campers and social and cultural processes. These factors are believed to have

equally as great of an impact on risk management as the commonly used risk management tools

and techniques. In order to fully understand the risk management process, the main challenges that were identified by study participants are presented in the following section.

4.5. Risk Management Challenges

In order to gain a more complete understanding of the risk management process, an objective of this research was to identify the main risk management related challenges at the camps in this study. For reference, Table 4.5 provides a complete list of the challenges which were directly identified and discussed by interviewees. This section aims to provide insight into the areas that could be focused on in order to ease the delivery of an outtripping program. Challenges presented in this section relate to participants, costs, guardians and staff.

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Risk Management Related Challenges

- Program
    - o Risk vs. safety: finding the balance*
    - o Outtripping is the most dangerous program the YMCA offers*
    - o Demands of risk management
    - o Loss of wilderness areas
    - o Developing sustainable programs
    - o Big jumps in program progression*
    - o Being influenced by the actions of other organizations
    - o Group size
    - o Planning
    - o Consistency of programs, participants and staff members*
    - o Uncertainties and unpredictable factors*
    - o Cost*
    - o Insurance and liability*
- Participants
    - o Nature Deficit Disorder
    - o Parents and guardians*
    - o People in general are disconnected from adventure/ nature*
- Staff
    - o Courses and certifications*
    - o Decision making traps
    - o Finding staff
    - o Internal re-hiring of staff
    - o Younger staff*
    - o Staff structure
    - o Staff culture*
    - o Staff competence*
    - o Disconnect between administration and staff
    - o Risk management department and administrative staff
    - o Director stress related to having trips out, with little to no contact*

</div>

* Indicates challenges that were focused on and emphasized by interviewees.

Table 4.5: Challenges, as perceived by YMCA Camp staff, related to risk management on outtrips.

A notable challenge which each of the camps in this study deal with relates to ensuring that the right participants are matched to the right program. This involves a complex balance between program design and participant selection, education and training. Interviewee D7 said that one of the biggest challenges at his camp was screening campers. Interviewee D7 said that,

at times, it can be challenging to ensure that campers and their guardians fully understand the

program that they are registering for. "So people are like „I‟m comfortable with whitewater‟‟ but

what‟s their definition of whitewater and what‟s our definition of whitewater?" (D7) Interviewee

D6 provided her opinion on the screening process at her camp:

> It‟s kind of annoying, but I think it has kind of deepened our understanding with our campers about how serious this is and how we‟re trying to be proactive with safety and make sure that everybody understands the experience they‟re going on. But it is logistically a little crazy.

Many interviewees expressed that at times risk management can be a little hectic, but they

understand its importance and value the added safety factors. There is an understanding however,

that at some point the accessibility and quality of programs declines as a result of too many

additional safety factors. This is a challenging balance to achieve. Interviewee D3 shared views

on what the future might look like:

> Generationally I feel as though there‟s going to be an exciting shift in the next 20 years and I can see some of this insane amount of paper work, and the insane amount of work that goes into making these experiences is so exhausting for people who are doing it. And I think that that‟s going to change because people are going to realize that on a planetary level, it can‟t be that difficult to make these experiences possible. It can‟t!

Risk management factors have an impact on the accessibility of programs. One of the most

significant ways that risk management can negatively affect accessibility is through the

additional costs of added safety factors.

The costs associated with managing risks stood out in the minds of many interviewees as

a significant challenge. Each camp aims to offer the most rewarding experience possible to each

camper. However, the more elaborate the program, the more expensive it becomes. Interviewee

D5, as well as many others, commented on how expensive it can be to run an outtripping

program:

I think another one is finding the money to run those trips and finding the equipment from that money. And that"s a big problem that I know we have struggled with is investing in the future of that program.

The many different costs associated with outtripping programs add up, resulting in substantial fees for participants. Safety is undoubtedly extremely important at each camp, but several interviewees stated that it is possible to become too safe and inefficient with how resources are invested into risk management. Many interviewees believed that one of the reasons for why there has been increased pressure for additional safety factors is connected to parents and guardians.

The term *Helicopter Parent* was mentioned by interviewees from each camp. Having parents who desire a greater understanding of what their child is doing at camp, is not necessarily a negative thing, but a challenge none the less. Interviewee D5 said that

Even in the last couple years of being in the office and answering questions about what we do in terms of our safety procedures and policies, there"s a lot more concerned parents and a lot more parents wanting to know what we do and what our procedures are and what we"d do if this happened or anything like that.

Study participants did not express that this is completely negative overall, but rather that it provides a good check for why and how things are done. Several interviewees did however note that it is impossible to know every exact detail of the outtrip experience. Not only have staff noticed shifts in parents and guardians, but in participants as well.

A particularly noteworthy challenge that was discussed several times was that interviewees have noticed changes in participants" abilities in the outdoors. "So when kids arrive at camp they often are... while some of them have never really been in the outdoors at all, let alone on an outtrip." (L11) Interviewees expressed that participants seem to becoming less and less experienced in the outdoors. The camps in this study are associated with YMCAs in major Ontario cities, including Sudbury, London and Toronto. Some interviews highlighted that it was not only campers" physical abilities that were challenging to cope with. Interviewee L6 said that

I think a big part of it is the decision making, I noticed that the kids seemed unable to make a decision on their own. Their parents would do everything for them. They'd ask a question and I would be like, I dunno, what do you think? Where should the kitchen be? I don't know, what do you think is best? Little things like that.

At one of the camps in this study, a major reason the Leadership 1 program no longer runs whitewater is because of the challenges associated with having campers who were ready for that level of experience. "To throw the group of Greenways that we have here in whitewater it would be a disaster, like these kids can barely interact with each other." (D1) Overall, participants present a variety of challenges, which are different from year to year. It becomes important for programs to be flexible to match the needs of different participants. A major factor in ensuring that participant's needs are met is camp staff.

In this research project, staff members were identified as being the most important aspect of wilderness risk management. Interviewees discussed a number of challenges related to staffing. Firstly, finding staff who are qualified and experienced enough to lead advanced outtrips can be a major challenge. Interviewee L12 discussed the following:

Well obviously finding staff is a bit of an issue. I know in the past at Pine Crest finding staff who are experienced and qualified enough to run those programs. I know in the past they actually had to alter their program offering based on what they thought they could get staffing wise.

Internal hiring and re-hiring is a way to ensure that a camp has the staff it needs. However, there are often benefits to be gained by hiring staff who have worked at other organizations.

I think it's been really good the last few years with staff coming in from Camp Stephens and well as Camp Wanapitei. So really, got a cool sense of their forms of risk management and that can really add a lot to a program knowing that you know, we've had this happen before so we're gonna send you out with this equipment, like this happened at our camp and we know that this could happen to you too. (L11)

Some of the major staff related challenges at each camp relate to younger staff leading shorter outtrips. On long trips, staff members generally have a great deal of experience, skills and qualifications, but on short trips, staff members are typically much younger and much less

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experienced. Interviewee D4 exclaimed "Yeah, and it may be coming more into play with our younger staff who lead trips, who don"t have the depth of experience to go on". It can be easy to justify expensive certifications for more advanced trips, but it can be much more challenging to know what is needed on shorter and less remote trips. Interviewee L12 explained that, "What I come back to quite often is the level of risk management on each trip totally depends on the staff member present and how conscious they are of those things." Through discussing some of the most significant challenges at the three YMCA camps in this study, it is hoped that each camp can gain a greater understanding of the risk management process and where to invest resources within that process.

