

## **SOCIO-ECONOMICS OF FIGURE SKATING**

Finnish figure skating families' socio-economic standing and perceptions  
of their child's participation in figure skating

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## ABSTRACT

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As frequently addressed in media, sport culture is facing a problem where money is becoming one of the main barriers for participating in organized sports. Very often the most expensive sports happen to be the sports that children desperately want to join. The recent evidence suggests that membership fees in youth sports in Finland are roughly two to three times as expensive as they were ten years ago. One of the most expensive sports to participate in Finland is figure skating. Each year, as the figure skater advances higher level and the cost of figure skating continues to rise, more families are faced with the question of how to continue to keep their children active in the sport. The overall financial burden on families keeps many children from participating in figure skating. During the recent years, high costs and the accessibility to the sport has been under discussion.

This study explores the linkage between figure skating and socio-economic background of the families whose children participate regularly in figure skating. The purpose is to demonstrate whether the barriers to participate in figure skating are purely dependent on family's socio-economic background, and to understand figure skating families more accurately. Through various insights and perceptions from the parents' point of view, this study gathered up-dated information of contemporary figure skating culture covering topics related to family background, family life and expenses. There is not any similar published studies within the families whose children practices figure skating.

The data for this quantitative research was gathered through web-based online survey during the spring of 2019. Participants were the parents whose child is a member of the Finnish Figure Skating Association. The survey was sent to the parents through the Finnish Figure Skating email distributor and a total of 1763 parents completed an anonymous questionnaire.

According to the results of this study, the overwhelming majority of respondents were most commonly married middle-aged mothers. Their children were mostly young 11-year-old girls who participated in competitive level single or synchronized skating. The majority of skating families had a high educational background, occupational status and an annual household income greater than 80 000 euros. Higher level of household income was associated with increased rates of competitive level skaters. Most of the parents reported to spend annually between 1 000 to 3 000 euros in figure skating club's membership and license fees and less than 499 euros on extra fees. Although, figure skating expenses were perceived high affecting on family's finances and leisure time decisions, parents reported the cost not being a barrier if their child advances to a higher level requiring them to pay more. Parents were highly involved in following and supporting their child's skating performances but less likely to be involved in figure skating club's fundraising activities.

Keywords: Figure skating, sport participation, socio-economic status, Finland

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The youth sport culture has changed significantly over the past decades in response to broad social changes. Increasing competitiveness, sport specific training sessions, rising cost of sport and customer based services have set sport clubs, coaches and athletes under pressure to operate on a required manner. (Koski 2006.) From sociological perspective, participation in sport has become a serious leisure activity where individuals center their life around sport and commit enormous amount of money, time and energy on participation (Stebbins 2005; Vehmas 2010, 100-102). Indeed, sport participation has become a way to express lifestyle choices, identity and taste. In other words, differences in engaging certain sports are seen as a function of cultural and economic based habitus that is valued in society's norms. Some sport activities may lead to socially homogeneous forms of engagement as access may be restricted by financial resources, preferences or background. In particular, certain sports are preferred as an important symbolic representation of individuals or family's identity which is used as cultural distancing from others. (Bourdieu 1985, 166.) Therefore, at the center of this study stands the notions of cultural and economic capital and their relation to participation in figure skating.

Figure skating has been around for many centuries representing the image of a highly specialized sport where children train intensively at a very young age. Although, the image of the sport represents glamour and conservative features, the training culture has been demonstrated to require exceptional determination, discipline and commitment from the skaters and the whole family. (Adams 2010.) Indeed, to be competitive at a high level in figure skating, children often need to specialize in a sport at a very young age, train intensively year-round and compete like elite level athletes (Monsma 2008; Valto & Kokkonen 2009, 446-447). The strive for glory in figure skating is also dependent on parental commitment, which often means that children's participation in figure skating comes with a price tag (Puronaho 2014). Unfortunately, media and recently published research of figure skating culture has prompted lively discussion on the negative aspects of figure skating. Questions related to high cost, mental well-being of the skaters and high risk of getting

injured due to harsh training culture have emerged to bring out the dark side of the sport under discussion. (Taloustutkimus 2019; Visuri 2019.)

Research on figure skating culture from a sociological point of view has been scarce, even though costs of sport and training culture have emerged as a point of interest among the skating community. The “elitist” tag of the sport has been partly explained through the existing findings that suggest figure skating as one of the most expensive sports in Finland (Puronaho 2014). Concerns regarding the equal access to sports have gained interest in the academic circles, but there are not any published studies within the families whose children practice figure skating. Therefore, the question arises, whether participation in figure skating is purely dependent on families’ economic and cultural resources. Also, the perception of figure skating as an elitist sport rather than a sport for the masses has been rightfully pointed out by the critics, but evidence on the matter has remained lacking. Therefore, this current study aims to further our understanding of the linkage of families’ socio-economic background and figure skating participation.

Through various insights and perceptions from the parents’ point of view, this study will gather up-dated information of contemporary figure skating culture covering topics related to family background, family life and expenses. On top of this, challenges and demands set by the figure skating culture and how it affects the parents, is being studied. The information provided is intended to give new and updated information of the skaters and their families that can be used to develop the conditions and culture of the sport in the future.

This study begins with a literature review that will set a stage for existing background information of organized sport participation and different sociological theories. The sociological theories will be referred throughout the study and provide a framework for understanding the relation of figure skating families and their social background. The methodology chapter introduces research questions, survey design, data collection and analyzing process. The results of the study are presented in chapter 6 followed by the discussion and conclusions.

## **2 ORGANIZED SPORTS AS PART OF LIFESTYLE**

Organized sports today support a large number of young people's physical activities. Participation in competitive sports has become highly specialized, overpriced and requires extensive amount of commitment from the family. (Coakley 2006.) In order to fully understand modern active lifestyle in its entirety, it needs to be viewed as an important aspect of the social world. The theoretical part of this study will then start by exploring the culture of competitive sports focusing mostly on children and adolescents. Various barriers affecting children and adolescents sport participation are highlighted.

### **2.1 Understanding participation in organized sports**

Sport culture is a reflection of the time we live in. Over the years, the opportunities within sport and physical activity have expanded and children and adolescents of today have the opportunity to participate in recreational, competitive, top and elite or health enhancing physical activities. (Koski 2012.) The possibilities to engage in active lifestyle, recreational or competitive sports have radically increased as new forms of sport and sport clubs have emerged. Consequently, participation in sports has become a popular leisure time activity for children and adolescents. (Mäenpää & Korkatti 2012.)

Children's and adolescent's natural physical activity besides daily tasks has decreased. Physically active lifestyle has taken a new meaning where most of the fitness activities among children and adolescents happen during the leisure time in organized sport settings. (Engström 2004.) Participation in sport has become more formal and requires usually a training place as well as social, financial and time commitment (Koski 2012). The trend towards the formal and structured physically active lifestyle among children's and adolescent's leisure time took off in the 1980's and has continued to the present day. A large amount of youth's physical activity occurs in organized sport clubs where participation in selected sport is practiced in a more structured, goal-orientated and competitive way than daily physical activities in leisure time or at school. (Telama & Yang 1996, 126-138.)

The organized sport club system is the most used structure that currently manages and organizes different recreational and competitive level sports especially for young people. It has also become a popular way to organize social events combined with health promotion to the society. (Kokko 2014.) Finnish grass-root sport clubs are commonly defined as non-school related sports that are organized through local clubs and funded by membership fees and voluntary work (Mäenpää & Korkatti 2012). They are an important fundamental base of the sport system that keep millions of Finns physically active (Koski 2012). They raise champions that at best inspire the community towards general quality of life and as a whole, they unite our society, give us national pride and present a positive image of Finland abroad (Mäenpää & Korkatti 2012). This being said, sport clubs have a large influence in the society since their goal is to give everyone an equal opportunity to train, work, compete and socialize with people. They also provide a sense of belonging and the feeling of being a part of something important. (Skille 2010.)

Despite the positive effects that sport clubs bring to the society, the dark side of the children's and adolescent's sport participation has raised concerns related to increased competitiveness, financial requirements and drop-out rates (Aarresola & Kontinen 2012). From the sociological perspective, children's sport participation has increasingly become a serious leisure time pursuit where families are required to invest enormous amount of financial and cultural resources to make their children's sport participation possible. (Vehmas 2015, 199). Cost alone may lead children from low income families to not participate in sports and therefore is a deterring factor of excluding children from the organized sports limiting their sport experiences (Itkonen 2017). Based on the Finnish Sport Act, every citizen should have a fundamental right for an equal access to participate in sports. (Liikuntalaki 2015; Berg & Salasuo 2017). Access to sports should not be dependent on individual's background such as financial situation, race, gender, age or ethnicity. However, in recent years increasing cost and demands in youth sports have been widely addressed in the media and provoked lively discussion related to the equality and accessibility of the sports. (Berg 2018.)

Different organized sports in certain extent are seen to create polarization where the distribution of sport participation is dependent on an individual's social status. Specifically, some sports have been recognized to demonstrate exclusive lifestyle pursued by economically and culturally dominated groups. (Stokvis 2011.) Vehmas (2015) explains that through sport



participation, individuals gain culturally and socially valuable life patterns that then give them a favorable identity that is valued in the society. Culturally valued social identity then enhances individual's acceptance in other life domains as well. (Vehmas 2015, 198-199.)

Developing children into competitive level athletes has become increasingly challenging as children have become inactive, overweight and show lack of interest in competing. Unhealthy lifestyle habits have negative aspects on children's and adolescent's wellbeing and health, making it harder to grow and perform on a required level in competitive sports. (Mäkelä 2011.) For many families, healthy lifestyle habits are not something that is considered self-evident and therefore, the assumption has been that sport clubs promote and educate young athletes in general health (Kokko 2014). However, Kokko (2014) has criticized that even though health has been identified as the main function of youth sport clubs, it has not been converted enough into practice. Increasing the promotion of health as part of sport club operations not only benefit the public health, but also improve the athlete's everyday behaviors that are important for sport specific development. Similarly, Van Hoya et al. (2016) suggests that when the concept of health promotion is used in coaches' daily work, athletes perceive more enjoyment and better health, which in turn, lower the dropout intentions. Specifically, by paying more attention to athlete's healthy lifestyle habits as part of the coaching process, essential abilities in performance such as readiness, recovery and learning process are seen to enhance.

Sport, not just physical activity, has been documented to give children and adolescents more than just physical well-being. Generally, organized sports are seen to be associated with improved social and psychological outcomes, such as positive peer relations, increased self-confidence and positive youth identity. (Findlay & Coplan 2008.) Specifically, Malina (2009) demonstrated continued sport participation to enhance general and sport-specific motor coordination, to improve self-esteem, promote positive perceptions of competence, teach values associated with sportsmanship, fair play and good citizenship and promote other positive health behaviours. Currently, studies have been conducted to determine the relationship between sport and academic performance. According to Haapala et al. (2019) highly active children are seen more likely to perform better grades in school. However, based on the same research children's activity level and academic performance do not always reflect a causal relationship. It is unknown whether high activity level improves academic

performance or if children with high GPA simply choose or are interested in a physically active lifestyle. Regardless, an active lifestyle and academic performance are believed to have similar virtues such as high motivation to succeed at the presented task. (Haapala et al. 2019.)

Youth sport participation has been in the scope of growth and popularity making tremendous impact on Finnish society (Mäenpää & Korkatti 2012). Participation in organized sports in Finland has been on the rise, with recent evidence suggesting that 62 percent of children take part in some form of organized sport between the ages of 9 and 15. Increasing number of children are participating in organized sport before school age and 76 percent of Finnish children in organized sports train on a competitive level. (Blomqvist, Mononen, Koski & Kokko 2019.) Compared to an international scale, Global Matrix 3.0 reports that around 47 to 53 percent of young people among 49 countries worldwide participate in organized sports (Aubert et al. 2018). A similar study conducted by Kokko et al. (2018) show that participation in organized sport was somewhat higher than in the Global Matrix 3.0 study and suggested that among European countries 60 to 69 percent of children and adolescents participate in sport club activities at some point in their life.

## **2.2 New challenges facing sport clubs and sport participation**

Children's and adolescent's leisure activities and sport participation have increasingly occurred in organized sport clubs. The growth of organized sports can be explained through the changes in society, such as changing values and growing interest in healthy and active lifestyles. These factors have contributed to increasing social significance of sport and the differentiation of organized sports. (Klostermann & Nagel 2012.) Also, the trend of organized sports can be measured in a significant expansion of sport clubs with recent evidence suggesting that Finland has 9 000 to 11 000 operating sport clubs that offer recreational and competitive activities mostly for young people (Koski & Mäenpää 2018).

While the benefits of sport participation have been well documented, methods and reasons for increasing participation rates in organized sports are not straightforward (Puronaho 2006). Kokko et al. (2018) suggest that even though organized sports are seen as a suitable setting in promoting a physically active way of life for young people, there is a large percentage of children and adolescents who do not meet the recommended guidelines for daily physical

activity. Also, recently published research by Guthold, Stevens, Riley & Bull (2019) outlines that over 80 percent of school-aged adolescents globally do meet the current recommendation of one hour of exercising per day. Participation in Finland is highest among eleven years old's as the majority of 71 percent are involved in organized sports. Unfortunately, soon after that, participation in organized sports start to decline. At the age of 15, only 44 percent are involved in organized sports. (Blomqvist et al. 2019). According to Telama & Yang (2017) the most crucial age of dropouts is at the age of 12 and continues to late teenage years.

Drop out and different barriers related to sport participation have been addressed from various theoretical perspectives, focusing mostly on youths personal, environmental and social factors. One of the major impacts in children's and adolescent's sport participation has been the changing culture towards competitive sports. Increasing emphasis on competitive sports that require high level-demands in performance and long-lasting commitment have given rise to unhealthy environments that may deter children's engagement to the sport. (Puronaho 2006.) Evidence highlights that the five most commonly identified barriers in sport participation are; finance, lack of facilities near to the family's home, child's motivation, hectic lifestyle and poor health. (Blomqvist et al. 2019.) Additionally, Crane and Temple (2015) highlight that in competitive sports lack of enjoyment, perception of competence, social pressure, competition priorities and injuries are often outlined as main reasons to dropout.

The changing society, norms and expectations with in already stretched budgets have affected sport clubs to struggle to find and sustain their participants (Koski 2012). According to Green and Houlihan (2005, 189) the development and execution of top level youth sports and supporting "the sport for all" initiative have been in conflict with each other. There is tension between youth's well-rounded athletic hobbies and the performance goals associated with elite sports. Most of the sport clubs are balancing between the goals set for elite sports and supporting "the sport for all" initiative.

Both Koski (2006) and Coakley (2006) emphasise how the children's sport culture has changed to become exclusive, highly specialized, goal-orientated and competitive. Children's home-based activities and neighbourhood outdoor games have increasingly been replaced

with structured organized sports. Therefore, it is less common today to see a group of children in a neighbourhood playing outdoor games. It has become normative for children and adolescents to participate in sport clubs that most commonly promote competitive and highly specialized sport activities. (Salasuo, Piispa & Huhta 2016, 81-90).

Today, competitive sport club participation means highly structured sport-specific training sessions that often push children to specialize in one sport at a young age. Coaches have become increasingly educated and knowledgeable in the sport specific technical skills and represent the newest expertise in their field, turning training more professional. (Koski 2012.) For some children, participation in a sport club is no longer a hobby but rather an elite level pursuit of athleticism, leading to early sport specialization, increased training intensity and culture related demand on competitiveness. (Malina 2010.) For some families early sport specialization has raised concerns such as pressure to achieve, increased commitment or overuse injuries. These concerns may weaken the parent's interest to enrol their children into early specialized sports (Baker, Cogley & Fraser-Thomas 2009).

One crucial factor in participation in organized sport has been demonstrated to depend on parent's willingness to commit their leisure time on the child's sport. Being a parent to a child enrolled in sports demands spending leisure time on transporting children to practices or committing time on voluntary activities alongside scheduling other family member's activities. (Wheeler, 2011.) Koski (2012) emphasizes how a hectic lifestyle has placed an emphasis on the importance of versatile family leisure time. As organized sports have been demonstrated to demand intense practice schedules and commitment from the parents, many families decide to withdraw their children at an early stage from the sport due to the hectic and intense lifestyle. (Weiss & Hayashi 1995.)

It seems that the pursuit of developing sport champions has become highly desirable in contemporary society (Stewart & Shroyer 2015). Although sport diversification has been documented to give favorable effect on developing a strong base of fundamental motor skills that will later on benefit athletic development, a growing number of children specialize in one sport at a young age rather than playing multiple sports. (Wiersma 2000.) Therefore, sport diversification has been replaced by the early specialized youth sports, where parental logic has changed to "the more money and time invested, the better skilled my child will be"

(Steward 2015). Within these cultural changes, even younger children in competitive sports are being recruited, labeled as “natural talents” and enrolled into specific sport programs in the hope of someday getting scholarships or professional contracts. Also, many families are ready to pay for high-quality operations, facilities and professional coaches so that their children attain the elitist level. (Malina 2010.)

Rising cost in competitive-driven sport operations have affected not just parents to create high expectations for their children but also sport clubs to change their operations towards high-quality service. Mainly because there is so much money involved in children’s sport participation, parents put extreme pressures toward sport clubs, coaches and their children’s capabilities. (Malina 2010.) Due to external influences and changing consumer preferences, athletes and their families are no longer members of a sport club but have become more like customers. Organized sports have become a tough business, in which parents expect that their investment will pay itself back in the future. (Koski 2012; Koski 2006.)

