

MJKO

Train Prepare Believe

Building a Better MJKO (Part I)

Mentoring Junior Kids Organization (MJKO)

Ontario Trillium Foundation Grow Grant Evaluation (Year 1)

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A. Introduction and Context:

On November 25, 2016, MJKO announced its application for the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) Grow Grant was successful. As part of the award, MJKO committed to pursuing an evaluation of its programs and their effectiveness. To date, and in addition to this report, MJKO has submitted 544 surveys to OTF – and reached 625 unique participants as of August 31st, 2017. This document reports early findings from an exploratory investigation regarding the local (domestic) sport-for-development (SFD) (Schulenkorf, Sherry, & Rowe, 2016; Svensson, 2015) (SFD) and sport for social change (SFSC) (Guest, 2009; Sherry, Schulenkorf, & Chalip, 2015) outcomes of the Champions in Training (CIT) initiative. Broadly, co-researchers in this project were interested to know whether non-contact boxing teaches leadership and other life-skills, and how participation and achievement in non-contact boxing impacts other areas of participants' lives. We were also interested to learn how participants perceived their involvement at MJKO and the CIT program itself. To answer the research questions, the lead researcher (LR) interviewed key stakeholders, including: MJKO participants; Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Principals; Toronto Police Services (TPS) Neighbourhood Officers; and MJKO executives as well.

In Canada, SFD research is growing (see: Gardham, Giles, & Hayhurst, 2017; Hayhurst, & Giles, 2013; Hayhurst, Giles, & Radforth, 2015; MacIntosh, Arellano, & Forneris, 2016; Scherer, Koch, & Holt, 2016). It includes research regarding the nature of successful programs in Northern Ontario (MacIntosh et al., 2016); improving

conditions for Canada's First Nations (Gardham et al., 2017); and improving access to services for underserved populations (Scherer et al., 2016). However, with few exceptions (Frisby, Crawford, & Dorer, 1997), local SFD research that empowers the voice of participants to direct and determine their own development objectives is scarce.

B. Purpose and Process:

This section outlines the purpose of our project and the research questions that guided our investigation. It includes an overview of the participatory action research (PAR) methodology used, and a brief discussion of researchers' roles in action research. Data collection techniques and its challenges in this context are also discussed.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to uncover and explore the SFD and SFSC outcomes achieved through the CIT initiative. Our research questions are:

RQ1: Is non-contact boxing a useful tool for teaching pro-social life skills?

RQ2: Do CIT participants demonstrate leadership skills?

RQ3: Do CIT participants achieve their educational goals?

RQ4: Do CIT participants achieve their employment goals?

RQ5: Do CIT participants transfer boxing skills to other sports?

RQ6: Are CIT participants satisfied with the program?

Process

To address the research questions, we used a participatory action research (PAR) methodology (see: Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003; Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005; MacKinnon, 2009; Rich, & Misener, 2017). Scholars describe action research as:

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory

worldview...it seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1)

For SFD organizations like MJKO:

Methodologies like PAR...have so much potential to positively affect communities beyond the academy...[by giving] researchers the opportunity to work with people to address issues that are relevant to the public, including improved access to sport and recreation for marginalized members of society. (Hoeber & Shaw, 2017, p. 6)

According to Rosso and McGrath (2017):

A PAR approach typically implies cycles of planning, action, observation, reflection and modification according to observations and ongoing consultation with key stakeholders (Kemmis et al., 2014)...[and] allows for modifications during the implementation of a project to address key concerns of stakeholders.

Broadly, “the notion that action research can enhance the performance of managers is well established” (Chalip, 1997, p. 1), and PAR offers an opportunity to “situate the less powerful at the center of the knowledge generation process” (Sherry et al., 2017, p. 71). Accordingly, we chose PAR to: pursue practical solutions to issues of pressing concern (Reason & Bradbury, 2001); to positively affect the MJKO community (Hoeber & Shaw, 2017); to situate the less powerful at the centre of the research process (Sherry et al., 2017); and to improve MJKO and its CIT initiative (Chalip, 1997).

Data Collection

During this project, co-researchers followed an adapted framework for PAR (Ferkins, Shilbury, & McDonald, 2009), which includes four research phases. They are:

1. Issue Identification
2. Context Analysis
3. Intervention and Action

4. Evaluation

Following Patton (2015), qualitative data were collected for the issue identification, context analysis, and (preliminary) evaluation phases of Ferkins et al.'s framework. The intervention and action phase of the project will follow, after MJKO executives and key stakeholders reflect on this report. Data were compiled using semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including two Toronto Police Services (TPS) Neighbourhood Officers, and two Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Principals. Following Morgan (2004), a focus group workshop with CIT participants was also used. Conversational interviews with two MJKO executives as part of the PAR reflection/meta-analyses (Ferkins et al., 2009) were also conducted.

Data from all interviews and the focus group were collected by the lead researcher (Ryan Clutterbuck) and co-researchers at MJKO. All interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded (with oral/written consent) and transcribed verbatim. All names and identifying features were removed from the transcripts to protect the anonymity of participants and third parties. The transcripts were analyzed by the lead researcher for evidence indicating pro-social life skills development (Gould & Carson, 2008) using a priori and open coding (Saldana, 2009). Preliminary findings and emergent themes related to the research questions are presented in the next section.

Data Collection Challenges

Several challenges were experienced by co-researchers during this project. Notably, doing research with young participants and doing research with participants whose first language is not English were anticipated, and steps were taken to ensure those participants were still able to contribute (e.g. through art). There were also challenges raised by MJKO executives during conversational interviews that may impact the intervention phase of the research project moving forward. For example, Miranda Kamal indicated that maintaining a “safe space” for participants that is separate from the demands of the school system (and researchers) is especially important to her, and:

My Hungarian students, my Roma students. Even some of my kids, if they have Asperger's or autism - like, that, I would say the school system that we currently have is failing them. So, measuring improvement is so challenging because often

they've kind of been written off...so then, to make [academic achievement] that kind of - like MJKO is their safe space. But to then go back to what they're already dealing with 8 hours a day, which is the people that are the brightest and the best are getting the opportunities and then the kids that aren't the brightest and the best are getting left behind [isn't fair]. (Miranda, conversational interview)

With respect to promoting academic achievement, Miranda's comment (above) illustrates the challenge MJKO faces as it continues to grow – balancing the needs of participants with the reporting demands from external partners and researchers.

The Role of Researcher in PAR

By collaborating with participants as 'co-researchers' in PAR, researchers must accept and acknowledge the potential for bias in their work. According to Nadler (in Ferkins et al., 2009) "by participating in the process, the strategy becomes 'our' strategy as opposed to 'their' strategy, [and] with increased ownership comes increased commitment to help the strategy succeed" (p. 274). In this project, the strategy to improve MJKO and the CIT initiative is shared by the lead researcher – and with that, comes the potential for bias in this report. To ensure the lead researcher's bias does not obstruct or alter the contributions of MJKO participants, TPS Neighbourhood Officers, and TDSB Principals, this report includes largely unedited transcripts and artwork from primary sources. By presenting these quotes and images in their original form and in context, participants may "speak through" (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 37, in Ferkins et al., 2009, p. 254) any biases to share their true experiences.

