



## Open Research Online

### Citation

Sargent, Julia (2023). Two Fields, Overlapping Messages: Investigating the Related Concepts of Leisure Studies and Physical Education. *Quest*, 75(4) pp. 295–309.

### URL

<https://oro.open.ac.uk/87662/>

### License

(CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0) Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

### Policy

This document has been downloaded from Open Research Online, The Open University's repository of research publications. This version is being made available in accordance with Open Research Online policies available from [Open Research Online \(ORO\) Policies](#)

### Versions

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding



Quest

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: [www.tandfonline.com/journals/uqst20](http://www.tandfonline.com/journals/uqst20)

# Two Fields, Overlapping Messages: Investigating the Related Concepts of Leisure Studies and Physical Education

Julia Sargent

To cite this article: Julia Sargent (2023) Two Fields, Overlapping Messages: Investigating the Related Concepts of Leisure Studies and Physical Education, *Quest*, 75:4, 295-309, DOI: [10.1080/00336297.2023.2185159](https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2023.2185159)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2023.2185159>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.



Published online: 11 Apr 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2226



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## Two Fields, Overlapping Messages: Investigating the Related Concepts of Leisure Studies and Physical Education

Julia Sargent 

The Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

### ABSTRACT

Inter-disciplinarity and bridging disciplinary boundaries is a practice that scholars often strive for within higher education research. Kinesiology encompasses many aspects such as physical activity, physical education and community. In this article, the two fields of leisure studies and physical education are analyzed as a means to argue that these fields have overlapping messages that are currently being missed within scholarship. Using the theory of boundary crossing, this paper will argue that as a result of missing these current messages, we are at risk of disconnecting education from the social context of leisure. As a result of such analysis, this paper presents conclusions on ways in which research and practice can seek to strengthen the connection between these contexts and open new lines of enquiry that would be fruitful to explore.

### KEYWORDS

Physical education; leisure studies; boundary; discipline; kinesiology

### Introduction

Interdisciplinary work, both within research and teaching, is becoming prominent and is used to provide solutions to fragmentation issues within a particular field (Schary & Cardinal, 2015). Indeed, whilst there have been some attempts to address interdisciplinary research in kinesiology (Szostak, 2016; Vertinsky, 2009), there is a general lack of research (Schary & Cardinal, 2015). As Newell (2007) and others have more recently claimed, there are many dimensions of knowledge in kinesiology (Hopsicker & Hochstetler, 2016; Twietmeyer, 2012). Dimensions include activities of daily living (ADL), physical education (PE), movement education and play, to name but a few (Newell, 2007). Taking a broad perspective of kinesiology as encompassing a multiplicity of different agendas, a discipline area that has received very little attention in kinesiology and, specifically within physical education scholarship, is that of leisure studies. One has to delve back into the papers published in the 1960's within *Quest* to come across discussions on leisure such as Zeigler (1965) analyzing recreation and leisure or from works such as Stormann (1984) who talked about the promise of leisure being an “illusion.”

Delving into the broader scholarship around leisure studies, leisure scholarship contains a multiplicity of perspectives and is contested (Silk et al., 2017). That being said, there are stronger scholarly connections between aspects of leisure, physical activity, sport, events and tourism and less apparent bonds between leisure and aspects such as urban studies,

**CONTACT** Julia Sargent  [julia.sargent@open.ac.uk](mailto:julia.sargent@open.ac.uk)  The Institute of Educational Technology, The Open University, Jennie Lee Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA, UK.

© 2023 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

health studies and performing arts (Silk et al., 2017). As Collins (2017) extends, higher education in the UK, North America and Europe have tended to hide leisure content under “sexier,” more attractive titles incorporating sport, leisure and tourism. Furthermore, and drawing upon the work of Andrews (2006) and Fletcher et al. (2017), leisure studies degree programs contain many practical elements associated with sport and active recreation which is drawn from physical education. As such a focus on “leisure” and active lifestyles outside of the classroom tends to get lost under the discussions around curriculum and often, sport.

Burrows and De Pian (2017) have argued that socially critical health and physical education researchers are vitally interested in the contexts within which various expressions of physical culture exist. They postulate that “the boundaries between school, home and community are porous and that schools, their teachers and curricula are not the only things shaping young people’s engagement in physical culture” (Burrows & De Pian, 2017, p. 429). We see many references to aspects such as sport, activities undertaken for fun and enjoyment or some references to the educational value of leisure pursuits. Yet, rarely does any formal discussion occur in relation to exploring leisure activities in relation to aspects such as physical education. This is a pertinent area to explore as we see increasing interest regarding school-based interventions to improve motivational outcomes in PE and leisure time (Sevil-Serrano et al., 2022) and the rapid decline in the identity and profile of leisure studies in education creating a desire to re-affirm its social and educational importance (Fletcher et al., 2017). Similarly, as Evans (2014) argues, there are real merits of making border crossings and that now, more than ever, they are needed if our goal is to advance thinking in our subject/discipline.

