

FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' DECISIONS ABOUT
THEIR CHILDREN'S SPORTS PARTICIPATION

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THESIS: FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S SPORTS
PARTICIPATION


by
Hugh Weir

Presented as part of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure
Management within the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management at Vancouver
Island University

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DECLARATION

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Department of Recreation & Tourism Management for acceptance, the thesis titled "FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S SPORTS PARTICIPATION," submitted by Hugh Weir in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management.



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ABSTRACT

The costs associated with physical inactivity are an increasing concern. Although the solution to this problem is physical activity, a longer-term solution would involve promoting physical activity at a young age, and throughout one's life (Jansen, 2012; Vanreusel, et al., 1997). Physical Literacy (PL) is the mastering of fundamental movement and sport skills, which allows an individual to participate in many forms of activity in everyday life (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011a). While physical literacy focuses on the growth of the whole person, Early Sport Specialization (ESS) takes place when a child is limited to participating fully in only one (or sometimes two) sports, that focuses on training, development, and competition at a very young age (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Copley, et al). The purpose of this study was to identify factors influencing parents' decisions about their children's sport participation. This study utilized surveys to obtain data that were conducted in the Cowichan Valley through face-to-face intercept and online through email to target various sports associations. Results indicated that there were several factors influencing parents' decisions about their children's sport participation. One major result was that parents tended to be more aware of the concept of PL compared to ESS, and they valued PL more than ESS. Results also showed that parents valued physical activity of their children more than they did for themselves. PL allows for children to develop the skills necessary to be competent in basic movement and sport skills, creating a foundation for lifelong physical activity. Parents may look at participation in organized sports differently, if they understood why PL is important in a child's holistic development. Understanding and expanding our knowledge regarding the promotion, benefits, and

evaluation of the benefits of these concepts may help in the future development of more holistic, institutional, and community plans.

Contents

Introduction	8
Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization Frameworks	9
Leisure/Sport Decision Making	10
Research Purpose & Questions.....	11
Thesis	11
Literature Review	13
Physical Literacy and the Complete Life Experience.....	13
The Importance of Physical Literacy	14
The Achievement of Physical Literacy.....	15
Physical Literacy for Indigenous Peoples	17
Physical Literacy vs. Traditional Sport Development Models.....	17
The Value of Early Sport Specialization (ESS).....	18
Labelling	18
Skilled Coaches.....	18
Scholarships	19
Professional.....	20
Parental Involvement and Influence.....	20
Financial Support	21
Adult Time Spent with Children	21
Parental Promotion and Encouragement	22
Methodology.....	24
Introduction	24
Research Design	24
Sampling.....	26
Method Implementation	26
Survey Design.....	26
Ethical Considerations.....	27
Method Rationale	28
The Researcher	28
Data Analysis & Results.....	30
Data Analysis.....	30

Results.....	32
Socio-Demographic Profile of Sample	32
Awareness of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization.....	35
Cronbach’s Alphas for Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization	38
Valuing of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization	40
Values of physical activity and inactivity	44
Reasons for putting children in organized sports	46
Difficulties faced after entry into sports	46
Discussion.....	48
Awareness of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization.....	48
Valuing of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization	50
Values Regarding Physical Activity and Inactivity	50
Reasons for Enrolling Children & Difficulties Faced in Organized Sports	51
Limitations	52
Future Research	52
Conclusion.....	54
References	55
Appendix A: Email Consent Form	59
Appendix B: Face to Face Consent Form	60
Appendix C: Recruitment Letter	61
Appendix D: Survey.....	62

"children who never learn to read or write become adults who can't read or write. Should we be surprised that children who never develop movement skills become inactive, uncoordinated adults?" (Active For Life, 2015, para. 1-2).

Introduction

The World Health Organization recognizes insufficient physical activity as one of the leading risk factors for death worldwide and is a key risk factor for noncommunicable diseases, such as cancer (World Health Organization, 2015). In Canada, in the 1990's it was estimated that due to physical inactivity 21,000 lives were lost, resulting in \$2.1 billion dollars in direct Canadian health care costs (Katzmarzyk, Gledhill, & Shephard, 2000). More recently, Krueger, Hans, Turner, Krueger, and Ready (2014) calculated the direct Canadian health care cost of sedentary behavior was at \$10 billion, an increase of five times the 1990 estimate. Physical inactivity has been linked to individuals carrying excess weight, costing the Canadian Health Care System an added \$19 billion annually.

The costs associated with physical inactivity are an increasing concern. Although the solution to this problem is simply to engage in physical activity, a longer-term solution would involve promoting physical activity at a young age, and throughout one's life (Jansen, 2012; Vanreusel, et al., 1997). Starting at a young age, being physically active helps with the maturation of the human body, including bone and skeletal health, healthy body weight, and motor skill development, while also having an essential impact on psychosocial health, and cognitive development (Jansen, 2012). Physical activity from a young age leads to ongoing physical activity later in life (Vanreusel, et al., 1997), thus making participation at a young age

very important. Further, many diseases and conditions that adults and older adults face, such as poor mental health, substance abuse, obesity, and loss of muscle can be controlled, improved, or even prevented through adequate physical activity (Chodzko-Zajko, 2014; Fuzhong, 2012). As such, it is important to understand factors influencing children's participation or non-participation in physical activity and sport.

The purpose of this study is to identify factors influencing parents' decisions about their children's sport participation. The research design and data analysis was informed by the Physical Literacy (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011a; International Physical Literacy Association, 2014; Pacific Institute For Sport Excellence, 2015; Whitehead, 2001) and Early Sport Specialization (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010) frameworks. These frameworks are critical to developing an enhanced understanding of physical inactivity (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; PHE Canada, 2015; Schwab, Wells, & Arthur-Banning, 2010; Shaw & Shannon, 2008). Being able to identify the factors influencing parental decision-making will assist community and sport organizations to understand better what is influencing parents' decision-making and to develop strategies for encouraging children's physical activity and sport promotion.

Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization Frameworks

The physical literacy framework recommends that children develop the skills necessary to be competent in basic movement and sport skills to create a foundation for lifelong physical activity (Canadian Sport For Life, 2015; Janson, K 2012; Whitehead, 2001). More specifically, through the development of fundamental movement skills and fundamental sports skills, this framework suggests that children are able to better understand and react to what is going on

around them (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011a). The physical literacy framework provides children with the tools necessary to participate in a wide variety of physical and everyday activities and sports throughout their life-time (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011a; Farry, n.d.; McCaffery, & Singleton, 2013). Physical Literacy is about creating a healthy lifestyle for people and is not only limited to athletes and sporting activities.

Early Sport Specialization (ESS) tends to be the traditional route that parents use to create success in their child's sporting career (Baker, & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Copley, Fraser-Thomas, & Baker, 2009; Malina, 2010). ESS focuses on what takes place when a child's participation in sports is limited to one or two sports and the focus is on training, development, and competition within those sports (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Copley, et al., 2009; Gould, 2010; Watts, 2002; Wojtys, 2013). The research points to a small number of very successful athletes, including Tiger Woods (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010), but also highlights that this approach also hinders not only success in a particular sport specifically, but also possibly all sports and physical activities in general (Copley, et al., 2009; Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010). The ESS approach to sport skill development can lead to burnout, which results in children and adolescents withdrawing from sports mentally, emotionally, and physically (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Copley, et al., 2009; Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; Watts, 2002). ESS can also lead to children dropping-out of sports altogether (Watts, 2002).

Leisure/Sport Decision Making

Decisions made by children on leisure and sport are formed, in part by people close to them such as parents, peers (Zeijl, te Poel, du Bois-Reymond, Ravesloot, & Meulman, 2000), and coaches (Gould, 2010). However, parents have the most influence due to aspects such as

financial support (Malina, 2010; Zeijl, et al., 2000), time spent with children (Zeijl, et al., 2000), and promotion and encouragement of their children's leisure and sport choices (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; Shaw & Shannon, 2008). It is important, therefore, to better understand the parental factors that affect whether or not a child will participate in sport.

Scope of Research

The research in this study was to determine (a) the level of awareness that parents have of physical literacy and (b) whether they value the concept. The study was also limited to parents with children who were currently involved in organized sport.

Research Purpose & Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify factors influencing parents' decisions about their children's sport participation. The research focused on parents':

- Awareness and valuing of physical literacy and early sport specialization;
- Values regarding physical activity and inactivity;
- Time spent with children participating in physical activities and sports;
- Reasons for putting children into organized sports; and,
- Difficulties faced after their children's entry into organized sports.

Thesis

The following thesis includes a literature review, a description of the methodology and methods, a data analysis with results, and a discussion. First, the literature review provides an overview of the existing literature related to physical literacy, early sport specialization, and parental influence on children's participation in physical activity and sport. Second, the methodology and methods chapter explains the study methodology, identifies the target

population, discusses the research methods used in this study, as well as ethical considerations.

Third, the data analysis and results chapter describes the data analysis techniques that were used along with the results of the study. Finally, the discussion chapter provides additional discussion of the study results, as it relates to the literature.

Literature Review

In this section, the literature related to the following will be highlighted, including: physical literacy and the complete life experience, the importance of physical literacy, the achievement of physical literacy, physical literacy versus traditional sport development models, early sport specialization, and an overview of parental influence and involvement.