4.6. Conclusion

Overall, this chapter has explored the views of 19 YMCA Camp staff related to risk management in outtripping programs. Interviewees strongly believe in the many positive outcomes which can result from and outtrip as well as in higher risk environments. Managing risks in these environments relies on balancing a number of different factors and processes, which all work together to form an effective overall risk management process. Understanding the outtrip environment, from a program outcome perspective, can go a long way in creating a risk management process which supports achieving program goals. Managing risks in an outtrip environment relies primarily on program design, risk management tools and techniques and human factors. Staff members were identified as having the most significant effect on risk management in a wilderness outtripping program. In order to increase the understanding of risk management, a number of challenges were also presented.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the risk management process occurring on YMCA camp outtrips by discussing the findings, linking them to the literature and reflecting on their meanings. Risk management on outtrips is a complex process with many interconnected components working together to influence the ways in which risks are managed during the experience. This chapter discusses how the risk management process works in this particular camp setting and how various aspects are linked. It also provides additional information on key components of the overall process. This discussion is founded on the reported experiences and thoughts of camp directors and outtrip leaders.

5.2. The Wilderness Risk Management Process

Findings from this research have led to a greater understanding of the wilderness risk management process occurring on YMCA camp outtrips. The overall process can be divided into three main components and includes: program design, risk management tools and techniques and human factors (see Figure 5.1).
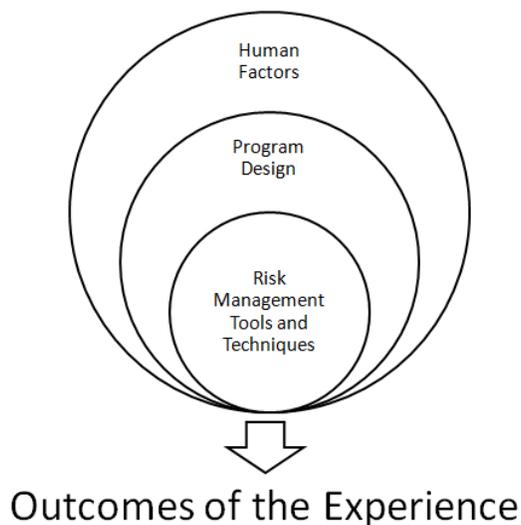
Figure 5.1: The wilderness risk management process.

Although these components have been grouped into three categories, it is important to note that there are really no distinct lines in practice. All components of the risk management process are highly interconnected. The purpose of discussing them separately is to ease the understanding of each component. Together, these components make up the overall process of wilderness risk management, which plays a lead role in shaping the end experience for participants on outtrips. This process builds on the traditional approach to risk management, which has typically been hazard based and focused on tools and techniques that are put in place in order to manage negative risks (e.g. Dalgleish and Cooper 2005; Liddle, 1998; Priest and Gass, 2005). With a shifting focus and greater knowledge of additional factors, risk management, and ultimately program outcomes, can be further strengthened. In addition to this, it is hoped that this discussion will add to the literature related to wilderness risk management.

The remaining sections of this chapter provide in-depth discussions of the findings. It is divided into three main sections and involves describing the outtrip environment, discussing the overall risk management process and examining specific aspects of the process which stand out based on the interviews that were conducted.

5.3. Risk Management in a Wilderness Context

Understanding how risk management in the outtrip environment differs from an urban environment provides a useful starting point for understanding the overall wilderness risk management process discussed in this thesis. Findings from this research uncovered many factors that contribute to making managing risks in wilderness environments unique. This includes factors such as limited resources to provide aid in the event that an incident occurs, no direct supervision for trip leaders and, typically, increased environmental hazards. The environment where outtrips travel has a substantial influence on risk levels. Interviewees

reported that when choosing an outtrip location, YMCA camps focus on both the positive and negative aspects of that environment. This ranges from elements such as beauty of the area to potential animal related hazards. An overall factor related to the outtrip environment that stood out in this research is the level of uncertainties involved with that environment.

Interviewees described the outtrip environment as being particularly dynamic, with numerous uncertainties. Several interviewees explained that despite how well leaders prepare for an outtrip program there will always be the potential for incidents to occur. This confirms the concept developed by Curtis (2010), which refers to this potential as the risk gap. Although the risk gap is never completely eliminated, Curtis (2010) suggests that it can be minimized through program preparedness and activity selection. Several study participants stated that strict guidelines cannot be developed to effectively deal with every possible situation which may arise on an outtrip. For example, a set of strict rules and safety equipment may function well on a challenge course, but may not be the most effective method in a wilderness context, especially when adventure is an essential aspect of the experience. Unpredictable factors which can arise on outtrips have been grouped into three areas and includes: people, the environment and equipment (Figure 5.2). Typically, it is a combination of these factors which come into play when an incident occurs (Ajango, 2005; Curtis, 2008; Dickson et. al., 2008; Raffan, 2002). Curtis (2008) also uses these three categories in reference to hazard and safety factors as part of the RASM Model (Figure 2.6).
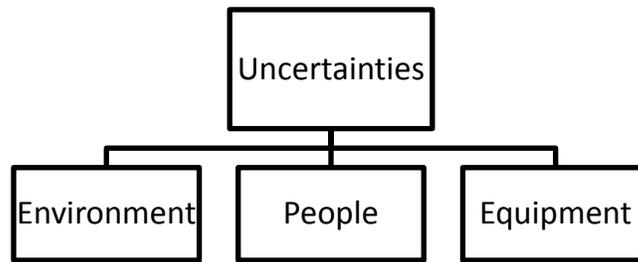
Figure 5.2: Factors which contribute to uncertainties in an outtrip environment.

Interviewees primarily linked uncertainties to human factors. Catastrophic equipment failure on camp canoe trips is unheard of. The natural environment where a majority of Ontario YMCA camp outtrips travel is relatively easy to manage with current standards and practices. It is apparent that placing a greater emphasis on human factors, in contrast to environmental and equipment hazards, would be valuable for camp outtripping programs. This concept is linked to the findings of Leemon & Schimelpfenig (2005) indicating that human factors cause incidents more than environmental and equipment factors do. Camp programs and academic models which utilize these same categories could benefit through putting emphasis on human factors. This thesis builds on the work of Curtis (2008) through helping to show that in an outdoor adventure environment human factors are the most influential hazard and safety factors. This also provides a greater understanding of where to invest resources within the risk management process.

Overall, there is a need to assess a wide variety of factors when managing risks in wilderness settings. Groups require a set of tools that can be applied to a variety of situations. Although the risks in a wilderness environment are heightened, they can be managed. The YMCA offers a wide range of programs in wilderness environments in order to facilitate a truly valuable experience for campers. It is evident that the outtrip environment has several unique attributes which make developing concepts and practices specifically related to this environment a valuable area of inquiry.

5.4. A Holistic Approach to Wilderness Risk Management

This research supports considering risk management as an overall process, rather than viewing it only as specific tools and techniques that are used to treat identified risks. Emerging literature related to risk management in outdoor programs is beginning to focus on a holistic approach to risk management (e.g. Barton, 2007; Jackson, 2009). This section discusses four main concepts related to the overall wilderness risk management process: (1) risk management is embedded within the overall camp process; (2) wilderness risk management is composed of many different factors, which need to be balanced; (3) wilderness risk management is an adaptive process; and, (4) there are different paths within the process which can lead to the same outcomes.

