

**Administrators' Experiences Facilitating Fee Assistance Programs and Supporting
the Inclusion of Low-Income Families Participation in Community Sport and
Recreation Organizations in New Brunswick**

by

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ABSTRACT

Community sport and recreation organizations (CSROs) are integral to facilitating sport and recreation in communities (Misener & Doherty, 2013; Sharpe, 2006), including the facilitation of fee assistance programs (FAPs) for low-income families (McCarville, 2008). However, the experiences of facilitating FAPs from the perspective of CSROs and how CSROs support the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation is not largely documented in the literature. Therefore, this study examined CSRO administrators' experiences facilitating FAPs and supporting the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in the province of New Brunswick. The findings of the study are presented across two publishable papers. This thesis contributes to the literature in two ways. First, this study demonstrated how responsabilization is evident in the facilitation of FAPs. Second, this study identified how CSROs facilitated inclusion to support the participation of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

According to New Brunswick's (NB) Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation (2020) *Overcoming Poverty Together* report, 15.1% of all people in NB live in poverty, while the child poverty rate is 21.7% (Human Development Council, 2021). Living in poverty can limit community involvement, including access to recreation and sport, as families with low income do not have the necessary economic and social resources required for participation (Oncescu & Neufeld, 2019; Shannon et al., 2016).

At the beginning of the 20th Century, recreation services were guided by social liberal values, which operated under the belief that everyone deserved the right to recreation regardless of their social, economic, and environmental life situations (Brodie, 2007; Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Thibault et al., 2004). In the 1980s, Canada's recreation sector was largely affected by the recession (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Harvey, 2001; Tink et al., 2020), which prompted the shift to operating under a business-oriented delivery system guided by neoliberalism, which values individualism, efficiency, and accountability (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Thibault et al., 2004). As a result, sport and recreation programs were downloaded from the public sector (i.e., municipal) onto private sector (i.e., for-profit, and not-for-profit community organizations) (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Ilcan & Basok, 2004).

Community sport and recreation organizations (CSROs) are largely volunteer-run organizations and are central to delivering sport and recreation services in Canada today (Misener & Doherty, 2013; Sharpe, 2006). The 1980s recession forced CSROs to fill the gap in recreation and sport program delivery left by the government as sport and

recreation programming was increasingly outsourced to the private sector by municipal entities (Newmeyer, 2017; Sharpe, 2006). This transfer of responsibility from the public to the private sector was coupled with a decrease in governmental funding (Newmeyer, 2017). As a result, CSROs adopted a business model that utilizes membership and user fees to support the organization's financial viability (Jones, 2018). Therefore, programs and services founded on neoliberalism often serve those who can afford to pay to play and decrease access to low or no cost options for those who cannot afford to pay (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Thibault et al., 2004).

The increase in user fees across the recreation and sport sector perpetuated limited access for low-income families and children. Access provisions, like Fee Assistance Programs (FAPs), were introduced as an administrative response to the increased use of user fees, as they alleviate some of the associated costs to recreation and sport participation (McCarville, 2008). These funding support programs align with the values of neoliberalism as they focus on the financial barriers associated with recreation and sport participation while evading other inhibitors to participation (Oncescu, 2021; Taylor & Frisby, 2010). While research has documented some of the benefits of FAPs, such as facilitating recreation and sport participation, involvement with the larger community, as well as social and personal benefits that are a result of recreation and sport participation (Donnelly, & Coakley, 2002; Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Tamminen et al., 2020), the degree to which FAPs facilitate inclusion has been challenged. When low-income families seek financial assistance through FAPs, there is often associated proof of poverty policies stigmatizing and discouraging applicants (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; McCarville, 2008). Continually, FAPs only offer

financial subsidies for registration fees and do not address the additional fees and barriers (e.g., childcare, unaffordable and inaccessible transportation, cost of equipment, racism and discrimination) associated with participation in sport and recreation for low-income families (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008). FAPs are intended to aid the participation of low-income families in sport and recreation; however, the design and implementation of such programs exclude the very population they are intended to serve because of associated mandates and policies (Taylor & Frisby, 2010).

Past and current literature has examined the experience of FAPs in municipal recreation (see Cureton & Frisby, 2011; McCarville, 2008; Taylor & Frisby, 2010) as well as the experience of accessing FAPs specifically for low-income citizens (see Clark et al., 2019; Holt et al., 2011; Kingsley et al., 2017). However, the experience of facilitating FAPs from the perspective of CSROs is largely undocumented, even though they are central to the facilitation of sport and recreation in communities and utilize FAPs to enable participation in recreation and sport for low-income families. Additionally, there is little known about how CSROs support low-income children's participation once they are enrolled in a recreation and sport program. However, it is known that FAPs do not cover all the costs associated with participation (Holt et al., 2011). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine CSRO administrators' experiences facilitating FAPs and supporting the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical ideologies this study utilizes are associated with the political economy. Caporaso and Levine (1992) describe the political economy as the interrelationships between the political and economic affairs of the government. Political economy theories examine the responsibilities of the state in relation to the economy. Specific to this study, I use two political ideologies: social liberalism and neoliberalism. Each ideology is described below and expanded upon further in each paper.

Following the Second World War, Canada was in a welfare state rooted in the political ideology of social liberalism (Brodie, 2007; Cureton & Frisby, 2011). Brodie (2007) highlights three main characteristics of social liberalism. Firstly, under social liberalism in a welfare state, the government was seen as “responsible for the just distribution of social resources and that the market could and should be regulated in order to maximize economic and political stability and the collective wellbeing of all citizens” (p. 97). Second, there was an intention to provide everyone equal access to social security, citizenship, and equality regardless of their status (Brodie, 2007). Lastly, social liberalism called on public administrators to integrate the different ethos of planning, procedures and governance technologies (Brodie, 2007). Governments influenced by the political ideology of social liberalism strived to keep social programs in the public domain rather than the capitalistic private market (Cureton & Frisby, 2011).

Cureton and Frisby (2011) identified four values associated with social liberalism: community development, social justice, ethic of care, and social inclusion. Community development is the recognition of “the relationship between agency and

structure” (Shaw, 2006, p.27) to acknowledge and comprehend the power dynamics at play. Social justice can be characterized as the fair and unbiased treatment of individuals (Cureton & Frisby, 2011) and highlights the need for policy to be grounded in and accepting of the multiplicity and differing societal values (Craig, 2002). Ethic of care can be understood as morals and ethics that are innate to human nature and the lived experience (Collins, 2018) and can contribute to one's awareness of the wide variety of individuals and their diverse life experiences, as well as the need for acceptance when working with diversity (Williams, 2001). Lastly, social inclusion can be defined “as the process of creating just and equitable systems that facilitates people’s choices and opportunities to engage (or not) in a wide range of social and democratic activities, including sport and recreation” (Frisby & Ponic, 2013, p. 381). The goal of social inclusion, according to Frisby and Ponic (2013), is to enhance quality of life for all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Labonte (2004) highlights that the process of equality and social inclusion “demands inequalities in opportunity” (p.119), meaning that if all individuals of any social status were given access to universal programs, the inequalities in society could be exemplified.

While social inclusion is an important concept, it is important to differentiate the differences between social inclusion and inclusion. According to Frisby and Ponic (2013), social inclusion is complex and involves the consideration of many factors to foster a process that is equitable for all as a result of careful negotiations and intentionally shifting away from top-down power systems that are common in the sport system (Frisby & Ponic, 2013). Whereas inclusion can be defined as working within the existing system to provide access and open the door to opportunities (Frisby & Ponic,

2013). While inclusion is important as a first step “much more needs to be done by all levels of government and other organizations working together” (Frisby & Ponic, 2013, p. 386). As such social inclusion, in comparison to inclusion, draws “attention to the diversity of people in Canada and the broader structures requiring change” (Frisby & Ponic, 2013, p. 381). Highlighting the importance of collaboratively working to change the sport system by connecting with those who are currently not in the system to create more positive and inclusive sport practices and policies (Frisby & Ponic, 2013).

Despite the important values of social liberalism, the welfare state in Canada began to become threatened in the late 1960s and 1970s due to an increase in privatization and political frustration with the current political ideology guiding government operation (Crompton, 1998; Harvegreaves, 1985). The combination of increased privatization and failing welfare policies resulted in the introduction of neoliberalism, a political strategy adopted across developed countries in response to the final crisis occurring in the 1980s (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Brodie, 2007). Neoliberalism is a capitalistic ideology characterized by the creation of free markets, privatization, and financial cutbacks across social, economic, and political structures (Brodie, 2007; Coakley, 2011). Brown (2006) explains neoliberalism in three different ways. First, neoliberalism cannot be confined to the economic domain and does not see the market as ‘natural’ or self-regulating. Rather “part of what makes neoliberalism “neo” is that it depicts free markets, free trade, and entrepreneurial rationality as *achieved and normative*, as promulgated through law and through social and economic policy” (Brown, 2006, p. 694). Second, neoliberalism’s political and social parts are controlled by the market and therefore are organized according to market

rationality. Lastly, neoliberalism as a political rationality enacts governing tactics that align with the market rationality criteria centred around efficiency, production, and profits (Brown, 2006).

Cureton and Frisby (2011) identify three core values associated with neoliberalism: individualism, efficiency, and accountability (Cureton & Frisby, 2011). The onus is on the individual in a neoliberal society to take responsibility for their overall wellbeing, including happiness and health, through the practices of self-awareness and pursuing transformative practices (Coakley, 2011; Cureton & Frisby, 2011). Efficiency is present when organizations adopt neoliberal operating systems, such as the business model, in which doing more with less is essential to success (Draft & Armstrong, 2009). Lastly, accountability can be defined as a “relationship of formal control between parties, one of whom is mandatorily held to account to the other for the exercise of roles and stewardship of public resources” (Ranson, 2003, p.460). Additionally, responsabilization emerged as a technology of neoliberal (Fullagar, 2003; Godrej, 2017). The goal of responsabilization is to “subordinate populations to handle their own problems as best they can on their own, with the aim that they become less of a burden for the constrained state” (Schram, 2018, p. 313). As such, a certain level of moral obligation is associated with responsabilization. Citizens assume responsibility and navigate trials and tribulations individually and independently of the state to not become an economic burden (Schram, 2018; Shamir, 2008).

The values associated with the political ideologies of social liberalism and neoliberalism are still present in sport and recreation today and create the theoretical framework for this study (Cureton & Frisby, 2011). The purpose of this study was to

examine CSRO administrators' experiences facilitating FAPs and supporting the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick. Therefore, the conceptual frameworks of this study, are responsabilization and neoliberalism (applied in chapter 2) and Ponc and Frisby's (2010) organizational dimension of inclusion (applied in chapter 3).

The findings of this study are presented in two publishable papers. The first paper (Chapter 2), titled "*Hands Off*": *Responsibilizing Low-Income Citizens Through Fee Assistance Programs*, illustrates how responsabilization is evident in the facilitation of FAPs through the values of neoliberalism. The primary research question addressed in this paper was, how is responsabilization evident in facilitating FAPs amongst community sport and recreation organizations? The conceptual framework for this paper included responsabilization and the values associated with neoliberalism; individualism, accountability, and efficiency (Cureton & Frisby, 2010). The second paper (Chapter) is titled *Community Sport and Recreation Organizations' Inclusion of Families with Low-Income in Sport and Recreation in New Brunswick*. This paper examined how CSROs support inclusion in sport and recreation for low-income families. The primary research question, how do CSROs support the inclusion of families living in low-income circumstances?, was guided by Ponc and Frisby's (2010) conceptual framework of the organization dimension of inclusion.

Study Context

In NB, many CSROs do not have their own FAP; as a result, the responsibility to provide funding for low-income children's participation in sport and recreation falls on

third-party organizations (Oncescu & Fortune, 2022). Generally speaking, FAPs are facilitated as follows. The low-income family applies directly to the FAP organization, mainly through an online submission portal. Based on their proof of income documentation (i.e., government approved tax forms) the family is either approved or denied FAP funding. The funding (up to \$200-\$300) is then sent directly to the recreation or sport organization and applied to the low-income families' account for registration purposes only. The most common funding organizations for CSROs in NB are KidSport NB, Jumpstart and Positive Recreation Opportunities for Kids (P. R. O. Kids)—each organization is described below.

KidSport NB

KidSport is a national organization with a network of over 160 designated local and provincial/territorial chapters across Canada. The slogan of KidSport is “so that all kids can play” (KidSport, 2020a). By supporting children in sports activities, KidSport hopes to impact academic success, leadership, safer communities, and foster inclusivity, healthy habits, and mental health in children (KidSport, 2020b). In NB, there are three-chapter locations: Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John. Each chapter accepts applications and funds up to \$200 per child/year. Those who live outside the chapter towns can access funds through the KidSport Provincial fund. Last year, KidSport NB granted just under \$58,000 and served 407 children (KidSport Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, 2022).

Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a charity, and affiliate of Canadian Tire, that “helps kids overcome financial and accessibility barriers to sport and recreation to provide inclusive play for

kids of all abilities” (Jumpstart, 2022a). The potential impacts identified by Jumpstart for children when participating in sport and recreation through their program are self-esteem, social skills, and academics (Jumpstart, 2022a). Jumpstart has a variety of grants available, including sport relief funds, individual child grants, community development grants, and the para-sport Jumpstart fund. When referencing Jumpstart, in the context of this study, I am referring to individual child grants, which provide up to \$300 per activity for up to \$600 in a calendar year. Individual child grants aim to remove financial barriers to over 70 eligible sport and recreation activities (Jumpstart, 2022b).

P.R.O. Kids

Positive Recreation Opportunities for Kids (P.R.O. Kids) is a non-profit organization to aid participation in sport and leisure activities for children who otherwise would not be able to participate due to financial limitations (Western Valley Recreation Association, 2018). P.R.O. Kids provides opportunities to participate in sport and leisure with the aim that children will experience increased self-esteem, healthy habits, learn new skills and continual personal development (Western Valley Recreation Association, 2018). There are different P.R.O. Kids organizations across eastern Canada; however, they are not all connected to a central national body, such as KidSport.

The application process for FAPs is often lengthy, specific, daunting, and requires individuals to prove their poverty through government-approved documents (Berk & Moon McGivern, 2016; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Reid, 2004). Similarly, all organizations noted above require proof of low income to be eligible for funding. Individuals with low income apply for the FAP through an online format, or in some cases, through a paper copy which is then

submitted to the FAP organization. Once the application is submitted, the FAP organization will confirm or deny funding. The funding from the FAP is then sent directly to the organization.

Researcher Position

This study utilized the method of interpretive description (ID). A research design using ID is guided by an analytical framework based on a critical analysis of the existing literature paired with the philosophical foundations of the method (Thorne et al., 2004). This grounded design aims to detect overarching themes and patterns constructed from the data. ID recognizes that multiple realities construct an individual's subjective experience of truth (Thorne et al., 1997). This research process results in co-created knowledge between the researcher and participants. In ID, bias is important to disclose during the research process as researchers' morals, views, beliefs, personal experiences, and knowledge influence how and why questions are asked (Berger, 2015). Thorne et al. (1997) state that "attempts to eliminate all biases are naïve" (p. 175); therefore, it is important to be transparent and actively address biases throughout the research process.

I am a white cisgender woman who grew up in a small town of 1,800 people on the West Coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. I grew up in a middle-class family with my mother, father, and younger brother. My mother has been the parks and recreation director for the community for over 20 years, and as a result, I grew up in the world of rural recreation. I have personally been involved and affected by a wide range of recreational and volunteer experiences that have influenced my overall perceptions, values, and philosophies of life which led me to pursue a Bachelor of Tourism

Management with a Major in Recreation at Vancouver Island University and a Master of Arts in Sport and Recreation Studies at the University of New Brunswick. As a result, I am a woman who believes that recreation and sport are important factors that contribute to a functioning and healthy society. However, due to the current influence of neoliberalism on the recreation and sport system, I believe that the people who would benefit the most from these services have to work the hardest to obtain them. I recognize that my biases are engrained in my morals, values, and philosophies that I have developed from a position of privilege in society due to my upbringing, socioeconomic standing, and education.

Regarding my research study, I also hold an insider role as a volunteer for the FAP KidSport NB. I became involved out of curiosity, I knew that my project was going to have a focus on FAPs, but I did not know a lot about them, so I connected with the local KidSport NB chapter in Fredericton. During my volunteer experience over the past year and a half, I took on a variety of tasks including the creation of promotional materials, creating KidSport resources (i.e., information sheets, volunteer onboard packages, etc.), and reviewing KidSport applications. My volunteer experiences allowed me to understand the processes and inner workings of the local KidSport NB chapter and helped to contextualize the conversations I was having throughout my interview process. I was also able to convey tools that could be enacted by KidSport NB to better serve local community organizations as a result of my master's research project.

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Chapter 2

“Hands Off”: Responsibilizing Low-Income Citizens Through Fee Assistance Programs

This manuscript will be submitted to the Sport Management Review

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Abstract

Despite the popularity and benefits of fee assistance programs, research has also highlighted the process of obtaining financial assistance as problematic, cumbersome, and stigmatizing (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; McCarville, 2008). Under a neoliberalism, community sport and recreation organizations have been downloaded the responsibility of ensuring citizens with low incomes have access to sport and recreation programs. However, these organizations have limited capacities and operate on a business service delivery model that challenges how fee assistance programs are facilitated. Through Cureton and Frisby's (2011) core values of neoliberalism, individualism, accountability, and efficiency, this study illustrates how responsabilization is evident in the facilitation of fee assistance programs and discusses the implications of creating access to sport and recreation for families with low incomes. Through data analysis, five themes were constructed and discussed: 1) don't advertise, don't share: applicants do all the work; 2) passive but efficient: processes of fee assistance programs; 3) "it's always the parent": communication of fee assistance programs; 4) families need to be accountable; and, 5) more support from fee assistance program administration is desired. This study demonstrates how responsabilization is evident in the facilitation of fee assistance programs in community sport and recreation organizations in New Brunswick.

Introduction

Neoliberalism started to emerge in the latter half of the twentieth century in Britain, the United States and other Western countries such as Australia and Canada in response to the prolonged criticisms of the welfare state coupled with the financial crisis of the 1980s (Blackshaw & Coetzee, 2020; Harvey, 2001; Rose et al., 2006). The rise of neoliberalism as a rationality of governmentality is an intellectual response to failing Keynesian economics and welfare state in favour of the “market-enabling and market-conforming” (Flew, 2014, p. 59) economic policies following the Second World War (Flew, 2014). Neoliberalism upholds the creation of markets, privatization of services, increased financialization, competition, and economizing (Brodie, 2007; Coakley, 2001; Flew, 2014) and has three core values: individualism, efficiency, and accountability (Cureton & Frisby, 2011). Essentially the market became central to all interactions that took place for individuals, as everything was “commodified, priced, and bought and sold in the marketplace” (Rose & Dustin, 2009, p. 398).

In the 1980s, Canada’s recreation and sport sector was largely affected by the underpinning political ideologies of neoliberalism (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Harvey, 2001; Tink et al., 2020), which resulted in many public recreation and sport programs and services being downloaded onto community volunteer organizations (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Ilcan & Basok, 2004). A consequence of this agenda is a business-oriented delivery system organizations had reduced access to government funding, resulting in the commercialization of sport (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Slack, 2004; Thibault et al., 2004). As a result, community sport and recreation organizations had to

fill a gap left by the government regarding programs and services and utilize a pay-per-use program design (Sharpe, 2006).

Programs and services under a neoliberal government agenda more often serve those who can afford to pay and decrease access to low or no-cost options for those who cannot afford to pay (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Thibault et al., 2004). Unfortunately, families with low incomes often lack the economic and social resources necessary to be responsible neoliberal citizens and thus, experience inequitable access to community-based sport and recreation activities (Oncescu & Neufeld, 2019; Shannon et al., 2016). Neoliberalism absolves the government's responsibility and emphasizes self-reliance and increased responsabilization (Ilcan, 2009), leaving individuals and families with low incomes with greater responsibility for accessing sport and recreation provisions. However, to ensure participation amongst individuals and families with low incomes, community sport and recreation organizations facilitate third-party fee assistance programs¹ to alleviate the financial barriers to participation. Although community sport and recreation non-profit organizations play an integral role in facilitating activities and programs that benefit individuals and communities in Canada (Misener & Doherty, 2013; Sharpe, 2006), the pressure of neoliberal governance and the resulting techniques of responsabilization have hindered these organizations' abilities to address access and inclusion (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008).

