

A close-up photograph of curling stones on a blue ice surface. In the foreground, a large, dark grey stone with a yellow top is partially visible. In the background, two smaller stones, one red and one black with a yellow top, are visible. A white rope is coiled on the ice surface.

Curling and Rural Women's Health in Canada: A National Photovoice Study

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Funded by Sport Canada

The image features a close-up of a large, dark, textured curling stone in the upper left corner. In the background, several other curling stones in various colors (red, black, yellow) are visible. The background is light blue and white with decorative white circular lines. The word "Background" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font on the right side of the image.

Background

- Curling is central to many rural communities
 - more than 28% of Canadian curlers live in communities with fewer than 10,000 people (CCA, 2008)
- Few health, recreation, or other resources exist in rural communities
- Rural people are less healthy and have shorter life expectancies compared to urban residents (CIHI, 2006; Romanow, 2004)

A close-up photograph of curling stones on an ice rink. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured stone is prominent. In the background, several other stones in various colors (red, black, yellow) are visible, along with the white bristles of a curling broom. The scene is brightly lit, creating a clean, professional look.

Why Rural Women?

- Rural communities in Canada are feminized aging communities
- Rural communities tend to support men and boys in sports, to the exclusion or minimizing of women and girls. e.g. hockey
- How can curling and health in rural communities be enriched to include women and girls?

A close-up photograph of curling stones on a blue ice surface. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured stone is partially visible. In the background, two more stones are visible, one with a red band and one with a yellow band. The scene is lit with bright, cool light, creating a blue and white color palette. The title 'Purpose of the Study' is overlaid in a bold, blue, sans-serif font on the right side of the image.

Purpose of the Study

- To explore effects of curling on the health and community life of rural women
- To determine how health, sport, and recreation can be understood within the contexts of rural gender and community change
- To assess the utility of photovoice, an innovative participatory research methodology and method, in advancing research with rural women

A close-up photograph of curling stones on an ice rink. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured stone is prominent. In the background, several other stones in various colors (red, black, yellow) are visible. A white curling broom is partially visible on the right side. The background is slightly blurred, showing the ice surface and some white lines.

The Research

- A national 4 year study in Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and the North West Territories
- Social capital and ethnography methods (Chambers, 2000; Seippel, 2006)
- Photovoice - developed for research with rural women; founded on feminist, critical consciousness, and PAR philosophies; facilitates inclusivity and empowerment (Wang & Burris, 1997)
- Rural definition: Populations living outside the commuting zone of urban centres with more than 10,000 inhabitants (du Plessis et al., 2002)

A close-up photograph of curling stones on a blue ice surface. In the foreground, a large, dark, textured stone is partially visible. In the background, several other stones in various colors (red, black, yellow) are arranged. The image is overlaid with a white graphic of several overlapping circles.

Study Participants

- 49 women and 3 girls, aged 12 to 75 years, average age range 50-60 years, from 8 rural communities in Ontario, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and the North West Territories
- Location: Half lived on a farm/acreage (5 to 30 km from town) and half lived in a town (300 to 5000 people)
- Education: Ranged from Grade 7-8 (2 children, 1 adult) to Post-secondary education (26)
- Marital status: Majority were married, 12 were single
- Curling experience: Ranged from less than two years to 16 or more years





Method

- Camera orientation session, then 2 weeks for picture taking and log book recording, then focus group session to discuss photos
- 955 photos taken; 52 log books with information
- Participants participate in analysis. Several strategies used for analysis of photo, log book, and focus group data (Leipert & Smith, 2008; Oliffe et al., 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997)
- NVIVO used for data management

Findings



Enhances Physical and Mental Health and Resiliency



“Curling really motivates me to keep in shape. It really does. It’s a big motivator.”

-F., 64 years old, retired school teacher

Facilitates Social Connections



“...curling people stick together. My son is 18 now and he will tell you that [his curling friends are like] family.”

-L., 43 years old

Supports Rural Community Life



“The curling club is such a big part of the community especially in a small rural town like ours.”

-K., 24 years old

Provides a Valued and Visible Presence for Women in Community



- Women's contributions (food, organization, etc.) were visible and valued
- Need for expanded gender roles e.g. women as icemakers



Believe/Inspiration Hope for the future

“...seeing that on the ice makes you think that one day we could actually be there [at the Olympics]”

- E., 17 years old



A close-up photograph of curling stones on a blue ice surface. In the foreground, a large, dark grey stone with a yellow band is prominent. In the background, two other stones, one red and one black, are visible. A white curling broom is partially visible in the lower right corner.

Findings and Recommendations

- To enhance curling for rural women and girls:
 - More coaching and support in schools and curling rinks - include as part of school programs
 - More celebration of the curling achievements of girls and women
 - Maintain day curling to enhance participation by rural seniors (who are predominantly women)

A close-up photograph of curling stones on an ice rink. In the foreground, a large, dark grey stone with a yellow band is partially visible. In the background, several other stones in various colors (red, black, yellow) are scattered on the ice. The background is softly blurred, and there are some white, glowing circular patterns overlaid on the image.

Findings and Recommendations

- Increase valuing of curling, similar to hockey, in small town Canada; need external support for survival and sustaining of small clubs e.g. CCA, Sport Canada
- Increase media attention to curling in international (e.g. Olympics, world competitions), national (e.g. CBC), and local (e.g. newspapers, billboards) venues
- Further research on the health and community effects of rural sports such as curling is clearly indicated



Findings and Recommendations

- This research significantly enhances understanding of how gender and recreation intersect to influence rural women's health, social capital, and rural community change, development, and sustainability.
- Photovoice methodology greatly enriched recruitment, data collection, analysis, & dissemination
- Nursing education should include learning about photovoice, and rural health, for research and practice, ideally with experts in the methodology and rural practice.

The background of the slide features a close-up of a large, dark, textured curling stone in the foreground on the left. In the background, two more curling stones are visible, one with a red top and one with a yellow top. The scene is set on a light-colored, reflective surface, possibly ice, with some white circular lines overlaid on the right side.

Selected References

Leipert, B., Leach, B., & Thurston, W. (Eds.). (2012). *Rural women's health*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

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Mair, H. (2007). Curling in Canada: From gathering place to international spectacle. *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 35, 39-60.