

2017

From Dawn to Dan: The Journey of Karate Masters.

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FROM DAWN TO DAWN
THE JOURNEY OF KARATE MASTERS

A dissertation presented to the faculty of

ANTIOCH UNIVERSITY SANTA BARBARA

In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

In
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

by

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May 19th, 2017

FROM DAWN TO DAN

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This dissertation, by Brandon Maynard, has been approved by the committee members signed below who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of Antioch University Santa Barbara in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

The contributions martial arts training can make to mental health treatment have scarcely been explored by researchers in psychology. Practitioners of martial arts, such as karate, report that the training improves self-esteem, concentration, and emotional well-being. Several studies have provided empirical evidence in support of these anecdotal reports, but very few have utilized participants who have advanced training in martial arts to examine the emotional impact such training has across time. This study takes a phenomenological approach to studying the emotional effects training has had on master-level martial artists (fourth-degree black belt or higher) in the discipline of karate. Eight participants were interviewed to identify how karate has impacted their personal lives as well as the lives of the students they have trained. The themes identified verify that practicing martial arts increases self-esteem, emotional well-being, memory, prosocial behaviors, and humility. These expert participants also voiced that many of their students – who suffered with a range of emotional conditions – experienced similar benefits from even brief (three to six months) practice of their martial art. The eight karate masters interviewed all report that their martial arts training positively impacted their emotional lives and mental functioning, but empirical research is needed to verify and quantify the positive effects karate training can have on emotional health. This Dissertation is available in Open Access at AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, <http://aura.antioch.edu> and OhioLink ETD Center, <http://www.ohiolink.edu/etd>.

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Glossary of Terms

Dan: A Japanese term for a martial artist that has attained the rank of black belt. There are often ten different degrees of this rank (Morgan, 1992).

Daimyo: A Japanese term for a Lord, someone who managed or ruled a prefecture in Japan. Usually had their own army of samurai.

Grappling: A martial arts focus that refers to ground combat with holds, throws, and wrestling (Haines, 1995).

Judo: A martial arts discipline that focuses on throws and grappling (Haines, 1995).

Judoka: A Japanese term for a student of the judo martial art (Haines, 1995).

Karate: A martial art that originated in the Okinawan islands of Japan. The word means “empty hand”. It is a self-defense and fighting style that relies on strikes, kicks, forms, and stances (Genovese, 1980).

Karateka: A Japanese term for a student of karate (Genovese, 1980).

Kabudo: Japanese term for the use of weapons in a *kata* (forms) or training.

Kohai: Japanese term for junior student (Jako, 2009).

Kumite: A Japanese term for another focus of martial arts where an individual trains with a partner. Has become a competitive aspect of most competitive martial arts (Genovese, 1980).

Kung Fu: A discipline of martial arts that originated in either India or China. Focuses on harmony and discipline and is often referred to as a ‘soft style’ due to fluid movements and the focus on redirecting opponents’ forces during practice (Haines, 1995).

Kyu: A Japanese term assigned to students who are below the rank of black belt, the lower the number of the *Kyu* rank, the closer the practitioner is to the rank of black belt (Prince, 1996).

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Mixed Martial Arts (MMA): A common competitive practice of martial arts where practitioners synthesize various disciplines and engage with a partner in either a practice or combative arena (Borer & Schafer, 2011).

Ronin: Japanese term for a samurai without a master, usually a rogue or someone whose master has been killed (Genovese, 1980).

Samurai: Japanese term for a servant warrior who fought for a *Daimyo*, and ultimately the Emperor or Shogunate. They were part of a warrior class that was given prestige and could own land (Genovese, 1980).

Sempai: Japanese term for senior student (Jako, 2009).

Sensei: Japanese term for teacher of Japanese martial arts (Jako, 2009).

Shifu: Chinese term for teacher of kung fu (Haines, 1995).

Shogun: Up until the Meiji restoration of the 19th century, the *shogun* made political and military decisions, though the Emperor was the ruler of Japan (Haines, 1995).

Shotokan karate: A discipline of karate founded by martial-arts master Gichin Funakoshi. The first official dojo was built in 1936 in Mejiro, Japan. Now, *Shotokan* karate is a common discipline of karate practiced throughout the world, and the common form of karate discussed in previous research (Haines, 1995).

Shuri Ryu: A discipline of karate founded by Grandmaster Robert Trias, who trained in Japan and began this form in the United States (Morgan, 1992).

Soke: Japanese term for founder (Jako, 2009).

Tae kwon do: A discipline of martial arts from Korea that focuses on kicks, a very common form of martial arts that was synthesized by many martial artists in Korea during the 1940s. This martial art is the most widely taught throughout the United States (Haines, 1995).

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United States Karate Alliance: USKA is a governing martial arts association founded by Grandmaster Robert Trias, after branching off from the United States Karate Association. The USKA governs many disciplines in the western United States and is headquartered in New Mexico. Additionally, this is one of the two organizations from which participants for the study were recruited.

United States Association of Martial Artists: USAMA is a more recent martial-arts association that branched off from the USKA in 2012. They govern martial arts disciplines in the midwestern and eastern United States and are headquartered in Colorado. Additionally, this is one of the two organizations from which participants for the study were recruited.

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

“There is nothing outside of yourself that can ever enable you to get better, stronger, richer, quicker, or smarter. Everything is within. Everything exists. Seek nothing outside of yourself” (Miyamoto, 2005). This is one of many sayings ascribed to the 15th-century Japanese Samurai Miyamoto Musashi, one of the most recognized warriors of medieval Japan. Also, known as Niten Doraku, his exploits are legendary in Japanese folklore. He founded the martial art style of *hyoho niten ichi-ryu*. After reportedly winning many duels, and living as a *Ronin* (samurai without a Lord), he retired to the caves of Reigando and authored *Go Rin No Sho*, or the *Book of Five Rings*. Through this book, he passed on his knowledge and philosophy as a warrior, artist, and teacher.

The traits of dedication and perseverance have been considered virtues across cultures and historical periods. Individuals who possess these traits are viewed favorably and are often considered to possess other virtuous attributes, such as honor, integrity, resiliency, and confidence. People who demonstrate these traits through words and deeds are often treated as role models within their respective social environments, and frequently guide others seeking to gain these attributes. An archetype that follows this pattern throughout history is that of the warrior – an individual dedicated to the art of combat whose reputation often outlives them (Haines, 1995).

A longstanding Japanese role model and example of such an ideal warrior that has recently spread across the globe due to the influence of movies, video games, and graphic novels, is the karate master (Morgan, 1992). However, it is important to note that although they are now being recognized as a master of their craft, these master martial artists all began as students that lacked all martial arts training and skill. The path that leads from being a disciple of karate, or a

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karateka, to becoming a master distinguished by their accomplishments is inspiring, as it highlights astonishing dedication and perseverance. Even those who are poorly acquainted with the martial arts regard karate masters with a surprising degree of reverence. Given how unusual it is to find individuals who possess this level of dedication, it is surprising that very little clinical research has been conducted to study the personal qualities or emotional makeup of martial arts masters.

Theoretical Framework

Many martial arts originate from foreign countries like Japan and have their own language or use specific terms. Both Japanese-Buddhist philosophy and the discipline of karate value a more collectivist approach to life that minimizes the importance of the self. Both schools of thought place their emphasis on internal processes and the development of self-control (Gregory, 2012). Both traditions also believe in the importance of social hierarchy, and in both, one's rank is attained through a training process where one must practice diligently and pass tests to advance. Additionally, age has a special importance in traditional martial arts and some ranks cannot be attained until one reaches a certain age or level of physical maturity (Genovese, 1980).

It should also be noted that the philosophy that is foundational to karate practice and the karate system is grounded in traditional Japanese values, which are an outgrowth of Japanese historical and cultural developments (Haines, 1995). The founders or lineage holders of a martial arts style are given special reverence and respect within their martial arts community (Jako, 2009). The role of the self plays a smaller role and individuals are thought to grow through discipline, focus, control, and humility (Morgan, 1992).

Self-Esteem

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Self. Two key components in karate's understanding of self-development are how the self is seen internally and externally. Martial arts and the philosophy it leans on conceptualize the self as an emergent product at the intersection of the individual's internal world and their external environment (Taylor, 2015). The self is separated into two key parts. One is the *internal self*, which refers to the individual's inner being that is responsible for feelings and thoughts. It is important to distinguish this from its public counterpart, the *self as an institution*. This second part of the self is the self an individual presents, how he/she acts or thinks, based on the environment he/she is in currently (Richman, 2015).

Social Influences on the Development of Self-Esteem in Karate.

An individual's self-esteem is influenced by the social environment or his or her physical health (Choi, 2015). One way the social environment can shape one's self-esteem is through social influences: larger groups place a greater pressure to conform to norms than smaller ones. Social pressure may influence or stress conformity and norms which may impact self-identity or esteem. Simply by functioning within a social environment, an individual will come across many influences that impact the decisions they make. These influences are important to the development of the self in the study of karate.

Individuals with *high self-esteem* tend to view themselves as capable and able to deal with the challenges of daily life. They are more likely to attempt new activities, because these activities have intrinsic value (the individual sees value in undertaking the activity), or because the activities provide external value such as rewards or compensation (Taylor, 2015). In western thinking, individual development and success are viewed as healthy and are attributed to individuals who are highly functional in the personal, social, and occupational realms of their lives (Kuwabara, 2014). From a clinical perspective, it seems that people are located on a

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spectrum of self-esteem that ranges from high to low based on their personal evaluations (Conant, 2007).

On the other side of this spectrum, individuals with *low self-esteem* tend to see themselves as less competent and perhaps experience social inferiority (Shalom, 2015). These individuals tend to avoid new activities that may increase the negative emotional experiences they associate with failure or judgment. Clinically, these people may have mood disturbances that are associated with anxiety, depression, and/or anger (Crocker, 2002). With the advancement of social media, many people hide behind technology to avoid the risks of social interaction. In this way, an individual may have time to thoroughly plan their interactions with people without the pressure of social cues or interpersonal interaction (Shalom, 2015).

An individualistic sense of self emphasizes the importance of individual development and growth. These cultures tend to focus on independence and success based on the individual's successes or uniqueness. Collectivistic cultures tend to focus more on uniformity, the individual becomes a part of the culture, and success is based on how the individual contributes to their respective social environments. Besides the similarities between the individualistic and collectivistic constructed senses of self, it should also be noted that the self is an important component in both karate and emotional health. Some researchers have argued that the sense of self is determined by a combination of environmental influences and genetic predisposition (Choi, 2015). Western paradigms (that is, how mental health is determined in Western Europe, the United States, Australia, and Canada) tend to emphasize individual function and the individual's ability to manage daily living (Wesnousky, 2015). Collectivistic cultures, like Japan or South Korea, may examine mental health from a communal standpoint, considering, for example, how an individual functions within the system and with an eye towards the trans-

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generational consequences of behaviors. An individual from one culture may thus have a different view of the importance of individual uniqueness than an individual from a different culture (Kuwabara, 2014). Another component of the sense of self common to both cultures is the importance of the emotion of shame. Shame for a person in a western culture is individual, and the treatment is of the individual. Conversely, predominantly collectivistic cultures examine shame as a toxic, dangerous phenomenon that impacts the community. The severity of the individual's shame also depends on the role of the person within that community, and how much responsibility they have (Dos-Gozkan, 2015).

The current research examines the various themes that can influence the development of self-esteem, resilience, and emotional regulation among martial artists. Karate masters often maintain strong ties with their martial arts communities and dojos and are viewed with respect and reverence in their larger social arenas (Jansen & Dahmen-Zimmer, 2012). Individuals who embody certain values of their martial arts culture (honor, integrity, respect, humility, etc....) may attain the status of a virtuoso, and within the community of karate, become masters (Genovese, 1980). In the community of *karateka*, practitioners often look up to these examples (Jako, 2009). This is similar to many of the goals of therapists and clients such as higher quality of life, positive social relationships, and a healthy sense of self (Oulanova, 2009).

Purpose

This study examines the role karate has played in shaping the self-esteem, emotional well-being, and emotional resiliency of master-level *karateka*. In addition, the study touches on their reasons for continuing to practice when emotional blockages or setbacks interfere with their training. It identifies common themes in the lives of these expert-level practitioners and thus allows for the development of clinical techniques that draw on martial arts practices to manage

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mood. Furthermore, researchers investigating karate or other martial arts may find this study useful as a framework for their own investigations.

This study is phenomenological, meaning it pursues themes and uses qualitative data analysis. The data is thus not easily quantifiable, as it comes from interviews and theme consolidation and comparison.

Clinicians treating people with mood disorders may benefit from understanding how karate has implemented training techniques that grow out of a form of philosophical and/or spiritual practice. These techniques have not been defined, but identifying them may quantify karate and its use in a clinical setting. Chapter II reviews the research on the effects of the mental and physical conditioning of karate practitioners. By interviewing masters, underlying themes are identified that connect traditional Japanese spiritual principles with western philosophical ideas and assessments of the quality of life.

Limitations

It should be noted that since this study is qualitative, it does not utilize the psychometric or personality measurement tools often associated with quantitative research. Also, the participants of this study are karate masters from the southern and central United States. Thus, the results of this study should not be generalized to karate masters in other countries such as Japan, where karate originated (Haines, 1995). Furthermore, the number of participants in this study is small. As such, the themes and data gathered by the present study cannot be considered conclusive and applicable to all practitioners of karate. Additionally, this researcher is also a first-degree black belt in karate, which provides a personal interest on this topic.

In this first chapter, a brief overview was given on the background of mental health and karate. The background and purpose were also briefly discussed. The following chapter discusses

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the extant research on the topic, providing an evaluation of the literature related to karate and mental health.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

In this chapter, a series of articles, reviews, and dissertations are examined to acquaint the reader with important principles of Japanese culture and the rise of karate. This information includes the historical development of Japan from a subordinate country to an independent superpower, as well as the development of its philosophy and culture (Henshall, 2001). Okinawan culture and history are also briefly examined, with specific attention being paid to common misconceptions about its history, and about the development of empty-hand martial art. Karate itself is discussed following Okinawan history to iterate the rise and popularity of martial arts in the United States and other western countries. Current and previous research was examined to consider the physical and emotional effects of practicing karate on numerous clinical populations.

Brief Historical Background of Japanese Culture. Japan originated as an island nation of many different regions, with respective *Daimyos*, or Lords. In feudal Japan (between 1333-1568 AD), there was frequent warfare between different states until prominent warlords, like Nobunaga Oda and Tokugawa Ieyasu, united the land during the Edo period. This effectively ended the era of feudal Japan (Prince, 1996) and began an era where the samurai became obsolete in their service to their *Daimyos*. Honor and discipline became an integrated part of Japanese culture, culminating in the concept of *bushido*, the code that samurai was expected to live by (Morgan, 1992).

The Tokugawa Shogunate focused on consolidating Japan's forces and maintaining order. *Daimyos* were required to take up residency in the Japanese capital and disperse their samurai to designated duties. During this time, the Shogunate eliminated foreign influence and

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focused on unifying Japan to a significant homo-ethnic nation state (Weston, 2002). Spirituality remained central to Japanese culture, as did rank and order.

When the samurai were made obsolete during the 17th and 18th centuries, many went on to become philosophers, artists, and martial arts teachers (Haines, 1995). Emperor Meiji's efforts in the late 19th and early 20th century to reform Japan into a modern state succeeded only partially and many samurai still clung to the old ways of *bushido* (Genovese, 1980). The samurai were finally displaced during the Satsuma Rebellion in 1877 (Morgan, 1992), but reemerged shortly after. Karate became a central part of Japanese culture and was taught to many Japanese people as a part of their education (Haines, 1995).

Brief History of Okinawan Culture. Much of Okinawan culture overlaps with that of Japan. The Okinawan prefecture held a dominant role throughout the 17th to 19th centuries. Before this era, the island chains that make up Okinawa were either controlled or heavily influenced by China (Kerr, 1958). As Japan dominated Southeast Asia during the Edo period, severe sanctions were placed on Okinawa after it was taken over from China. One such sanction was the removal of metal, thus severely limiting the prefecture's capacity for warfare. However, some historians hold that the inhabitants of the region developed a martial art that did not require traditional metal weapons during this time (Haines, 1995). Many of the weapons were supposedly ordinary farm tools (Prince, 1996). Empty-hand martial art remains Okinawa's largest cultural export.

Buddhism and Karate. Buddhist principles have heavily influenced the philosophy of both Japan and karate. An example is the belief that discipline ought to be used to minimize the self, to escape from human desires, and to control emotions like anxiety or anger. The idea of selflessness is particularly important in leading individuals to pursue the idea of emptiness and avoidance of selfishness. This process, according to some, translates into honor, a guiding

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principle of *bushido* (Ikegami, 1996). The values of Buddhism include principles of honor, honesty, and respect. These principles are often found in Japanese martial arts such as karate, judo, and aikido (Haines).

The *bushido* code serves as a template upon which many dojos base their individual school codes, or *dojo kuns* (Genovese, 1980). The concept that individuals should dedicate their lives to ideals greater than themselves, coupled with principles of integrity, honesty, and respect, is central to many *dojo kuns* (Haines, 1995). Honor is often the largest component of martial arts, and it is integral to Japanese philosophy. Honor requires the individual to submit to the needs of their community (Sanharakshita, 2007).

Historical Background of Karate. As the Okinawan islands shifted between Japanese and Chinese imperial rule, they became a frequent battleground for fights for dominance over the Southeastern Asian shores (Genovese, 1980). Japan remained a strong monarchy, ruled by an Emperor. However, between the 17th and the 19th century, the *shogun* was responsible for the country's maintenance and power. As Okinawa remained a prefecture of Japan, they began to formulate a self-defense system to maintain their own strength.

Okinawan karate masters, such as Gichin Funakoshi, often dubbed the "Father of Karate" (Haines, 1995), and Anko Itosu, taught their respective arts in the form of *kata*, movements carried out in sequence (Jako, 2009). Karate grew in popularity and was practiced on the main islands of Japan throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. After World War II, the Allied Forces occupied much of Japan and the country's culture became a subject of interest for many westerners (Prince, 1996). In the 1940s and 1950s, practitioners of karate like Funakoshi introduced the martial art to the United States where it slowly grew in popularity throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s (Haines, 1995). As the competitive sport grew in popularity, clinicians and

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researchers began investigating the physical and psychological effects of martial arts (Endler, King, & Herring, 1985).

However, another competitive martial art began growing in popularity in the United States during the 1990s, mixed martial arts (MMA). Calls to have it banned due to its aggressive nature and higher risk of injury were unsuccessful (Chen & Cheesman, 2013). As MMA became more popular, the scientific community also began to take an interest in it (Brent & Kraska, 2013).

