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## Karate, and the perception of the sport

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## SOCIOLOGY

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### Abstract

**Problem and Aim.** Apart from delineating the borderline between the following terms; “martial art”, “*budo*”, “combat sport” and “fighting art”, this paper covers the main motives and factors for practicing *karate* in different countries. It attempts to distinguish the main trends based on the outputs of various sociological theories and studies.

**Method.** This study relies strongly on reflections that are available in the literature concerning the topic.

**Results and Conclusions.** *Karate* is considered a martial art, *budo*, combat sport and fighting art. It can sometimes even be a spectacle. Martial arts discipline the mind by disciplining the body. *Budo* is based on the warrior's philosophy of life and is closely linked to the spiritual dimensions of the practice. Combat sports aim for continuous improvement of performance. The concept of *budo* is included in martial arts. Martial arts and combat sports have two completely divergent goals. “Fighting arts” is an umbrella term encompassing martial arts and combat sports. *Karate* is perceived differently depending on practitioners' cultural background. The main reasons for practicing *karate* fall into three main categories: pragmatic motives concerning health and sport; philosophical factors which are about education, and thirdly, utilitarian motives which are linked to self defense.

### Introduction

Originating from Okinawan *To-de*, which is derived from *Chonfa*, *karate* is considered to be a form of self-defense without using weapons or instruments [Seiler, Seiler 2006], an effective combat in order to eliminate an enemy [Fouquet 1996]. Technically, *karate* as being a Japanese martial art is based on *todome waza* which means finishing blow; making the opponent defenseless with only one technique [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005]. Its practice improves the general health condition and maintaining a high level of both mental and physical fitness [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. Since the training is focused on the dynamic use of the entire body, *karate* permits a sound physical state; such as physical memory, spatial orientation, visual-motor concentration, motor coordination abilities and arm strength [Panczyk, Cynarski 2006].

It has numerous advantages not only on the individual level, where it develops self-esteem, sense of security, emotional self-control, self-confidence, perseverance, integrity and will, but also on the social level where *karate* practice improves team work, interpersonal skills, communications and social interactions. Besides, it teaches respect for others as well as for tradition and authority.

These virtues concern all people regardless of their age or their social statuses. The practice of *karate* offers an intersection point of different social classes; therefore it promotes positive social interactions and social awareness. The development of *karatekas'* personal characters and social skills lead to the well-functioning and harmony of society [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014].

In addition to the personal improvement and the continuing pursuit of self-perfection, *karate's* practice leads basically to the unity of mind and body in the action of the martial artist [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. This unity is called *mushin* which is a key cultural concept of Japanese martial arts in general [McFarlane 1990]. There is no exact English translation for this term. But Suzuki suggested ‘no mind’ to express it and to explain it as a state of unity between the mind and the body. To *samurai* the state of no mindedness is the representation of knowledge acquired over the years of strict and careful training with the purity of action which is possible to get before the start of the training [Suzuki 1959]. This process is symbolically expressed in the change and evolution of the color of the black belt of *karateka* called also *kurobi* in Japanese. The white belt stands for the absence of skills as well as the purity of action and