Subsequently, the purpose of this paper is to take a critical exploration of the two fields of leisure studies and physical education to argue that these disciplines have overlapping messages that are currently being missed within kinesiology scholarship. In doing so, it will argue that we, as scholars, are at risk of disconnecting education from its social context of leisure. This is important to explore at this juncture as the boundaries between physical education time and leisure pursuits (in various forms such as outdoor activities, hiking or cultural ideas such as “Frilufsliv” etc.) are disintegrating due to the prevalence of digital technologies and the relevancy of physical education to the social and physical lives of students. If, indeed, one of the goals of physical education is to support young people so that they can lead healthy and active lifestyles (Harris & Cale, 2022) then exploring the relevancy of leisure time is pertinent not only for youth but also into adulthood and beyond formal education.

## Physical education

Physical education is a term that has been historically debated but it is, in most cases, used specifically within the context of schooling (Whitehead, 2020). Kirk (2020) for example, argues that the term physical education refers specifically to those activities undertaken during school curriculum time and where the majority of students are routinely included. As such, what is taught in schools, during curriculum time, is often guided by government or national curricular as well as sport policy (Kirk, 2020). In the above statements, the notion of inclusion and group participation (i.e., a majority rather than a minority of individuals) is of note. Similarly, we know that what is experienced within activities

undertaken during school curriculum time can include sport and sports techniques (Stolz & Kirk, 2015) and physical education programs and practices that are not always inclusive (Makopoulou et al., 2022).

Yet we are increasingly aware from more recent conversations that physical education has been repositioned in many countries and their school curriculums with connotations around health and wellbeing (Kirk, 2018). There is subsequently a drive for a shift in terms of the focuses of physical education and variation in what is taught and why to students (Fitzpatrick, 2022). Some examples of these shifts in focus can be areas such as lifestyle sports (Beaumont & Warburton, 2020) or leisure-time physical activity. For example, Green (2020) argues that physical education must have an impact during the transitions from childhood right through to adulthood as young people's leisure (and sporting) lives can, and do, reform as we develop. Roberts (2009), for example, argues that our choices regarding leisure activities are constantly changing and being re-negotiated, dropped, done less frequently or replaced by other pastimes which are generally home-based. Subsequently, the role of schooling can have a key part to play in what we choose to pursue in later life, but it is certainly not the only part. As Whitehead (2020) summarizes, education, and subsequently physical education, can be conceived either as a lifelong journey (and thus influenced by others such as parents, schools, the community and individual pursuits) or as a responsibility for schools and schooling (and thus the responsibility of teachers, schools and the government). Furthermore, the concept of purpose and value are important to consider in relation to physical education. For example, the extrinsic value of physical education leans toward promoting aspects such as health promotion, disease prevention, physical development, sports or personal and social development (and what the country or culture in which physical education is taught values) (Whitehead, 2020). The intrinsic elements, however, are more focused on aspects such as what the learner is interested in and enjoys in relation to areas such as meaningful movement (Whitehead, 2020). The former, has tended to take precedence over the latter despite the drive to decrease the disconnect between PE and lifelong participation in physical pursuits.

## Leisure studies

The study of leisure activities has taken many forms. For example, terminology such as leisure, serious leisure, leisure education and work-leisure are present within the literature. Blackshaw (2009, p. 1) argues that "leisure studies, in the broadest sense, is a discursive formation concerned with the systematic interpretation of the whole 'economy' of leisure as a contested realm of society and culture." Taking this idea into account, leisure can be seen through the lens of physical activity pursuits (i.e., walking, rock climbing, orienteering, swimming, skateboarding etc.), sports outside of schooling and through other activities such as craft or tourism experiences such as visiting a museum.

Back in 1965, Earle Zeigler discussed the concept of education *for* leisure depending on the dominant educational philosophy of the time interacting with whether societies perception would include such leisure pursuits within the educational system (Zeigler, 1965). In 1986, Standeven and Thompson argued that schools concentrate their resources on short term aims in the provision of recreational activities, rather than tackling a more long-term process of education *for* leisure. Moving on from these ideas, Stebbins (2005) argued that the aspects of "choice" and the freedom of such choices are key sensitizing concepts for

research in leisure education. He further argued that one of the principal goals of considering leisure and leisure education is to inform students (i.e., adults and children) of the range of activities that are available to them, the nature of those activities and the cost/reward that one can expect to find in pursuing them (Stebbins, 2005).

Taking these aspects into account, leisure studies can be characterized as the study of leisure as a relatively self-determined activity or experience that falls into one's economically free time (Best, 2009). Taking an individualistic perspective, it can be easy to think about leisure and our study of it as an experience that people of varying degrees of privilege engage in (Mowatt, 2021). There is, however, a notable gap in research on the changing meanings of leisure over time (Snape & Spracklen, 2019) and thus leisure studies have many dimensions (these include, play, participants, activities, spaces and provision Haywood et al., 1989). Indeed, it is argued that leisure is more than an experience, but a complicated and problematic reality that is public and collective (Mowatt, 2021). Whatever definition of leisure we are accustomed to and how we study it, Best (2009) further argues that our experience of leisure is commonly assumed to be different from our experience of work. Our experiences of leisure often take place in specific places or leisure venues (i.e., context) and is something we look forward to participating in (Best, 2009). After giving an overview of these two field areas, this paper now turns to a discussion of the theoretical framework.

