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AMERICAN CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ASIAN MARTIAL ARTS: AN
INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVE
OF TAEKWONDO PARTICIPANTS

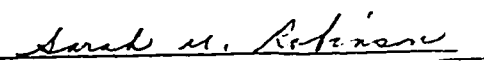
by

Jin Bang Yang

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
the University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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Approved by


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YANG, JIN BANG, Ph.D. American Conceptualization of Asian Martial Arts: An Interpretive Analysis of the Narrative of Taekwondo Participants. (1996)
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The purpose of this study is to investigate American conceptualizations of Asian martial arts practice. The study collected American martial arts literature that were known as influential to the American martial arts community and analyzed them to grasp how American literature conceptualizes Asian martial arts practice in American society. On the other hand, the study collected narratives of American martial arts practitioners to investigate how ordinary American participants interpret martial arts practice in the contexts of their own social lives. The informants were selected from the population of over 35 year old adult male and female taekwondo black belts. Through the open-ended interview, narratives were collected from 18 informants (male: 9, female: 9).

American martial arts literature conceptualized Asian martial arts as a spiritual discipline and rejected the practically oriented perspective of martial arts including the competitive and sport-oriented modern version of martial arts. American martial arts literature emphasized the value of the traditional Asian cultures of martial arts practice and viewed some Asian world views and philosophies as a significant part of the arts. American literature accepted Japanese perspectives of martial arts as the main referential framework and neglected to discuss other cultures of martial arts, particularly the Chinese and Korean resources.

American middle-aged martial arts practitioners viewed martial arts training as self-defense, physical exercise, and a medium for self-improvement. They valued martial arts

training as offering meaningful experiences that help them enhance self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-discipline. Adult female practitioners interpreted martial arts training to propose challenging experiences that help them reflect on their social self and personal potentials and reconceptualize themselves as more confident and self-centered beings. Adult participants defined their physical condition for the training but at the same time, reframed the training for their age and gender. They attempted to find meanings for their own purposes and conditions of life from the martial arts training.

Whereas American martial arts literature conceptualized martial arts as a spiritual, philosophical, and educational discipline, ordinary American practitioners defined their training in practical, physical, and personally meaningful ways. The spiritual version of martial arts framed by literature was not accepted by the ordinary practitioners. American practitioners' narratives did not reveal a significant influence from the languages of American martial arts literature.

APPROVAL PAGE

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This work is dedicated to my mentor
Chong Woo Lee, a father of modern Taekwondo,
and Taekwondo instructors all over the world.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Asian Martial Arts in Today's American Society

Martial arts have long been an important form of physical activity and education in Eastern Asian countries. This Eastern form of physical activity was recognized as early as the eighteenth century by Westerners as a foreign, but interesting, human movement culture. Although Asian martial arts were initially introduced to America around 1900, it was not accessible to ordinary audiences (except in very limited places) until the 1960's. However, as the result of 1970's and '80's popularization of the activity, martial arts are no longer foreign and extraordinary but ubiquitous and common in American society. Young Americans are growing up with the images and jargon of martial arts such as "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," "Karate Kid," and "Power Rangers." There are numerous cartoons, books, movies, and television series featuring martial arts stories that are now at the center of youth culture. Today's American youngster's life is replete with toys, costumes, and the language of martial arts. It is not difficult at all to find some type of martial arts studio or club around neighborhoods, community centers and college activity programs. Jargon from martial arts, "ki," "samurai," "blackbelt," and "karate kicks", have become a part of everyday American vocabulary. Donohue (1994) describes

the booming phenomenon of martial arts in American society as “novels about ninja make the best-seller list, businessmen comb ancient manuals on swordsmanship for guidance, and it is a rare action movie that has not been in some way affected by the psychology and technique of the martial arts” (p.3).

There is a new trend to promote martial arts as an activity for the general population, martial arts for families. There are increasing numbers of martial arts studios around residential neighborhoods, and they are packed with a variety of people of different genders, ages, and occupations. It has been estimated that 1 out of 10 Americans at some time registered for martial arts lessons and that several million are currently serious trainees (Blumenthal, 1986, Cox, 1993). Martial arts are no longer an exotic, foreign, personal hobby but have become an integral part of American culture, in particular, of sport and physical activity culture.

Diffusion of Asian Martial Arts in American Society

It is not clear who first introduced Asian martial arts to America, or when. Historical studies have neglected the diffusion process of Asian martial arts to American society, while concentrating on the Asian history of martial arts. There were some Asian martial arts activities in limited areas of the United States as early as the mid 1880s to the early 1900s. From 1884, Chinese laborers were imported to California mine towns and rail road construction sites, and Japanese immigrants moved to farm lands in California and Hawaii. These Asian immigrants practiced their own traditional activities within their

communities but excluded outsiders (Corcoran & Fakas, 1983; Davey, H. E., 1996). Around the same time, there were a few Americans who went abroad and had opportunities to learn these arts in the home lands (Harrison, 1955, Corcoran & Fakas, 1983). In 1902 and 1903 Japanese judoka (judo professional) Yoshiaki Yamashita and Shumeshiro Tomita visited the United States, and for the first time formally introduced Judo into the American society (Corcoran & Fakas, 1983). In 1921 the film “Outside Woman” showed Oriental martial arts to western audiences for the first time . (Corcoran & Fakas, 1983). In 1936, Toaro Mori began to teach kendo in Los Angeles (Corcoran & Fakas, 1983).

However, it was not until after World War II that America had any significant level of exposure to Asian martial arts. When American troops occupied Japan , Korea, Okinawa, and some parts of China, many GIs had the chance to learn some types of Asian martial arts, and to bring these arts back home. In some cases, they invited their foreign instructors to come to the United States to teach their art (USTU, 1990).

In the 1950s, there were several historical events that promoted Japanese karate and Korean taekwondo to American audiences. In 1952, a Korean Japanese, Mas Oyama toured the United States to introduce karate to the American public; in 1953, ten prominent Japanese martial arts instructors’ demo tours followed. During the next ten years Asian martial arts were promoted throughout American society by both Asian and American practitioners: Edward Kaloudis in New York, William Dometrich in Kentucky, Robert Trias in Arizona, and Tsutomu Ohishima in Los Angeles. Ed Parker on the West Coast introduced kempo-karate, and Joon Rhee began to teach taekwondo in Texas.

Bruce Lee immigrated to Seattle, Washington, from Hong Kong in 1959, and, at the same time, Alan Lee, based in New York, introduced Shaolin kung-fu on the East Coast. Black Belt Magazine was founded in 1961, the first American periodical specializing in martial arts (Corcoran & Fakas, 1983).

Through the 1960s, Asian martial arts gained broader recognition among American audiences; however, the activities still remained exotic and unknown to the general public. Martial arts enjoyed an increase in popularity following the release of Bruce Lee's movie, "Enter the Dragon" in 1973, following the television series "Kung-Fu" in 1972. Since then, Asian martial arts have become a favorite theme in Hollywood movies and television shows. The entertainment industry, on one hand, fostered the popularity of martial arts, and on the other hand, formed the general public's perceptions of martial arts, the popular image of Asian martial arts (Donohue, 1994, Graper, 1983).

With the popularity gained through martial arts movies, in the 1970s Asian martial arts in United States underwent significant changes that gave momentum to the popularization of martial arts. One change was that American students achieved instructor status. Another milestone was the end of the Vietnam war. The Vietnam war was an important event for the international diffusion of Korean taekwondo. With the participation of the Korean army as western allies, there was a dispatch of a taekwondo instructor unit primarily to teach Vietnamese military forces and civilians, but also resulted in spreading the art to other allied soldiers. After the war, soldiers who learned the art, and more significantly the Korean instructors who moved to the United States, accelerated

the diffusion of taekwondo, which was at the time, a minor art. Over next ten years it became one of the most popular martial arts in United States (USTU, 1990).

Table 1 presents a brief chronology of the diffusion of Asian martial arts to the United States.

Definitions of Asian Martial Arts

The definition of martial arts is ambiguous and has rarely been captured in accurate terms. In everyday American language, karate is the most common word for Asian martial arts, for example, the yellow pages in telephone books uses the term “karate” as a generic expression for martial arts. In contexts that need more specific, if not accurate, terms, authors often use “Oriental martial arts”, instead of Asian martial arts. The word “Oriental” is more ambiguous and less accurately denotes the geographical contexts of the origins of these arts than “Asian,” or, more precisely, “Eastern Asian.” There are a number of terms that describe martial arts in general: fighting arts, fighting systems, combative systems, self-defense systems, martial way, martial techniques, combative disciplines, and so on. The term “martial arts” is increasingly employed by academic and non-academic writers, and “Asian,” instead of “Oriental,” is now a more common prefix. Thus the term “Asian martial arts” is acquiring its status as a standard name.

There are numerous styles and schools of different systems within the category of martial arts. However, very few studies have developed conceptual frameworks for categorizing and classifying these complicated human activities. Draeger (1977, 1973a, b, c) attempts this by inventing a new term, “hopology,” and Donohue(1994) tries to

Table 1

A Chronology of Asian Martial Arts Diffusion to United States

Years	Style	Events
1848 -	Wushu	Chinese laborers imported to California for the Gold Rush.
1863	(kung-fu)	Chinese laborers imported to Central Pacific Railroad.
Late 1800	Japanese arts	Japanese immigrants to Hawaii and California practiced their traditional arts.
1879	Judo	United States president Grant visited and observed Jigoro Kano's demonstration (Kano was 19 years old).
1889	Judo	Kano demonstrated judo to visiting American dignitaries.
1889	Judo	Ladd, Yale University professor studied judo at the Kodohan.
1902	Judo	Yoshiaki Yamashita, as the first Japanese judo instructor taught judo in the United States
1903	Judo	Shumeshiro Tomita taught judo in Princeton and Columbia University.
1907	Judo	Takugoro Ito founded the first American judo school in Seattle.
1921	The movie, "Outside Woman" showed Asian martial arts to the general audience.
1930	Wushu (Kung-Fu)	Ark-Yuey Wong organized Kung-fu training group within Chinese community.
1933	Karate	Kamesuke Higaonna from Okinawa visited Hawaii.
1934	Karate	Chojun Miyagi was invited to Hawaii to teach Karate.
1936	Kendo	Toaro Mori immigrated to Los Angeles and begun to teach Kendo.
1940	Judo	The first intercollegiate judo competition held in San Jose.
1941 --	Judo	Many Americans practiced Judo in Japanese relocation camps.
1946	Karate	Robert Trias founded the first Karate school in the United States mainland in Phoenix, Arizona.
1949	Judo	Judo was recognized as an official sport by AAU.
1952	Karate	Mas Oyama toured 32 states for demonstration of karate.
1953	karate	Hidetaka Nishiyama and other Japanese prominent martial artists toured U S military base.
1955	Karate	Tsutomu Ohshima began to teach karate in Los Angeles, first time teaching orthodox Japanese style karate in the U S.

(table continues)

Table 1 (Continued)

Years	Style	Events
1955	Taekwondo	Atlee Chittim began to teach taekwondo in Texas after he returned from Korea.
1955	Karate	Robert Trias organized the first karate tournament in Phoenix.
1956	Taekwondo	Jhoon Rhee moved to Texas from Korea and taught taekwondo, becoming the father of American taekwondo.
1959	Wushu (Kung-Fu)	Alan Lee began to teach Shaolin kung-fu in New York.
1960	Taekwondo	Henry Cho moved to New York to teach taekwondo first in East Coast.
1960	Wushu (Kung-Fu)	Bruce Lee opened his first school in Seattle.
1964	Hapkido	Sea Oh Choi introduced hapkido in Los Angeles.

develop “a typology for martial system.” Draeger (1977) expresses his dissatisfaction with the common use of the term “martial” or “combative”:

The popular dictionary definition of “combative” is highly unsatisfactory to the hoplogist, for it treats only of the pugnacious, wrongly assuming that man can conveniently operate in a tidy emotional compartment that is characterized by offensive thoughts and actions that make no concessions to non-belligerent state. --
 -- For hoplogist, then , not all fighting arts are martial arts and not all martial arts *are* fighting arts (p. 71).

Donohue(1994) also states the complexity of the existing definition;

Anyone familiar with the variety of interpretations of the martial arts today knows that there are seemingly as many versions of what such an art is as there are practitioners. Ask a few pointed questions, however, and the vagueness of these

definition(s) becomes readily apparent. Is a martial art any activity relating to fighting? Are soldiers martial artists? Is martial art designed to be a practical means of combat, or is it a sport? Is a street fighter a martial artist? An Olympic judo contestant? Is a martial art found only in a specific society in a specific time and place? Do we find martial art only in Asia? Is it philosophy that defines such an art? The process of codification? The manner of its transmittal? (p. 20).

Defining martial arts and categorizing sub-activities of martial arts are daunting tasks.

They are anthropological and sociological endeavors for cross-cultural studies. Any effort to define martial arts in the context of broader human social life is far more complicated than can be imagined. Draeger(1977) points out:

Because combative cultures represent deep and significant human expressions, the study of such disciplines reveals certain depths of man, areas of emotion that are equally as significant to the understanding of man as are his arts and emotion of peace. The study of man's combative arts is not all to do with the "impassioned drama"-war-and its attendant acts of violence and bloodshed. Some of greatest peacetime achievements have derived from this spirit and techniques of combat. Martial culture has indelibly influenced language, graphic arts, literature, music, and drama, as well as the philosophical and religious systems of thought in virtually every culture known to man (p. 70).

Donohue(1994) makes the same point in a similar way:

Questions of structure, purpose and classification imply that we must attempt to place the martial arts within a broader range of activities related to human conflict to attempt to define what a martial art is, we must be able to contrast such a system with other systems whose social function and cultural and historical antecedents place them in categories that can be differentiated from that of "martial art." ---- The potential for aggression is a universal characteristic of human being, and there is a depressing abundance of the development of organized systems of aggression in the annals of human history. Whatever our feelings about combat, the fact remains that

fact remains that fighting (ritualistic, sportive, or lethal) is done among, with, and to other people. It is an eminently social activity (p.20).

Donohue (1994) accentuates the importance of a comprehensive understanding of martial arts as a cultural system.

On a cultural level, to approach the study of a culture's fighters is also to draw nearer to a more complete understanding of the ideas that motivate people toward (and through) combat. From a broader perspective, such an examination also shed light on society itself. To discuss a martial system is to investigate a particular type of social institution and the constellation of cultural as well as technical forces which animate it. A comparative discussion of martial systems and the development of a cross-cultural typology has important implications for our specific understanding of the form and purpose of the martial arts in America today (pp. 20-21).

There are different levels of issues in the effort for conceptual definitions of martial arts. The first approach is to define martial arts as a form of generic cultural activity existing in any society. This definition must include human aggressiveness and social-cultural forms of expressing them, values toward them, historical contexts, and other sociological and anthropological implications. But this level of definition is too broad and general to avoid the problem of over-abstraction. To narrow down to the next level is to focus on the technicality of martial arts. This approach will limit martial arts to human activities that depend on skillful movements, excluding those activities that apply mechanical power and sophistication such as fire arms. Thus, martial arts will be defined as systems of skillful human movements that have developed to deal effectively with interpersonal combats. The definition will include those components that are non-

movements but critical to the systems, such as the rationale principal to the training and application of the system, and cultural components in the practice of the system. This way of definition seems plausible, but raises an interesting question: Why are people hesitant to classify boxing, wrestling and fencing as martial arts? Is it a matter of geographical categorization of cultural characteristics of the activities? Or is there an irreconcilable gap between the concept of sport and that of martial arts? Although these are challenging and significant questions for further study of martial arts, they are beyond the scope of this study.

This study employs the definition of martial arts that most American martial arts communities accept in practice and writing; that is, systems of combative activities developed in historically and geographically Asian cultural contexts. However, there are some problems with this definition, particularly considering current American discourses on martial arts. For example, there are some non-Asian activities that are generally accepted among American audiences as martial arts, and some Asian combative activities that are not accepted as martial arts but as sports. Indeed, it is difficult to develop a categorical concept that can accommodate all forms of practices that American audience perceive, in one sense or another, as martial arts. Therefore, this study will not attempt to define "martial arts" in a general sense, but concentrate only on Asian martial arts, mainly Eastern Asian martial arts for the scope of the study.

A definition of Asian martial arts cannot be developed without consideration of their evolutionary process in the history of Asian cultures in general, and particularly, of their developments in the social and historical contexts in the respective societies of China.

Korea, and Japan. For Westerners, cultures of those three countries tend to be identical, but in reality, are somewhat different. And the difference sometimes becomes the matter. The English word “martial art” is a translation of the Chinese word, “wushu”, “wuyi,” or “wutao”, or the Japanese word, “bujjitu”, or “buhei” or “budo”; or the Korean word “moosool”, or “mooye”, or “moodo”. Although each of these Asian languages has its own cultural connotations within the historical contexts of the country, they can be categorized into three groups purely according to their linguistic origins. For example, “wushu”, “bujjitu”, and “moosool” can be written in same Chinese characters as 武術, and pronounced differently in each country, the same is true with such words as, “wuyi”, “buhei”, and “mooyae” as 武艺, and words, “wutao”, “budo”, and “moodo” as 武道. However, the cultural and historical connotations of the word may not be same in each country. There are significant differences in the development of social notions of martial arts within the given cultural and historical contexts. For example, in Japanese history, warriors had long been a social class of dominant power. Thus martial arts in Japanese traditional society were a major culture of the ruling class, whereas in China and Korea, intellectuals replaced the warrior group as the political elite long ago and martial arts were not as much of the ruling class’s ideological culture as in the Japanese society. Martial arts in Chinese and Korean societies were mainly a professional technology of military society and a form of cultural activities for civilians’ educational, religious, and sporting pursuits.

From the Asian terms above; “wu-”, “bu-”, “moo-” are the same Chinese character “武” and means military, martial, or combative. And “shu”, “jjitu,” and “sool” are the

same word “術” and mean skill, techniques or set of them, while the character for “yi”, “hei” and “yae” is “芸”, and means art, artistic, or artful. The words “tao,” “do,” and “do” are written as “道” and mean the way, or ultimate principle. Therefore, “wushu”, “bujjtu”, and “moosool” can be translated as martial techniques, or systems of combative techniques, and “wuyi”, “buhei”, and “mooyae” as martial arts, and “wutao”, “budo”, and “moodo” as the martial way. The English term “martial art” is, in most cases, a translation of the Japanese concept of “budo” or Korean “moodo.” “Budo” is the term for general martial arts in Japan, whereas, in Korea, “moodo”, “moosool”, and “mooyae” are almost equally used. In China, however, “wushu” is unanimously used to denote martial arts in general, whereas “wutao” is used on very exceptional occasions. These linguistic preferences imply that each culture has given different social meanings to martial arts.

For today’s American practitioners, there are far more complications than simply choosing a proper word for translation when they try to interpret the Asian concepts of martial arts. The arguments on those three sets of words (Monday, 1994, Hurst, 1993, Draeger & Smith, 1980) are not linguistic questions but rather issues of understanding the historical transformation of social and cultural status of martial arts in the three respective Asian countries.

There are numerous names of Asian martial arts that are practiced in the United States. The major systems of Asian martial arts practiced in the United States are listed in Appendix A.

A Brief Introduction to Taekwondo

Since the study is limited to informants from only one Asian martial art, taekwondo, a brief introduction of taekwondo will give a basis for the understanding of informants' narratives on their training experiences. Taekwondo has been developed in the context of Korean history and culture. Therefore, the symbols, language, rituals, and interpersonal and institutional ethos in taekwondo are predominantly Korean. Although its technical formation and training structure has some commonality with other Asian arts, it is very distinctive for its salient kicking systems and sophisticated sparring system. It is said in the martial arts community that rapid growth of taekwondo in American martial arts community is due to its superior kicking techniques and sport-like sparring system. In fact, taekwondo pursued its development as sport and achieved the status as an internationally recognized sport, relatively early compared to other Asian martial arts. There is no clear evidence that the success of taekwondo internationally contributed to the rapid spreading of taekwondo to American society.

Taekwondo has a relatively high level of uniformity in organizational structure and curriculum compared to other martial arts systems in the United States. Another feature of taekwondo in the United States is that more instructors from the country of origin, Korea, are teaching the art as compared to other styles of martial art.

Taekwondo and karate are the most popular styles of Asian martial arts in the United States. There is no nationwide statistical data that describe the demography of martial arts participants in the United States. Thus, the researcher surveyed martial arts

schools registered in the telephone books of five big cities; Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta, Washington, D. C. to estimate the distribution of different martial arts systems in the country. The result shown in the following table indicates the striking-oriented martial arts such as taekwondo and karate are the major system of martial arts in the United States. (There are many taekwondo schools that advertise themselves as karate for better publicity. The numbers of taekwondo schools in the following table might be underestimated if those cases were considered).

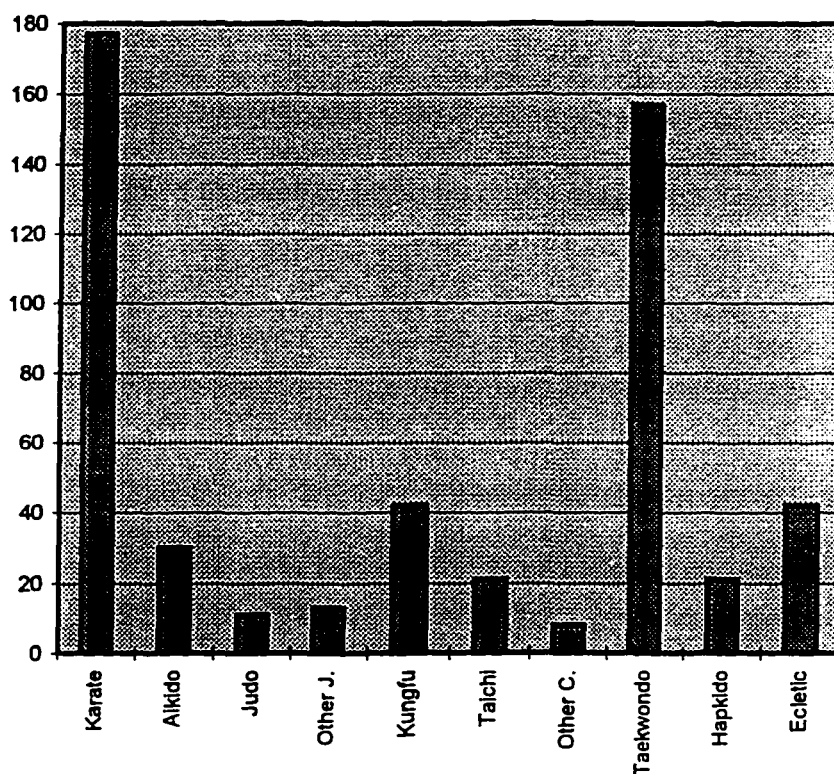


Figure 1. The Number of Martial Arts Schools in Five Major Cities

Purpose of the Study

The impact of western civilization on the Asian world during the last three centuries of colonial invasions was so dramatic that Asian perceptions of the world were shaken and changed. The martial arts were not the exception. In fact, the culture of martial arts is one so profoundly affected that there are significant transformations from their traditional forms [I will discuss the details of this issue later in this study]. Asians gradually recognized the value of martial arts as a cultural source that could compete with Western culture of sport and physical education. Soon they saw martial arts becoming popular even in Western societies, a significant event for Asians because they had a sense of being overshadowed by Western civilization.

During the last half century, Asian martial arts have been rapidly globalized. However, this globalization was, in a sense, a one-way process in which they disseminated mostly Asian cultural messages to the rest of the world, but did not accepted much feedback from the hosting cultures. Thus, there are increasing debates on intercultural communication problems in international martial arts communities.

There is an interesting, and at the same time, challenging set of intercultural questions: Why are Asian martial arts so attractive to the Westerners? What is the impact of Westerners' involvement? What is the cultural significance embedded in these stories of globalization? It is beyond the scope of this study to cover these issues. This study will focus on American society's reflections on the Asian martial arts, how Americans interpret and conceptualize them within their social contexts. Martial arts have been developed in

traditional Asian society to fulfill certain cultural meanings and functions (Draeger, 1973b). Asian martial arts in American society must also have cultural significance, although probably different from those in their home societies. However, most of the texts in English so far have concentrated on grasping what they call “original versions of martial arts.” Most English texts on martial arts are about Asian histories and philosophies of Asian martial arts, in hopes that the study of the original source will provide answers for their practice. But, in fact, there has never been a single clearly stated definition of martial arts in Asian societies nor probably anywhere else. And more importantly, through my personal study and experiences of travel to many countries, I observed that Asian martial arts were practiced in diverse ways in different societies. Through the globalization, the changes occurred during last half century in Asian martial arts may be evaluated as significant as the progress of the whole previous history. There is a need to study the practice of Asian martial arts in Western societies from the perspectives of Western practitioners, in light of the popularity of Asian martial arts in the West and the changes they have undergone there.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Americans make sense of their participation in these arts within the context of their own social lives. The study also anticipates that there are diverse versions of martial arts in the American martial arts community. The main goal of the study is to delineate these diverse versions through the analysis of American martial arts texts and practitioners’ narratives. The investigation of American interpretations and conceptualizations of their martial arts activities is expected

to give new perspectives to the research and the field of instruction in martial arts communities both in Western and Asian countries.

Significance of the Study

There have not been many studies that focus on the sociological dimensions of martial arts both in Asia and in the United States. If Asian martial arts play a role of channeling Asian culture to American society, a study of American conceptualizations of this Asian physical activity will contribute to understanding this acculturation process. This study may help the international community of martial arts, particularly international martial arts organizations, most of which are controlled by Asian leaders to understand Americans' interests and interpretations of the activity.

Since this analysis is forged through the frame of an Asian expert, the outcome could be insightful to American authors. There is an increasing number of authors from both an academic background and a field background who study and write on martial arts. This study will provide them with a new perspective on martial arts, one that is not from original texts nor from experts' versions, but from the positions of contemporary American participants.

Another main interest in this study is to find a cue for developing a new curricular framework of taekwondo for Western society. The findings of this study will suggest how Asian martial arts can be transformed to accommodate the conditions of Western society.

Research Questions

The following questions are framed to guide the inquiry on several different levels:

- I. What are the interpretations and conceptualizations of Asian martial arts in the martial arts literature in English that have been influential to the American martial arts community?
 - A. What are the salient themes in those American texts of martial arts?
 - B. How did American authors interpret the Asian texts? Particularly, which parts of the original texts did they select, emphasize, or exclude to conceptualize Asian martial arts for the American audience?
- II. What are the interpretations and conceptualizations of Asian martial arts from the perspectives of contemporary practitioners?
 - A. What are the significant themes in the participants' narratives on their martial art participation? What are the important meanings of their involvement in martial arts activity?

- B. How do the participants conceptualize their martial arts practices connected to their own particular conditions of social lives; 1) middle-aged adult, 2) gender?
- III. Are there meaningful similarities and differences between the conceptualizations of martial arts in the American literature and those of the participants? Is there textual connectedness between the two?
- A. What are the differences between participants' interpretations of martial arts training and those of the written texts? If there are salient differences framing themes between the two sets, how can those differences be interpreted?
- B. Is there some intertextual connectedness between these two versions of martial arts?
- IV. Does the American concept of martial arts have salient characteristics, as contrasted to traditional Asian versions of martial arts? If so, what are those concepts that the American martial arts community has actively, independently, and creatively constructed for the conceptualization of their own martial arts practices?

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FOUNDING

Introduction

Studies of human physical activity in contemporary society flourish in various disciplines with diverse theoretical orientations. Positivist-Behavioral approaches often attempt to theorize the phenomena with the language of motivation, goal, objectives, expectation, efficacy, social conditioning, and so on. Other approaches assume that human engagement in physical activity is a form of social-cultural practice; these approaches focus on the complex social, political, and cultural dimensions of human physical activity.

When physical activity is considered as a form of social-cultural practice, the concept of physical activity, whether sports or exercise activity, can not be separate, independent, or isolated from the larger social, political, and cultural domains. In this context, the meanings that participants experience, interpret, construct, and create in their daily lives is key in understanding and explaining their actions within the given social conditions. Theberge(1984) states that “a more adequate theory of sport participation must examine this activity as a process by which men and women actively create their sporting lives within the constraints of particular social and political structures” (p.32).The

effort to explain human physical activity as sociocultural activity leads to the question of how people make sense of their everyday experiences in the wider social, economic, political and historical context that structures their lives. There are diverse approaches to understand the meaning-making process and its significance. The study focuses on the social constructionists' approach and the perspectives of Hall and his colleague in the circle of the cultural studies as the theoretical frames to understand the American martial arts practitioners' conceptualizations of their experiences.

Theories of Meaning

To define the meaning of the word "meaning" is difficult because of "the rich complexity of the concept" (Carlson, 1988). Theories of meaning have developed as a key subject of linguistics, philosophy, and psychology in Western thought. The main focus of the theories of meaning in general is the relationship between abstract symbols and the things in the world (Johnson, 1987). Most traditional theories of meaning focus on the relationship between the word and things to which the word refers. Edwards (1967) grouped these traditional theories into three categories: referential; ideational; and stimulus-response theory. Johnson (1987) described these traditional approaches of meaning as the objectivist theory of meaning. This objectivist view of meaning, according to Johnson (1987) and Schwandt (1994), assumes that reality exists "out there" to be studied, and words are arbitrary symbols which, though meaningless in themselves, get their meaning by virtue of their capacity to correspond directly to things in the world.

These theorists believe that language can map the objects, properties, and relations in a literal, univocal, context-independent fashion.

There is a different perspective that focuses not on the direct relationship between symbolic representation and objective reality, but on the role of human subjectivity and social conditions in the human process of meaning-making. In this line of thought, Marx, Wittgenstein, Shultz, Mead, Foucault, and others view meaning not as a mirrored representation of objective reality but as a social product. However, they disagree about the roles subjectivity and society play in the meaning-making process, giving birth to the social determinism and subjectivism dispute. To the subjectivist views, meaning is neither supplied by the pre-existing relationship between words and things, nor determined by given social structure, but requires the active role of a meaning-maker, the person. Human consciousness actively constitutes the objects of experience, using the interpretive application of a category to the concrete particulars of a situation (Jansen & Peshkin, 1992, Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Social determinists, typically structural Marxists, believe that meaning of human experience in a society is determined by its given economic, political structures in particular, by mode of production and class structure (Grossberg, 1984).

Constructionist Theory of Meaning

Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a reflection or map of the world, but as an artifact of communal interchange among the social actors.

Phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Alfred Schutz attempt to describe how meaning comes out of experience and how we come to know the experience of others. Schutz (in Holstein & Gubrium, 1994; Wuthnow, 1984) argues that consciousness is fundamentally “a broken stream of lived experiences” which have no meaning themselves. Therefore meaning is attached to actions retrospectively; “only the already experienced is meaningful, not that which is in the process of being experienced” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 244). Merleau-Ponty stresses that the role of language is to make meaning out of human experience.

Our linguistic ability enables us to descend into the realm of our primary perceptual and emotional experience, to find there a reality susceptible to verbal understanding, and to bring forth a meaningful experience of this primary level of our existence (in Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 29).

With the emphasis of the roles of language and subjective meaning in human experience, phenomenologists emphasize the significance of inter-subjectivity or shared understandings in social life (Wuthnow, 1984).

