

# The Social Practice of Self-Defense Martial Arts: Applications for Physical Education

David Brown and Alan Johnson

The practice of the self-defense martial arts has much to offer physical education. In this paper we draw on Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory of the *Logic of Practice* to present a case that when viewed as a social practice, these movement forms generate certain, specific, practically oriented schemes of dispositions or habitus in the practitioner. We then consider the potential value of using martial arts practice in physical education for their ability to offer a glimpse at genuinely alternative ways of relating to oneself and the world through the physical medium that would help to compliment and offset the overriding dominance of dualist understandings of the mind/body nexus that currently exists in Western physical education.

As Cox (1993) confirms, in the past two decades there has been a visible expansion in the practice of the martial arts in the West. Concurrently, academic interest in the potential benefits of these Eastern movement forms has been steadily increasing from a variety of disciplines. Several authors have examined the transformative potential of these practices for adopting and integrating alternative philosophical outlooks toward life and physical activity (Back & Kim, 1979, 1984; Becker, 1982; Kleinman, 1986). Elsewhere, psychological study has suggested that martial arts practice can constitute a form of self help (Fuller, 1988), a means toward self-actualization (Thirer & Grabiner, 1980), increased self-esteem (Richman & Rehberg, 1986), a greater sense of self-control (Madden, 1990), and improved self-concept (Finkenberg, 1990). More recently, Columbus and Rice's (1997) phenomenological work suggests that martial arts participation can take on the meaning

---

David Brown is with the Department of Physical Education, Sports Science, and Recreation Management at Loughborough University, Leicestershire, LE11 3TU, United Kingdom; Alan Johnson was formerly with the University of Exeter, and is now with Spes Inc. International, at Fukuyama City 1-3-10-902, Hiroshima Prefecture, Japan 720-0052.

of an emancipatory practice, where challenges and obstacles in other areas of life are easier to deal with as a side-effect of training.

This paper draws its focus from the sociology of the body within the field of physical education and adopts a perspective of the martial arts as an *embodied practice* to examine their potential social benefits. More specifically, in what follows, we draw on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's post-structuralist theory of practice to analyze how the practice of martial arts can generate alternative forms of embodiment. We then apply these insights to suggest how they might make a positive contribution to physical education. With reference to our generic use of the term "martial arts," we are referring to those social practices that develop the use of combative techniques for self-defense *and* through this, the development of the self.

In the *Logic of Practice* (1990), Bourdieu attempts to overcome the enduring dichotomies of agency and structure, power and reproduction in sociology. Practice, in Bourdieu's terms, has its own logic, not that of a logician but one oriented toward human necessity taking place in a given set of prevailing social conditions. He stipulates:

The theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positive materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constructed in practice and is always oriented toward practical functions. (1990, p. 52)

Central to this theory of practice is the concept of *habitus* that bridges an important gap in theoretical sociology—that of representing the mind, body, and society as linked in some fundamental way. The habitus is comprised of schemes of dispositions that are largely implicit and developed through engagement in social practices, serving to constitute an individual's orientation to the social world they inhabit as well as toward themselves. Moreover, habitus is generative; "the *habitus*, which at every moment, structures new experiences in accordance with the structures produced by past experience . . . are modified by the new experiences, within the limits defined by their power of selection" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 60). In other words, practices generate habitus and then habitus generates future practice in a reflexive but evolving relationship. Within the habitus Bourdieu also identifies the more refined notion of body habitus which, as Harvey and Sparkes (1991) clarify, "Constitutes a system of implicit schemes (dispositions, appreciations) that govern one's relation to one's own body" (p. 173). Moreover, such practices/body habitus can, as Bourdieu intended, provide a direct link to institutions, thereby implicating the body in wider social processes of class, culture, and politics.

Bourdieu's theory has proven particularly useful in the field of sport and physical education where the practical inculcation of embodied dispositions not only unconsciously takes place, but in many cases, has been actively engendered. One has only to think of sport in Victorian public schools in England (see Mangan, 1981) during the early twentieth century to find powerful examples of how the habitus of these upper class pupils was worked upon with the use of specific sporting practices to develop key dispositions toward upper class masculinity and

leadership qualities in preparation for a life of social dominance expected of an English male gentry at that time. Similar examples can be derived from Kirk (1992, 1993) and Harvey and Sparkes (1991), where physical education practices reflected and generated other gender and class "appropriate" dispositions, those of "following orders" via drill for working class boys, calisthenic gym for girls in anticipation of motherhood, and so on. The logic of physical education practice is contextual and responds to social conditions and understandings (including prejudices) of the time, place, and culture (see Bourdieu, 1993).

