

Statement on Research and Scholarly Contributions

Dr. Luis Columna

Research enables our society to progress to a higher level of thinking and professional practices through the systematic investigation of a specific topic. I believe research is an essential component of academic life and helps to provide our undergraduate and graduate students with a quality education. By developing and delivering evidence-based practices identified through research, we can advance knowledge in specific areas of expertise. My specific area of expertise is working with children with disabilities and their families from diverse cultural backgrounds. From the experience I have acquired throughout my professional career, I can attest that the best research involves a collaborative effort. That is, I believe that “all of us are better than one of us.” For that reason, many of my research studies and publications have been interdisciplinary and done in collaboration with colleagues from my department, my institution, as well as from national and international organizations. We each bring different backgrounds, philosophies, perspectives, and professional skills to the table. In my case, the fact that I am bilingual (Spanish and English) allows me to conduct research with professionals from different Spanish-speaking countries and provide quality services to underserved populations in a variety of locations. In addition, my previous teaching experience as an adapted physical education teacher and my doctoral training in adapted physical education (with an emphasis in family science) has allowed me to pursue research that addresses the physical activity needs of children, families, and physical education teachers. I publish in scientific journals for academic professionals as well as in practitioner journals in order to directly inform current and future physical education practices. By doing both, I am hastening the translation of scholarly information into contemporary practices.

Current Research Practices

The research I conduct informs and guides my interventions, research and practitioner manuscripts, as well as my undergraduate and graduate teaching. I am interested in finding ways to better prepare future educators to maximize opportunities for physical activity for children with disabilities and their families. I use a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies appropriate for answering my questions and guiding my experimental design. The majority of my research has been qualitative in design based on my specific research questions. I truly enjoy working with my research participants. I learn by listening to their voices and by their life experiences regarding specific issues related to physical activity. It can be a very emotional experience when I discover new information in the voices of the underrepresented. That is one of the reasons that I enjoy conducting research with a qualitative focus.

I utilize quantitative research methods as well. For example, I utilized advanced quantitative methods to explore teachers' attitudes toward diversity (Columna, Foley, & Lytle, 2010) and teachers' intentions toward teaching children with disabilities (Columna et al., in press), and to validate a questionnaire that explored parents' perceptions toward adapted physical education teachers (Columna, Cook, Bailey, & Foley, 2014). In future research, I will combine the benefits of quantitative and qualitative design in a single project. Aligned with my research agenda, I will explore ways to promote effective collaboration between physical education teachers and parents. I will interview physical education teachers and parents regarding strategies they utilize to include parents in their programming. Concurrently, I will survey the parents on their perceptions of valued content in physical education programs. Another research project in

which I will utilize a mixed methods design is in the Syracuse University Fit Families program, as we conduct research with children with disabilities, parents, and university students. In a later section (Grants Funding), I will provide a more detailed explanation of the SU Fit Families program.

Collaboration During Research

Research becomes a dynamic learning experience when others share their personal background and ideas. Through collaboration with other professionals, I have identified mentors consistent with my research agenda. Mentors have provided valuable information regarding research design, methodology, and statistical analysis. Learning from my mentors' strengths and, in particular, observing successful mentorship strategies also allow me to be a better mentor to others.

I enjoy working with colleagues who share my passion for research and service to diverse groups. I like to collaborate with peers who value the benefits of conducting transformative research. I have established connections with professionals from the United States, Latin America (Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela), and African Countries (Cape Verde, Egypt) to work on several projects, including research, workshops and sports camps for children with disabilities.

We are currently working to expand the SU Fit Families program in order to provide services to children with autism and their families. I have invited a number of my colleagues from Syracuse University to join me in this work. Dr. Kevin Heffernan will measure cardiovascular responses to exercise. Dr. Tiago Barreira will measure physical activity using accelerometers. Dr. Michael Norris will assist me with the intervention by providing training to our students (exercise science and physical education) in best practices for teaching physical activity to children with autism. In addition, I have engaged other professionals from the School of Education (Christine Ashby and Beth Myers) and the Psychology Department (Natalie Russo) in the College of Arts and Sciences to work on this innovative project with children with autism and their families. These professionals are experts in working with children with autism in the areas of communication and brain activity, respectively.