C. Summary of Results:

In this section, results are presented from each of the data collection sources, including: Principal interviews; the TPS Neighbourhood Officer interviews; the CIT focus group; and the MJKO executive interviews. In each sub-section, the choice of participants, and the research questions are also presented. Representative and illustrative quotes that address the research questions are provided below.

i. Semi-Structured Interviews (TDSB Principals):

Participant Selection

Two Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Principals were selected to contribute to this project because they understand the issues facing youth in their communities. As well, Principals routinely evaluate after-school initiatives that are administered by their teachers and community partners. To ensure the success of MJKO and its CIT initiative, support from these Principals is key.

Research Questions

The lead researcher followed a semi-structured interview guide that was developed specifically for this project to address the following research questions:

1. What are the unique challenges facing youth in MJKO communities?
2. How does MJKO and the CIT initiative address those challenges?
3. How do Principals measure success at programs like CIT?
4. What (more) can MJKO do to support their school/community?

The semi-structured interview guide allowed for follow-up questions regarding new ideas and issues raised by the Principals. Those issues and ideas are also presented below. Regarding the research questions:

1. What are the unique challenges facing youth in your communities?

Principal 1:

I don't know if you know [our community] well. It's a very very diverse community. Diverse in terms of background, language, culture. But also, very diverse in socio-economics. We have very very needy students...[and] we also have diversity of access to programs. [For] many of our students, the only programming they get in terms of music or physical activity is either from organizations that do work in our school or that are provided by our school...and many of our students have limited access. Their parents work multiple jobs. Many work nights. So, even getting the kids out – again, those kinds of needs.

Principal 2:

They're unique. And I'm an experienced educator so each community has its uniqueness and its different features and needs. So, within the [our] community itself we have pockets of poverty and that surrounds our school. Some of our kids come to school without the financial and also the social capital that other students from other communities have. It's a very definite, visible need here.

2. How does MJKO and the CIT initiative address those challenges?

Principal 1:

It's an activity that many of our kids – they look forward to it, they build connections, they're enjoying, they're active, they're learning. It motivates many of our kids. They're very excited by the program and they want to be in school that day. They're actively involved, so there's physical activity. With the leader's there are really good connections. Just good role models. The fact that MJKO brings in the police officers too – those are other solid connections, and strong role models. Adult role models. Those value pieces along with the physical activity, I mean, if they're not with us at that after school program often they're just by themselves in the park or they're at home watching TV. So, I think it's a fantastic program.

Principal 2:

We do a lot of collaboration between students and teachers. In the school, we have a lot of support from external organizations such as MJKO who come into our premises every Tuesday after school to deliver and provide educational programming that supports the Ontario curriculum as well as a healthy lifestyle and healthy choices philosophy. So, one of the pieces that we have been working together and having support from MJKO is the boxing program. Students have many opportunities to interact and become physically active and maintaining that active lifestyle throughout the academic year with the programming that MJKO provides. An extension of what they do with our students is that there is a

community officer from the Toronto Police Services that comes in with MJKO on a weekly basis to interact and support our students.

Principal 2:

Whenever I pop my head in to see the work that our students are doing with the volunteers and staff at MJKO, I see a lot of engagement; I see a lot of student leadership, I see opportunities where our students are given opportunities to lead some of the activities after they've become more familiar and get some of the training that MJKO has provided. I also know that some of our students have also went out and do training with MJKO and begin certified as coaches through their support and through their assistance.

3. How do Principals measure success at programs like CIT?

Principal 1:

You know, it's hard. I can't say. I haven't done a statistical analysis [regarding attendance]. we could do that, but we haven't. But I definitely, when you see the MJKO... well, how about this - the special event. When they did the [Special Event] we had 45 kids - and none were absent that day, right. The excitement level of seeing when the day ends and these kids come running up to our staffroom where we have the MJKO event, there's just a really good strong engagement. When those coaches just walk through [the halls] - they're high-fiving, they're excited to see them. When you have that level of engagement in the schools, the kids are excited to go to the programs that day - it's motivating.

Principal 2:

The measurement of success or the measurement of impact, could be measured at various levels. You mentioned attendance. there's also report cards. there's also the social well-being components. Those are very measurable - and the impacts that the MJKO program has had on our students. I can tell you from my observations of the MJKO staff and my students, from very difficult times, we have students who could be easily agitated and easily upset for various reasons, and some of our students are disadvantaged in terms of their emotional well-

being because they suffer from various issues external to school. I've seen the progress of how these students have become more vocal, more active, and more extroverted compared to when they started the program they were shy, they were introverted. They weren't willing to speak. That's through the relationships that they built with the staff at MJKO and also their interactions with Toronto Police Services, and their common classmates. They've blossomed and they've become more open in terms of sharing and in terms of their communication. So that's one aspect that could not be measured just by looking at attendance and report card marks. And in terms of attendance I think what it is is, students who we've had some attendance issues with that started MJKO and continued, and that continuing piece is very important. So, did they continue in the program? Their behaviour - their outlook really improved. Again, I can't say this for all of our students, but I can say for those I've observed, their outlook on school and who they are as individuals have actually improved and they've become more positive and optimistic. So, that's the attendance piece. I think, you know, when we improve students' overall well-being and how they see themselves and their confidence level, and having them reach out and explore things and try new things academically, it will be impactful, so I can't tell you how it has been impactful before MJKO, but I can share with you these students who I have witnessed have had these positive impacts. Their report cards are not bad at all. So, I think there's some correlation between improving students' outlook on themselves and who they are - their self-confidence and also building that relationship among our students and MJKO staff and external staff with the Toronto police really helps.

4. What (more) can MJKO do to support their school/community?

Principal 1:

For example, we're doing summer schools, and I just emailed [Miranda Kamal] and said do you want to come to my summer school and do some physical activity? And she's like "yup!". So, talking to her, and as those things arise, we talk, and we come up with ideas. I know there's a gym that over the summer that

students can go to. But I'd like more kids to get - I don't know the numbers, how many that translated to. But when I meet with her, I want to know are my kids going to her in the summer? Because that would be a wonderful connection. I mean, anything I see, I find her very good to work with, and she's open to ideas and I'm open to ideas. So, if we see a need we'll try to address it.

Principal 2:

I can share with you that I've been so confident in the program that I've also assisted MJKO's co-founder Miranda to reach out to our board partnership office and I've facilitated the conversation. So, it is in the works, and I believe in supporting this program so wholeheartedly that I believe a formal partnership between the TDSB and MJKO needs to happen. So, it's on its way, and the finalization of this partnership is going to happen soon. So, it speaks volumes in terms of what I have done to support MJKO, because how it has been impactful and successful with our students.

Emergent Themes

a. Neighbourhood Officers are positive role models in schools

Principal 1:

The police are excellent role models, and just engaging with them in this environment it creates this positive community building thing. So, when they're on the street and later-on in life when they talk with them it's more positive...I can go back to the role models. they're very good role models for our students.

ii. Semi-Structured Interviews (Neighbourhood Officers):

Participant Selection

Two Toronto Police Services (TPS) Neighbourhood Officers were interviewed for this report. As part of the CIT initiative, these Neighbourhood Officers work with MJKO in after-school programs for priority (at-risk) neighbourhoods. In each interview, the Neighbourhood Officers shared their experiences working with the MJKO CIT initiative.