Physical Literacy and the Complete Life Experience

In 2001 Whitehead argued that "physical literacy was essential to a complete experience of human life" (p. 127). Since Whitehead's early work, there have been many definitions of physical literacy, most of which keep the idea of the "complete experience of human life" (Whitehead, 2001, p. 127).

The "complete life experience" includes "mastering fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills, motivation, confidence, and physical competence allowing individuals to participate in many forms of activity in everyday life" (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011a; International Physical Literacy Association, 2014; Pacific Institute For Sport Excellence, 2015). Fundamental movement skills and fundamental sport skills can be similar, but are not necessarily the same. Fundamental movement skills prepare an individual to participate in fundamental sport skills. Throwing, for example, is a fundamental movement skill. It requires the ability to throw different sized, weighted, and shaped balls, using one or two hands, at different speeds, etc, but a fundamental sport skill would be to pitch a baseball over home plate (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011b).

The Importance of Physical Literacy

Physical literacy defines the tools necessary to participate in physical activity and sports, while also presenting the opportunity for excellence (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011c; Higgs, Balyi, Way, Cardinal, Norris, & Bluecharadt, 2008). These tools include competence in movement ability, and the aptitude to move safely and use the right movements in different physical settings referred to as *reading* the environment (Whithead, 2001).

Advocates of physical literacy believe that competence in a person's movement and sport skills relates to an individual's enjoyment in, and continuation with, physical activity and sport (McCaffery, & Singleton, 2013; Whitehead, 2001). Other advocates looked at reasons why children dropped out of sports, and discovered that a feeling of lack of competence to be one of the main reasons, which is especially the case for children new to a sport (Butcher, Lindner, and Johns, 2002). Competence in physical movement abilities mitigates a person's perception of their own incompetence, which can then lead to a person participating in different forms of exercise (McCaffery, & Singleton, 2013).

Physical literacy also provides a person with the ability to *read* the environment. Reading the environment is based on one's former experiences learned through physical literacy. A gym floor, hockey rink, swimming pool, or hiking trail are all examples of different environments. By learning how to move and react to these environments from a young age, a person can proceed in a safe and proper manner in future situations. This 'reading' also allows a person to have a partial understanding of new environments that may include elements of previous environments they experienced (Active For Life, 2015; Canadian Sport For Life, 2015; Centres, 2005; Whitehead, 2001). An example of this would be a curler who learns how to

move on ice can learn to walk safely on an icy sidewalk in their everyday life (L. Malbon, personal communication, April 20th, 2018)

In addition, physical literacy is of great importance during a child's developmental stages: mental, cognitive, emotional, and physical (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011c). These levels can be found on the Long Term Athlete Development document provided by Sport for Life. The Stages that fall under physical literacy are *active start* (males aged 3-6 and females aged 3-6), *FUNDamentals* (males aged 6-9 and females aged 6-8), and *learn to train* (males aged 9-12 and females aged 8-11)(Canadian Sport For Life, 2011c). If a person then chooses to pursue a competitive athletic career there are two additional steps that fall outside of the PL stages. These are *train to train* (males aged 12-16 and females aged 11-15) and *train to compete* (males aged 16-19 and females aged 15-18)(Canadian Sport For Life, 2011c).

Finally, the appreciation of physical literacy from a young age is correlated to health-related benefits. If attended to properly, the associated health benefits can act as a means of prevention of chronic injuries, diseases associated with inactivity, and can even slow down the ageing process. However, health benefits derived from physical literacy can be learned at any age.

The Achievement of Physical Literacy

Physical literacy can be achieved in many different ways. Researchers point to sport sampling - also called sport diversification - as a primary means to achieve physical literacy. Sport sampling refers to a child's exposure to many sports at a young age (Cobley, et al., 2009; Gould, 2010; McCaffery & Singleton, 2013). The introduction to many different sports and activities allows for a child to learn different movements and skills, which may be beneficial in

later life (Cobley, et al., 2009; Gould, 2010; McCaffery & Singleton, 2013). Sport sampling is a key component to the physical literacy concept. Furthermore, Gould (2010) argues that "initial evidence also suggests that early sport sampling is linked to a longer sport career and provides a range of experiences, coaches, and contexts that allow participants to maximize positive development experiences that allow them to discover their talents" (p. 36). Sport sampling allows the child to gain valuable movement and sports skills that will allow him or her to participate in a wide variety of activities and sports throughout life. Sport sampling also allows individuals the confidence to pick up new activities and sports later on in life without being discouraged in their inability to perform new activities or sports due to a lack of movement abilities (Active For Life, 2015; Pacific Institute for Sport Excellence, 2015).

For parents who may be interested in their child becoming a professional athlete, the research shows that expert athletes had sampled many sports before narrowing down their participation to one sport in mid-to late-adolescence (Cote, Baker, & Abernethy, 2007). They argue that the play-like engagement in a number of sports was crucial for the development of intrinsic motivation, particularly when training in sports becomes more structured and less inherently enjoyable (Baker, & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Cote, Baker, Abernethy, 2007). Grant Hill (1993), who examined rookie league baseball players, found most of the players had played at least three sports in high school. Ward, Hodges, Starkes, and Williams found that elite soccer players did not specialize until after the age of 16 (cited in Baker, 2003). It is important to note that while sport sampling is an important part of physical literacy and development of the child, it is also important to ensure that children are not participating in so many different sports that they do not have adequate time to rest and heal their bodies (Shafer, 2008).

Physical Literacy for Indigenous Peoples

Interestingly, the Sport for Life organization has developed and created a document for long-term athlete development, a model designed specifically for Indigenous peoples. The document called "Long Term Participant Development Pathway" (Aboriginal Sport for Life, 2016) is very similar to the LTAD model and follows much of the same basic principles, but it includes Indigenous culture, spirituality, intellectual and emotional, and physical values. The model also highlights Indigenous peoples sport and community systems (Aboriginal Sport for Life, 2016).

Physical Literacy vs. Traditional Sport Development Models

While physical literacy focuses on the growth of the whole person, an alternative popular concept is Early Sport Specialization or ESS, (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010). According to the evidence, ESS takes place when children are limited to participating fully in only one, or, sometimes two sports. Early sport specialization focuses on training, development, and competition at a very young age (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Cobley, et al., 2009; Gould, 2010; Watts, 2002; Wojtys, 2013). Cobley, et al., 2009 explain that early sport specialization "includes four specific parameters: early start age in sport; early involvement in one sport (as opposed to participating in several sports); early involvement in focused, high intensity training; and early involvement in competitive sport" (pp. 77-78).

Early sport specialization is often initiated by the parent or parents after they have noticed (real or perceived) some form of talent or promise in their child during their participation in a certain sport (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993). Early sport specialization focuses on the skills and achievement in one (or two) sports and not the

acquisition of numerous movement skills and other sport skills that help build the whole person (for example, as advocated in the physical literacy research).

The Value of Early Sport Specialization (ESS)

The value of Early Sport Specialization relates to many factors. These factors include: labelling of young talented children, more skilled coaches, pursuit of athletic college scholarships, and pursuit of professional sporting careers. Each of these factors will be described below.

Labelling

Labelling (Malina, 2010, p. 365) occurs when a young athlete is deemed gifted or talented by coaches or other parents (Malina, 2010). Labelling is often unavoidable when it comes to talent in any shape or form, but it can have an effect on how the individuals, their parents, and coaches proceed, given the positive reinforcement that comes from it. Labelling can lead to parents encouraging a “talented” child to specialize in a particular sport at an early age, while providing the time, money, and support required to make it happen (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993). Labelling also has a major influence on a child, because around the age of five children begin to compare their skills and characteristics to other children (Harris, & Anderson, 2010). As well, positive reinforcement for a child to continue in specialized sport activities can come from the child’s peers (Harris, & Anderson, 2010).

Skilled Coaches

Early Sport Specialization values better and more skilled coaches, as they are seen to make a positive difference in the specialized development in the child athlete (Cote, Law, & Ericsson, 2008; Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; Watts, 2002;). Due to this belief, better coaches end

up working with the more skilled and talented athletes, even at younger ages. Gould (2010), notes that "the benefits of early specialization often include better coaching and skill instruction, because the most experienced coaches usually work with players who specialize" (p. 35). Due to this, a parent may decide against having their children enrolled in multiple sports as they opt for their child's development in a preferred sport.

Scholarships

Another ESS factor relates to the pursuit of college scholarships (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; Watts, 2002), especially in the United States. Obtaining a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) scholarship to the United States has become strongly associated with high achievement in youth sports in schools and in sports clubs (Dyck, 2011). Hill and Hansen explained that "many coaches and athletes also feel that specialization increases an athlete's chances of obtaining college scholarships" (as cited in Watts, 2002, pp. 33-34). American Colleges might also help drive the ESS model, not only in the United States, but in Canada too, as the age of the athletes they recruit seems to get younger and younger each year as colleges look to gain an edge on other academic institutions that they compete against (Yen, 2011).

