

Analysis of the Crib Goch incident

In this essay I will be creating a critical account of an incident that occurred on the 7th of March 2020 involving a person who fell down the side of Crib Goch in poor weather. I will be analysing the behaviours of the people who were with him to help from the moment he fell, to the moment mountain rescue arrived. This is all in reference to a YouTube video posted by the main person giving aid who recorded the entirety of the incident (www.youtube.com, 2020). For anonymity, I will not be using any personal names for the people involved in the incident. For the main person involved they will be referred to as the camera man or the first aider and the person who fell will be referred to as the casualty.

Before I analyse the behaviours of the people involved in the incident it is important to mention the weather conditions and the general expertise of those involved. In the YouTube video it is evident that the conditions are dangerously poor with the someone the video describing it as jacket ripping weather. Upon further analysis and reading the weather report for the day in question it is described as rain all day on and off with wind speeds of up to 55mph on the higher mountain peaks. With temperatures of 3 degrees and minus 11 degrees in direct winds as the afternoon progresses and poor visibility all day (MWIS, 2020). The British Mountaineering Council describes Crib Goch as a grade 1 scramble and is often underestimated and dangerous especially in poor conditions (BMC, 2024). For these conditions described, an argument can be made that even attempting this route was an ignorant decision as based on the video, the equipment and level of expertise in this group of people was not enough. From a professional perspective and as someone who has done a fair amount of scrambling in good and poor conditions, I would not attempt this route in these conditions. Even if I had all the professional equipment and took all safety precautions, the risk to reward ratio would not be in my favour.

Moving on to the incident itself. The first thing to note is that camera man assumed the role of leader before the situation unfolded, being at the front of the group with the behaviour of someone that had high confidence and control of the situation. The camera cuts out and when he turns it back on is the moment that the casualty fell. What I find strange is that just before the accident the camera man is holding the camera in his hand but upon turning it back on it seems to now be mounted either on his head or chest. To me it seems highly inappropriate for the camera man to have done that in such a critical high stress situation. Instead of instantly trying to help the situation he took the time to mount a camera to record the ordeal. However, research suggests that people involved in negative critical incidents feel 3 times more emotion than people in positive critical incidents (Friman, 2004). In this case then it could be argued that due to the high stress of the negative incident the main first aider (camera man) at least initially was not thinking logically and critically, leading him to make the decisions he did. In this case it is difficult to critique this decision due to the severity and the alarming rate that the situation unravelled. Moving back to the idea of the camera man being the perceived leader of the situation. They decided to lead the other 2 participants of the group down the same way that the casualty fell. This decision was a dangerous one as it was already proved how severe the conditions were and how easy it is for someone to fall. Not necessarily that going down the same

way was right or wrong. It is my professional opinion conviction that as a perceived leader it is your responsibility to not put others in danger, especially in a severe situation where someone could be injured. It is likely that the 2 others that were with the camera man fell into the heuristic trap, expert halo (Rebekah Wilson, 2023) believing that he knew best to go down a dangerous escape route off the mountain to find the casualty. (Salmon et al., 2010) suggests that

“According to the model, root causes emerging from poor safety management systems, or poor implementation of safety management systems, can in themselves lead to instructor errors that cause accidents and incidents or can lead to the instructors being placed in an unsafe environment or with unsafe students or with unsafe equipment (or combinations of the three), which, in turn, leads to accidents and incidents.”

In this context it is referencing a model called the Root cause model of led outdoor activity accidents. Now in this instance the camera man was not technically an instructor, however as they took the role as leader of the situation this model applies. It is clear based on the video that the risk management that was in place for the group was firstly not adequate, with low amounts of gear and less experienced participants. Secondly the high stress situation caused them to put themselves in an unnecessarily risky position.

Moving on to the primary focus of my critical report which is going to be my analysis of the first response first aid given to the casualty by the camera operator. After descending the slope off Crib Goch that the casualty fell from, they discover him conscious but injured with a head injury, suspected broken leg and other cuts and abrasions. As well as missing hiking boot and trousers that are completely ripped. The behaviour from the main first aider from this point in the video becomes increasingly erratic and seem to lack order. In line with all basic first aid is to, on arriving at the site of a casualty, it is particularly important to make sure yourself and the person injured are in no current danger (NHS, 2019). From observing the video, the camera man is scrambling around saying ‘I thought you were dead’ interspersed with swearing and other comments directed to the casualty about the severity of the situation. As well as not, at least visibly, do any sort of dynamic risk assessment of the environment to ensure safety of those involved. As much as basic first aid is of paramount importance in a critical incident such as this, psychological first aid for a conscious casualty is equally as important. Research suggests that to keep a casualty from becoming increasingly psychologically distressed, calmness and reassurance over a situation is paramount for keeping the situation from becoming too irate (Mortimer and Mortimer, 2023). As mentioned earlier the lack of order and stress exerted by the camera man is not only going to not help a situation but potentially make it worse.