Stemming from this social phenomenology, constructionism is concerned with explicating the process by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world. Constructionists are critical of the positivist-empiricist concept of knowledge in which scientific theory serves to reflect or map reality in any direct or decontextualized manner. Instead, they believe that the terms in which the world is understood are social artifacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people (Gergen, 1985). Gergen, (1989) point out that:

the reality of the world, or the facts of any matter, are generated through social discourse, and not through observation and induction (as in the positivist-empiricist version). Thus facts and theories are dependent upon the process of communication and consensus (p. 433).

Thus, for constructionists, it is essential to elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meaning is embodied in the language and actions of social actors (Schwandt, 1994).

Constructionists do not believe in a single absolute reality “out there”; instead, they assume multiple realities, locally and historically constructed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). They emphasize “the pluralistic and plastic character of reality - pluralistic in the sense that reality is expressible in a variety of symbol and language systems; plastic in the sense that reality is stretched and shaped to fit purposeful acts of intentional human agents” (Schwandt, 1994, p.125). As a consequence of this assumption of multiple realities, they accept multiple truths and meanings.

Constructionists shift the point of concentration from the early phenomenologists’ concern with the relationship between mind and world to the relationship between words and world. The central focus then, is on the language used by persons to describe or explain their world. Language is no longer an outer expression of inner states, but is social in its origins, uses, and implications. Meaning is not the product of an isolated individual mind but the product of historically situated interchange among people, a social discourse. People understand the world and their experience through the medium of

shared meanings of language which are sociocultural constitutions. Thus everyday understanding exists in the language of the culture (Gergen and Semin, 1990, Gergen, 1989).

In summary, the constructionist theory of meaning assumes multiple realities articulated by concepts such as; social reality, linguistic reality, local knowledge, and socially shared meaning. It emphasizes the active role of language in human cognition and understanding of the world. Social constructionists believe that language, concepts, social categories, and metaphors are socially constructed; thus meaning is not private, but communal or social. Consequently, meaning is not constant, but historical, changing, emerging, reforming, and creating within the given social contexts. However, social constructionism does not give fully concrete explanations to the notion and role of “the social” in the constructing process of meaning.

Theory of Meaning in Cultural Studies

In the recently emerging field of cultural studies, attention is focused on meaning as the conduit to understand and analyze an individual's everyday life experiences. The assumption is that “culture is inherently meaningful, and meanings are rooted in practical social experience.” (Weedon, et. al., 1980, p. 178). Hall (1980) expresses the centrality of meaning in the cultural studies: “[c]ulture no longer simply reflected other practices in the realm of ideas. It was itself a practice - a signifying practice -and had its own determinate product: meaning” (p.30).

Hall and his colleagues in cultural studies do not consider meaning to be solely the product of subjective consciousness, but note that social structure has something to do with determining the meanings of an individual's experiences. However, they take a critical stance toward the position of traditional Marxists' reductionism and determinism, which ascribe "the domain of ideas and of meanings to the 'superstructure,' themselves conceived as merely reflective of and determined in some simple fashion by 'the base,' without a social effectivity of their own" (Hall, 1985, 1994). Instead, these theorists try to ground "a middle position between culturalism and structuralism" (Hall, 1985, 1994, Grossberg, 1985). Hall (1994) contrasts the two positions.

Whereas, in "culturalism," experience was the ground-the terrain of "the lived"-where consciousness and conditions intersected, structuralism insisted that "experience" could not, by definition, be the ground of anything, since one could only "live" and experience one's conditions *in and through* the categories, classifications and frameworks of the culture. These categories, however, did not arise from or in experience: rather, experience was the their "effect." The culturalists had defined the forms of consciousness and culture as collective. But they had stopped far short of the radical proposition that, in culture and in language, the subject was "spoken by" the categories of the culture in which he/she thought, rather than individual productions: they were *unconscious* structures (p. 531).

Hall and his colleagues focus on the notion of ideology to theorize the middle ground of culturalism and structuralism. They discard old structural Marxists' notions of determinist, reductionist, distorted and negative aspects of ideology, and they adapt a practical notion of ideology or theory of ideology from the theories of Foucault, Gramsci.

Althusser, Lacan, and Laclue (Larrain, 1991, Hall, 1994). Hall himself defines ideology as:

those images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and “make sense” of some aspects of social existence. ---- First, ideologies do not consist of isolated and separated concepts, but in the articulation of different elements into a distinctive set or chain of meanings. Second, ideological statements are made by individuals; but ideologies are not the product of individual consciousness or intention. Rather, we formulate our intentions within ideology. Third, ideologies “work” by constructing for their subjects (individuals and collective) positions of identification and knowledge which allow them to “utter” ideological truths as if they were their authentic authors. (Hall 1981 a. p. 31- 32)

In this position, ideology becomes critical because language and discourse in a society are deeply penetrated and inscribed by ideology (Grossberg, 1985). Thus, from the perspective of cultural studies, ideology is not the false consciousness, but:

the historical articulations between forms of consciousness and forms of practice and struggle. Ideology is ---- the web of meanings and discourses, the strings of connotation and their means of representation, within which social practices, consciousnesses, identities, and subjectivities are placed (Grossberg, 1985, p.89).

Therefore, “ideology” is a mediating and bridging concept between culture and structure, subjectivity and society, and “the speaking subject” and “the spoken subject.” This new interpretation of ideology gives a new theoretical direction to the analysis of experience and meaning of ordinary people’s everyday practice within the given social conditions. It asks researchers to take the balanced position between the participant’s

active role for constructing meanings, and ideological encoding to the participant's consciousness. The efforts for the balance becomes the struggled and negotiated terrain of interpretation.

If we take this new interpretation of ideology as the theoretical grounding for the understanding of the relationship between individual's subjective consciousness and social condition, then the next issue should be the question of how the dynamics of the two sources of signifying practice work. Hall (1980) attempted to theorize the process with the conceptualization of "encoding and decoding". Hall (1980), in his theoretical account of how messages are produced and disseminated, (referring particularly to television), points out the significant process of decoding messages encoded by institutional power relations. Hall (1980) used the notion of "dominant or preferred meanings" as the key conceptualization of decoding process, influenced from Gramsci's notions of hegemony and dominant ideology.

The different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organized into *dominant or preferred meanings*. --- We say *dominant*, not 'determined' because it is always possible to order, classify, assign and decode an event within more than one 'mapping'. But we say 'dominant' because there exists a pattern of 'preferred readings,' and these both have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized. The domains of 'preferred meaning' have the social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practice and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of 'how things work for all practical purposes in this culture', the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits and sanctions (p.98).

Hall's notion of *dominant meanings* does not mean one-sided process of signification, but rather that decoding should be processed by a subjective capacity in the individualized and privatized manner of interpretation within the limit of dominant definitions in which the event has been connotatively signified. In this context, the process of interpretation, reading, or decoding texts becomes the intersecting terrain of subjectivity's autonomous capacity and power of hegemony, meanings from dominant ideologies. This is close to the Foucaultian understanding of the intertwined relation of power and knowledge, that is, language and texts (Sholle, 1988).

No longer is ideology a false consciousness or a reflection of class interests or an imaginary relation or a production of obfuscating ideas. Rather, ideology is that condition of all discourse that is present as the embodiment or articulation of power, as the maintenance of control over definition itself (Sholle, 1988, p. 37).

In summary, cultural studies, from their complex intertextual background using a combination of different theoretical frames (Marxism, structuralism, culturalism, Foucaultian, Gramscian, and even postmodern theory), conceptualize culture as "a middle ground in which people constantly try to bend what they are given to their own needs and desires, to win a bit of space for themselves, a bit of power over their own lives, and society's future" (Grossberg, 1986, Hall, 1996). In the cultural practice, individuals, mainly through the "negotiated process of articulation", explore, interpret, construct, and contest meanings of their social experience and also of their 'self.' Through these meanings, they construct the social identities that enable them to make sense of themselves

and of their social relations in the modern society (Fiske, 1987, Hall, 1996, Grossberg, 1986).

Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality was developed by the works of Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Barthes (Plottell & Charney, 1978, Worton & Still, 1990). The basic notion of intertextuality is that no text is an untouched, unified whole, instead, “a galaxy of signifiers, a network of interrelated codes, an open, dynamic playground where the endless process of signification takes place” (Cancalon & Spacagna, 1988, p. 1). The theory of intertextuality argues that a text can not be a closed or self-sufficient system because of the processes involved in making a text, writing a text, and reading a text. First, writing a text is inevitably an intertextual process because the writer is a reader of other texts before s/he becomes a creator of texts. Second, reading a text also involves the intertextual process because “what is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilization of the packaged textual material (say, a book) by all the texts which the reader brings to it” (Worton & Still, 1990, p. 1-2). Worton & Still (1990) point out the significance of the process of reading:

A delicate allusion to a work unknown to the reader, which therefore goes unnoticed, will have a dormant existence in that reading. On the other hand, the reader’s experience of some practice or theory unknown to the author may lead to a fresh interpretation (p.1).

Chi (1995) adds:

Texts become understandable when readers are able to link a writer's knowledge of the world with their own. Texts become powerful when readers tie the written work to their personal experience. Through these intertextual connection between writer and reader or the written and the reading, we not only make meaning out of the texts but are also personally transformed in varying degrees by the text (p. 638).

The notion of intertextuality requires us to discard traditional notions of "author-centered theory of influence", and to reconsider the dynamics of reading texts and the relationship of author and reader (Clayton & Rothstein, 1991). In fact, these arguments of intertextuality can be traced from Bakhtin's concepts of language, particularly his concepts of "dialogism," and "heteroglossia". In his theory of language, Bakhtin insisted that "words do not live in dictionaries but in other people's mouths" (Still & Worton, p. 16); "a word in the mouth of a particular individual is a product of the living interaction of social force"(Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 220). Refusing the rigid meaning of language, Bakhtin rather suggests the unpredictability of interlocutors' interpretations and its social contextual relations. For Bakhtin, all language is social, and meaning must be situated within a social context, because "actual social life and historical becoming create a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.288). Todorov (1984) states the point clearly:

no utterance in general can be attributed to the speaker exclusively; it is the product of the interaction of the interlocution, and broadly speaking, the product of the whole complex social situation in which it occurred (p.30).

Interpretive Community

Another significant implication of the theory of intertextuality is the possibility of collective practice of reading texts, interpretation in community. Mailloux (1989) states that rhetoric communities shape the interpretive acts of individuals, considering the role of the existing tradition of interpretation, as well as broader cultural influence, in shaping local interpretive events. Casey (1993, 1995) collected several terms to denote this community of reading social texts: Gramsci's "collective subjective," Fish's "interpretive community," Bakhtin's "social dialect," and the Popular Memory Group's "general cultural repertoire." Richardson (1990) names the narratives of a particular social group as "collective story," and defined that "collective story displays an individual story by narrativizing the experience of the social category to which the individual belongs, rather than by telling the particular individual's story or by simply retelling the cultural story" (p.128).

There are studies which extended these concepts to the study of the role of interpretive community, or intersubjective construction of meaning with which the audience decodes social texts, particularly media texts (Carragee, 1990). But, before we theorize the interpretive community, there is a need to assume the existence of "active

audience” who reads and decodes the given text in creative or resistant ways, rather than consuming socially prescribed text passively. Theoretically, the notion of active audience views texts not as carrying hegemonic or dominant ideological meaning, but as polysemic or “an empty vessel,” which requires the mediating presence of an interpreting audience to be realized. (Evans, 1990). Evans (1990) argues that

the media text or artifact is not concrete but, rather, is pregnant with multiple implications that defy the imposition of any general, monolithic meaning. --- Nonetheless, common to most all interpretivists, particularly those emphasizing the empty vessel view, is the notion that “readers” often exercise their capacity to produce their own, individual meanings from texts (p. 149).

Lindlof (1988), Liebes (1988), and Carragee (1990) maintain that the polysemic characteristics of text invite “multiple interpretation” (Carragee), “multiple decoding” (Lindlof), or “negotiation and different readings” (Liebes) of a single text. According to Katz and Liebes (1986), television programs “do not impose themselves unequivocally on passive viewers the reading of a programme is a process of negotiation between the story on the screen and the culture of the viewers” (p. 97). Barkin and Gurevitch (1987) stress that the meanings of texts emerge and are reproduced in the interaction between texts and audiences.

The audience, as an active participant in the social production of meaning (Fiske, 1987) interprets social texts not in the monolithic ideological limit but by the discursive mode of their culture (Jensen, 1990). This suggests a possibility of “a different kind of community or patterning of interpretation.”(Evans, 1990). Evans (1990) argues that even

though individual interpretation may vary, the differences are possibly ascribed more significantly to groups, “interpretive communities”, than to individuals. Liebes (1988) observes that differences in the retelling of television fiction exist among different ethnic groups who have distinct meaning systems.

However, there is a concern that the concept of interpretive community is vague and imprecise to be applied for research. Harris (1993) noted limitations and utilities of the concept as a research frame, illustrating several cases of empirical studies that employed the concept in different ways. Although there are questions of how to accurately define the boundary of the community, the concept of interpretive community suggests the possibility of an active audience who reads the social text and interprets their own experiences not within the limit of dominant ideology, but with their own meanings, and proposes the possibility of active and creative interpretation not in an individualistic way, but rather with some level of commonality.

Theoretical Grounding of the Study

The research questions of the study are framed based on the theoretical perspectives discussed in the previous chapter. It is assumed that participation in martial arts is a social practice in the sense that martial arts practice is taking place in a social contexts, as a part of the participant’s social life. Therefore, martial arts activity has social and political implications, both on conscious, and unconscious levels. The participant makes sense of the activity and self within his/her social cultural life conditions. The participant’s decision to participate in martial arts itself implies social and cultural meanings. Individuals who

practice martial arts are assumed to make sense of their experience in martial arts training. However, participants construct their own meaning of martial arts training interpreting messages encoded in the practice of martial arts within the social and cultural contexts of the today's American society. Thus, the analysis of the written texts and the participants' narratives is expected to reveal American interpretations of Asian martial arts practice in the society in not only personal level but also in social and cultural level.

Although individuals are assumed to be active interpreters and constructors of their own experiences in martial arts activities, their interpretations and constructions of meaning are expected to reveal certain patterns according to discourses associated with some salient identities (middle-age and gender differences). Therefore, the study intends to identify the different versions of martial arts practice existing among people of different constellation of social identities, particularly in gender.

Participants construct meanings in martial arts not in a context-free vacuum, but in reference to a broader contextual web. There are three significant sources of intertexts for the participant's interpretation. The first is the Asian original texts on martial arts that give direct and profound effects on American practitioners' conceptualization of martial arts. The second is American consciousness on sport and physical activity constructed in the larger context of American culture and society. Third is the participant's individual life history which reflects the personal and social conditions through which that individual has lived. The study identifies the interactive dynamics of these three different contexts interwoven into American conceptualization of martial arts practice from the readings of the written and spoken texts on martial arts.

Written texts examined in this study are assumed to have authoritative status in the American martial arts community, not only because they are well known texts, but also because they are published materials. The published texts on martial arts are forms of American representation of martial arts practice, but also, are authoritative voices to ordinary practitioners. Ordinary practitioners are subjected to authoritative voices from books, magazines, mass media, and instructors or experts. Those authoritative voices intend to shape, regulate, control ordinary participants' practice, not only on a conceptual level, but also in the very practical level, directing their behaviors. However, participants may exert their capacities to reinterpret and recreate the meanings that the authoritative discourses attempt to inscribe on them. Participants may not be passive consumers but active producers of meaning. They possibly construct the meaning of martial art training, relating the activity to their other aspects of life. Therefore, the study anticipates that the ordinary participants' narratives on martial arts training reveal different versions of martial arts training from the versions of the authoritative texts.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

In the most broad sense, modern social linguistic approaches define “text” as any form of written and spoken materials, and non-verbal symbols (Silverman, 1994, Potter & Wetherell, 1987). If we accept this definition of “text,” there are diverse forms of texts that American martial arts practitioners receive, interpret, and produce in their martial arts training. There are extensive materials written in English, exclusively dealing with martial arts; books, articles, magazines, and pamphlets. For some audiences, materials written in foreign languages, mostly in Asian languages, are available. Another influential form of martial arts texts is movies, television programs, and comic books which have martial arts as the main theme or as an instrumental component. The contents of the practice, instructional messages, and discourses exchanged in the community is another form of significant texts. A practitioner stands in the middle of these diverse texts, not only as a consumer of these texts but also as a producer of other texts. Practitioners produce their own discourses from the reflection of their experiences in martial arts.

Thus, there is a tension between those texts given to the practitioner and those produced by the individual. The texts socially given to the individual usually take a

position of “authorial voices,” (Hicks, 1996) forming a “social reality,” that is, social concepts of martial arts practice in American society. Jamrozik et. al. (1995) describes the point:

In effect, in any society there will always be two kinds of social reality existing, as it were, side by side: the social reality experienced by people in the course of their everyday life; and the one authoritatively defined by the people who are part of dominant power structure. The two kinds of social reality may or may not be identical; they are rarely identical, however because the former is experienced and the latter is only observed and interpreted, and both are mediated through the class position of those who observe and interpret social reality and those who experience it (p. 4).

The authors do not seem to refer the traditional notion of class position as socio-economic status, but to stress different power relations in society between active producers and passive consumers of information. Therefore, it is not the class positions in the traditional sense that gives authority to texts in modern society, but rather it is the dominant power groups who distribute various forms of information and control social reality. Books, movies, and voices from professional organizations including national and regional governing bodies, martial arts schools and clubs, and business corporations try to shape the common notions of martial arts in American society to their preferred way(s).

Although it seems a valuable and appealing challenge to analyze all those major texts that are critical in shaping the American concepts of martial arts, this study limits itself to two kinds of texts for logistical reasons. The first category of text is materials written in English selected as having significant influences or as revealing significant aspects of the

American concepts of martial arts. The second form of text is martial arts participants' narratives on their own experiences. General practitioners must receive diverse information from a variety of texts socially distributed. However, they should not passively accept those texts, but interpret them connecting to the conditions of their own lives and construct their own versions of martial arts practice.

It is a significant limitation of the study that the narrative texts are collected only from taekwondo practitioners. There are several reasons that the study limits the population of informants to only one type of martial art, taekwondo. First, it makes the study logistically manageable. Second, my knowledge and experience, as a significant part of the interpretive frame of the study, are substantially skewed toward taekwondo. Third, the study assumes that taekwondo, in terms of technical contents and training culture, represents the styles of the martial arts in which the majority of American martial art practitioners are participating. In fact, the majority of current American martial arts schools can be classified into a category of taekwondo and karate which possess similar characteristics and are diversified into numerous styles and names. However, due to notable differences of details among the diverse styles of martial arts, the results of this study should not be generalized to all martial arts in the United States.

Autobiographical Framing: Researcher as the Interpretive Frame

As the researcher of this study I have a definite perspective of the world and culture. and of course martial arts. My view of the world and martial arts shape and direct the

questioning and interpretation of the study. Therefore, I will autobiographically conceptualize my self as the author of the study. First, my life is professionally committed to martial arts, particularly to a martial art, taekwondo. It is “professionally committed” in the sense that my whole life is fabricated with the martial art as the pivoting pole. I make my living in the martial arts, and spend most of my time studying, practicing, and teaching martial arts. Most of my significant others are related, one way or another, to martial arts. My personal and professional identity is martial arts itself.

I have experienced several turning points that have impacted my view of my life and the world as well as my view of martial arts. The first one came when I started training with a serious attitude. For any young boy, martial arts is always a theme or a fascinating dream, though to me it was more than a dream, it was my life. It was the only way that a preadolescent boy, struggling with the inferiority complex of having a small body, could search for a sense of identity and security. A turning point in my concept of taekwondo training came when I attended college. The cultural consciousness on campus made me realize that taekwondo training was more than learning to be a good street fighter, but instead I learned to view it as a valuable cultural practice in a contemporary Korean society where Western culture was dominant. This cultural awareness pushed me to study theoretical aspects of taekwondo, history, philosophy, and the theory of technique. What disappointed me the most from the research was the barrenness of theories in taekwondo, and it led me to pursue research on taekwondo as my profession. Since I came to the United States, I have been astonished by observing and experiencing how Americans interpret the meaning of this activity differently than I do, or Koreans used to do, and how

much cultural significance this activity carried in American society in terms of intercultural communication. My reflections on those several incidents framed directly the research questions of this study and they will frame my interpretive perspective for the analysis of the study.

As a professional martial artist, I used to classify myself as a technique-centered, pro-competition, modernist, and anti-authoritarian. However, my extensive international experiences (I have held 24 instructional clinics in 15 countries), particularly of the last six years in the United States and China, substantially changed my perspective on martial arts. I observed and experienced how the values of martial arts training could be realized differently by people in different societies. So, now I accept some positive aspects of traditional arguments, weigh the value of technical mastery less, appreciate the value of formal movement (forms) much higher than before, and, as the most significant change, believe in multiple realities in martial arts training.

As the researcher of this study, I use my experience and knowledge in martial arts as the prime tool for the analysis and interpretation of the texts. I have written several articles on Asian martial arts, particularly taekwondo, and conducted a broad search of materials for a comparative study of Asian martial arts. My textual background on Asian martial arts plays central role for the analysis of American texts on martial arts. I use my knowledge as the referential text for the Asian concepts of martial arts which this study does not analyze directly from the original texts, but refers often for the interpretation of American texts. My teaching experiences, particularly with American students, I believe, extend my capability to understand and interpret their narratives.

Selection and Analysis of Written Texts

Selection of Texts

There are a variety of written texts in the American martial arts community. Because the study can not logistically analyze all of them, it excludes some and selects others as representing American concepts of Asian martial arts. The study excludes those texts that exclusively cover technical areas. The second exclusion is those texts that are academic research materials but deal with the biological effects of martial arts training. The study selects those texts that have been known as influential in the shaping of American concepts of Asian martial arts, proven as repeatedly printed, broadly referred to or cited in the community. The starting point for the selection is Nelson's *Martial Arts Reader: An Anthology of Historical and Philosophical Writing* (1989), *A Bibliography of Work on Martial Arts* produced by Ken Min and the Berkeley Martial Arts Club (1990), and bibliographies in the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* (1992, 1-2 – 1996, 5-1). Starting from those three sources, the study collected around 230 items, and selected 40 key pieces of literature to analyze. These items include books, parts of books, and articles, some of them written in academic or semi-academic styles, others in non-academic forms. There are several articles and books selected even though they are published recently because they appear to have new approaches to conceptualize martial arts. Considering heavy redundancy in American martial arts literature, these materials present relatively

authentic perspectives to conceptualize martial arts as well as broader readings of original Asian sources.

Through the selection process of these texts, the researcher believed that the quantity and range of the materials selected should be enough to cover most of the salient American versions of Asian martial arts. The lists of the selected literature are appended (Appendix B).

Analysis of Texts

The analytical interest of the study is not in the content of every individual text but in the commonality of language, topics, and themes in the texts. Although the selected texts are written by diverse authors in different areas, there is a common significance among these texts, that is, to make sense of martial arts practice in American society. The analytical goal of the study is to capture the key issues and the characteristics of the American authors' conceptualization of martial arts practice. The first phase of analysis is to survey the topics and issues recurring across different texts. To identify these critical issues, key words, concepts and critical descriptions are highlighted throughout the texts. Then the collected words are grouped into certain categories of topics, and these categories are grouped into broader levels of topics. The topics in the broader level of categories identified as significant issues across texts, will be defined as key themes for the next phase of analysis, interpretation of the themes.

The purpose of the interpreting process is to portray how the authors interpret and theorize their themes. The study, based on the researcher's knowledge, analyzes how American authors interpret the original Asian versions of issues and how they reconstruct the meanings of martial arts training for American audiences. This intertextual process of interpretation reveals American authors' selectivity, emphasis, and exclusion of (pre-) texts, and ideological implications behind their predispositions. Another dimension of the intertextual analysis is to delineate how the authors accommodate the American context into their conceptualization of the activity.

Selection of Informants

Since the designed method of interview is an open-ended, in-depth, narrative format, a relatively small number of informants were selected, with a purposive sampling method. The study selected 20 prospective informants, expecting to successfully complete interviewing at least 16 of them, and finally completed 18 interviews. The informants were selected from the population of current taekwondo practitioners over the age of 35, who have more than 3 years experience and have achieved black-belt level. The average age of interviewed individuals is 43, and their average length of training experience is 4.7 years (male: 6.0 and female: 3.4). The informants were recruited from 10 taekwondo schools located in North Carolina, Virginia, Washington, D. C., Maryland, New Jersey, and New York. One male and one female informant were recruited from each school. The ethnic background, social-economic status, age, and other social backgrounds were not considered at the time of the selection due to the limited numbers of informants.

Interviewing and Analysis

This study intends to reveal the ordinary practitioners' concepts of martial arts training, making sense of their experience in martial arts. To capture their own language and constructed stories, the study chooses an open-ended interview method. Mishler (1986) points out the limitations of the traditional standard survey interview method as respondents' stories are suppressed in that their responses are limited to "relevant" answers to specific questions. Tayler and Bogdan (1984) value the open-ended or unstructured interview to capture informant perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words, or, their own definition of the experiences. Casey (1990, 1993) emphasizes "respect for the authenticity and integrity of the narrator's discourse" and "the selectivities of the subject themselves." Patton (1990) describes the truly open-ended question as not presupposing which dimension of feeling or thought will be salient for the informant, rather allowing the informant to select from among his/her full repertoire of possible words and directions. Potter and Wetherell (1987) view this form of interview as an active site where the respondent's interpretive resources are explored and engaged to the fullest.

To secure informants' own selection and prioritizing of their interpretations, the study used open-ended interview questions as shown in Appendix D. During the interview, when the interviewee did not mention certain issues that I expected to hear, follow-up questions were given. The follow-up questions were on the issues: the spiritual aspects of martial arts; the traditional and modern in martial arts; man and/or woman and

martial arts. The entire contents of each interview were audio-taped and transcribed. The analysis of the transcribed narratives conducted in a similar process as that of the written texts analysis. After identifying the major themes, relevant parts of narratives were grouped into each theme, and were analyzed and interpreted to delineate participants' meanings and conceptualizations of their experiences, sometimes, contrasting to those themes that emerge from the written texts analysis. The researcher expected to identify some connectedness and disparity between the two texts. The comparison was conducted in the final discussion.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of American Martial Arts Literature

Introduction

American literature on martial arts has been tailored to conceptualize the American practice of this foreign activity in diverse ways. Some authors have read Asian literature to grasp the original concepts of the arts, whereas others define the activity by identifying its functions in the society or by comparing the activity to Western sports or other forms of physical activities. Overall, Asian martial arts in the American literature are viewed variously as self-defense system, physical activity, sports, spiritual education, quasi-religion, arts, therapeutic measure, or cultural institution. There are diverse versions of understanding of this foreign activity among American authors.

There are several key issues and topics to which these American authors commonly have paid attention. To read the authors' narratives on these issues will help to understand how American authors conceptualize Asian martial arts and what their prime interests are in this subject. Through the readings of the literature, the researcher selected eight key issues to analyze the American conceptualizations of Asian martial arts. They are spirituality and practicality; traditionalism versus modernism; mystification and

demystification of martial arts; world view of martial arts; pedagogy of martial arts; socialization; personal meaning and self-improvement; and violence and martial arts.

Spirituality and Practicality

The word “spiritual” (sometimes “spirit”) is one of the most frequently spoken and heavily signified vocabularies in the discourses of the martial arts community. There is an abundance of martial arts literature that contributes to popularize the metaphoric images of martial arts as “a spiritual education,” “a spiritual discipline,” or “the path to spiritual development.” The version of “spiritually-oriented martial arts” is probably the most widely marketed version in today’s American martial arts world. This spiritually oriented version of martial arts carries a certain value orientation, contending the personal and social meanings of the activities in some particular sense. Therefore, it is critical to an understanding of American concepts of martial arts practice to know how American practitioners conceptualize “the spiritual aspect of martial arts.”

The spiritually oriented version of martial arts explicitly or implicitly invites a competing notion; that is the practically oriented version of martial arts. In fact, there has been historically rooted, long-lasting tension between the two competing concepts of spirituality and practicality in the Asian efforts to conceptualize martial arts. As a result, Asians developed a variety of concepts to denote martial arts in general, but which also accommodate the subtlety of diverse versions of the social and cultural definitions of martial arts in particular languages. Among them, the most popularly referred are a set of

concepts; bu-jutsu, bu-gei, bu-do [Japanese]; wu-shu, wu-yi, wudao [Chinese]; moo-sool, moo yae, moo-do [Korean]. Bu [Jap.], wu [Chi.], and moo [Kor.] can be written in the same character, 武 and means stopping violence in original sense, but can be translated to martial. These three concepts represent three different perspective of martial arts. Respectively, they are: technically oriented version (jutsu, shu, sool [術] meaning skill or technique), aesthetically oriented version (gei, yi, yae [藝] meaning art or aesthetics), and spiritually oriented version (do, dao, do [道] meaning way or path as philosophical or religious context). As discussed briefly in the introduction of this study, there are subtle differences in the meanings and implications throughout the different times and societies in Asian history; however, it is greatly beneficial for Western practitioners who are eager to grasp the authentic meanings of martial arts to investigate the social and historical contexts of the development of these concepts.

Donn Draeger (1973a, b, c, 1977, 1980 with Smith) was the first American martial art author who recognized the significance of the topic and investigated, on a comprehensive scale, the Asian (but, in fact, mostly Japanese) history of martial arts and introduced the American audience to the concepts of budo, and bujutsu within the social and historical contexts.

Draeger and many other American authors recognized that the social images of martial arts had been constantly changed in their mother societies. Dann (1977) pointed out the fact as:

The Japanese combative arts have endured over time, but they have not remained static institutions. They reveal a great variety of forms, evidence of a dynamic character highly responsive to the changing needs of society. At every juncture significant in Japanese history, the combative disciplines show an adaptation to the new circumstances (p.77).

Draeger (1973a, b, c, 1977) introduced four concepts to understand how Japanese concepts of martial arts systems emerged throughout the history, they are ko bujutsu; ko budo; shin bujutsu; and shin budo. From his understanding, ko bujutsu, classical (Japanese) martial arts, was emerged from the efforts of the classical warriors under conditions of almost constant warfare, therefore, they are “combatively oriented systems.” Ko budo, classical martial ways, is not intended for battlefield use, but for “spiritual disciplines that purport to lead the advocate in accord with the do (michi), the ‘Way,’ to an ‘enlightened’ state of mind respectively by the ‘perfected’ person” (1977, p. 124). In his conceptual frame, shin bujutsu, modern martial arts, is the modern form of martial arts which

have combative applications that range from those useful on the battlefield to those that are useful in civil life. They differ considerably from their classical forerunners (ko bujutsu) in that the majority of the modern arts are not only defensively oriented toward restraining, not killing an enemy, but also operate to protect the individual, not the group. Included in this category are: taiho-jutsu (police art of restraint), toshu kakuto-jutsu (military art of unarmed personal self-defense), jujutsu (flexible art), karate-jutsu (sparring art), and juken-jutsu (bayonet art) (1977, p. 74).

Shin budo, modern martial ways, is the form practiced in contemporary society for “a wide spectrum of applications in spiritual and competitive sport contests or trials of skill” (p.

74). The modern martial ways differ in training methods, ranking system, purpose and social organization from the classical combat system. They no longer have the classical ryu system which has been autonomous individual institutions of the arts in a great diversity, but governed by a unified national organization for all standards and conduct of their respective disciplines.