In line with the idea of connecting early sport specialization with better coaches, the pursuit of a scholarship is more the choice of the parent, especially the younger the age of the child. Malina (2010) explains that "Many youngsters with encouragement of parents begin specialized sport training in a single sport at young ages with the goal (hope) of obtaining a college scholarship" (p. 365). However, as the child gets older they may realize that due to their financial status, obtaining an athletic scholarship may be their best or only way of receiving an education, and therefore push the athlete to specialize (Root, 2009). In two different studies,

one looking at young African Canadian basketball players and the other looking at young Canadian hockey players, it was found that the athletes best chance of having post-secondary school paid for was through an athletic scholarship to the United States, and not a Canadian college or university, where money for athletic ability is minimal (McLaughlin, 2014; Root, 2009). The study done by Dyck (2011) found that none of the athletes he interviewed would have been able to afford a college education in the United States except through an athletic scholarship. Indeed, those athletes who obtain a scholarship is a testament to the individuals' achievements and accomplishments as an athlete (Dyck,2011).

Professional

Many parents who support the early sport specialization view believe their child can become a professional athlete (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010). Popular and famous stories of extremely successful athletes, such as Tiger Woods, who have specialized and trained in one sport from a young age, are models for parents who believe that their children can also become highly successful athletes (Gould, 2010). Parents also believe that the pursuit of professional sporting careers can benefit the child through the determined and persistent behaviors that are exercised in the 'sporting' journey (Domingues & Gonçalves, 2013). However, only a small percentage of athletes make it to the professional level (Malina, 2010).

Parental Involvement and Influence

Parents play an important role in a child's life in terms of participation in sport and physical activity. The three sections that will be covered in this section will relate to how parents affect children's sport and physical activity participation through financial support, time

spent with their children, and parents' promotion and encouragement in sport and physical activity.

Financial Support

Children are often dependent on their parents for sport and physical activity opportunities (Malina, 2010; Zeijl, et al., 2000). For many children, the possibility of participating in sport and physical activity is often determined by the parent. If money is not an issue, the parent is often willing to pay for their children's sporting activities (Schwab, et al., 2010). Schwab, et al. (2000), argue that parents encourage their children to do the best they can in all that they do and are willing to help make that happen. Cote (1999) found that parents who are committed to their children's sports participation were willing to sacrifice their own social and recreational life to pay for the children's sports.

In Canada there are many programs and organizations that provide assistance to families who cannot afford to register their children in sports. Programs such as Jumpstart (Canadian Tire, 2016) a Canadian Tire program, and KidSport (KidSport, 2016), a not-for-profit organization, are examples of programs in Canada that provide help with costs of registration and equipment for children to play sport. This support assists parents, who do not have the money, or opportunity to involve their kids in sports, which makes participation in sport more accessible for all children.

Adult Time Spent with Children

When parents spend time participating in leisure activities with their children it has an influence on children's leisure behavior choices. Zeijl, et al., (2000), explored the role of parents and peers in the leisure activities of young adolescents aged 12 to 15, splitting the adolescents

into three groups: younger juveniles (10 to 12 years of age), transition children (13 years of age), and older juveniles (14 to 15 years of age). The research found that younger juveniles spent most of their leisure time with parents, while transition children (13 years) split their time between parents and peers before spending most of their leisure time with their peers as older juveniles, although they did not necessarily end leisure time with parents. According to the study, children spend most of their leisure time with parents up to the age of 13. However, while children spend leisure time with parents after the age of 13, they tend to spend more of their leisure time with peers.

A study by Shaw & Dawson (2001), explored the meaning of family leisure, and found that out of the 31 families participating in the study, the average family participated in 14.3 hours per week of family leisure. These families had children ranging from ages 4 to 16 years of age providing a wide range of ages for the study.

When parents do not participate in leisure activities with their children, they still try, and often do, influence their child's leisure time (Schwab, et al., 2010). Parents often choose to control their children's free time through different means, for instance enrolling them into youth programs and/or youth sports, with the hope that their children will learn valuable life skills (Malina, 2010; Zeijl, et al., 2000).

Parental Promotion and Encouragement

Parents also have an influence on children's sports and physical activities through promotion and encouragement (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; Shaw & Shannon, 2008). This influence is present whether or not parents play a role in their children's sports clubs. (Domingues, & Gonçalves, 2013). Parental promotion and encouragement towards a child's

sport and physical activity choice is usually seen in the ESS model and not the physical literacy model (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010). Part of the reason why the ESS model receives more attention with promotion and encouragement is due to the assumption that "good parenting has become associated with achievements of children" (Gould, 2010, p. 35). Through ESS, a parent is able to see accomplishment and success from an early age when a child participates in only one or two sports, whereas a parent may not see as many accomplishments or success when their child participates in a variety of sports and physical activities. Additionally, parental promotion and encouragement can have an effect on a child's sporting career and expectations (Domingues, & Gonçalves, 2013).

Methodology

This section describes the methodology used in this study. It includes an introduction, research design, sampling, method implementation, survey design, ethical considerations, and method rationale.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify factors influencing parents' decisions about their children's sport participation.

The research focused on the following aspects of parents':

- Awareness and valuing of physical literacy and early sport specialization;
- Values regarding physical activity and inactivity;
- Time spent with children participating in physical activities and sports;
- Reasons for putting children into organized sports; and
- Difficulties faced after their children's entry into organized sports.

The findings will enable community and sport organizations, for example, to understand better what influences parent's decision-making with regards to their children's sports participation in order to develop better strategies for physical activity and sport promotion.

Research Design

The research design and data analysis was informed by the Physical Literacy (Canadian Sport For Life, 2011a; International Physical Literacy Association, 2014; Pacific Institute For Sport Excellence, 2015; Whitehead, 2001) and Early Sport Specialization (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010) frameworks.

This study utilized surveys to obtain primary data. Surveys were conducted through face-to-face intercept, as well as online through email. The face-to-face intercept survey was conducted by setting up a table at the Cowichan Aquatic Centre on two separate occasions and once at the Island Savings Community Centre located in the Duncan hockey arena. At both locations a table was set up with the surveys, consent forms, clip boards, pens, and a container to place the completed surveys. The researcher sat at the table and explained what the survey was about, if a passerby showed interest, and he was present to answer any clarification questions.

Emailed surveys were sent to designated people from different sports associations in the Cowichan area, which were then distributed through the email contacts of the particular sport associations. The email link was sent to the Cowichan Valley Athletics Club (track and field), Cowichan Thunder Lacrosse, Cowichan Valley Soccer Association, Cowichan Field Hockey, Cowichan Valley Minor Hockey Association, Duncan Baseball and Softball, and Duncan Basketball Association. It was also sent to Drew Cooper, the General Manager of Pacific Sport Vancouver Island, who also had the survey link posted on the Pacific Sports website. The survey link was also sent to Warren Weir, the Academic Administrator at the VIU Cowichan campus, my supervisor Dr. Aggie Weighill, and my supervisor Marcel Aubin, who worked at the Island Savings Centre at the time, all of whom forwarded the link to some of their contacts in the Cowichan Valley as well.

The researcher was also contacted at one point in the data collection by someone from the Cowichan Tribes asking for permission to distribute the survey through their contacts, which he accepted. After the first two weeks of data collection the researcher sent a reminder email

to all the sports associations to distribute the survey, if they had not done so already. This was due to the initial low response rate and not knowing exactly what sports organizations had actually distributed the survey. This reminder email resulted in 101 completed and useable surveys.

Sampling

The sampling for this study targeted parents with at least one child aged 5-18 who was enrolled in at least one organized sport. For the purpose of this study I chose to use the age range of 5-18, because children are very dependent in that point in their lives on their parents when it comes to organized sports. My study did not use the LTAD model for choosing the age ranges for sampling, but did use the LTAD model age ranges to display the results. The study used a convenience sampling that targeted sports associations in the Cowichan Valley area through emails. Face-to-face intercept surveys were done in areas where sporting events were being held, and where spectators were primarily parents.

Method Implementation

The two approaches used for data collection were face-to-face intercept survey and online surveys. Both methods were created on the Survey Monkey software. The face-to-face intercept survey results were collected by paper copy. A link to the online survey was emailed to a designated person from each chosen sport association who then forwarded the survey to all of the sports association's contacts.

Survey Design

The survey tool was designed to collect quantitative and open-ended qualitative data. The survey tool was designed to obtain data from parents in the Cowichan Valley with at least

one child aged 5-18 years who is enrolled in at least one organized sport. If the person did not fit into this category then he/she was not be eligible to participate in the survey. The first section of the survey asked questions that focused on the participant's child who is most involved in organized sports. The second section asked participants to reflect on their experiences related to their own sports choices/activities/participation and their children's sports. The third section was composed of value statements identifying the participant's values towards physical literacy and early sport specialization. The fourth section assessed the participant's awareness of the terms physical literacy and early sport specialization. The fifth section included demographic questions, such as the age of the child, the gender of the child, and family income. The sixth and last section provided an opportunity for survey participants to view the definitions of physical literacy and early sport specialization and allow them to make any final comments in regards to the concepts and the survey in general. (see Appendix D)

Ethical Considerations

The survey was designed to obtain information from adults only. All participant identities were kept confidential. Prior to participating in the face-to-face intercept survey the potential participant was asked to read through a consent form and provide verbal consent. Prior to participating in the online version of the survey the participant was required to read over the consent form and click on a button to start the survey as a way of giving consent. The form included details about participation in the survey, confidentiality, data storage, and use of the responses. (see Appendix A)

Method Rationale

The methods chosen for this study were face-to-face intercept surveys and email surveys, the main goal of which was to “find out ‘how many’ feel, think or behave in a particular way” (Hammond & Wellington, 2012, p. 138). Hammond & Wellington explain that surveys are often used to obtain quantitative data, and are very useful for exploratory research (2012). This research was exploratory in nature and looked to obtain data on the awareness of a relatively new and unknown concept to the Cowichan area, making the survey method an ideal choice for collecting data. Due to the nature of the study being on a new and unknown concept the survey option is also one of the more effective methods for obtaining large amounts of data from a large population (McNeill & Chapman, 2005). The goal of the study was to also understand values and other forms of data that are qualitative in nature. Although surveys are not primarily intended for qualitative data they are able to obtain qualitative data through the design of the survey, as well as using open-ended questions (Hammond & Wellington, 2012).