Japanese Karate and its Layout. Genovese (1980) undertook a ten-month ethnographic study to understand karate in its original cultural context of Japan. During doctoral research in Anthropology, Genovese examined the layout of karate, as well as its ranking system. Despite being over 30 years old, many of its findings still hold true (Jako, 2010).

Karate's Rank System. Hierarchy is an important aspect of Japanese culture and history, dating back to the Tokugawa Shogunate in the 17th century. This concept carries over to the discipline of karate. The official system of *dan* and *kyu* was not adopted until 1971 (Genovese, 1980). Before then, titles held more importance. *Soke* was the term used for a founder. It was a title of great honor often reserved for the patriarchal heads of martial arts systems. *Sensei* was a term used for an individual who had mastered enough of the art to teach it to new students, effectively granting them a type of license (Haines, 1995). *Sempais* were senior students who were given the privilege of seniority in traditional martial arts. On the other hand, *kohai* was a name given to junior students. Traditionally, a person with a higher rank was given more respect and privilege (Genovese, 1980).

Karateka were required to wear a *gi* (uniform) for dojo cohesiveness. *Fajko* ranking (a traditional ranking of *karateka* in martial arts) standards were developed and used as the template

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of many promotional systems, namely the *kyu* and *dan*. No ranking system is universal across disciplines, but traditionally the age requirement to achieve *dan* status is adolescence or older (Genovese, 1980). There were no age requirements for the *kyu* ranks, but achieving *dan* rank and higher usually required a sense of mastery and maturity (Haines, 1995). Usually, individuals between first and third *kyu* would wear a brown belt, symbolizing the advancement of the *karateka* and their proximity to the black-belt rank.

Studies on Karate and Mood

Athletic involvement is said to lead to mood regulation through decreased levels of emotional disturbances such as anxiety, depression, and aggression (Oulanova, 2009). One of the key components of karate is managing emotions and utilizing them effectively. For instance, individuals who participate in *kata* competitions require some form of perceived aggression during their performance. However, the etiquette involved before and after the *kata* requires calmness and control (Morgan, 1992). Additionally, if an individual does not demonstrate an appropriate amount of emotional control, it could delay their advancement in many traditional martial art systems (McGowan, 1991).

In an older study, McGowan examined how a single exercise bout could alter the mood of individuals. Utilizing a convenience sampling method at a local college in Montana, 72 college students were recruited and separated into four exercise classes: karate (n = 11), weight training (n = 26), jogging (n = 25), and a physical education lecture (n = 10, the control group). Demographics were not identified. The profile of mood states test (POMS), a 1-5 point Likert scale, was utilized to measure anxiety, depression, dejection, anger, fatigue, and confusion. All participants engaged in a 75-minute class, with the POMS being administered before, during, and after their respective classes.

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The researcher found that all physical exercise classes demonstrated lower measures across all six fields of the POMS when compared to the control group. Additionally, individuals within the karate group had lower measures of confusion and fatigue than the weight-training or jogging groups. McGowan (1991) argues that a single exercise bout is sufficient to reduce emotional disturbances such as aggression or depression (McGowan, 1991). Unfortunately, this study is quite old and features a small sample size as well as only a single measurement tool. As such, its findings should not be regarded too highly.

In a study conducted 10 years later, researchers examined the role of withdrawal from sports practice among *karateka* (Szabo, 2001). Eighty individuals in the United Kingdom were recruited within the *Shotokan* style of karate at or near the black-belt level. However, only 20 were chosen for the study (10 males and 10 females). Eighteen of the participants were ranked at the black-belt level and two at the brown-belt level. All participants were tasked with filling out the POMS and the wellbeing questionnaire (WBQ) over a period of 28 days, with a period of 14 days where they were barred from participating in any martial arts.

After the 28-day trial, data was collected from the POMS and WBQ to analyze mood differences. There were no significant differences between male and female *karateka*. Areas of significant change were decreases in positive affect and vigor, as well as increases in negative affect, anger, tension, depression, and total mood disturbances when the participants were barred from participating in martial arts. Total mood disturbance showed the highest range of increase. Szabo (2001) argued that continued participation within a sport maintains a consistent management of emotional disturbances. Disrupting this balance can bring back these disturbances at equal or greater levels than before (Szabo, 2001). It should be noted that both researchers were respected martial artists, and attained their sample through convenience

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sampling. More objective research would help validate their results and limit bias and potential confounding variables. However, as the present study is subjective, it will not have the capabilities to remediate this issue.

One year later, in 2002, an Italian research study examined pre-competition emotions (positive or negative) and their impact on performance (Robazza & Bartoli, 2002). The ten participants in the study were elite *karateka*, ranking at *shodan* level or higher. The participants had begun practicing karate between the ages of eight and 18. They practiced for two hours at a time four times a week. Eight of the participants were members of Italy's national competitive karate team, and five were Italian national champions. These *karateka* were followed over the course of 10 competitions. Before and after competitions, they were asked to identify specific emotional and bodily descriptors to describe how they perceived their best and worst performances. The descriptors were collated and analyzed through a frequency method to identify themes.

The results were processed by the Borg category ratio (CR-10) to identify the intensity of the descriptors. All the descriptors were then identified as functional (positive/supportive) or dysfunctional (negative). Of all the competitions, 34 performances were identified as good, 57 as average, and 9 as poor. The researchers found that individuals who demonstrated positive and functional perceptions of themselves and their performance (functional/supportive descriptors) tended to perform better than those participants who identified negative (dysfunctional) descriptors. The researchers argued that emotionality may enhance or impede performance even amongst elite *karateka* during tournament competitions (Robazza & Bartoli, 2002).

A similar study was conducted in 2011 (Cerin & Barnett, 2011), examining the role of pre- and post-competition states and performance. This study recruited 44 male martial artists in

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Texas. Twenty-two participants were *karateka* while the other 22 were students of tae kwon do. Most participants were ranked at the national level ($n = 38$) and six were ranked at the international level. The neuroticism and extraversion scale (NEO-PI-R) was utilized to identify the personality types of this sample of elite-level martial arts practitioners. All the questionnaires were filled out over an 11-day period. Participants were prompted at random times throughout this period to complete the questionnaire. Of the initial 44 participants, only 39 completed the assessment. Data was then collected and analyzed to establish a correlation between personality type and competition performance.

Cerin and Barnett (2011) found that individuals who measured higher in the neuroticism scale tended to report higher shyness, shame, and hostility. These traits are connected to performance anxiety. Individuals who ranked high on neuroticism tended to fear failure, enjoy competitions less, and fear negative social evaluations more than those participants who ranked higher in extraversion. Individuals who ranked higher in extraversion enjoyed karate competitions due to the social aspect and the engagement with other individuals within their chosen martial arts field (Cerin & Barnett, 2011). However, the study had a smaller sample and did not specify any demographic information that could generalize their results to broader populations.

Many martial arts are reported to share similarities with psychotherapy in the pursuit of emotional regulation and personal development. Weiser (1995) conducted a literature review that examined such parallels between martial arts and psychotherapy. The author reports that physical fitness has been utilized to reduce and manage emotional disturbances such as depression, anxiety, and anger and to increase mental performance and concentration.

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Kihon focuses on the unification of the mind and body through the practice of specific techniques. *Kata* unifies the body and mind through the practice of physical skills and emotional management. *Kumite* overcomes fear of an opponent. The dojo is compared to a therapeutic facility in which all three of these disciplines are practiced (Weiser, 1995). However, it should be noted that Weiser's literature review is old and he does not specify which studies prove that these similarities exist. Instead, the review states that such parallels are theoretical or philosophical.

Another literature review (Oulanova, 2009) examined therapeutic concepts relating to martial arts with similar conclusions. This review, however, used current research and improved the reliability of the previous study. Oulanova argues that karate and psychotherapy have similar qualities, such as finding balance and incorporating mindfulness. Many of Oulanova's statements, however, are left untested. For instance, she proposed that utilizing karate could produce emotional and physical benefits, but provided no evidence. Future research is needed to confirm this claim.

A more recent literature review by Gregory (2012) examined the therapeutic similarities between tai chi and psychotherapy, and theorized that principles of tai chi could be used with mind-body hypnotherapy. Gregory reviews and discusses how hypnotherapy and psychotherapy have been utilized for over two decades, and notes that the concept of healing has many facets. The author reports that tai chi's principles of harmony, rooting, and focus on physiological balance share similarities with those of hypnotherapy and could also be used in psychotherapy. It is possible that the subjective experiences of master-level *karateka* could provide the scientific community with greater insight into the role of healing in martial arts and its similarities with psychotherapy.

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Research on martial arts and substance use is very limited. One study by Soussi, Adelelmelek, Chtourou, Boussita, Hakim, and Sahnoun (2013) used a sample of 12 elite judokas who were given caffeine during their early morning practice. Then, the POMS was utilized to examine any mood changes they experienced. Soussi et al. found that caffeine increased anxiety, vigor, and fatigue. This indicates that the use of a substance before practice can skew one's mood. However, the study does not conclude that substances affect martial arts practitioners differently than the general population (Soussi et al. 2013).

The overlapping themes of these research projects iterate that the practice of martial arts seems to be supportive of managing emotional regulation and building self-esteem. Available research has confirmed that psychotherapy has many similarities with the principles of karate, such as the importance of mindfulness, self-control, and personal growth. Additional benefits include that exercise itself mitigates the effects of emotional disturbances such as depression, anxiety, and anger. This indicates that it could potentially be used as a supplemental treatment to psychotherapy. However, much of the existing research is scattered. It fails to center on a topic, leaving the scientific community with no data to support the claims made by the studies in any significant way.

Karate and Aggression. Aggression is a key component in martial arts practice. It is argued by Trebicky, Haylicek, Roberts, Little, and Kleisner (2013) that self-defense, *kata* competitions, and sparring all require sufficient amounts of aggression to build the intent and efficacy required to effectively partake in the martial art. Trebicky et al. (2013) examined the physical displays of aggression and perception by individuals against the actual records and performances of the participants. Photographs of the fighters were taken and shown to a sample of 618 individuals (216 men, 402 women) in the Czech Republic. These individuals were asked to rank the

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perceived aggressiveness of the fighters on a 1-7 Likert scale. All fighters were separated into three weight classes (light, middle, and heavyweight). Fighting ability was also examined through the reports of the participants. Trebicky et al. (2013) found that individuals tended to view fighters as more aggressive or possessing better fighting ability depending on their weight. Individuals in the heavyweight ranks were perceived with the highest levels of aggression and fighting ability, while the middle and lightweights were perceived as being less aggressive and worse at fighting. When comparing the fight records of the fighters with perceived aggressiveness, there was a positive correlation between levels of perceived aggressiveness and number of fights won (Trebicky et al. 2013).

Aggression has a role in mood as well. The hormone peaks experienced during adolescence, for example, can increase aggression. Vertonghen and Theeboom (2012) examined the role of aggression and intensity amongst adolescent martial arts practitioners. The study examined 477 students with the Aggression Questionnaire and the Strengths and Weakness questionnaire. In addition, 307 parents also filled out these questionnaires to identify contextual factors to martial arts participation. Three martial arts were examined: Thai kick boxing, judo, and karate. Aggression management was analyzed through these questionnaires and through behavioral observations of the participants. No further demographic information was provided, and the study does not reveal the number of participants in each martial arts discipline.

Based on their observations and questionnaire results, Verthogen and Theeboom (2012) stated that individuals with a lower socioeconomic status tended to prefer the physical aggression of Thai kick boxing over the other disciplines. The focus on self was ranked higher among judo and Thai kick boxing practitioners due to the nature of utilizing one's own skills to dominate opponents. Prevalent teaching styles among the disciplines were also examined: traditional,

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education sporting, and efficiency (competition-focused). The researchers found that individuals who ranked higher in aggression tended to participate in efficiency-based martial arts. Of these, Thai kick boxing ranked the highest. Karate ranked high within all three teaching styles, but measured lower on aggression than judo and Thai kick boxing. The researchers argued that personality and aggression manifest differently within cultural contexts (socio-economic status), and that participation may be dependent on the teaching styles of the martial art (Vertonghen & Theeboom, 2012).

A qualitative study was conducted to examine the role of aggression in a softer-style martial art: kung fu (Fletcher & Milton, 2009). Six practitioners were acquired through advertisements within the community in the United Kingdom. All participants were required to have a high rank (grade 4), as verified by the interviewers. The interviews conducted were semi-structured and included an open-ended discussion. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed to produce findings. All recordings were destroyed afterwards. All participants were male and ranged between 21 and 49 years of age, with two to 14 years of practice.

According to the participants, aggression was subjective and difficult to define. They placed it within the realm of fear and said that it needed to be managed to produce a balanced mind-body connection. This balance allowed aggression to be practiced with control. Being out of balance, the participants reported, produced poor control, posture, and performance. Aggression was reported to have two facets: physical and mental. However, this study examined only kung-fu practitioners, and the sample was very small.

Reynes and Lorant (2004) examined aggression among adolescent males over a two-year period. Due to the length of the study, only 42 of the original 99 participants completed the

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study. All participants were either judoka or *karateka*. A 29-item 5-point Likert scale was utilized to measure four facets of aggression: physical, verbal, anger, and hostility. The language was adapted to make this scale more appropriate for foreign-language speakers, as this study took place in France. Over the two-year period, individuals within the karate group increased in anger and hostility, while the judo group demonstrated a decrease in physical aggression. The researchers argued that the data could not conclusively identify karate or judo as decreasing aggression in adolescent males due to identified differences not being significant (Reynes & Lorant, 2004). Furthermore, the study would have benefitted from a control group to identify further changes in aggression. Though it appears that anger and hostility increased in adolescent males, the sample population for this research was older and may not generalize well to all *karateka*.

Aggression plays a role in karate and is utilized to manifest the intensity of the practice of this combative sport (Haines, 1995). However, the above-mentioned researchers have stated that the practice of martial arts helps temper aggression through the development of control. In fact, the use of karate itself is argued to have mixed results among *karateka*. An increase in aggression may be due to hormonal changes in adolescence, and may not be related to practicing a Japanese-style martial art as reported by Haines. Aggression is also subjective and defined differently across martial arts: it can be internal and external. Internal aggression is utilized to fuel the motivation and practice of karate, while external aggression requires control. However, the amount of data on this topic is limited and inconclusive. Many of these studies also utilized participants who practice martial arts other than karate.

Karate and Anxiety. Karate reportedly aids the regulation of emotions (Morgan, 1992). Anxiety is a reaction that allows an individual to remain alert during times of stress. In limited amounts,

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anxiety is argued to be helpful in managing life stressors and remaining attentive to day-to-day tasks. However, when out of balance, anxiety can produce negative effects such as insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and excessive worrying. Anxiety is dependent on the perceived level of danger to one's emotional or physical safety. For *karateka*, competitions are sources of anxiety. An individual competes within their respective divisions and is judged on their performance by a panel. Winners usually attain a memento of their victory, such as a trophy, medal, or certificate.

In an older study, researchers utilized the General Trait Anxiousness Scale (S-R GTA) among 44 *karateka*. The S-R GTA is a five-faceted measure that focuses on interpersonal and physical danger as well as ambiguous, innocuous, and social evaluations of anxiety. Four of the participants were female while the remaining 40 were male. No other demographic information was provided. The anxiety levels of these individuals were tracked during a tournament in Toronto, Canada. The researchers reported that individuals had high levels of anxiety in two of the facets from the S-R GTA: physical danger perception and social evaluation of failure and success. The researchers argued that the physical dangers of *kumite* may increase anxiety, and that the fear of failure in a social situation contributes to these elevated levels (Endler, King, & Herring, 1985). This study is quite old and cannot be held in high esteem, as the research on this topic is so sparse.

Another study, conducted by Seabourne, Weinberg, and Jackson (1984), examined the use of visual-behavioral rehearsal (VBR) to moderate anxiety and emotions during physically relaxed and athletic states. Through random sampling, 18 males and 26 females between the ages of 18 and 24 years were divided into two groups that participated in a 16-week martial arts class that met three times a week (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays). The first group did not utilize VMBR (n = 26) while the second group did engage in this practice (n = 18). Both groups

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participated in weeks five, ten, and sixteen. The first group also utilized Chinese-Buddhist proverbs to enhance their *kumite* practice, being able to remain calm and collected in their sparring matches.

An ANOVA analysis was conducted to assess correlations between gender, group, and anxiety. The researchers found that individuals (both genders) who did not practice VMBR (group 1) had increased levels of anxiety compared to the second group. However, the first group initially performed better in sparring than the VMBR group, though the VMBR group finished the class with higher marks in performance compared to the first group. The researchers argued that VMBR may be a helpful tool in managing anxiety in day-to-day living while also being particularly effective in a competitive sports setting (Seabourne, Weinberg, & Jackson, 1984). This study is old and never specified any of its demographics or probed for differences between ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. To be considered valid, this study would need to be repeated with adjusted methods.

In a study conducted in 1999 by Williams, visual search strategies were examined to assess performance based on low and high anxiety situations in martial arts performance. Sixteen male martial artists were recruited (eight at expert level, eight at novice level) and separated into two groups. Expert martial artists were identified as having an average of 5.6 years of training and had participated in an average of 14.3 competitions. Novices were identified as having no competitive experience. A tape was produced that examined 10 different techniques by a *dan*-level *karateka* and separated these into high anxiety and low anxiety conditions (five trials for high anxiety, fifteen trials for low anxiety). The participants were then tasked to repeat the techniques through 20 trials and evaluated based on their performance.

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Williams and Elliott reported that all participants tended to perform better during the high-anxiety trials compared to the low-anxiety ones. Additionally, the expert *karateka* could repeat the techniques faster and with better precision and form. The original hypothesis was that the expert martial artists would learn faster than novices through their muscle memory and experience in their chosen sport. This hypothesis was confirmed. Furthermore, the researchers argued that anxiety plays a role in the performance of *karateka* in competitive environments (Williams & Elliott, 1999). As with many studies in this field, this study is old, has very little demographic information, and relies on a small pool of participants.

As karate and traditional martial arts are overshadowed by synthesized martial arts like MMA, Vocarro, Schrock, and McCabe (2011) examined the role of anxiety and fear within participants at several martial arts studios. Over a 24-month period of fieldwork, including visits to a variety of training sites, researchers gathered their data through a series of interviews. In total, 24 interviews, spanning between 45-75 minutes, were conducted with 15 local and regional fighters. In addition, 97 brief (5-15 minutes) interviews were conducted with 64 practitioners and trainers. These interviews were conducted to gather themes of reasoning for combative sport participation, as well as emotional reasoning. Of the participants, 70% were White, 11% Latino, 16% Black, and 3% Asian.

