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THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE
MARTIAL ARTS EXPERIENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

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Abstract

THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MARTIAL ARTS EXPERIENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

This thesis examines the martial arts in New Zealand. It takes three approaches. The first is socio-historical, with a particular focus on the history and development of martial arts practice in New Zealand. The second is socio-cultural and is concerned with the characteristics of the people practising the various martial arts. The third is motivational and explores the reasons why people become involved in martial arts training and why they continue. The theories of risk and the risk society, and popular or mass consumer culture are used to help explain, and provide a social context for understanding, people's motivations. In addition, the black belt is examined in terms of its symbolic nature and its role in motivating people to begin, and continue with, their training.

The research participants were drawn from four different martial arts with prominent profiles in Christchurch, New Zealand. These were: Zen Do Kai Martial Arts, Seido Karate, Aikido and Tai Chi Chuan. The respondents represented a range of martial arts experience, and included beginners, trainees with some experience and trainees with long-term experience/instructors.

The study employed a mixed qualitative and quantitative research strategy. The chosen methods related specifically to the three approaches of the thesis. Documentary research was the dominant mode of enquiry for the socio-historical section. For the socio-cultural and motivational approaches, a two-stage data gathering method was used. General information was gathered initially by means of a questionnaire, while more specific information about trainees' personal experiences with their martial arts was gathered subsequently through semi-structured interviews.

It was found that an extremely diverse range of people was drawn to the study of martial arts. The respondents identified a wide variety of reasons for beginning martial arts training. Their reasons for continuing training were almost always different from those reasons that led them to begin. Despite the respondents' various motivations, three underlying influences were particularly evident: popular culture representations of the martial arts; fears and anxieties arising from risk consciousness; and the myth of the black belt. As respondents progressed with their training, their perception of their martial art changed. Many began by thinking of their martial art as a sport, but, over time, gained an appreciation of it as an art form. Eventually, some came to understand their martial arts training as a way of life.

Keywords: martial arts, popular culture, risk society, black belt, motivation, leisure participation.
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Chapter One
Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The martial arts have become a conspicuous part of contemporary New Zealand culture, even though the majority are based in very different religious and cultural milieux. An extremely diverse range of people are attracted to martial arts training, representing different ages, occupations, socio-economic backgrounds, bodies, experiences, needs, desires, expectations and objectives. This thesis is concerned primarily with describing and analysing the phenomenon of the martial arts in New Zealand. The thesis takes three approaches. The first is socio-historical, with a particular focus on the history and development of martial arts practice in New Zealand; the second is socio-cultural and is concerned with the characteristics of the people practising the various martial arts; and the third is motivational and explores the reasons why people become involved in martial arts training and why they continue. The theories of risk and the risk society, and popular or mass consumer culture will be used to help explain, and provide a social context for understanding, people’s motivations. In addition, the black belt will be examined in terms of its symbolic nature and its role in motivating people to begin, and continue with, their training.

This chapter provides a definition of ‘the martial arts’, and defines the term in the context of the thesis. It offers a brief précis of the historical development of the Asian martial arts to facilitate a greater understanding of many of the art forms introduced to New Zealand. The chapter also summarises existing research on the topic, discusses my research approach and research strategy, describes the groups involved in the study, and outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.1 What are the martial arts?

‘Martial arts’ describes any of various philosophies of self-defence and techniques of single combat, both armed and unarmed. The term itself is a translation of the Japanese *bujutsu* (formerly *bugei*) (*OED II*, 1989; *Draeger and Smith*, 1980: 81). The
martial arts are most commonly associated with Asia; however, fighting arts have originated in many other countries, including India, Brazil, Israel, Russia, Greece, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. According to Corcoran (1994: 4), there are now over 1,150 martial arts practised around the world, comprising traditional arts, non-traditional arts and contemporary eclectic systems.

The martial arts date back to the earliest periods of civilisation and probably derive from our instinctive methods of defence against attack from animals and other humans. Over time people explored, refined and systematised these defence techniques (Yuhan, 1998: 1). Technically, any fighting art or form of combat could be categorised as a "martial art", but there is a tendency to associate the term with specific systems and contexts. For example, the term "martial art" often implies a form of combat with an Asian quality, employing either unarmed techniques or exotic weaponry; strict, disciplined training; a strongly hierarchical system; and an (Eastern) spiritual and/or philosophical component. It is assumptions such as these that lead us to categorise a film like Fists of Fury (Hong Kong, 1972) as a 'martial arts film', but not films like Utu (New Zealand, 1983) or Braveheart (US, 1995), although all three place similar emphases on armed and unarmed combat, and their protagonists evince similar emotions and motivation. It is interesting that the Asian martial tradition has such prominence in Western society, especially because, as Draeger and Smith (1980) point out, certain aspects of the martial arts that we associate with Asia have also developed in the Western martial tradition:

Many facets of Asian combat techniques appear novel to the Western reader. It comes as a surprise, then, to learn that at least some elements present in the Asian combat methods were practised in the West well over two thousand years ago. What Plato called 'fighting without an antagonist' (skiamachia) was an ancient form of shadow boxing. And there were military dances called pyrrhichia ('how to cope with an enemy'). Both types are counterparts of the kata or form training, a central part of all Asian combat techniques. ... The abdominal shout (Japanese: ki-ai – 'spirit meeting') was used by Greeks, Romans, Irish and other martial peoples. Even the stress put on the foothold by Asian fighting systems is not unique. In ancient Rome there was an exercise in which a man stood on a shield or disk and others tried to pull it from under him (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 7).

This Asian focus is perhaps because the martial arts appear to be a more integrated, conspicuous part of Asian culture in comparison to the martial traditions of other
cultures. In addition, the novelty and exotic nature of Asian arts may be attractive to many Westerners. Despite the indigenous development of separate martial traditions in Western countries, the spread of Asian-derived and Asian-influenced martial arts to the West is very noticeable.

It is to these predominantly Asiatic combat systems that 'the martial arts' refer in this thesis. Although each art is distinct and, as a group, they represent numerous processes, traditions and approaches, there are important commonalities which allow them to be categorised under this umbrella term. Most of the martial arts emphasise the practice of skills, the passing of tests and the endurance of hardships, but they also have an intellectual content, embodying certain sets of rules and values based on specific views of the world and our place in it (Reid and Croucher, 1995: 23). In this way, many martial arts are situated liminally between sports and art forms.

1.2 A brief historical overview of the chief Asian martial arts

The vast majority of martial arts practised in New Zealand are Asian-derived or Asian-influenced. The most common countries of origin or ascendancy are China, Japan and Korea. Therefore, it is useful to summarise the salient features of the development of the martial traditions of these countries in order to provide a social and historical background for many of the arts that have been introduced to New Zealand.

1.2.1 Chinese martial arts

China was one of the first countries in the world to systematise fighting forms. Primitive martial art forms spread from India to China, where they took root and began the gradual process of diversification into a number of sophisticated branches (Reid and Croucher, 1995: 20). It is difficult to trace the different Chinese styles that have developed over the centuries because, in addition to the language barrier, some styles died out due to obsessive secrecy, some were derivative, and some contemporary styles duplicated the names of earlier ones (Corcoran, 1994: 3). Nonetheless, early fighting forms are known to date back to the Zhou dynasty (1122 – 255 BC) (Maliszewski, 1992b: 14), and evidence drawn from the literary and artistic
traditions of China suggest that the martial arts began to develop in earnest sometime between the fifth century BC, when the mass production of swords began in China, and the third century AD, when the exercises on which the martial arts were based were written down (Reid and Croucher, 1995: 20). Moreover, three influential philosophies were developed during this period: Buddhism, based on the teachings of Prince Gautama Siddhartha Buddha (born c.560 BC); Confucianism, which stemmed from the ideas of Confucius (500 BC); and Taoism, a philosophy based on the writings of Lao Tzu's *Tao I Ching (The Way and the Power)* (c.500 BC). The conditions for the development of the martial arts were established when these creeds were promulgated (Reid and Croucher, 1995: 23-4; Draeger and Smith, 1980: 16).

One of the initial martial arts was Chinese boxing, a rugged form of personal combat which provided beneficial exercise. Chinese boxing is what has long been called Kung Fu in the West. It is important to note that this term does not refer to a specific method, but is a generic term for all training, of which the various boxing methods are a part (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 11, 20). The first literary description of boxing occurs during the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), when ‘Six Chapters of Hand Fighting’ were mentioned in *Han Shu I Wen Chih (Han Book of Arts)*. At about this time a parallel discipline developed which had a significant impact on Chinese boxing. This was a physical culture based on respiratory and psycho-physiological techniques expounded by Lao Tzu. In addition, during the later Han dynasty (25 – 220 AD), the famous surgeon Hua To originated a series of exercises based on the movements of five animals: the tiger, the deer, the bear, the monkey and the bird, which are still used in various boxing schools (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 16).

In about 550 AD, a wandering Indian monk named Bodhidharma (Ta Mo) entered the Songshang Shaolin Temple in Northern China. He introduced the Shaolin monks to eighteen exercises for strengthening the body and conditioning the mind. Over time, these exercises were developed, extended and multiplied, producing a system known as Shaolin Temple Boxing (Lewis, 1996: 40; Reid and Croucher, 1995: 26).

During the T’ang dynasty (618 – 907 AD), China’s age of chivalry, very few young men were ignorant of the fighting arts. Boxing gained particular popularity following the heroics of the fighting monks Chih Ts'ao, Hui Yang and T’an Tsung of the
Shaolin temple in Honan, who helped the first emperor of T'ang defeat his enemy Wang Shih-ch'ung. Under the impetus given by the Shaolin temple, boxing spread throughout China. As it spread, it affected, and was affected by, the people it reached (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 17).

Eventually two main systems developed in China: the 'external' (also known as the 'exoteric' or the 'hard') school, and the 'internal' (also known as the 'esoteric' or the 'soft') school. Although the two systems were separate, they were related, containing elements of each other. The external system stressed the regulation of breath, the training of bones and muscles, the conditioning of the body and the ability to advance and retreat. The fundamental principle was that force is opposed by force. Most of the techniques of the external system were linear, mainly incorporating strikes. Examples of the external system include: Chuan-fa (Shaolin 'fist'); Hung Gar Chuan; Tong Long (praying mantis); Wing Chun; and Choy Lee Fut. This hard, external system was most closely associated with the original Shaolin tradition, and was informed by Buddhism (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 17; Lewis, 1996: 44; Reid and Croucher, 1995: 60). The internal system also emphasised the training of bones and muscles, but advocated the exercise of ch'i-kung, subduing the offensive by stillness. The aim was to use an enemy's incoming force against them and to defeat them at the instant they attacked. Circular techniques were favoured. The internal system had a greater metaphysical, philosophical nature, based on a strong affiliation with Taoism, and the forms exhibited a deeper relationship with the natural world. Examples of internal forms include: Tai Chi Chuan, Ba-Gua and Hsing-I (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 17; Lewis, 1996: 44; Reid and Croucher, 1995: 86).

During the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644 AD) and the Ch'ing dynasty (1644 – 1911 AD) boxing proliferated. Over 400 styles developed and many of the systems of today were created. The conquest of China by the Manchu in the latter period caused many boxers to join up with secret societies hoping to return the Ming to power. Thousands from the north retreated south, even as far as Taiwan, disseminating boxing skills as they went. Although they were unsuccessful in their political aims, they spread their martial arts doctrine to all areas of China. With the demise of the Manchu and the birth of the People's Republic in 1912, boxing continued to develop and spread. The
hard forms were discouraged, but many arts were eventually introduced to the West (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 18-19).

1.2.2 Japanese martial arts
For almost 1,500 years China held the key position in the development of the martial arts; however, the fighting systems that arose and evolved in China were eventually exported by Chinese martial artists to other Asian countries. In addition, foreigners coming to visit, trade and study learned the Chinese martial systems and took their knowledge home. The religious and philosophical tenets on which the martial arts were based were nurtured in China, but were transmitted to Japan and elsewhere (Reid and Croucher, 1995: 58).

The martial arts in Japan date mainly from the tenth century AD onwards. They were known as bugei and were practised by professional feudal warriors. These warriors were called bushi, but from the Muromachi period (1392 – 1573 AD) onwards, they were known as samurai (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 81-83). The bushi were instrumental in developing the martial arts they practised. In bringing about the systematisation of combat weapons and arts, they borrowed extensively from China and the Asian continent, using Asian continental weapons as prototypes for their own styles.

The fighting systems developed by the bushi were named kakuto-bugei (‘fighting’ bugei). Almost all were distinguished by the -jutsu suffix, sumo being the exception. The systems included: kenjutsu (swordsmanship – offensive); iai-jutsu (swordsmanship – defensive); sojutsu (spear technique); jujutsu (encounter with minimum use of weapons); and bujutsu (staff art). Research cited in Draeger and Smith (1980: 83) suggests that, between the tenth and sixteenth centuries AD, almost fifty bugei were in existence.

These fighting arts were designed to protect the group cause, or to promote the cause of the superior to whom the bushi had sworn allegiance. The bugei had a practical combat focus, were designed for battlefield use and were concerned with a broad spectrum of weapons. Because of the broad scope, complementary systems that did not deal directly with weapons were also recognised; for example, ba-jutsu
(horsemanship), chikujo-jutsu (technique of fortifications); and senjo-jutsu (deployment of warriors) (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 90-91).

The bugei did not have a ranking system in the way it is generally conceived now. Exponents were identified by a *menkyo* (Master's licence) system comprising three to five certificates indicating the level of ability of the instructor (Reid and Croucher, 1995: 123).

One defining aspect of the bugei was its warrior code, named *bushido*, or 'the way of the warrior'. This code attained a national consciousness in Japan during the Kamakura period (1185 – 1333) and was the natural development of centuries of military experience, integrated by ethical and philosophical influences from the Asian mainland, such as Confucianism, (Zen) Buddhism and, later, Shinto. Bushido entailed a loyalty to, and respect for, family, ancestors and superiors; an implicit trust in fate; composure in the face of adversity; and an ability to accept death and face it with integrity.

Japan also gained an important fighting art from the neighbouring islands of Okinawa. The inhabitants practised a traditional style of unarmed combat known as *te*, or 'the art of the hand', which the Japanese were introduced to following their invasion of Okinawa in 1609. In the eighteenth century, the art of *te* underwent synthesis with the Chinese art of Shaolin Temple Boxing and was eventually developed into what has been known since the early twentieth century as karate, or 'empty hand'.

The feudal system disintegrated in the late sixteenth century and was followed by the Edo period (1603 – 1867), which was a time of peace. During the eighteenth century a new concept arose, that of *budo*, meaning 'martial way' or 'path'. The morpheme *-do* is derived from the Chinese *tao*, meaning 'a path through life'. According to Reid and Croucher (1995: 148), 'Budo was and is used to describe the armed and unarmed martial systems in which some of the functional aspects of combat skills have been transformed, usually for aesthetic reasons.' Therefore, the styles that derived from budo were unlike the bugei in purpose, nature and technique, but were essential in the development of the popular forms of today. Whereas the combat forms deriving from the bugei/bujutsu had the *-jutsu* suffix, those that stemmed from the budo were
designated a \(-do\) suffix (Corcoran, 1994: 4). Thus, the combat skill of ken-jutsu or iai-jutsu, the sword art, became kendo or iaido, the way of the sword; naginata-jutsu, the art of the halberd, became naginata-do, the way of the halberd. No \(-do\) form exists without the \(-jutsu\) form from which it originates, but both are quite distinct.

In the older combat (or \(-jutsu\)) schools, function dominated form, but in the more refined (or \(-do\)) schools, form and style sometimes superseded combat efficiency (Reid and Croucher, 148). Developing after the feudal age, budo lacked the practical element inherent in the bugei, and principle, rather than technique, was the focus. Consequently, budo were more specialised and their efficacy was confined to a particular weapon or type of combat. Essentially, the budo were concerned with spiritual discipline through which the individual elevated themselves mentally and physically in the search for self-perfection. The concept of martial arts training as a lifelong journey also developed from these forms. The fact that warriors adopted budo in a peaceful era revealed that spiritual development was the main priority. It has been claimed that some budo forms are ‘matured’ bugei in that they incorporate ‘higher aims’ related to greater self-perception in the individual rather than functioning simply as training exercises for martial purposes (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 91).

Many of the bugei and budo were practised with weapons, but after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 the samurai class was abolished and it became illegal to carry weapons throughout Japan. As a result, the unarmed arts enjoyed a major revival, and this popularity has continued to the present day (www.ijji.org/jujutsu.htm). The Japanese were also responsible for introducing the \(kyu/dan\) system in 1883, which has had a marked impact on a large variety of martial arts worldwide. The \(kyu/dan\) system instituted a set ranking system to classify students from beginning to highly advanced levels, each rank represented (eventually) by a coloured belt. This system is now used widely to assess and represent students’ progress and achievements.

Both bugei and budo exist in the modern world, although the bugei are not often practised due to insufficient interest. The Japanese martial arts are now categorised in two ways: classical forms, which denote those \(-jutsu\) and \(-do\) arts with traditional heritages established prior to the twentieth century; and modern cognate forms, which refer to arts established during the twentieth century (Draeger and Smith, 1980: 92).
1.2.3 Korean martial arts

To a large extent the Korean martial arts represent a synthesis of the Chinese and Japanese traditions. For example, many of the high kicks in Korean martial arts echo the Chinese Shaolin styles, and the hard, linear punches reflect Japanese karate.

The martial arts in Korea were recorded extensively during the Three Kingdom era (100 BC – 900 AD). The three kingdoms were Kogurø, Paekche and Silla. Kogurø was the biggest, a strong military power that advocated martial arts based on military skills, such as archery, swordsmanship and unarmed combat techniques. Paekche was more of a cultural and religious society but exported swords to Japan. Silla was also a military power that had made a treaty with China, and so had adapted Chinese methods of warfare. One consequence of this emphasis on Chinese military philosophies was the development of Hwarang, which is thought by some to be the foundation of Japanese bushido (Hallander, 1998: 1).

Hwarang dates from c.200 AD. It was originally practised by Korean elite troops, whose armed and unarmed techniques made them feared and admired all over Asia. In their fighting ability and their moral and ethical standards the Hwarang warriors had much in common with the later Japanese samurai. These warriors developed the military system Hwa Rang Do® (or Um-Yang Kwon) meaning, ‘way of the flowering knight’ or ‘way of the flower of manhood’. Like the Japanese bugei, this system was designed for the battlefield, not for sport, competitions or spiritual practice. During the fourteenth century the Hwarang fell into disfavour when Silla was conquered by a new Korean kingdom. Several of the Hwarang took refuge in remote mountain temples, and it was there that the martial art of the Hwarang was preserved until today. Between 1910 and 1945 Korea fell under Japanese occupation. During that time, only the Japanese arts of karate, Kendo and Judo were taught publicly (www.allmartialarts.com/KIXCO/History/history/map.htm). In the 1960s the government gave permission for Hwa Rang Do® to be demonstrated and taught once again.
Besides Hwa Rang Do® there are over 30 other Korean martial arts, such as the classical art of Soo Bakh Do, which was eventually amalgamated with elements of Northern and Southern Chinese Kung Fu to produce Tang Soo Do, or ‘way of the China hand’, which is still practised today (www.tang-soo-do.org.uk). Modern martial arts like Hapkido and Taekwondo display a special creativity which implies mixed origins. Taekwondo is now Korea’s national sport and a recent addition to the Olympic Games. Some martial arts, such as Kuk Sool, incorporate weapons training alongside empty hand techniques (Hallander, 1998: 2). Like many other Asian arts, the various processes of trade, globalisation and technological development mean that several Korean arts have been introduced to the West, although this has happened more recently, generally during the latter half of the twentieth century.

1.3 Social scientific research into the martial arts

Little substantial social-scientific academic research has been conducted in the area of martial arts. Draeger and Smith (1980: 9) draw attention to this lack of research and the unevenness of literature upon the subject generally. The most extensive research of this type has been undertaken in the areas of education (Davis and Byrd, 1975; Min, 1979), history (Draeger and Smith, 1969, 1980), and oriental and religious studies (Donohue, 1991; Maliszewski, 1992b). In addition to the books, theses and conference papers that have arisen from this research, specialist scholarly journals such as the Journal of Asian Martial Arts have been established expressly to present some of this work.¹

The remainder of social scientific research consists of small psychological studies carried out with martial arts trainees. Commonly, such research explores the relationship between martial arts training and personality (for example, Columbus and Rice, 1991; Delva-Tauiliili, 1995; Finkenberg et al., 1992; Jin, 1992; Kroll and Carlson, 1967; Pyecha, 1970; Twemlow, 1994). One article, authored by Twemlow, Lerma and Twemlow (1996), provides an analysis of students’ reasons for studying martial arts. Although it is almost the only study of its kind, the research is fairly superficial, in that it focuses only upon students of a single art form (unspecified), at a

¹ See Maliszewski (1992b: 7-8) for a more detailed review of scholarly literature on the Asian martial arts.
single school, who were not interviewed in-depth. The study was interested only in students’ initial reasons for beginning training, as the aim of the study was to discover how a martial arts instructor might build a school to a functional size. Some doctoral theses in the field of social psychology (such as Cox, 1999; Sedlacek, 2000) also touch on the topic of people’s motivations to train in the martial arts, but this is not the primary focus of the studies.

A significant body of academic research has evolved from studies undertaken in non social-scientific disciplines, such as literature (Chard, 2003), performance studies (Chu and Foerster, 1994; Klens-Bigman, 1999) and medicine (Agnew, 1993; Birrer and Birrer, 1981; Callister et al., 1990, 1991; Cantwell and King, 1973; Jackson et al., 1967; Lannuzel et al., 1994; Norton and Cutler, 1965; Russel and Lewis, 1975; Zehr and Sale, 1993).

The greatest amount of available material, however, is non-academic. For example, there are several (auto)biographical works, detailing the lives and careers of prominent martial arts exponents (for example, Funakoshi, 1981; Jones, 2001; Lowenthal, 1991; Shamrock, 1998). Despite their lay focus, martial arts magazines such as Blitz (Australia), Fighttimes (New Zealand) and Black Belt (US) are useful, accurate forums for the circulation of information about martial arts skills, practitioners and current events, and provide a context for topical discussions and debates. A wide variety of texts focus upon the development and/or use of a particular martial art or weapon, and sometimes function as training manuals. As such, they tend to be descriptive rather than analytical. Popular fan-oriented tributes to famous martial artists in the mass media are also common; these are generally found on the internet and, although they are interesting and provide an insight into consumer responses to martial arts as portrayed in film, on television and in other popular genres, there are questions about their validity and reliability for social science research (although they can be subject to analysis as cultural studies material and are used as such in this study).
1.4 Research approach

It is therefore apparent that there is a deficit of research in my subject area. Despite the considerable academic attention that the martial arts have received, especially in recent years, few social scientists have investigated martial arts students’ decisions to begin and continue with their training. Furthermore, few have explored the nature of the martial arts training experience in a certain country or region, and none has focused upon the martial arts in New Zealand.

The chief aims of this thesis are to describe and analyse the phenomenon of martial arts practice in New Zealand. The martial arts are examined from three perspectives: socio-historical, socio-cultural and motivational. The socio-historical approach focuses upon the history and development of martial arts practice in New Zealand. The socio-cultural approach is concerned with the characteristics of the people practising the various martial arts. The motivational approach explores the reasons why people become involved in martial arts training and why they continue. This approach is the most substantial of the three and is pursued in the greatest depth. Theories of risk and the risk society, and popular or mass consumer culture, are used to help explain, and provide a social context for understanding, people’s motivations. The black belt is also considered in terms of its symbolic nature and its role in motivating people to begin, and continue with, their training.

1.4.1 Research questions

The following research questions relate to the socio-historical, socio-cultural and motivational approaches of the thesis.

Socio-historical
When, how and why did (Asian) martial arts become established in New Zealand?

Socio-cultural
What are the demographic characteristics of the martial artists in this study?
Do these factors differentiate people practising different martial arts?

Motivational
What is the function and purpose of martial arts training in the lives of people in this study?
Why do people begin martial arts training?
Why do they continue?
What role does popular/mass consumer culture play in people’s decisions to begin and continue with martial arts training?
What influence does popular/mass consumer culture have upon people’s impressions and experiences of the martial arts?
To what extent are notions of risk and the risk society applicable to explaining people’s decisions to begin and continue with martial arts training?
How has risk consciousness affected martial arts practice and philosophy?
How is the black belt perceived both by martial artists and non-martial artists?
To what extent do perceptions of the black belt motivate people to begin and continue with martial arts training?

1.4.2 Research strategy
Given the context of historical development and people’s personal responses to the martial arts training experience, I choose to adopt a mixed quantitative and qualitative research strategy based on documentary sources, and questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews carried out with Christchurch martial artists. Further details of the research process, methods and sources are contained in Chapter Two.

1.4.3 The groups involved in this study
The respondents who participated in this study were drawn from four different martial arts with prominent profiles in Christchurch, New Zealand.

1.4.3.1 Zen Do Kai Martial Arts
Zen Do Kai, or ‘the best of everything in progression’, is a contemporary eclectic system founded in Australia in 1970 and practised throughout Australia and New Zealand. Its Australasian focus made it particularly appropriate for this study. Although it has its roots in Goju Ryu and traditional forms of karate, Zen Do Kai is a hybrid style and incorporates techniques from a number of other arts, hence the inclusion of the general term ‘martial arts’ in its title. Zen Do Kai is also closely associated with Muay Thai Kickboxing and most instructors have cross-trained in this style. Despite this mélange of arts and traditions, Zen Do Kai may be described as a ‘hard’ martial art, as it has a strong physical focus and students learn to spar (fight)
from their first lesson. Respondents were sourced from the University of Canterbury Zen Do Kai Club.2

1.4.3.2 Seido Karate
Seido, meaning ‘silent way’ or ‘sincere way’, is a form of karate that developed in the mid-1970s from Kyokushinkai Karate. It has strong links with traditional forms of Japanese karate. It is characterised by a family-oriented focus, and emphasises meditation and spiritual awareness as a complement to physical training. Although students do spar and compete in tournaments, they do not fight until they have been training for three years. Seido is an internationally recognised, highly respected martial art, with a well established dojo in central Christchurch.

1.4.3.3 Aikido (Shinryukan)
Aikido, meaning ‘the way of harmony’, is a gentler, more aesthetic art, characterised by circular techniques, holds and throws, rather than linear techniques and strikes. Aikido developed in Japan during the mid-twentieth century and may be described as a modern cognate form. Although Aikido is a non-combative martial art, it is highly effective for self defence. The style of Aikido chosen for this study was Shinryukan (‘divine flow’), which has a popular dojo in suburban Christchurch.

1.4.3.4 Tai Chi Chuan
Tai Chi Chuan is a traditional Chinese martial art. An example of a ‘soft’ or an ‘internal’ martial art, Tai Chi is infused with Taoist philosophy. The Tai Chi forms are generally practised gently in slow motion and practitioners derive significant health benefits from the practice. Although Tai Chi is one of the world’s deadliest martial arts, in recent years it has become popular as a gentle recreation activity, providing relaxation and stress relief. Two clubs were observed for this study: a suburban Christchurch club where the focus was upon health and relaxation, and a purpose-built dojo in central Christchurch, where the emphasis was upon the martial applications of the forms.

2 Although this club is run from the University of Canterbury, university students comprise only half of the trainees. The remainder consist of school students and working adults who choose to train at the university club because of its competitive fees and convenient location. As such, it is representative of most other Christchurch Zen Do Kai clubs.
1.5 Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter Two gives further details of my research process, outlining the methods used to gather and analyse data. Following the general historical résumé provided in Chapter One, Chapter Three focuses specifically on the historical development of the indigenous and introduced martial arts in New Zealand. Chapter Four concentrates upon the contemporary martial arts situation, and considers and compares the various reasons why respondents chose to begin martial arts training, and why they have continued. The chapter draws particular attention to three main issues: the influence of popular culture representations on people's perceptions of martial arts and motivations to train; the impact of risk society-related fears and anxieties on the study of martial arts; and the myth of the black belt and its effect on martial arts trainees. These issues are explored in greater depth in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, respectively. Chapter Eight presents the conclusions of my research. It summarises the main themes and issues arising from the study, and makes recommendations for future research.
Chapter Two
Methodology

2.0 Introduction
This chapter describes the research process undertaken in this study. It discusses the methods used to gather data; the chosen sample, and factors related to sample selection and recruitment; issues arising from the data collection; data analysis; and ethical considerations.