Research Questions

The lead researcher followed a semi-structured interview guide that was developed specifically for this project to address the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges facing youth in your communities?
2. How does MJKO address those challenges?
3. What positive impacts has CIT achieved?

The semi-structured interview guide allowed for follow-up questions regarding new ideas and issues raised by the Neighbourhood Officers. Those issues and ideas are also presented below. Regarding the research questions:

1. What are the challenges facing youth in your communities?

Officer 1:

An at-risk neighbourhood is all based on stats. So, the ones with higher rates of violent crimes - we're talking robberies, even homicides, gun crimes, that kind of stuff. So, any neighbourhoods within [our] division with higher rates of those violent offences are categorized as at-risk neighbourhoods. Basically, we go in there and you get mixed, like people either hate us or like us, right. but, mostly kids don't like us. In general, they don't like the police, they don't like talking with the police...but our job is to continue what we do, and hopefully deter their mind, and it's almost like a proactive policing. So, maybe their view towards the police changes to a positive way - that's our main goal.

Officer 2:

The neighbourhood that I work in, it's considered a we'd call it a priority neighbourhood or at at-risk neighbourhood. So, a lot of the youth that I deal with, and I've done programs with, basically, a lot of them have, have had some kind of police contact in the past. Either they've seen somebody in the neighbourhood - sometimes one of the siblings - a brother or a parent have been arrested. They're also typically in that neighbourhood from lower income families, and Toronto community housing, and I've found especially in the beginning I've been doing

this for quite a while now, I've been in this program for 4/5 years now, and in the beginning, it was very challenging because a lot of them had negative interactions with the police and they didn't have too many positive interactions. So, I'm trying to just start up these programs and do community events with some of the youth was a little challenging. I remember going into a drop-in program at [a school], and the first day we got there, like, I remember a couple of the girls were like "what are you guys doing here?", which, you know, they didn't seem really happy for us to be there kind of thing right. A lot of them I think associated us with negativity and trouble and problems.

2. How does MJKO address those challenges?

Officer 1:

MJKO is one of the biggest after school programs that we participate in. So, Miranda, I mean, we've seen her work, it's definitely working. The things she does, it's phenomenal. the kids all respect her, and these are the kids that doesn't like the police - they don't have respect for authorities. But I see the same kids go to Miranda's class, and they're totally different kids. So, we participate, and those kids are starting to open up to us too. We help them coaching - we hold the pads for them, and we teach them how to box, and I guess using sports is one of the biggest ways to I guess influence them, right. So, it's working really well for us too. That's why we really appreciate the partnership with MJKO.

Officer 1:

Programs like MJKO, I see them as a great opportunity for us as well too. We prefer to dress in uniform so that the kids see that you're police, and they never call us by "constable Ryan" or any of that. They say "Officer Clutterbuck". We try to mingle with the kids and talk at their level, and holding the pads in uniform and things like that. It really seems to fascinate the kids, and a lot of kids bring it up that their brother or themselves got pulled over and the officers were being very rude to them, but you guys are different. Those are the things that we really want to hear, right. And MJKO is definitely helping us set that tone.

Officer 2:

Well it's because the way the program is run, Ryan. It has a lot to do with the organizers, with the way certain programs - because I've been in other programs where they're not as successful and I just found over the years what it is, is Miranda and her team there - she basically, she always portrays us in a positive way to the kids. Whenever we do the different activities, you know one of the things is you lead by example - and that includes everybody, the police officers, the volunteers - everybody...I think she does things in a certain way. She's really good - she has a really good relationship with the kids, and a really good handle on things. I don't know how to describe it, but she just - the kids will listen to her. She just knows how to talk to them and she treats them fairly she treats them with respect...she goes above and beyond as far as I'm concerned.

Officer 2:

I've been doing this job for almost 14 years now, and I don't know, maybe it sounds strange to say, but what I find with Miranda and that group, and more so with Miranda is just the way she is. I've found over the years with a lot of kids and youth that I've dealt with that get in trouble, that would end up in the system after getting charged - a lot of them, you would find out about their background and their home and family life, and a lot of them really didn't have much support at home. They didn't have really a parent figure there, right. Either they're a single parent who's always working or never home, or, sometimes the parents just had addictions or didn't get involved. I just find, with Miranda, she's almost I don't know how to describe it - she's almost like a parent to them. She's like, you know, she provides them direction, and she kind of gets through the importance of having goals. and that's the main thing in life right, is always having a goal - something to strive for. And I believe I've seen different people and a lot of times over the years one of the main things for depression - they just have nothing to look forward to, and I think she really projects a lot of these things having goals and working towards something and being able to achieve something that you really want, right. So, I think that's part of the reason why she's so successful as

well right. Almost like a mother to them. It's kind of strange to say, but I think they look up to her.

3. What positive impacts has CIT achieved?

Officer 1:

When we first started the program, I'm actually, it started like 5 years ago, but I just started a year and half ago. The guys that started before me established a lot of positive relationships, but what I hear is when they first started it was a pretty rough go. Nobody wanted to speak with them - they'd organize some kind of event and nobody would show up. They would not even talk to us. Their parents, even the whole neighbourhood. But they built the relationships, with the kids, the younger kids - the older kids, you know, it's tough to get their positive feedback from them. But the younger kids really like us, and now that I see they like us, they talk to us, if they have a concern they bring it up. Even the parents - they talk to us about their kids. It seems like they're opening up to us more.

Officer 1:

The biggest thing we look for is consistency, right. Some of the programs that we participate in – I won't name any programs. But, we come out with the program and we start running it, and after three weeks it starts deteriorating. You see less kids coming out and showing up, and nothing is really changing. But MJKO is very consistent. All the time there's plenty of kids, the same kids - they all enjoy coming and things like that we look for something that's going to work well. So, I would say, the main thing is consistency.

Officer 2:

I started working with MJKO a long time ago - not that long ago, in 2013. I actually started working with them before that, but that's when I got into the unit here. In that year we started off, I believe at [The] community school when Miranda was there. So that year, and we've been going there ever since. I remember when we first started off, there was a smaller group and then just over

the year it kept growing and growing and now there's so many kids there, there's a waiting list to get into the program there.

Officer 2:

A lot of them I think associated us with negativity and trouble and problems, and I believe over the years that's changed quite a lot. I've seen a huge difference. I go to [The] public school - is the main school that I go to in the neighbourhood, and when I walk in there - I can't walk down the hall without somebody calling my name, or you know, there's always students saying hey Ryan, hey officer Ryan - so it's really changed over the time. Just being there basically being there almost every day and being involved with the kids doing sport activities with the kids, doing leadership training with the kids - just all that sort of stuff over the years they get to know you as a person rather than just as a police officer right.

Officer 2:

It has to do with the results you get from the programs as well, right. I mean, there's tons of ideas out there that people pitch around, but I mean for us as long as there's a positive outcome, as long as the youth there feel like they're making, they've made a connection with us, with the officers, and it makes them feel more comfortable with the police - they want to talk to police and that kind of stuff. Our main goal is as community officers is to foster that type of relationship, right. So, anything that fosters a positive relationship and, you know, you see it because some of these parents they'll call the station or sometimes stuff happens with the kids and they'll call us. Sometimes the kids will call us themselves through Miranda or somebody else and they'll talk to us because they're afraid.

iii. Focus Group Workshop with MJKO Champions-in-Training:

Participant Selection

16 MJKO Champions-in-Training were selected to join the lead researcher on May 6, 2017 for approximately 90 minutes to discuss their experiences at MJKO.