Steward and Shroyer (2015) has created The Private Sport Pyramid to illustrate the different phases of youth sport participation. The youth sport pyramid is strongly shaped by the American sport system, but in certain extent applies to highly specialized competitive sports that are organized in Europe. According to Steward and Shroyer (2015) the youth sport pyramid starts with the entry level which is broadly populated by beginners. In this phase, families are motivated by the low organization activities, practices are flexibly scheduled, and scores of games are rarely published. This continues until around the age of eight when sport participation becomes more serious. In the middle section of the pyramid, practices are regularly scheduled, children start to compete and scores and standings are usually publicly released. Also, off-season camps are introduced which means that the practice seasons get progressively longer. By the age of 12, selections and tryouts are being implemented and potential athletes are being selected to compete at a higher level. In this phase, the amount of practices and cost of sport increases radically. The selected sport is regularly practiced, competitions and tournaments take place across the country and different indirect costs, such as equipment or team gear increases the cost of the sport even more. Also, athletes have access to better training facilities. Usually in this phase parents are highly involved or in some

cases obsessed to support their children. Most common way to show support is to provide financial commitments and travel across the country to cheer for their children to win.

Until the late adolescence, most successful athletes climb to the top of the pyramid where they often get their first touch of early contacts from agents, scouts or business people who may introduce themselves to parents or directly to the athlete. Finally, depending on the sport and athlete's success at an early age, athletic scholarships, funding or grants may be provided. As an athlete becomes a commodity with investors, parent's role in providing financial support eases. (Steward & Shroyer 2015.)

### **2.3 Increasing costs of youth sport**

Participating in organized sports have become an increasingly expensive financial investment for many families (Puronaho 2006). Most commonly, families who have enough time and resources have the ability to participate in organized sports. Thus, there are families who are willing to sacrifice family budgets to support their child's participation. (Coakley 2006.) Itkonen (2017) demonstrates how youth sport culture is fragmented as some families do not have the freedom and ability to finance expensive sports that their children desperately want to join. Therefore, the high cost of organized sports is seen to increase the differences in health and wellbeing between people from high- and low-income families. These differences may exclude young people from a physically active way of life and limit their sport experiences.

As the level of children's achievement in sports rise, it is the parents who carry the burden of financial cost, transportation to training and competitions, work scheduling and other family member's activities to ensure development in the child's sports career. Parents have reported that the most obvious sacrifice in providing children sport opportunities is the burden on financial expenditures and influence it has on the family's other life decisions. (Rowley 1992; Kay 2000.) With today's economic concerns, almost two thirds of the Finnish families are struggling to pay for the expenses that organized sport club activities charge (Hakamäki, Jaako & Kankaanpää et al. 2014). However, little is known about how often young promising athletes drop out from sport purely based on financial costs (Aarresola & Kontinen 2012).

The total cost of being a member of a sport club consist of direct and indirect fees. Direct fees include expenses such as coaching salaries, facility rent, membership fee, tournament or competition fees, license fee and necessary equipment or textile expenses that are required in the sport. Beyond the direct costs, members often pay expenses that are not directly attributed to the sport such as travel fees, medical costs and cosmetics. (Puronaho 2014.) During the years, not only have the fees for registration in sports steadily risen, but also sporting equipment has become more expensive. It has been estimated that an average Finnish family spends nearly 2 200 euros on recreational sports and 3 300 euros on competitive sports yearly. The same study revealed regional differences in sport expenses in Finland. Uusimaa region was reported to have the most expensive membership fees in children and adolescents sport. Alternatively, the most affordable membership fees were reported from Central Ostrobothnia, Kainuu and North and South Karelia. In the places where membership fees were the lowest, sport clubs reported that parents often commit high levels of voluntary work, fundraising and coaching without pay in order to minimize the cost of fees. (The Ministry of Culture and Education 2016.)

According to Puronaho (2014) membership fees in Finnish sport clubs have increased two to three times in the last ten years. The total cost of being a member in sport club varies tremendously depending on the type of sport, athletes' levels, the expenses from facilities and required equipment. The expenses have especially risen in sports that include organizing competitive level operation for young children. The same research also discovered that the most expensive competitive level sports in all age groups from 6 to 18 years old athletes were equestrian and figure skating. At the other end of the spectrum, most affordable competitive level sports in similar age group were popular team sports, such as floorball and baseball. (Puronaho 2014.) Similarly, The Ministry of Education and Culture (2016) reported equestrian to be the most expensive sport in Finland, costing on average 10 000 euros per year. Annual cost was reported to vary between 800 euros to 50 000 euros depending whether the horse is owned by the family and how much is spent on specific horse gear. Popular team sports such as basketball, floorball and volleyball were reported to cost over 70 percent less than equestrian, ranging from 1 300 - 1 500 euros on annual basis.

Ice sports, such as ice hockey and figure skating have been proved to be very expensive mostly due to year-round training, cost of ice and qualified coach expenses. Parents whose

children play ice hockey at the age group of 6 to 18 years old indicated annual family expenditures on sport participation to be more likely in the 3 000 –10 000 euros range per year. (Puronaho 2014.) As an international comparison, Coakley (2006) expressed that parents spent between 5 000 to 20 000 dollars per year to support their children's participation in ice hockey. Even though, the expenses were excessive for the family budget, parents pointed out that paying the expenses was worth the money bringing many benefits for their children.

Figure skating is considered an expensive and time consuming sport. In general, the cost for a competitive level figure skater depends on the level where the skater competes and what are the practice arrangements. Each year, as a skater competes on a higher level, the cost of figure skating continues to rise. Thus, more families are faced with the question of how they will continue to keep their children active in the sport. The overall financial burden on low income families keeps many children from participating in organized sports, especially when the cost keeps increasing steadily. (Puronaho 2014.) According to recently published study conducted by Taloustutkimus (2019), high expenses are seen as a serious problem in developing the culture of figure skating. Finnish figure skating coaches, judges and club directors, all point out that the high cost of figure skating exclude potential children to join the sport and restricts to develop the skating activities appealing to everyone.

The costs for the beginners in figure skating is usually paid in semester tuitions. Many figure skating clubs in Finland arrange skating schools and charge roughly 100 euros during the autumn and spring semester. Beyond the cost of joining competitive figure skating, skaters often need to pay additional fees for such things as license, skates, customized performance dresses and skating camps. When skating becomes competitive and the amount of practices becomes weekly, the form of fees changes into monthly payments. A figure skater whose training schedule includes daily practices on the ice and off the ice, competition fees, travelling fees and equipment fees can add up to a minimum of 5 000 euros and an in highest 20 000 euros a year. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2016.) The data from Puronaho's (2014) research outlines the total annual cost of competitive figure skater aged 6 to 14 years to be in the 5 000 - 6 500 euro's range, whereas 15 to 18 years old skater's expenses increased close to 10 000 euros per year.



There have been corresponding results of whether participation in certain sports is simply a matter of economic investment from the family. At the competitive level, particularly in individual sports many athletes tend to come from financially stable families, where enormous financial sacrifices are required to fund a young athlete's development in certain sports. Sports such as sailing, gymnastics, tennis, equestrian and downhill skiing have been demonstrated popular among high income families but go beyond the reach of the average family. (Woods 2016, 43.) Puronaho (2014) discovers competitive figure skater's families to earn an average of total income of 90 000 euros or more per year. Woods (2016, 43) outlines that usually team sports such as soccer, basketball, baseball and wrestling are financially feasible for many families which partly explains why these sports are the most popular options for most children.

Puronaho (2014) discovered an escalating rise of the cost in Finnish sport clubs to be contributed mostly by the price of using sport facilities, professional and qualified coaches, longer practice seasons and the decrease of voluntary work. Municipalities today still subsidize the cost of different sport facilities and some may even rent facilities for youth sport clubs without charge. However, the price tag for newer and value added facilities has challenged many municipal budgets and due to this, especially the cost of renting ice rinks and swimming halls has been on the rise because maintaining them is not cheap. The primary source of revenue for sport clubs will be in most cases from the fees that members pay and that way facility fees and coaching salaries are covered. Each club set their own fees and membership categories based upon the level of benefits or services that a club offers. Sport clubs that organize ice hockey, figure skating or swimming have been pushed to raise their membership fees as the facility fees have been rising. Sport clubs that arrange ice related sporting activities for children and adolescents can pay for the ice from 0 to 100 euros per hour, whereas a small indoor hall that can be used for multiple type of sports may cost from 0 to 20 euros per hour. (Suomi et al. 2012.) Especially in ice sports where high amount of training year-round is required at a competitive level, ice hockey and figure skating clubs have started to use privately owned facilities to attain the required number of practice sessions per season. (The Ministry of Education and Culture 2016.)

Berglund (2019) explains how the rising cost of youth sport is mainly based on the increased demand and extensive expectations parents set on their children. This can be explained as a cultural change in parenting which is a result of wider economic, social and cultural development, especially in the United States and Canada. In increasingly competitive environments, parents are determined to see their child exceed their peers. Success in recreational activities is a form of statement to the community about the child's motivation and talent. Similarly, it can be explained as a demonstration of child's social capability. Therefore, high demands in sport operations set by the parents partly explain why the cost of certain sports is so high.

## **2.4 Family's role in youth sport participation**

In recent years, parent involvement in organized sports has taken on a new meaning, making parents the central influencer on their children's sport participation. The role of the parent is most commonly labeled as a socialization agent that introduces children to sports at a young age and later acts as a motivator for further sport activity. (Aarresalo & Kontinen 2012.) Wheeler (2011) demonstrates parents as highly visible actors in child's sport participation as they devote an extensive amount of time, emotional energy and money in child's sport-related activities. Typically, parents support their children's sport participation by transporting to and from practices and games, watching performances, waiting during practices, attending parent meetings and sport club's operational functions such as fundraising events. On top of this, parents provide financial support in paying membership fees and necessary equipment. Most commonly parents support and encourage their children emotionally by cheering, praising and providing positive comments. (Wheeler 2011.)

Parent's enrollment of their children in organized sports has many various reasons and motives. Most commonly the reason for enrolling children to youth sports is that parents want to provide opportunities that allow their children to develop and adopt skills and habits that support a healthy, self-directed, responsible and autonomous form of life. (Hutchinson et al. 2003; Kanters et al. 2008.) Findings from Neely and Holt (2014) identify motivation in three aspects: personal, social and physical benefits. First, parents want their children to gain positive self-perceptions such as, confidence and sense of identity. Second, learn social skills

when forming friendships or cooperating in a team and lastly, develop fundamental sport skills and improve their health.

Parents with children participating in sports have been demonstrated to perceive organized sport as a high-priority activity mainly due to reason of it being culturally valued and publicly visible. What makes it culturally valued is that organized sports happen under the supervision and eye of coaches who create a safe environment, teach valuable life skills and therefore enables children to grow into a person that is valued in society. Also, many parents find organized youth sport as an opportunity to exert good parenthood which proves their worthiness. This means that, parents are seen to be worthy of praise and meet their responsibilities when their child succeeds in sports and alternatively parents are the ones who get the blame. (Coakley 2006.)

From a sociological point of view, Lareau (2011, 170-286) has demonstrated two different patterns of strategic parenting that can be used to explain a parent's role in creating advantages for their children to acquire the necessary resources to success in life. In Lareau's research, middle class parents were demonstrated to engage in a process of "concerned cultivation" which meant that parents wanted to raise and manage their children's life through intensive parental advocacy and investments of time and resources. Instead of encouraging children to find motivating interests in life by themselves, parents pursued involving their children in numerous tailored and constantly shifting extracurricular activities to provide distinctive advantages for their children. In contrast, parents from working class with less credentials were demonstrated to engage in a process of "accomplishment of natural growth". This meant that parents were less involved with their children's structured activities and had less focus on promoting values or skills in their children. Based on Lareau's concept, "concerned cultivation" can be demonstrated in organized youth sports when parents shape their children's opportunities in particular sports by investing money on enrichment activities including extra practice sessions or private coaching that then give hope of gaining scholarships, professional careers or a decent status for the children (Berglund 2019).

Coakley (2006) especially highlights how competitive sports have become highly structured in terms of training schedules and regional locations. These components have made children and youth more dependent on their parents to make transportation to practice possible. Also,

Bremer (2012) illustrates how organized sports are taking a greater extent of family time and affecting the whole family unit. Children's sport participation can be called a way of life where families arrange their daily life based on the child's practice schedule, ask help from grandparents in transportation or may leave from work earlier. Due to lack of resources that go towards sport participation, certain leisure time activities such as family vacations may become cancelled. (Wolfender & Holt 2005). Dunn, Kinney & Hofferth (2003) demonstrate that sacrifices and commitments to child's sport participation are particularly made by mothers. Mothers are more likely than fathers to minimize their own involvement in personal activities so that they have more time and financial support to take care of their children's sport related duties. Similarly, Weiss & Hayashi (1995) findings outline that mothers spend an average of six hours per week on their child's gymnastics-related activities, whereas father's commitment was four hours. In the same study, parents expressed how children's active gymnastics-related activities surrounded their personal life.

Children's and adolescent's participation in organized sport usually involves competitions, progressive skill development, ranking systems, judging and tests. These activities besides regular participation give parents valuable information of their children's sporting accomplishments which gives them the ability to compare their own child with same-age peers. These measurable indicators may then satisfy parent's expectations for the experience they have purchased for their children. (Coakley 2006.) For example, Berg and Salasuo (2017) suggest that high priced youth sports are seen as an important symbolic representation of the family's social position. The high cost and readiness to pay are ways of parents to distinguish themselves socially from other families. The high costs limit the families representing non-desirable social classes outside the hobbies. This way the high-class families with mutual values and views can raise their children in these socially homogeneous environments and ensure the continuum of their views and status as "upstanding citizens".

Parents behavioral patterns and attitudes have been demonstrated to change as a child participates in organized sports. Parents have been demonstrated to show greater interest in sport by educating themselves about sport-specific rules, knowing better of the strategies and skills, watching sports on television more regularly and studying sport related literature. (Weiss and Hayashi 1995.) Dorsch, Smith & McDonough (2014) also reviewed the topic of how youth sport shapes family relations and parental practices, results pointing out that

parents perceive a range of personal behavioral outcomes as soon as child participates in sport clubs. Participation in sport was reported as a shared interest that created a platform for communication and bonding between parent and child. Harrington (2006) and Coakley (2006) discovered that especially for fathers, youth sport is natural and comfortable way to spend quality parenting time with their children. Namely, youth sport was perceived by the fathers as a comfortable environment where fathers feel more open to share their experiences, guide their children and find shared topics to talk. Fathers also reported that sport was a way to start conversations about other matters that they may find difficult to talk about within the whole family. (Harrington 2006.)

Studies have suggested children to report enjoyment and greater level of motivation to sport when they perceive positive encouragement and support from their parents (Brustad 1988). Although, the parental commitment and support outside and during practice routines is associated with being positive, some parents have been recognized to be overly enthusiastic in their support resulting harm and negative influence on their children's sport participation. When parental support becomes excessive, parents create high levels of unrealistic goals, set standards of success, emphasize victory at all cost and have bigger expectations for an activity than their child has. These parental pressures may contribute conflicts between children and parents or possibly between parents and coach. Intense demands and high expectations may lead children or youth feeling anxious or stressed to perform in games, competitions or practices. Children and adolescents who participate in a competitive level sport may also experience considerable pressure in attaining results which may lead to dropping out from the sport or cause mental damage to the young athlete. (Doherty 1999.)

### **3 SPORT PARTICIPATION AS DIFFERENTIATING CULTURAL PRACTICE**

This chapter focuses on how socio-economic background affects a child's possibility to participate in high status sports, such as gymnastics, downhill skiing, tennis or ballet. Participation in these particular sport is seen as an expression of one's lifestyle, status and identity. In modern society, physical activity and sport are seen as forms of culture that give opportunities to individuals for personal expression and distinction. (Karisto 1988.) In theoretical terms, Pierre Bourdieu's notions of capital and habitus are used as a sociological reference that provides a framework for explaining the linkages between sport participation and lifestyle. Additionally, the concept of serious leisure is used to identify the behaviors and motives of sport participants and further the understanding of people who are seriously committed to particular leisure activities (Stebbins 2005).

#### **3.1 Theoretical origins of socio-economic status**

Social class refers to persistent social inequalities in society. The concept of social class has been used in several studies determining social relationships such as inequalities in income, occupation, wealth, education and social status. (McPherson, Curtis & Loy 1989, 172-183.) Several studies have used social class to refer to social groups arising from different economic relationships among people. Class position may explain and give better understanding of why some members of different social classes advance in their economic and social well-being. (Melin & Blom 2011.) Krieger et al. (1997) explain social class to be a status hierarchy in which individuals are classified into upper, middle or lower class mainly through their economic success and accumulation of wealth.

In Finland, the concept of social class and grouping people based on their financial standing mostly faded away in the late 1980's. Social class has remained as an outdated concept to use in understanding inequalities in contemporary society. Even though, the term has remained old fashioned, many studies have continuously examined the composition of the new consensus society and various findings have prompted lively discussion related to the class system. (Kahma 2010, 11.) Furthermore, a variety of other terms such as socio-economic

status (SES), social stratification, social inequality has been used as a synonym and are seen as a more suitable concept for describing social class in contemporary societies. In general, all these terms are used in understanding the social distributions across social groups and geographical regions but their meaning differs to some extent based on their theoretical bases. (Galobardes, Lynch & Smith 2007.)