Although Draeger's conceptualization of *ko* (classical) and *shin* (modern) did not gain popularity among American authors, he definitely revealed the significance of categorizing martial arts practice into *jutsu* (art) form and *do* (way) form. Monday (1994) stated the importance of differentiating the two as:

There are two basic categories of martial activity: the *bugei* (of *bujutsu*) and the *budo*. The former can most accurately be translated into English as "martial arts," and the latter as "martial way." Although almost no distinction is made between these two in the West, they differ greatly in purpose, nature and technique (p. 74).

While describing the historical background of the emergence of the two notions of martial arts, *bujutsu* and *budo*, many authors (Draeger; 1973, 1977, Draeger & Smith: 1980, Monday; 1994, Wingate; 1993, Hurst, 1993) noted the significance of social-political changes in Japanese society, from the chaotic Sengoku age of 1477-1600, where endless war and battle existed among warlords (*daimyo*) to Tokugawa bakufu (1600-1868). The opening of the Tokugawa period transformed Japanese society from war to peace, and this social transition brought inevitable changes in the lives of professional warriors (*samurai*) and their professional skill, martial arts (Draeger, 1973, Hurst, 1993). Hurst (1993)

illustrates the details of historical transformation of martial arts according to the changes of the society.

Over the course of the Tokugawa period, the Japanese samurai were transformed from fierce battlefield-hardened warriors into scholars and bureaucrats in the service of either the shogun or one of more than two hundred feudal lords. Those intrepid warriors, founders of many of the martial arts *ryuha* or bow, sword, and spear use, had largely passed from the scene....

Military training was no longer the life and death matter it had been during the sengoku era, but was instead compartmentalized as one among many options a samurai might choose to explore in daily life. Although swordsmanship and other martial skills continued to be seen as at least paramilitary training, in an era of peace they of necessity developed in different ways. In fact, they were transformed into martial arts which were practiced for diverse reasons, but primarily as either a means of self-cultivation or as sport..... Although I would rather regard this as a transformation rather than a decline, it was perceived as a decline by contemporaries. Martial skills for self-protection were transformed into martial arts for self-perfection (pp. 115-117).

*ryuha: school(s) or style(s) of martial arts or other artistic disciplines.

Pieter (1993) perceived the difference of budo from bujutsu as:

They differed in a number of ways from the bujutsu practiced in medieval Japan. First of all, the warriors were not the main developers and practitioners of the martial ways. Civilians had an impact as well, which made the martial ways potentially accessible to a wider public instead of a selected few. Also, the budo were aimed at self-perfection rather than killing an opponent, which was the primary goal of adherents of bujutsu. Finally, the medieval warriors had to know as many jutsu forms as possible, so that the chances of being confronted on the battlefield with an unknown fighting system - which would mean certain death - would be reduced. Budo practitioners, on the other hand, learned only one or two do forms.

Wingate (1993) sketched the process of transformation as:

It was during the Tokugawa Shogunate that aspects of *bujutsu* (military science) and the emerging *bushido* (the code of warrior) were developed into *budo*, the Way of stopping conflict. As previously noted, *budo* is the practice of a martial art for the sake of self-development rather than for combat (*bujutsu*).

Classical *budo* first emerged in Japan at the beginning of the Tokugawa period, with the development of *kendo* (the way of the sword) from *kenjutsu* (the techniques of the sword). Other martial disciplines became *do*-forms, and new classical *do*-forms evolved from classical *bujutsu*, there are important differences between the two The orientation toward actual combat in *bujutsu* is central to the art. Discipline and virtue follow combat in importance and only insofar as they contribute to the warrior's success as a warrior. *Budo*, on the other hand, are spiritual disciplines (p. 16).

As briefly stated, those American authors' understanding of the Tokugawan transformation of martial arts from *bujutsu* to *budo* is the transition of battlefield oriented combative arts to educational-cultural disciplines as Draeger (1973b) described.

The creation of the classical *budo* was indicated by the nominal change of the ideogram for *jutsu*, "art," in the word "bujutsu" to *do*, "way." This change heralded man's desire to cultivate an awareness of their spiritual nature through the exercise of disciplines that would bring them to a state of self-realization. It is this goal that underlies the major difference between a classical martial discipline labeled "jutsu" and one term "do" (pp. 32-33).

This transformation is in effect the switching of the emphasis from the practical value to spiritual value of martial arts practice. There are several significant issues embedded in this way of theorizing the transformation. The first issue is what is the meaning of the word "spiritual" in this context. The second issue is what are the implications of the

emphasis on the spiritual aspects to the physical dimension of the arts, the techniques. The third issue is whether this Japanese process of transformation can be generalized to histories of other Asian societies, particularly to Chinese and Korean martial arts. The fourth issue is what are the implications of this emergence of spiritual martial arts to contemporary Western practice of martial arts, in other words, why American authors focus on the emergence of spiritual version of the arts.

The meanings of “spiritual”

The word “spiritual” used in martial arts literature is not easily defined , rather the authors attempt to illustrate the value and meanings of martial arts training in various metaphoric ways. There are a variety of languages in the literature to define the meaning of the “spiritual” or to describe the spiritual aspects of martial arts. The study identified four significant versions of the spiritual orientations from these texts. They are (1) mental discipline related to ultimate practical performance; (2) self-development; (3) enlightenment; and (4) religious experience.

The first version of martial arts, mental discipline related to ultimate practical performance, assumes that in martial arts physical performance cannot be separated from mental ability, particularly considering the highly charged situation of real fighting in the classical sense where one’s life is at stake. Therefore, as Hurst (1993) points out, for many martial arts practitioners, there was indeed a concern for developing a right mental awareness. Konzak and Klavora (1980) explained the significance of the mental dimension in martial arts training.

The training is seen as encompassing not only a physical dimension, as is normal in any sport, but a mental dimension as well that goes well beyond the normal hackneyed expression of “mental discipline,” “spirit,” etc. Karate’s prime emphasis is the development of mental discipline, concentration, and relaxation. These mental skills are not seen as by-products of advancement in the physical skills, but rather these are viewed as the specific focus of what the karate training is all about (p 230).

Draeger (1973a) noticed that the martial artist who confronted life and death in fighting “was forced to develop self-discipline, largely to control fear” (p.61). To overcome fear and to forge the ideal mental state during the anxious and stressful moments of fighting, martial arts concentrate on “mind” and develop various concepts to guide a martial artist’s training. Hurst (1993) introduces some Eastern concepts of mental conditioning that have been traditionally considered as significant parts of karate training.

Martial arts texts began to discuss the theoretical principles behind paramilitary techniques and the correct mental state one ought to develop in confronting an opponent. The concern they showed for cultivating the right state of mind was expressed in the names of many early and mid-Tokugawa schools: *munen* or *muso* (“no thought”), *mushin* (“no mind”), *jikishin* (“correct mind”), *shinshin* (“true mind”), *muteki* (“no opponent”), and so forth. (pp.45-46)

Wingate (1993) gives a more detailed introduction of those concepts that have been taught in martial arts.

Three of the most popular of these sayings are *mushin no kokoro* (mind without thought), *mizu no kokoro* (mind like water), and *tsuki no kokoro* (mind like the moon). (While *kokoro* is often translated simply as “mind,” it is more accurately

expressed as “mind, spirit, heart, will, intention,” and is so defined in most Japanese-English dictionaries.)

Mushin no kokoro (mind without thought) is the ideal state of the *budoka* (martial artist). The mind without thought is wholly aware of the present, unattached to conscious desire or emotion. The Zen master Takuan, in his writings to the sword master during the seventeenth century, discussed the concept of *mushin no kokoro* at length (Takuan, 1986), as did Japan’s most famous sword master, Musashi, during the same period (Musashi, 1974). *Mizu no kokoro* (mind like water) is related to *mushin no kokoro*. Such a mind is calm and clear, like the surface of a pool of pure water. It acts like a mirror, reflecting all that comes before it without distortion. Only with a mind like water can the budoka respond quickly and freely in the cause of justice. When we speak of *tsuki no kokoro* (mind like the moon), we refer to an unclouded mind, shining equally on everything and thus open and aware of all things (p. 29).

The author explained the significance of these concepts in the context of martial arts training.

In all three of these concepts, conscious thought, desire, and emotion serve only to disturb and distort our perceptions and our ability to act. Total concentration and awareness are necessary for the successful execution of *waza*, and these are impossible if conscious thought or desire “stop” the mind from perceiving freely. This principle is basic to the practice of Zen as well as to all budo. True enlightenment presupposes the absence of obstacles to perception (Wingate, 1993, p. 29).

The freedom of mind or liberation from any mental obstacles is the ultimate goal martial artists attempt to achieve through the training of their mind with these concepts (Herrigel, 1953, Wingate, 1993, Levine, 1984). Levine (1984) describes this goal as:

all pursue the goals of developing a harmonious blending of mental and physical powers, a sensitivity to the responses of others, the virtues of calmness and courage

under stress, and some form of an experience of transcendence (Levine, 1984, p. 242).

Herrigel (1953) suggests that the freedom of mind is obtainable, and the forms which the students of martial arts master no longer oppress but liberate their minds. Foster (1986) detailed this stage.

The fighter becomes completely absorbed by the movement so that there is congruency between intention and execution. This new quality of reality is only possible when the fighter reaches a "loss of ego," free from an anxiety, success-bound orientation. The fighter may liberate inner forces which do not emerge by willpower. This concept of no mind, this unison which overcomes the rift between thinking and action, is felt positively due to the ease of movement and the different perception of time (p. 86).

Olson and Comfort (1986) also illustrate the ideal stage of martial arts learning as a harmonious unification of all confronting parts existing in the process of learning.

As a new learning process begins, technique and rhythm are forgotten. An aikidoka is the movement and the movement is the aikidoka. The attack and defense, the mind and the body, no longer exist as separate entities; there is only the harmony of the pattern of movement. All movement is art, and art is the expression of self-actualization (p. 103).

Levine (1984) explains how the stages of learning are facilitated throughout the learning process.

One begins by self-consciously practicing a certain technique. One proceeds slowly, deliberately, reflectively; but one keeps on practicing until the technique becomes internalized and one is no longer self-conscious when executing it. After a set of techniques has been thoroughly internalized, one begins to grasp the principles behind them. And finally, when one has understood and internalized the basic principles, one no longer responds mechanically to a given attack, but begins to use the art creatively and in a manner whereby one's individual style and insights can find expression. (pp. 246-247)

Some authors argue that the significance of these learnings is not limited to the martial arts but can be extended to other areas of life. Schmidt (1986) states that “[c]onfrontation of self through the combative mode of the budo will cultivate in oneself those qualities that will enable one to more effectively face the challenges of modern-day life” (p. 73).

However, the statement Schmidt makes here is critical to the controversy between practical orientation and spiritual orientation of martial arts; that is, forging spirit or developing mental capability for the technical success versus technical learning for spiritual development. These two competing concepts were critical in separating the ideology of bujutsu (martial arts) and of budo (martial way) in the literature. Suzuki (in Herrigel, 1953) well represents the latter position which is popular among the majority of American authors.

One of the most significant features we notice in the practice of archery, and in fact of all the arts as they are studied in Japan and probably also in other Far Eastern countries, is that they are not intended for utilitarian purposes only or for purely aesthetic enjoyments, but are meant to train the mind; indeed, to bring it into contact with the ultimate reality. (p. v)

Those who are proponents of non-utilitarian version of martial arts training perceive the techniques and learning techniques as the medium for other, in their sense, higher areas of learning as Forster (1986) states.

The purpose of the exercise is not to achieve an effortless and complete mastering, but, instead, to use the mastering achieved to transcend the purpose. At this stage, the student only has to attend to the inner factors such as anxiety or fear. Attention is directed away from the technique and toward the inner state; the technique is a mirror of this inner state of mind. Thus, in practice, the hit that does not score is not the result of a lack of skill but is caused by the inner state. The trainee uses the technique as a medium to explore his inner self and thus to train his mental abilities. (p. 85)

Interestingly, Levine (1984) interprets this shifting of the value of martial arts training from the practicality to spirituality as the transformation of “the martial arts from illiberal to liberal perspective, vehicles for training that emphasized the spiritual development of participants” (p. 241). However, it is not easy to grasp a definite meaning of the non-utilitarian values of martial arts training or, in their most common language, the “spiritual” aspect of martial arts, from those authors’ writings.

Some authors are more concrete in terms of conceptualizing objectives and values of training martial arts. They usually discuss personal development or mental development, referring to the benefits of martial arts training for self-improvement. Wingate (1993) defines the objective of martial arts training in an ideological tone.

The ideology of traditional karate-do continues to reflect its identity as a budo, or martial Way. The art is practiced for self-improvement, not combat. Its teachings, training, and lore promote perfection of character, the development of virtue, a deeper understanding of self, and an enhanced spiritual awareness. (p. 32)

He explained how the benefits of training accrue in detail.

[T]raining in karate-do produces benefits in three interrelated ways: (1) through the structure of the training process, one must develop discipline, self-control, concentration, and awareness in order to progress in one's training; (2) through the example and guidance of the instructor and seniors, one is encouraged to strive for self-development, and in so striving, one develops in character and virtue; (3) as one continues in the art and develops a deeper understanding of its nature and purpose, one is motivated to adopt attitudes and practices that lead to self-development and spiritual awareness. (p. 32)

McCarthy (1987) makes a similar statement.

The philosophy of karate-do is the most important aspect of training because it is the training of the spirit ... [students of the art] learn the higher virtues, that [sic] of respect, compassion, gratitude, and honor. Karate is a path by which one humbly learns his weakness, and it is by these virtues that weakness are turned into strengths. (p. 9)

Dregson (1992) addresses the benefits of training as:

The aim of Aikido is not to beat an opponent or to show that we are strong or to become enamored with techniques, but to create beauty and harmony together. The purpose of practicing the martial art in the dojo is to purify our total self of all kinds of impurities, physiological, psychological, and spiritual. It increases our power,

flexibility, capacity to relax, and ability to pay attention. It purges us of stress (p.65).

Lebra (1976) attributes self-improvement resulting from martial arts training to the unusual features of the training process.

Certain types of practices within the martial discipline, such as intense repetitious execution of techniques to the point of fatigue, prolonged sitting in *seiza* (formal sitting position), special training sessions held during extremes of heat and cold, and the general perseverance through pain and bruises, are all thought to test, nurture, and refine the ability to concentrate one's physical and mental efforts. The underlying belief is that through such concentration one can achieve anything one undertakes (p. 163).

Based on those traditional beliefs about the values and objectives of martial arts training, on other hand, from the observation of practitioners' experiences and their narratives, many studies have been done to prove the benefits of martial arts participation. Those studies focus on such languages as self-confidence, self-assertiveness, concentration, non-aggressiveness, self-esteem, self-concept, positive mood state, tough minded/tender minded, emotional stability, self-control, relaxation, self-assurance, venturesomeness, social adroitness, so on (summarized in Schmidt, 1990). All these languages are the translation of so called the spiritual development in martial arts literature into terms of practical benefits of martial arts. In effect, those languages are an American conceptualization of martial arts as a vehicle for self-improvement.

Another theme of the spiritually oriented version of martial arts is “enlightenment.” Some authors take the ultimate goal of martial arts learning beyond the mundane notion of self-improvement to a higher and deeper dimension of life, enlightenment. For them, learning martial arts should not be aimed at physical techniques nor be stopped at the mental benefits but, as Suzuki (1953, in Herrigel) says, “are meant to train the mind; indeed, to bring it into contact with the ultimate reality” (p. v). Olson and Comfort (1986) describe the enlightenment in martial arts.

The aikidoka trains toward a perfection of the self. There are no rules, boundaries, or judges; therefore, the only competition one has is with his own ego. If one can drop the ego, the rationalization process between reality and self, one realizes the beauty of harmony with nature—enlightenment! (p. 102)

Dann (1978) moves into a little deeper context of the notion of enlightenment in martial arts.

Meeting or confronting one’s death has been a central teaching in the martial ways and continues in a muted form today. Budo’s use of death, consistent with its classical heritage, has been to treat it as a spiritual metaphor for the ‘killing’ of desire, weakness, and other disharmonies created by the ‘small self’ (jishin) or ego (p. 130).

Draeger (1973b) also points out that spiritual enlightenment in martial arts has its roots in the very nature of martial arts as an extraordinary experience of confronting life and death.

The virtue of loyalty and courage, which were sometimes displayed on the field of combat, were idealized. These virtues and others were made the basis of the indomitable spirit of the classical warrior, whose primary concern was to achieve the state of *seishi o choetsu* - "transcending life and death" - that is, a frame of mind in which one is able to transcend thoughts of life and death. It was the classical warrior's mental preparation, his breaking through the spiritual border between life and death, that gave rise to a spiritual awakening in him. (p. 31)

However, most authors do not pay much attention to this technical context as the basis of enlightenment, in other words, the deep relationship between the original nature of martial arts as fighting business and their social remasking as a medium of education. The majority of American literature seems to be attracted merely by the fascinating languages of spiritual enlightenment or quasi-religious approach to the discipline. Many writings, following Suzuki (1959, 1973) and Herrigel (1953), have focused on the Zen discourses in the martial arts. Some state the relationship between Zen and the discipline, such as Hyams (1979); *Zen in the martial arts*, Deshimura (1982); *The Zen way to the martial arts*, and Nicol (1982); *Moving Zen*. Others have Zen fashioned titles (Webster-Doyle, 1987: *One encounter one chance: Facing the double-edged sword*; Dong, 1993: *Beyond unknown*; Baxter, 1992: *Sword of no blade*; Ming, 1994: *Mind over matter*; etc.). Deshimura (1982) points out the elements of Zen significant to martial arts as: pacification of the emotions, tranquil compliance with the inevitable, self-control, intimate understanding of death, and detachment from the materials. Wingate (1993) depicts the tenet of Zen and its implication to martial arts.

In practicing Zen, one learns to direct the mind toward right action by not thinking. Zen is an experience; its only goal is the treading of the path itself. Zen, like budo, emphasizes self-discipline, breathing, and correct attitude as a way of aligning oneself with universal energy and thus experiencing harmony. Zen is not meditation, but unconsciousness, the absence of thought. Zen does not seek a special state of illumination, but an ongoing inner unity. Thus, one does not achieve enlightenment, but lives in such a way as to become aware of one's own enlightenment. Zen is process, not product, and can be applied to every aspect of our daily lives. Those who practice Zen do not isolate themselves from the everyday world; they cultivate Zen in it.

These aspects of Zen were central to the development of budo. Experience is seen as the ultimate teacher, and students are trained in a non-verbal, highly intuitive manner. Hardship is necessary to develop self-discipline, to break our attachments to material things, to end our reliance on conscious thoughts, and to forge the spirit. Above all, budo training is of the whole person and is meant to influence the whole life. One carries one's training out into the world and applies it in all things.... As this is reflected in both Zen practice and in budo, we cannot train the body without training the mind and the spirit. All are one. This is why physical hardship is necessary to forge the spirit and why spiritual practices are essential for perfecting physical techniques (pp.17-18).

Those who emphasize enlightenment or Zen in martial arts often discard the significance of technique and view technique as a medium for something else, usually something of higher value. Canic (1986) states the point:

For one who has attained enlightenment, the performance of a motor skill becomes an outward expression of the Enlightenment state, the higher understanding. Clearly, the skill that is being performed in Zen - the underlying Skill, the real Skill - is the Skill of spiritual cultivation and expression, the Skill for life. This skill goes far beyond the mere perfecting of specific responses to given sets of environmental conditions. The vehicle for the practice of this Skill, whether in archery, swordsmanship, floral arrangement, or tea ceremony, is unimportant as long as the proper path (the Middle Path) is followed to the proper destination (Nirvana) (p. 78).

Enlightenment is often conceptualized by the word “do,” as in the name of most of Asian martial arts, judo; karate-do; aikido; taekwondo; hapkido; kendo; etc. Based on this concept of do, Asian martial arts are interpreted as a “way of life” for those who have been trained in the traditional, Zen-based system. (Harrison-Pepper, 1993, p.92). Levine (1984) introduces the historical context of the development of “do” concept.

The change from ju-jitsu to ju-do exemplifies, in terminology and practice, the self-conscious transformation of the martial arts for lethal weapons to means of self-development. The suffix “jitsu” means technique; jujitsu was, thus, a technique for inflicting serious damage on an opponent. The suffix “do” means “way.” It derives from the Chinese Tao, and in Japanese has connotations related to the outlook of Taoism. More fully, “do” means the way to enlightenment, self-realization, and understanding (Levine, p. 241).

Schmidt (1986) recognizes the characteristics of the martial arts as “do discipline” which “has a highly developed teaching tradition and philosophy which varies fundamentally from the Western combat forms such as boxing and fencing” (p. 83). He explains the concept of do.

The *do* suffixed to the aforementioned arts suggests that they are “ways” or “paths” to travel throughout one’s life. From a metaphysical viewpoint, the do (*Tao:michi*) are understood to be moral, ethical, philosophical, and self-actualization paths that are unending and profound and filled with “numerous technical difficulties” (Draeger, 1973b, p.24). They are methods of self-cultivation that ultimately lead to self-perfection or enlightenment (satori) in the Zen sense. (pp. 69-70)

Drengson (1993) theorizes the meaning of the “Way” (do) and enlightenment as one.

The Way, as we have seen, is a lived philosophy of life, a practice, a spiritual discipline that cultivates persons so that they continuously evolve in love and learning. The ultimate realization of a Way is nothing less than enlightenment itself, which is a form of life or the Way of being that fully confirms life's intrinsic value and continuity. This is a confirmation of life that resolves our existential anxiety, our underlying fear of death. (p.64)

American authors define the meaning of do (the way), enlightenment, or Zen in various ways. Canic (1986) notes the mind as "ripe" for Enlightenment and describes the ultimate stage of training as "the spontaneous flow of the mind with the Tao (natural stream of existence)," whereas Levine (1994) focuses on such state of mind as "emptiness of mind, mind like a mirror or water that reflects without distortion, and thus to connote the ideals of selflessness, austerity, and humbleness" (p. 241). Pieter (1993) makes a similar statement.

This mind never stops anywhere and it flows like water to fill every corner of the person. In this way, one can act naturally. The original mind is the Buddha nature or the Dao (in its form of de) in us and it is also called no-mind: a mind with nothing in it, an empty mind, i.e., a non-dichotomizing mind. (p. 18)

Schmidt (1986) perceives the goal as developing feelings of subtle serenity and calmness as well as fostering "the idea of quietly accepting the realities of one's life and resignation to the inevitable" (p. 77).

Some authors concentrate on the Zen notions of no separation between subject and object or non-rational way of thinking. For Canic (1986), the realization is possible with “the breakdown of conceptual distinctions,” and Pieter (1993) illustrates this as:

without relying on any conceptualization or abstractions, but through direct insight, Zen tries to attain a state in which there is no distinction between subject and object, in which the individual and the environment are not seen in opposition to each other, but rather in unity with one another. Tiwald (1981) calls this a state in which there is no distortion of self, no biased view of oneself. (p. 15)

This notion of no distinction between subject and object was regarded as one of the most significant stage of the learning a martial artist should achieve. There are several sayings with similar meanings in traditional martial arts; “the sword and the mind is one”; “the object and I (the martial artist) are one”; so on. Martial artists have long sought to achieve the stage where they forget the boundaries between the technique, self, and opponent so that the technique becomes a part of self, self becomes the movement, the performing self emerges into the environment as one, and the opponent becomes an integral part of this one unit. However, from these discourses of theorizing martial arts training, we recognize the fact that authors, both Eastern and Western, put the emphasis on the mind and not on the techniques. The poetic expression of a Japanese kejustu master, Shimada Toranosuke is a typical example of the priority the mind.

*The sword is the mind.
If the mind is not correct,*

then the sword will not be correct.

If one wishes to study the sword,

he should first study the mind.

(in Hurst, 1993, p. 47)

When practitioners are discontented with their performance, they go back to the mind, not to the technique. But, more significantly, they probably do not aim at the technical perfection through the training of mind, but pursue the perfection of the mind through the training of the technique. This emphasis of the mind is not limited to Zen Buddhism, but also can be found in Taoism, Neo-Confucianism, and other Asian philosophies (Chan, 1963; Fung, 1948). American authors point out the fact that the teachings of Asian martial arts have mixed influences from these schools of thought. Schmidt (1986), Hurst (1993), Draeger (1973), Holcobme(1993), and Wingate (1993) recognize that there are multiple referential texts other than Zen and that their adaptations of religious languages are not necessarily meant to be understood in the Western sense of religion or spirit. Hurst (1993) points out that, although in the West we have been conditioned to see a primarily Zen Buddhist focus in martial arts, there is a wide variety of eclectically explicated philosophical discourses in martial arts texts, and furthermore “the presence of Zen or other religious terminology does not mean that individual practitioners regarded this as an especially religious or spiritual experience” (p. 46).

It is, in fact, rare that American authors attempt to interpret martial arts practice in the sense of religious significance , if anything, the attempt is to describe the seriousness of

the involvement on a religious level. However, these philosophical and religious languages of martial arts contribute to infuse the American audience with an Asian notion of religion. Dregson (1993) shows an example narrative.

The ultimate realization of a Way is nothing less than enlightenment itself, which is a form of life or the Way of being that fully confirms life's intrinsic value and continuity. This is a confirmation of life that resolves our existential anxiety, our underlying fear of death. The Way is both means and end. We purify ourselves, integrate, unify, validate, authenticate, harmonize and complete ourselves, as we live the Way. We are not, then, thinking of time running out. We are not in hurry, trying to get to some grand, transcendental place or experience in the future. We try to live fully, completely and perfectly now. To paraphrase Zen Roshi Joshu Sasaki, realization of this perfection in daily life is the full realization of the meaning of religion; those who realize the perfection of this moment are fully religious and have no need for religion. The Way is to be realized in daily life (pp.64-65).

These Asian versions of religion may appeal to the contemporary American trend toward more pluralistic approaches to religious commitment (Gallup and Castelli, 1989).

However, Donohue (1994) attributes the American linkage between the physical and transcendental dimensions in the Asian martial arts to "a flawed analytical and historical sense on the part of martial arts practitioners" (p. 90).

From the reading of American writings on Asian martial arts, findings are; (1) American authors dominantly favor the spiritually oriented version, and practical aspects of the arts are mostly ignored or at least, downplayed; (2) their conceptualization of the spiritual aspect of martial arts is either martial arts training as vehicle for self-improvement or a medium for enlightenment in a Zen sense; (3) they do not interpret religious languages of Asian martial arts in the strict sense of the Western notion of religion as God

or Divine related, but are influenced by the Asian notion of religion as a part of philosophy of the discipline.

There are several questions about American authors' conceptualization of martial arts. First, most of their writings are introductions of Asian original theories and histories, however, the majority are from Japanese perspectives. There are very limited writings that introduce Chinese or Korean perspectives. There should be some differences in philosophy, religious concepts, cultures, and social and historical contexts of martial arts among these three countries. For example, Draeger (1973b) points out that the notions of "do" are different between Chinese and Japanese culture.

The Japanese, however, are less inclined than the Chinese to abstract speculations about an "otherworldly" life, and, favoring a pragmatic outlook, took the Tao—Do in Japanese—to be a more realistic concept, one that was applicable to man in his social relationships (p.24).

This American conceptualization of Asian martial arts as heavily skewed to the Japanese framework will result in several limitations for an American understanding of martial arts. The first issue is the origin of martial arts. Most American authors seem to take for granted that martial arts originated as a system of fighting. However, with enough exposure to the Chinese perspectives of martial arts, a system of fighting cannot be assumed to be the only origin of martial arts. There are few writings that suggest this different perspective. For example, Holcombe (1993) introduces a Chinese notion of martial arts that perceives martial arts as the therapeutic exercise or the art of longevity. If

we assume that Asian martial arts did not originate as a system for fighting but were developed as a system for human health and longevity, our understanding of the discipline and theorizing the movements would be radically different from the current dominant version of fighting origin.

Another issue is related to the philosophical frameworks and worldview embedded in martial arts discourse. American authors' Japanese bound version of martial arts represents Zen as the major philosophical frame and implicitly carries a worldview which is intertwined with Japanese discourses on martial arts. This limits or distorts the American conceptualization of Asian martial arts in a certain way. Ch'en (1986) brings a worldview embedded in Chinese martial arts, natural symbolism, which is not found in the Zen dominant Japanese perspective. American martial artists should have broader exposure to Chinese and Korean discourses on martial arts to introduce Taoist approach, Neo-Confucian languages, the perspectives of Chinese medical science, and so on.

Second question is the significance of American authors' favoring the spiritual aspect of Asian martial arts. Most of these authors write about the non-technical aspects of martial arts training. The first issue raised by this question is how we can justify the existence of many different styles of martial arts that claim their own identities, if there is no close connection between the technical domain and philosophical languages, in other words, between movement and the meaning. There must be some differences between taekwondo and judo or karate and kendo to lead the students to the "enlightenment" at least in their pedagogy.

Second issue raised is their concreteness (substantiveness) of Zen languages. If the Zen languages are not translated into concrete technical contexts, then, what is the difference between Zen itself and martial arts? This confusion is revealed in Jackson (1978).

While in the past, Kendo was a practice reserved for a privileged few, as a Zen art the range of possible practitioners grew in geometric proportions. This trend continued into contemporary times resulting in international appeal. The answer to the question, "how Zen?" - a question that attracted the attention of millions throughout the world - became, "by art." (p. 90)

Although Asian martial arts have many aspects of Zen, they are not Zen, rather they have their own objectives and characters. It is highly questionable that the motives of martial arts practitioners are primarily to learn Zen, without concerning the technical aspect. Becker (1982) criticized these unconditional adoption of Zen into martial arts and sport, for example, tying "some cute Zen-like phrases into descriptions of karate-chops or football passes," as not any more acceptable. Rather, he argued, "the connection with Zen philosophy, if any, is one which must be carefully examined, logically explained and defended, and not simply assumed as an inherent inherited characteristic" (p. 99). The author seems to target ultimately the notion of enlightenment in the unscrutinized adoption of Zen.

[I]t is seriously questionable whether enlightenment implies no more than the reduction of discursive thought to enable better performance of any given activity.

Surely “enlightenment” must refer to an experience whose consequences continue to transform one’s life and world view from that moment onward. (p. 105)

The third question goes to the validity of the concept of budo and bujutsu as the generic term for Asian martial arts. Particularly, the question is whether these Japanese concepts of martial arts can comprehensively represent diverse cultures of all Asian martial arts, and furthermore, how much the two concepts can accommodate the contemporary multicultural complexity of American martial arts. Given the situation of contemporary martial arts community in the United States, as Donohue (1994) points out, “[a]nyone familiar with the variety of interpretation of the martial arts today knows that there are seemingly as many versions of what such an art is as there are practitioners” (p. 20). American authors’ popular framing of “do” and “jutsu” possibly contributes to an American tendency to dichotomize the technique and philosophy. It will help to enrich American understanding of the disciplines to extend American discourse of martial arts to intertextually broader perspectives of Chinese and Korean notions of martial arts which have more emphasis on the aesthetic expression and biologically oriented worldview other than to narrowly focused on the Japanese spiritualism which tends tightly to mold the trainee into the given moral, aesthetic frame.

Traditionalism versus Modernism

One frequently hears the words “traditional” or “modern” in the dialogues of martial arts practitioners. The words “traditional” and “modern” are jargon of the martial art

community which disclose some aspects of contemporary American practitioners' concepts of Asian martial arts. In particular, the word "traditional" has been used as an intrinsic adjective of Asian martial arts; i.e. traditional Asian martial arts or traditional Korean martial arts, etc.