response. Through training, the martial artist works hard to perform his mind's intent. Getting the black belt, the martial artist already acquired karate techniques but the gap between mind and body is still existing and lingering. As time goes by, the color of the black belt fades and returns slowly to white. This stands for the execution of karate movements done with purity which the martial artist begins with. This concept of unity is against the division of mind and body that goes back to Greek philosophers like Aristotle, and then developed by the French philosopher René Descartes “I think therefore I am”. Dualistic thoughts or Cartesian dualism separate the mind from the body and also place it above the latter. These ideas underestimate and reduce the role as well as the importance of the body and its senses in the process of learning [Light 2014]. We live in an era where the minds are overworked while the bodies are becoming more and more inert. A lot of people take care of their bodies, their fitness under the influence of health consciousness as well as hedonistic ideas. The body in this frame is considered to be a machine or a product. The ultimate aim of practicing martial arts is not about getting a healthy and good-looking body but rather concerns the development of one's character and personality [Bolelli 2008]. “A poor awareness of one's body is the symptom of a deeper illness: physical, spiritual and even social at the same time” [Bolelli 2008: 17]. People have to be true to their bodies and pay attention to their perceptions so that they can live fully and reach a state of awakening and enlightenment. If the five senses are well functioning, they can create the sixth one [Bolelli 2008]. “Martial arts are one of the methods that can teach the body to reawaken the sleepy senses” [Bolelli 2008: 15]. Martial arts' philosophy cannot be acquired by reading, contemplating or thinking but through training the muscles as well as the mind [Bolelli 2008]. “In martial arts everything begins with the body. First, one gets acquainted with it, and slowly becomes intimate with it. The body is transformed into the best ally of the spirit. Then spirit and body become one” [Bolelli 2008: 13]. In old times, martial arts existed jointly with acupuncture, medicine, religion and arts such as poetry, painting, origami and tea ceremonies. But it is a lot better if martial arts do not stay confined to a special domain and are present in our daily lives since *karate* is the complement of the spirit as Gichin Funakoshi believes; they can exist in our philosophy of life, our way of living, our education, our jobs, our relationships and in every choice. A holistic approach reveals the true color of martial arts [Bolelli 2008].

Apart from being a martial art aiming at disciplining the mind through disciplining the body [Wasik 2014], *Karate* is also considered as *budo*. Literally, “*kara*” means void, to empty, to purify of selfishness and anger- a clear mind, heart and hands “*te*” [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014: 13]. Gichin Funakoshi, the forerunner of Shotokan

style, added *do* to the term *Karate* to include it in *Budo* [Habersetzer 1987], and it means a way or philosophy of life [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014].

The first appearance of the term *budo* was in Azuma Kagami's work of 1195 and stands for the profession pertained to warrior's life. Then in 1371, in *Taiheiki* this term refers to the way of warriors' life. In a manuscript dating back to 1641 in Takenouchi-ryu school of classical *bujutsu*, the word *budo* refers to martial arts; *bujutsu* and *bungei*. In Edo period, it refers to the same ideals of *bushido*. “It was in 1919, that Hiromichi Nishikubo of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai changed *bujutsu* into *budo*, and thus *kenjutsu*, *jujutsu*, and *kyujutsu* became known as *kendo*, *judo*, and *kyudo*, respectively” [Nakiri 2015: 13]. *Kakugi* is another Japanese term which means fighting techniques first used in 1958, but changed into *budo* from 1986 till today [Nakamura 1994]. In Japan, from 2012, *budo* was recognized as a part of the compulsory education system in junior high schools; because it is important to strengthen the Japanese culture and identity as well [Nakiri 2015].

Then, *budo* is tightly linked to the philosophy of *Bushido*, which refers to the pathway of the warrior [Matsunaga 2009]. *Bu* means martial but in this context it means *bushi*; knights or warriors of *samurai* [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. “The Warrior's Pathway” means pushing one's own limits, a kind of transgression, through continuous effort of self-development- it is a moral way, improving the character and personality of the fighter through his own weakness. Not so much a distant goal, as the way itself, is the main sense of self-improvement and personal values in the psychophysical systems of the East” [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014: 12]. The way of the warrior does not mean an effective way to get rid of an enemy but it concerns a spiritual and philosophical path aiming at self-perfection, spiritual refinement as well as enlightenment and character building. “Being a warrior means having the strength and passion to follow one's vision” [Bolelli 2008: 4], and has the willpower to make dreams reality and always does instead of speaking [Bolelli 2008]. It is also called “Path of Return” or “Pathway of Heaven”. These qualities are similar to universal moral ethos of soldiers and knights [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014].