The email survey method was chosen to obtain data from a large population through the email contacts of sports associations in the Cowichan area. It was also convenient for reaching parents of children, who may be in sports that were not in season during the time of data collection. The face-to-face intercept survey method was chosen to take advantage of the areas hosting organized sports where the majority of spectators would be parents of the children participating in the particular sport.

The Researcher

The nature of this research was something that this researcher is very passionate about. From an early age the researcher was enrolled in several sporting activities culminating in his

participation in an NCAA Division I Field Lacrosse scholarship. As such, the researcher believes he fell strongly in the PL path to his sport participation, as he played soccer, track, football, hockey, and lacrosse and later specialized in lacrosse. The researcher's schooling (BSc in Physical and Health Education) and his work experiences in recreation in Duncan (youth camps, the youth drop in center, and event service work) also demonstrate the impact his experiences had on this research. As a result, the researcher may have had a slight bias towards PL and physical activity. Nevertheless, the researcher had also experienced ESS to a certain degree and did take into consideration the theoretical foundations of ESS, as well as the possible benefits of the ESS framework.

Data Analysis & Results

This chapter describes the six steps that went into the data analysis using SPSS, followed with an overview of the socio-demographic profile of the sample, a profile of the children's reported characteristics as reported by the parents, and the reported participation rates of organized sports of the children as reported by the parents. Next, the chapter will look at awareness of PL and ESS and the independent sample t tests regarding PL and ESS awareness. Then the chapter will provide the Cronbach's alpha results, followed by the cluster analysis results, the results of the independent sample t tests for the PL valuing group, and quotes from participants about their values towards PL, ESS, and physical activity. Finally, results related to values of physical activity, reasons for putting children in organized sports, and difficulties and boundaries faced after entry into organized sports, are presented.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was a six step process utilizing SPSS. First, the surveys were reviewed to see if the participants' answers were complete enough to remain in the study, which meant that they answered the majority of the questions. Surveys were removed completely ($n = 7$), if the respondent failed to answer any of the questions after agreeing to participate in the survey. In addition, data from questions that were answered incorrectly were removed. For example, a number of participants said that they participated more hours a week than would be possible. Likewise, some respondents did not check off their gender, age, or family income. In these and other similar cases, only the data from that question was removed, and not the entire survey.

Second, the consistency of the 18 likert scale questions, measuring participant values towards PL and ESS, were validated by using Cronbach's alpha. An alpha score of at least .70 was used as the standard for keeping individual items in the aggregation process (Bland, J.M, & Altman, 1997). All items met the desired alpha score of .7. The items assessing PL values had an alpha of .8, and the items assessing ESS had an alpha of .8. See Table 1 (page 33) for full list of scale items and Cronbach's alpha scores.

After running Cronbach's alpha, PL and ESS means were aggregated. A K-Means cluster analysis was run to create two clusters based off valuing of PL and ESS. With these two groups, descriptive analysis was conducted on each group. Written qualitative responses were utilized to support and further describe the quantitative findings.

Due to the large influence that parents have on their children's sports decisions (Zeijl, et al., 2000), the survey explored whether awareness of physical literacy and/or early sport specialization influenced parents' decisions on their children's sports participation. Therefore, the fourth step began with creating two groups based on whether participants had heard about PL or ESS prior to the survey. One group included those who were aware of physical literacy and those who were not. The second group included those participants who were aware of early sport specialization and those who were not. Independent Sample T-tests were conducted to determine if there were any differences between PL aware and not PL aware, and ESS aware and not ESS aware (Pandis, 2015), with regard to: a) amount of organized sports the child played in the past year, b) amount of organized sports the child no longer plays, c) importance of children's physical activity, d) amount of hours in a week on average parents spent

participating in physical activity with their children, e) average hours spent on children's organized sports, and f) the age of the parent.

In the final stage of analysis, the parents' values of physical activity were examined, comparing the importance of their children's activity versus their own. Finally, reasons for putting children into organized sports and difficulties and boundaries faced after entry into organized sports were explored through descriptive statistics.

Results

A total of 108 people responded to this study: 95 online and 13 face-to-face. Seven incomplete online surveys were removed, leaving 101 respondents. The following provides results related to the five primary research areas of this project. However, before turning to the five areas, the socio-demographic profile of the sample is described (gender, age, and income), including the type of sport the children were involved in, and the children's participation rates.

Socio-Demographic Profile of Sample

There were more female (65.6%) than male (34.4%) respondents, with the age of the participants ranging from 29 to 62 years of age ($M = 44.0$, $SD = 6.9$). The majority of participants (66.3%) reported a family income of over \$75,000. See Table 1 for a full profile of socio-demographic information.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Respondent Characteristics	Percentage
Gender (<i>n</i> =90)	
Male	34.4%
Female	65.6%
Age Groups (<i>n</i> =89)	
Under 30	1.1%
30-39	30.3%
40-49	46.1%
50-59	20.2%
60 and older	2.2%
Family Income (<i>n</i> =89)	
\$0-\$24,999	3.4%
\$25,000-\$49,000	11.2%
\$50,000-\$74,999	11.2%
\$75,000-\$99,999	28.1%
\$100,000+	38.2%

Respondents noted that their children participated in over 20 different organized sports. The three most common organized sports among the children were, lacrosse (46.5%), hockey (31.7%), and soccer (30.7%). See Table 2 for demographic information about the children. A high number of children were male (70.8%), while a small number of children were female (29.2%). Children's ages were split into the stages of the LTAD model (sport for life). Of the male children in this study 52.8% fell under the PL stages and 56% of female children in this study fell under the PL stages. Full lists of male and female children age groups can be seen in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Male Children’s Age Groups Using LTAD Stages

Child Age Group (LTAD)	Percentage <i>n</i> = 63
3-6 (Active Start)	5.7%
6-9 (FUNdamentals)	20.8%
9-12 (Learn to Train)	26.4%
12-16 (Train to Train)	41.5%
16-19 (Train to Compete)	5.7%

* Physical Literacy Stages Include: Active Start, FUNdamentals, and Learn to Train

Table 3: Female Children’s Age Groups Using LTAD Stages

Child Age Group (LTAD)	Percentage <i>n</i> = 26
3-6 (Active Start)	4.0%
6-8 (FUNdamentals)	20.0%
8-11 (Learn to Train)	32.0%
11-15 (Train to Train)	28.0%
15-18 (Train to Compete)	16.0%

* Physical Literacy Stages Include: Active Start, FUNdamentals, and Learn to Train

The results showed two main findings. Prior to the study, participants reported on average that their children played about two organized sports. During the year of the study children on average no longer played at least one organized sport. Table 4 shows the percentages of organized sports played and no longer played, as well as the number of years children participated in organized sports.

Table 4: Parents Report of Children’s Participation Rates

Child Information	Percentage
Years Participating in Organized Sports (<i>n</i> =99)	
1-3	18.2%
4-6	38.4%
7-9	20.2%
10-12	19.2%
13-15	4.0%
Organized Sports in the Past Year (<i>n</i> =100)	
1	18.0%
2	48.0%
3	26.0%
4	7.0%
8	1.0%
Organized Sports No longer Played (<i>n</i> =93)	
0	34.4%
1	34.4%
2	26.6%
3	5.4%
4	2.2%
5	1.1%

Awareness of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization

Parents’ awareness of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization was measured to determine whether those factors affected the decisions parents made about their children’s sports participation. Most participants heard about PL (*n* = 45) through some form of training 17.8% (teaching, coaching), while most participants heard about ESS (*n* = 28) from other parents/coaches 39.3%. (See Figure 1).