## Theoretical framework

This paper draws upon the theoretical concept of “boundary crossing” as a lens to analyze these two fields to draw out some overlapping messages for critical analysis. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) argue that a boundary can be seen as a sociological difference leading to discontinuity in action or interaction. In addition, “boundaries simultaneously suggest a sameness and continuity in the sense that within discontinuity, two or more sites are relevant to each other in a particular way” (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 133). It is important to point out that the concept of boundaries is not in and of itself a new concept and it has been used by other theorists in education. For example, Wenger et al. (2002) put forward that boundaries can have negative connotations as they are often viewed as sites of difficulty, yet are often sites for learning and innovation (Tsui & Law, 2007). Similarly, and perhaps more well-known, is Bernstein talking about boundaries being symbolic and social interactions occurring across different boundary contexts (Bernstein, 1975).

Akkerman and Bakker (2011) argue that there are four potential learning mechanisms that can take place at boundaries: identification, coordination, reflection and transformation. Identification involves defining one's practice in light of another and delineating how it differs from the other. Coordination relates to the collaboration between practices. Reflection involves the boundary acting as a site of learning through reflection to realize similarities and differences. Transformation involves learning at the boundary that creates changes or new practices.

The purpose of this paper is to focus on enhancing knowledge of the boundaries between leisure studies and physical education. In doing so, it focuses on the “identification” and “coordination” phases of learning identified by Akkerman and Bakker (2011). In essence, the premise is “coming to know what the potentially diverse practices are about in relation to one another” (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 150). The aim is that by identifying

overlapping messages (i.e., the continuity and discontinuity between these two fields) that learning and new knowledge can be identified to aid in the process of boundary crossing for scholars. Subsequently developing both the “reflection” and “transformation” learning mechanisms that can take place for others. As a result, this theoretical lens intends to provide a tool for initiating the learning mechanisms that can occur because of boundary crossing and supporting interdisciplinary work that stretches beyond the identified areas of this paper.

The overarching question that guides this theoretical analysis of these two fields was: *What are the overlapping continuities and discontinuities between what we know to be leisure studies and physical education?* The use of this theory, like the approach taken by Simonton et al. (2021) with their use of appraisal theory, will be proposed below by first giving an overview of the overlapping messages before considering some directions for future research.

## Overlapping messages

### *Motivational support in PE and the impact on leisure*

Exploring the aspects of motivation in relation to leisure studies and physical education seems a prominent area of note. Given the health-promotional connotated and somewhat contested view for some of the importance of young people gaining positive experiences of PE being motivational for their future physical activity (e.g., Ekblom-Bak et al., 2018), it is unsurprising that motivation for PE has been the focus of considerable research (Beaumont & Warburton, 2020). For example, Hagger et al. (2003) argued that perceived autonomy support (i.e., the extent that students perceive others, such as teachers, to be supportive of their autonomy and intrinsic motivation) in physical education positively affected their leisure-time physical activity. This assumption is similarly supported by Shen et al. (2007) who proposed that perceived autonomy and competence in physical education are inter-related and function for enhancing leisure time physical activity intentions and behavior. Wallhead et al. (2013) argued that social recognition and status goals significantly and positively predicted extra-curricular exercise participation as well as perceived relatedness and enjoyment of physical education. Wallhead et al. (2014) later found that support for the direct transfer of motivation from a sport education program led to increases in leisure-time physical activity behavior. Taking more recent research into account, Kalajas-Tilga et al. (2022) found that students gaining autonomous motivation in physical education positively predicted their autonomous motivation in leisure time.

What can be discerned from some of these overlapping messages is that motivational support in physical education can play a role in supporting leisure time physical activity. The motivational support in this sense deriving from teachers and fellow students. Nonetheless, and as is mentioned above, leisure time does not just incorporate physical activity through activities like sports. The physical is one domain whereas there are broader emotional, social or intrinsic value that drives one’s pursuit of leisure activities. A key aspect of leisure being that they are self-determined and activities that we look forward to doing. Thus, to create greater continuities between physical education, leisure and increasing the likelihood of aspects such as lifelong movement, exploring young people’s motivations for

and enjoyment in movement would seem logical for both fields to engage with for mutual benefits.

### ***Enjoyment and meaning making***

Looking at the concept of “leisure education,” Blackshaw and Crawford (2009) describe the term as the act or process of acquiring knowledge, skills and experiences for their own sake and in ways which will provide sociability, personal pleasure, challenge and fulfillment. Arguably this has many overlaps with the concept of meaningful PE. Fletcher et al. (2021) discusses meaningful physical education in the sense of identifying features of an experience which are meaningful to us such as distinguishing which aspects of an activity are enjoyable, challenging and personally relevant. The “primary theme of meaningful PE is to support students in coming to value physical education through experiencing meaningfulness and recognizing the ways participation enhances the quality of their lives” (Fletcher et al., 2021, p. 5). Yet, the premise of leisure time is not (and with the caveat of not explicitly) mentioned in this regard. As Wankel (1994) argued, emphasis lies on individual choice to engage in an activity which is personally meaningful and enjoyable; that could be gardening, walking our dog or running. Similarly, as pointed out in relation to migrants’ leisure experiences, the meaning of leisure is influenced somewhat by contemporary society which can include aspects such as seeking out experiences that enhance a sense of belonging (Mata-Codesal et al., 2015).

It would seem that through our own scholarship we have only touched the surface of the connections of meaning in movement within leisure by focusing on forms of movement that we have bound to the confines of physical education and youth sport programs. If we want to promote messages of meaning making that acknowledges the broader aspects of young people lifestyle and leisure experiences outside of school (i.e., the social context of leisure and physical activity), then investigating meaningful leisure experiences is a key part of this.