*Budo* carries the values of *butoku*; a term indicating the virtues of chivalry and *bushido*. “These virtues are: honor, courage, justice, loyalty, honesty, willingness to fight, respect, sacrifice, straight-forwardness, devotion and kindness” [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014: 14]. In this frame, it is considered a part of the cultural heritage of Japan [Sasaki 2009] as well as an educational system deriving from *samurai* culture [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. It is against any form of aggression and aims to reach a state of harmony and inner peace [Maroteaux 2007]. Nowadays in Japan, *budo* (the martial way) are called *kogeki* which means combat sports. “Martial art,

a term evocative of militarism, is unfashionable or even politically incorrect” [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014: 34]. But, in the scientific area, these two terms are used interchangeably [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014].

*Karate* is the combination of Okinawan martial arts and Japanese *Budo*'s philosophy [Seiler, Seiler 2006]. Besides, it is considered a combat sport. Thanks to Gichin Funakoshi, *karate* was recognized as such for the first time in a sport event in 1922 in Tokyo [Habersetzer 1987]. As it was mentioned above, “*budo* is included in the idea of martial arts but there is no clear distinction between “martial arts” and “combat sports” ” [Nakiri 2015: 14]. In order to unveil the confusion and mystery surrounding these two terms, philosophers of martial arts state that the axiology of martial arts is completely different from the axiology of sport. The ultimate aim of sports is to increase performance, to break scores and win competitions, whereas martial arts' purpose to improve the psychophysical personality of the human being. Martial arts have to be studied and analyzed in its different aspects; the axiological dimension, especially concerning education, as well as spiritual and socio-cultural dimensions [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. There is not only one common axiology of martial arts; it depends on the martial art, masters and schools [Cynarski 2012]. The European Charter of sport defines sport as “any forms of physical activity, which through temporary or organized participation aim at working out or improving physical and mental condition, development of social relations or achieving sport results at any levels” [Wachowski, Strzelczyk 1995: 9-15]. This is a general definition; it encompasses Olympic sports, sports for all, Far-Eastern martial arts and any kind of physical culture [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005]. Combat sports are basically centered on the competition and concern what happens in *dojo*. It suits much more activities like boxing and wrestling than *karate* or *kendo* that are near to the concept of martial arts which goes hand in hand with the daily life of practitioners [Deshimaru 1983; Nakiri 2015]. To conclude, martial arts cannot be considered a translation of the Japanese term “*budo*”; it is rather encompassing the concept of *budo*. The term “fighting arts” has a broad meaning, it contains three concepts; martial arts, combat sports and *budo* [Nakiri 2015]. Spectacles are neither sports nor martial arts [Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2006]. Fighting arts in general open new research perspectives in the field of physical culture and sport as well as the field of human sciences [Tokarski 2006].

### Perceptions of practicing *karate*

The reception and understanding of martial arts in different civilizations and countries are becoming more and more interesting topics to deal with nowadays [Donohue 1994; Orlando 1997; Eichberg 2004; Cynarski, Sieber,

Litwiniuk 2005; 2006; Cynarski, Obodynski 2007]. Sport and physical culture faced multicultural encounters, and especially martial arts present a cultural meeting point. *Karate* can be treated as a way to cross-cultural dialogue. It underwent a huge transformation from martial art to combat sport in its moving from the East to the West. Rooted in the culture of self protection in self defense, it becomes the product of both ancient East Asian practices and Western physical culture and sport [Tokarski 2006]. Through the process of sportification, *karate* has transformed and reduced from educational system to a mere sport; combat and competition [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. Receiving Asian martial arts influenced the modern civilization in Western world. The confrontations of different cultures lead to the emergence of new combat sports having Asian techniques and Western values of competition and physical culture [Tokarski 2006]. This is enhanced by the wide spread of Olympic Games. Lately, migrations of sports, sportsmen and sports fashion have been notably developed. Hence, martial arts become well-known all over the world thanks to sport globalization [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. The increasing number of martial arts' movies helped the dissemination of this kind of practices [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. Although martial arts are becoming global culture products with the increasing number of participants, organizations and events [Ko, Yang 2008], *karatekas* throughout the world present divergent perceptions concerning their practice.