Participants ranged from 9 to 16 years old, and written consent for their participation was obtained from a parent/guardian prior to the focus group. During the focus group, the research questions were addressed, including: the relationship between non-contact boxing and other sports; the relationship between boxing success and academic success; and participants' views of the CIT program and its most important components.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the lead researcher conducting the focus group:

RQ1: Is non-contact boxing a useful tool for teaching pro-social life skills?

RQ2: Do CIT participants develop/demonstrate leadership skills?

RQ3: Do participants achieve their educational goals?

RQ4: Do participants achieve their employment goals?

RQ5: Do participants transfer athletic skills from MJKO to other sport activities?

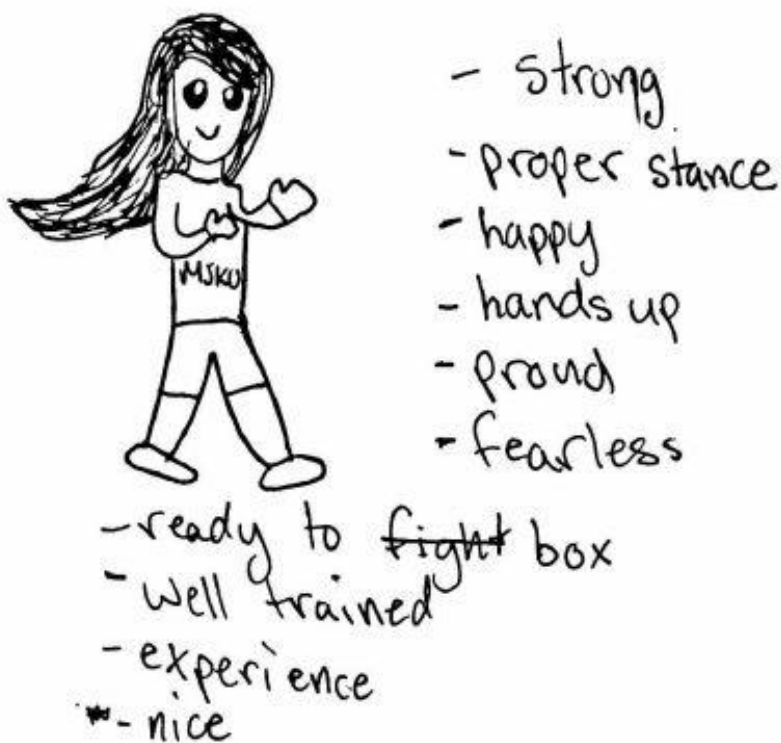
RQ6: Are MJKO participants satisfied with the CIT program?

Regarding the research questions:

RQ1: Is non-contact boxing a useful tool for teaching pro-social life skills?

Research suggests sport can serve as a useful platform for teaching life skills to at-risk youth and underserved participants under the right conditions (Coakley, 2011; Levermore & Beacom, 2012; Schulenkorf & Edwards, 2012). To add to this existing literature, co-researchers from MJKO explored how life-skills are developed and demonstrated by their Champions-in-Training. Co-researchers utilized several data collection strategies, including individual reflections, group work, and discussions to determine how “champion boxers” and “great students” are alike. During the focus group, we also discussed: the importance of goal-setting; the importance of emotional regulation; and the importance of self-esteem (following Gould & Carson, 2008). In this section, representative quotes and artwork are presented to illustrate the ways MJKO participants are developing and demonstrating positive life-skills. First, to be a “champion boxer”:

You have to be strong, have proper stance. They're still happy [and] they have their hands up. They're proud. They're fearless. They're ready to box. They're well trained and they have experience and they still have to be kind. (MJKO Youth)



Another MJKO Champion-in-Training described a “champion boxer” this way:

- ① A good boxer is strong./has mustle.
- ② relates to most people.
- ③ Kind and smart.
- ④ Never feels sad/never lets anger take over her.
- 5.) courages everyone./helps people in need.

A 14.5-year-old Champion-in-Training saw a “champion boxer” as a “True Champion”:



- Practiced
- Perseverant
- Skillful

Building on that exercise, participants were instructed to draw a “great student...somebody who’s excellent in the classroom” (Ryan Clutterbuck, focus group). Participants were also instructed to identify similarities and differences between “champion boxers” and “great students”. Below is a collection of their responses:

“Great Student” Responses Collection



- Smart
- hardworking
- ~~not~~
- participates
- good attitude
- doesn't give up
- good listener in class
- doesn't get in trouble
- gets good grades
- doesn't distract others

Asked to describe their “great student”, this MJKO CIT indicated they were:

Smart, hardworking, participates, has a good attitude, doesn't give up, a good listener, doesn't get in trouble, gets good grades, and doesn't distract others. And a champion is also hardworking, also participates, also has a good energy, also doesn't give up. (MJKO Youth)

Another CIT described their “great student” drawing this way:

MJKO Youth: This student’s name is Jessica. She gets good grades. She accepts people for who they are no matter how they look. She encourages people to be positive. She participates in most team sports.

Lead Researcher: Okay, and how is Jessica like a champion boxer?

MJKO Youth: She participates and boxers participate, and she's kind, and boxers are kind. Boxers are smart, and Jessica is smart. (image below)



- has supplies
- kind
- careful
- happy to learn
- passionate
- excited
- ~~- we~~
- prepared
- responsible
- respectful
- enthusiastic
- attentive

