
Citation:

Sharp, B and Finkel, R and Dashper, K (2024) Editorial: Transformations and Transgressions: Explorations of 'Restricted' Leisure during COVID-19. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 27 (1). pp. 1-6. ISSN 1174-5398 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2024.2304317>

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:

<https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/10428/>

Document Version:

Article (Accepted Version)

Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0

© 2024 Australia and New Zealand Association of Leisure Studies

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please [contact us](#) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Transformations and Transgressions: Explorations of ‘Restricted’ Leisure during COVID-19

Briony Sharp, Rebecca Finkel and Katherine Dashper

Annals of Leisure Research

<https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2024.2304317>.

It is hard to overstate the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on human societies around the world, even if, as we write this introduction in early 2024, the strangeness and uncertainty of the early stages of the pandemic are fading from public consciousness. During the peak of the pandemic, all aspects of day-to-life were affected, as people feared for their lives and those of their loved ones and communities. Many parts of the world went into ‘lockdown’, and social interactions were severely constrained. In this strange new world, leisure also took on different meanings, forms, and importance (see Sharp et al., 2023). Once taken-for-granted leisure activities, especially those in public spaces and involving other people, became impossible and often forbidden. Yet, at the same time, the importance of leisure to our well-being and relationships became ever-more apparent. As is often the case, it is only when something is taken away or threatened that we realise its value. Although the pandemic severely constrained leisure opportunities and practices, leisure took on extra importance in our uncertain and often isolated lives. Leisure was reimagined, transformed, altered, reshaped, and renegotiated under these unprecedented circumstances, and the aim of this special issue is to capture some of those transformations and the resilience of people and their leisure lives.

In this special issue, the authors investigate how COVID-19 has influenced leisure practices worldwide. The collection of articles showcases both the transformations necessary for some leisure practices to continue as well as transgressive leisure exchanges and undertakings in response to social restrictions. There has been a visible response to COVID-19 throughout leisure research covering a wide range of areas including, but not limited to, the future of leisure (Mowatt, 2021), leisure mobilities (Butler et al., 2021; Mertzanis et al., 2023), stress and anxiety (Lui et al., 2022; Bae & Chang, 2023), social wellbeing (Son et al., 2021), social control (Gabriel et al., 2021) and age-related impacts (Wegner et al., 2022; Tavares & Marinho, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Initial responses illustrated the rapid, unprecedented changes that had to take place to leisure practices and communities worldwide (Sivan 2020). This was a time of global uncertainty, even fear. Researchers noted that boredom and anxiety levels increased, and that active leisure and technology were important ways in which many people tried to cope with the isolation and frustration and limit negative impacts on mental health (Meira et al., 2020). COVID-19-related publications in 2020 represented rapid responses to this unexpected global event, and papers were necessarily based on quick, easy to conduct research (such as online surveys) or opinion pieces. There has since been more time to both research the impacts of the pandemic on leisure lives and practices more fully and to reflect on the deeper, long-term implications lockdowns and social distancing have had for leisure around the world, as the papers in this special issue illustrate. The pandemic has reinforced the importance of leisure for mental health and resilience (Takiguchi et al., 2023), providing hope and possibilities to connect with others (Liu et al., 2023). When normal life was turned on its head, routines were disrupted, and leisure

became even more important for many (Roberts, 2023). However, the pandemic also exposed deep inequalities between those who had more time and resources to spend on leisure and those with limited access to and ability to engage with outdoor leisure spaces and online leisure communities (Dashper & King, 2022; Dalmer et al., 2023).

Increasingly, the COVID-19 narrative is fading within day-to-day vocabulary and social media as a sense of normality resumes globally and everyday activities either continue in a transformed state or return to pre-COVID-19 practice. It is easy to see how the drastic changes to leisure experiences, spaces and communities could be forgotten, or deemed less dramatic than they were as we experienced them in the early stages of the pandemic. However, this would lose an important part of the picture of that strange year and the vital role that leisure played within it. The articles in this special issue portray a real-life snapshot of lived experience with COVID-19 restrictions and leisure. Specifically and uniquely, they focus on the transgressive reactions to leisure restrictions within some circumstances as well as the necessary transformations needed to persist in finding ways to interact. In so doing, they help document the centrality of leisure to human experiences during this unprecedented global phenomenon.