¹ Organizations such as Jumpstart, KidSport and P.R.O. Kids are non-profit charitable organizations in Canada that facilitate participation for low-income children by providing funding through community sport and recreation organizations.

Though studies have highlighted the benefits of fee assistance programs (see Clark et al., 2019; Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008, Tamminen et al., 2020), some have argued the facilitation of these programs are characterized as problematic, bureaucratic, cumbersome, and discouraging (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Taylor & Frisby, 2010; Trussell & Mair, 2010). These facilitation processes cultivate responsabilization, a set of techniques and methods used by the government to cultivate action on the part of individuals and community organizations (Woolford & Nelund, 2013); in this case, to be self-sufficient in recreation and sport programs. Most research on fee assistance programs has focused on the participants' experiences, and there is evidence of the exclusionary nature of fee assistance programs for low-income citizens (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Taylor & Frisby, 2010; Trussell & Mair, 2010).

In light of these issues, limited research has examined how fee assistance programs are processed and communicated between community sport and recreation organization administrators, low-income applicants, and fee assistance programs. Therefore, through the values of neoliberalism, this study aims to illustrate how responsabilization is evident in the facilitation of fee assistance programs in Canada that are targeted at low-income families and discusses the implications of creating access to sport and recreation.

Literature Review

Community Sport and Recreation Organizations

The Canadian sport and recreation systems are comprised of three levels, national, provincial/territorial and local community (Edwards & Leadbetter, 2016). This

study focuses on the local community level, as such, community sport and recreation organizations in this context are defined as volunteer-led, non-profit organizations that work at the community level to provide a wide variety of services for people to participate in sport and recreation activities (Misener & Doherty, 2009; Sharpe, 2006). These organizations “provide recreational and competitive sport opportunities for children and adults in the community, generating physical and mental health benefits, social capital benefits, and economic returns” (Misener & Doherty, 2013, p. 136). As community sport and recreation organizations are primarily reliant on volunteers, there is a large amount of pressure placed on individuals in the community to continually support the operation of these organizations (Sharpe, 2006). This pressure is coupled with the fact that community sport and recreation organizations are often limited in capacity due to “a lack of human resource capacity (volunteers with professional competencies) limits the ability of the organization to generate social capital (trust, reciprocity) from networks and connections among individuals” (Misener & Doherty, 2009, p. 461). Consequently, these non-profit, volunteer organizations have struggled to negotiate the pressures and demands due to neoliberal government agendas and funding structures (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008).

The financial cuts and pressures of the early 1980s in Canada prompted the shift for community sport and recreation organizations to operate under neoliberalism (Cureton & Frisby, 2011), where the responsibility of social programs was transferred from the government and public entities to community volunteer organizations (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Ilcan & Basok, 2004). Ware (1989) noted that there were many advantages for the state because of downloading the responsibility of service

provisions to community volunteer organizations, such as “lower labour costs; increase voluntary agencies’ flexibility in programme delivery since voluntary sector programmes can be easily cut back and policy priorities altered; and reduce direct client pressure under conditions when state programmes are eliminated or decreased” (p. 235). The processes of operating and maintaining provisions were placed on community volunteer organizations, coupled with the fact that government funding available for non-profit volunteer organizations is often short-term and oriented to ‘funding for outcomes’ (Aimers & Walker, 2015; Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Ilcan & Basok, 2004). These types of funding structures are “contracting the sector to achieve performance-linked social outcomes that align with government priorities” (Aimers & Walker, 2015, p. 342). As a result, a competitive nature between organizations flourishes because of the funding structures, which diminish opportunities for collaboration (Aimers & Walker, 2015; Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Rosol, 2012).

Consequently, many community sport and recreation organizations rely on membership and user fees to support the operation of their organization financially (Jones et al., 2018). Cross-sector partnerships have also become an integral part of community sport and recreation organizations (Jones et al., 2018; Misener & Doherty, 2013; Misener & Misener, 2017). As a result of a neoliberal agenda, organizations are no longer solely reliant on government funding, “the process of creating and implementing policies has become diffused across a web of partnerships involving government, businesses, public interest groups, and non-profit organizations” (Jones et al., 2018, p. 134). For example, due to limited government support and funding for programs and services, many community recreation and grassroots sport organizations

frequently rely on, and partner with, fee assistance programs to facilitate low-income citizens' participation (Sharpe, 2006).

Fee Assistance Programs

Access programs, such as fee assistance programs, are an administrative response to poverty, as they ease the costs associated with participating in sport and recreation programs (McCarville, 2008). Below is a summary of the documented benefits and the challenges of fee assistance programs.

Benefits of fee assistance programs

Having a low income can complicate recreation and sport participation for families and individuals; however, fee assistance programs have been able to create opportunities for low-income citizens to participate in recreation and sport activities (McCarville, 2008, Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2019; Tamminen et al., 2020). Many benefits are associated with fee assistance programs, such as access to sport programming and involvement within the larger community (Tamminen et al., 2020). Clark et al. (2019) highlighted that structured sport and recreation participation facilitated through fee assistance programs positively contributes to a child's social well-being and development. Fee assistance programs provide opportunities for low-income families to participate in activities they otherwise would not have access to due to financial limitations. As a result, children can experience feelings of inclusion, belonging, and self-confidence (Clark et al., 2019).

Fee assistance programs can help cultivate many personal benefits from sport and recreation participation, such as emotional control, confidence, self-discipline,

overall health and quality of life, leadership, motivation, and academic achievement (Donnelly et al., 2002; Holt et al., 2011; Tamminen et al., 2020). Individuals can also obtain the social benefits of sport and recreation participation through fee assistance programs, including building relationships, connectedness, teamwork, and social skills (Holt et al., 2011; Tamminen et al., 2020). Lastly, fee assistance programs facilitate participation and access to sport and recreation for low-income citizens, which can help to buffer “the cyclical and intergenerational dimension of poverty” (Tamminen et al., 2020, p. 15).

Challenges of fee assistance programs

Many different factors make fee assistance programs inaccessible to the population for which they are designed (McCarville, 2008). The exclusionary nature of fee assistance programs forms through a multitude of systemic barriers, including infrastructural, interpersonal, and procedural barriers and discrimination based on gender, race, and socioeconomic status (McCarville, 2008). There is a common belief that once a low-income participant is enrolled in the activity, all the barriers to participation are eliminated (Kingsley et al., 2017). Fee assistance programs often limit the number of activities and the types of programs that participants are allowed to enroll. Fee assistance programs only subsidize a certain amount of money or select programs, resulting in inequitable access to sport and recreation programming (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020). Once the participant is enrolled in an activity, there are often additional costs associated with sport and recreation programs, such as equipment costs, tournament fees, and transportation. If parents cannot provide

the additional fees not covered through the fee assistance program, the child's participation in the activity could end (Holt et al., 2011; Tamminen et al., 2020).

Many low-income citizens are not aware of programs and services designed to help facilitate participation. More communication between administrators and participants would enhance awareness of different opportunities (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020). The bureaucratic process of fee assistance programs can be overwhelming, and low-income citizens seeking assistance are inundated with a myriad of information to decipher (McCarville, 2008). Low-income individuals have reported that there is often a lack of information or that they lack confidence, which can lead to confusion in the processes and procedures as well as how to get the most out of the fee assistance programs (McCarville, 2008, Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020, Taylor & Frisby, 2010). Confusion and lack of information between administrators, front line staff, and individuals living in poverty may be due to communication breakdown.

The application process for fee assistance programs is often lengthy, daunting, and invasive as it requires individuals to prove their poverty through government-approved documents (Berk & Moon McGivern, 2016; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Reid, 2004). There are times when families do not want to disclose their socioeconomic status, resulting in a lack of participation in sport and recreation due to fee assistance program ineligibility (Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Trussell & Mair, 2010). The current structure of many fee assistance programs across North America is detrimental to low-income families as they leave with feelings of shame, helplessness, and subject to judgement and exposure,

which can deter them from applying in the first place (McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Reid 2004; Trussell & Mair, 2010).

Additionally, registration is often facilitated over the internet; however, individuals living in poverty are the least likely to access the internet (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; McCarville, 2008; Taylor & Frisby, 2010). Therefore, the people who would benefit the most from sport and recreation programming have to work the hardest to access it. As such the primary research question guiding this study was how is responsabilization evident in facilitating fee assistance programs amongst community sport and recreation organizations?

Conceptual Framework

Responsibilization is a technique of neoliberal governance, which is often present through a specific type of thought, policies, and strategies for individuals to assume and complete self-governing tasks to become self-reliant (Birk, 2018; Shamir, 2008). Responsibilization was sparked by the introduction of privatization of public entities and the transfer of responsibility back onto individuals (Ilcan, 2009). Schram (2018) describes the goal of responsabilization as to “subordinate populations to handle their own problems as best they can on their own, with the aim that they become less of a burden for the constrained state” (p. 313). Responsibilization assumes a certain level of moral agency of citizens to navigate their problems independent of the state, not to be an economic burden (Schram, 2018; Shamir, 2008). Consequently, citizens assume the “tendencies of economic-rational actors: autonomous, self-determined and self-sustaining subjects” (Shamir, 2008, p. 7). Clarke (2005) explained that in a neoliberal

society, citizens “are not just ‘responsible,’ they are the product of processes of ‘responsibilization’” (p. 451).

The transfer of responsibility from the state to the individual is synonymous with neoliberalism (Ilcan, 2009). Neoliberal governance upholds economic growth through the creation of a market, competition, privatization of services, and economizing, which can be characterized by the three core values: individualism, efficiency, and accountability (Brodie, 2007; Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Thibault et al., 2004). These core values are directly connected to responsibilization as a technique of governance (Shamir, 2008; Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Ilcan, 2009) and are further described below.

Individualism is a central value to neoliberalism and responsibilization, emphasizing an onus on the individual to take responsibility to sustain their health, happiness, and overall wellbeing, including self-awareness, contemplation, and engaging in transformative practices (Coakley, 2011; Cureton & Frisby, 2011). Shamir (2008) states that “responsibilization operates at the level of individuals actors” (p. 8). Similarly, under the neoliberal agenda, individuals are to take an active role in their self-management and discipline (Ilcan, 2009). Woolford and Nelund (2013) portray neoliberal citizens as “active in the formal economy” (p. 305), “prudent” (p. 306), “responsible” (p. 307), and “autonomous” (p. 309) and “entrepreneurial” (p. 309). The components of a neoliberal and responsibilized citizen create an independent and reasonable market actor who contributes to a self-reliant and responsible society through their rational choices (Birk, 2018; Clarke, 2005; Soss et al., 2009). The idolization of the individual in a neoliberal society results in a lack of acknowledgement of the external factors that influence the lived experience of an individual, such as environmental,

social, and economic standing (Woolford & Nelund, 2013); thus, those living in poverty become perceived as a failure in society and are subject to a ‘blame the victim’ attitude (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Harvey, 2001). The way individuals are perceived in a neoliberal society influences their treatment. For example, low-income citizens are often faced with negative encounters with policy and programs in recreation and sport (Allison & Hibbler, 2004). The importance placed on individualism under a neoliberal agenda, in turn, perpetuates the poor treatment, stereotypes, and stigma of marginalized individuals without acknowledgment of the systems and infrastructure that created the exclusionary environment in the first place (Tink et al., 2020).

Efficiency under neoliberalism is understood as organizations doing more with less (Daft & Armstrong, 2009). In community sport and recreation organizations, this resulted in a business model delivery system that allowed organizations to cut costs and generate revenue by embracing “the entrepreneurial and managerial sensibilities of the neoliberal business” (Woolford & Curran, 2011, p. 583). In many cases, the for-profit business model is still the dominant operating standard in sport and recreation today (Thibault et al., 2004). Daft and Armstrong (2009) highlight that when organizations are functioning through neoliberal operating systems, such as the business model, the idea of ‘doing more with less’ becomes paramount to success. In addition, to be eligible for external funding opportunities, community sport and recreation organizations often must create services that are “efficient, flexible, cost-effective and deliver measurable outcomes” (Woolford & Curran, 2011, p. 584). With revenue generation a priority under neoliberalism, recreation and sport organizations catered to upper- and middle-class citizens' needs because they can afford to pay for programming, as they are seen as

responsible and autonomous neoliberal citizens (Woolford & Nelund, 2013).

Consequently, low-income citizens are excluded due to the competitive pricing and not being perceived as responsible (Smale & Reid, 2002; Tamminen et al., 2020). As such, fee assistance programs can be seen as an administrative response to enable access for low-income families (McCarville, 2008). However, fee assistance programs place the responsibility on the individual to conform to the dominant society through rules and restrictions which determine and regulate the sport and recreation activities and wants of families with low-income, to foster responsible and self-governing citizens (Oncescu, 2021; Oncescu & Fortune, 2022). The environment created through efficiency practices inhibits easy participation for low-income citizens, who arguably would benefit the most from the programs and services (Taylor & Frisby, 2010).

The last core value associated with neoliberalism is accountability, which can be defined as a “relationship of formal control between parties, one of whom is mandatorily held to account to the other for the exercise of roles and stewardship of public resources” (Ranson, 2003, p. 460). Increased accountability measures often are displayed by tracking successes and failures to provide evidence of the relevance, ensure service quality, and promote competition across for-profit and not-for-profit community organizations (Carman, 2010; Ilcan, 2009). Ilcan (2009) highlights that language such as ‘benchmarking’ can be used as a technique of neoliberal agendas to establish “standards of accountability in competitive environments” (p. 217). The accountability movement intended to ensure uniformity and maintain the status quo across organizations. However, the realization of this goal was inhibited by a lack of consistency in accountability measures across organizations (Carman, 2010). Ultimately, discrepancies

in accountability measures, such as differing designs, requirements, and implementation strategies, are not consistent across organizations and sectors making them hard to compare (Taylor & Frisby, 2010).

Responsibilization is present when encountering fee assistance program accountability measures for access to sport and recreation, as low-income families are responsible for performing self-governing tasks such as seeking information, proving their low-income and taking the onus to apply for fee assistance programs (Oncescu & Fortune, 2022; Shamir, 2008). Accountability measures are present in the facilitation of fee assistance programs through pre-set eligibility standards, which require low-income families to prove their level of income through government approved documents (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; McCarville, 2008). Those who are not able to fulfill accountability measures are seen as unable to embody the duties of a responsible neoliberal citizen and therefore denied access to sport and recreation participation (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Oncescu & Fortune, 2022).

Overall, sport participation for low-income individuals is complex. Fee assistance programs align with the values of neoliberalism as they focus on the financial barriers associated with participation while evading other inhibitors to participation (Oncescu et al., 2021; Taylor & Frisby, 2010). Fee assistance programs put the onus on the individual to conform to societal standards, such as creating a healthy lifestyle and being self-reliant within leisure, which is not always possible for low-income families as they lack the necessary resources. To achieve the neoliberal ideal, these expectations are reinforced through the current operationalization of fee assistance programs (Oncescu et al., 2021). The fee assistance process is further complicated because of the presence of

the values of neoliberalism, which can result in responsabilization techniques that influence low-income families' abilities to navigate a system that was not created to meet their needs. For example, in a study conducted by Oncescu and Fortune (2022), it was found that the values of neoliberalism and responsabilization were present in municipal recreation access provisions. While neoliberalism ideologies continue to influence sport and recreation provisions, the experience of community sport and recreation organization administrators facilitating fee assistance programs is still largely unknown despite being a key facilitator in the process. Through the values of neoliberalism, this study focused on answering the following research question: how is responsabilization evident in facilitating fee assistance programs amongst community sport and recreation organizations?

Methods

Interpretive description was used to guide this study. Hunt (2009) identified that interpretive description is “aligned with a constructivist and naturalistic orientation to inquiry” (p. 1284). A critical analysis of previous knowledge of the subject, both experiential and theoretical, creates the foundation for the analytic framework in which the study is situated (Thorne et al., 1997). In interpretive description, an analytic framework “represents an appropriate platform on which to build a qualitative design” (Thorne et al., 1997, p. 173). Further, interpretive description emphasizes the lived experience that emerges from the data, specifically overarching themes, relationships, and patterns, which further demonstrates the applied nature of the methodology (Thorne et al., 1997; Thorne et al., 2004). Interpretive description is often used in practical or

applied research settings, such as community sport and recreation organizations, and is therefore appropriate to use for this study. Further, a focus on overarching themes, patterns, and relationships within the individual and subjective experience of administrators will produce an interpretive description that will allow an understanding of their experiences when facilitating fee assistance programs in their organizations.

Study Context

Fee assistance programs such as Jumpstart, KidSport and P.R.O. Kids distribute funds bi-annually to support low-income children and youth participation in sport and recreation. The funds received can only be used to pay for registration. To obtain these funds, applicants must prove their low-income status through government-approved documents (McCarville, 2008). Individuals with low income then apply for the fee assistance program through an online format or a paper copy which is then scanned into the fee assistance program organization. Once the application is submitted, the fee assistance program organization will confirm or deny funding. The funding from the fee assistance program is then sent directly to the organization.

Participant Recruitment

Volunteers and administrative staff from community sport and recreation organizations in New Brunswick who facilitated fee assistance programs for their organizations were selected through purposeful sampling. To identify participants, third-party funding agencies, such as KidSport, P.R.O. Kids and Jumpstart, which have fee assistance programs in New Brunswick, were contacted to identify community sport organizations that have received funding in the past two years to support children and

youth from low-income households. Only KidSport and P.R.O. Kids provided access to community sport organizations in New Brunswick that had previously received funding. This purposeful sampling technique ensured that participants had the experience of facilitating fee assistance programs in their organizations. Across New Brunswick, 60 organizations were identified and contacted via email and/or over the phone, resulting in 12 responses and 11 semi-structured interviews as two of the participants were from the same organization and participated in a group interview. See Table 1 for participation information.

Table 1

Study Participants

Pseudonym	Position	Type of community sport and recreation organization	Years with the Organization	Number of Participants in Organization
Nicole	Manager of Youth Programs	Community Non-Profit Recreation Centre	2.5 years	750 (youth programming)
Vanessa	Member Services Coordinator	Non-Profit Recreation Organization	6 years	<35,000 nationally
Cheryl	Customer Care Centre Representative		3 years	
Barb	Executive Director and Head Coach	Skating Club	20 years	135
Taylor	Executive Director	Fast Pitch	4 years	150
William	General Manager	Hockey	6 years	1000
Kevin	Executive Director	Soccer	6 years	1500
Mark	Coach	Fencing	4 years	40

Ellen	Co-Owner, Vice President, CFO	Cheerleading	7 years	400
Sarah	Head Coach	Artistic Swimming	10 years	30
Shawn	President	Baseball	>1 year	600
Rachel	Treasurer	Hockey	2 years	400

Data Collection

Participants selected from the recruitment process scheduled a semi-structured interview conducted through the online platforms of Microsoft Teams and Zoom or via the phone. All participants completed a university ethics board-approved consent form prior to the interview. One interview was a group interview, as two of the participants were representing the same organization, while the other 10 interviews were one on one. Sample questions from the interviews included: (1) How are fee assistance programs facilitated within your organization? (2) Can you describe the communication between your organization, the applicant, and the funding provider (KidSport, Jumpstart, P.R.O. Kids)? (3) How does your organization promote fee assistance programs in the community/membership/programs? The transcription service Otter.ai was used to transcribe verbatim all interview files. Following transcription, all files were reviewed to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. The identifying information of participants was removed to preserve the privacy and anonymity of all participants in the study.

Going back to the participant and obtaining feedback is important for “transforming the data into findings” (Thorne, 2008, p. 159). However, Thorne et al. (1997) have found that providing participants with verbatim transcripts often takes away

from the overall findings and creates controversy within the data as the focus is on the intricacies of the data rather than the overall themes and patterns. As a result, verbatim transcripts are often not shared but rather a synthesis of all interviews. Participants in this study received a synthesis of all interview data, including overall initial interpretations, insights, and observations, allowing them “an opportunity to have them reflect on the experience to which it does or does not ring true to their experience” (Thorne, 2008, p. 159). Participants were encouraged to reach out to provide feedback and discuss feedback on the synthesis (Thorne, 2008). No participants responded.