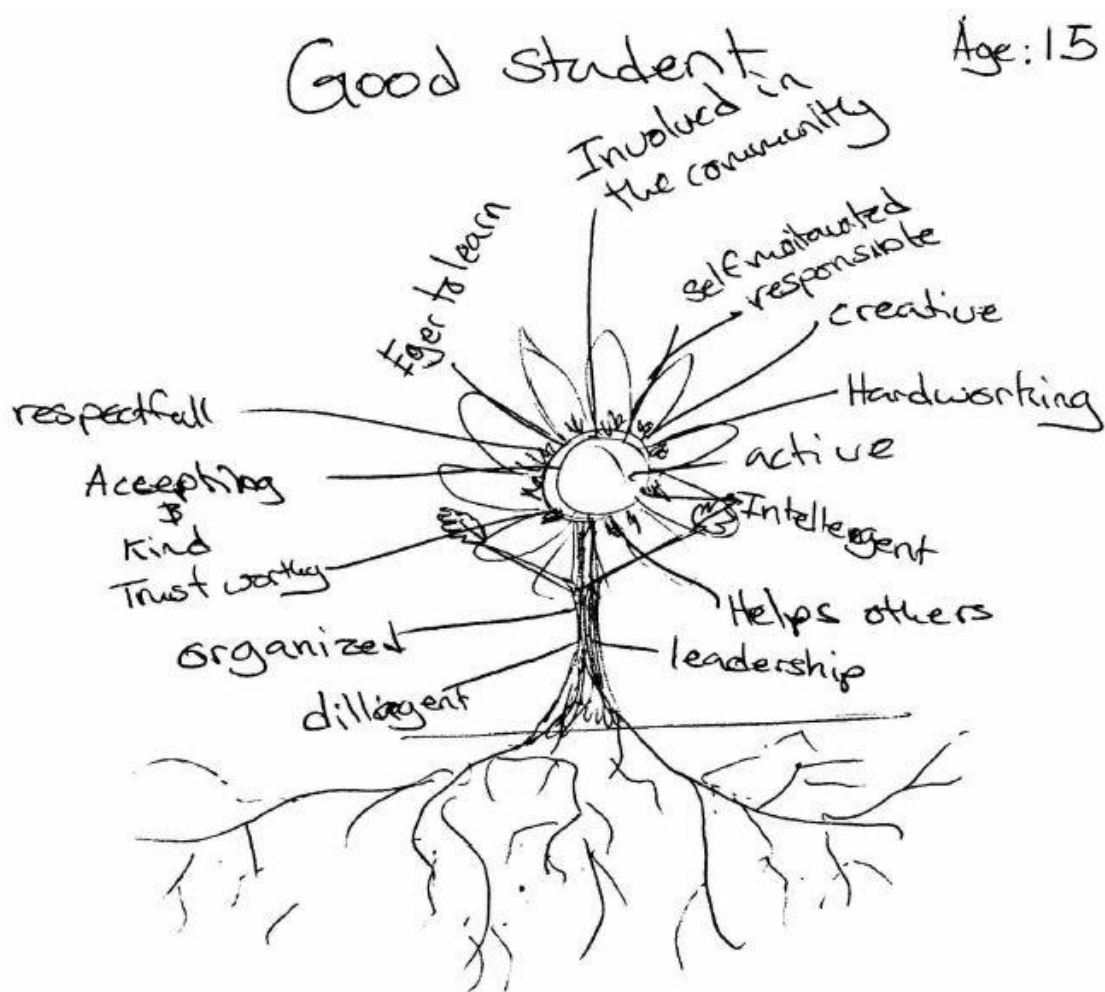
Another MJKO participant described their “great student” this way:

Her Name is Skylar.
 She is smart always Does her
 Homework. Never is late For School.
 She is Well behaved. She Helps the teacher
 She Never Has ~~an~~ a late assignment.
 She love School, She ~~Does~~ DOES NOT
 bully others. Shes Relly active. She love's
 all Her teachers. Never Disre Speaks Her
 Mom. takes good care OF Her Family.
 Doesnt care what people Say about Her.
 Shes Hardworking. loves to participate.
 passion to learn and Be a scientist.
 She confident. and Help Full. she is
 Friendly.

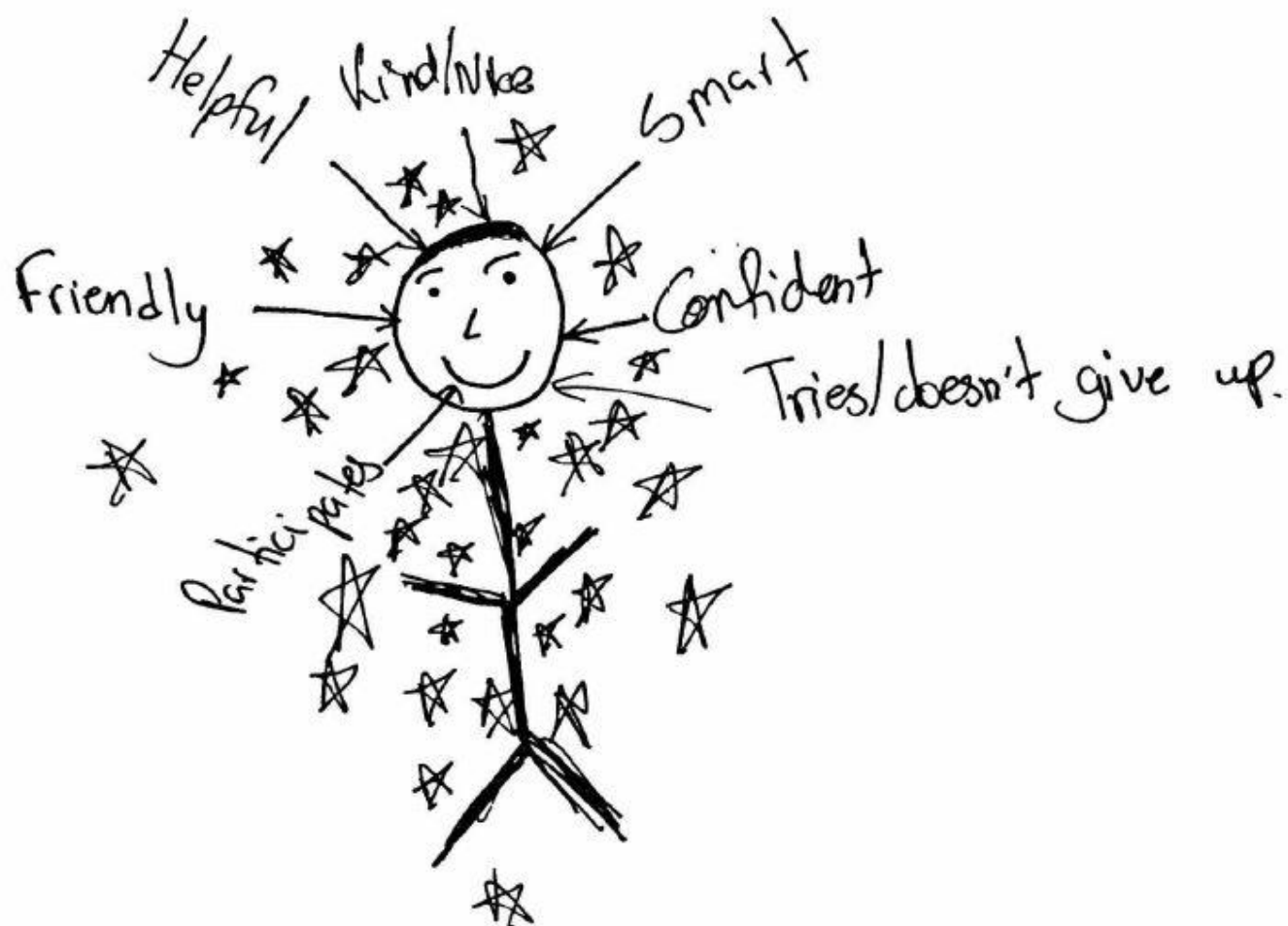
Collectively, MJKO participants identified the following traits as being shared by “champion boxers” and “great students”:

- Confidence
- Not giving up
- Intelligence
- Hard working
- Active
- Kind
- Respectful
- Participates
- Passion
- Friendliness
- Preparedness

“Great Student” Responses Collection Continued



“Great Student” Responses Collection Continued





Regarding similarities between “champion boxers” and “great students”:

Smart, confident, try's even though they fail they don't give up - they participate and they're friendly, and that's similar to a boxer, because they also have to be confident to be able to fight, and they also try hard. (MJKO Youth)

As part of this exercise, MJKO participants were able to demonstrate how the boxing skills and abilities they learn through the CIT initiative may translate to success in other areas of their life. Academic success and achievement is one critical area – and through the remainder of the focus group, several other critical life skills were discussed as well. Those discussions are presented below.

