Youth Development through Street-Sports:
An Exploration of the Relationship between Learning Styles and Fear of Failure

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Psychology

At Massey University, Albany,
New Zealand.

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2015
Abstract

Research has found that being involved with sports can be physically, psychologically and socially beneficial, especially during youth’s developmental years (Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin, 2005). Many youth programs advocate sporting activities as a way to foster positive youth development. Within this body of research, the issues of fear of failure and perfectionism have been considered as factors that affect a person’s motivation to continue participating in sport (Conroy, 2001). To date, fear of failure and perfectionism have typically been explored in achievement settings, and only in relation to competitive sports (e.g. Dunn, Gotwals, Dunn, & Syrotuik, 2006; Flett & Hewitt, 2005; Sagar, Lavallee, & Spray, 2007). The present research explored these constructs within a street-sports environment, where achievement and success is not a fundamental aspect. Furthermore, because of the unique learning environment that street-sports provide, this study examined whether a relationship existed between learning styles, fear of failure and perfectionism. Participants included youth – aged 10 to 18 years old – who participated in street-sports as their main form of physical activity. The street-sports included in this study were skateboarding, BMX and parkour. Self-report questionnaires were used to measure learning style, fears of failing and perfectionism scores. Correlation and regression analyses were employed to examine existing relationships between the three constructs. Results demonstrated that a relationship did exist between perfectionism and fear of failure, although this was low in comparison to prior research in competitive sports. Confirming previous findings, concern over mistakes was the aspect of perfectionism that showed the strongest relationship to fear of failure. Additionally, the results indicated that street-sport participants were collaborative learners and the more collaborative their learning style, the less likely they were to experience fear of failure. This thesis presents a proposition for better inclusion of street-sports within quantitative studies, particularly with interest to youth development.
Acknowledgements

I would first of all like to acknowledge and thank all the street-sport kids that allowed me to invade their recreational space and provide them with a spiel about my research. Without their participation, this study never would have been possible. These kids make research worthwhile.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr Richard Fletcher for allowing me the freedom to explore a topic that many asked ‘why?’, but I believed to be invaluable to the study of psychology. He stood behind me when it came to advocating the importance of my research, especially to the ethics committee the many times I went through the application process. It was at times difficult with my supervisor being based in Auckland, and for this reason I need to mention Dr Stephen Humphries, who showed me some of the analytical processes, that my below-basic understanding of stats would never have helped me with.

The Wellington campus staff were amazing with the support and kindness they showed me, that kept me from going insane at times. I have to specially mention Keith Tuffin, Ella Kahu and Megan Burnett, who believed in me, showed interest in my work, and made me feel a part of the supportive Massey community they have warmly created here.

I thank my friends for their patience during this seemingly unending time, especially those who understood how important it was to remove myself from facebook (and effectively the entire world) during the last months of writing up. And to Nicola, who I am so grateful for helping me stuff envelopes, driving across Auckland trying to get my ethics applications handed in on time, but most importantly, keeping me company on the road-trip all over the north island to visit skate parks and help me convince kids to take part in my study. Without your support, I most likely would have just stayed in the car and watched all the skaters I didn’t have the confidence to approach. No one else would have volunteered for that task, so for that I owe you a lifetime’s supply of beer!!

The girls who I shared an office with at uni, Alexia and Carmen, who I have made life-long friends with, I will forever be thankful that they were around during my Masters experience. To be able to share our struggles and realise I wasn’t alone in this was advantageous. You were both truly amazing, and I never would have created the thesis I have without the determination you gave me.

I especially want to acknowledge my family, who I am forever grateful to have in my life. Firstly, my brother who – even though I’m jealous he has this talent – always knew the right things to say to me, reminding me how the hard work would pay off. And my sister, who in her own unique, but loveable way, supported me right to the very end. My greatest emotional debt I owe to my mum. You listened to me, understood when I took my frustrations out on you, and put my feelings ahead of your own time and time again. I will be forever thankful for your encouraging words that kept me from giving up on myself – when the world says “give up”; hope whispers, “try it one more time”. Your love, and the amount of belief you have in my academic abilities inspire me to be a better person!
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