2.1 Research process
The main research strategy was qualitative, which takes an iterative, rather than a linear approach, whereby the individual stages of the research overlap and data analysis is an important part of the entire research process. The process begins with an idea for which theoretical information is gathered and theoretical assumptions formulated. Data is collected and analysed and the theoretical assumptions are re-examined. No stage of the research process is discrete, as literature is reviewed throughout and theoretical propositions are formed, re-evaluated, changed, discarded and reselected at all stages; thus, recursivity is a dominant part of the process (Gorman and Clayton, 1997).

The initial idea for this study developed from my own involvement as a certified martial arts instructor and shodan black belt in Zen Do Kai Martial Arts, with previous experience in Muay Thai Kickboxing and women’s self-defence. Having observed the attitudes and responses of new students, as well as their retention rates, over several years, I became interested in why people began martial arts training and why they continued. This developed into a more general curiosity regarding the characteristics of the martial arts experience in New Zealand.

The chosen methods related specifically to the three approaches of the thesis: socio-historical, socio-cultural and motivational. Documentary research was the dominant mode of enquiry for the socio-historical section. For the socio-cultural and motivational approaches, a two-stage data gathering method was employed. General
information was gathered initially by means of a questionnaire, while more specific information about trainees' personal experiences with their martial arts was gathered subsequently through semi-structured interviews.

2.1.1 Documentary research
The purpose of the socio-historical section of the thesis was to facilitate an understanding of the development of the martial arts in New Zealand, and provide a historical context for our contemporary martial arts situation. The chief method of data collection for this section was documentary research. Because nothing comprehensive had been written on the martial arts in New Zealand, it was necessary to trace a number of sources in order to compile a historical narrative.

Documents of relevance to the historical development of the martial arts in New Zealand included books; scout manuals; newspaper, magazine, e-zine and journal articles; advertisements in the newspaper, in magazines and in the Yellow Pages sections of various telephone books; posters; pamphlets; videos; photographs; armed forces training manuals; and information contained on internet sites.

These documents were gathered from the following sources: electronic databases, including Social Science Abstracts, and Index New Zealand, which provided access to the National Library of New Zealand Bibliographic Database; Newspaper Indexes and Telephone Book archives held in the Aotearoa/New Zealand Reference Section of the Canterbury Public Library; the Macmillan Brown Library at the University of Canterbury; the Auckland Public Library; the rare books collection, the sports collection and the pictorial archives at the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington; the Canterbury Museum Documentary Research Centre; and the New Zealand Defence Force Museum at Wigram. In addition, some martial arts instructor colleagues had compiled personal archives, which also proved useful sources of information.

2.1.2 Fieldwork
I began my fieldwork at the beginning of this project in January 2002, through my own involvement as a martial arts practitioner. Although I was not a 'participant observer' as traditionally conceived, I made notes from my own experience, some of
which were used to inform and supplement the collected data. The questionnaire surveys were administered between July and August 2002 and were followed by the semi-structured interviews which took place between October and December 2002.

2.1.2.1 Initial approach

In order to address the research questions relating to the socio-cultural and motivational levels of the thesis, data needed to be gathered via interviews with people actively involved in martial arts training.

It was necessary to first define the parameters of the research. Because the study had to be accommodated within the scope of a Master’s thesis, it was not realistic to pursue a nationwide study; therefore, I decided to concentrate upon martial artists practising in Christchurch. Apart from the obvious practicality of siting the project locally, Christchurch is a big city with a thriving martial arts scene. There are over 100 clubs representing more than forty martial arts, which was sufficient to support a project of this type.

Next, I needed to establish exactly which martial arts were practised currently in Christchurch. There are no comprehensive lists of Christchurch martial arts clubs, so the information had to be compiled from a number of sources. The chief sources included the Christchurch Yellow Pages, the Martial Arts Online Directory and the compilation of club information held at Christchurch Martial Arts Supplies, a shop in the central city. In addition to these, I gained contacts from other martial artist colleagues, who recommended various clubs and instructors, and my documentary research yielded further information. From these sources, I assembled an ample list of contacts which could be used to devise a possible sample. I augmented the list by researching the background of each martial art. I recorded where the art was from, its history and its main systems, tenets and approaches. This was required in order to be able to make informed choices about the martial arts included in the study.

To gain a general view of martial arts practice in Christchurch, it seemed appropriate to choose a range of martial arts that differed according to country of origin, technique and philosophy, and which represented both ‘traditional’ and ‘eclectic’ (non-traditional) systems, as the martial arts ‘experience’ could not be described
satisfactorily on the basis of a single art. Consequently, I decided upon the four subject arts: Zen Do Kai, Seido Karate, Aikido and Tai Chi Chuan. I selected main schools for each of these arts and contacted each chief instructor by letter.\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{2.1.2.2 Questionnaire survey}

The purpose of the questionnaire survey was to provide a broad information context for the follow-up recorded interviews. The nineteen-item questionnaire\textsuperscript{4} was designed to elicit general information relating to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the place and meaning of martial arts in the lives of the respondents, the qualities they were searching for in a martial art, the reasons why respondents began studying their chosen martial art, and the reasons why they have continued.

I decided that a sample of sixty martial artists – fifteen respondents from each of the four martial arts styles – would be adequate to address the research questions in detail and produce sufficient preliminary data. The questionnaire respondents needed to represent a range of martial arts experience; for example, beginners, trainees with some experience and trainees with long-term experience/instructors.

I sent a sample questionnaire to each of the chief instructors so they could see the questions I intended to ask. Once they had approved the questionnaire, I liaised with each instructor to organise times when I could observe classes containing appropriate respondents. For each style surveyed, I watched the classes in action several times prior to administering the questionnaires. There were three main reasons for this. First, observing the classes helped me gain some understanding of each martial art and the particular dynamics of each class. Second, the students got used to my presence before they were interviewed. Third, my attendance made it clear to the respondents that I was interested in their activity. Because I am involved with Zen Do Kai, in the case of that martial art I chose to interview a class that I did not instruct, so that the students did not feel obliged to be involved.

After the period of observation, I administered the questionnaire to the respondents. Initially, my approach was to ask the respondents to stay behind after class and spend

\textsuperscript{3} See Appendix 3.
\textsuperscript{4} See Appendix 4.
fifteen to twenty minutes filling out the questionnaire. I realised after surveying the first group (Zen Do Kai) that this was too ambitious. I had requested that the respondents take care to answer all questions so that I could have as complete a data set as possible, and most found it too difficult to answer a nineteen-item questionnaire in fifteen minutes, especially because the qualitative questions required them to formulate thoughts and express personal opinions. In fact, the time constraints compromised the detail given in the first batch of answers. Several respondents asked if they could take home the questionnaire and return it the following week. I agreed to this, although it meant a further visit to the school. The questionnaires could have been mailed to me; however, I saw the advantage of following up, as it gave me a chance to confirm or clarify any aspect of the interviews with the respondents and as check that the consent forms had been completed.

Not everyone returned their questionnaires during the next class, which meant that I often had to make two or more trips back to the school. Eventually, some questionnaires had to be posted to me. Nevertheless, allowing respondents more time to complete the survey resulted in much fuller, carefully constructed responses, which improved the quality of the data.

The instructors were active in ensuring that the questionnaires were completed and returned to me; however, they were not coercive, merely supportive. Of sixty questionnaires administered, forty-seven were returned. This was a very high return rate, given that respondents had numerous work and family responsibilities in addition to their martial arts training. It is likely that the respondents’ enthusiasm for the survey was related to their personal commitment to, and passion for, their martial arts, coupled with the instructor’s role in encouraging them to be involved.

At the end of the survey form, respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they would be interested in participating in an individual interview at some later period. Respondents for the second stage of the data gathering were chosen predominantly from among these willing first-phase respondents. The second-phase respondents were selected on the basis of their rank (brown belt or above) and experience (advanced trainee or instructor).
2.1.2.3 Semi-structured interview

The second stage of the data collection took the form of detailed individual interviews in the form of semi-structured tape recorded conversations. The analysis of the questionnaires formed the basis for the design of the semi-structured interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to discuss relevant issues arising from the questionnaire, and to explore in greater depth the individual’s experiences, attitudes, motives and reflections associated with martial arts training, and how these may have changed over time. Although the information sought related especially to the socio-cultural and motivational levels of the thesis, comments and anecdotes from very experienced trainees also provided useful information about the socio-historical development of the martial arts in New Zealand.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out with a sample of fourteen people. This comprised approximately one quarter of the questionnaire sample. All four subject styles were represented in the sample. In addition to those chosen from among the survey respondents, two experienced martial artists who were not part of the original surveyed group were invited to participate in the individual interviews. Of the fourteen respondents, twelve were black belt grade (or equivalent) or above. One was a brown belt currently training for her black belt. The only interview respondent who was not an advanced trainee or instructor was an Aikido white belt/fifth kyu who had been training for one year. He was deemed suitable because of his highly detailed, interesting, insightful questionnaire responses, his enthusiasm about Aikido, his willingness to be interviewed, and his previous experience with a range of other martial arts. Importantly, his perspective often provided a balance to those of more experienced trainees.

Most of the interviews took place at the respondents’ places of work or residence, or at their martial arts schools. Whenever possible, we chose a quiet place for the interview in order to gain a clear recording and to help the respondent feel comfortable to speak freely about their experiences. In general, the respondents were gregarious and enjoyed discussing their experiences with martial arts. As with the questionnaire respondents, this may have been due to the enthusiasm each had about

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5 See Appendix 5.
their martial art and the important place that the practice occupied in their lives. Several acknowledged that they were seldom presented with opportunities to talk at length about their interests. On average, the interviews lasted between sixty and ninety minutes. I struck a balance between navigating the interview to make sure all topics were covered in reasonable time, and allowing the conversation to develop, giving the respondents the opportunity to pursue trains of thought, recount their experiences and put forward their opinions.

To assist long-term trainees to remember details of early training/instructing as clearly and accurately as possible, I asked them beforehand to provide recollection aids, such as photographs, newspaper cuttings, grading certificates, trophies and club memorabilia.

Several respondents were also very helpful in recommending people for me to talk to and suggesting relevant secondary sources. In addition, some invited me to watch certain classes or gradings that would not generally be open to the public. These experiences helped inform the data and enrich the research experience.

2.1.2.4 The interviewees

The interviewees represented a diverse range of people. Of the forty-nine respondents overall, thirty-two were male and seventeen were female. There was considerable variation in the respondents' ethnic identities, educational backgrounds and occupations, while the ages ranged from eleven years to seventy-eight years. Interestingly, there was also great diversity in terms of physical appearance. This diversity was represented in all the subject martial arts, which suggests that although people may be attracted to certain martial arts for certain reasons, each martial art still appeals to a considerable variety of people.

The respondents also represented a wide range of martial arts experience outside the subject arts. Respondents were asked if they had studied any other martial arts (previously or concurrently) and the subject sample represented experience with a total of twenty-eight different martial arts. These were:
Aikido (Japanese, ‘the way of harmony’, non-combative art)
Arnis (Filipino dagger and/or stick fighting, also empty-hand techniques)
Ba Gua (Chinese, based on Taoist philosophy, circular techniques)
Brazilian Jujutsu (Japanese-derived Brazilian art, groundfighting techniques)
Close Quarter Combat (Western contemporary system – full contact, civilian clothes)
(Doce Pares) Eskrima (see Arnis)
Fencing (European, fighting with swords such as rapier, sabre)
Goju Ryu Karate (Okinawan, ‘hard-soft school’)
Hapkido (Korean, ‘the art of co-ordinated power’)
Hsing I (Xing Yi) (Chinese, based on Taoist philosophy, linear techniques)
Iaido (Japanese, ‘art of the flashing sword’, art of drawing samurai sword)
Judo (Japanese, ‘the gentle way’, locks, holds, throws, use of balance)
Jujutsu (Japanese, ‘pliable skill’, locks, holds, throws)
Kendo (Japanese fencing)
Kung Fu (Chinese, derived from ‘hard’ forms of Shaolin Temple Boxing)
Kyokushinkai Karate (Japanese karate style – modern cognate form)
Muay Thai Kickboxing (Thai, primarily involving strikes – hands, feet, knees, elbows)
Ni Satori Ryu (Japanese, a style of iaido)
Qing-na (Chinese, controls joints, locks, holds)
Seido Karate (Japanese-derived; dev. in the US, ‘way of silence’, or ‘sincere way’)
Shotokan Karate (Okinawan karate style)
Taekwondo (Korean, ‘the way of hand and foot’)
Tai Chi Chuan (Chinese, based on Taoist philosophy, ch. by flowing form)
Tan Tui (Chinese, ‘spring leg’, i.e. ‘kick’ – kicking techniques)
Ten Sen Pai (Japanese/Okinawan classical karate style)
Western Boxing (Chiefly assoc. with Britain and US; hand techniques)
Yan Qing (Chinese, ‘swallow [bird]’ ‘bluish-purple colour’, inc. strikes, holds)
Yoshukai Karate (Japanese-derived style of karate, dev. & v. popular in the US)
Zen Do Kai (Australasian contemporary eclectic system: ‘the best of everything in progression’)

This multiplicity allowed me to develop a much wider view of the martial arts experience.
2.1.2.5 *Issues arising from the data collection*

Although the interview process generally ran smoothly, there were some issues that needed to be resolved. For example, some of the interview questions required the respondents to describe their salient experiences and their achievements. Several very senior black belt respondents, however, were so humble and self-effacing that it was very hard to get them to talk about their accomplishments.

Another incident demonstrated clearly the way in which martial arts roles affect roles taken in other areas of a martial artist’s life. While interviewing a very senior martial artist in his place of work we were joined by his co-worker, who happened to be a more junior martial artist in the same style. It was extremely difficult to get the junior respondent to speak about his experiences because he constantly deferred to the senior respondent and was reluctant to articulate opinions, despite encouragement from the senior respondent. This self-consciousness may have been exacerbated by the fact that the junior respondent was the senior respondent’s subordinate at work.

Occasionally respondents asked me about my background in the martial arts and its effect on the data-gathering process. One respondent ensured that I had experience with martial arts training before agreeing to be interviewed, as he felt that I would otherwise be unable to conduct the research effectively. Another respondent asked whether, after training in certain martial arts for several years, it was difficult to interview people from other arts without having a ‘filter’ (that is, without trying to interpret their experiences and information through my own martial arts perspective). I replied that I tried to keep an open mind; after all, for its success, this type of project called for an interest in ideas, experiences and perspectives outside my immediate martial arts experience.

2.1.3 *Data analysis*

Interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure textual accuracy. While transcribing, I made general notes about the content of the interview, where to find information on a certain topic, or other points of interest. This served as a basic preliminary analysis of the interview data and helped identify recurrent responses and possible trends which would be useful when the data was collated.
I decided to analyse the data manually, rather than use a qualitative data software analysis package such as NUDIST, because useful material was not always couched in obvious terms and was identified more effectively during careful read-throughs. Once the transcripts were complete I saved them as computer files and made hard copies of each. For each topic I read through the hard copies and highlighted the appropriate information. The information was then copied and pasted from the computer files into labelled files. From these files, the material was drafted, edited, ordered into logical sequence, and integrated with theory and commentary. This process meant that I had to perform several read-throughs and produce numerous drafts, but it enabled me to become very au fait with the data.

When writing up the results, there were several possible options for citing the respondents' comments while still preserving anonymity. Two of these were to use pseudonyms, or to refer to the respondents in terms of broad categories, such as 'martial arts student' or 'martial arts instructor.' Neither of these were satisfactory in that they reduced the ability to judge the context from which the respondents spoke, and this would have been particularly difficult in chapters that dealt specifically with change over time and the experiences of new students versus those of long-term practitioners. Consequently, respondents were labelled according to their gender, martial art and rank. For example, a comment might be attributed to a 'male Seido shodan' or a 'female Zen Do Kai green belt' or a 'male Seido yellow tip'. Because Aikido does not use a wide range of coloured belts to identify students' ranks, respondents were referred to by their kyu ranks instead. All black belts, however, were referred to by their dan rank. Tai Chi has no formal ranking system, so comments were ascribed to either teachers or students. This method served to inform each comment more effectively. Furthermore, because it was rare to find only one practitioner in a given art at a certain rank, it was very difficult to identify any particular respondent.

2.1.4 Additional research

Throughout the research period I continued to study and instruct martial arts. In addition to the research process described above, I read a range of training books and

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6 Refer to Appendices 1 and 2 for specific details of martial arts-related terminology and ranking systems.
autobiographies, to engage with the wider martial arts ‘culture’. I observed classes in Yoshukai Karate, Kung Fu and Kickboxing (also Women’s Kickboxing), and witnessed gradings in Zen Do Kai, Kickboxing and Aikido. I attended seminars with senior martial arts practitioners, and observed Kyokushinkai Karate tournaments, Kickboxing fights, and martial arts demonstrations. I went to the Christchurch Martial Arts Supplies store for a closer view of martial arts equipment and weapons used by various arts. In particular, for the chapter on popular culture, I accessed martial arts film catalogues and watched a representative chronological sample, making notes on content and conducting net-based fan searches. I also visited comic book stores to read comics/manga and other martial arts-related popular material.

2.1.5 Ethical considerations
Approval for this research was granted by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

2.2 Conclusion
This chapter has described the process used to collect and analyse data for this study. Chapter Three comprises the socio-historical section of the thesis, drawing upon the documentary research to outline the historical development of the martial arts in New Zealand and to facilitate an understanding of our contemporary martial arts situation.
3.0 Introduction

The history of the martial arts in New Zealand is not well documented. Those who have attempted to comment about the introduction and development of certain arts (such as Todd, 1976) acknowledge the lack of information, especially regarding the early period during the first half of the twentieth century. Until about 1950, evidence is sporadic and must be gathered from scanty and disparate sources. This chapter constructs a historical narrative of the martial arts in this country: their dates and means of arrival, and their process of development here. It outlines some of the main issues that have arisen as the various arts have been introduced and have increased in popularity, and it provides a historical context for some of the topics discussed in later chapters.

3.1 A brief history of the martial arts in New Zealand

Most of the arts introduced to New Zealand are of Asian derivation. Before the introduction of Asian martial arts, New Zealand had its own traditional forms of armed and unarmed combat. Māori practised Mau, a hand-to-hand fighting style, and Mau Rakau, the art of weaponry, involving the patu (a short, single-handed weapon) and taiaha (a long, two-handed weapon). Coney (1993) mentions that kuia (wise older women) were often involved in the practice and perpetuation of these art forms. She writes that:

As well as the more conventional activities of karanga, manaaki tangata or caring for visitors, midwifery or weaving, some kuia have become known for other, rarer, qualities. These have included ... excellence with weaponry, both patu (short, single-handed) and taiaha (long, two-handed) forms. Male experts today acknowledge instruction in the martial arts from formidable kuia, who wielded their staffs with lethal precision (Coney, 1993: 83).

Significantly, although the fighting arts have traditionally been the realm of men and male practitioners still far outnumber female martial artists in New Zealand, women have always had a notable involvement with the martial arts in this country.
Women's involvement is apparent from the earliest records of introduced martial arts in New Zealand. These first records refer to Jujutsu (from *ju* = 'pliable, yielding' and *jutsu* = 'skill'; also spelt Ju-Jitsu or Jiu-Jitsu), a traditional Japanese form of unarmed combat incorporating throws, strikes and immobilisations. Jujutsu appeared here about the turn of the twentieth century, and predates the appearance of other martial arts by almost 50 years. It seems likely that Jujutsu came to New Zealand via Australia; the first recorded Australian Jujutsu club operated in Melbourne in 1896 and Sydney newspapers of 1906 contain advertisements for a Sydney Jujutsu club begun by two Japanese instructors, J. Okura and R. Fukushima (http://www.ijji.org/women/australia.htm).

The first reference to Jujutsu in New Zealand occurs in the Girl Peace Scouts manual, *Peace Scouting for Girls*, written by Lieut. Col. David Cossgrove in 1910. The manual includes sections on 'Jiu Jitsu for Girls' and 'Self-Defence'. Cossgrove praises the practicality and efficacy of Jujutsu, especially its unarmed quality: 'One great advantage of the Japanese method of training is that no apparatus is required, nor any special room for the practices' (Cossgrove, 1910: 81). Cossgrove promotes Jujutsu as a means for girls to improve their health and strength, claiming that, 'Once the muscles have been formed by [Jujutsu] they do not disappear again when you give up the practices' (Cossgrove, 1910: 81). Interestingly, he discourages girls from wearing corsets because the constriction would interfere with their Jujutsu exercises.

The defensive application of Jujutsu techniques is also stressed. Cossgrove explains that:

> As it is possible that a Scout may find herself in such a predicament that she is in danger of bodily harm or insult, I give ... a few simple rules of jiu-jitsu tricks of self-defence, which, if followed, will enable any girl of average strength to be more than a match for the greatest bully she is likely to encounter (Cossgrove, 1910: 85).

The manual provides basic instruction in two types of wrist locks, a release from a waist hold, a wrist and elbow hold, and a thumb twist incorporating a sleeper hold (Coney, 1993: 118; Cossgrove, 1910: 85-89; Roth, 1986: 91). These descriptions are illustrated with photographs of Peace Scouts in uniform, warding off would-be attackers.
Cossgrove served in the Boer War with Baden-Powell (the founder of the Boy Scouts) and it is possible that he gained his knowledge of Jujutsu during his military training. As well as being popular in New Zealand, the far-sighted Peace Scouting for Girls sold widely in the United States and Japan (DNZB, 1996: 118), and very likely influenced perceptions of self-defence practice overseas.

Further evidence of the growing popularity of Jujutsu in New Zealand is found in a book by Florence LeMar and her husband, Joe Gardiner. The Life and Adventures of Miss Florence LeMar, the World’s Famous Ju-Jitsu Girl was published privately in Wellington in 1913. The book details LeMar’s adventures with a colourful variety of criminals and madmen, all overcome, ultimately, by her Jujutsu prowess. LeMar was born in Australia and says that she ‘acquired a knowledge of the art when quite a young girl’ (LeMar, 1913: 10), but gives no details of when, where or from whom. Gardiner himself was also a Jujutsu authority and apparently ‘qualified under several Japanese experts’ (LeMar, 1913: 10).

The information given suggests that both Gardiner and LeMar learnt Jujutsu in Australia, but both were instrumental in promoting the art in New Zealand. From about 1909, the couple and their son, Ronnie (‘The Youngest Ju-Jitsu Exponent in the
World’ (LeMar, 1913: 15)) toured Australasia with their show, ‘The Hooligan and the Lady’, billed as a ‘refined vaudeville novelty ... the only act of its kind in the world’ (LeMar, 1913: 126), a Jujutsu display in which LeMar successfully and artistically defended herself against Gardiner’s staged assaults. LeMar writes that:

Together we have perfected our knowledge of the art, so that we are able upon the vaudeville stage to give a representation which has invariably been well received by an appreciative and generous public. Our great ambition, however, is to arouse the public to the extreme value of Ju Jitsu as a means of self-defence ... [for] the feminine portion of the public, in particular (LeMar, 1913: 10).

The pair also gave Jujutsu classes to the general public in the places they visited.

LeMar was a very enthusiastic exponent of Jujutsu. Of The Life and Adventures she explains:

My purpose in writing this little book, is, in the main to arouse interest in the defensive art of Ju Jitsu, and, as a secondary consideration to show my fellow men and women how easily they may put themselves on a perfect physical equality with persons possessed of twice their strength, by a careful and practical study of this fascinating art (LeMar, 1913: 7).

Like Cossgrove (1910), LeMar makes an appeal for Jujutsu training to men and women on the grounds of health and appearance. She tells her readers that: ‘the practice of Ju Jitsu is a simply marvellous health-giver and promoter of physical strength. As a corrective of over-stoutness it is without parallel’ (LeMar, 1913: 8).

LeMar’s chief agenda is to promote the benefits of Jujutsu to women. In so doing, LeMar reveals herself as an early feminist. She demonstrates a heightened awareness of the possibility of physical and/or sexual assault upon women and states that her book is, essentially:

An urgent and earnest exhortation to all parents to arm their children – and especially their girls – with this wonderful weapon of defence, and, if need be, offence, Ju Jitsu. It is a melancholy truth that one can rarely pick up a newspaper nowadays without reading an account of some dangerous assault upon timid and unoffending young women and girls (LeMar, 1913: 7).

Several of LeMar’s stories feature women who panic when faced with danger. LeMar often saves these women using a range of anti-rape and anti-assault techniques. Significantly, she states that knowledge of Jujutsu ‘pro[ves] the equality of the feminine race with mankind’ (LeMar, 1913: 126).
The second part of *The Life and Adventures* comprises a series of photographs of LeMar and Gardiner demonstrating a number of Jujutsu manoeuvres. Each move is described in detail, with instructions and advice on applications and benefits. In this way, the book functions as an early martial arts manual. Le Mar’s publication is a unique amalgam of martial arts theory, fitness instruction, history, biography, narrative and feminist philosophy, and is an intriguing early contribution to the corpus of information on martial arts practice in New Zealand.

There is evidence to suggest that Jujutsu received greater attention during the First World War, not only because of its exotic entertainment value, but its application in military training. *The Evening Post* of 27 March 1915 includes a review of a ‘Programme of Grand Assault-At-Arms and Display of Jiu Jitsu’ held in the Wellington Town Hall. The display was contributed by one Captain Leopold McLaglen, advertised as the Jujutsu ‘World Champion.’ McLaglen incorporated his knowledge of the Japanese martial art in his bayonet instruction to various units of the
Imperial Army, including the New Zealand Expeditionary Force at Trentham, near Wellington (*The Evening Post*, 1915, March 27: 8).

McLaglen must have spent some considerable time in New Zealand, as his *McLaglen System of Bayonet Fighting* (1916) was published by the Christchurch Press. He also published *Bayonet Fighting for War* the same year, and the early self-defence book, *Ju-Jitsu: A Manual of the Science*, in 1918. McLaglen was obviously considered something of an authority on bayonet fighting, but his knowledge of Jujutsu is questionable. In ‘Early Ju-jutsu: The Challenges’ (2001), Graham Noble reveals that although McLaglen spent much of his life in the army, when it came to martial arts he was in fact an eccentric fraud, a consummate showman who convinced his audiences that he had won Jujutsu contests all over the world when, in fact, his skills were limited. He toured many countries, giving choreographed Jujutsu performances as ‘The Great Leopold’ and ‘Leopold the Mighty’. It is not certain whether the New Zealand Army was aware of this fact when it employed him.

During the First World War, possibly as a result of its introduction as a military training tool, Jujutsu was promoted as a means of self-defence for pupils in New Zealand secondary schools. Despite his spurious qualifications, McLaglen was involved with this initiative and appears to have been a success. In *Ju-Jitsu: A Manual of the Science*, McLaglen lists some ‘records of the author’, which include a testimony from F. Milner, then principal of Waitaki Boys’ High School in Otago, dated 14 March 1915. Milner writes that:

> This is to certify that Captain Leopold McLaglen trained the whole of the boys at this school (260 in number) in Jiu-Jitsu. I have carefully watched Captain McLaglen’s work.
He is a fine disciplinarian. The boys have benefited greatly from his tuition, and he has enlisted their enthusiastic admiration (McLaglen, 1918: 10).

Although McLaglen left New Zealand shortly after the War to pursue travelling and performing, Jujutsu continued to be taught in schools. By the mid-1920s, schoolgirls were also receiving tuition. Pictorial evidence dated 30 October 1926 shows students at Wellington East Girls’ College giving a Jujutsu demonstration on the school tennis courts, working in pairs and practising arm locks upon each other. Schoolgirls in some areas may have received tuition in Jujutsu until the Second World War, although boxing was the popular choice for boys.

![Schoolgirls at Wellington East Girls’ College performing Jujutsu manoeuvres, 1926. (Photograph courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library, G EP 1304 ½.)](image)

There is virtually no information about martial arts practice in New Zealand between the mid-1920s and the early 1940s, except for occasional comments in newspapers and magazines. The New Zealand Police received martial arts instruction as part of their Depot training in Wellington during the interwar years and, according to the *New Zealand Listener* of 4 July 1941, when women were recruited, this training was extended to them:

We* [Listener staff] went to interview the Superintendent of Police. ... But the Superintendent was not communicative. All we could learn was that the ten [female recruits] were housed in specially-constructed barracks in Newtown, Wellington, that
they had plenty of hot water, lots of wood and coal, and lessons in ju-jitsu, and that he had every confidence that they would be a credit to the force. At any rate, their physical well-being is being looked after, we reflected (Listener, 1941, July 4: 42).