Based on the analysis of the findings, it is apparent that risk management is not a separate entity, but rather it is closely linked and imbedded within all aspects of an outdoor organization and its programs. Throughout discussions, interviewees often drew on a wide range of connections between different elements of camp operations and the risk management process. An almost endless number of connections could be made between risk management factors and overall camp programs and operations. Resources were a common theme in interviews that are linked to camp programs and aspects of risk management. Risk management essentially involves many factors which need to be balanced in order to effectively manage risks.

In wilderness risk management it is apparent that there are competing goals between safety and adventure. Outdoor adventure programs are designed with the goal of child and youth development, which is typically achieved through exposing participants to challenging situations. These challenging situations involve danger, which directly competes with goals related to participant and staff safety. The standard approach to risk management tends to focus on safety

factors, and yet, based on this research it is evident that risk management relies on a delicate balance of both safety factors and adventure experiences.

This risk management process at YMCA camps relies on finding a delicate balance of the numerous parts which make up that process. Balancing risk and safety stood out as a particularly influential goal in outtripping program risk management. Interviewees expressed that they aim to offer programs which are valuable for campers, but at the same time, avoid exposing campers to unnecessary risks. Determining which outtrips to offer and the locations where outtrips travel is closely linked to this goal. Interviewees also frequently discussed both the positive and negative sides of specific elements within the risk management process. Study participants described various factors in the risk management process as playing different roles in different situations. This ranges from situations which require split second decision making to long term organizational decision making. There essentially needs to be not only a balance of hazard and safety factors, but also a balance of all of the factors which make up the risk management process.

Based on the analysis of findings, it is evident that an essential aspect of wilderness risk management is for it to be an adaptive process that can be applied to different situations, trips, participants, staff and uncertainties. In order for the process to be adaptive, it relies substantially on people, including camp administration, directors, campers and especially trip leaders. Based on interviews, it is apparent that outtrip leaders have the greatest control over shifting aspects of the risk management process in order to meet the needs of a specific situation. This is supports the concept of situational leadership (Leemon and Schimelpfenig, 2005). Incorporating the experiences of staff and campers into risk management planning at the administrative level was also described by the directors in this study as being particularly important. Another common

theme that emerged from the interviews was that as the level of risk and adventure increases in a program, the level of potential uncertainties also increases. The risk management process shifts and adapts based on different environments. For example, on a remote northern river an expert leader‟s judgement will likely play a more significant role than a strict set of rules and regulations. On the other hand, rules and regulations may play a more important role in environments with novice leaders. One factor which does not seem to be highlighted in the literature is that there are numerous ways to reach the same risk management goals.

Understanding risk management as a process with many different and interconnected parts and processes essentially supports organizations in taking different paths to reach the same risk management goals. By considering this framework, organizations may be able to discover alternative and creative ways to effectively make up for components of the process which may not be as strong. For example, if an organization has old equipment, staff members may be able to identify a variety of ways to ensure that programs are still safe and valuable, despite not having the resources to invest in that new equipment. Overall, this concept further supports considering wilderness risk management as an adaptive process which can shift based on different situations, environments and conditions.

In the end, it is apparent that risk management on outtrips involves a complex process composed of many different elements. There are numerous uncertainties in the outtrip environment and so peoples‟ abilities, in combination with risk management tools and techniques, are essential for running the most effective programs possible.

5.5. Specific Aspects of the Wilderness Risk Management Process

The focus of this chapter now shifts from a broad level discussion of the risk management process to a more specific discussion of aspects of the process that were identified by study

participants as being particularly important and which help fill gaps in the literature. This covers

program design, risk management tools and techniques and human factors.

5.6. Program Design

The design of programs has a substantial link to how risks are managed and utilized on

outtrips. Program design consists of many interconnected components. Table 5.1 displays the

components that were identified in this research project.

Program Design
• Goals • Risk and adventure in programs • The outtrip location • Activities • Progression of programs • Resources

Table 5.1: Element of program design in adventurous YMCA camp outtripping programs.

Several components of program design have obvious impacts on risk levels and program

outcomes. For example, outtrip locations have an obvious effect on the risk levels present within

a program. Some components do not appear to be well covered in existing literature. For

example, a progression of programs was described as being particularly important at YMCA

camps, but does not receive a similar focus in the literature. Considering program design as part

of the overall risk management process can greatly strengthen that process. This research

identifies goals as being a predominantly important aspect of program design.

5.6.1 Outtripping Goals

When discussing risk management, interviewees often reflected back on the goals of their

program. Goals were very similar amongst each camp and with each interviewee. The goals

discussed by interviewees are also similar to both the goals I have noticed during my experience and with the written goals of YMCA camps (see Table 2.1). Developing clear goals is an essential piece of the risk management process at the YMCA camps in this study.

Organizing, prioritizing and understanding each of these goals can be a challenging task. Findings from this research show that goals are complex. Some goals can support each other, but others can directly compete with each other. For example, allowing participants to cliff jump may support goals related to fun and adventure, but this directly competes with goals related to safety. In this sense, every goal should be taken into consideration during risk management planning. However, if an organization focuses equally on each goal, it is possible that the most important goals could become overshadowed by less important goals. This concept can be linked to the work by Hogan (2002), which considers all potential losses in outdoor programs, but identifies deaths and debilitating injuries as being primary and thus prioritizes these over other potential forms of loss. With this approach, all goals would be considered, but certain goals would be given priority. Which goals are given priority would depend on the expected outcomes of an organization‟s programs. Goals related to risk management in YMCA camp outtripping programs can be grouped into three main general areas: protecting the organization, safety and program outcomes (Figure 5.3). Although goals have been grouped into three different categories, it is important to note that in reality all goals are highly interconnected.
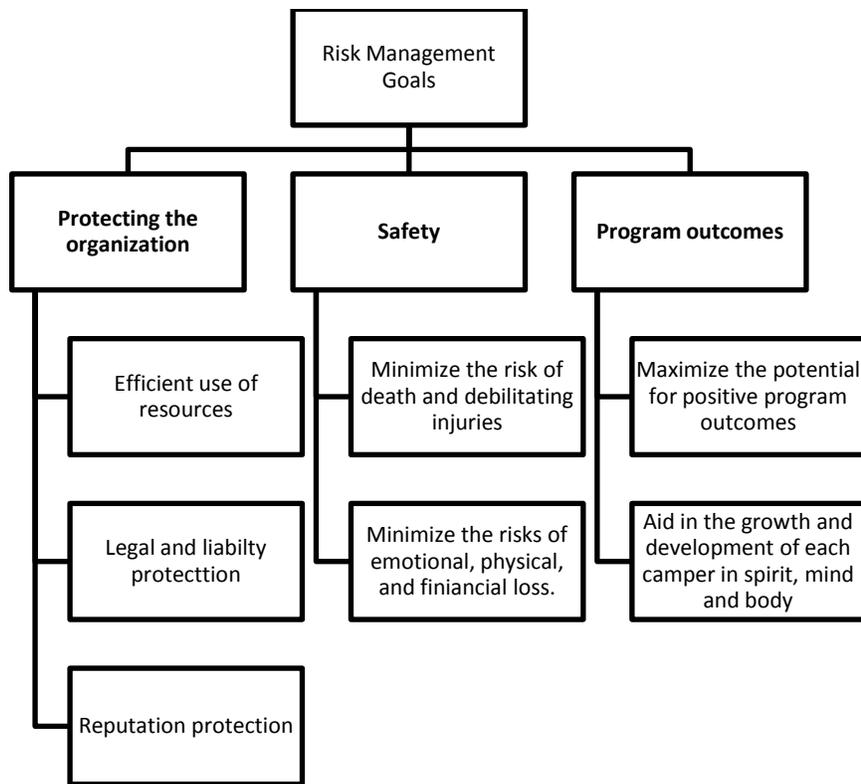
Figure 5.3: Risk management goals in outtripping programs at YMCA Camps.