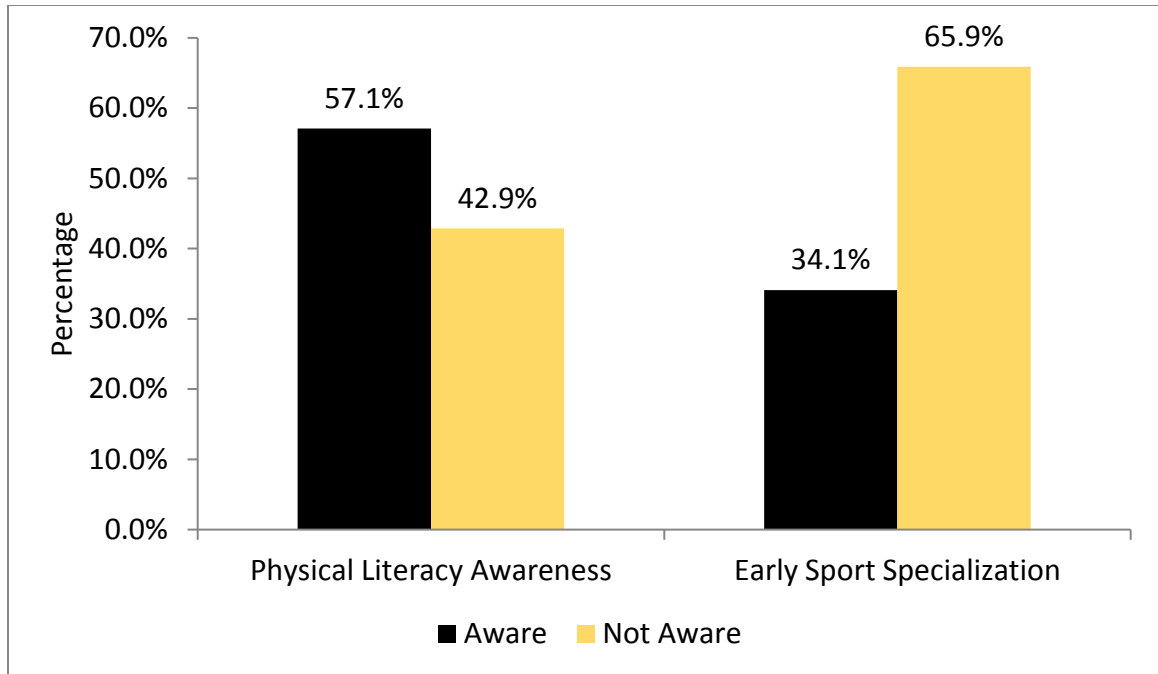


Figure 1: Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization Awareness

Tests were conducted to see if awareness was related to: a) the number of sports a child participates in, b) the importance of physical activity, c) the amount of hours parents spend with children in physical activities, and d) hours spent on their children’s organized sports. The only relationship that was significant for the PL aware participants (Table 4) was that parents, who were aware of PL entered their children into more organized sports ($M = 2.5, SD = 1.1$) than parents who were not aware of PL ($M = 2.0, SD = 0.8$) ($t(88) = 2.4, p = .020$). See Table 5 for the full list of results for PL awareness.

Table 5: Independent Sample T-test Results for PL Aware and Not Aware Participants

Variables	t	df	p
Amount of organized sports the child played in the past year (n=90)	2.377	88	.020
Amount of organized sports the child no longer plays (n=84)	-.723	82	.471
Importance of children’s physical activity (n=91)	-.173	89	.863
Amount of hours in a week on average spent participating in physical activity with their children (n=75)	.607	73	.546
Average hours spent on children’s organized sports (n=83)	1.032	81	.305

Table 6 shows the full list of Independent Sample T-tests results for ESS awareness regarding a) the number of sports a child participates in, b) the importance of physical activity, c) the amount of hours parents spend with children in physical activities, and d) hours spent on their children’s organized sports.

Table 6: Independent Sample T-test Results for ESS Aware and Not Aware Participants

Variables	t	df	p
Amount of organized sports the child played in the past year (n=90)	.373	88	.710
Amount of organized sports the child no longer plays (n=84)	1.505	82	.136
Importance of children’s physical activity (n=91)	.257	89	.798
Amount of hours in a week on average spent participating in physical activity with their children (n=75)	1.375	73	.173
Average hours spent on children’s organized sports (n=83)	1.234	81	.221

The results from the independent sample T-tests show that awareness of PL and ESS does not explain behavior in this case. A chi square test was run to confirm that there were no differences between awareness groups based off of the same tests that were run for the independent sample t-tests. See Table 7 for the full list of awareness chi square results.

Table 7: Chi Square results for PL and ESS results

Variable	PL Aware			ESS Aware		
	X ²	df	p	X ²	df	p
Amount of sports played	6.384	4	.172	2.261	4	.688
Sports no longer played	.699	4	.951	4.345	4	.361
Importance of children's activity	.918	2	.632	3.654	2	.161
Hours participating in physical activity with child	20.726	15	.146	15.437	15	.420
Hours spent on child's organized sports	15.363	14	.354	11.792	14	.623

Cronbach's Alphas for Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization

Items that measured participant values towards PL and ESS Items were measured on a scale of 1 (agree) to 5 (disagree). The consistency of the 18 scale items, nine PL value items and nine ESS value items was validated by using Cronbach's alphas. An alpha score of at least .7 was used as the standard for keeping individual items in the aggregation process (Bland, & Altman, 1997). Items assessing PL values and ESS values were higher than .8. See Table 8 for full list of combine scale items and Cronbach's alphas scores.

Table 8: Cronbach’s Alphas for PL and ESS Value Questions

Scale Item	Alpha <i>M (SD)</i>
Physical Literacy Value	.812
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children should play many sports • Children should learn fundamental movement skills before fundamental sports skills • Children should not pursue elite training in sport until after the age of 12 • The more sports a child is competent in the more likely the child will be physically active for life • Burnout can have long lasting negative effects on a child • Playing many sports as a child leads to lifelong physical activity • Learning basic fundamental movement skills sets a child up to be active for life • The more sports a child participates in the better chance of that child becoming a professional athlete • The more sports a child plays at a young age the more chance the child has in obtaining an athletic scholarship 	2.30(1.14)
Early Sport Specialization Value	.823
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialization in one sport at a young age is the best way to obtain an athletic scholarship • A child who plays in a maximum of two sports at a young age has the best chance at being physically active later in life • The younger a child focuses on one sport the better chance he/she has at becoming an elite athlete • Not specializing in a sport at a young age lessens a child’s chance at becoming an elite athlete • At a young age, talented athletes should play no more than two sports • If a child is labelled talented in a sport at a young age, he/she should specialize in that sport immediately • Specialization in one sport at a young age is the best way to become a professional athlete • Children should only play two sports or less 	2.62(1.13)

Valuing of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization

A K-Means cluster analysis was used to split the participants into two clusters. Cluster one ($n = 53$) designated as *neutral ESS valuing group* had respondents value PL and were neutral for ESS. Cluster two ($n = 38$) designated as *low ESS valuing group* had mean scores that valued PL and did not value ESS. Table 9 shows the mean score for PL and ESS for each cluster. The results illustrate that the clusters have similar values in terms of PL, but different values in terms of ESS.

Table 9: Cluster Means for PL and ESS Value Groups

Scale	Cluster 1 (neutral ESS valuing group) <i>M(SD)</i>	Cluster 2 (low ESS valuing group) <i>M(SD)</i>
Physical Literacy	2.4(0.4)a	2.3(0.8)b
Early Sport Specialization	3.0(0.4)ac	4.2(0.4)bc

Mean scores with a subscript are significantly different from each other a = $p < .001$ b = $p < .001$ c = $p < .001$

To verify the difference between each of the clusters, an independent t-test was run to verify that the mean scores of PL and ESS were different. There was a significant difference between the ESS value mean scores $t = -15.0$, $df = 89$, $p < .001$, while there was no significant difference between PL value mean scores $t = 1.6$, $df = 89$, $p = .3$.

To verify the differences within each of the clusters, a paired t-test was run to verify that the mean scores of PL was different from the ESS mean scores. There was a significant difference within cluster one $t = -7.6$, $df = 52$, $p < .001$, and cluster two $t = -13.6$, $df = 37$, $p < .001$.

Cluster one the *neutral ESS valuing group* consisted of 37.7% males and 62.3% females with an average age of about 44 ($SD = 6.8$) years old. This group had just over 66% of respondents report a family income of over \$75,000. Of these participants, 47.2% had heard

about PL and 17.0% had heard about ESS. Table 10 shows the behaviors of the *neutral ESS valuing group*.

Table 10: Neutral Early Sport Specialization Valuing Group Behaviors

Characteristics	Percentages
Volunteers with child's sports	71.7%
Coaches with child's sports	26.4%
Managing with child's sports	24.5%
Put their child in organized sport/s to keep them active	88.7%
Put their child in organized sport/s because their child wanted to	90.6%
Put their child in organized sport/s because they play/ed the same sport	17.0%
Put their child in organized sports because their parents did so	11.3%
Put their child in organized sports because the child's friend played that sport	39.6%
Put their child in organized sports because of talks with other parents/peers	15.1%
Put their child in organized sports due to family recommendations	7.5%
Child is specializing in a sport	41.5%

Cluster two the *low ESS valuing group* consisted of 29.7% males and 70.3% females with an average age of about 44 ($SD = 7.0$) years old. The *moderate PL valuing group* had 66.6% report a family income of over \$75,000. Of these participants, 71.1% had heard about PL and 57.9% had heard about ESS. The behaviors of the *low ESS valuing group* are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Low Early Sport Specialization Valuing Group Behaviors

Characteristics	Percentages
Volunteers with child's sports	76.3%
Coaches with child's sports	28.9%
Managing with child's sports	21.1%
Put their child in organized sport/s to keep them active	89.5%
Put their child in organized sport/s because their child wanted to	86.8%
Put their child in organized sport/s because they play/ed the same sport	18.4%
Put their child in organized sports because their parents did so	13.2%
Put their child in organized sports because the child's friend played that sport	50.0%
Put their child in organized sports because of talks with other parents/peers	34.2%
Put their child in organized sports due to family recommendations	2.6%
Child is specializing in a sport	37.8%

A chi square test was run to confirm that there were no major differences between the valuing groups, although there was one significant difference between the two valuing groups.

