

**Sports as a Passport to Success: Life Skill Integration in a Positive Youth
Development Program**

Michael A. Hemphill¹, Barrie Gordon², and Paul M. Wright³

¹*Department of Kinesiology, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA*

²*Faculty of Education, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*

³*Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education, Northern Illinois University, USA*

For correspondence: hemphill@uncg.edu.

Sports as a Passport to Success: Life Skill Integration in a Positive Youth Development Program

Background: Sports-based positive youth development (SBYD) programs aim to teach life skills to youth within a physical activity context. An explicit objective of most SBYD programs is that youth learn to apply, or transfer, life skills beyond the sports program. Limited research has been conducted on the cognitive processes that help youth understand how life skills apply within and beyond sports.

Purpose: This study uses a conceptual framework on transfer of life skills to examine the role of life skills in an SBYD program. Research questions include: 1) how does the SBYD program integrate life skills, 2) how do youth participants experience the life skills in the boxing program, and 3) how do the youth participants perceive the life skills to impact them beyond the program.

Methodology: This research took place at three community boxing programs in New Zealand. The program was selected because it was committed to implementing a life skills framework called the Passport to Success. Forty-one youth participated in focus groups interviews about their experience in the program. Additionally, observations of the program documented the daily routines of each boxing gym. Using a qualitative case study design, inductive analysis and constant comparative methods were used to examine data from focus group interviews with youth participants.

Findings: Youth participants perceived life skills to be a foundational component of the boxing program. The life skills were presented to youth through the “Passport to Success” a document containing eight key values. The coaches focused on the Passport in several ways, including setting an expectation that youth memorize the life skills to demonstrate their commitment. Several youth participants discussed learning valuable lessons around the values and this was observed during reflective sessions where youth were given opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of the Passport. Finally, youth were able to describe scenarios which demonstrated how the life skills connected with other areas of their lives.

Discussion: Life skills implementation was guided by the Passport to Success and an expectation that youth develop positive relationships at the gym. A routine strategy for memorizing the Passport to Success provided a clear example of youth learning the meaning of life skills in the context of sports. The youth participants demonstrated cognitive connections in their explanation of the value of life skills beyond the boxing program. Using the conceptual framework on transfer (Jacobs & Wright, 2017) helps to explain the cognitive connections youth participants make between life skills in a sports program and their application beyond sports.

Keywords: positive youth development, transfer, life skills

Introduction

This paper reports on a New Zealand based program that uses the sport of boxing as a context to teach life skills to youth. The Billy Graham youth development program began as a single boxing academy for boys in 2004. It has since expanded to five academies within New Zealand, two of which also have girl's classes. The development of the program was organic, evolving through a grassroots approach driven by boxing coach Billy Graham, a New Zealand boxing champion. While centered around the sport of boxing, the program places a strong emphasis on the teaching of eight life skills, which are presented to youth participants as the "Passport to Success" (see Table 1). The purpose of this study was to examine how a grassroots community youth sports program integrates life skills into its programs and the perceived impact of the life skills on youth participants.

Positive youth development (PYD) is an approach to youth work grounded in a belief that all youth have strengths and skills that can be cultivated when aligned with appropriate resources. It is considered that PYD occurs most effectively when youth have positive relationships with peers, adults, and the institutions in their lives (Lerner et al. 2017). PYD

65 programs view youth as unique individuals and acknowledges that developmental challenges
66 impact youth in different ways. However, PYD programs avoid framing developmental issues as
67 problems to overcome (Damon 2004). Instead PYD programs focuses on the potential of youth,
68 including youth who are defined by society as at-risk or disadvantaged (Lerner and Benson
69 2003). PYD outcomes include a holistic set of development assets including 1) physical
70 development, 2) intellectual development, 3) emotional development, and 4) social development.
71 (Hamilton, Hamilton, and Pittman 2004). The developmental assets are often conceptualized by
72 PYD programs as life skills that can be applied in multiple contexts beyond a PYD program
73 (Hellison 2011; Holt 2016).

74 Sport-based youth development (SBYD) programs intentionally use sport and physical
75 activity contexts as the means for achieving PYD outcomes. They provide youth with structured
76 sport and physical activity experiences that explicitly prioritize the development of personal and
77 social life skills, along with the physical development more commonly associated with sport
78 participation. In this context, life skills are broadly defined as personal assets that enable youth to
79 survive and thrive in different areas of their lives (Danish, Forneris, and Wallace 2005).
80 Effective communication is an example of one life skill that youth can practice within a SBYD
81 setting, and then learn to apply in their personal, professional, and social lives. SBYD programs
82 are offered in a variety of contexts and ways. For example, programs that use the Teaching
83 Personal and Social Responsibility through physical activity model (TPSR; Hellison 2011) tend
84 to include a variety of physical activities that meet the needs and interests of youth. In contrast
85 programs such as the First Tee golf program utilize a single sport to teach core values to youth
86 participants (Weiss et al. 2013).