Tremlow *et al.* (1996) have recoured to ‘perceived needs’ model to analyze 170 students’ motivations to enroll martial arts school in Kansas. The respondents were asked to rate thirteen factors according to how influential they were to them. The reasons to practice martial arts fall into three main categories; first, physical and recreational needs are detected and concern self-defense, physical exercise, sport, competitions and tournaments. Second, students get involved in martial arts to meet their emotional and intellectual needs such as self confidence, self discipline, outlet for aggression and internal control. Third, practitioners aim to achieve self-transcendence through spiritual practice, meditation and dealing with existential issues [Tremlow, Lerma, Tremlow 1996].

A research made in New York City explores the reasons and factors that motivate practitioners to participate in taekwondo training. Data was collected from 85 taekwondo athletes (51 boys and 34 girls aged from 10 to 22) and findings reveal three main motives; technical content and unique value, fun and shape body. Results show also that males have higher scores concerning body shape and becoming professional than females. On the other hand, females have higher scores about establishing prestige and self-defense than males. As regards belt colors comparisons; black-belt athletes hold higher scores in technical content and unique value than those who are red-belt. Blue-belt practitioners scored over yellow-belt

ones in fun as motive, and black-belt holders over red-belt ones in making new friends. In short, the reasons to practicing taekwondo can be gathered in two main motivation's reasons or factors; intrinsic motivations concerning value, enjoyment, self esteem and physical needs, and extrinsic motivations including developing skills, establishing prestige, making friendship and becoming contest or competition winners [Zeng *et al.* 2015]. Other studies on taekwondo showed that only 20% of adult practitioners are interested in competitions while 60% of young practitioners like the competitive dimension [Hartl, Faber, Bogle 1989]. The factors and motives for practicing taekwondo are similar to those concerning karate, since taekwondo is the variation of karate as Choi Hong Hi, the taekwondo's creator, states [Bujak 2001] and as many martial arts' historians hold [Rzany 2002-2003; Madis 2003].

Donohue, an American researcher, states that the understanding of martial arts is influenced by mass culture especially movies pertaining to this theme where the hero defeats the villain. According to Donohue, the majority of American martial arts' practitioners consider recreation as the main motive to adopt these disciplines [Donohue 1994]. Some American sociologists take the periods of silence in the beginning and the end of training sessions for meditation and practicing a way to enlightenment [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005].

By semi-directive interviews collected from forty martial artists in Quebec (16 female and 24 male athletes), findings reveal that practitioners perceive martial arts in general and *karate* in particular as effective self-defense, a sport, a way of life, self-reconstruction, and social acknowledgment. They link them to mythical ideas as well as commercial domain [Olivier 2008].

While in New Zealand, the interviewed practitioners (49 athletes including 32 male and 17 female martial artists) reported thirty-five reasons to practice martial arts; eleven concern physical and recreational needs, nineteen are about intellectual and emotional needs, four correspond to self-transcendence needs and four to safety needs.

Firstly, physical and recreational needs reflect the improvement of physical fitness; developing cardiovascular system, flexibility and strength. Second, intellectual and emotional needs hinge on popular culture which provides individual with inspirational and attractive images. Some practitioners try to emulate martial arts' films protagonists. Curiosity and interest in Asian culture can motivate people to discover martial arts as well. Since these practices have always been associated with Asia, individuals find these activities exotic and mystic. Also, respondents appreciate the philosophy accompanying martial arts practices, and consider it as a way to confirm their self identity. Apart from the development of personal characteristics and traits, practitioners use martial arts to tie new friendships and to enjoy sharing

time and training with existing ones. For others, they can be a way to enhance family relationships; some parents practice martial arts to encourage their children. The social atmosphere of the training club has usually positive impact on students' self-confidence. Besides, many respondents are convinced by the practice's role in achieving self-control and self-discipline. Thirdly, the integrated self-transcendent needs are tightly linked to everyday life even though it is the most abstract dimension. It is based on philosophical and existential issues and operating on the intellectual and the emotional levels. In this frame, practitioners adopt martial arts' training hoping to make a change in their lives. Others are trying to find a purpose or meaning to their lives through training. The fourth reason for undertaking training is the fact that safety needs are based on fear or anxiety-based motivations. Four reasons can be detected from this perspective. To begin with, many people take up the practice of martial arts in order to learn self-defense techniques. Also, practitioners are afraid of being unhealthy and unfit. Then, there is the fear of being lonely that is why a lot of people practice martial arts for social reasons. Finally, on the spiritual level, the anxiety concerning dealing with life motivates people to do martial arts.