Many fighters reported that fear and anxiety are obstacles to their participation in martial arts, typically right before a competitive fight. Like Endler et al. (1985), this study found that fear among the participants appeared in two main thematic categories: fear of injury and fear of losing. However, the expert fighters reported that their experience and practice managed these fears as they grew to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, many of the participants reported that they developed internal ‘scripts’, usually a framework or mantra they

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utilized to manage anxiety throughout their day. Many individuals reported that they attempted to induce fear through intimidation and outward attitude to reach a more idealized form of themselves.

Vocarro, Schrock, and McCabe (2011) examined the role of emotions and regulation among competitive martial artists. Their study did not consider how traditional martial arts differ in the identification and management of anxiety and fear. In addition, this study did not discuss the demographic and cultural backgrounds of the participants and what impact these backgrounds could have had on the results.

Focusing on karate, an older study by Terry and Slade (1995) examined the psychological state of mind and anxiety among individuals who partook in karate competitions. Two hundred and eight *karateka* within the *Shotokan* discipline were examined at the regional level. Of these, 104 held brown belts (competing for around two years) and 104 had black belts (practicing on average for 2.5 years). The participants filled out a POMS 40 minutes before and 40 minutes after a competitive event. The Competitive Anxiety Inventory-2 was also utilized. This anxiety scale measures three subscales: cognitive anxiety, somatic anxiety, and self-confidence. This data was examined and collated to identify any correlating themes.

Terry and Slade (1995) found that both brown- and black-belt *karateka* who ended up victorious in their respective competitions measured higher on anger and vigor, and held lower scores of depression, fatigue, and confusion than their counterparts who lost their matches. Individuals who lost their events scored higher on tension, depression, anger, and confusion, while measuring lower in vigor and fatigue. The winning participants scored higher on cognitive anxiety and self-confidence after the event, while the losing participants scored lower on self-confidence and higher on both anxiety scales (cognitive and somatic). The researchers argued

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that the individuals who tended to have higher anxiety performed poorer than those who had higher measures of self-confidence, indicating that mood is a predictor of competitive performance (Terry & Slade, 1995). This study is quite old and had a pool of participants composed entirely of men. No other demographic information was provided. Perhaps identifying cultural differences or gender differences would have allowed for a more in-depth analysis of the correlation between anxiety and competition. Experienced *karateka* may also define emotions and their role in their lives through a philosophical lens. This topic is explored in the current dissertation, providing more insight.

A 1989 study by Bell and Yee examined the role of audiences on the performance of *karateka*. The study recruited 45 students, though only 33 completed the study. The study utilized four separate trials of roundhouse kicks by skilled and unskilled practitioners. There was no indication as to how many individuals were skilled or unskilled. The researchers report that individuals with higher skill tended to perform better when in front of an audience than less skilled individuals. Participants with lower skill performed worse (missed their target) in front of an audience than when they had no audience. The researchers argue that skill level may promote confidence and consistency, despite the presence of others (Bell & Yee, 1989). Experienced *karateka* often have significant tournament experience, and emotions may play a role in their performance throughout their career as a competitor.

Anxiety is a general emotion experienced by many martial arts practitioners when they are going to compete or engage in *kumite*. However, anxiety, like aggression and other mood disturbances, is tempered through the practice of karate. Karate provides the practitioner with additional resources for managing their mood more effectively, and the exercise itself appears to improve depressive symptoms such as low self-esteem and social anxiety. However, much of the

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research conducted on this topic does not examine experienced practitioners. Instead, the research groups individuals from various levels of proficiency together. Additional research in the field of mental health and martial arts would supplement this data and provide a stronger foundation for the study of martial arts and mood.

Studies on Karate with Children and Adolescents

Karate and Oppositional Defiance Disorder. Palermo, Di Luigi, Dal Forno, Dominici, Vicomandi, Sambucioni, Proietti, and Pasqualetti (2006) argued that 4-16% of the total population in the United States is affected by social deviance. They suspect that this is the case due to a lack of early interventions and ineffective attachments in early childhood. An early diagnosis of social deviance is oppositional defiance disorder (ODD), characterized by direct defiance of authority figures or instruction. In 2006, 16 children between ages of eight and 10 were enrolled in either a *Wo Da Ryu* karate class (n = 8), or given no intervention (n = 8). After ten months, a Carey temperament scale was used to measure adaptability, intensity, and mood regulation before and after the class. Based on reports from parents, teachers, and the students themselves, individuals who participated in the karate group demonstrated higher scores in adaptability and mood regulation and reduction in emotional control. The researchers suggested that karate participation improves the maladaptive symptoms of children diagnosed with ODD (Palermo et al. 2006). However, this study used a small convenience sample and did not indicate what aspects of karate reduced the reported symptoms. This study was also a pilot study, indicating a need for replication to strengthen its findings.

A literature review examined the possibility of utilizing karate or physical exercise as an alternative treatment for ODD. Palermo et al. (2006) argue that ODD may transform into a conduct disorder in adolescence, and perhaps an antisocial personality disorder in adulthood if

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left untreated. Though the authors acknowledge the psychological origins to the disorder, such as persistent trauma, they also suggested that there might be a neuropsychological component. Utilizing the physical benefits of karate and its mood mitigation properties, karate might be a helpful alternative to medications when treating ODD as an early intervention strategy to reduce the progression of the disorder (Palermo et al. 2006).

Karate and Autism. Though research into karate indicates that practicing this martial art may have emotional benefits such as fostering self-confidence and discipline, limited research has examined the potential organic benefits of martial arts on pervasive disorders such as autism. One study examined karate as a potential alternative medicine or psychomotor treatment for autism and attention deficit disorder (ADD). The study divided an unspecified number of children into two groups. All the subjects had been diagnosed with either autism or ADD. One group participated in karate while the other group received traditional therapies or medicine designed for these diagnoses. Palermo and Greydanus reported a significant increase in positive social behaviors and interactions with others in the karate-therapy group. All children within this group appeared to demonstrate a reduction in maladaptive behaviors and an increase in attention when compared to the group that had been treated with traditional methods (therapy and medicine) (Palermo & Greydanus, 2011).

Another study focused on autism and the use of *kata* techniques in managing repetitive, rigid, and maladaptive behaviors. The study split 30 children between the ages of five and 16 into two groups of 15. The sampling was random, and the participants consisted of 26 males and four females. The Gilliam autism rating scale was utilized to measure the frequency of stereotypy behaviors among both groups after one of the groups underwent a 14-week course in

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Shotokan karate. Behavioral observations were also gathered from teachers and caregivers both before and after the class, as well as 30 days after the class had ended.

The first seven weeks of the program consisted of 60-minute sessions, followed by seven weeks of 90-minute sessions that focused on the practice of Heian *shodan kata*. The researchers measured significant decreases in stereotypy behaviors among the karate group based on observations and the GARS-2 scale. Additionally, at the 30-day follow up, there remained a relatively consistent decrease in stereotypy behaviors, although the previous reductions had regressed slightly and stereotypy behaviors had become more frequent than at the assessment right after the 14-week course (Bahrami, Movahedi, Marandi, & Abedi, 2012). Bahrami et al. argue that stereotypy behaviors, largely thought of as maladaptive, are managed by karate practice through the repetition of a *kata*, as opposed to less desirable behaviors. However, it is worth noting that this study had a small sample size. No similar studies have been carried out in the United States or Europe.

Karate and Children with Disabilities. The impact of karate's concepts of self-control, confidence, and discipline on individuals who struggle with physical disabilities has also been investigated. Unfortunately, research on karate and disabilities is limited to children. In one study, 11 girls were interviewed on how physical activities, including karate, impacted their lives and how they perceived their disabilities. The participants included mostly White girls (n = 8) between the ages of 10-16 years. Two African American females were interviewed as well. Nine of the youths used a wheelchair, three had spina bifida, two had osteogenesis imperfecta, and four had cerebral palsy. These girls were sampled through a snowball method from local schools, churches, and recreational centers. They had participated in some form of physical activity and their perceptions of self and disability were assessed in a 30-60-minute interview utilizing a 25-

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item tool. The researchers found that each of these girls reported an increased positive outlook on life. Moreover, their disability did not form the entire makeup of their perception of self (Bedini & Anderson, 2005).

This research project demonstrated that physical activity may improve the quality of life among physically disabled children. However, the participants were primarily White and the sample size of the study was small. The tool utilized did not produce any objective measures on what aspects of the lives of the participants were improved. Should future research seek to understand how karate supports increased self-esteem, it would need to assess correlations between karate practice and emotional and physical wellness.

Another study focused on 15 children diagnosed with epilepsy who were enrolled in a *kempo* karate program. Of these participants, only nine completed the study due to incomplete questionnaires and a lack of parental support. The ages ranged between eight and 16 years, and most the participants (seven) were female. No further demographic information was provided. The researchers utilized the Quality of Life in Childhood Epilepsy Inventory and the Piers Harris Children's Self Concept Scale to measure the participants' self-concept and quality of life over ten weeks. Over the course of the class, the parents of the participants reported an increase in memory and attention while also observing decreases in depression and isolation (Conant, Morgan, Muzykewicz, Clark, & Thiele, 2007). Unfortunately, as nearly half of the original sample dropped out of this study, the findings of this study need to be replicated for validity.

Studies on Karate and Victimized Populations

Karate is argued to increase self-confidence and control (Hayes, 1995), two key areas that are often compromised among individuals who have dealt with victimization or trauma. One study examined aggression and martial arts amongst a sample comprised predominately of Asian

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adolescents in Hawaii. A large sample of high school students ($n = 881$) from two schools participated in a 447-item survey to measure attitudes, habits, and influences towards violence and martial arts. Of this sample, 52.3% enjoyed observing martial arts fights and 23.5% reported participating in martial arts either informally or formally. Native Hawaiian adolescents had the highest rates of watching martial arts (63.7%), while Japanese teenagers enjoyed participating in combative sports (82.8%) (Hishinuma, Unemoto, Nyugen, Chang, & Bautista, 2012).

An analysis revealed a correlation between being victimized (Samoan males) and enjoying more aggressive martial arts. The researchers suggest that this correlation may be the result of experiences of victimization among participants with a lower socio-economic status or a shared interest in self-defense for the sake of protection. Notably, this study is not indicative of the preferences of other minority populations, such as African Americans or Latinos, for combative sports.

Low socio-economic status participants may have had more victimizing experiences either in prior generations or current ones (Hishinuma et al. 2012). Sexual trauma also causes victimization and low self-control and self-esteem. Utilizing convenience sampling at a university, 87 women who had been sexually assaulted were recruited to participate in one of three courses. Of this sample, the majority were Caucasian (72.5%). The rest of the participants were African American (13%) or unspecified (14.5%). The first group ($n = 10$) took a class in traditional martial arts (TMA), the second group ($n = 32$) participated in modern self-defense training (MDST), and the third underwent a physical fitness education class ($n = 27$). During the study, 18 women dropped out, thus reducing the sample to 69 participants. All participants filled in the multi-dimensional self-efficacy scale (1-10 Likert scale), the multi-dimensional fear scale (1-5 Likert scale), and the Marlow Crown social desirability scale (true/false scale).

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The instructors of each group had no affiliation to the research team to increase the validity and reliability of the study. After the semester-long course, the group of women in the MDST class reported the highest measures of self-efficacy and reduction in fear. Though TMA did report higher measures of self-efficacy and fear reduction than the physical education class, this group did not demonstrate higher measures than individuals in the MSDT group. The researchers argued that many of the victimized women desired to learn skills to protect themselves and reduce the risk of a future assault through self-defense. A desire for self-development was not a priority for the participants. Furthermore, the authors stated that martial arts may be more appropriate for helping individuals who suffer from mood disorders such as anxiety or depression (Ball & Martin, 2012).

Self-Concepts among *Karateka*

In 1984, Konzak utilized the Cattell sixteen-personality factor scale to measure the main dimensions of personality amongst *karateka* at a Canadian university in Toronto. Konzak investigated differences between genders and skill levels among 84 *karateka* (42 male, 42 female). Of the participants, 33 were beginners, 42 were intermediates, and nine had black belts.

Konzak found that the Eastern principles of martial arts tended to provide balanced emotional states across the sample. The advanced-level female *karateka* measured higher in intelligence, self-assurance, self-esteem, trust, and relaxation than their beginner and intermediate counterparts. Advanced male *karateka* measured higher in liveliness, self-esteem, emotional stability, and relaxation than their lower level counterparts. Overall, 93% of the participants reported that karate had a significant impact on their lives, while 79% reported an increase in assertiveness, thus supporting the author's hypothesis that individuals who participate in karate longer benefit from increased emotional balance and relaxation. However, these

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findings have yet to receive support from other studies and should thus receive careful consideration. It is also possible that experienced *karateka* may synthesize Eastern principles in their daily lives, thus affecting the results of the study.

In a more recent study, emotional toughness was identified in a sample of 136 male MMA fighters, utilizing the sports mental toughness questionnaire (SMTQ), a 14-item self-report scale. This was supplemented with the alternative psychological performance inventory (APPI), another 14-item subjective report scale on mental toughness. The sample was recruited through surveys, forums, and events (MMA competitions). Of the 136 fighters, 48 were ranked as amateurs, 39 as semi-professionals, and 49 as professionals. The inclusion criteria required that all participants had partaken in at least one fight within the past year.

The researchers found that professional MMA fighters ranked higher in their SMTQ and APPI scores in mental toughness than semi-professionals or amateurs. The researchers argued that the longer an individual participates in martial arts, the more assertive and tough they feel (Chen & Cheesman, 2013). Unfortunately, the participants in this study practiced MMA. This group of fighters usually does not ascribe to many of the Eastern values promoted by most traditional martial arts. As such, it is unclear whether these findings in assertiveness and emotional toughness among MMA fighters extend to people who participate in traditional martial arts like karate.

Very little research exists that examines the self-concepts of *karateka*. Further research is needed to identify how an individual's concept of self is developed through the implementation and practice of traditional martial arts. A 2010 study examined the motivation of *karateka* at the 2004 Columbus Martial Arts World Games held in Ohio. This study had a rather large sample of 307 participants. Of these 307 participants, 81 were female and 226 were male. Half of the

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participants practiced tae kwon do, while the other half was made up of practitioners of various martial arts.

The researchers utilized the McDonald's motivation scale to identify why martial artists participated in their discipline. Most the participants reported that martial arts were fun, but many of the motivating factors centered on the themes of growth (achievement, self-esteem, and value) and related factors (fitness, self-defense, skill mastery, and stress release). The researchers argued that more experienced practitioners engaged in martial arts for self-growth, while less experienced practitioners pursued external gains (skill mastery and accomplishments) (Yong Kim, & Valacich, 2010). The study failed to provide detailed demographic information.

Lantz (2002) examined family development amongst martial arts participation. Both parents and children were involved in a qualitative study that examined themes through semi-structured interviews and observations. In total, 23 families and nine couples were recruited in Central Ohio. No demographic information was provided. The researchers found that families typically engaged in martial arts for self-defense and protection. Parents reported that they desired their children to learn self-confidence, physical fitness, and the ability to protect themselves from danger. Furthermore, community building within the dojo was important for parents and families that desired to teach children life lessons through rank promotions. The researchers argued that martial arts may serve as a potential referral for therapists due to the themes drawn from this study (Lantz, 2002).

Neuropsychological Research on Karate

Combative sports like karate, boxing, or tae kwon do have many benefits. However, there are also physical risks associated with participating in such sports. Zazryn, McCrory, and Camerson (2008) compared neurological injuries between these three sports in a meta-analysis.

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They observed data from several sources that spanned a period of 78 years to analyze head injuries. The highest prevalence of head injuries occurred in boxing at a rate of 47/100 participants. Tae kwon do ranked second with 5.6/100 participants, and karate the lowest with .09/100 participants. The researchers noted that boxing emphasizes blows to the head while tae kwon do practitioners utilize kicks as their dominant strikes. Finally, karate focuses on striking (Zazryn, McCrory, & Camerson, 2008).

In 1999, a study investigated the visuo-perceptual speed of karate practitioners throughout their rank progression. The participants of the study were made up of 50 men and 45 women who were recruited from university *Shotokan* classes, a karate club, and a *sho rei shobu* karate dojo. The participants were made up of white belts (20 men, 15 women), blue belts (15 men, 15 women), and black belts (15 men, 15 women). All participants were given pictures of techniques to replicate, which comprised of a two-part, 48-item demonstration over a period of 90 seconds. The researchers found that women tended to replicate the techniques faster than men, and that black belts (of both genders) fared better than white or blue belts with no significant differences between white and blue belts. The researchers argued that the longer an individual participates in a martial art, the better their visuo--perceptual coordination and reaction time becomes (Kim, 1999).

A recent Italian study examined the neural efficiency of expert and amateur *karateka*. The participants of this study were made up of 49 individuals (18 elites, 15 amateurs, and 17 non-practitioners) who were asked to view a series of 120 karate *kata* videos and rank them on a scale from 0 to 10. Their scores were compared against the actual scores given at the time of the *kata* performance. The purpose of the study was to examine how accurately the scores of the participants matched the official scores between the three groups. The researchers found that the

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elite *karateka* gave the *kata* scores that were much closer to the official ones than the scores given by their amateur and non-practitioner counterparts. The researchers argued that due to an individual's expertise in a martial art, they can accurately judge performances by fellow practitioners in a competitive arena (Babiloni, Marzano, Inferinato, Iaacoboni, Rizza, Aschieri, Cibelli, Soriccelli, Eusebi, & Del Percio 2010).

Another Italian study examined the endocrine responses and hormone balances amongst 24 male karate athletes. The participants were asked to compete in *kumite* against each other. A *kata* competition took place four weeks later. All competitions were completed between 6:00PM and 9:00PM in a local dojo. A hormone analysis was conducted by utilizing 10-ml blood samples 10 minutes before and after the sessions. The testosterone and cortisol levels of the participants were measured. An analysis revealed that individuals who engaged in *kumite* had heightened levels of testosterone and cortisol after their match.

Supplementing this, the researchers utilized the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI) to measure four subscales: novelty seeking, harm avoidance, reward dependence, and persistence. The researchers found that individuals with higher levels of novelty-seeking traits performed better in both *kumite* and *kata*, while those with higher levels of harm avoidance tended to perform worse. The researchers argued that personality traits and hormones may have a small correlation with performance (Parmigiani, Dadomo, Bartolomucci, Brain, Carbucicchio, Constantino, Ferrari, Palanzi, & Volpi, 2009). Regardless, the sample used by the study was small and gathered through convenience sampling, thereby limiting the usefulness of the study.