GOAL SETTING

CIT participants were asked to reflect on the importance of goal setting in their lives and whether MJKO taught them to set goals. The lead researcher asked the room “just by a show of hands, who has experience goal setting?...Okay, I see 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8...hands are slowly coming up” (Ryan Clutterbuck, focus group). A group discussion regarding SMART goals followed. Then, MJKO participants were put into groups of two and asked to write a personal athletic goal and an academic goal, and to share their work with a partner. Below are some examples of their goals:

Goal 1[#]

Athletic: I want to win the

CHAMPION banner from

my school.

Educational: I want to do very well
on my E.Q.A.O and feel very happy because
I did very, very well.

Smart Goals

Academic Goal: Get a 90 or over in math by the end of the school year

Athletic Goal: Become more confident in my scoring ability in hockey by next season

- receive better in volleyball for next year

Siham ~~ten~~ = 10.

chapter books.

Goal 1 = Read at least 100 books a year. ~~2~~

~~Goal 1 = be more focused on my education~~

Goal 2 = ~~be~~ participate in more team activities at school or anywhere else.

With respect to goal setting in general, the lead researcher was pleased with the enthusiasm of the group developing their goals. However, it was noted at the time, and in subsequent discussions with MJKO executives that goal-setting is an area that can be

re-emphasized in 2018. For example, here is an excerpt from the lead researcher's (post focus group) conversation with Miranda Kamal:

Lead Researcher: We talked a little bit in the focus group about having athletic goals and also academic goals. The next step to that might be what are your goals for the next 6 months - just in your life - and how can we help facilitate that?

Miranda Kamal: It's funny I have all my, I feel like this' - everything that you're saying, I have this on my desk right now. From the beginning of the year, I have printed off to set SMART goals, like 1 short term, and 1 long term goal, and they're still sitting on the desk... and I want to create a culture...a culture of kids coming in and saying "it's time to set our goals for the year - where do I do that? where do I get my paper? (Miranda, conversational interview)

EMOTIONAL REGULATION

MJKO participants were asked to reflect on whether boxing taught this important life skill. Instructions for this exercise were as follows: "tell me about a time, or, how in some way, that boxing teaches you to control your emotions...is that something that boxing can teach you?" (Ryan Clutterbuck, focus group). A CIT volunteered:

It's like, when you're a boxer, and you know the punches and stuff, you have a lot of power - and you could do disastrous things. But it teaches you to control - even if you're angry - you're going to take it out on the punching bag because that's not hurting anyone, and that's sort of a way to vent. But when you're in your daily situation you'll be in more control because you've already taken out your anger. (MJKO Youth)

Another participant put it this way:

When you box, it teaches you to control your emotions by like talking out what my problem is instead of hurting someone and punching them or something. And instead of like anger, you let it take over you, you just talk about it. (MJKO Youth)

SELF ESTEEM

To determine whether the CIT initiative was developing this life-skill, the lead researcher asked participants to describe how participating at MJKO made them feel. Below is a collection of their responses (participant ages indicated where available):

“When I participate at MJKO I feel happy and let all my problems wash away”
(MJKO Youth, age 11)

“Participating at MJKO makes me feel strong and proud. I feel confident that I can do anything. I also love the opportunity since my family couldn’t afford to send me to a boxing program, otherwise.” (MJKO Youth)

“Participating at MJKO makes me feel very welcome to make new Awesome friends. And it also makes my happy because it is very fun. So I get to have a lot of fun every week. And all of the coaches are very nice and funny 😊. They all have really big hearts” (MJKO Youth)

“[Participating at MJKO] makes me feel like I’m not alone and makes me forget about my problems” (MJKO Youth)

“Participating at MJKO makes me feel happy excited I love MJKO cause we get to be active and I love being active” (MJKO Youth, age 10)

“Coming here makes me feel included and not excluded” (MJKO Youth, age 10)

“Participating at MJKO makes me feel good because when I spar and do my workout I feel much better and in a better mood” (MJKO Youth)

“Participating in MJKO makes me feel good about myself because I’m trying something new and learning new things. 😊 !!!” (MJKO Youth)

“[Participating at MJKO] makes me feel like I have somewhere to go. I feel strong and proud of what I accomplish each class. I feel like I have achieved a lot” (MJKO Youth)

“Participating at MJKO – it makes me feel happy at times and tired (after its over)” (MJKO Youth)

Developing Self-Esteem Responses Collection Continued

Participating at MJKO makes me feel strong and proud. I feel confident that I can do anything. I also love the opportunity since my family couldn't afford to send me to a boxing program, otherwise.

Developing Self-Esteem Responses Collection Continued

Participating at MJKO makes me feel empowered and like I'm part of a community that is supportive and accepting. I feel confident in my ability to box and my ability to coach and help others. It's rewarding to see how much I have learned and how much I can teach others.

-It makes me feel like I'm apart of something bigger than myself. It also makes me feel like I'm generally excelling because of how everyone boosts my confidence and helps me become better.

Developing Self-Esteem Responses Collection Continued

Participating at M.J.V.O makes me feel
 Very welcome to make new **Awesome** friend
 -s. And it also makes me happy because it
 is very fun. So I get to have alot of fun
 every week. And all of ~~the~~ the coach's
 are very nice and funny!! & they all have
 really big hearts



Practicing at MJKO Makes
 me Feel. . .

- Happy
- Good about myself
- Fearless
- Stronger
- Fun
- Confident

HARD WORK

Participants identified several reasons why boxing was “hard work”, and how their experiences at MJKO had prepared them to work hard in other areas of their lives. Here are some examples of those comments from participants:

It's harder because it's like any other sport - you have to try hard, and it has a lot of power and strength and you might not actually know how to do it in the beginning, so you have to work harder to learn the punches and to be able to do specific skills that boxing needs, so it's a lot of hard work. (MJKO Youth)

Another participant put it this way:

I think it's also hard work because it's not like other sports - it's not just physically demanding but it's also mentally demanding, because you have to be able to keep going, and keep getting better. And when you go into a fight you have to have the right mentality before you can actually succeed. (MJKO Youth)

Regarding transferring the hard work life-skill and self-discipline from boxing to other areas of their lives, a CIT suggested:

It's like, boxing is like, you go through like series and you learn things. So even when you have like, stumbles, you still have to keep going. (MJKO Youth)

RQ2: Do CIT participants develop/demonstrate leadership skills?

To determine how participants developed leadership skills and demonstrated their own leadership, the lead researcher facilitated a group discussion. Participants discussed aspects of transformational and transactional leadership, and the characteristics of formal and informal leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Gould & Voelker, 2010). The following is an excerpt from that group discussion. The importance of leadership, how MJKO empowers its leaders, and areas where participants demonstrate their own leadership are shared.

Lead Researcher (LR): Leadership came up in one of the groups when we did the report cards at the start of the session. I think it was your group, right? You

talked about how leadership was an important piece of what goes on at MJKO. Can you expand a little bit about why your group thought that was important?

MJKO Youth 1: Well we thought because usually when we're like, so when we started this program we had to learn like how to like hold pads and stuff like that. So that taught us leadership...so it just like taught us how to like teach classes. And also for the education and stuff like that, you have to be able to like read, and ask questions, so you always have to have like confidence, and kind of use your leadership skills.