### ***Physical activity as leisure and physical education***

As has been underlined above, physical activity is a mutual part of both leisure studies and physical education. The terms “leisure-time physical activity” and “physical activity” as part of physical education are commonplace. Subsequently it is the context of such physical activity that dictates the distinction for these fields. Physical activity which is conducted in one’s own time and outside of the context of schooling sits within the leisure boundary. On the other hand, physical activity that takes part in school and may take form through a game such as “Netball” is included within the confines of physical education.

We know from the literature discussed above that experiences of physical education and physical activity in schools can have an impact on physical activity that is sought in leisure time. This can be illustrated through examples such as Flintoff and Scraton (2001) who argued that there was a gap between PE programs and young women’s active leisure lifestyles outside of school. However, other impacts such as one’s family structure have been shown as a determinant for leisure-time physical activity (Quarmby & Dagkas, 2010). Similarly, class-based inequalities can be said to remain in the leisure sphere with those that



are economically better off able to do more and experience much more variety in leisure pursuits (Green et al., 2005).

Subsequently if both the contexts of schooling and leisure-time can have an impact on physical activity, there seems to be the overlapping message of physical activity as important to both. Given this mutual territory, it would also seem of benefit to seek to explore the spaces in which physical education and leisure have shared ground. For example, play or break time in schools, optional after school clubs or extracurricular activities (Øksnes, 2008). By creating boundaries between physical education and leisure in terms of one involving physical activity within school and one outside of school, we are potentially losing an educational mechanism that can help to support physical activity in both spheres and contribute toward the broader goal of supporting healthy and active communities.

### ***The fluid boundaries of 'sport' and 'play'***

As Zeigler (1965) discussed, play has been recognized as an important developmental process for children and have had impacts on the ideas underpinning health, physical education and recreational leisure. Play can be characterized as activities that are valuable in and of themselves (Siedentop, 1990). It has intrinsic value and be characterized by aspects in terms of it being voluntary, somewhat pleasurable uncertain or perhaps spontaneous as well as being fictive (i.e., accompanied by make-believe or fiction) (Bain, 1976; Caillois, 1961). Similarly, play is self-organized by the “players” and can be found in every serious cultural institution (Huizinga, 1955).

Conversely, sport is often associated with characteristics such as being organized and structured (i.e., by rules), include a competitive element that is organized toward winning and performance judgment (i.e., by physical skills) (Guttmann, 1978; Suits, 2007). Similarly, leisure activities in the form of sports might be identified as “recreation” (Haywood et al., 1989). Sport remains a focus of offering in physical education despite the trend toward lifestyle sports (i.e., surfing, skateboarding or BMX riding) in young people’s leisure time being evident (Beaumont & Warburton, 2020; Green et al., 2005).

Like play, definitional criteria that are often attributed to the terms of sport and play result in labels applied to activities that fail to meet either of them (Stebbins, 2015). For some scholars, however, play forms the foundation of sports (Guttmann, 1978). Play can also be associated with games, structured play (Coakley, 2008) or free time (Huizinga, 1955). Subsequently play and its involvement with sport has fluid boundaries. It can be described as fluid because sport can be the object or mechanism in which physical education takes place, but it can also be the pursuit or object of leisure. Similarly, play can be experienced through physical education and leisure despite not being planned to do so. Vice versa, physical education and leisure studies relationship with sport and play are similarly fluid.

When looking into the concept of sport and play within leisure studies, we see these discontinuities being contested. Stebbins (2015) for example metaphorically argues that leisure studies and play are disciplinarily separated and contain very little overlap despite their similarities. Furthermore, he argues that leisure studies could benefit considerably from recognizing the importance of play and incorporating it into theory and research (Stebbins, 2015).

In the field of physical education, there has tended to be a focus on play in relation to levels or promotion of physical activity within aspects such as school break times (recess) and some exploration of play within primary PE (Varea, 2018). Some note that structured play or games within physical education and sport programs have shown to contribute toward the development of self-esteem in children (Bailey et al., 2009; Gruber, 1985) or that active play is important in “the fight against childhood obesity” (Janssen, 2014). Others have called for “play-based pedagogy” (Jefferson-Buchanan, 2022) yet the core role of play or the exploration of play is subsumed into our discussions of physical education and sport.

Looking at these continuities and discontinuities between leisure studies and physical education, the concepts of play and sport are both a part of but “hidden” foci. As explored in the sections above, the focus on physical activity and skills in play and sport has somewhat hindered the space available within formal educational and leisure time to explore the broader aspects of play and what we find meaningful through such play. As advocated for by Hawkins (2008), a reorientation of the profession is proposed toward a concept that has the capacity to capture a more genuine sense of professional meaning for physical education and kinesiology is play. Extending this call out to leisure studies is a mutual and worthwhile endeavor.

### ***The role of health as a mutual but somewhat contested goal***

Both physical education and leisure studies have had their share of discussions on the role of health as both a goal but also a site of contention. As Wankel discussed in 1994, the evolution of leisure studies, kinesiology and aspects such as sport and exercise sciences as distinct academic fields of study has weakened the original links between physical education and recreation (Wankel, 1994). He goes on to argue that:

... the tendency to separate the two [leisure and health] within physical education and recreation curricula is dysfunctional. The health focus ... should be brought together with the experiential and philosophical richness of leisure studies. Such a rapprochement would give purpose to and strengthen both areas ... (Wankel, 1994, p. 31).