I have built a number of strong collaborations during my time at Syracuse University. Another partnership I have established is with Dr. Ben Dotger from the School of Education. We have involved physical education students in simulations at the Upstate Medical Clinical Skills Center. His research project allowed us to study how future teachers and leaders execute professional skills, dispositions, and content knowledge while interacting face-to-face with standardized actors (e.g., parents). By conducting this type of research, we are modeling best practices by promoting and reinforcing the collaboration between physical activity professionals and education professionals. In my opinion, school systems should function this way to educate young people in an organic and ongoing basis. It is my hope that with this line of research, we will be able to maximize and enhance physical activity opportunities for children with disabilities and their families.

Mentoring Other Colleagues Through Scholarly Activities

Based on the knowledge I have acquired from my training and research activities, I mentor other colleagues in order to help them find their own passion in teaching and scholarship. As the first Hispanic Physical Education faculty at a Carnegie Classified RU/H Research University in the United States, I want to inspire my colleagues to do their best. One way I do this is by inviting them to join my research projects and academic endeavors. One of these

examples is a book chapter I wrote with Dr. Esther Ortiz related to aquatic opportunities for children with disabilities (Ortiz & Columna, 2013). This was Dr. Ortiz's first publication. I took the lead with this chapter and coached her by sharing different strategies I employ when writing.

In my quest to learn how to better mentor my colleagues, especially those who are Hispanic, I conducted a research study with a group of colleagues to explore the experiences of Hispanic faculty in academia. We studied their challenges and the strategies they implemented to be successful in their teaching positions. It is my goal with this project to identify ways to assist Hispanic faculty with strategies for success in higher education. This manuscript was accepted for publication in QUEST.

In addition to providing mentorship to colleagues, I have mentored hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students in their professional and research endeavors. I have written several peer-reviewed manuscripts with graduate students (Perkins, Chaapple, Cook, McCabe, & Corcoran) and most recently wrote an aquatic book with a former undergraduate student (Friedlander-Litzner). This aquatic book came to fruition due to my desire to prepare better physical educators. While teaching in the Physical Education Department at SUNY Cortland, I recognized that my students were successful in providing physical activities in the gymnasium but struggled to deliver appropriate instructions in the pool. This dichotomy made me aware of the need to create an important resource text.

Mentoring students is a joy for me. During the spring semester of 2015, a visiting Brazilian undergraduate student (Vitor Ciampolini) came to Syracuse for one semester to take a course (PED 250: Team Sports) with me and be part of the SU Fit Families (a physical activity program for children with disabilities) programming. This opportunity allowed me to mentor an international student and, in so doing, learn more about the Brazilian educational system and their services for people with disabilities. As part of the mentorship process, the student asked if I would support him on a manuscript as part of his undergraduate program. In Brazil, he conducted a research study to determine if there is a correlation between participation in wheelchair sports and quality of life. My contribution to this project will be continued mentorship, organization of the results, and preparation of the final manuscript. This manuscript was accepted for publication in an international journal (See CV).

Transforming Research Into Practice

Through my research and teaching, I strive to translate research into practice and share that information with my students and others. For me, turning research into practice is a four-step approach that includes: a) research, b) professional presentations, c) peer-reviewed research articles, and d) peer-reviewed practitioner articles. I consider myself a researcher and a practitioner (teacher). Therefore, every time I do research I ask: How I can convey these results to different populations such as researchers, teachers, students, and parents.