Best practices for life skill development in SBYD programs include a focus on developing positive relationships, an explicit focus on the teaching and learning of life skills and the transfer of these into other areas of participants lives, and integrating life skill instruction throughout sports programs (Fraser-Thomas, Cote, and Deakin 2007). When a positive climate and a focus on life skills are present, SBYD outcomes are enhanced and transfer of life skills to other areas is more likely (Holt et al. 2017). Many programs developed with the intent to focus on life skills (e.g. Martinek, Schilling, and Hellison 2006; Weiss et al. 2013), take advantage of previous knowledge of PYD frameworks such as the developmental assets. Others, however, are developed from a grassroots approach of providing sport opportunities to youth. Such programs may focus on life skills, to the extent that they align with their mission and meet the needs of youth in their communities. In many cases, this is an organic process based on perceptions of what works and what doesn't rather than strong theoretical knowledge. For example, Haudenhuyse and colleagues (2012) describe a grassroots boxing program that was developed and led by an Olympic boxer in Belgium. The program was developed through trial and error over time. The credibility of the well-known boxing coach led to effective relationship development with youth that provided a strong foundation for PYD to thrive.

More research is needed to understand how life skills are integrated in SBYD programs that have developed from a grassroots perspective. The findings from such research would inform SBYD scholars and practitioners on ways that sport can more effectively enhance PYD.

Conceptual Framework

Research on SBYD programs has demonstrated that participation can result in the development of life skills (Fraser-Thomas, Cote, and Deakin 2005), and some studies suggest that the transfer of this learning to other areas of participants lives is an outcome of high quality

SBYD programs (Allen, Rhind, and Koshy 2015; Walsh, Ozaeta, and Wright, 2010). Several qualitative case studies provide evidence that youth participants, parents, and teachers perceive a positive impact of SBYD programs in other areas of participants lives such as school (Hemphill and Richards 2016; Hellison and Walsh 2002). In other studies, self-report measures of transfer have provided voice to participants and stakeholders to express their perceptions of transfer and help clarify contextual factors that inhibit or enable transfer to occur (Lee and Martinek 2013).

The question of whether transfer occurs, and if so, what processes facilitate transfer remains a hot topic in scholarly conversation. A recently published conceptual framework for transfer (Jacobs and Wright 2017) focuses on the cognitive processes that help to bridge the gap between the learning of life skills and the application of those skills within and beyond sports. The authors argue that consideration must be given to these cognitive processes if transfer of learning is to be fully understood. Jacobs and Wright's (2017) framework addresses several shortcomings around transfer that have been identified in the literature. Previous research suggests that youth are not always fully aware of the life skills being taught in their programs (Danish, Forneris, and Wallace 2005) or that the life skills are applicable outside of the program (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, and Jones 2005). To address this limitation, Jacobs and Wright (2017) draw upon transformative experiences (Pugh et al. 2010) as a framework to explain how youth can apply learning to situations outside the SBYD program itself.

The conceptual model for skill transfer in SBYD includes four components: 1) program implementation, 2) student learning, 3) cognitive connections, and 4) application. The transfer process begins with program implementation, including the integration of life skills into activities. Quality program implementation provides the foundation upon which life skills can be learned through sport participation. Second, youth learn more about the life skills introduced in

133 sport. This increased level of awareness may allow youth to understand the complexities of life
134 skills within the context of sport. Third, the transfer process continues as youth make cognitive
135 connections. In other words, as youth see the value of life skills in the sport context their
136 perception of the utility of like skills within and beyond sports may expand. The cognitive
137 process also considers the motivation of youth to use, or transfer, life skills. Finally, the
138 application of life skills beyond sports includes behavior changes, informed decision making, or
139 changes in worldview. The application of life skills is considered more broadly than previous
140 research and is not limited to observable behavior change. The model acknowledges that a
141 variety of contextual factors (i.e. student, teacher, and environment) influence program activities
142 and outcomes.