Despite such arguments, this rapprochement between leisure and health within physical education that Wankel argued for many years ago is still, in Stormann’s (1984) terms an “illusion” in physical education. For example, Gray et al. (2022) contextualized that in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, there remains a discourse on performance related and competitive sport despite the curricula focus on health and wellbeing. Colleagues outside of the UK will also notice similarities within their own contexts. Physical education may be making headway into addressing health related learning such as through active pedagogies (Harris & Cale, 2022) but, due to the increasing presence of spaces such as social media, (Goodyear et al., 2021), we must seek to explore alternative avenues that have educational value for aspects like health in spaces such as leisure time. Indeed, as Quennerstedt (2019) suggests, this could occur through societal responsibility or in our digital future (Gard, 2014). If a healthy and active lifestyle is a goal of physical education then, given the relatively short time frame in which children spend in formal schooling, the contexts that health and activity is explored within young people’s leisure time should form a part of this educational process.

In relation to leisure studies, scholars such as Haworth (2003) have positioned leisure as having a key role in areas such as policy around health and well-being. Despite this, Silk et al. (2017) argue that leisure studies scholars are largely absent from investigating the contributions of leisure to health and well-being – leaving these debates largely to other fields such as psychology, public health and sport. Particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a decline in participation for several types of leisure activity, particularly social and outdoor activities (Liu et al., 2022). Similarly, Mansfield (2021) recently argued that future work in leisure and health needs to critically address the wider policy debates around the physical and mental health benefits of leisure beyond areas such as physical activity which tend to be the focus of leisure studies debates with health.

This role of health as a mutual but somewhat contested goal is present for both physical education and leisure studies. As can be seen from the analysis above, health is a desired but arguably contested focus for scholarship. Similarly, health can be viewed through a narrow lens of its connotations and relationship with physical activity, rather than problematizing the broader factors at play and negative health consequences of certain types of physical activity (Mansfield, 2021). As health and what it means to “be healthy” stretches beyond the confines of physical activity, a broader and critical view of what health means both within and outside the context of formal schooling is an area for future scholarship.

## Discussion

The overlapping messages presented in this paper demonstrate that there is indeed continuity between these two fields or sites but also areas of difference. The boundaries between these sites are becoming more explicit due to the increase in specialization and with the need to define boundaries between different specialisms so that they have scope and focus. That being said, there is a risk that by broadening the boundaries of these two areas and missing these connections education and leisure are both disconnected from their broader contextual aspects such as context, health, physical activity and play. Yet, as the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which both physical education and leisure studies are a part of develop and evolve, there will be an ever pressing need to consider the roles, functions and interplay of these areas.

To spur continuity across two sites, various terms have been deployed such as “broker-ing,” “boundary zones” and “boundary interactions” (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Exploring the process of establishing different actions and interactions between these two areas can be seen as a resource for learning and creating new knowledge (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). This is presented with the caveat that connections between the two sites are not always desirable and thus require critical reflection in relation to the suitability or interactions between the two. Subsequently, and in concluding this paper, some of these areas are discussed as means to strengthen the connection between these two field areas and, in doing so, spur potential future lines of enquiry that would be fruitful to explore for both.

### *Recognizing a shared ‘problem’ space*

One of the aspects argued to lead to transformation of boundaries is recognizing a shared problem space (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Edwards and Fowler (2007) argue that the term “boundary object” can be used to refer to this shared problem space. In the case of leisure

studies and physical education, this manuscript argues that the shared problem space or boundary object could be the potential for (physical) education or, what Blair and Guildea (2020) termed *potentially physically educated*. To expand further on this term, when discussed in this context, is that both the contexts of physical education and leisure have the concept of physicality and educational value at their core but are both potentially sites of physical education. Put differently, they are both sites or contexts for developing an understanding the importance and value of being physically active and educated throughout different life-stages (physical literacy).

In recognizing this shared “problem” space, a process of transformation can then begin as mutual ground can be used for change (Edwards & Fowler, 2007). Yet the term “problem” can evoke perceptions that this shared space is troublesome or even something that needs (re)solving. However, one can recognize something in terms of acknowledging its presence without needing to act upon it. In doing so, awareness can be raised but allow the addressing of the “problem” to be open to the context and how it is addressed within that context.

Looking at our own physical culture and how we engage with the physical cultures of society is something that stretches beyond the disciplinary boundaries of PE and leisure studies. Seeking to understand and expand upon physical culture is one such way to move forward with recognizing and embracing both the continuities and discontinuities between field and discipline areas. Physical culture and the study of it has been argued to be a dynamic and transdisciplinary approach to explore the diverse realm of physical culture (which includes, but is not restricted to sport, fitness, exercise, recreation, leisure, wellbeing and health-related movement practices) (Silk et al., 2017). It is then recognized that “boundaries” between schools, homes and community settings are porous and that schools, teachers and curricula are not the only things shaping young people’s engagement in physical (and nonphysical) cultural practices (Burrows & De Pian, 2017). We, as scholars, need to recognize that in creating these distinctions and boundaries (whether intentionally or not) they influence how we perpetuate them through practices and scholarship, how we frame young people’s experiences and their educational value they may or may not perceive. We can begin to address this recognition by looking at the concept of education *for* leisure.