Data Analysis

Interpretive description borrows techniques from other methods such as phenomenology, grounded theory, and narrative analysis and utilizes different creative coding techniques as it lacks formal data collection and analysis processes (Thorne, 2008). To become familiar with the data and the initial perceptions and understandings of each interview, the first step of analysis involved immersing myself in the data and reflective notes (Thorne, 1997). Following data immersion, the data were coded. Guidance from other methodologies is recommended by Thorne (2008) during the initial coding process, as it allows for the data to be effectively organized and managed. With guidance from Chun Tie et al.’s (2019) grounded theory coding technique, authors engaged in the coding process to make sense of the data to create large groups and broad connections (Thorne, 2008). First, open coding was used to inductively create as many codes as possible from the data. In this study, examples of open coding include ‘communication is done through the applicants,’ ‘limited communication with fee

assistance administration,' and 'inconsistent communication.' Following open coding, axial coding was applied to the data. This process included "reviewing categories and identifying which ones can be subsumed beneath other categories occurs and the properties or dimension of the developed categories are refined" (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 5). An example of axial coding was the effective communication processes of fee assistance programs. After axial coding, themes were constructed through the clustering of codes guided by the theoretical framework of neoliberalism and responsabilization, processes informed by the processes of grounded theory. For example, the axial code of effective communication processes of fee assistance programs is part of the larger theme of communication of fee assistance programs. Peer debriefing was performed between myself and my supervisor throughout the coding process. Finally, as it is common in interpretive description research, a thematic description is used to present the findings (Thorne, 2008).

Findings

Through data analysis, five themes were developed to highlight how responsabilization is evident in the facilitation of fee assistance programs by community sport organizations for low-income families: 1) Applicants do all the work; 2) Processes of fee assistance programs; 3) Communication of fee assistance programs; 4) Families need to be accountable; and, 5) More support from fee assistance programs administration is desired.

Applicants do all the work

A responsabilization technique present in this study was that community sport and recreation organizations do not advertise or promote the fee assistance programs. The current fee assistance process requires the applicant to locate the application material online, download the application, fill it out, and submit it online or through the mail; this process requires the applicant to be aware of the fee assistance programs. However, it became evident through the interviews that community sport and recreation organizations do not advertise or promote the fee assistance programs, putting the responsibility on the applicant to locate the fee assistance programs and required materials. When asked about how community sport and recreation organizations advertise fee assistance programs in their organizations, Taylor, the executive director of a fastpitch association, explained, “I’m not like actively like promoting or advertising it [fee assistance programs]...we don’t really, like put it out there.”

Further, community sport and recreation organizations also rely on the applicant to ask for financial help. Kevin, the executive director of a soccer club, stated that he is “relying on people identifying themselves” when it comes to needing financial support; this was echoed by Barb, the executive director of a skating club, “it has to be the family [that] reaches out.”

While the participants felt it was the applicants’ responsibility to identify themselves when needing financial support, some administrators felt the applicants needed to take the lead on the fee assistance program process. Taylor stated that the fee assistance program process “...falls on the parents”. While Sarah, the head coach of an artistic swimming club, explained that in their organization, “they’re [parents] the ones that kind of like have to take the lead on it kind of thing.”

Processes of fee assistance programs

Responsibilization was also evident in this study when community sport and recreation administrators found the online application process for fee assistance programs simple and efficient for their organizations. William shared, “the online application process is fairly simple. It's not complicated. They're [fee assistance programs] not asking for a whole lot of special documentation or anything.” William also explained that the shift to an online application form is “convenient” and “simple” for their organization, as “prior to that [online forms], you know, I would set up appointments for people to come in.” Other participants shared this experience with the current process of fee assistance programs in the study; Ellen, who is the co-owner of a for-profit cheerleading club, explained, “I like that format ...everything seems to work well, they're [fee assistance program application] very well structured.” Similarly, Kevin spoke about the efficiency of the fee assistance process for their organization, “the application process is pretty slick and smooth...all the funds come directly to the organization, and we processed all of that stuff for them [the parent].” Kevin expressed the efficiency of fee assistance programs in their organization, speaking to how it eases the burden for the applicant.

Communication of fee assistance programs

The communication process involved in fee assistance programs continually demonstrated the technique of responsibilization. Part of the fee assistance program process is communicating the results of the funding application to the applicant. In this study, the administrators described inconsistent communication between the applicant,

the fee assistance programs, and the community sport and recreation organization.

William explained that “the applicant is receiving a confirmation email from Jumpstart [or] KidSport, telling them that they’ve received funding support. Sometimes I’ll get a copy of that email, sometimes I won’t.” For William’s organization, he must rely on the applicant to reach out with their funding details, meaning they must confirm they received funding from the fee assistance program with the sport and recreation organization. However, all the communication regarding fee assistance programs was done through the parents in other community sport and recreation organizations. Rachel, the treasurer of an ice hockey club, stated, “I don't even have a lot of direct correspondence with Jumpstart directly or KidSport, right. We just kind of go through the parents.” In Rachel’s case, it meant the “[parent] usually just forward an email to me showing that they're approved and stuff. And then I wait to get the cheque [from the fee assistance program].” Similarly, Taylor stated, “I've never been in contact with Jumpstart themselves. It's always the parent [who] [communicates] directly.” Interestingly, some community sport and recreation organizations only hear from the fee assistance program and not the parent. Shawn, the president of a baseball club, explained, “the only thing we ever get as a communication is an email from the fee assistance program that [the applicant has] confirmed [funding].”

Despite the inconsistencies, the communication process between the community sport and recreation organizations, fee assistance programs administration, and applicants applying for the fee assistance programs was described as a good process and seen as efficient by participants in this study. Vanessa, the member services coordinator for a non-profit recreation organization, shared that their community sport and recreation

organization does not communicate with the fee assistance programs and that all the communication is through the applicant, and found it "...a pretty good process, I think."

For many participants in this study, emails were an efficient way to communicate about fee assistance programs with participants and the fee assistance program administration. For example, when Shawn reflected on the use of email as the main method of communication between the fee assistance program and the applicant, he stated, "unfortunately, there's not much effort, either way [with the fee assistance program or parents]. Yeah, definitely. It's a very it's a very passive relationship." In his experience, the communication that took place between the community sport and recreation organization, fee assistance program and parents was very one-sided "there's no real dialogue that happens; it's just, we know [who] gets confirmed in the [fee assistance] program or not." Regardless of the one-sided nature of the communication process between fee assistance programs and community sport and recreation organizations, Shawn shared, "I don't know if it works for the kids and families, but [the process] certainly works for us."

Families need to be accountable

Another technique of responsabilization found in the study was when low-income families were required to pay upfront for registration costs. Two participants in this study felt that those applying to fee assistance programs need to be held accountable for their decision to seek sport and recreation opportunities for their families. For example, in Rachel's organization, payment is needed before the child can play the sport regardless of whether they are using a fee assistance program or not. Therefore, the

responsibility of paying for registration is transferred to the parent if the fee assistance program does not pay the community sport and recreation organization before the fee deadline. The organization would then pay back the individual once the fee assistance program payment has come through. Regardless of how payments came through, Rachel stated,

You [fee assistance applicant] have to take ownership of the fact that you registered your kid for [sport] and committed to a payment. And you need to make a payment because you're taking a spot from [others], we have a waitlist, you're taking the spot from somebody else who's willing to pay.

In this situation, all the responsibility is placed on the individual to facilitate the financial requirements for enrollment, even though they have identified needing assistance by applying to the fee assistance program. Rachel continued by saying, "I just feel families need to be accountable."

In addition to paying upfront, Ellen felt that low-income individuals applying for fee assistance programs need to be held accountable and be responsible for the fee assistance program process, including locating the fee assistance program and doing some additional fundraising to support their child's participation in the sport. She explained, "you know, [if low-income families] haven't looked at the opportunity of doing any Jumpstart, or P.R.O. Kids and they haven't looked at the opportunity of doing any fundraising, you kind of have to say, maybe this isn't the path [sport or recreation] for you."

More support from fee assistance program administration is desired

Responsibilization was also evident between the fee assistance program and the community sport and recreation organization. Participants felt the fee assistance program downloaded a lot of responsibility onto the community sport and recreation organization. In this study, the relationship between fee assistance program administration and community sport and recreation organizations were mostly limited to email confirmations of funded applicants and organizations receiving cheques from the fee assistance program. In some cases, participants spoke to wanting further communication, but only in circumstances where clarification from the fee assistance program was needed.

While much of the responsibility of the fee assistance program process is placed on the applicant, participants identified that fee assistance programs also downloaded responsibility onto the community sport and recreation organizations with minimal support. Kevin reflected, “they [fee assistance programs] do definitely rely on the organizations which I guess, are the kind of the front lines for the most part.” He further stated:

I wish we had more resources available to advertise...let's collaborate with all organizations and say, hey, listen, these [fee assistance programs] are here for everybody, and not just this particular sport or that particular activity. They're available for multiple different things.

For Kevin, there was a desire for community sport and recreation organizations and fee assistance programs to engage in collaborative action to share information around fee assistance programs and ease the burden put on applicants with low incomes. Many administrators felt a disconnect and lack of support from fee assistance program

administrators, which inhibited their organizations' ability to promote fee assistance programs. For example, Ellen expressed frustration that she had never received formal information from fee assistance programs that could be promoted within her community sport and recreation organization, “I didn't really have anything that has written material that says, hey, here's some written material. Do you mind sharing this? ... when I'm communicating with them [fee assistance programs], they never asked.”

Kevin expressed the need for collaboration and further support, stating that KidSport and Jumpstart should be “reaching out to their partner organizations [community sport and recreation organizations] and saying, how can we help, you know, direct things? Or how can we be better at making these things [fee assistance programs] known?” There is a desire by community sport and recreation organizations to promote fee assistance programs within their organization; however, collaboration and communication are required. Collaboration and communication were made difficult as administrators identified that the administration of the fee assistance program was often hard to reach. Barb stated, “you could call [the fee assistance programs] office, and they just don't answer the phone... they need to try and ramp up getting the information out to the public.” Further, Shawn shared that he did not know much about the fee assistance process and has never received any support from local fee assistance programs entities, but desired further collaboration “it would be beneficial to work with those programs...I don't even have a contact information really, ... I don't even know the people [fee assistance programs administrators] in our region.”

Discussion

Through the core values of neoliberalism, I discuss how responsabilization is evident in the ways sport and recreation organizations facilitate fee assistance programs. I specifically examine individualism, accountability, and efficiency and discuss how the values of neoliberalism influenced the responsabilization of families with low income and community sport and recreation organizations in facilitating fee assistance programs.

Applicants do all the work

Individualism is a core value of neoliberalism that puts the onus on the individual to take responsibility for sustaining their health, happiness, and overall wellbeing (Coakley, 2011; Cureton & Frisby, 2011). In this study, participants reported that the promotion of fee assistance programs was not a priority for their organization, leaving low-income individuals responsible for locating fee assistance program details and the required materials for a successful application. In previous research, Holt et al. (2011) identified that parents seeking out fee assistance desired increased awareness of fee assistance options available to them as it would increase access to funding and sport and recreation opportunities. When community sport and recreation organizations do not actively promote fee assistance programs, the onus is placed on the individual to seek out information or self-identify that assistance is needed for sport and recreation participation. This lack of promotion is problematic as sport organizations and systems can be intimidating for low-income families, considering that these mechanisms of neoliberalism cater to middle-upper class citizens as they possess more capital (i.e., social, financial, and human) to become responsible citizens (Schram, 2018). Low-

income parents often do not have the same capital, time, resources, or knowledge to navigate these privileged systems, creating barriers to identifying and collecting the necessary information from fee assistance programs (Oncescu, 2021). Accessing sport and recreation settings is intimidating; it hinders citizens with low incomes from seeking sport and recreation experiences. However, if fee assistance programs were promoted beyond the organization, it could signal to families that there is support for sport and recreation, which could prompt them to inquire.

Processes of fee assistance programs

Another core value of neoliberalism present in the findings of this study was efficiency, which can be described as doing more with less (Cureton and Frisby, 2011; Daft & Armstrong, 2009). The findings demonstrated that research participants felt the online application process for fee assistance programs was simple and efficient., even though they did not experience the process as applicants. Though I recognize that efficient practices help community sport and recreation organizations operate with limited capacity (Sharpe, 2006), it does so at the expense of excluding low-income families. Previous literature has demonstrated that the fee assistance application process for low-income individuals is often overwhelming and invasive as it requires individuals to prove their poverty through government documents (see Berk & Moon McGivern, 2016; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Reid, 2004). Furthermore, low-income individuals do not have the same access to resources and support that other groups have to aid their participation in sport and recreation (Oncescu & Loewen, 2020) and are the least likely to have readily available access to

the Internet and various types of technology (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; McCarville, 2008; Taylor & Frisby, 2010). When applying for fee assistance programs, low-income individuals need access to the Internet and a computer to fill out the application and access to a printer and scanner to upload proof of poverty documents. While these processes are seen as simple and efficient for community sport and recreation administrators, the experience and impact on low-income individuals applying for such assistance are not understood or are disregarded. For community sport and recreation organizations and fee assistance administration, efficient practices responsabilize low-income individuals to operate in a system that was not developed to meet their needs. Rather, it is a system that operates in alignment with the values of neoliberalism. Ultimately, online applications create efficiencies that help community sport and recreation organizations operate with fewer resources, but they do so at the risk of excluding low-income families from participation.

Communication of fee assistance programs

The responsibility for communicating funding results was centred on the applicant in this study. Individualism is a core value of neoliberalism that expects individuals to take an active role in their self-management and discipline (Ilcan, 2009). In this study, the communication between the community sport and recreation organization, fee assistance program, and the low-income applicant was inconsistent and largely placed the responsibility for communicating the status of their fee assistance application on the applicant. Despite these inconsistencies, the communication throughout the fee assistance process was still seen as efficient for research participants

as it was not time-consuming. In part, demonstrating a hands-off approach that transferred the responsibility of communication to the applicant.

Communication is essential to create access to recreation and sport for low-income individuals. Research has reported that a lack of communication between administrators and low-income individuals can lead to confusion and a lack of information regarding the process of fee assistance programs (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Tamminen et al., 2020). Downloading the responsibility for the communication to the applicant creates more efficiencies for the sport and recreation organizations and the funding organizations as they can maintain a hands-off approach with limited investment. Ultimately, individualism and efficiency are valued over the documented needs of low-income individuals regarding communication to combat confusion and information on how to get the most out of fee assistance programs. It is important to highlight community sport and recreation organizations are placing the responsibility for communication on low-income individuals, as they often do not have the capacity to address such issues (Misener & Doherty, 2009). Further, when funding programs targeted at low-income families have a “hands-off” service approach, the experiences and feelings of exclusion could be compounded.

Families need to be accountable

Common accountability strategies that responsabilize citizens include making them responsible for accessing recreation: seeking information, applying for access provisions, and proving their poverty (Oncescu & Fortune, 2022). In this study,

accountability was evident when organizations required upfront payments for participation in the sport if the fee assistance was not available by the due date. Consequently, the responsibility was then placed on the low-income individual to figure out how to fund the registration costs. These bureaucratic processes can delay the participation of low-income families and spark distrust with administrative entities (McCarville, 2008). Two research participants also discussed how low-income families need to take accountability and ownership that they signed up to participate in recreation and sport activities and should be prepared to fundraise and seek out fee assistance if they want their child to play; if not, suggesting sport is not the right path for them. It was even mentioned that low-income individuals on fee assistance take up the spots from ready and willing individuals to pay. In part, this perspective of accountability suggests that low-income families are only worthy of sport and recreation if they are “responsible” and “accountable” enough to afford the activity financially.

When organizations responsabilize low-income families in this manner, the social and community exclusion and stigma associated with low-income families are reinforced (Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020). The literature has reported that low-income citizens have felt unwelcomed, stigmatized, and marginalized by sport and recreation staff, presenting significant barriers to participation (McCarville, 2008; Trussell & Mair, 2010). When leaders of sport and recreation organizations are unaware of, and do not account for, the experiences and situations of low-income families that prevent their capacity to pay for the activity, they perpetuate responsabilization and reduce the families’ capacity to fund the costs of the sport. Thus,

reinforcing stigmas, sparking distrust, and ultimately negatively affecting the likelihood and probability of recreation and sport participation in the future.

More support from fee assistance program administration is desired

In this study, sport and recreation organization administrators were also responsabilized through the facilitation of fee assistance programs. Specifically, participants identified how fee assistance programs downloaded the responsibility of promotion and information sharing onto them but did not provide adequate program information, nor did they engage inadequate communication to support these processes. As such, the responsibility of program promotion and knowledge sharing is placed on community sport and recreation organizations to take accountability and find out information for low-income families. If not, as previously demonstrated and discussed above, the responsibility lands on the low-income individual applying for fee assistance. Ilcan and Basok (2004) identified that volunteer organizations, such as community sport and recreation organizations, are often left with “the responsibility to educate the broader public” (p. 135), which is evident in the findings. However, the administrators of these organizations have not received the appropriate information and resources to fulfill this task.

It is important to highlight the desire for collaboration between community sport and recreation organizations and fee assistance programs that emerged in this study. According to Jones et al. (2018), it was found that while community sport and recreation organizations were widely connected in a network of organizations, often minimal collaboration occurred. Jones et al. (2018) noted that most partnerships for community

sport and recreation organizations were unrequited and related to financial entities, which is reflected in the findings of this study. Collaboration can enhance access to resources and “minimize individualistic behaviour by facilitating shared interests in common resources” (Jones et al., 2018, p. 151). Collaboration across partnered organizations such as fee assistance programs and community sport and recreation organizations can address communication breakdowns and increase information and resources across organizations. In turn, capacity could be enhanced, which would assist community organizations and their administration in the promotion and information sharing regarding fee assistance programs, but it would also alleviate low-income individuals of some responsibility placed on them because of the current fee assistance process.

Conclusion

According to Schram (2018), programs and services can perpetuate responsabilization when the administration and programmatic systems rationalize them to be less dependent on government services and resources. Similarly, in this study, it was found that how sport and recreation organizations facilitate fee assistance programs largely reinforces the responsabilization of low-income families by remaining relatively hands-off throughout the process, forcing applicants to be independent and less dependent on the organization. Some participants held attitudes that sport and recreation were not an appropriate “path” if applicants could not take responsibility to fund the activity, with or without fee assistance. The responsabilization evident in the fee assistance program process resulted in cultivating efficiencies within sport and

recreation organizations. Regarding communication and promotion of fee assistance programs, program administrators have placed responsibility onto for-profit and not-for-profit sport and recreation organizations that are already strained for resources. As a result, the responsibility is further placed on low-income individuals. In part, the facilitation of fee assistance programs acts as a tool of responsabilization that reinforces the values of neoliberalism. Consequently, the message to low-income citizens is that they are only worthy of sport and recreation if they are responsible and resourceful enough to navigate a system that was never designed to support their participation.

Community sport and recreation organizations have been operating under the influence of the values of neoliberalism and responsabilization since the 1980s in Western countries (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Ilcan & Basok, 2004). The consequence is a business-oriented operating system with a narrative that providing fee assistance is enough to support the participation of low-income families; this operating system also affects their capacity to operate at the community level (Misener & Doherty, 2009). Despite the limited capacity, fee assistance programs are still the main mechanism for access for low-income families. Greater responsibility and coordination between community sport and recreation organizations and fee assistance programs are required to alleviate the responsabilization of low-income individuals.

The challenge, however, is that sport and recreation have created access provisions that are centred around the values of neoliberalism and individual responsibility. Improving access to sport and recreation and developing more inclusive experiences for low-income families is a complex issue and will require resisting neoliberal ideals. For example, investing more resources into sport and recreation to

build capacity and create more supportive provisions that nurture the development of relationships between low-income citizens and sport and recreation providers (Oncescu, 2021). Fee assistance programs could also assist the facilitation of the programs by providing administrators of community sport and recreation organizations with marketing materials, hosting workshops on how to complete the application process and offering support to individual organizations to further assist the participation in sport and recreation for low-income individuals.