143 When considering programs through the conceptual model of life skill transfer, it is
144 important to first consider the learning that takes place within a youth development program
145 before considering how life skills are transferred beyond the program (Jacobs and Wright 2017).
146 The question of life skill learning and transfer often begins at the end, examining how transfer
147 has occurred without first establishing the teaching and learning of life skills within the contexts
148 of a youth program. Therefore, research that documents the implementation of life skills in the
149 program, the processes and procedures that occur in practice, along with the youth perspectives,
150 can help advance research related to transfer of learning and SBYD.

151 **Methods**

152 This study utilized a qualitative case study approach (Yin 2002) because it allowed the
153 researchers to examine youth perceptions of the learning of life skills within the real world
154 context of their SBYD program. Ethical approval to complete this study was obtained from the
155 Victoria University of Wellington human subjects ethics committee. Informed consent was

obtained from all individual participants in the study. Additional informed consent was obtained from all individual participants for whom identifying information is included in this article.

Program Description

The Billy Graham Youth Foundation is a non-profit organization that aims to empower youth to reach their full potential through community boxing programs. The program was founded in 2006 by a retired New Zealand boxing champion Billy Graham. For several years, Coach Graham administered the community boxing program at a gymnasium adjacent to his home and within the community that is served by the program. Over the past 12 years, the program has grown to include four additional locations and has aspirations to expand to other areas within New Zealand in the coming years. Since opening with an initial focus on serving boys, the program has grown to be inclusive of boys and girls who participate separately. Classes are divided into three groups including fundamentals (9-10 years), juniors (11-13 years) and seniors (14-18 years).

Youth participants typically attend boxing practices twice per week. The boxing related activities include skill practice and conditioning drills presented in a standard format. Sparring was also included in the program, but those who wished to spar are only allowed to do so when the coaches consider they have reached a sufficient level of skill and experience. Sparring was always optional, and while popular with most of the boys, some boys never chose to spar. In addition to the boxing activities, the class gathered together to sit as a group at the start and at the end of each session. The initial gathering was a time to focus the boys on the coming session, to discuss what had been happening for them since the last session and to reinforce the underpinning values. The concluding session was an opportunity for boys to recite their values and to talk about the session. It always finished with the boys being given food bars and fruit.

While the program is strongly focused on boxing it also has a clear and explicit focus on eight life skills presented to the youth as “The Passport to Success” (Table 1). The passport defines each of the eight life skills at length. For example, the Passport’s definition for “Respect” is “willingness to treat with courtesy; to hold in high regard, to honour, to care about yourself.” The definition is accompanied in the Passport by several examples of respect:

Treat everyone you meet as if they were the most important person in the world; Make the most of yourself for that is all there is of you; Respectful behaviour is the oil that keeps a class working well; If you want to be respected, you must respect yourself; Treat others the way you would want to be treated; Respect the right to be listened to, learn and be safe in our classroom.

The eight values are provided to all youth participants in a pamphlet format and each value is prominently placed on the walls of the gym. See Table 1 for a list of each life skill and examples, as they were presented to youth participants.

Program Setting

At the time of this study, the BGYF operated boxing academies in three locations: NaeNae, Cannon’s Creek, and Ashburton. Each location uses the Passport to Success as its life skill curriculum. Billy Graham is still active in administrating and coaching at the NaeNae Academy. Cannons Creek and Ashburton have attempted to replicate the practices established at NaeNae with separate coaches and administrative staff. All the boxing academies have a central location in the communities they serve. Youth participants are often recommended to join the boxing academies by school officials or community police officers based on their need for structured out-of-school programming. The BGYF has established strong relationships with the New Zealand police and the community police officers. Most notably, one police officer was assigned

to work full time with the BGYF for 18 months. During that time, the officer led a variety of initiatives including inviting other officers to visit boxing academies, coordinating the enrollment of youth who may benefit from the academies, and developing critical program infrastructure such as a code of conduct.

Research Questions

To explain how the SBYD program integrated positive youth development, this study aims to address the following questions: 1) how does the SBYD program integrate life skills, 2) how do youth participants experience the life skills in the boxing program, and 3) how do the youth participants perceive the life skills to impact them beyond the program.

Participants and Focus Group Interviews

Youth participants (N = 41) participated in semi-structured focus group interviews about their experience in the program. An effort was made to have a representative sample across the three program sites. At Naenae Academy, 14 boys participated in two focus groups (8 senior; 6 junior). At Cannon's Creek 12 boys (4 senior; 4 junior; 4 fundamental) and 10 girls (5 junior; 5 fundamental) participated. At Ashburton five senior boys were interviewed. All focus group interviews followed a semi-structured approach where the interviewer asked a lead question and used follow-up questioning to probe the responses. Example questions included what are the most important things you learn at BGYF?, Do you apply any lessons learned in the gym at home or at school?, and what would you say about the program to a friend who was considering joining?