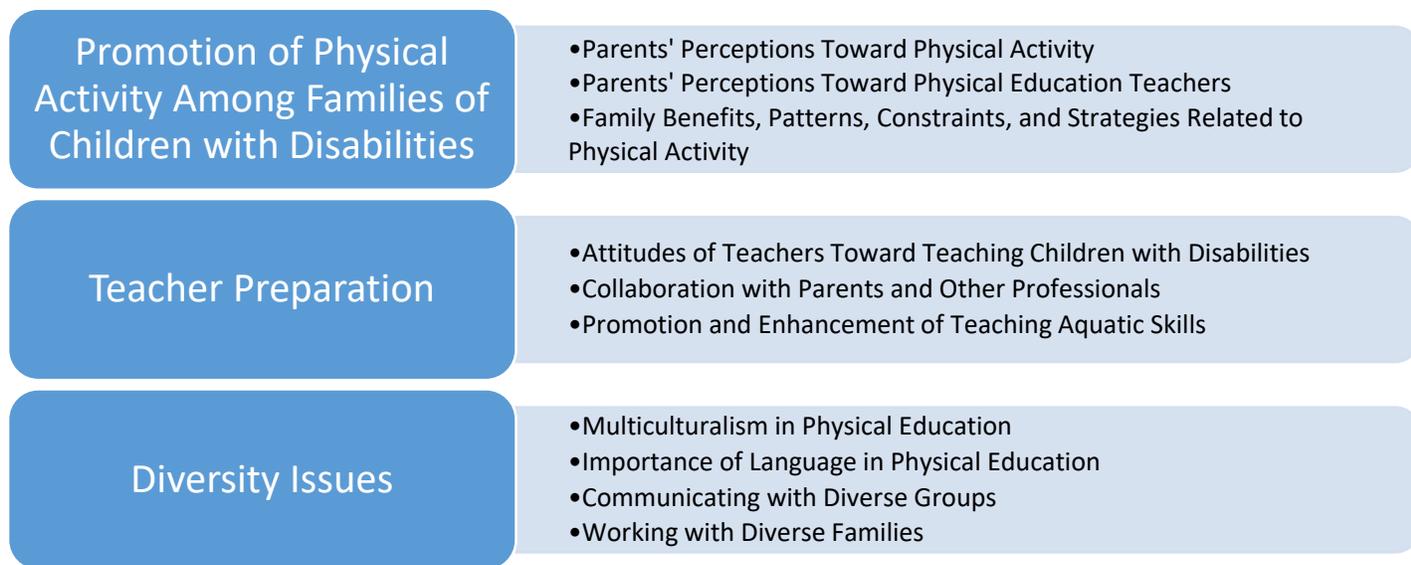
I elaborate on this process in my teaching statement, but I believe it is pertinent to explain the process here. In 2008, I conducted a research study to explore the expectations of Hispanic parents of children with disabilities toward adapted physical educators. While I was in the process of writing the results of this research study, I presented preliminary data at the international level (Brazil). Thus, a peer-reviewed presentation resulted from my scientific inquiry. After the data analysis was completed, I presented this project at an international conference in Brazil (2007) and submitted this research manuscript to the *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly* (Columna, Pyfer, Senne, Vélez, Canabal, & Bridenthral, 2008). One of the major findings reported by parents in this study was the lack of communication between parents

and teachers. One of the reasons for the lack of communication was language barriers. Parents provided several strategies to promote effective communication between parents and teachers. Based on this data, I transformed the themes provided by families into a practitioner article. The title of this article is “Communicating with Hispanic Parents of Children with Disabilities” (Columna, Senne, & Lytle, 2009). The purpose of this practitioner article is to provide physical activity professionals with strategies to assist them in overcoming language barriers with Hispanic families.

I routinely employ this four-step approach (research, presentations, research article, and practitioner article) in order to integrate my research and teaching career. I share these experiences with my students and help them to think critically and to be able to transform research into practice. Through my teaching practices, I am teaching my students to be creators of knowledge and consumers of research.

Research Agenda

My research goal is to identify barriers to physical activity among children with disabilities (and their families) and identify, evaluate, and implement strategies for reducing these barriers. The model below is a visual representation of my research agenda. My research agenda focuses on three major areas: a) promotion of physical activity among families of children with disabilities, b) teacher preparation programs, and c) diversity issues.