Based on interviews, program goals were the primary focus of trip leaders and directors

at the camps in this study. With the desire for outdoor programs to be beneficial and aid in

development of children and youth, there is a need for outcomes based risk management. This

relates to the contention of Zink and Leberman (2001) that risk management needs to place a

greater emphasis on the positive side of risk, instead of only focusing on the negative side.

Maximizing the potential positive outcomes associated with program risks can be accomplished

through building the risk management process on a foundation of well developed goals. This

would involve considering program goals alongside safety goals and goals related to protecting

the organization. Safety was described as an extremely important aspect of YMCA camp

programs.

Interviewees discussed a wide range of safety goals related to the emotional and physical safety of campers and staff. Managing for safety goals is complex because several of the risks on outtrips which can cause loss are the same risks which can cause gain. Tom Price from Outward Bound said that "anyone can make an adventure safe, by taking all of the adventure out of it" (as cited in Barton, 2007, p. 10). If outtripping programs only considered safety goals, then groups would simply walk a short distance from camp, to a fenced in area, and sit around with helmets on doing nothing for a few days. Many of the goals that interviewees discussed related to challenge and adventure, rely on an environment with increased risks. Interviewees almost exclusively discussed goals related to safety alongside program goals.

Program goals act as a justification for tolerating and accepting the potential risks associated with an outtripping program. Examining these goals highlights the importance of designing components of the risk management process to support achieving them. Outcomes based risk management would consider the potential for gain, equally as much as the potential for loss. Study participants believed that the benefits of a camp environment are far reaching and that it has significant positive influences on children and youth. This research extends the wide range of literature which supports the benefits of outdoor and adventure programs (e.g. Curtis, 2008; Hunter and Kauffman, 2005; Priest and Gass, 2005; Louv, 2008; Neill, 2003). This research has found that many of the benefits associated with outtripping programs are largely due to the special social and physical environment in which outtrips travel. This research groups the benefits of an outtrip experience into three main categories, including: personal development, group and community development, and the development of a strong connection to nature. Adventure was an overarching program goal in relation to the advanced level outtrips at the camps in this study.

5.6.2 Risk and Adventure on Outtrips

YMCA camp administration, directors and trip leaders accept certain levels of risk in order to achieve their desired program outcomes. Interviewees described risk as being an essential aspect of their outtripping programs. Risk was also described as something that can never be completely removed from programs. These finding helps confirm the wide range of literature related to risk in outdoor programs (e.g. Cloutier, 2000; Hunter, 2007; Liddle, 1998; Martin et. al. 2006). Interviewees also reinforced the concept that the purpose of risk management is to develop a balance between the positive and negative sides of risk (e.g. Barton, 2007; Cloutier, 2000; Curtis, 2008). Analysis of findings shows that adventurous experiences further complicate the wilderness risk management process. Interviewees expressed that one of the main purposes of risk is that it provides challenging situations for campers to work through. The camps in this study use level of remoteness, trip length and whitewater as tools to increase challenge levels on outtrips and ultimately increase the potential for positive outcomes associated with programs. These forms of challenge are used because they go beyond simply requiring participants to work harder physically in order to overcome them. These challenges are also designed to include an element of fun. The adventurous experiences on outtrips were described as having the potential to go beyond what can be provided in an in-camp setting. Adventure experiences are part of a progression, where participants develop the skills and experience they require over many summers at camp.

In the end, based on the findings from this research, it is evident that program design plays a large role in the overall wilderness risk management process. Goals stand out as being a particularly important aspect of program design. Assessing program goals is a means for considering the benefits of risks and designing an outcome based risk management process. Once

programs have been designed, risk management tools and techniques are developed and implemented to assist in treating the risks within those programs.

5.7. Risk Management Tools and Techniques

The most common risk management tools and techniques used by the camps in this study are displayed in Table 5.2. Risk management tools and techniques are essential aspects of risk management, yet these factors alone do not guarantee a safe and enjoyable experience for campers. This is especially the case in wilderness environments where there are many unique factors which influence risk. The standard approach to risk management, which relies substantially on risk management tools and techniques, may be too narrow. Based on findings of this research it is evident that risk management is a process that is made up of many additional components. This holistic approach to risk management links with Cloutier (2000) and Jackson (2009).

Risk Management Tools and Techniques
• Rules, Regulations, Policies and Procedures • Equipment • Documentation • Planning • Staff Structure and Support Networks • Staff Training and Certification • Insurance and Liability Planning

Table 5.2: Risk management tools and techniques used by YMCA Camps.

Additional risk management tools, other than those listed in Table 5.2, are likely used at YMCA camps and other outdoor programs. This may include tools such as accreditation and audits; however, these elements were not directly focused on by interviewees. Specific concepts

highlighted by interviewees that do not seem to appear in the literature are discussed below. These concepts relate to rules and regulations, equipment and certifications.

Rules and regulations are an essential piece of the risk management process. They definitely need to be in place in order to prevent situations where the likelihood of loss becomes high. However, they also need to be designed in a way which takes into consideration program goals and the fact that an effective rule or regulation cannot be developed for every situation which may arise in a wilderness context. Study participants" discussion of rules and regulations are in line with the findings of Zink and Leberman (2001) that there can be several practical and logistical reasons for stepping outside of rules and regulations in certain situations. Interviewees in this research suggest that policies need to support staff in decision making and not be designed to replace the need for decision making.

Another area where interviewees focused is on equipment. A wide range of equipment contributes to effective risk management on outtrips. Risk homeostasis (e.g. O"Neill, 1998) is a theory that states that increased safety gear does not guarantee a decrease in incident rates in many situations. In some situations, this theory may apply at the camps in this study. However, this appears to not necessarily be a negative thing overall. This is because with increased risks can come the increased potential for gains. Increased safety gear was described by interviewees as making it easier in some cases for their camps to run more advanced outtrips. The piece of equipment which was discussed the most often by interviewees was electronic communication devices.

Study participants discussed many positive and negative aspects related to carrying communication devices on outtrips. A majority of these findings links with the work of Holden (2002) and Roberts (2010). This study identifies one factor which does not seem to appear in the

existing literature related to communication devices in outdoor programs. This relates to the idea that communication devices may interrupt the leaning processes of staff when the device begins to be used and relied upon for minor situations. This was identified as primarily being the case with novice leaders, as learning process may be interrupted by relying on communication devices in their early experiences. One director explained that it is a difficult line to draw, but if trends continue, novice staff may not learn the problem solving skills they need to deal with a major incident that could occur in the future and in a more complex environment. Several interviewees noted that the responsibility of group safety should not shift from group leaders to camp directors, or other people, who are not directly in the field when a situation requiring complex decision making occurs. Camp directors in this study stated that, when outtrip leaders call in, their goal is simply to act as a resource to help the leaders make a decision, without attempting to make the decision for them. Competent staff and clear expectations and policies surrounding equipment are evidently required to overshadow the potential negatives associated with communication devices. Overall, communication devices were described as an extremely valuable resource which is used on almost all YMCA camp outtrips.