This study comes with limitations. First, this study and its findings are only representative of the experiences of community sport and recreation administrators in New Brunswick, Canada. Second, sport-specific policies and mandates can influence the operation and process of fee assistance programs in organizations, however, they were not considered in this study. However, this could be a consideration and opportunity for future studies examining the experience of community sport organization administrators when facilitating fee assistance programs. The literature has documented the experience of fee assistance programs from the perspective of low-income families (parents and children) (see Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Taylor & Frisby, 2010; Trussell & Mair, 2010). This study has contributed to the literature by demonstrating how responsabilization is evident in the facilitation of fee assistance programs in community sport and recreation organizations in New Brunswick, Canada. However, the perspective of fee assistance program administrators has not been documented in the literature. Therefore, there is an opportunity for future research to gain the perspectives of fee assistance program administrators and their experience with facilitating and distributing fee assistance programs.

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Chapter 3

Community Sport and Recreation Organizations' Inclusion of Families with Low- Income in Sport and Recreation in New Brunswick.

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Abstract

Fee assistance programs (FAPs) are popular among community sport and recreation organizations (CSROs) as a mechanism to address the financial barriers families with low-income face. However, there is less known about the other ways CSROs address the inclusion of low-income families. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how CSROs support the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation. Ponc and Frisby's (2010) organizational dimension of inclusion was used as a conceptual framework. Through the data analysis, three main themes were constructed to highlight how CSROs' facilitated inclusion to support sport and recreation participation for families with low-income: 1) CSROs' financial access provisions; 2) supplying equipment; and, 3) relationship building. This study highlighted how CSROs support the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick beyond FAPs.

Introduction

In New Brunswick (NB), 15.1% of all people live in poverty according to the low-income measure after tax (Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation, 2020), while the child poverty rate is 21.7% (Human Development Council, 2021). Families with low-income often experience inequitable access to recreation and sport (Shannon et al., 2016) as they lack the economic and social resources that are required to participate (Oncescu & Neufeld, 2019). In addition, there is a lack of resources available to community sport and recreation organizations (CSROs) (Ilcan & Basok, 2004), which challenges their capacity to create accessible and inclusive recreation and sport provisions for families with low-income. As a result, most CSROs adhere to a delivery system that follows a business orientation, utilizing a pay-per-use program model, decreasing access to low or no-cost program options for those who cannot afford to pay (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Thibault et al., 2004).

Due to the increased use of pay-per-use program models across the sport and recreation sector, participation for families with low-income is typically made possible through Fee Assistance Programs (FAPs) and low or no-cost programming (Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Scott & McCarville, 2008). While having low-income complicates sport and recreation participation, FAPs have successfully created opportunities for citizens with low-income to participate in activities and access public services (McCarville, 2008, Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2019; Tamminen et al., 2020). Many benefits are associated with FAPs, such as access to programming and involvement within the larger community (Tamminen et al., 2020). Clark et al. (2019)

highlighted that structured sport and recreation participation facilitated through FAPs can positively contribute to a child's social wellbeing and development.

When individuals seek out FAPs, there are often associated processes for eligibility. There are different ways in which the standards for eligibility are set; these include standards of higher government structures, such as the Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO), internal standards, 3rd party verification such as a community counsellor, and self-identification of need (McCarville, 2008). FAPs have a defined budget to cover the cost of registration; however, there are many additional costs to participation that FAPs do not address, such as extra fees, equipment costs, tournament fees, and transportation (Holt et al., 2011; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Tamminen et al., 2020). Most FAPs have strict limitations on how and what the funds are used for (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Taylor & Frisby, 2010). FAPs are a primary tool for improving access to sport and recreation opportunities; however, FAPs are not enough (Oncescu et al., 2021).

Consequently, CSROs are left to fill the gap to support the participation of families with low-income. However, less is known about how these organizations support the participation of low-income families beyond facilitating FAPs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how CSROs support inclusion in sport and recreation for families with low-income. The primary research question is, how do CSROs support the inclusion of families with low-income in sport and recreation in NB?

Literature Review

Low-Income Families and Sport and Recreation Participation

Low-income is measured in a variety of ways in Canada; however, the LICO is a common measure used for eligibility criteria associated with FAPs (Jumpstart, 2022).

LICO is an “income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income to the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing” (Statistics Canada, 2015, para. 1) than a family living above the LICO. Families are low-income if they spend more than 20% of their income on the previously stated necessities than an average family (Government of Canada, 2022). The LICO measure is adjusted for family size, location, year, and income (Statistics Canada, 2022). This measurement of low-income does not consider the environmental, societal, and personal factors that influence the lived experience of poverty. Families with low-income lack social, financial, and tangible resources that allow for easy participation in sport and recreation, resulting in unequal participation and access (McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2019; Tamminen et al., 2020). For example, living with a low-income can limit access to sporting equipment and public and private transportation (Holt et al., 2011; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020). Additionally, citizens with low-income often reside in neighbourhoods with limited sport and recreation infrastructure, making access to sport and recreation participation difficult (Holt et al., 2011; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020).

Continually, many citizens with low-income are not aware of programs and services designed to help facilitate participation in sport and recreation, such as FAPs. Communication between administrators and participants is needed to enhance the awareness of different opportunities, such as funding and equipment provisions (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020). A lack of communication of information and knowledge between administrators and participants can lead to confusion and potentially discourage participants from seeking access programs (McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Taylor &

Frisby, 2010). Individuals with low-income have reported that there is often a lack of information or that they lack confidence, which can lead to confusion in the processes, procedures as well as how to get the most out of the access provisions (McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Taylor & Frisby, 2010).

Further, there are many stigmas and assumptions that families with low-income face. Those living with low-income are often not greeted in a friendly manner by staff members; this maltreatment reinforces social and community exclusion as well as stigmas (Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020). Poverty is often depicted as a personal failure, meaning practitioners are aware of the environmental, social, and policy factors that influence the lived experience of poverty; this can spark prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping from recreation staff as well as the community at large (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Harvey, 2001). These interactions disregard the daily social, economic, and environmental hurdles that are the lived experience of individuals and families with low-income (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020). The attitudes that individuals living with low-income encounter when working with frontline staff can greatly impact the success of following through on the access provision application and, ultimately, their participation in CSROs (Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020).

Community Sport and Recreation Organizations

CSROs are non-profit, volunteer-led organizations that operate at a community level (Sharpe, 2006). These types of community organizations largely depend on volunteers, which places immense pressure and stress on a small group of individual

volunteers (Sharpe, 2006). Community grassroots organizations operate under certain guidelines; as a result, the perceived demands and expectations can deter potential volunteers from becoming involved in the first place (Chouinard & Crooks; 2008; Sharpe, 2006). In some cases, there is a limited number of volunteers in grassroots organizations, and the capacity and expertise of these individuals can often be challenged when it comes to the operation and sustainability of an organization.

In Canada during the 1980s, the process of transferring the responsibility of social programs from the government to community organizations began (Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Ilcan & Basok, 2004). Many municipal governments outsourced leisure programs and services to non-profit CSROs and the private and not-for profit sector to fill the gap, there was a “a shift of recreation from the domain of the public sphere to the private sphere” (Newmeyer, 2017, p. 843). These for-profit and not-for profit community organizations assumed responsibility for operating and maintaining service provisions with little or no recognition or funding from the government (Aimers & Walker, 2016; Ilcan & Basok, 2004). Sport and recreation became a commodity to be purchased and were no longer seen as a right for everyone (Newmeyer, 2017). Further, this market-focused funding structure creates an environment of competition between organizations and takes away from the collaborative opportunities, such as events and programs, that could contribute to the overall well-being of the community (Aimers & Walker, 2015; Chouinard & Crooks, 2008; Rosol, 2012).

Sport, Recreation, and Inclusion of Low-Income Individuals

The commodification of recreation in the for-profit and non-profit sectors resulted in increased fees for sport and recreation services, which increased the experience of exclusion for citizens who could not afford to pay (Tink et al., 2020). Social exclusion can be seen as a process in which people lack access to social support systems (Collins, 2004). The experience of social exclusion can be intensified for families with low-income by other intersectional factors such as gender, age, race, and geography, which often results in limited freedom of choice and options when seeking participation in sport (Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015).

Inclusion and social inclusion can combat mechanisms of social exclusion.

Social inclusion can be defined:

as the process of creating just and equitable systems that facilitate people's choices and opportunities to engage (or not) in a wide range of social and democratic activities, including sport and recreation (Ponic, 2007). While some sport organizations refer to 'inclusion,' I use the term 'social inclusion' to draw attention to the diversity of people in Canada and the broader structures requiring change (Frisby & Ponic, 2013, p. 381).

Frisby and Ponic (2013) state that inclusion can be defined more as "as 'opening the doors' or 'providing access' to the existing sport system" (Frisby & Ponic, 2013, p.382) whereas, social inclusion involves working collaboratively outside the existing system to create opportunities for all people in society (Frisby & Ponic, 2013).

CSROs frequently rely on FAPs to combat social exclusion and facilitate participation for citizens with low-income as there is limited government support and

funding for recreation and sport programs and services (Sharpe, 2006). While there are many benefits associated with FAPs, such as facilitating recreation and sport participation, involvement in the community and personal benefits (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008; Tamminen et al., 2020), the inclusive nature of FAPs has been challenged. The current design of FAPs often only emphasizes the financial burdens that individuals face without accounting for the other factors, systems of oppression that influence their lived experiences (Taylor & Frisby, 2010). Although FAPs provide financial support for families in need, as financial barriers are one of the main restrictors to sport and recreation (Holt et al., 2011), there are still many discrepancies that limit low-income families' participation. Once the participant is enrolled in an activity, there are often additional costs associated with sport and recreation programs, such as equipment costs, tournament fees, supplies, and transportation. If parents or guardians cannot provide the additional fees not covered through the FAP, the child's participation in the activity could end (Holt et al., 2011; Tamminen et al., 2020).

When exploring the sport and inclusion literature, barriers such as gender, race, and accessibility, have been more explicitly stated as priorities for sport's social inclusion (Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015), leaving the topic of poverty rarely brought to the forefront (Vandermeerschen et al., 2016). While there has been previous research on inclusion and recreation, less specifically is directed towards sport. Therefore, examining how CSROs can support inclusion for low-income families is warranted.

Conceptual Framework

This study's primary research question is, how do CSROs support the inclusion of families with low-income in sport and recreation? There are four dimensions of inclusion outlined by Ponc and Frisby (2010), psychological, relation, participatory, and organizational dimensions. To answer the primary research question, Ponc and Frisby's (2010) organizational dimensions of inclusion was utilized as a conceptual framework to guide the study. Only using the organizational dimension of this framework is justified as the focus of this study was at the level of the organization, specifically examining provisions of inclusion facilitated by CSROs. Ponc and Frisby's (2010) dimensions of inclusion result from research with low-income users of sport and recreation services offered by community organizations. Low-income individuals identified the elements of the organizational dimension of inclusion as ways in which community organizations create inclusive structures, processes, and values. It is appropriate to use the organizational dimension of inclusion outlined by Ponc and Frisby (2010) as a conceptual framework to assess the how inclusion was supported CSROs for low-income families in sport and recreation activities.

According to Ponc and Frisby (2010), "the organizational dimension of inclusion refers to community-based organizing structures, processes and values" (p. 1524). There are three core elements to the organizational dimension: 1) addressing barriers, 2) access to resources, and 3) ethic of care. Addressing barriers speaks to whether barriers are addressed by enabling access and focusing on CSRO's membership needs (Forde et al., 2015; Ponc & Frisby, 2010). Examples of barriers in sport and recreation include lack of finances and equipment, unaffordable and inaccessible

transportation, and discrimination (Holt et al., 2011; McCarville, 2008). Access to resources is characterized as an organization's ability to leverage intentional partnerships and collaborations to facilitate access and social inclusion for organizations and participants (Forde et al., 2015; Ponio & Frisby, 2010). For example, Ponio and Frisby (2010) explained that partnerships allow for sharing infrastructural and human resources and connecting marginalized populations to community organizations and structures.

Lastly, Day (2000) defines ethic of care as “a model of moral development, in which ‘taking care’ receives highest priority” (p. 105). It is generally accepted that ethic of care is characterized by morals and ethics that are innate to human nature when maintaining, preserving, and adapting to the lived experience (Collins, 2018). Williams (2001) adds that ethic of care can contribute to one’s awareness of the wide variety of individuals and their diverse life experiences and the need for acceptance when working with diversity. Further, Williams (2001) highlights the importance of interdependence to create autonomy for marginalized populations is key to ethic of care. In the context of Ponio and Frisby’s (2010) organizational dimension of inclusion, ethic of care is the basis of creating an organizational culture of inclusion through the organization's mission, goals, strategies, and practices (Forde et al., 2015; Ponio & Frisby, 2010).

Methods

This study is part of a larger project that utilized Interpretive Description (ID) to examine CSRO administrators’ experiences facilitating FAPs and supporting the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick. This paper addresses half of the overall purpose of this study: to examine how CSROs support inclusion in sport and recreation for low-income families. The primary research question

is, how do CSROs support the inclusion of families with low-income in sport and recreation?

ID is a method “aligned with a constructivist and naturalistic orientation to inquiry” (Hunt, 2009, p. 1284). Originally developed to generate knowledge relevant to the clinical setting in applied health disciplines, ID is increasingly being applied to research outside of health, including sport and recreation (see Clark et al., 2011; Neely & Holt, 2014; Watchman & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2017). This method uses previous knowledge of a phenomenon to inform the analytical framework in which the study is founded. Thorne et al. (1997) state that “an analytic framework constructed based on critical analysis of the existing knowledge represents an appropriate platform on which to build a qualitative design” (p. 173). Continually, the research process allowed for connections between tangible and intangible components such as theory, practice, process, and the multiple realities of individuals (Thorne et al., 2004). ID focuses on identifying overall themes, patterns, and relationships of the lived experience that are constructed from the data, contributing to the method’s applied nature (Thorne et al., 1997; Thorne et al., 2004). ID is an appropriate method for this study as it is grounded in an applied research setting, i.e., sport and recreation organizations, and focuses on capturing themes and patterns within subjective perceptions that will generate an interpretive description capable of informing an understanding of CSRO practices of inclusion.

Participant Recruitment

Following ethics approval, purposeful sampling was used to recruit staff or volunteers from CSROs who oversaw facilitating FAPs for their organization. Participants were identified through third-party funding organizations facilitating FAPs, specifically P.R.O. Kids and KidSport². P.R.O. Kids and KidSport New Brunswick (NB) were contacted to gather a list of CSROs that receive funding to support children and youth living in low-income contexts. This process ensured that recruited participants could speak about the experiences of facilitating the FAPs and other provisions to support inclusion. Sixty CSROs across NB were identified. All CSROs were contacted through email and/or over the phone. Of the 60 CSROs contacted, 12 participants responded, resulting in 11 semi-structured interviews. All identifying information of participants was removed, and pseudonyms were assigned to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. See Table 1 for participant information.

Table 2

Study Participants

Pseudonym	Position	Type of community sport and recreation organization	Years with the Organization	Number of Participants in Organization
Nicole	Manager of Youth Programs	Community Non-Profit Recreation Centre	2.5 years	750 (youth programming)

² Organizations such as KidSport and P.R.O. Kids are non-profit charitable organizations that facilitate participation for low-income children by providing funding through community sport and recreation organizations.

Vanessa	Member Services Coordinator	Non-Profit Recreation Organization	6 years	<35,000 nationally
Cheryl	Customer Care Centre Representative		3 years	
Barb	Executive Director and Head Coach	Skating Club	20 years	135
Taylor	Executive Director	Fast Pitch	4 years	150
William	General Manager	Hockey	6 years	1000
Kevin	Executive Director	Soccer	6 years	1500
Mark	Coach	Fencing	4 years	40
Ellen	Co-Owner, Vice President, CFO	Cheerleading	7 years	400
Sarah	Head Coach	Artistic Swimming	10 years	30
Shawn	President	Baseball	>1 year	600
Rachel	Treasurer	Hockey	2 years	400

Data Collection

Participants interested in the study booked an interview time that suited their schedule. Semi-structured interviews were conducted through an online platform such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom, or over the phone, as in-person interviews were not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions at the time of data collection. Interviews lasted between 45 and 110 minutes. Ten of the interviews took place one-on-one, while one interview was a group interview as two participants from the same organization participated in the interview process. During data collection, reflective notes were used to provide initial understandings and perspectives of each interview. Reflective journaling allows for an

understanding of researcher reactions and encounters with bias and demonstrates the thought processes and narrative present in the study (Thorne, 1997). The conceptual framework of inclusion guided the interview guide. Sample questions included: (1) How would you describe your club/organization's attitudes or beliefs towards the inclusion of low-income parents and their children and/or youth? (2) Can you give some examples of how this attitude or belief is translated into practice in your organization/club? (3) Can you describe what your organization does to support children and youth from families with low-income's participation beyond FAPs? All interview files were transcribed verbatim through the transcription service of Otter.ai and read over to ensure accuracy.

In ID, a verbatim transcript is not often shared with participants as a focus on intricacies can take away from and create controversy within the data (Thorne et al., 1997). However, going back to the participant is important for the process of developing the data into findings (Thorne, 2008). Therefore, a synthesis of all the interviews, including the overall initial interpretations, insights, and observations, was shared with participants. This process allowed for the participants to receive a synthesis of what knowledge had been shared and offered "an opportunity to have them reflect on the experience to which it does or does not ring true to their experience" (Thorne, 2008, p. 159). Participants were encouraged to reach out and provide feedback and comments on the synthesis (Thorne, 2008). None of the participants provided feedback or comments to change the synthesis.

Data Analysis

ID borrows techniques from other methods such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative analysis and/or engages in different creative coding

techniques (Thorne, 2008). The initial step of data analysis included the first author repeatedly immersing themselves in the data and reflective notes as advised by Thorne (1997) to become familiar with the data and the initial understandings and perspectives of each interview. The next step included coding the data. Thorne (2008) recommends finding guidance from other methods such as grounded theory to effectively organize and manage the data set during the initial coding process. It is important to note that what distinguishes ID is that these approaches, such as grounded theory, are not “used in a manner that is entirely faithful to the original tradition” (Thorne, 2008, p. 153). Researchers using ID remain aware of the “obligation to account for the relationship between the technique and the underlying approach to what constitutes knowledge from which it has been extracted” (Thorne, 2008, p. 153).

As such, grounded theory coding technique guided by Chun Tie et al. (2019) was used to help make sense of the data to create broad groups and connections (Thorne, 2008). Open coding was used to fracture the data by inductively generating as many codes as possible from the data (Chun Tie et al., 2019). In this study, examples of open coding include limited financial capacity and building funds into budgets. Axial coding was then applied to the data by building on open coding by “reviewing categories and identifying which ones, if any, can be subsumed beneath other categories occurs and the properties or dimension of the developed categories are refined” (Chun Tie et al., 2019, p. 5). An example of an axial code was sponsorship and funding. My supervisor and I then engaged in peer debriefing. Following coding guided by grounded theory, axial codes were clustered to form themes, informed by the conceptual framework of the organizational dimension of inclusion. For example, the axial code of sponsorship and

funding is part of the larger theme of CSROs financial access provisions, as they reduce financial barriers to sport and recreation participation. Lastly, the findings are presented through a thematic description, as is common in ID research (Thorne, 2008).

Findings

Through the data analysis, three main themes were constructed to highlight how CSROs' support inclusion in sport and recreation for families with low-income: 1) CSROs' financial access provisions; 2) supplying equipment; and, 3) relationship building.

CSROs financial access provisions

All participants mentioned financial provisions as a mechanism to address barriers and support inclusion in sport and recreation for families in low-income circumstances. These financial supports have been organized into the following subthemes: 1) Sponsorships and fundraising, 2) Flexible payment plans, and 3) Organizational financial aid.

Sponsorship and fundraising

Limited financial capacity was identified by every participant in the study as a barrier to participation in community sport and recreation programs for families with low-income. In response to this barrier, CSROs provided ways to alleviate financial barriers through internal organizational funding. Some organizations had separate funding set aside to support individuals with financial needs. Kevin, an executive director of a soccer club, shared that “if it’s a financial barrier, we do have a fund set aside in our budget to help quote-unquote ‘sponsor’ or reduce fees,” which was called

the player sponsorship fund. In addition, Kevin explained that “lots of times we’ll do a matching program [for the FAP],” which, combined, completely funded most recreational level sport programs in their organization. To generate funds for their player sponsorship fund, Kevin shared that they collected donations from other members:

We actually have a new feature where it was used to be kind of like you can add a certain amount [to the fund]. Now it’s an open field [on the registration form], and [the parent or guardian] just put in a number [dollar amount] ... it’s whatever you’re comfortable with. We don’t want to tell you it’s got to be this much or this much.