Promotion of Physical Activity among Families of Children with Disabilities

I believe that physical educators are doing a reasonable job teaching and promoting physical activity in school settings for children with disabilities. However, we are overlooking parents as critical members of the multidisciplinary team that contributes to the well-being of children with disabilities. When physical educators focus too closely on enhancing the motor skills of children, collaboration between parents and physical activity professionals is often minimized. Parents are the first teachers of their children. Therefore, we need to be cognizant of the parental role and value their expertise. Parents can provide physical educators with extremely valuable information regarding their children’s interests. Collaboration allows teachers to explore obstacles families face when participating in physical activities. By acknowledging

parental input, teachers can assist parents with strategies to facilitate family participation in physical activities.

To that end, I have explored this issue with Hispanic parents in the United States (Columna, Pyfer, & Senne, 2011) and in Guatemala (Columna, Fernández-Vivó, Lieberman, & Arndt, in press; 2013). In addition, I have conducted several research studies with Caucasian parents regarding this topic (Columna, Norris, & McCabe, under review; Perkins, Columna, Lieberman, & Bailey, 2013). These studies have allowed me to gain a better understanding of the obstacles families face when trying to promote physical activity. Participants have voiced two main concerns. First, they indicated that although they are interested in physical activity with their children, they often do not know how to engage their children in activities. Second, they perceive physical educators as having inadequate communication with them. They would like teachers to share ideas they can use as a family in physical activity environments.

To address this issue, we created the Syracuse University Fit Families program. This program maximizes physical and recreational opportunities for parents of children with disabilities. The first SU Fit Families program provided families of children with disabilities with the tools and skills necessary to continue physical activity at home and school. This innovative program includes a qualitative and a quantitative research component. The purpose of this research component was to explore the effects of activity participation on the children with disabilities and their parents. In addition, I was interested in learning how this collaborative work influences the teachers helping with the program.

Parents Perceptions Toward APE Teachers

In order to gain parental trust and better assist parents with the task of having a physically active family, physical educators need to be aware of parental expectations toward the professionals who deliver services to their children. I have studied this issue with Hispanic parents living in the United States (Columna, Pyfer, Senne, Vélez, Canabal, & Bridenthall, 2008) and with Caucasian parents (Columna, Cook, Bailey, & Foley, 2014; Chaapel, Columna, Lytle, & Bailey, 2012). By listening to the voices of parents, I have learned what their expectations toward those professionals are and what they value the most in terms of effective collaboration. One of the recommendations provided by parents was that they would like physical educators to attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and to share with them information about their children's progress in physical education. To address the issue of collaboration, I published several manuscripts providing ideas to promote collaboration and teachers' attendance at IEP meetings (Columna, Davis, Lieberman, & Lytle, 2010; Roth & Columna, 2011; Columna, Lieberman, Lytle, & Arndt, 2014; Columna, Senne, & Lytle, 2009).

Teacher Preparation

Teachers' Attitudes Toward Teaching Children with Disabilities

Professionals in the field of adapted physical education research have recognized that teachers' attitudes toward teaching children with disabilities are a predictor for intentions to include children with disabilities in physical education or physical activity settings (Folsom-Meek, & Rizzo, 2002). When a physical educator or a parent has a positive attitude toward physical activity, the likelihood this adult will include their students or children in physical activity tends to be higher. Therefore, as higher education professionals, we need to assist students in the development of positive attitudes toward this population. This is a new line of inquiry for me. I realized that most of the research regarding teachers' attitudes has been conducted in the United States and Europe. Because of my strong collaboration with colleagues

from different Latin American countries and in response to the lack of research of this topic in their countries, we conducted one of the first research studies in Latin America exploring this issue (Columna, Hoyos-Cuartas, Foley, Prado, Rivera, Mora, Ozols, Chavarro, & Del Cid, in press). I have also investigated this issue with pre-service teachers in the United States utilizing a qualitative design (Columna, Rocco-Dillon, Corcoran, Bailey, & Davis, under review). By acknowledging the attitudes of in-service and teacher candidates, we can gain an understanding of the steps we need to follow to promote positive attitudes that will lead to positive intentions toward including children with disabilities in their physical education classes (e.g., ability to include children in physical education or physical activity settings).

