***Injuries In Parkour And Freerunning Practitioners, Challenging The Prejudices***

Auke Rinsma

Hanze: University of applied sciences.

**Introduction**

“If I would try that, I would break my neck!” This is one of the most common responses I get when I tell people I practice parkour and freerunning. In the media, parkour is portrayed as a daredevil sport with lots of recklessness. [[1]](#footnote-1)

When I started training, I did not tell my mom, because she thought it was too dangerous. These negative prejudices take away from a versatile, challenging and beautiful sport, with a great community and philosophy. People are hesitant to try it or let their children try it, and I would like to tell you why this is not justified.

**Putting things into perspective**

Why is doing jumps and flips on concrete not as dangerous as it seems? First of all, I would like to put things into perspective and compare the percentage of freerunning related injuries to more conventional sports like football and swimming. On average, each freerunner sustained 5.5 injuries/1000h training, respectively. As researched by (Wanke, Thiel, Groneberg, & Fischer, 2013) . Football has the highest injury rates for both practices (9.6 injuries per 1000 A-Es) and games (35.9 injuries per 1000 A-Es) (Hootman, Dick, & Agel, 2007). In swimming the overall injury rates were estimated as 4.00 injuries per 1000 exposures for men and 3.78 injuries per 1000 exposures for women (Wolf, A.E., & Lawler, 2009).

Freerunning is a lifestyle sport, which includes, but is not limited to; “*movement and risk within the bodily experience dimension, and community, public and world views within the interactive experience dimension.”* As mentioned in research by (Clegg & Butryn, 2011). The philosophy’s of freerunning come from the founders of parkour and freerunning; David Belle and Sebasatien Foucan. They uploaded video’s to www.youtube.com which became an inspiration to the community. Within the appendix I have compiled a list of the most influential videos. What they agree on is that: overcoming risk is what makes freerunning to what it is, although, risks should always be assessed. You should work your way up to a challenge by finding progressions into it. For example; if you were to jump a 2 meter gap at height, you should make sure you have done that same jump a 1000 times on flat ground to make sure nothing can go wrong. [[2]](#footnote-2)

**Quick to judge**

*Chris McGovern, chair of Campaign for Real Education and a former Downing Street adviser, said that making parkour an official sport is a "barmy idea" which many parents will be "alarmed" by.*

*"We do need to promote sports in schools but this is not the answer. It’s pandering to the worst instance in children, and is likely to produce and encourage delinquent behaviour,” he said.*

*“Promoting fringe sports that potentially jeopardises students' lives is to the detriment t of other recognised sports. I think a lot of parents will be quite alarmed. We do want to invest in sport but we don’t want to do it this way."* (Turner, 2017)

This quote sums up the biggest concerns with Freerunning’s image;

1) People are alarmed by the thought of freerunning.

2) Parkour and freerunning stimulate delinquent behavior in children.

3) Parkour and freerunning practitioners risk their lives.

I will discuss each of these arguments:

1) People are alarmed by the thought of freerunning.

It is true that many parents are alarmed by the thought of freerunning. When you search for freerunning videos, you will see the most dangerous stunts. However, what you cannot see in those videos is the years of training, and preparation the athlete has gone through. It is understandable that people have this impression, because freerunning is a relatively young sport and people might not be very familiar with it. Below a video that shows this process.[[3]](#footnote-3)

2) stimulate delinquent behavior.

This refers to reports of acts of accessing prohibited areas by freerunners. I cannot deny that this has been an issue within the community. Nowadays separate disciplines have split of from freerunning, focusing on stunts like Rooftopping, the act of balancing on the edges of skyscrapers, and Trainsurfing, whose name speaks for it self.

3) Freerunning risks lives.

As with any sports there are risks involved. Within freerunning some people take the risks to extremes. Most of these people are professionals who have been practicing for more than 10 years. When training in gyms the risks are very low according to an interview with parkour coach Lehmar Allen. (Allen, 2019)

**Conclusion**

Although it is understandable that people can have a negative view on freerunning, this is not necessarily justified. It is true that some people take the sport to extremes, however in most instances, these people know what they are doing and have been practicing for multiple years. When compared to other sports, injuries in freerunning do not seem as bad as the media sometimes makes it out to be.

Freerunning is seen as dangerous and a bad influence on children, the parkour philosophy and our expert disagree with this. In fact freerunning is relatively safe when practiced in a safe environment and does not stimulate children to try crazy moves, but helps them find their own limits. Some extreme disciplines that have sprung from parkour include rooftopping and trainsurfing, although related, they do not represent the parkour community.

**Bibliography**

Carter, E., Westerman, B., & Hunting, K. (2011). *Risk of Injury in Basketball, Football, and Soccer Players, Ages 15 Years and Older, 2003–2007.* Journal of athletic training.

retrieved on january 20, 2019 from:

*https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223969744\_Risk\_of\_Injury\_in\_Basketball\_Football\_and\_Soccer\_Players\_Ages\_15\_Years\_and\_Older\_2003-2007 on 20/1/19*

Clegg, J., & Butryn, T. (2011). *An existential phenomenological examination of parkour and freerunning.* from online database: t and f online.

retrieved on january 20, 2019 from:

*https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2159676X.2012.693527*

Hootman, J., Dick, R., & Agel, J. (2007). *Epidemiology of Collegiate Injuries for 15 Sports: Summary and Recommendations for Injury Prevention Initiatives.* Journal of athletic training.

retrieved on january 21, 2019 from:

*https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1941297/*

Wanke, E., Thiel, N., Groneberg, D., & Fischer, A. (2013). *Parkour--"art of movement" and its injury risk.* Stuttgart: Thieme.