Certifications are another tool which interviewees focused on. The number of available and required certification courses for canoe trip leaders has greatly increased throughout the history of Ontario camps. Study participants explained that certifications were extremely important for advanced programs however, in house staff training was believed to be more efficient for beginner programs. Based on findings, there are many factors which contribute to a staff member‟s skill and ability levels in outdoor programs and so, only focusing on certifications to fulfill program requirements can be ineffective. This provides support for the concepts discussed by Barton (2007) and Gass (1999, as cited in Attarian, 2001). Gass (1999, as

cited in Attarian, 2001) states that the idea that certification alone is the solution to participant safety and environmental protection is seriously flawed. With a broader understanding of the risk management process, it is hoped that organizations can better understand potential challenges related to certification and develop the most effective solutions.

Overall, there are many risk management tools and techniques that are utilized by YMCA camps in order to manage and treat risks within outtripping programs. When discussing risk management tools and techniques, interviewees frequently included points related to human factors. The effectiveness of many of these tools and techniques was described as relying substantially on human factors.

5.8. Human Factors and Risk Management

Risk management is influenced not only by the factors which an organization directly puts in place to manage risk, but by a variety of human factors as well. Human factors include aspects related to staff, participants and social and cultural processes (see Table 5.3). In this research, staff members were identified as playing the most substantial role in the risk management process. Human factors can essentially be linked to all aspects of wilderness risk management.

Human Factors which Influence Risk Management
• Staff • Participants • Social and Cultural Processes

Table 5.3: Human factors that influence outtripping program risk management at YMCA camps

5.8.1 Staff

Outtrip leaders were identified by interviewees as having the most significant role in the wilderness risk management process. This concept links with the work of Barton (2007) and Hewison et al. (2007). Risk is essential for reaching program goals and so it cannot be eliminated or controlled completely by risk management tools and techniques. Because of this, outtrip leaders" skills and abilities are extremely important for successful program operation. A leader"s judgement and decision making skills were described as greatly affecting risk management on outtrips. Many interviewees stated that the success or failure of outtrips depends on the staff leading those trips. This supports the findings of Reason (2000) which states that human factors can be the most significant factor in the breakdown of risk management. The decision making process was described as shifting from younger staff to more experienced staff and from less advanced programs to more advanced programs.

Interviewees expressed differences between senior staff leading leadership outtrips and younger staff leading short cabin group outtrips. This helps extend Galloway"s (2002) research which explores the differences between novice and expert leaders in terms of their decision making and judgement abilities. Interviewees expressed differences between younger staff leading short cabin outtrips compared to leadership staff leading extended outtrips. Several interviewees explained that there is a higher likelihood of an incident occurring on short trips than on longer expeditions. This was expressed as being largely due to the human factors involved in those programs. Novice leaders do not have the experience that expert leaders do. Several interviews described the way they manage risks as being largely based off of their past experience. The risk management process essentially needs to shift based on different leadership traits. A leader"s abilities must be matched to program design, participants, risk management

tools and techniques and all other aspect of the risk management process. Having novice leaders spend as much time as possible with expert leaders, in the field, was identified as being a very beneficial training technique. By looking at risk management as a process, with many integrated and adjustable components, an organization can avoid the development of rigid training practices which may not be effective for all staff members.

Since staff play such a vital role in the risk management process, it becomes extremely important that their real world experience is consistently valued and incorporated into risk management planning. Directors in this research discussed the importance of open and clear communication with their tripping staff. This can be formal communication and feedback involving documentation such as staff evaluations, trip proposals, incident reports and trip reports. It can be a wide range of informal communication techniques. The role of informal communication and a strong community amongst staff was described as being closely linked to risk management and successful program operation.

5.8.2. Participants

Participants play a significant role in the risk management process. In this study, risk management was not described as something which is applied to participants, but rather a process which they are a significant part of. It does not appear that the literature has focused on this concept. There are a vast number of factors related to participants within the risk management process. Interviewees believed that it is important for participants to understand the programs that they are registering for and that they have adequate skills and abilities to match that program. A few interviews also highlighted the importance of having participants who have the ability to contribute to managing their own risks. At the camps in this study, having participants with adequate skills has presented challenges in the past.

At one camp in particular, one of the primary reasons for no longer running whitewater in the Leadership I program was because of the difficulties associated with finding campers who had the required skills and abilities to match that program. Although there are few concrete studies to draw on, many interviewees described noticing shifts in participants" abilities and fitness levels in the outdoors, and not for the better. Both interviewees and the related literature (e.g. Barton, 2007; Louv, 2008) suggest that this connection is particularly important and yet, children and youth seem to be coming increasingly disconnected from natural environments. A positive outtrip experience was viewed as a great way to teach children and youth about the natural world and instil positive values towards it. Outtrips were said to facilitate a more intense connection to nature because groups spend such a significant amount of time immersed within it. The camps in this study rely on building a progression into their programs, in order to prepare campers for more advanced outtrips.

Advanced outtrips at the camps in this study typically take place over 3 to 5 weeks, on rivers in very remote locations. Campers in these environments were described by interviewees as having the potential to be very dynamic in nature. One day campers may navigate difficult whitewater with ease and the next they may be tired and capsize in much easier waters. This research finds that teaching campers how to manage their own risk and safety is extremely important on outtrips. This is especially the case in wilderness environments because, there are many uncertainties and constant supervision is not always possible or desired. In an adventure outtrip environment, it may be beneficial for participants to have an accurate perception of risk, opposed to a skewed perceived level of risk (Zink and Leberman, 2001). Having campers who can accurately perceive risk on outtrips was highlighted by a number of interviewees as a way increase safety levels on outtrips. Creating an environment where participants add to managing

risks can contribute greatly to effectively managing risks overall. The concept that campers are a significant aspect of risk management and that they can contribute to managing their own risks is linked to the work of Ajango (2005) and Barton (2007).

5.8.3. Social and Cultural Processes

Social and cultural processes play a significant role in how risks are managed on outtrips. These processes cannot necessarily be quantified, but this does not mean that they should not receive the same amount of focus as things such as equipment and policies would. Social and cultural processes were described as influencing such things as staff members" adherence to camp policies, how risks are communicated and how industry standards are met. Different social and cultural processes provide links between various aspects of the risk management process. Social and cultural processes can be grouped into two main categories (see Figure 5.4). These categories are linked to the work of Daft et. al. (2009) and Hitt et. al. (2009).
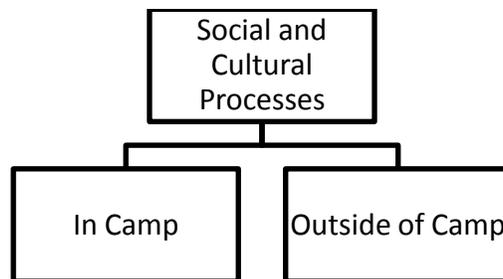
Figure 5.4: The two sides of social and cultural processes affecting wilderness risk management.

This research supports the work of Barton (2007), which identifies an organization"s risk culture as having a significant influence on risk management. How camp staff and campers view risk and safety is part of their risk culture. Risk culture can shift from the organization level, to the staff level and to the participant level. Directors, staff and campers all influence in camp culture, but at the same time, this culture is also influenced by wider culture in general. This concept supports the work of Johnston and Churchill (1992). Culture also influences what goals

are established, as well as how those goals are achieved. At the camps in this study, administrators, directors and camp staff were all identified as influencing the development of organizational goals. Interviews identified trust as being a particularly important aspect of a camp‟s culture and risk management.