Members of the New Zealand armed forces were schooled in martial arts skills during the Second World War as they had been during the First. Along with boxing and wrestling, service personnel were taught a miscellany of self-defence techniques collectively termed ‘unarmed combat’ (The Press, 1962, March 31: 5) or ‘close combat’, which included Jujutsu. The April 1943 issue of the Royal New Zealand Air Force’s wartime magazine, Contact, shows pictures of Air Force trainees involved in Jujutsu training (Contact, 1943, April: 25). Information published by the London War Office in 1946 also points to the use of martial arts training. Their Basic and Battle Physical Training manual (BBPT) was used in New Zealand, and Pamphlet III is a Syllabus of Battle Physical Training and Battle Physical Efficiency Tests. Once again, the syllabus mentions instruction in boxing, wrestling and close combat (BBPT, III, 1946: 4).

However, it would appear that the majority of soldiers’ training in the martial arts took place while they were posted overseas in Asia, where they encountered different fighting styles. For example, New Zealand’s J-Force came into contact with Japanese fighting arts (NZ Herald, 1989, June 3: S2/3). In addition, New Zealand’s K-Force would probably have been exposed to Korean martial arts during the Korean War (1950-1953).

There was a steady post-war growth in the number of people involved in martial arts in New Zealand and in the variety of arts practised here. The first martial art to develop in New Zealand after the Second World War was Judo, a Japanese Jujutsu derivative developed by Dr Jiguro Kano in 1882. Meaning ‘the gentle way’, Judo relies upon the flexible and efficient use of balance and leverage in the performance of throws and holds. Todd (1976) writes that Judo was first introduced to New Zealand by English and Dutch immigrants shortly after the Second World War, who joined with other New Zealanders trained in Asia, possibly while serving in the armed forces (Todd, 1976: 149). Judo made its presence felt in New Zealand sport from the late 1940s onward, when small groups began teaching, mainly from old Jujutsu
books, although no clubs were formed at the time (Todd, 1966: 143). New Zealand’s first Judo club, Judokwai, in Auckland, was established in 1948, and the sport had spread to the South Island by 1953 (The Press, 1954, July 9: 10), when Can-Am-Ju (Canterbury Amateur Judo) was created in Christchurch (Todd, 1966: 143). A Press article from 9 July 1954 discusses Christchurch’s new club, or ‘judokwai’, providing information on the history of Judo, the ranking system, instructors, trainees, techniques, benefits and applications. The detail in which Judo is discussed here suggests that it was new to many people and was perceived as rather exotic. Throughout the 1950s Judo became increasingly established; a national organisation was formed in 1956 and in 1957 the first National Judo Championships were held.

By the late 1950s Judo had also become part of physical/combat training for members of all the armed forces. Part 4 Section 4 (‘Unarmed Combat’) of the 1958 Syllabus of Advanced Training for Physical Education and Recreational Training Instructors of the Navy, Army and Air Force mentions that service personnel should have both theoretical and practical instruction and assessment in ‘Break fall principles and exercises; Throwing from all positions; Locks; Self-defence from blows, kicks, weapons; Attack on armed sentry, crippling blows, killing blows, Judo traditions, special usage, to white belt standard’7 (Part 4, Sec. 4).

Judo was up for public discussion in the early 1960s with the suggestion that it might take the place of boxing as the chief self-defence method taught in schools. In the Press of 31 March 1962, medical officer of health, Dr L. F. Jepson, advised that:

As training in self-defence, school boxing could well be replaced by judo or other methods of unarmed combat…. As a means of self-defence … boxing is greatly inferior to the practices taught in the Armed Services under the name of ‘unarmed combat’ and to the systems of judo, jujitsu and related disciplines. I see nothing against school boxing as such, but, if self-defence is a main objective, judo or some similar sport would be a logical choice (The Press, 1962, March 31: 5).

The wider application of these self-defence skills marks a significant move away from Anglocentric fighting forms towards Asian forms of combat.

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7 The words ‘to white belt standard’ were a handwritten addition to the text provided by the New Zealand Defence Force Museum.
From its inception, Judo was considered a sport. After it was entered for the first time in the Tokyo Olympic Games (1964) its popularity grew markedly. Judo's worldwide expansion was also facilitated by the necessary translation into English of a number of training manuals. This made much information about martial arts accessible to the West, and paved the way for an increasingly diverse range of Eastern martial arts to enter the global consciousness.

It was also at this time that the martial arts began to feature in popular culture. Since the 1960s, popular culture has played a key role in advertising the martial arts, suggesting and promoting certain concepts, views and stereotypes. Although the martial arts film per se did not become popular in the West until the early 1970s, choreographed fight scenes involving martial arts techniques featured often in films and television shows. Several of these, such as the James Bond films and The Avengers series, had a very wide audience and rapidly achieved cult status.

During the 1960s there was a significant growth in the number of martial arts adopted in New Zealand and the number of hybrid styles being devised. In particular, forms of karate became popular from the mid-1960s. Karate, meaning 'empty hand' in Japanese, is an umbrella term for a range of particular styles of unarmed combat that employ both offensive and defensive techniques. Despite the lack of detailed information about karate during this period, brief remarks about the new pastime may be found in various newspapers and magazines, providing information about its reception. Unlike Judo, karate was not seen strictly as a sport and comments from the period reveal confusion over how to categorise it; its exotic, performative nature and its obvious menace made karate rather controversial.

*Listener* reporter Wallie Ingram contributed to this debate in his article, 'Is Karate a Sport?' which appeared on 10 March 1967. Ingram writes that: 'Wrestling, boxing, ju-jitsu and judo have long been established and recognised as means of self-defence, but I am afraid that karate is being “sold” as an attacking medium, or an unarmed combat activity' (*Listener, 1967, March 10: 16*). Ingram draws a clear distinction

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8 This distinction is illustrated by the use of the term 'Judo player' to identify a Judo practitioner.
between Jujutsu and Judo as defensive arts (and therefore useful), and karate as offensive (and therefore dangerous).

Interestingly, Ingram primarily blames popular culture for encouraging the perception of karate as a flamboyant and hazardous pastime: 'This dissociation of karate from sport might have been partially due to a Town and Around feature over WNTV-1 recently, in which karate chops, breaking of bricks and some rather ostentatious, belligerent moves were highlighted' (Listener, 1967, March 10: 16). He expresses concern that knowledge of such techniques might lead to 'hooliganism', especially among young people. Ingram sought 'the opinion of Police Commissioner C. L. Spencer, who has been a keen sportsman and is known for his interest in sport. His reply was brief – and to the point: "I don't look on it as a sport and, personally, I do not encourage it"' (Listener, 1967, March 10: 16). This attitude is not surprising, as anxiety about the behaviour of New Zealand's youth was common during the years following the widely circulated Mazengarb Report (1954), which testified to growing moral delinquency in children and adolescents. Although the authors do not mention martial arts as a possible cause for young people's wayward behaviour, the report condemns 'objectionable publications, films, broadcasting and television' for portraying suggestive images of sex and violence (Mazengarb et al., 1954: 21-27). Ultimately, however, Ingram concedes that 'so far, at least, nobody has been killed or maimed at karate in New Zealand, so, maybe, I am worrying too much about it' (Listener, 1967, March 10: 16).

The discussion over the liminal and dangerous nature of karate continued in a follow-up article on 7 April. Entitled, 'Too Tough for Hooligans', the article contained a testimony in defence of karate from Bob McCallum, at that time the head instructor of VUW Karate at Victoria University, Wellington. McCallum admits that television programmes such as Danger Man and similar had given karate 'bad press,' but that 'karate does not develop hooliganism or delinquents' (Listener, 1967, April 7: 16), possibly because the discipline involved in training would deter such 'hooligans'. Of particular interest is McCallum's comment that he did not expect karate to gain a wide popularity. In fact, the opposite would turn out to be true.
A month later *The Press* featured an article on Kyokushinkai karate, a style based on the teachings of Japanese Master Oyama, and devised during the 1960s. Typically, the article describes a demonstration. It also contains a brief description of the style and refers to clubs in Wellington, Christchurch and Invercargill (*The Press*, 1967, May 8: 1).

Karate was not the only type of martial art to become popular during the 1960s. The Japanese art, Aikido ('the way of harmony'), became established in New Zealand in 1965 and the Korean art of Tang Soo Do was started in Petone, near Wellington, during the same year. A second wave of influence brought Taekwondo to New Zealand in 1969 and the first member club was founded in Palmerston North in 1970 (www.itfnz.org.nz). Taekwondo ('the way of hand and foot' or 'the way of kicking and punching') was devised in Korea in the 1950s and is characterised by its fast, high, spinning kicks.

Although Taekwondo is Korea's national sport, many New Zealanders learnt of it in Singapore, where it was also rapidly gaining popularity (*NZ Herald*, 1989, June 3: S2/3). From the 1950s until the late 1980s, New Zealand had defence arrangements with Australia, Malaysia and Singapore as well as Britain, partly a legacy of Commonwealth involvement in the Malaysian Emergency (1948 – 1960) and the fear of the spread of Communism during the Cold War period. These arrangements involved regular joint exercises and an exchange of forces. In particular, New Zealand had troops stationed in Singapore from 1955 until 1989 (McIntyre, 1991: 75). It is very likely that, through this period, this New Zealand base in Asia functioned as a vein of influence for martial arts in New Zealand.

The Chinese art of Kung Fu was introduced during the early 1970s. This was probably aided by popular culture; in particular, the martial arts film, an action film with extensive fighting scenes employing various types of martial arts. Bruce Lee’s *Enter the Dragon* (1973) was one of the earliest martial arts films, and was instrumental in promoting the genre in the West. The widespread influence of popular culture portrayals of the martial arts, especially filmic representations, is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.
The cumulative growth of the martial arts continued throughout the 1970s. Todd (1976) notes that Budokan Karate was founded in Auckland in 1972 by Vic Sargent, who already held a first dan black belt in Judo. Hapkido ('the art of coordinated power'), a defensive Korean martial art, was established in Lower Hutt in 1974. Todd (1976) lists the various styles participating in the 1975 first National Karate Competition in Auckland as: Budokan, Shotokan, Kyokushinkai and Shorin-Ru, and also mentions Taekwon-Do and Kung Fu. Seido Karate, a Kyokushinkai derivative, began in New Zealand in 1976.

As part of their process of evolution in New Zealand, many of these more recent arts moved towards founding their own national organisations, in much the same way as Judo had done in the mid-1950s. For example, in 1968 John Jarvis returned to New Zealand from studying Kyokushinkai Karate in Japan, and began the task of bringing existing clubs together to form a single national body. This resulted in the Rembuden Institute of Martial Arts, which was for many years the largest martial arts organisation in New Zealand and was the South Pacific controlling body for Kyokushinkai Karate. The Rembuden Institute was the foundation for the New Zealand Okinawan Goju-Ryu Karate Association (currently the International Okinawan Goju-Ryu Karate-Do Federation of New Zealand), New Zealand's largest Okinawan Goju-Ryu Karate body (www.karate.org.nz/iogkfnzhistory.html). The National Karate Association was set up in 1974, and the International Taekwon-Do Federation of New Zealand was also established shortly afterward.

Despite the establishment of these organisations, it seems that details of their activities were scarce. For example, Todd (1976) acknowledges that, 'There are several schools of karate practised in New Zealand and it is difficult to find a source of information representing a uniform karate organisation. We regret that we have been unable to cover this sport comprehensively' (Todd 1976: 150). It is true that, at this time, there was still no overarching representative organisation for the martial arts in New Zealand.
Due to the increasing abundance of styles, we see the term ‘martial arts’ used in New Zealand from the early 1970s to refer collectively to these various fighting arts. Because of this growth, established martial arts instructors became concerned that, with the proliferation of martial arts, standards might slip and inadequate instructors might emerge. The New Zealand Martial Arts Council was formed in Wellington in the late 1970s to ‘co-ordinate the harmonious development of the martial arts in accordance with the highest principles’ (The Press, 1979, July 6: 22). In pursuit of this aim, the Council established guidelines, such as instructor accreditation, to ensure that high standards in the martial arts were achieved and maintained. Unfortunately, although the Council’s intentions were admirable, their activities were severely limited due to lack of funding.

In New Zealand, the 1970s also saw the growth of second-wave feminism and the women’s liberation movement. In this context, it is interesting to consider the feminist response to the martial arts phenomenon. A feminist interest in the martial arts arose for two chief reasons. First, despite women’s early involvement with the martial arts, men’s involvement soon became predominant, especially after the 1940s. Male practitioners were privileged during the Second World War because, as servicemen, they received the bulk of unarmed combat training. Furthermore, as soldiers overseas, they were in a position to learn new martial forms and take responsibility for developing them in New Zealand. It can be argued that this strong ‘martial’ emphasis served to (re)-establish the traditional understanding of martial arts training as a ‘male’ activity. As such, the martial arts were likely to attract feminist attention. Second, feminist philosophy was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it facilitated women’s empowerment, allowing many greater independence, autonomy and subjectivity; but on the other hand, this very knowledge and freedom raised women’s awareness of their (sexual) objectification by men, the possibility of attack and their own potential for victimisation, along with a growing perception (accurate or otherwise) of living in an increasingly violent society. Consequently, there was a revival of women’s sense of the need for self-defence.

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9 It seems that the term ‘martial arts’ becomes common in any given country once a sufficient number of different arts are practised to warrant an umbrella term. For example, the first recorded mention of ‘martial arts’ in English occurs in the 1933 Official Guide to Japan (Japanese Government Railways). The first British citation is 1955 (OED II, 1989).
Such awareness is evident in the August 1974 issue of *Broadsheet*, a feminist magazine published by the Auckland Women's Liberation. It includes a section on self-defence, prefaced with a full-page picture of a woman in fighting mode, wearing a karate gi. Information on precautions to take when at home and out, and basic self-defence manoeuvres, are provided.

Of particular interest here are two articles by Maureen Thompson and Jessica Sand, which discuss the experience of being a female participant in a karate class. Thompson, a member of the Auckland Women's Liberation, decided to train in karate as a practical action against victimisation by men:

Knowing that women generally are highly susceptible to physical attack (i.e. the rapist's sex object; the object for husband's/lover's displaced aggression) and that 'uppity' (male epithet) women (i.e. feminists, lesbians) tend to arouse extreme abuse-attack (fear) reaction in men, it seems quite logical that I personally, and women as a sex, should take preventative action and ensure both their own and their sisters' safety when it is threatened (Thompson, 1974: 30).

Jessica Sand's discussion of her experiences as a female karateka takes this view further to consider not only women's need for self-defence, but the ways in which women interact with the masculine culture of martial arts training while gaining the skills they need to protect themselves. Sand demonstrates a self-consciousness of being a 'puny' woman in an exceedingly male-dominated activity and a frustration at not being taken seriously. She writes the following:

Most teachers are male, if only because the influx of women into the sport is recent. You know a teacher is sexist if he laughs at you or makes a remark ('You sure you don't want to sign up for ballet instead?'), or if he has very few women students, or if his women students aren't working as hard as the men. ... A sexist teacher will usually just ignore you. He may fail to promote you 'on time' or worse, promote you when you're still floating round like a southern belle or giggling whenever anyone punches at you. The male students may give you some flack ('Boy, I wouldn't want to meet YOU in an alley on a dark night'), but you can afford to ignore them. EXCEPT that they won't push you in sparring. You may have to hit a few of them to get them mad enough to push back (Sand, 1974: 30).

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These female responses to the male martial arts tradition are interesting, because they establish a gendered dynamic. The emphasis appears to be upon the female defending herself from the perceived male oppressor, using the skills of the oppressor; this would seem an empowering – almost subversive – act, but while acquiring the skills, females place themselves in a disempowered position.

A stronger, more proactive response to the issue of women’s self-defence emerged at the beginning of the 1980s, with the introduction of self-defence classes for women by (radical) feminist martial arts practitioner, Sue Lytollis. Lytollis began studying martial arts at the age of ten and gained a third dan rank in Kendo (Japanese fencing) as well as a black belt in Judo (Coney, 1986: 286; Coney, 1993: 119). She had always had a keen interest in women’s rights and her feminism received a significant boost after the 1979 United Women’s Convention. After the convention, Lytollis approached the Auckland YWCA with the idea of self-defence classes for women (Coney, 1986: 286). In her book, Self-defence for Women (1983), she writes that: ‘A most basic and simple understanding of Bushido (warrior spirit) or martial arts to me is wa, or harmony of both body and nature … Self-defence for women is dealing with a foreign intrusion into our wa. That intrusion is men’ (Lytollis, 1983: 6).

Lytollis reinforces the need for women’s self-defence and acknowledges the difficulties that women have faced when trying to acquire skills, as outlined by Sand and Thompson:

People learn martial arts for many reasons, some for the spiritual aspect, some for the muscle or confidence building. Whatever the reasons, one thing is painfully obvious to the woman recruit – it is a man’s world. Although more and more women are beginning to join martial art classes, there is still less than a 50/50 ratio. In a world where women are self conscious about their so-called ‘feminine’ appearance and are rarely encouraged to attempt non-traditional jobs and sports, it is no wonder that even today Martha Bloggs can walk into a karate class and be the only woman there (Lytollis 1983: 130).

Lytollis recognises that, because of the gender imbalance in many classes, sexism can occur and the male camaraderie may be alienating. She also comments that, at the time, individual sport was a new experience for many women, and consistent training for personal benefit could be seen as selfish, especially for mothers.
As a result, Lytollis was innovative in her devising of a tailored short course that proved that ‘it was not necessary to spend five years in a dojo to learn how to live free from fear’ (Coney, 1986: 287). Initially, in 1979, she formulated an eight-hour course, incorporating physical, martial-arts based techniques, as well as verbal and psychological strategies. Lytollis also offered classes for elderly, blind and disabled women (Coney, 1986: 287) and, after the murder of Avondale six-year-old Alicia Ann O’Reilly in 1980, started classes for girls aged seven to fourteen years (Listener, 1981, October 17: 16).

What set Lytollis’ approach apart from other martial arts practitioners in particular was her feminist philosophy of empowerment. She saw self-defence as a mild form of revolution, where women found strength they did not know they possessed. By 1992 more than 100,000 New Zealand women had taken her course, taught either by Lytollis herself, or by one of the thirty teachers she had trained (Coney, 1993: 119).

Lytollis had much in common with first-wave feminist self-defence pioneer Florence LeMar. In fact, in the revised edition of Self-defence for Women (1990), Lytollis writes of her discovery of LeMar’s 1913 work: ‘When I first wrote this book in 1983 I thought that it was the first book on women’s self-defence to be published in New Zealand. I was wrong. I was more than delighted to find that I had been beaten to this dubious honour by not ten years but seventy!’ (Lytollis, 1990: 7).

While physical training for women’s self-defence developed, the existing largely masculine tradition of martial arts continued alongside. The early 1980s saw other new approaches to the existing body of martial arts practice, including the streetwise Australian martial art, Zen Do Kai. Zen Do Kai was first devised in Melbourne in 1970 by Bob Jones, a bodyguard and former gang-member with previous experience in Goju-Ryu (Jones, 2001: 9-11). Although Zen Do Kai drew essentially upon traditional styles of karate and Thai Kickboxing, it was designed as a ‘Freestyle’ martial art, incorporating many different styles of martial arts, and therefore more organic and dynamic than most previous forms of combat.

Zen Do Kai was introduced to New Zealand around 1980, when a club was established in Palmerston North. By 1983 there were six clubs throughout the country,
including one in Christchurch. An article in *The Press* of 21 December 1983 describes the new martial art, emphasising its practicality and suitability for street-fighting situations. The article mentions that there was a perceived gap in the martial arts tradition, so the new style was formed in response to people’s needs in contemporary society. Ian Griffin, then a third dan Zen Do Kai practitioner, says that the style ‘had to fight for its dignity on the streets of Australia’ (*The Press*, 1983, December 21: 43). He goes on to describe the philosophy of Zen Do Kai: ‘We teach our pupils how to use karate from the first night. After all, that is what they are there for. We don’t believe in all the mystical crap that other styles have surrounding them’ (*The Press*, 1983, December 21: 43). Griffin’s final comment is significant, because it indicates that, by this point, the public held collective assumptions about what ‘the martial arts’ involved; for example, discipline, years of hard work and religious philosophy (possibly emphasised by popular culture portrayals), and that there was a need to forge an alternative identity for new martial arts by going against these fixed notions.

Existing martial arts instructors reportedly were ‘peeved’ when Zen Do Kai appeared in the country. An early *Press* article from 1982, ‘Karate heretics come to Christchurch’, testifies to the unease felt by practitioners of other styles toward the unorthodox methods of Zen Do Kai trainees, especially their philosophy of adopting and adapting techniques from these other styles. Despite these attitudes, Zen Do Kai proved popular in New Zealand; a later *Press* reference from 9 July 1988 comments upon its ‘explosion’ in this country, by which time Bob Jones’ Muay Thai Kickboxing had also become established.

Zen Do Kai and Muay Thai Kickboxing were two of a profusion of martial arts introduced in New Zealand from the early 1980s. There was considerable competition between arts and styles, and fashion played a significant part. This competition was representative of the martial arts’ incorporation into the Western market system. In a *Metro* review of the martial arts available in Auckland in November 1983, Dwight Whitney commented on this commodification:

The product choice in the supermarket of self-defence is mind-boggling and forever changing. The ‘in’ killing technique one day could be passé the next. Taekwan-do and Gung-Fu (not actually an art but the Chinese word for ‘that’s good’. What one sees on the giant screen is likely to be variations of win chun or wah shu) were all the rage for
several years in the United States. Now the ‘ninja’ – Japanese assassin arts, are the thing to study. Labels scream out saying ‘Study me, I’m the best.’ So what is one to believe? (Metro, 1983, November: 58).


By 1989, Auckland had 150 martial arts clubs and Christchurch had 100. With the large number of practitioners, public debate arose over their possession of dangerous weapons such as nunchakus, throwing stars, samurai swords, knives, bokkans, bostaffs, sais and tonfa batons. Bernadette Rae drew attention to this issue in her article in the New Zealand Herald of 3 June 1989, but also identified a further negative aspect of this abundance of martial arts styles. In an interview with Auckland martial art equipment supplier Rick Littlewood, Rae commented that ‘the real danger of martial arts is not in the weaponry, but in the proliferation of clubs which can be started by people with only a superficial knowledge of the traditional training’ (NZ Herald, 1989, June 3: S2/3). Littlewood pointed out that overseas, especially in Europe, the martial arts were backed by government funding, it was illegal to open a club without licence from a martial arts council, instructors must hold first aid and/or sports injury certificates, and must have no criminal background. No such measures existed in New Zealand, leading Littlewood to conclude that: ‘New Zealand’s open situation enables any charlatan to set up shop’ (NZ Herald, 1989, June 3: S2/3).

This situation has led to the development of ‘rogue styles’. The term ‘rogue style’ may be applied to any art that is devised in reaction to existing martial arts traditions and approaches; however, it usually refers to an art that is created without a sound pedagogical basis and taught by untrained, unqualified people. A rogue style may include ineffective, make-believe techniques, and the training process may put students at unnecessary risk of injury. One such example was Sir Dorr. According to
The Press, Sir Dorr trainees were well known around Auckland in the late 1980s as bouncers at nightclubs, all with shaven heads. Their master, Robert McInnes, was convicted of endangering the lives of three students by firing shots at them as they trained. One student drowned during an exercise. Other than these brief details, little information can be found about this 'art' (The Press, 2003, January 25: 1). It is interesting to note that, following the unsuccessful attempts of the New Zealand Martial Arts Council, there is still no regulation of the teaching of the martial arts.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the high standards of training that many reputable arts have achieved in New Zealand. New Zealand martial artists are gaining a notable profile in international competition. For example, in recent years, Judo players have successfully represented New Zealand in the Oceania Championships, the Scottish Open Championships, the Pacific Rim Championships and the Olympic Games (http://www.oneolympics.nzzoom.com/team/judo.html). When Judo was first introduced as a Commonwealth Games sport at the Auckland Games (1990), New Zealand won one gold medal, two silver medals and two bronze medals. Practitioners in various karate styles have also competed in many international tournaments, including World Championship competitions, British Open Championships and Australian Championships (http://www.bbc.com). Similarly, New Zealand Kickboxers have fought in South Pacific Championships and Australasian Championships. This representation reveals that many of the introduced martial arts have become established to the extent that they are producing world class students.

This global perspective has been complemented by a renewed focus on the indigenous practice of martial arts. Māori martial arts appear to have enjoyed a renaissance alongside the proliferation of Asian martial arts, and comparisons between the cultural practices are sometimes drawn, emphasising a similarity of goals and approaches. In August 1995 an article in the Māori newspaper, Pu Kaea, discussed the Chinese art of Tai Chi and its application for Māori, pointing out that the inner energy known as chi or ki in Chinese culture can be compared to mauri (Pu Kaea, 1995, August: 19). Here, the philosophical and spiritual aspects of the martial arts are given prominence.

By emphasising spiritual and philosophical concepts that inform the physicality of martial arts, Māori martial arts have found a place as a rehabilitation tool. The June
2001 issue of *Te Karere* featured an interview with Rehua Ote Rangi Kereama, who incorporated tāiaha training as part of a 10-week anger management programme. A variety of men attended Kereama’s programmes, including a number of offenders referred by the Department of Corrections. Kereama stressed the practice of martial arts for self-improvement, self-knowledge and confidence. Through a holistic approach, integrating tāiaha training with other marae traditions, he established an emphasis on a way of life through martial arts, an everyday application of training principles and, through this, a developed understanding of one’s identity. According to Kereama:

> Teaching Māori martial art covers the whole philosophy of Māori spirituality, identity and social standing. ‘Rarely, if ever, have those people who have been trained in the art, been guilty of aggression. They are peaceful people who are very confident in themselves.’ ... Learning about the tāiaha gives men a sense of identity, confidence, leadership, pride, how to be a good person and above all, to revere women (*Te Karere*, 2001, June: 1).

The *Te Karere* article affirms that: ‘Those finishing Mr Kereama’s course say they feel complete physically and spiritually. Many have joined the army, the police, have become teachers of the tāiaha art or have gone on to learn about the Māori language’ (*Te Karere*, 2001, June: 1). Significantly, Māori martial arts have not encountered the same kind of commercialisation to which some other arts have been subject. This is probably because of the strong sense of identity and pride for Māori inherent in these arts.

Today, the martial arts are a flourishing aspect of New Zealand leisure and culture. Students are numbered in their thousands. Although there are no statistics to indicate the entire number of people involved with martial arts in this country, the figures that are available on certain arts signify their popularity. For example, club membership data for National Governing Bodies provided by the Hillary Commission (2000) shows that Karate New Zealand has 11,700 members and the NZ Judo Federation has 3,355 members (www.hillarysport.org.nz). Additionally, the International Taekwon-Do Federation of New Zealand has about 2,000 active members (www.itfnz.org.nz). These numbers comprise only a small percentage of people actually involved. Potential martial arts students can choose from a wide array of traditional, eclectic and hybrid styles from different parts of the globe, armed or unarmed, and informed by different philosophies. The New Zealand Online Martial Arts Directory currently lists
over fifty distinct arts practised in this country and this list is by no means exhaustive. Most clubs now have their own website, giving information about their brand of martial art, with instructor profiles, details of training times and dates for gradings, demonstrations and tournaments.

Our contemporary New Zealand martial arts culture is, in many ways, representative of other Western countries; however, our particular mélange of introduced and indigenous arts makes our situation unique. The importation and proliferation of the martial arts manifests their translation into New Zealand culture, as their popularity indicates New Zealanders' awareness and acceptance of, and engagement with, these arts. The development of the martial arts has occurred within a society that is increasingly at ease with a range of multicultural practises and identities. That we view martial arts films, buy martial arts-related material (books, toys, games), and regularly see the martial arts depicted in our television advertisements (for example, New World supermarket coupon books dressed in gis with black belts; sumo wrestlers promoting Hitachi vacuum-cleaners; black belt martial artists engaging in spectacular combat with fantastic adversaries to market Mizone mineral water; Kung Fu fights in Visa commercials) reveals the integration of the martial arts in our culture. Importantly, these actions and representations demonstrate that it is not only the practices themselves that have become established, but all the concomitant stereotypes, associations and assumptions.