Ellen, the vice president and CFO of a cheerleading club, explained that she looked to sponsor children who were not eligible for external FAP (i.e., Jumpstart or KidSport) as they were just over the low-income cut-off but still lacked the financial resources to participate. Ellen shared, “we’ll step up and offer it [registration] free for the year... so yeah, [I] always build into my budget the ability to help two to three children.” Similarly, Barb, an executive director, and head coach at a skating club, sponsored four to six local children every year to “help them keep up with the other children” by creating opportunities for participation in sport for children with low-income that would otherwise not be an option due to lack of funding and resources. This organization works with local schools to identify who needs the most financial support. Barb continued by stating, “we pick schools and [give] kids out these memberships and let [the school] choose the children [who] can come because they know the children better, the history than we do.” Barb shared:

We say here's some free memberships and [the schools] decide. Like, who are the really needy ones, you know. Like, not just trying to 'Oh, I think I'll go because it's free,' but ones that wouldn't get to do anything [sport or recreation activity] because there's no support for them.

For Barb, the goal of collaborating with local schools and offering free membership was intentional as it allows for participation in sport and recreation for children who otherwise would not have the opportunity due to a lack of financial resources and support. While some organizations had funds built into their budgets for sponsorship, others also reached out to external funding sources. Ellen shared, "there's other times too, that I will approach local businesses...and on behalf of children [low-income], they [businesses] make sponsorships in behind [anonymously]. So that helps pay for a uniform for somebody."

Fundraising was identified as an additional way for organizations to provide financial assistance to families with low-income. In some organizations, fundraising efforts directly supported the child's fees for participation, wherein the organization provided families with fundraising activities that they could choose to participate in to reduce the costs of enrolment. For example, Ellen explained that to offset costs for all members regardless of socioeconomic status, "I do offer fundraising opportunities that I run. And I run the programs and [then] what [parents fundraise], I put back [in] their account."

In other organizations, the funds from collective fundraising from all participants were distributed across club expenses to reduce participation costs for all participants.

Sarah explained that in her organization, "we've had some really successful years [with

fundraising], especially recently that we've made and surpassed our fundraising goals, which goes towards [facility] fees, goes towards coaches' fees, and we have some that are designated to go towards competition fees as well." Along the same lines, Barb shared, "we do fundraisers so that the club has enough money, we're not for profit," the funds are then distributed back into the club to support events, performances, and extra funds for individuals with low-income.

Flexible payment plans

While fundraising and sponsorship are access provisions that offset participation costs, some organizations created flexible payment plans to address financial barriers to participation and help parents and/or guardians pay registration fees. Across CSROs that offered this service, payment plans were highlighted as a provision for low-income families, but they were available for everyone in the organization, and not specifically enacted for families with low-income. For example, Shawn, the president of a baseball club, shared, "we have, I mean, just like you say, stretch some payments out over a period of time." However, the payment plan was not a formalized policy advertised to their membership. When asked why it was not a formal policy, Shawn explained, "we don't; we wouldn't want to advertise it to kind of create ourselves administrative nightmare."

However, other organizations had a formalized payment plan to create flexibility in paying registration fees. Kevin shared what they do in his organization:

We definitely have, you know, [to] work with all of our participants in terms of, you know, understanding their ability [to pay fees] as fees kind of get more expensive. We certainly offer, you know, payment plans and those kinds of things.

The flexibility to pay by different methods, potentially, as well as you know, with static or, or more moving deadlines of such, you know, understanding, you know, how it kind of all goes together and just trying to be as flexible as we can.

This sentiment was reflected as Sarah, who is the head coach for artistic swimming, explained:

We have oftentimes set up multiple different payment plans so that people can afford kind of the fees that are required so that some people choose to pay it all upfront, some people pay month by month, and we really try to make it so that everybody has a has a plan that they're comfortable with financially so that they can participate.

It is important to note that one organization no longer offered payment plans.

Rachel, who is the treasurer of a hockey organization, stated:

We didn't have that many people using the payment plan. And we did have some family; we just struggled to get the money [from families], period. And again, this is my first this is a personal belief. But we did pass a thing [motion in the CSRO] where we would no longer do the payment plan. And your fee just had to be paid by the end of September... I don't care. You want to send me ten payments in between now and the end of September. That's fine. But it has to be paid by the end of September.

For this organization, payment plans were not a feasible and sustainable way for their organization to address financial barriers faced by families and individuals with low-income.

Organizational financial aid

Many leaders of CSROs spoke about how they ‘try to keep costs low’ to address financial barriers to sport participation. While these practices benefit those living with low income, they were not put in place intentionally to meet the complex needs of those living with low income but rather the whole organization. When asked how their organization supports the participation of children and families with low-income, Taylor explained, “that's really the primary thing that we do is really trying to keep our costs low.” Similarly, Mark, who is a coach in fencing, explained, “our fees are relatively low, particularly [compared to] other fencing clubs. Partially because, currently, we don't have sort of expenses in terms of [volunteer] staff, we try and minimize equipment expenses as much as possible”. Continually, Ellen shared, “I try to keep costs down as well, too. So, we're not travelling away”. These organizations are working to keep their costs low by minimizing registration, staff, travel, and facility fees to lower the financial burden of participation. However, the administrators of these organizations expressed that keeping their costs low compared to other sport organizations was an additional incentive for these low-cost practices.

Administrators of CSROs have created financial access provisions through supplemental funds, sponsorships, fundraising, payment plans, and low costs to address the financial barriers of participation to support children with low income. While some of these provisions are intentionally provided to assist low-income children and their participation in sport and recreation, other provisions are in place for all the organization's members.

Supplying Equipment

Participants in this study identified that lack of access to equipment was a barrier to participation in recreation and sport, and as a result, intentionally offered informal support for equipment to families with low income. Equipment provisions were not established but only offered when the CSRO became aware of an equipment need. For example, one CSRO facilitated purchasing new equipment by working with local sport stores or even reaching out to sponsors for equipment. William, the general manager of an ice hockey association, stated:

If we become aware of a family or child [who's] having an issue with equipment, then ...we will buy equipment for a family [who's] struggling. We don't necessarily advertise it. But we will reach out and purchase the equipment for them. We will approach potential sponsors perhaps to help with that.

William added that he did not want equipment to be the reason why someone could not participate in the sport of their choice.

Furthermore, many CSROs facilitated equipment swaps, rentals, and equipment borrowing in their organizations. These provisions were not directed at families with low-income but were made available to all families. Taylor explained, "whether that's like renting some equipment, or selling some used equipment, or just borrow it; we're always willing, we have a big storage locker...we're always willing to, like help out as we can." Other organizations took donations and then redistributed the used equipment throughout the organization for those looking for equipment. For example, Kevin stated, "we have families drop off used equipment or equipment that they are not using

anymore, or whatever, we keep it here,” the equipment was then distributed back into the community [membership] for anyone looking for equipment.

Administrators of CSROs created access provisions to address the barriers associated with equipment. Some organizations were able to directly support the access to equipment for children with low income by purchasing it for them. At the same time, other CSROs facilitated equipment sharing, swaps, and rentals to create access to equipment.

Relationship building

In addition to equipment provisions, administrators of CSROs built relationships with allied organizations and individuals in these organizations to support the participation of low-income families. Participants expressed that when CSROs worked with other community organizations, it allowed cross-organizational relationships to form, increasing resources and opportunities for families with low-income to participate in sports and recreation activities. Kevin felt partnering with the local multicultural organization cultivated more access to their organization among newcomer children and youth. Specifically, the relationship between the organizations created opportunities for Kevin to educate families about the organization and have documents and information translated for immigrant families. Kevin explained:

We work with organizations, like I said earlier, like the [multicultural organization], to kind of make sure that families who are new to our area understand who we are, what we do, and what it might take to get involved. So that would be kind of one of the bigger things that we would do outside of

financial assistance to help support families [who] need a little extra, you know, information working with [multicultural organization] and places like that. So they [the multicultural organization] maybe translate certain documents or, or things so that they can understand and be able to read things in their own language, sometimes very helpful for people.

For Taylor's organization, where they are the executive director for fastpitch, a relationship with local First Nations communities has been built to increase the sport and recreation opportunities for those with low-income. Taylor explained, "we've worked with a lot of the First Nations communities." They further shared, "we've just built relationships with them over the past few years." As a result of this relationship, Taylor's CSRO received sponsorship from the local First Nations community for the whole organization and individual sponsorship for Indigenous players in the CSRO. Creating these types of relationships (i.e., collaboration with minority groups, sponsorship, and the translation of documents) increases opportunities for families with low-income to participate in sport and recreation.

Lastly, one CSRO administrator created a mentorship program and the pairing up of parents to facilitate interpersonal relationships within the organization. This program is facilitated throughout the organization for all parents. Sarah felt that this program was important for low-income families as it cultivates relationships amongst parents that could support their inclusion. Sarah explained: "We started a kind of a parent buddy system [we take] experienced parents [who] have been involved for a few years; we try to pair them with the new coming parents." These peer support programs allowed incoming parents in the organization to share resources, build and foster relationships,

and have additional support for participation in the community sport and recreation organization.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how CSROs supported the inclusion of families with low-income in sport and recreation. The CSROs support inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in a variety of ways, including financial and equipment provisions and fostering relationships. Through the lens of Ponc and Frisby's (2010) organizational dimension of inclusion, I frame the discussion by threading the findings through the three core elements: addressing barriers, partnerships, and ethic of care.

According to Ponc and Frisby (2010), inclusion can be supported when organizations address barriers to participation. In this study, offering sponsorship, flexible payment options, and fundraising opportunities were tangible ways that administrators of CSROs reduced the financial barriers associated with participation contributing to inclusion for low-income families. Flexible payment options such as payment plans can allow for an acknowledgement of the complexity of pursuing sport and recreation participation on a low-income. When practitioners introduce flexibility into their inclusion practices, low-income families assume more power, which can contribute to empowerment and equitable sport and recreation systems (Onicescu, 2021). While fee assistance does provide the opportunity for participation for those with low-income, it is not enough to allow for inclusion as there is an unequal distribution of resources regarding other needs of low-income participants, such as access to

equipment, transportation, etc. (Kingsley & Spencer-Cavaliere, 2015). Similarly, fundraising opportunities facilitated by CSROs can be problematic. Despite the research that highlights fundraising can help parents fill the financial gap required for participation (Holt et al., 2011), fundraising can also be inherently exclusionary and harmful as it is reliant on the free time of parents and access to financial resources, which many families with low income do not have (Oncescu et al., 2021). This harm can be intensified because those with low income do not have social networks that are financially stable, making fundraising time-consuming, demanding, taxing, and inappropriate (Oncescu et al., 2021).

By limiting inclusion efforts to financial assistance and fundraising, CSROs can become unaware of the deeply rooted processes of exclusion that are evident beyond one's lack of finances and how exclusion is evident in sport and recreation provisions (Oncescu et al., 2021). For example, some participants did not advertise the organization's financial assistance. If the focus of inclusion in recreation and sport for CSROs is continually on financial assistance as the only barrier to participation, the other exclusionary practices and provisions present in CSROs will not be addressed. This ultimately perpetuates the exclusion from sport and recreation for low-income families (Suzuki, 2017).

While all the inclusion strategies the CSROs employed are important, it is interesting to note that some of the strategies were intentionally put in place to meet the needs of those with low-income. While others, in contrast, were applied and available to the whole organization for equal distribution to the members. For example, CSROs identified discounts and 'keeping costs low' and payment plans for all members to break

down financial barriers and support participation. Equality of opportunity for all disregards the social and economic inequities that prevent low-income families from accessing various social, material, and financial resources required for participation (Oncescu & Neufled, 2019). Labonte (2004) states that “equality in outcome demands inequalities in opportunity” (p. 119), and there is a need for inequality of programs and services to create widespread equality and equity. For example, while equipment swaps are good for all as they do not exclusively target low-income families, CSROs could create opportunities for low-income families to have first access to the equipment options. This would demonstrate unequal opportunity in access to services, to allow for equity in equipment distribution. This action creates more equitable access and prioritize the needs of low-income families, while still being available for everyone so as to not stigmatize low-income families.

To foster inclusion, it is important to focus less on equality of resources for all members and redistribute financial, social, and material resources directly and intentionally to support low-income families' participation in recreation and sport. Redistributing resources based on social and economic inequities will better support access to the resources required for participation for low-income families and children. In this study, one CSRO employed this strategy through a player sponsorship fund. Those who had more resources in the organization contributed to the sponsorship fund which was then redistributed to those who cannot afford as much contributing to inclusion through resource redistribution. Further, employing pay-what-you-can models would allow families with low-income to have more choice in what they can afford based on their circumstances while still contributing to the organization. Creating more

choices to contribute to the organization can be a more empowering experience than asking for financial assistance.

Of the initiatives employed intentionally to meet the needs of those with low income, most were associated with financial and equipment assistance. This focused attention to financial and equipment needs may indicate CSROs' lack of understanding surrounding the additional barriers to participation for low-income families and children. This questions the influence of measuring low-income solely from an objective measure like the LICO. The current LICO measure used by FAPs to determine if a family is low-income or not, the LICO is based on the statistical measures of income, family size, and community size. This measure does not incorporate the lived experience of those with low-income to account for the social barriers, stigmas, and discrimination they face in conjunction with their low income. When administrators of CSROs are conditioned to measure financial need based on the LICO, it could create “blindness” to the social barriers low-income families experience that limit their participation in sport and recreation. Without a deeper level of awareness of the lived experience of poverty and how that experience intersects with sport and recreation provisions (i.e., registration, enrollment, etc.), administrators of CSROs will create access provisions that do not meet the needs of the families they are intending to support.

In addition to financial assistance, access to equipment is a barrier to participation for families with low income (Holt et al., 2011; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020); this was reflected in the actions of CSRO staff and volunteers in this study. While CSROs provided access to equipment through swaps and loan programs, which were available for all organization members to take part in, one organization had a targeted

program where the CSRO would purchase equipment for families with low-income. While supplying equipment allows for participation in sport and recreation activities, one CSRO expressed that they did not want equipment to be why someone did not participate. Interestingly, many CSROs did not advertise or communicate that they would purchase equipment, therefore putting the onus on the individual to ask for help. These types of practices and opportunities for those with low-income should be properly advertised, (i.e., posters, emails, word of mouth, handouts/newsletters, and radio ads) as a lack of information and communication is a barrier that prevents families and children with low income from participating in recreation and sport (Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020, Taylor & Frisby, 2010). In part, there appears to be a behind closed doors, and an ask and you shall receive experience for families with low-income in this study. Meaning, once these families are part of the organization, there are more support mechanisms CSROs can provide. Still, families and children with low income do not know that until they take the initiative to ask for help. Without broader initiatives, such as increased financial, human, and information resources, to support CSROs in employing inclusion provisions, families with low-income may continue to be excluded from sport and recreation programs.

For Ponc and Frisby (2010), inclusion can be enhanced through organizations' access to resources such as facilities, knowledge, and legitimacy through partnerships which support the organization and connect underserved populations to reputable organizations and institutions. In this study, CSROs partnered with multicultural organizations and Indigenous communities to support inclusion. Frisby and Ponc (2013) found that developing organizational partnerships directly focused on the inclusion of

marginalized groups contributed to social inclusion. Organizations were able to expand their resources and reach because of community partnerships. For example, one CSRO had all its documents translated into different languages; this also allowed individuals in the partner organization to become educated on the programs and services available in the CSRO. Further, interpersonal relationships were fostered through a buddy program in one of the CSROs.

These programs allow individuals to access resources and information and create a sense of belonging and connection to other parents in the sport. This sense of connection can help combat feelings of exclusion for families with low-income, resulting from structural factors such as lack of social support and networks, poor facilities and environments (both physical and social), and lack of transportation (Collins, 2004). These types of programs address feelings of exclusion for families with low income as it allows the fostering of inclusion through sharing of resources and mutual understanding. Further, partnerships offer opportunities for CSROs to continue building relationships, which allows for creating a safe and trusting supportive environment (Hopper et al., 2019) that contributes to inclusion (Onicescu & Loewen, 2020).

Additionally, one CSRO had a free membership program run through the local school. In this program, resources were redistributed throughout the community by providing free memberships for sport and recreation participation to individuals who otherwise would not have access to these opportunities. This free membership initiative creates opportunities for equality and equity for families with limited financial needs and support (Craig, 2002). This program challenges the current delivery system of sport and

recreation by creating opportunities so that individuals do not have to ask for help or prove their poverty to gain access to sport and recreation participation which creates a more equitable distribution of resources and promotes inclusion (Cureton & Frisby, 2011).

Ethic of care is the upholding of morals and ethics that are innate to human nature when working with various lived experiences and diverse populations, which can contribute to an inclusive organizational culture (Ponic & Frisby, 2010; Williams, 2001). Many of the CSROs in this study demonstrated an ethic of care through the practices and intentions to create a supportive and inclusive organizational culture for sport and recreation participation by purchasing equipment, organizational and peer partnership programs, and members sponsorships. According to Forde et al. (2015), programs reflect the organizational goals and values through practice and policy, whether formal or informal, which can contribute to an ethic of care in organizations.

Furthermore, Cureton and Frisby (2011) identified that when administrators go above and beyond their job description to meet the needs of individuals, an ethic of care is demonstrated. In this study, one administrator demonstrated an ethic of care through their free membership program as they went outside of the organization to intentionally make connections in the community to create sport and recreation opportunities for those who did not previously have an option to participate. As well, CSROs that sought out sponsorships from the community are going out of their way to facilitate social inclusion and participation in their organization. Forde et al. (2015) noted that acquiring equipment and clothing for individuals to wear demonstrated an ethic of care; this was evidenced through various CSROs' equipment initiatives in this study. These practices

and policies demonstrated the values and intentions that contribute to the organizational culture, creating a supportive and inclusive environment for low-income families. It also highlights how inclusion provisions are interdependent, where the ethic of care overlaps with the intention associated with providing financial assistance, equipment access, and relationship building between CSROs and families with low-income in their organizations, as an example.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how CSROs supported the inclusion of low-income families' participation in sport and recreation. Most access provisions only focused on financial and material barriers faced by families with low-income. This approach to providing access to sport and recreation is void of the lived experience of poverty, which could result from how low-income is currently defined and measured by FAPs in Canada (i.e., the LICO). However, one CSRO provided sponsorship opportunities to those who were not considered low-income according to the LICO but still lacked the resources to participate. In doing so, this CSRO resisted the objective measurement of the LICO, filled the gap left by FAPs, and challenged the current eligibility system in place for low-income families when accessing sport and recreation opportunities. As such, further education for CSROs and their administrators can be used to cultivate an understanding of how to support the participation of families with low-income in sport and recreation. Education would allow CSROs to critically reflect on their structures and approaches to diversity to understand the experience of underserved populations such as those with low income (Spaij et al., 2020).

Lastly, I want to draw attention to the differences of inclusion and social inclusion. In this study, I demonstrated how CSROs facilitated inclusion for low-income families, which Frisby and Ponc (2013) describe as working within the existing system. Whereas social inclusion is necessary “to draw attention to the diversity of people in Canada and the broader structures requiring change” (Frisby & Ponc, 2013. p. 381). For social inclusion to be achieved, it is essential to “work collaboratively with those who are currently outside the system to make fundamental changes to sport policies and practices” (Frisby & Ponc, 2013, p. 382). To promote social inclusion in organizations, Frisby and Ponc (2013) have outlined four strategies. Firstly, there needs to be a commitment to change by the CSRO, meaning social inclusion needs to be engrained in all parts of the organization from policy to programming. Secondly, CSROs need to engage in continuous evaluation, this allows for the recognition of success as well as areas of the organization that need to improve their social inclusion practices. Next, members of the community should be engaged throughout the planning and policy process of the CSRO. This allows for staff and members of the community to gain perspectives of those who are socially marginalized from the existing sport system, such as those living in poverty. Lastly, Frisby and Ponc (2013) highlight that the development of partnerships between community organizations is essential to fostering social inclusion. Especially engaging in partnerships with groups that are marginalized from the existing sport system. In this study, a couple of the CSROs were fully engaging in social inclusion practices through the creation of partnerships with Indigenous communities and a multicultural organization. However, many of the other initiatives

could be seen as mere inclusion, as opposed to social inclusion when drawing on the definition provided by Frisby and Ponc (2013).