Trust seems to be an aspect which no one has explored in relation to outdoor program risk management. Yet, trust was a major theme which emerged from this research. Trust was identified by almost every single interviewee as playing a particularly important role in the risk management process at each camp. Trust can be defined as a firm belief in the reliability, truth and ability of someone (Oxford University Press, 2010). In relation to the outtrip environment, trust occurs between parents, campers, tripping staff, camp directors and assistant directors and YMCA administrators. The directors in this study all expressed having complete trust in the staff leading outtrips at their camp. Participants are trusted to complete many day to day activities in environment where constant supervision is not possible. It is evident that consciously building an environment which supports and facilitates trust and develops strong networks is an extremely important aspect of creating a truly effective risk management process. Study participants also explained how culture outside of the camp setting influences the risk management process.

An organization has very little control over culture outside of the camp setting. The factor which stood out the most in this research related to culture was societies, and more specifically parents and guardians, views and perceptions of risk. The term *helicopter parent* was identified by several interviewees from each camp. Helicopter parents are viewed as over protective parents and guardians who need to know every detail about their child‟s experience. This was described as an increasing challenge at each of the camps in this study. Interviewees also expressed that the programs they run and the way they manage risk is influenced by the growing

disconnect between the population they serve and nature. In the end it is evident that understanding organizational culture and developing a culture which supports achieving goals is an essential aspect of risk management.

5.9. Conclusion

Based on this research, and growing literature, there are three main short comings of the traditional approach to risk management: (1) risk management tools and techniques alone do not lead to a safe and valuable outtrip experience; (2) it adopts a partial definition of risk and risk management, which fails to place emphasis on the positive side of risk; and, (3) human factors are not adequately addressed in the process. Increasing the effectiveness of risk management is a complex task. There are many factors at play, in an environment with numerous uncertainties. Goals provide a foundation for which an outcome based risk management process can be built upon. The quality of a participant"s experience is of primary importance and should thus be considered when making risk management decision. The components which make up the risk management process are interconnected and developing the most effective process possible relies of finding a delicate balance of those components. Staff members play one of the most significant roles in the risk management process. The challenge of risk management is to further strengthen its effectiveness, without resorting to factors which significantly increase costs for participants or decrease the level of adventure in programs.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this research was to gain an understanding of how risks are managed in adventure focused outtripping programs through using Ontario YMCA camps as a case study. In the end, this has produced a wide range of information. It is hoped that this information can be utilized by both academic and applied audiences to further strengthen the process of wilderness risk management. This chapter provides an overview of this research project, provides recommendations for future research and outdoor programs and leaves the reader with some final thoughts.

6.2. Discoveries and Moving Forward

Three Ontario YMCA camps participated in this study and include Camp Queen Elizabeth, John Island Camp and Camp Pine Crest. Staff members from these camps provided the wealth and depth of information which was required for this research. Outtripping programs are a significant focus at each of these camps. Risk management plays a substantial role in the successful operation of these programs. The exploratory nature of this study was valuable because it aided in the emergence of factors which make up the risk management process, which could not have been identified prior. Because of uncertainties and the increased risk in wilderness settings, it is apparent that developing risk management processes specifically for the outtrip environment is a valuable area of study.

This research has found that risk management in outtripping programs involves a complex process that is composed of many interconnected components. This research demonstrates that a holistic approach to risk management is extremely effective for outdoor organizations. Based on this research, the overall risk management process can be grouped into

three categories and includes program design, risk management tools and techniques and human factors. Risk management tools and techniques, are an essential aspect of wilderness risk management; however, these factors alone do not lead to a successful program. Program design and human factors in combination with risk management tools and techniques lead to effective wilderness risk management.

This research discussed several concepts related to the overall risk management process. This includes viewing the wilderness risk management at the camps in this study as an adaptive process. The nature of the process was found to be largely due to the level of uncertainties involved with the outtrip environment. Effective risk management relies on establishing a balance of many components which make up the risk management process. Balancing risk and safety stood out as an overarching goal of outdoor adventure programs. Being aware of the potential negatives associated with specific components of the risk management process, both in terms of safety and program quality, is also essential. This research also found that the risk management is a process that is embedded throughout the overall camp program.

Exploring YMCA camp goals has facilitated a greater understanding of outtripping program risk management. This has provided a great deal of information which supports the use of outtrips in outdoor programs, as well as helps to understand the process of managing risks in those programs. The potential positive outcomes associated with outtripping programs relate to camper personal growth and development, group development and the development of a connection to nature. Interviewees highlighted a wide range of benefits specifically associated with adventurous outtrips which involve whitewater, remote locations and extended lengths. Understanding these aspects contributes to developing an outcome based risk management process.

Human factors were identified as the most influential aspect of the risk management process. Human factors can essentially be linked to all aspects of risk management. Based on this research, human factors can be grouped into three categories and include: staff, participants and social and cultural processes. Outtrip leaders were identified as the most significant human factor in the risk management process. Building trust between trip leaders, directors, administrative staff, guardians and campers was also identified as being particularly important aspect of risk management. In the end, focusing on human factors would likely result in significant progress being made towards the goal of further strengthening risk management practices, without reducing the level of adventure or greatly reducing the accessibility of those programs.

6.3. Recommendations for Future Research

Upon reflecting on this research project, a number of areas come to mind which could be valuable areas for future research. Risk management in a wilderness context is a very complex process which provides numerous areas for further research.

Additional research could be conducted on the human element of risk management in outtripping programs. Organizational culture evidently has a significant influence on risk management, and so, examining this topic with an ethnographic approach could prove to be very valuable. Interviewees made implicit connections between camp culture and risk; however, these links were not discussed or explored explicitly, which suggests a particularly valuable area for future research. Further studies on the role of trust would also be valuable because trust was identified as an essential aspect of risk management in this study; however, it does not appear to be well covered in the literature. Developing concepts related to participants‟ role in the risk management process would also be valuable. Additional studies could further explore concepts related to outcome based risk management. Additional research could also be conducted on risk

management tools and techniques. It is apparent that communication devices, policy development and certifications are elements which could gain from further research. In addition to these topics, it is evident that additional research on the holistic approach to wilderness risk management and the adaptive nature of that process would be valuable for both the academic community and outdoor programs. It is also recommended that future research incorporates literature from additional areas such as the aviation field or the medical field.

6.4. Recommendations for Outdoor Programs

Based on this research there are a number of risk management related recommendations for organizations that run outdoor programs. Considering these recommendations could help strengthen risk management practices. Recommendations for wilderness risk management in outdoor programs are listed below.

- Be cautious and aware of potential negative effects of increased certification requirements for outtrip leaders. Remember that certification alone does not guarantee safety.

- Create awareness of the benefits and limitations of communication devices for outtrip leaders.

- Consciously focus on trust building and developing a positive risk and risk management culture at your organization.

- Include staff input in developing risk management systems. The risk management process will work most effectively when those which have the greatest influence on it, value, understand and have input into it.

- Constantly assess participants" abilities and design programs based on a progression where possible.

- Facilitate the development of camper and staff judgement and decision making skills from a young age.

- Involve participants in managing risks on outtrips. Help them develop the skills they need to manage their own risks.

- Ensure that all trip leaders understand program goals and base risk management decisions on those goals.

Overall, risk management practices at the camps in this study currently appear to be strong. However, in any program, there are always aspects which can be further strengthened. It is hoped that this research can act as a resource for organizations to draw from in the pursuit of further strengthening its risk management practices.