In 2006, a study examined the reaction times and attention of both high- and low-level athletes. The Zimmerman and Fimm's Attentional Test (ZaFAT) was utilized to measure attention, and the Divided Attention (TDA) test was used to examine the athletes' ability to react

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to different attentional pathways. The participants were composed of 42 athletes: 24 volleyball players (nine experts) and 18 *karateka* (nine experts). All experts had national or international rankings. The researchers reported that there were no differences between groups as per the ZaFAT assessment. However, the volleyball athletes performed better with divided memory than the *karateka* group. The researchers argued that this could be caused by volleyball's emphasis on divided attention while karate necessitates greater individual focus (Fontani, Lodi, Felici, Migliorini, & Corradeschi, 2006). However, this study failed to include women among its participants and did not include demographic information to provide contextual information.

Research on Profiling *Karateka*

Some research has examined how practicing karate, amongst other martial arts, influences mood, behaviors, and physical fitness. However, a limited amount of studies has been done on the profile of *karateka*. In this section, several studies are synthesized and reviewed to examine the overall profile of a *karateka*. The domains encompass the physical and psychological profile of karate practitioners.

In a 1999 study, the relationship between years of karate practice and the ability to learn new *kata* was examined. The hypothesis was that individuals who learned a new *kata* did so at different levels of proficiency based on their tenure as *karateka*. This study included 27 male *Shotokan* black belts who were recruited to practice the *kata Taikyoku shodan, Nidan, and Sandan*. These *kata* are the first three *kata* at *dan* level in the *Shotokan* system. All participants ranked between the first and seventh degree black belt.

The researchers discovered that high-ranking practitioners displayed slower movements than those within the first two degrees of black belt rank. However, though higher-ranking *karateka* displayed slower movements, they also learned and mastered their *kata* quicker than the

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less experienced practitioners. The researchers theorized that the longer an individual participates in a martial art, the more apt they become at learning and memorizing new or forgotten material due to muscle and cognitive memory (Layton & Moran, 1999). However, as is typical with studies in this field, no demographic information was provided and the participants did not include women.

Another study examined the frequency of right- and left-handedness amongst karate masters in England. The participants composed of 46 Caucasian males who held the ranks of master (between fifth and seventh *dan*). All individuals were simply asked to identify their dominant hand. Of the participants, 45 reported being right handed. The researcher argued that karate has strong historical ties to Buddhism in Japan where left-handedness was often believed to be a sign of bad luck. Due to this, many activities in Japan are right-handed, and karate has become a predominately right-handed sport (Layton, 1993). However, no other studies have been done to examine left-handed *karateka*, or on how learning a traditionally right-handed, orthodox sport impacts the skills of left-handed learners.

A 2012 literature review examined the physiological profile of expert *karateka* (Chaabene, Hachana, Franchini, McKrouer, & Chamari, 2012). The authors of the review discuss the history of karate and its rise in popular culture with the development of the World Karate Federation. This organization recognizes four styles of karate: *Shotokan*, *Goju*, *Shito*, and *Wato*. The authors discuss the organization of tournaments and provide a synthesis of existing databases to compile a physiological profile of elite *karateka*. They state that body-fat percentages play a significant role in performance of stamina and flexibility in karate. Not surprisingly, this study reports that female *karateka* tend to have a higher fat percentage than men. The authors also state that Japanese *karateka*, regardless of sex, ranked lowest in body fat.

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It was also reported that the elite practitioners had higher bone density than beginners. The authors pointed out that high bone density is essential for maintaining muscles and cardio-endurance. Additionally, the more experienced *karateka* had higher flexibility than the beginners, and individuals who ranked between third and fourth *dan* had better reaction times than those who ranked between first and second *dan* (Chaabene et al. 2012). However, although this literature review provides an excellent description of the physical benefits of practicing karate and creates a comprehensive physiological profile of experienced *karateka*, it does not consider the psychological profiles of *karateka*.

One of the oldest studies in the field of karate participation and psychology examined *karateka*'s motivations for participating in karate. This 1977 study considered 30 *karateka* recruited from a gymnasium in Italy (Saraceni & Montesarchio, 1977). These individuals were tasked with an adjectives test (list of 45 adjectives) to identify why they participated in karate and what interested them about the sport. The researchers identified that many of their participants were satisfied with their self-perception as *karateka*, and that people engaged in karate for various reasons depending on their gender. Male participants enjoyed karate because they perceived it as achievement through power (competition and ranks). On the other hand, female participants were motivated by affiliation and building relationships. Despite the age of the study and its small sample size, the data it presents is congruent with common motivations for individuals involved in traditional martial arts (self-esteem, accomplishment, and sense of community).

One study examined the use of metaphors as a way of identifying the self among *karateka* when practicing and participating in competitions. A small sample of 16 high-ranking karate athletes was recruited to identify metaphors using an unspecified metaphor generation

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method. This was coupled with a tool used to recall individual emotions. A Likert scale was used to rank the intensity of the emotions. All participants spoke Spanish. Twelve of these individuals were male and four were female. The study itself took place in Finland. Ten participants competed in international *kumite* competitions while six participated in a national one. All metaphors were compared and recorded based on their frequency between participants. All 16 participants successfully generated metaphors with the research team, and 12 of the participants followed up five months later for consistency.

Overall, 98 metaphors were generated. Of these, 67 appeared once, nine were used twice, and three were identified three times. These metaphors were generated after the participants discussed their best and worst performances over their karate careers. All the metaphors were separated into two main categories: animate (animals, humans, mythical creatures) and inanimate (objects, vehicles, phenomena). The best performances were characterized by animate metaphors, and held cognitive and affective components, while inanimate metaphors and negative affect characterized worst performances. Out of the 12 follow ups, nine felt that these metaphors were still congruent after the five-month period. The researchers discussed that individuals who competed well had the tendency to feel more positive and animated about their skills, while losses were attributed as more negative in affect. As a qualitative study, this study did not utilize any formal scales.

A study conducted in New Zealand focused on identifying the personality traits of black-belt instructors (Kodman, 1982). It recruited 45 male black-belt karate instructors who ranked second degree or higher. The study also had an exclusion criterion of requiring the participants to have taught for a minimum of two years. The California Personality Inventory (CPI) was utilized to identify key personality traits between the participants. The researchers found that karate

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instructors scored higher on wellbeing, self-control, and flexibility subscales. The researchers argued that the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) could be a supportive test for karate teachers, coupled with the CPI, as it would add more quantitative data on personality traits.

Another study, focusing on personality traits among non-black-belt and black-belt students, was implemented in 1988 (Layton, 1988). It used the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) to assess the extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism of 110 *kyu*-level and 32 *dan*-level *karateka*. The researchers found that black belt martial artists ranked higher on neuroticism and lower on extraversion than their lower ranking counterparts. The researchers hypothesized this was due to the introverted nature of the individuals who desired to achieve mastery in a singular activity. The less experienced *karateka* (*kyu*) ranked higher in extraversion. It was argued that these individuals were more apt to engage in multiple activities versus honing in on one specific sport.

Strengths of Current Research

The clinical and medical fields aspire to uncover data that improves their fields, making them more efficient and cost-effective. One aspect that clinical psychology focuses its attention on is self-efficacy. Although limited, the research that exists in the field of mental health and martial arts has produced some important data.

Specific clinical populations have been targeted over the previous three decades to examine the effects of karate on mental and physical health. Such populations include autistic young boys (Bahrami, Movahedi, Marandi, & Abedi, 2012), sexually victimized college women, (Ball & Martin, 2012), youths with physical disabilities (Bedini & Anderson, 2005), at-risk youths (Hishinuma, Unemoto, Nyugen, Chang, & Bautista, 2012), and older adults (Jansen &

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Dahmen-Zimmer, 2012). Many of the findings suggest that karate tends to increase memory, physical fitness, and quality of life, and reduces mood disturbances and self-esteem issues (McGowan, 1991). Some studies have examined karate as a supplement to traditional psychotherapy (Oulanova, 2009), psychomotor treatment (Palermo & Greydanus, 2011), and crime prevention among aggressive youth (Parmigiani, Dadomo, Bartolomucci, Brain, Carbucicchio, Constantino, Ferrari, Palanza, & Volpi, 2009). The results indicate that karate improves psychomotor skills (Seaborne, 1984), reduces aggression and anger (Reynes & Lorant, 2004), and shares similarities with psychotherapeutic treatment options (Weiser, Kutz, Kuz, & Weiser, 1995).

Researchers have also examined the populations of *karateka*, attempting to understand their motivations (Yong, Kim, & Valacich, 2010). Moreover, research has created psychological (Saraceni & Montesarchio, 1977) and physiological (Chaabene, Hachana, Franchini, McKaouer, & Chamari 2012) profiles for these athletes. Considering the limited amount of research conducted on this topic, the existing data forms a foundational bank of information concerning the physical, psychological, and spiritual effects of karate on specific populations.

Some recurring benefits of practicing karate identified by research include increased self-esteem and decreased anger, depression, and anxiety. Other reported benefits include an increased sense of self and the ability to perceive oneself in a positive light. Conversely, withdrawal from martial arts appears to be correlated with lower self-satisfaction, indicating that there is perhaps a dependency or a lifestyle contribution to the practice of martial arts (Szabo & Parkin, 2001). Existing research appears to have some consistencies and a consensus of available data indicates that some benefits stem from karate.

Weaknesses of Current Research

Studies investigating martial arts and mental health have significant gaps and there is a lack of available research. Much of the research that centers on martial arts was conducted in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as martial arts such as tae kwon do and karate rose to popularity. The arrival of MMA into mainstream culture during the 1990s shifted clinical attention to this combative sport (Chen & Cheesman, 2013). The trend of favoring MMA over other martial arts has remained prevalent until around 2013. Notably, this has resulted in a minimal amount of recent research on karate and its experienced practitioners. The data of existing studies on karate suffers from highly specific or unspecified demographics, high dropout rates, and varying conclusions, thus making drawing conclusions based on the results difficult. Importantly, the data often does not provide emotional or spiritual themes for martial artists. Instead, it emphasizes the psychological responses that practicing karate has on clinical populations.

Past research has served to expand and narrow down specific emotional and mental benefits of physical fitness, including practicing martial arts such as karate, kung fu, and judo. Unfortunately, this type of research is limited and does not indicate specific, longitudinal effects of karate on mental health (Chaabene, Hachana, Franchini, McKaouer, & Chamari 2012). Most of the samples of karate or other martial arts practitioners are composed primarily of younger males who have practiced their sport of choice for any period between a few months and several years (Ball & Martin, 2012).

The Current Study

The data gathered by existing research on karate is predominately quantitative. As such, it lacks subjective accounts by *karateka*. This gap in the research is multi-faceted. For instance,

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the quantity of data concerning certain clinical populations, such as autistic individuals or trauma victims, is not plentiful and can hardly be considered generalizable. Nonetheless, the findings of most studies on karate indicate that overlap exists and that the physical and philosophical approaches in karate discipline improve emotional regulation, a cornerstone in many philosophical Buddhist principles. This indicates that there is merit to the holistic approaches to health in the mind-and-body connection. This study seeks to help fill in those gaps, and provide a more qualitative understanding to supplement existing data. By supplementing existing research, this study expands this small field.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

As the previous chapter indicated, much of previous researchers have examined martial arts through a quantitative method. There are some qualitative measures, but this method appears mostly absent from the research available. To help supplement available data, qualitative methods were explored to provide a subjective report from experienced practitioners. As quantitative methods capture data in the moment, qualitative methods allow participants to draw on their experience over a span of time. As karate masters have decades of experience, phenomenology was chosen to help grasp the lived essence of these participants. Additionally, it allows flexibility with the use of open-ended questions and follow-up questions to draw out more information.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology differs from many research methods in clinical psychology in the fact that it is qualitative instead of quantitative. Thus, it does not rely on objective measures such as statistical analysis and psychometric testing. Whereas much of the quantitative approach seeks to establish findings through large samples and correlational analysis, the qualitative approach relies heavily on the subjective reports of the participants' experiences.

The primary method in the present study were interviews. The researcher explored the topic of karate through a series of open-ended questions. This allowed the interviewees to express their subjective experience. Avoiding closed questions, the researcher asked follow-up questions to improve clarity and understanding.

A qualitative approach was chosen for two reasons. First, the subject of the tenure of a master-level *karateka* is not an objective variable that can be accurately measured and analyzed. An experiential articulation of the participant through a semi-structured interview is required to

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identify this phenomenon. Second, most martial arts are heavily linked to philosophical and spiritual components. To properly study these components, a qualitative analysis is needed. The questions presented to the participants of the study allowed the researcher to follow the three major steps of phenomenological analysis (Morse, 1985):

- 1) Obtain descriptions of the phenomena.
- 2) Reduction or bracketing any preconceived notions on the phenomena.
- 3) Search for the essences of the phenomena through these themes.

Strengths of Phenomenology. The phenomenological approach allows researchers to gather subjective information on the lived experiences of their participants. As argued prior, this provides the researcher with some flexibility in structuring interviews to gather their data. Additionally, it allows the researcher to ask follow up questions to help clarify or expand their answers, further enriching the quantity of data available. The advantage this method has over quantitative measures is that it provides an opportunity to gather information about a long period through the structured questions. This is verified by checking in with the participants to assure understanding. For this research, these questions help encapsulate decades of experience of karate masters and how their training impacted their emotional health.

Weaknesses of Phenomenology. This research approach lacks the objective and correlative results that quantitative studies provide. Though its findings produce subjective themes that may be applied to future research, those findings do not meld well with quantitative approaches. This limits opportunities to replicate this research approach. Additionally, the sample sizes of phenomenological studies are smaller, and participants are usually sampled through convenience methods, lacking the empirical strengths of quantitative methods. Additionally, the analysis of

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phenomenology is exhaustive and intensive when compared to the mathematical approaches of statistical analysis.

Research Questions

The research has the following overarching research question: Does karate provide any emotional benefits for experienced practitioners? Do these experiences continue to impact them today? Additionally, the research studies how karate impacts them and if data agrees with current research. Utilizing an in-depth approach, a semi-structured interview examined the following questions:

- 1) Why have master *karateka* continued practicing karate?
- 2) What has contributed to their dedication to the sport?
- 3) According to the *karateka*, what role has karate played in their self-esteem?
- 4) Have these *karateka* ever felt like quitting, and if so, why did they not?
- 5) What was it like at their various belt promotions?
- 6) How has karate impacted the way they feel or express depression and anger?
- 7) What philosophies of their discipline are important to them?
- 8) Has spirituality played a role in the participant's study of karate?

These questions address why master-level *karateka* have practiced their style for so long and how this practice has contributed to their self-esteem. The questions also address *karateka*'s approach to emotions such as depression and anger. By examining the tenure of the participants, milestones are identified in the development of the *karateka*. These milestones include beginning karate, first belt promotion, black belt promotion, promotion to teacher, and promotion to master.

Research Design

Prior to the beginning of the study, approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee of the Antioch University.

No hypothesis was formulated prior to the analysis. Participants were recruited through two organizations that govern martial arts practice and its authenticity as a combative sport. The first organization was the United States Karate Alliance (USKA) and the second organization was a branch from the USKA, the United Association of Martial Artists (UAMA). The board of directors of both organizations gave their permission to send invitations to their members. Only individuals under approved styles of karate were considered for participation. Any candidate who was not a master-level *karateka* was excluded from the present study. The remaining candidates were screened and contacted for an initial phone interview for appropriateness and willingness to participate in the study. Before the study began, prospective participants were given information that explained the purpose of the study, risks and benefits of participation, confidentiality, legal and ethical issues, and procedures. All participants gave informed consent and signed documents signifying that they were willingly participating in the research project.

After this, the researcher carried out a 30 to 90-minute, in-person, semi-structured interview with the participants. The interviews included open discussions with the participants to gather in-depth answers to the questions asked. After all, interviews, had been conducted, the information gathered was transcribed and maintained digitally on a flash drive. To promote confidentiality, all identifying information was deleted, and the remaining information was kept on a flash drive in a double-lock safe environment until the analysis was completed. Only this researcher and dissertation chair could access this flash drive.

Recruitment of the Participants

Both karateka organizations were first contacted via phone. After giving approval, the boards of directors of both circuits were sent a letter and a phone call was made to them explaining the topic, procedures, and purpose of this study. The organizations agreed to provide a list of 34 master-level *karateka* in the association to the researcher. Once a list of potential candidates was compiled, this researcher contacted them via phone, email, or letter with a proposal, and invited them to participate in the study. All participants had reached their fourth *dan* or higher ranks and used approved styles of karate verified through the USKA or USAMA.

Out of the 34 candidates contacted, six replied and followed through with the interview. Contact details of two additional master-level practitioners were obtained through word of mouth from other participants and these two also agreed to take part. All eight participants were interviewed in person, five in October 2015, and three in February 2016.

Participants

All participants were master-level *karateka* and chosen based on the geographical location and availability of both the researcher and the participants. The sample was composed of members of either gender to provide congruity with most the research available on the topic of karate and mental health. All participants had their certification as master-level *karateka* verified by a governing martial arts association. The participants were mostly middle-aged adults due to the length of time it takes to achieve the rank of fourth *dan*.

All participants lived in three counties in Southern California and had their dojo there. Eight total participants were interviewed, five males and three females. Four of the participants were born in the United States, three in Central America, and one was East Asian. The

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participants were between 34 and 68 years old (mean age 49), and the time they had been practicing karate ranged from 21 to 52 years (mean time 36).

Six different martial arts styles were observed through the interview and demographics questionnaire: two in the style of *keichu do*, two in a Karate tae kwon do hybrid, one in *shuri Ryu*, one in *isshin Ryu*, one in *kempo*, and one in American-style karate. The lowest rank represented was fourth *dan*, and the highest represented was eighth *dan*. There were three fourth-degree black-belt practitioners, one fifth degree, two sixth degree, one seventh degree, and one eight degree.

Additionally, all eight participants were ranked as *Senseis*, or teachers, within their style, and six were business owners. These six participants both taught and independently ran their dojos as businesses. The remaining two practitioners worked additional jobs for supplemental income and trained in and taught karate.

Measures

In accordance with the phenomenological method, there were no quantitative measures other than a basic demographic questionnaire (see Appendix E). No formal hypothesis was formulated.