This study does come with limitations. Only the organizational dimension of Ponc and Frisby's (2010) framework for inclusion was investigated in this study. The three other dimensions of the framework for inclusion need to be further considered in the context of this study. This study represents CSROs administrators who operate out of Atlantic Canada, which has higher poverty rates than other parts of Canada. Therefore, other CSROs could operate differently and employ different inclusion provisions to support those with low-income. More research is needed to explore different policies and programs in CSROs that support the participation and inclusion of children and families with low income beyond the financial and material barriers of sport and recreation. Lastly, community participatory action research that brings together families with low-income and CSRO practitioners to co-create social inclusion provisions and policies will be beneficial for developing effective and sustainable supports for participation in sport and recreation.

Disclosure Statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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Chapter 4 – Conclusion

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine CSRO administrators' experiences facilitating FAPs and supporting the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick which was addressed in this thesis through two publishable papers. CSROs are integral to facilitating sport and recreation participation in communities (Misener & Doherty, 2013; Sharpe, 2006), including facilitating FAPs that support participation for those families with low incomes (McCarville, 2008). This study contributes to the literature in two ways. First, by exploring and understanding the experiences of facilitating FAPs from the perspective of administrators of CSROs. Second, there is little known about how CSROs support low-income families' participation once they are enrolled in a recreation and sport programs. This study contributes to the literature by examining CSRO administrators' experiences supporting the inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick.

As I conclude this study, I want to discuss three overarching discussion points that touch on both papers: responsabilization, partnerships, and education. Responsibilization of CSROs and low-income families was evident in both papers. 'Open door,' 'hands-off,' and 'have to ask' approaches to service delivery were present in how CSROs facilitated FAPs. Responsibilization was evident when low-income applicants had to locate, apply, and communicate their funding results to CSROs. Additionally, when providing social inclusion provisions within their organizations, CSRO administrators were responsabilizing low-income families as the onus was still largely on them to ask for help. CSROs did not communicate and promote social inclusion initiatives such as financial aid opportunities, the purchasing of equipment, and

payment plans; therefore, the only way low-income families found out about these provisions was if they asked and expressed their needs to the organization. CSROs were also subject to responsabilization in this study. Specifically, FAPs downloaded the responsibility of communicating and promoting their programs and funding opportunities to CSROs. However, CSROs are not provided with the appropriate or adequate resources required to fulfil these tasks. Furthermore, CSROs were responsible for facilitating all tasks associated with recreation and sport experiences and the accompanying benefits of participation, including social inclusion (Misener & Doherty, 2013). As a result of the limited capacity of CSROs, the responsabilization of low-income individuals is then further perpetuated.

To reduce the responsabilization of low-income families, CSROs could integrate social inclusion values into sport and recreation provisions, including FAPs. Social inclusion in sport and recreation is complex and requires various considerations (Frisby & Ponice, 2013). While policies can provide the foundation for change and social inclusion, participation in sport and recreation “is supported by a strong system of connected stakeholders working towards common goals” (Rich, 2022, para. 25). Gaining access to sport and recreation does not equate to experiences of inclusion for low-income citizens. There are psychosocial, relational, participatory, and organizational dimensions of social inclusion that influence the experience of low-income participants when being included in community sport and recreation (Ponice & Frisby, 2010). Therefore, the inner workings of organizations to support the dimensions of inclusion are just as important as the policies and practices that are being implemented outside the organization. Policies and practices put in place at the different levels of sport and

recreation governance can help influence how the dimensions of social inclusion are supported through the common goal of access and inclusion, which can contribute to more people participating in sport and recreation and acquiring the associated benefits to participation.

As Frisby and Ponc (2013) suggest, social inclusion requires addressing the mechanisms of exclusion that exist within the systems of sport and recreation. Changing the current power structure in Canadian sport and recreation system from the current top-down orientation to a “process that requires careful negotiation and a fundamental shift in hierarchical power relations” (p. 382) is required for social inclusion to be accomplished (Frisby & Ponc, 2013). When both social inclusion and exclusion mechanisms are considered, there is an opportunity to create a more equitable sport and recreation system in Canada so that more people can experience the benefits of participation (Frisby & Ponc, 2013). Therefore, infusing social justice and inclusion values within the delivery system may help. Social justice can be characterized as the fair and unbiased treatment of individuals. Craig (2002) expands on the definition of social justice to highlight the need for a political framework grounded in and accepting of society’s multiplicity and differing values. This will allow society to work towards equality, feeling of self-worth, and equity, especially for minority groups, “pursued through social, economic, environmental and political policies” (Craig, 2002, p. 671). When the values of social justice are present, resources are more equitably distributed across society to meet the needs of those who lack financial and social assets (Cureton & Frisby, 2011).

Partnerships were highlighted in the findings of this overall study. Partnerships, and education act as possible avenues to infuse social inclusion and social justice into the processes, policies, and programs associated with participation in sport and recreation for low-income families. Some CSROs had pre-established partnerships with local organizations (e.g., schools, multicultural organizations, Indigenous communities.) to support social inclusion. CSRO administrators wanted to embark on and establish new partnerships with FAPs to create a more supportive FAP facilitation process.

Partnerships are key to establishing and building relationships in a safe, trusting, and supportive environment (Hopper et al., 2019) and, therefore, could be an integral component when creating access and contributing to social inclusion in sport and recreation participation opportunities for low-income families (Oncescu & Loewen, 2020). Partnerships allow for increased capacity, resources, and information for CSROs, enabling the redistribution of resources across partnered organizations in an equitable manner (Forde et al., 2015; Ponic & Frisby, 2010).

The partnerships between FAPs and CSROs need to be renewed with more defined responsibilities to better address the needs and responsabilization of low-income families. Partnerships could be redefined through the lens of Ponic and Frisby's (2010) dimensions of social inclusion to create more inclusive practices desired by low-income populations at the organizational level. For example, the sharing of promotional materials from FAPs to CSROs could help combat the responsabilization of CSROs and low-income families that are already involved in sport and recreation activities as CSROs would have readily available promotional materials to share and communicate with their constituents. However, simply sharing promotional materials is not enough. If

FAPs are only being promoted through CSROs, any low-income families not already in pursuit of sport or recreation are likely unaware of the FAP. Therefore, partnerships with other organizations that are not sport and recreation specific have the potential to reduce the responsabilization of low-income families. For example, FAPs and CSROs partner with organizations that low-income families are already connected to, such as multicultural or new settlement centres, social and immigration services, and family resources centres, there is an opportunity to bring awareness of financial aid for sport and recreation participation to families who are currently not involved in sport and recreation. These partnerships could also work collaboratively to discuss how and what can be done better regarding the facilitation of FAPs, as they already have direct experience working with families who live in low-income.

Further, partnerships between non sport organizations, CSROs and FAPs pose an opportunity to connect with low-income families who are not currently involved in sport and recreation and break down barriers (e.g., lack of information, financial aid, equipment opportunities), which also demonstrates an ethic of care from CSROs and FAPs, ultimately contributing to the social inclusion of low-income families. The responsabilization of low-income families would also be reduced as the information would be directly presented, rather than seeking it out individually. Partnerships in this way also act as a tool for education on the collective sport and recreation opportunities and resources available for all parties involved. FAPs can share their funding opportunities, and CSROs can share specific equipment programs and financial aids available. As a result, other community organizations and low-income families become

educated about sport and recreation opportunities and the associated supports that are in place for low-income families.

Lastly, CSRO administrators lacked understanding and awareness of the lived experience of those living with low-income, making education for sport and recreation providers incredibly important. For example, many of the participants in this study considered the application process for FAPs easy and simple. However, researchers have drawn attention to how the limited information on FAPs makes them difficult to access and can leave people completely unaware that financial assistance is available (Oncescu, 2020; Oncescu & Neufeld, 2020; Taylor & Frisby, 2010). Continually, the proof of poverty policies required to gain access to most mainstream FAPs can be cumbersome and bureaucratic, leaving low-income families discouraged, ashamed, and embarrassed, ultimately preventing low-income families from applying for the FAP. As a result of these processes, low-income families' participation in sport and recreation could be terminated before even enrolling in a program (Cureton & Frisby, 2011; McCarville, 2008; Oncescu & Loewen, 2020; Reid, 2004; Trussell & Mair, 2010). When CSRO administrators engage in a facilitation process that responsabilizes low-income citizens, CSROs reduce the opportunity for relationship building, which is one of the social benefits associated with recreation and sport participation (Holt et al., 2011; Tamminen et al., 2020), with low-income applicants and therefore limit empathy and understanding of the complexities of living in low-income circumstances. Education can be seen as a tool for this lack of knowledge and allow for critical reflection on the current responsabilizing operating structures and understanding of the experience of those with low income (Spaaij et al., 2020). Education can also support cultural change within

CSROs to align with changing policies and structures to foster understanding, specifically concerning social inclusion and diversity (Spaaij et al., 2020).

There is an opportunity for education to support social inclusion objectives, but it is also needed to combat the presence of neoliberal tendencies and responsabilization found in the sport and recreation system. CSROs have limited capacity, resources, and education needed to implement social inclusion and equity practices (Sharpe, 2006). Incentives attached to incorporating and implementing social inclusion practices could possibly shift Canada's current recreation and sport operating system. This action could also be supported by introducing an educational module on the principles and practices of social inclusion to standard sport and recreation training that is already required for CSRO administration and coaches to support the implementation of social inclusion and equity.

Framed in Ponc and Frisby's (2010) organizational dimension of social inclusion, the module would outline practices that could support each element, addressing barriers, access to resources, and ethic of care. For example, to address barriers, the module could enact an interactive piece to create an understanding of the experience of low-income families when applying for FAPs and the associated barriers of lack of information, limited access to the Internet and technology, and negative interpersonal interactions to name a few. The module would then present practical next steps practitioners could enact to better support low-income families' participation in sport and recreation, such as outreach, leisure education, freedom of choice, and social capital (Oncescu & Loewen, 2020). This will help build capacity into the system to

support the operation of CSROs and the participation of marginalized communities such as low-income families.

It is important to recognize that administrators of CSROs are already struggling because of limited capacity and resources and the suggested action of education could further responsabilize them. However, the issue of social inclusion and access for low-income families in sport and recreation is a wicked problem in the sense that it is a complex social issue that is open ended and contradictory, with no single solution or definition (Head & Alford, 2015). While effectively more financial resources and support are needed in the sport and recreation system in Canada to remove all barriers to make sport and recreation accessible and meaningful for all. Education for administrators of CSROs is still needed to illuminate the challenges faces by low-income families to allow for equitable access and inclusion in sport and recreation.

Future Research

To create a recreation and sport environment that allows for freedom of choice and fosters social, creative, and knowledge development, there needs to be more than just acknowledging neoliberalism's presence as an ideology. Tink et al. (2020) express that to create recreation and sport systems that are available to a wider variety of people with a larger variety of recreation and sport participation opportunities, “we must recognize that recreation is a highly regulated institution” (p. 12) that is influenced by ‘scientific truths’ hailing from discourses of economics, medicine, demography etc. which are then reproduced in the context of recreation. Tink et al. (2020) continue to state that “any process that aims to transform recreation practices and policies must

begin with a questioning of the ‘scientific truths’ that have come to constitute patterns of action and systems of thought” (p. 12). This narrative presents an opportunity for future research to support the findings of this study. Now that we understand the current practices and processes of social inclusion and FAPs for CSROs, systemic change is needed. There needs to be a further investigation of the discourses of ‘scientific truths,’ which means how reality is produced, normalized, and managed to create meaningful transformations of sport and recreation practices and policies. Asking these questions allows for an understanding of how the recreation and sport system have been affected by and built off a variety of morals, pieces of knowledge, political views, and market forces (Tink et al., 2020). This enlightenment could then contribute to the construction and delivery of recreation and sport services that “actually delivers on its promise to promote individual fulfillment, encourage self-discovery, and give meaning to life” (Tink et al., 2020, p. 12).

This study has generated additional future research opportunities regarding CSROs and access to sport and recreation for low-income families. More research is needed to explore the specific policies that are in place to support the participation and social inclusion of low-income families and how these policies are implemented and enforced at the various levels of governance for sport and recreation, including individuals, CSROs, and provincial and federal governments. This will allow for an understanding of the relationship between the actions and practices of sport and recreation systems holders and the guiding policies and regulations to increase the social inclusion of low-income families. Additionally, community participatory action research conducted with CSROs and low-income families to allow for the co-creation of social

inclusion and equitable access provisions that are effective and sustainable for CSROs and low-income families in a bottom-up fashion. Lastly, regarding the facilitation of FAPs in CSROs, the perspective of FAP administrators is still not accounted for; as such, future research exploring the experience of FAP administrators' facilitation, distribution, and communication of FAPs would create a more holistic understanding of the experiences of all the stakeholders involved in the FAP process.

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Table 3***Study Participants***

Pseudonym	Position	Type of community sport and recreation organization	Years with the Organization	Number of Participants in Organization
Nicole	Manager of Youth Programs	Community Non-Profit Recreation Centre	2.5 years	750 (youth programming)
Vanessa	Member Services Coordinator	Non-Profit Recreation Organization	6 years	<35,000 nationally
Cheryl	Customer Care Centre Representative		3 years	
Barb	Executive Director and Head Coach	Skating Club	20 years	135
Taylor	Executive Director	Fast Pitch	4 years	150
William	General Manager	Hockey	6 years	1000
Kevin	Executive Director	Soccer	6 years	1500
Mark	Coach	Fencing	4 years	40
Ellen	Co-Owner, Vice President, CFO	Cheerleading	7 years	400
Sarah	Head Coach	Artistic Swimming	10 years	30
Shawn	President	Baseball	>1 year	600
Rachel	Treasurer	Hockey	2 years	400

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Administrator Background/Responsibility

1. Can you tell me a bit **about yourself**?
 - a. What organization do you work/volunteer for?
 - b. What is your position within the organization/club?
 - c. How long have you been working/volunteering for the organization/club?
 - d. What is your background in sport or recreation?
 - i. Have you always worked/volunteered in the recreation/sport field?
2. Can you tell me **about the organization** you work for?
 - a. Goals/mission of the organization/club?
 - b. What are the main programs and services offered?
 - c. Approximately how many individuals participate in the organization/club annually?

Inclusion and Access Beliefs

3. What challenges do you think low-income parents/guardians face when facilitating and supporting their child in the sport/recreation activity?
 - a. Why do you think low-income parents face these challenges?
 - b. What factors are leading low-income families to access these financial provisions to begin with?
4. What challenges do you think low-income children face when participating and being included in the sport/recreation activity?
 - a. Why do you think low-income children face these challenges?
5. How would you describe your club/organization's attitudes or beliefs towards inclusion of low-income parents and their children and/or youth?
 - a. Can you give some examples of how this attitude or belief is translated into practice in your organization/club? For example, promote FAPs in the community, it is part of our strategic plan to include low-income children, we provide additional funds to ensure participation, we work with the parents to ensure carpooling, we partner with organizations that have access to low-income families to communicate and process the FAPs, etc.

FAPs Process and Communication

6. Can you explain your understanding of FAPs?
 - a. Why do they exist?
 - b. Who does it support?

- c. Overall impressions of these types of programs?
7. What **FAPs** do you facilitate within your organization (i.e. Kidsport, Jumpstart, Prokids, etc.)?
- a. Can you explain **the design** (i.e. activities funded, eligibility criteria, organization criteria, etc.) **of FAPs**?
 - i. Is the design of FAPs effective in terms of supporting low-income families? Why or why not?
 - ii. Can you describe any drawbacks or gaps of the design of FAPs?
 - iii. Can you describe any strengths of the design of FAPs?
 - b. **How FAPs are processed** within your organization? Starting from the applicant applying, receiving notification of a funded participant, to communication with parents.
 - i. Is this process effective in terms of supporting low-income families? Why or why not?
 - ii. Can you describe any drawbacks or gaps in this current process?
 - iii. Can you describe any strengths in this current process?
 - c. Can you describe the **communication** that takes place between your organization, the applicant and the funding provider (Kidsport, Jumpstart, Prokids)?
 - i. Is this communication effective in terms of supporting low-income families? Why or why not?
 - ii. Can you describe any drawbacks or gaps in the current communication structure?
 - iii. Can you describe any strengths in the current communication structure?
 - d. When reflecting on the ways in which your organization communicates and processes FAPs, can you describe what works well for your organization?
 - e. When reflecting on the ways in which your organization communicate and facilitate FAPs, can you describe what doesn't work well for your organization?
8. How does your organization **promote** the FAPs in the community/membership/parents? For example, paper, flyers, radio, outreach, social media?
- a. Why is this your method of promotion?
 - b. How effective is this method for reaching low-income families?
 - c. If you don't promote the FAPs, why not?
 - i. Who is responsible for promoting FAPs to low-income families?

9. What is the average **funding** participants receive from the FAP?
 - a. Can you describe whether or not the funding from the FAP meet the needs of the child's full participation in the sport or activity?
 - b. What are most common "needs" of participants? i.e. what kind of support do they actually need? (i.e. beyond financial assistance)
 - c. Can you describe any gaps, if any?
 - d. Who these gaps addressed? The parent? Organization?
 - e. How are these gaps addressed?
 - i. I.e. Free equipment, provide additional funding, donate jerseys, etc.
 - ii. In what ways do parents address these gaps?
 - f. Are there any other ways in which process of FAPs are or are not meeting the needs of low-income parents and children participation in recreation/sport?
 - g. What are some of the benefits of FAPs?
 - h. How do these programs benefit the organization? Parents? Children
10. What challenges do you think low-income parents/guardians face when **applying for and processing** FAPs? i.e. meeting registration deadlines, not being aware of FAPs, etc.
 - a. How does your club mitigate these challenges? I.e. flexible payment process, etc.

Support beyond FAP

11. Can you describe what your organization does to support low-income children's participation beyond FAPs?
 - a. How did you/your club or organization decide that this was the best way to support children's participation?
12. Can you describe how your organization supports low-income parents' ability to facilitate their children's participation beyond FAPs?
 - a. How did you/your club or organization decide that this was the best way to support parents?
13. If your organization does not provide support beyond the FAP, why is that?

Opportunities for the future

14. If you had the opportunity to change any part FAPs so that it was more efficient and sustainable for your organization, what would you change and why? (If you had a magic wand, what would you create?)
 - a. Access to staff with the funding agency?
 - b. Application process?
 - c. Communication?
 - d. Funding?

15. If you had the opportunity to change any part FAPs, with no time or money constraints, so that it was more supportive and sustainable for low-income parents/guardians and children, what would you change and why?

16. What, if anything, within your organization would need to change to be more inclusive and supportive of low-income children's participation recreation and sport activities?

Did I miss anything?

17. Is there anything else that you would like to share when it comes to fee assistance programs or facilitating and supporting participation in sport/recreation for low-income parents and children?

Appendix B: Interview Summary

Participant Interview Summary: Administrators' Experiences Facilitating and Supporting Low-Income Children's Participation in Community Sport and Recreation Organizations

By Megan Fortune

Summary of the Project

This study focused on administrators' experiences facilitating fee assistance programs (FAPs) and supporting low-income children's participation in community sport and recreation organizations. I am conducting a study to understand 1) administrators experiences facilitating FAPs and the current design of these programs; 2) additional ways in which administrators support participation for low-income children beyond initial enrollment. FAPs can be organizations such as KidSport, Jumpstart and P.R.O Kids which aim to alleviate the costs associated with recreation and sport participation for low-income children. The following document is a summary of 11 interviews conducted with 12 participants. This summary is divided into sections based on the questions that were asked throughout the interviews.

Administrator Background

The size of community recreation and sport organizations ranged from 30 – 1,500 participants annually.