The reasons and motives of practitioners to continue their practice are for the majority of cases different from the factors that push them to start the training. Many think of their practice as a sport in the beginning but later their perceptions change and tend to discover their art aspect. Three elements can affect practitioners' motivations; the popular culture representations about martial arts, fears and anxieties exacerbating the need of safety and black belt myth [Loozer 2003].

In order to delineate the design of *karatekas* tendencies and perceptions about their practice in Portugal, practitioners from different *karate* styles (*shotokai*, *shotokan*, *goju-ryu*, *wado-ryu*) have been interviewed (23 female and 146 male *karatekas*). They pinpoint the following factors to take up their practice, in a decreasing order of importance; physical fitness, psychological well-being, the development of character and behavior, the practice's pleasure and enjoyment, mental and cognitive capacities' improvement. Then, less importance is attributed to business and spiritual as well as religious aspects. Besides, self-defense and competitions are two main motives to practice *karate* [Rosa 2012]. The European experts of this field expressed three essential reasons to adopt this kind of practice; developing the personality, serving as leisure and recreational activity and as self-defense [Cynarski 2014a].

The year 1984 saw the beginning of *karate*'s institutionalization in Tunisia, an African, Arabian and Muslim country. At first, its federation was shared with other combat sports; *taekwondo* and *kung fu*. Then, thanks to the noteworthy number of practitioners which does not seem to cease increasing, it soared from 3998 in 2001 to

8278 in 2011; *karate shotokan* has its own federation. As time goes by, new styles of *karate* have appeared making new federations emerge such as *karate kyokushinkai* [Ben Messaoud 2015]. Tunisian *karatekas* chose their practice because of its biological, psychological, sociological and cognitive virtues. In fact, practicing *karate* improves health, body strength, reaction rate, flexibility and precision. It develops also self-confidence, perseverance, discipline, willpower and concentration. It helps them creating goals and sticking to. *Karate* develops not only self-confidence but also the courage of defending oneself. Then, the practitioner gets the feeling of security. *Karate* helps practitioners to behave properly in society; to socialize, respect others and avoid violence. *Karate* helps getting calm state of mind and reach inner peace. So, it lessens aggressive actions and reactions. It reduces violent behaviors since it is codified and based on determined rules [Bodin, Heas 2002]. Adopted as a way of life, *karatekas* get more organized and positive thanks to training. It is practiced for its effective techniques of self-defense, for its aspect of competitions and combats and the one pertaining to shows and spectacle. Added to this, *karate* is seen as a means of entertainment; relaxing as well as soothing and staving off stress, and a way of life. *Karate* represents Japan and myths about *samurai*. Apart from this cultural dimension, it has another utilitarian and realistic aspect which is linked to lucrative activity and assumes an income to professional *karatekas*. In Tunisia, the main motives to practice *karate* are self-defense, biological, sociological and psychological effects. *Karatekas* are influenced by disseminating ideas especially in mass media such as action movies and Japanese cartoons, while others by people around them [Ben Messaoud 2015].

### **Main factors to practicing *karate***

*Karatedo* in its different forms and various styles becomes very popular worldwide [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. It is perceived in different ways depending on the cultural backgrounds of *karatekas* [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005]. The perception as Merleau Ponty maintains it is a naive contact with the world. It is our openness to the world, our insertion in a natural and historical world. It is our initiation and introduction to the being. It is not an immediate seizure but it is hidden and covered by deposits and sediments of later knowledge and it has to be reached by a work just like an archeologist [Dupond 2007].