In addition to the classed, gendered, and ethnocentric nature of a body habitus differentially fostered in many Western physical education programs, there is a constant presence of an underlying scheme that might be identified as *dualistic*, a practically inculcated scheme of dispositions and appreciations that presuppose a distinct and separate relationship between mind and body. Following their research, Sparkes, Templin, and Schempp (1990) concluded that physical education retains a marginal subject status largely due to widely held preconceptions that physical education and sport's generic preoccupation are with the purely physical and thus are given lower educational status in keeping with the western cultural preeminence of the Cartesian dualism "*cogito ergo sum*" (I think, therefore, I am). Elsewhere in his analysis of physical education ideology, Tinning (1990) proposed that dualist modes of thinking about the mind-body nexus were indicative of a "technocratic rationality," a mode of thinking that reduces knowledge of the body to a series of technical, scientifically neutral facts that encourage a mechanistic evaluation of the body, overriding and undermining important social factors.

With the development of embodied sociological approaches in human movement, critical questions have been raised about the unintended consequences of dualisms in physical education, particularly regarding the impact of body/mind relationships that are legitimized and deposited in pupils. For example, Whithead (1992) has argued that dualist discourse and practices delivered by teachers can be damaging at a subjective level because they alienate students of physical education and sport from their bodies, regardless of whether they are good or bad performers. Hoberman (1992) went further, proposing that the separation of the body and mind and the paradigmatic evaluation of the body as a machine is dehumanizing. Evidence from research into physical education and sport increasingly supports such a view; bodies are being considered as machines to be used for instrumental ends, particularly in male sporting arenas (see for example, Messner, 1992; Trujillo, 1995; Synnott, 1992). In addition, Kirk's (1992) sociocultural analysis criticized dualist discourses in physical education because of their scientifically functionalist nature. Depositing mind/body dualisms through practice is socially reproductive, closing off pupil's embodied awareness in physical education by reducing experiences to a merely mechanistic significance. Where the mind is acknowledged as involved in the subject, it is largely in a cognitive sense, usually in a classroom learning about, rather than through, the physical. It would seem that the metaphor for body and mind in high modernity is mind-as-computer, body-as-machine.

In response to the prevailing mind/body dualisms in physical education, we support the position held by Figueroa (1993) who advocates a more inclusive rationale for physical education that embraces unified conceptions of the body and mind being conceptualized, "more along the lines of educating people in and through

physical activity by developing an active and reflective knowledge of the self and others as embodied beings” (p. 99). However, the problem for those who wish to embrace such an approach to physical education is how to modify dualistic practices given the prevailing social conditions and mode of thinking that have generated them in the first place. In the discussion that follows, we use Bourdieu’s theory of practice to explore the ways in which the practice of self-defense martial arts is generated from a genuinely alternative paradigm to the dualistic one described above and how, from this, different but beneficial dispositions are developed. In the final section, we then apply these insights to make a case for the incorporation of the self-defense martial arts into physical education.

### **The Martial Arts: Practice and Habitus From Necessity**

Bourdieu argues that the logic of practice and the production of habitus are generated as a response to social and/or economic necessity, the precise form of which will reflect the conditions of existence and sociocultural context. The history that we have of the martial arts corresponds strongly with such a view. The fact that ancient China and Japan were often dangerous places is well documented (Newman, 1989). During the Manchu period, Buddhist monks studied martial arts in Shaolin Temples for purposes of self-defense and slowly developed them into practices that also addressed health, spirituality, and social order. Wandering Taoist sages developed martial art forms to respond to random attacks while travelling but developed them into a physical expression of their Taoist philosophy. The people of Okinawa (mainly farmers) developed martial arts to defend their autonomy from mainland Japan. Many of their weapons, and the ways they used them, were ingeniously adapted from common agricultural instruments to specifically counter the weapons used by Imperial Japanese troops. The Samurai were a class of martial arts warriors who came into existence following the need of feudal lords to defend their provinces. The practices and habitus of the Samurai took on their own form of existence, developed from the use of the Samurai sword and an adherence to Zen philosophy (from which Bushido—the martial way—was born).

These few, brief examples illustrate that from a need for effective forms of self-defense came a whole variety of practices and habitus that were developed in ways that responded to the prevailing social conditions of the time. This view forms the basis for Fields’ (1991) anthropological thesis in *The Code of the Warrior*. Fields developed the thesis that warrior “codes” in both East and West centered around the need all societies have for self-defense in the face of potential and actual conflict. The response, the creation of warriors, also creates a dilemma in that the very people who are called upon to protect and serve societies have the potential themselves to be predators on the very social order they were intended to defend. The result was (and is) a warrior code, which might also be described as a habitus, simultaneously embodying the dispositions needed for combat with other dispositions that place firm restrictions on the use of violence (against whom, when, how much, etc.).