### **Education for leisure**

The concept of education *for* leisure is something that is discussed here to move forward with the boundaries of physical education and leisure studies. In the context of youth exploring alternative sources of knowledge (i.e., social media), leisure pursuits and activities, education for leisure could amount in a process whereby physical activity, movement and sport are adopted as a “valued cultural practice” (McNamee, 2005) and the focus of physical education in schooling. For example, using physical education as a means to explore the underlying premises and personal pursuits of leisure (i.e., questioning what do I/we find meaningful, enjoyable, and that I/we want to pursue in my/our free time?) to better meet the needs of contemporary learners. This has some conceptual alignment with meaningful physical education (c.f. Fletcher et al., 2021). In doing so, we are focusing on the longer-term gain of education *for* leisure rather than short term aims of the provision of sporting and recreational activities (Standeven & Thompson, 1986). As Fletcher et al. (2017) reminds us, if leisure studies is to be seen in the long-term as “socially useful,” teachers and researchers need to direct their attention outwards to the pressing

issues at any given time (i.e. digital technologies, climate emergencies or pandemics), rather than taking leisure as the necessary starting point. This could be, as Evans (2014) postulates, mutual engagement through subject-specific attachments, allegiances and ideational common ground, rather than relinquishing commitments to parent disciplines. Future research could subsequently approach the idea of “concept studies” as a means of making such crossings and addressing enduring issues (Evans, 2014).

Whilst there is an appreciation that the broader premise of such an approach may not be an entirely new concept, the practice of (physical) education *for* leisure could contribute toward the broader social role of the subject of physical education (Green, 2020) as well as the potential to be physically educated.

## Conclusion

In concluding this paper, the original aims are returned to in terms of taking a critical exploration of the two fields of leisure studies and physical education to argue that these disciplines have overlapping messages that are currently being missed within kinesiology scholarship. Drawing on the theory of boundary crossing, the overlapping continuities and discontinuities identified were discussed in relation to motivational support in PE and impact on leisure; enjoyment and meaning making; physical activity as leisure and PE; the fluid boundaries of sport and play; and the role of health as a mutual but somewhat contested goal. These were presented as both identifying and coordinating mechanisms occurring at the two boundaries of physical education and leisure studies. In discussing these areas and concluding this paper, the areas of recognizing a shared problem space of physical activity and education *for* leisure were presented as areas fruitful to explore further. They further relate to the premise of reflection and transformation that readers are challenged to take as potential learning mechanisms that not only take place at boundaries but hopefully can seek to increase interdisciplinary and boundary crossing between leisure studies and physical education fields.

## Disclosure statement

I am reporting that I am the social media administrator for the Leisure Studies Journal. I have disclosed those interests fully to Taylor & Francis.

## ORCID

Julia Sargent  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9082-8378>

## References

- Akkerman, S. F., & Bakker, A. (2011). Boundary crossing and boundary objects. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 132–169. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311404435>
- Andrews, D. (2006). Leisure Studies: Progress, phases and possibilities—an interview with Alan Tomlinson. *Leisure Studies*, 25(3), 257–273. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614360600746889>
- Bailey, R., Armour, K., Kirk, D., Jess, M., Pickup, I., Sandford, R., & BERA PESP Special Interest Group. (2009). The educational benefits claimed for physical education and school sport: An academic review. *Research Papers in Education*, 24(1), 1–27.