Viewing leisure through a COVID-19 lens involves exploring restrictions on social interaction, movement, gatherings, and cultural activities that caused people worldwide to change their patterns of behaviour and their perspectives about what is socially acceptable when it comes to leisure experiences. The combined contribution of these articles tackles unknown territory across a wide range of academic fields within leisure including what is considered safe practice, leisure in crisis, creativity and innovation, digital practice and consumption, risk taking, police enforcement and social control. Exploring leisure in this way aligned with COVID-19 does not relate solely to a particular country or region; on the contrary, the articles in this special issue reflect a global response to crisis highlighting cultural and national contexts. This cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, and cross-geographical special issue showcases a global shift in leisure.

The special issue begins with Carnicelli's (2023) critical commentary, in which he develops the theme of inequalities in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on themes of conformity, family and home complexities, social class implications, and the necessity for a longitudinal impact study, Carnicelli offers valuable insights into the diverse facets of the leisure spectrum. Following on from this, the papers are divided into two related sections: Leisure Transformations and Leisure Transgressions.

Leisure Transformations

The first half of this special issue concentrates on leisure transformations as a result of COVID-19 restrictions; specifically, these articles encompass how restricted leisure has resulted in transformation in the ways leisure activities are practised. A key theme emerging from this special issue is wellbeing and social relationships. The need to reimagine and repurpose space for leisure was a vital part of the transformation of daily activities. This can be seen in reimagining domestic space to become workspaces, children's home-school spaces, and leisure spaces as discussed in this special issue by Morris and Orton-Johnson (2022) study of home camping, which changed and limited the opportunity for social interaction and has been linked to feelings of isolation (Devine-Wright et al., 2020; Lal et al., 2021; Meier et al., 2021).

Similar feelings of loss, loneliness, or lack of meaningful engagement were present in findings concerning sport and recreation activities from Hedenborg et al., (2022) where the outdoorification transformation process provided a lifeline to participants to escape being confined indoors. These articles highlight the transformation opportunities for an existing leisure pastime - camping becomes camping at home - and, outdoorification of typical indoor sporting activities. Interestingly, a finding that suggested comfort rather than confinement in the home was echoed across a number of the articles. The notion of being surrounded by a sense of self and comfort at home (Hedenborg et al., 2022; Mansfield et al., 2022) amidst uncertainty and threatened safety in the outside world is a valuable reflection that perhaps links to the health and safety concerns brought by COVID-19. Moreover, Antchak et al. (2022) explore the transformation of a different perspective where a balcony, typically used as an extension to one's living space, became a public event venue. These so-called 'balcony performances' are heralded as platforms to foster community cohesion and resilience amongst times of uncertainty as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. Their article goes on to share findings that suggest that utilising residential balconies as spaces to share leisure activities at a safe distance enabled a sense of hope and positivity to emerge from shared feelings of fear and worry during 2020. The repurposed role of leisure in these studies provided comfort in friends, families, and social groups that allowed reassurance in a time of uncertainty. Kosmaczewska (2022) presents findings that include both the notion of staying home as a way of complying with restrictions (cocooning), as well as an exposing or 'getting out' attitude towards imposed leisure-related changes. Her research investigates geocachers' behaviour in Poland during COVID-19 and discusses perceptions of risk and perceived uncertainty. Findings suggest that despite the pandemic-led risk and uncertainty, the close link to nature and ability to participate in geocaching outside of large groups, the majority of respondents in this research continued to participate regardless of restrictions in Poland. Bachman and Hull's (2022) article also echoes the theme of reassurance in transformation, particularity for underrepresented communities. Findings in their article explored elements of both in-person and online festivals, ultimately emphasising the perceived value in satisfaction of in-person festivals combined with higher loyalty and accessibility and diversity opportunities through virtual festivals.