Promotion of Aquatic Skills

Through my research with families of children with disabilities, I have learned that aquatic activities are the preferred recreational activity among many of these families. In addition, through my personal experience I have discovered that most physical educators are excellent at delivering land-based activities but have limited experience teaching in an aquatic environment and therefore struggle in this setting. For that reason, I have written two book chapters to address this need (Ortiz-Stuhr, E. & Columna, 2013; Columna, 2011). Most recently, Human Kinetics published my new book, *Assessments and Activities for Teaching Swimming* (Lepore, Columna, Friedlander-Litzner, 2015). The purpose of this textbook is to provide teachers, parents, and aquatic instructors with more than 200 aquatic activities they can use and share with parents of children with and without disabilities. In addition, we included an assessment instrument that will allow users to evaluate their student's aquatic skills before, during, and after the aquatic instruction.

Diversity Issues

As part of my research and teaching practice, I want to prepare future educators to work with diverse populations. In the United States, most physical education teachers are white, middle-class, and male (Aud, Hussar, Kena, Bianco, Frohlich, Kemp, & Tahan, 2011). However, in many states there is an increase in minority populations (Sato & Burge-Hall, 2010). Therefore, I want to provide my students with culturally relevant pedagogical practice that will allow them to meet the needs of diverse students. Stanley (1990) explored the perceptions of physical education teachers toward the inclusion of students of color in their classes. Her work revealed that physical education teachers valued diversity, perceived this issue as important, but they did not have the knowledge to include these students into their physical education classes (Stanley, 1990). Twenty years later, we conducted a similar study (Columna et al., 2010); sadly, our results were similar to those reported by Stanley in 1990. The past 20 years has seen little improvement in the ability/skills of physical educators to include diverse learners, especially if those students do not possess mastery of the English language (Burden, Columna, Hodge, & Martínez-De la Vega, 2013; Columna et al., 2010).

My research has illuminated strategies for teachers to include diverse learners and their families in their programming. I published a manuscript that includes strategies for communication with Hispanic families of children with and without disabilities (Columna, Senne et al., 2009). In addition, I wrote an article (Lieberman, Columna, Martínez-De la Vega, & Taylor, 2010) and a textbook (Columna & Lieberman, 2011) regarding the infusion of Spanish and sign language for physical education teachers. In this article and in the textbook, we presented ideas for including students by using words and phrases in Spanish and sign language.

The purpose of these publications is to reduce the gap in the literature on preparation of current and future physical educators to work with diverse learners and their families.

In 2013, we published a manuscript (Burden et al.) on preparing physical education teacher candidates by incorporating ethnolinguistically relevant pedagogy into physical education teacher education programs (PETE). Ethnolinguistically relevant pedagogy is a blend of intercultural language education and intercultural competence with culturally relevant pedagogy. In this manuscript, we recognized that in the United States, most teachers are white, but the Hispanic community in school settings is on the rise. Therefore, we advocate for an approach that will assist educators in being culturally responsive in order to better accommodate students with diverse linguistic backgrounds in K–12 physical education settings.

Grant Funding

Through my academic career, I have been able to secure external funding to support my research. These grants have allowed me the opportunity to develop instructional material and conduct preliminary research to support my scholarly agenda. In addition, I have been a co-investigator for several grants in conjunction with SUNY Upstate and SUNY Cortland. The funding I have obtained from private foundations (the Central New York Community Foundation, the Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation, and the Christopher Reeves Foundation) has demonstrated my ability to pursue and obtain external funding. In the near future I will be pursuing additional external foundation grants and federal grants to expand my research agenda to the next level.

Group Visits

We secured \$6,000 from the Christopher Reeves Foundation to develop a manual and a DVD to promote group visits for parents of children with spina bifida. Dosa, Columna, Davis, Foley, & Garner (2012) described group visits as:

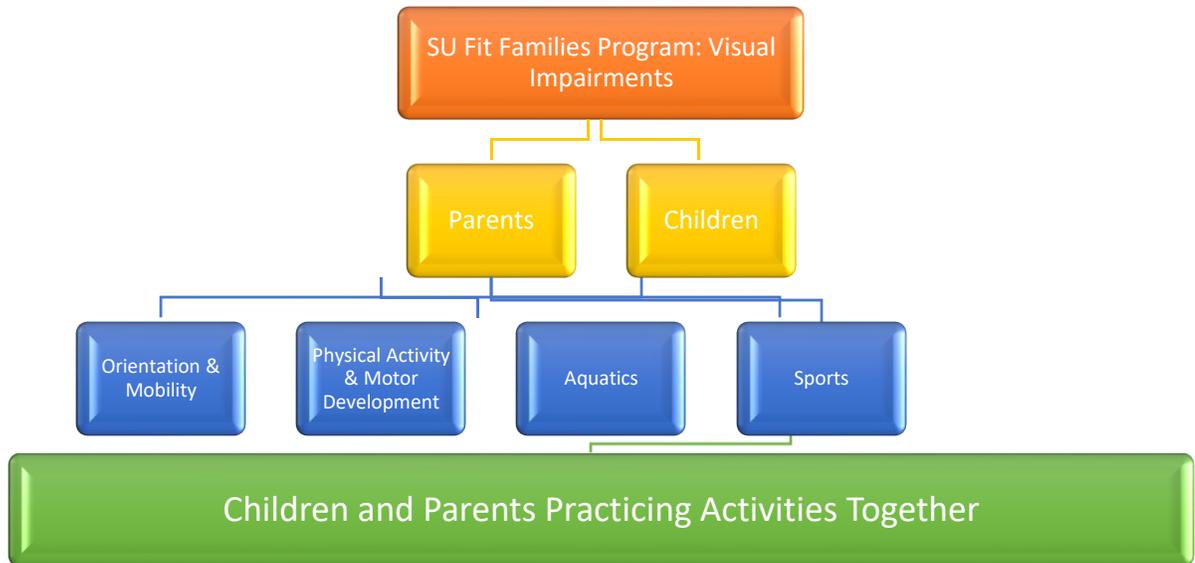
An extended doctor's visit where medical as well as educational, social and psychological concerns can be dealt with effectively. Group visits are similar to support groups in many ways, but differ in that medical care is included in each session. The group format allows patients to share tips and to provide emotional support for one another as they learn – together - how to live with a medical condition (p.2).

During this project, we collaborated with adapted physical education professionals, medical doctors, occupational and physical therapists, and social workers to enhance the quality of life of children with spina bifida.

Syracuse University Fit Families Program

To address the important aspect of family physical activity promotion I created a holistic program, the *Syracuse University Fit Families Program: Visual Impairment*. This program was supported, in part, by two external grants from the Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation (\$5,000) and the Central New York Community Foundation (\$14,300). *SU Fit Families* is a physical activity program that brings together children with visual impairments, their parents, college students, and in-service professionals in the fields of adapted physical education, orientation and mobility, physical education, and exercise science. The program provides interactive workshops to parents related to: a) orientation and mobility, b) motor development and physical activity, c) aquatic opportunities, and d) team sports. The model below (and the video; see link) are visual

representations of the program and the interaction of the different components of the program. Please see link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTml8C0vPhg>



I designed these services to improve the emotional, social, and physical well-being of the participants. This program includes: 1) educational seminars for parents on topics that improve awareness, advocacy, and access to community services; 2) inclusive games and modified sports for children and parents to improve self-awareness, social interactions, and physical fitness; 3) individual consultation with physical activity professionals to address children's and families' social and recreational needs; and 4) opportunities for social networking for families participating in the program, including mentoring of youth by adapted sport athletes.

The Syracuse University Fit Families program was designed to increase the physical activity levels of children through modified activities, using adapted equipment and, importantly, to increase the families' comfort level in having their children participate in sport. The workshops also teach children and their families how to access nearby facilities and modify familiar activities, resulting in health benefits for all. Children and parents are involved in developmentally designed, land-based, and aquatic physical activities.

During each workshop, parents are actively engaged in vibrant discussions with professionals and other parents who share similar experiences. While parents are participating in the workshops, their children with visual impairments participated in land or aquatic based activities led by physical education teacher candidates and exercise science students. Then, parents have the opportunity to practice the activities they learned during the morning workshops with their children, under the supervision of the physical activity professionals. After each workshop, families receive a variety of equipment (e.g., toys, games) pertinent to each of the workshops. For example, during the aquatic workshop, families received a kickboard, floating toys, and goggles.