A semi-structured interview lasting 60-90 minutes was conducted with each individual. The actual interview ranged between 32 and 48 minutes, and the rest of the time was spent on rapport building and explaining the purpose of the study. Seven of the interviews took place at the dojo of the participant, and one interview took place in the participant's hometown. All interviews were audio recorded onto two recording devices: a Sony digital voice recorder (ICD-BX140) and an Olympus digital voice recorder (VN-7200). After the recordings were completed, they were transcribed verbatim into a digital document kept on the researcher's computer. After

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the transcription, the data was reviewed and the frequency of themes surrounding the questions was documented.

Next, these themes were quantified and recorded based on their frequency to identify the phenomenology of the topic of the research project. This means that the frequency of these themes was counted across all eight interviews. The themes were reviewed with the participants to ensure understanding and data validity.

Risks

All participants discussed their tenure as *karateka* and elaborated on periods in their training that evoked emotional memories. All participants recalled their entire martial arts careers. Recalling of this kind carried the risk of emotional discomfort. As some of the topics explored revolved around emotions such as anxiety, depression, or anger, the participants could experience these emotions. Some practitioners had failed a belt promotion, or lost in a competition. Such experiences may have brought about feelings of rejection, anger, or emotional distress.

Also, as many of the participants were middle-aged or older, some reported that during their martial arts careers they had lost a loved one, a job, or an ability, or experienced some other loss that may have been associated with aging. Recalling past times may bring about emotional distress.

Safeguards

All participants were given a thorough explanation of the risks and benefits associated with participating so that they could provide informed consent. They signed a consent form verifying that they understood the potential risks. All participants could withdraw from the study

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at any time, without giving a reason. All participants were given a chance to debrief at the end of the interview, and again when the researcher verified the data with the participant.

Afterwards, a follow-up phone call was had with all participants regarding the completion of the analysis of the data, and they were also given another opportunity to debrief. All participants were given the researcher's email address so that they could contact him regarding any potential concerns, or to request to withdraw. Referrals for individual and group counseling were provided upon request. All data will be kept for a period of ten years, and then deleted.

Validity and Reliability of the Method

Phenomenology is an emergent approach in qualitative analysis and differs from the quantitative approach since it does not require numbers or a meta-analysis to assure validity. Instead, validity and reliability are assured through maintaining consistent procedures across the study. As the responses of the participants are subjective, it is required that the researcher follows up with them to ensure that the shared information is accurate and understood between both parties. Once this is done, the researcher may transcribe the analysis with confidence (Sousa, 2013).

No participant can be given a question from the questionnaire that is not also asked from all other participants. Furthermore, the follow-up questions must be appropriate based on the responses to assure a mutual understanding of the shared material. This procedure is followed with each participant. Additionally, as instructed by Giorgi (1989), the researcher must bracket preconceived notions for the phenomena under investigation.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The following information was drawn from eight interviews throughout the final quarter of 2015 and the first quarter of 2016. Most individuals were interviewed within their dojo, while one was interviewed at a location of their choice. All information was audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through the phenomenological method iterated in Chapter III. Themes were drawn out to obtain natural meaning units (NMU) to compile and find any potential commonality between these experiences. Natural meaning units is a term for the themes drawn out from the interviews. Quotes will be synthesized throughout this chapter to substantiate these themes.

The chapter is organized in units that follow the journey of the *karateka*. First, I discuss reasons for beginning to practice karate and what they interviewees' current practice looks like. I discuss common themes surrounding the meaning of the black belt, as well as their point of view on the phenomenon of the master. The most common important factors surround the themes of community, their *sensei*, as well as their reported benefits of training. The chapter ends with themes of self-esteem and resiliency before transitioning into the final chapter, which synthesizes these findings for current and future research in mental health and martial arts.

Beginning the Journey of Karate.

All participants reported factors that contributed to their interest in karate or martial arts. For five participants, there was a family connection with martial arts. The role of family was reported to be a major focus of many individuals beginning their study. Most commonly, a family member was a martial arts practitioner or owned a dojo. Two participants stated that their fathers were either practitioners or owners of a dojo, and this played a significant role in their study of martial arts. A couple of participants reported the following:

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“I started martial arts about 20 to 24 years ago. Taekwondo, I had a neighbor who was an instructor and had a place to teach around the corner from where we live. So, his invitation attracted me because he was my neighbor, I liked it. He was a good instructor, I was in high school at the time.”

“So, right after I had my first child, I turned 18, and I decided I need to do something and get back into shape. My friend’s uncle lived across the street and happened to be a black belt. And it was in a Chinese style, *Kempo*. So, I started training in his garage and on Tuesdays we’d go to his teacher’s instructor.”

For four others, including some who had a familial connection, there was a “fit” as one participant called it. They had attempted several other sports, such as baseball or soccer, that did not produce any desire for continued participation. The individuals who reported this were male and stated that there was a family culture of active involvement in extra-curricular activities. Family continued to play a significant role in their study, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Four participants reported that their instructors, past or present, had a strong reputation. They could be founders of certain styles or instructors of celebrities in the movie industry or in the martial arts world. A common theme revolves around how these individuals presented themselves. Participants mentioned consistent calmness, open-mindedness, confidence, and social presentation. These factors manifested in the way the participants felt about their *Senseis*. None of the participants reported any negative factors about their instructors, and all held them in high regard. In fact, five participants reported they have a continued relationship with their current *sensei*.

Three participants stated they had seen a martial arts movie like *The Karate Kid* or *Enter the Dragon*. This first exposure is what appeared to elicit their interest into the martial arts field. Four participants voiced a knowledge of the history of the martial arts field, reporting its rise in popularity in the 1960s through 1990s, before the rise of MMA. This popularity was a motivating factor for many practitioners.

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Whether it was media, family relationships, or the witnessing of a technique or demonstration, each of the participants had a voiced ideal of what a martial artist is, and a desire to experience and pursue these images. All participants reported that the pursuit of a black belt was their initial goal. The belt system is an essential factor in the martial arts world. It contains markers for beginners, intermediate, and advanced study.

The Brown Belt

A common theme in the interviews was the importance of certain belts and ranks. Five participants reported that obtaining their first belt was significant. The brown belt, the last belt before *shodan*, was an important belt to seven of the participants. *Shodan* is the rank of basic mastery of a martial art. The brown belt signifies that an individual has advanced to what has been called “black belt candidacy”. Only one step remains before obtaining their black belt. Seven participants reported that the brown belt was an important marker for them. All eight participants agreed that it is at the rank of brown belt that most students have the highest attrition.

The reasons given were that this belt is often the rank a student will spend the most time in, and that this rank is about refining physical and mental technique up to *shodan* level. Three participants reported that once they reached the brown-belt level, they made a commitment to achieve *shodan* rank.

Wanting to Quit

As stated above, the brown-belt level is the rank of highest attrition. Four participants reported that this rank was particularly difficult and the thought of quitting arose during this time. However, only five out of eight stated that they had wanted to quit at some point. The reasons could be categorized into two areas: outside events and internal struggle. For individuals

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who experienced outside events (divorce, family conflict, relocation, immigration, or school), these feelings arose as the result of a choice that had to be made to either continue training or commit to other life circumstances.

For individuals who reported internal struggle (depression, low self-esteem, and anxiety), this usually arose during their study before attaining the black belt. Karate or martial arts were reported as psychologically and emotionally demanding. Four participants stated that achieving the black belt required not only physical technique, but also mental and emotional maturity. Two participants reported no desire or consideration to quit karate. Both individuals began studying in childhood and stated it was a way of life.

Factors Influencing Continued Training

Among the six participants who reported that they seriously considered quitting, various factors contributed to their continued interest and study. Three participants studied under the founder of their style and had been trained by this individual from the beginning. The relationship with their *sensei* was the most common contributing factor, reported by six out of eight participants. This relationship was articulated as mostly positive. The following factors were listed as the most common reasons for continuing their study: 1) perseverance and commitment, 2) relationship with dojo community, 3) teaching, and 4) self-development. Each of these elements is discussed below.

Perseverance and Commitment

Each of the eight participants mentioned commitment as a reason for pursuing their study of karate or martial arts. Many reported that commitment to the black belt was a commitment to transforming from the person they were to the person they should be. Participants mentioned the

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development of moral character, humility, and open-mindedness. This commitment was a significant motivating factor in their decision to pursue a black belt.

The anatomy of this theme came in the form of a linear process towards the black belt. Before attaining the black belt, there was a sense of reverence for the black-belt rank and the belief that this was nearly unattainable. This was voiced as a discouraging factor in the pursuit of the black belt, and when examining the time and training it would take, it became overwhelming.

Relationship with the Dojo Community

All participants developed several relationships during their study in their dojo. Aside from the relationship with their *sensei*, discussed in the next section, all participants developed deep relationships with other students. The reasons articulated for this were the emotional and physical involvement of these students. Seen in a linear fashion, many of the participants developed life-long friendships early in their training, and not just within their dojo, or even within their own geographic region. One participant, a world-champion competitor, described his social community as follows:

“I’m a part of a large community. I mean, I have friends in other countries: Germany, France, and even Central America. Our style has emerged and developed a worldwide community known globally. I am honored to be a part of that, and hope I can continue to train with all these other people.”

All participants reported that they served in several roles during their study. Six reported that upon entering intermediate level, they took on *kumite* and partner work. This requires participants to engage with other students in a match. Five reported that this helped them develop community and humility, as they were not necessarily the most efficient in *kumite*. *Kumite* requires two people to practice their skills in live hand-to-hand combat (controlled), and before and after, bow to their partner in respect.

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Two participants reported that they encountered a dilemma when their dojo was set to close. One participant stated that as the *sensei*'s daughter, she would have regretted not taking over the dojo as it was a major marker in their community. The other participant took over the dojo as an adolescent with his parents managing the studio. He stated that it had been his desire to continue the training and study of karate and pass on their philosophies and benefits to others.

Teaching

The single most mentioned factor for why individuals continued to study martial arts was their teaching experience. In five of the interviews, the participants stated that they were required to teach others to advance in rank. Some were required to teach at the intermediate level, while others were required to obtain a certain number of teaching hours before advancing to the black belt or even advanced candidacy. All eight participants voiced that teaching was their motivating factor for continued study outside of their relationship with their *sensei*.

One theme that arose in all the interviews was that at some point after their promotion to the black belt, there was a decreased interest in the competitive components of martial arts. As stated by two world-champion *karateka*, competition took a secondary role to their passion for teaching karate to other people. Teaching provided opportunities to give back to the dojo, which is an expectation of black-belt martial artists and a requirement for promotion to subsequent degrees past *shodan* rank. No participants stated they felt any pressure to teach once they had achieved black-belt rank. One participant gave his passion for teaching as his motivation, even though many of his students never achieve advanced rank or black belt:

“I think right at some of the critical areas of life, you get a lot of dropouts at the beginning. They get involved and don't gel, and they find out it's not their thing. I see a lot of people struggle at orange [belt] and get to green [belt], from getting beginner to intermediate. It's tough. I had to come to grips with this a long time ago, beyond that they didn't get their black belt. And feeling that they'd make it, I had to change my idea of that, because they did make it. They made it to green

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belt, purple belt, which is significant. Yes, it's not black belt, but are they better off than if they never started? Completely. The stuff they learned in here will help them years and years later, even if they never return to the dojo. So, knowing if they're only with me a little bit, it has a great effect on my life, which is important to me, as an instructor. If I only banked my success off black belts, I probably wouldn't be doing this. I'd consider myself a failure if I only had x number of black belts per this many students and compile my success only on that. Then, luckily, I don't measure things on that concept."

Two other participants stated that they were heavily involved in countrywide teaching curriculums in a faith-based organization that specializes in teaching and retention. A complaint many interviews brought out was attrition rates. Of these two participants, both engage in proactive approaches to reduce the likelihood of dropouts among their students. Their reasons for doing so were the clear benefits in their individual lives as well as the lives of the students that they taught. As in the quote provided above, both participants stated that the achievement of a black belt among their students was not their goal. Rather, they preferred to simply teach and pass on their style and philosophies to other students.

The Role of the *Sensei*

One major theme that arose from all participants' responses was the *sensei*. Their *sensei* was the strongest motivation for perseverance and continuation throughout their study in martial arts. Five out of eight participants reported that their *sensei* was their first instructor, while three out of five stated their *sensei* became their instructor later. Throughout the questions, each participant returned to the topic of their *sensei* as a central theme of their study. Many reported that the relationship with their *sensei* was one of the greatest factors in why they continued to study. While analyzing the transcriptions, the *sensei* emerged in four major categories: *sensei* as role model, student-*sensei* relationship, and a responsibility to their *sensei*. Each of these categories is detailed below.

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The Sensei as a Role Model

For many of the participants, the *sensei* was the example of what a martial artist should be. Four participants reported an immediate teaching relationship with their *sensei*, while three stated they began a *sensei*-student relationship within six months, and one stated that she became a direct student after a prolonged period of study. The *sensei* displayed desirable qualities such as self-confidence, calm, ability to connect with others, and ability to teach karate in a way that resonated with the participants.

The *sensei*'s responsibilities within the dojo as well as outside of it were a major motivating factor for the participants to continue studying martial arts. These qualities show themes of admiration and motivation. Watching and talking with their *sensei* caused participants to maintain a sense of humility, open-mindedness, and a teachable demeanor. The *sensei*'s reputation within the martial arts community and in the wider community was another motivating factor for participants' continued practice.

The Sensei-Student Relationship

For seven of the participants, the student-teacher relationship between them and their *sensei* was a major motivating factor. Six reported that there was a sense of reverence for their *sensei*, and that they wanted to continue to train under them because of their ongoing relationship. The relationship was defined in a way that the student would always be respectful and subordinate to their *sensei*. If the *sensei* asked the student to do something, the student was expected to do it. Most participants reported an overall positive relationship with their *sensei*. Four stated that their *sensei* had individually spoken with them at times when they had struggled and considered quitting, and had been able to persuade them to continue to practice.

One participant recounted a different story. She had studied under a founder of karate and experienced many difficulties in the relationship. Among these difficulties was the fact she was a

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woman involved in a primarily male sport during its rise to popularity in the United States. The relationship between her and her *sensei* became close, and she reports that she had difficulty adhering to his rules or training, since he could understand her in a personal way. In one instance, this participant stated that her *sensei* had utilized other black-belt *karateka* to flirt with her and to attempt to engage her in a brief romantic relationship.

The participant reports that once she found out that her *sensei* was coordinating this, she became angry and quit, refusing to return to the dojo. She states that her *sensei* attempted, through other *karateka*, to convince her to return to the dojo. The participant states she refused until she confronted the *sensei* on why he had orchestrated this situation. She articulates it as follows:

“I told *sensei* he needs to call me himself, and I was told he couldn’t do that. I asked him [*sensei*] why. He replied he didn’t apologize because he was right, that it was the quickest way to get me to understand that I’m attractive and needed to be careful, which was to build my self-esteem.”

Though this participant stated this situation caused her a period of anger, she also said that one struggle she had was with self-esteem and her physical appearance. She states that this unorthodox experience had indeed assisted her in increasing her self-esteem and perceptions of her physical attributes, albeit following a history of divorce and familial conflict. This relationship was articulated in more detail than in other interviews. The *sensei*-student relationship plays an integral role in the development of self-esteem and emotional and physical progression. The *sensei* is perceived with great respect, and none of the participants made any statements of negative nature when discussing their teacher.

Responsibility to the *Sensei*

For all participants, a theme of responsibility to their *sensei* was synthesized throughout the entirety of the interview. For instance, four of the dojos visited had a picture of their style’s

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founder or *sensei* somewhere in the front of the dojo. One participant stated that this was a reminder of where the style and philosophies came from or were enhanced. As stated above, participants reported loyalty to their *sensei*. When discussing testing for their black belts, six participants stated they felt nervous. This nervousness was not due to fear of failing the test, but due to fear of failing their *sensei* by not passing the test.

The participant who discussed a conflicted relationship with her *sensei* made a statement on her responsibility to her *sensei* as the major factor for committing to her black belt. She stated she had trained for 16 years prior to her *shodan* examination:

“For the black belt, the year before he told me he was dying. He had cancer for a while and knew his time was short, he told me that I knew I’d kick myself if his name wasn’t on my *shodan* certificate. He wanted me to train, to run, and lift weights. It was going to take a year to get into shape. I was his last black belt he personally took from white to black.”

Though all participants were at ranked fourth *dan* or higher, as well as *sensei* certified, they all reported a duty to their *sensei* in their training. Five participants stated that they carry on many of the customs of their *sensei*’s teachings in their dojo today, and four of those participants’ *Senseis* had passed away by this time. Four participants stated they have a continuing existing relationship with their *sensei* and that they continue to look to them for guidance in their individual training as well as passing on their style to their students. In a way, this continues the customs and philosophies of their respective study.

The Black Belt

All eight participants stated that their black belt was the single most important milestone in their study of martial arts. All styles practiced by participants, even multi-disciplinary practices, had black belts. As articulated in Chapter II, the black belt is a marker for a student

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who has obtained proficiency in their style, as recognized by fellow black-belt practitioners or the founder.

The Black Belt as a Goal. All participants stated that achieving their black belt had been the most memorable experience in their training. Six participants stated that they had decided on the goal of achieving the black belt within a year of beginning to study karate. The remaining two participants made this decision when they reached their brown belt. All participants stated that the most common goal of both their colleagues and their students is to achieve the black belt. All participants presented this topic in a linear progression and discussed the process of obtaining a black belt.

As discussed in this chapter, the process and requirements for a black belt can be overwhelming and often lead to attrition either at the beginning or in the advanced stages of rank progression. All eight participants noted that the belt system is designed to break up the curriculum into achievable segments to promote continuity of training. Four participants utilize a separate belt system for children to maintain participation, as the most common demographic of students within their dojos are young children.

For the participants, the black belt was viewed as more obtainable when they achieved their brown-belt rank. Four participants stated that the brown belt was the defining moment of their study, as this was when they transitioned from training in classes alone to investing additional time outside of class hours to prepare themselves for the test.

The Black-Belt Test. All participants identified their black-belt test as the most memorable milestone of their study. Additionally, they all reported that the test was equally demanding physically and mentally. Anxiety and nervousness as well as fear of failure were the most common reported feelings during the test. The test itself ranged from four to twelve hours in

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length, varied with or without breaks. Five participants reported that they “earned it [black belt], without a doubt.” The feelings associated with passing their test were relief, excitement, and gratefulness.

The Black Belt as a Marker. All but one interviewee noted that the black belt is not just a rank, but a series of components that separate an individual from others at the advanced or lower ranks. The requirements for the black belt transcend a basic understanding and demonstration of the curriculum. As stated by three participants, individuals require a sense of emotional and physical maturity. Though some interviewees achieved their black belts between the ages of 12 and 14, one interviewee stated that he does not provide full black belts to students under the age of 16.