However, the discourses of the "traditional" and "modern" seem to have certain ideological implications, first, in the sense that "traditional —" implies something authentic, correct, strong, and valuable, whereas "modern —" sounds unorthodox, deformed, wrongful, sometimes, even immoral. It is common for any style of martial artist to claim his/her own practice as a "traditional" one, and to criticize other styles as "non-traditional."

This common pattern of favoring traditional over modern is also found in the reading of American martial arts authors. Boudreau et al. (1995) shows a typical narrative on the subject.

In this report, the term karate-do is used in its traditional sense, as opposed to some of the modern altered forms, such as kick-boxing or full-contact karate, which neglect the mental and philosophical components considered so essential in the traditional art, emphasizing instead its potential violent aspect. (p. 52)

American authors often interpret the "traditional" as an ideology of anti-sport and anti-competition and a metaphor for promoting the spiritual version of martial arts.

Konzak and Klavora (1980) clearly reveals this interpretive frame.

[T]he terms “traditional” and “modern” are used to characterize the two polar types. They might also be characterized as “art-meditative” and “sport-competitive.” The point is that the two polar types describe completely different forms of training, although both are subsumed under the name of “karate.” In the Orient, distinction is sometimes made by referring to the latter type as “karate” and the former type as “karate-do” - meaning “the way of self-development based on karate.” This latter type is what Suzuki refers to in his discussion of the martial arts - “do” or “michi” being Japanese for the “way” or “path” of self-development. (Konzak & Klavara, p.229, *in note 4)

The study underscores the values of the traditional over modern as:

Unlikely gymnastics or wrestling, karate is not just a sport or physical activity - it is variously interpreted as an art (based on form, grace and inner expression - akin to dance or ballet), a form of meditation, a competitive non-contact sport and a full-contact form of kick-boxing with heavily violent overtones (p.228).

Trulson (1986) shows a concrete perception of the issue while attributing desirable personality changes in martial arts training to the “traditional.”

Traditional Korean martial art philosophy places great emphasis on respect for others, humility, confidence, responsibility, honesty, perseverance, and honor. This philosophy is an integral part of traditional Taekwondo training sessions. Furthermore, there is a very strong emphasis on using Taekwondo techniques only for self-defense, to protect oneself, one’s family, the weak, and one’s country. In fact, students of traditional Taekwondo are required to sign a pledge that they will use their skills only for the above-mentioned purposes. Students of the “modern” or nontraditional martial arts do not sign such a pledge. Nor do they take a membership oath, as in traditional Taekwondo. For those nontraditional martial arts schools, it takes the typical form of “might is right” philosophy. That is anything is acceptable as long as one is able to overpower his opponent. (p. 1137)

Olson and Comfort (1986) stress the value of non-sport dimension of traditional martial arts training .

Aikido differs greatly from the modern sport version of traditional martial ways in that aikido is not a sport. Although aikido is usually practiced in groups of two, there is no competition, only mutual cooperation. The founding of aikido as a noncompetitive martial way avoided the short-comings and problems of a sport. The aikidoka trains toward a perfection of the self. There are no rules, boundaries, or judges; therefore, the only competition one has is with his own ego. If one can drop the ego, the rationalization process between reality and self, one realizes the beauty of harmony with nature—enlightenment! (p. 102)

Hurst (1993) also notices that American practitioners' notion of "true martial arts" is framed with the rejection of sport.

There is some tension between the sporting and spiritual approaches, since many practitioners of the martial arts regard it as a cardinal sin to equate martial arts and sport. Two quotes from popular English language works underscore this attitude. The late Donn Draeger opined that "Kendo, judo, kyudo, naginata-do, and some forms of *aikido* are especially guilty of emphasizing the sportive elements," revealing the negative attitude towards sport common to both scholars and martial artist alike (1981: 92). Taisen Deshimaru is equally damning: "Sports train the body and develop stamina and endurance. But the spirit of competition and power that presides over them is not good, it reflects a distorted vision of life. The root of the martial arts is not there.... "True *budo*," for Deshimura, occurs when "one transcends the conflict, transforms it into a spiritual progress" (1983: 2), (p. 41).

Clark (1986) concludes, in an empirical study, that "Americans view judo as competitive sport rather than as a way of living life in the same sense that the Japanese do" (p. 248).

And he attributes this to the condition of their social life, alluding the trend is not idealistic

for him: “Western life seems compartmentalized rather than holistic and with the American bent toward competition, it is interpreted that judo participation will reflect this trait” (p. 244).

With the rejection of sport, there is a different concept of competition in martial arts. Drengson (1992) addresses the negative feeling toward the concept of competition of sport and stresses the difference in that of martial arts.

Aikido is often characterized as the non-fighting martial art,.....not allowing competition.[It] is a martial art in which the primary focus is not defeating an opponent but overcoming the attachments within ourselves which kindle the conditions for aggression. is used to transcend the impulse to fight with others Thus, aikido has important spiritual aspects that add significant dimensions to its highly purified, integrated and commanding arts of self-defense. (p.60).

Harrison-Pepper (1993) points out similarly that competition in martial arts is internalized - between parts of body, between the mind and body - rather than between individuals.

Wingate (1993) points out this anti-sport attitude is in fact a part of the ideology of the martial arts community.

Like other established forms of human endeavor, the martial arts have an ideology that defines their identity and purpose. And as in other social processes, there is often inconsistency between this ideology and actual practice. Konzak (1980) suggests that martial arts are more ideologically defined than most physical activities because of their cultural and historical roots in the Orient. In fact, the belief that martial arts are not “just sports” is a major component of their ideology (Kauz, 1977; Konzak, 1980; Random, 1977), (p. 12).

As Wingate (1993) notes, the martial artists' rejection of their activity as sport reveals several critical aspects of their conceptualization of martial arts. First is American authors' concern about the negative aspect of sports. They perceive Asian martial arts as an alternative system of physical activity that provide Western sport culture with a new philosophical, moral and methodological framework to overcome the problematics of Western sports, mainly overemphasis on competition and winning. This view of Asian martial arts as a possible alternative paradigm for Western sport practice is reflected in the literature that attempts to apply the Zen philosophy of martial arts to Western sports (Leonard (1974); Gallwey (1974); Blackburn and Jorgenson, 1976; Gallwey, 1976; Leuchs and Skalka, 1976; Rohe, 1974; etc.). Although it is beyond the task of this study to discuss the value and validity of their works, they do reveal how much and why Americans are attracted by the notion of non-competitive, non-product oriented, and non-physical discipline of physical activity.

Second, they want to separate Asian martial arts from sports as an effort to keep martial arts intact from the sin of sports. American authors condemn or devalue the practically oriented version of martial arts and sportized version of martial arts as deviant forms. They express the voice of the concern as the "Americanization of Asian martial arts." Forster (1986) voices the opinion.

The transition of the martial arts to martial "sports" imparts a negative impact. Specialization supplants do orientation; commercialism paves the way into show business, and the worst result is the brutalization of the martial arts. Full-contact karate, most popular in the United States, is an example. (p. 86)

Jackson (1975) makes the point in a different way. For him, sportization of martial arts does not necessarily mean deterioration of the art but can be beneficial.

As tempting as the institution of sport might seem to kendo, it as well carried a stigma completely unacceptable to the traditionalist within its ranks. Above all else, to the traditionalist, kendo and the way had to remain a serious pursuit and not fall into the meaningless and self-destructive weaknesses they associated with play.

This controversy appears to be fixed, at least at this point in time, an unresolvable dilemma. However, as an outgrowth, kendo has become bi-functional. On one side, it remains as it always has been - a traditional Zen art that presents, as an essential element of its function, a way of life. On the other, it has become a sport, with all the associated social ramifications. This bi-functional configuration, disregarding the frequent battles carried on by the traditionalists and modernists, has been far more beneficial than harmful. As opposed to similar martial practices such as kyudo (Zen archery), which has resisted identification with sport, and Judo, which has lost much of its original intent and purpose through total alliance with sport, Kendo is able to remain flexible and benefit from the popularization attained through the identity of sport, thereby continuing to conserve traditional beliefs and practices central to the way and the Japanese experience.

Jackson's remark is a rare but fresh perspective on the traditionalist-modernist controversy. He does not seem to reach the core of the issue however. The crux of the quarrel between the spiritually oriented traditionalist and the practically oriented modernist is the "form-centered" training system versus "sparring-centered" training system. The transition of traditional kenjutsu to modern kendo is the transition of form-centered to sparring-centered. Kano's invention of judo can be defined as the transition of form-centered jujitsu to sparring-centered system, in his own word, *randori*. Bruce Lee's creation of jee kun do is his rejection of traditional system of over-formalism. The modern

transformation of taekwondo is the same case. For those modernists, the technique is the essence of the arts, and the traditional form-centered training system is viewed as empty not only for the technique but also for the spiritual aspect because the old system does not have any practical or substantial medium for the spiritual development. Modernists believe that the spiritual development can be realized not through the imitations of stylized movements (forms) without intense involvement in interpersonal confrontation through the sparring experiences. However, most American authors promote traditional, the spiritual aspects of Asian martial arts, devaluing the modern, sports-like practical side.

Becker (1982) illustrates a clear picture of the non-practical perspective of martial arts.

- In contrast to the flights of soaring abandon described by American authors as typifying the Zen athlete, the serious practitioner of judo or karate spends most of his practice time either bowing and meditating more or less uncomfortably on his knees, or literally mindlessly repeating forms (katas) and motions against a wall or in the air, over and over again. The tendency of the American is to wonder, “when am I going to get to do the real stuff? (i.e., sparring against opponents)”. The view of the martial arts master is that the discipline of form (kata) and the practice of ritual *is* the “real stuff”, and sparring is only a small tangent to the discipline. (p.103).

However, this perspective toward martial arts training is quite different from the spiritual orientation that most American authors are leaning toward. When Becker (1982) describes that ‘the discipline of form (kata) and the practice of ritual *is* the “real stuff”, there are serious concerns about the quality of movements in form and ritual whereas

Western authors' spiritual narratives do not grasp the meaning of spirituality from the "real" context of their movements.

Hurst (1993) addressed a point not common among American authors criticizing traditionalist's emphasis of the spiritual value discarding the inherent connection to technical context.

Contemporary martial arts has thus inherited two strands of martial arts, two new forms which combat skills took when they were essentially no longer necessary. Naturally, one cannot neatly divide all martial arts schools into one camp or the other, and schools which advocated *shiai* did not totally disregard ideals of self-cultivation or concerns with spirituality. But at the end of the Tokugawa period - when the bakufu established the *Kobusho*, or Academy of Martial Training, in the wake of Western intrusion - the instructors chosen to teach bakufu vassals were all drawn from schools which emphasized realistic competitive matches, while those preoccupied with kata-focused practice, like the *Yagyū Shinkage-ryū* whose head held the hereditary post of shogunal fencing instructor, were systematically excluded.

Thus we would be wise to avoid emotional assessments of "true" martial arts as those which stress spiritual values to the exclusion of competition and devalue sport as somehow beneath a "true" martial artist. In fact, both martial arts as sport and as spiritual vehicle are transformations of the "true" martial skills of pre-modern Japanese warriors. Both spiritual and sporting aspects of the martial arts have their value and their limitations and are equally heirs to deadly combat techniques of the past. The best of schools combine these approaches. We should not worry about labels (p. 49).

The author recognized Mandell's (1984) point as another important perspective of the controversy between pro-competition and anti-sport in martial arts because he suggests a possible deconstruction of Western notion of sport in Eastern culture.

The boundaries we moderns use to separate “sport” from other areas of human endeavor have been indistinct and not worth noticing in other cultures. The Chinese martial exercises which could be engaged in competitively were at once workouts for fitness, paramilitary gymnastics, preparations for spiritual composure, and of course dance. (p. 93-94)

There is an interesting intertextual feature of American martial arts literature is that most authors read very limited numbers of original sources, and most of the cases the materials are second handed (written or translated in English). Draeger (1973a;b;c; 1980), Suzuki (1959; 1973), Herrigel (1953) and a few translated Japanese martial arts classics (Musashi, 1977; Takuan, 1986; Uyeshiba, 1984; Funagoshi, 1973, 1975, 1988) are the most popular references for most authors. All those materials are the representative of traditional discourses of Japanese martial arts. It is difficult to find the contemporary Asian literature written by academic researchers in American martial arts literature. This intertextual feature is another facet of traditionally-oriented American martial arts literature. In fact, there is an interesting parallel between practice and theoretical discussions that most of modern achievements of Asian martial arts both in theories and practices are ignored by American audience.

Mystification and Demystification of Martial Arts

The word “mystical” is another common adjective to Asian martial arts. Donohue (1994) illustrates the American adherence of mysticalness of Asian martial arts.

What else do people seek in their study of the martial arts? One of the most notable things concerning Western ideas about these systems is the component of mystery and mysticism which surrounds them. *Karateka* can break boards and bricks with their bare hands; there must be (many believe) an occult element which contributes to this skill. The whole complex of ideas regarding meditation, Zen, enlightenment, power and martial arts smacks of both excessive stereotypes and extreme romanticization. What attracts people to the martial arts is often the allure of "Oriental mystery" and occult knowledge harnessed to the more prosaic pursuit of physical power. Most martial artists start out with the desire, not to break through into a higher realm of consciousness, but rather with the desire to just break through anything (preferably a brick or board). (p.10)

Donohue (1994) points out that the overly mystical approach to the martial arts is usually symptomatic of a lack of familiarity with them on the part of Western observers. Due to the extensive exposure to Asian martial arts for over thirty years, Americans have much less expectation of mystical features from the arts, and instead begin to view the arts as an essential physical endeavor. However, as Donohue (1994) describes, the ideas of mysticism persists among the American audience.

Despite the fact that familiarity seems to breed not only attempt but also a type of contempt, in that people no longer see a prominent mystical element to arts they are increasingly familiar with, the expectation that a mystical component to the martial arts exists seems to be a very persistent belief. The "inscrutable" Oriental mind has widely not let us see the real martial arts. There are masters in Japan (or Korea, or China) who could show us a thing or two about the power of *ki*.

Rather than alter their fundamental preconceptions concerning the martial arts, Westerners continue to search for the "true," the "pure" martial art which fits their intellectual stereotypes. For a martial art to fit with Western expectations, it must be exotic, relatively rare, have a high dose of mysticism, and (a typically Western desire) a low ratio of effort to efficacy (p.11).

To confirm these Western expectations (in reality, the Asian situation is similar) of mystical aspects of martial arts, commercial enterprises, such as movies, television,

magazines, and comic books, continuously produce different images of mysticism in martial arts.

However, there are different categories of mysticism in the intellectual efforts to understand martial arts. One of mystical approach to Asian martial arts found from the American authors' writings is mystifyingly to idealize Asian martial arts as an alternative model for the problematic Western physical education or culture of physical activity. For example, Forster (1986) states:

Western sports are fixed on skills, abilities, and physical strength which lead to an artificial separation of body and soul. In the martial arts, technical skills and abilities are secondary; rather, they are the means to give stability to the "path." Exercise is more enriching and satisfying in martial arts because it is based on a wholistic concept, that is, a unity of physical and mental elements (p.84).

A similar line of perception is to assume that Western practitioners are less conditioned for learning martial arts, particularly the high level of learning both technical and philosophical or theoretical areas.

In Western culture ideas are more fixed (black and white), as evidenced in Western styles of martial art by the more rigid conception of usage and technique. It is difficult for Westerners to conceptualize existence as an interplay of complementary forces in a state of continual change and to apply the concept to martial art (Ch'en, p. 94).

Hsu (1986) expressed a similar position.

In learning kung fu, Westerners must develop a more flexible mentality that enables the mind to focus on more than one area of the body at once; then the body parts can be orchestrated to execute the kung fu techniques correctly. This training process requires patience and dedication, and a willingness to modify ingrained patterns of thinking. (pp.90-91)

Another type of mysticism in martial arts literature generalizes the ideal stage of learning as one that anybody can reach without emphasizing the laborious process.

As a new learning process begins, technique and rhythm are forgotten. An aikidoka is the movement and the movement is the aikidoka. The attack and defense, the mind and the body, no longer exist as separate entities; there is only the harmony of the pattern of movement. All movement is art, and art is the expression of self-actualization.” (Olson and Comfort, 1986, p.103)

There are a few, though not many, authors who try to deconstruct those perceptions of “mystifying the philosophical or covering it in stereotypically ‘impenetrable’ Asian cloth, thus alienating these arts from full public appreciation” (Rosenburg, 1995, p.27). Becker (1982) criticism against unconditional promotion of Zen philosophy can be interpreted as an attempt to strip off the mystical attitude toward Asian martial arts. In the same vein, Hurst (1993) also criticizes the popular notion of Zen in martial arts.

Thus, one should not overemphasize the Zen factor in martial arts. Exaggeration of the idea that the samurai were somehow naturally attracted to this way of thought has given rise to such strange formulations as “Zen samurai” or the idea that “kyudo cannot be separated from Zen” (Hoover, 1978; Sollier & Gyorburo, 1969). It leads people to think that where there are martial arts there is necessarily some Zen

activity taking place, or that when martial arts were practiced, those doing so were believers of Zen. (p. 47)

American mystification of Asian martial arts probably has its historical roots in the Western concepts of Oriental mysticism, however, particularly in martial arts, the mysticism has been grown to form the basis of common expectations of martial arts. This expectations are amplified by the popular image of martial arts framed by movies and other commercial media. The mystical gaze on martial arts is so pervasive that we find some influences even in the academic territories. This interpretive frame of mystification of martial arts seems to be closely associated with the version of traditional and spiritually oriented martial arts.

World View of Asian Martial Arts

Asian martial arts have played a significant role in transmitting Asian forms of physical culture to the Western world. When Westerners practice Asian martial arts, they learn or are exposed to , consciously or unconsciously, Asian ways of thinking in general and particularly Asian world views intertwined within the discourse of the activities. American martial arts literature reveals which schools of Asian thoughts appeal to Western audience. There are interesting narratives in which American authors reveal their position toward their own culture and worldview when they speak about Asian ways of viewing the world.

The first noticeable aspect of the acculturation process of Asian martial arts in Western society is their formidable persistence in maintaining their original culture's characters. Wingate (1993) illustrate this tendency in the case of Japanese karate.

This ideology is reflected in the structure of traditional karate training. Over the last three decades, Japanese karate has been introduced throughout the world. Wherever it is taught, its structure and principles remain the same, reflecting the cultural roots of its Japanese origins. Elements of Zen, of bushido, and budo can be seen in almost all aspect of traditional karate. (p.23)

Schmidt (1986) points out that Western practitioners are acculturated to the traditional Asian cultural values, with particular impact on their perspectives of reality, man, and nature. There are several key topics that American authors frequently discuss; they are; (1) metaphysical topic; (2) epistemological topic; (3) the concept of man, particularly, body-mind issue; and (4) relation of man and the world. But, as characteristics of the Asian worldview itself, all these issues are intermingled in their discussions.

Holcombe (1993) describes the key feature of the Asian view of the universe as "a harmoniously functioning organism," borrowing Derk Bodde's (1981) concept. Becker (1982) explains the notion as: "the universe is itself an organic, living entity manifesting the interplay of opposing (yin and yang) forces. The basic component of the universe is ch'i (Jap: ki) or like life-force" (p. 106). Drengson (1992) describes the concept of ki-based-universe from the perspective of Japanese aikido.

Ki has deep metaphysical, practical and experiential significance. The power of energy referred to here is considered in Japanese traditions as natural universal energy that animates all that lives. Ancient Shintoism views nature as an animate, creative, organic, living unity, an ongoing process alive with consciousness and intelligence. Thus, ki refers to the creative force that is expressed not only in our actions, but also in our thoughts and feelings (p.50)

Holcombe (1993) interpret qi (ki) as:

Somewhat like the Western concept of ether, qi was believed to be the substance surrounding and including all things, which brought even distant points into direct physical contact. Since one single substance joined all corners of the cosmos into a single organic unity, it followed that mastery of qi was equivalent to mastery of the material universe. (p.13)

It is not the interest of this study to determine accuracy of their explanations, but rather to discuss which aspects of the Asian perspective they focus on and how they relate these to their martial arts practice and to their Western perspectives. Becker (1982) responds to this question as:

On still a more elevated level, the claim is made that we gain knowledge of the ebb and flow of the universe itself by forming the forms and dancing the dances of the martial arts. To some westerners, this claim may sound absurd or abstract, for it is certainly founded upon a different, more wholistic, and more living view of the universe than our physics and chemistry will consider. Man himself is a microcosmic subunit of ch'i, explicable in terms of the interplay of yin and yang, as are all processes in the universe. The Chinese analogize man's body and movements to those of the universe, not only by making the universe anthropomorphic, but by seeing the cosmic drama and properties embodied in man, when man moves or flows in certain ways. Times of day, months, and years are named after and analogized to animals whose properties are seen in the movements of the martial arts. So there is a parallel not only between those moves and certain animal qualities, but by

transitivity, between those moves and times of day, seasons of the year, and/or stages of life. Man's character is also defined in terms of various sensed qualities, which in turn enables the selection of moves particularly suited either to enhance his talents or remedy his deficiencies (pp. 106-107).

And he addresses the significance of this new view of the world to the Western audience.

While Westerners might tend to dismiss the notion of a universe describable in terms of categories of animal characteristics and sense-perception qualities as too primitive or anthropocentric, the Chinese would respond in turn that a purely mechanistic materialism is equally incapable of capturing and understanding the universe—much less of comprehending the strengths and weakness, moods and moves of athletes at certain times of day, faced with human opponents of varying characters. In short, the Chinese may see the universe in terms of analogies which we do not generally perceive or accept in the west. But we should not too hasty with the labels of “true” or “false” before exploring the advantages or knowledge which such a view point really may possess. It may prove to be the case that the Chinese world-view in this sense is even more capable of explaining the dynamics of human energy and competition than are the mechanics of chemistry, physics, and biology, to the primitive extent we have developed them in the West to date. (p. 107)

There are frequent references to the emphasis of Asian philosophy on the interrelated nature of man and world. Pieter (1993) states that man is part of the surrounding world in the Asian perspectives.

From the perspective of Zen, the individual and nature are also one. Though it is recognized that “nature is the world of manyness” and one is facing this world as a subject, the Zen practitioner experiences a close relationship with the environment. Underlying the many things in the world is a Unity called Dao (Munro, 1982). It is often described as “nothingness,” Non-Being or Wu to indicate that it has no qualities such as good or bad, large or small, positive or negative, and so on. Dao, therefore, is beyond dichotomization. Dao, however, can be found in individual beings or things. As such it is called de, the life principle that gives these beings and

things their characteristics. Through this de everything is linked with Dao, the unitary principle. (pp. 17-18)

Ch'en (1986) presents another example of how the Asian perspective of close relationship between man and nature is codified into the martial arts practice.

Concerning man's view of his relationship with nature, there was an early Chinese notion that a physical resemblance exists between the universe and man From this the concept that the human body is a miniature universe is derived; this concept forms an essential part of the underlying metaphysical principle shared by the medical sciences and the martial arts of China. Besides the physical similarity between the universe and man with which ancient Chinese interpretation of the structure and function of the human body is associated, another important concept in this philosophy of nature is man's benefit from his imitation of nature. This concept springs from the principle of "following nature" of Taoism, as found in the emergence of wu-shu systems. Shapes and postures, motions and maneuvers, contacts and interactions of myriad things in the creation have long inspired wu-shu masters in designing their systems ... reflect the imitation of movements of living things and the concept of unity of nature and man in those original designs. (p. 55)

This perspective of unity of man with nature seems to be extended to the concept of body and mind. Many authors emphasize the significance of a wholistic view of mind and body incarnated in the Asian martial arts practice. Kleinman (1986) claims that Asian martial arts have the potential to break through the Western dualism of body and mind. Wingate (1993) introduces the Zen concept of body and mind which is applied in martial arts in the same way.

In Zen, as in other Japanese spiritual disciplines, the mind and body are not separate entities. We speak of them as two because of the limitations of both our language

and our understanding of reality. The concept of physical, mental, and spiritual training are heuristics that allow us to communicate aspects of the human experience, but they fail to capture the essential truths of ultimate reality (p.18).

From this perspective, he insists that “we cannot train the body without training the mind and the spirit. All are one. This is why physical hardship is necessary to forge the spirit and why spiritual practices are essential for perfecting physical techniques” (p.18) Kauz (1977) also values the Eastern view of man as holistic rather than dualistic and contends that;

martial arts teachers who share this view see themselves as helping their students develop as a whole. In teaching what Westerners would consider physical skills, they think they are affecting the student’s mental and psychological approach to life as well as cultivating his body. (p. 28)

Dregson (1993) describes how this holistic view functions in Aikido training.

Aikido philosophy holds that by perfecting our capacities to move, stand, and sit properly, we can at the same time “correct” or purify ourselves in other ways. This means that Aikido is a practical study in which its philosophy is expressed in the effective cultivation of the body and mind as a dynamic unity, integrated and unified by the cultivation of spiritual strength and the power of love and respect. (p.60)

And he explains the meaning of the training process.

The various meditations, movements, evasions, submissions, exercises, postures and throws that form its practice have as their unifying principle the realization of our

oneness in nature. In aikido the participants express through their movements the fundamental principles of the natural world. (p.60)

Forster (1986) also emphasizes that experience of training is “more enriching and satisfying in martial arts because it is based on a wholistic concept, that is, a unity of physical and mental elements” (p.84). Olson and Comfort (1986) express this wholistic view as “a philosophical spiritual dimension with which to build and integrate with the physical dimension” (pp.101-102). The Eastern concept of ki also supports the holistic perspective. Holcombe (1993) explains ki (gi or ki in Korean and qi or ch’i in Chinese) as the substance of the universe but in human body, as energy in fluid form. Asian often believe that they can control and improve this stream of energy by training of their breathing. This system of breathing control, so called, qi-gong “may have focused on actual respiration or the circulation of bodily fluids, but mental concentration must have been a necessary concomitant of “breath control” from its inception” (p.15) because the energy is not only physical but also mental.

These concepts of interrelated unity among the universe, nature, man, and body and mind are developed into the notion of the ultimate stage of learning in martial arts where there is no separation between the performance and the performer, the sword and mind, or the movement and the environment. Olson and Comfort (1986) describe this stage as:

Through the experience and understanding of the rhythm of breathing (the flow of energy) comes the understanding of the rhythm of movement and energy flow within an attack.” As a new learning process begins, technique and rhythm are forgotten. An aikidoka is the movement and the movement is the aikidoka.

.... The attack and defense, the mind and the body, no longer exist as separate entities; there is only the harmony of the pattern of movement. All movement is art, and art is the expression of self-actualization.” (p.103)

As a philosophical background of this idealization of human performance, Koizumi (1986) introduces the Taoist notion of *wu-wei* that may be understood a different metaphor of *do* concept.

[T]he Oriental idea about the importance of being in tune with the cosmic process is also found in Taoism. The Taoism concept of *wu wei*, which is usually translated as “non-action,” does not mean, therefore, doing nothing. Rather, it means action in harmony with the ongoing cosmic process. This is what Lao Tsu (1972, p. 39) means when he says, “Tao abides in non-action, yet nothing is left undone.” In the final analysis, the aesthetics of no-action is thus an outgrowth of a worldview which emphasizes the need for human existence to be in harmony with the cosmic process. (p.67)

Pieter (1993) attributes the Western attraction to the Asian way of viewing the world to the new value system of post-industrialized Western societies.

This shift in Western values is not only related to the physical activities that people engage in, but is also closely connected to the perception that people have of their bodies. The changing view of Western man from a personalized perspective on the human body as an extension of one’s identity to a more reified (“thingified,” “objectified”) perspective and the consequences of this change for physical education and sport have been described by Broekhoff (1972) for modern Western society. If the martial arts are held to be an alternative to the present Western dualistic view, it could be because these martial arts are thought to offer a non-reified view of the human body (p.11-12)

These American authors' conceptualizations of the Eastern view of the world reflects their efforts to understand Asian martial arts not only as a practice but also the culture and philosophy upon which the practice based. Most of these authors seem to be attracted to the notion of wholistic perspectives, particularly related to the concept of body and mind that has been a critical issue in physical education area. It is also noticeable that American authors often address Western perspectives on a specific issue as problematic, suggesting that the Eastern one may be valued as an alternative. In doing so, there is a tendency of uncritically valuing Eastern perspectives or often neglecting to understand the social-historical contexts of those perspectives.

American authors often overgeneralize Asian philosophy and worldview to martial arts. There are various schools of thought in Asian societies, though not all those ideas have been incorporated into martial arts practice. Some are more influential than others to the development of the discipline, and there are some differences in referential philosophies across martial arts, especially in different societies among China, Japan, and Korea. Since most American authors concentrate on the Japanese martial arts, they fail to cover comprehensively Asian ways of viewing the world.

Pedagogy of Asian Martial Arts

Asian martial arts have attracted attentions from Western physical educators from the first exposure. As early as 1919, John Dewey had a chance to observe judo in Japan, which led to the establishment of a judo program in Columbia University (Corcoran and Farkas, 1983). However, it seems to be Herrigel's publishing his well cited book, *Zen in*

the art of archery (1953) that instigated Western physical educators to realize the potential of martial arts as a different but interesting perspective of human movement discipline.

Particularly in United States, the 1970s was a booming time to write about Asian martial arts, with attempts to apply the Eastern approach to physical education and study of sport.

There are a great number of publication other than two the most frequently cited, Leonard (1974) and Gallwey (1974), for example, Blackburn and Jorgenson, 1976; Gallwey, 1976; Leuchs and Skalka, 1976; Rohe, 1974; Sekida, 1975; "Smith Adam" (pseudonym), 1975; so on.

It is not clearly explained in the literature why the popularity of Asian martial arts surged in 1970s among American physical educators. A part of the reason was the increased interests in Eastern philosophies and religions in the 1970s when Americans were searching for alternative worldviews. Also the 1970s marked the time that Asian martial arts gained momentum to be popularized in American society (Corcoran and Farkas, 1983).

Although it is not evident what impact these introductions of Asian perspectives gave to the theories and practices in American physical education and sports, there are distinct concepts and issues on which American physical educators concentrate to introduce, discuss, and contrast with Western views. Beker (1982) illustrates American physical educators' interest in martial arts.

The 1970s have witnessed a surge of interest in applying Asian philosophies, particularly Zen Buddhism, to sport. *Prima facie*, this might indicate that the philosophy of sport, while relatively new on the American scene, may have a longer

tradition in the Orient. At the same time, a number of Oriental sports have gained increasing attention in the West-especially the martial arts of judo and karate. Several aspects of these martial arts indeed merit the attention of philosophers, particularly because of they illustrate aspects of sports which have generally been undervalued or overlooked in Western sports. (p. 97).

The most attractive aspect among the merits of martial arts seems to be the blending of Zen principles into a discipline of movement. American authors seem to be fascinated by the idea that education of physical movement can be integrated into the philosophical domain. The languages of Zen and martial arts show a possibility of transcending mere physical activity to spiritual cultivation. Olson and comfort (1986) questioned, "in what way can movement forms of the martial arts contribute to sport-minded, analytical Western culture?" He suggests that the martial arts may provide "an excellent alternative supplement to the physical education programs of the West" (p.101), which adds "a philosophical spiritual dimension with which to build and integrate with the physical dimension." (p. 102). Drengson (1992) argues that the philosophy of a martial art transcends the activity beyond sheer physical movement.