At an individual level, modern Western societies have experienced the need for individual self-defense to decrease, but, significantly, not to disappear. Risk, as Giddens (1990) and Beck (1992) argue convincingly, remains ever present albeit in different forms than in the pre-modern societies where the Eastern martial arts

developed. Accordingly, martial arts practice has not disappeared but evolved, following the needs of these specific conditions of existence. If Bourdieu's theory of practice holds, then the prevalence of the martial arts in the West today is perhaps indicative of the continuing and widespread perception of necessity for self-defense, and is, therefore, more socially significant than just some vestigial cultural anachronism. Moreover, it is within the range of Eastern movement forms that we find sophisticated practices for developing dispositions deemed essential for living peacefully, while providing the means to respond effectively to the threat of interpersonal violence, making them particularly appropriate for individuals living with risk in high modernity. It should be noted that this phenomenon is not only due to the actual need for self-defense itself but also the way in which the martial arts provide dispositions that help practitioners live with the constant threat of violence at an ontological level. The discussion will now turn toward these martial arts and aspects of their practice and the body habitus that they generate.

The fusion of the practical physical functions of the self-defense martial arts with other essential qualities of mind needed to be able to use them efficiently and judiciously has led to the development of the "Way" as a central necessity. Derived from the suffix "do" in Japanese, and the term "Tao/Dao" in Chinese, the Way indicates that the practice to which it is applied is a *pathway* of self-cultivation that individuals follow throughout their martial art education (and life) with a view to bringing about fundamental changes to the self. In Eastern cultures, there are many Ways, including calligraphy, painting, poetry, music, meditation, and the martial arts. The martial way is a set of practices which set out to develop the self (in a holistic sense) in and through learning the art of self-defense. Levine (1991) has described this as "disciplines that employ training in combative forms as a means to cultivate the students' physical, mental and spiritual powers" (p. 209).

Throughout the remainder of this discussion, use of the term "the martial arts" will imply a reference to those that emphasize the Way and include self-defense arts such as Aikido, Hapkido, traditional Judo, Iado, Kendo, Karate-do, Shorinji Kempo, Jee Kune Do, Tai Chi, and many forms of Gung Fu, to name but a few. It is also worth noting that while many Chinese and Japanese martial arts do not carry the suffix "do" or the term Tao, they bear characteristic orientations. At this juncture we also recognize that there are alternative philosophical orientations that guide some forms of martial arts. Some arts are solely concerned with practical effectiveness and place relatively little importance on self-cultivation through their practice. Others primarily focus on sporting performances and exhibit a similar competitive ethos to many Western sports. We do not undertake to evaluate these other approaches here, although each has its own merit and justification.

Some further insight into the dispositions sought by practicing the Way can be found by considering the etymology of the Japanese term Budo, the martial way. The Japanese character for *bu*, found in *Budo* (martial way), can be taken to mean three things: two, spear, and stop. This comes to mean "to stop two spears," that is, *not* to fight or kill or defeat, but rather to calm aggression that may or may not be physical and so facilitate the development of a non-violent habitus, itself a practical expression of Buddhist and Taoist heritage. Funakoshi, generally considered to be the father of modern Karate-do, was an influential figure who recognized that modern martial arts might instill dispositions responsive to the contemporary social order, as the following comment demonstrates:

Vigor is stimulated by bu (martial arts) and it overflows into good or sometimes bad actions. Thus, if Karate-do is followed correctly, it will polish the character, and one will uphold justice, but if used for evil purposes it will corrupt society and be contrary to humanity. (1973, p. 247)

Through the Way, Funakoshi was concerned with reinforcing positive social and ethical dispositions through Karate-do practice, because he recognized it was open to misuse and abuse. As a social practice *Budo* gives Japanese martial art a pathway that unites the seemingly contradictory practices of combat with those of a peaceful lifestyle. For this reason, Funakoshi (1973) considered self-control as one of the most significant aspects of practice. "As one continues to gain skill . . . one must be more careful with one's speech . . . the trainee of Karate-do must consider good behavior and humbleness as the highest of virtues" (p. 247). Therefore, self development through practicing the martial Way is intended to modify habitus in a manner that combines self-defense abilities with an ethical approach to living life.

