

Courtney Schnurr

Supervisor: Dr. Chris Shields

Research Focus

Evolutionary psychologists view risk as a biological necessity; however, the everyday social norm is that risk is to be minimized or avoided. This study looked to understand young adults' perceptions of risk and whether there are differences in the way risky daily/recreational activities are perceived as compared to extreme sports activities. To this end, the study was a combination of two studies where the first study used photo-elicitation to better understand young adults' perceptions of risk by asking them to provide photos that illustrate sport activities and daily/recreational activities that they see as representing different levels of risk. The second study had interrelated research questions that built upon the preliminary study's findings. First, how do young adults react to, and perceive the risk of extreme sports as compared to daily/recreational activities deemed high risk by others? This was examined using photo elicitation procedures. Second, how young adults react to and perceive a person engaged in these behaviours was examined using narrative vignettes. As physical activity levels and neuroticism have been shown to impact responses to stressful or risky situations, the potential moderating effects of these variables were also examined as an exploratory analysis for both research questions in the second study. This study has the potential to contribute to the emerging literature highlighting the paradox of risk that is particularly relevant today.

The Researcher

Courtney is from a rural community close to Walkerton, Ontario. Perpetually curious, Courtney first pursued research with the supervision of Dr. Chris Shields through an independent study examining the concept of social loafing, and whether it occurs differently based on the gender of the participants in the group. This question and the focus of Courtney's thesis was informed by her work with the Ontario Fire Ranger crew. Courtney currently volunteers to promote health and wellbeing with people on parole in Nova Scotia. Courtney's plans for the future include pursuing a master's program to extend her work with the Correctional Service of Canada.