Field Notes

Extensive field notes, the second author observed over fifty sessions across the three academies, were taken by the research team during visits to the gym. Field notes focused on documenting

the presence or absence of a focus on life skills. For example, the researchers noted when youth participants reflected on life skills at the end of practice or were recognized by coaches for positive behaviors. The field notes helped the researchers understand the extent to which life skills were featured in the program alongside the boxing practice.

Data Analysis

Inductive analysis and constant comparative methods were used to examine data from focus group interviews with youth participants (Strauss and Corbin 2015). A qualitative codebook was developed by the first author and reviewed by the research team. The codes included operational definitions of themes that were applied across all of the focus group data (Richards and Hemphill 2018). Several methodological strategies were employed to promote the trustworthiness of findings. First, the second author spent extensive amounts of time in the SBYD setting before, during, and after the completion of this study. This prolonged engagement helped to gain the trust of participants. The first and third author also visited two of the boxing gyms on multiple occasions. Second, audit trails of the data were maintained using qualitative data management software. Third, the three authors routinely debriefed the through face-to-face and virtual meetings. Finally, the research team used a proactive approach to address cultural issues. The second researcher, who was of Samoan/New Zealand ethnicity, helped ensure the data collection, analysis, and reporting were sensitive to cultural issues that often emerge in minority populations (Wright et al. 2018). For example, he conducted focus group interviews where there were predominately Pasifika participants.

Results

Program observations and interviews with youth participants demonstrated that the BGYF had an intentional focus on life skills and that the life skills were valued by youth participants. The

248 results section is organized around the three research questions. The gender of the participant,
249 and the boxing academy they were a member of, is listed alongside each quote. Additionally,
250 Table 2 illustrates how the findings align with the conceptual framework for transfer of life
251 skills.

252 *How does the SBYD Program Integrate Life Skills?*

253 The teaching and learning around the Passport to Success, and the life skills it described,
254 occurred in several ways. All the participants, and their families received copies of the Passport
255 to Success document when they first enrolled in to the academy. It was explained that the
256 Passport to Success was the underpinning framework for the academy and that the life skills
257 contained in it were the most important things that they would learn from attending. The
258 participants were encouraged to memorize the life skills, descriptions and examples so they
259 could confidently recite them in front of others. During the final few minutes of each session the
260 participants joined together in a circle. Several youth referred to this as the “circle of trust”
261 where they could “talk about anything” (Cannon’s Creek boys). During this time, they were also
262 given an opportunity to recite a life skill. Any participant who could recite one of the life skills in
263 its totality, received a magnet acknowledging the achievement which they then attached to their
264 lockers. This led to the life skills being prominently placed on the gym locker of several youth
265 participants. The field notes also recorded the program leader, Coach Graham, as “talking to
266 them about the values again and again trying to encourage them to learn them.” When they could
267 recite all eight values successfully they were awarded a life membership of the academy. The
268 eight life skills were also prominently displayed on the walls of the boxing gym and on occasions
269 referred to by the coaches during the boxing sessions. During the circle time the coaches often
270 discussed the values in relation to participants lives. For example, one day the researcher

271 observed that “it was really interested that they spent 10 minutes discussing the passport to
272 success and the values, but for the first-time kindness was the value, and [the coach] was
273 attempting to relate it to the kids’ lives outside of the gym.”

274 It was notable, however, that the life skills were not integrated in a practical sense into
275 the activity part of the lesson and there were few examples of the coaches discussing actions and
276 behaviours shown in the boxing sessions with direct reference to the life skills.

277 *How do youth participants experience the life skills?*

278

279 The results indicated that youth participants perceived life skills to be a foundational component
280 of the boxing program. One participant, indicative of many, commented that “boxing is kind of
281 like the last thing we do, it’s so much more other stuff than boxing” (Cannons Creek boys).

282 According to the youth participants, boxing was a “fun” and “challenging” activity that helped
283 them learn “how to build yourself up as a person in general ... as a better and healthier person
284 and to get you confident at school, at home, and in the community” (Ashburton boy). The youth
285 participants seemed to develop these impressions based on intentional program practices that
286 helped youth feel as if the gym was a “safe place to release feelings” (Cannons Creek boy).