Leisure Transgressions

The second half of this special issue delves into the nature of transgressive leisure, as people negotiated and pushed the boundaries of what activities, forms and spaces were acceptable - formally and informally - under the restrictions of the pandemic. The articles capture themes of social acceptance, digital consumption, travel-risk, uncertainty, enforcement, and disruption to access within the bounds of leisure practices and spaces. Specifically, Elliot and Lever (2022) present research rooted in travel-related social media usage throughout COVID-19 restrictions in Canada. The authors observe changes made in travel-related online sharing due to restrictions and media; these shifts highlighted the move from other-focus behaviours to self-focused behaviours, therefore reducing the risk of negativity from peers. Overall, this article highlights the redefined relationship between digital interactions and value associated with travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, with that, posits the impact of the future of leisure within growing virtual communities and norms. Furthermore, Norman et al. (2022), also situated in Canada, contributed research analysing media outlets' diffusion of social control amidst COVID-19 leisure-related restrictions. The authors highlight the complex position of leisure time and space during this time, as, for many people,

leisure became extremely meaningful in new ways. However, it also exemplified social inequality and inconsistency in restrictions. A central story across media outlets at the time centred on debating health risk vs. benefits of leisure as a space to grasp for hope and social normalcy. While the pandemic provided many with opportunities for positive transformations of practices and spaces, as discussed in the articles in the previous section, it also exposed those already marginalised (through class, race, age, health status etc.) to social censure as they were often seen to be transgressing norms of acceptable behaviour.

Situating this Special Issue and Contribution to Leisure Research

Reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of leisure research, this special issue has assembled authors that are subject experts in a wide range of areas such as virtual communities, sport and recreation, community cohesion, and everyday creativity. They are affiliated with universities across North America and Europe representing varying COVID-19 restrictions and responses both nationally and globally. The articles published utilise diverse research methods including quantitative surveys, qualitative evidence reviews, semi-structured and in-depth interviews, national surveys, regional public participation, social media, content analysis and discourse analysis, and drew upon a range of single or multiple case studies examples to embed their argument within relevant literature. The variety in size and scope of the articles published represent the extensive nature of leisure and the extent to which most aspects of everyday life were impacted by COVID-19 in 2020. Therefore, it provides a snapshot of the lived reality of communities, consumers, families, and researchers navigating a global crisis and should be understood in those circumstances of representing a specific moment in history. Thus, it provides a time capsule of how we lived, coped, and constructed meaning through new leisure practices during those uncertain times.

References

- Antchak, V., Gorchakova, V. and Rossetti, G., 2022. The value of events in times of uncertainty: insights from balcony performances in Italy during the COVID-19 lockdown. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-18.
- Assiter, B., 2022. From dancefloors to tables: socially distanced clubbing, temporary urbanism, and the gentrification of London's nightlife. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-7.
- Bachman, J.R. and Hull, J.S., 2022. From the theatre to the living room: comparing queer film festival patrons and outcomes before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-20.
- Bae, S.Y. and Chang, P.J., 2023. Stress, anxiety, leisure changes, and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Leisure Research*, pp.1-23.
- Butler, G., Szili, G., Cutler, C., Hay, I. and Saikia, U., 2021. Changing Australian leisure mobilities in the COVID-19 pandemic: Exploring the role of automobilities. *Leisure Studies*, 40(5), pp.698-713.

Dalmer, N. K., Sawchuk, D., & Ly, M. (2023). "I felt there was a big chunk taken out of my life": COVID-19 and older adults' library-based magazine leisure reading. *Leisure Studies*, 42(1), 118-132.

Dashper, K., & King, J. (2022). The outdoors as a contested leisure terrain. *Annals of leisure research*, 25(3), 435-443.

Elliot, S. and Lever, M.W., 2022. You Want to go where? Shifts in social media behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-15.

Gabriel, M.G., Brown, A., León, M. and Outley, C., 2021. Power and social control of youth during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Leisure Sciences*, 43(1-2), pp.240-246.

Kumar, A. and Nayar, K.R., 2021. COVID 19 and its mental health consequences. *Journal of Mental Health*, 30(1), pp.1-2.

Hedenborg, S., Fredman, P., Hansen, A.S. and Wolf-Watz, D., 2022. Outdoorification of sports and recreation: a leisure transformation under the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-19.