- Bain, L. L. (1976). Play and intrinsic values in education. *Quest*, 26(1), 75–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.1976.10519871>
- Beaumont, L., & Warburton, V. (2020). Lifestyle sports, pedagogy and physical education. Physical education beyond schools and teachers. In S. Capel & R. Blair (Eds.), *Debates in physical education* (2nd ed., pp. 239–255). Routledge.
- Bernstein, B. (1975). *Class, codes and control: Volume 3. Towards a theory of educational transmissions*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Best, S. (2009). *Leisure studies: Themes and perspectives*. Sage.
- Blackshaw, T. (2009). Leisure studies. In S. H. Callahan (Ed.), *The SAGE dictionary of leisure studies* (pp. 1–227). Sage.
- Blackshaw, T., & Crawford, G. (2009). *The SAGE dictionary of leisure studies*. Sage.
- Blair, R., & Guildea, M. (2020). Physical education beyond schools and teachers. In S. Capel & R. Blair (Eds.), *Debates in physical education* (2nd ed., pp. 69–85). Routledge.
- Burrows, L., & De Pian, L. (2017). Physical education, policy and embodied pedagogies. In M. L. Silk, D. Andrews, & H. Thorpe (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of physical cultural studies* (pp. 423–431). Routledge.
- Caillois, R. (1961). *Man, play, and games*. The Free Press of Glencoe.
- Coakley, J. (2008). *Sports in society: Issues and controversies* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Collins, M. (2017). Looking back at leisure: An abridged version of ‘the growth of many leisures? Three decades of leisure studies 1982–2011. *Leisure Studies*, 36(2), 163–169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2017.1288755>
- Edwards, R., & Fowler, Z. (2007). Unsettling boundaries in making a space for research. *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(1), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920601104565>
- Eklblom-Bak, E., Eklblom, Ö., Andersson, G., Wallin, P., & Eklblom, B. (2018). Physical education and leisure-time physical activity in youth are both important for adulthood activity, physical performance, and health. *Journal of Physical Activity & Health*, 15(9), 661–670. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jpah.2017-0083>
- Evans, J. (2014). Ideational border crossings: Rethinking the politics of knowledge within and across disciplines. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(1), 45–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2012.739466>
- Fitzpatrick, K. (2022). Physical education: A reflection on subject status, the critical, and the wellbeing agenda. *Sport, Education and Society*, 1–14. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2022.2077718>
- Fletcher, T., Carnicelli, S., Lawrence, S., & Snape, R. (2017). Reclaiming the ‘L’ word: Leisure studies and UK higher education in neoliberal times. *Leisure Studies*, 36(2), 293–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2016.1261182>
- Fletcher, T., Ni Chronin, D., Gleddie, D., & Beni, S. (2021). *Meaningful physical education: An approach for teaching and learning*. Routledge.
- Flintoff, A., & Scraton, S. (2001). Stepping into active leisure? Young women’s perceptions of active lifestyles and their experiences of school physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 6(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713696043>
- Gard, M. (2014). eHPE: A history of the future. *Sport, Education and Society*, 19(6), 827–845. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.938036>
- Goodyear, V., Wood, G., Skinner, B., & Thompson, J. L. (2021). The effect of social media interventions on physical activity and dietary behaviors in young people and adults: A systematic review. *The International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 18(72). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-021-01138-3>
- Gray, S., Hooper, O., & Sandford, R. (2022). *Comparing PE curricula across the UK home nations: Creating conditions for cross-border conversations*. BERA Blog. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/comparing-pe-curricula-across-the-uk-home-nations-creating-conditions-for-cross-border-conversations>
- Green, K. (2020). Physical education and school sport: Is there a wider social role? In S. Capel & R. Blair (Eds.), *Debates in physical education* (2nd ed., pp. 18–36). Routledge.

- Green, K., Smith, A., & Roberts, K. (2005). Young people and lifelong participation in sport and physical activity: A sociological perspective on contemporary physical education programmes in England and Wales. *Leisure Studies*, 24(1), 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0261436042000231637>
- Gruber, J. J. (1985). Physical activity and self-esteem development in children: A meta-analysis. *The Academy Papers*, 19, 330–348.
- Guttman, A. (1978). *From ritual to record: The nature of modern sports*. Columbia University Press.
- Hagger, M. S., Chatzisarantis, N. L., Culverhouse, T., & Biddle, S. J. (2003). The processes by which perceived autonomy support in physical education promotes leisure-time physical activity intentions and behavior: A trans-contextual model. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(4), 784–795. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.95.4.784>
- Harris, J., & Cale, L. (2022). *The role of physical education in health: Expectations, challenges and opportunities*. Routledge.
- Hawkins, A. (2008). Pragmatism, purpose and play: Struggle for the soul of physical education. *Quest*, 60(3), 345–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2008.10483585>
- Haworth, J. (2003). Editorial: Leisure and wellbeing. *Leisure Studies*, 22(4), 317–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0261436032000148460>
- Haywood, L., Kew, F., Bramham, P., Spink, J., Capenerhurt, J., & Henry, I. (1989). *Understanding leisure*. Routledge.
- Hopsicker, P. M., & Hochstetler, D. (2016). The future of sport philosophy in higher education kinesiology. *Quest*, 68(3), 240–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2016.1181556>
- Huizinga, J. (1955). *Homo ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*. The Beacon Press.
- Janssen, I. (2014). Active play: An important physical activity strategy in the fight against childhood obesity. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 105(1), 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.17269/cjph.105.4154>
- Jefferson-Buchanan, R. (2022). Teaching fundamental movement skills through play-based pedagogy. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 93(8), 28–33. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2022.2108171>
- Kalajas-Tilga, H., Hein, V., Koka, A., Tilga, H., Raudsepp, L., & Hagger, M. (2022). Application of the trans-contextual model to predict change in leisure time physical activity. *Psychology & Health*, 37(1), 62–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08870446.2020.1869741>
- Kirk, D. (2018). A new critical pedagogy for physical education in ‘turbulent times’: What are the possibilities. In R. Pringle, H. Larsson, & G. Gerdin (Eds.), *Critical research in sport, health and physical education* (pp.106–119). Routledge.
- Kirk, D. (2020). Government and physical education. In S. Capel & R. Blair (Eds.), *Debates in physical education* (2nd ed., pp. 3–18). Routledge.
- Liu, H. L., Lavender-Stott, E. S., Carotta, C. L., & Garcia, A. S. (2022). Leisure experience and participation and its contribution to stress-related growth amid COVID-19 pandemic. *Leisure Studies*, 41(1), 70–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2021.1942526>
- Makopoulou, K., Penney, D., Neville, R., & Thomas, G. (2022). What sort of ‘inclusion’ is continuing professional development promoting? An investigation of a national CPD programme for inclusive physical education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 26(3), 245–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1647297>
- Mansfield, L. (2021). Leisure and health – critical commentary. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 24(3), 283–294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2020.1767664>
- Mata-Codesal, D., Peperkamp, E., & Tiesler, N. C. (2015). Migration, migrants and leisure: Meaningful leisure? *Leisure Studies*, 34(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2015.992620>
- McNamee, M. (2005). The nature and values of physical education. In K. Green & K. Hardman (Eds.), *Physical education: Essential issues* (pp. 1–21). Sage.
- Mowatt, R. (2021). A people’s future of leisure studies: Leisure with the enemy under COVID-19. *Leisure Sciences*, 43(1–2), 43–49. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2020.1773981>
- Newell, K. M. (2007). Kinesiology: Challenges of multiple agendas. *Quest*, 59(1), 5–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2007.10483532>
- Øksnes, M. (2008). The carnival goes on and on! Children’s perceptions of their leisure time and play in SFO. *Leisure Studies*, 27(2), 149–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614360701757140>