287 One important underlying belief was that in order to facilitate the learning of life skills it
288 was imperative that the youth established positive and respectful relationships with each other
289 and with the coaches. The researchers observed consistent efforts to build these relationships
290 among peers and adults. The most commonly observed example was the expectation that
291 students get to know each other well. Field notes explained that “everyone went around and
292 shook hands and introduced them self” and “that this was a safe place was emphasized to the
293 group.” Youth participants were expected to learn everyone’s name and on occasions when they
294 had forgotten someone’s name, they had conversations to help them learn more about each other.

295 Coach Graham often explained to the students that, “you all have 30 friends in this room and you
296 need to look after them.”

297 Focus group interviews revealed that the positive relationships made students feel as if
298 the gym was a “safe haven” that it “makes everyone feel so welcome and comfortable.” Boys
299 and girls referred to the boxing gym as a “brotherhood” or “sisterhood.” One girl explained that,
300 “I’ve made lots of new friends and it’s all about our values, it’s so cool to be with all these girls
301 who help me learn and all that, I have so much fun” (CC girls). According to youth participants,
302 the positive atmosphere is grounded in their appreciation for the respect shown by their coaches.
303 “Billy respects us,” explained one senior level participant, “this whole gym is a family.” At
304 Ashburton, youth participants offered an example of how one coach goes beyond expectations to
305 support youth,

306 Murray he's just the man aye ... Like he had a really awesome car with like butterfly
307 doors and stuff, and he's like ‘wait some boys can't get themselves to boxing, even though
308 they really want to so, I'll go get a van so I can pick up some boys and bring them to
309 boxing.’ So that's just because Murray was such a good man ... he sold his car ... now
310 we can go pick up all the boys.

311 Across all three gyms, students cited positive relationships with coaches. For example,
312 several students described Ally as someone they would trust to discuss personal issues with. “If I
313 had a problem, I’d go to Ally about it because she is not a biased type of person and you can talk
314 to her about anything,” explained one of the Cannon’s Creek Junior girls. Another explained
315 that, “If I was feeling uncomfortable about anything I would go to Ally.” Some youth were
316 surprised by the caring relationships of adults, “Yeah I don’t really think adults cared about what
317 I did as a kid, but whenever I come here they are always talking about what I have done in sport

318 or in the weekend or when I was away. So just real friendly as if they are our parents.” As a
319 result of their participation in the boxing program, youth participants generally described
320 themselves as being “a better friend now than I used to be before joining the gym” and having
321 “heaps more friendships.”

322 During focus group interviews, all youth participants (N = 41) reporting learning at least
323 one of the eight life skills of the Passport to Success. Field notes reported several examples of
324 students reciting the life skills and being encouraged to practice them by coaches. Many
325 reporting memorizing all eight life skills and being recognized for their learning with a life
326 membership to the boxing academy. Group meetings at the beginning and end of practices
327 typically included opportunities for youth participants to discuss life skills and attempt to recite
328 them from memory. This often led students to make efforts to practice memorizing the life skills
329 outside of the program. According to one boy this was often challenging, “I can like remember
330 them one night but forget the next day.”

331 ***How do the youth participants perceive the life skills to impact them beyond the program?***

332 Several youth participants discussed learning valuable lessons that apply beyond the boxing
333 gym. For example, an Ashburton boy described that in the past “if people called me names I
334 would punch them and now [coach] has taught me how to control that.” One Naenae senior boy
335 explained that he previously had “a bad temper” but “I came here and you know my temper’s got
336 a bit better and my people skills are better.” Other students explained that they are learning to put
337 in a good effort, “we try our best and we know it’s okay to have a bad day as long as we try our
338 best.” Youth participants also recognized that life skills are relevant to different contexts. For
339 example, when asked which was more important the youth explained that “no one [life skill] is
340 better than the other because they all tell different messages.” Another participant elaborated to

341 explain that “maybe in one situation respect or responsibility would be more important than
342 honesty and truthfulness, they each have their own strengths.”

343 Focus group interviews revealed examples of students using a cognitive bridging process
344 to connect life skills with other areas of their lives. For example, one student described that he
345 realized how honesty and truthfulness was applicable to school:

346 I used to lie a lot to teachers and stuff so I didn’t have to get into trouble. But now that
347 I’ve learned Honesty and Truthfulness, there’s one thing on the [Passport to Success]
348 that’s 100% true, it’s that if you tell the truth you don’t have to remember what you said.
349 If you lie, and you say something the next day you’ll probably say another thing so
350 you’ve got to like keep on remembering your lies.