Five participants agree that an individual must demonstrate a mental capacity for humility and a “teachable spirit”, always being willing to learn. One participant states that he had seen fellow *karateka* not pass their *shodan* test due to a lack of these qualities, although they have achieved the physical capacity to complete the curriculum to appropriate efficiency. As stated earlier in this chapter, the brown belt is reported to be the most emotionally demanding rank, as individuals are required both to fine-tune their physical skills and to demonstrate the psychological capacity to complete the arduous improvements required for the black-belt recognition.

Three participants discussed the responsibilities of a black belt in relationship to their techniques and their self-defense capacity. They stated that achieving this rank is a recognition that they could seriously hurt or even kill someone. To balance this, it is important for them to realize that they only utilize these skill sets for self-defense or the defense of others. Two participants voiced this as a revelation that was an important component of the black belt rank.

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The Black Belt as a Beginning. Though achieving the black belt was the most memorable marker for all participants, five participants articulated that with this rank came the beginning of true training. As a sixth *dan* reported, getting a black belt is merely a statement that the student knows the curriculum at the basic level. This does not make an individual a master, as the student is always learning and training, and true mastery is ultimately over one's own self (emotions, body, and spirit). One participant, also a sixth *dan*, articulated the rank of *shodan* as follows:

“One of the things people enter in their mindset is that they want to get a black belt. They don't understand that the black belt is not an end. We have a name for all the belts, *shodan*, *nidan*, *sandan*, and so on. *Ni* means ‘two’, and *dan* means ‘three’, *sho* doesn't mean ‘one’. *Ichi* means ‘one’, [but] it's not called *ichi-dan*. And so, I wondered about that, finally it was explained to me. If you look in front of the dojo, the shrine or whatever they have, where everyone focuses, or where the *sensei* sits, it's called the *shoman*, *sho*, ‘the front, the beginning of class’. *Shodan* is the beginning, what it means you're at a level to appreciate your training.”

The Importance of Community

Another dominant theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of community. This was discussed in two areas: community in the dojo and outside community. Community in the dojo was discussed at length with six participants. They began discussing their experiences when they were training and how the community relationships with the *sensei* and other instructors or students helped develop their identity as a person. They stated that they looked up to the senior students, and lined up in the dojo per their belt rank. Even if they had surpassed the individual in rank, they still showed respect to them, due to their seniority in the dojo. Moreover, when they attained higher ranks, their importance in the community also grew. Based on their rank, they were expected to present themselves in a certain physically and emotionally mature manner.

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As they continued to rise through the ranks, they played more roles within the dojo. These roles were teaching, custodial, administration, and even outreach and community participation. Though the sport is an individual sport at competitions, the community of the dojo is more important than the individual self, as articulated by three interviewees. Four stated that each *karateka* supports the others throughout their training and that personal feelings are kept in check or evaluated. This does not mean that there was no room for conflict management, but there was an expectation that even if a student had a personal issue with another, that this was “left outside of the dojo” during their training.

Community with others was the other, less-mentioned theme. Six participants stated that they are actively involved in their community (city or state) on separate levels and that they encourage their dojo to do the same. This participation includes presentations at festivals or conferences, or providing self-defense training to non-profit or religious institutions. Three interviewees reported that they believed their dojo was an important cornerstone in their community. Six participants stated they actively try to involve the family or other major influences of their child students. Some offered parents discounted rates for training, because the continuity is important.

These participants stated they have active, ongoing communication with parents and implement certain measures to assure that the students practice the lessons learned at home. Three interviewees stated that they require parental approval prior to testing for the next rank. One interviewee provides parents with an appreciation meal for their participation in the dojo, organized by the instructor, but managed by the students. The *sensei* who was interviewed stated she does this annually, and she often invites parents to all events that students are invited to as well.

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The Meaning of Master

Perhaps one of the most interesting themes that emerged during these interviews was the meaning of the master. Only one participant reported that her promotion to master level was significant to her, and that she had trained to reach that rank. The seven other participants stated that they never considered a promotion to master, and that they did not consider it to be a major milestone for their study. In fact, three participants reported that they refuse to be called master because they did not agree that this title was relevant in the study of karate. One participant articulates this point as follows:

“It’s something I’ve avoided like the plague, I don’t like that term at all. Personally, it drives me bonkers. Other styles do different things with that title... So, people would call me master, and I’d say that I’m not a master, they can call me Mr. or Sir. My faith comes into play as well, a lot of religious people only consider one master.”

Another participant, who was well versed in martial arts history, stated the following regarding the title of master.

“No mention of master, the only one who gets that is the founder. I would never be so presumptuous as to consider myself a master of anything. I consider myself a *sensei*, because *sensei* is term for teacher. In Japan, you’d call your doctor “*sensei*”, it’s an honorific term. Or [a] dentist, if someone was a master noodle maker, you’d call him *sensei*. Even though I hit a level of proficiency, I consider my founder the master.”

Psychological Impacts of Training

The focus of this dissertation is on the mental health impacts of training among master-level martial artists. Two practitioners identified a pre-existing diagnosis from childhood or adolescence, while five others mentioned subjective emotional difficulties such as anger, anxiety, or depression. All practitioners mentioned the following themes surrounding the psychological impacts of training: self-esteem, attention, emotional regulation, and even withdrawal from training. Each of these themes is discussed below.

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Self-Esteem. The dominating factor identified in the interviews was an overall increase in self-esteem. During their interviews, all participants stated that they had no doubt in their abilities as a martial artist or a person. Six practitioners stated that they identified their self-esteem as coming from internal faculties, and four of them stated it also came from spiritual ones. All practitioners stated that they had felt an increase in self-esteem within the first two years of studying. Words used synonymously with self-esteem were self-confidence, self-acceptance, and self-acknowledgement.

There was a difference in experience between female and male practitioners. Male practitioners tended to base their self-confidence on their achievements or accomplishments. These included competition achievements at national and international levels, ranking achievements, student achievements, *sensei* recognition, or recognition from the community. For the female practitioners, the increased self-esteem surrounded themes of initial introversion and low self-confidence and a progression towards increased self-confidence and assertiveness. Male practitioners tended to measure their self-esteem in external achievements, while female practitioners tended to measure it based on internal processes.

Low self-esteem was also examined. Here, too, there was a clear difference between males and females. Males tended to relate their self-esteem to external accomplishments or failures. Three of the male participants stated that they felt lower self-esteem when they were away from the dojo or when their profession as a martial artist was perceived as “not a real job”. For female practitioners, low self-esteem tended to surround relationships or absence of community. For both genders, external events such as divorce, relocation, or familial conflict caused a decrease in self-esteem.

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Attention and Memory. Five participants stated that they felt they had improved attention and memory within a year of study. One practitioner, who states he had a dual diagnosis of dyslexia and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), reports he had marked improvements in memory and attention. He notes that he had significant difficulty managing academics and was even placed in special education classes until he reached adolescence. *Kata* was reported as a major factor in his ability to focus more on one topic through repetitive movements and flow into other stances or moves.

He further reported that karate became an outlet for his high energy and emerged as an appropriate fit for his study in martial arts. Another practitioner states that she had significant difficulty remembering and organizing day-to-day living prior to practicing karate. She reports that within six months, she had increased her organization, remembered obligations, and become more efficient in her occupational and personal responsibilities. Six participants stated that they saw improvements in the students they taught, which was supplemented by reports from parents. Though none identified martial arts as the sole catalyst, they stated that parents reported academic improvement, increased memory, and higher achievements.

Emotional Regulation. After self-esteem, the second main theme was emotional regulation. Four participants reported that they had struggled with anxiety and depression, two stated that they struggle with anger. Five participants stated that martial arts have supported them in tempering their emotions and balancing them out. They noted that these emotions were in themselves not positive or negative, but that their management and the behaviors associated with them defined their quality.

During *kata* or even *kumite*, emotions are utilized to help a student complete a *kata* or sparring match. Too much of a particular emotion would negatively influence technique and

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decrease performance, and too little of the emotion would mean a loss of power or force. All participants with an emotional disposition for depression or anxiety reported that martial arts helped them to balance these emotions, and that they could be controlled and drawn out appropriately. For instance, one participant stated that she would increase her assertiveness to communicate with others in her occupation. Another participant stated they utilized anxiety to increase performance when speaking in public or maintaining professional consumer relationships.

Individuals who reported struggling with depression, anxiety, or anger stated that when they trained, they felt a relief of these emotions and felt a calm baseline. Those who reported a disposition to anger stated they felt a significant subjective decrease from restlessness to calm after activities such as sparring, bag work, or running through a *kata*. Individuals who stated that they had a disposition to depression or anxiety felt relief and an increase of self-perception and esteem after a class or a workout.

Withdrawal of Training. One unexpected theme that also emerged, mainly among male practitioners, was increased emotional disturbance after prolonged absence from training. The feelings iterated were restlessness, irritability, sadness, or attention difficulties. Though the consensus among the five male interviewees was that continued training provided emotional regulation, one sixth-degree participant reported that he had never experienced anger or emotional dysregulation throughout his training until three or four years ago.

He stated that life circumstances (family, managing a business) had required him to decrease his training time and increase time on other responsibilities. He reported that he had been experiencing anger and irritability at home and in the dojo, and identified that his decreased time training was the common marker for the onset of these symptoms. He further stated that he

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mitigates this by sparring with fellow instructors or students, running through a *kata*, or bag work, which provides a subjective noticeable decrease in these symptoms. Three other participants state that they felt depressed (sadness, lethargy, isolation) when they were away from the dojo for prolonged periods of time (more than a month) due to relocation or absence of a facility to train. They identified a decrease of these symptoms when they returned to training or to the dojo.

Physical Impacts of Training

Though the focus of this research lies on the mental-health components of experienced *karateka* and their training tenure, many interviews produced themes about the physical impact of training. Though many of the interviews discussed health improvements and maintenance, some interviewees reported that there were risks and consequences of training. As noted in Chapter II, karate and martial arts are contact sports and pose a risk for injury during events such as tournaments, *kabuto* (weapons *kata*), or sparring. The following themes arose when examining the physical impacts of training: health improvements and stamina, and injuries. These themes are discussed below.

Health Improvements and Stamina. This theme emerged in six interviews, but not to a significant extent. The six participants reported that they enjoyed increased stamina, better sleep patterns, and an improved understanding of their bodies' limits and capabilities. Four participants reported that they had believed that obtaining the black belt was going to be physically impossible. Once they had reached this rank, they reported experiencing a revelation that they were physically more capable than they had originally believed. Furthermore, individuals reported that they became more involved in healthier diets and eating, and synthesized these benefits into their curriculum with their students. In fact, one participant stated he strongly

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encourages that any of his students testing for the black belt take six months in which they avoid unhealthy foods or habits.

Injuries. Three of the interviewees discussed the risks of martial arts. The highest-ranking interviewee, an eighth-degree black belt, stated that he commonly experienced bruised hips or a bloody nose or lip when engaged in class. The same participant stated that he experienced many headaches and other injuries to his leg during practice. He iterates an experience at a belt test:

“At my next belt test, I sparred against a guy who was a Navy SEAL and physical trainer. That was intimidating. I was very scared and I happened to clip him with a roundhouse kick to his head, and he began walking around in circles. It’s a cautionary tale, he had inner ear problems due to diving, which compromised his sinuses and his balance. He weighed 50 pounds more than me, a great athlete, and I barely hit him in the head, and he never came back, or at least I don’t remember seeing him again.”

Other Impacts of Training

The personal stories iterated by the participants produced many other themes outside of the ones discussed earlier in this chapter. One expected theme was the role of spirituality. Many martial arts emphasize unity of mind, body, and spirit, as reported by all eight participants. There is a difference between spirituality (focus on presence) and religion (focus on a faith). However, in the interviews with the *karateka*, other themes were instead identified: social impacts, occupational impacts, problem solving, and conflict management. Below, the religious impacts are discussed, followed by these other themes.

Religious Impacts of Training. Five participants belonged to a Christian faith, two were agnostic, and one had no religious affiliation. Two participants were involved in a faith-based martial-art ministry which permeates the entire United States and three others were involved in churches or other religious associations. All five Christian practitioners identified their faith as the basis of their style. Four reported that they use scripture as a foundation of their daily training or classes, and that they have “mat chats”, or sermons or discussions and how that is relevant to

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their training. Two participants stated that they synthesize Biblical scriptures as requirements for progressing through the ranks. One participant articulated that his style was founded by a Christian who only allowed Christian individuals to progress to black-belt level within that style.

One participant with over 50 years' practice in martial arts iterated that spiritual components manifest themselves in her own study. She stated that at fourth degree and higher, the practitioner begins learning how to heal the body, while up to that rank, the student learns how to destroy the body. She said that she had experiences where she had been able to heal parts of an individual's body with her hands, or watched others do so, without any medical explanation. Two other practitioners noted that Shinto Buddhism's philosophical component of focusing outwardly was the key to a content life.

Social Impacts of Training. All practitioners reported they enjoyed several social benefits from their training. As iterated earlier in the chapter, many individuals have become involved in the associations for their respective styles and martial arts. Five stated that they have worked as either international or regional representatives within their organizations, and seven reported that they frequently travel to tournaments and events for social reasons. Three reported that they were initially very introverted (shy, performance anxiety, public speaking fears) and enjoyed time to themselves. However, all three reported that they have learned to socialize with others effectively and have developed close relationships within their dojo.

One participant, who explicitly stated that she was, and still is, introverted by nature, said that she was actively involved in the dojo for social reasons. While growing up, she often had sporadic attendance with training, and even spent a year abroad with family to help with a family-owned business. While she was away, she missed her dojo, as she had trained while growing up. She stated that when she returned, she discovered that she had missed her social

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connections, and iterated that she even came to the dojo to socialize, and not just to train. Three other participants stated they have friends in other countries, with whom they maintain ongoing communication, and attend their events when possible.

Occupational Impacts of Training. Five participants stated that they held other jobs throughout their training, and three of them are now full-time *Senseis* who run and own their own dojo. These five participants stated that they had learned skills that translated into their occupational world. These skills were listed as professional communication, maintaining appropriate boundaries with coworkers and clients, and the ability to manage stress during day-to-day functioning. These participants stated they experienced improved occupational relationships, job promotions, and the ability to communicate and participate in groups as an individual and team member.

One participant noted that she had utilized her improved ability to express herself and her increased self-confidence and relational skills to move up from being a bank teller to being a regional manager with over 20 branches of financial institutions under her authority. She credits what she learned in karate by utilizing training exercises and recalling the philosophies and lessons learned in the dojo. Another participant, who works in sales, stated that he utilizes his communication skills and open-mindedness to maintain a successful career and that he taught these lessons during his tenure in the military.

All participants were engaged in professional networking, ranging from involvement as regional or international representatives in martial arts associations such as the USKA or the USAMA, to involvement with interdisciplinary teaching associations that work together in seminars and tournaments. This networking is reported by seven participants as a major benefit.

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No participant stated their style was their only style; they are open to adopting ideas from other styles with the idea of continuous self and community improvement.

Conflict Management and Training. One unexpected theme that arose from the interviews was the reported number of physical altercations solved by alternative methods. All participants voiced that they felt they could defend themselves if they were ever caught in a compromising situation, but none identified any specific events where they were required to utilize any of their physical techniques to solve a dangerous situation. In fact, three participants stated that they have never been in a physical altercation throughout their study. This is an important finding that goes against much of the earlier research on martial arts and mental health. The participants explained that the philosophies of their study emphasize self-defense, but also proactive approaches to avoid confrontations. An eighth-degree black belt reported the following:

“I, of course, being at 57 years old, have been with angry cowboys at a country music concert, or with an aggressive panhandler downtown. I’ve been in lots of situations where someone, perhaps, wanted to make me their next victim or pick a fight. But, I’ve never had to strike anybody, using eye contact and body language, I’ve could change peoples’ minds before anything got aggressive. I do have confidence to protect myself or other people, if I need to, however.”

Student Stories. One unexpected theme that arose from seven of the interviews was the discussion of their students and their experiences as a teacher. Each of these seven participants provided a first- or second-hand account of a student of theirs, whether past or current, and their karate journey. When discussing this student, they provided a linear progression from where the student was when they began practicing martial arts to the difficulties faced and where they are now or during their most recent interactions. In fact, four participants tended to present their experience in martial arts through the stories of their students.

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Each of these stories began with how the student was presenting prior to their training, based on the students' individual reports and the reports from schools and family. Often, the student was a child, with one exception where there was an adult. The child had some form of behavioral issue, either extreme introversion (refusing to talk, isolating, crying), oppositional defiance or anger (yelling, refusing to participate, not following directions), or attentional difficulties (not paying attention, not staying in one spot for a prolonged period). Three participants identified these students as "success stories", while one stated the student was a "poster child for [their] dojo".

All interviewees became animated (increased eye contact, more affect) when discussing these students. They continued their story by telling what they did to manage the child's complications. All stated that they had personal difficulty with the child and that they "learned more from them [the student]." These interventions included constant involvement with parents, behavioral report cards that school staff signed off on, personal one-on-one talks or training, or requiring them to teach in class.

Six interviewees stated that these students continue to train in the dojo, and their stories concluded with how the philosophies and disciplines of martial arts had reduced these behaviors and their voiced belief that martial arts is therapeutic and helpful for everyone.

The story about the adult student included co-occurring substance abuse. The man had become so intoxicated that he had been in an alcohol-induced coma for a month. After awakening, he set himself the goal to remain sober and to pursue obtaining his black belt in martial arts. The participant reported that he did indeed obtain this black belt and that to his knowledge, he was still sober.

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Demographic Differences

One important factor for consideration is the differences between all participants. As iterated in Chapter III, participants were of different gender, ethnicity, and even country of origin. Some individuals began training as adults, while others became involved at a young age. Men and women had different presentations in their stories. The following thematic differences were drawn out for consideration: gender, country of origin, age of training, and religion. Each of these differences are discussed below

Gender Presentation. As discussed above, men and women experienced karate and its benefits differently. Males tended to present with more external themes, such as accomplishments or descriptions. Achievements, rankings, and knowledge were synthesized throughout the interviews. Male participants tended to discuss the philosophies and history of martial arts, and they noted that their dedication to the style expressed itself in participation and teaching. Though relationships and emotions were discussed, these were usually discussed in the context of questions about emotions during the interviews. Physical themes such as injuries, self-defense, techniques, or experiences in competition among male participants also emerged.

Female *karateka* tended to articulate the internal experiences more thoroughly than male participants. The emotional journey was discussed unprompted. Relationships were articulated more as well, such as relationships with dojo students, colleagues, or teachers. Female *karateka* tended to discuss other aspects of their lives in fluidity during the interview (as a mother, business owner, or a daughter). Women also answered the questions in more depth than their male counterparts. Perseverance in their training was discussed more with the female participants, and they also discussed obstacles or difficulties more easily.