Aikido philosophy holds that by perfecting our capacities to move, stand, and sit properly, we can at the same time "correct" or purify ourselves in other ways. This means that Aikido is a practical study in which its philosophy is expressed in the effective cultivation of the body and mind as a dynamic unity, integrated and unified by the cultivation of spiritual strength and the power of love and respect (p.60).

American physical educators value the Eastern perspective that considers learning physical skills for achieving higher dimension of learning. They perceive the higher learning as

enlightenment (Schmidt, 1986, 1990; Linden, 1986; Wertz, 1977), true understanding (Canic, 1986), Ultimate understanding and self-discovery (Wingate, 1993), self-actualization (Schmidt, 1990) or a perfection of the self (Olson, 1986), the skill of life (Canic, 1986), a way of life and a process of self-definition (Harrison-Pepper, 1993), paths to self-cultivation (Pieter, 1993), self-knowledge (Wertz, 1977), etc. Levine (1984) conceptualizes the educational perspective of martial arts beyond their technical utilitarian dimension as a liberal version contrary to a illiberal one. All these languages suggest that the American authors like to define physical education for something other than the physical domain as they see from the spiritually and philosophically oriented version of martial arts.

If the validity of this notion of physical education is not the focus of this analysis, a question can be asked about how philosophical or spiritual education through physical training is possible in Asian martial arts. American authors attempted to answer the question in several different ways. The Eastern view of body and mind is one issue that American physical educators interpret as a critical difference between East and West, as discussed in the early in this analysis. The next issue is the process and product orientation. They perceive that Western physical education is product-oriented whereas Eastern approach emphasizes the process. Forster (1986) interpret this process-oriented pedagogy of martial arts as a part of “Do” concept, saying “the inherent maturing process.”

Most significantly, it is not the final result or the success which counts, but the experiences gathered in the pursuit of the path. This concept emphasizes inner attitudes and self-knowledge in the sense of the Zen tradition. Do does not imply the renunciation of achievements nor does it exclude an orientation toward a certain goal: It goes far beyond this. Achievements are possible on a different level and are seen as an integral part of the path. What counts is the way of achieving the goal, not the goal itself. (p.83-84)

Canic (1986) stresses the significance of process.

This skill goes far beyond the mere perfecting of specific responses to given sets of environmental conditions. The vehicle for the practice of this Skill, is unimportant as long as the proper path (the Middle Path) is followed to the proper destination (Nirvana). The focus in the present context then, is on the process, the approach to the motor skill, the internal or *how* it is done as opposed to the product, result of the motor skill, the external or *what* is done. (p. 78)

Linden (1986) tries to incorporate his learning from aikido into his teaching swimming class.

It is important to note that looking at movement education as..... that process orientation rather than goal orientation must be emphasized. If success is defined by external, goal-oriented criteria, then relatively little attention will be paid to the human element, that is, to what the person feels himself to be as he does the task. Only when tasks are used primarily as vehicles for self-examination through movement will students have the opportunity to learn to use movement as a means of philosophical growth. (p. 111)

However, it is highly questionable whether this humanistic interpretations of the "process" in Zen or martial arts are matched by the authentic Asian concept. Asians speak of the

process as a process for the product, believing that without a proper process, there should not be the product. They might speaking the process as such:

Certain types of practices within the martial discipline, such as intense repetitious execution of techniques to the point of fatigue, prolonged sitting in *seiza* (formal sitting position), special training sessions held during extremes of heat and cold, and the general perseverance through pain and bruises, are all thought to test, nurture, and refine the ability to concentrate one's physical and mental efforts. (Schmidt, pp.70-71)

Or the genuine meaning of "process" could be related to their notion of patient elaboration instead of hurrying for quick achievement. Becker's episodic illustration (1982) is possibly read as saying this notion of process.

In contrast to the flights of soaring abandon described by American authors as typifying the Zen athlete, the serious practitioner of judo or karate spends most of his practice time either bowing and meditating more or less uncomfortably on his knees, or literally mindlessly repeating forms (katas) and motions against a wall or in the air, over and over again. The tendency of the American is to wonder, "when am I going to get to do the real stuff? (i.e., sparring against opponents)". The view of the martial arts master is that the discipline of form (kata) and the practice of ritual *is* the "real stuff", and sparring is only a small tangent to the discipline. (p.103).

There is another issue, in a sense, related to the issue of process-product, that is, competition orientation and non-competition orientation. American authors perceive that the process oriented perspective is a ground for a non-competitive concept of sports.

Western sports overvalues competition and overrates the so-called competition spirit. In contrast, if we adopt the do concept, the idea of winning and losing, of victory and defeat does not have the same significance; competition is only a by-product, an intermediate step within the longer and more important maturing process. In view of the humanization of sports (Lenk, 1977), the athlete may follow his "path" for a lifetime regardless of the physical and psychical conditions, regardless of whether or not he may attain high-level achievements. (Forster, pp. 83-84)

Forster (1986) criticizes the product-oriented Western concept of sports and suggests the benefit of the process-oriented martial arts perspective.

Unique striving for achievement deprives the athlete of essential inner dimensions of the experience. Competition and high-level performance are only a small part of the whole sport experience. Why should it not be possible to achieve self-assertion independently from external success and external dynamics, and thereby derive deep enjoyment from daily practice? In other words, why should it not be possible to emphasize the internal maturing process of the athlete?(p. 84)

Olson and Comfort (1986) perceives the different notion of competition in martial arts.

"Although aikido is usually practiced in groups of two, there is no competition, only mutual cooperation." Because their training is toward a perfection of the self, therefore, "the only competition one has is with his own ego" (p. 102). Harrison-Pepper (1993) defines the concept in a similar sense. "Competition was internalized - between parts of body, between the mind and body - rather than between individuals" (p.95). Clark (1986) observed that:

Judo, as a way of life, is based on traditional Japanese values of "Bushido." Competition is not the end goal, but merely a way to gain insight into the living of a more perfect life. In the United States, we seem to focus on the third aspect of judo, that of competitive sport. Western life seems compartmentalized rather than holistic and with the American bent toward competition, it is interpreted that judo participation will reflect this trait. (p. 244)

The American authors' interpretation of Asian martial arts as non-product and non-competition oriented seems to reflect their disappointment toward Western ethos of overly promoted competition and achievement. The wholistic approach of Asian martial arts alludes a possible alternative to cure the problem of contemporary culture of physical education and sports. However, it is not certain whether or not American authors' interpretations of Asian concepts of competition and non-competition, process and product, and even mind and body are correspondent to those of the Asian martial arts. Most of these concepts are derived from the Zen discourse. But, it is questionable whether the pedagogy of Zen training is such humanistic in reality as today's American notion of a so called humanistic approach of education, particularly considering the other side of Zen and martial arts education, exclusiveness. The traditional pedagogy of Zen and martial arts have never seriously concerned about less-talented or less enthusiastic students. Those were excluded through the "process" which was designed to be tough enough for them to drop themselves out of the course.

Next one is an epistemological issue. American physical educators perceive that the pedagogy of Asian martial arts is grounded in the intuitive mode of thinking and that

Western method is oriented toward analytical reasoning. Olson and Comfort (1986)

contrasts the analytic and scientific perspective to the Eastern approach.

The traditional Eastern approach to learning the martial arts seems to be based on intuition. This abstraction of thought, nurtured by body control oriented experiences designed to develop the inner awareness and perception of the mind, teaches the mind to respond through the body without evidence of conscious rational thought. Thus, what is produced is a heightened kinesthetic sense between mind and body as one intuitively. (Olson, p.104)

Schmidt (1986) points out that reflective of the Zen method of training, the emphasis is on a nonverbalized, intuitive approach rather than rational. The trainee is encouraged to “think with his body and not with his mind” and that this intuitive knowledge “results from direct, firsthand experience.” (p.71) Therefore, in this “intuitive mode of comprehending reality” (Koizumi, 1986, p.61), experience is valued as the core of education (Wingate, 1993, Draeger, 1973b).

Through philosophical assumptions, the pedagogy of Asian martial arts may be important to understand the practice and, in fact, American authors focus on this. However, there are many aspects of specific teaching method, environment, expectancy to learner, and other culturally conditioned characteristics of pedagogy which make differences between physical education and martial arts. When a Western student undertakes study of martial arts, there are evident differences in his/her attitude toward learning and, consequently, in gaining compared to other physical activities. Many experimental studies report that martial arts training has significant impacts on the

participants in various areas (Cox, 1993, Schmidt, 1992). However, many researchers could not make a conclusive statement as to what aspects of martial arts training contributed to those effects (Schmidt, 1990; Wingate, 1993, Konzak and Klavora, 1980) This may be why many American physical educators concentrated to the philosophical aspects of martial arts pedagogy believing that the differences were in philosophy.

Culture of Martial Arts Pedagogy

There are a need to take a close look at the actual culture and practice of martial arts pedagogy other than the abstract philosophy to understand the educational dynamics of the Asian martial arts. In fact, several authors approached this topic with pedagogical interests(Linden, 1986; Schmidt, 1986; Canic, 1986). Some other authors introduced cultures of martial arts practice in general.

The culture of martial arts education is viewed differently by those authors. The first noticeable aspect is their teaching methods. American physical educators interpret the key features of martial arts teaching method as demonstration and imitation, and not frequent verbal instruction, repetition, hard and intensive task, and self-discovery. “The main method is constant repetition of the teacher’s example; the keyword is always copy” (Jacobs, 1970). Schmidt (1986) describes the image of the teacher as “the interpreter and transmitter of the techniques and philosophies of his particular martial tradition” and as “the model for the trainee to emulate” (p. 71). Therefore, the training becomes “a process of trial and error,” (Schmidt, 1986, p. 72). Based on the belief that “explaining is objectification” and thereby “experience is the ultimate teacher” (Wingate, 1993, p.17-18).

“the instructor teaches primarily through the use of demonstrations.” (Canic, 1986, p. 79).

Canic (1986) explains the rationale of valuing non-verbal method.

A demonstration may have much more effect than a dialogue between teacher and student. By excessive verbalization, the instructor would only serve to modify the student's deluded concept of Reality by providing more distinctions to which it might cling. The instructor cannot help the student to master a motor skill by explaining it any more than he or she can make the student aware of the Ultimate Truth by telling him or her. (p. 79)

However, a teacher's verbal instruction is often a frank critique of a student's technique (Jacobs, 1970), sometimes in a strict and severe, even abusive manner (Schmidt, 1986; Wnigate, 1993).

Schmidt (1986) describes the social relationship between teacher and student in martial arts as “paternalistic in nature and based on personal loyalty and a complex system of reciprocal obligation.” (p. 73). He points out that this culture is a reflective of the traditional Japanese *iemoto* system that is an institution for teaching artistic or practical skills in feudal society similar to European guild systems. In his participant observation study of a American martial art studio, Jacobs (1970) draws the image of the martial arts instructor as “a father-figure” and “a benevolent dictator” who is viewed as with the symbolic features of a folk hero to the students. (pp. 154-155). Wingate (1993) illustrates the concept of the teacher in the rigid hierarchical social structure of the traditional martial arts school.

The sensei (teacher), whether of Japanese ancestry or not, commands absolute respect and authority. His position is patriarchal; They [the students], in turn, accept his authority and follow his teaching without questions., this expectation of unquestioning obedience and deference is maintained. (p.24)

Considering the centrality of the master instructor in the social structure of a martial arts school, however, there is not enough coverage of this main figure in martial arts literature.

The social atmosphere is probably the most visible side of the martial arts classroom, that is, training hall, differing from other activity class or physical education. American authors observed that the social atmosphere of martial arts training hall is filled with the spirit of discipline, obedience, dedication, respect, and etiquette (Schmidt, 1986; Jacobs, 1970; Nicol, 1975; Reilly, 1975). Schmidt (1986) metaphorizes the training hall as “sacred space” and explains the cultural traditions of the sacredness of the training hall.

The hall in which the martial arts are practiced is called a dojo. Dojo is the name given to a place devoted to religious exercises, and its original Sanskrit meaning, *bodhimandala*, is the place of enlightenment. Due to its religious atmosphere, the dojo is simple and without ostentation and reflects the Japanese aesthetic values of *wabi* (simplicity) and *sabi* (tranquillity). For this reason the dojo is considered to be a *shinsei*, or sacred space. All actions within the dojo are conducted according to a strictly prescribed code of etiquette known as *reigi saho*. These forms of etiquette serve as outer forms of self-cultivation, the purpose of which is to bring order and harmony to the social nexus a physical behavior motivated by inner convictions of humbleness of one’s spirit and respect for the status-oriented vertical societal hierarchy (p. 72)

In this sacred space, training and instruction are conducted with strict discipline, sometimes even in militaristic fashion, and most of techniques exercises are developed in

very formalistic routines (Jacobs, 1970). Harrison-Pepper (1993) describes that the atmosphere of the class as “disciplined, focused and respectful. Interactions were on the level of ‘high courtesy,’ a state in which participants suppress displays of dissatisfaction, boredom, or embarrassment, even satisfaction or joy” (p.95). Analogizing martial arts training with her own teaching experience of dance, she defines the meaning of training in this strongly disciplined environment as “a process of self-definition, a process of self-discipline which manifests it self indissolubly through physical reactions” and “the individual’s justification for his own work” (p. 92).

Karate skills are a totality of experience, a part of one’s passage toward a more centered, more aware self, so that techniques are closely connected to notions of discipline, precision, and concentration. Through exhaustive, repetitive exercise, the martial artist tackles the persistent and fundamental problems of concentration and relaxation. (p.92-93)

Harrison-Pepper (1993) attests to an interesting experience from her own training.

Instructors simply told me to do it; my mind was persuaded through practice rather than explanation. “You go and you do,” Master Kim used to say. In Kim’s “go and do” training method, karateka were thus encouraged to present positive, energetic attitude, despite actual pain or fatigue. At first, however, this seemed an unnatural demand for theatrics, an inauthentic or dishonest exchange between student and master. But I did not yet understand that action precedes emotion in the martial arts “Are you tired?” “No Sir!” I shouted. The collusion of fellow students supported my pretense, and suddenly I was no longer tired. Through repetition and observation, the “demonstration” become “actual.” (pp. 95-96)

This episode would not be any strange to those who have experience in martial arts training. There is an extraordinary force and power in the atmosphere of the training hall which forces people to change their daily mental attitude into unusually attentive and receptive one. This strange energy of the classroom might be the real strength of the martial arts pedagogy that American physical educators have looked for. But there is no clear explanation in American literature where this power is from.

Socialization in Martial Arts

American authors recognized that the practice of Asian martial arts worked to socialize American participants into the culture of martial arts. Schmidt (1990) depict the process of acculturation.

A secondary, but very important function of the traditional martial arts is to serve as expressive institutions through which practitioners are acculturated to the traditional cultural ideas, norms and behaviors and practices associated with martial arts specifically and Japanese culture in general. In the Western practitioner of the Eastern (Japanese) martial arts this process of acculturation is most generally reflected by a behavioral shifting of one's cultural value orientation from a Western perspective of reality, man, and nature, to a more Eastern perspective (pp. 191-192)

Konzak and Kavora (1980) described the effect in the training process.

Even in the very beginning of the training processes, before learning any physical skills, novices are introduced to the ubiquitous etiquette of the martial arts and the emphasis on characteristics such as humility, respect, concentration and realization. For the novice, this is a start in a process of resocialization that will continue, unrelentingly, during his period of karate training. Day after day, week after week.

he will be barraged with lectures and talks on philosophy of the martial arts. He will learn to follow the etiquette of the training hall until it becomes second nature, and the constant group reinforcement of this closed environment will reinforce and solidify in his mind the essential characteristics, i.e., mental skills of karate training (p. 230).

The authors attributed the power and force of the strongly disciplined environment of martial arts to the changes of the students' attitudes and behaviors. Several authors point out that the rituals practiced in martial arts function as the main channel to socialize the practitioners into the culture of martial arts. Harrison-Pepper (1993) explained the significance of ritual.

This physical act became a significant persuasive tool in my development and orientation to the martial arts. Though at first I performed this routine only because I was told to do so, doing so later began alter my beliefs. This, as Barbara Myerhoff observed, is one of the special task of ritual action: to persuade its practitioners that what is occurring is significant, sacred, or set apart in some way. Ritual, Myerhoff says, "is an act or actions intentionally conducted by a group of people employing one or more symbols in a repetitive, formal, precise, highly stylized fashion. Action is indicated because rituals persuade the body first; behaviors precede emotions in the participants" (1977:199), (p. 94)

Becker (1982) interprets the role of rituals as a world-making process.

[T]hat the discipline and ritual discussed at length in the previous section are themselves aspects of "world-making" As he bows and reveres his master each day, for example, he creates, participates in and comes to understand a relationship which is very real and important for Asian artists, and which rarely if ever pertains between Western athletes and coaches. Similarly, the acts of meditation prior to action, the swearing of loyalty to one's own martial tradition, and the bowing and

honoring of one's opponents create a world of concern with invisible relations (pp.105-106).

Clark (1986) illustrates how a ritual of bowing contributes to socialize Western practitioners into the culture of martial arts.

Bowing is a formalized part of Japanese life. Bowing took many forms when the teacher and various participants interacted in situations both verbal and physical. Bowing helped set the hierarchy standards (bow-in and bow-out ceremonies from each session). Bowing together in time and place also seemed to acknowledge the idea of group unity often mentioned in the literature about Japanese behavior. Judo beginners were appraised of the meaning of bowing, and class time was spent telling us why it should be done correctly (pp. 244-245).

He perceives the stress the teacher put on proper bowing as an effort to transfer the Japanese cultural norm through judo participation. He observes the socializing process of American practitioners in martial arts culture.

The rank-ordering structure, style of teaching, and ritualization of certain practices were seen as the vehicles of cultural transmission. The use of Japanese language, the explanation of the "essence" of behavior (i.e., bowing movements), and the constant and consistent referral to "respect" and "obligation" were seen as ways to socialize participants toward accepting judo (and thus Japanese) values..... The longer a person participated (and gained friends who participated or used the participation as a point of life focus), the more that participant seemed socialized to the "new" set of values (p. 248).

However, he also notes that there is some evidence indicating that Americans resist being socialized into certain values of martial arts (i.e., long hard work of learning moral-cultural

behaviors, instead of quickly moving into practical aspects such as sparring or competition), or accept the culture in certain situations, (i.e., during training supervised by the instructor) but not in other situations (i.e., outside of class or informal session of the class). Goodyear (1981) and Schmidt and Ansoorge (1987) report that Western martial arts practitioners change their cultural value orientation as the result of extended participation in the activities. Jacobs (1970) observed an interesting facet of socialization in martial arts, interpreting the martial arts participation as imbuing the practitioners with different social masks into their social body.

Another aspect of the composure of some upperlevel members is the highly dramatized caricaturing and aping of the master. From the time a member begins his stint in the dojo, he soon learns to adopt a frozen expression of mystical seriousness, aloofness, and reticence. This is designed to convey the belief and conviction that karate is serious business, that it is religious, intellectual, and "cultural." The "karate poker face" is adopted from Urban's own composure and may be defined as a symbolization of leadership, enlightenment, and skill. As the member becomes socialized, the poker face acquires new meanings. He begins to notice that whole dojo personalities or trait constellations form about the seriousness of the facial expression, and that these are more pronounced among several upper level members. (p. 152).

Boudreau et al. (1995), from their study on the effects of martial arts training, finds out that martial arts training has a possibility to resocialize the participants' gender identities.

These findings lead us to speculate that karate-do may permit a resocialization of girls and boys; for example, parents may perceive that it helps fill gap in our traditional gender socialization, compensating for lack of self-confidence in girls and the lack of sensitivity often perceived among boys. The result was a "black-belt person" who is at the same time strong and sensitive, powerful and gentle.

manifesting the qualities emphasized in the traditional philosophy of karate. Karate-do, it was perceived liberating the woman in every man and the man in every woman. (Boudreau, et.al., p.59)

It may be an interesting hypothesis for further study that the strong socialization effects are possibly due to the power of the learning environment of Asian martial arts that facilitates the psychic and somatic unity of pedagogical process and American expectancy to martial arts as mystical, quasi-religious, spiritual practice.

Violence and Martial Arts

Many American authors express their concerns about the relationship between martial arts training and violence. It is understandable that the American audience is suspicious of the Asian argument that martial arts training tends to reduce violent tendencies or curb them. Foster (1986) calls this seemingly contradicting claim the “paradox” of martial arts.

Fighting and aggression need not be connected or interdependent. On the contrary, full fighting force and use on inner energies are only possible if aggression and the initial aim-orientation are eliminated. This “emptiness” enables the fighter to achieve the highest quality of movements, and the necessary state of quiet and alertness. In this stage, the opponent can barely hit or tax the “empty” fighter (p.84).

In fact, many Asian martial arts claim themselves to be “non-violent arts” in their philosophical statements. For example, judo is defined as “the Way of Gentleness”

(Becker, 1982; Rosenberg, 1995) and is idealized as the spirit of “concession” and “mutual welfare and benefit” (Kano, 1986). It is viewed “as a way to gain self- and sensory awareness, as a means of creative expression, and as a way to guide and understand human interaction.” (Clark, 1986, p. 244). Aikido is another martial art most strongly advertised as non-violent. Dregson (1992) emphasizes the non-violent philosophy of aikido. He defines aikido as the non-fighting martial art in which competition is not allowed and stresses that the primary focus of the training is “not defeating an opponent but overcoming the attachments within ourselves which kindle the conditions for aggression” and transcending “the impulse to fight with others.” (Dregson, 1992 p. 60). Other Asian martial arts such as karate and taekwondo similarly accentuate their characters as non-violent. In the philosophical discourses of these arts, always “aggressiveness is negatively sanctioned and self-control and conflict avoidance emphasized” (Nosanchuck, 1981; Nicol, 1975).

However, these self-stated philosophical clichés do not seem to provide Westerners with the answer for the question, “[H]ow does one accomplish the justification of fighting and morality at the same time?” (Rosenburg, 1995, p. 18). Forster (1986) views that there are certain factors in the training process to regulate participants’ violent tendencies; they are: rituals of respect toward opponent, rules of conduct, and non-aggressive behavior. Dregson (1992) makes a similar point.

The various techniques and arts, the meditation, the ethics, the community sense, the emphasis by instructors and students on mutual respect, respect for the Way, for teachers, for practice weapons, for the dojo, for flowers that have been placed on

the shelf, for ourselves, for nature, these and many other things instruct us in the Way that is the heart of Aikido. (p. 63).

Becker (1982) considers the “self-control theory” as the most plausible one for the case of martial arts among three commonly referred theories of aggression relief.

A third theory—which I take to be most correct—is that the martial arts inculcate self-control as a fundamental principle. This self-control is not simply the control which a tennis player seeks in his serve or a golfer in his putt, but a control of the “will to violence” itself (p. 101).

He illustrates examples of how martial arts nourish this self-control to retrain the will to violence. In practice, martial arts prohibit practitioners from exerting their full force or limit contact; for instances, technical notion of “stopping punch in one inch before contact” or “light contact sparring.” Schmidt and Hesson (1989) stress the contribution of vigorous, disciplined training pursued within the cultural framework of moral values, attitudes, and beliefs of martial arts to development of morality.

There is another approach to explaining the non-violent character of martial arts, attributing to the nature and context of movement itself. Rosenburg (1995) suggests the benefit of the “form” practice as the path to and producer of the moral objectives of martial arts training due to the nature of the practice format which enables the practitioner to discipline his movement and mind without a partner and to concentrate more on oneself than opponent. Drengson (1992) approaches this issue from the technical principle of aikido.

They are able to lead the partner's ki (mind/body) in such a way that the throw happens almost by itself, as if the partner threw him/herself. Thus, one does not meet the partner's energy head on, but blends with, and directs this power away from oneself, so that it turns its course harmlessly and is resolved. (p.62)

Hyams (1979) introduces a lecture of martial arts to illustrate how the principle is applied.

When someone hits you, he is extending his ki toward you and it starts to flow when he thinks he will hit you—even before his body moves. His action is directed by his mind. You don't need to deal with his body at all if you can redirect his mind and the flow of his ki. That's the secret; lead his mind away from you and the body will follow. The principle of avoiding conflict and never opposing an aggressor's strength head-on is the essence of aikido. (pp. 73-74)

Most Asian martial arts have a similar technical principle, that softness overcomes hardness, rooted in the Eastern philosophy, particularly Taoism. Whether or not these philosophized technical principles are effective in practice, they seem to be appealing to American audiences, convincing them of martial art's non-violent moral nature.

Attracted by these philosophical narratives of martial arts, many researchers have investigated the effects of martial arts training on aggressiveness. Most studies report the positive effects of martial arts training in reducing the participants' aggressive tendencies. however, research is inconclusive as to what factors of martial arts training reduce aggressiveness. (Nosanchuk, 1981; Trusion, 1986; Boudreau, et.al., 1995; Skelton, et. al., 1991; Madenlian, 1979; Rothpearl, 1980) Some researchers stress the significance of the school's cultural orientation in accruing the moral benefits. Boudreau et al. (1995) and

Nosanchuk (1981) suggest that the schools preserving traditional culture of martial arts are more likely to produce such benefits than the Americanized, practically oriented schools.

However, not many American authors pay attention to the ideology of martial arts embedded in the social, historical, and political backgrounds of their developments in Asia. Rosenberg (1995) addresses the issue related to the socio-political implication of violence in martial arts training.

Consequently, noting the attraction of karate to Japanese on the far right of the political spectrum, a respected martial artist states: "Karate in the hands of a fanatic, and especially when it becomes the tool of a fanatical, quasi-political group, can be an awful thing" (Nicol, 1982: 56). In that vein, Japanese officials in occupied Asian countries before and during World War II learned martial arts as a matter of course (Stevens, 1987: 46-47). Undoubtedly they too studied kata and imbibed the apparent moral lessons within, but how and to what effect? But the martial arts have also suffused the arsenals of Asian popular movements which have resisted foreign occupation and control. Thus, protagonists of anti-colonial rebellions in China - particularly the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 (Haines, 1989:11) and of the revolution which created the People's Republic in 1949 (Oyama, 1977:17) employed kempo (a karate precursor) in hand-to-hand fighting.

The martial arts in the United States have also been employed by constituencies whose moral aims do not coincide. Martial arts training has for years been required of agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other intelligence services (Oyama, 1977:17), many of whom achieved higher "awareness" and ostensible ethical insight even as they participated in the suppression of civil liberties after World War II. Indeed, evidence demonstrates that "political violence was a central part of the FBI response" to the civil rights movement (O'Reilly, 1989:324). On the other hand, targets of the FBI have also turned to the martial arts, in part for their own protection. Security training in the separatist Nation of Islam included judo and karate as early as the 1950's (Haley, 1965, 227, 241), (P. 18).

The author's reflection on the politically ambiguous employment of martial arts in history leads him to conclude the ideology of martial arts is politically neutral but socially shaped.

Wherever they are practiced, the martial arts are, therefore, subject to variations growing out of the historical, economic, political, and cultural contexts in which they evolve. This is no less true for the martial arts in the United States. But, in addition to the general course of American history, with its violent overtones, special factors may also have affected the position of martial disciplines in this country: the Cold War and the historical standing of Asians in the United States (pp. 18-19).

Historically, martial arts have been employed by the ruler and the ruled, the suppresser and the rebel, and the invader and the resistance. Therefore, it is difficult to delineate the ideological guise of martial arts by only the historical fact of who practiced martial arts. There should be in depth discussions on the historical backgrounds of their development. It is also necessary to consider the different cultural orientations among the three major societies, China, Japan, and Korea, as well as the specific cultural backgrounds of the different styles and schools, for example, tai chi chuan and aikido as less fighting oriented, kendo and karate as more combatively spiritualized, and taekwondo and judo developed in more competitive culture. Another facet of ideology of Asian martial arts is the cultural consciousness between East and West. The Boxer's Rebellion in the late 19th century China was organized by local martial artists' anti-consciousness to Western imperial culture. It was another side of the cultural consciousness that made the conqueror MacArthur ban martial arts practice in Japanese society. There have been significant efforts of remaking up Asian martial arts in philosophical, theoretical, and practical levels

to be accommodated by Western cultures during the contemporary process of internationalization of Asian martial arts. The impacts made on the ideology of martial arts as a result of the cultural collision and interaction should not be overlooked in discussions of the conceptualization of Asian martial arts in Western society.

Another powerful face of martial arts, the popular images of martial arts constructed by commercial media, defines martial arts as a carrier of violence and aggressiveness. The representations of martial arts in American commercial media and popular literature justify and even glamorize violence by the sensationalistic concentration on violent action in an esoteric fashion (Rosenburg, 1995; Glaessner, 1974). This violent face of martial arts may be the most common American notion of Asian martial arts, especially to those who never experience the training personally.

Personal Meaning and Self-improvement in Martial Arts Training

One notable aspect of participation in martial arts activity is the intensity of involvement. Once one becomes involved in learning a martial art on a serious level, the activity often becomes a quasi-religious commitment for her/him. Fritschner (1974) questions what makes the participants so become seriously committed.

What was it about the players or about karate that kept them coming day after day, month after month, and in some cases year after year to the dry, dull, repetitive practices? (p. 9)

There are various approaches to this question in the American martial arts literature. Donohue (1994) devotes his an entire volume to explain the popularity of martial arts in contemporary American society and remarks on the complexity of the answer.

Once again we are presented with extremely complex factors that contribute to the popularity of these arts in contemporary America. It is perhaps indicative of the unfolding development of our own understanding that we are presented here with suggestions that it is the concatenation of myth, hope, the search for individual aggrandizement, the need for social connection, as well as more material considerations, that have helped condition the shape and tenor of the American martial arts experience (p. 11).

He suggests three major areas of benefits which attract the participants; the physical, the psychological, and the spiritual. However, the diverse narratives on the attractions or benefits of martial arts training may be boiled down to the Western concept of "self." Indeed, the "self" is the central theme of all the Western narratives on martial arts training, regardless of style, age, or gender. American authors describe this centrality of self in martial arts training in various metaphoric ways; "the search for center" (Donohue, 1994); "a concern for being centered" (Levine, 1984; Linden, 1986); "a new self image" (Schmidt, 1990); "self-discovery" (Becker, 1982); "self-perfection" (Schmidt, 1986); "self-strengthening" (Ch'en, 1986).

It is a challenging but interesting question to ask how martial arts can be a vehicle for the American search for self. Donohue (1994) considers the

problematic condition of contemporary social life as the background for today's American hunger for self.

Theorists have long noted the sense of alienation, rootlessness, and lack of connection experienced in the complex societies of the contemporary world. While questions regarding identity, place, and purpose are universal ones all humans wrestle with the particular conditions of life today seem to complicate the process of formulating creditable and satisfying answers. In a society characterized by rapid change in areas as different as technology and social roles, among highly mobile populations attempting to survive within a formal market economy, how are human relations created that generate a sense of stability, reassurance, and transcendent importance? (p. 102).

One the theme American authors consider significant to the practitioners is self-awareness (Linden, 1986), self-discovery (Becker, 1982, Kauz, 1975), or self-exploration (Wertz, 1977). This theme of self-awareness means that martial arts training gives back to the individual practitioner a sense of self which is lost in their rugged daily life. Linden (1986) illustrates how martial arts training helps practitioners to be centered in life.