### **Practicing Duality: Integrating Mind and Body**

Through necessity, the practice of martial arts embeds a certain form of body habitus, a disposition of mind/body unity. Again, this can be read as a result of the logic of practice or the realization that such a unity is essential for effective self-defense. Sensitivity toward intra and inter-corporeal communication are considered necessary for appropriate responses in combat situations. There quite simply is not time to "think" in a disembodied sense. This is a point that Bourdieu (1990) himself alludes to in his discussions on the logic of practice:

Hermeneutic errors are paid for instantly, such as the exchange of blows, discussed by George H. Mead (1962:42-3), in which each stance of the opponent's body contains cues which the fighter has to grasp while they are still incipient, reading in the hint of a blow or a sidestep the future that it contains, that is a blow or a "dummy." (1990, p. 80)

Moving beyond masculinized responses to predatory aggression and bypassing the domination of ego is critical to recognize a potential attacker's embodied intentions early enough. This awareness can buy enough time to diffuse a situation before it begins physically, thereby achieving the primary goal of self-defense. The self-defense martial arts identify and develop such embodied appreciations through their practices and ultimately take them to the level of an art form. It is necessary to explore these elements in more detail.

Although mind and body are acknowledged separately in the Eastern martial arts, there is, as Chee Soo (1984) describes, the explicit recognition that "Dualism comprehends the separateness and yet the unity of all things" (p. 25). Representationalist body-as-a machine metaphors don't work in self-defense martial arts practice. The separation of body and mind promotes a disunification of the self, a situation that renders much skill practice pointless, because it represents an unthinking body in an unfeeling mind. Practice that demands attention is paid to how the body feels and how these feelings influence thought and vice versa and is intended to develop the self holistically. Under analysis, a close parallel to such

dispositions of duality is provided by Whithead (1992), who reflects on Sartre's examples of the climber in *Being and Nothingness* (1966):

In preparation he pays attention to all he will need to achieve the challenging task ahead—his equipment, his clothing, his own fitness, and his ability to execute the necessary movement techniques. However, once he starts the climb all these separate items and concerns merge into his single minded attempt to reach his goal. He no longer concentrates on specific movement patterns he must perform, but is totally absorbed in his task. His embodied dimension is lived to the full but not contemplated. (1992, pp. 377-78)

In Sartrean terms, this is an example of lived embodiment or the "body-for-self" and is very similar to the disposition of duality that Back & Kim (1984) refer to as "you-in-the-situation," a state of being in which "there is no dichotomy of you and the situation, nor of perception and action" (p. 12). As a state of integrated consciousness, this is most commonly referred to as "no-mindedness" (Mushin in Japanese, Wu Hsin in Chinese). Bruce Lee (1997) described Wu Hsin as "not being without emotion or feeling, but being one in whom feeling is not sticky or blocked. It is a mind immune to emotional influences" (p. 124). While being mentally and physically absorbed in practice (or combat), the practitioner must learn to "feel" the body as part of the self and relinquish the mind as a separate, controlling entity. Payne (1981) holds that self-defense martial arts encourage practitioners to take the view that "the body is *felt* directly rather than seen from without. The body is this directly sensed 'inner' reality, this complex of shifting sensations and feelings that interacts with our thoughts and with the outside world" (p. 9).

In order to achieve such states of embodied consciousness, practice is systematic. The purposeful development of sensitivity toward one's own and others' bodies continues to a point that one can begin to feel what the opponent is going to do next. It might be added that sensitivity is more refined than anticipation in a cognitive sense and resembles more of an embodied disposition. Such practices are most well developed in arts that stress internal training, such as Tai Chi, Aikido, and some forms of Gung Fu, such as Wing Chun. In Wing Chun, for example, the exercise of Chi Sau (sticking hands) is a good example of the focused development of embodied sensitivity. In the exercise, the practitioners perform a close quarter drill of increasing complexity, throughout which neither partner loses physical contact with their opponent. The objective of retaining contact (stickiness) is to learn to feel how the opponent is moving. Stickiness facilitates the development of sensitivity by feeling the origins of the next attack, thereby exposing opportunities to neutralize it with a block. The goal here, as Egami (as cited in Payne, 1981) noted, is to enter into a *moving relationship* with an opponent, a relationship in which the individual and his or her antagonist "do not exist as separate entities; it is a world beyond egotism" (p. 42). Therefore, unlike Sartre's climber, the martial artist must endeavor to achieve embodied sensitivity and "you-in-the-situation" while engaging with other people in stressful situations and not an inanimate mountain. However, importantly, the logic of practice that guides the self-defense martial arts means these practices are not merely conceptualizations of duality; they are the embodiment of it. Their development as a practice has taken place under the auspices of need and within a paradigm of duality, backed up with a pedagogy

that assumes the connections between body and mind must be developed as a disposition, if appropriate reactions are to be fostered.