LR: And why do we think that leadership is important? And anyone can jump in.

MJKO Youth 2: Say you're in a group, and nobody knows and everybody knows random things and nobody knows which order what to do. it has to be one person, or a couple people that know what to do so they can help everybody else in the rest of the group.

LR: that's a great example...anyone else - how are we leaders in our lives?

MJKO Youth 3: I'm a leader to some younger children because I volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters. So, like, they're younger children and you just mentor them by spending time with them and instilling them with good values. And I think you're a good leader because you can demonstrate like a role model, how they should be, and like, leading good lives. So, you're a leader because you're like leading them through the path.

LR: That's another great organization. Does anyone else here volunteer with any other community organizations? And if so, what are some of those?

MJKO Youth 4: Right to Play.

LR: Okay, that's a great international non-governmental organization. They do a lot with sport in different communities - how are you a leader at Right to Play?

MJKO Youth 4: At my school you play games with all the children, and you help them play the games, and you lead them in the games with them.

LR: Excellent. Yeah, one more...

MJKO Youth 5: PALS.

LR: What's PALS?

MJKO Youth 5: At PALS, like you basically, there's like lonely students, so you have to be like a leader to get to know the students who play with you.

LR: Excellent - that sounds like a great program, and that's at your school?

MJKO Youth 5: Yeah.

LR: So, those are all great examples of how we can all be leaders in our communities. Does MJKO help you become leaders - and if so, in what ways?

MJKO Youth 1: They help me because you know, I'm, we have classes that I have to lead the class soon and actually the whole class.

LR: So, you have an opportunity to lead small groups at MJKO?

MJKO Youth 1: Yeah.

MJKO Youth 2: It helps me because they lead the whole class, and then it helps, like, I can take some tips from what they do, and also, I lead at school too sometimes. So, I take pointers from the coaches.

LR: So you get to watch the MJKO leaders and you can behave in a similar way. Anything else from MJKO in particular?

MJKO Youth 2: Well, the junior coaches are allowed to like speak in public, like to the class about knowledge, or teach them how to do a certain, like stance or move or punch or something. So that's sort of like speaking in front of a crowd that's sort of leading because they don't really know what to do yet. So, when you're giving instructions you're becoming a leader. So, those are small things but like it builds up your confidence so you can become a leader for bigger things.

LR: Excellent. Perfect example. And you should know, just by virtue of participating in today's program, you are all acting as leaders, not only for the MJKO community, but also for youth that are involved in sport in Toronto and across the country. Being able to share our experiences and talk about how we're

using some of the skills that we're learning through boxing or football or whatever sport we're a part of - that's acting as a leader. Being able to share your experiences and develop the group. So, I commend you all for being here and being leaders today.

RQ3: Do participants achieve their educational goals? &

RQ4: Do participants achieve their employment goals?

Over time, co-researchers believe MJKO participants will see positive results from having participated in the CIT initiative – through learning the life skills already discussed. However, these research questions require a longitudinal study to determine whether our expectations will be met. As part of this project, co-researchers have collected educational goals and long-term employment goals from CIT participants. We also asked participants to set short-term goals for achieving their long-term goals. Consequently, we are now able to track those participants through their time with MJKO – providing individualized mentoring and support to ensure those goals are met. Below is a sample of the educational and employment goals identified by participants.

My dream job is to be a fire fighter or an
police. I would like to because they both do
something good for our world that we live in.
And who knows maybe I could save your life!
Some DAY { ! ! ! ! }

Educational goals: Work hard to get into Robotics program in Western
Tech and the computer science program so I can
achieve my goal of being a computer programmer.
I will achieve this by 2023.

When I grow up, I see myself working in the medical field, helping other people in their lives.

In working towards my dream, I will work hard and take responsibility to seek the opportunities and grades that are needed for the profession.

is.... to be a doctor, this job is important to me because I get to see lots of happy faces and I get to help 1000-hundreds or even thousand of people. if I help someone in need or someone that's hurt I will get closer and closer to my dream job, which I will do ~~tomorrow~~ - tomorrow. 🙏🙏🙏

RQ5: Do participants transfer athletic skills from MJKO to other sports?

To determine whether participants are using the athletic skills learned at MJKO and through the CIT initiative in other sporting activities, we asked them to list their

favourite sports outside of boxing. Working in groups, participants indicated the following sports were “their favourites”:

GROUP A:

Basketball, Soccer, Hockey, Badminton, Volleyball, Swimming, Football, Softball, Baseball, Kickball, Lacrosse, Ultimate Frisbee, Track and Field, Ice Skating, Synchronize Swimming, Rugby, Tennis, Cross Country, Ping Pong, and Squash

GROUP B:

Gymnastics, Basketball, Soccer, Swimming, Ice Hockey, Baseball, Track and Field, Bottle Flipping, Badminton, Bowling, and Trivia

GROUP C:

Basketball, Soccer, Track and Field, Badminton, Baseball, Hockey, Swimming, Racing, Ping Pong, Softball, Bottle Flipping, and Bowling

Participants were then asked to reflect on whether (and how) boxing skills learned at MJKO helped them become better athletes in those sports. Working in small groups, participants identified the following transferable boxing skills that helped them participate in other sports:

Endurance, Balance, Stamina, Strength, Coordination, Teamwork, Sportsmanship, Confidence, Reflexes, Focus, and Speed

RQ6: Are MJKO participants satisfied with the CIT program?

To determine whether CIT participants were satisfied with the CIT program, participants were asked to write “report cards” for MJKO. The criteria (grading scheme) were determined by each group of participants, and the report cards are presented here:

GROUP A

PARTICIPATION	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv4
FUN ⁴ 0	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv4
Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv4
Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv4
Boxing Skill's	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv4
Teamwork	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv4
Fitness Level	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv4
Friendship	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv1	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv2	<input type="checkbox"/> Lv3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lv4

GROUP B

MJKO Report card

I give fun = A-

Exercise = A + + + + + + + + + +

Friends = 10-12 Friends

Trips = A

Boxing skills = A

Friendliness = B+

Overall

A.



MJKO



GROUP C

Making Friends - B

Leadership Skills - B+

Self-esteem/confidence/responsibility - A-

Knowledge - A-

E.g. Countries

Hands-on activities - A+

Fun - A

Safety - A-

iv. Conversational Interviews with MJKO Board Members:

Participant Selection

MJKO executives were interviewed as part of this project's reflection phase. Following Ferkins et al. (2009), conversational interviews with Miranda Kamal and Brian Jolley more illustrate how reflections on the PAR process and the preliminary findings of this report may influence MJKO and the CIT initiative moving forward.

Emergent Themes

In each interview, Miranda and Brian identified several areas for development, as well as concerns regarding how the next phase of the research program (intervention and action) may be implemented. The emergent issues identified during interviews are:

1. Emphasizing the education (reading) component of the CIT initiative in 2018
2. Ensuring intentionality of the SFD components of CIT (life-skills/goal-setting)
3. Continuing to offer “fun” and “engaging” programs to achieve broader goals
4. Creating a culture that supports SFD initiatives (life-skills/goal-setting)

Excerpts from the conversational interviews are presented below.

