

Croagh Patrick: A Study of a Mountain Pilgrimage

Orla Prendergast

**MSc Outdoor Education
University of Edinburgh
2005**

Abstract

Croagh Patrick is the most famous and popular pilgrimage mountain in Ireland. During the summer of 2003 semi-structured interviews and on-site observations were used to determine how people perceive the mountain, what motivates them to undertake the climb and what they experience during the climb. The mountain was perceived as an historic monument and holy place, which should not be subject to any development work that could interfere with the challenge or the traditional element of the climb. The main motivational factors involved challenge, preserving a tradition, visiting a famous site and involvement in penance. The climb was experienced as a positive communal event and provided spiritual or meaningful experiences for some individuals. It would appear that the climb has moved away from being a penitential ritual towards being a personal challenge related to a personal value system. This shift reflects changes in an increasingly secular Ireland. When viewed within the framework of self-determination theory, there appears to be a greater amount of personal ownership or internalisation of motivational factors than may have occurred in the past.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Pete Higgins for his support in starting this study and to Breedá, Joan and Stephen for assistance in the final stages of preparation.

In particular, I wish to thank all those who took part in the interviews.

Dedicated to the memory of Niamh McGrath.

Table Of Contents

ERROR! NO TABLE OF CONTENTS ENTRIES FOUND.

Appendix A Map of Ireland

Appendix B Map of local area surrounding Croagh Patrick

Appendix C Photographs of Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage

Appendix D Interview Questions

Appendix E Summary of Results

LIST OF TABLES

Error! No table of figures entries found.

LIST OF FIGURES

Error! No table of figures entries found.