The key concepts of socio-economic differences have their origin in the work of Karl Marx and Max Weber. Both of their sociological theories have influenced modern research on socio-economic circumstances. (Melin & Blom 2011; Galobardes, Lynch & Smith 2007.) In Marxian tradition, socio-economic position is entirely determined by the means of production (land, factories), whereby an individual's social stratification is mainly a result of the structural relations imposed by capitalism. This means that uneven distribution within society is a result of the lack of joining ranks between individuals who have resources and those who do not. In contrast with Marxian tradition, Weberian sociology suggests that society is hierarchically distributed along with two or more groups where social classes are based on individual's market position and life changes. Therefore, individuals in different classes share the same circumstances, values and norms. (Lynch & Kaplan 2000.) In contrast to Marx and Weber, Bourdieu broadens the base of the class concept to other aspects than just an individual's economic circumstance. Bourdieu argues that people from different social positions differ from one another based on the possession of three fundamental types of capital; economic, cultural and social capital. (Booth & Loy, 1999.)

Socio-economic status has been frequently used as a term in the academic world to describe classifications and differences in society (Kahma 2011). Socio-economic position most commonly depends on a combination of different indicators including educational level, occupational status, income, wealth and place of residence (Lynch & Kaplan 2000). However, Oakes & Rossi (2003) suggested that mostly socio-economic measurement relies entirely on data from income, occupational position and educational attainment. These three characteristics of socio-economic status have been identified as being valid, simple to collect and recalled by participants (Oakes & Rossi 2003). Children's and adolescent's socio-economic position is determined and measured by the social and economic status of family members with information collected from parents or from youth themselves. It has been

recorded that environmental and social factors may have an adverse or favourable impact on the youth's life. (Lehto, Corander, Ray & Roos 2009.)

Research on socio-economic status has shown that parents' education, income and occupation affect children's lifestyle and life choices. Especially, a wide range of studies have indicated higher SES in the family being associated with children being more likely to participate in organized sports. (e.g. Santos et al. 2004; Stuij 2013; Aarresola 2014; Lampinen et al. 2017.) However, there have been controversial results whether the family SES is associated in children's and adolescent's physical activity in leisure time. Research by Santos et al. (2004) indicates that individuals from all SES attend leisure time physical activity. However, only high SES families are strongly associated with organized sports. Also, Lampinen et al. (2017) reported that children with lower parental SES participated in organized sports twice less than other children.

Children and adolescents who live in high income households are more likely to participate in physical activity, organized sports and follow physical activity recommendations. Similarly, high educational attainment in the family has been outlined to strongly influence adolescent's sports involvement. To support these findings, 78 percent of Finnish adolescents from the highest income families earning over 80 000 euros per year participated in organized sports while corresponding proportion in the lowest income group was under half. (Palomäki, Laherto & Kukkonen et al., 2016.) Similarly focusing on the relationship on children's sport participation and family SES, Santos et al. (2004) illustrates how parents from higher SES are more active in encouraging their children to participate in organized sports when compared to low SES families. In Stuij's (2013) research, parents from high SES were examined to control and regulate their children's sport habits. Children from high SES illustrated more discipline to participate in practices and tournaments and learn specific skills or rules to sports when compared to children from low SES groups.

Inconsistent results have been found whether family's SES affects children's participation in certain organized sports. A Finnish study by Kantomaa, Tammelin, Näyhä & Taanila (2007) reported that within the highest income families, boys commonly participated in tennis, golf or badminton and girls most commonly in aerobics and dancing. Another Finnish study by



Tammelin, Näyhä, Hills & Järvelin (2003) found evidence that adolescents from highest social class participate most commonly in downhill skiing, orienteering, dance and horse-riding. According to Berg (2018) perceptions and opinions of over-priced sports can either be a barrier or an opportunity for children to participate in certain sports. In Berg's (2018) study, depending on the family earnings and number of children participating in organized sports, parents mostly perceived soccer and track and field affordable. They categorized themselves as middle class. Their perceptions of golf, ice hockey and equestrian were highlighted being overly-priced and pursued exclusively by the high-income families.

Up to this point, studies have generally found that higher education, income and occupational status in the family is positively associated with children's and adolescent's participation in organized sports (e.g. Santos et al. 2004; Stuij 2013; Aarresola 2014; Lampinen et al. 2017). Sallis et al. (1996) indicate that children from low-income families are presumed to have limited access to resources that can support a healthy and physically active lifestyle, such as participation in sport clubs. Also, the family's socioeconomic status may limit the child's possibility to compete in sports, attend sport camps or play in sport club year around. (Itkonen, 2017.)

Lampinen et al. (2017) has studied the reasons why parental socioeconomic status affects children's sport participation. The research indicated that parents with low educational backgrounds may have irregular work schedules and therefore less opportunities to transport children to organized sports. Another explanation may be that children from a lower SES may obtain less parental support and encouragement to participate in activities and because of this, children are less likely to participate in sports. Low participation in organized sports by the children in the low SES group is most commonly dependent on financial issues, these families are not able to cover the participation fees (Itkonen, 2017; Stuij 2013). Itkonen (2017) added that most commonly poor financial status in the family is associated with cultural and social capital when parents have limited social networks and limited opportunities to cultural capital.

### **3.2 Forms of capital**

Through the lenses of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field theory, habitus, forms of capital and distinction, sport participation can be perceived as a cultural practice in the same way as for example, reading, listening to music, clothing or arts (Laberge & Kay 2002). Bourdieu's theories have been shaped strongly by the French society in the early 1970's, where various cultural practices were linked to an individual's social position, lifestyle choices and taste. (Karisto 1999, 44.) Bourdieu also used his theories in a sport context, where different sports and physical activities are linked to various lifestyle practices that embrace an individual's status and identity (Laberge & Kay 2002). Bourdieu supported the idea that sports are not a personal choice and participation is dependent on the economic resources, social status and different cultural meanings. According to Bourdieu's forms of capital, individuals constantly compete with one another in the various social fields of life. In work and personal life, it is typical to express one's worthiness in financial endeavours, hobbies, clothes, dialect/verbal expression, and other similar categories. People work to accumulate the capital that is valued within each social field. The practice of gaining capital, also known as habitus, has become so integrated in the principle of certain social classes that these individuals participate in the behaviour subconsciously. The habitus is considered to guide individuals to make decisions, think and behave in a certain way that is valuable in specific social group. (Bourdieu 1985, 11; Karisto 1988, 43.)

Bourdieu (1986) explains that capital can present itself in multiple dimensions such as in economic, cultural and social forms. These different forms of capital represent resources that people go after, possess or exchange in order to gain power, status and advantage over others in all fields of life. For instance, economic capital, means any material assets that are convertible into money or property which is recognized as a sign of distinction and refers to financial status, wealth, assets and time and money devoted to leisure pursuits. In contrast, Bourdieu defined cultural capital to refer to the culturally valued tastes and consumption patterns, which are not solely conceived as financial assets. Cultural capital is defined to act as a marker of social competence through three different forms; institutional forms (education, formal credentials, university degrees), objective forms (cultural goods such as art work, books) and embodied forms (taste, accent). Cultural capital is used as exclusive access to the

most valued resources, positions and activities that the dominant classes use to distance themselves from the lower classes. (Bourdieu 1986, 243.) Lastly, Bourdieu (1985, 67-68) defined social capital as a personal asset that is produced through individual's status, social standing, connections and networks. Social capital gives an individual a sort of a favourable social identity, which can be converted into significant tangible benefits.

Based on Bourdieu's understanding of capital, leisure pursuits take place in exclusive cultural fields such as in sport clubs, which are linked to various lifestyle practices, status, capital and taste. Therefore, Bourdieu defines taste as an important expression of symbolic dimension of class relations, where individuals have distinct tastes and preferences for cultural goods and practices. (Bourdieu 1985, 142-143.) Bourdieu described how individuals in the upper classes attempt to disassociate themselves from the general mass in order to stand out (Laberge & Kay 2000.) Bourdieu considered sporting activities to be matters of class interest as well, where the selected sport activity is seen as an expression of the symbolic dimension of class relations. For instance, a sport like golf incorporates features that are valued and appreciated by the higher social groups because participation is often exclusive in terms of location and member status and participation requires high investment of economic and cultural capital. (Bourdieu 1985, 165-166.) Similarly, Woods (2016, 45) expressed that throughout overall trends, expectations and traditional origins financially stable people tend to favor certain sports. Often high income families encourage their children to participate in selected sports such as golf, tennis, sailing, equestrian, fencing or downhill skiing. Engström (2004), explained this phenomenon as a cultural expression in a social context, which allows people to express their lifestyle, personalities and show who they are. Similarly, Karisto (1988) suggests how Bourdieu's theories emphasise how individual's lifestyle and status affect their sport and hobby selections. Sport preferences are used to highlight dynamism, trendiness and "being in reality time". Preferences can also reveal things about sensuality, aesthetics or of a more traditional lifestyle (Karisto 1988, 70-71). For some people, participation in high-status sports is just a leisure time activity that distinguishes themselves from others and reflects their status and prestige (Booth & Loy 1990).

Participation in overrated sports such as golf, fencing or downhill skiing does not necessarily mean a high level of training and competition, it may also be a leisure activity often included

in family vacations or as a way to spend time with friends (Woods 2016, 343). Golf, tennis, sailing, polo, cricket or downhill skiing are referred to as high-status sports which encompass strict rules of etiquette, embrace firm ethical imperatives, reflect particular aesthetic taste and follow manners (Booth & Loy 1999). A certain level of skill and understanding of these high-status sports are expected to be learned in some high-income families. Participating in high-status sports might be a way to connect the family or represent a certain image of the family. (Woods 2016, 343.) However, when children succeed and receive trophies in sports, parents may use it as a symbol of capital that is visible for other families in the neighborhood, community or sport clubs. Parents have been demonstrated to praise their children sporting success for others and thereby feel itself to deserve special credits of their parenting. (Coakley 2006).

To conclude, Bourdieu explains how the idea in power relations through forms of capital is seen in selecting and participating sport. Engaging in different sports and physical activities is seen to arise from economic and cultural capital and free time opportunities that individuals possess. (Bourdieu 1985, 166.) Based on this, Bourdieu demonstrated how those with more economic capital tend to be more drawn into trending sports that require great cost and offer opportunities to represent wealth, status, power and exclusive lifestyle. People who asses heavily with cultural capital have naturally excellent taste which drives them to sports that demonstrate aesthetic body preferences, style, physical attractiveness and appearance. Therefore, sports such as gymnastics, ballet or dance represent cultural forms that require intellectual and aesthetic skills, which usually people with cultural capital value. (Stempel 2005.) Unlike upper class and middle class groups who have enough economic and cultural capital to invest their sport participation, the lower-class groups who possess little capital typically choose to engage in sports such as boxing, gambling or wrestling. The reason why lower-class tend to join these sports is that they are in most case accessible in terms of money, exhibit aggressive behaviors, require high physical effort and contains risky pursuits creating excitement. (Booth and Loy 1999.)

Another theoretical framework that is crucial to use in explaining individuals' involvement in and commitment to participation in leisure activities is the concept of serious leisure, which was first introduced by Robert Stebbins. The concept of serious leisure has been used to

identify the behaviors and motives of sport participants and further the understanding of people who are seriously committed to participation in a particular activity on their leisure time. Stebbins demonstrates how leisure activities take on different forms, levels of intensity and commitment that happen in various social contexts. Generally speaking, leisure activities range from casual short-lived activities to highly intensive lifetime commitments where individuals take their level of pursuit to another level. For instance, participation in hobbies or recreational activities may become so interesting, fulfilling and substantial part of individual's life that dedication borders close to obsession. In this case, participation in serious leisure requires often a great deal of money, time and energy but in return individual gain personal fulfillment, rewards or sense of identity. Serious leisure participants often acquire or develop a specialized knowledge and skills that are associated in a particular activity which then distinguish themselves from others and bring similar people together. (Stebbins 1982.)

Qualities that distinguish serious leisure from casual leisure have been identified in the following way: perseverance, significant effort, career development, durable benefits, strong identification and unique ethos. All these qualities are found in among the three separate categories of serious leisure which Stebbins named as amateurs, hobbyists and volunteers. (Stebbins 2005.) Amateurs are described as followers of professional counterparts who set the benchmarks in terms of skills, trends, clothes and behaviors. Unlike amateurs who follow the steps of professionals, hobbyists exist within their own social world without any admirable professional counterparts. They are classified under five common types: collectors, makers and thinkers, activity participants, players in sport and games and highly knowledgeable enthusiasts. Volunteers who represent the third type of serious leisure participants are classified as active individuals who work for the purpose of pure social good, such as political or third sector events without any material gain. (Jones & Green 2006, 33-39; Stebbins 1997, 117-118; Vehmas 2010, 100-101.)

Vehmas (2010, 27) has examined the leisure choices of Finnish sport tourists by using Stebbin's conceptualization of serious leisure to identify distinctive types of sport travelers. In the research, the Finnish tourists reflected serious leisure qualities in their engagement with a leisure sports. Vehmas (2010, 175-180) categorizes them as dutiful performers who intensively practice on a weekly basis their chosen sport, compete in it and reflect career

development. Involvement in sports was described by the tourists as a duty and responsibility that needed to be completed like work. They justified their dutiful commitment on sports by gaining life satisfaction, health and energy capital.

## **4 FIGURE SKATING**

Figure skating has been described as a sport that combines perfect balance between athleticism and artistry. Competitive skating with its costumes, choreographies, interprets in music, big jumps, lifts and effortless movement on the ice has attracted spectators for years. (Hines 2011, 4-6.) The following chapter will review how the sport originally developed from upper-class men's leisure activity to a feminine sport that nowadays mostly attracts young girls to pursue competitive figure skating. Furthermore, this chapter sets the foundation upon which this research is based on.

### **4.1 Figure skating as a research topic**

Figure skating has developed from a practical way to move on ice into a graceful mixture of art and sport. The earliest use of the term "*figure skating*" came from the idea when different circular geometric figures and patterns were skated on to clean ice. These complex designs on ice were called figures. (Kestnbaum 2003, 11-13.) As being the oldest Winter Olympic sport, figure skating has undergone many dramatic changes during its history. Today, figure skating has emerged as one of the most prominent physical activities for young girls to participate in competitively. Television broadcasts of figure skating competitions and touring ice shows have reached large audiences all around the world and helped to popularize the sport as a spectator event. (Hines 2011, 1-6.) Kivimäki (1981, 9-11) also pointed out how long winters and increasing amount of indoor skating rinks have attracted people from all ages to spend their leisure time exercising on the ice and provided the opportunity for athletes to train year-round.

Figure skating is the umbrella term that represents four different and unique disciplines; single skating, synchronized skating, pair skating and ice dance. Each of these disciplines requires the skater to perform sport-specific skills and routines at competitions with high levels of strength, balance and control either alone, with a pair or in a team. (Kestnbaum 2003, 11-13.) Historically, various countries and their skaters have dominated competitive figure skating

periodically, often in specific disciplines. According to Hines (2011, 4-6) the most successful countries in the early championships from 1986 were Sweden, Austria, France, Great Britain and Germany. Hines (2011, 4-6) then added that in the 21st century, skaters from Russia, Japan and the United States have firmly grasped their place in the podiums in the most important championships across all four disciplines. Finland has been an internationally recognized country in single skating and synchronized skating. After the success of single skaters in the European and World championships in the years of 2000-2010 and synchronized skating teams representing at the world-class level in almost every World championship, the sport has gained popularity and visibility in Finland and abroad.

As a research topic, figure skating has not been a popular area of research worldwide. The previously published academic research topics related to figure skating have largely focused on the experiences of figure skaters and their physical and mental characteristics. Some international studies have been mostly limited to a few broad areas, which are injuries, eating disorders or sport-specific technical analyses. However, recently the media has put its attention to the negative aspects of figure skating bringing in light the discussion of young skater's mental and physical health and criticized the demanding training culture. Many skaters have since come forward to discuss their lifelong battles with eating disorders, mental problems and basic human rights. (Visuri 2019.)

In Finland, most of the research topics related to figure skating have been published in the field of sport sciences. The research topics related to biomechanics and exercise physiology have been limited to three broad areas; sport-specific analysis, coaching, and physical and gross motor requirements. More specifically, the following subjects have been recently researched: sport-specific analysis and coaching programming (Aalto 2017), physiological performance requirements of young national team figure skaters (Alanen 2012) and motor capabilities required to learn specific figure skating jumps (Laksola 2015). In the field of sport management, research related to figure skating have focused on leadership, operational and managerial aspects in figure skating clubs (Sunnari, 2009; Lindman, 2017) and the sponsorship opportunities in figure skating (Salmijärvi, 2016; Sponsor Insight 2018). The culture of figure skating from the coaches' point of view have been studied by Mälkki in 2016. Lately, the Finnish Figure Skating Association has carried out extensive public studies



of figure skating events (Sponsor Insight 2018) and the culture of figure skating (Taloustutkimus 2019).

## **4.2 The early stages of ice skating**

The origins of skating can be traced back to the late 17th and early 18th century when skating was originated as a means of transportation across frozen canals, lakes and ponds. Skating on natural ice provided people to travel quickly and easily between towns and villages. Different landscapes in the Northern European cities led people to invent new ways to use their blades which created new skating styles. (Adams 2007; 2010.)