A significant difference occurred between PL and ESS valuing groups when it came to putting their children into organized sports because parents spoke with other parents/peers ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.6, p < .033$). See Table 12 for the full list of chi square valuing results.

Table 12: Chi Square Results for Valuing Groups

Variable	χ^2	df	p
Parent Volunteering	.243	1	.622
Parent Coaching	.071	1	.790
Parent Managing	.151	1	.698
Keep Them Active	.014	1	.905
Child Wanted to play sport	.314	1	.575
Put Child in the same sport you played	.070	1	.791
Child's Friend plays the sport	.967	1	.325
Speaking with other parents/peers	4.556	1	.033
Other family members recommendation	1.030	1	.310

Open-ended questions further clarified the values associated with physical literacy and early sport specialization. A number of participants displayed positive values towards physical literacy, with one participant stating, “physical literacy is more important than early sport specialization in ensuring children develop lifelong sporting interests” (48 year old male, PL and ESS aware, neutral ESS valuing group). Other participants spoke about the soft skills that come from a PL view of sports, “I chose for my daughter team sports for the soft skills this teaches, for example, dealing with frustration with team players who don't try, etc” (51 year old male, not PL or ESS aware, low ESS valuing group).

On the one hand, other participants noted that a PL view of sports is related to a healthy lifestyle, with one participant noting that, “I have great respect for physical literacy as a foundation for healthy living” (42 year old female, PL aware, neutral ESS valuing group).

On the other hand, a participant noted the value of ESS, such as the parent who stated that, “specialization is vital.” (48 year old male, PL and ESS aware, neutral ESS valuing group).

However, a participant also noted the positive aspects of both Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization. For example, one respondent stated:

I have 6 children all who do sports many at a high competitive level. I have seen a couple who have trained too hard and burnt out. I think there is a fine balance to high level training, specializing in specific sport, cross training, keeping it fun to prevent burnout.” (40 year old female, PL aware, neutral ESS valuing group).

Other participants noted that the decision to pursue ESS could come from perceived athletic ability of the child and/or labeling (Malina, 2010). One respondent stated that “While our two older kids are active, neither are particularly drawn to achieving many skills in sport. Our youngest child seems to be more 'athletic' generally. So, we will see if we pursue more of

an early sport specialization with our youngest who is 7.” (39 year old female, PL aware, neutral ESS valuing group).

Participants also noted how they saw ESS happening with other parents and that it should be the child’s choice for sport participation and not the parents:

We want our daughter to be the absolute most amazing lacrosse player to come out of the Cowichan Valley, but the moment that is not her dream, it will, without question, stop. Absolutely it would be amazing to get a 'full ride' to a US university but not when it's not her dream. I don't agree with the way some families pressure their children. (43 year old female, PL and ESS aware, neutral ESS valuing group).

Some participants spoke to how ESS came as a function of logistics and not sport development. One participant noted that “both children play soccer and do track and field; therefore, early sport specialization. This is based on what the children enjoy playing and what doesn't conflict with the parents work schedules.” (47 year old female, not PL or ESS aware, neutral ESS valuing group).

Values of physical activity and inactivity

Participants ($n = 99$) were asked to rate how important 1 (Important) to 5 (not important) it was that their children were physically active. Just over 90.0% of participants responded that physical activity was important ($M = 4.9, SD = .34$). However, when the participants were asked to rate how important it was that they were physically active themselves ($n = 97$), as parents, only 55.7% said it was important ($M = 4.3, SD = .9$). Figure 2 illustrates the importance level that their children are physically active compared to the importance parents place on their own level of physical activity.

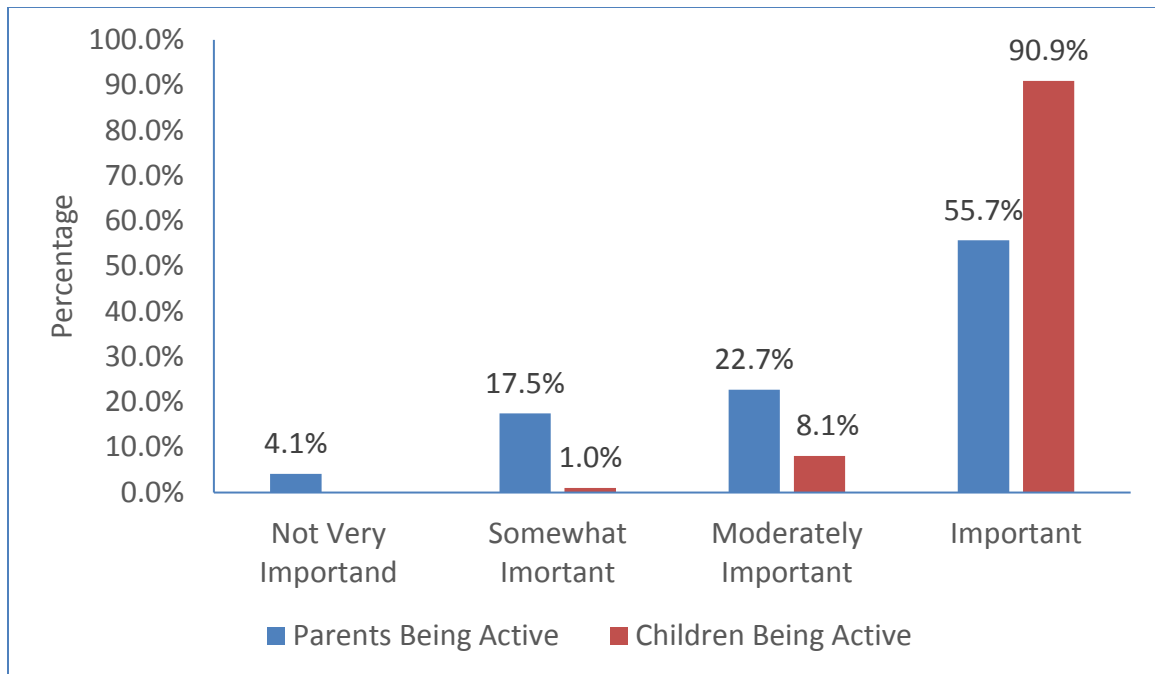


Figure 2: Importance of Self Being Active vs. Importance of Children Being Active

Participants noted that their children should be physically active, but that the children should only be involved in sports and activities in which they wanted to be involved. One participant commented that kids should not be forced to play organized sports, and that “they should be encouraged to be involved in something they like i.e., karate, judo, hockey, soccer... find something they like not what the parent wants” (47 year old male, PL and ESS aware, low ESS valuing group). Another respondent noted the value of the life skills that come with physical activity, stating that “children should be active physically and mentally, it teaches our kids to be better people. Organized sports teaches rules, team work, respect and the art of being a good winner an[d] good loser” (48 year old female, PL aware, neutral ESS valuing group).

Reasons for putting children in organized sports

Participants ($n = 101$) were asked why they enrolled their children in organized sports. The top two reasons that emerged were that “the child wanted to play the particular sport” (85.1%) and “to keep them active” (84.2%), while the response of “you played the same sport” factored very low (16.8%). The top three open ended reasons ($n = 20$) given were: a) providing an opportunity for their children to participate in organized sports, b) to learn teamwork, discipline and other life skills, and, c) to make friends. See Table 13 for the full list of reasons for putting children in organized sports.

Table 13: Reasons For Putting Children In Organized Sports

Reasons ($n = 101$)	Percentages
Child Wanted To Play The Sport	85.1%
Keep Them Active	84.2%
The Child’s Friends Play The Sport	39.6%
Speaking With Other Parents/Peers	21.8%
You Played The Same Sport	16.8%
It’s What Your Parents Did For You As A Child	11.9%
Other Family Members’ Recommendation	5.9%

Difficulties faced after entry into sports

Participants were also asked why they did not put their children in more organized sports. The number one reason was “not enough time” at 74.3%, while “the child doesn’t want to” had a response rate at 35.6%. Some of the open-ended responses revealed other difficulties parents faced such as, not believing everything their child is doing should be structured, to having time for family, and that children were already playing other sports. Table 14 outlines all of the reasons why parents did not put their children in more organized sports.

Table 14: Reasons For Not Putting Children In More Organized Sports

Reasons (<i>n</i> = 101)	Percentages
Not Enough Time	74.3%
Child Doesn't Want To	35.6%
Too Expensive	34.7%
Not Aware Of Options	4.0%

Participants (*n* = 90) were also asked to list challenges they have faced since they entered their children into organized sports. The top reasons were time or time management. Some other reasons related to cost and other sport obligations. Last, respondents were asked to rate how much these challenges would affect whether they put their child in organized sports again the next year, with the results showing, no impact (31.1%), barely an impact (25.6%), a bit of an impact at (31.1%), and a large impact at (12.2%).