After the initial discovery of the casualty the events that occurred are as follows, one of the people with the group called mountain rescue with coordinates of their whereabouts, the main first aider began to give a form of first aid and they then left to go get some help from passers-by on the Pyg track. I'd like to focus on the camera man's first aid on the casualty. Referencing the video the camera man did a very basic assessment of the injury's asking what hurts but not doing sufficient checks. A fall from the height that casualty fell from suggests that a spinal injury is very possible so moving the victim too much or at all could lead to further injury. It is observed

throughout this video that the casualty is moved by the camera man to insulate them from the ground using jackets, spare layers and rucksacks (St Johns ambulance, 2024). Now despite it not being advisable to move someone with injuries as severe as the victims, this was the correct decision. Considering the poor weather, dropping temperature, high speed winds, and the fact that they were far from professional help on the side of a mountain, preventing hypothermia was the most critical thing to focus on rather than the injuries at that point in time. Most effective forms of heating a body up in critical conditions is an emergency foil blanket as it reflects body heat back onto itself (Lier et al., 2023). However initially it seems that no one in the group had one with them which only highlights how unprepared the group was for the conditions of the day. An unusual decision made by the camera man is their choice to leave the group to go and get help from potential passersby on the main track not far from the casualty site. There are two sides to the argument to analyse here. The first being that as he was the perceived leader and main one giving first aid to the casualty, meaning he possibly shouldn't have left the less experienced people to look after the situation. On the flip side I believe based on the video evidence of the condition of the casualty, the chance of severe hypothermia was almost imminent. Because the camera man went to get help, he was able to get help from other hikers as well as survival blankets which most likely kept the casualty alive long enough for mountain rescue to arrive. By the time the mountain rescue arrived the weather had worsened with the temperature dropping and the casualty's shock and adrenaline had worn off. It was described the video that they were struggling to stay conscious shivering a lot and taking longer to respond. According to resources (Furst, 2016), (St Johns ambulance, 2024), the casualty seemed to be suffering from moderate hypothermia which if not treated quickly can lead to your body shutting down and inevitable death. Another important thing to mention is how quickly mountain rescue responded to the incident, taking around an hour and a half for a full team callout (Mountain Rescue, 2024). As mountain rescue are a voluntary service they are not on constant standby. The speed that they arrived played positively into the outcome of the situation, as hypothermia was already setting in. In a follow up video (YouTube, 2021), it was later discovered that the casualty had much more serious injury's than originally assumed. They broke their nose, neck, shoulder, wrist, leg, was in intensive care and had to receive blood transfusions.

This critical incident that occurred is an interesting one as it is rare that the entire situation was documented via camera, allowing it to become a topic of discussion and analysis. To conceptualise further (Groves and Varley, 2020) suggests,

“unconscious bias effects for risk-based decisions in other leisure and tourism contexts, where risk perceptions and risk reduction strategies result from a dialogue between a participant's risk expectations and personal experience,”

In the situation that occurred there is at least a level of unconscious bias on the decision making of the camera man as well as a skewed level of risk perception based on personal experience. Despite this report being critical of the behaviour shown by the camera man and the decision-making skills. It is of my opinion that despite the things that were done wrong from a purely outside and professional perspective, generally the situation was very well handled. The camera

man knew to call mountain rescue straight away and was able to accurately give coordinates of their whereabouts. They were also able to generally give a level of first aid that ultimately kept the casualty alive long enough for mountain rescue to arrive and take over the situation. From a professional development standpoint and my experience being in similar environments there are certainly things that I would have done differently. These things however are linked with equipment quality and quantity for the conditions as well as slightly different risk management strategies. It is impossible for someone who was not in this situation to judge the actions of another without experiencing it themselves. As mentioned earlier negative critical incidents are shown to increase the number of emotions shown compared to positive critical incidents which most likely made a high stress situation emotional. As well as this I suggest that due to the camera man being the perceived leader and the most experienced of the group, there is a possibility for a sort of instant onset survivors' guilt (Murray, Pethania and Medin, 2021). In a situation such as this, despite the incident not being any person's fault as the perceived leader I suggest that a level of guilt was shown by the camera man which may have clouded his judgement.

This is a case of a day of ill-equipped hiking gone wrong with the intention being only to complete the hike and the worst-case scenario being a negative critical incident (Brymer and Gray, 2006). The situation of this day could have ended up worse and could have quite easily done so due the negligence of the group. However, the actions of the camera man saved the casualty from death and the decisions made no matter how emotion based were enough to save a life.

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