Both Adams (2007) and Puromies (2008, 14) illustrated the birthplace of figure skating as mid-Victorian England, where upper-class gentlemen were fascinated about the marks they could leave on the ice. In the late 1800s to beginning of the 1900s, Englishmen developed curved blades that allowed them to trace complicated figures on the ice and draw complex geometric shapes with their blades. These improvements permitted further development of skating and the sport transformed its name into "*figure skating*". This early form of figure skating was seen as an elegant, noble and exclusive leisure activity. (Kestnbaum 2003, 57-59.) At that time, gliding on the ponds was a form of privileged entertainment and a leisure activity that combined art, social event and exercising. It was a form of activity that demonstrated social class, wealth and sophistication. As a part of it, grace and elegance were considered to be a fundamental characteristic of masculinity that upper-class gentlemen exclusively pursued. This partly explains why women were rarely seen on the ice when the sport was created. Another reason why women were excluded from the sport was that women's skating was seen as disruptive for public morals and dangerous to their health.

The first world championships in figure skating were held in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1896 by the International Skating Union (ISU), which still acts as a body that internationally governs figure skating and speed skating. Originally, competitive figure skating scores were based on the compulsory geometric figures and patterns that were created on to the ice. After 1990, these requirements have not been in use. (Hines 2011, 4-8.) Figures reflected the early days of figure skating but due to limited broadcast coverage and lack of interest to follow the complex figures, the ISU began to progressively reduce the importance of scoring figures.

With these changes, figure skating scoring was changed to a judging system which allowed scores to range from 0.0-6.0. Scores were based on technical skills and performance. However, due to the scoring being easily manipulated, the point system was renewed. The newest ISU Judging System was established in 2004 and the same system is used across all four disciplines. The present ISU judging system is based on the quantitative scoring, which allows tracking statistics of specific technical elements and program component scores. (Puromies 2008, 171.) The ISUs purpose is to govern and establish the fundamental rules that are to be followed by all nations who internationally compete in figure skating. This is to ensure that during international competitions all countries follow the same guidelines. The Finnish Figure Skating Association has been a member of the ISU from 1969. (ISU 2019a.)

Competitive figure skating steadily grew in popularity and in the mid-nineteenth century the world began to recognize famous figure skaters. One skating pioneer was Ulrich Salchow, a Swedish ten-time world champion, who invented *the salchow jump*, which is still used in competitions today (Hines 2011, 6.) Adams (2007) stated that later famous female skaters started to appear and the sport was considered to be one of the only sports where women were able to participate. Norwegian figure skater Sonja Henie, who began to internationally compete in the 1920's, was the reason for the dramatic increase in participation of young middle class girls. Her unique combination of athletic and artistic abilities pulled the spectators attention and led population to describe figure skating as a feminine form of dancing on ice, rather than as a competitive sport. Henie brought long white boots and elegant dresses into the sport. Through Sonja Henie's impressions and performances, women's skating became graceful and effortless which seemed to suit the natural characteristics of females. (Adams 2010.)

The history of figure skating in Finland began in 1869. The figure skating pioneer Jackson Haines from the United States visited Finland and introduced people to a new style of skating. (Puromies 2008, 15-17.) Haines had a unique style of skating which went beyond the rigid and formal British style. Haines incorporated dance and music into figure skating and brought many new moves, such as leaps, spins, elegant body lines and artistic features to the sport (Adams 2007). Inspired by Haines, organized figure skating activities began to be established and eventually skating became familiar for Finns. The first outdoor skating tracks and clubs began to appear soon after Haines visit and one of the first skating clubs called *Helsingfors*

*Skridskoklubb* started to organize exhibitions, gala balls and winter carnivals at the Kaisaniemi park in Helsinki. (Puromies 2008 20-21.)

Several history-making figure skaters have represented Finland in Olympic Games, World and European Championships. The first important Finnish skaters were Ludowika and Walter Jakobsson followed by Kristiina Wegelius, Susan Broman and Pekka Leskinen. In the late 1990's Susanna Rahkamo and Petri Kokko began an era of outstanding success in ice dance being one of the world's best athletes in the sport. The couple reached up to four ISU Championship medals and are the most successful Finnish ice dancers to date. (Puromies 2008, 42-152.)

After Susanna Rahkamo and Petri Kokko's career, Finnish figure skating has celebrated several history-making moments on the ice in both single and synchronized skating. In single skating, a strong group of Finnish ladies including Susanna Pöykiö, Laura Lepistö and Kiira Korpi reached the European podium for the first time in the beginning of 2000's. (Puromies 2008, 8-13.) Between 2005 and 2018 Finnish single skaters have won a total of nine ISU Championship medals. Laura Lepistö, the 2009 European gold and 2010 World Championship bronze medalist is the first Finnish female single skater who has achieved a medal from World Championships. Kiira Korpi won the ISU Championship medal in 2012 and it was not until 2019 that Viveca Lindfors brought a medal to Finland by winning the bronze medal in the European Championships. (ISU 2019b.)

Synchronized skating is the newest and fastest growing discipline of figure skating. At the 1994 ISU Congress, synchronized skating became officially recognized as one of the disciplines of figure skating and since then advanced level teams have competed annually for World title. Even though synchronized skating has been dominated only a small number of teams and countries including Finland, Sweden, Canada, USA and most recently Russia, which has won the latest World title in 2019, the sport has expanded to a wide range of countries. (ISU 2017.) Finland has achieved medals in nearly every Synchronized World Championships. Between 2000 and 2018 Finnish synchronized teams Marigold IceUnity, Rockettes and Team Unique have won 23 medals in total from Synchronized World Championships. The goal of synchronized skating is to become a participant in the winter Olympics. (Finnish Figure Skating Association 2018.)

### **4.3 Figure skating in Finland**

During the early history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ice sports were seasonal sports practiced only in countries where weather conditions provided natural ice on skating (Hines 2011, 7). Finland is considered a country that offers long winters and cold temperatures that enables ice sports to be practiced on natural ice. Over the years the growing number of indoor and outdoor ice rinks and lack of snow have increased the popularity to exercise on ice. Therefore, ice sports such as ice hockey, tour skating and ice skating have had a strong hold on Finns for centuries. Exercising on ice with skates has been seen as one of the Finnish national sports and has traditionally been taught in school's physical education classes (Kivimäki 1981, 9-11.) The unusual lack of snow in recent winters have increased the popularity of tour skating and due to this, tour skating participants have nearly quadrupled in ten years. Recreational long distance skating on frozen waterways usually attracts adults but fits individuals of all ages. (Finnish Outdoor Association 2019.) Among the three previously mentioned forms of ice sports, ice hockey is seen as the most popular and one of the most successful sports in Finland. Due to this, the sport receives wide media coverage. From 1960's onwards a massive construction of indoor ice rinks in Finland guaranteed year-round practice opportunities, enabled the creation of new professional ice hockey teams and made ice hockey the most popular spectator sport. (Kivinen et al. 2000, 16-50.) The progressive construction of new indoor ice rinks in Finland can be followed in ten year periods; 1970: 15; 1980: 30; 1990: 90; 2000:63; 2010:35. Currently Finland has 249 ice rinks, which are owned either by municipalities or private corporations (Lipas 2019).

Currently there are 82 operating figure skating clubs in Finland. These clubs are located in seven different regions and are registered member clubs of the Finnish Figure Skating Association. (Finnish Figure Skating Association 2018a.) Finnish figure skating clubs organize a wide range of skating-related activities for club members who compete at various levels from beginners all the way to the professional level (Valto & Kokko 2012, 445). In addition, many figure skating clubs offer recreational skating activities for those who enjoy the sport as a hobby. The clubs offer separate organized practices for all disciplines of figure skating. Furthermore, most figure skating clubs offer inexpensive skating schools for children to learn the basics of skating. Depending on the resources of the club, some may provide

adapted figure skating sessions, family skating sessions or only focus on the experienced and competitive level skaters. (Finnish Figure Skating Association 2018.)

During the last five years, the participation rates of figure skating in Finland have risen steadily. Today, the figure skating clubs have approximately 18 000 registered and licensed skaters in member clubs and 8 000 of them compete at a national or international level. (Finnish Figure Skating Association 2017b.) In contrast to other organized youth sports, soccer is the most widely practiced club-based sport in Finland with over 140 000 registered players (Football Association of Finland, 2019). Ice hockey is the second most popular sport in Finland with 75 000 registered players, followed by floorball (Finnish Ice Hockey Association 2019). Floorball has grown strongly in popularity in recent years and has a widespread popularity of 65 000 members (Finnish Floorball Federation 2019). A notable factor is that the trends of youth sport participation are based on the number of athletes who have purchased license from the sporting association and not based on the total number of those who engage sports as a recreational purpose. For that reason, some sports may not appear in the top ranking.

According to research conducted by Taloustutkimus (2019) 12-year-old Finnish figure skaters outlined the top three reasons that motivates them about figure skating: opportunity to progress and learn new tricks, love for the sport and like-minded training friends. More than three quarters (79 %) of skaters would definitely recommend figure skating as a hobby for their friends. Just over half (51 %) of the figure skaters' parents would recommend figure skating as a hobby. In the same research, 75 percent hold figure skating practices in a positive light where skaters highlighted to enjoy the practice sessions. (Taloustutkimus 2019.)

Competitive sports that require aesthetic abilities like figure skating, gymnastics and diving are recognized as early-specialization sports, in which young children train in higher volume and intensity than their peers in other sports (Monsma 2008). To achieve a high competitive level in figure skating, young skaters need to train at least ten years developing their complex motor coordination combined with the technical accuracy, strength, endurance, flexibility and persistence (Valto & Kokkonen 2009, 446-447). In addition to physical abilities, success in the sport is determined by psychological characteristic. Competitions require high levels of concentration and skaters need to cope with pressure and nerves during the performance.

Pressure is often caused by the fear of making mistakes during the performance or stress placed on the athlete by parents, coaches, judges or the audience. (Smith 1997, 241.) Despite the feeling of pressure that skaters experience, performing should be an enjoyable moment where the athlete is allowed personal expression through the interpretation of music (Valto & Kokko 2009, 446).

In early-specialized sports, such as in figure skating, preferably complex technical skills are to be learned before puberty (Monsma 2008). Children's participation usually begins by attending skating school as early as four years of age. By the age of seven, the amount of practices increases noticeably due to specialization in one discipline. Coaches train 7-year-old skaters intensively all year-round between four to six hours a week. Often, competitions begin from the lowest levels around the age of six. (Valto & Kokko 2009, 445-447.) A minimum age of 15 or turning 15 within the calendar year is required to allow participation in the internal major senior level competitions (ISU 2018, 112). Skaters tend to reach their peak at approximately 20 years of age. However, intensive training begins at the age of 13 to 15 when skaters train nearly 700 hours a year. This is usually broken down to approximately two hour training sessions a day during the week. Elite level figure skaters who have reached their peak train intensively for approximately 800 hours per season. (Valto & Kokkonen 2009, 445-451.)

Despite figure skating being considered a female oriented sport, it has been actively promoted equally between girls and boys. Single skating and synchronized skating are almost exclusively practiced by females. However, due to pair skating and ice dance requiring a man and female counterpart, the number of male skaters has increased in the sport (Hines 2011, 6.) Female skaters have been among the most idolized and admired athletes around the world (Michalski & Moncrief 2016, 1). Skaters are seen to represent pure beauty and athleticism while figure skating as a sport is seen elegant and glamorous which often corresponds with various companies' values thus attracting interest in sponsorships (Alaraja 2018).

Due to figure skating representing values such as wellbeing, creativity and equality many active followers display similar ideals in their lifestyle choices. (Alaraja 2018.) As an example, most of the spectators are attracted to figure skating because of the inherent beauty and artistic expression of the skaters. (Wann, Grieve & Zapalac 2008.) Sponsor Insight's (2018) findings are similar to Wann, Grieve and Zapalac's research and highlighted that many

skating fans are interested in attending cultural activities such as theaters and museums during their leisure time. In addition, Sponsor Insight (2018) concluded that individuals interested in figure skating typically follow the latest fashion trends, prefer to use recyclable products and favor brands that fit their own values.

People have enjoyed watching a variety of figure skating events through television broadcast for many years (Hines 2011, 1). Often, spectators are fascinated by the technical tricks, fast speed and controlled balance on the ice, making the sport interesting to follow (Kivimäki 1981, 9-39.) According to the study by Sponsor Insight (2018), more than 940 000 Finnish adults follow figure skating through television. Figure skating, similar to sports such as track and field, ski jump and volleyball, attracts fans and casual viewers but is well behind the major mass sports of ice hockey, soccer and cross-country skiing. Top sports usually get the highest status, the greatest profits and the most media coverage in Finland. Adams (2011) agreed with the previous finding of Sponsor Insight and points out that figure skating has a relatively modest status in terms of media coverage. However, female spectators from the age groups of 30 to 44 and 60 and older have been outlined to rank figure skating among one of the most interesting top spectator sports to follow. (Sponsor Insight 2018.)

Figure skaters have a limited number of international competitions annually in which to compete. Most countries, including Finland arrange national championships in the middle of the season. Entries into the upcoming international championships regulated by the ISU are typically selected from national medal winners. Other than during Olympic years, The Worlds are usually the premier event of each skating season. (Hines 2011, 10-11.) The Finnish Figure Skating Association has been active in arranging world-class figure skating events which have brought publicity and visibility to the sport. One of the highlights during the season 2017 was the ISU World Figure Skating Championships in Helsinki. The event generated 2.9 million euros of revenue and an estimated 80 000 spectators visited Hartwall Arena. (Finnish Figure Skating Association 2017a.) The 2017 World Championships turned out to be a great success and two years later the Finnish Figure Skating Association had the privilege to arrange another championship in synchronized skating. The ISU World Synchronized Championships in 2019 was sold out, filling Helsinki's Ice Hall to the limit and generated approximately 600 000 euros of profit for the Association. (Finnish Figure Skating Association 2019.) Even though, championships have brought growth, interest and new members to the sport, new

collaborations and concepts have increased the visibility of the sport in Finland. In winter season 2016 - 2017, the concept of “Ice Skating Tour feat. Koko Suomi Luistelee” was launched for the first time together with Finland Skating Federation and the Finnish Figure Skating Association. To present day, nationwide tour-events have been organized in cooperation with local figure skating and speed skating clubs, municipalities and schools. To spread visibility of ice sports, in 2017 the Ice Skating tour visited over 70 locations with an estimated 45 000 people participating in the events. (Finnish Figure Skating Association 2017b.)



## **5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to explore how young figure skater's family background and other social factors influence in the participation in figure skating. A questionnaire assessing family background in terms of socio-economic status, lifestyle, the parents view on the child's figure skating hobby as well as the daily habits, values and preferences of the family were asked. The aim is to understand the culture of figure skating more precisely and explore the socioeconomic factors of the participants by statistical means. Participants of this study are the parents whose children participate in a figure skating club that is a member of the Finnish Figure Skating Association.

The changes that have occurred in figure skating have primarily effected the skaters and their families. By examining the socio-economic background and perceptions of figure skating as a hobby from the perspective of parents, the current study aims to further our understanding of the linkage between social background and participation. The information provided is intended to give new and updated information of the participants and their families which then can be used to develop the conditions and culture of the sport in the future.

The specific research questions for the study are the following:

1. What is the socioeconomic background of the families whose child participates in figure skating?
2. How does figure skating influence the family life of the figure skater?
3. What are the parents' perceptions and opinions about their child's participation in figure skating?

## **5.2 Research methodology and strategy**

In this study, a quantitative research approach was implemented. A quantitative approach primarily aims to collect and analyse data that is structured and represented numerically. This type of research allows exploration of accurate and statistical information from a large population sample. (Vilkkä 2007, 16.) The statistical research is strongly based on numerical reasoning and probability calculations, which in turn are used to answer “what” or “how” of a given situation and therefore explain a particular phenomenon. Specifically, percentages and correlations between different matters are calculated and based on the data, graphs and figures are used to present the overall results. Even though, a quantitative research provides numerical statistics on a certain trend, it does not provide reasoning for the specific phenomenon. (Heikkilä 2014.)

A quantitative approach was considered to be the most appropriate method to use in this study because it allowed to obtain accurate and statistical information from the largest possible population. Since all data was collected simultaneously from a relatively large sample of people, this study is seen as a cross-sectional study executed by survey research. By definition, a cross-sectional survey refers to collection of data in a given timeframe from a sample drawn from a specific population. Cross-sectional survey is seen as a useful approach when a researcher aims to describe features or particular characteristics of larger or smaller populations in a particular study. Cross-sectional data can be used to test the relations and differences between variables and based on that, percentages, frequencies and other statistical approaches can be implemented. (Vastamäki & Valli 2018.)

The research process started by exploring the literature, identifying research issues and selecting an interesting topic. The decision to choose figure skating as a research topic was based on researcher’s interests and background. On top of this, it was necessary to find a research topic that proves to be important to the Finnish figure skating society. Figure skating as a sport was seen as a potential topic to study because there are relatively few studies about figure skating in academic circles and lately, it has been discovered as one of the most expensive youth sports in Finland raising questions related to accessibility, equality and socioeconomic status (Puronaho 2014). Therefore, studying the social background and

lifestyle of families with children who practice figure skating combined with analysis of the figure skating culture in general was deemed to be the foundation of the study by the researcher and thesis supervisor. After sketching the theoretical framework and research questions, the Sport Manager of the Finnish Figure Skating Association at that time was contacted and agreed with the thesis process. After the agreement, an active phase of framing the questionnaire, familiarizing with the related literature and writing the actual theory of the research began. Data collection included sending the questionnaire to the participants, which will be discussed in the chapter 5.3. After the questionnaire was closed, the data was processed and analysed. Chapter 5.4 will discuss more in details about the process of analysing the results. The final stage of the process was to write the results and finish the literature review. The results of the study will be presented in chapter 6.