### **Living Wu Wei: The Embodiment of Non-Violent Dispositions**

The practice of almost all Eastern martial arts draws heavily on Taoism and Buddhism. Both ethical religions emphasize the need for a fluid adaptable approach to living, with a capacity for spontaneity, and the ability to adapt to any given situation. Eventually, these Indo-Chinese schools of thought influenced the development of *Ch'an Buddhism* (later *Zen Buddhism* in Japan). According to Cooper (1981), Wu Wei is perhaps the most significant principle to be passed from Taoism to Ch'an Buddhism. It advocates the "immediacy and spontaneity necessary for living in accord with Nature and for simplicity, motiveless action and the perfection of effortlessness" (p. 101). Therefore, although Wu-Wei was originally a Taoist approach to living, the principle finds much sympathy and similarity within its sister schools of Buddhism.

Following his literal translation, Hoff (1982) interprets Wu Wei as "without meddlesome, combative, or egotistical effort" (p. 68). He adds that the character *Wei* is composed from the Chinese "symbols for a clawing hand and a monkey, since the term Wu Wei means not going against the nature of things; no clever tampering; no monkeying around" (p. 68). Therefore, Wu-Wei comes to mean to do without doing, causing, or making. Many misconstrue this as meaning "inaction" and subsequently see it as a negative thing. However, in practice, Wu-Wei is a principle intended to guide a way toward positive action. Wu Wei is an ethical discourse intended to guide practice and is explicitly advocated by the classic Taoist text, the *Tao Teh Ching* (Tzu, 1961) that states "You must never think of conquering others by force" (p. 61). Translated into martial arts practice Kauz (1977) points out that Wu Wei is:

Reflected in training by not resisting an opponents attack. The use of this tactic theoretically results in the attacker losing his [her] balance because he [she] is overextended in the direction of a target he [she] mistakenly thought was solid. (1977, p. 95)

Over time and through continuous practice, this principle is intended to become an embodied disposition in the practitioner. Many arts express this principle through practice, perhaps most notably the Tai Chi, Aikido, and Wing Chun systems. Although technically different, in practice each have developed the Wu Wei principle to a high degree of sophistication and drill it constantly until the martial artist never actually thinks of opposing force with force. In Aikido, for example, blocks are rarely used; the practitioner simultaneously attempts to evade and combine with the movement of the attack redirecting its energy. By contrast, the Wing Chun system uses a range of blocking movements, all of which merely make sufficient contact to deflect the energy of the attack away from the body. Embedding dispositions such as Wu Wei through practice helps to socialize the ugly primordial act of *fighting* to the level of a physical and mental art form in which movement, precision, choice, and motives are of great importance if one is to be regarded a martial *artist*.



A second disposition that expresses Wu Wei is the attitude toward the act of violence itself. Back and Kim's (1979) philosophical arguments on the moral value of the martial arts support this claim. They point out that the combative form of training engaged in through martial arts is likely to have other (side) effects. In situations of block, punching drills, and sparring, it is not only physical skill that is being developed, "But also how to act toward other people where self-control is difficult to maintain" (p. 22). Most sparring situations are high stress and quick but there are "definite restraints on where, how, and how hard one may strike one's opponent" (p. 22). It is the practice of restraint under pressure that Back and Kim claim provides the conditions for moral growth. By remaining calm and practicing restraint in action (the techniques should still be executed in the proper way), the practitioner learns how to react, drawing from the modified habitus without cognitive interventions.

Training techniques of the self-defense martial arts take a deliberative attitude toward combat in which actual fighting is not the goal of training, rather self-defense is the goal. Self-defense, developed as an art form, differs from fighting in that its rationale is to avoid conflict, and the most successful act of self-defense is having avoided the need to fight at all. Therefore, the Wu Wei principle is not embedded in fighting but in self-defense. Furthermore, the pedagogy of these martial arts usually drills self-defense dispositions rather than attacking, fighting dispositions. In application, when forced to defend oneself, the right path is only to reciprocate the attacker's ferocity, not to add more. The emphasis is on staying calm while receiving and causing the least physical damage possible to an attacker. Great skill is seen as a servant of this higher non-violent objective rather than for greater feats of destruction. In this way, martial art applications of the Wu Wei principle are often seen as analogous to the Tao Teh Ching (Tzu, 1961) proverb that advises, "A great tailor does little cutting" (p. 61). The recommendation to do what is necessary without over acting represents an important part of the martial artist's disposition of restraint. In social terms, it represents a significant internal check on the potential for violence that is intrinsic to martial arts and is one of the dispositions that separate a martial artist from a fighter.