Discussion

This chapter will look at the research purpose and questions, the findings of the study and compare it to existing literature, limitations of the research, future research ideas, and recommendations for communities and sport organizations. The purpose of this study was to identify factors influencing parents' decisions about their children's sport participation, focusing on the following aspects of parents'

- Awareness and valuing of physical literacy and early sport specialization;
- Values regarding physical activity and inactivity;
- Reasons for putting children into organized sports; and
- Difficulties and boundaries faced after their children's entry into organized sports.

Awareness of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization

Participants were more aware of the newer concept of PL than the older concept ESS, which contradicts the literature (Baker, & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Cobley, Fraser-Thomas, & Baker, 2009; Malina, 2010) that suggested the more traditional and more used approach is ESS. For the people who were aware of PL, most had become aware through some form of training, such as workshops for sport coaches. For the people who were aware of ESS most had been made aware through other parents or coaches.

The high awareness level of physical literacy could be due to the location of the study in the Cowichan Valley Area and the recent efforts in the community to raise awareness of physical literacy in the past three years. These efforts included multiple information sessions, workshops, and summits that were open to city employees, health employees, school district employees, the general public, etc (D. Cooper, personal communication, April 10, 2018). Some

of these sessions have been led by Dr. Dean Kriellaars, who is one of the leading voices for physical literacy (Landreville, 2015) and he has authored numerous physical literacy articles (e.g., Rober, Kriellaars, Ellenbecker, & Richardson, 2017 & Dudley, Cairney, Wainwright, Kriellaars, & Mitchell, 2017).

In the Cowichan Valley the “PLAY Cowichan group has engaged 16 agencies within the health, education, recreation and sport sectors to partner on a community wide initiative” (D. Cooper, personal communication, April 10, 2018) to address issues related to PL, free play, and inactivity. This group has addressed these issues through a) PL training, b) online tools for PL, c) PL talks for the community by researchers and professionals, d) and PL initiatives, such as activity stencil installations outside of recreation facilities, sports venues, health care centres, libraries, schools, and more. Cooper also notes, “This three-year ‘movement’ has garnered national attention and was showcased at the 2017 International Physical Literacy Conference in Toronto. Based on this model, there are now four other PLAY communities on Vancouver Island” (D. Cooper, personal communication, April 10, 2018).

These efforts in the Cowichan Valley show how powerful the idea of integration is across sectors. Having the different sectors in a community work together to address issues related to inactivity provides children with more opportunities to be physically literate, and can help to provide a more consistent message around a community regarding physical literacy and physical inactivity. Lastly, integrating all of these sectors can provide the community a lifelong pathway for physical activity that caters to all people, not just people in schools, people in recreation facilities, or people in organized sports, but rather smooth transitions between all of these sectors.

Valuing of Physical Literacy and Early Sport Specialization

A neutral ESS valuing group and a low ESS valuing group were formed using cluster analysis. Both groups positively valued PL; however, they differed based on their valuing of ESS. The neutral valuing to low valuing of ESS challenges current literature, which states that parents value ESS as a framework for success in sports (Baker, & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Cobley, Fraser-Thomas, & Baker, 2009; Malina, 2010). The different results may be related to a survey population where participants were very aware of PL. In addition, the neutral to low valuing of ESS could have to do with the high number of respondents with children in team sports compared to individual sports. The research shows that many people tend to specialize early in individual sports compared to team sports (Baker & Robertson-Wilson, 2003; Cobley, et al., 2009; Gould, 2010; Watts, 2002; Wojtys, 2013).

One result that was worth noting was the low number of participants who said they enrolled their children in the same organized sports that they play/ed. This difference is worth noting because the literature on ESS (e.g., Malina, 2010) argued that parents tend to enroll their children in organized sports they play/ed. Possible reasons could have been the neutral to low valuing of ESS in this sample. Another reason could be due to the large number of female participants answering questions regarding a high number of male children, because of the literature by Wiley, Shaw, Havitz. (2000), which speaks to participation being influenced by gender.

Values Regarding Physical Activity and Inactivity

Participant values on physical activity were measured based on how important it was that they were physically active and how important it was that their children were physically

active. The results showed that a large majority of parents found it important that their children were physically active, regardless of whether or not they felt the same way themselves. This was consistent with the literature that states parents want what is best for their children (Schwab, et al., 2010). In contrast, participants in this study did not all feel as strongly about the value of their own physical activity.

Parents' valuing of lifelong activity, but not modeling it may have detrimental impacts on their children. Specifically, it could prove problematic as research has shown that parents influence children as role models through time spent with them (Zeijl, et al., 2000), and through promoting and encouraging involvement in physical activity (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; Shaw & Shannon, 2008). If parents value their children's physical activity so strongly, but do not value their own physical activity, then they may be sending the wrong message without even knowing it. If they are not modeling this physically active lifestyle, then their children's physical activity levels that they value so highly will suffer.

Reasons for Enrolling Children & Difficulties Faced in Organized Sports

The top two reasons that parents indicated for putting their children into organized sports were that the child wanted to play the sport and that the parents wanted to keep their children active. These results were consistent with the results of Schwab, et al., 2010. The results of this study show that both groups provided similar reasons for entering their children into organized sports. Both groups, although different in their views on PL and ESS, were supportive and willing to do what it took to provide opportunities for their children, as stated in the literature (Schwab, et al., 2010).

Difficulties faced after entry into sports was also explored. The results revealed that a) parents did not have time, b) the child did not want to, and c) it was too expensive. Lack of time may have been the top reason, as all the participants have at least one child enrolled in an organized sport.

Limitations

The first limitation was that only parents with children actively participating in organized sports during the data collection period were surveyed. This eliminated the possibility of gaining answers from parents whose children played sports in different seasons and those who have never enrolled their children in sports.

The second limitation is related to the small sample size, which did not allow for further in-depth data analysis, including dividing the sample into additional sub groups for comparison. This could be addressed by expanding the data collection period to include other sporting seasons.

Future Research

Future research might focus on those parents with children who do not participate in sport. This would target a completely different group, who potentially have very different views and awareness on the concepts in this study; therefore, broadening the understanding of another group of parents who could possibly have their children participate in organized sports.

It is worth noting that, in this research population, a majority of the participants had a high income. Given that, a second area for future research might target participants coming from families with low family incomes. Surveying this population would be helpful to understand how low income families provide physical activity opportunities to their children for

centres and programs that look to provide low-cost affordable sports programs and activities. This future research could also help to better understand other possible barriers and issues that may be preventing these individuals from enrolling their children in sports at all.

A third area of future research could be to look at how early sport specialization is not always caused by values of the parent, but can be caused by other factors such as time, money, what the child wants to play, and/or possibly a combination of all these reasons.

In addition, a fourth area for future research might look at different communities or locations where they do not have any sports initiatives, committees, or promotions that are physical literacy focused.

A fifth area that might be considered for future research would be to focus on male participants with male children, and female participants with female children due to the possible gender biases to certain sports as noted by Wiley, Shaw, Havitz. (2000). This examination could possibly show that children are in fact put into the same sports as their parents, or that PL and ESS may have a gender connection between parents.

A sixth area for future research is to look at sporting systems and or physical education/activities within schools. This research could look at similar study areas that this research examined, but the research can be conducted within a school system, where so much of a child's time is spent.

The last area of future research could look at Indigenous people's awareness and valuing of physical literacy in a particular location. This research could compare the current thesis findings with non-Indigenous public in a particular area. This research could better

understand the full population of a given area and possibly identify differences between Indigenous peoples and the rest of the general public when studied in particular areas.

Conclusion

There is more to sports participation than just enrolling children in sporting activities. Evidence shows that people develop more holistically if they are literate in reading, writing, and math (Rober, Kriellaars, Ellenbecker, & Richardson, 2017), so why not physical literacy as well? Parents may look at participation in organized sports differently if they understood why physical literacy is so important to a child's holistic development. At this time, we know that parents use sport as a means of having their children gain lifelong experiences (Malina, 2010; Zeijl, et al., 2000), for babysitting and scholarship aspirations (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010; Watts, 2002), because of their own interests and hopes (Gould, 2010; Malina, 2010), or they may have no stated reason at all.

Sports participation and physical literacy are both important aspects to finding a solution to the problems associated with insufficient physical activity, including noncommunicable diseases such as cancer (World Health Organization, 2015) and the billions of dollars of spending from the Canadian health care system. Perhaps understanding both of these concepts together might help to mitigate the problems listed previously. Understanding and expanding our knowledge regarding the promotion, benefits, and evaluation of the benefits of these concepts may help in the development of more holistic institutional and community plans.

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Appendix A: Email Consent Form

Email Information & Consent Form

Hugh Weir, Student
Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management
Vancouver Island University
hughijweir@gmail.com
604-785-7091

Dr. Aggie Weighill, Chair
Dept. Recreation & Tourism
Vancouver Island University
Aggie.Weighill@viu.ca
250-753-3245 ext 2416

Good day,

You are receiving this email because you have a child registered in an organized sport in the Cowichan Valley, and are being invited to participate in a study on the factors influencing *parents' decisions about their children's sports participation*. The survey will also include questions about your history in sport. The research is being conducted by Hugh Weir, a Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management student at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, will not be tracked, and does not impact on your child's future participation in sport in the Cowichan Valley. If you choose to participate in this survey, you may stop at any time and you can skip any question you do not wish to answer. However, once you submit your survey there will be no way of removing your responses.