Sports included in the study across New Brunswick include:

Ice Hockey x2	Baseball	Fast Pitch	Fencing	Soccer
Cheerleading	Artistic Swimming	YMCA	Skating Club	Girl Guides

Inclusion and Access Beliefs

What challenges do you think parents/guardians with low-income face when facilitating and supporting their child in the sport/recreation activity?

The main challenges faced by parents with low-income that were identified throughout the interviews included:

Tangible

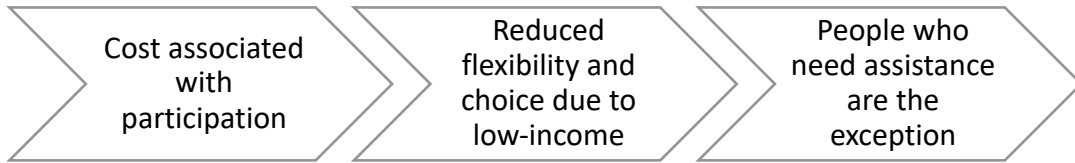
- Equipment
- Finances
- Transportation
- Lack of Information
- Technology/Access to Internet

Intangible

- Shame
- Pride

Why do you think parents with low-income face these challenges?

When asked why parents face these challenges participants expressed:



What challenges do you think children in low-income families face when participating and being included in the sport/recreation activity?

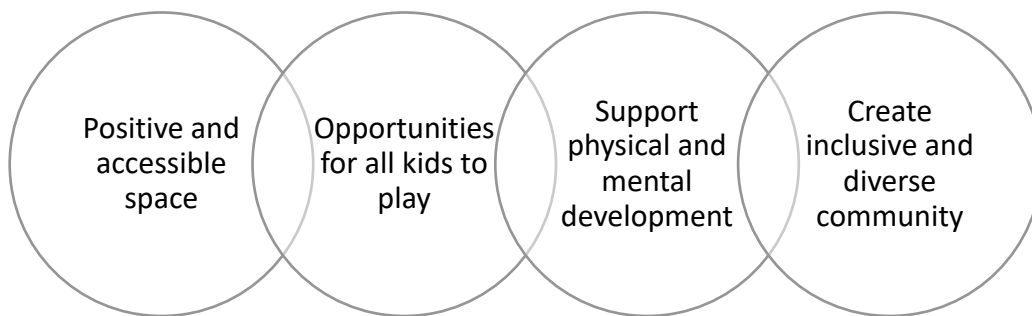
When asked what challenges children with low-income face, participants expressed:



However, some participants expressed that once a child with low-income are enrolled in the sport there are not as many barriers, as it is not easy to identify who is low-income. Another participant expressed ‘why wouldn’t they be included’.

How would you describe your club/organization's attitudes or beliefs towards inclusion of parents with low-income and their children and/or youth?

Participants described their access and inclusion beliefs as follows:



Can you give some examples of how this attitude or belief is translated into practice in your organization/club?

These beliefs and attitudes are translated into practice a variety of ways:

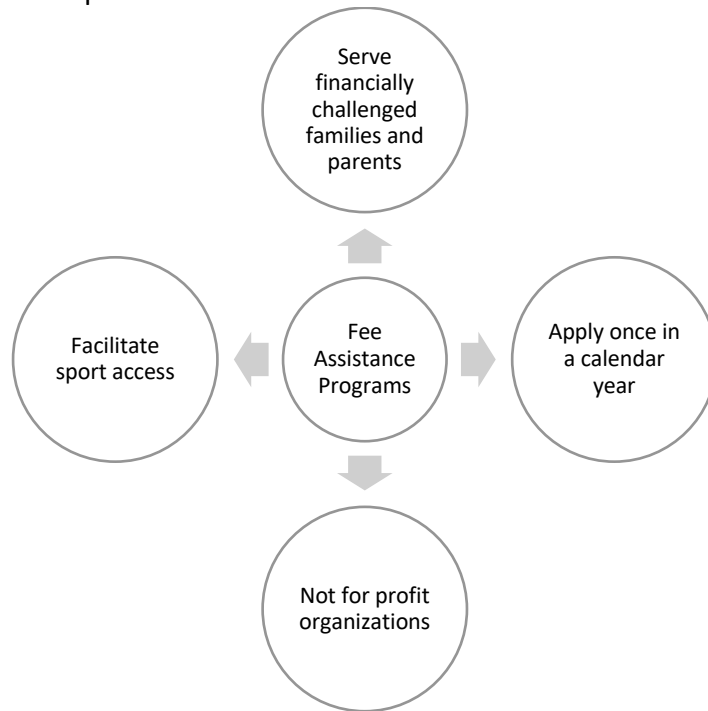
- Specific person who is available and administers FAPs
- Send out information through schools
- Encourage the use of FAPs
- Help with equipment
- Support for indigenous populations
- Working with organizations such as MCAF
- Offer free events/trials
- Telephone committee for those who do not have easy access to the internet
- Different payment methods available, payment plans, flexible payments etc.
- Information sheets/regular newsletters
- Absorb costs that families are not able to cover to allow for continued participation
- Try to keep costs as low as possible
- Some organizations have funds set aside to sponsor a certain number of children every year
- Pay for equipment or conduct equipment swaps
- Assist with registration fees
- Do not stop participation because fees are not paid
- Assess need on a case-by-case basis
- Information sessions at the beginning of the year
- Buddy Program the pairs new parents with veteran parents
- Sponsorship for families with low-income (internal and external)

- Work with local schools to identify children with low-income for sponsorship opportunities
- Special request box on registration form

FAPs Process and Communication

Can you explain your understanding of a FAP?

When participants were asked about their understanding of what an FAP is including why they exist, who they support and their overall impressions of these types of programs, participants explained:



When asked if FAPs are effective or not, some of the participants thought that FAPs were effective because it allows for participation and involvement of children and youth with low-income, a couple of participants stated that they could not speak to whether FAPs are effective as they do not know the specific stats. Additionally, a few participants spoke to how FAPs are not effective, one participant expressed that they aren't effective because only about 1/60 of their organization was using FAPs to participate, while surely more children and youth need financial assistance. Another participant shared that FAPs are only effective for those who are accessing them, but there are still many they don't access FAPs and therefore, do not participate due to financial barriers.

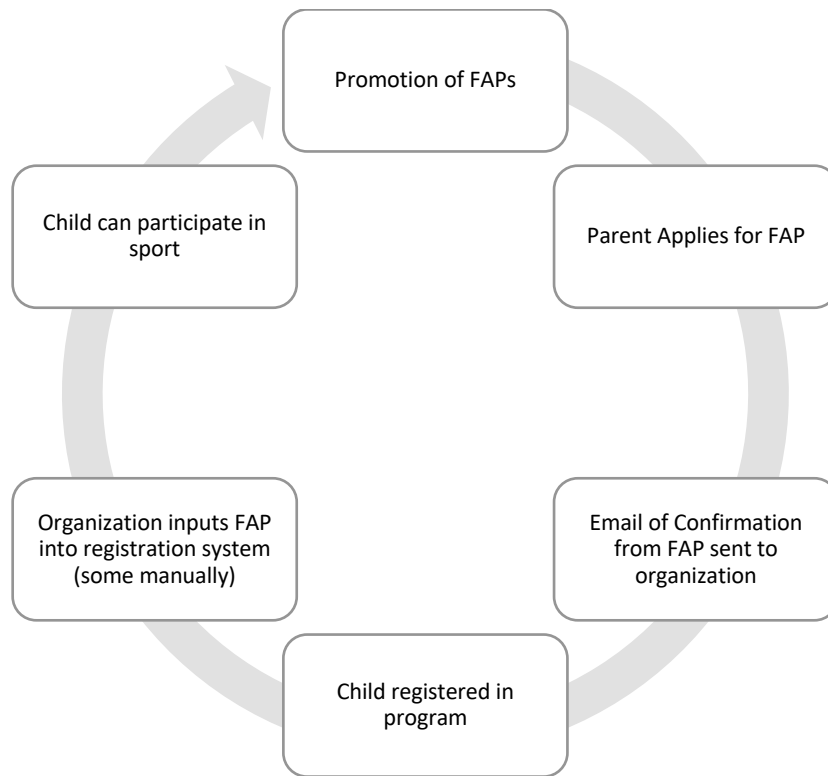
What FAPs do you facilitate within your organization (i.e., KidSport, Jumpstart, Pro Kids)?

The FAPs facilitated through community sport organizations are as follows:

Jumpstart	KidSport	P.R.O. Kids
Government Funding	Brendan Oreto Foundation	Lace It Up
Hockey Canada Covid Relief Fund	Foster Care	St. Mary's First Nation

How are FAPs facilitated within your organization?

The general process explained by participants was as follows:



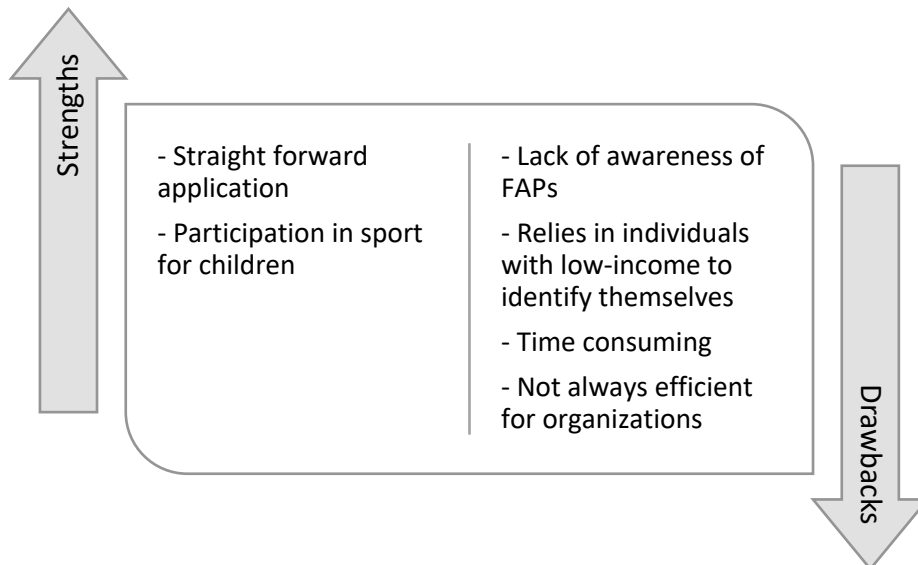
Some people did not know enough about FAPs to speak about the process and how they are facilitated in their organization, in some cases it was all done by the parents, and they just receive a cheque on the other end.

When asked if the current process of FAPs was effective in terms of supporting families with low income, participants expressed that the process of FAPs is effective because there are people using FAPs and they are supporting the end goal of participation. While the overall impression was that FAPs are effective, many of the participants highlighted components of FAPs that hindered the effectiveness of these programs such as:

Components of FAPs that hinder effectiveness

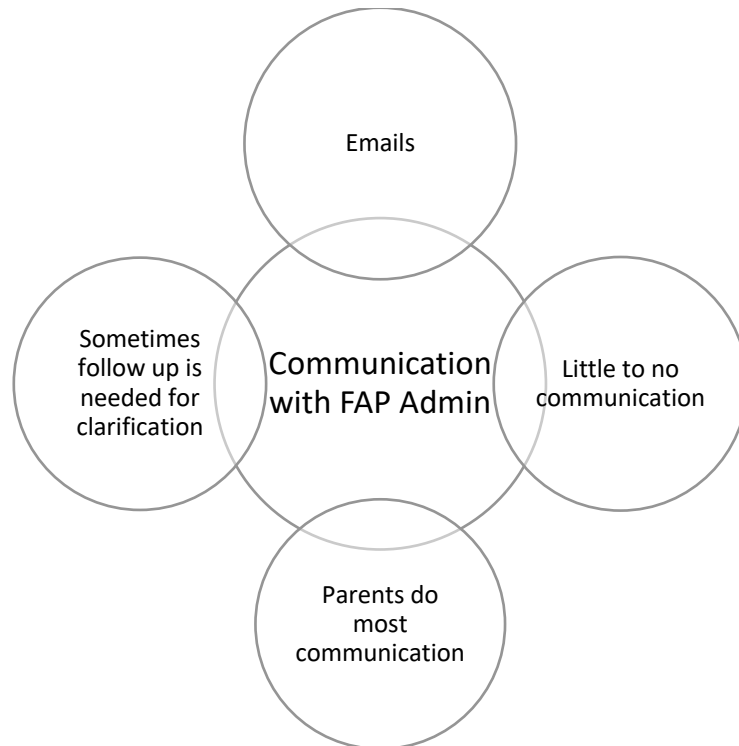
- Access to internet/technology
- Need to be organized to meet deadlines
- Land just outside the low-income cut off, but still need financial support
- Other barriers (equipment, transportation) are not addressed by FAPs

The strengths and drawbacks highlighted from the current process of FAPs included:



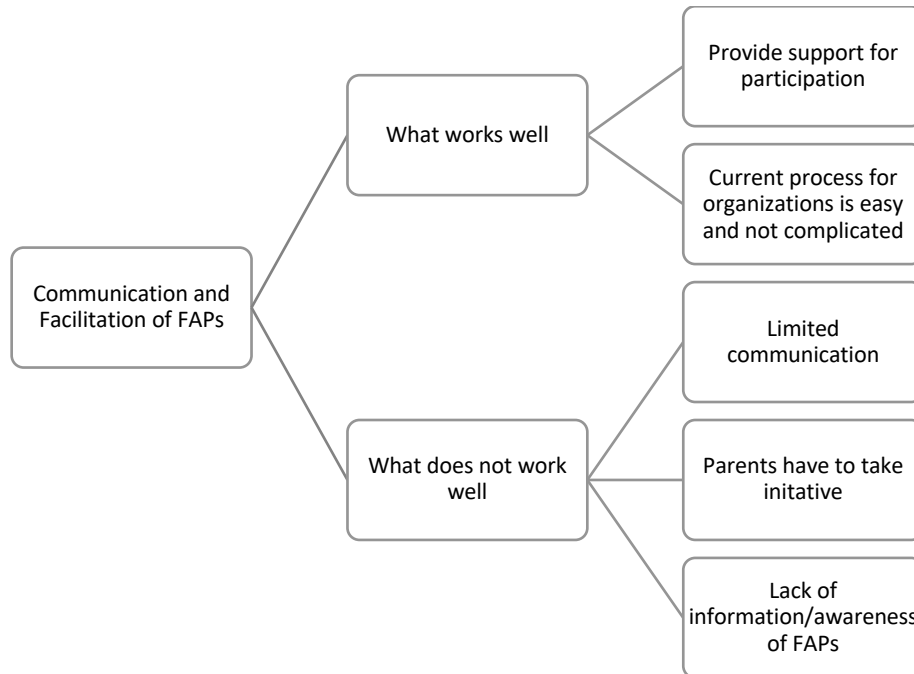
Can you describe the communication that takes place between your organization, the applicant, and the funding provider (Kidsport, Jumpstart, Pro Kids)?

When asked about communication, participants expressed:

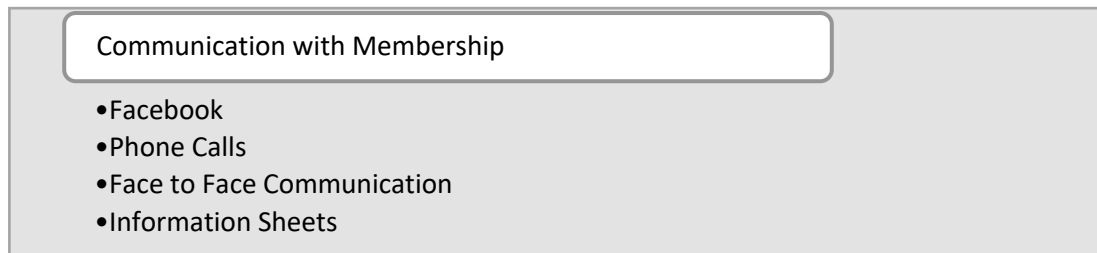


When asked if the communication that currently takes place is effective, participants expressed there wasn't much communication going on between them and the funding providers, so it was hard to judge for them if it was effective or not. One participant explained that it was not effective as they did not have the appropriate contacts and did not know how to obtain those contacts. Others were happy with the current minimal communication structure and explained that it seemed to work for the current process and was easy through email communication.

When reflecting on the way in which the community organizations communicate and facilitate FAPs, participants explained what worked well and what does not:



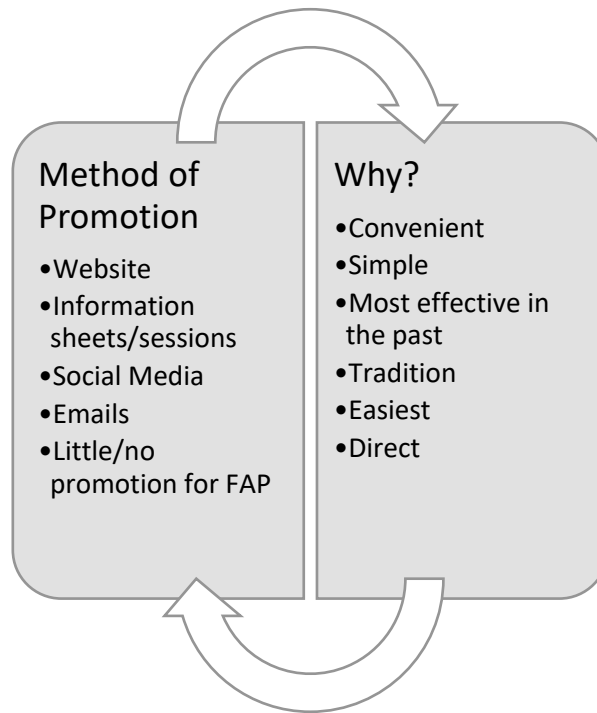
Participants also explained the communication that takes place between them and the individuals with low-income in their organizations:



When asked if these forms of communication with individuals with low-income from their organizations were effective participants expressed the current communication was effective for communicating with their membership. While others stated it is only effective for those who use it.

How does your organization promote the FAPs in the community/membership/parents?

Participants explained their current promotion of FAPs and why this was their method of promotion:



Participants were then asked if this method was effective or not. Almost all participants used the phrase ‘I think so...’ many were unsure of the effectiveness of their current promotion. A couple of participants explained that it is not too effective when all promotion is done through social media/email as not everyone has access to the appropriate internet/technology to access the information. One participant who conducts in person information sessions at the beginning of each season explained that their method of promotion was effective because it allowed for the immediate feedback, and everyone had access to the information.

For those who don’t promote FAPs, it was expressed that they did not know that they could promote it, they wished that they had the appropriate information from the funding provider to properly promote the programs.

When asked who is responsible for promoting FAPs one participant explained that it is the responsibility of all parties to promote FAPs the community organization and the

funding provider, they also expressed that it is the responsibility of the parent to seek funding opportunities as well.

In what ways does your organizations help parents/guardians process the application?

Participants explained how they assist with the application process:

Assistance with FAP application process

- Book meetings with individuals to help with process
- Fill out application with the applicant
- Helped with access to internet, technology and digital literacy
- Paper applications available
- Deliver paper applications to FAP admin offices
- Not everyone was comfortable with the income verification part of the application

As an organization that facilitates FAPs what are your impressions of the eligibility criteria and the verification methods used?

Participants were asked their opinions on eligibility criteria, overall impressions and whether they are necessary or not. Participants expressed:

Why Eligibility Criteria Exists?

- Limited resources available
- People will take advantage of the system

Thoughts on Current Verification Method (Submission of tax form)

- Seems Easy
- Needed to ensure people that need it are the ones getting it
- They are necessary but can be a barrier to the applicants
- Outdated practice and not necessary

When asked if eligibility criteria are beneficial or harmful many of the participants explained that they did not see it as harmful or they saw it in a neutral light. Some of the participants expressed that it could be harmful for participants and provide another barrier to participation or be hurtful to people's pride to prove their income status. Some of the participants felt these criteria were beneficial because it ensures money was going to the right people and is important for the funders to have verification.

Almost all the organizations expressed that eligibility criteria did not have an impact on their organization, except for a few that stated it might deter some people from applying and they could lose a couple of memberships as a result.