### **Modifying Dispositions of Practice and Competition**

A further scheme of dispositions that is deposited concerns the repositioning of orientations toward training (practice), competition, and the relationship between them. Learning how to compete, win, lose, and draw in socially acceptable ways has always been a core of the ethic of sportsmanship. However, the practical and philosophical principles of the Way (do/ Tao) and Wu Wei embedded within self-defense martial arts practice draw constant attention to ego led reasons for competing, whether it be in combat or sporting contests. Again, this understanding is informed by the practical logic of efficient self-defense, in which an "ego-less" attitude is crucial for practical engagement. The ability to not respond emotionally to predatory forms of aggression from others and most importantly, understanding why and when combat should end once the goal of self-defense has been achieved, is vital for minimizing conflict and harm; none of these can be achieved if the martial artists actions are emotionally centered. Indeed, self-defense arts are

deeply critical of unreflective attitudes toward competition, aggression, and violence.

The alternative conception is practice; practice of the art becomes *the Way* and achievement can only be lived and developed through the further modification of essential dispositions. It cannot be won or awarded and has no definitive end point. It has to be lived as an end in itself and all of this with no extrinsic guarantees. The view that a physical activity has no immediate externally referenced objective (like winning, losing, or completion) may initially seem pointless and frustrating, but it is precisely this practical logic that leads to the development of the necessary scheme of dispositions for effective self-defense. Kauz (1977) captures this spirit succinctly in the following:

Taking the view that we are only practising in order to get to some imagined goal tends to devalue what is being done. The goal we are striving to reach may not exist or, if we feel we have reached it, may not be at all the same way we imagined it. All we really have is our daily practice and living our daily life. (1977, p. 70)

It would be misleading, however, to convey the idea that these martial arts have no referenced objectives or are anti-competition. Because achievement in self-defense systems are concerned with internal qualities of self-development needed for effective self-defense, this in no way excludes competition itself, so long as it is engaged in for the development of the intrinsic qualities competition has to offer. Funakoshi's (1975) well-known account of "Winning by Losing" (pp. 48-52) is a case in point where he demonstrates how dispositions toward winning at any cost interfere with self-development if allowed to dominate one's purpose for practicing. These martial arts use a variety of forms of competition as an integral part of their pedagogy for testing levels of development vis-à-vis the ultimate practical objective of self-defense. This displaces and modifies the competitive ethos and along with it the pervasive disposition of training for competition, leaving only the notion of practice. Successful practice in these terms means the transcendence of judging success or failure as the result of comparative performance and more in terms of self-investment and progress. Very few martial art competitions bear resemblance to the circumstances or reasons for self-defense combat. The definitions and, consequently, dispositions required for success vary. For example, if it is necessary to "lose face" in a real combat situation but accomplish self-defense, then the practice of the martial art has been successful. These appreciations of practice also go beyond our conventional rationales of participation for the sake of enjoyment, health, or even sociability.

Following the logic of practice, attempts to translate self-defense oriented martial arts into a competitive sport in the Western sense alter the arts' means/ends relationships leading to the deposition of technocratic, dualistic, and instrumental dispositions into the habitus, a process many have referred to as the Westernization of the martial arts. Westernization removes the response to necessity out of which these martial arts have been created and developed. Rules are imposed and techniques move from what is effective in self-defense combat to what is effective in sporting combat (not necessarily the same), although it would be quite wrong to imply that there is no technical, social, or psychological overlap between sports combat and actual self-defense.

### **Applying the Martial Arts in Physical Education**

Armour (1999) suggests that the proactive use of sociological knowledge can enhance the development of embodied dimensions of physical education. She contends: "Perhaps the time is right for physical education to lead the way using sociological information about the importance of pupils' embodiment in high modernity as a starting point" (p. 14). Making the case for a body focused physical education, Armour uses as its organizing principle the embodiment of pupils and the linking of embodiment to society (via gender, race, class, ability, ethnicity, body/mind relationships, and so on). An embodied sociological approach is useful for evaluating which aspects of the martial arts practice are valuable when applied to the context of physical education. There are several ways in which the sociological information emerging from the above discussion might be used for the development of a more embodied physical education; we shall address each of these in turn.

First, in a recent discussion, Kirk (1999) makes a strong case that physical education might usefully embrace, and be responsive to, the concept of physical culture. He defines physical culture as a "specialized form of discourse concerned with meaning-making centered on the bodily practices which constitute sport, physical recreation and exercise" (p. 66). Kirk maintains that the "disjunctions and contradictions between school practices and physical culture have become so severe as to constitute a crisis" (p. 69). A large part of the crisis is caused by the process of institutionalization of physical practices that represent dominant social forms of corporeality, often heavily invested in tradition, social control, and productivity via the body. However, Kirk contends that if physical education is to remain socially and culturally relevant in high modernity, it must become more reflexively engaged with those aspects of physical culture that are now prevalent and important in wider society as well as becoming more overtly interested in the social construction of the body, both through and for physical culture. The practice of martial arts has an increasingly visible presence in Western societies and in Kirk's terms, have become a part of a pluralist Western physical culture, and as such, they represent a valuable cultural resource from which physical education can draw. Furthermore, the way in which the self-defense martial arts provide an active and explicit social construction of the body through practice opens many possibilities for its judicious use and evaluation in physical education.