Below is link to questionnaire housed on SurveyMonkey.com, an online data collection and storage site. For the purposes of this study, I will not be collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous to the research and should not be traceable to you. We ask that you do not provide identifiable information in the open ended questions on the survey (e.g., child's name, team info, etc). Please note: SurveyMonkey is an American company and thus its servers can be searched under the US Patriot Act legislation.

Data will be stored on a password protected computers for approximately one year (May 2018) after the project ends and paper copies will be stored at a secure location and will be shredded once they are entered into the computer. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study and no direct benefits to participants. However, your participation will help us better understand parents' decision making regarding their children's sport participation. The findings of this research will be presented as a thesis for the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management program at the Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo, to employees at CVRD recreation facilities, and other organizations trying to enhance their understanding of physical literacy.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the me or my supervisor at: Hugh Weir via phone at 604-785-7091 and hughijweir@gmail.com, or Dr. Aggie Weighill at 250-753-3245 ext 2416 and Aggie.Weighill@viu.ca. If you have any concerns about how this research is being conducted, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer at 250-740-2665 or REB@viu.ca.

Clicking on the link attached to the email will take you to the survey:

Appendix B: Face to Face Consent Form

Face to Face Script & Consent Form

Hugh Weir, Student
Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management
Vancouver Island University
hughijweir@gmail.com
604-785-7091

Dr. Aggie Weighill, Chair
Dept. Recreation & Tourism
Vancouver Island University
Aggie.Weighill@viu.ca
250-753-3245 ext 2416

Hello, I wondering if you would mind taking a few minutes to participate in my study on the factors influencing *parents' decisions about their children's sports participation*. My name is Hugh Weir, and I'm a Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management student at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. The study should only take 15 – 20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, will not be tracked, and does not impact on your child's future participation in sport in the Cowichan Valley. If you choose to participate in this survey, you may stop at any time and you can skip any question you do not wish to answer. However, once you return your survey there will be no way of removing your responses.

As noted, once the survey is returned and entered into the computer, I will be unable to know which responses are yours but we also ask that you do not provide identifiable information in the open ended questions on the questionnaire (e.g., child's name, team info, etc). All individual responses will be kept confidential and if information is shared that may lead to identification it will not be used in public document.

Data will be stored on a password protected computers for approximately one year (May 2018) after the project ends and paper copies will be stored at a secure location and will be shredded once they are entered into the computer. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study and no direct benefits to participants. However, your participation will help us better understand parents' decision making regarding their children's sport participation.

The findings of this research will be presented as a thesis for the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management program at VIU, to recreation staff of the CVRD, and other organizations (e.g., Pacific Sport) trying to enhance their understanding of physical literacy.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the me or my supervisor at: Hugh Weir via phone at 604-785-7091 and hughijweir@gmail.com, or Dr. Aggie Weighill at 250-753-3245 ext 2416 and Aggie.Weighill@viu.ca. If you have any concerns about how this research is being conducted, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer at 250-740-2665 or REB@viu.ca.

By Completing and returning the survey you are giving me permission to use your information for the purpose outlined above.

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter

Hi

I am following up on my email I sent a couple months ago requesting your help in distributing my survey for my thesis.

Attached is the **DRAFT** copy of the survey I would like to have circulated through your basketball association's email contacts. I am not allowed to have this survey distributed until I receive approval from my University's Research Ethics Board, which will be sometime in August, possibly sooner.

I am sending you this **DRAFT** copy of the survey so that you are able to approve of its distribution once I have received ethics approval from my University.

The survey was made through the Survey Monkey software, so I will send the link to the electronic version of the survey once I have ethics approval from my University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or anything else you can call me at [604-785-7091](tel:604-785-7091) or email me at hughijweir@gmail.com

Thank you.

Appendix D: Survey

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in this online survey on factors influencing parental decisions on their children's sports participation. This is a research project being conducted by Hugh Weir, MASLM student at VIU, Nanaimo. This survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You may withdraw from the survey at any time and are free to decline to answer any question. Your responses will remain anonymous and no one will be able to know if you participated in the survey. The findings of this research will be presented as a thesis for the MASLM program at VIU and other places trying to enhance their understanding of physical literacy. If you have any questions about the study you may contact the VIU REB at 250-753-3245. By completing this survey you are giving consent for the results to be used in the study.

1. Do you have a child aged 5-18 in at least one organized sport?

Yes

No

2. When answering the following questions, please think of your child who is most involved with organized sports. How many years has your child been participating in organized sports?

3. Thinking about the past year, how many different organized sports does your child play?

4. Thinking about your child's life, how many organized sports does your child no longer play?

5. Do you have other children that spend similar amounts of time in organized sports?

Yes

No

6. If yes, how many children?

7. Is it important that your children are physically active? (0=Not important, 4=Important, 5=No opinion)

Choose one

0 1 2 3 4 5

8. To what extent do you encourage your children to be physically active?

Often

Fairly Often

Not very often

Never

9. **The following questions are related to your experiences.** On average, how much time do you spend participating in physical activity with your child in a week?
(Outside of their organized sports participation)

10. On average, how much time do you spend participating in sports with your child in a week?
(Outside of their organized sports participation)

11. On average, how much time do you spend on your child's organized sports in a week?

12. Other than watching your child's organized sports, what else takes up your time with regards to their organized sports? (Please list)

13. Is it important that you are physically active? (0=Not important, 4=Important, 5=No opinion)
Choose one
0 1 2 3 4 5

14. Were you active during your childhood?

- Not at all active
- Somewhat active
- Active
- Very Active
- Don't know

15. Were your parents physically active?

- Not at all active
- Somewhat active
- Active
- Very active
- Don't know

16. How did your parents encourage you to be active? (Select all that apply)

- Participated in physical activity with you
- Made rules
- Showed you by example
- Enrolled you in organized sports
- They didn't
- Other (please specify)

17. Did you play the same sports as your children do now?

- Yes
- No

18. What are your reasons for putting your children in organized sports?

19. What are your reasons for not putting your children in more organized sports?

20. What are some challenges you've faced since your children have entered into organized sports?

21. To what extent have these challenges impacted whether you put your children in organized sports next season?

No impact

Barely an impact

Somewhat of an impact

A large impact

Agree Somewhat agree

Neither agree nor

disagree Somewhat disagree Disagree

Children should

participate in many

sports

specialization in one

sport at a young age

leads to the best chance

of obtaining an athletic

college scholarship

Children should learn

many fundamental

movement skills (ex.

running, throwing, and

catching) before learning

fundamental sports skills

(ex. pitching a baseball

or catching a football)

Children who choose to

pursue elite training in a

sport should do so after

12 years of age

Specialization in one

sport at a young age

leads to the best chance

of becoming a

professional athlete

22. The following are value statements. Please choose the answer that relates to you. There are no right or wrong answers.

The younger a child starts only playing in one sport the more likely they will become an elite athlete

The more sports in which a child is competent in leads to more of a chance of that child being physically active for life

Not specializing in one sport at a young age lessens a child's chance of becoming an elite athlete

Burnout (physical and mental withdrawal) from a sport can have negative, long lasting mental, physical, and emotional effects on a child

At a young age, talented athletes should play no more than two sports

Playing in many sports as a child helps lead to lifelong physical activity

If a child is labelled as talented in a sport at a young age they should specialize in that sport immediately

Learning basic fundamental movement skills (ex. running, throwing, and catching) before puberty, sets a child up to be active for life

Playing in a maximum of two sports at a very young age leads to more

of a chance of a child
being physically active
later in life
Agree Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor
disagree Somewhat disagree Disagree
The more sports a child
participates in the better
chance of that child
becoming a professional
athlete
Children should only
play in two or less sports
The more sports a child
plays at a young age the
more of a chance they
have of obtaining an
athletic college
scholarship
Specialization in one
sport at a young age
provide a child enough
time to become an elite
athlete later in life
Agree Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor
disagree Somewhat disagree Disagree

23. The following questions are to assess the awareness of terms that not everyone has heard of. If

you are not aware of the terms please feel free to answer so.

Have you heard of physical literacy?

Yes

No

24. If yes, please write down where you became aware of the term.

25. If yes on question 23, please right down how long ago you first heard about physical literacy.

26. Have you heard of early sport specialization?

Yes

No

27. If yes, please write down where you became aware of the term.

6

28. If yes on question 26, please write down how long ago you heard about early sport specialization.

29. The following are basic information questions.

Are you

Male

Female

30. What is your family income?

\$0-\$24.999

\$25.000-\$49.999

\$50.000-\$74.999

\$75.000-\$99.999

\$100.000+

31. What is the age of your child?

32. Is your child a

Boy

Girl

33. For my research physical literacy and early sport specialization are defined as:

Physical Literacy- is the complete life experience which includes mastering fundamental movement skills and fundamental sports skills, motivation, confidence, and physical competence allowing individuals to participate in many forms of activity in everyday life.

Early Sport Specialization- Focuses on what takes place when a child's participation in sports is limited to one or two sports and the focus is on training, development, and competition within those sports.

Given these definitions and survey questions, do you have anything else you would like to add or comment on?