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Country of Origin Presentation. Three participants were not born in the United States, but immigrated at some point in their lives. Two immigrated as adults pursuing higher education, while one immigrated as a child. All three reported they had initial difficulty adjusting to the culture and language of the United States, although this was not an emphasized theme. Two reported difficulties with locating a dojo that taught their style or a style that interested them. One maintains an ongoing relationship with her *sensei* in Central America, and all three stated that they valued their relationship with their *sensei*, because it helped their acculturation and adjustment.

Four American-born participants did not voice ethnic identity as an important value within their personal lives. In fact, they emphasized that martial arts supported open-mindedness and development of accepting and engaging in other cultures. One American-born participant did articulate her identity as a Mexican-American throughout her study, as she was the only female or Latina in her training as well as her occupation. This produced a well-articulated theme of perseverance. She continued to study and has an eclectic approach to teaching by integrating spirituality without a heavy religious emphasis, despite her Catholic upbringing.

Age of Training Presentation. Five participants began training under the age of twelve and they provided a different presentation than those who had begun training as adults. For instance, four of these five participants identified karate as a “way of life” and did not report any serious consideration of quitting. All five reported that their participation in karate had supported them in their identity development throughout adolescence, and that it had regulated their self-esteem into adulthood. All five participants stated that they had developed a social community within their dojo or style, and that these friendships continue to affect their lives today. Three

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participants reported active parental involvement in their training, a practice they continue to emphasize in their teaching at the time of their interview.

The three participants who began training as adults reported that their journey was much more personal instead of social. There were life events such as divorces and family obligations that reduced continued participation in the martial arts, while the younger interviewees reported less disturbances. The three participants articulated significant desires to quit at one point or another, but noted that their commitment and their relationship with their *sensei* motivated them to continue to study. The *sensei* relationship was articulated much clearer within this demographic than among those who had studied since childhood.

Religious Presentation. Five participants reported that they were Christian, and all five were involved in their respective churches in some way. Four reported they were a part of a faith-based organization that designed curricula for use across associated schools to promote the implementation of Christian values. While the remaining three had philosophies and disciplinary values, the Christians reported utilizing scripture as part of their own personal training as well as the training of other students. Three participants stated that the term “master” should only be used for God.

Other philosophies that emerged were based on open-mindedness and emptiness of self. The Christian *karateka* do not restrict themselves to one style, but openly participate with other Christian martial artists to improve their current skill or mindset. The term “teachable spirit” was used by four Christian participants and argued to be an important value for students of any rank. These Christians still considered achieving their black belt to be their most memorable experience, but they did not discuss other ranks beyond it in the same way. They appeared to consider the progression through the *dan* system as natural if someone dedicated themselves to

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the art. Two participants stated they served as leaders in their church, and three stated they found their faith while training within their respective styles.

Conclusion

All eight participants were engaged throughout the interview and were willing to discuss their experiences in their several decades' worth of study in martial arts. The emerging themes show the journey to the black belt and beyond, as well as important milestones during their tenure. The black belt was ranked as the single most important memory of emotional and physical consequence, but also as the beginning of their training. There were reported benefits of increased self-esteem, emotional regulation, and other impacts of their training (occupational, social, and physical). Martial arts appear to have a positive correlation with mental health and symptom reduction as well as increased quality of life, as supplemented by the literature review in Chapter II. All results are synthesized with existing research in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V—DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The present study demonstrates that long-term martial arts training benefited karate masters both psychologically and emotionally. The eight masters participating in the study reported that their training caused them to feel less emotional distress and caused a decrease in their symptoms of anxiety, anger, and depression. The participants also reported improvements in their memory and their self-esteem because of their practice. Moreover, the subjects informed the interviewer that they experienced enhanced occupational, social, and cognitive functioning, including faster reaction times, the ability to complete tasks more quickly, and better memory recall for specific details of tasks they engage in. Additionally, the study participants reported that karate training caused them to develop a mindset that values life. Importantly, not only did their practice influence their training, but this “*karateka* mindset” also extended into other areas of their lives, so that they showed less symptoms of emotional stress and improved cognitive health even when they were not practicing. The participants reported that active training similarly affected their students. As experienced practitioners and teachers, they reported that students across all ages enjoyed similar improvements in their emotional and cognitive health. When looking back on their lives, the masters identified their black-belt promotion as a critical factor in solidifying the psychological benefits of their training. Thus, by the time they reached the black-belt level, the participants had attained the “*karateka* mindset” that allowed them to reach the full physical and mental health benefits of *karateka* practice.

Interpretation of Findings

This study adds to the existing literature by identifying and interpreting the benefits of karate training. These benefits include reduction in anger, anxiety, and depression symptoms, as well as improved attention and concentration. The study also identifies several physical benefits of karate, including increased physical health and avoidance of unhealthy habits such as smoking, poor diet, and inactivity. Furthermore, participants report improvements in their memory and self-esteem with enhanced social and occupational functioning. Additionally, training in a controlled environment ensured a low risk of injury and led to improved peer relations with colleagues and students.

At the same time, some of the findings of this study stand in contrast to the evidence presented in previous research. For instance, half of the participants reported that Buddhist religion and philosophy, which are a foundational element of karate training, are not a critical determinant for their emotional health. Much of the available research reports that philosophy and religion are integral in the training of practitioners (Morgan, 1992). Three masters in the current research reported that they were agnostic or non-religious; the rest identified as being of the Christian faith. Buddhism was not a religion of choice for any of the participants. A Christian religious affiliation appeared to increase involvement in activities outside of the dojo such as in churches, or the community. The Christian participants were, in the past or currently, in a leadership position in their respective churches. Those with no religious affiliation reported that karate training led them to seek increased involvement outside of the dojo in areas such as tournaments and martial art association meetings.

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Additionally, the role of the *sensei* was emphasized in this study, while other studies do not focus on this factor (cf. Genovese, 1980). The participants reported that their relationship with their *sensei* was one of the most important elements in their training. It should be noted that all participants were active *Senseis* themselves and had taught for at least a decade. Additionally, the *sensei* is reported to have a heavy involvement in the life of the dojo and beyond. The *sensei* also had a great effect on student retention and program development.

Alternative Interpretation of Findings

Numerous studies have demonstrated that exercising can help to reduce emotional dysfunctions and increase overall quality of life (Terry, 1995). Participation in sports and other physical activities is reported to increase a person's physical and psychological health (Palermo, 2006). It is possible that the physical component of karate caused, or significantly contributed to, the reduction in participants' reported stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms. Interestingly, none of the participants listed the physical benefits as their main motivation for continued participation in karate. Instead, they argued that the mental health benefits were the main source of increased quality of life. Additionally, obtaining mastery in a sport can provide a sense of accomplishment for an athlete, increasing his or her self-esteem. Although karate is not a team sport, it still offers a strong sense of community, social interactions, and support.

Although none of the participants identified themselves as Buddhist, this belief system is still embroidered in the core philosophies of karate. This faith, as well as the Christian belief system of many participants, minimizes the self and emphasizes others. Being exposed to both Christian and Buddhist beliefs might explain why many participants had reported that they were more involved in their community, increased their charity functions, and had more discipline after they started practicing karate. Participants often stated that the social components of their

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practice enhanced their overall social support and helped them to reduce emotionally disruptive behaviors such as angry emotional outbursts or impulsivity. It seemed that for many participants, the combination of karate practice, religious practices, and the enhanced social support system that karate provides brought them the best results.

The eight masters interviewed identified that they had trained hundreds, if not thousands of students. With decades of experience, they believed that they had a crucial influence on their students' lives. Whether as a collateral support for the raising of a child, or as long-standing training partners for adults, they regarded themselves as experts in the field. Some were chosen by their karate discipline to be ambassadors of the sport to other countries, and several consulted with other experienced martial artists or *Senseis*. The data collected represents the personal and professional experience that these martial artists gained over the course of their life.

Clinical Implications of Findings.

Although participation in any sport can improve a person's physical and emotional health, martial arts are often far more complicated than typical sports. Karate emphasizes both physical and mental maturity, and many of the participants described the responsibility they felt towards their students and even the larger community. This was especially clear when the participants had a Christian affiliation. One participant reports his faith in his teaching:

“You [the participant] may have them [the students] for three weeks or even three years. I know it's my job to impact them as much as I can on that person in both karate and as a Christian, or if a non-believer, spread the gospel to them. So, I really deal with my teaching on that basis, they're not here by mistake. It's not like, Oh—I'll do this for the rest of my life—that wasn't a mistake. If I do isn't a mistake, then the people who train with me are not here by mistake.”

Emotional Regulation and Mood Disorders. Individuals who have mood disorders often struggle with managing and regulating emotions. Previous researchers have indicated that

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participation in karate strengthens emotional control and thereby aids in regulating mood (Zazryn et al., 2008). Physical exercise reduces emotional lability, stress, anxiety, anger, and the symptoms of depression. Exercise itself can be insufficient in managing the ongoing stressors in person's life (Szabo, 2001). Karate emphasizes self-control and its benefits thus appear to go beyond the value provided by physical exercise alone to help practitioners manage their emotions. *Karateka* often learn additional coping skills and cognitive resources such as meditation and *dojo-kun*, and gain a large social support network that can teach them, or assist them, in dealing better with everyday stressors. One subject shares how karate affected her anxiety around people:

“I’m a very shy person, I don’t like to talk to people very often. But when you must teach, you must be in front of people. Karate wasn’t easy, I had to work hard to be good at it. That gave me a sense of accomplishment, I earned my black belt. I know I can be hard working. With tournaments, under a lot of pressure and when I’m nervous, I know I can function under high stress situations in my everyday life.”

Involvement in a martial art could benefit a person struggling with emotional disturbances and lability. Many of the study participants noticed a significant difference in their emotions and symptoms within weeks of practice. As one participant, a seventh-degree black belt, stated:

“I saw tangible improvements within two months; basic coordination skills and mental improvements. I started noticing I could accomplish a 30-minute task in 20 minutes, to 10 minutes, and to five minutes. And along with that, teacher [sensei] is very important, it’s not how fast you do something, it’s how fast you get ready to do the next thing. Because the time between thought contemplation and action as a martial artist gets reduced, you get more done because your contemplation time, because your mental process is accelerated. That’s what kept me interested, I saw tangible improvements in my ability to things more quickly and understand.”

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Specifically, some participants identified difficulties with their mood that they had struggled with since childhood. This included anger, irritability, anxiety, depression, and perception of low self-worth. Subjects in this study reported that training assisted them in tempering their emotions and managing them throughout their lives. *Kumite*, where they face someone they perceive as an opponent, was especially helpful to many participants. After the engagement, practitioners are expected to shake hands and maintain positive relations and calmness with their sparring partner. Per the participants, this activity increases comradery among male masters in their training while female participants voiced more ego mastery.

Data from this study also reveals that an individual does not need to get a black belt to notice these changes. Masters reported that they noticed changes within two weeks to six months in both themselves and their students. However, as this is self-report, further studies are needed to verify this finding. Specifics of karate practice and philosophy need to be explored further to get support for the existing data. For example, it would be important to learn what kind of philosophies cause the reported increase in participants' self-esteem. Many martial artists state that total dedication and perseverance, and an attitude unwilling to give up on training, despite difficulty or adversity, is what makes for such improvements (Haines, 1995). By exploring these commonalities, the details of what leads to the changes the martial artists in this study described may be quantified, and the claims these experienced martial artists have made may be substantiated.

Childhood Development and Treatment. Children are the largest group of people currently training in karate in the United States. The *Senseis* in this study maintained active involvement in the lives of their child students. This involvement includes open discussions with parents,

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teachers, and other important authority figures in the child's life. This may signify that the *sensei* plays a key role in the development of children who study karate. Children can call on this relationship and they can use their *sensei* as a support, which may contribute significantly to their emotional and social development. Children with pervasive disorders such as autism can experience decreased stereotypical behaviors when they begin to practice *kata*. Their social relationship can also improve when they communicate with their dojo peers (Codman, 1982).

One participant articulated this as follows:

“I've worked with autistic students, just about every spectrum, I've worked with the Easter Seals down in San Diego, so I've seen it give people with both physical and mental disabilities, who've been told that they can't do anything, or that they're limited. I've seen people come in with a wheelchair, or a cane into the dojo and master techniques and see them light up. Like they do what they've been told they cannot, they develop a sense of confidence and discipline and we go together with the parents.”

Participants also stated that many of their students had less behavioral problems because of their training. This might be because karate teaches children both better social skills and a better understanding of the consequences of their behavior. The attainment of a black belt is not as heavily emphasized for children in karate training. Thus, it seems likely that skill acquisition is the primary focus of training for this age group. One participant discussed a case of a child with oppositional defiant behaviors:

“He [the student] came in with a terrible attitude, behavioral skills were not that good. So, after a few weeks, it was amazing, he did much better. He listened, played games. He didn't like playing games at first. Now he says please and thank you, obeys his parents. His parents thanked us and said his behavior had improved. He didn't want to do anything new at first, we don't let students get away with that here. So, when I showed him and believed he could do this, he accomplished so much in the first few weeks. He made friends, he plays, he talks to us all the time, he didn't do that before.”

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Although the present study focused mainly on the masters' more recent life experiences, some participants also spoke about, and seemed to recognize the relevance of, their childhood experiences. For example, one participant stated that he had been diagnosed with ADHD and had struggled with attention and memory difficulties throughout his life. He notes that the repeated practice of *kata* helped him to manage his attention problems. He stated that his academic performance improved during his training and that his parents noticed changes in his concentration skills as well as changes in his general behavior and attitude. Many participants who trained as children said that their parents were in open communication with their *sensei*, and that this provided them with an additional sense of security and support. These feelings gave them an enhanced sense of confidence as they were growing up. One participant stated about his experiences with ADHD:

“Though, getting involved I can remember that I wasn't that good, it was a struggle. I didn't pick up things super-fast, I picked them up a bit slower. I'm a bit more tactile, so getting involved in martial arts was a good thing. It helped me. I have a couple of disabilities: ADHD and dyslexia. Some of the things I was learning was hard to grasp at the beginning.”

He shared how karate affects his experiences with this diagnosis:

“My hyper-activeness had me all over the place, so when I started learning martial arts, I was still all over the place still, but doing karate. I think my hyper-activeness became 'hyper-practiveness'. It gave me, it became my outlet of my hyperactive activeness. So, when I was going bizarre, it was karate stuff, not just useless movements or running. It was techniques and stuff like that. It had a lot to do with practice. It wasn't like I have to schedule my practice time, it was a little bit throughout the day, all day.”

Furthermore, he reported how his symptoms were managed:

“Karate helped my ADHD a lot. Through *kata*, it taught me how to control my impulses, my attention to stay on topic for however long it took to get through the *kata*. It's a process, not immediate. My mom can distinctively remember that I started learning the *kata*, it really stuck me in one spot. It confined me to the

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confines of the form, I was still all over the place doing other things, but *kata* helped my attention, focus, and self-control.”

Several participants reported that they utilize a type of behavioral chart or token economy system for students with behavioral issues. Three participants stated that they require that some of their students show them their report cards, signed by teachers and parents, to verify that they are engaging in positive and appropriate behaviors. They report reviewing the report cards not only to attest to their students’ good grades, but also to ensure that their behavior is appropriate and that they are showing proper respect for parents, teachers, and other authority figures. Other *Senseis* report using token economies, including stripes on the belt, badges, and stickers, to reward their students’ positive behaviors. During two interviews, the dojo was in the middle of a parent appreciation event. Both participants identified that parents played an active role in the students’ training. Two parents were students themselves, while others attended tournaments, volunteered, or observed classes. Both participants also identified that parents were essential, and as much a part of the dojo as the students and teachers. Further research on child development and martial arts is needed to learn more about the effects of karate practice on children.

Substance Abuse Disorders and Addiction. Many people in American society struggle with the stressors of day to day life and try to manage the distress and discomfort such stress induces, often by relying on psychotropic medication. Some people may turn to alcohol or illicit drugs in their search for a relief of emotional distress. These behaviors may mitigate the symptom initially, but soon turns into an addiction that reduces the person’s overall functioning. However, one of the many effective treatments available for substance abuse are replacement interventions. Karate practice leads people to engage in activities that support and promote other avenues for dealing with life stress.

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If a person is struggling with an addiction, karate may offer him or her more productive coping skills. The focus of martial arts is on both self and community, and many dojos emphasize continuous growth. As one participant reported, “if you fall six times, get up seven.” These mantras can support a patient who relapses. The encouragement of the dojo and the coping skills karate training provides may help to reduce use or at least provide interventions such as meditation, a *kata*, or reaching out to a dojo peer or support.

Two participants reported that their training has helped their students avoid using substances. This is not heavily emphasized, but one subject reported that an adult student had quit over a decade of substance abuse after an overdose, to pursue their black belt training. This participant reported that his student retained sobriety and acquired his black belt. Yet, the present study does not offer much data on the effects of karate practice on addictions since none of the participants reported having any addictions or significant substance abuse. Further research is needed to study this important topic.

The Belt System as an Accomplishment and Anchor. The black belt is a common goal and a material representation of the accomplishments of the student. The black belt is highly coveted by *karateka*, and the journey to this belt has many physical and emotional challenges.

The reports from this study indicate that anyone who maintains their training can obtain a black belt in martial arts. The journey itself requires an individual to learn to master their emotions and body to obtain their *shodan*. Once this is acquired, a belt promotion is never revoked. The belt itself serves as a representation of the accomplishments of the *karateka*. For the clinician treating a black belt *karateka*, it is essential to understand the importance of the

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black belt for the practitioners, and to remind themselves that they can use this achievement to help a person with self-esteem problems by recalling their accomplishment as an anchor.

However, the black belt ranking system is utilized not just to retain students and identify mastery, but also to reward those who are training. Half of the participants identified that not achieving black belt was not a failure, and that training for a period produces its own benefits. One participant went on to identify that students who achieved yellow belt, or another belt, had attained an important goal and they gained more self-confidence. Two participants identified that over half of the people drop out before attaining the yellow belt, and that many of their former students had returned to thank them for the role karate had played in increasing their self-esteem, even though they never managed to achieve black-belt status.