6.5. Final Thoughts

In the beginning, many Ontario camps were designed to help deal with the potential negatives associated with child and youth growing up in urban environments. Today, it does not appear that these potential downsides have declined. The accessibility and availability of truly adventurous experiences for children and youth however, seems to have declined. It is a daunting challenge, but outdoor organizations need to work hard and not succumb to external pressures which threaten core values. The emphasis of wilderness risk management should be equally on the positive side of risk as the negative side. Human factors play the most significant role in wilderness risk management and so cannot be replaced with things such as equipment or rules and regulations. Instead, these factors should add to the group"s abilities and support them in achieving greater successes. This is especially apparent through considering that the risks associated with the natural environment where groups travel has seen very little change. The accessibility of valuable outdoor programs relies on an efficient use of resources within the risk management process. Many people have benefited from the work of camp leaders in the past and now future children and youth depend on the creativity and dedication of today"s outdoor leaders to continually provide truly healthy adventurous experiences. It is a risk that has potential for truly tremendous gains.

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APPENDIX A: DIRECTOR AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR COVER LETTER (to be sent by email)

To (Camp director''s name),

I am a Masters student in the School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and Tourism at Lakehead University and am currently working at YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth. I would like to invite the directors and a group of outtripping staff from your camp to participate in a study I am conducting related to risk management and YMCA camp outtripping programs. The research project title is: "Wilderness Risk Management and YMCA Camp Outtripping Programs" and is being conducted under the direction of my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Johnston, Professor, School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism. I would like to involve Camp Queen Elizabeth, John Island Camp and Camp Pine Crest in this study.

Last summer I worked at YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth as a Leadership I: Delaware Trainer. This summer I will be leading CQE''s month long Venture LIT program on the Bloodvein River. I am extremely passionate about YMCA Camps and hope to contribute to their programs and the organization through this research project.

I have attached a summary of my proposed research study which provides more details. There is definitely room to incorporate your thoughts, ideas and comments!

In addition to writing a thesis as a requirement for my degree, I would like to provide each camp with the results of this research. This could be in both paper and presentation form. The YMCA can benefit from participating in this study through access to the research findings that will be available in May 2011. Participants in the study can also benefit through articulating their own experiences and hearing the experiences of others in the field. The goal is to identify the main risk management related challenges in the industry and begin to find ways to address them.

Participation in the interview is voluntary and withdrawal can take place at any time. If someone does chose to participate, the interview process will require approximately 1 hour of their time and focus groups will require 1-2 hours. Names will not be identified in any way in the final analysis or in any report produced from this study. The study follows the Lakehead University standard ethics policy. If you have any ethical concerns regarding this study, please contact the Research Ethics Board - Lakehead University (Phone: 1.807.343.8283; http://research.lakeheadu.ca/).

Below is contact information for myself as well as Dr. Margaret Johnston, who is my advisor. We can communicate through e-mail or if you would like to arrange a phone conversation that would also work well.

Thanks for your time and I look forward to chatting with you soon!

OUTTRIPPING STAFF COVER LETTER (to be sent by email)

To whom it may concern,

I am a Masters student in the Department of Outdoor Recreation, Parks, and Tourism at Lakehead University and am currently working at YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth. I would like to invite you and other outtripping staff from your camp to participate in a study I am conducting related to risk management and YMCA camp outtripping programs. The research project title is: "Wilderness Risk Management and YMCA Camp Outtripping Programs" and is being conducted under the direction of my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Johnston, Professor, School of Outdoor Recreation, Parks and Tourism at Lakehead. I would like to involve Camp Queen Elizabeth, John Island Camp and Camp Pine Crest in this study.

Last summer I worked at YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth as a Leadership I: Delaware Trainer. This summer I will be leading CQE"s month long Venture LIT program in Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, including the Bloodvein River. I am extremely passionate about YMCA Camps and hope to contribute to their programs and the organization through this research project.

I have attached a summary of my proposed research study which provides more details on the study.

By participating in this research, you will be providing information which can be used to strengthen risk management practices in outdoor settings. The goal is to identify the main risk management related challenges in the industry and begin to find ways to address them. The YMCA and its staff can benefit from participating in this research through access to the research findings that will be available in May 2011.

Participation in the focus groups is voluntary and withdrawal can take place at any time. If a participant does chose to participate, focus groups will require 1-2 hours of their time. Names will not be identified in any way in the final analysis or in any report produced from this study. The study follows the Lakehead University standard ethics policy. If you have any ethical concerns regarding this study, please contact the Research Ethics Board - Lakehead University (Phone: 1.807.343.8283; http://research.lakeheadu.ca/).

Below is contact information for myself as well as Dr. Margaret Johnston, who is my advisor. We can communicate through e-mail or if you would like to arrange a phone conversation that would also work well.

Thanks for your time and I look forward to chatting with you soon!

Research Proposal:
Wilderness Risk Management and YMCA Camp Outtripping Programs

Introduction:

I am interested in conducting a research study at three Ontario YMCA summer camps during the 2010 summer season. The camps are Camp Pine Crest, John Island Camp and Camp Queen Elizabeth. I would like to explore the wilderness risk management process used at each camp. I do not intend to simply provide a critique of YMCA risk management, but rather a comprehensive look into how the risk management process works overall. If issues are identified, I would like to suggest viable ways in which they can be addressed.

My interest in this topic has developed through my experiences as a canoe trip leader at Project CANOE and YMCA Camp Queen Elizabeth. Each season I have seen improvements in staff training, safety gear and policies and yet it appears as if the demands of managing risks keep growing. For obvious reasons, a great deal of resources are invested in making programs as safe as possible, but this can also have unintended effects. This relates to how program goals and outcomes are becoming more and more constrained by safety measures. It is extremely difficult to know where to draw the line between safety and adventure.

The purpose of this research is to identify the main challenges that select YMCA camps are facing related to managing risks in outtripping program operation. This study will focus on wilderness risk management and camp outtripping programs. I aim to develop a picture of the YMCA‴s balance between safety and adventure through exploring the risk management process used at three YMCA camps. Ideally, this research will also produce useful information, which can be used by the YMCA to build on its strengths and ultimately improve the overall effectiveness of its risk management process. This research has not been designed to simply provide a critique of YMCA risk management, but rather to give a comprehensive look into how the risk management process works at the operational level.

Project Overview:

In this study I would like to explore a variety of themes. These themes will emerge through exploring the risk management process used at each camp. This risk management process is developed by the organization and typically starts by setting goals related to program operation. These goals often aim to find a balance between ensuring a high degree of safety and providing adventurous and challenging experiences for participants. Although there are risks associated with challenging participants, it is known that challenge is an essential part of learning and development. Based on their goals, organizations then develop a risk management framework, which includes components such as policies and protocols, equipment, staff training and certification, communication and documentation, as a way to meet the organization‴s risk management goals. These components are interrelated and strengths in each area ensure that risks are correctly managed in relation to the organization‴s goals. This research aims to explore how this process works, with a focus on the step between the organization‴s risk management framework and what actually occurs in the field. I would like explore how each camp‴s program goals are transferred through their risk management plans to their staff members and into the field. I would also like to explore how information from the field transfers back to the

organization. From this, I would aim to identify the main challenges that outtripping staff are facing and compare those to the challenges that camp administrators are facing. Furthermore, I would like to compare the challenges that are present at each of the three camps as well as how each camp deals with them. I aim to generate information for this research through exploring staff perspectives on these topics.

Themes:

Bellow is a list of the current themes I have identified for this research. I welcome and would appreciate your input!
1. To understand the YMCA's goals related to outtripping programs.
2. To explore how those goals are transferred to staff members and into outtripping programs.
3. To discuss major factors which influence and affect how risk is being managed in each YMCA camp's outtripping program.
4. To discuss the main risk related challenges that each camp is dealing with.
5. To discuss components of the risk management framework which work well and which areas could be improved.