This program is unique because to our knowledge it is the only program in the United States that provides a holistic approach in which parents are taught how to participate in physical activities with their children. There are other programs that provide workshops on aquatics (Prupas, Harvey, & Benjamin, 2006) or physical activity for parents and children (Sayers, Cowden, & Sherrill, 2002), but the SU Fit Families program is the only one that combines several components related to physical activity. From this program, we have submitted six manuscripts for publication to peer-reviewed journals. We have five additional manuscripts, both research and practitioner, related to this program in progress. By virtue of the success of this program in Central New York, we are in conversation with professionals from other countries to replicate the SU FIT Families program in Dominican Republic, Egypt, India, and Puerto Rico.

In addition to providing physical activity opportunities for children with visual impairments and their families, we have been able to conduct quantitative and qualitative measurements to determine what factors contribute to barriers to physical activity and best practices for reducing them. As part of the research, parents participated in one-on-one interviews to explore their perceptions regarding patterns of physical recreation, perceived benefits, and constraints. In addition, we explored their perceptions toward potential strategies that may assist in increasing their participation in physical recreational activities. In summary, parents indicated that before the SU Fit Families program they loved physical activity but did not possess the skills to teach or engage their children in these activities. They indicated that SU Fit Families was extremely beneficial for them in terms of learning teaching skills to interact with their children in physical activity environments.

We also interviewed Exercise Science and Physical Education students regarding their perceptions toward teaching children with visual impairments. We are in the process of analyzing the data. However, preliminary evaluation of the data indicates that students who participated in the program highly valued this experience and felt extremely confident about providing physical activity opportunities to children with visual impairments.

As part of the quantitative measurements, we administered a battery of assessments to the children and their parents. The aquatic skills of both parents and children were assessed using the Texas Woman's University Aquatic Assessment (Lepore, Columna, Friedlander-Litzner, 2015). Children's motor skills were assessed using the Test of Gross Motor Development 2 (TGMD-2), a valid and reliable measure of motor skills (Berkeley, et al., 2001; Staples & Reid, 2010; Ulrich, 2000). We also assessed children's perception of quality of life using the Low Vision Quality-of-Life Questionnaire (Wolffsohn & Cochrane, 2000). An extraordinary addition to this project was the inclusion of my colleague Dr. Kevin Heffernan, who measured children's blood pressure using an oscillometric cuff (i.e. an automatic blood pressure cuff that senses the blood pressure without need for a researcher to listen for sounds with a stethoscope). This machine is similar to the machines often found in commercial stores like Walmart. This machine also provided additional measures of cardiovascular health like elasticity of the artery and heart rate. No previous research studies have utilized these measurements in children with visual impairments. We are in the process of analyzing this data.

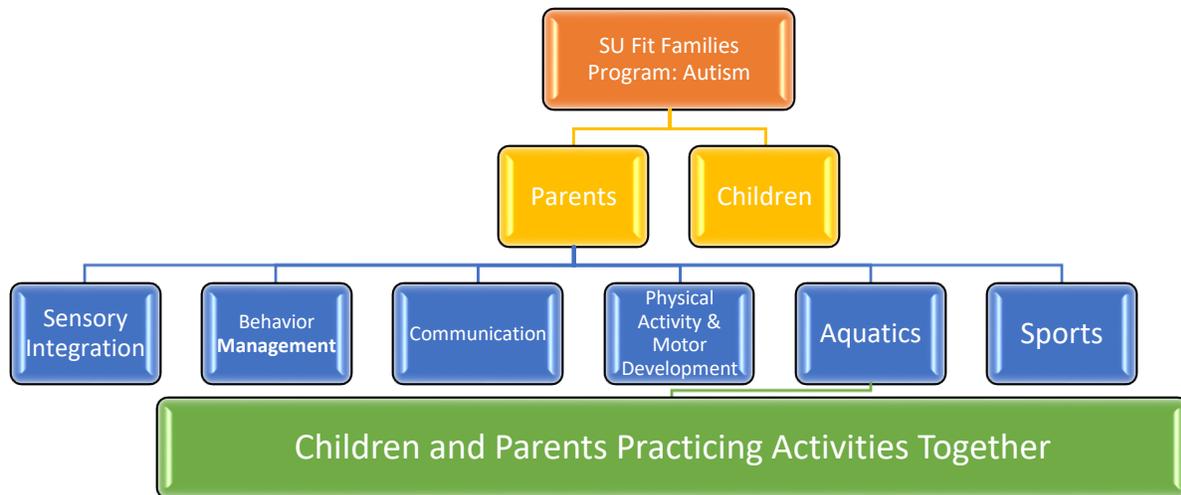
Last, in collaboration with Dr. Tiago Barreira, we measured physical activity before and after the program using an ActiGraph accelerometer attached to the waist with an elastic belt. Participants were asked to wear it for seven (7) consecutive days, removing it only for sleep and water-based activities (e.g., showering, bathing). Physical activity was also measured using a wristwatch-style accelerometer. Participants were asked to wear this device for 24 hours a day. This device is currently being used successfully to monitor activity levels in children by Brooks