351 Several other students made comments suggesting that “my teacher noticed a big difference in
352 my behavior in the class” after they joined the boxing gym. For example, one student described
353 that “sometimes behind my teacher’s back I would be silly, but then I started to learn to be
354 respectful to her, to be compassionate, and show mercy to other people.” She explained that she
355 changed her behavior out of compassion because “it can take all [of a teacher’s] lunch time to
356 solve a problem.” One Cannon’s Creek girl explained that “I try to teach them to other people at
357 my school because there are some people who are really disrespectful and I try to teach them to
358 be more respectful.” Another student interjected that she also tries to show others how to respect
359 people at school, but “it is quite difficult for some people.”

360 One Cannon’s Creek senior boy explained that the value of respect was different from his
361 home environment. “I don’t get given a lot of respect,” he explained, “so there’s really no point
362 in giving respect if they are not going to be bothered to respect me.” However, other youth
363 explained using their life skills to impact on family,

364 With respect, I use it against my sister. If she is not respecting me I just bring up the fact
365 that we respect each other at the gym and when it comes to home time it changes
366 sometimes, so I just use it and I just keep reminding her that it is important to live these
367 values, including to your sisters (CC Junior girls).

368 Another girl agreed with this sentiment and added, I just don't listen to my own opinion and
369 forget about other people's [opinion]. I now realize that you have to get everyone's opinion to
370 get the best of what you are doing." Finally, one boy recalled an anecdote of the life skills impact
371 his decisions in the community,

372 this lady was putting shopping into a car and she was struggling and so then I went over
373 and helped her, and then after doing that it kind of made me feel better. But if I haven't
374 gone to this gym ... I probably would have just let her do her thing and go home but
375 coming to the gym made me realize what the values mean a lot more, instead of just
376 words but then realizing what they are.

377 **Discussion**

378 This study examined a SBYD boxing program that explicitly incorporated the teaching and
379 learning of life skills as an integral part of the experience. The study sought to identify 1) how
380 the SBYD program integrated the teaching and learning of life skills, 2) how youth participants
381 experience the life skills in the boxing program, and 3) how the youth participants perceived the
382 life skills to impact them beyond the program. The major sources of data were the voices of the
383 youth participants and extensive observational field notes. The findings were considered through
384 the lens of the theoretical conceptual framework on transfer of life skills developed by Jacobs
385 and Wright (2017).

386 Prior research on SBYD programs has suggested that using intentional strategies for the
387 teaching of life skills, and integrating the learning of them into the physical activity component

of the program, are two practices likely to increase the effectiveness of the learning (Hellison 2011; Martinek and Lee 2012). In this study the Passport to Success, and the eight values identified within it, were identified as being the central platform for learning of life skills. Observations of the program documented the intentional practices that were employed by coaches to integrate life skills. These included setting an expectation that students memorize the eight life skills and the supporting examples used to describe them in practice. The eight life skills were also prominently displayed within the gyms, which was a visual reminder of their importance, and at the conclusion of most sessions there was discussion among the group around some aspect of the Passport to Success. The ready availability of copies of the Passport to Success within the gyms, and the regular handing of copies to parents, care givers and visitors, all reinforced its importance. While a number of intentional teaching practices were observed, there was little evidence of the second recommended practice, the teaching of life skills being integrated into the boxing related physical activities.

Central to all SGYD programs is the expectation that life skills learnt in the program will be applied by participants to other aspects of their lives. This transfer of learning is essentially the justification given for SBYD programs and the degree to which it occurs is an important measure of program success. Previous research on transfer of life skills has generally emphasized outcomes through self-reports of transfer experiences by youth and other stakeholders (Gordon 2010; Walsh, Ozaeta, and Wright 2010). While there is a great deal to be learnt from outcome based research, there are also limitations to this approach. It has been suggested that, as an alternative, researchers should examine what happens within the program,

with the intention of better identifying the relationship between the actual experiences of participants and the observed outcomes (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom, and Coalter 2012).

This study was designed to identify the procedures and processes that occurred within the BGYF programs and their relationship to the learning and transfer of life skills. The youth participants reported that they had developed an understanding of the life skills presented in the Passport to Success and were aware of ways in which they might be applied outside of the boxing gym. Many of them gave specific examples of the life skills having a tangible and positive impact on their lives outside the gym. One boy, for example, explained that he realized that honesty was a life skill he could apply at school to make his life easier because “if you lie ... you have to keep remembering your lies”.