3.2 Conclusion

The martial arts in New Zealand have an interesting history. In the early, pre-Second World War period, the introduced martial arts were seen as exotic and innovative in comparison with Western martial arts such as boxing and fencing, and were promoted by a range of colourful characters. At this time, the martial arts were viewed in competing ways: as a serious, effective means of combat and self-defence; and as an almost vaudevillian form of entertainment. During the latter half of the twentieth century, as a greater number of arts were introduced and became established, the martial arts gained a higher profile and were, in general, practised more seriously, although the popularity of public tournaments and demonstrations still testifies to this
double perspective, and an uncertainty over whether to characterise the martial arts as sports or as art forms. At times, various arts have caused public debate and controversy, as they have challenged New Zealanders' ideas of what denotes leisure activity. However, the fact that the martial arts have flourished and diversified is an indication of their acceptance. Significantly, the introduction and development of the various arts has been indicative not only of our own changing culture, but of international processes, trends and events, such as war, the rise of popular culture, first and second-wave feminism, risk consciousness and globalisation. Some of these aspects are explored in greater depth in following chapters. Having established the context for current martial arts practice in New Zealand in this chapter, Chapter Four considers the reasons why contemporary martial arts students choose to begin, and continue with, their training.
Chapter Four

Students' Reasons for Beginning, and Continuing With, Martial Arts Training

4.0 Introduction

Arguably, the reasons why people choose to become involved with martial arts training are as diverse as the individuals themselves. The same might be said for the reasons why people continue with their training. Although my sample represents a diverse range of people with numerous reasons for training and varied responses to the martial arts experience, it is possible to identify certain commonalities and order and label these various motivations. Potentially, with some activities, it may be possible to match certain reasons for beginning with certain reasons for continuing and identify a number of ‘forms’ of experience. In this study, however, this was not possible for two reasons. First, most of the respondents joined for a number of different reasons (three, on average) and each respondent’s particular combination of reasons was not generally compatible with those of other respondents. Second, the reasons why respondents continued were often different from those that caused them to begin. Consequently, it was very difficult to identify with any consistency links between certain beginnings and certain ends. Therefore, this chapter has a dual structure. The first section uses a modified version of Twemlow’s (1996) ‘perceived needs’ model to record and categorise respondents’ reasons for beginning martial arts training. The second section uses the same model to order and discuss students’ various reasons for continuing with their training.

4.1 Twemlow’s ‘perceived needs’ model

Because there was a large number of reasons why respondents chose to begin and continue with martial arts training, it was necessary to divide them into various categories to explain them more clearly. To organise the responses, I used a version of Twemlow et al.’s (1996) ‘perceived needs’ model, used to analyse students’ reasons for studying martial arts at a Kansas martial arts school. In Twemlow’s study, 170 students were presented with a questionnaire containing thirteen possible reasons for studying martial arts. The students were asked to rate these factors according to how influential
they felt each one had been for them. The subjects’ responses were described according to three sets of perceived needs:

1) physical and recreational (self-defence; physical exercise; fun or something to do; a sport; competition and tournaments)
2) intellectual and emotional (self confidence; self discipline; outlet for aggression; internal control; self-projection or self-actualisation; to change themselves to be like someone else wanted them to be)
3) integrated self-transcendent (spiritual practice; meditation; existential issues).

Although Twemlow’s model is useful for categorising and discussing students’ various motivations, it has limitations. The model was designed to accommodate only thirteen different reasons, whereas my findings are more extensive. Therefore, I have modified the model by adding a fourth set:

4) safety needs (fear or anxiety-based reasons).

This set was introduced because, in my findings, fear was an important motivator that is not addressed adequately in Twemlow’s model. Since fear can operate on physical, intellectual, emotional or existential levels, most of the reasons listed in this set also occur in the other categories. The function of this set is not to introduce further reasons for training, but to take certain motivations and examine them through a different lens so as to provide a greater understanding of respondents’ motivations for beginning and continuing with martial arts training.

4.2 Students’ reasons for beginning martial arts training

In my study, the respondents identified thirty-five different reasons why they chose to begin martial arts training. Of these, eleven corresponded to physical and recreational needs; nineteen to intellectual and emotional needs; four to integrated self-transcendent needs; and four to safety needs, one of which was discrete and three of which were also represented in other categories.

4.2.1 Physical and recreational needs

One of the most common reasons for beginning martial arts training was to improve physical fitness. Respondents saw martial arts training as providing aerobic exercise, developing cardiovascular fitness and building flexibility and strength in most areas of
the body. For example, a male Aikido first kyu began, ‘Primarily for fitness reasons,’ and a female Aikido sixth kyu started training because she ‘Needed to get fit.’ A male Judo green belt ‘Began Judo as a fitness tool,’ and a male Zen Do Kai black tip began, ‘For the fitness side of it.’

Many students favoured the holistic form of physical exercise for its health benefits, especially the advantages derived from having a conditioned body. Several saw the mixture of physical and meditative aspects as an effective way to relieve stress. In addition, certain martial arts are designed to help heal the body through the repeated practice of techniques and this aspect appealed to some respondents. For example, a male Tai Chi teacher said that he began his martial art to alleviate his own health problems, explaining that:

You see [people] doing the form slow motion, but it’s also building up the chi [energy] inside, so you get to the point in the form where you can feel the chi flowing through the body. And the different postures are actually there to direct the chi through all the acupuncture meridians. So if you have, say, kidney troubles, you do one particular posture, just do it again and again, rather than the whole form, so you can use each posture medicinally.

The realisation that certain martial arts could improve one’s health and physical wellbeing led some students to seek martial arts training for physical therapy, especially following an injury. A male Aikido fourth kyu recalled that:

When I was eighteen, I did something to my back and put it out ... and then I took up yoga, so I thought yoga was quite good and actually helped my back. And then I thought that I’d get into something with a little bit more movement because I got tired just sitting on the carpet all the time, so I took up Aikido.

Some respondents had physical and recreational needs that were more specific to the practice of martial arts. Several wrote that they had become involved because of a long-standing interest in the fighting arts. A female Seido Karate yondan said that martial arts training was ‘Something [she] was interested in from a young age,’ and a female shodan in both Aikido and Iaido wrote that she had ‘Always had an interest in fighting arts.’ Similarly, a male Aikido godan had an ‘Interest in martial arts and additional physical training.’
Most students with an interest in the fighting arts had a particular desire to learn combat skills. A male Zen Do Kai godan said that: 'I guess I had a bit of a hankering for contact sports ... I'd been involved in boxing and in rugby league, and it was a little bit of a natural transition.' Likewise, a male Zen Do Kai blue belt said that he 'Liked to fight in [a] controlled environment.' Some respondents who were interested in combat had a particular desire to compete. For example, the chief reason why a male Taekwondo yondan began was, 'Tournaments.'

Often, respondents felt that the combative aspect of the training lent the martial arts an interest and relevance lacking in other activities. For example, a respondent who was also involved in fencing observed that: 'Even at a step removed, the fencer still confronts an opponent in a simulacrum of a life and death situation. Fears, stratagems and techniques are all involved in this, and therefore seem to have an actual relevance, rather than a sport that develops abstract skills that are themselves only relevant to mastering the game.'

Many respondents had previous experience in other sports or martial arts. Often, their involvement in their chief martial art arose from having started in order to cross-train for their prior activity. For example, a male Tai Chi teacher remarked that, 'I'm really using my Aikido to develop my Tai Chi.' A male Aikido godan began his training in the first place to build fitness for hockey, and a female Seido brown belt had been a runner and chose martial arts as a way to strengthen her upper body. Interestingly, it was common to find that although martial arts training had been chosen initially as an ancillary activity, it soon became a primary activity. For instance, a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho explained that his martial arts practice was originally as pre-season training for rugby; I thought not only skills, but also to get a wee bit of fitness before rugby ... The funny thing was that rugby training was on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and so Tuesday night, because we started [karate] late, I'd go and rugby train first, and then I'd go to karate, and then on Thursdays they were at the same time, so I'd go to karate instead of rugby training because I liked karate more! And I got on quite well with my rugby, so even though I was missing training I got good game time. And then the next year, I was just, 'Nah, I'm not playing rugby this year, I'm doing martial arts fulltime.'
Not all people who played a lot of sport chose martial arts as a supplementary activity. Some chose martial arts training specifically because it was a new sport and offered a set of new skills and opportunities. A male Aikido godan ‘Already played a great deal of sport and wanted to try something else,’ and another male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho began for the experience of ‘Taking up another sport, learning a new sport.’ A female Zen Do Kai brown belt commented that: ‘I was looking forward to getting back into sport, because I’ve always been sort of a fitness fanatic, and been involved in a lot of different sports, and I had never trained martial arts and it appealed. The idea of what I thought it was appealed to me.’

Other respondents were attracted to the martial arts because they appeared to be ‘different’. Often this had to do with martial arts training being a minority activity and the general perception of the martial arts as ‘exotic’. For example, a male Aikido first kyu, ‘Wanted to try something different,’ while a female Seido yellow belt, ‘Started martial arts because it was something different’ and a female Zen Do Kai blue belt liked the fact that martial arts offered ‘Something other than going to the gym.’ A female Zen Do Kai brown belt enjoyed the idea that: ‘It’s something that not everybody does…. It’s one of those things, you say, “Oh, I do martial arts,” it’s not like saying you play tennis or you play rugby. It’s like people [say], “Oh, that’s different! What sort? Ooh, Zen Do Kai, I’ve never heard of that, what is that?”’

Importantly, many respondents chose to take up a martial art for fun. Many talked about the enjoyment they derived from the classes and from the performance of interesting techniques. For instance, a male Aikido godan remembered that:

I was fresh at university and I was into a lot of sports, I played a huge amount of sport – it’s what I love doing. … but I didn’t enjoy running and I didn’t enjoy pumping weights all the time and things like that … and I just thought, Oh, stuff it! I just want to train for something just for fun. … So I was looking for something else, and probably martial arts was bubbling away in my brain, seemed like something to do.

4.2.2 Intellectual and emotional needs

The respondents identified a number of intellectual and emotional needs. Many respondents revealed a desire to mirror the personal qualities of accomplished martial artists. Particularly, popular culture representations of the martial arts were significant
in influencing people to take up training because they conveyed attractive, inspirational images. Several respondents sought to emulate the protagonists of certain martial arts films. A subtle and complex relationship exists between producers and consumers of martial arts-related media, so the subject will be pursued in greater depth in Chapter Five.

Simple curiosity also motivated certain respondents to begin training. For example, a male Zen Do Kai black tip explained that he approached his club, 'To see what it was all about.' Involvement with a martial art may be facilitated by more specific curiosity, such as an interest in Asian culture. A female Seido brown belt, for example, wrote that one reason she began was because, 'I had always been interested in Japanese tradition and culture.' It is possible that popular culture representations may help fuel such interest. Such respondents, unsurprisingly, often chose Asian-derived martial arts and sought to develop their interest through engagement with that art.

Because the martial arts are generally associated with Asia, they tend to be viewed as exotic and invested with a certain 'mystique'. It can be argued that, in this context, the martial arts are viewed through an Orientalist lens. According to Said (1978), Orientalism is a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between 'the Orient' (the East) and 'the Occident' (the West). Because this distinction has been devised by Westerners, European culture in effect 'produces' the Orient (Said, 1978, in Easthope and McGowan, 1996: 61-65). This Western representation of the East has become a created body of theory and practice, by which the East is not simply described, but is dominated, restructured and subjugated by the West (Said, 1978: 2-3). Therefore, Said's basic premise is that, as Westerners, our idea of the East is less a true understanding than a cultural construction, based originally on imperialist and ethnocentric attitudes, which marginalise the East, and place it in the position of Other. This dichotomy leads to essentialist (and often contradictory) claims; for example, that Eastern peoples are sensual, decadent, religious, mysterious and inscrutable. This particular view is very common and can be a motivation for some people to take up martial arts training. A female Zen Do Kai brown belt pointed out that:

I think it is very much that Western perception of the exotic, the East, and this thing they've got going with their martial arts. And it's something that, when you don't
sort of hear of martial arts originating from Western parts of the world, it's almost it's like this other thing that's out there that we'd like to be able to do, or it's fascinating because it is the Other. So, I think that is where the fascination comes from. I think it's just this exotic nature.

A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho also commented on these perceptions by saying that:

A lot of people perceive that martial arts originated from Japan and the East ... And I think the more you get into it, the more you realise that there's Philippines martial arts, there's so many different types ... South American, Māori ... Boxing's a martial art, I mean, it's all the same. And so I think [what's] keeping the mystique is that Asian flavour, I suppose. ... I think people just relate to the Eastern side of things.

In the early days of the introduced martial arts in New Zealand, people responded particularly to the perceived enigma and aura surrounding the practice. A male Seido Karate seventh dan remarked that:

It was mystical and fantastic and if you did anything and got into any kind of level you were kind of a hero, really; you were kind of covered in this mystical shroud, and of course, when you're eighteen or nineteen, you make the most of that - you play it to the hilt, of course! ... If it had come from Perdunk in New Zealand, nobody would have cared, but because it was shrouded in this sort of 'death touch' type thing, people thought it was fantastic.

Because the martial arts are perceived as representing a different system of knowledge and set of expectations, several respondents saw involvement in the martial arts as a way to challenge themselves, to test their ability and to prove something to themselves and/or other people. When realised successfully, these efforts can elicit feelings of self-realisation. For example, a female Seido yellow tip started training, 'To see whether I could do this or not,' and a female Seido brown belt, 'Needed a focus and a challenge more than just sport.' Some respondents who were already martial artists chose to take up a different art because it represented certain new challenges for them. For example, a male Aikido nidan chose his art because 'Seemed more challenging than karate.'

Part of the test, especially in arts with a clearly-demarcated ranking system, may be to gain a black belt. Although new students may not have a proper idea of the function and purpose of the black belt, it has particular cultural capital (over and above that gained from general participation in the martial arts) and is often seen as the ultimate goal. A female Seido yondan asserted that, 'I think some people come and they have their mind set on a black belt.' It is important to point out that not all students start training with a
black belt in mind, but many are made aware of it by virtue of the instructing situation and the hierarchical nature of the art. People's specific perceptions of the black belt and its role in motivating people to begin and continue with training is worth exploring in greater depth, and so will be investigated further in Chapter Seven.

Some respondents saw involvement in the martial arts as a way to rebel, especially against parents' wishes. Sometimes this was because of the popular perception of the martial arts as 'violent' or 'tough'. A female Seido brown belt, for example, wrote that she began because, 'I was young and my parents wanted me to do ballet or something. I wanted to be tough so I chose karate.' Alternatively, some respondents were resolved to begin training because of the challenge perceived to be within the practice. For example, a male Zen Do Kai godan said that: 'I had a health problem and I got pigheaded and I remember being told as a kid, "You'll never be able to do this," or "You'll never be able to do that," so that made me more determined to do things.'

For many respondents, the reputation of their martial art was instrumental in their decision to begin training. In some cases, the martial art was chosen because its reputation reflected how respondents wished to see themselves or wished to be seen by others. For example, a male Zen Do Kai godan working in the security industry chose his style because of its reputation for being tough and streetwise. Other respondents were interested in more traditional formats and wanted to be assured of excellent tuition, such as a female Seido yondan who chose her art because, 'Seido is very well established, it's international.'

Similarly, many respondents chose particular arts because of their philosophies and attitudes towards students and life in general. The range of available martial arts represent a variety of philosophies and approaches and suit different students. For example, a male Tai Chi Master recalled how his father had encouraged him to learn Tai Chi rather than Judo, because the non-combative elements would be good for him:

My father advised me to do Tai Chi because I learned the other things that made me rather hot tempered, and quite often get into fighting. And school subjects not very good, and bad reports from school, and my father advised me to do Tai Chi. Since I do
Tai Chi, my teacher was very good, never encouraging me get into fighting, so my temper’s calming down.\(^{11}\)

A male Aikido fifth kyu appreciated the holistic aspect of his martial art: ‘Aikido was chosen because it fulfilled so many different needs – physical, mental and spiritual/philosophical.’ In contrast, a male Zen Do Kai godan explained how he moved from karate to kickboxing:

They're a [karate] tournament, and you've got to see them as tournament and not as a streetfight. Unfortunately, I'm learning how to streetfight in the effective, practical martial arts and I'm going into a controlled atmosphere. So the techniques didn't really work that well for the controlled area. So I went into the kickboxing ring which was full-contact with gloves on, in a boxing ring, when I was a brown belt, and that really suited me. It really suited me because I could punch and kick them as hard as I liked and I couldn't get disqualified!

Because the martial arts concentrate especially on the development of the individual, several respondents were attracted to the personal focus of the martial art. For example, a male Zen Do Kai black tip began training to gain ‘independence’. A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho appreciated the emphasis on the self that the martial art provided:

I'd been doing [rugby] for so long and it was fun and I was still playing at the time, but martial arts just seemed like – it's more individual, and I can get in there. You go and play a game of rugby and a couple of people play bad, you don't feel so good, even if you played good, but Zen Do Kai, it's just go in there, and it's all you. You do well, or you don't do well, but it's all whether it's your fault if something goes wrong, so it was just something helped me grow as a person, too, I suppose, because I didn't have people pushing me up, I just had to go in there and do the time myself.

Certain respondents were attracted to this aspect of the martial arts not simply because they wanted to have time for themselves or desired to become more self reliant, but specifically because they were trying to define their sense of self. This is common amongst Māori who practise Māori martial arts, as discussed in Chapter Three, but was also important for respondents practising Asian-inflected martial arts, even if they did not identify closely with the culture. A female Zen Do Kai brown belt explained that she began martial arts training because:

I'd just split up with my boyfriend of two years, and ... I'd been really sick, I'd had a kidney infection, and I'd been really run down and stressed out, and the reason I'd split up with my boyfriend in the first place was, I kind of had lost my self identity. I didn’t

\(^{11}\) This quotation is transcribed verbatim from the respondent’s interview. The respondent was not a native speaker of English.
know where I was going, what I was doing, I'd given up all my sports, my hobbies ...
And basically I didn't do anything; I just went to university, and I didn't even do that
great there.

She confirmed that her involvement with martial arts helped (re)define her sense of self identity.

Despite many respondents' attraction to the self-sufficiency of the art, others were
motivated to begin training because of the social atmosphere. Many valued the chance
to form new friendships, or to learn with existing friends. A male Taekwondo yondan
began for 'Friendship,' and a male Aikido brown belt had 'Friends who trained and
encouraged [him] to join,' while a male Seido shodan started because, 'A friend
(karateka) told me it would change my life.' A female Seido yellow tip recalled that,
'Friends talked me into coming to watch a grading. I decided to join after enjoying the
grading so much.' A male Zen Do Kai brown belt decided to train because, 'People
from my Hall [University Hall of Residence] had joined the year before. My best
friends had also joined.' Similarly, a female Zen Do Kai black tip, 'Had wanted to do a
martial art of some kind and mentioned this to a friend, who brought us along.' A male
Zen Do Kai godan made the following point:

The main reason they come along is word of mouth. ... People, they just come for
different reasons, and most of it's because of their friends. And I hope that continues,
because if you come along because of your friends, it's very easy for you to make
friends, because friends is the attitude that you've got.

Many respondents, especially those who practised Seido Karate, viewed martial arts
training as a way to enhance family relationships. This view may have been encouraged
by the mixed adult's and children's classes that Seido offers. A male Seido green belt
began, 'Because my kids wanted to do martial arts and I joined up in support of them.'
Similarly, a female Seido green belt started training because, 'My son was training, that
encouraged me to start. ... Now I have another son who has begun and it has re-
motivated me.' A female Seido blue tip wrote that: 'My son (6½ years) was interested
in doing some form of martial arts and I thought that seeing I was going to be there
with him that I may as well do it, too, instead of just on-looking,' whereas a male Zen
Do Kai black tip saw his martial arts training as, 'Something to teach my children.'
Some respondents' family members encouraged them to begin martial arts training,
especially if those family members were already involved and the respondent was
young. A male Aikido nidan began due to encouragement from his parents; a female Aikido sixth kyu began training, 'Because ... my dad wanted me to start'; while a female Seido blue belt listed 'Family tradition' as her main reason for beginning karate.

Family tradition may play a key role in introducing students to martial arts training in cultures or communities where the study of the martial arts is a strong part of the cultural practice. A Chinese Tai Chi Master living and teaching in New Zealand explained that, in China: 'You don't choose [to learn]; it's traditional way, traditional. Everybody practise. ... School does not force you to learn. Your family business. Some families do, some families don't.'

The social atmosphere of the club is useful for developing students' social confidence and self-confidence. Many respondents joined for this reason. For example, a male Aikido nidan, 'Felt [he] was becoming too withdrawn and needed something to build confidence.' In addition, a female Seido yellow tip said that, 'I started martial arts because it would help my confidence as well as strengthen me both physically and mentally.' Consequently, because the martial arts are perceived to provide social support, some respondents joined to develop their self-esteem. A male Seido seventh dan said that, as a young man, 'A friend took me along – I was fascinated and it was good for my self-esteem.'

Some respondents saw the structured nature of the practice as a useful way to help develop self control. Interestingly, a male Aikido nidan, 'Wanted to know how to protect myself properly, rather than lashing out aggressively.' Similarly, several respondents were motivated because of the discipline and the respect understood to be gained from martial arts training. A male Seido brown belt began training, 'So I could ... have a bit of discipline in my life.' In some cases, students were introduced to the martial art for precisely this reason; for example, a male Seido black tip remembered that: 'When I first started, I went to Xavier College ... and one of the teachers there, a Marist Brother, we went together, probably because I was a ratbag at school.'
4.2.3 Integrated self-transcendent needs

Integrated self-transcendent needs tend to be more abstract than those needs listed in the other categories and are focused around spiritual awareness and other existential issues. It could be argued that most of the integrated self-transcendent needs operate on intellectual and emotional levels, but they generally concern a search for something intangible lacking in everyday life.

Some respondents chose the study of a martial art because they wished for a change in their lives. In general, such respondents aspired towards a deep-seated personal change involving self-development. For example, one reason a male Aikido fifth kyu began training was, 'To change, to alter, to deepen – that exploration and progression of self.'

For several respondents, the desire for martial arts training was centred around a search for purpose or meaning in life. In part, this search was related to the development of self-identity, but had wider implications in that the respondents sought not only to find out who they were, but where they were going in their lives. The notion of the martial arts embodying a lifestyle or a journey was influential in respondents' decisions to seek martial arts training for this reason, but at this nascent stage of training their views were simply impressions and were not well developed. A female Zen Do Kai brown belt said that when she first began training, she had an awareness that martial arts could give her some kind of structure or purpose:

I was quite unhappy, and I started to think about things, I thought, Yeah, I’ve really lost my sort of sense of purpose or where I’m going or my own identity. ...Basically I was looking for some purpose in my life again, and I think maybe subconsciously I realised that martial arts could actually do that for me. When I say subconsciously, I definitely didn’t think, ‘Oh, I’ll go to martial arts and I’ll learn about Zen and then I will become one with myself’ – that wasn’t something that I had in mind. It was, I think, really more just [that] I’d done a lot of sort of self exploration after breaking up with [my boyfriend], and I think it was probably in the following weeks, maybe up to a month after I’d split up with him, that I joined Zen Do Kai.

Interestingly, in Aikido especially, there were recurrent comments about 'searching' or 'looking for something.' Others, such as a male Zen Do Kai godan, valued the martial arts because they provided a sense of direction and rites of passage, which, as a vulnerable teenager, had helped him to grow up. He said that:
I guess just at that age, mid teens, you know, you’re getting into the odd bust-up, schools and things. So I guess [martial arts training is] part of a natural progression of – particularly probably more so for guys at that age … I guess it’s part of just learning how to grow up.

The meditative aspects of a martial art also motivated some respondents to take up training. Certain martial arts stress this aspect more than others; for example, Tai Chi places more emphasis on meditation than do Judo or Kickboxing. Some respondents were attracted to meditative martial arts because they were looking for an activity to introduce them to meditation, while others were already involved in meditative practice and saw the martial art as one way to develop that interest or discipline. As a male Tai Chi student said: ‘I was doing a lot of meditation, and Tai Chi seemed a natural progression.’

The meditative aspects of the martial arts are closely allied to the concept of spirituality. Interestingly, spiritual characteristics were not a common inducement for respondents to begin martial arts training. At this initial stage, respondents simply evinced an interest in, and a desire to find out more about, this element of the martial arts, rather than demonstrating a clear understanding of what it involved. One male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho remarked that, at this initial stage, ‘Probably people say it’s quite spiritual and they don’t really know what they mean by it.’ Many responses revealed a note of uncertainty; for example, a male Aikido sixth kyu wrote that he was, ‘Interested to learn about the spiritual (or something along these lines) lifestyle that goes with it.’ Other respondents liked the idea of a connection between physical and spiritual practice; for example, when a female Seido brown belt began, she was, ‘Particularly interested in the spiritual benefits that a martial art offered – co-ordinating the energy of mind, body, spirit and soul.’ Initially, many of the respondents were attracted to the idea of a spiritual component because of its perceived connection with Eastern religion. As a male Aikido fifth kyu explained:

All that kind of stuff does appeal, personally. Spiritual – yeah, I suspect very strongly that that’s a substantial part of what I’m looking for – that hole I was talking about? But one thing I did realise over the last six months, sometime in the last six months, was I’m not happy with Western religions because they’re very one-sided. There’s nothing physical involved, no physical training in order to alter the mind and vice versa, it’s very much: live your life like this. Never realised it at the time, but that
was unbalanced, for me. Yeah, there's something; there's a definite spiritual
philosophical - more so spiritual - I can see it becoming more and more a focus.

4.2.4 Safety needs (fear or anxiety-based motivators)

It is important to recognise the influence that fear has upon people's decisions to begin
martial arts training. There are four reasons in particular that, although mentioned in
previous sections, have additional relevance when considered from this perspective.

The most common reason why respondents chose to take up martial arts training was to
learn self-defence. Some indicative responses include those of a female Aikido sixth
kyu who began, 'Because I was interested in learning a form of self-defence and I have
always liked the idea of karate or Aikido'; a male Taekwondo yondan who started
training, 'To look after myself'; and a female Zen Do Kai black tip who 'Wanted to
learn self-defence.' Self-defence may be understood better as a safety need, and not a
physical-recreational need as Twemlow has it, because the motivation has less to do
with gaining physical competence than it has to do with dealing with fear and risk
perceptions. For such students, physical skill is simply a means, but a feeling of
security is the end.

Reasons of health and fitness have been covered in the physical-recreational section,
but by considering them as safety needs it is possible to understand people's
motivations on a deeper level. For example, a person may wish to take up martial arts
training to increase health and fitness, but this desire might be motivated by a fear of
being unhealthy or unfit and, therefore, at risk of becoming sick, or being perceived as
ineffectual.

Similarly, a search for social solidarity and camaraderie was a key intellectual-
emotional reason for respondents to begin martial arts training, but it is important to
consider the implications of this social support for a person's sense of security. The
structure and the support it affords was valuable for several respondents, especially
those who had been though traumatic experiences. For example, a male Zen Do Kai
godan joined his club after his parents separated. A male Seido seventh dan also
recalled that: 'I was at an age probably where I was quite vulnerable - my mother had
just passed away - so I guess at one level or another I was looking for something to
support me, basically. You could call it an extended family structure, and so I started Judo, initially.' Consequently, the social solidarity functions to combat people's fear of isolation or fear of having to cope single-handedly with their problems.

The interest in spiritual practice can be understood simultaneously as being driven by existential anxiety. Some respondents were drawn to martial arts training because they felt a lack of organised structure in their lives, and were searching for some kind of belief system to give them a firmer sense of themselves and the world.

4.3 Students' reasons for continuing with martial arts training

The respondents identified twenty-two different reasons why they chose to continue their martial arts training, significantly fewer than the number of reasons given for beginning. Of these, two corresponded to physical and recreational needs; fifteen to intellectual and emotional needs; five to integrated self-transcendent needs; and three to safety needs, all of which were also represented in other categories. Many of the reasons for continuing appear similar to the reasons for beginning; however, there are two points to observe. First, almost all individual respondents noted that their own reasons for continuing training were different from those that had caused them to begin. Second, the reasons for continuing were focused differently, demonstrating a deeper level of intensity or understanding. There are also changes within the various needs categories; the number of reasons listed in each category show that some needs have decreased in importance, while others have increased.