### **5.3 Survey design**

The traditional way to collect information in the quantitative method from a large population is usually web-based data collection surveys (Valli 2018). Researchers have agreed that online surveys are effective in increasing response rates because a large number of people can be reached in a short time, they are simple and quick to answer and secure anonymity which may lead to an increased amount of honest responses (Fricker & Schonlau 2002). Researchers also benefit from online survey methods as they are usually cost effective, flexible in the questionnaire design, fast in transmission and data comes in numerical format making it easy to import into a data analysis program. Despite the advantages, the downside of online surveys is that they can limit the ability to provide further in-depth questions and respondent cannot get any additional instructions to unclear questions. Poorly designed questionnaire may result respondent to exit a survey without finishing it entirely. (Valli 2018.)

As the purpose of this research was to collect data from geographically diverse respondents and profile the sample in terms of numbers, an online survey method was seen to be the most suitable research instrument. Other methods for collecting data would have been email, paper or phone surveys. However, as online questionnaires have become the most widely used research instrument of collecting data and proved to be effective, fast and accountable, the decision was clear. (Valli & Perkkilä 2018.) In framing a questionnaire and before taking

further steps, the researcher should ensure that the questions fulfil research objectives and questions are carefully planned and written understandably. It is the researcher's responsibility to design the questionnaire that is as easy and understandable as possible for the respondent. If the respondent understands questions differently than the researcher implies it will increase the probability of incorrect responses. (Heikkilä 2014.)

Designing a questionnaire for this study began in the beginning of spring 2019 by using the online-based survey tool Webropol 3.0 software. Webropol 3.0 software enabled to design and place questions in long scrollable pages, where respondents were able to view the previous answers. (Valli & Perkkilä 2018.) Before conducting the actual survey, a questionnaire was pilot-tested by four people who had experience of figure skating as a parent, coach and judge. After this, a questionnaire was approved by the Finnish Figure Skating Association and thesis supervisor. The pilot test did not reveal any technical problems, but some questions were slightly modified and response choices were added since some from the pilot group did not find the correct answer options they were looking for. Valli & Perkkilä (2018) noticed that even though a pilot test will provide reliability and prove the survey practical, unpredictable issues may still occur when executing the actual survey which may result in lack of response rates.

The data for this study was captured by a means of a quantitative questionnaire, which was composed of 24 multiple choice questions, close-ended questions, rank order and Likert. Questions related to respondents age and place of residence were asked to be typed shortly in an open text box. At the end of the questionnaire an open text box was set to allow respondents to specify their answers, identify new issues or just express their thoughts. (See appendix 1.) The length of a questionnaire has been found to influence the motivation of the respondent to fulfill the whole survey. Therefore, to maximize high response rate and entail accurate answers, the goal was to keep the questionnaire simple and short to carry out. (Valli 2018.) Also, in order to avoid incorrect answers and make the questionnaire appealing to the respondents, the research objectives and context was introduced on the first page of the questionnaire. Specifically, the instructions included detailed information about what the study encompasses and instructions on filling the questionnaire. This page also clarified the anonymity of the questionnaire. (See appendix 1.)

The actual questionnaire constructed of three sections and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. The first section was designed to gather demographic information about the parents and their families. The second part of the questionnaire covered questions related to their children's demographic background and participation in figure skating including questions related to level, volume, specialization and expenses. The third part contained questions of the parent's perceptions, attitudes and opinions of their children's figure skating hobby.

Proportion of the questions were closed-ended and in order to move forward in the survey, respondents had to select one answer from predefined alternatives. Only one question related to defining the figure skaters discipline was set mutually exclusive to answer and respondents were able to select two or more alternatives at the same time. Three close-ended questions related to occupation, socioeconomic status and parents athletic career had a response option of "Other, please specify" provided if the available answer choices did not apply to respondent. Three closed questions were formulated in a ranking scale where respondent compared alternatives by placing them in order of preference. Rankings differ to some extent from actual measurements, because they indicate where the value stands in relation to other values. Parents were asked to rank in order what mostly impacted their children's participation in figure skating, what type of leisure time activities the family does together and lastly, what kind of expectations parents have on their children's figure skating hobby.

In the last part of the questionnaire, a 5-point Likert scale approach was used. Respondents chose their answer from two opposing perspectives from a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Likert approach had 12 statements which all had to be answered. If respondent did not have an opinion on a particular topic, a neutral midpoint "neither agree nor disagree" was included. Although, Likert-scale is widely used in measuring opinions and attitudes, very often respondents either avoid answering the extreme opinions on the scale or they easily lean towards "no opinion at all". Therefore, it is hard to distinguish and interpret the data. (Valli 2018.) Ultimately, the purpose of choosing these question layouts was to ensure that the questionnaire is easy and quick for respondent to complete. Additionally, data analysis is more practical for the researchers and broad comparisons amongst respondents are simple to examine. (Valli & Perkkilä 2018.)

## **5.4 Data collection and analysis**

The distribution of the questionnaire to the families whose children participated in figure skating was possible as a result of the cooperation with the Finnish Figure Skating Association. The questionnaire was sent to the parents' email addresses through the Finnish Figure Skating Association's email distributor. Therefore, all the email addresses were obtained from the register of the Finnish Figure Skating Association and successfully 8821 emails with the link to the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents. However, the exact number of people who received the survey is hard to define since some of the messages may have gone straight to a spam box. A total of 1763 respondents completed the questionnaire and the survey had a final response rate of 22 percent. Generally, the sample sizes used in quantitative research is determined as minimum 100 participants. In nationwide consumer surveys recommended sample size ranges from 500 to 1000 responses. (Heikkilä 2014.) Overall, a sufficiently large sample size in this study enables to describe phenomenon based on numerical values.

The survey was conducted over a period of a month, starting from April 16<sup>th</sup> and closing on May 18<sup>th</sup> in 2019. The Finnish Figure Skating Association mailed an invitation to all families whose children were registered license athletes at the member clubs of the Association. Parents of children under 18 years old were invited to complete an anonymous online questionnaire regarding family background and children's sport participation in figure skating. The email provided information of the study and a link to the survey. Participants were also asked to ensure that the person who answered the questionnaire was either a parent or caregiver for a child who participates in figure skating. In case the message receiver was the skater them self the email was asked to be forwarded to the parents. If parents had multiple children involved in figure skating, they were instructed to choose one child and fill the survey based on that.

As this study was conducted by using quantitative method and the data was collected through numeric variables and statistics, the chosen technique for analyzing the data was IBM SPSS Statistics- program. Before beginning the analysis, the data was browsed and run through

multiple checks to ensure that no errors occurred. Additionally, some of the survey's verbal responses were coded by assigning a numerical value to each response.

The first step in analyzing data was constructing the frequency distributions and calculating percentages that emerged from the cross-tabulation. Additionally, measures of central tendency were implemented for questions related to age, children's level of figure skating and Likert-scale. To find evidence of a significant difference between groups, regions and disciplines, the One-way ANOVA was used as a statistical test. Once the existing difference was determined, the Post hoc test was used to determine specifically which means differed. Whether there were any statistical differences between the variables, the results are presented in the following way: the result was statistically almost significant when  $p < 0,05$ , significant when  $p < 0,01$  and very significant when  $p = 0,001$ . Multiple comparisons between regions, expenses, disciplines were implemented through the Bonferroni test and in case if variances were unequal Tamhane's test was used. In order to describe and summarize extensive numerical data in an organized manner, different figures were created by using the Excel-program.

## **6 RESULTS**

This chapter presents the main findings of the study in three sections based on the research questions. First, the socio-demographic information of the respondents (parents) and their families is presented. Then, information about children's sport participation, including yearly expenses, level of figure skating, weekly sport participation volume and sport specialization is presented and lastly, parents perceptions and opinions of the sport are illustrated.

### **6.1 Background of the participants**

This section focuses on identifying and demonstrating socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the families whose children participate in figure skating. Socio-demographic questions in a survey allow researcher to gain background information of the respondents and form subgroups to compare how responses vary between groups. (Valli 2018). In this study, parents were asked to report socio-demographic information about themselves including their role as a parent, age, place of residence, marital status, educational attainment, income level and socio-economic status. The socio-demographic characteristics of the total of the 1763 respondents are presented in Tables 1. and 2. Several background characteristics based on the results are used later in the report to draw comparisons among respondents.

The questionnaire started by asking the respondents' roles in the family. The predetermined response options regarding the relationship of respondent in the family were: mother, father or other caregiver. All respondents were asked to report their age by typing in the text box in numerical format. The age distribution has been presented in Table 1. by regrouping participants' ages into following categories: under 30 years, 31-40 years, 41-50 years, 50 and older. Each respondent was also asked about their marital status. The response options were: single, married, domestic partnership, divorced or widowed.



The relationship between the children and the adult who took part in the survey ranged from mothers and fathers to other caregiver. Even though several types of relatives participated, mothers composed the greatest majority of respondents. That being said, 85 percent of respondents were mothers and 15 percent fathers. The age of respondents ranged from 24 years to 69 years with a mean age of 42 years. With regards to age groups, the respondents aged under 30 years (3 %) and 50 years and older (8 %) represented the minority groups while nearly half of the respondents (49 %) were aged between 41 and 50 years. The second largest age group were those between the ages of 31 to 40 years, reaching 39 percent of the total sample. Almost three-quarters (76 %) of the respondents reported being married at the time of survey, and 14 percent reported being in domestic relationship. The remaining small percentages reported was divorced (6 %), single (3 %) and widowed (1 %). (Table 1.)

TABLE 1. Respondents demographic background (N=1763)

|                       | Frequency | %    |
|-----------------------|-----------|------|
| <b>Respondent</b>     |           |      |
| Mother                | 1495      | 84,8 |
| Father                | 262       | 14,9 |
| Other caregiver       | 6         | 0,3  |
| <b>Age*</b>           |           |      |
| Under 30              | 50        | 2,8  |
| 31-40                 | 693       | 39,3 |
| 41-50                 | 868       | 49,2 |
| 50 +                  | 138       | 7,8  |
| <b>Marital status</b> |           |      |
| Single                | 57        | 3,2  |
| Married               | 1347      | 76,4 |
| Domestic partnership  | 251       | 14,2 |
| Divorced              | 104       | 5,9  |
| Widow                 | 4         | 0,2  |

\*Unusual and unexpected values were excluded from the analysis N=1752

Table 2. presents parents' educational attainment and annual household income. Parental education was measured by outlining six different categories related to educational attainment. Parents were asked to mark the closest option from the list that corresponded to their highest educational attainment. The response options were: compulsory school, high school, vocational school, bachelor's degree or master's degree. In addition, response option "Other, please specify" was included if respondent did not find corresponding answer from the predefined categories. Similarly, parents were asked to choose the category that most closely matched their total family income level. Twelve categories were provided ranging from under 9 999 euros to 150 000 euros. The annual income in this study is the sum of total pre-tax incomes from all members of a household.

Table 2. demonstrates that the majority of respondents were highly educated: 43 percent of respondents had a master's degree and 35 percent had a bachelor's degree. The remaining small percentages included degrees from vocational school (13 %), high school (4 %) and compulsory school (0.8 %). Open-ended option "Other degree, please specify" had four percent of respondents including mostly doctorate level degrees. As a conclusion, almost four in five respondents (78 %) were highly educated. Table 2. also demonstrates the annual income of the households to which the respondents belonged to. As a point of comparison, Statistics Finland's (2018) documented that median income earnings for a Finnish male was 34 227 euros and female 25 061 euros in 2017. Based on this, it can be assumed that median household income with two median earning adults are expected to be around 59 288 euros in total. In this study, eight percent of the respondents belonged to the income category of 50 000- 59 999 euros, which was the average Finnish family income in 2017. Of the respondent's, 16 percent belonged to the households with an annual income below 49 999 euros. Therefore, more than three quarters (77 %) of respondents categorized their household income to be above the average Finnish family income. Out of all the respondents, almost half (42 %) reported their family income in the range between 60 000 and 99 999 euro. Notably, the household income that received the most responses (23 %) was the reported household income between 100 000 – 149 999 euros.

TABLE 2. Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents including educational attainment and annual household income (N= 1763)

|                                | Frequency | %    |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------|
| <b>Education</b>               |           |      |
| Compulsory education           | 14        | 0,8  |
| High-school                    | 74        | 4,2  |
| Vocational education           | 221       | 12,5 |
| Bachelor's degree              | 621       | 35,2 |
| Master's degree                | 764       | 43,3 |
| Other degree, please specify   | 69        | 3,9  |
| <b>Yearly household income</b> |           |      |
| Under 9 999 €                  | 7         | 0,4  |
| 10 000 - 19 999 €              | 27        | 1,5  |
| 20 000 - 29 999 €              | 58        | 3,3  |
| 30 000 - 39 999 €              | 87        | 4,9  |
| 40 000 - 49 999 €              | 95        | 5,4  |
| 50 000 - 59 999 €              | 132       | 7,5  |
| 60 000 - 69 999 €              | 134       | 7,6  |
| 70 000 - 79 999 €              | 196       | 11,1 |
| 80 000 - 89 999 €              | 219       | 12,4 |
| 90 000 - 99 999 €              | 197       | 11,2 |
| 100 000 - 149 999 €            | 398       | 22,6 |
| Over 150 000 €                 | 213       | 12,1 |

To determine the parent's socio-economic status from various perspectives, parents were asked to determine their employment status. Predefined categories were provided: student, senior or executive manager, middle management employee, entry level employee, self-employed, entrepreneur, retired and in case if none of the predefined alternatives did not match respondent's employment status "Other, please specify" was provided. The highest representation of respondents (36 %) work in senior or executive positions, second highest group categorized themselves as middle management employees (34 %) and third highest group included entry level employees (14 %). Remaining 16 percent included entrepreneurs (7 %), students (2 %), retired (0.9 %) and five percent of respondents chose "Other, please specify". Those who specified their employment status, were most commonly on parental leave, housewives, specialists or unemployed.

In the questionnaire, all the respondents were asked to provide information about their family size. Family size ranged from one children to four or more. The majority (52 %) of survey respondents had two children in the family. The respondents were also asked to report how many children from the family participated in figure skating. Of the overall total, 79 percent of parents had most commonly at least one child participating in figure skating. Families who reported two children being involved in figure skating consisted 19 percent of the respondents and remaining small two percentages reported three or more children from the family to practice figure skating.

In order to fully understand parents' backgrounds and perceptions of sports, parents were asked about their own sport experience. Answer options were simply outlined "yes I have competitive level background in sports" and correspond "No experience". Parents were also able to specify the sport in which they had participated in the past. Surprisingly, slightly over half (58 %) of the parents did not have a history of participating in competitive level sports. Nonetheless, 42 percent of the parents reported being involved in competitive level sports. The most common sport that fathers had participated were ice-hockey and football and among mothers, figure skating including both single and synchronized skating and track and field.

## **6.2 Children's participation in figure skating**

As part of the questionnaire, parents were asked demographic information about their children and information regarding their children's sport participation in figure skating. Five close-ended questions were used to obtain a general profile of the children who participated in figure skating, including questions of gender, age, sport specialization, volume and level. In addition, parents were asked to report the region to which their child's figure skating club belongs to and yearly expenses of figure skating. Later in the report, skaters profile and the regional information is used to draw comparisons between different groups.

Table 3. shows the distributions of children's gender, age and level of skating. Differences between girls' and boys' participation in figure skating was noteworthy. While 98 percent of girls took part in figure skating, the equivalent share of boys was two percent. The mean age

of the sample at the time of survey was 11 years ranging from youngest being 3 years old and the oldest 18 years old. The largest age group was 10 – 13 year old children (36 %), followed by younger age group of 7 – 9 year old children (29 %). Almost a quarter (24 %) were reported being adolescents aged 14 to 18 years and the smallest portion (11 %) represented the youngest children aged 3-6 years.

TABLE 3. Demographic background of children (N= 1763)

|               | Frequency | %    |
|---------------|-----------|------|
| <b>Gender</b> |           |      |
| Girl          | 1725      | 97,8 |
| Boy           | 37        | 2,1  |
| Other         | 1         | 0,1  |
| <b>Age</b>    |           |      |
| 3-6           | 199       | 11,3 |
| 7-9           | 511       | 29,0 |
| 10-13         | 633       | 35,9 |
| 14-18         | 420       | 23,8 |

In total, over half (53 %) of the children were reported to be competing at the national level. Remaining 18 percent of the figure skaters were beginners closely followed by figure skaters who compete at the international level (17 %). The remaining 13 percent of children and adolescents were categorized as recreational skaters. When comparing the level of figure skaters and the household incomes, the majority of the international level skater's (63 %) tended to live in families with higher level incomes ranging from 80 000 to over 150 000 euros. By comparison, in the beginner's level, 68 percent tended to live in families with lower level incomes ranging from 40 000 to 89 999 euros. Recreational and national level skater's household incomes were distributed equally in all categories.