In order to facilitate the understanding and analyses of practitioners' perceptions and motives for practicing *karate*, factors are gathered in three main categories; pragmatic factor concerning health and sport, philosophical factor linked to education and utilitarian factor related to self-defense. First, to begin with the pragmatic

aspect, *karatedo* is practiced for its numerous virtues; it develops self-discipline, self-control, mental endurance, sharpness of the mind, relaxation and balance between mind and body [Columbus, Rice, 1998; Kim 1990; 2005; Wasik 2014]. It has a noteworthy rehabilitation's role; it can be considered as a therapeutic activity since it offers a place for persons with mental or physical disabilities to join the training and share the pleasure of learning them [Cynarski, Kubala 2013; Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. If the person with disability cannot recover physically through training, they still can improve and develop their own self-esteem, well-being and sense of safety. Hence, *karate* can be considered as a form of psychotherapy. In fact, it is already proven that it participates effectively in the process of healing and treating some disorders and dysfunctions pertaining to behavior and socio cognition like autism and attention deficit disorder [Pelham *et al.* 2000; Kim, 2005; Palermo 2011].

Secondly, practitioners chose *karate* for its philosophical aspects. In fact, *karate* as being a combat sport is included in the field of physical culture but carrying its own specific philosophy [Wasik 2014]. *Karate* as being a part of physical culture is considered as the intersection of anthropology and sociology of martial arts [Cynarski 2004, 2012a; Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. Many martial arts are considered as manifestations of symbolic culture. "Only a part of the concept of martial arts coincides with the area "physical culture". The remaining part is already included in the areas of spiritual culture and national heritage." [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014: 32]. Sport and physical education are derived from the physical culture which is influenced by the warriors' culture. Physical culture is considered as "a collection of creations as tangible and intangible, in the field of care for the physical body and human functioning, recognized in it the values and patterns of behavior that have been objectified, accepted and can be transmitted in a given community" [Osinski 2002: 33]. This is in line with the definition of culture which refers to "the totality of the products of human activity (tangible and intangible) value and recognized in a society ways of conduct adopted in any collectivities, sent to other collectivities and the next generations" [Szczepanski 1963: 43-44], so culture provides the community with an identity. *Karate* as a martial art is a part of the general process of education and the teaching process [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. Martial arts encompass ethos values, technical skills and their methodology to prepare practitioners to the fight or the war. Competent instructors and masters have to consider *karate* more than just physical activity and value their philosophical and educational aspects [Kim 2005; Wasik 2014].

The humanistic theory of martial arts recognizes the physical and psychological dimensions of this kind of practice [Cynarski 2004; 2012a]. The humanistic theory of martial arts explains *budo* as physical recreation

