

Finding Belonging through Traditional Karate for Children from Low-Income Settings: A Grounded Theory

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Poverty affects 12.3% of all Canadians and inordinately impacts children. Poverty lowers life satisfaction and increases mental health disorders. Sport can improve social and emotional health, however only 44% of children from low-income settings participate in sport. This research aimed to examine the social and emotional benefits and barriers of traditional karate for children from low-income settings through the following research questions: What are the experiences of children who participate in karate and their parents?, and What are the underlying social processes that support or prevent children from low-income settings and their families to participate in karate?

Charmaz's Constructivist Grounded Theory with a patient-oriented approach was used to gather and analyze data. 7 parents and 8 children participated in the study through a demographic survey, photo voice exercise, and a total of 34 interviews. Data analysis followed Charmaz's Constructive Grounded Theory process of initial coding, advanced coding, and theoretical coding.

The social problem elucidated through analysis was that children from low-income settings lacked opportunities to belong to the wider community. Parents desired their children to be part of groups and have the chance to do fun activities but were limited in their ability to provide these experiences. The underlying social process that described this was finding belonging. Finding belonging is an ongoing process wherein children move from being outsiders to being insiders. Finding belonging consists of three parts; physical belonging, social belonging and building competency. Without physical belonging children have no opportunity to belong socially or build competence and all three parts are needed on the quest to find belonging.

Children need opportunities to find belonging and sport is one way to do this. Nurses have a role in improving equity in sport for children through educating, and advocating for policy changes and improved infrastructure.