When these examples of transfer are considered through the lens of the Jacobs and Wright (2017) transfer framework (Table 2), it is reasonable to conclude that many of the youth participants had developed cognitive connections between what was happening in the gym and their outside lives. In terms of the processes occurring within the program, all four components of the transfer process; program implementation, student learning, cognitive connections and application were observed to be occurring. This study adds to the knowledge base of transfer of learning by using the cognitive bridging process as a lens to observe the process by which youth begin to understand how life skills apply within and beyond the sport context (Jacobs and Wright 2017).

As detailed previously, many writers have commented on the need to integrate the learning of life skills with the physical activity inherent in a SBYD to achieve successful transfer of values outside of the gym. The success of this program, despite the lack of a specific

432 integration of the teaching of values and activity, suggest that the need for integration may not be
433 as clear cut as some writers recommend.

434 While the pedagogical approaches used within a program are important, the program
435 culture and the quality of relationships within it have also been identified as important elements
436 in the teaching and learning of values (Holt 2016; Jacobs, Knoppers, and Webb 2013; Walsh,
437 Veri, and Willard 2015). Within these programs the consistent focus on life skills seems to have
438 enhanced the interest of the youth participants in learning the values. This may have been in in
439 part, because of the positive motivational climate established by coaches and embraced by the
440 participants. Relationships were important and the youth were expected to learn about and
441 respect one another. The positive and respectful relationships between the youth and their
442 coaches was both consistent and notable.

443 This study draws on the voices of the youth and as such provides new insights into the
444 youth participant's perception on the learning of life skills and transferring them to other
445 environments (Jacobs and Wright 2018). Their perspective helps understand how youth might be
446 better supported to successfully transfer learning to other contexts. The participants in this study,
447 for example, often described examples of near transfer (Gordon and Doyle 2015), to
448 environments where the life skills were obviously applicable (i.e. home, school), rather than give
449 examples of far transfer. This suggests that youth participants may therefore require more
450 specific support to help transfer life skills in more abstract ways. Coaches should perhaps do
451 more to promote far transfer by identifying authentic opportunities for youth to use their life
452 skills outside of sports (Holton and Baldwin 2013). That it is feasible for participants to commit
453 to a level of engagement necessary to develop an understanding of far transfer, is supported by

the evidence from this study. Participants reported that they intentionally reflected upon and practiced life skills within and beyond the sports program.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. While the focus on youth voice helps to add new perspectives to the literature, questions always arise about the validity of self-reported data. Additionally, this paper did not consider what life skills youth learn outside of the boxing program and how those they align. For example, many youth participants would be expected to practice honesty and respect by their families. We cannot, therefore, fully attribute those life skills to a single program.

Further research

Areas that could be considered for future research include the degree to which the teaching of values, integrated into the physical activities of a SBYD program, impacts on the learning of values? Are the values understood more fully if they are reinforced during the activities or is it not particularly important? A second area to explore is the other sources of values teaching on youth, what are they and are they supportive or contradictory? Thirdly there is interest in exploring the degree to which values are enacted in the reality of the youth lives. Do they select some contexts to enact them or are they more general? Finally, the concept of near and far transfer leads to an examination of how best to generate the more conceptually difficult far transfer in youth.

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Table 1. Passport to Success.

Respect: *Willingness to treat with courtesy; to hold in high regard, to honour, to care about yourself and others.*

- Treat everyone you meet as if they were the most important person in the world • Make the most of yourself for that is all there is of you • Respectful behaviour is the oil that keeps a class working well • If you want to be respected, you must respect yourself • Treat others the way you would want to be treated • Respect the right to be listened to, learn and be safe in our classroom

Responsibility: *Willingness to be answerable, to be trustworthy, and accountable for your own conduct and behavior.*

- Responsibility teaching you much • With privilege comes responsibility • You are responsible for your own learning • Being responsible for your own actions is the responsibility of everyone • Whatever happens, take responsibility • It's easy to dodge our responsibilities but we cannot dodge the consequences of dodging our responsibility • You cannot lose if responsibility is what you choose

Compassion: *Willingness to help, empathize with, or show mercy to those who suffer.*

- Helping another person makes two people happy • It's never too late to do the right thing • Put 'go' into goal and 'do' into done because the actions speak louder than words • Be the change you want to see happen in the world • Never look down on anyone unless you are helping them up; Don't always put yourself first • Walk a while in someone else's shoes • Care for someone enough to make their problems your own