4.3.1 Physical and recreational needs

Noticeably, respondents tended not to continue training in order to meet physical and recreational needs. Whereas respondents identified ten needs in this category in the Beginning section, here they listed only two. This may be because many of the respondents' reasons for beginning had to do with finding a new sport or different activity, or learning a new skill, and were not relevant to continuing with the practice. However, it appears, in general, that the salience of the physical aspect of training decreases as students progress with their study of martial arts.
Several respondents mentioned that they continued training to maintain their increased levels of fitness. For example, a female Seido Karate yellow belt wrote that: ‘I’ve continued training because it’s doing me a lot of good, especially with my fitness and strength,’ and a male Zen Do Kai brown belt continued for ‘Fitness maintenance.’ Interestingly, even those who privileged the fitness aspect in their motivation to continue training acknowledged that they were gaining other benefits from the training experience, such as new skills, new perspectives and personal development. A female Seido green belt wrote that she enjoyed the ‘Fitness, while learning at the same time.’ It is reasonable to assume that respondents also derived health benefits from their ongoing martial arts practice, but this was not stated.

Many respondents also continued because they found the martial arts training fun and enjoyable. A female Aikido yondan wrote that, after twenty years of training, ‘The enjoyment is as great if not greater than when I started.’ A female Seido brown belt wrote that, ‘It’s great fun – I love it!’ while a male Zen Do Kai brown belt continued to train because, ‘I’ve come this far, why stop? It’s fun!’

4.3.2 Intellectual and emotional needs
According to the respondents, continued martial arts training met a number of intellectual and emotional needs. A common reason for continuing training was to improve various martial arts skills. Although some of these skills have a physical or recreational focus, their motivation is intellectual or emotional; for example, to gain confidence or to educe feelings of self-realisation. A male Aikido fifth kyu continued training, ‘To become better,’ and, equally, a male Zen Do Kai brown belt continued in order to ‘Become more skilled in the style I’ve chosen.’ This desire to become more proficient is often characterised by a more serious, committed attitude to the practice. For example, a female Aikido yondan said that, ‘It really started as a laugh. I am far more serious now.’

Many students who wish to improve their skills want to gain a higher rank. This was a key motivator for some respondents to keep training, as they enjoyed setting and meeting goals. A male Zen Do Kai blue belt chose to continue training because of a ‘Desire to gain a higher rank.’ A male Zen Do Kai black tip was also encouraged by
‘The goals you set for yourself, to try and get better.’ Similarly, a female Zen Do Kai blue belt liked the fact that her martial art ‘Has something to work towards.’ In particular, the possibility of gaining a black belt was an enticement for many respondents, possibly because, for those arts with the kyu/dan system, the black belt is seen to represent a high degree of proficiency. Although some respondents who began training in order to gain a black belt also continued for that reason, other respondents who joined for different reasons found that the black belt became a focus of desire for them. Commonly, those respondents had trained for some time and had progressed some way through the coloured grades; therefore, the black belt had become a realistic goal. A male Zen Do Kai godan gave the following explanation:

Why did I continue with it? Well, I think one of the things that our style, or any other sort of classical style of martial arts, is with the grading system and the belts, there’s a criteria for achievement. And one of the things with martial arts is that black belt’s sort of been seen as the ultimate, or the penultimate, goal. So anybody that’s working their way through coloured belts is always focused on achieving their black belt. And often when you talk to students who are coloured belts, perhaps in the back of their mind is: ‘All I want to do is get my black belt,’ because it’s seen as being sort of the ultimate. But when they get there, they realise that it is just the beginning, and all you’ve really done is your apprenticeship. I suppose also, by that time, you feel as though you’ve achieved so much and you’re just really not ready to walk away.

The sense of achievement gained from progressing from belt to belt was of especial importance to some respondents, and motivated them to continue with their martial arts training. According to another male Zen Do Kai godan:

Just the coloured grades I remember the most because that’s so much achievement in such a short amount of time. ... Going from being a bit of a hood and a bit of a rough guy and starting to achieve things, and something you can be proud of. My parents were jumping up and down like daisies going, ‘Wow! Our son’s just amazing!’ ... And I didn’t achieve [in other areas of my life]. When you’re a teenager you get in trouble a bit with the law and do a few drugs and drink too much alcohol, and I was a little bit of a ratbag. And so, yeah, it was nice to share the achievement with my folks as well. Being a teenager, you start becoming proud of yourself when your parents are really, really proud of you, too. I remember when I got my blue belt, actually. I got my blue belt and I remember my parents weren’t home. So I got my certificate and I put it on the dining table, I got my certificate and I got my belt, and I wrote, LOOK WHAT I’VE GOT! And when they came home, they read it.
Staying in the system can lead to increased feelings of self-worth, pride and confidence. A female Seido brown belt who had commenced training and then stopped, said that, 'I re-started when I realised it was something I was decent at.' A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho admitted that, when it came to his martial arts technique, 'I do take a bit of pride.' For many respondents, the feeling that they were good at something and were supported in their efforts encouraged them to persevere with their training.

The atmosphere of the dojo is instrumental in fostering this feeling of support and achievement. For example, a female Seido blue belt continued because of the 'Dojo atmosphere.' A female Seido brown belt explained that she continued because: 'The club I go to now is well-run, has a long history, is very organised, which adopts and recognises the traditions and culture of its origins, and I have learned that I have so much more to learn.'

Many respondents mentioned the psychological benefits that they derived from continued martial arts training. Several considered their training to be emotional therapy. For example, a female Seido brown belt wrote that, 'I find I am less stressed, calmer, able to deal with life pressures more ably.' Likewise, a male Zen Do Kai brown belt continued with his martial arts because the training provided an 'Outlet for emotions.'

Respondents frequently noted that, because of the regular training schedule, their martial arts practice had become an integral component of their daily lives. Some referred to their training commitment as a 'discipline'; others labelled it an 'addiction.' A male Aikido first kyu said that he continued because Aikido had become part of his routine, and a male Aikido nidan observed that: 'Aikido is very addictive when practised for long enough.' Furthermore, many respondents felt that the sense of motivation they derived from going to training influenced other areas of their lives. A female Zen Do Kai brown belt said that: 'I really, really enjoy the sense of motivation I get from going to training, and I feel that's spilled over to other parts of my life, in the
sense of self-discipline, especially with things like kata\textsuperscript{12} and that — I find that very relaxing.’

The social aspect of the martial arts experience, especially the friendships made and developed through training, was another key reason for respondents to continue. In addition, family involvement, or ‘quality time’, was important for many of the respondents. However, certain respondents underwent an interesting development. Some who began for the social support and camaraderie continued because of the individual focus that the martial art provided. A male Zen Do Kai godan wrote that: ‘I began because of friends and now it’s a self-improvement and motivation reason. It’s great for all individuals.’

If respondents demonstrate an increased interest in the development of the self, then the connection between martial arts knowledge and self knowledge should be considered. Many respondents noted that as they progressed with their martial arts training they gained a greater understanding of themselves. For example, a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho said that: ‘The more martial arts I learn the more I learn about myself.’ Possibly, such discoveries arise from the fact that martial arts training provides a number of challenges to be met and overcome. As a male Seido Karate seventh dan explained:

I think it’s important in life that you have your rites of passage, and that involves serving some kind of apprenticeship, whether that’s at university, or whether it’s in some other field. In karate there is a set requirement, a grading system that you go through, and each time you go through them, I guess you have a new set of learnings. And from my experience, real learning only takes place experientially — you have to experience something to really know about it.

Similarly, a female Zen Do Kai brown belt said that:

I think for me, martial arts challenges me, not just physically, but mentally as well. And it’s challenged maybe some of the fears that I’ve had, and that has helped me to grow — sort of personal development. But I’ve gained greater self knowledge from it because when I met these challenges I realised that I can actually achieve whatever I

\textsuperscript{12}Kata (or ‘forms’) are a set of choreographed fighting techniques that have been refined and stylised to flow as one cohesive whole. The kata techniques are the fundamental principles of fighting; through executing kata the martial artist practises and improves his or her stances, strikes, holds and other movements, and develops strength and flexibility. As such, kata is an effective means of passing on information and training methods. Kata is usually performed individually and thus is non-combative. It can be performed with full energy as a way to exercise and tone the body internally and externally, or slowly as an act of moving meditation. Most styles of karate have kata for every grade/level. Many kata in older styles of karate, and other martial arts, derive from forms that are several hundred years old.
set out to do. And I think that's quite an important thing to know, because it's all very well to have goals and dreams or ambitions, but if you don't totally believe that you are able to achieve them, then you never will. And I think something like martial arts, just by achieving your belt every year, by putting in the solid training, and getting a lot better ... you realise, 'Goodness, I've actually come a really long way!' ... and that's a really exciting thing.

The philosophy and attitude of a respondent's chosen martial art was also important in their decision to continue training. It appeared that students valued increasingly the holistic aspects of their martial art. A male Aikido first kyu continued because he: 'Enjoyed the movement, the philosophy and non-combative aspects ... Aikido is enduring, age being no barrier.' Similarly, a female Seido yellow tip continued her training, 'Because I enjoy it — it is physically and mentally stimulating and challenging.' In addition, respondents increasingly were inclined to privilege non-physical elements of their training and, significantly, displayed a decreased interest in pure combat. As a male Tai Chi Master explained:

From beginning, because I learn the hard martial art, always getting into fighting. But after I learned the Tai Chi, practise for long time, and whole thinking is changing, the philosophy, background is changing. Fighting cannot solve the problem. Why do you get into fighting? Most people think of fighting, you win. Actually does not mean you win. Today you win, maybe tomorrow you lose again.

A male Zen Do Kai shodan commented that his 'Emphasis has changed from defence to straight training — mental as well as physical.' In the same way, a male Taekwondo yondan said that his martial art was: 'Initially a tool for fighting. But now a tool for personal development, health and confidence.' A male Aikido fifth kyu recalled that: 'Just one day I kind of woke up — figuratively — and just found that I was training more and more and very definitely getting into and learning more about the history and how it came about, philosophy, you know, all that kind of stuff. And the more I learnt, the more it felt right, it worked.'

These comments illustrate a transition towards an interest in the martial arts as art forms, rather than sports. The more senior respondents, in particular, talked of their enjoyment of a pure study of their art and an application of its principles. For example, a male Aikido godan said that: 'Now it is the pure study of Aikido and the
understanding of human behaviour.’ Similarly, a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho observed that:

I saw it more as fighting to begin with, but now I see it as a martial art. And a martial art’s everything: yakusuko and kata, and then sparring as well. ... It’s an art that keeps you fit and on your toes. When I started it was just a sport, go along and fight. And I probably should have done Kickboxing if I had that mentality because that would have been more of what I was looking for, but now it’s gone to — it is an art. It’s something that I enjoy, so that’s why I go.

Another male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho explained how this experiential transition from sport to art form was inherent in his martial art. In Zen Do Kai, the various stages of training are understood according to a series of colours, which are separate from the colours of the belts, but represent the character of the different steps of the martial arts journey. The coloured grades are designated ‘red’ (physical); the early black belt stages are designated ‘yellow’ (intellectual); and the senior black belt stages are designated ‘blue’ (spiritual). He said that:

It does start off as a sport because you’re just concentrating on the physicalness [sic] of it, and because you seem to be wrapped up in what you’re physically doing, whereas when you get more proficient at it, that physical side of it sort of drops away and you become more aware of your technique and you’re refining the physical side of things, so it’s a bit like what I was saying with my black belt; all of a sudden I was using less effort, but getting better results. So you’re moving from the red to the yellow, and then eventually to the blue.

Thus, a male Zen Do Kai godan observed that at this stage in his training:

I love the feel of looking at the artistic side of the martial art. It’s not something I’ve really explored hugely. I’ve sort of been really looking at it probably [since] I got my fifth dan, actually, probably in about the last year, last two years. No more brawn; it’s a bit more brain. ... When I teach my people that are going for first dan, or going to black belt, I say, ‘Yes, you’ve got the move, but now you’ve got to get the martial arts feeling, that essence, and stuff.’ And that’s the artistic part I’m talking about. And as I say, it’s not something I can just wake up one day and go, ‘I’ll do the artistic,’ it’s just something that’s come on me, it’s just come over me, over me, over me, and it’s where I’m going as a martial artist.

Here, it is important to note that respondents’ perceptions of their changing motives might be influenced by this explicit indication of what should be motivating them. However, as I have shown, this sense of progression is not confined solely to Zen Do Kai.

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13 Defence with counter-attack.
Many senior respondents evinced an increased appreciation of the depth within their martial art and the ongoing progression possible in the training. For example, a female shodan in Aikido and Iaido commented that: ‘Aikido is endlessly fascinating – there’s always something new just around the next corner’ and the male Zen Do Kai godan valued: ‘The forever progression of this art and the ability to always get better.’

Importantly, this idea of progression is closely related to the concept of martial arts training as a journey for life, complete with lessons whose outcomes can be applied outside the dojo. According to another male Zen Do Kai godan:

> I think what people don’t realise about the martial arts is that it’s a journey for life. And whether you’re training or not training doesn’t necessarily mean you don’t participate in that journey. So you may train through to, for example, black belt, and you may take certain life lessons from that that you carry with you for the rest of your life. You may still be on the path, but you’re not necessarily in the class doing the work.

This respondent’s observation reveals that martial arts training can be understood sequentially as a sport, then an art form, and then a way of life. One respondent, a female Zen Do Kai brown belt, carried out an exercise which illustrated this progression very well. She explained that:

> I did a really interesting exercise about six or seven months ago where I evaluated in my life the … important things, and there was a series of questions you went through, things like: what is my commitment to this? How would I feel if this was taken away from me? And it was really interesting because, when I actually went through drama, martial arts, friends, family, health, all the main things that would make me up as a person, I was surprised where my priorities lay. I was surprised at some of the things I would really care about if they were taken away, and I wasn’t. Sure, it would be sad, or whatever, but I would be able to let it go. But martial arts was one thing that mattered to me a lot more than I thought that it would. Because I think it was at that point that I realised that it’s actually not just a sport for me, it is going to be a way of life. And it is something that I always, always want to be involved with.

Interestingly, those respondents who had continued their training for long periods of time and had become senior instructors exhibited a ‘generative’ approach in their martial arts training (Erikson, 1968); that is, their reasons for training were motivated
more by a desire to develop their students than to develop themselves, although these instructors gained further self-development from this very process. Erikson (1968) argues that:

Evolution has made man a teaching as well as a learning animal, for dependency and maturity are reciprocal: mature man needs to be needed and maturity is guided by the nature of that which must be cared for. Generativity, then, is primarily the concern for establishing and guiding the next generation (Erikson, 1968: 138).

Erikson explains that generativity is not confined to one's own offspring, but may be directed towards 'other forms of altruistic concern and creativity which may absorb [one's] parental drive. And indeed, the concept of generativity is meant to include productivity and creativity' (Erikson, 1968: 138). He makes the point that all social institutions reinforce generativity and safeguard it, because generativity is a driving power in human organisation (Erikson, 1968: 139). Consequently, given the structure of most martial arts systems and the methods by which information and skills are transferred, it is not surprising that martial arts training facilitates a generative approach in senior practitioners. For example, a male Aikido godan was motivated to continue training because: 'I find developing others rewarding. ... Obviously I spend a lot more time teaching now than I did, but in a way that's just another form of training. I get a great kick out of seeing the students that we're producing now.' A male Seido Karate seventh dan felt that his continued training was, 'A good way to polish oneself and to give something to the community.' Similarly, a male Taekwondo yondan found that his motivation to continue came from, 'Making a difference to people young and old, through increased self-confidence and health.' A male Zen Do Kai godan stated that his students were:

How I read myself. Because I'm looking at them, they're my mirror. What I teach them is what I am. My students are not doing anything, usually, that I haven't taught them. So I'm looking at me; all those students facing me, I'm looking back, that's me. And I think, 'Okay, we've got to pick this up, we've got to pick this up, we've got to pick this up,' and then I say to myself. 'Hang on, I've got to pick that up; it's me that has to pick it up.'

As another male Zen Do godan remarked: 'Training becomes like any knowledge or like work – you don't wish to let go ... Your reasons become based on giving to others and improving yourself through the process.' It could be argued that these changes come about simply as a result of the general physical, intellectual and emotional maturity of these senior respondents. However, it is equally possible that because
martial arts training is integrated into the process of human development to a larger extent than other sports or activities, such changes are encouraged through involvement in the martial arts.

4.3.3 Integrated self transcendent needs
One evident difference between respondents’ reasons for beginning and reasons for continuing training is an increased emphasis on integrated self-transcendent needs. In the preliminary stages of training students tended not to privilege these needs, as it seems that an appreciation of spiritual practice or moral principles of the art form really only develop through the process of training. Therefore, those who begin with an interest in this area may develop a fuller understanding; and those who begin for different reasons may develop an appreciation of these aspects, which may motivate them to continue.

Spiritual practice was an important motivation for many students to continue with their martial arts training. Those respondents who had been training for some time demonstrated a more comprehensive understanding of what ‘spirituality’ entailed for them. There were, however, various responses regarding this issue, so it is useful to explore some of the numerous understandings of spirituality in the martial arts. Chapter One contained a brief discussion of the development of some of the Asian martial arts and made the point that many arts are supported by religious philosophy. For example, certain Chinese arts are based on Taoist or Buddhist teachings, while the -do suffix applied to some Japanese arts implies the integration of transcendental principles. Conversely, there are many other martial arts that are not based on any religious ideology. Therefore, spiritual experiences that students derive from their training are not necessarily related to a particular religious doctrine. From the respondents’ comments it is possible to identify a range of spiritual understandings, but the majority are concerned with greater awareness and understanding of self.

Many respondents felt that it was important for there to be some kind of spiritual element in their training. Indeed, several believed it was this aspect that allowed the martial arts to function as art forms, and enabled students to develop holistically. For example, a female Seido Karate yondan said that:
A big part of our training is Zen Buddhism, and not everyone picks that up. They should. I shouldn’t say they should, but they should, because it’s a big part of Seido. I mean, how can you just have the physical and not the spiritual and the mental? The people who do the best gradings are the ones who put a lot of time into Zen and meditation as well. ... In a grading situation your body wears out. The whole point of some gradings is to wear your body down to the point where it doesn’t function, so therefore you’ve only got the strength of your mind to carry on. So that needs a lot of work as well. People forget that, because it’s something you do away from here, it’s not something you’re schooled to do. ... It would be empty without [the spiritual aspect] for me. How could it be an art without that? It wouldn’t be. It would be a sport.

This argument has also been advanced by several martial arts scholars, such as Chambers and Draeger (1978) who write that: 'Without the tempering effects of religious values, no system of self-defence can rise above sheer acts of rowdy violence' (Chambers and Draeger, 1978: 17, in Maliszewski, 1992b: 7).

Whereas some students identified a particular religious philosophy within the art and sought to understand and apply it, others found that they had very individual responses to the training experience, which they classified as 'spiritual'. As a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho remarked: 'It’s quite a funny term, spiritualness, because it’s quite open to interpretation, as to how people see it. Martial arts is individual and the spirituality of martial arts is probably specific to the individual.' Some instructors felt that it was very important for students to develop their own insight, as this encouraged them to think for themselves and engage with the martial art on their own terms. For example, a male Seido seventh dan said that:

My understanding of that in terms of karate is much the same as in terms of life. I mean, anything you do can be a spiritual activity if you approach it in that particular way. We don’t emphasise the spiritual aspect of it per se, because I don’t think you need to, because karate, being an experiential practice, when you practise it and you go through the various levels, that tends to be something that happens as a result of, rather than something that needs to be taught. ... That’s the way I would prefer it, anyway. I’m not very keen on, from my perspective, imposing my own beliefs on people, because then they become followers and it becomes cultish and I don’t think it serves anybody very well at all. ... [Students] integrate it in their own lives how they perceive it to be, and then it becomes useful for them in their own particular way. We run meditation classes so that people who are interested in that can do that, but it’s not an essential; it’s just something that people find and come to in their own
particular way. You could derive the same spirituality out of squash, rugby. Anything that involves rites of passage, serving your apprenticeship, paying your dues, tends to implement those feelings in people, whether it's mountain climbing, or whatever. It's a personal journey for everybody.

Even instructors in arts with a strong philosophical base maintained that it was essential for students to form their own understanding of the philosophy through the process of training. A male Aikido godan explained that:

We're from the Aikikai, which ninety percent of Aikido is. And the basic approach there is that people should come along and practise the technical side, and through that learn the philosophy. ... I think the philosophy is passed on over time. You can hear something, you can understand it, but you don't believe it. Aikido you believe it because you train it; you understand it, instinctively. And the ideas will grow from there. But within that, I try to make allowances to sit down and talk with the students, hopefully, I mean, I'd prefer over a beer or over a coffee or something, talk about things, but I think that training comes first, the talk comes second.

This emphasis on the student's individual interpretation and integration of spirituality is closely allied to an increased understanding of self. For example, a male Tai Chi teacher believed that:

The more you do Tai Chi, the more you discover yourself. You're looking for the 'I am' point, the point where your awareness comes from, So you might stand there, because we have a preparatory posture when you're just standing and you might say to yourself, 'Where am I?' And you might find yourself in your head or somewhere like that, the centre of consciousness. And once you find that centre of consciousness, everything flows from it. So, to my mind, they're exactly the same; Tai Chi is the way of discovering yourself and expressing, moving on, expressing yourself from the centre.

Therefore, there are various understandings of what 'spirituality' entails in the martial arts. Some respondents subscribed to a particular religious doctrine; other respondents identified particular philosophies in their art and developed their own belief systems; while others found their own numen and developed an individual awareness that was not related to any prescribed ideology. Despite these different approaches, however, it seems that most spiritual journeys had a close self-developmental focus. Essentially, because such understandings are gained through the personal experience of training and are developed over time, it is clear that spiritual awareness in the martial arts helps explain why some people continue with their training.
Correspondingly, several respondents were motivated to continue their training because of the meditative aspects of the practice. Many Seido students appreciated the meditation classes on offer. A male Tai Chi teacher also said that much of his enjoyment stemmed from the meditative feeling involved in the execution of the Tai Chi forms, especially because it was more challenging than static meditation. As he explained:

'It's like moving meditation, so it's all right if you're meditating, it's quite easy to sit and go into a nice meditative state, it's a bit more difficult to stand. They've got this thing called Ching Chuan, which is standing meditation, and it's even more difficult to maintain that sort of feeling while you're moving. But the idea is, you're moving, but you're in the meditative state, which is not asleep; it's like total awareness of here and now. So there's so much in it, that you get out a lot from doing the form.

Commonly, those respondents who had a strong interest in meditation felt that this practice functioned as an avenue for their spiritual awareness.

In addition to providing the opportunity for meditation and spiritual practice, some martial arts embody ethical and moral principles which may become apparent to the student over time. It appears that such principles encouraged respondents to value and take pride in their arts, and motivated them to continue training. For example, a male Seido shodan said that he continued because of the 'higher moral standard' that Seido advocated and expected.

Many respondents chose to persevere with their martial arts training because of a continued search for purpose and meaning in life. The whole practice of a martial art, with its structure, its transcendental components, its social support networks and its emphasis on self-development, may help satisfy this ongoing need. A female Seido yellow tip continued because martial arts training, 'Gives me a reason to do something.' A male Aikido fifth kyu also made the point that, through training, his search for purpose and meaning persisted, but had become more directed, personal and integrated. He explained that: 'My reasons [for training] have grown and deepened with respect to Aikido, but not changed in kind – the search and direction within me had already firmed up, become part of who I am.'
4.3.4 Safety needs

It appears that safety needs were of least importance in explaining why respondents chose to continue with their martial arts training. This would suggest that martial arts training perhaps satisfies people's initial safety needs by allaying their fear. For example, not a single respondent listed 'self-defence' as a reason for continuing with martial arts training. Although a small number of respondents listed fitness maintenance as one reason for continuing, this was never the sole reason. Social solidarity featured more strongly as a reason for continuing, probably because the constant camaraderie combats a fear of isolation. Similarly, the search for purpose and meaning also motivated respondents to continue because the very practice of a martial art constitutes this search.

4.4 Conclusions

Despite the respondents' diversity and their various reasons for beginning, and continuing with, martial arts training, there are a number of general trends or developments which can be identified and which provide an insight into the function and purpose of martial arts training in the lives of the respondents. Comparing the reasons why respondents began training and why they continued, it is evident that there was a distinct move away from the concrete aspects of training (such as learning a particular technique for a specific application, getting fitter, fighting or competing more successfully) towards more abstract elements (such as spiritual practice, an understanding and application of the ethical and moral principles of the art). This change was manifested most noticeably through a decreased focus on physical aspects of training and an increased focus on non-physical aspects. This suggests that respondents often began by thinking of their martial art as a sport, but over time, gained an understanding of it as an art form. Some respondents took this further to conceive of their training as a way of life. These developments entailed an increasingly personal focus, which may account for why so many students who began because of friends or other external reasons stayed for internal, individual reasons, often related to self-development. However, the comments made by very senior martial artists revealed a further change in perception, which Erikson (1968) describes as a move from self-absorption to generativity, where the motivation to continue was
not so much to develop themselves, but to develop others. These changes demonstrate that the martial arts experience is multi-faceted, with capacity for development and discovery.

While many reasons were given by the respondents for beginning and continuing training, three underlying influences were particularly evident: popular culture representations of the martial arts; fears and anxieties arising from risk consciousness; and the myth of the black belt. These will be discussed in greater detail in the following three chapters.
Chapter Five

The Martial Arts and Popular Culture

5.0 Introduction

A recent BBC article about Lee Tamahori's new James Bond film, *Die Another Day* (2002), draws attention to a brief fencing scene which has led to British fencing instructors being 'overwhelmed by ... beginners queuing up to learn to fight like James Bond' (*BBC News*, 2002, December 10). The article also mentions that films such as *Zorro*, *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* have had a similar effect on the viewing public, illustrating the extent to which people are influenced by the images and ideas portrayed in the popular mass media. This chapter investigates the impact in New Zealand of popular culture representations of the martial arts. Because a substantial body of literature exists on the subject of 'popular culture' and popular genres (especially film) have been analysed in-depth, the focus of this chapter is to explore specific ways in which people perform and consume culture to better understand people's motivations to begin, and continue with, martial arts training. The chapter examines the concept of 'popular culture' and its emergence, rise and significance in contemporary consumer society; and it explores the ways in which popular culture products in their various manifestations reflect and promote certain ideas about martial arts philosophy and practice. Further, it investigates how such artefacts affect people at the level of ideas, in terms of the way audiences form preconceptions about martial arts training, and at the level of action, in terms of people's motivations to take up the study of a martial art on the basis of these preconceptions.

5.1 Popular culture

The concept of 'popular culture' is difficult to define comprehensively and a variety of definitions exist. In this context, the term 'popular culture' will be used to refer to the largely post-Second World War phenomenon of mass consumer culture, originating in the United States. Johnson and Newitz (2001: 1) provide this useful explanation:

> Popular culture has been defined as everything from 'common culture,' to 'folk culture,' to 'mass culture.' While it has been all of these things at various points in history, in
Post-War America, popular culture is undeniably associated with commercial culture and all its trappings: movies, television, radio, cyberspace, advertising, toys, nearly any commodity available for purchase, many forms of art, photography, games, and even group 'experiences' like collective comet-watching or rave dancing on ecstasy. ... 'Pop culture' is also one of the US' most lucrative export commodities, making everything from Levi's jeans to Sylvester Stallone movies popular on the international market.

In popular culture, images, ideas, objects and experiences are purveyed to a wide range of audiences, which reveals the way in which mass production works in conjunction with mass distribution and mass consumption (Harrington and Bielby, 2001: 8).

The emergence of popular or mass consumer culture is often explained as deriving from industrialisation and urbanisation (for example, see Harrington and Bielby, 2001; Nachbar and Lause, 1992; Storey, 1993). Arguably, the mass production of ideas, images and objects started with the institution of the printing press; however, popular culture has grown as technology has advanced and is associated particularly with the latter half of the twentieth century.