Parents were asked to report the chosen discipline of figure skating from five predefined options. Majority of the skaters represented single skaters (46 %) or synchronized skaters (41%). Skaters who have not decided the discipline from four predefined options consisted of 13 percent of respondents. (Table 4). In the questionnaire, parents also provided information about their child's sport participation volume. Training time was measured by number of

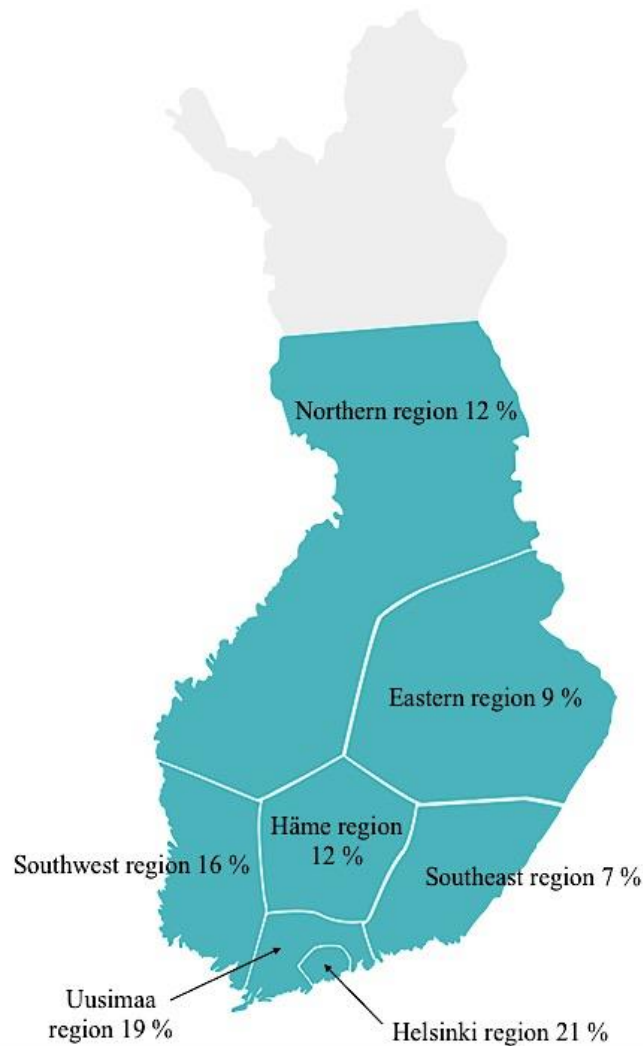
days' children participated in organized figure skating practices per week. Options ranged from once in a week to over five times per week. More than one third (36 %) of skaters were reported to train four to five times per week, 26 percent over five times per week and 25 percent two to three times per week.

TABLE 4. Information about skater's level and chosen discipline (N= 1763)

|   | Frequency | %    |
|---|-----------|------|
| <b>Level</b>                                |           |      |
| Beginner                                    | 308       | 17,5 |
| Recreational skater                         | 231       | 13,1 |
| Skater competing at the national level      | 925       | 52,5 |
| Skater competing at the international level | 299       | 17,0 |
| <b>Discipline</b>                           |           |      |
| Single skater                               | 821       | 45,7 |
| Synchronized skater                         | 735       | 40,9 |
| Pair skating                                | 1         | 0,1  |
| Ice dance                                   | 6         | 0,3  |
| Not decided yet                             | 235       | 13,3 |

Parents were asked to report the region in which their children's figure skating club belonged to. Parents were able to select their region from a dropdown list and in case of not knowing the region, the option "no answer" was provided. As shown in Chart 1., responses were distributed quite equally around Finland. The largest amount of responses came from the Southern part of Finland including 21 percent of respondents from Helsinki region and 19 percent of respondents from Uusimaa region. Third largest portion of respondents were from the Southwest region (16 %), and equally 12 percent from both Häme and the Northern region. The lowest amount of responses came from Easter region (9%). Four percent of the respondents did not know the region.

CHART 1. Geographical distribution of respondent's figure skating clubs (N=1763) (Map retrieved from the Finnish Figure Skating Association's website)



One of the most crucial questions in this study was to determine families' financial investment in their children's participation in figure skating. To determine the cost as accurately as possible and recognize the direct and indirect cost of participation, parents were first asked to estimate annual expenditures by separating the financial investment in direct and indirect costs. The costs of membership and license fees are shown in Figure 1. and other extra costs of figure skating is represented in Figure 2.

The total sum of direct fees, such as membership and license fees were categorized into nine groups ranging from under 299 euros to over 10 000 euros. Less than 26 percent of the parents pay below 1 000 euros annually per child for membership and license fees. Nearly a third (28 %) pay between 3 000 to 6 000 euros and the majority at 41 percent pay 1000 to 3000 euros in membership and license fees per season. Of the remaining five percent paid the highest prices ranging from 6 000 euros to over 10 000 euros. (Figure 1.)

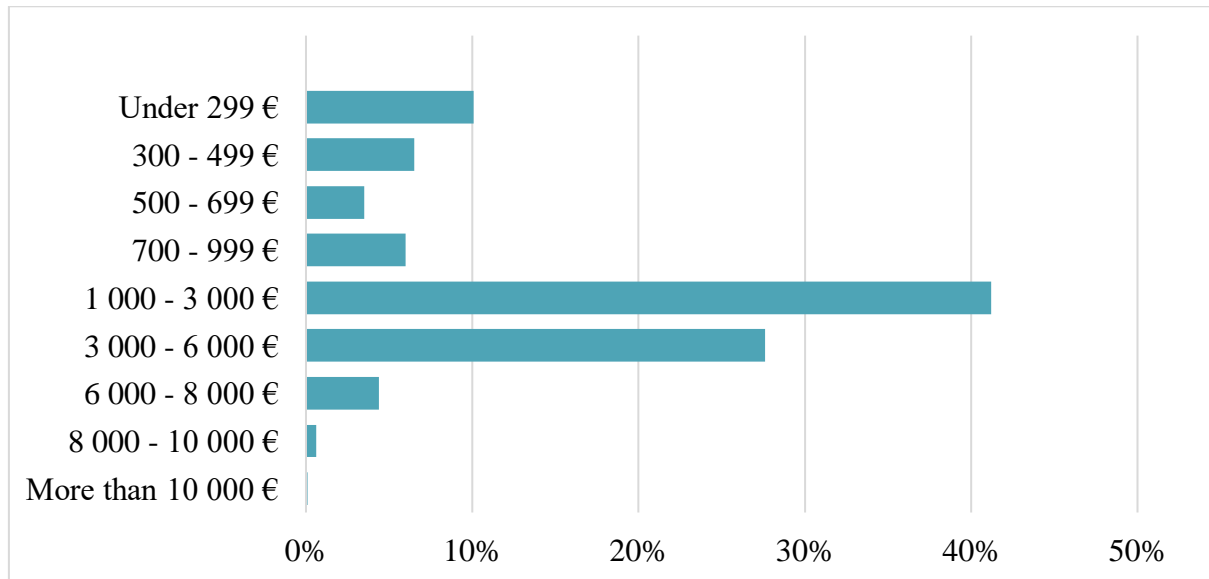


FIGURE 1. Yearly direct costs including membership and licence fees (N= 1763)

In addition to membership and license expenditures, parents were asked to estimate the total sum of indirect expenditures, such as expenditures from figure skating camps, competitions, travel, equipment, textiles and other items used in figure skating that required financial commitment. Expenditure categories ranged from under 499 euros to more than 5 000 euros per season. Overall, it was estimated that more than a third (31 %) spent below 499 euros annually per child on extra fees. 27 percent pay between 1 000 to 2 000 euros, 15 percent between 500 to 799 euros and 13 percent 3000 to 4 000 euros. Four percent estimated to pay more than 5 000 euros annually per child for indirect fees. (Figure 2.)



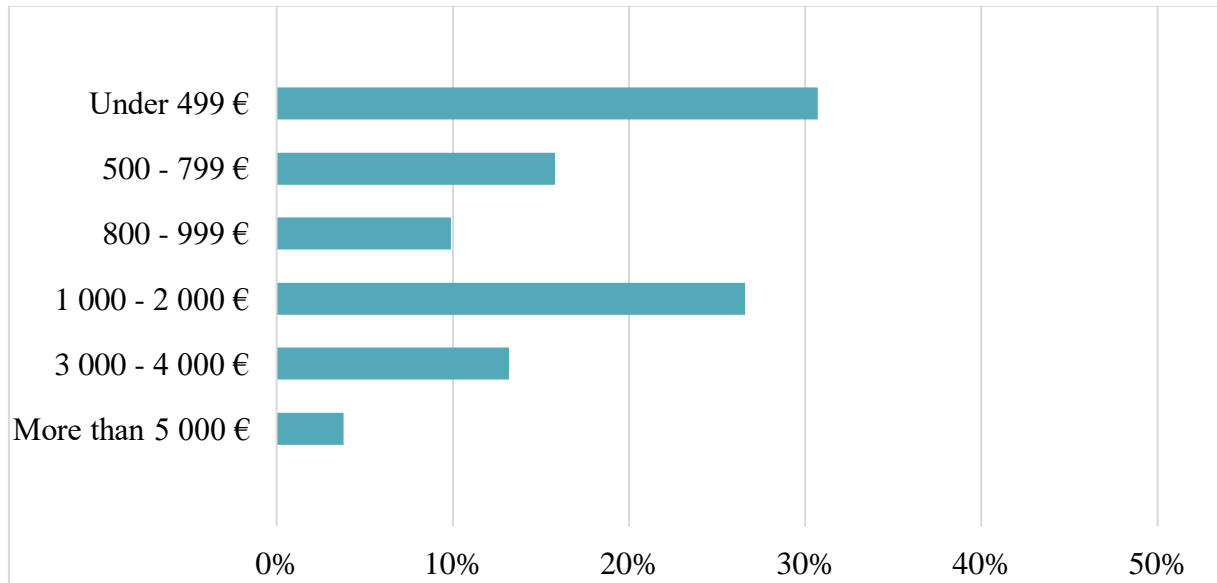


FIGURE 2. The yearly cost of indirect fees such as camps, competition, travel, textile or equipment fees (N= 1763)

Statistical significance was found between the regions of Helsinki, Uusimaa and Häme, where direct costs (membership and license fees) were statistically significantly higher than in the other regions. (Table 5.) The differences between direct costs within the other four regions were not statistically significant. Differences in the cost of indirect expenses (travel, camps, equipment etc.) and regions was only significant between Häme and Southwest region ( $p = .12$ ).

Table 5. Statistical differences between regions and direct costs of figure skating.

| Region          | Region           | p-value |
|-----------------|------------------|---------|
| Helsinki region | Southwest region | .000    |
|                 | Southeast region | .001    |
|                 | Eastern region   | .000    |
|                 | Northern region  | .000    |
| Uudenmaa region | Southwest region | .000    |
|                 | Eastern region   | .007    |
|                 | Northern region  | .000    |
| Häme region     | Southwest region | .002    |
|                 | Northern region  | .000    |
|                 | Southwest region | .002    |

There was a statistically significant difference in direct costs and disciplines. The cost of direct fees in single skating and synchronized skating was, as expected, statistically higher than beginner's direct costs ( $p=.000$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Comparisons with ice dance and pair skating could not be implemented due to the low sample size. Also, as expected, the indirect fees were statistically higher in single and synchronized skating than in beginner's level ( $p=.000$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Notably, there was almost a statistically significant difference between single and synchronized skater's indirect fees ( $p=.033$ ).

When parents were asked to what extent they are satisfied with the costs of figure skating, the majority (61 %) considered the price of figure skating as "satisfied" and "very satisfied". On the other spectrum, 21 percent were not satisfied with the price and 17 percent of the respondents had no opinion on the matter. In comparison, beginners and recreational skaters were more satisfied within the price and quality of skating than national and international level skaters ( $p=.000$ ).

For this study, parents were asked to indicate their family's first, second and third most common leisure activity from a given list of predefined alternatives. The Figure 3. shows the ranked responses in a graphic form where the percentages of each factor are shown in different colors. As shown in Figure 3. a large majority of parents (82 %) ranked family time in the top three most common leisure activity. Relatively high portion of families had participated in other organized sports besides figure skating as 46 percent selected it among the top three most common leisure activities. The third most common way to spend leisure time was in the company of friends (43 %) closely followed travelling (41 %). Other cultural activities, such as theater, concerts and movies were ranked by 22 percent, mostly being either second or third most common leisure activity. The remaining answers were sport events (13 %) and arts and crafts (8 %) which were the least common activities among families.

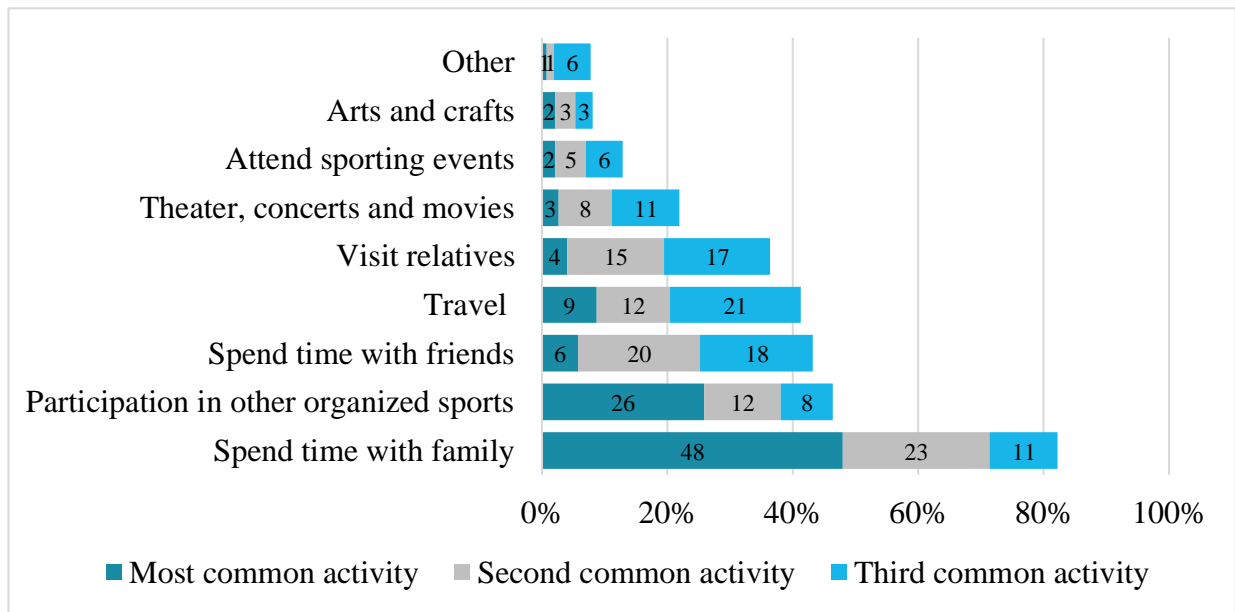


FIGURE 3. The most common leisure activities among figure skating families (N= 1763)

### 6.3 Parent's perceptions of their children's involvement in figure skating

In this section, the participating families parents opinions, perceptions and point of view of figure skating culture are analyzed. Similarly, as in previous question in the survey, parents were asked to rank the three most important factors from the predefined alternatives that most likely influenced their children's active participation in figure skating. The ranked list of eight predefined alternatives of influencing factors are represented in Figure 4. The interest in figure skating as a sport was by far the most common response that influenced children's active participation in figure skating (92 %). The second most common response that influenced child's decision to participate in figure skating was considered to be parents themselves (56 %) closely followed by the influence of friends (48 %). Interestingly, almost half of the parents (46 %) ranked environmental sport facilities in top three. In this case, outdoor and indoor ice rinks near to children home seem to play a crucial role in figure skating participation. Siblings (25 %), coaches (19 %), school's physical activity lessons (13 %) were seen to have the least influence on a child's figure skating participation.

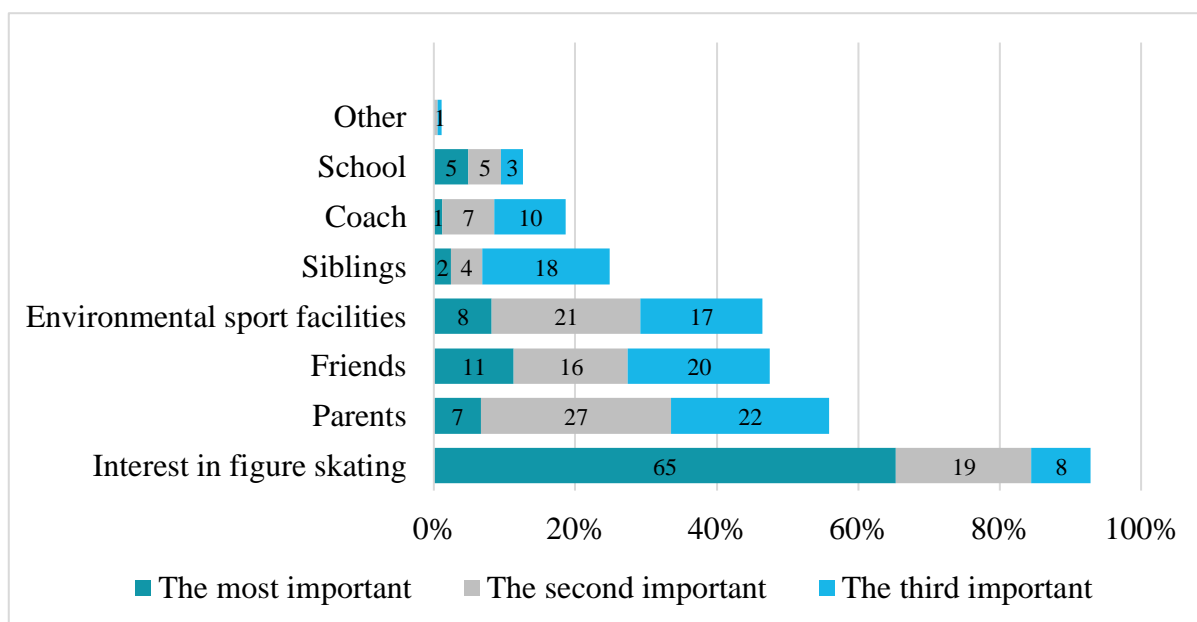


FIGURE 4. The most important factors that influenced children’s participation in figure skating (N= 1763)

One of the last questions in the questionnaire asked whether parents have any expectations regarding their children’s participation in figure skating. Parents who answered “Yes” were directed to the question number 24. and asked to select three options from the nine predefined alternatives of what type of expectations they specifically had. Those who answered “No expectations” jumped automatically to the last question. Therefore, only those parents who indicated having some expectations on their children’s participation in figure skating were included in this analysis (N= 608). Of 1763 respondents, only 35 percent had expectations. An error occurred in the question layout as some of the predefined alternatives did not fit onto one screen when using a mobile phone, which then deterred respondent to scroll or see the entire sentence. The error in the question layout was corrected after one day from sending the survey to the respondents. It should be noted that the results of this question are not considered completely reliable. (Figure 5.)