- Quarmby, T., & Dagkas, S. (2010). Children's engagement in leisure time physical activity: Exploring family structure as a determinant. *Leisure Studies*, 29(1), 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614360903242560>
- Quennerstedt, M. (2019). Healthying physical education – on the possibility of learning health. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 24(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2018.1539705>
- Roberts, K. (2009). *Youth in transition: Eastern Europe and the West*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schary, D. P., & Cardinal, B. J. (2015). Interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary research and teaching in kinesiology: Continuing the conversation. *Quest*, 67(2), 173–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2015.1017586>
- Sevil-Serrano, J., Aibar, A., Abós, A., Generelo, E., & García-González, L. (2022). Improving motivation for physical activity and physical education through a school-based intervention. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 90(2), 383–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2020.1764466>
- Shen, B., McCaughtry, N., & Martin, J. (2007). The influence of self-determination in physical education on leisure-time physical activity behavior. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 78(4), 328–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2007.10599430>
- Siedentop, D. (1990). *Introduction to physical education, fitness and sport*. Mayfield Pub Co.
- Silk, M., Caudwell, J., & Gibson, H. (2017). Views on leisure studies: Pasts, presents & future possibilities? *Leisure Studies*, 36(2), 153–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2017.1290130>
- Silk, M. L., Andrews, D. L., & Thorpe, H. (2017). Introduction. In M. L. Silk, D. L. Andrews, & H. Thorpe (Eds.), *Handbook of physical cultural studies* (pp. 1–12). Routledge.
- Simonton, K. L., Richards, A. R., & Washburn, N. (2021). Understanding emotion in physical education teaching: A conceptual framework for research and practice. *Quest*, 73(3), 306–322. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2021.1915352>
- Snape, R., & Spracklen, K. (2019). Introduction: Robert Snape and Karl Spracklen. *Leisure/Loisir*, 43(2), 155–158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14927713.2019.1613315>
- Standeven, J., & Thompson, G. B. (1986). Education for leisure — a comparison of current physical education and recreation approaches in selected English and Canadian high schools. *Leisure Studies*, 5(3), 361–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614368600390271>
- Stebbins, R. A. (2005). Research reflections: Choice and experiential definitions of leisure. *Leisure Sciences*, 27(4), 349–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400590962470>
- Stebbins, R. A. (2015). *The interrelationship of leisure and play, play as leisure, leisure as play*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stolz, S. A., & Kirk, D. (2015). David Kirk on physical education and sport pedagogy: In dialogue with Steven Stolz (part 1). *Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education*, 6(1), 77–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18377122.2014.997862>
- Stormann, W. F. (1984). The promised leisure: An illusion. *Quest*, 36(2), 147–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.1984.10483809>
- Suits, B. (2007). The elements of sport. In W. J. Morgan (Ed.), *Ethics in sport* (pp. 9–19). Human Kinetics.
- Szostak, R. (2016). Interdisciplinary best practices for adapted physical activity. *Quest*, 68(1), 69–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2015.1117001>
- Tsui, A. B., & Law, D. Y. (2007). Learning as boundary-crossing in school–university partnership. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(8), 1289–1301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.06.003>
- Twietmeyer, G. (2012). What is kinesiology? Historical and philosophical insights. *Quest*, 64(1), 4–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2012.653268>
- Varea, V. (2018). Exploring play in school recess and physical education classes. *European Physical Education Review*, 24(2), 194–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X16679932>
- Vertinsky, P. (2009). Mind the gap (or Mending it): Qualitative research and interdisciplinarity in kinesiology. *Quest*, 61(1), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.2009.10483599>
- Wallhead, T. L., Garn, A. C., & Vidoni, C. (2013). Sport education and social goals in physical education: Relationships with enjoyment, relatedness, and leisure-time physical activity. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 18(4), 427–441. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2012.690377>



- Wallhead, T. L., Garn, A. C., & Vidoni, C. (2014). Effect of a sport education program on motivation for physical education and leisure-time physical activity. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 85(4), 478–487. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02701367.2014.961051>
- Wankel, L. M. (1994). Health and leisure: Inextricably linked. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 65(4), 28–31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.1994.10606894>
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Whitehead, M. (2020). What is education in physical education? In S. Capel & R. Blair (Eds.), *Debates in physical education* (2nd ed., pp. 87–103). Routledge.
- Zeigler, E. F. (1965). A philosophical analysis of recreation and leisure. *Quest*, 5(1), 8–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.1965.10519594>