1. Emphasizing the education/reading component of CIT in 2018

Lead Researcher: I want you to think about how MJKO can promote educational achievement. And I don't know what that is going to mean. I don't know if it means a reward system for improving grades, or a recognition for somebody that achieves some academic milestone. I don't know what that's going to look like in the boxing gym necessarily. But if there's a way to make that part of the MJKO culture, I think that would be a positive thing as well.

Miranda Kamal: This' one of the reasons why I hired this particular girl. I wanted to create - somehow a boxing and reading program. I would like to see the kids, even the kids that are excelling in school could help volunteer in this kind of reading program or a tutoring program. Something where, I want to. I feel like MJKO - we are falling behind in terms of specifically the kids that have

immigrated here and maybe don't speak English. They are doing phenomenal in the gym. But, their daily life - the 8 hours that they're not with us, is a very big struggle for them. [And, it] comes down, mostly to the fact that they can't read at a kindergarten level. And that's something that I'm struggling with because even when I take these kids to tournaments they can't fill out their own forms. they can't fill out a customs form...so that's something too that I've been, trying to get my head around how we can create a program or something that's - first of all, that the kids trust us to be a part of and come. But, how to actually, to your point - measure the success of the kids that are most vulnerable.

2. Ensuring intentionality of the SFD components of CIT (life-skills etc.)

Lead Researcher: I think it's going to be more interesting moving forward to just pull out some of those areas where a student said they liked the friends that they were making at MJKO, but, they still managed to sort of sneak in there this idea that, you know, the friendship building component of CIT was a little bit, it wasn't quite as good as the enthusiasm, or the athleticism that they were getting. So, how can we systematically improve their ability to talk to more people in the sessions? Are we sure that when a student comes in and boxes at MJKO, that they talk to 8 different people? Right, we might take that for granted based on how we structure the practices and who they're sparring with and who's holding the bag for them, but are we really sure that when so and so comes to the gym that they're not just buddying up with the person they already know, versus getting to know some of the other people? Are we providing enough opportunities for some of the older students to work with the younger students in a leadership style role? And it doesn't have to be huge, but, some sort of instruction. We come back to leadership again and again, and say this' one of the pillars of the program, but how are we sure that it's getting through? [and] what steps are we taking to make sure that whatever we're doing now, is going to be better a year from now?

Brian Jolleymore: I haven't thought about what you just said about meeting additional people at the program. Because one of the things to help a person move forward - it's like way back when, when I took the Dale Carnegie course,

and learning how to speak in public. If you speak to one person that's one thing - stand in front of a crowd and you go silent...like you said those 8 people, it's almost like a training field where you can walk into a crowd of people and walk up to anybody and just strike up a conversation - and that's a skill-set, jeez I hope they learn. But what you've just told me, we don't know if they are or not.

The lead researcher and Miranda Kamal had a similar conversation regarding intentionality and social capital. Here is an excerpt from that conversation:

Lead Researcher: So, the fact that the student athletes are making connections that are going to benefit them beyond the gym - they're making friends and they're expanding their network [and that's great!]. I just want you to think about how MJKO facilitates those interactions - and how it can do an even better job of making sure that when the kids come to the gym, they're not just staying in their group of friends but that they're meeting new people and that when they come to the gym, they should really know everybody there. And I think for the most part they do - but, that's something that if you can be intentional about, how you structure your programs so that you make sure that everybody is getting to know one another - that would be really good.

Miranda Kamal: Okay, so you know what, I'm going to think that one through. Maybe we can talk to the coaches because we're always thinking about things we can work on and maybe we can come up with some sort of incentive program that we can implement to help with that.

3. Continuing to offer fun and engaging programs to achieve broader goals

Lead Researcher: it's going to be a challenge. So, I'm interested to learn what you think is appropriate in that context. And it might be tied to the reading program as that develops. It could be something like you have this reading program and those sessions get posted on the wall in the same way that the boxing sessions are. Whether it's attendance or they've read so many chapters, or they've submitted a half page summary of this' why I loved this last book that I read...

Miranda Kamal: And it's so hard, like I mean my kids can't read a primary book ...so, to post that visibly where people can see it. It's such a...to be honest, I want, it's something that's actually kind of bothering me a lot, because I feel like we're failing the kids, because I feel like we have to do a better job of helping them with that. But I haven't come up with a solution yet.

Lead Researcher: So, my comment is I wouldn't look for the solution. I think you're setting the bar too high – right. MJKO does a great job of providing an athletic based service. You do an excellent job of getting the kids moving and providing a safe space and an opportunity to meet new people. All of that is wonderful. You don't have to solve their academic issues. You just have to find a way to encourage that...you cannot solve these systemic barriers [alone].

Miranda Kamal: Really? (laughs). No believe me, this' something that has been eating away at me, because I feel like, right now too the police are always coming to me and they're like “Miranda - wow, we didn't know the kids can't read and we want to do this program” and I'm like you know it's so much bigger than you want to “do a program”. Before you teach a kid to read, they have to trust you, and build a relationship with you.

4. Creating a culture that supports SFD initiatives (life-skills/goal-setting)

Lead Researcher: [Regarding] goal-setting interventions. So, that's a way that you can get the kids involved - so they're telling you what they think is important to them and it's going to be different for each athlete, right. Some are going to say I need an A-plus in my class and some are going to say, you know what, I need to know my teachers' names, or I need to be able to reach out to them. But, that's something that can be initiated at the boxing club. We talked a little bit in the focus group about having athletic goals and also academic goals. The next step to that might be what are your goals for the next 6 months - just in your life - and how can we help facilitate that?

Miranda Kamal: And I want to create a culture that that's something where my volunteer coaches - they take more ownership as opposed to everything having to be life [Coordinator] and I being like is this done? is this done? is this done? And

more of a culture of kids coming in and saying it's time to set our goals for the year - where do I do that, where do I get my paper?

Lead Researcher: A small, this might not be small - obviously it involves some leg work. But, something in terms of building that culture is - it would be nice to see, maybe it's a poster that gets posted up in the gym. I saw how wonderfully decorated the place is, and just have that SMART acronym up.

Miranda Kamal: That's true - that's a good point.

Lead Researcher: So, that's visibly an important piece now of MJKO - just like the championship belts are, and all the kids faces - all of that stuff is wonderful right.

D. Limitations and Future Research

This document reports findings from an exploratory investigation into the SFD outcomes of the CIT initiative. It is meant to inform MJKO and its executive board to improve MJKO programs for 2018, and is not meant to be generalizable. Co-researchers also acknowledge the limitations of this work. This report includes baseline data for further longitudinal research regarding the education and employment goals of MJKO participants. However, it does not definitively answer the question “to what degree does MJKO improve participants’ educational outcomes?”. The same is true for participants’ employment goals. As well, participants in this study, including TDSB Principals, Neighbourhood Officers, and MJKO youth were pre-selected – knowing they could provide rich detail and insight regarding the CIT initiative.

Future research should include a more holistic sampling of participants, including those who have dropped out of the program. The same is true for TDSB Principals and TPS Neighbourhood Officers. Future research may also include a more in-depth longitudinal study of select MJKO participants as they mature and pursue their educational and employment goals. This type of longitudinal research is continually called for – and MJKO has an opportunity with this baseline data and (presumably) willing participants to engage in this difficult and laborious work.

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