This ideal is called *being centered*. It manifests in the body as a firm, supple, balanced, and open body organization. It manifests in movements as freedom to move evenly, smoothly, and powerfully in all directions. It manifests psychologically as a calm, alert, fluid, and focused state of mind. And it manifests philosophically as a spirit of nonattachment, an ability to accept life as it is while at the same time working to change it to meet your wishes, not being overwhelmed either by getting what you want or by not getting it. Once we become sensitive to and aware of the changes that take place in our bodies and movements and understand how these changes relate to our attitudes toward the external events with which we are dealing, we can work toward learning new ways of moving.

feeling, and acting. As we learn how to do this in class, we can begin doing the same in our daily lives. (Linden, p.109)

Levine (1984) makes a point consistent with Linden.

There is, moreover, a set of generalized competencies involved in various ways in all the martial arts that may be formulated as follows: Know oneself; know the other; and observe the right timing in one's response to the other. The idea of self-knowledge in the martial arts is tied to a concern for being centered. One must be in touch with the true center of one's being. One must be unified, the hands with arms, the limbs with the torso, the body with the feelings and the mind. One must be poised in a state between relaxation and readiness to move—at all times. In the words of the seventeenth century martial artist, Miyamoto Musashi, "Do not become tense and do not let yourself go. Keep your mind on the center and do not waver. Calm your mind, do not cease the firmness for even a second, Always maintain a fluid and flexible, free and open mind." (p.245)

Donohue (1994) points acutely out an ironic philosophy of self in martial arts that in the effort to explore self, martial arts ask students "to learn to lose a little of that self." (p.107)

Draeger (1973) describes this point as:

Attainment of the 'do' represents, beyond mere perfection of motor skills, a self-perfection in which old habits of dependence upon mechanics are thrown away and restrictive thought, or awareness of 'I' or 'I am doing' is lost (p. 59).

Drengson (1992) stresses that training will help practitioners reach the stage at which they "become empty of small self and are filled with the Self of Nature. It is the total activity with its breathing meditation that pulls out of the small mind of

calculative thinking” (p.65) Harrison-Pepper (1993) explains:

In traditional martial arts training as well, daily practice puts one to the test. Karate skills are a totality of experience, a part of one’s passage toward a more centered, more aware self, so that techniques are closely connected to notions of discipline, precision, and concentration. Combat exercises further develop one’s center through an immersion in oppositions. Balanced between aggression and fear, moving and not-moving, tension and relaxation, students learn to surrender to the demands of a sparring partner, not as adversary, my master used to say, but as a teacher, one who will illustrate one’s weakness. The self, then, becomes the sole obstacle to good sparring and good training, and this is true for much more than the martial arts (Harrison-Pepper, pp.92-93).

Perceiving self as an obstacle to recovering the real self is a common assumption of traditional Eastern philosophies, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Canic (1986) describes the concept in detail:

The meditative mind is a clear and detached mind, and it is this mind which the learner attempts to realize. The realization of this mind results in action that is spontaneous and not a product of conscious desires. To place the mind anywhere in particular is to remove it from the natural flow of the universal stream and thus to lose awareness of the ever present here and now. To consciously place the mind anywhere is to create a conceptual distinction which perpetuates the notion of a distinct self. When the mind is attached to anything, it loses touch with the Ultimate Reality. (Canic, pp. 89-81)

However, American literature does not delineate how practical and mundane American practitioners accept and interpret these Asian notions of discarding self, unattached mind, or no mind in daily efforts to secure the fragile self. It might be American way of understanding these abstract Asian concepts that American

authors connect the concepts with transcendental experience. In fact, many authors focus on the possibility of transcendental experiences through martial arts training. Forster (1986) calls it the inner experience or fringe experience.

This experience differs in some ways from the quality of experience aimed for by daily exercise in the martial arts. Attention is not reduced, but increased. In this case, the fighter and environment melt together. The fighter becomes completely absorbed by the movement so that there is congruency between intention and execution. This new quality of reality is only possible when the fighter reaches a "loss of ego," free from an anxiety, success-bound orientation. The fighter may liberate inner forces which do not emerge by willpower. This concept of no mind, this unison which overcomes the rift between thinking and action, is felt positively due to the ease of movement and the different perception of time. No mind, with body and mind in perfect harmony, is systematically taught but not limited to the martial arts or to high-level performance (Forster, p. 86).

Thirer and Grabner (1980) match the martial arts training with Maslow's concept of self-actualization, employing notions of spontaneity marked by simplicity and naturalness, absent-mindedness produced by intense concentration, and peak experience combined with a total loss of fear and an effortless movement as key features common to the both. Harrison-Pepper (1993) speaks of a feeling of flow in training.

In the martial arts too, devoted karateka describe a sense of floating or flowing within their kata. Mike Kennelly described the benefits of repetition in sparring: "Once you have learned and mastered certain formalized modes of interaction, you diminish fear, thus releasing the mind to float with the experience. In fact, repetition of behavior both releases the fear and causes the student to learn with the sense more than the mind, which then has the secondary effect of maximizing performance" (1982:73) (p.97).

Donohue (1994) remarks on this quality of experience referring to Csikszentmihalyi's concept of the flow experience.

Certainly a central concern of religions and ritual activities associated with them is the creation of a type of "optimal experience" that approximates the flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990: 76-77). In an increasing secular society, however, Americans no longer invest a large portion of their time in religious ritual that may generate such experiences. They do however, continue to search for occasions of flow. Ritual structure creates an environment conducive toward the creation of this experience, and this may in part explain the attraction of karate training for individuals: it offers a highly structured and symbolic activity that facilitates the focus of psychic and physical energy and to create a flow experience (p. 107).

However, there is more interest in the practical benefits of martial arts training, the theme of self-improvement. Schimidt (1990) lists a series of self-improvement related vocabularies from his review of research that investigates the effects of martial arts training: self-confidence; self-esteem; self-assertiveness; self control; concentration; self-discipline; self-assurance; self-sufficiency; greater self-concept or positive changes in the self-concept; venturesomeness; achievement and dominance; endurance; emotional stability; relaxation; lowed anxiety and aggressiveness; warmhearted; easygoing; moral-ethical and family-self orientation; affiliation; heterosexuality; autonomy; increased social adroitness; increase in value orthodoxy (pp.194-198) Observing these multiple effects of martial arts training, some authors perceive martial arts training as a therapeutic practice (Schmidt.

1990; Jacobs, 1970; Konzak and Klavora, 1980). The interest in the effects of martial arts training on self-improvement may be understood as an American interpretation of the idea of self-perfection in Asian philosophy of martial arts education.

Some authors focus on the social world of the martial arts community, particularly how the individual practitioner makes sense of his/her participation in the miniature social world of the school. Becker (1982) interprets participation in martial arts training as a “world-making” process. For him, the involvement in martial arts is more than simply a creation of a stronger or more sensitive body.

Rather, it is in the establishment of relationships with teachers, seniors, fellows, and juniors, with competitors, judges, and unseen forces (of which more later), which relationships he creates through his repetition of ritual. As he bows and reveres his master each day, for example, he creates, participates in and comes to understand a relationship which is very real and important for Asian artists, and which rarely if ever pertains between Western athletes and coaches. In a somewhat similar sense, the martial arts practitioner is creating a new, invisible world, if not of faith, at least of commitments and relationships in the dojo, which only become fully comprehensible and meaningful to him once he has placed himself fully within their hermeneutic framework. (p. 105-106)

Jacobs (1970) points out that participation in a martial arts school offers the practitioner an antidote, a replacement, a suspension of one's everyday life. He describes the meaning of the school as:

In terms of human needs and experience, it is comparable to other groups in the world of everyday life. It stands for its members as a place where some aspect of

their many-sided selves can become rooted, a place where a uniform and a colored belt become the criteria of who they are and what they do, in this time, in that place (Jacobs, p.160).

Harrison-Pepper (1993) illustrates how the self in daily life can be suspended and tuned into a different subjective.

The doorway bow, as an act of deliberate demarcation, a frame, came to mark not only my physical passage from one place to another, but also my spiritual passage from one world to another. Indeed, I came to rely on the bow as a trigger, a device which would systematically suspend the world outside the studio through a ritualized sequence of actions. The bow said “I am here” and at the same time, “I am not there.” It was, therefore, a ritual of both separation and inclusion: my mind was persuaded to shift its focus to other concerns, a quest for center, posture, obedience, rules, repetition, strength, endurance (concerns which did not exist, at least not to the same degree, outside the studio), while, as a gesture of surrender and humility, the threshold rituals also enhanced and supported the studio’s overall structure of beliefs. The bow announced my presence and my attention. (p.94)

Martial arts schools, then, become a place for separation from, escape from, and replacement for, one’s rootless, meaningless, and alienating everyday life, where one can find a sense of self and values to achieve for self.

Donohue (1994) considers that an understanding of contemporary American commitment to martial arts is not possible “without acknowledging their role in the forging of a sense of social place and community” (p. 101). He addresses the significance of finding a place in today’s social life for the individual to nest one’s sense of self on.

Certainly the discovery, revival, or outright creation of alternative traditions that attempt to incorporate the individual into a meaningful system of beliefs and behaviors is symptomatic of this quest for a sense of place. It is my contention that the martial arts are one such attempt. It is interesting that the Asian symbolism and ritual trappings of *karate* have been retained and perpetuated contemporary America. This suggests that the ritual nature of *karate* is not mere exotic window-dressing, but an important component of what makes *karate* so attractive to modern Americans (p.102).

The author attributes some social features of the martial arts school to its role as an alternative social place.

The karate training hall is a hierarchical society. Within this group, trainees participate and believe in a system for evaluating the worth of the individual by abstract standards which are unique to the group itself. Upon entering the dojo, the novice is plunged into a world where a type of achieved status, determined by the level of skill in the particular system being studied, organizes the social universe. All individuals can easily be placed within the social hierarchy by virtue of overt skill and even more subtle cues such as symbolic dress (p.103).

Fritschner (1974) argues that the sociability is not the prime motive for the participation but that a sense of power and dignity is the key value for the American practitioner, particularly working class males.

Karate has widespread appeal, but that primarily working class males, most of whom have little education and hold dead-end jobs, stick to the rigorous training program of karate with religious solemnity. To these students, sociability was discovered to be of secondary importance, instead they were buying dignity and power. Karate and its offer of indomitable power function to make and maintain a class of underdogs by providing a parallel stratification system for those without credentials, occupation, origins.

education, or other recourse to economic power or success. (p. 11)

He perceives the deferred gratification and very ritualized, instrumental goal-oriented practice in martial arts as a secondary ranking system that give the powerless underdog a sense of power or at least an illusion of power. Seeger (1969) describes this motive of martial arts as a means to buy self-image or face insurance. These authors may consider the value of rank in the context of highly hierarchical culture of martial arts school where achievement of an advanced rank would give the practitioner a sense of dignity and power.

American authors, overall, theorize personal meanings in martial arts training in two different perspectives. Some authors believed that practitioners would find the inherent philosophies of Asian martial arts as the ultimate meaning for their training. For this perspective, the meaning of martial arts training is to realize enlightenment, the Way, or self-perfection through training. Others attempted to translate the experiences into languages more practically related to the participant's daily lives; self-confidence, self-esteem, self-discipline, senses of belonging or power, and other areas of self-improvement. However, American authors do not attempt to explain any connections between the philosophically defined frames of meanings and the practically translated outcomes of martial arts training.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

Introduction

Although martial arts are widespread and popular in today's American society, they still are perceived as a foreign and special activity, particularly for adult women. Adult participants, when asked to talk about their experiences in the activity, often reveal a feelings of pride as well as shyness. Most of their narratives began with their motivation to begin martial arts training and their unusual experiences of the first class and first few weeks. Most of the interviewed participants spoke at length of the benefits of training and the changes in their lives resulting from the training.

The study also analyzes two published materials which covered exclusively of women's experiences in martial arts (Atkinson, 1983, Wiley, 1992). Although these women participate in diverse styles of martial arts, most of their narratives talk about experiences that are general to most martial arts. When the narratives are concerned about the types of martial arts they practiced, they were excluded from the analysis.

The interviewed participants were conscious of their social identities, particularly of age and gender. As a result, their narratives revealed differences in the interpretations of their experiences and conceptualizations of the activity across different social identities

Reading their narratives, the researcher began to realize that women more sensitively reflected the meaning of their involvement in martial arts than did men. One may interpret this to mean that martial arts training presents more challenges for women than men, and therefore gives impacts to women's lives more than to men's. However, these women's interpretations of martial arts training reveal not only women's version of the experiences but may imply some significance to men's experiences as well, although less openly expressed by men. Considering the very nature of martial arts training, the violence, intense physical involvement, and the competitive and hierarchical culture of the training hall, it is understandable that martial arts become an adventure for women taking their first step into this world, particularly when so few women were doing this activity in 1950s and 1960s (Atkinson, 1983). It is much easier today for women to find female peers in martial arts schools, and, in fact, many schools are marketing their programs toward women and family. However, it is still an unusual experience when women commit themselves to this activity. The quality as well as the quantity of the women's narratives support the point.

Although this analysis does not deal exclusively women's experiences, more women's stories are featured simply because there were more substantial responses from women. The emergent themes from the interviewed participants' narratives are; 1) starting, the first class, and the first few weeks; 2) pains, injuries, and difficulties; 3) a new self image—empowered self; 4) violence, victimization, and self-defense; 5) a way of life; 6) "I'm mediocre"—improvement, improvement, and improvement; 7) men and women in dojang; 8) the spiritual and the traditional.

Starting and the First Class, and Then a Couple of Weeks

It is not easy for middle-aged men and women to start a new activity, particularly a highly demanding one. It is certainly a challenge for them to commit to martial arts training in one's forties or fifties. Most of the interviewed practitioners began this activity not by internal motivations but by some other external motives. A common external motive was that some family members, usually children had started the martial arts. This exposed the participant to martial arts training and infused them to be interested. Probably every man and woman longs for power or techniques to enable them to take care of themselves, but they never knew that the way is available to them. When they happened upon a martial arts school, it may bring their long cherished dream onto a conscious level. Perhaps it is why they said, "OK, I will try it" when the instructor asked them to started with their children.

Mothers generally thought that they were going to spend the time doing nothing but sitting there during their children's class. One mother said, "I figured that if I didn't sign up then I would just sit in the back and watch them all the time. So we all signed up." Finding other people of similar age or condition also encouraged them to start. Another mother said;

I found that I was spending so much time sitting in the dojang waiting for the kids during class and that I didn't have any time to exercise myself at home. I also noticed that there were a couple of middle-aged women taking class who were blue belts at the time. And so, I thought, maybe, if I was going to be spending all this time at the dojang, then it would make more sense for me to take classes as well so that I would also get some exercise.

Some started the activity through the encouragement of friends who were already involved or upon a doctor's recommendation. Several male participants reflected that their dull, everyday lives promoted a desire escape.

All I did during the day was go to work and I would come home at night and sit around, watch TV, maybe have a drink, maybe two drinks. And I saw a pattern developing that I didn't like. It kind of scared me.

Martial arts seem to provide parents with something to do with their teenage children.

Two mothers expressed the significance of participating in an activity with their children.

It was good to do something with your children. My daughter was, like I said, a teenager and that's the age where they usually have problems with their mother. And we would take this class together.

Whatever their motives to start martial arts training, there was a general lack of knowledge about martial arts before they started. Most women in particular confessed that they did not know what kind of activity they were going to do. Some admitted feeling silly or being embarrassed in the first class.

We went up there, and I didn't know a thing about it. I mean, I knew it was a martial art and it was kicking and punching, but I really did not have any kind of a true grasp of what it was about.

For some women, standing up and physically performing in front of people was a challenge in itself. A woman participant confessed, "I hated walking into a gathering of people I didn't know and exposing the awful inadequacy of my body for everyone to see." Other women practitioners talked about how they went through a preconceived mental barrier.

I started taking and when I first started I was very nervous about getting up front of the class, I felt like they were all looking at me and thinking that I didn't know what I was doing. As I progressed I got more confident, everybody makes mistakes. We are all here to learn.

So, I was a bit nervous about it but I decided to give it a try. I kinda felt a little bit silly at my age, beginning, but I quickly found that when I started taking classes that I really enjoyed it. And the exercise made me feel really good; it was the most strenuous form of exercise, I guess, that I had ever taken. And I found that I liked being in the class with the teacher - it's more enjoyable to exercise with other people around you. I just found that I really enjoyed the experience. And I started coming whenever my children came, so I came 3 or 4 times a week.

The first class was tough for almost every middle-aged beginners. A women participant described her experience of the first class.

I remember my first class. [laughter] I showed up with my glasses on and I didn't know to wear an undershirt under my dobok. And the first time I tried to kick, I fell flat on my face and my glasses went flying. And my shirt gapped open, I was mortified.

In some cases it was not easy for men. A male participant confessed that he almost decided to quit at the first class.

My first class, I don't know how I made it through the class because it's a lot of perspiration and exertion, and the air got so thick that I almost wanted to quit; to go to the side, but I was embarrassed to quit. I would be the only one to stop. So I stayed there and I finished the class and that gave me more confidence, and so I would come two or three times a week, and I really began to like it.

While some participants felt out of place at first, others found the activity as one they had long been looking for. A woman participant described her impression when she saw first time other women practicing a martial art: "As I looked around the room, I realized that all the women there had a sense about themselves that I had never seen before." A tai chi practitioner wrote of her fascination upon her first exposure.

It was like poetry. It was like a ballet. The range of motion and the balance they maintained in slow motion were incredible to me. I had never seen anything like it before, or anything like that atmosphere, the silent peaceful energy that just filled the room. I didn't understand what it was, but I knew it was what I needed, and I felt as though I belonged there. (Atkinson, pp. 86-87).

However, there are mental or physical barriers facing American adults in committing themselves to martial arts training. But most interviewed participants find the activity to be enjoyable and rewarding after completing the first few weeks. The physical hardship became a challenge to overcome, and the foreign feelings of being a martial art "trainee" gradually dissipated. These stories may tell us that martial arts are not yet well introduced

to the adult population as a form of activity other than the popular image of martial arts shaped by mass media.

Pains, Injuries, and Difficulties

There are stories about difficult experiences met through training that made participants almost quit. But their narratives are survivors' stories, proud winners' memoirs.

Participants reflected upon the physical hardships such as pains and sore and aching muscles during the early stages of their training. A women practitioner said.

The first couple of weeks of class were hard and I went home very sore. I used to come every night at the beginning and realized that was something you were not supposed to do. It took a lot of time to not pull hamstrings and stuff.

Another woman described her struggles with these pains.

I felt the exact aching definition of every muscle for several days afterward and pulled myself up the back stairs because my legs did not want to lift me. I cried at home because I did not know if I could continue, and I knew that if I gave up, I would be giving up on myself. I now know that I am not giving up, and that makes it all a little easier

Certain areas of training were tougher than others, especially fitness training for women who usually did not have any experience with intensive strength and endurance training.

There were times, particularly at the beginning when I wasn't so fit, when it was just physically very hard. About halfway through, when I got to, like, blue belt and we started doing a lot of conditioning, it got very hard physically, and then I got to a certain point where I enjoyed it because I was fit enough that even though it was hard, it was enjoyable. Sometimes the discipline and having to do whatever I was told no matter how I felt about it, sometimes that was difficult. That was probably the hardest thing.

For older practitioners, the demand for a high level of flexibility is difficult and painful. A male participant recalled how he managed the problem.

I was his oldest student, I started when I was 43, going on 49 now. Stretching was a unique experience. My body was a little too old to start that type of stretching and I got a lot of injuries in my first 3 years because of the stretching. A lot of ligament inflammations, too, so, couple of years ago, I really cut back on the amount of stretching and went a little more for a combination of light warm-up, stretch, light warm-up, stretch. Seemed to do better for my body rather than to get out there, start some stretching. That was pretty much killing me.

Although these difficulties and pains were big obstacles to overcome, injuries presented a more serious challenges. For some participant, injuries were persistently, but could not stop the motivated practitioner.

Then, I guess over the period of time, in coming through, I had some injuries. I broke my foot during a tournament..... And that was kind of a challenge because the foot didn't heal so it took me four months on crutches. And I actually started classes back still on the crutches. So that was kind of a test for me of my commitment at that time. I've also had some other sort of minor injuries that might have been really frightening to someone. I got kicked in the throat once and couldn't speak for 3 days. And had my voice kind of change for several weeks. And wasn't sure I was ever going to stop talking like a frog. And I think that a lot of especially females might have quit at that point. One was that when I was kicked.

I couldn't breathe because it was collapsed. So for a second or two, I thought "I'm going to suffocate and die here." Once I got past that then it was the idea that I've seen people quit for a lot less, you know, a little bruise to the hand or a little twisted elbow or something. And again, that was kind of another test of commitment. And that's a very strong challenge. So all of these have been good growth things for me personally.

Most female practitioners were terrified about sparring. Possible injury from sparring is more frightening than sparring itself for them. When asked to spar with a man they became particularly uncomfortable.

I came close to quitting when I was a green belt because every time they would put me against the same guy, I remember, because we were the same age and the same height. He is the nicest guy in the world, but when he started to spar something happened to him. He didn't know who he was sparring. It didn't matter who was there, he would just go crazy. Well, in that thirty seconds, he managed to kick me in the eye, his nails cut into the corner of my eye. Blood was pouring down my face. Every exam, I would get bruises all over me, so, at that point, I was ready to quit.

But women practitioners expressed that they enjoy sparring with other women, and most found that sparring with other women was more cooperative than competitive. Some women finally overcame the fear and mental block, as a practitioner expressed, "in some ways I think it is basically against most people's nature to fight against someone or to hit somebody." They began to conceptualize their experiences of sparring in individual ways. Some interpret the sparring not as fighting but as a game, while others conceptualize it as a process of learning human relationship. A woman practitioner interpreted the sparring and the pains entailed as a different level of learning.

Suddenly I realized that I could learn from the pain and adapt my responses to make the free-fighting relationship work more effectively for me. Then I became not afraid of getting hurt any more and pain became a teacher I could learn from.

Women practitioners have struggled with pains and injuries, however they adjusted to them and understood these bodily symptoms more clearly than before, thus reframing their perceptions.

Most male participants did not list pains and injuries among the difficulties they encountered through training, instead they spoke of work schedules, travels, and other business affairs as obstacles. They emphasized that they did not quit anything they set out to achieve. They also mentioned the importance of support from family, especially from their wives. These middle-agers, both male and female, are very proud to be survivors and not subdued by the difficulties they encountered in this unusual commitment. This sense of achievement became the basis of their self-confidence.

A New Self-image - Empowered Self

Although martial arts training present a challenge for adult beginners in terms of its physical demand, it presents a still tougher challenge on a mental and conceptual level. This deals with issues of violence, physical confrontations, and other forms of physical and mental challenges. However, the real tough challenge comes not from the activity but from the participant her/himself, the inner self, which has been constructed by the

sociocultural discourse. They may have a socially constructed stereotypical notion of being a martial artist, what a middle-aged man and woman could or could not do. This preconceived notions pose more of a barrier for woman than for man. The culture and ideology of martial arts may stand the very opposite side to those with which they were raised. This may explain why martial arts training impacts women more than men.

Martial arts seem to provide women with an opportunity to learn of the “false limitations”, as a practitioner described, or “inner wound,” as another described, that were imposed on them throughout their social life. A woman martial arts instructor wrote of a the powerful experience.

I saw women and girls blossom as they overcome the false limitations their upbringing had placed upon them. They dropped the subdued manner women so often assume around men. They were able to work to the utmost of their ability and it was astonishing how fast some of them learned. To this day, my greatest joy as a teacher is in seeing a woman come in feeling timid and alone and watching her grow into a strong, self-confident person. (Atkinson, 1983, p. 80)

Martial arts training gives a more physical dimension, or embodied sensation of well-being back to women, which may have been largely neglected, ignored, or blocked ordinarily. An woman tai chi chuan practitioner described this recovery of her bodily self as a “homecoming to her body” in her autobiographical essay.

Let me tell you about a homecoming: a woman coming home to her body.Then, after some thirty years of exile from her body and her self, Brenda began the return home. She began to study T'ai Chi Ch'uan. (Wiley, p.5)

Another woman emphasized the importance of the focus of martial art on the bodily self.

Most of the arts don't require equipment or anything else that money can buy. They use the body itself. They train it, refine it, develop its capacities from the inside out. They tap and develop energy most people are not aware of having. They change our ideas of what is possible and show us that we are capable of being stronger, more courageous, better than we ever dreamed. (Atkinson, p. 1)

This rediscovery of the bodily self and confronting various physical challenges facilitate the reframing their concept of self. A female participant described this process.

Martial arts training forced me to challenge myself and change who I was and who I was supposed to become. A high level of belief in myself has resulted from these changes. Call it self-esteem, self-respect, or self-pride but it stems from the core of the self. It has been an amazing process for me to undergo my own changes, and now I am privileged to participate in other women's process of self-discovery.

Another female reflected on her experience.

I think the things I've enjoyed about it are the physical discipline, the exercise. I always feel really good after a taekwondo class, but I also enjoy the mental and physical discipline, the feeling that I was gaining control over my body and that my body was becoming more powerful - I could see the changes in my body. And the sense of mastery, that I had physical and mental mastery of myself. I still find I come sometimes when - I can't always make it to class and I'll come and work out on my own; but I still tend to find that I enjoy being in the class more than exercising or doing forms by myself.

When they found out themselves being able to do certain things that they never thought they could do, they began to see themselves differently. Almost every practitioners interviewed illustrated one or two similar incidences.

You realize , so you got knocked down, you get up; I didn't die; I can take this; I'm tougher; I'm stronger.

I just never thought I could do it, as time went on, I saw myself doing these things, like breaking a board for the first time. I had such hard time with it, but I did it. I actually broke it, and to me that was amazing, I didn't think I could do it and I did it and I couldn't believe it and so in that essence, it carried over in my self..... you should've been believing in yourself all along and so that's helped me in my everyday life.

I ran across the room, and jumped over four or five people and break a board, ... To me it's not so much about that I kicked or I broke a board, but that I was able to bring myself up there and do it, you know, that I had the courage to do whatever was placed before me and overcome it. That's how it comes into my life.

These experiences of meeting challenges through the accumulated confrontations and achievements give the practitioners a new sense of self-confidence, and help them see themselves as more powerful. A martial arts writer conceptualized martial arts training as a process of empowerment.

If a person finds herself collapsing under a strong attack in class, she also may be collapsing when mentally or emotionally pushed in life. Learning to be strong in training can be translated to being strong when faced with life's other challenges. In this way, the value of martial arts training is the empowerment of self. (Wiley, 1992. p. 1)

This empowerment becomes more real when they talk about self-defense, the practical side of the training. When a woman believes that she can defend herself, it may change her whole attitude toward the world. One woman said.

 Taekwondo makes me feel more secure with myself. It makes me more aware of things around me, and, I know that, if I had to, I could help myself I generally believe in myself more, so that, Yes if I have to talk in front of people, I can do it a lot better than before I can believe in myself so I can.

Another female martial artist wrote of the social implications of acquiring self-defense skills.

 Self-defense is a way of nurturing ourselves by caring about our own safety and the safety of others. It involves intuition and making choices. We can use self-defense to create a safe, supportive, and caring environment. Self-defense skills and strategies are much more than methods for defending against attackers. These skills and strategies have many uses and help improve the overall quality of everyday life for women. Most importantly, when used in situations not potentially threatening, these skills enhance our ability as women to cultivate our awareness of ourselves, our relationships with others, and our enjoyment of the world. These skills help us, including those with limited physical ability, have more control over and improve our lives. (Wiley, 1992, p. 70)

Another woman described how martial arts helped her gain power to control her own life, which had been tough, having grown up in a dysfunctional family.

Martial arts training helped me to become more than just a survivor of a negligent and harsh upbringing. I became someone who could create choice in her life. This transition required that I honestly recognize my strengths and weaknesses. The next step was to take real care of myself, to become loving of myself, to gain the skills that would enable me to defend myself when necessary. I came to understand that I did not have to let anyone harm me with either physical or verbal assaults. Now all I have to do is continue taking steps along the path that I not only collided with but have actively chosen as my life's work.

Nadia Telsey, one of the first women to study martial arts in the United States, conceptualized the meaning of martial arts training as a path toward empowerment for women.

Karate is above all empowering, It acquaints us with our bodies, giving us evidence of our own strength, which is often surprising to us. It enables us to act from our own bodies, speak with our own words. 'Femininity' can no longer limit us. On the most obvious level, karate provides us with the physical skills we need to fend off assault. Far beyond this, it gives us a sense of control over our own destinies. (Atkinson, 1983, p. 9)

One participant viewed martial arts training for middle-aged women as a way to rediscover themselves.

Well, I think a lot of middle-aged women are dissatisfied in this society. They're unhappy and they're looking for something and they don't really know what it is that they need. And a middle-aged woman has usually spent about half her life being somebody's wife and somebody's mother, and they sort of reach that point and they want something more for themselves. So, I think martial arts is something that gives them a sense of achievement and a sense of purpose and a sense of something that they're doing for themselves - you know, something that's really them. It's something that provides them with some improved self-esteem, a sense of being a

person in your own right, doing something for yourself instead of just being somebody's mother sitting there watching your child.

The empowered selves can find the center of their lives and ground their lives on the center, as one practitioner wrote, "an oasis of relative ease and rest when the rest of her life seemed arid and toilsome" (Wiley, 1992, p. 8). They seem to rediscover, through their experiences in martial arts training, their bodily selves, confidence to meet challenges in their social lives, and self-esteem or self-respect. All participants valued their black belt degree highly, not for the degree itself but as a token of their efforts and challenges. One women black belt said.

I guess, I do feel a big sense of achievement in having worked for my black belt because it was hard work. It was difficult for me to start at the age of 45 - it's difficult to start something like that, so I'm actually proud of having done it. I have my black belt framed on the wall with my certificate, so I do feel a sense of accomplishment because it wasn't easy; I really had to work hard at it physically. And I was also very pleased at the changes in my body, that I felt more healthy and fit. I could see a change in my shape, and my muscle tone and things like that. I feel very positive about having done it.

With the black belt, they seem to reframe a new image of self colored by their sweat and tears and triumphs. One female black belt described the meaning of her belt, saying that "I probably would feel naked without it."

Most male practitioners also spoke of the benefits of their martial arts training, such as self-confidence, self-esteem, more flexible attitude, stress release, and so on.

They also talked about various physical benefits. However, they seemed to consider the martial arts training more as an extension of their manly culture.

Violence, Victimization, and Self-defense

Training in the martial arts inevitably invites participants to reconsider the concept of violence on a conscious level. Especially for women, the issue of violence is not an abstract concept but the very condition of defining their existence in society. When women come to learn martial arts they have to confront this issue, or they often come to the martial arts to do this. Many women martial artists, in fact, have discussed and theorized violence, victimization, and their own versions of self-defense. Atkinson (1983) illustrated the historical background of women's discovery of martial arts as a practical path for securing their existence in the society.

But in the late sixties and early seventies, when so many forces for change were at work in the United States and around the world, women began turning to the martial arts in greater and greater numbers. In the beginning, most of them were directly inspired by the women's liberation movement. They entered the arts to learn self-defense, to step out of the "passive-victim" role, to find out what their limits really were, and to begin the process of changing a society in which women were so often the targets and victims of violence. (p. 8)

Susan Ribner, a pioneer in women's self-defense, conceptualized the meaning of martial arts training for women.