Popular culture functions by taking cultural artefacts and commodifying them – (re)creating them as marketable products. One way in which this is achieved is by reflecting and reinforcing audience beliefs and values. Nachbar and Lause (1992) assert that the study of popular culture as a reflective mirror of its audience must focus upon two aspects of the zeitgeist: the 'transitory' and the 'concrete'. Transitory aspects are those beliefs and perspectives which perhaps last only as long as the era itself; whereas concrete aspects are deep-seated, highly significant beliefs, which transcend the time period and represent the fundamental character of the culture itself (Nachbar and Lause, 1992: 5). Most elements of popular culture focus upon both. In the film version of Bridget Jones's Diary (2000), for example, Bridget represents the contemporary phenomenon of the post-Liberation, single, childless, thirty-something woman who pursues a career by day and drinks, smokes and parties at night. But these transitory perspectives of what a modern woman can, and should, do are underpinned by Bridget's great search for male love and a long-term monogamous relationship, which is a concrete, traditional component of Western culture. That she is eventually successful, and that the ultimate satisfaction of the film rests on her success, simply validates these concrete beliefs.
Because producers of popular culture go to great lengths to mould their products to reflect audience beliefs and values, popular culture tends to be imitative, repetitive and conservatively resistant to change. However, the producers of popular culture are promoters as well: not only do they create a product that reflects us and will attract us, they also work actively to instil beliefs likely to ensure their success (Nachbar and Lause, 1992: 6). Therefore, an intimate connection exists between the two worlds of cultural production and consumption. The popularity of any given cultural text, whether music, television or sport, is dependent upon an integrated relationship between producers and consumers (Harrington and Bielby, 2001: 11). It is useful to consider this process in terms of a 'circuit of culture', which suggests that cultural meaning-making functions less in terms of a 'transmission flow' between producer and consumer, or vice versa, but more like a dialogue. For example, advertising both articulates production with consumption and draws consumption back into the process of production. Consequently, the mass media can be understood as something not separate from society, but something within which the social is continuously being defined and redefined (McRobbie, 1994: 201).

Unsurprisingly, the martial arts have been subject to the influence of mass consumer culture. The post-war rise of popular culture has paralleled (and possibly facilitated) the growth of the martial arts in the West. The last forty years have seen the establishment of the martial arts in the West as a marketable commodity. This influence may be seen in two main areas. First, martial arts skills themselves have become commodified and diversified. Hundreds of styles and schools have been founded throughout the West as people have seen instruction in the fighting arts as a viable business opportunity to capitalise. Consequently, in many cases, customers' needs have become the primary consideration. As a result, some styles have been modified to be more accommodating to Western practitioners, while other styles have used their uncompromising 'traditional' format as a successful marketing ploy, claiming 'authenticity.' In some cases, martial arts such as the Korean Hwa Rang Do® have been internationally trademarked in an effort to protect their integrity and tradition. Competition for students/customers may have been to some degree responsible for the number of new styles devised, for example, the invention and promotion of 'better' fighting systems. It may be argued that this commodification
has caused the emphasis to shift from the long-term practice of established skills towards the tailoring of knowledge into a marketable package. Ironically, such activity is often at odds with the principles and philosophies of many of the older martial arts.

Second, and of most relevance here, popular culture has commodified images and ideas about the martial arts. The period since the 1960s has witnessed a proliferation of popular visual, print and online media related to the martial arts. The cycle of production and consumption is evident here: the martial arts portrayed in popular culture do reflect bona fide aspects of the martial arts, as well as both the transitory and concrete beliefs of the consumers, but the producers are also responsible for inventing and promoting certain views of martial arts philosophy and practice. Often, these ideas are picked up by the consumer audience and are circulated as popular myths which, over time, often become ‘truths’. Eventually, in turn, these are taken up by the producers and reflected back.

As part of their commodification, the martial arts have been culturally constructed according to the expectations of the public and the agendas of popular culture producers. There are media versions of numerous professions, some of the more common including police officers, lawyers and medical doctors. Their portrayal in the mass media establishes a visual-intellectual shorthand that stereotypes the practice. Martial artists are treated similarly. It appears, however, that there is a fascination with martial arts culture that extends beyond that of other activities or professions. This is evidenced in the multiplicity of mass media genres in which the martial arts are featured; in this way the intimate relationship between martial arts and popular culture is quite unique. For example, hospital, legal and police dramas are very popular and recurrent as television series, but they do not tend to appear as PlayStation games, and their main characters are not usually reproduced as action figures. The genres in which the martial arts/martial artists are commonly depicted include films (there are literally hundreds, but some significant examples are: Burning of the Red Lotus Monastery, 1928; Huang Fei Hong, 1949; Story of Iron Monkey, 1955; Enter the Dragon, 1973; Drunken Master, 1979; The Empire Strikes Back, 1980; To Kill With Intrigue, 1981; The Karate Kid, 1984; American Ninja, 1985; Kickboxer, 1989; Rumble in the Bronx, 1995; Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai,
2000; *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, 2000; *Kiss of the Dragon*, 2001; *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, 2003); television series (*The Avengers*, 1961-1969; *Kung Fu*, 1972-1975; *Mortal Kombat: Conquest*, 1998; *Martial Law*, 1998-2000); television advertisements; animated cartoons (such as *Hong Kong Phooey*, 1977-1979; *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, 1987-1996; *Dragonball Z*, 1995-); anime\(^{14}\) (*Samurai X*, 1993-); action figures (typically an extension of films and television series, but *Action Man* manufactures a Ninjutsu Extreme/Kung Fu Extreme figurine); other toys, such as soft toys and hacky-sacks; popular live theatre, usually in the form of spectacular demonstrations (*Shaolin Warriors*); board and role-playing games; songs (for example, Carl Douglas’ *Kung Fu Fighting*, 1974); branded clothes; paintings, posters, calendars and other visual art forms; comic strips (for example, *Little Tornado Heroes*; as well as a number of Japanese manga); books, including martial arts fiction (for example, Eiji Yoshikawa’s epic, *Musashi* (1935-1939) and the novels of Jin Yong/Louis Leung-yung Cha); video games for the computer, PlayStation, Xbox and Nintendo (*Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon*, *Tekken*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Dead or Alive*, *Onimusha Warlords*, *Kung Fu Chaos*); arcade games (*Streetfighter*); magazines (*Samurai*);\(^{15}\) and internet sites. There are also group ‘martial arts experiences’ for non-martial artists. The South Korean firm, Meetex Korea, runs a one-day ‘Taekwondo (Martial Arts) Experience Tour’ for foreign tourists. For $100 (US) participants watch an audio-visual presentation on the martial art, experience a class and break a pine board. At the end of the tour they are presented with an honorary certificate, a uniform and an honorary black belt (http://www.biztravel.com/TRAVEL/SIT/sit_pages/10872.html).

5.2 The martial arts film: characteristics of the genre

Of all the popular culture media responsible for communicating ideas about ‘the martial arts’ to a mass audience, the martial arts film is the most prominent and influential. Essentially, the martial arts film is an action film characterised by extensive fighting scenes employing various types of martial arts. The martial arts film also incorporates many of the same elements featured in other martial arts media

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\(^{14}\) Japanese animated film.

\(^{15}\) It is important to note that not all magazines are ‘popular’ and designed for fans. Many, such as *Blitz* and *Black Belt*, function to circulate genuine, useful information among martial artists in several countries, although other martial arts enthusiasts may well subscribe. A considerable number of these publications are e-zines; for example, www.FightingArts.com.
and so it provides a useful avenue for exploring the concepts and images with which audiences are presented, especially in the West.

The martial arts film originated in Shanghai in the 1920s, though tightening censorship and the Chinese cinema’s growing engagement in social issues resulted in few martial arts films being produced in the 1930s, and after the Communist Revolution of 1949, the Chinese commercial film industry relocated to Hong Kong, where it has since flourished (Garcia, 1994). The early films included swordplay and other forms of armed combat along with unarmed combat, but in the 1970s the unarmed combat film came into its own, and is often referred to as the ‘kung fu’ film (Kei et al., 1994). In 1973, *Enter the Dragon*, starring Bruce Lee, ‘the first martial arts film produced by a major Hollywood studio’ (*Enter the Dragon*, 1973: trailer), brought the genre to the attention of the West. Many subsequent martial arts films have enjoyed large audiences in the West and have proved extremely lucrative. An indicative example is the Chinese-language film, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), which grossed $126.8 million (US) in the United States, and played to 23.7 million people (http://www.imdb.com). The martial arts film has now become a significant genre in the West itself and has been produced in a number of different countries. Despite diversity within the genre, most martial arts films contain similar elements.

Martial arts films, in the main, have a formulaic structure. There are a number of factors that illustrate a typical martial arts aesthetic. It is useful to read the martial arts film in terms of the Genre of Social Order, which Nachbar and Lause (1992) have used to discuss the US Western (interestingly, the decline of the Hollywood Western was followed by the rise of the martial arts film). Within this narrative framework, the action takes place in a setting whose nature is undetermined (for example, a mythic dreamscape; a small village somewhere in Asia; or the suburb of a big city, often representative of postmodern corruption and meaninglessness). This setting is violently contested between forces of savagery and darkness on the one hand and civilization and light on the other. The conflict is decided by a hero who borrows qualities from each of the opposing forces, but who places his skills on the side of progress, civilisation and justice (Nachbar and Lause, 1992: 417). Like most products
of popular culture, martial arts cinema deals in idealistic ethics. The hero overcomes the villain and virtue is shown to be triumphant over corruption (Garcia, 1994).

Probably the most compelling aspect of these films is the way in which the protagonist meets and defeats his or her adversaries, which almost always takes the form of a highly skilled martial arts combat sequence. The realism of these sequences varies greatly from film to film – and even from scene to scene – from the probable to the impossible; nevertheless, the protagonist is usually presented as untouchable, stylish and lethally effective, but nevertheless modest and committed to democratic values.

The martial arts film stars themselves can be classified in two types: genuine martial artists pursuing a film career (Kwan Tak-hing, Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Yuen Biao, Sammo Hung, Steven Seagal, Jean Claude van Damme, Mark Dacascos, Cynthia Rothrock) and dancers and actors who perform in martial arts films under the direction of choreographers (Michelle Yeoh, Aaron Kwok, Owen Wilson) (http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/Martial_arts_film).

Although the martial arts are a global phenomenon, the martial arts seen in films are associated overwhelmingly with Asia. Consequently, for many Westerners, the martial arts become imbued with exotic mystique. References to legendary history, rituals and secret arts are common: for instance, Liu Jiuan’s ‘Chinese magic’ needles which can cure or kill in *Kiss of the Dragon*, and Mr Miyagi’s ‘rubbing hands’ cure in *The Karate Kid*. Clearly, these films take advantage of Westerners’ Orientalist constructions of the East (Said, 1978). In the hands of its most adept practitioners, the martial arts film plays on beliefs suspended somewhere between historical legend and contemporary fact. The majority of post-war martial arts films originating from the Hong Kong studios have been produced for Chinese communities outside mainland China, and therefore may be read as films of mythic remembrance, linking Chinese audiences to a national identity and an imaginary cultural past (Garcia, 1994). This introduces an intriguing intercultural dynamic in terms of the way Western audiences relate to such material, bereft of the cultural knowledge to fully interpret the references, especially since a number of Western martial arts films also draw upon
these concepts. Therefore, Western audiences are inclined to consider the martial arts fascinating and strange.

Owing to the derivative and reflexive nature of popular culture, the genre also refers to and parodies itself. For example, after the death of Bruce Lee in 1973, Taiwanese actor, Ho Chung Tao, was discovered by producer Jimmy Shaw and rechristened Bruce Li. Tao/Li was the first deliberate attempt to create a substitute for Lee, and other clones followed, creating an imitation subgenre that lasted until the mid-1980s (http://simonyam.com/hkmw/Actors/BruceLi/). Intertextual references are also frequent in martial arts films. In Enter the Dragon, Williams tells the evil Han that he is like something 'out of a comic book'. In The Karate Kid, after hearing Daniel's misinformed ideas on karate, Mr Miyagi tells him, 'You watch too much TV.' Jackie Chan's slapstick martial arts comedies satirise aspects of the genre (although he conforms to the formulaic structure). There are recurrent humorous references to The Karate Kid in the US cartoon, The Simpsons (1989-), and Mike Myers lampoons the Hong Kong martial arts film genre in a famous scene during the teen movie, Wayne's World (1992). These parodies have testified to the genre's increasing mainstream acceptance in both East and West.

For Western audiences, the martial arts film offers an attractive package. The martial arts lend themselves to screen portrayal in a wide variety of fictional contexts. The amazing physicality and exotic mystique inherent in the films, together with the time-honoured battles between good and evil, make for good entertainment. Because Hollywood may be understood as one of the most important myth-making institutions in Western culture (Horrocks, 1995: 3), the films and associated media serve to circulate popular mythologies about martial arts history, philosophy and practice. Accordingly, it is common to find that the public develops uninformed preconceptions about the martial arts experience based on these popular myths.

This situation is exacerbated by the fact that most people never get to see a real martial arts class in action. The martial arts, therefore, exist in contrast to a sport such as rugby, where there are numerous opportunities to experience the game: on a Saturday morning at the local park, as one of a crowd at a stadium for a provincial or
international match, or live on television. The television might also feature interviews with players, coaches, selectors and so on. Consequently, rugby is a popular sport that most people know something about, even if they have never played themselves. As non-players, our general perceptions, expectations and ideas about what rugby involves are likely to be relatively accurate. Other activities such as cricket, netball, basketball, soccer or swimming, are also structured in a similar fashion.

The martial arts provide fewer occasions for ‘live’ engagement. Martial arts contests are rarely featured on television and the majority of organised tournaments are ‘in house’. Classes do not take place on an open field, but in a hall or purpose-built dojo belonging to the club, which may appear exclusive to casual spectators. Although most dojos do not actively discourage the public, there are some situations in which the doors are open only to certain martial artists, for instance, senior black belt classes in some styles.

It follows, then, that most people’s ideas about the martial arts come not from actual experience, but from exposure to make-believe filmic representations that portray choreographed and stylised fighting sequences, as well as a range of other fictitious renderings. It is likely that one could be a ‘fan’ and have no real idea what the martial arts entail. In the case of many potential students, before they inspected a few classes or began training, their knowledge of what a martial artist did would not be based on what the practice actually involved, but on a series of acquired generic or literary conventions.

Popular culture products have the potential to affect the consumers at the level of ideas, and at the level of action. At the level of ideas, these products are responsible for instilling certain ideas (accurate or otherwise) about martial arts in the minds of the audience. At the level of action, these ideas and images may serve as a motivation for some people to begin martial arts training. Both these aspects are explored in the following section.
5.3 Popular culture, preconceptions of martial arts training and motivation to train

The global nature of the mass media means that many of the images, concepts and popular mythologies about the martial arts are communicated to, and influence, New Zealand audiences. Of the sample of Christchurch martial artists, most claimed that many of their impressions and expectations held prior to training were derived from popular images conveyed by the mass media. Indeed, no respondent claimed that popular culture had not had an influence. There were several specific preconceptions that were very pervasive and were held by a significant number of respondents, irrespective of age, gender, educational background and occupation. It is useful to explore what these preconceptions are in understanding the extent to which popular culture influences people’s ideas about, and responses to, the martial arts training experience; in particular, people’s motivation to train.

It may be argued that when students are motivated to take up the study of a martial art on the basis of their preconceptions, they might well inject those preconceptions into their study. Consequently, if the martial arts experience may be viewed as something ever evolving and responding to how it is being understood, people’s preconceptions may in fact contribute to this dynamism and provide a further dimension to the martial arts experience. Such developments appear to have occurred in some specific areas of martial arts practice.

Earlier, I discussed how mass consumer culture has led to the marketing of martial arts skills, leading to increased competition for consumers and greater consideration of their needs. In particular, the martial arts have responded to people’s perceived need for self-defence, perpetuated in large part by the mass media. Consequently, many styles have become less demanding and uncompromising in order to be accessible to a wider range of students. Popular expectations have also influenced the way in which the martial arts market themselves to student consumers. Most of the martial arts advertise themselves in similar, formulaic ways. These advertisements not only reflect public expectations, but simultaneously induce expectations,
demonstrating the intermediary role that advertising plays in the dialogue between producer and consumer. According to a male Zen Do Kai godan:

A lot of it's cliché; you read a martial art advertisement in the paper or the Yellow Pages or something: come along and get self-defence and get confidence and get fit. And I mean every martial art ad just about reads the same: learn discipline! So, to some degree, a lot of those things are preconceived ideas that people may have when they join martial arts. And they think, 'Well, perhaps I do need to be more disciplined.'

Individual students will inevitably bring some preconceived ideas with them to the class. Some may project these ideas into their study and may attempt to prefigure their training experience. Just as the martial arts in the popular media are constructed according to a stereotypical set of ideas, it is possible to argue for the constructed nature of the martial arts experience, where students’ pre-existing notions dictate the way in which they engage with their martial art, on physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels. One female brown belt stated that:

There was this stereotypical thing of, yes, you must be able to do this many press-ups or whatever ... Physically I feel that there should be certain things that I should be able to do, like fifty men’s press-ups, or whatever. And mentally I feel like I should be able to sustain focus, particularly in kata and things, an unbroken focus, and emotionally, yes I feel that – I think emotionally for me is perhaps the most interesting – I feel that I should have that calmness, that Zen-sort-of-like calm state. So those are the probably the things that I feel I perhaps should be getting out of it, and I do get those things out of it, I feel.

It is also possible that these expectations may, in some cases, impact upon the class or even upon the art. However, the data gathered from the questionnaire and interview respondents suggest that such prophecies tend not to be self-fulfilling. Over time, the students’ ideas usually either change to conform to the structure and content of the classes, or their expectations are not met and they drop out. This disillusionment may account, in part, for the high attrition rate in the martial arts.

It appears, therefore, that a gap exists between popular expectations and the actual experience of training, and that students’ personal expectations do not cause the martial arts to change significantly. There are two chief reasons for this. First, popular culture representations tend to generalise the martial arts and efface their diversity. Therefore, anyone who forms preconceptions from such an indiscriminate model will find it very difficult to anticipate correctly the exact experience of training in any specific martial art. Secondly, the integrity of most martial arts is maintained by their structure and traditions. Although each art is unique, most have their own pedagogy
built around very prescriptive systems that ensure consistent levels of achievement (for instance, a student who studies x art will spend x amount of time, or x number of lessons, learning x specific techniques to x standard, to grade to x level). While certain martial arts will adapt to respond to advances in sports science, and to introduce innovative, safer and more effective techniques, the fundamental aspects of the martial arts generally remain constant.

The notion that there are set martial arts modi operandi that differ from mass media representations was substantiated by the respondents, who observed frequently that members of the public and new students often held misinformed preconceptions and unrealistic expectations. The respondents' observations suggested that they saw themselves as 'guardians of the truth', defending their practice against popular images and discriminating between the non-initiate and the initiate. For instance, many instructors testified to having new students arrive with expectations garnered from the mass media and said that these expectations could be frustrating for both instructors and students. One male Aikido instructor explained that:

They've got this idea of [Steven] Seagal, they come into Aikido and it's like, 'Whoa! Hang on! I can see the similarity but that's not like it at all!' And certainly the other problem is it takes an enormous amount of effort and dedication, discipline, and the techniques when they're applied, yes, there is some pain, and you've got to learn to put that aside and just accept it. But if you go through that you can get some of the rewards and concepts out of Aikido. But ... I would say almost without a doubt, there's [no] student who arrives at the door that's got any real idea of what Aikido's about. They're either typically from the Seagal, one pole, break an arm, what's the quickest way to do that move?, but in Aikido we also have the other, which is the brown rice and breathe deeply and concentrate on your centre approach! And they have got no idea, really, and there's no way I can explain it to them, the words don't do justice to it. As a teacher, I'm simply trying to provide them with reasons to train, and then let their training as a process start to educate them.

Such students often have a keen desire to experience in class that which has been seen in the movies. Twemlow (1996: 102) writes that: 'There is much to suggest that an interest in the martial arts may be motivated by magical wishes and wishes for power, as suggested by the high interest in karate movies.' The Aikido instructor commented that: 'We get a lot of, "Is that what Steven Seagal does?" And – yeah, but ... that's Hollywood, and it's all scripted, and probably there's quite a few frames cut out and it's been practised twenty five times before it's actually filmed.' A male Aikido fifth
kyu testified to new trainees' disappointment with the lack of 'reality' in dojo training as a result of having engaged with popular media:

They're expecting more kind of 'real', they're expecting real. We train with wooden swords called bokkans, and the wooden sword was actually used as a combat weapon... But they walk in and they see these wooden swords and they say, 'Oh it's training swords, where's the real thing?' 'Oh no, we don't – there are no "real thing" – that is the real thing.' So they have that kind of thing, you know, what it should be. And you're never – I guarantee you – in a movie you're never going to see someone waving a wooden sword! So they have that kind of expectation, which I think comes from the movies.

One female Zen Do Kai brown belt admitted that, when she first began studying martial arts, it was hard to dissociate popular culture ideas and imagery from the actual techniques she was being taught in class. She explained:

You know that whole mawashi [hand defence] thing – wax on, wax off? Like I was really excited because I remember learning that in the first class that I went to, and I remember thinking, That's so cool! That's from Karate Kid! And that's my kind of association with it. And I didn't really know what I was doing, I was just going wax on, wax off, I had no idea – took me a few weeks to actually get that motion down!

It is interesting that this respondent learnt the technique without any real understanding of it. In this way, it appears that her preconceptions impeded her progress. On the other hand, however, it could be argued that these notions in fact facilitated her learning, as they helped her to remember the technique.16

Nevertheless, such situations led one Tai Chi Master to make the comment that the popular media had a bad result. He pointed out that the martial arts are packaged by the media for entertainment, 'but because of this entertainment ... people get into [martial arts] the wrong way.'

Having described how people often begin martial arts training with misinformed preconceptions about the experience, it is worth investigating in greater detail the nature and origin of these preconceptions. Clearly, most people do not consider that the combat situations portrayed in the mass media model reality. Most are conscious that the techniques learnt in a martial arts class are rudimentary compared to the

16 In The Karate Kid (1984), Mr Miyagi teaches Daniel certain karate techniques based on general household chores. In this instance, Mr Miyagi gets Daniel to wax his car, using the hand defence manoeuvre to apply and remove the wax.
actions choreographed for a fight scene in a martial arts film. As one female Zen Do Kai brown belt said:

If someone had said to me before I went [to my first lesson], 'What do you think you'll learn tonight?' I wouldn't have been stupid enough to say, 'Oh, those spinning kicks that fly through the air, I'll be able to do those at the end of my session.' I wasn't naïve enough to think that what I saw in the movies was what was replicated in class.

People are also aware that the nature of the training experience and the martial arts 'lifestyle' often portrayed in the mass media was a fictional construct. A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho acknowledged that:

The movies sometimes glamourise [the martial artists] a bit, to a degree, with their training. You know, where they're like standing in the sea kicking or up all night standing in the rain – all that sort of jazz. I mean, with the movies, the guys just breathe and live martial arts, whereas in real life, you know, you have a job, you have a family, you've got other things to do as well as martial arts.

Despite this awareness, popular martial arts representations are very persuasive. Possibly cartoons, video games and comics are less compelling because they are obviously fake, but filmic images are more cogent, as they show 'real' people doing 'real' things, especially if the audience has no basis for comparison. In the main, people's preconceptions are not focused naively around fantasy projections, but are more generic, based primarily upon the messages that are gained from the media.

In addition to films themselves, several senior martial artists noted that fans of martial arts film stars are inclined to write tributes to their heroes (for example, on websites, in magazines, etc.), which include spurious discussions of the particular martial art associated with that star. In this way, fans are responsible for producing and circulating inaccurate information about the martial arts and this has a detrimental flow-on effect for the general public. One Aikido black belt explains that, '[Steven] Seagal's probably a classic. There's a lot of stuff which is coming up around him in terms of Aikido, you know, it's got no basis.'

Print and electronic media are also prominent sources of (mis)information. The sources of information about the martial arts have increased tremendously, but this *embarras de richesses* can pose problems for an uninformed public. One male Aikido godan asserted that, 'People are faced with probably a mass of information, and the
internet’s a good one, but a lot of it’s just crap; it really doesn’t advance the cause at all.’ He continued with reference to other print media:

I’m in the process, on our website, of reviewing all the English language books on Aikido ... and there’s some enormously misinformed books about Aikido. There’s a lot of people that are claiming a background in Aikido that really have no background in Aikido and they’re writing books. Or they’ve trained for one or two years and they’re writing books, and it’s gloriously misinformed and it’s got no real base at all. And I’m sure that comes through, that’s one of the sources of the misconceptions, because people read these things.... The growth of martial arts books I think has really happened in the nineties, some of it we’re seeing which is good, and some of it really is not worth the paper it’s written on. But for someone with no knowledge of a particular martial art, they will probably accept that as gospel, but you know, it’s just a load of crap.

A male Zen Do Kai godan concurred with his comment that, ‘A lot of the ideas come from movies and books.’ He argued that these ideas are also promulgated by ‘Perhaps some hearsay from different people: “Oh, I had a friend who did something or other and he did this and he did that.”’

Much of this hearsay stems from popular culture, and thus serves to disseminate these ideas further. Popular mythologies gain status and ‘credibility’ through people telling and retelling the stories. One male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho maintained that people’s preconceived ideas and misconceptions become widespread from

word of mouth, to a degree. People saying things like, you go along and get beaten up the first time ... if you wipe the sweat off your brow in the class, you have to do fifty push-ups and fifty sit-ups, or you get a hiding or something like that. And then when you start up you’ve got to walk through with your shirt off and the black belts whip you with their belts as you go past, on the back, and things like that. And a lot of it’s a load of crap. I’ve never found a martial art that does that yet.

The prevalence of such stories about the martial arts may be due to the combative nature of the art, its perceived mystery, and the generally cumulative character of storytelling. As one Zen Do Kai godan said: ‘people love to tell stories, and inevitably, when stories are told, they always get a little bit exaggerated or inflated.’

The Zen Do Kai shodan-ho contended that:

You don’t hear stories about, ‘Ooh, I wouldn’t go play for that cricket team, you’ll get beaten up; they’ll hit you with their cricket bats!’ or anything like that. You don’t hear that, so I don’t know why people would say that. Chinese whispers, I suppose. If someone says, ‘I went along to karate and the fifteenth time I went we did sparring and someone hit me a bit hard and I got a sore leg,’ down the way it’s, ‘He went along for his
first lesson and the biggest, baddest black belt beat the crap out of him.’ ... There are
martial arts that are quite strongly disciplined, but nothing to the degree to what people
have said. I mean, a martial art that’s like that just wouldn’t have students; no-one would
go.

It may be that many of these stories derive from the nascent period of martial arts
practice in Western countries when many of the styles trained in a harder, more
physically-oriented way, possibly a hangover from more combat-oriented wartime
training. As an example, a Seido Karate seventh dan recalled his early days of training
when: ‘My teacher used to belt our hands with four-by-twos. So people would be in a
row and they’d be all holding their fists out and he’d go around and he wasn’t just
tapping them, he was whacking them, and you’d hear people get their bones broken
and all that sort of stuff. That was horrendous.’ He said, however, that that such
training was now ‘redundant’, because the purpose of training was to provide
recreation for many types of people, ‘So there’s no need to go to those kinds of
excesses.’

The majority of the subject matter of popular stories and myths is centred around the
idea that study of the martial arts involves hard, extreme, physically punishing
training, administered via strict disciplinary methods. This was a common reply when
respondents were asked to describe their prior expectations of training. For example,
one female shodan in both Aikido and Iaido replied that she had an ‘idea of
extraordinary dedication, discipline and physicality’; a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho
expected that martial arts training would be ‘very strict, [you] learn to beat people up.’
One male Zen Do Kai blue belt believed that martial arts was ‘board-breaking, more
traditional Karate Kid stuff’; while a male shodan from the same style expected:
‘Hard physical training, big leery [complex, showy] technique.’ In addition to
hearsay, all the respondents put their expectations down to the influence of films,
television and books.