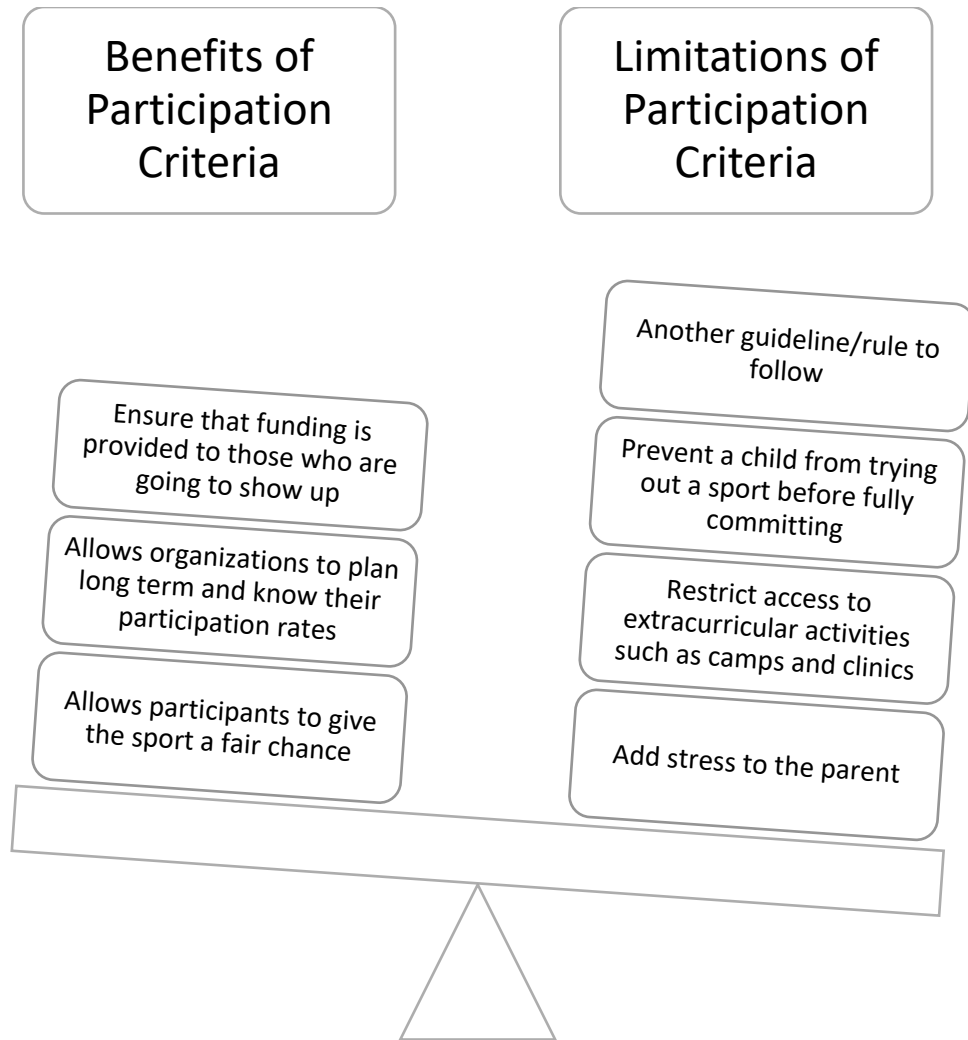
As an organization that facilitates FAPs what are your impressions of the participation criteria?

Participants were asked their opinions on participation criteria, their impressions and whether they are necessary or not:

Impressions of Participation Criteria

- Never heard of participation criteria before.
- Generally aligns with the structure of most sport programs.
- Requires child to fully participate in the sport.
- Could hinder participation as children could miss out on clinics or camps that do not align with the criteria.
- The current criteria does not encompass all of the different sports and therefore is not necessary.

When asked if these participation criteria are beneficial participants explained:

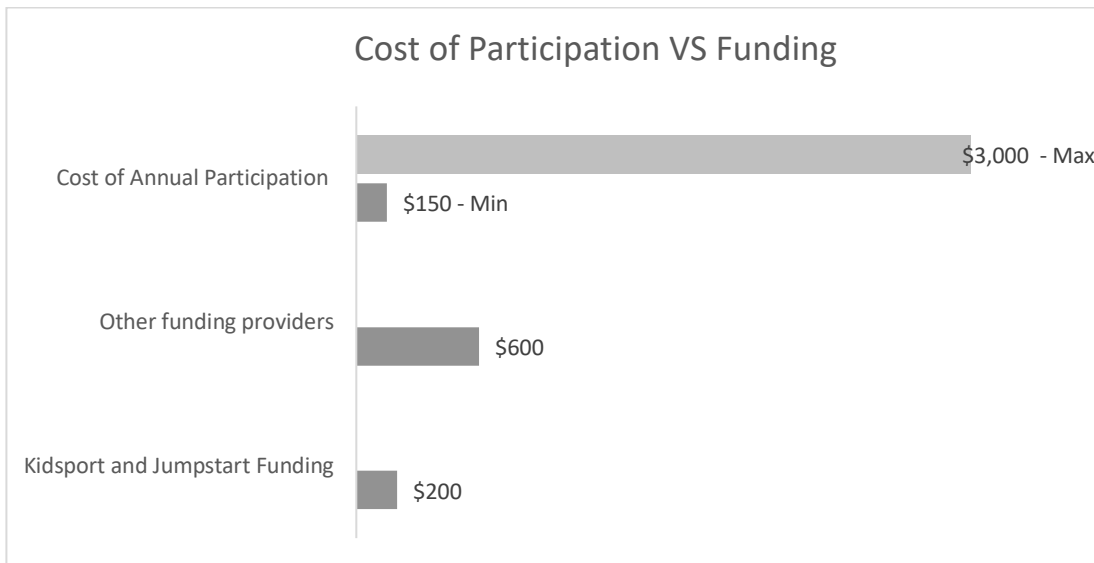


Some participant believed that these criteria did not add further limitations explaining that participation criteria is not verified by the organization so it should not be limiting. There was a consensus that the organizations were not limited by participation criteria.

Benefits and Challenges of FAPs

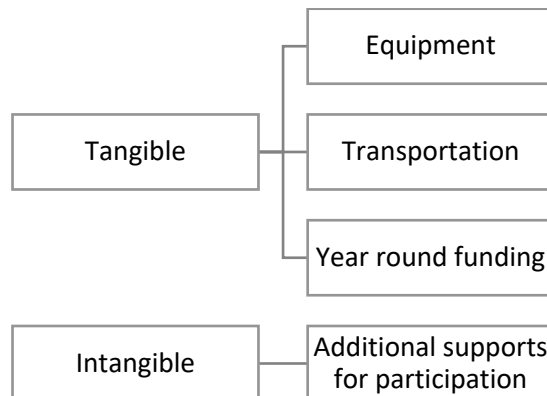
What is the average funding amount that participants receive from the FAP and what is the full cost of participation in the sport?

The general funding amount from KidSport and Jumpstart was \$200, while some organizations had funding of up to \$600 from other funding providers specific to their sport. This is compared to the annual cost of participation which ranged from \$150 to \$3000.



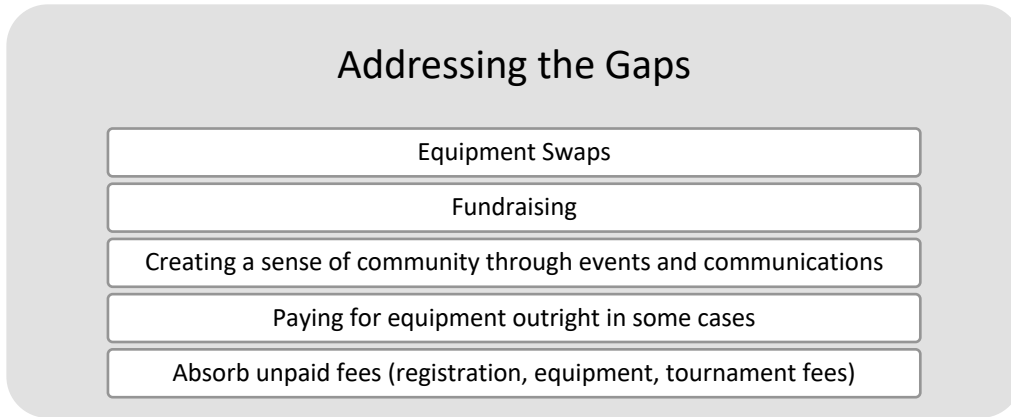
What are most common “needs”/gaps of participants? i.e., what kind of support do they *actually need* beyond financial assistance?

The most common gaps and needs of families and children with low-income identified are as follows:

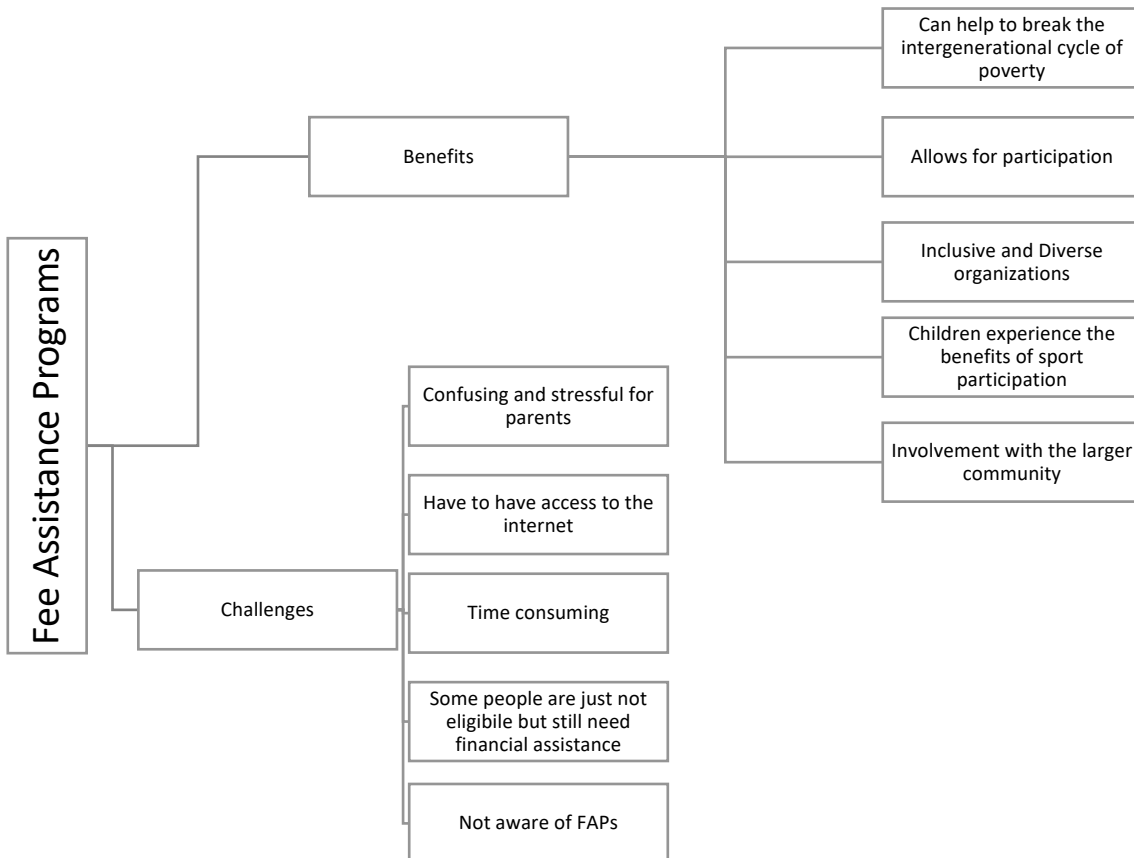


When asked who is affected by these gaps most participants identified the parents and the children because they are the ones that are having to overcome different barriers to facilitate participation in sport. One participant explained that FAPs are set up for financial support, but families with low-income need so many other supports to fully engage in sport participation, it is not all about money.

Organizations were then asked how they addressed these gaps:



The benefits and challenges of FAPs identified by participants are as follows:



Participants in the study were then asked how their organization mitigated some of the challenges faced by parents with low-income:

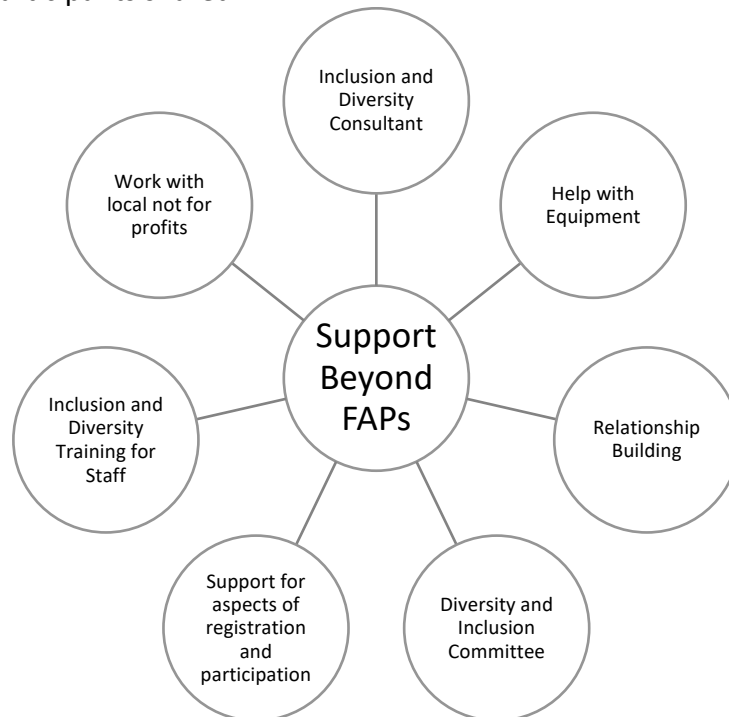
Mitigation of Challenges by Organizations for Parents

- Payment plans
- Flexible registration
- Extra funding from organizations
- Discounts for larger families
- Sponsorships (internal and external)

Support beyond FAP

Can you describe what your organization does to support children and parents from families with low-income’s participation beyond FAPs?

When asked what organizations do to support children from families with low-income beyond FAPs, participants shared:



If your organization does not provide support beyond the FAP, why is that?

One organization did not provide support beyond FAP; however, it was discussed that they did not know how, they did not have to resources or awareness to support families with low-income in their organization.

Opportunities for the future

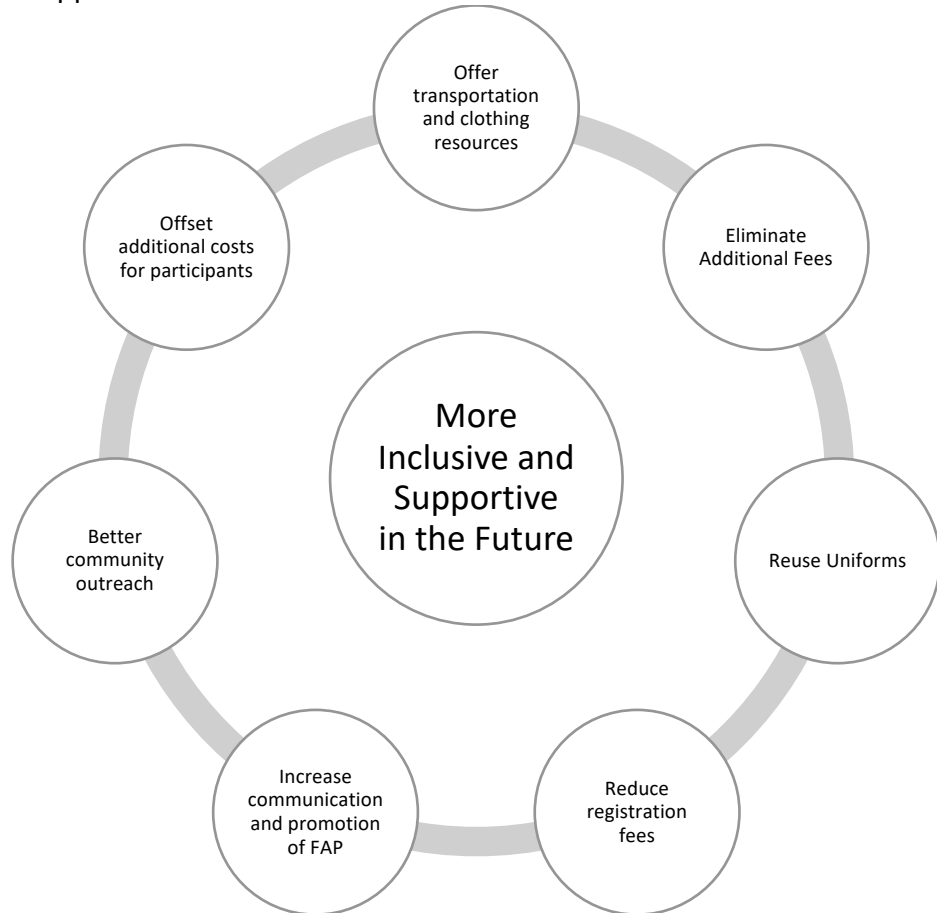
If you had the opportunity to change any part FAPs so that it was more efficient and sustainable for your organization, as well as more supportive and sustainable for low-income parents/guardians and children, what would you change and why?

Participants were asked if they would change any part of FAPs, so they are more efficient and sustainable for their organizations. As well as how to make FAPs more supportive and sustainable for families with low-income:



What, if anything, within your organization would need to change to be more inclusive and supportive of children from low-income families' participation recreation and sport activities?

Participants expressed what would need to change in their organizations to be more inclusive and supportive in the future:



Thank you for your participation!

A more detailed summary is available upon request.

Curriculum Vitae

Candidate's full name:

Megan Fortune

Universities attended:

Master of Arts in Sport and Recreation Studies, University of New Brunswick, 2020 – 2022

Bachelor of Tourism Management with a Major in Recreation, Vancouver Island University, 2016 – 2020.

Study Abroad, University of Canberra, 2018

Publications:

Fortune, M., & Oncescu, J. (under review). Community sport and recreation organizations' inclusion of low-income families in sport and recreation in New Brunswick. *Leisure/Loisir*.

Fortune, M., Oncescu, J., Fisher, L., & Sweatman, M. (2022). Balancing act: A socialist feminist perspective of rural low-income mothers' experiences navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. *Leisure/Loisir*, 1 – 24. DOI: 10.1080/14927713.2022.2054460

Oncescu, J., & Fortune, M. (submitted). Access to recreation in rural communities: Municipal recreation's approaches to supporting citizens living with low incomes. *Journal of Parks and Recreation Administration*.

Oncescu, J., & Fortune, M. (2022). Keeping citizens living with low incomes at arm's length away: The responsabilization of municipal recreation access provisions. *Leisure/Loisir*, 1-23. DOI: 10.1080/14927713.2022.2032806

Oncescu, J., & Fortune, M. (2022). Neoliberalism's influence on recreation access provisions: Municipal recreation practitioners' perspectives. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 1 – 20. DOI: 10.1080/00222216.2022.2044942

Oncescu, J., Froese, J., Fortune, M., Green, L., & Jenkins, J. (2021). Facilitating recreation programs and services for low-income citizens: practitioners' challenges and strategies. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 1-16. DOI: 10.1080/23750472.2021.2005468

Fortune, M., Fournier, J., & Weighill, A. (2020). Technical Report Exploring pro-environmental values, behaviours, and environmental education curriculum and programming in Junior High Schools, Wechiau, Ghana. Vancouver Island University. Retrieved from https://www.aggieweighill.com/uploads/1/0/2/3/102377988/wchs_environmental_education_report_2019.pdf

Conference Presentations:

Fortune, M., Oncescu, J., Fisher, L., & Sweatman, M. (2022). Providing provisions in uncertain times. Poster presentation at the Canadian Rural Revitalization

Foundation and Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation Conference, Rimouski, Quebec.

Fortune M. (2022). Community sport and recreation organizations' social inclusion provisions: addressing participation in sport and recreation for children and youth living in low-income contexts in New Brunswick. University of New Brunswick Graduate Research Conference, Fredericton, NB.

Fortune, M., & Brennan, G. (2019). Collaborative tourism development. Poster presentation at the Travel & Tourism Research Association Conference, Saskatoon, SK. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=ttrac_anada_2019_conference