Kosmaczewska, J., 2022. Should I stay or should I go out? Leisure and tourism consumption of geocachers under the existence of COVID restrictions and economic uncertainty in Poland. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-19.

Lal, B., Dwivedi, Y.K. and Haag, M., 2021. Working from home during Covid-19: doing and managing technology-enabled social interaction with colleagues at a distance. *Information Systems Frontiers*, pp.1-18.

Liu, H.L., Lavender-Stott, E.S., Carotta, C.L. and Garcia, A.S., 2022. Leisure experience and participation and its contribution to stress-related growth amid COVID-19 pandemic. *Leisure Studies*, 41(1), pp.70-84.

Liu, H. L., Carotta, C. L., Lavender-Stott, E. S., & Garcia, A. S. (2023). Thriving through stress: leisure satisfaction, hope, growth, and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *World Leisure Journal*, 1-20.

Mansfield, L., Daykin, N., Golding, A. and Ewbank, N., 2022. Understanding everyday creativity: a framework drawn from a qualitative evidence review of home-based arts. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-32.

Meier, J.V., Noel, J.A. and Kaspar, K., 2021. Alone together: computer-mediated communication in leisure time during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, p.666655.

Meira Jr, C. M., Meneguelli, K. S., Leopoldo, M. P., & Florindo, A. A. (2020). Anxiety and leisure-domain physical activity frequency, duration, and intensity during Covid-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 603770.

Mertzanis, C., Papastathopoulos, A., Koutra, C. and Marashdeh, H., 2022. COVID-19, mobility, leisure, and travel around the world. *Journal of Leisure Research*, pp.1-23.

Morris, N.J. and Orton-Johnson, K., 2022. Camping at home: escapism, self-care, and social bonding during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-22.

Mowatt, R.A., 2021. A people's future of leisure studies: Leisure with the enemy under COVID-19. *Leisure Sciences*, 43(1-2), pp.43-49.

Norman, M., Silva, D., Kennedy, L. and Cipolli III, W., 2022. 'Essential for the soul'? : leisure as a flashpoint during COVID-19 lockdowns in Ontario, Canada. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-20.

Rich, K. and Sharpe, E., 2022. Securing hipster leisure: park policy in gentrifying neighbourhoods. *Annals of Leisure Research*, pp.1-8.

Roberts, K. (2023). Time use, work and leisure in the UK before, during, between and following the Covid-19 lockdowns. *Leisure Studies*, 42(1), 56-68.

Sampogna, G., Pompili, M. and Fiorillo, A., 2022. Mental health in the time of Covid-19 pandemic: A worldwide perspective. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 19(1), p.161.

Sivan, A. (2020). Reflection on leisure during COVID-19. *World Leisure Journal*, 62(4), 296-299.

Son, J.S., Nimrod, G., West, S.T., Janke, M.C., Liechty, T. and Naar, J.J., 2021. Promoting older adults' physical activity and social well-being during COVID-19. *Leisure Sciences*, 43(1-2), pp.287-294.

Sutin, A.R., Stephan, Y., Luchetti, M., Aschwanden, D., Lee, J.H., Sesker, A.A. and Terracciano, A., 2022. Differential personality change earlier and later in the coronavirus pandemic in a longitudinal sample of adults in the United States. *Plos one*, 17(9), p.e0274542.

Takiguchi, Y., Matsui, M., Kikutani, M., & Ebina, K. (2023). The relationship between leisure activities and mental health: The impact of resilience and COVID-19. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 15(1), 133-151.

Tavares, L.M. and Marinho, A., 2021. Leisure and COVID-19: Reflections on Brazilian older adults who frequent urban public parks. *World Leisure Journal*, 63(3), pp.229-243.

Wegner, L., Stirrup, S., Desai, H. and De Jongh, J.C., 2022. "This pandemic has changed our daily living": Young adults' leisure experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 29(3), pp.323-335.

Yan, Y., Wang, X., Zhang, R. and Zhang, Y., 2023. The relationship between leisure activities and the mental health of college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *World Leisure Journal*, 65(1), pp.119-142.