The second point concerns the way in which the body is socially constructed through these arts because they are informed from a paradigm that recognizes that the mind and body are a duality, in other words, inseparable in any practical or representational way. The ability of the self-defense martial arts to modify and generate alternative forms of habitus might be used as a powerful compliment to dualistic, representationalist forms of corporeality, fostered unconsciously in physical education. Furthermore, the practical nature of the martial arts draws implicitly on this paradigm to foster a habitus of body/mind integration that establishes a basis for developing dispositions of sensitivity toward oneself and others that are useful in life beyond the practices of training and self-defense. Most self-defense oriented systems explicitly seek to develop a unified body/mind relationship through their pedagogy, a mixture of difficult but reflective solo practice, courteous etiquette, and a balance of co-operative, graduated competitive encounters with others.

As pedagogy, this approach is compatible with education *of* and *through* the physical. It is useful to compare these points with that of Figueora's (1993) vision for physical education: "We are inextricably embodied, so that a balanced physical education must contribute to and be an integral part of the development of the whole person, who is inseparably physical, intellectual, spiritual, individual, cultural and social" (p. 99).

Third, the alternative schemes of dispositions generated can serve positive practical social functions. Once embedded within the habitus, the practice of Wu Wei is a valuable point of convergence between the self and others. The link between the self-defense martial arts and non-violence is an embodied one that is developed as a disposition over time and through carefully selected physical experiences but consistently geared toward the avoidance of, rather than the indulgence in, violent encounters with others. This moves beyond the mere avoidance of meeting force with force in a technical sense to encompass a range of other situations where confrontational pathways are avoided if possible. These qualities developed through practice instill appreciations that the use of violence is only a result of practical necessity, and even then it is always controlled and responsive to the situation, an important ethical responsibility for individuals in modern societies and one that might be effectively addressed through the physical medium. Furthermore, in an embodied sense, the learning of martial arts techniques represents a practical opportunity to experience controlled forms of violence and appreciate the physical and emotional damage that can be inflicted and sustained following even a short exchange of blows. We believe this is preferable to a denial of violence so prevalent in many educational discourses, despite its obvious daily usage in wider society (by individuals, institutions, and nation states etc.), in which all too often individuals are left ignorant of the reality and responsibility each person has concerning the use and abuse of violence. In short, such schemes represent "real world" dispositions that can be deposited through using the self-defense martial arts as a medium of physical education.

Fourth and finally, the engagement in practice, based on necessity, coupled with the need for holistic self-development required for practical effectiveness, leads to development of these physical systems as movement art forms and a questioning and repositioning of ego led motives for why we engage in all forms of physical activity, particularly highly competitive ones. As an alternative, it provides a very important complimentary channel for physical education to retain and develop as a balance to other more technocratic activities. As Sparkes (1985) contends, the practical, pragmatic nature of martial arts skills, combined with the aesthetics and morality embedded in the Eastern movement forms, offer a range of experiences that are "the antithesis of the 'high arousal,' 'get psyched up,' and 'win at all costs' philosophy that is so prevalent in the west" (p. 42).

In conclusion, from the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of practice, the self-defense martial arts represent practices that have been developed from social necessity, a necessity that still exists in Western societies. Following this fundamental logic, the development of the whole person generates holistic schemes of dispositions reflecting the pursuit of effective forms of self-defense in which increased sensitivity toward the self and others, attitudes of non-violence, and reflective dispositions toward one's ego driven actions are central components. These dispositions have many positive intended and unintended consequences because the practical goal of self-defense is to avoid or minimize violence rather than indulge

in it. Therefore, if the future development of physical education is to embrace further the education of the whole person through the physical medium as an important goal in which individuals are given the necessary dispositions to think and act for themselves at the same time as behaving responsibly toward others throughout life, then the self-defense martial arts constitute a valuable cultural resource.