retrieved on january 21, 2019 from:

*https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23860830*

Wolf, B., A.E., E., & Lawler, M. (2009). *Injury Patterns in Division I Collegiate Swimming.* Wolf, R.

retrieved on january 25, 2019 from:

*https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19633232*

Turner, C. (2017). *Safety concerns as daredevil pursuit of Parkour is set to become official sport.* Telegraph.co.uk.

retrieved on january 21, 2019 from:

*https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/01/08/safety-concerns-daredevil-pursuit-parkour-set-become-official/*

Videos:

**The origins and philosophy of parkour:**

Choose not to fall, Daniel Ilabaca

*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-EoLfgA8Cc*

Disctrict 13, chase scene, by David Belle

*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3VZhPEQb8c*

Yamakasi, the modern samurai

*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mu4mm63EcFs*

Generation Yamakasi, documentary

*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOYpHLHg6io*

David Belle on the philosophy of parkour

*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUeHrPazTtY*

Ted talk by Sebastien Foucan on fear in Freerunning

*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3mpOjP-tHc*

**Behind the jump:**

Behind the jump, the motus projects, Max Barker

*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYSTq38HW\_w*

**Expert Interview: Lehmar Allen, Parkour coach at NBC gymnastics and member of Axis freerunning team.**

Q1. Where do you teach and how often?

*“I live in England, in the city of Birmingham. I teach in a local gym called: NBC Gymnastics. How often I teach? The session is every Friday for two hours.”*

Q2. How many injuries do you roughly see a year?

*“Within the class, because it is a safe environment, I have only actually seen one injury ever, which was an ankle injury. However, in my freerunning group, it is very rare that someone is not injured. So in the classes I have only ever seen one injury, it is very rare, however outside of that, in the real world, people are always injured.”*

Q3.Have you ever done any other sports, and would you say that those are more dangerous than freerunning?

*“previously, I used to be in a football team, did a little bit of rollerblading, I skateboarded for four years, and I have done b-boying or breakdancing.*

*Out of all of them, I would say* *freerunning, skateboarding and rollerblading contain the most frequent injuries. Compared to football and breakdancing, Freerunning has more injuries.*

Q4: How long have you been training? And how many injuries have you had?

*“I have been training for roughly 7 years, I have never broken a bone, thankfully. However I have had some injuries, I think it was internal bruising that put me out for about a month, I reckon. That was my most serious injury. Other than that, I have not really had any serious injuries.”*

Q5: What is your opinion on rooftopping and trainsurfing?

*“my opinion on rooftopping? I respect the idea that people are able to be in full control of their bodies, and are able to calculate risks and understand what they are able and not abe to do. However, personally I don’t do it, I feel, that I am able to get just as much fulfillment from training on lower ground, so to summarize, I do respect it, but personally stay away from it.*

*Adding on to that point I just made, trainsurfing, I find it to be quite reckless. Because it seems like more of a daring culture, rather than people trying to accomplish something, trainsurving is reckless. And another thing, rooftopping can become quite reckless as well, where people are doing something more for being daring, then for reaching the goals I just mentioned.”*

Q6: How would you say the freerunning community looks at rooftopping?

“*Out of all the freerunners I have met, I have never come across anyone that has been against rooftopping, as well as online, seeing videos, it seems that the freerunning community is pretty much behind rooftopping.”*

Q7: Would you want your children to practice freerunning?

*“I would love for my children to do freerunning, because of all the positives that come from it. Despite the negatives that I mentioned, the discipline, in and off itself, of always pushing yourself to try and reach new limits and literally trying to be the best that you can be in an aspect of life. Which then transfers to other aspects of like, I think the discipline has a lot of benefits, so I would be happy for my children to practice freerunning.*

*”*Q8: Would you say that rooftopping is a part of freerunning?

“*When you think about it, freerunning is the freedom of movement, and adapting to your environment which does include rooftopping, it can be a part of freerunning, but it is not necessary, if that makes sense.”*

Q9: Do you think that practicing parkour during gym class would encourage delinquent behavior in children?

*“I do not think that practicing parkour, in gym class, or anywhere else for that matter, would lead to delinquent behavior in children, I actually think the opposite, because I feel like practicing freerunning is very time consuming, so when children are occupying their time with that, they are less likely to occupy their time with more negative things, that might come about from not having anything to do.”*

*“furthermore, risk managing is a healthy and important part of growing up, children have to learn how to take appropriate risks.”*

“

Feedback essays classmates

Ivan Draijer - FINANCIAL FAIR PLAY IN EUROPEAN FOOTBALL

- Essay has an interesting introduction, with example. A personal motivation could have been included.

- More sources could have been included in the explanation of the control mechanism.

- Great use of statistics.

- Uses fitting examples to make his point and weighs of the positives and negatives.

- Overall, more sources could have been included in the essay. It is however, written convincingly and clearly.

6.7/10

Lieuwe van der Bijl - Crashes in Professional Cycling

- Simple word choice in introduction, but his passion shows through.

- A few grammar and spelling mistakes

- could have included more sources in the introduction and development section.

- Use of “maybe” instead of backing claim up with a source.

- Clear, over seeable structure in text.

- Solid reasoning used.

- Could have included different perspectives in the argumentation.

6.3/10

1. https://mumbaimirror.indiatimes.com/mumbai/other/uk-parkour-group-alarms-residents-with-jump-stunts/articleshow/66837078.cms [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUeHrPazTtY [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zYSTq38HW\_w [↑](#footnote-ref-3)