[Cynarski, Obodynski, Cieszkowski 2007; Cynarski 2008]. Martial arts allow enculturation of the culture of East Asia. They provide martial artists regardless their sex and ages with physical and cultural recreation [Cynarski, Obodynski 2006]. *Karate* presents a specific form of tourism; the active one [Green, Svinth 2003; Sieber, Cynarski, Litwiniuk 2007; Cynarski 2012b; cf. Cynarski, Kubala 2013]. The active form of tourism concerns those who travel and make trips in order to learn, teach, train, demonstrate and perform physical activities and exercises pertaining to martial arts [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. *Karate* is seen as a philosophy of life [Cynarski 2000]. Recreation and tourism are forms of leisure and lifestyle [cf. Legienis 1997; Bilinski, Grzywacz 2006; Grzywacz, Przydział 2009]. Postmodern societies give an important place to health and physical fitness [Itkonen 2002; Panczyk, Cynarski 2006]. Martial arts are part of physical culture and the culture heritage [cf. Gim Jeong Myung 1998]. They are the expression and manifestation of active lifestyle paying attention to health and environment [Cynarski, Yu 2011; Zeng *et al.* 2013; Wasik 2014]. *Karate* is considered as a sport for all [Figueiredo *et al.* 2013]. Sport for all or sport for the whole life is based on the fact that martial arts reject the notion of competition which is more suitable for combat sports [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. *Karate* helps re-socialization [Wolters 2005; Wolters, Fussmann 2008; Slopecki, Cynarski 2009; Wasik 2014]. It improves the social behavior of practitioners; they learn how to respect others and make new relationships as well as overcoming shyness and social anxiety [Ben Messaoud 2015]. Also, it develops social skills of practitioners, so they acquire proper behavior and conduct [Pain 2011]. *Karate* improves attention and social cognition [Palermo 2011]. Social cognition is the capacity to understand situations and act in the right way [Frith 2007]. This practice develops the personality of practitioners. It allows a better understanding of one's personality [Kalina 2000]. The training reduces juvenile delinquency, aggressiveness and anxiety. It teaches practitioners self-confidence, responsibility, tolerance and respect to traditional values [Trulson 1986]. *Karateka* who gets bigger chance of winning competitions is the one who is practicing with a will, determination and resolution [Habersetzer 1986a]. So the practice develops learning potential as well as imagination among young practitioners. Acquiring only the techniques of martial arts can be a threat and jeopardy to society [Szyszko-Bohusz 2011]. Competitions in this context play the role of reducing and controlling aggressiveness. In fact, techniques will be executed in the frame of respect of rules [Wasik 2014]. "The martial artist is a master of moods, an artist of mental states, and a conductor of an orchestra of emotions" [Bolelli 2008: 41]. The fight is not only against the opponent but also a battle against our own limits and fears like the fear of violence [Bolelli 2008]. In this frame, *karate* can be seen as an art and a way of life [cf.

Cynarski, Obodynski, Cieszkowski 2007; Figueiredo *et al.* 2013; Cynarski 2014]. The humanistic theory of martial arts claims that these kinds of practices are linked to the adopted life style or way of life. The "lifestyle includes recurring characteristics and actions of individuals and groups who are their specific choice resulting from personal and social motives" [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014: 36]. Spirituality is not far nor above reality, it exists in every detail of our daily life; "It is the quintessence of life" [Bolelli 2008: 6]. *Karate* is a part of physical culture, physical education, sport, recreation and physical rehabilitation, and presents a unique socio-cultural phenomenon [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014].

Thirdly, the utilitarian aspect hinges on the safety's culture such as military training and self-defence [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014]. Training aims basically at developing self-defence techniques. They are generally used in army and police units. The Jigoro Kano paradox lies in the fact that in real fight and competition, the less offensive and dangerous techniques are the most effective ones. That is why practitioners have to concentrate more on techniques like feigning strikes and execute movements with less speed and strength and try to get rid of useless techniques or energy [Watanabe, Avakin 2001]. It has to be a balance between all the three factors. If martial arts lose the dimension of self-defense they can enhance aggressiveness [Wasik 2014].

## Conclusion

Most significantly it is crucially important to differentiate between terms that have been always used interchangeably in literature; martial art; *budo*; combat sport and fighting art. *Karate*, as a Japanese martial art is deemed a form of self-defense with bare hands [Seiler, Seiler 2006]. Its practice aims basically at improving the practitioner's psychophysical personality [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. As a *budo*, *karate* is closely linked to the warrior's philosophy of life. It is not founded on getting rid of an enemy [Bolelli 2008] but on spiritual refinement, enlightenment and perfection [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. *Budo* is included in the idea of martial arts [Nakiri 2015]. *Karate* is also a combat sport. Its purpose is to increase performance, to better ones own scores and win competitions [Cynarski, Lee-Barron 2014]. "Fighting arts" is an umbrella term which includes martial arts, combat sports and *budo* [Nakiri 2015].

The main reasons for practicing *karate* fall into three main categories: pragmatic, philosophical and utilitarian motives. The pragmatic factor concerns health and sport, the philosophical factor is linked to education and the utilitarian factor is related to self-defence [Cynarski, Sieber, Szajna 2014; Wasik 2014].