Gump (Department of Public Health). Weight and body fat percentage was measured before and after the program using a Tanita SC-240 scale. The scale uses bioelectrical impedance to estimate body composition, and the only restriction of its use is for people with a pacemaker. Height of the participants was also measured during the research.

Future Research and Grants

Syracuse Fit Families: Autism

The SU Fit Families program was a successful experience with parents of children with visual impairments. During the spring semester of 2015, we secured another external grant from the Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation (\$10,000) to expand our work to families of children with autism. We tailored this new intervention according to the most common characteristics of children with autism. As can be seen in the model below, we are organizing this program into six areas: a) sensory integration, b) behavior management, c) communication, d) physical activity and motor development, e) aquatics, and f) sports. Because children with autism tend to exhibit different needs than children with visual impairments, we will not include the orientation and mobility workshop in this new program (see model above). During these workshops, parents learned strategies to implement these areas in physical activity settings.



As part of this new program, we will be conducting research to explore ways to maximize families' participation in physical activities. In addition, based on the strong collaboration we have established at Syracuse University, we will be conducting a series of measurement related to the children's biometrics (BMI, levels of physical activity, brain blood flow, cardiovascular fitness, etc.), adaptive behaviors, communication skills, sensory issues, and brain activity. In the

near future, we will be submitting a comprehensive grant to the National Institutes of Health to replicate this program at the national level. Future students enrolled in this program will be able to participate and lead the SU Fit Families program as part of their graduate experience.

Diversity

As an integral part of our physical education program and my research agenda, I am planning to conduct research to explore the barriers teachers face when working with diverse children, including Hispanics. I am planning to conduct both quantitative and qualitative research in this area and develop school interventions to better assist teachers. To accomplish these goals, I will provide teachers with the skills to communicate with Hispanic students. I will use my textbook (Columna & Lieberman, 2011) and other resources to better prepare physical educators. My ultimate goal is to be able to create an online Spanish course for health professionals (e.g., physical educators, exercise scientists, physical and occupational therapists). For this project, I envision working with the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics at Syracuse University and SUNY Cortland to assist me with the pedagogical aspects of the course, and I will be responsible for the course content.

Concluding Thoughts on Research

I am passionate about teaching and research. My research informs my teaching, and my teaching influences my research. Through my research, I strive to close the gap in health disparities by identifying reasons for physical inactivity among families of children with disabilities. I believe that by collaborating with colleagues around the country and around the world, we will be able to promote inclusive opportunities for all. Through the Syracuse University Fit Families program, I hope to conduct and disseminate research that will inspire others to provide children with disabilities and their families the skills to maximize physical activity opportunities. Through this program, we are modeling professional collaboration and evidence-based practice and developing a framework that can be implemented around the world. Through my research, I have been able to build a national and international reputation in terms of the promotion of services, specifically physical activity, for children with disabilities and their families. Because of this international recognition, I have been able to travel the world and established collaboration with colleagues in many different countries.