The concept of disciplined, physically taxing training is a common theme in the
martial arts media. One shodan black belt pointed out that:

[Films] put out that obviously everybody’s got the ability to produce those sort of moves,
but they also show in the background that most people actually put in a bit of training and
a bit of time to get that capability as well. So they don’t just show them out busy drinking
or whatever, they actually show them doing a bit of training as well ... So they give it a
bit of a background that these guys are that good because they put in the time and the effort.

Although martial arts training does involve sustained concentration and significant physical effort, typically the films embellish the training process. Several respondents drew attention to perceived training methods. One Zen Do Kai shodan-ho recalled that he expected training to be: 'Just all Bang! Bang! Bang! I’d seen the Karate Kid movies: paint the fence, paint the house, sand the deck, all that stuff. And I saw karate as really traditional, really strict. Stand round; if you breathe or something someone will kick you in the head or something like that.' A female Zen Do Kai brown belt remembered that she had been influenced by 'this kind of terrible stereotype ... kicking the bloody poles or posts or whatever with their legs and that kind of thing.'

It is interesting to note that the term ‘traditional’ occurred often in respondents’ descriptions of their expectations of training. It is not certain, however, that respondents had a clear idea of what traditional training entailed, or to which period(s) ‘traditional’ actually referred. It is possible that ‘traditional’ is equated with a particular historical period when the martial arts had very real combat applications; however, the use of the term by the respondents was usually so vague that it suggests that it is simply another example of being informed by a popular culture stereotype.

Some respondents were also influenced by a contrasting idea based on the same sources. Some films feature the training process, but primarily, audiences see the end result of training on the big screen, so many students envisage a fast road to success. (Neo’s instant acquisition of Kung Fu skills in the film The Matrix (1999) is a particularly idealised version of this concept.) Being presented continually with images of the martial arts star’s seemingly effortless execution of techniques has led some students to believe that the process is easy. For example, a male Seido Karate brown belt said that: ‘I could say that when you join any martial arts you have expectations of becoming good, and quick, because you see it on TV. It’s not like that; it takes a lot of hard work. I didn’t think it would be as hard as it is.’ Likewise, one male Aikido sixth kyu admitted that: ‘I thought that it would be easier to learn, but in reality you just need to go to training and enjoy and mostly give it time.’ This preconception has proved problematic in that students sometimes attempt training by osmosis. One Zen Do Kai instructor explained:
I think some feel that because they're going along to training, putting their gi on, putting their belt on, that everything should just come to them. 'I'll become cool, yeah,' and they feel as though they're just going to become really good. And yet they don't put any effort in.

The attitude of such students illustrates another aspect of consumerism at work. Increasingly, martial arts students expect value for money, with an attitude of: 'I turn up, I pay, I get skills.' However, if students' definitions of 'value' are based on popular culture renderings of martial arts, they are likely to be disappointed.

The hard training is often perceived to lead to physical invincibility. The martial artist in film, television, books, comics and so on, performs incredible physical feats, and this is quite influential for some people in the way they conceive of the martial arts. A female Aikido shodan believed that the media, especially 'old movies', had led to an 'idea of extraordinary ... physicality.' The same source encouraged a female Aikido yondan to believe that martial arts gave one 'the ability to do amazing things physically.' A male Zen Do Kai godan equated martial arts training with 'invincibility', and acknowledged that this view came from 'movies'.

In large part, this perception of physical invincibility stems from the film protagonists' amazing fighting abilities. Thus, many people place a considerable emphasis on combat efficiency in martial arts training. As one Seido black tip remarked: 'Some people might turn up thinking that they're going to be the best fighter in the world ... absolutely they do have a perception.' For example, one male Aikido Nidan 'thought [he] would be able to smash lots of people at once' and that this preconception 'came from Bruce Lee'. Similarly, one Aikido fifth kyu described the way in which films manipulate martial arts techniques, exaggerating their brutality for greater dramatic effect:

If you say to somebody, 'I do Aikido,' then they'll say, 'Oh, isn't that what Steven Seagal does?' And you say, 'Well, yeah, sort of, but to get anything Aikido-like you'd actually have to go back to his very early movies. His later ones have all sorts of other stuff washed in as well.' ... The classic one which seems to come up again and again is some movie on a boat [Under Siege, 1992] and he actually does a technique, but the way we would finish it, or I've been taught to finish it, is to throw them [the opponent] away. ... He did this technique in the movie, but he finished it by grabbing their throat and ripping it out bloodily! Oh yeah, that's Aikido! Typical movie, isn't it! And, yeah, again and
Again for some reason you say, 'I do Aikido,' and they say, 'Oh that's what Steven Seagal - hey! Did you see that movie where he ripped the guy's throat out?'

Anecdotes like this are common amongst martial arts students, and illustrate that, for many members of the public, the martial arts are equated not only with combat and fighting ability, but with a large amount of unnecessary, graphic, violence.

Because of these images of extreme violence portrayed in popular media, many people perceive the martial arts to be aggressive and dangerous. This is a perception that has been held for many years in New Zealand; recall, for example, the 1967 debate led by Wallie Ingram in the Listener over the dangers of karate. Before starting, many students in my sample feared that they would be hurt. One female Seido yellow tip recalled that television and movies had led her to believe that karate 'might be quite violent', and another female Seido blue tip had 'thought of karate as an aggressive art - dangerous - that [she] could get hurt.' A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho recalled that hearsay had also disseminated similar ideas:

You hear stories: the new people, they come along, and the first thing they do is they beat you up as initiation, you hear all things like that. That's what the rumours were about martial arts. And that was just my perception when I went there; I just thought, yeah, big, tough guys go round, beat the crap out of each other. And when they spar, they spar to hurt each other, they don't friendly spar. And then now, it's completely different - I just see how wrong I was. And some people are like, 'Martial arts!' And you have to explain to them that it's not what they think.

Some respondents who planned to take up a martial art encountered resistance from family and friends who warned them that they would be injured. Often these opinions were based solely upon rumour. One Zen Do Kai black belt recollected the following exchange:

When I started martial arts, my mum said, 'Oh, you're not doing that, are you? Oh, you shouldn't do martial arts!' 'Why?' 'Well, all they do is hit each other; you'll get beaten up. If you go along, they'll beat you up!' And I went along and now she doesn't think that way, but she had never gone to a dojo and even trained. She had absolutely no idea what it was about. And then, Dad's like, 'What do you actually do?' And they had opinions, but they didn't know what we actually did. I said, 'Well, we have a warm-up and then we do linear attacks' and we do yakusuko and then we do a bit of sparring, then we do a bit of kata.' And they're, 'Ooh, what's kata?' And you show them kata and they're like, 'Oh, is that karate?' 'Yes.' 'Oh, oh, I didn't ever know that was an aspect of

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17 Attack techniques performed against an imagined opponent.
karate!' And it's like, 'Well, if you didn't know that then you don't know anything about karate, because all karate is, is kata.'

Such opinions are often problematic, not only for potential martial arts students, but for existing students and instructors. Certain respondents found that they were sometimes stigmatised and branded 'violent' by association, especially those who studied arts that had a reputation for being practical and street-oriented. One male Zen Do Kai black belt felt that one prevalent belief was that:

People who do martial arts go out and pick fights. I don't think that's true, but I think a lot of people think that. I think one of the perceptions is that people who do martial arts look for fights, and I think if someone who does martial arts is in a situation where he has to defend himself, he has to be quite careful as to what he does, because at the end of the day, if all parties are questioned and this guy says, 'Well, I'm a black belt in Zen Do Kai', they're going to go, 'Well, you won the fight, you're at fault', when you could have been attacked, but just because you won the fight makes you - you beat up two guys! You must have attacked them to try out what [you?] can do. That's not true, but people will think that. So, you know, you've really got to use the meagrest amount of force you can to get out of the situation.

Although the likelihood of an attack situation is rare, the mass media emphasises and exaggerates our sense of personal danger (Furedi, 1998), which encourages people to seek self-defence (see Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion of this aspect of martial arts training). Consequently, the ease with which popular martial artists defend themselves may be a motivation for some people to train. A Zen Do Kai black belt came to the following conclusion:

The reason people take [a martial art] up for self-defence is because they're not big and burly, which is the perception of a boxer, and the perception of a rugby player - big, burly, they can force their way through situations. So they see martial arts, because it's been perceived in movies and things like that, a small type of person can take out a larger person easily, with not a lot of effort, with technique, such as the Steven Seagal situation in movies.

This ability to be able to defend oneself with ease and speed is something that the popular media definitely exploits, but in particular, popular culture delivers the message that the martial arts equal self-defence with style; the smooth protagonists of film and television look good as they vanquish their enemies. A male Aikido sixth kyu 'wanted to learn to defend [him]self in a kick-ass type way,' a desire that
stemmed from 'television, movies – Bruce Lee, Steven Seagal.' Likewise, a female Zen Do Kai brown belt related her expectation of, and attraction to, self-defence to:

The whole thing that you see in the movies, Jackie Chan, Bruce Lee, Van Damme, all that kind of stuff. I think you see it as this very cool – that's one word I'd definitely use is 'awesome', or 'cool' – all these good-looking guys ... I think my major, probably my biggest influence would have been from films.

Because popular culture products are created for consumers, the images and ideas portrayed are designed to be attractive to the audience. Many of the films are glamorous and inspiring. For example, one Seido Karate shodan wrote that he began training because 'A friend (karateka) told me it would change my life [and I] had Karate Kid images in my head.' A Zen Do Kai black tip took up martial arts training because he 'always liked martial art movies, e.g. Bruce Lee, Van Damme, Jet Li, etc.' A female Zen Do Kai brown belt admitted that: 'I'd never considered doing martial arts before, but I'd always really enjoyed watching martial arts flicks, you know, Bruce Lee, Van Damme, all that, I'd always been really into that ... so I thought it could be something quite interesting to explore.' Similarly, an Aikido godan remembered that he began studying martial arts because: 'I was frustrated with [hockey] training and ... probably like most kids in those days I was fascinated by martial arts. I had this vision of Bruce Lee or ... David Carradine – Kung Fu! So I was fascinated by that sort of thing and the talk of martial arts.' A female Seido Karate yondan said that: 'I've always been fascinated with martial arts. Even probably as a thirteen year old, I was a fan of Bruce Lee and Chuck Norris and all that type of thing.' Being exposed to film images as an impressionable child also encouraged one male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho to get involved:

[The Karate Kid's] probably one of the few movies I've watched more than once. I've probably watched that four or five times. And just when I was little I went to all three of them in the movies. And it was just, hey, this is what karate is... I always thought it was pretty cool as a kid and I always thought it was something I'd like to have a go at and I never did. ... And then, when I did do it, or when I was looking into it, I was thinking Karate Kid, you know?

A male Aikido fourth kyu found his motivation to begin training in the sophisticated techniques and physical prowess displayed on the screen:

You get all the movies going way back to Bruce Lee, you learn the martial art and then you're invincible. And you look cool as well. And a whole generation of people of my age started martial arts with that. I mean, I was influenced by Bruce Lee ... I think that
people see that: invincible, cool, strong, confident – not just winning fights, but what goes with it, and I'm sure it's influenced a lot of people. However, it is not only action-packed fight scenes or flamboyant male protagonists that are portrayed or attract students. One Tai Chi teacher recalled that his first introduction to the art was through 'a whisky commercial on Japanese TV, and in it some Chinese woman was doing Tai Chi and I thought great! It's sort of a martial art, it's movement and it's yoga. So I bought a couple of books and then joined a class in Japan and started doing Tai Chi.'

To a large extent, the audience's attraction to the martial arts popular culture artefacts arises from the desire to emulate what is seen. A female Zen Do Kai brown belt believed that audiences are attracted to, and motivated to take up, study of the martial arts because the films reflect back to the audience something that they want to be. She suggested that:

It's like going to the movies and seeing a beautiful, tanned, fit looking woman and appreciating that and thinking, 'Wow! Love to look like that in a bikini!' or whatever. And projecting your ultimate sort of figure or whatever it is, of what that woman has, wouldn't it be great to have something like that? And I think that you can definitely do that for skills as well. And I guess that's what films and things buy into, that whole fantasy that people want to be like that. I mean you don't have, most of the time, a very plain, overweight lead role in a mainstream movie theatre, because who would want to go and see that? You don't; you want to go and look at something that's going to take you out of your own world. And I think it's the same thing with martial arts, it takes you somewhere where you think, 'Wouldn't it be awesome to be like that?'

In particular, much of the attraction may be to do with the type of protagonist who is presented in martial arts media. The solitary protagonist (almost always male), is disciplined, competent, self contained and active, displaying a stylised preternatural ability during combat. He usually undertakes some kind of journey, which may be geographical, but is usually also emotional and/or spiritual. He overcomes seemingly impossible odds to emerge, eventually, a stronger and better person. In these ways, the protagonist conforms to the archetype of the 'hero'. Campbell (1949, 1975) discusses the fundamental characteristics of the 'hero' in literature and argues that, 'the adventure of the hero normally follows [this] nuclear unit: a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return' (Campbell, 1975: 35). Frequently, the protagonist's individualistic lifestyle and training methods
are accentuated by being contrasted with those of dojo karatekas, who are presented as incompetent, limited or corrupt. Often there is a guide or mentor (also usually male) who is older and wiser, possessing an enviable synthesis of inner and outer strength. He is instrumental in helping the young protagonist to achieve his goal, and his presence emphasises the concept of the lifelong journey of martial arts. This mentor may be present in the text, or referred to as a previous source of inspiration.

One male Zen Do Kai godan maintained that it is this model of the ‘hero’ to which most people respond:

Quite a lot of [ideas, inspiration, motivation] comes from the movies, books, simple things like comic strips. People want to perhaps put their faith in some kind of hero. I mean, everybody needs heroes, people to aspire to, whether those are tangible people like boxing champions or top martial arts people, or whether they’re fantasy-oriented people.

Certainly the protagonist’s personality and exploits seem to be a source of interest and admiration for many martial arts practitioners. One Aikido instructor, now a nidan, confessed that his passion for martial arts began when he was ‘three [years old] and thought Bruce Lee was cool’. More specifically, one female Zen Do Kai brown belt felt that: ‘the films that [she] liked best were the ones where the person had to fight and it was this idea of honour, or duty to avenge one’s dead brother or mother or father or whatever. And they’re always, ‘No, I don’t want to fight; if you hit me again, I’m going to kill you.’” A female Seido yondan also referred to the honourable, self-effacing nature of the martial arts film hero:

Even though I thought of Chuck Norris and that, I was aware of them, but it wasn’t aware in the sense of watching every movie – I think I watched one movie. But I just liked what I saw. … They have a quiet, disciplined composure, so it’s that type of thing, and very self-contained and sure of themselves. And humble. So often high ranking sports people are not humble, and in karate you’ll find they are. Terribly so. So that appealed to me.

Conversely, some protagonists are presented as sexy, flashy and successful with women. Once more, this posits an unrealistic, yet appealing stereotype. According to one senior Zen Do Kai godan:

Most people who see martial arts in the movies or the TV really don’t have an understanding of what martial arts is really about – all they see is an end result. And it’s like, I want to be a Jean-Claude Van Damme, or I want to be a Bruce Lee, or I want to get all the girls and beat up all the bad guys!
Clearly, the popular martial arts protagonist provides an appealing role model for many young men. What is not so clear is whether the films provide the same role models and appeal for women. Although several female martial artists in this study confirmed that martial arts characters had been a source of inspiration and motivation, such attitudes were far more prevalent amongst the men. Films featuring 'violent women' or 'tough women' role models certainly exist in the mass media, appearing in a 'variety of genres, from classic horror and film noir to 1970s blaxploitation and 1990s road movies' (McCaughey and King, 2001: 1-2) and as the lead characters in some martial arts films, but they are in the definite minority. In a discussion about martial arts media, one female karate student said that she had noticed that 'there's not many chick martial arts films around.' Instead, women portrayed in martial arts films tend to be sidekicks of the men, stereotypical 'damsels in distress' (victims), love interests (who may or may not threaten to divert the hero from his journey), or objects to be 'won' (and therefore commodified). Consequently, such films do not generally present an empowering view of women (at least, not in terms of martial arts ability), possibly because women are not the prime target audience.

Inness (1999) acknowledges the difficulty of finding 'tough women' role models in the mass media. Her discussion centres around cartoons, but can be applied to film, television and other media. She writes that:

Most of the central male characters in these shows have a female sidekick, but it is always obvious that she is less important than the hero. Although she may get in an occasional karate chop, or blast a bad guy with her laser pistol, her male cohorts are at the centre of the action and engage in all the heavy fighting (Inness, 1999: 2).

Inness concludes that tough women are commonly portrayed as less strong and less effectual than tough men (those tough women usually portrayed as being the exception to the rule that women are not tough) and that this reinforces cultural expectations of women (Inness, 1999: 4). Significantly, popular culture in this context is careful not to challenge gender roles too openly because, as we have established, its success depends to a large extent on reflecting back traditional, commonly held audience beliefs. Tania Modleski writes that: 'Mass art not only contains contradictions, it also functions in a highly contradictory manner: while appearing to
be merely escapist, such art simultaneously challenges and reaffirms traditional values, behaviour and attitudes' (Modleski, 1982: 112).

Those 'tough women' who do appear in the media, however, have a strong allure for women viewers. Inness claims that, 'Almost every woman dreams at one point or another about having the super powers or toughness of character that will make her invincible' (Inness, 1999: 8). Heroines such as Xena, Wonderwoman, the Bionic Woman, Mrs Peel, Elektra Natchios and Jinx (the most recent 'Bond-girl'), are empowered, principally, by the confidence that stems from their fighting ability.

According to Inness:

No matter what perils confront the Bionic Woman or Xena, we know she will survive. In a society where women are warned that they should not walk alone after dark and should never visit a deserted area by themselves, the tough women who appear in the media offer a reassuring fantasy. Xena would not be fearful of walking in a park after dusk. The Bionic Woman would not be nervous walking into even the seediest of biker bars. In a culture where women are often considered the 'natural' victims of men, tough women rewrite the script (Inness, 1999: 8).

A female Zen Do Kai brown belt also alluded to women's self-empowerment through martial arts training:

It's very cool, these cool, spiny, flicky kick things, and you think, 'Wow! Wouldn't it be awesome to be able to do that!' And I think this idea of, you're walking down the street, and you're thinking, 'Yeah, I could take you out, I could take you out, I could take you out.' And the other people not knowing that this is actually what you're capable of doing. I think before I started doing martial arts I'd think, 'Wouldn't that be cool?' And also, I like the idea of this now that I do martial arts, but before I started martial arts, I liked the idea of having this hidden strength, being a woman, looking feminine, but having this hidden strength.

This projection describes a persona similar to the mild-mannered male hero in many films: lethal, but incredibly self-effacing, even gentle. Specifically, it reveals this woman's desire for autonomy and indomitability without sacrificing her femininity. Interestingly, despite their scarcity, 'tough women' role models are not new to New Zealand audiences; recollect, for example, the popularity of the stories and performances of feminist Jujutsu exponent Florence LeMar at the beginning of the twentieth century.
The protagonist's adroit manoeuvres are obviously an attraction and stimulus for many viewers. In a discussion of action films, many respondents made a distinction in favour of the skilful protagonist who uses 'cool' martial arts techniques as opposed to the character who simply draws a gun. Some respondents said this was because, in addition to the skill displayed, and the exciting immediacy of the combat, the moves were believable and therefore attainable. The possibility of emulating the film protagonists increased some people's motivation to train. As one male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho explained:

I was always fascinated with people being able to jump and spin kicks in the air and stuff like that, because it was quite mystical at that stage. You see movies like *Rambo* and you see a big, huge fella pick up a gun and kill a hundred people. And you think, 'Yeah, wow, you know, he's picked up a gun and he's killed a hundred people.' But then you see someone like Bruce Lee who's small, he's not a big fellow, and you see him using just his body, so he's unarmed, and he eliminates a group of fifteen, twenty people. But his movies were never over the top, they were realistic, like you could look at them and you'd think, 'Yeah, well, that's possible.' And the other martial artist who really stands out ... is Steven Seagal ... There was one movie ... instead of just beating the people up, he picks up a pool ball and he sticks it in a sock and he spins it around and takes people -- you know? And that's believable. You know, like he takes out six or seven guys, but in a believable sense; it's not like, well it wouldn't be done, it's like, wow! That would really hurt, and that's obviously very possible. Very real. And he just looks so smooth doing it! And they're so effective, and they look so effective on the screen, and you think -- 'Wow! That's cool, yeah -- I want to do THAT!' Because Rambo used to shoot people then run away, where Steven Seagal used to like take people out and then he'd just used to stand there and finish his drink and then walk away. Way cool. Very James Dean-ish.

Another shodan-ho black belt from the same style made similar comments.

People look to martial arts and think it's pretty mystical, pretty cool. But quite recently a lot of martial arts movies are more popular than the type of Bruce Willis kind of way; goes around, he's got a big gun, Rambo, that type of thing. And now it's more like Jet Li and what Bruce Lee used to do; Jet Li and Jackie Chan type movies where it's all just pure martial arts. As soon as someone pulls out a gun it gets kicked out of their hand, and then there's a big fight. And people don't want to see someone shooting, because that's pretty boring, but a big fight scene's really exciting. And they go, 'Wow! Wish I could do that!' And they could go along to a dojo and learn a bit of that; they just don't think it's possible. And, of course, the movies glamorise it a bit; the fights last for a very long time, they do really, really big moves and don't hurt each other that much when they do them. And then all of a sudden, one of them will win.
These comments give rise to an interesting view of the nature of the martial arts in the mass media. One Tai Chi teacher contended that, compared with action movies in general, the martial arts fights appeared less violent, due to the highly choreographed, rather contrived style of many of the scenes, and their potential to slip easily into fantasy, comedy or pure spectacle.

I'm sure it's better seeing that than seeing people shoot each other on TV or the movies, because at least the person who is a martial artist and winning fights has really put a lot of effort into it, they haven't just gone and bought a gun, have they? It's interesting. In some ways, martial arts on TV's almost non-violence, it seems to be, because the person's very rarely killed, the opponent, and it's not done through a nasty way: I'm going to go and shoot that guy. It's almost comedic in a way. They have to set it up so these people come together and have this martial arts fight. And then apparently they have to slow down the movements – you can't fight at a normal speed, you have to slow it down a bit, or else it's over too quickly, so there's a whole lot goes on there.

This comment illustrates the respondent's awareness of filmmakers' deliberate attempts to construct a martial arts aesthetic. Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that a significant proportion of martial arts films are very violent, have R18 ratings, and show characters dying in exceedingly graphic ways only really possible with the close proximity of hand-to-hand combat.

The fascination with the protagonists of the martial arts media has had an interesting consequence. Sometimes students of certain styles are stereotyped according to their respective film and television stars. Unsurprisingly, many martial artists consider this attitude annoying and insulting. An Aikido fifth kyu complained that:

My friend at work [nidan, Taekwondo], we've been talking shop and people have sat down and – because TKD and Aikido are quite different – they've tried to compare: 'So you're more like Jackie Chan and you're more like Bruce Lee.' 'Sort of, sort of.' So, yeah there's been a definite thing like that. So much to the point where, unless there's a specific need, reason or a direct question, I just won't bother talking about it, unless somebody's had some experience.

A further consequence of such associations is a perception of martial artists as being 'special' or having amazing abilities. A male Zen Do Kai godan observed that, as the martial arts have gained a more secure hold on the popular imagination, this view of senior martial artists seems to have become more widespread:
Probably twenty years ago it ... didn't touch a lot of people. Nowadays it does touch a lot more people. The only feedback I get back is, people go, 'Oh, what do you do?' 'Oh, I do martial arts.' 'Wow, that's amazing!' People think it's quite amazing to do. They go, 'Oh, what are you?' And I go, 'I'm a fifth dan black belt.' They go: 'A what?' I say, 'But before you go any further, I'm still a human being.' They do have that perception of, 'Wow!'

This respondent's comment reveals that martial artists can find it strange to be regarded in this way. He continued:

Let's not label the martial arts the Holy Grail of everything, because people can think that, I don't know why they would. It's just the same as any other part of your life, or any other part of sport. That's what you've got to not get carried away with. I'm a human, I've got two arms, two legs, like I explain to everybody; you've just learnt a skill that nobody else has got.

One key constituent of the popular martial arts tradition has been a supernatural, mystic or spiritual element. Many of the Hong Kong films draw upon religious philosophy, Chinese lore and superstitious beliefs, and reinforce common suppositions about childhood myths and legends, all underpinned by a historical tradition of institutions such as the Shaolin Temple (Garcia, 1994). The early films, in particular, featured sorcerers with magic powers (Kei et al., 1994). Consequently, the martial arts are commonly perceived as 'spiritual'. Normally, 'spiritual' in this context refers to some kind of transcendental experience. As we have discussed, a number of martial arts are supported by certain religious and philosophical tenets, many of which have Asian origins and, certainly, martial arts students claim to derive some individual spiritual experience out of training. However, as with other conceptions of the martial arts, this notion appears to result in part from how popular culture characterises martial arts. A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho recalled:

Probably my first experience of [spirituality in martial arts] was watching a movie [sic.; originally a television series] called Kung Fu ... [and] they had this American guy imitating a monk, who was very proficient at Kung Fu, David Carradine. And that used to really push the spiritual part quite a bit with the martial art, because it always related them back to the monk who was blind and used to do things like – one episode that really stuck in my mind was when he taught [his protégé] about controlling his mind where he was able to pick up a bowl or an urn full of hot, burning rocks. And he did it with his forearms and there was actually engraving or embossed parts on the actual urn, which burnt two
dragons into his forearms. And that was really probably my first experience of that.... Buddhist monkey thingee, definitely.

This description is particularly pertinent in that it relates to a traditional initiation ordeal undertaken by monks of the Shaolin Temple. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that some Westerners have interpreted the term ‘spiritual’ in the sense of ‘a malign force’, possibly because many of the martial arts philosophies are perceived to be non-Christian. This (mis)understanding has led to negative stereotyping of the martial arts, as a male Zen Do Kai godan explained:

It’s quite interesting because you often talk to lay people, particularly those who have got some sort of religious beliefs, and they say, ‘Ooh! Martial arts is evil, you know, it's spiritual!’ But as I said before, one of the best kept secrets is that there is no secret! And the spirituality is really just more a journey of self-discovery.

The emphasis upon transcendental spirituality in martial arts is also perpetuated in the print media. Numerous books have been written on the subject. Consequently, just as people arrive to study martial arts with an expectation of learning the techniques based on what they have seen in the movies, so people turn up thinking they understand the spiritual and philosophic elements from their reading. This assumption occurs especially in styles that are considered to be particularly ‘spiritual’. One Aikido instructor explained that such students, however, don’t hang round that long. A lot of them probably never step on the mat because the reality just doesn’t match the idea. I mean, I get people saying they’ve read – there’s a couple of main books on the philosophy of Aikido, one’s called The Spirit of Aikido – ‘Oh, we’ve read The Spirit of Aikido so we know all about Aikido philosophy.’ And really in my brain what I’m saying is, you know nothing. You've got no idea. And you never will have until you step out on the mat and you train for ten years. Then you’ll know something about the philosophy of Aikido. And until you meet all those challenges and break through them and experience the techniques and experience the training, you really have no idea.

This comment draws attention to the difficulties that such ideas can cause for practitioners, and also reinforces the inherently experiential nature of martial arts training and of the acquisition of the spiritual aspects of the art.

This spirituality and mysticism frequently read into the martial arts is a prime example of the way in which the martial arts are constructed as ‘exotic’ in popular

18 This scene was at the beginning of every Kung Fu episode.
culture. Again, much of this has to do with association of martial arts with Asia, or the East. Producers and recipients of popular culture images and concepts conform to Said's widely documented theory of Orientalism (1978). Despite the fact that the West has had increasing exposure to the East, the myths have not dissolved. In fact, popular culture has functioned to instil these existing models. Said draws this connection between Orientalism and popular culture when he writes that:

One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardised moulds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardisation and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of ‘the mysterious Orient’ (Said, 1978: 26).