## References

- Armour, K. (1999). The case for a body-focus in education and physical education. *Sport, Education & Society*, **4**(1), 5-16.
- Back, A., & Kim, D. (1979). Toward a western philosophy of the Eastern martial arts. *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport*, **6**, 19-29.
- Back, A., & Kim, D. (1984). The future course of the Eastern martial arts. *Quest*, **36**, 7-14.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Toward a new modernity*. London: Sage.
- Becker, G.B. (1982). Philosophical perspectives on the martial arts in America. *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, **9**, 19-29.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *Sociology in question*. London: Sage Publications.
- Columbus, P. & Rice, D. (1997). Phenomenological meanings of martial arts participation. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, **21**(1), 16-28.
- Cooper, J. C. (1981). *Taoism*. Wellingborough, UK: Aquarian Press.
- Cox, J. (1993). Traditional Asian martial arts training: A review. *Quest*, **45**, 366-388.
- Figueroa, P. (1993). Equality, multiculturalism, anti racism and physical education in the National Curriculum. In J. Evans (Ed.), *Equality, education and physical education* (pp. 90-104). London: The Falmer Press.
- Fields, R. (1991). *The code of the warrior, in history, myth and everyday life*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Finkenber, M.E. (1990). Effect of participation in Taekwondo in college women's self concept. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, **71**, 891-894.
- Fuller, J.R. (1988). Martial arts and psychological health. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, **61**, 317-328.
- Funakoshi, G. (1973). *Karate-do Kyohan: The master text*. Ohshima, Japan: Kodansha International.
- Funakoshi, G. (1975). *Karate-do: My way of life*. Ohshima, Japan: Kodansha International.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Harvey, J., & Sparks, R. (1991). The politics of the body in the context of modernity. *Quest*, **43**, 164-189.
- Hoberman, J. (1992). *Mortal engines: The science of performance and the dehumanization of sport*. Oxford: Macmillan.
- Hoff, B. (1982). *The Tao of Pooh*. London: Viking.
- Kauz, H. (1977). *The martial spirit: An introduction to the origin, philosophy and psychology of the martial arts*. New York: The Overlook Press.
- Kirk, D. (1992). *Defining physical education: The social construction of a school subject in postwar Britain*. London: The Falmer Press.
- Kirk, D. (1993). *The body, schooling and culture*. Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Kirk, D. (1999). Physical culture, physical education and relational analysis. *Sport Education and Society*, **4**(1), 63-73.

- Kleinman, S. (Ed.). (1986). *Mind and body: East meets West*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Lee, B. (1997). *The Tao of Gung Fu: A study in the way of a Chinese martial art*. Boston: Charles Turtle Co. Inc.
- Levine, D. E. (1991). Martial arts as a resource for liberal education: The case of Aikido. In M. Featherstone, M. Hepworth & B. Turner (Eds), *The body: Social process and cultural theory* (pp. 209-224). London: Sage.
- Madden, M.E. (1990). Attributions of control and vulnerability at the beginning and end of a karate course. *Perceptual and Motor skills*, **70**, 787-794.
- Mangan, J. A. (1981). *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school: The emergence and consolidation of an educational ideology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Messner, M. (1992). *Power at play: Sports and the problem of masculinity*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Newman, J. (1989). *Bushido: The Way of the warrior: A new perspective on the Japanese military tradition*. New York: Gallery Books.
- Payne, P. (1981). *Martial arts: The spiritual dimension*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Richman, C.L. & Rehberg, H. (1986). The development of self-esteem through the martial arts. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, **17**, 234-239.
- Sartre, J.-P. (1966). *Being and nothingness*. Washington: Square Press. (Original work published 1943).
- Soo, C. (1984). *The Chinese art of Tai Chi Chuan: The Taoist way to mental and physical health*. London: The Aquarian Press.
- Sparkes, A., Templin, T., & Schempp, P. (1990). The problematic nature of a career in a marginal subject: Some implications for teacher education programmes. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, **16**(1), 3-27.
- Sparkes, A.C. (1985). Martial movement sequences. *Bulletin of Physical Education*, **21**(1), 40-43.
- Synnott, A. (1992). Tomb, temple, machine and self: The social construction of the body. *British Journal of Sociology*, **43**, 79-110.
- Tinning, R. (1990). *Ideology and physical education*. Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Thirer, J., & Grabiner, M.D. (1980). Self actualisation through Zen and the martial arts. *Review of Sport and Leisure*, **6**, 79-92.
- Tzu, L. (1961). *Tao Teh Ching*. London: Shambala.
- Trujillo, N. (1995). Machines, missiles, and men: Images of the male body on ABC's Monday night football. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, **12**, 403-423.
- Whithead, M. (1992). Body as machine and body as self in teaching physical education. In T. Williams., L. Almond, & A. Sparkes (Eds.), *Sport and physical activity* (pp. 376-382). London: Human Kinetics.

---

### Acknowledgments

We extend our thanks to Prof. John Evans (Loughborough University), Prof. Andrew Sparkes (Exeter University), Sifu Gavin Blackburn (Close Range Combat Academy UK), the reviewers and the editor for their supportive and helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. We would also like to dedicate this paper to the memory of Dr. Trevor Williams. It was following discussions with Trevor that the perspective of the martial arts as a social practice and the educational potential of them emerged. He also encouraged us to write a paper on it.

Copyright of Quest (00336297) is the property of Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.