Methods:

This study would focus on wilderness risk management in outtripping programs. The three camps I have identified offer some of the largest outtripping programs in Ontario and are currently three YMCA camps which offer month long river canoe trips. The large number of outtripping staff at each of these camps will provide the most comprehensive information. Outtrips are an important part of the YMCA camp experience. They involve travelling in remote areas away from direct medical assistance. Adventurous outtrips also provide the greatest opportunities for participants to experience the benefits associated with risks. An organization's risk management plan needs to be the strongest in this type of environment. The dangers are real and there is little supervision or communication between camp administration and the staff members leading the trip. The risk management components used by the YMCA need to equip its staff to be able to manage real risks in a remote setting for up to a month at a time. Essentially, outtrips provide the ultimate test of the YMCA's risk management plan.

Information for this study will come from two main sources. The first source will be interviews with directors and assistant directors related to the specific goals of their camp. Also, included with this will be questions related to the risk management framework they use and how it works. The second source will be a focus group, with 6 - 10 outtripping staff, conducted at each camp. These focus groups will generate information directly from the field related to how the risk management processes are working and how the goals of the organization are being met.

Conclusion:

By providing each YMCA camp with information on how its risk management process is working, the camps will then be able to identify practical ways in which their resources can be used in their risk management process. Ultimately this will aid in addressing some of the challenges related to running and operating YMCA camp programs. By strengthening risk management practices, adventurous activities will remain accessible, despite the ever increasing challenges related largely to litigation within the industry. The aim is not to eliminate risk from activities, but rather ensure that it is managed in an optimal way which reduces the likelihood of incidents. I am passionate about YMCA camps and their programs and think this is a great opportunity for us to work together on an interesting and important topic.

APPENDIX C: CONSENT LETTER

Dear Potential Participant,

By signing this consent letter, you are indicating your willingness to participate in this study and that you understand and agree to the following conditions:

1. Your participation in this research is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time.
2. You have the right to anonymity, and you acknowledge that no personal or identifying information is being gathered without your consent.
3. You have the right to choose not to answer any question.
4. The data generated from this research will be kept at Lakehead University for 5 years, as per Lakehead University's research ethics policy.
5. You can receive copies of publications that result from this research, if requested.
6. You consent to the interview being audio-recorded.

I have read the information provided, and hereby declare to freely consent to this interview.

_____
Signature

If you would like a copy of the research summary or publications, please provide your email address here: _____

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUIDE

Wilderness Risk Management and YMCA Camp Outtripping Programs:
Focus Group and Interview Guide

Interview Guide: Directors and Assistant Directors

Program goals and views on risk:
- How large of a role does your outtripping program play in your overall camp program?

- In the future, what would you like your outtripping program to look like?

- What are the main goals of your outtripping program?
  o Do you feel that those goals are being met?

- What are the main challenges you‟ve experienced related to reaching those goals?

- How have you overcome some of those challenges?

- What is the place of risk and adventure in your outtripping program?
  o What is the role of whitewater paddling in your program?

Evolution of risk management:
- How has risk management evolved at your camp? Have you noticed any changes in how risk is managed throughout your time at camp?

- Does your camp continually improve and develop its risk management practices? If so, how?

- Has this made it easier to meet the demands of managing risk? Please explain.

- Do you feel as if the demands of managing risks has increased, decreased or remained relatively constant?

Risk management framework:
- What is the process of managing risks at your camp?
  o For example, does it involve identifying risks and then developing plans to mitigate them? What does your camp do differently?

- What is put in place by the YMCA in order to manage risks at your camp?
  o Equipment
    ▪ Do you feel as if staff carry safety equipment on outtrips that may be unnecessary?

- - - Is there any safety equipment that you feel is necessary for a trip, but is not available?
      - What is the role of technology in your outtripping program?

  - Documentation
    - What type of documents do you view as being most important for your outtripping program?

  - Staff training and certification
    - How does the YMCA help its staff acquire the skills they need to run their programs?
    - Do you feel that your training was effective? Could improvements be made? If so, how?
    - What is your greatest source of information related to knowledge of managing risks?

  - Rules, regulations, protocols, procedures, guidelines, etc.
    - How large of a role do these have in protecting the YMCA as an organization? In protecting the camp? In protecting staff and participants?
    - How much flexibility do you try and give your staff to make decisions and judgment calls on their own?
      - Does this change from your first year staff to your most experienced trippers?

  - Communication and supervision
    - What is the role of outtripping staff in developing risk management plans?
    - How do you support your staff in making decisions?

  - Insurance
    - How do insurance policies influence the role of risk in your outtripping programs?

- Which of the above areas are the most important? Do some areas receive more attention than others?

Practices:
- Do you feel that there are areas in your program which are too risky or too dangerous?

- Do you feel as if any areas in your program are constrained by safety measures? If so, which areas?

- What are some of the major factors which influence how risk is managed at your camp?

Information feedback from the field:
- Is information from the field incorporated into your risk management plans? If so, How?

Focus Group Interview Guide: Outtripping Staff

Program goals and views on risk:
- How large is your outtripping program compared to the rest of your camp programs?

- In the future, what would you like your outtripping program to look like?

- What are the main goals of your outtripping program?
  o Do you feel as if those goals are being met?

- What are the main challenges you"ve experienced related to reaching those goals?

- How have you overcome some of those challenges?

- What is the place of risk and adventure in your outtripping programs?
  o What is the role of whitewater paddling in your program?

Evolution of risk management:
- How has risk management evolved at your camp? Have you noticed any changes in how risk is managed throughout your time at camp?

- Does your camp continually improve and develop its risk management practices? If so, how?

- Has this made it easier to meet the demands of managing risk? Please explain.

- Do you feel as if the demands have increased, decreased or remained relatively constant?

Risk management framework:
- What is the process of managing risks at your camp?
  o For example, does it involve identifying risks and then developing plans to mitigate them? What does your camp do differently?

- What is put in place by the YMCA in order to manage risks at your camp?
  o Equipment
    ▪ Do you feel as if staff carry safety equipment on outtrips that may be unnecessary?
    ▪ Is there any safety equipment that you feel is necessary for a trip but is not available?
    ▪ What is the role of technology in your outtripping program?

  o Documentation
    ▪ What type of documents do you view as being most important for your outtripping program?

  o Staff training and certification

- How does the YMCA help its staff acquire the skills they need to run their programs?
- Do you feel as if your training was effective? Could improvements be made? If so, how?
- What is your greatest source of information related to knowledge of managing risks?
  - Experience?

- Rules, regulations, protocols, procedures, guidelines, etc.
  - Have you come across a situation where there wasn't a protocol? A situation where a protocol was too weak? Too strict?
    - (examples: Shoes, cliff jumping, whitewater etc.)

- Communication and supervision
  - Do you feel as if your views and experiences are incorporated into the Y's risk management plans?
  - Do you feel supported by your organization?
  - Do you feel as if the Y would support your judgement calls?
  - Would you feel comfortable telling your supervisors that you were not comfortable with a situation? (ie. Running a certain river, lack of safety equipment).

- Are some of these components (see above) more important than others? Do some areas receive more attention than others? Please explain.

Practices:
- Do you feel as if there are areas in your program which are too risky or too dangerous?

- Do you feel as if certain areas of your program are constrained by safety measures? If so, which areas?

- What are some of the major factors which influence how risk is managed at your camp?

Information feedback from the field:
- Is information from the field incorporated into your risk management plans? If so, How?