Historically, women have been kept in their place by an excessive fear of physical violence. Women take up the martial arts to demystify violence and conquer their fear of it, not because they themselves want to become violent people who attack nice men on their way to work.” (Atkinson, 1983, p. 14)

These women martial artists fought back against the violence facing them not only with physical skill but also by deconstructing the social and cultural ideology that caused them to be victimized in the first place. They tried to uncover the conditions and assumptions of violence itself in this society. One women martial artist stated.

We are all at risk of assault because many people generally consider us vulnerable, weak, and/or passive. Men who assault us are not usually looking for a fight, but want an easy situation in which to overpower, control, or dominate another person. (Wiley, p. 69)

Grant, a woman martial artist described an enigma women encounter in the society when they try to confront the issue of violence, and criticized the absurdity of the social discourse on women and violence in our culture.

Most women in our society have heard the statement “Don’t fight back, you will just get him angry.” When this statement is taken in a literal way it means subjugate your will to an offender without question, regardless of circumstances. This statement is part of the socialization process for women in our society that denies each woman the right to make a choice regarding personal safety. The interesting paradox is that the victim is then asked if she fought back. If she says no, how is she and her experience of being assaulted processed by this society? She is told that if she didn’t fight back she must have wanted it. So we train women to submit to violence, and then blame them for doing exactly what we taught them to do. Our culture, in fact, does not allow women a choice (i.e., fight or submit), nor does

it teach them a choice that is more likely to maintain their safety (i.e., fighting back). Instead our culture tells women to submit to violence (i.e., passively accept being victimized), and then blames them for the assault and submitting to it.....This type of indoctrination perpetuates an imbalance in the rearing process that reinforces victim mentality in women and offender mentality in men. (Wiley, pp. 73-74).

Understanding the ideological implications, women martial artists have realized that self-defense for women not only encompasses physical and technical tasks, but also addresses an attitudinal and perceptual problem. They came to believe the need for women to understand critically the cultural conditions that sustain the violence and women's position as the victim.

Women's self-defense is a practical response to the violence women face. After working in rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters and listening to women in self-defense classes describe the violence they have faced, I and the group of self-defense teachers I work with have found that much of the violence can be best addressed in ways other than with martial arts fighting skills. (Wiley, p. 67)

Women's awareness of the issue led them to make a connection between self-defense and feminist perspectives.

When I think about it now, she says, I realize that the self-defense I taught came from being a feminist as much as from being a martial artist, because in self-defense, especially for women, the attitude is the important thing—the willingness to fight back, the belief that you should and that you can. Women are not brought up to think that way. We are brought up to give way to force immediately. There is no 'womanly art of self-defense.' If we're attacked, that's it! Perfect victims! (Atkinson, p. 113)

Therefore, learning and teaching self-defense is more than just a matter of physical activity. It is women's social action for their own right and space. One woman martial artist stated.

Assailants expect us to be weak and defenseless—good targets. Every time we fight back and resist attacks and violence, we help destroy the myth of women as passive and helpless and make the world safer for all women. (Atkinson, 1983, p. 15).

Although the interviewed practitioners' narratives of their martial arts training did not make self-defense the prime focus of their interests, many practitioners, particularly women, spoke of the significance of acquiring the ability to defend themselves. But they emphasized the value of self-confidence as being more important than the physical skill itself. One woman said.

I really enjoy learning self-defense skills. But I think it also gives me more self-confidence in terms of being able to defend myself. I feel that the confidence changes my instincts - well, my instincts probably always would have been to try to defend myself - but now, I feel more confident and certain that I automatically would know what to do in an emergency situation.

Another woman explained that the training made her more aware of situations and potential dangers. A male practitioner stated that learning self-defense is not only technical matter but also a matter of perception and understanding the situation.

I think that I've learned enough that I could defend myself. I could, in a situation, control it to a certain degree to calm the situation, to control it as far as keeping the tempers down and keeping people from escalating into a confrontation. I feel that if I were on the street, and someone were to try and rob me or mug me. I think that I have learned enough here to be able to determine whether or not the situation required that I defend myself. . . . It's made me more alert when I'm in crowds or whenever I'm out somewhere.

Another male practitioner remarked that learning self-defense would help people be able to avoid a situation.

I learned a long time ago to stay out of situations where I'd have to get into a fight. Learning taekwondo has simply made that easier. I would imagine learning any martial arts and believing in the process and believing in the spirit behind martial arts makes you a little more conscious of where you are and what possible situations you can get in and help you avoid them. Enhanced self-confidence makes it easier, it is not going to hurt your self-esteem when you step yourself out of the confrontation. If you have the real confidence in yourself you don't have to show off to other people.

Some female practitioners expressed doubts about whether they could successfully defend themselves against a strong man's attack in real situation.

Well, actually it's been a question in my mind because I think the reason I feel like the self defense would be more instinctive now, that I wouldn't have to think before I acted, that some of the defensive moves are more automatic now because I've been practicing them in class. But at the same time, there's always been a question in my mind, "I wonder if this really works." You don't get to try it out in a real situation. It's all practice, so I often wonder, in a real situation would I be able to break someone's arm by grabbing it, twisting it and then blocking to the back of the elbow? I'm not completely confident that in a real emergency I could defend myself, but I have the feeling that it would be my instinct now to try to do so. As

opposed to running, I would be more likely to stay there and try to defend myself. Then I wonder whether that's more dangerous because I'm not sure I actually could defend myself against a large man. Because the thing that I have notice is that, in sparring, and we've done some wrestling and pressure points, that size and strength still tend to be the dominating thing. So, I'm not sure how a small female black belt could really defend herself against a large male. But there's certainly a feeling of confidence that you would be willing to try and you'd have some idea of what you could try to do.

Another female black belt theorized how she believed her technique would be going up against man.

There's no way a woman is as strong as a man. You know, I'm not going to pretend to be... There is no way... But what I would rely on in self-defense would be the element of surprise. The fact that someone wouldn't be expecting me to kick them. There were some cases among our school students, One was.... When he got close enough she did a front kick to his groin and when he bent over double she did a round-house kick in his face. He was incapacitated and she ran. Another one was Some guy grabbed a girl and she turned around and kicked him and punched him at the same time and managed to get away. That's what I was telling you it's the element of surprise. If they grab you, they expect you to pull away from them. They don't expect you to come towards them... attack them with a kick or whatever.

She is attacking, in strategically effective way, the male assailant's mentality that perceives the female victim as passive, weak, and vulnerable. But, empowered physically, mentally, and spiritually, these women get out of the victim role. For women participants, martial arts training means much more than learning physical or technical skills. It gives them the opportunity and medium to critically reconsider their

condition of social existence and the ways that they can improve their position and extend their capabilities to take command of their lives.

A Way of Life

People have described martial arts training as a way of life based on the original Asian concept of “do,” or the way of art. However, the concept historically has been defined very loosely or explained in abstract language, such as perfection of self, cultivation of self, or spiritual development. Many practitioners’ narratives reveal how they connected their training to their daily lives. One participant interprets martial art training as a mirror of life, a way to see oneself (Wiley, 1992). Others, too, view martial arts to help them to understand themselves fully. Curley (1992), a woman tai chi chuan practitioner wrote of this process.

.... the solo form is the way of knowing oneself; the two-person practice is the way of knowing others. T'ai Chi Ch'uan is an art of knowing, an art of relationship: relationship with self, with other beings, and with the universe we live in. Knowing who we are as we move through our lives, we reclaim the parts of ourselves we have disowned and cast off into the shadow realms of our psyches. (Wiley, p. 12)

Many practitioners commonly noted that martial arts training has provided a mirror reflecting their character, giving them opportunities to question certain aspects of themselves through the intensive involvement of the activity. The understanding of

oneself is, in most cases, the rediscovery of one's potentials and reconceptualization of self in more positive directions. One women practitioner reflected upon her experience.

The more I travel along this road, the more I learn about myself. It has addressed issues of body, emotion, mind, spirit, and culture. Martial arts practice positively affects my approach to life in general while training me to win the ultimate fight, one with an opponent who tests me physically and mentally past the limits. (Wiley, 1992, p. 67)

Another woman practitioner described how the martial art training helped her reconceptualize her obesity in a different way.

The martial arts have been important in helping me accept my body. If I can do all this, what's so great about being thin? A few years ago I stopped dieting, tentatively at first, but with increasing conviction, especially as I read more about the dangers of yo-yo dieting. I eat nutritiously and let my weight find its own level, a level that has proven to be neither the lightest nor heaviest I have been as an adult. Weight is now a much less important part of my life, but the martial arts remain important, training my body, my mind, and my spirit. (Wiley, 1992, p.60)

Wiley (1992) explained that the martial arts served as a guide for her life beyond the significance of learning fighting skills.

The martial arts are often called the way of the warrior, for the strengths of the warrior are courage and discipline. The warrior need no longer fight physical battles. Our warrior's courage and our belief in self will help us win the most important battles: the battles within, the battles against fears and frustrations, hopelessness, despair, cynicism, and self-limiting concepts. But life is more than battle, and the best martial artists are more than warriors: they are sages, seekers of knowledge, always learning, always growing. (p. 4)

However, above all these abstract languages, the intensity and duration of the involvement are the most salient features that makes this activity a way of life. A practitioner whose whole family is involved in the training said.

Yes, this is basically our outside interest. This is what we do mostly. I mean, in the summertime we like to go swimming and play tennis, but for the most part... At fact, for the last eight years all of our Saturdays have been spent here too. we were never in it for the competition. We were in it more as a way of life.

Another father of a family of martial artists testified to a similar level of involvement.

We have been doing it as a family for the last seven years. We come about 5 days a week sometimes a little more. We've participated in all the activities, all the different functions that Master --- was putting on, such as the exhibitions and tournaments. Those were a sort of our way of family life.

Some participants expressed that training became a significant part of their lives that they felt a sense of loss without it.

Coming here 4 or 5 times a week, it kind of becomes a way of life. You almost don't feel right when you don't do it. When I go on vacation, I just miss it . I do practice to the extent that I can. When I come back, I really look forward to getting back to practice again. I am going to go as long as my body will let me.

Those participants interpret martial arts as a way of life not in a philosophical or spiritual sense but, in terms of their addiction to the activity as a significant part of their daily lives. They find, in the highly organized structure of the dojang, a sense of place, stability, identity, and personal dignity in their rugged social lives that were otherwise dominated by feelings of dullness, rootlessness, alienation, and impersonalisation (Donohue, 1994; Jackson, 1970). Although these participants' intense involvement in martial art is not grounded in the philosophy or the worldview of the discipline, their long term of involvement does seem to transform their experience to a different level. One practitioner described how the extended repetition of a certain movement pattern could change the experience.

When beginners learn complex forms they do not understand much of them. But then you just keep working on them, you do them over and over and over again. You can keep working on them forever. Finally you learn to feel some sense of the practice. You begin to feel something like the flow, to get in touch with movement itself, and to let the movement take over. The form takes on a life of its own and it becomes a new part of you.

Another participant said.

It's a big difference now at this level than when I was a green belt. I have come to appreciate it even more. As I understand it more, I discover more of the value I did not see before. I'm trying to make it more a part of my life. When I do something else, I 'm trying to apply what I have learned in my taekwondo training.

Many participants expressed self-discipline as the core benefits from long term training.

I think it is a fantastic training mechanism for the mind. It teaches discipline, self-discipline. As you train over years and progress through it, it teaches self-discipline and enforces or enhances your own self-discipline in everything you do..... It enhances your capabilities and what you are capable of preventing. The combination of the physical training and the philosophical learning which taekwondo gives the students here and which I have learned develops a strong self-discipline. I think that discipline part is really a strong character builder for me.

It seems inevitable that one's attitude, behavior, and his/her way of thinking will be affected, as one practitioner said, "If you are doing something intensive like martial arts on a long term basis, it's not just dealing with physical realities; it's dealing with how you are in this world." A woman practitioner wrote of her reflection on this extended dimension of learning.

While sitting in horse stance in what seems like forever or repeating a technique over and over in search of perfection, tears want to burst forth from the pain and frustration. But something in me says, "Don't give up. There's a lesson in this." Then, when I least think it will happen, my head clears, the stance feels strong, the technique flies, it is powerful, and it feels natural. It is a glimpse of what my teacher calls spirit, a oneness with nature that the proper practice of the martial arts can bring. In martial arts, fighting is the medium from which other lessons are learned. I learn how the body, spirit, and mind interrelate. The mind, the part of us which many believe makes us distinctly human, often hinders this quest to achieve the art. Fear, trust, ego, and mental dependencies are issues that get in the way. To continue to learn the art, I must deal head-on with these issues. I learn about my humanness while at the same time I try to work past it (Wiley, 1992, p. 71).

Some participants contrasted the characteristics of martial arts training to other forms of activities.

Taekwondo has turned out to be a pretty important part of my life. Some type of athletics has always been a part of my life, but like weight lifting and bowling and things like that, they were not as involving as martial arts. First of all, it gives me a tremendous amount of mental conditioning effects. in doing the workout I try as much as possible to totally forget everything other than taekwondo so that helps me get rid of a tremendous amount of tension. Secondly, there's just a natural kind of satisfaction in being able to find out that I can do something which I didn't think I could. When you're doing jogging or weight lifting, you are simply doing nothing but pushing and pulling your muscles. But in taekwondo there are tremendous things you learn, not only physical but other knowledge and more. It is very enlightening and self-satisfying.

Other practitioners emphasized that their learning could be extended to their outside lives. They tried to apply the principles of martial arts or their experiences in martial arts training to other areas of their lives, as a practitioner described, "The learning is slipping out of the training hall into other areas of my life." Another practitioner said,

The physical benefits of the martial arts are obvious: improved coordination, strength, and endurance. But the mental benefits are more important. The true martial artist knows that the mind is a more powerful weapon than the body. Training develops focus concentration, awareness, and self-confidence. These elements are important not only in a self-defense situation but also in all other areas of life.

Asian martial arts have been understood as a way of life, however, complete definition was not translated into concrete language. Much Asian literature capitalizes

the “do,” the Way, as the key concept of the discipline. American authors also wrote a lot about the Way, however, many American practitioners seem not to accept the concept of philosophical or spiritual enlightenment or transcendental experience as the key meaning of their training. Instead, they testify to their intense involvement as evidence of their finding the way of life through the martial art. They seem to have found the place and culture where they can ground their lives and find meanings. Some practitioners discovered a way to reconceptualize themselves; still others found a way for their families. Many practitioners searched for practical benefits that would help them in their daily lives. Martial art training becomes a way of life for them but not in the same sense of “way” that the Asian masters and literature describe. One woman participant summarized the meaning of her training.

For me, taekwondo training is a life-long study. It means many things for me, it is a system of physical exercise, a tool for stress reduction, a method of meditation, a training in self-defense, self-confidence builder, and all these components are the parts of a greater whole. It is ultimately for me a way of self-transformation. It means to me much more than physical activity. As with my taekwondo, I can't predict where my life is heading, but I'm sure enjoying the journey.

I am Mediocre - Improvement, Improvement, Improvement

The martial arts are, above all else, technical tasks. They consist of highly complex and difficult movement skills. Therefore, they place physical and mental demands on the practitioners, especially the adult population. The middle aged taekwondo practitioners

narrativized the issue of physical challenges as an important parts of their overall experiences.

Most of the interviewed practitioners defined themselves neither as talented nor young enough to do the art well. Generally, they defined themselves as “mediocre.” A participant confessed, “My husband and I don’t excel at this. We’re not gifted, not young either. We know we’re mediocre.” Most male participants attributed their limitations to age and were also very conscious of competition with the younger age group.

The big thing I ran into by starting so late (I was 48 when I started) was that my flexibility and endurance were not what they need to be. I was extremely inflexible in fact when I started. And I never did any stretching in my life until I came to martial arts. I have come a long way from where I was when I started. You can’t do it like a 20 year old guy, but you may try it at first, and you may be able to do it to a certain degree, but you’re still not going to do it like that 20 year old. At this age, you have to understand that you’re not going to be doing it....

Another male participant established his own boundaries in order to meet the physical challenges of training.

When in your late 40’s, it’s different, and I approach it differently than I would have if I had started when I was in my 20’s. O.K. there’re things that I can’t do now that I could do at 20. There’re certain things that some of us, at this age, don’t even try that we would have tried when we were 20. We have to stay with what our abilities are.

However, their age and limited physical conditions does not stop them, rather they find their own ways of doing and enjoying martial arts. They theorized their training, progress, meanings and even technique in their own rights. One participant described his attitude toward training and his own concept of competition.

What I came to do is to maintain a sense of humor and not take myself so seriously and to just learn what I could, do the best I could, and not worry so much about whether I was as good as this one person or another person. The only thing I needed to do was not to impress everybody else, but impress myself with the fact that I did my best.

Another participant theorized the technical limitations of his age group not as an inferiority but as a different way of performing.

You can't let that frustrate you. O.K, I can't kick as high as a 20 year old, that's fine. I don't need to. I don't need to do that because if I'm defending myself on the street, I'm not going kick over somebody's head anyway. I don't need to kick any higher than their shoulder if I need to kick that high. So that's the way I look at it and I know there are others here, some who are in their 40's, and some of us in our 50's, that look at it as were here to do as much as we can do do it as well as we can do it and not try to compete against the younger generation. We just try to compete among ourselves.

Another middle-aged practitioner explained how he overcame his physical limitations.

That was a unique experience, watching the younger ones as they got older, passing you by in skill, which happens a lot. Learning to adjust, to pick out the types of things in Taekwondo that worked well for us that we could offset against our younger and faster opponents. A lot of the younger students go for the fancier

kicks. We're a little more direct in our sparring, we are probably wiser and more mature than they are. I know I'll never reach high level of expertise in any one area, but I try to pick up a little bit of each thing that I learn. That makes me feel better about what I'm doing.

The middle-aged martial arts practitioners perceived themselves as less physically fit, flexible, and coordinated than their younger counterparts; however, they were not frustrated by the physical limitations. Instead, they valued internal the competition with self and emphasized the mature way of understanding techniques, avoiding the painful effort to achieve acrobatic feats. Above all, they seem to enjoy the physical and mental challenges of the training that are not common for their age. It may be meaningful enough for them to able to do things that other members of their peer group would not even attempt. One woman was simply proud of being able to stay in taekwondo despite a tough work schedule, something most of her colleagues were not doing.

They come home and they turn on the television. They don't understand how I find the time because I work full time; I have a big house; I have three animals; I have an elderly mother that is mentally starting to get senile who lives with me. They say, "you're crazy, you know, you go to work and you go there. And when you're home, you spend your time trying to clean everything and do the laundry and cook all the dinners." They say, "you're nuts." They don't understand why I do it. I can do the splits and they can't. You know, I bet half of them can't even touch their toes. I'm serious. They're going to be creepy by the time they're sixty. By the time I'm sixty, I'm still going to be able to do a drop kick and break two boards. I think I'm going to live a lot stronger, healthier, happier life than they are. I kind of feel sorry for them.

With this pride and confidence, they also understand the need for a constant effort to improve. They heavily emphasize learning and improvement. The meaning seems to come not from achieving new knowledge or an improved skill, but rather from the process itself. One participant said.

My personal goal is to keep going for as long as I can and continually improve. I've got a long way to go. I need to practice everything I learn every day. I need to work a little harder than some young folks because again it is not quite as natural. There are so many things you need to learn in martial arts I'm a 3rd degree black belt and I feel like I know nothing. There are so many more things to learn and so many things to improve on. You can never say you wake up one morning and your doing the best you can. You can always do better. I like that challenge. That there is always I like the way the program is structured to all different belt ranks, there's continuous goal setting so that you always have something new to look forward to and improve on. I think that's really what tied me to it on an ongoing basis.

There are plenty of narratives from almost all of the interviewed participants that testify to their seriousness and efforts to the training. They often commit themselves more deeply to and get more enjoyment training than their younger counterparts. But sometimes they were frustrated because they did not see any progress despite their efforts.

There was a period where I felt I wasn't learning anything. I was coming into classes and I was working hard, but I got the impression that I was not advancing. I think that's part of the American attitude, if you don't see progress, it's not there. I try to avoid that. I know it exists. It's an ingrained thing in the society I came from. You expect to see something for your efforts. And I didn't see it. I was very frustrated at the time.

However, most of those practitioners matured enough to understand what they are really looking for.

I was never pleased with my performance and I'm still not, but I'm able to accept it a little bit better and work with it. I know the important thing is that I'm able to do it, but more so than the technique is the attitude. Improving my attitude, my willingness to try, my willingness to do. But I'm still working on my technique because I know there's still always more to improve. I'm finding that there is so much to it, and I'm constantly looking to improve myself. I wish I had started it years earlier, but I have to deal with where I am. But there's still more that I can do, even at my age, and I believe that taekwondo is a way that I can do something with my age. I'm so glad that I'm involved, and that I had the appreciation and the openness to try.

Men and Women in the Dojang

It seems common that most Americans believe that martial arts were developed as a man's activity. An interesting question would be to see how the ideology of gender was embedded in the Asian culture of martial arts. Whatever the tradition in either culture, we see more and more women martial artists in both Asian and western societies. The narratives from the interviewed participants revealed their perceptions of their own sex in martial arts and also of the other gender in the activity. During the interview, women participants, in most cases, spoke of men in the dojang before they were asked, but men did not address the topic of their female classmates without prompting.

For women participants, the narratives, in parts, theorize their participation in an activity traditionally considered the men's territory. Many women martial artists illustrated their struggles against various barriers and abusive traditions when few females practiced martial arts. Atkinson (1983) collected those stories.

In one school, a sign just inside the door said: "No smoking, no alcohol, no women." In some schools, women were kept out of certain parts of the training and "excused" from certain exercises on the grounds that they wouldn't be able to do them or would be injured in strange and sometimes mythical ways. "Women off the floor!" was the standard command at one school when the time came for push-ups. To the women who asked for permission to stay, the instructor explained that push-ups would be "bad for her reproductive organs." In another school, women were allowed to do push-ups, but only half the number required of men. In still another, they were allowed to do the same number of push-ups, but half the sit-ups! One teacher refused his black belt men to spar with women because he thought it would ruin the men's style. In another, the instructor wouldn't let women spar at all because they had too many "soft spots" on their bodies.

Annie Ellman (1983), a pioneers who advocated martial arts schools for women, conceptualized the meaning of martial arts for women.

Women are constantly being told we can't do things, or that we'll never be able to do them well, We want them to break out of the patterns of self-doubt and passivity, which only serve to keep them down. (Atkinson, 1983, p. 49)

But the difficulties for women to break down the barriers both visible and invisible were manifold. Another pioneer of women martial artists, Sue Ribner (1983) reflected,

We were in a real quandary, We didn't know how far women could go or what we could really hope to achieve, and more teachers were not interested in helping us to find out. They didn't mind training women—it brought in money—but that wasn't where they expected to find excellence. We had to set our own standards, because there were no standards for us except humiliating ones. (Atkinson, p. 11)

They encouraged and advised each other not to give up and to resist the norms to hold them back.

Try to be stoic, even if the class is difficult. Don't allow yourself to be coddled. Usually women's endurance is equal to, if not better than men's. If you have a little trouble in the beginning, hold on, try harder, and you'll get it. When the instructor says women should stop doing an exercise before the men stop, pretend you don't hear, If your instructor tells you to stop because he thinks you've done enough, say 'No, I'm all right,' and go on working. (Atkinson, p. 17)

Today's American martial arts schools are full of women participants, and they do not face as severe prejudices as the early practitioners did, however, today's practitioners still seem to have certain barriers when they start the activity. one woman interviewed described how she has overcome them.

It's been a rocky road. You run across men that say "Why are you here? This is a man's sport. You have no place in this sport." I've run across that a lot. Yet I've also run across men who say, "I wish my wife were here; I wish my wife would learn self-defense." But now, nobody says anything because I've been here so long, they know better. It's funny, because finally they treat me like one of the guys. So I make sure that I wear perfume and paint my nails. I'm serious. Just because I do Tae Kwon Do doesn't mean I deny my femininity. That's the main thing. That's a point I try to get across.

Another woman black belt advised other female perspective participants.

But I think any female who wants to do this must understand a couple of things. One is that they have to get beyond the idea that it's a macho thing. It's not. I never felt more feminine in my life than since I've been doing this. I feel my femininity everyday more than I ever did before. Not that it was ever really a question. I don't think of myself as a female in a man's art. As far as the physical part of it, you have to be able to withstand pain up to a certain point. Because some of the things we do particularly in our school are painful. And you have to be able to do that and not be a sissy. You're going to get a few bruises and batters and it's going to take its toll on your body regardless of how easy you go at it. But if you don't make some effort, you're not going to get much out of it anyway.

The female practitioners are, in fact, very conscious of the physical challenges that come from the gender differences, particularly when it comes to sparring. Many women practitioners expressed that sparring was their least favorite part of the training. Here is a typical narrative describing why they do not like sparring.

The women I've talked to don't like the sparring. I think because when they line us up, at the beginning they try to put the women with the women. And that's fine. But after a minute or so, "O.K., rotate!" and all of a sudden you're facing some guy that's 6'2" and a green belt or worse than that, you know, he's a high yellow belt and he has no control - none - does not know his own strength, and there you are. They get hurt. I've had bruises, but I've seen a lot of bruises on other women too. If they would leave the women to spar the women, I don't think it would be such a dreaded thing among the women.

The physical contact and competition with men makes women more aware of the disparity of physical strength between men and women.

There's no way a woman is as strong as a man. You know, I'm not going to pretend to be... There is no way... There is no way in physical contact that I can out-spar any man. It does not work, even if I was twenty it wouldn't work. Men are just, physically, so much stronger

Sometimes, during this physically and mentally intense interactions with male partners, female participants often meet the naked characters of their male classmates.

A woman participant observed the man in her dojang.

I found that sometimes you've got men up there that are bullies. There are some men in this world that are cowards and they feel like they are big men if they beat up on a woman. And once or twice, or, more than once or twice, I would run into those up there.

Another woman made this her observation of her male partners.

I see a difference between women doing martial arts and men doing martial arts. It's very interesting because the men, and, in particular, the middle-aged men, seem to be really macho, and terribly anxious that they do well. They're really sort of self-conscious and they try really hard. It seems to be bound up with their sense of being a man, that, "I have to be good at this." Whereas for women, it's not the same thing at all. They don't have that feeling that either they have to be good at it or there's something wrong with them, because it's something that women don't usually do anyway, so they don't have this macho feeling to be really tough. Whereas the middle-aged men act as though they have to be really tough.

Some women observed that women had special strengths that men lacked. In fact, they experienced their strengths and advantages in learning martial arts.

In general, with the men it's a different thing. They're used to using their muscles. So it's much harder to see them get over their initial hump, which is to stop depending on all the biceps and triceps and pecs to get things happening for them. There's constant blocking, aggressing - you know - imposition of will. That's usually a lot harder, in a way, to deal with, because I think most of the women can come up with power fairly early in their training. Women are more flexible and good to follow the principles of the movements not try to go against them with overpower. But for the men to let go of force as a way of dealing with life is a lot harder. It's a longer process for many of them, because they are too strong.

There were narratives from male participants about women in their dojang. There was some degrees of cynicism toward their female classmates. A male practitioner revealed that feeling in a sort of joking expression.

I hate sparring women. You cannot win. There's no way to win. Boy, I might get into trouble for this. But actually I think it's good for women to spar women, mostly, but I do think that women should at some point spar with men too. And if the man gets hit he shouldn't complain, and if the woman gets hit she shouldn't complain. Am I in trouble?

Another male participant confessed his perception of martial arts training for women.

A lot of women have kicked me all over the place! Actually, I've seen some very gifted women in martial arts. Conversely, I have seen a lot of women who are not gifted who do stick with things. They will come up and spar against you and expect you not to hit them and so they will do stupid things like charge in on you. And I've got this stupid American attitude in my head that you're not supposed to hurt women. You're supposed to give them preference or whatever...stand there or move out of the way and they hit you. No, I think martial arts training is excellent for everybody. I think women are particularly good in forms if you're looking for elegance and grace in forms, women are just about the best I've ever seen. It's a pleasure, aesthetic pleasure watching them go through forms. Then there's the

other ones...these people ought to go back to the kitchen, because they've got no business thinking that you should know how to defend yourself. But we have the same thing with men too.

The males partners' sexually biased attitudes that refuse to take the female partners seriously sometimes become an obstacle for serious female practitioners. Sunny Graff, once an internationally ranked a female taekwondo competitor reflects on her experience.

If your partners don't take you seriously, it's awfully hard to feel legitimate. And if you don't feel legitimate, you keep putting your energy into apologizing, and you can't focus on developing skill. My partners were constantly asking me if I was all right, which was very demeaning. They turned away when it was time to choose partners and in a hundred other ways made it clear that they didn't think I really belonged there. (Atkinson, 1983, p. 110)

However, after working together for an extended time, some male partners became to understand how martial arts training help women participants.

The women in the United States, as they're brought up, don't have enough self-respect. I think that some of them even feel that they can't do things. they have to have a man's approval to do things or to think a certain way. But I've noticed that the women in the martial arts, most of the women that I've ever met that got up into the black belts, they were more independent. They thought more about what they wanted to do. They didn't look for approval from anybody, which is good. I think it helps them to defend yourself also to be able to have that confidence and the ability to take care of themselves. I know it used to be women, if husbands passed away, I know women that didn't even know how to pay the bills or didn't even know how to talk to people. To make a decision, they would have to go get their son or a friend or whatever. But, I think the women within martial arts, begin to think for themselves. They have more confidence now and they're not

afraid to speak up. I know that some of them, when they first came here, they weren't like that. They were submissive and they were: "I can't do this" or "I can't do that." They don't do that anymore. They're more independent and self-reliant.

Martial arts training gives the middle-aged participants opportunities to see themselves differently. They tend to conceptualize their own experiences by comparing and contrasting to those of the other social groups. Women participants contrasted their experiences to their male counterparts, while men tend to compare theirs to a younger age group. Although their narratives revealed that they were conscious of their gender or age as conditions limiting their training, those limitations could not stop them from training. Rather, they actively searched for meanings and techniques that were suited for their conditions. Having developed within predominantly male culture, martial arts generally present more obstacles to women than men. However, American women have opened the door of the martial arts schools for other women and, further, are constructing a new domain of martial art tradition, a women's martial arts training culture. It may be a significant part of the cultural diversification resulting from the Westernization of Asian martial arts.

Interpretations of the Spiritual and the Traditional

American literature on martial arts largely conceptualizes Asian martial arts as a spiritual discipline. In fact, the word, "spiritual" is probably the most often appeared one throughout the literature. However, during the open ended interviews, participants

seldom addressed the topic, and then only very casually. As a follow-up question, they were asked “How do you feel about the spiritual aspects of taekwondo?” Most every interviewed participant started his/her narratives by denying any relationship between religion and their training. This common response have something to do with their religious consciousnesses. With their definite rejection of religious connection to martial art training, they may say that they do not commit to the martial art training with any secularized sense of religion.

A participant defined the spiritual aspect of the art.

Taekwondo doesn't have anything to do with any form of religion. It has to do with self-improvement, understanding and self-actualization. The spiritual aspect of taekwondo is, I think, built around life. Taekwondo is life, it's built around life, and it's built around how you're going to live your life. The spiritual aspect of it is basically all inside. It's inside of you, it's what you think and how you feel and how you're going to use what you've learned here to make your life better and to help others

Another participant defined it differently.