The responses to the question assessing parental expectations on children’s figure skating participation is displayed in Figure 5. The top-ranked expectations and goals that most of the parents outlined in top three were: a child will learn healthy lifestyle habits (63 %),

participation in figure skating will continue as long as possible (62 %) and improvement of communication skills (49 %). Conversely, the following expectations received the least ratings in descending order: a child will have a profession through figure skating (17 %), a child is expected to become a professional figure skater (16 %) and other expectations (7 %).

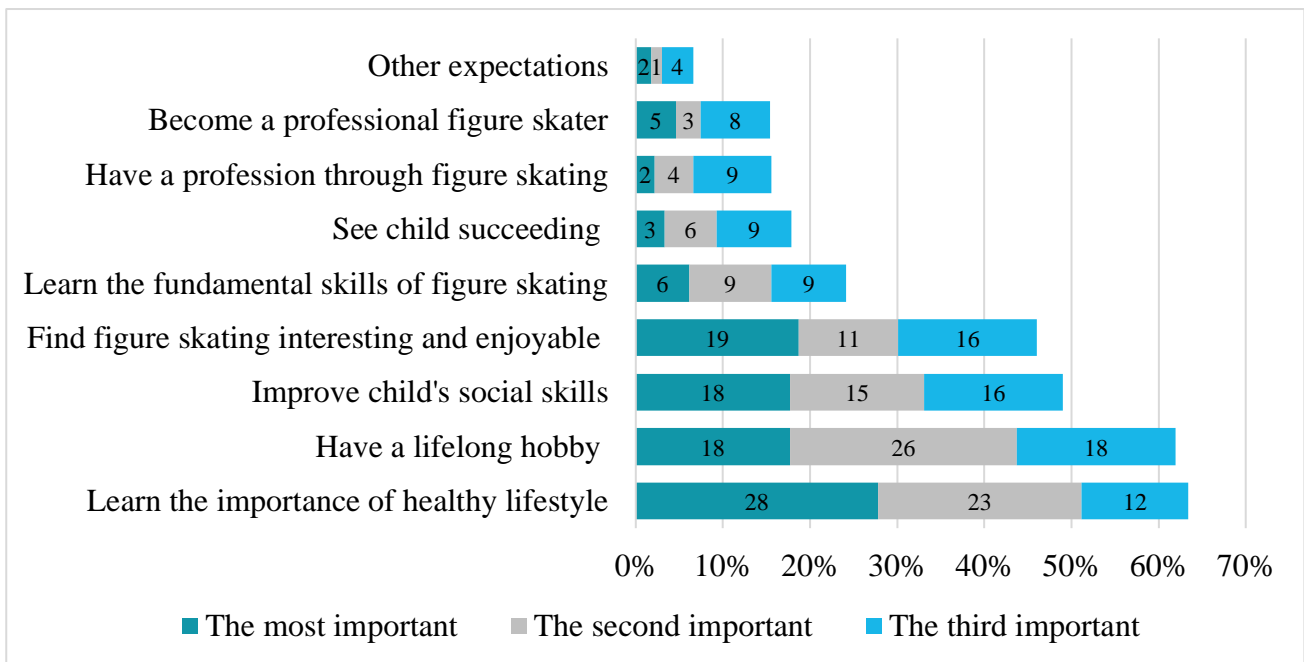


FIGURE 5. Parental expectations on their child's participation in figure skating (N= 608)

In the final question, participants were asked to state to what extent they agree with twelve different statements regarding the figure skating culture. More specifically, topics were related to parent commitment, sport expenses and figure skating club's operations. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree 5= Strongly agree). Ratings are captured in Figure 6.

Overall, 93 percent of parents indicated being actively involved in cheering and supporting their children's skating performances. Of the parents, 63 percent reported to follow children's practice sessions on a weekly basis. To determine whether the family is interested to follow top level figure skating competitions, 64 percent of parents indicated families actively following professional level skating. To conclude, evidence points that a significant portion of

parents are interested in following their own child's skating but decreasing number of families actively follow professional skating.

To determine whether membership fees play a crucial role in family's lifestyle decisions and skaters progress, parents were asked to state their opinion based on five different statements. More than two thirds (70 %) of the parents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that membership fees in figure skating affect their family finances. More than half (65 %) of the respondents stated that figure skating club charges are too expensive and creates a financial burden on families. Similarly, over half (59 %) of the parents expressed that expenses affect family's leisure time decisions. Interestingly, the majority (61 %) of the parents "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" that expenses would be a barrier if their children advances in higher level. Therefore, it can be indicated that parents are ready to pay or sacrifice from the family budget if their child succeeds in figure skating and cost keeps increasing.

From the parent's perspective, 63 percent stated that figure skating clubs should focus more on promoting wellness and health, rather than focusing on elite level activities. However, relatively high proportion of the parents did not have an opinion on the matter (20 %). Slightly over half (54 %) of the families reported to engage actively in figure skating club's fundraising activities. However, seeing fundraising in a figure skating club as profitable created controversial opinions. Of the respondents, 40 percent did not have an opinion on the matter, 38 percent "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed" fundraising to bring any profit and 23 percent "agreed" or "strongly agreed" fundraising being effective way in gaining profit. Similarly, opinions varied in the question whether fundraising is an effective way to reduce the cost of membership fees. Of the respondent's, 35 percent felt fundraising to reduce the cost of membership fees whereas 33 percent felt the opposite.

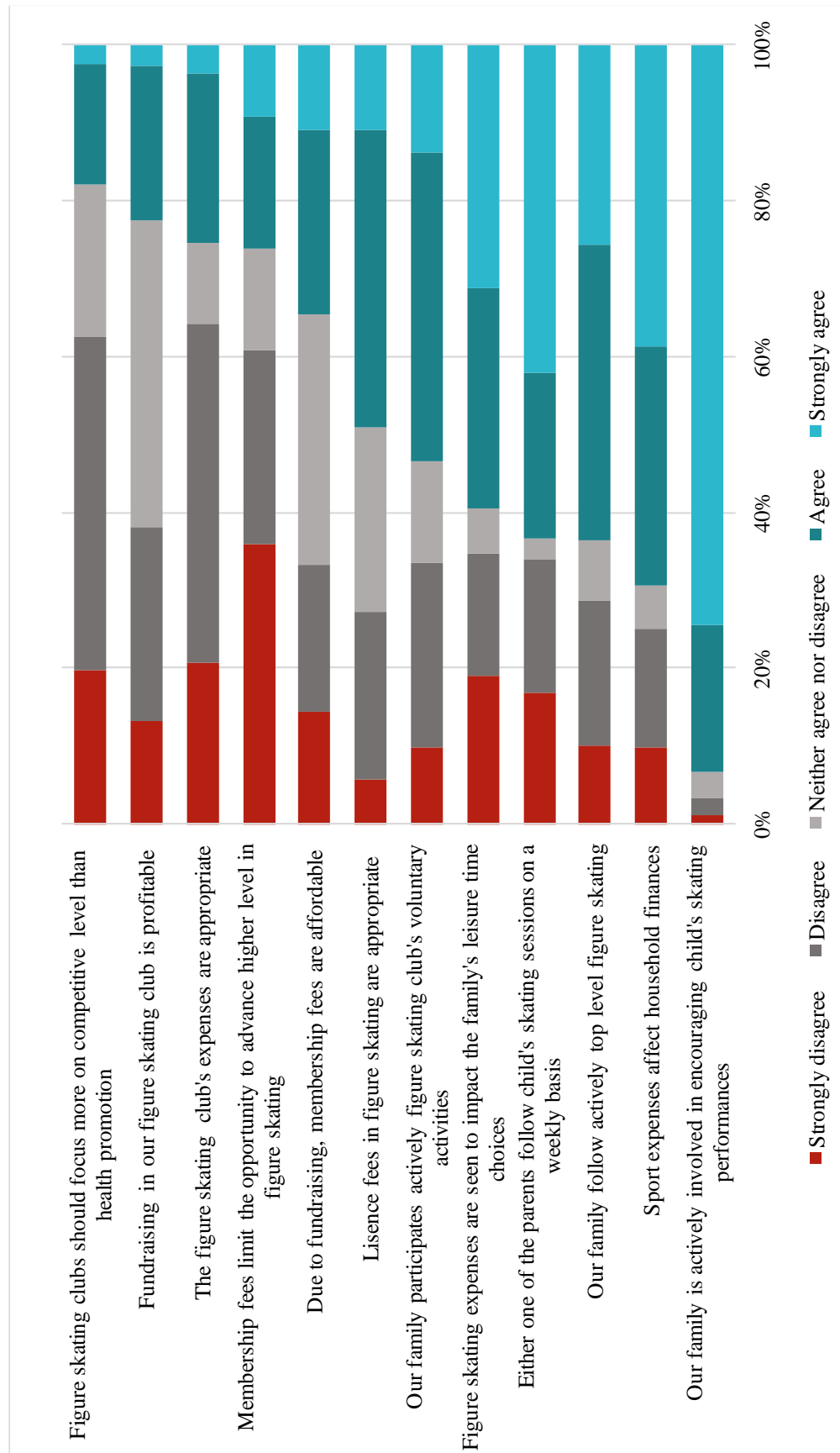


FIGURE 6. Parents' opinions and perceptions about figure skating (N= 1763)

At the end of the questionnaire, respondents had an opportunity to leave a free comment. Offering an open-ended question in the end was a way to gain in-depth feedback and thoughts from the respondents. Some of the respondents had strong feelings on the matter while others left it blank. Open-ended comments are not analyzed in this study.



## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

The aim of this study was to explore the socio-economic background of the Finnish families whose children participate in figure skating. Additionally, the objective of this study was to explore other social factors that influence participation in figure skating from the parent's point of view and therefore understand the culture of figure skating more precisely. This research was carried out in collaboration with the Finnish Figure Skating Association. The following conclusion will briefly introduce the main findings, acknowledge the limitations and give further recommendations for future studies.

### **7.1 Major findings of the study**

In conclusion, one of the most noticeable findings in this study was that the majority of the responding families had similar educational, occupational and financial background which strengthens the perception that figure skating is perceived as a homogeneous group of elite families. Almost four in five of the parents (78 %) were highly educated obtaining master's or bachelor's degree and were more likely to work in higher-status occupations which indicates that figure skating is, in fact, a sport for individuals from higher SES. Over half (58 %) of the families' household income ranged from 80 000 to over 150 000 euros per year. The largest portion (23 %) of the families who participated in the study had a household income between 100 000 – 149 999 euros. As a point of comparison, the median Finnish two-parent household earns approximately 59 288 euros per year. In this study, more than three quarters (77 %) of the families earned above the median earnings (Statistics Finland 2018).

Additionally, this study found other socio-economic and demographic similarities among the respondents. The great majority, namely 85 percent of the respondents were mothers. Nearly half (49 %) of the respondents belonged to the age category of 41-50 years and the overwhelming majority (76 %) of the parents were married. Most families (52%) had two children, one children being involved in figure skating (79 %). It has been suggested that a parent's active interest and background in competitive level sports will naturally expose their

children to participate in competitive sports at an early age. However, there are controversial results whether the parents sport background affects the child's sport of choice. (Aarresola 2014.) In this study, a somewhat surprising result was that a high portion (58%) of the parents did not have any experience in participating in competitive level sports. Nonetheless, remaining 42 percent of parents reported having a competitive level background in sports. Interestingly, the most common sports involved were figure skating or track and field, especially among mothers. Therefore, it can be indicated that parents with a figure skating background are more likely to introduce their child to the same sport.

As the main aim of this study was to examine and profile the socio-economic characteristics of families whose children participate in figure skating, it can be generalized that very often the parents of figure skaters hold a strong socio-economic status. Multiple studies suggest that sport club participation is significantly associated with the family's socio-economic status, concluding that participants in organized sport more often come from high socio-economic families (Santos et al. 2004; Stuij 2013; Aarresola 2014; Lampinen et al. 2017). Finnish studies show inconsistent results whether family SES is associated with the decision to participate in certain sport. High income families have been reported to place their children in sports such as downhill skiing, tennis, orienteering, horse-riding, dance and aerobics. (Tammelin et al. 2003; Kantomaa et al. 2007). In addition to the elite sports mentioned in Tammelin's and Kantomaa's studies, this study indicates that figure skating too is a sport mostly for the children from high income families. As outlined in the theoretical section, the reason that high SES families are more involved in organized sport is that they have more occupational flexibility to transport their children to sport activities, more financial resources to support participation and lastly, highly educated parents have been documented to introduce their children to sports for health related reasons (Stuij 2013; Itkonen, 2017; Lampinen et al. 2017). Perhaps these reasons explain why participation in figure skating draws mostly certain SES families.

Figure skating as a sport has been widely considered a feminine sport, especially attracting young girls (Adams 2010). The population in this study demonstrated as well that figure skating is mostly reigned by young females. Out of the respondents, 36 percent were 10-13 years of age and 98 percent were females. Despite the attempt to promote males into figure

skating, unfortunately, the lack of males was noticeable in this study (2 %). As outlined in the literature review, figure skating is characterized as an early-specialized sport in which participation begins as young as five years of age and practice sessions increase rapidly after the decision of specializing in one discipline (Monsma 2018). In this study, 71 percent of the skaters competed on the national or international level most commonly as a single or synchronized skater. Most skaters practiced between four to five times per week (36 %).

The specific concern in the present study was the high membership fees in figure skating. As being outlined by Puronaho (2014), figure skating is one of the most expensive sports in Finland costing in 6 to 14 year old competitive skaters a total of 5 000 to 6 500 euros per year. The results in this study indicates expenses slightly less than in Puronaho's research. In the current research, the majority of respondents (41%) reported to spend between 1 000 to 3 000 euros in membership and license fees per season. On top of this, 31 percent estimated to spend below 499 euros per skater on extra fees. It was expected that the expenses would have been higher. However, it is worthy to note that the expenses varied a lot due to the diverse levels of the skaters and different practice arrangements. As mentioned above, respondents came from a variety of regional locations, largest portion from southern Finland. Membership and license fees were reported to be highest in Helsinki, Uusimaa and Häme regions.

An important finding in this study was that especially international level skaters were found to come from the highest income families. In fact, 63 percent of the international level skater's families reported to earn more than 80 000 euros per year. Whereas, in the beginner's level, the majority (68 %) of the families reported to earn less than 89 999 euros. In line with past research by Puronaho (2014), competitive level figure skaters were also found to come from more financially stable families where households earned approximately 90 000 euros or more per year. According to these similarities, a conclusion can be drawn that figure skating, especially at the competitive level is exclusively pursued by high-income families. It is concerning, that many families with children in figure skating at the beginner level do not necessarily have the ability to finance the hobby, even if their child would like to continue participation. This is a great loss to the highly competitive sport of figure skating because many potential and talented figure skaters are lost due to financial reasons. Additionally, it is also concerning from a public health perspective because many potential skaters who enjoy exercising and being active are not able to participate.

Bourdieu's (1985) theory of habitus and distinction can be tied to the population who have been studied in this research. Due to the parents high investment in their child's figure skating, it can be speculated that parents shape their child's interests, taste for figure skating and perceptions regarding what is considered a suitable cultural activity. To be able to participate in competitive level skating, families need to be able to fully invest their time and resources to their children's figure skating hobby. Therefore, it can reasonably be argued that parents with high income are trying to form their children's habitus and accumulation of the capital that is valued within a sporting context and in other social fields. Furthermore, a family's ability to invest in figure skating is perhaps seen as a representation of the family status or as a part of the family's habitus.

In Puronaho's study (2014) approximately 54-73 percent of the parents perceived competitive level figure skating too expensive. Results from this study extend on Puronaho's previous findings by discovering that figure skating club's charges were reported overpriced and affected a family's budget and leisure time decisions. More than half (65 %) of the parents in this study stated that the charges in figure skating are overpriced. Two thirds of the parents reported figure skating expenses to affect their family's finances and over half (59 %) stated expenses to affect their family's leisure time decisions. However, surprisingly, 61 percent of the parents mentioned that the cost of figure skating is not a barrier if their children advances to a higher level. Therefore, it can be presumed that parents are ready to pay or sacrifice from the family budget or from other financial requirements in family life if their child succeeds in figure skating and participation requires more investment. When comparing the relationship between household income of the participants and outlined expenses of figure skating, it can be concluded that figure skating is priced beyond the income of the average family but not necessarily for high-income families. However, investment in figure skating can still be perceived high no matter of the income level perhaps due to other, lower priced, youth sports.

One of the main aims in this study was to explore the lifestyles and perceptions of the figure skating culture from the perspective of the participating families. The three most common reasons why children became involved in figure skating was because of their interest in the sport (92 %), parental influence (56 %) or friends (48 %). Furthermore, it was found that most of the families tend to spend their leisure time with family (82 %), attending other organized

sports (46 %) or by spending time with their friends (43 %). Using Bourdieu's (1985, 142-143), ideology it was expected that families who asses heavily with cultural and economic capital tend to distinguish themselves by attending cultural leisure activities, such as theaters, classical musicals, museums and other activities usually considered for elite audiences. However, a relatively small percentage of families in this study demonstrated to be interested spending their leisure time on cultural forms that require intellectual and aesthetic interest, such as theater, movies, concerts or arts.