*Karate* is perceived differently according to practitioners' cultural background. The motives for its practice are

basically pragmatic and utilitarian, except in the Far East. Perceptions of *Karate* also depend on gender and belt-color or rank. Although *karate* has undergone a large number of changes and mutations in recent decades; undoubtedly the most significant transformation has been from martial art to combat sport. However some opposing tendencies have emerged such as *ido* and *zendo karate* which reject competition and aim basically at self-realization and self-development [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005].

Nowadays, the contemporary warrior is no longer someone fighting against another but a person studying martial arts, fighting against their own weaknesses (laziness, anger and fear) and adopting noble goals such as self-realization and spiritual perfection [Cynarski 2004].

While the number of *karatekas* is increasing by leaps and bounds around the world, there is still a lack of documentation concerning martial arts in general and *karate* in particular, especially from sociological perspectives. Michael Maliszewski, having conducted research in Eastern and South-Eastern Asian countries has said that there is a martial arts in the right way [Cynarski 2000b; Obodyski, Cynarski 2004]. Furthermore, European sociological studies on martial arts are missing from American literature [Cynarski, Sieber, Litwiniuk 2005].

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## Postrzeżenie i odbiór karate

**Słowa kluczowe:** karate, sztuki walki, sporty walki, budo, percepcje

### Abstrakt

Problem i cel. Poza wyznaczeniem granicy między pojęciami: „sztuka walki”, „budo”, „sport walki” i „sztuka bojowa”, autor artykułu koncentruje się na głównych motywach i czynnikach skłaniających do ćwiczenia karate w różnych krajach. Stara się wyróżnić główne trendy oparte na wnioskach różnych teorii socjologicznych i badań np. fakt, że dla mężczyzn ważniejszy jest wygląd osiągnięty dzięki ćwiczeniom, a dla kobiet większe znaczenie ma ustalenie swojego miejsca w hierarchii i możliwość samoobrony. Liczne wyniki badań, które przytacza autor, analizują także motywacje do uczenia się karate tzn. wewnętrzne motywacje dotyczące wartości, radości, poczucia własnej wartości oraz potrzeby fizyczne i zewnętrzne, w tym rozwijanie umiejętności motywacji, ustanawianie prestiżu, zawarcie przyjaźni i branie udziału w rywalizacji. Inne badania wspominają rolę kulturowych filmów o sztukach walki, a także zainteresowanie kulturą Wschodu.

Metoda. Badanie to opiera się w dużym stopniu na spostrzeżeniach i refleksjach, które są dostępne w literaturze przedmiotu (analiza treści literatury przedmiotu).

Wyniki i wnioski. Karate jest traktowane, jako sztuka walki, budo i sport walki. Czasami może to być nawet spektakl. Sztuka walki dyscyplinuje umysł poprzez dyscyplinowanie ciała. Budo opiera się na filozofii życia wojownika i jest ściśle powiązane z duchowym wymiarem praktyki. Sport walki ma na celu niekończącą się poprawę wydajności. Karate ma wiele zalet nie tylko na poziomie indywidualnym, gdzie rozwija samoocenę, poczucie bezpieczeństwa, samokontrolę emocjonalną, pewność siebie, wytrwałość, uczciwość i wolę, ale także na poziomie społecznym, gdzie poprawia pracę zespołową, umiejętności interpersonalne, komunikację i interakcję społeczną. Poza tym, uczy szacunku dla innych, jak również dla tradycji i aurytetu. Dotyczy to wszystkich ludzi, niezależnie od ich wieku czy statusu społecznego.

Koncepcja budo zawiera się w sztukach walki. Sztuki walki i sporty walki mają dwa zupełnie rozbieżne cele. Sztuka bojowa (fighting art) jest pojęciem obejmującym sztuki walki i sporty walki. Karate jest postrzegane różnie w zależności od kontekstu kulturowego. Główne tendencje uprawiania karate można podzielić na trzy główne kategorie: po pierwsze, pragmatyczne motywy dotyczące zdrowia i sportu. Po drugie, czynniki filozoficzne dotyczące edukacji. Po trzecie, motywy użyteczne powiązane z samoobroną.