If you believe in the basic tenants of martial arts, then I guess you could almost consider it as a religion. One of the characteristics that I believe martial arts has is that it has to have a philosophy of its use. Without it, it's just a style of fighting and not really an art. I think you need that philosophy - how to use it, when to use it and why you'd use it. The basic tenant of the philosophy is that it is totally for defense. There's no way I would use martial arts for offense other than to stop my opponent from doing any more damage to me than possible. ... I think if you use it offensively, you're violating the art.

Another practitioner gave his interpretation of the spiritual aspects.

Martial arts was started by very spiritual people. So I think the ideas that were laid down as the basis of martial arts had a spiritual basis. the idea of respecting other people, loving other people, never using martial arts except for self-defense when you really had no alternative. I think those all rest on the spiritual basis, the way it began. I think also, even the idea of caring for your own body, keeping in good shape is also something that came from the spiritual basis, that this is what you're here to work with, you're in this body for a life time and you have to respect it and you should treat it well because it's your vehicle for doing this spiritual work while your here.

Those participants' interpretations of the spiritual aspects of martial arts training are somewhat different from those throughout the literature that focused on the self-perfection, enlightenment, and universal harmony. Above all, participants did not take the spiritual or transcendental experiences seriously; rather they concerned themselves more with practical benefits and technical progress.

Another follow-up question was, "What's your definition of 'traditional' martial arts? Some practitioners addressed this topic before they were asked, but many of participants did not mention the word, "traditional." All but one practitioners interviewed preferred a traditional style of martial arts, and most were prided their own school as "one of the most traditional" schools. Some of them defined traditional martial arts as non-Americanized or Westernized forms, in other words, intact Asian original cultures and systems of training. Other practitioners interestingly interpreted traditional martial arts as non-fighting systems. They referred to such components of

the traditional martial arts as strict discipline, formality, intensity of training, Asian manners of instruction and etiquette, and so on.

In their conceptualizations of the traditional side of martial arts, they often reveal their suspicions about whether they, as Americans are practicing the martial arts in the right way or not, especially when compared to Asian practice. One interviewee told a story.

I think it's something to do with the intensity in which the training is done. Say for instance, in Korea versus in the United States, I know that when my older son went to Japan he took Karate. That summer, his aunt took him to class and the master asked if you want me to teach him according to the western style or the Japanese style. And of course, she said Japanese style. And he beat the crap out of you. It showed him that how he was supposed to do it. He also took kendo class in Japan, and told us when he came back that it's a lot different than here. They just don't tap you, they hit you. And when they do their martial arts or their self-defense, you either block it or you get hit. So I feel that's traditional, I feel that's what they refer to when they're referring what traditional is. It's taught as it had been in earlier times. Everything here is Americanized.

There is very limited narratives that reflect the traditional culture of Asian martial arts in a critical manner. Most of participants favored and valued the traditional martial arts cultures. However, in some cases, American practitioners attempted to be selective or to reinterpret the Asian cultures in their own cultural judgments. A woman martial artist, Kathy Park addressed her position on the issue.

This comes in part out of my questioning and not participating in some of the traditions. For example, in my class, we don't bow in the formalized line like other dojos do. We bow in as a semicircle. I'm part of the line. I want it to become more

and more circular. The circle denotes much more equality than the straight line. with one person out in front. I'm not comfortable with that hierarchy, with what it evokes, be it power-trapping on my end or giving over power on the student's end. (Siegel, 1993, p.97)

There are various parts of Asian martial arts cultures that do not easily match the contemporary American social values. However, not many practitioners pointed out those values as uncomfortable to accept for their practice. They might be enjoying the foreignness of those cultures and not seriously accepting them as a part of their ways of lives in the society.

Although they often expressed their interests to learn Asian cultures and philosophies, their narratives did not provided any indication of their efforts. In fact, there was a few interviewed practitioners who indicated that they read martial arts literature. American martial arts literature strongly advocates the spiritual version of martial arts, however, it does not seem to be confirmed by ordinary American martial arts practitioners. Rather, they interpreted and theorized martial arts training based on their own purposes in the contexts of their social lives. For example, their conceptualizations of the training were significantly framed by age and gender, which might have pedagogical implications.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Significant Themes of American Martial Arts Literature

An analysis of American martial arts literature was conducted to investigate American authors' conceptualization of Asian martial arts practice in the United States. Through the reading of American literature, the study found eight themes that framed key features and uncovered the main content of American martial arts authors' conceptualization of the subject. Those themes are; 1) spirituality and practicality; 2) traditionalism versus modernism; 3) mystification and demystification of martial arts; 4) world views of Asian martial arts; 5) pedagogy of Asian martial arts; 6) socialization into martial arts; 7) violence and martial arts; and 8) personal meaning and self-improvement in martial arts training.

The most prominent characteristic of American authors' conceptualization of Asian martial arts was to interpret the activity as a spiritual discipline. Most American authors valued the potential of martial arts training to reach humanistic education beyond a practical purpose. They attempted to theorize this spiritual version of martial arts by the interpretation of Asian theories of martial arts. One of their efforts was to conceptualize the martial arts based on a developmental frame of Japanese martial arts history.

American authors focused on the emergence of the Tokugawan notion of budo (martial way). American authors perceived transformation of Japanese martial arts from bujutsu to budo, from the training for fighting skills to the training for spiritual education as the perfect conceptual framework to theorize martial arts as an activity more valuable than just a self-defense system.

This spiritual version of martial arts led the American authors to accentuate Zen language in martial arts and some of them accepted the notion of Zen martial arts implying martial arts as a medium to Zen training. Some other authors followed the Japanese concept of “do discipline” to explain the spirituality of martial arts. The Japanese culture developed this do discipline by infusing Zen philosophy into various artistic activities (Draeger, 1973b). American authors noticed the key ideals of the Japanese version of spiritually oriented concepts of martial arts as enlightenment, the ultimate mental state, a Way of life, and self-perfection. Most authors reinterpreted these Asian concepts of training into the Western language of self-realization, self-actualization, self-development, and self-improvement. They viewed Asian martial arts as a good vehicle for Western participants to develop self-meaning. However, it is questionable whether the traditional Asian concept of training for self-development is a match for the American concept of self-actualization. As Draeger (1973b) noticed, traditional Japanese society anticipated that martial arts would help to nourish the practitioners into certain attitudes, behavioral patterns and norms the society valued, whereas the modern American concept of self-actualization is based on an individualist perspective. The theories of Asian martial arts emphasize the training of the mind originally for the sake of technical performance. Later

the emphasis became for its own sake. Incorporated with Zen practice, this emphasis of training the mind was turned into the theory of unity of mind and technique. The ideas of unity of mind and technique was interpreted as a good alternative perspective for the Western dualistic concept of body and mind. As a result, American authors perceived the concept of martial arts as a medium for the training of the mind as an attractive perspective that suggested a way to overcome the limitation of Western notions of body and mind, particularly in the areas of physical education.

Some physical educators seemed to be fascinated by the tenets of Asian martial arts, emphasizing training of mind, enlightenment, self-development, and transcendental experience and to consider these philosophies of Asian martial arts to propose a possibility that physical activity could be transformed into a discipline for wholistic human development. They defined martial arts as spiritual education (Schmidt, 1986) philosophical education (Linden, 1986), and liberal education (Levine, 1984). However, they did not recognize the other side of the culture of Asian martial arts education that emphasized a high level of technical mastery, severe training process for the goal, selectivity and exclusivity in the sense that the system was for the talented and expected a high rate of drop-outs.

Another feature of American authors' conceptualization of martial arts was that they valued traditional forms of practice. They perceived that the traditional forms reserved a more spiritual side of the practice. For them, the word, "modern" was interpreted as practically oriented, inauthentic or Westernized, sportized, and educationally unsound. Their favored perception of the traditional martial arts led the American authors to

excessively promote Zen and other spiritually oriented philosophies of Asian martial arts, which resulted in mystification of martial arts in some sense. The American authors' favored perception of traditional and somewhat mystical guise of martial arts is probably correspondent to the Western expectations of exotic and relatively rare forms of Oriental technique. As Donohue (1994) pointed out, Westerners continue to search for the "true," the "pure" Oriental martial arts which do not exist in reality. Or they are creating the real and authentic form of Asian martial arts that is fit for their own expectations.

Therefore, American literature's conceptualization of martial arts seem to be congruent among these three themes, favoring of spirituality against practicality, traditional approach against modern approach, and mystic features against demystified ones.

American authors rejected, if not, neglected the practical aspects of martial arts. They seemed to understand the transformation of martial arts to martial way, discarded the significance of technique and the practical purpose of the arts. However, there are a few questionable issues in the American authors' conceptualization of martial arts as spiritual discipline and leaning toward a traditionalistic approach. The first question is whether Asian martial arts have developed the spiritual training apart from or opposed to the technical context. The second question is how the spiritual development can be achieved in the pedagogical sense without the physical process of the training. The third question is what is the American authors' notion of traditional martial arts. It is not clear to define a specific time line of traditional and modern in Asian martial arts history. They seem to perceive the notion more related to the characteristics of the practice than to the temporal

criterion. They consider competition- or sport-oriented versions of martial arts as the main opposite characteristics of the traditional culture of the arts. If then, there is no room to accommodate many modern ideas of Asian martial arts that attempted to develop martial arts as educational medium in a practical and substantial way. For modern leaders of Asian martial arts, the traditional practice of martial arts was a vessel filled with the language of philosophy but empty in a method to realize the philosophy through the training. This may be related to the lack of discussion of technical aspects in the traditionalists' discourses. American authors may not grasp the real ideas of those modern transformation of the Asian martial arts and accept the traditional approach which has been critically rejected by the Asian martial artists. This probably is more true in the real situation of today's American martial arts market than in academic literature. There are numerous styles and schools that advertise authentic traditional arts, some of which are difficult to identify with the Asian roots, and most martial arts schools are emphasizing their teaching as traditional, not competition or sport oriented.

American authors interpreted the Asian perspectives, viewing the world as an organic system or an animated natural process as the reality, as the philosophical background of martial arts. Mainly Zen philosophy and in parts, Taoism and Confucian perspectives are referred to by American authors as the philosophical frameworks of martial arts. The authors focused on the philosophy of body and mind unity or the harmony of object and subject, performance and performer. However, they did not pay much attention to how these philosophies would be realized through the training.

The practice of Asian martial arts seems to play a role in socializing American participants into certain values of Asian cultures. The practice of various rituals and reserved Asian cultures of martial arts training halls seems to be the main channel that socializes participants into the culture of Asian martial arts. However, it is not clear why martial arts practice in American society, in fact, everywhere in the world, maintains the key features of the original Asian cultures. It may be that Western practitioners want to conserve the original cultural characteristics because they like the exotic aspects of the arts. It might be that Asian martial arts instructors who introduced the arts to Western societies wanted to keep their values and norms because they believed that these cultural packages were not separable from the activities or due to some other rationale. However, American literature did not discuss the issue of the contradicting values of Asian martial arts to the contemporary American society, for example, the authoritative and hierarchical culture of martial arts society.

American authors notice that there is a contradicting argument in martial arts that they teach fighting skills and at the same time, lecture a non-violent and peaceful personality. The authors conceptualized this contradiction as the “paradox of martial arts.” Most authors agree that martial arts training contributes to the participants’ reduction of aggressiveness but they can not identify which mechanism of the martial arts training facilitates this function. Very few American authors paid attention to the issue of the political and ideological implications of martial arts practice. Martial arts could be conceptually connected to the notions of power, control, and confrontation. Martial arts and martial artists were frequently found standing in the middle of historical events. for

example, the Boxer's Rebellion in China, the military regimes in 11th century Korea, the seven hundred years-long Japanese military regimes, and numerous cases of civil resistance in the three societies. However, the ideological significance of Asian martial arts is not the topic the American authors are interested in.

Intertextual Reflection on American Martial Arts Literature.

American authors' conceptualization of martial arts are mainly framed by the Asian discourses of martial arts. They theorize their concepts of martial arts by reinterpretation of the Asian perspectives of the discipline. In the process of the translations and interpretations, American authors reveal their selectivity of the referential materials. A noticeable feature of American authors' selections of referential framework was their dependence on Japanese sources. This American authors' adaptations of Japanese perspectives of martial arts as the dominant framework has several significant consequences in the formation of the American concepts of martial arts.

First, they characterized the concepts of martial arts based on the Japanese concepts of budo. This budo seems to become the conceptual model of American authors' spiritual version of martial arts. However, the Japanese concepts of budo is questionable to represent concepts of Asian martial arts in general. It may not be accurate to explain the characteristics of Chinese martial arts and Korean martial arts with this concept of budo. Therefore, theorizing Asian martial arts practice in general with the conceptual frame of Japanese budo can result in serious limitations and distortions to

accommodate diverse cultures of Asian martial arts practiced in the contemporary American society. For example, in the perspective of budo, Chinese martial arts may be considered as too acrobatic and complex without having Zen like simplicity and directness or Korean martial arts as too technically oriented and competitive without having spiritual seriousness. However, if we can admit that one system or culture can not be judged properly by the concepts of another culture, we may need to develop a more general conceptual frame to understand the diverse cultures of Asian martial arts.

Second, although there are a great deal of commonality among the cultures of the three societies, China, Japan, and Korea, there are also some significant differences among them. The American authors' heavy dependence on the Japanese perspectives incurs the possibility that American audiences will accept Japanese cultural values and world views imbedded in martial arts as the general Asian martial arts. As discussed in the chapter of text analysis, Japanese martial arts adapted the philosophy of Zen as the main philosophical framework. However, it was not the case in the Chinese and Korean martial arts. Rather, Chinese and Korean martial arts were theorized more in the languages of the Taoism and Confucian philosophies than of Zen Buddhism. Therefore, American authors' theorization of martial arts based on the Japanese sources may result in a biased understanding of Asian martial arts in terms of the philosophical perspectives.

The third issue is the culture of the training hall and pedagogy. The culture of organizational structures of school and ethos of interaction among the members is a significant part of the socialization process of participants. Harrison (1939) noticed that martial arts is a molding force in the development of a national culture and education, and

Jackson (1978) recognized martial arts as a social institution for the conveyance of traditional beliefs and values of the society in Asia. The cultures of training hall and its pedagogy are the medium to realize these social functions of martial arts. Most American authors theorize the cultures of martial arts schools and pedagogy are based on the Japanese model and there is limited literature that discusses different cultures of Chinese and Korean martial arts. It will be an interesting and rewarding topic for American martial arts authors to investigate diverse values, norms, and patterns of interaction in martial arts schools across different cultural origins.

Another intertextual issue of American authors' discourses is their assumptions on the origin of martial arts. Most American authors consciously or unconsciously accept the assumption that martial arts were developed for the fighting skill, either for defensive or offensive purposes. However, this assumption may be challenged if American discourses on martial arts accommodate broader bases of historical sources and diverse perspectives. For example, some schools of Chinese martial arts claim themselves as arts of longevity (Holcombe, 1993). It will result in a significant transformation in the understanding of theories and practices of martial arts if one hypothesizes that martial arts are originated not by the militaristic ideas but by medical ideas. The spiritual discipline, the American authors' dominant version of martial arts is based on the Japanese transformation of martial arts, from the arts of fighting to the discipline of spiritual forging. However, the "spiritual" in this perspective maintains and is grounded as the spirit of fighting. And the movements and practices are interpreted mainly in the contexts of practical effectiveness of fighting. If one conceives martial arts not from the perspective of a warrior but a

Taoist monk who is looking for mental and bodily wellness instead of ways of defeating opponents, the meaning of the “spiritual” would be differently translated and practiced.

It is not clear why American discourses on martial arts in the written texts are shaped and framed dominantly based on the Japanese perspectives. There may be several factors to explain this phenomenon. First, the American occupation of Japan after World War II and the consequent massive military residence in Japan could contribute to Americans’ early exposures to Japanese martial arts. Second, Japanese society developed martial arts in a way that appeals more to American taste than other Asian martial arts did. Third, Japanese society accumulated more written materials on martial arts so that American authors could understand Asian martial arts more from the Japanese sources than other societies’. Fourth, there may be more Japanese materials translated in English than Chinese or Korean. And there may be several other factors, such as; Japanese economic success and the consequent boom of studying its cultures. The answer should be a mixture of all these factors. American martial arts researchers may need to investigate the reasons and consequences of American martial arts concepts framed by dominantly Japanese perspectives.

Another significant intertextual feature of American literature is that most martial arts authors read second hand (written or translated in English) materials. Draeger (1973a;b;c; 1980), Suzuki (1959; 1973), Herrigel (1953) and a few translated Japanese martial arts classics (Musashi, 1977; Takuan, 1986; Uyeshiba, 1984; Funagoshi, 1973, 1975, 1988) are the most popular references for most authors. The American authors did not discuss most contemporary Asian literature written by academic researchers. There is

an interesting parallel between practice and theoretical discussions that most of modern achievements of Asian martial arts both in theories and practices are rejected by American audience. American audience seems to prefer the traditional ones that are mostly discarded in the mother societies.

Participants' Narratives Analysis

American martial arts participants (taekwondo practitioners) conceptualized their training experiences in various topics. The meaningful themes of their narratives are: 1) their starting motivations; 2) pains, injuries, and difficulties; 3) a new self-image—empowered self; 4) violence, victimization, and self-defense; 5) a way of life; 6) I'm mediocre, improvement, improvement, and improvement; 7) men and women in the dojang and 8) interpretations of the spiritual and the traditional.

The consciousness of self and self-related benefits of martial arts training are the center of their narratives. Martial arts training gave them an opportunity to reflect on themselves from a different perspective. Although the majority of middle-aged adult participants did not start the activity by their own motivations, but soon after they began to participate in the activity, they found a meaningful experiences for themselves. Participants stressed the significance of the rediscovery of their bodily self through the various physical challenges presented in martial arts training. When they found themselves surmounting physical tasks that they never thought they could do, they felt a sense of achievement and self-confidence. Especially for women participants, martial arts training

provided them with challenging experiences unusual in their daily social lives. Therefore, martial arts seem to offer more meaningful experiences and deeper impacts on the self-concept for women than men. Participants found new images of themselves, empowered selves.

Learning self-defense skills is one of the main factors that give participants a sense of power. When they realize that they are capable of defending themselves, they seem to feel more control over their own lives. This sense of self-control is not limited to the physical safety but extends to their attitude of social living. They become centered beings in their lives. Martial arts training gives them an opportunity to reflect on the conditions of their social existence and the possibilities that they can improve their conditions of existence and extend their capabilities to take command of their own lives.

It will be interesting to discover how strong an impact martial arts training will have on the participant's self-concept. There are several potential factors: first, there is heavy bodily involvement in martial arts. Different from other sports, the bodily involvement in martial arts is related to the participant's perceptions of physical identity in terms of an individual's capability to defend him/herself. Individuals confront the issue of power in diverse ways when they get involved in martial arts training. Second, movement tasks in martial arts are designed to force practitioners to concentrate (Draeger, 1973b) so that intensive training enhances a practitioners' awareness of self in both physical and mental levels. Third, there are various philosophical languages theorizing ideal states of mind and perceptions of self in the training. Another factor is the culture of the training hall and pedagogical features. The culture of martial arts training encourages practitioners

to concentrate on the development of strong self, often providing motivational awards such as a ranking system which asks the participant to pretend a certain level of maturity correspondent to one's ranking.

Many participants described martial arts training as a way of life. Although some participants discussed the impact of martial arts training to their views of world and life, most participants interpreted the activity as a way of life not in a philosophical sense but because of the intensity of their involvement. They may suggest that the participation itself gives a significant amount of meaningfulness to their lives which are situated in a rootless, dull, and alienated contemporary social condition of life. Nevertheless, the participants' narratives prove evidently that martial arts are placed in the middle of their lives.

Many participants define themselves not as talented nor athletic but as mediocre practitioners. The middle-aged male practitioners are conscious of the physical limitations of their aged body and the difficulty in meeting various skillful tasks in martial arts. Female practitioners express their physical weakness compared to male partners. However, they do not hesitate to confront physical challenges, instead, they try with more effort to overcome those physical limitations and furthermore, conceptualize the training to their conditions. They place a lot of value on technical improvement, but compete within their own peer group, similar age or the same sex. They know how to frame technical tasks in a way, selecting appropriate and effective areas for their physical conditions. Above all, their narratives prove that they are constantly discovering and defining meanings of martial arts training for the conditions of their lives. Most

participants stressed the value of their training and their pride in being involved in such intensive physical activity at their age.

Female participants seem to meet more difficulties in training not only due to their physical condition but also from the socially constructed prejudices of their male partners' perceptions and historically developed masculine cultures of martial arts training hall. There are interesting narratives from the published autobiographical essays of women martial artists who struggled to overcome all those obstacles and to find a place for women in martial arts communities in the United States. However, most of the female practitioners interviewed do not seem to experience such bitter treatment in their training. It may be due, in part, to the fact that today's martial arts schools have developed a variety of programs for diverse populations, as well as the struggling efforts of many pioneering women martial artists in the United States.

Women participants constantly compare themselves to their male classmates whereas adult male practitioners mirror their training to their younger male classmates. It may reflect the fact that they perceive their performance and progress with the referential criteria of other groups which have better physical conditions for training. Martial arts training provides women participants with an opportunity to observe their male partners in an angle different from their daily lives. Some women participants described their male classmates as having a macho character, but many women perceive male classmates as beneficial training partners. Still, there is some degree of cynicism from male practitioners toward their female classmates. These male partners' sexually biased attitudes sometimes hinder female practitioners' serious training.

American practitioners' narratives suggest that they actively interpret their experiences based on the needs and conditions of their lives. The language of "self" is located in the middle of their narratives while gender identity and age are sensitively embedded into their experiences. Learning self-defense skills and physical exercise are main parts of their meanings but there is much more than the practical purposes of the training. Most middle-aged adult practitioners value their training for giving them self-confidence, self-esteem, discipline, and enhanced awareness of their bodily self. Some participants refer to the training as a medium to reflect on self and rediscover their potentials. Overall, American practitioners come to develop new self-images through martial arts training. They empower themselves not only physically but also mentally and conceptually.

Comparison of Written Texts and Participant Narratives

American martial arts literature conceptualizes Asian martial arts as a spiritual discipline, arguing that martial arts training is for the development of mind and enlightenment beyond the technical and physical domains. Literature discusses at length the transcendental experiences in martial arts in the languages of Zen and the "do" concept. However, participants interpret martial arts training in the contexts of its practical benefits. For them, physical and technical aspects of the training is the main concern and they perceive martial arts as a medium for self-improvement. Martial arts training plays a significant role

for American practitioners to redefine their selves through accumulated experiences of success to meet physical challenges.

However, participants did not utter the word “spiritual” often in their narratives. When asked, they stressed that the spiritual aspects of martial arts training does not relate to any religious significance. They largely interpreted the moral principles of martial arts as the spiritual.

It is difficult to find influences of martial arts literature from the reading of participants’ narratives. A few practitioners mentioned martial arts literature they read, but even in those cases, their narratives did not reveal many languages dominant in the literature. American martial arts literature seems to have limited influences on the ordinary American martial arts practitioners. The researcher interprets this phenomenon in part, due to the authors’ attitudes and perspectives toward their study of martial arts. Most American authors attempt to conceptualize martial arts in the Asian frameworks and neglect to consider the living conditions of American society and culture where the activity is located. Both academic and non-academic authors tend to preserve ideal images of Asian martial arts found in Asian literature, and they conceptualize this idealized image of Asian martial arts into their versions of martial arts, spiritually-oriented traditional forms. However, in reality, ordinary American practitioners construct meanings of their own training in the contexts of their lives and they reinterpret the techniques as well as the philosophies of martial arts to meet their own purposes. Their constructions of meanings of martial arts training was not grounded in the American authors’ conceptualizations but in the social conditions of their own lives. American

practitioners revealed their selectivities through which they accepted certain parts of Asian cultures and at the same time, rejected other aspects of the cultures. All those processes of participants' subjectivities confirm the theories of meaning in the perspectives of the social construction and the cultural studies, contending that individuals, mainly through the "negotiated process of articulation," explore, interpret, construct, and contest meanings of their social experience and also of their 'self' (Grossberg, 1986, Hall, 1996).

However, there should be limitations to interpreting the concepts of martial arts practice theorized by the particular group of participants. The interviewed participants in this study are defined as ordinary practitioners who take martial arts as a hobby and physical activity not as a profession nor pursuing technical excellency in competition. This definition does not mean that they are not as serious as other groups, but suggests that there are diverse groups of martial arts practitioners in today's American society. Some groups must have significantly different orientations toward martial arts than the group this study represents. However, ordinary practitioners' conceptualizations of martial arts training represent significant aspects of today's martial arts practice in American society in more than one sense. First, they are the biggest population in size. Second, they may represent today's ordinary American in that they, in most cases, have normal obligations of job and family, taking martial arts as an activity not as profession.

Summary of Findings

To understand American conceptualizations of Asian martial arts practice, the researcher analyzed selected American literature on martial arts and participants' narratives on their martial arts experiences. The significant findings are:

1. American martial arts literature conceptualizes Asian martial arts as a spiritual discipline with a purpose of wholistic human development through the medium of fighting skills.
2. American martial arts literature rejects the practically oriented perspective of martial arts and competitive or sport-oriented modern versions of martial arts. American literature valued traditional Asian systems of practice.
3. American martial arts literature introduced to the American audience the Asian worldview and Asian cultures of training hall and pedagogy as a part of the activity.
4. American martial arts literature accepted Japanese perspectives of martial arts as the main referential framework, and neglected to accommodate other cultures, particularly Chinese and Korean perspectives.
5. American literature referred largely to old Asian resources written in spiritual perspectives, ignoring most contemporary materials published by Asian academic writers.

6. American middle-aged martial arts practitioners viewed martial arts training as self-defense, physical exercise, and a medium for self-improvement. They valued martial arts training as offering meaningful experiences that help them enhance self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-discipline.
7. Adult female practitioners interpreted martial arts training to propose challenging experiences that help them reflect on their social self and personal potentials and reconceptualize themselves as more confident and self-centered beings.
8. Adult participants defined their physical condition for the training but at the same time, reframed the training for their age and gender. They attempted to find meanings for their own purposes and conditions of life from the martial arts training.
9. Whereas American martial arts literature conceptualized martial arts as spiritual, philosophical, educational discipline, ordinary American practitioners defined their training in practical, physical, and personally meaningful ways. The spiritual version of martial arts framed by literature was not accepted by the ordinary practitioners.
10. American practitioners' narratives did not reveal a significant influence from the languages of American martial arts literature.

Concluding Remarks

American martial arts literature and practitioners both rejected modern Asian versions of competition-oriented martial arts. They condemned competition and sport version of martial arts as devaluing the authentic philosophies of martial arts. Americans seem to be more conservative than Asians in keeping the traditional cultures of martial arts. This phenomenon may be interpreted as Westernization of Asian martial arts and Asianization of American martial arts. Another possible interpretation of this trend is the American expectation of Asian martial arts to be exotic, mystical, and traditional. They tended to refuse any forms of martial arts betraying their expectations.

American martial arts narratives interpreted Asian concepts of martial arts training into their own meanings. The socially bound notion of self in Asian martial arts is translated into the individualist concept of self. And, marginal experiences from the concentration and seriousness of life and death are converted into the languages of self-realization or self-actualization such as Maslow's peak experience and Csikszentmihalyi's flow. Americans interpreted seemingly abstract languages of Asian martial arts into concrete American concepts practically connected to personal meanings.

There is an emerging women's version of martial arts that has not existed in the Asian discourses of martial arts. Many American women challenged the personal and social barriers in the martial arts training and struggled to develop a women's culture of martial arts. Many female participants articulated the benefits and potential values of martial arts training for women. This American women's culture of martial arts will be a

fresh challenge to the Asian martial art societies, particularly Asian leaders of international martial arts communities.

Asian martial arts have pursued internationalization during the last half century. However, there were limited efforts to understand non-Asian cultures from Asian martial arts communities. There is also a lack of attempts by westerners to understand their own cultural conditions, instead, concentrating on Asian cultures of martial arts. Based on the belief that martial arts in today's world should be understood in a multicultural perspective, I attempted to grasp American interpretations of martial arts practice. As the result, I, an Asian professional martial arts instructor and researcher, obtained valuable insights and new understandings on martial arts in American society. First, I realized that martial arts could have different meanings to different people. This perception means that I should discard the old belief that martial arts, the philosophies, techniques, norms, criteria, and concepts should be defined by the mother society's archetypes. Second, the curriculum paradigm of martial arts should be extended to accommodate diverse demands of people. For example, Asian martial arts leaders have seldom considered a woman's version of martial arts in a serious way. Most Asian countries, particularly Japan and Korea are relatively uniform societies in terms of racial, ethnic, religious, and other aspects of cultures. Uniformity has been culturally valued in these societies. Therefore, it is not easy for Asian martial arts communities to accept multi-perspectives. This study may propose the necessity of reconceptualization of curricular and pedagogical paradigms in Asian martial arts communities. I also realized the need of further in-depth studies to

understand meanings of martial arts practice in broader and specified social constellations of identities, as the martial arts move into the future.

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APPENDIX A

Asian Martial Arts Systems Practiced in America.

South Eastern Asian Systems

- Indian Styles: Yoga, Kalaripayattu.
- Malaysia-Indonesian Styles: Silat (Pentjak-Silat).
- Thai Styles: Muay Thai.
- Filipino Styles: Escrima, Kali.
- Other South Eastern Asian Styles

Eastern Asian systems

- Chinese Styles: Generally called “Kung-Fu” outside of China, “Wushu” in homeland, there are numerous styles and names, but as significant, Tai-chi, Shaolin-chuan, Pagua, Shing-I, Wing-chun, Tang-lang -chuan.
- Japanese Styles: Judo, Karate, Aikido, Kendo, Jujijtu, Ninjijtu,
- Korean Styles: Taekwondo, Hapkido, Yudo, Gumdo,
**Although there are numerous names of different styles of Japanese and Korean martial arts, they can be categorized into the above styles or some mixture of them.*

Other Asian Systems

In the theories of Chinese martial arts, there are several concepts which are employed to classify martial arts to certain quality of their movements; northern vs. southern; internal vs. external; soft vs. hard style. However, it is questionable that they can be applied to martial arts that have a different cultural and historical background of development.

APPENDIX B

List of Literature (Selected for Analysis)

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APPENDIX C

Letter of Inquiry

Dear:

I am working on my doctorate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The topic of my study is American conceptualizations of Asian martial arts: An interpretive analysis of the narratives of taekwondo participants. The study focuses on American interpretations of martial arts practice. I plan to analyze American martial arts literature and participants' stories of martial arts training.

I will interview adult black-belt students who have longer than three years of taekwondo experience. I initially contacted to your school master instructor and he recommended you as a sincere practitioner. I would very much like to hear the story of your life and taekwondo training . The interview will last one or one and half hour long. The interviews will be taped and transcribed. All informations you give to me would be completely anonymous and would not be used beyond the study.

If you would be willing to be interviewed for my project, please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to me. I will then contact you by telephone to discuss the schedule with you. I hope that you will consider sharing your taekwondo experience with me.

Sincerely,

Jin Bang Yang

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

Part 1.

Opening Question:

“I am doing research about people’s experiences in martial arts. Please tell me your story of taekwondo training.”

Follow-up Questions

1. How do you think of the spiritual aspects of martial arts?
2. How do you define the traditional martial arts?
3. How do you think about woman and martial arts training?
4. Do you have special comments about curriculum and/or instructions of your school

Part 2.

Personal Information

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Occupation
4. Family Background
5. Personal history of physical activity
6. Martial arts training history (what styles, how long, where, instructors)