Skill Acquisition and Stress Management. Learning how to manage the day-to-day stressors of life is essential for all people. People who do not have strong stress management skills are likely to struggle with poor performances across occupational, social, and personal domains. Individuals may also have problems with poor frustration tolerance, inadequate social skills, peer relationships, and emotional distress. Additionally, they may have difficulties at work and might find it difficult to connect with others. The present study indicates that those who train in karate acquire several methods to manage personal stress and improve functioning at their jobs. The participants of the study stated that such methods can result in job promotions, salary increases, occupational retention, and increased job satisfaction. One subject identified this as a crucial part in her ongoing profession

“If you advance in banking, which outside of the military is the most reactionary that a woman could be, because it deals with power, this is in the 1970s. I got good at doing exercises that taught me to think three steps ahead, put you in a situation where someone is attacking you, thinking of three more things you could

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do in response. These are tangible, that's why my fighters [students] are so good, but it translated into the work arena. Eventually, I got to the point where I was a loan officer, where women were beginning to become loan officers. I had to take classes instead of a degree, plus a recommendation to enter the training program. I got good at it. Eventually, I became Division Manager. That's when my training came in, I could handle corporate back-stabbing and not compromise my integrity. I wouldn't hurt anybody, if anybody needed my help, I would help them."

Individuals with poor employment records may benefit from the involvement of a supportive, engaged authority figure, such as a *sensei*. *Kumite* is likely to help individuals to maintain positive relationships even when they have just engaged in a physical and psychological sparring match with an individual.

Participants also stated that karate taught them to use mental imagery in various settings. For example, one woman reported that she learned to communicate better with people by practicing facial expressions in front of a mirror. Skills learned also included improved communication, boundary setting, assertiveness, and professional presentation competency. Subjects identified that tournament performance allowed them to present their skills in a professional and calm manner. The ability to remain calm and present material was reported essential in all participants who worked outside of the dojo.

Withdrawal-like Symptoms. The findings from this research show that taking breaks from or quitting martial arts caused negative symptoms in many participants, even if they didn't quit entirely. These symptoms included increased irritability, restlessness, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Although participants stated that these symptoms were temporary (external circumstances preventing ongoing training like family stress or job), it is a consideration for those training in martial arts. One participant reported that training "was like a medicine."

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This participant went into detail on the effects of training on these symptoms. He stated that he struggled with anger throughout his adulthood, but not as a child. He found that as his anger increased, so would corresponding feelings of restless and an overall negative mood. He reported that when he went to his dojo, his anger would dissipate quickly, but that he required continual training, or “doses” of practice to mitigate his anger. Many other subjects reported that they saw such symptoms as increased irritability, anger, or sadness in their students when they took breaks from training. If a clinician should suggest martial arts as a potential outlet, it might be noted that cessation of practice might spike a peak in behavioral intensity, or regression.

Limitations

Several considerations need to be acknowledged in defining the implications of this study. A limiting factor for generalizability is the sample size. The specificity and narrow demographic of the study and its reliance on eight interviews of only highly advanced karate masters indicate that these results cannot be generalized to individuals who do not train regularly. Furthermore, the present study of martial arts training focuses only on karate training, and does not consider individuals who train in other combat sports. The participants are also all from a narrow geographical region within two affiliated martial arts associations. Masters from other areas may not identify with the same themes discovered in this research topic.

Another limitation is that the participants of the present study were all experts with a long experience in training and teaching. Thus, the results of the present study may not apply to those who have only recently started practicing karate. As mentioned before, many participants stated that they saw the full effects of karate practice only after they had reached the black-belt stage. Notably, the dropout rate amongst those who train in karate is significant and most people never reach the black-belt stage. Thus, the reported benefits and interventions cannot be generalized

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across populations. This means that karate may not be an appropriate intervention for most people despite its promise.

Many of the benefits of karate that were reported in the study were identified based on teachers' observations of their child pupils. Future studies are needed to investigate how the child students themselves describe the changes they have experienced through their practice of karate. Moreover, it is important to carry out longitudinal studies so that for example the symptoms of depression, ADHD, or anxiety can be compared objectively before a person begins to practice karate and then at various time points in their training.

The data gathered does not encompass clinically diagnosed patients in active treatment. The reports provided are subjective and the diagnoses and symptoms described have been determined by self-report. Severe mood disorders such as bipolar I and II are not mentioned, nor are psychotic or personality diagnoses. The symptom reductions reported have not been quantified and are solely described as emotional and behavioral in nature, and they extend in only a few cases to severe and persistent mental illness such as autism spectrum disorder.

The information collected in this study was from interviews of subjects and is thus self-report data. This means it lacks the benefit of multiple data sources such as collateral information. Interviewing other important sources such as family, students, or even the participants' *Senseis* themselves would add additional dimensions of information. Furthermore, the approach taken in this study did not allow the author to provide any quantifiable data such as data from psychological testing measures to verify the informants' descriptions of their emotional health. This researcher is the sole author as well as the lone analyst, and so the study does not benefit from the additional perspective that an analysis by other clinicians would

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provide. Additionally, specific interventions are not identified and cannot be directly linked to clinical intervention for treating clinicians.

Recommendations

The findings from this study emphasize the emotional benefits of karate practice. Karate differentiates itself from many sports with its philosophical focus and emphasis on control of the self. Karate itself is not encouraged as a sole therapy, nor should it replace modern mental-health interventions. Instead, an understanding of how karate practice influences individuals may allow it to be integrated into or synthesized with other approaches to offer tailored interventions for people suffering from a range of emotional disorders. As discussed in the limitations section above, there are some recommendations that could be explored in further research.

Effects of Karate Training on Severe Mental Disorders and Neurocognitive Disorders. The present study did not investigate the effects of karate on more severe mental illnesses as bipolar disorder or intermittent explosive disorder. Yet, since the present study found that karate training seems to reduce anxiety and depression symptoms and appears to help people to regulate their emotions in a more constructive way, such studies might be beneficial.

The present study briefly discussed the possible effects of karate on neurocognitive disorders such as autism and ADHD. Yet most of the participants in the present study simply noted the positive effects that they had observed in other people with these disorders. Thus, further studies investigating the effects of karate on people with autism or ADHD are needed to fully understand how and why karate can help them. By identifying specific components of martial arts practice, perhaps other treatments of pervasive disorders could adopt interventions to reduce stereotypy behaviors and improve social interaction among peers, such as the ability to pick up social cues and responding appropriately.

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Exploring the Sensei Relationship. All participants emphasized the importance of the relationship with the *sensei*. Thus, it would be of great importance to explore this topic further. Future researchers would need to identify how the *sensei* specifically impacts the lives of the children and corroborate such data with collateral sources. It would be important to study the perspectives of the parents and teachers as well. Exploring the role of *sensei* in the lives of adult students would be of great importance.

Identifying Specific Interventions in Karate. Although participants provided specific details of their training, there are only a few interventions common to all participants. It is thus impossible to draw a consistent avenue of approach that is present across all eight interviews. Future studies could work to specifically parse how individual components of karate impact people. For example, does sparring cause psychological distress or improve social interactions? Does *kata* improve attention and memory for individuals who struggle with depression or ADHD? Identifying what components of karate are of importance and how they impact the lives of the students and masters would help scientists to tailor interventions for mood or behavioral disorders in children.

This topic would require substantial study since it would be necessary to identify the specific components or techniques of the karate system. By gathering a list of these techniques, researchers might be able to establish a list of interventions that could be tested. After this list is compiled, the research team could expand on these topics by seeking out populations that have been explored before, such as people with autism or behavioral disorders. Other, unlisted, diagnoses or symptoms could also be explored.

Dropout Rates in Karate. Dropout is possibly the largest stressor for dojos, since many students stop practicing before they even reach yellow-belt rank. How does dropping out after years of

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practicing affect people? Could it be a risk to their emotional health? Do people at brown-belt level regret dropping out before achieving their black belt? Studying dropouts may provide enlightenment on the specific stressors and psychological obstacles that students face. Do these obstacles present themselves in other areas of their lives? Are there any differences in the overall functioning between people who have dropped out and those who have achieved the black-belt rank?

Profiling Karate Masters with Objective Measures. Unfortunately, quantifiable data to profile a master *karateka* is lacking and research needs to be conducted to begin profiling the karate master. Although this study expands and verifies that master level *karateka* in Southern California exhibit many of the benefits mentioned in research, its participants were not profiled. Are there similar personality characteristics in all masters? Future research should conduct a series of tests to measure personality, intelligence, or even neurological traits of a karate master. By expanding this topic, the individuals who are likely to train and succeed in karate might be identified. Conducting this study in pre- and post-measures would support findings or challenge them.

Although this field would benefit from further subjective research, objective studies are also recommended. Psychometric testing or emotional evaluation reports could substantiate subjective claims of emotional health. This topic offers flexibility, since the available information on the topic of karate and emotional health is yet sparse. This means that researchers could examine how karate impacts emotions and overall psychological wellbeing in short-term and long-term studies. Identifying these results could further explore if karate specifically impacts psychology.

Substantiate the Current Field on Karate and Mental Health. The participants' reports were the only source of data in this study. Thus, it is recommended that this study be repeated with some minor changes. For example, semi-structured interviews could be used with the students themselves, instead of focusing on masters alone. Furthermore, accessing collateral reports from e.g. parents, teachers, or family members would help to substantiate, expand, or challenge the claims made by these participants. Future researchers could repeat this interview, but explore other sources of data to further or alter what many practitioners have reported.

Furthermore, more researchers could be used to conduct the study. Having multiple perspectives would verify and increase the validity of the themes presented in this study. A research team could conduct a study that explores both subjective and objective themes. For instance, it would be possible to combine both intelligence and personality testing, along with semi-structured interviews. Martial arts masters do not necessarily have to be the subjects in question, unless the research team wanted to further explore profiling them. Instead, it might be beneficial to conduct a series of studies, identical in design, and include participants in all ranks of martial arts. Further analysis could demonstrate if these reported benefits are more common between certain ranks, or if they are achieved at earlier ranks already.

Conclusion

Eight karate masters were interviewed to gather the essence of what experience in martial arts has produced. Much of the available literature verifies the report's findings, but the current research also expands the limited field of martial arts and clinical psychology. Individuals who train in martial arts enjoy higher self-esteem, emotional regulation, social involvement, and the prestige of achievement with each rank. Surprisingly, the title of master is not used by many who hold it; instead, their focus lies on self-development and training. Clinically, karate appears to

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support the idea that practicing improves quality of life and can help practitioners manage the stresses of life more effectively.

These reports capture the phenomenological data that could only be acquired from the lived experiences of karate masters. For treating clinicians and interested parties alike, martial arts practice helps improve the emotional health of individuals who decide to train. Individuals notice differences within weeks of beginning training. The journey to the black belt is difficult, and many do not achieve it. However, as these findings, based on the reports of the most experienced martial artists in their field, make clear, individuals enjoy many benefits of training.

There remains much research to be done to substantiate the statements of previous literature and the current reports of eight masters. By continuing to study this field, researchers may expand and identify components of karate that correlate with improved emotional health. Treating clinicians may examine karate as a complimentary treatment method that could be combined with traditional talk therapy etc. Regardless, this field remains in its infancy. The current research study is an early attempt to explain the psychology of karate.

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Appendix A: People of Importance

Funakoshi, Gichin (1868-1957): Widely considered the “Father of Karate”, a Japanese master who influenced karate and introduced it to the western world. Became the honorary head of the Japanese Karate Association when it was founded (Haines, 1997).

Itosu, Anko (1831-1915): A Japanese karate master who is regarded as one of the founding fathers of karate. Living in the Okinawan Islands of Japan, he studied and taught karate throughout his lifetime (Haines, 1997).

Lee, Bruce (1940-1973): One of the most influential martial artists in modern times. Lee studied many different styles and founded his own mix-style of *jeet kune do*. Lee’s writings and study influenced many martial arts and even MMA.

Meiji (1852-1912): The Emperor of Japan who ended the Shogunate and consolidated power to the position of Emperor. Meiji modernized Japan as an international power, ending its isolation completely and opening up trade (Haines, 1997).

Nobunaga, Oda (1534-1582): A *Daimyo* in Japan who was credited with unifying much of the country under one rule, together with Hideyoshi and Tokugawa (Haines, 1997).

Tokugawa, Ieyasu (1543-1616): A *Daimyo* who founded the Tokugawa Shogunate and served as the first *Shogun*, credited with the unification of the county of Japan under one rule which lasted until 1866 (Haines, 1997).

Trias, Robert (1923-1929): Also considered one of the founding fathers of modern karate. Trias was a Navy Reserve after World War 2 and studied martial arts in Japan. He founded the USKA and *shuri Ryu* in 1948.

Appendix B: Sample of Screening Flyer

United States Karate Alliance/United States Association of Martial Artists
Board of Directors,

My name is Brandon Maynard, and I am a doctoral candidate at Antioch University in Santa Barbara. Additionally, I am a member of the United States Karate Alliance (USKA) and United States Association of Martial Artists (USAMA). I am conducting a study on the journey of a master leveled *karateka* to gain understanding of the resiliency and tenure of such practitioners. I appreciate your consideration, as we have spoken on the phone briefly to discuss the study itself.

I'm contacting you because I am currently screening for participants who are master-leveled martial artists in the discipline of karate. As a member of your organization, I am asking if you would be willing in supporting me in identifying a list of potential participants.

I wanted to assure you that such information will be kept confidential and not be shared with outside parties. Your participation is strictly to identify potential candidates for this research topic of the journey of masters leveled martial artists, and identify qualities and the development of these qualities throughout the study of karate. This project will provide helpful information in utilizing karate as a supplemental treatment for depression, anxiety, or other psychological disorders.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx

Respectfully,

Brandon Maynard, MA
Doctoral Candidate
Antioch University Santa Barbara

Appendix C: Sample of Solicitation Flyer

Greetings,

My name is Brandon Maynard, and I am a doctoral candidate at Antioch University in Santa Barbara. Additionally, I am a member of the United States Karate Alliance (USKA) and United States Association of Martial Artists (USAMA). I am conducting a study on the journey of a master leveled *karateka* to gain understanding of the resiliency and tenure of such practitioners. I appreciate your consideration, as we have spoken on the phone briefly to discuss the study itself.

Your involvement is completely voluntary, and all information is confidential. This means that all identifying personal information is changed or omitted from the study itself to protect confidentiality. Your participation will include a 60-90-minute interview, where I will ask you questions about your personal journey in karate. This interview will cover the beginning of your karate career to your status now as a *karateka*. If there are any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx

Respectfully,

Brandon Maynard, MA
Doctoral Candidate
Antioch University Santa Barbara

Appendix D: Informed Consent



Name of Researcher: Brandon Maynard, MA

Name of University: Antioch University Santa Barbara

Name of Dissertation: *From Dawn to Dan: The Journey of Karate Masters*

Hello,

My name is Brandon Maynard, I'm a doctoral candidate at Antioch University in Santa Barbara, California. I am also an avid martial artist, and hold a *shodan* in Keichu Ryu, and have had periodic participation in the United States Karate Alliance and United States Association of Martial Artists. I am inviting you to participate in a research topic that examines the lived experiences of masters' leveled *karateka* throughout their journey in karate. However, I have provided detailed information on the project itself, and humbly request you read it thoroughly before deciding. Please ask as many questions to clarify any ambiguity as in the nature or process of this dissertation project. Please email or call me at xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx, (xxx)xxx-xxxx.

Purpose of this Research.

As a *karateka*, we develop a perception of the world in a unique way. Through the dedication and perseverance of training and defining our bodies and minds; we develop several qualities that are attained through such a rigorous journey. Many *karateka* drop out, and do not make it to black belt, while very few others continue training once they have reached the rank of *shodan*. Through this research project; I hope to identify the lived experience of a karate master through decades of dedicated training. I hope to link these experiences into identifying themes that have been produced through the hard work and the development of mind, body, and spirit.

Participants

As this study focuses on karate masters; a screening was conducted through the United States Karate Alliance and United States Association of Martial Artist to identify a list of *karateka* who have attained the rank of master (fourth *dan* or higher). Because I have contacted you, you have been recommended based on this criterion. It is completely voluntary participation throughout the study, and withdrawal is always an option with no questions asked.

Research Procedures

All participants will be asked to fill out a basic demographic questionnaire strictly for research purposes. An individual's name, sexual orientation, marital status, and other excluded information will not be asked in this questionnaire. The questionnaire will ask the participant's age, ethnicity, occupation, religious affiliation, and gender. The second part of the questionnaire will ask for the discipline of karate, duration of study, position in the system, as well as any other martial arts experience.

This researcher will travel to a location of the participant's convenience, preferably a dojo, office, or neutral location where privacy is maintained.

This researcher will conduct a 60-90-minute interview with each participant. All questions are open-ended and voluntary, the participant may skip any question he/she desires. It is beneficial to answer all questions to provide more enriching information. It should be noted that all interviews will be audio-recorded.

After the interviews, this researcher will review the recording and transcribe all material, and assign themes drawn from the interview a code. These codes will be reviewed with all interviews to identify similarity and differences. After the data, has been analyzed, you will be contacted to assure that this material is accurate, to promote consistency and reliability.

Risks:

The material discussed will encompass the entire duration of each participant's study in martial arts, beginning with what started their interest in karate to where he/she is now. It should be noted that there are minimal risks; including potential emotional discomfort, as the journey of a *karateka* is often an emotional one. It is possible that the participant may feel uncomfortable with discussing periods of their tenure, and feel it is important that all information is voluntary. This researcher will offer an optional debriefing session to discuss any discomfort, and if necessary; provide referrals for counseling.

Benefits

The field of martial arts and mental health is small, but all participation will enrich this small field in providing contributions to the therapeutic and philosophical understanding of the health-promoting benefits of karate.

Confidentiality

Everything identifying information will be coded and removed to promote the anonymity of all participants. After the transcription and the analysis of the interview, all data will be kept in a flash drive inside a safe for seven years and destroyed thereafter, and only accessible by this researcher. Additionally, the Dissertation Committee will see the proposal of this research; and the Internal Review Board to assure that this study is ethical, and prioritizes participation protection and confidentiality assurance.

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Interview results will be shared with each participant before it will be made available to the public with the publication of this dissertation. Each participant will be given the opportunity to receive a summary of the results, and a copy of the complete dissertation provided upon request.

Contact Information

If you have any questions, now or later, please feel free to contact Brandon Maynard, at xxxxxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx, or by phone at (xxx)xxx-xxxx

Appendix E: Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

Age: _____

Religious Affiliation: _____

Discipline of Karate: _____

Rank: _____

Do you have any experience in any other styles? If so, please list them, including rank.

Position in your System: (Circle all that apply)

STUDENT

SENSEI

HEAD OF STYLE

FOUNDER

REPRESENTATIVE (USKA or USAMA): YES NO

-If Yes: Please specify _____

OTHER: (Please Specify) _____