

Recreation and leisure studies

with Professor Heather Mair

Talking points

Knowledge & Comprehension

1. What is curling? What are the key competitive and social features of the sport?
2. What are third places?
3. What is social capital, and why is it important?
4. What are the aims of Partners Transforming Curling?

Application

5. What leisure activities do you take part in and/or what third places do you spend time in? How do these help you build social capital?
6. How could you study the impacts of your favourite leisure activities on your well-being?
7. What career opportunities can you think of related to your favourite leisure activities?

Analysis

8. Why are sport and leisure activities so important for health and well-being?
9. What do you think are the advantages of using an ethnographic approach to study the social benefits of leisure activities? And what challenges do you think Heather faces when she conducts this type of research?

Evaluation

10. People from underrepresented groups often face barriers to taking part in leisure activities. What do you think these barriers might be, and why do they particularly affect people from underrepresented groups? How could they be addressed so that everyone has the opportunity to participate in leisure activities?

Activity

In a small group, design a research project to investigate the impact of leisure activities at your school on the lives of those who participate.

1. Decide which leisure activity/activities you want to focus on. You might choose to focus on one activity or to compare several. These could be organised lunchtime/ afterschool clubs (e.g., sports, music, debate) or informal activities that people participate in during leisure time at school.
2. Agree on your research aims and come up with two or three specific questions that you want to answer. Topics could include:
 - Impacts on physical well-being, mental well-being, social capital, confidence, leadership skills, schoolwork.
 - How inclusive the activity/club is, and what could be done to improve this.
3. Choose your research methods. For example, you could observe people participating in the activity to see what it involves and/or interview them (and those who do not participate) to discover what opinions people have about the activity. You could conduct a photovoice project and ask participants to take photos of what the activity means to them. Consider how your research methods will enable you to answer your research questions, and how you will analyse your data.
4. Before you start your research, ensure you have consent from all participants involved. Then conduct your study and collect your data.
5. Analyse your data and present your findings. What have you discovered? Did any of your results surprise you? Were you able to answer your research questions? How easy was it to analyse and interpret your results? Were your participants representative of the school population? What action could you take next to apply your results to improve the lives of people in your school?

More resources

- Learn more about Partners Transforming Curling: uwaterloo.ca/recreation-and-leisure-studies/research/partners-transforming-curling
- In this podcast episode, Heather discusses her work exploring the importance of curling clubs with two curling enthusiasts: open.spotify.com/episode/1nGCN4Hm0BB0oU8Xn9a8cC
- Visit Heather's Futurum webpage to read her article in French: futurumcareers.com/how-ethnography-highlighted-the-value-of-curling-for-communities