Consideration: *Willingness to be kind, thoughtful, and consider the interest of others before self.*

- Be nice to people on your way up because you will probably meet them on your way down! • When consideration is the sensation that sweeps the nation it will be time for a celebration • Let others learn • Make others happy when you enter a room, not when you leave it • Before thinking of yourself consider the effect of your actions on others • Become an example of how you would like the world to be

Kindness: *Willingness to help, show concern for and be friendly to others.*

- Make sure your words are seeds, not bullets • Kindness is a language that the deaf can hear and the blind can read • The best portion of a good person's life is their little nameless unremembered acts of kindness • Let no-one come to you without leaving better and happier • Show kindness is your face, kindness in your eyes and kindness in your smile • It's hard to give away kindness because it keeps coming back on you • Be random with an act of kindness every day

Duty: *Willingness to do what is right or what a person ought to do; obligation.*

- The things that are your duty are the thing that need doing that you see need to be done and that no one else seems to see the need to be done • The right thing to do is still the right thing to do even when you are the only one doing it • The reward for doing your duty is knowing that you have done the right thing • At school, home and in the

617 community find out what needs to be done and then ‘just do it!’ • See the need, do the
618 deed! • No-body needs to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world •
619 The greatest reward for doing is the opportunity to do more • Good to do a good thing,
620 better to do the right thing
621

622 **Obedience:** *Willingness to obey rightful authority.*

- 623 • Following rules keeps you safe • Learn to trust, then obey • Do what you know to be
624 right, obey yourself • When you are obedient also be responsible, honest and kind •
625 You win or lose by what you choose • You must for learn how to obey, who to obey
626 and when to obey • The ship that will not obey the helm will have to obey the rocks •
627 The opposite of obedience is disobedience
628

629 **Honesty & Truthfulness:** *Willingness not to steal, cheap, lie, or be unfair.*

- 630 • Honesty is the best policy • Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom • If you
631 want to be trusted, don’t cover up the truth • If you tell the truth, you don’t have to
632 remember what you said • Say “No” if that’s what you mean, not just “Yes” to please
633 someone • Telling one lie spoils your reputation for telling the truth • If you add to the
634 truth you subtract from it • When someone lies, someone loses • The truth needs no
635 rehearsal

636 Table 2. Explanation of conceptual framework for transfer of life skills (Jacobs & Wright, 2017)
 637 and BGYF youth perspectives on transfer.

Model Components	BGYF Youth Perspective
Program Implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on relationship building. • Integration of life skills with sport. • Opportunity for youth to practice life skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “youth won’t get hurt at this gym ... you learn how to build yourself up as a person.” (Ashburton boys) • “I’ve made lots of new friends and it’s all about our values and it’s really cool to be with all these girls who help you learn and all that. Really friendly. I have so much fun.” (Cannon’s Creek girls) • “I’d even go to [coach] before I talk to my parents, because I trust him so much” (Ashburton boys)
Student Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of life skills being taught. • Understand how life skills apply beyond sports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Definitely all the life skills that Murray teaches us, with the passport to success, just living by those that has made my life a whole lot like easier” (Ashburton boys) • “I would like to learn [the Passport to Success] but every time I try – I read it and then the next morning I just forget it completely. I can remember some of the responsibility but I can’t remember all of it.” (NaeNae boys)
Cognitive Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigning value to life skills beyond sports. • Motivation to transfer life skills beyond sports. • Expansion of perception about the application of life skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If you memorize [the Passport to success} you’ll remember it for a very long time and you know it keeps it in your head when you’re out in public” (NaeNae boys) • Just understanding now that everyone deserves respect, not just to go around dissing people and I think I respect my friends more now. I just don’t listen to my own opinion and just forget about other people’s. I now realise that you have to get everyone’s opinion to get the best of what you are doing, not just mine because I think it is better than everyone else’s. (Cannon’s Creek girls)
Application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skills influence decision making, worldview, or behavior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yeah like I use obedience, responsibility and respect a lot at home and class, when the teacher tells us to get the books out, I’ll listen to her and go and get out the books, but not just for me but for the whole class.” (Ashburton boys) • “I’ve probably respected my brother a little bit more and I’ve considered other’s ideas and I think I have been a bit more kind and respected my friends more.” (Ashburton girls) • Well not long ago I got in trouble for doing something and them [coach] reminded me of one of honesty and truthfulness ... so a few days ago someone asked me to do what I had done again and I said no.” (Ashburton girls)

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