The high cost of participation in organized sports explained the high expectations and pressure placed on the young athlete by parents (Coakley 2006). It was assumed, especially in figure skating, that years of financial investment and time devoted to supporting the child's participation in the sport would create high expectations on the child's success. However, unlike expected, most of the parental expectations turned out to be positive. The results showed that parents find it most important for children to gain general life skills, such as obtain healthy lifestyle habits (63 %) and social skills through figure skating (49 %). In addition, 62 percent of the parents hoped that figure skating will become an important lifelong hobby for the children. A minority of parents expected their child to achieve great sport success or become a professional figure skaters. However, it should be noted that the generalization of results may be questionable due to temporal layout error during the time of the survey.

From a sociological perspective, organized sports is seen as a serious leisure activity where families prioritize their own personal life around the child's sport participation. Additionally, parents have been documented to commit money, time and energy on supporting children's sport activity. In this study, majority of the participating families reflected the six serious leisure qualities outlined by Stebbins (2005). Based on the results of the study, the child's figure skating participation is seen as a priority in families. Over half (63%) of the parents reported that they follow their child's practice sessions on a weekly basis, 93 percent reported to support and cheer actively for their child at performances and 54 percent reported to devote their free time to figure skating club's fundraising activities. However, only 35 percent of all respondents reported fundraising to be effective way to reduce the cost of membership fees. It seems that the results and perceptions of voluntary work goes in line with Koski's (2006)

research, who demonstrated that the willingness to engage in voluntary work has decreased and now sport club members are more similar to customers. Due to the low commitment level and perceptions of voluntary work, perhaps families who have a child participating in figure skating are the ones who would rather pay for the service than commit their leisure time on voluntary activities?

## **7.2 Significance of research**

This research outlined the socio-economic status of Finnish families whose child participates in figure skating, the skaters characteristics and parents perceptions of figure skating. The information provided from the study is intended to give new and updated information of the figure skaters and their families that can be used to develop the conditions and culture of the sport in the future. The results of this research can be used by administration and other staff of the association to allow further understanding of the background of the families as well as to create ways to make skating more affordable and appealing to potential members. Understanding the characteristics and backgrounds of these families is not only a significant benefit to the workers in figure skating but also provides valuable groundwork for future research. In addition, the results can be used for marketing purposes when attempting to target a skating audience.

The major strength of this study was the exceptionally large sample size (N=1763) in which respondents represent a variety of regional locations around Finland. Relatively high sample size (N=1736) response rate (22 %) and extensive regional distributions make it possible to generalize the results to the population of Finnish figure skating. High response rate was also seen as a positive indicator of the quality of the survey and the social significance of the study. Furthermore, it can be indicated that respondents had strong feelings and interest on the particular research topic as one third (30 %) of the respondents left extra comments and thoughts to the last open-ended question. Offering an open-ended question at the end of the survey was a way to gain feedback and general thoughts about the survey and research topic. An open-ended question was not intended to be analysed as the results of the study were initially planned to be analysed by using only quantitative research method. Also, as the open-

ended question at the end was not a specific question, analysing the feedback from the respondents would have been problematic.

To the researcher's knowledge, no related studies have previously been written which makes this study an exclusive necessity. Due to the lack of numerical data on figure skating, the qualitative method was the appropriate choice of data collection. Fortunately, due to the high rate of completed responses, this study was able to provide accurate and statistical results as well as useful background information on the skating community.

Although this study enhances the knowledge of the participating families and perceptions of the sport, it possesses limitations that should be acknowledged. This study was designed as cross-sectional and limited only exact statistical results. Also, the measures used were mostly categorical which does not allow for a high level of details or for the establishment of causalities. Due to the researcher wanting to reach the participants during the skating season, the survey was created within limited time, which resulted the survey questions to be somewhat vague and not completely related to the research questions. Although, the final survey was pilot-tested, an unexpected error occurred in question 24. An error occurred in the question layout and some of the predefined alternatives did not fit onto one screen when using a mobile phone. The error in the question layout was corrected after one day from sending the survey to the respondents. Reflecting back on the beginning of the survey process, the researcher could have used more time on searching similar surveys. It is also worth considering whether the survey questions and response types were influenced by the researchers own background and experience in figure skating.

It should be noted that even though in the cover letter respondents were assured of anonymity, some may feel questions related to their private life, demographic information, economic or social behavior somewhat sensitive and uncomfortable to share. For example, low-income families may have felt socio-economic questions sensitive resulting them to exit the survey without finishing it entirely whereas, high-income families may not have felt similar shame. Although the survey was designed to protect the privacy of the skaters and their families, some participants may have felt that they could be identified based on their answers because

the researcher has strong social ties in figure skating and may have known some of the participants. This may have led to non-responses.

### **7.3 Recommendations for further studies**

As mentioned previously, figure skating within the academic circles has been a scarcely studied topic. Figure skating has not been studied from a sociological point of view and the findings in this study provide various worthy research possibilities and groundwork for later analysis.

In the case of a follow-up study on the same topic as this research, it would be beneficial to implement the qualitative research approach. The quantitative results of this study could be used as a valid framework for the interpretation of qualitative data. Possible follow up research could be limited to a smaller sample size and a certain level of skaters which would allow a more in-depth look of their family backgrounds. For example, hypothesizing figure skating as an elitist sport in the top level skaters in the age group of 14 to 16 year olds could provide interesting results. Also, as many figure skating clubs organize recreational skating activities, it would be reasonable to study the background of recreational skaters more deeply and perhaps find interesting insights when comparing them to competitive level skaters. Another follow-up study based on this research could be implemented by using the existing data gathered from this particular study's unanalysed open-ended question. By discovering and pursuing deeper insights on the comments and thoughts from the respondents in this study's questionnaire, the results could provide in depth findings of the families who participated. The results from this study could be used as groundwork.

According to the findings in this study, there should be a focus on lower SES families to ensure that their needs are met to allow participation in the sport. In fact, it seems that figure skaters from families with lower socio-economic status are deterred from being able to participate particularly in competitive skating to the same degree as skaters from high income families. Further research on figure skating is required in order to allow development of the culture of figure skating.



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## APPENDIX



### Kysely taitoluistelua harrastavien lasten vanhemmille

#### Hyvä taitoluistelua harrastavan lapsen vanhempi,

oheisella kyselylomakkeella on tarkoitus selvittää taitoluistelua harrastavien lasten perhetaustan ja harrastuskustannuksien yhteyttä harrastamiseen. Tutkimuksella kerätään aineistoa Jyväskylän yliopiston Liikuntatieteellisen tiedekunnan kansainvälisen maisteriohjelman (Master's Programme in Sport and Exercise Promotion) pro gradu -tutkielmaan. Tutkimuksen aineisto perustuu vanhemmilta kerätyn kyselyn tietoihin. Tavoitteena on, että tutkimus tuottaisi sellaista tietoa taitoluistelun harrastamisesta, jonka avulla voitaisiin tulevaisuudessa parantaa harrastamisen edellytyksiä ja lajikulttuuria.

Pro gradu -tutkijana on Rosa-Maria Salonen, ja tutkimusta ohjaa yliopistolehtori Hanna Vehmas. Tutkimus toteutetaan yhteistyössä Suomen Taitoluisteluliiton kanssa. Kyselylomake on lähetetty teille Suomen Taitoluisteluliiton jäsenrekisterin kautta.

#### Ohjeet tutkimuksen osallistumiseen:

Kyselyn vastaamiseen menee aikaa noin 10 minuuttia. Kyselyyn vastataan anonyymisti ja vastauksia tullaan käsittelemään luottamuksellisesti tietosuojalainsäädännön edellyttämällä tavalla. Vastauksia tulee käsittelemään tutkimuksen vastuullinen tutkija ja tutkimuksen ohjaaja. **Tutkimus tullaan raportoimaan tilastollisina kokonaisuuksina, eikä raportoinnissa mainita sellaisia piirteitä, joiden avulla vastaajia tai taitoluisteluseuroja voisi tunnistaa.**

Pyydämme teitä täyttämään kyselylomakkeen mahdollisimman huolellisesti. Lomakkeen täyttää jompikumpi lapsen huoltajista. Kysely on tarkoitettu kaikille perheille, joiden lapsi harrastaa joko yksinluistelua, muodostelmaluistelua, jäätanssia, pariluistelua, harrasteluistelua tai on vasta aloittanut luistelukoulussa käymisen. **Mikäli perheessä luistelee useampi lapsi, tulee kyselyyn valita yhden lapsen tiedot.**

## Taustatiedot vastaajasta

### 1. Vastaaja

- ☐ Äiti
- ☐ Isä
- ☐ Muu huoltaja

### 2. Vanhemman ikä

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### 3. Asuinpaikkakunta

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### 4. Siviilisäät

- ☐ Naimaton
- ☐ Avioliitossa
- ☐ Avioliitossa
- ☐ Eronnut
- ☐ Leski

### 5. Mikä on korkein koulutustasosi?

- ☐ Peruskoulu
- ☐ Ylioppilas
- ☐ Ammattikoulu
- ☐ Alempi korkeakoulututkinto/ AMK
- ☐ Ylempi korkeakoulututkinto
- ☐ Muu, mikä? 

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### 6. Mikä on ammattinimikkeesi?

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**7. Kotitalouden kokonaisbruttotulot vuonna 2018? (Kotitalouden yhteenlasketut tulot veroja vähentämättä)**

- ☐ Alle 9 999 €
- ☐ 10 000 - 19 999 €
- ☐ 20 000 - 29 999 €
- ☐ 30 000 - 39 999 €
- ☐ 40 000 - 49 999 €
- ☐ 50 000 - 59 999 €
- ☐ 60 000 - 69 999 €
- ☐ 70 000 - 79 999 €
- ☐ 80 000 - 89 999 €
- ☐ 90 000 – 99 999 €
- ☐ 100 000 – 149 999 €
- ☐ Yli 150 000 €

**8. Mikä on sosioekonominen asemasi?**

- ☐ Opiskelija
- ☐ Työntekijä
- ☐ Alempi toimihenkilö
- ☐ Ylempi toimihenkilö
- ☐ Itsenäinen ammatin harjoittaja/ Yrittäjä
- ☐ Eläkeläinen
- ☐ Jokin muu, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Kuinka monta lasta taloudessasi tällä hetkellä on?**

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4 tai enemmän

**10. Kuinka monta lasta perheestäsi harrastaa taitoluistelua?**

- ☐ 1  
☐ 2  
☐ 3 tai enemmän

**11. Oletko itse harrastanut kilpaurheilua?**

- ☐ Kyllä, mitä lajia \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ En

**Kysely lapsen harrastuksesta.**

**Kyselyyn vastataan yhden taitoluistelua harrastavan lapsen tiedoilla.**

**12. Lapsen sukupuoli**

- ☐ Tyttö  
☐ Poika  
☐ Muu

**13. Lapsen syntymävuosi \_\_\_\_\_**

**14. Mihin Taitoluisteluliiton alueeseen/piiriin lapsesi taitoluistelseura kuuluu?**

- ☐ Helsingin alue  
☐ Uudenmaan alue  
☐ Lounais-Suomi  
☐ Hämeen alue  
☐ Kaakkoinen alue  
☐ Itäinen alue  
☐ Pohjoinen alue  
☐ En osaa sanoa

**15. Lapsi harrastaa taitoluisteluseurassa (Rastitus mahdollista moneen vaihtoehtoon)**

- ☐ Yksinluistelua ☐ Jäätanssia
- ☐ Muodostelmaluistelua ☐ Pariluistelua
- ☐ Ei ole vielä valinnut edellä mainituista vaihtoehtoista suuntautumista

**16. Kuinka monena päivänä viikossa lapsesi osallistuu taitoluisteluseuran ohjattuihin harjoituksiin?**

- ☐ Kerran viikossa
- ☐ Harvemmin kuin kerran viikossa
- ☐ 2-3 kertaa viikossa
- ☐ 4-5 kertaa viikossa
- ☐ Yli 5 kertaa viikossa

**17. Millä tasolla lapsesi harrastaa taitoluistelua?**

- ☐ Luistelukoulu tai luistelukoulun jatkoryhmä
- ☐ Harrasteluistelija (Ei kilpailuja)
- ☐ Kilpaluistelija kansallisella tasolla
- ☐ Kilpaluistelija kansainvälisellä tasolla (SM-sarjat)

**18. Arvioi lapsesi taitoluistelu-harrastuksen keskimääräiset seura- ja liittokustannukset vuodessa? (Kustannuksiin lasketaan seuran jäsen- ja kausimaksut sekä lisenssimaksut)**

- ☐ Alle 299 €
- ☐ 300 - 499 €
- ☐ 500 - 699 €
- ☐ 700 - 999 €
- ☐ 1 000 - 3 000 €
- ☐ 3 000 - 6 000 €
- ☐ 6 000 - 8 000 €
- ☐ 8 000 - 10 000 €
- ☐ Yli 10 000 €

**19. Arvioi lapsesi muut taitoluistelun harrastekulut vuodessa? (Kustannuksiin lasketaan kilpailukulut, leirit, matka- ja majoituskulut, harjoittelun/ kilpailun tekstiilit ja välineet)**

- ☐ Alle 499 €
- ☐ 500 - 799 €
- ☐ 800 - 999 €
- ☐ 1 000 - 2 000 €
- ☐ 3 000 - 4 000 €
- ☐ Yli 5 000 €

**20. Mikä seuraavista tekijöistä vaikutti mielestäsi eniten lapsesi säännöllisen taitoluisteluharrastuksen aloittamiseen? (Mainitse kolme tärkeintä vaihtoehtoa)**

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Vanhemmat      | <input type="radio"/> Kaverit                           |
| <input type="radio"/> Sisarukset     | <input type="radio"/> Ympäristön liikuntamahdollisuudet |
| <input type="radio"/> Valmentaja     | <input type="radio"/> Koulu                             |
| <input type="radio"/> Lajikiinnostus | <input type="radio"/> Muu                               |

**21. Kuinka tyytyväinen olet lapsesi taitoluisteluharrastuksen hinta-laatu suhteeseen?**

- ☐ Erittäin tyytymätön
- ☐ Melko tyytymätön
- ☐ Ei tyytyväinen eikä tyytymätön
- ☐ Melko tyytyväinen
- ☐ Erittäin tyytyväinen
- ☐ En osaa sanoa



**22. Mihin muihin kuin taitoluisteluun liittyviin vapaa-ajan toimintoihin perheenne osallistuu?**

**(Mainitse kolme tärkeintä)**

- ☐ Teatteri, konsertit, elokuvissakäynti
- ☐ Taiteen ja käsityön harrastaminen
- ☐ Sukulaisten tapaaminen
- ☐ Ajanvietto ystävien kanssa
- ☐ Muihin ohjattuihin harrastuksiin osallistuminen
- ☐ Perheen yhdessäolo
- ☐ Urheilutapahtumissa käynti
- ☐ Matkailu
- ☐ Muu

**23. Kohdistatko huoltajana jonkinlaisia odotuksia lapsesi taitoluisteluharrastukseen?**

- ☐ Kyllä
- ☐ Minulla ei ole erityisiä odotuksia lapseni taitoluisteluharrastusta kohtaan

**24. Millaisia odotuksia kohdistat? Merkitse kolme tärkeintä. (1= keskeisin)**

- ☐ Harrastus jatkuu mahdollisimman pitkään
- ☐ Lapseni menestyy hyvin
- ☐ Toivon lapseni yltävän huippu-urheilijaksi
- ☐ Lapseni omaksuu terveelliset elämäntavat
- ☐ Lapseni oppii sosiaaliset taidot
- ☐ Lapseni kokee taitoluistelun tärkeäksi
- ☐ Lapseni oppii lajitaidot
- ☐ Lapseni saa taitoluistelusta ammatin itselleen
- ☐ Muita odotuksia

**25. Vastaa mielipideväittämiin rengastamalla mielipidettänne vastaava numero.**

1. Täysin eri mieltä 2. Jonkin verran eri mieltä 3. En osaa sanoa 4. Jonkin verran samaa mieltä  
5. Täysin samaa mieltä

|   | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Taitoluisteluseurojen tulee panostaa enemmän kilpa- ja huippu-urheiluun kuin harraste- ja terveysliikuntaan                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Taitoluistelun lisenssimaksut ovat sopivat  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Seurojen harrastusmaksut ovat sopivat   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Taitoluisteluseuramme varainhankinta on tuottoisaa  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Taitoluisteluseuramme varainhankinta vaikuttaa suuresti siihen, että harrastusmaksut eivät nouse liian korkeiksi                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Perheemme osallistuu mielellään varainhankintaan seurassamme  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Perheemme osallistuu aktiivisesti kannustamaan lapsen suorituksia taitoluistelukilpailuissa ja/tai seuran järjestämissä luistelunäytöksissä | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Perheestämme jompikumpi vanhempi on viikoittain seuraamassa lapsen harjoituksia   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Perheemme on aktiivinen seuraamaan taitoluistelun arvokisoja  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Harrastuskustannukset vaikuttavat perheemme talouteen                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Harrastuskustannukset rajoittavat lapseni etenemistä taitoluistelussa    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Lapseni harrastuskustannukset vaikuttavat perheen vapaa-ajan valintoihin | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

**28. Onko vielä jotain mistä haluaisit mainita?**