This was certainly the case for one female Zen Do Kai brown belt in my sample who believed that martial arts were seen as strange, foreign and mysterious because: ‘It is very much that Western perception of the exotic, the East, and ... it’s fascinating because it is the Other. ... And that’s perpetuated through all your films with Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, etcetera.’ One male Zen Do Kai godan made a similar point:

‘Martial arts’ itself’s an interesting term because it really implies an element of military training, or the military arts, or the fighting arts, which was historically something that was done as part of the military. But did the Asian people have a monopoly on that? Certainly not.... It has all been a little bit ‘Asianised’, for want of a better word. ... But there have been people like Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan and even Western movies like this Kung Fu series that have been responsible for the promotion of that. ... Maybe some of it came from even as far back as the Second World War, which was about the same time that movies started to become available to the public and the American war heroes and so on. Maybe it’s just an inbuilt thing where Westerners wanted to understand a little bit more about these weird, mysterious people that they were fighting. Now, had martial arts come from Germany, would [they] be held in the same regard? Probably not.

5.4 Conclusion

In popular or mass consumer culture, the martial arts appear glamorous, intriguing, violent, exotic, engaging and larger than life. These mass-produced models tend to be highly influential for an audience that is given a limited basis for comparison between the simulated fantasy and the real experience of martial arts training, and may lead members of the general public to form a number of preconceptions about the martial
arts, some of which are accurate, many of which are not. These collective assumptions not only influence people’s impressions of the martial arts, but may motivate certain people to assume the study of a martial art. It appears that popular culture plays more of a role in people’s decisions to begin, rather than to continue with, martial arts training. Although it can be argued that those students who take up a martial art on the basis of their popular preconceptions inject their understanding into that art, thus informing and evolving the existing discourse, it seems that such influence is not widespread and remains confined largely to individuals; therefore, a disparity remains between popular preconceptions and the actuality of training. This is because of the diversity within the practice, as ‘the martial arts’ incorporate a varied array of styles, philosophies and approaches. However, the disparity also arises from the commonalities between the various arts, specifically the set pedagogical systems by which many are defined. Consequently, students who continue training usually realign their ideas and expectations to conform to the certain forms of experience offered by their martial art. An examination of the relationship between the martial arts and popular culture reveals some of the ways in which the martial arts are portrayed and perceived, facilitates an understanding of the reasons why some people are motivated to begin martial arts training, and provides an insight into an important aspect of the martial arts experience in New Zealand.

Further insight into people’s motivations to begin and continue with martial arts training can be gained through an examination of the relationship between the martial arts and the risk society. This relationship and its implications are explored in Chapter Six.
Chapter Six
The Martial Arts and the Risk Society

6.0 Introduction
In addition to theories of popular culture, and general theories of sport, leisure and play, there are contemporary sociological theories that may account for why some people begin, and continue with, martial arts training. The notion of the risk society is one such theory. For some people, the study of a martial art may be a response to fear and anxiety arising from risk consciousness. This chapter describes the theory of the risk society and discusses how increased risk consciousness encourages people to search for means of security. It relates specifically to the 'safety needs' described in Chapter Four by exploring how martial arts training may be sought initially to provide a solution for fears and anxieties regarding personal safety (self-defence), personal health and fitness, lack of social solidarity, and lack of meaning and purpose in life. The chapter also assesses the extent to which each of these reasons may be applicable in explaining why people continue training.

6.1 The risk society
According to Beck (1992, 1999), we live currently in a 'risk society'; that is, a stage of modernity in which the social, political, ecological and individual hazards produced in the growth of industrial society have become predominant and have eluded the control and protective institutions of industrial society (Beck, 1999: 72). Beck argues that the risk society is not an option that could have been chosen or rejected in the course of political debate, but arises through the automatic operation of autonomous modernisation processes which are oblivious to consequences and dangers (Beck, 1992: 2).

There is some variability in the definitions of the terms 'risk' and 'hazard' in risk society literature. Furedi (1998) provides a clear and succinct explanation when he writes that hazards are generally defined to mean 'a threat to people and what they value.' In this context, Beck identifies these hazards as given technological and

There are two chief stages that an industrial society must complete before it becomes a risk society. The first is when scientific and industrial development produces a set of hazards. These hazards increase in magnitude and become globalised, and are therefore more difficult than in past eras to calculate and manage or avoid (Lupton, 1999: 3-4). Initially, these hazards are not recognised as being problematic and, as such, they are not the subject of debate, nor at the centre of political conflict. The industrial society simultaneously intensifies these hazards, and legitimates them and their outcomes as 'residual risks'. Consequently, the society becomes a 'residual risk society' (Beck, 1992: 2).

The second stage occurs when the institutions of industrial society produce and legitimate hazards they cannot control. Subsequently, the hazards of industrial society dominate public, political and private debates, and the society sees and criticises itself as a 'risk society'. Although the society continues to act in the same way, new debates and conflicts are superimposed upon existing societal institutions, such as politics and the legal system (Beck, 1992: 2).

The sequence of these two stages generates a condition of 'reflexive modernisation'. Reflexive modernisation describes a situation in which the unanticipated transition from industrial to risk society causes the society suddenly to be confronted with the consequences of the risk society which cannot be addressed adequately and overcome in the system of industrial society. Because these hazards have become predominant, industrial society can no longer continue to operate in the same way. Therefore, the industrial society is forced to redefine previously attained standards of responsibility, safety, control and damage limitation with reference to these potential dangers.

Beck argues that transformation occurs in three areas as a result of these revisions. First, there is a change in the relationship between industrial society and the forces of nature and culture such as the environment and human cultures, and between society

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19 This concept is used by a number of 'postmodern' social scientists, not all of whom have 'risk' as their central motif.
and cultural constructs such as the nuclear family. Second, change occurs in the relationship between the industrial society and the hazards produced by it. Because these hazards exceed society’s traditional notions of security, people’s awareness of these hazards is likely to upset the assumptions of the previously existing social order.

The third area of transformation involves the exhaustion and dissolution of collective and group-specific sources of meaning. Individuals are now placed with the responsibility of finding meaning in the world. This is what Beck calls the ‘individualising process’. People are released from industrial society into the risk society to manage, single-handedly, diverse and contradictory global and personal risks that once would have been coped with in the family unit, village community or class. At the same time, this release (in the West, at least) takes place against a background of educational expansion, increasing social and labour mobility, and growing gender equality. Therefore, people enjoy greater freedoms, but these are ‘risky freedoms’ (Beck, 1999: 72-75). All three areas of transformation destabilise the individual’s previous notions of social structure and personal identity, and contribute to an all-pervasive feeling of uncertainty and self-endangerment.

Although Rojek (2000) points out that Beck’s work can be criticised for over-exaggerating the omnipresence of risk consciousness in everyday life (Rojek, 2000: 15), he does admit the isolating consequence of the risk society, apparent in his concept of ‘reservation’, which Rojek puts forward as a general social-psychological concept to underpin a theory of contemporary culture. Rojek defines ‘reservation’ as ‘a threshold of social diffidence in relations with others, especially strangers’ (Rojek, 2000: 129). Reservation is probably a response to sensing ‘riskiness’ in social relations and arises from the dramatic transformation wrought upon life by the rise of postmodernity (Rojek, 2000: 130-1).

Furedi (1998) also asserts that the individualised nature of society reinforces feelings of powerlessness and isolation, and contributes to the consolidation of the consciousness of global and personal risk. Like Beck (1992, 1999), Furedi maintains that our society is one which ‘lives in fear of itself’ (Furedi, 1998: v). In a world obsessed with disease, abuse, stranger-danger and environmental damage, people are told constantly that they are ‘at risk’ and are urged to take greater precautions and seek more protection. Significantly, the term ‘at risk’ is used to denote certain types of
people who are particularly vulnerable to a hazard (Furedi, 1998: 19), so to be ‘at risk’ no longer has to do with what one does, but who one is; for example, the notion that women are ‘at risk’ from physical and/or sexual assault. This serves to further personalise and intensify people’s fear and uncertainty.

This fear and uncertainty means that the sentiment of trust suffers (Furedi, 1998: 139-140), leading to widespread misanthropy, where ‘[o]ften the word ‘public’ is associated with ‘risky’; the presence of other, unknown people is presumed to be a problem’ (Furedi, 1998: 5). This observation suggests that, of the possible fears abundant in the risk society, one of the most sharply defined is that of other people. Increasingly, relationships between people, even those who live in the same community, are characterised by lack of clarity about expected forms of behaviour, especially about what people may be trusted to do (Furedi, 1998: 127). Furedi argues that a ‘culture of abuse’ and a ‘culture of victimhood’ have developed within contemporary society. ‘Claims that abuse is rife, that most people are affected and damaged by it are now widely believed. Such claims thrive in a moral climate where visions of a rising tide of violence help to generate a consensus that everyone is potentially a victim or an abuser’ (Furedi, 1998: 73).

It is important to note that, although the risk society poses a number of real dangers for people, people’s risk perceptions are not congruent with real risks, nor are they to do with simple reactions of the individual mind. The explosion of anxieties about risk takes place within the imagination of society as a whole. Risk perceptions are subject to a variety of influences, form an integral part of the prevailing social and cultural climate, and express a mood and a set of attitudes, which cannot be characterised in terms of rational or irrational (Fox, 1999, in Lupton, 1999: 17). It can be argued that risk perceptions in fact fabricate hazards. Hazards are socially constructed by being created from contingent judgements about the adverse or undesirable outcomes of choices made by human beings. These ‘hazards’ are then invoked discursively to support estimations of risk, risky behaviour and of the people who take the risks (Fox, 1999, in Lupton, 1999: 19).

Risk perceptions are mainly propagated and exaggerated by the mass media. A wide variety of print and visual media focus on themes of crime and personal danger.
Tulloch (1999), for example, argues that our concept of crime is not grounded in reality, but is constructed largely by news coverage and television shows. He states that watching television shows containing heavy violence tends toward a 'mean world' perception of the occurrence of crime and violence in society (Tulloch, 1999, in Lupton, 1999: 34). Physically violent shows are not the only programmes that encourage such conceptions. Police and detective dramas are usually extremely popular, as are shows about 'post-crime' investigators, such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. In the majority of these scenarios, the viewing audience is never actually shown the crime as it occurs; the action takes place afterwards, when the nature of the act is revealed incrementally through the careful discovery and analysis of artefacts and other clues. Viewers are given the responsibility of 'filling in the gaps'; thus, it is not what is shown or explained but what is *imagined* that proves most frightening or disturbing for the audience. Moreover, it is common for the assault, death, or other misfortune to be explained, initially, as being due to innocent causes, but by the end of the show to be confirmed as foul play. Often the perpetrator's identity comes as a surprise to the audience. These portrayals further entrench the view that crime is rife, cannot be anticipated, and that anyone, even a loved one, may be a potential predator. US television producer Dick Wolf (*Special Victims Unit, Criminal Intent*) extends this view. His scenarios tend to be centred around various societal institutions, such as the church, the legal system, the political system, academia and the family. In most episodes, his choice of criminal is a key figure within one of these establishments, and the shows' denouements serve to question the legitimacy and efficacy of such institutions.

Print media also exacerbate risk perceptions. Furedi (1998) writes that: 'The statistics on abuse make truly phenomenal reading. They suggest that male violence against women is so deeply structured that virtually every woman [sic] is subject to it. Alarmist accounts warn that one in four or one in three or one in two women will be raped' (Furedi, 1998: 78). Hood (2001) provides plentiful examples of similar alarmist claims in New Zealand. She writes that, since the 1970s, various social movements, such as feminism, religious conservatism, the child protection movement and the rape crisis movement, have contributed to a culture of fear by pursuing claims that women and children face significant risk of physical and sexual abuse by men (Hood, 2001: 48-49). Hood cites numerous New Zealand publications that ignore
reliable research methods, pre-empt results and manipulate statistics, in order to lend credence to unsubstantiated claims about the widespread nature of sexual abuse. Some claims, such as ‘All men are potential rapists’ (Hood, 2001: 39), come across as overt feminist propaganda, but when pursued with sufficient tenacity, these claims may gain credibility, especially if they are disseminated by ‘reliable’ professionals with government backing. For example, Hood writes that in 1981, one feminist academic, Miriam Saphira: ‘[E]mbarked on a Mental Health Foundation-sponsored lecture tour of New Zealand. Her main message was: “one out of four girls will be molested before she turns eighteen”. As a result, within a few years Saphira’s “one in four” claim became widely accepted as a reliable estimate of the prevalence of sexual abuse’ (Hood, 2001: 52). As both Hood’s and Furedi’s research indicates, similar claims are still being made today. The people who make these exaggerated statements are not concerned with the facts, but with the ways in which these facts may be distorted in order to manipulate the public’s response to the given issue. Thus, as Hood’s research in particular makes clear, a moral panic may, in fact, be the objective. As McRobbie (1994) asserts:

'It should not be forgotten that the root of the moral panic is about instilling fear in people and, in so doing, encouraging them to try to turn away from the complexity and the visible social problems of everyday life and either to retreat into a ‘fortress mentality’ – a feeling of hopelessness, political powerlessness and paralysis – or to adopt a gung-ho ‘something must be done about it’ attitude (McRobbie, 1994: 199).

People are given the impression that there are large, inescapable risks in society that impinge directly upon them. This dystopian vision gives rise to feelings of impotence, isolation and paranoia, or instead, to the urge to respond proactively to seek a cure or, at least, self protection. Consequently, in the latter case, people are driven increasingly to search for safety.

6.2 The risk society and the martial arts

6.2.1 Martial arts training and the search for safety

The phenomenon described here has potential application in explaining the growing practice of martial arts. Martial arts training may be one method used by people to combat feelings of fear and panic arising from risk consciousness; in fact, Maliszewski (1992b) argues that martial arts training may be ‘a method of conquering
physical fears and anxieties that emanate from living in a hostile environment' (Maliszewski, 1992b: 7). Martial arts training may satisfy a need for self-protection or self-empowerment, and may lead to enhanced self-confidence and self-esteem through increasing physical competence and the successful achievement of goals.

Several interview respondents made the connection between heightened risk consciousness and the mass media. According to one Tai Chi teacher:

You see a commercial on TV [that] starts by saying the amount of break-ins now has doubled in the last six years, or one in five women is going to be attacked. ... But they're really working on fear at the moment, to my mind, because nearly all commercials are based on fear: fear of not being accepted, fear of not being healthy, fear of being overweight or not having the money to do this or that, and it's quite a negative way of selling things; but it's effective, because it's one of the strongest emotions.

As a result, he believed that increasingly, people perceived themselves to be at risk, But it's only perception. You project your ideas and you see the results. So if you're projecting fear – especially Americans and the victim business at the moment, 'I'm a victim' – that's what you're going to come across. And I think, if you get back to Tai Chi, where the intent is very important, you're learning that in a very practical way. First of all, you imagine your hand coming up and then your hand comes up; you imagine yourself going out on a dark night and getting beaten up, and of course you get beaten up. So I think that if you listen to the messages from the media nowadays: 'It's a dangerous world,' 'It's unsafe for a woman to be out there alone,' the minute you believe that you're going to bring it about.

Similarly, a male Seido seventh dan asked, 'Realistically, how many people have ever been attacked in their lives? Very few. And if it wasn't for the media announcing people getting mugged, children and that, I mean for most people it wouldn't touch them all that much.'

Although the mass media communicates messages of risk and fear to a universal audience, women are usually the prime targets, being depicted as more 'at risk' than men. Women's vulnerability is a very pervasive ideology; historically, in many cultures, women have been considered in need of protection. Even the women's liberation movement subscribed in large part to this concept, as a considerable amount of feminist theory and propaganda is premised on the notion that women are at risk from, or victimised by, men. It is not surprising, therefore, that in an atmosphere of
risk consciousness with a focus on lack of personal safety, women are supposed to face the greatest amount of risk. Cox’s (1999) research suggests that, in response, women perceive a larger number of environments to be unsafe, perceive a greater degree of danger in these environments, and spend more time preserving their safety than do men (Cox, 1999: 2).

The data I collected suggested an interesting trend regarding the difference between men’s and women’s perceptions of personal danger. In the main, when talking about their fears, female respondents tended to visualise attack situations in which they were helpless, passive and often unwitting victims. Those women who had never experienced an attack described fears that were usually quite amorphous; that is, that often they had no clear concept of their aggressor and did not know why, exactly, they held such fears. For instance, a female Zen Do Kai brown belt confessed that: ‘I have this horrible fear of home invasions. I don’t know why, exactly, but I just do. I have had periods of quite, like, really bad fears and not being able to sleep because I’ve been really worried about it.’ In contrast, the male respondents inclined towards more structured, specific concepts of personal risk. Rather than regarding themselves as unwitting victims, they generally described attack situations in which they were complicit, possibly also aggressive. In their case, the attack situations also tended to be more clearly defined and rationalised. For example, one Aikido fifth kyu said that he had felt at risk when he had ‘been in pub fights and things, had guys come at me on the street,’ and a male Zen Do Kao shodan-ho recalled that: ‘I nearly had a bit of a scrap at a cricket game and it didn’t come up to much, but I thought at the time, it would have been handy to at least know something. And we had the odd biff at rugby and things like that.’ These comments support Cox’s (1999) argument that, in general, women perceive danger as being both physical and sexual, whereas men understand it as being physical only.

Although the mass media is responsible largely for promoting and instilling fear of personal attack, it also presents ‘solutions’ to that fear. One solution is to seek a means of self-defence in the form of martial arts skills. The ‘tough women’ discussed
in the previous chapter, for example, regularly choose this mode of operation.\textsuperscript{20} It is possible that this perception is especially popular in New Zealand where other options (guns in handbags, for instance) are not part of our self-defence culture. Importantly, though, the majority of women’s personal safety fears revolve around home invasions, knife attacks, or rape or similar assault – all of which lend themselves to close-range self-defence. Therefore, women may imagine that if they take the initiative, they will not be passive victims but will have a chance with martial arts skills if they know what to do. This message from the mass media is probably a key reason why martial arts training is seen as a means of effective self-defence.

When asked why she thought women felt the need for martial arts training and self-defence, a female Zen Do Kai brown belt replied:

I think a lot of women feel very vulnerable nowadays, whether it’s to do with higher crime rates or that type of thing? Yeah, that’s quite possible. But I think that we maybe realise that there’s a lot of scary, bad people out there and we’re not necessarily protected from them. And I think even just unwanted attention; you know ... there’s been times when I’ve, say, been in a club and a guy’s come up and said, ‘Do you want to dance?’ You’re not interested, so you say, ‘No,’ and he grabs you by the wrist or the hand. And you’re able to use a move to get out of that – just very subtly, but it shows that you will not be dragged onto the dance floor or mucked around with. And I think that’s a great sense of power, [and] I think a lot of women want to feel empowered, and I do know certain friends of ours at martial arts, who have martial arts specifically because they want to feel empowered, through perhaps events that have happened out of their control ... I like the idea of being able to look after myself. And I think this comes down again to being a modern woman, living in the twenty-first century, and I want to be independent, I want to be able to look after myself, and part of that is being able to look after myself physically, when I’m out and about.

She felt that, for women in particular, the occurrence of an attack was almost a foregone conclusion. She continued: ‘For me, I think all women are at risk. For sure, and I think if you can be prepared for what’s going to happen, then that’s great ... I

\textsuperscript{20} Although, ostensibly, tough women appear to show that women can (and should?) be autonomous, fearless, and therefore safe, the simultaneous underlying message is that tough women are rare, they deviate from the norm, and therefore, generally, women are not safe.
think that if you have had some training it gives you confidence. And that is the key... it is having the confidence that will get you out of it.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition (and in response), the martial arts commodify themselves partly on the basis of self-defence. Thus, it can be argued that the risk society motivates people to train in the martial arts, but is also used by the martial arts community, in that their marketing takes advantage of people’s risk perceptions.

Consequently, many people elect martial arts training as a self-defence option. When the questionnaire and interview respondents were asked why they began studying martial arts, one of the most popular explanations was ‘self-defence’. It is important to note that, although the ‘self-defence’ response occurred more frequently amongst the female trainees, a considerable number of men also claimed that they sought martial arts training for the same reason. One male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho claimed that:

\begin{quote}
You see it in the news every day - people are getting attacked, home invasions, kidnappings during the day, and things like that, which is quite freaky and scary. And I think, because a lot more people are aware of those sort of situations, they understand that there’s no use getting into one of those situations and then going: ‘What am I going to do?’ They’re being a lot more proactive and trying to skill themselves up for those situations.
\end{quote}

A male Taekwondo yondan began martial arts training because, ‘I had been in a fight, and didn’t want that to happen again.’ A female Seido Karate blue tip wrote that she started training for ‘the ability to defend myself.’ Similarly, a female Seido brown belt felt that it ‘was important for me to ... learn to defend myself.’ A female Seido yondan provided an almost identical response in that she commenced training to ‘learn to defend myself’. A male Zen Do Kai blue belt started in order to develop ‘self-confidence ... [and the] ability to defend myself,’ and a female Zen Do Kai blue belt also wrote that she began for ‘self-defence’. Interestingly, although all these respondents wished to defend themselves, they never specified against what or whom. Furthermore, it was not only adults who exhibited risk consciousness. A 13-year-old

\textsuperscript{21} The martial arts market themselves actively to women, but male trainees still outnumber female trainees. This may be because some women are reluctant to sacrifice their ‘femininity’ in a gendered culture. Alternatively, it may arise from the desire of many women to find a ‘quick fix’ for their fear, as many may not see the point of training in a martial art for five years when they might be attacked next week. These women tend to seek out short, tailored self-defence courses, like the ones designed by Sue Lytollis (see Chapter Three).
female Aikido white belt wrote that, 'I expected [martial arts] to be a way of
defending myself and so that I wouldn’t be totally helpless', because, 'I have a friend
who is kind of paranoid about that stuff (being attacked) so I am learning self-
defence!' Noticeably, it was her friend who was 'paranoid', but the respondent herself
who was learning martial arts, which demonstrates the 'contagious' nature of risk
consciousness.

Because 'self-defence' is a common reason for beginning martial arts training, it is
useful to consider the nature of the self-defence tuition offered generally by the
martial arts, and how it compares with students' prior expectations. It seems that,
among my respondents, the 'search for safety' was complicated by the differences
between their preconceptions and the actuality of training, and that this discrepancy
influenced the reasons why they continued with their training.

Certainly most martial arts provide training in techniques that will facilitate effective
self-defence. For instance, as well as the general public, martial arts students include
police officers, prison officers, mental health nurses, social workers, security guards
and people in other 'high risk' occupations who desire practical self-defence skills
with 'real life' applications. Students who train in the martial arts over a period of
time become conditioned to fighting. Women students, especially, become
significantly more conscious of male strength. However, perhaps more importantly,
the martial arts provide students with the experience and the confidence to be able to
handle themselves in dangerous situations not only physically, but psychologically
and emotionally. A male Zen Do Kai godan suggested that the martial arts were over-
advertised for physical self-defence and that, essentially, martial arts training offered
internal self-defence strategies. He contended that:

It's a bit of a marketing gimmick actually ... the whole martial arts self-defence thing's
a bit of a misnomer. I think what it does, though, when clubs advertise self-defence, is
that it's more the ability to be able to stand up for yourself and it comes back to that
kind of inner strength thing. Perhaps if you're in a situation, it's not necessarily saying,
'I have the skills to be able to deal with this situation in that there are three people who
want to attack me and in thirty seconds they'll all be lying on the floor.' But it's more
the ability of saying, 'Well, I'm under a bit of pressure here; there are options available
to me, I have to stop and be calm and think about how I'm going to handle this
situation.' So perhaps the term self-defence is not necessarily pertaining to the physical
self-defence of oneself. In saying that, though, obviously the techniques that people learn can have a self-defence focus, but the hardest thing is to be able to apply them under a pressure situation.

Additionally, martial arts training may encourage students to avoid potentially dangerous situations altogether. The same respondent went on to illustrate his point by sharing the following anecdote:

I remember listening to a guy one night at an Aikido school who went up to the instructor and he said, ‘Sensei, what would you do if someone threw a punch at you?’ And [the instructor] said, ‘Well, why would someone want to throw a punch at you?’ And he said, ‘Well, maybe you’re walking down an alley and somebody wants to attack you?’ ‘Why would they want to attack you?’ ‘Well, you’re in this dark alley at two o’clock in the morning.’ ‘What would you be doing in a dark alley at two o’clock in the morning?’ You know? And it’s like, I was just sitting there grinning, going, ‘Mate, you just don’t get it!’ ... There are a lot of very good martial artists that you talk to who’ve never had any sorts of problems because they don’t put themselves in those types of situations.

A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho agreed that martial arts had given him the confidence to remain calm under pressure and to implement avoidance strategies, saying that, ‘I’ve only ever been in a couple of street situations that never turned into a full-on fight and, in a way, martial arts helped me get out of that without a fight.’

There are, however, some public expectations to which many martial arts styles do not conform. Because self-defence is the prominent selling point for many martial arts, many students expect to be taught only ‘self-defence’. Most instructors were quick to point out that the martial arts are significantly more complex. According to another male Zen Do Kai godan, ‘You come into a martial art club, you’re not coming to a self-defence club. I mean, the name above the door says it all: martial art club. We’re learning a martial art, here. Sure, martial arts at the same time does look after you and it does give you self-defence, but it gives you more than self-defence.’ Some instructors even found this expectation to be insulting, or contrary to their practice. A male Seido Karate shodan claimed that: ‘Many styles focus on the physical and on fighting and self-defence. To do this is to insult much of what the founders and
"masters" wished to achieve. There is a great difference between Seido Karate and a "Tae Bo" video.22

If this is the case, it also implies conversely that a person could be good at 'martial arts', but not necessarily good at self-defence. As one male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho said, 'I think grading really shows out that there are people who can grade and are very proficient at martial arts, but it doesn't make them a good fighter, and it doesn't mean they're going to be any good in a self-defence situation.' Similarly, another male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho pointed out that:

Martial arts isn't just fighting. I mean, if you're not a good fighter that doesn't make you a bad martial artist. Like, your kata could be good. I've seen people who aren't that good fighters, but they're wicked at kata and really, really sharp and really good technique. They just perhaps don't have the killer mentality. I'm probably more like that; I'm probably better at kata than I am at sparring.

In fact, it is possible to study the martial arts for a lifetime and never engage in a real, spontaneous fighting situation. Therefore, a person can grasp the principles of the 'art form', but may lack ability in applying them practically. This counteracts the popular view that 'if you know it, you can use it'.

Because most martial arts are taught according to a complex system which covers a multitude of techniques and applications, it takes several years for a student to become proficient. Consequently, any self-defence benefits that a student might derive from martial arts training will come only after years of practice. However, consumer culture and popular representations encourage people to expect immediate gratification. For example, a male Aikido godan made the point that: 'For coming to learn self-defence, the thing I try and stress to [new students] - I don't know whether it goes down well or not - but you can't really learn in ten easy lessons. So if they wish to learn self-defence, yes, by learning Aikido they will learn some physical skills. But it's not a short term process.' A male Zen Do Kai godan admitted that, as a young man, 'The perception I had about martial arts was how easy it was to beat [everyone] or defend yourself.' Some students arrive with very unrealistic

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22 Pioneered by American Billy Blanks in the mid-1990s, Tae Bo is a style of aerobic exercise that consists of basic martial arts-style moves, such as kicks and punches. Tae Bo is taught in gyms, but videos can be bought for home work-outs. Because Tae Bo is an exercise medium and not a martial art, its concentration is purely physical.
expectations of instant success and amazing skills. Another male Zen Do Kai godan claimed that he had encountered students who expected 'to be able to go: touch here, touch there, and the guy falls over unconscious. That's all you need to know.' He believed that: 'a lot of those ideas are a product of the media and the movies and fantasy and those types of things, really.'

Many people who become involved with martial arts for basic self-defence may not be looking for a lifelong journey, but a quick fix for a lack of self-confidence or problems of sexual and/or other harassment. They may feel that their needs are not being met through their training and may discontinue. As another male Zen Do Kai godan remarked:

It's just ... how they look at what self-defence is. At different levels of martial arts we teach different things. I mean, if you stayed for three or four years you'd probably learn quite a lot of things to look after yourself. If we haven't given them what they perceive in six months, they'll go, 'Am I learning something? Will this defend me?' So they maybe go and have a look at something else. So it's really what they perceive in martial arts. People go on, 'Can we have self-defence? So that means nobody should be able to touch me by, what sort of time?' Or are we convincing them that this will protect them? So, it's the drop out thing, you don't know what's going through people's minds and how they perceive it. Maybe because I'm on the wrong tangent; I'm going for the quality of martial arts and the art of martial arts.

It seems that attrition in the early stages of training is particularly common in arts that appear initially to be less violent and more abstract. According to a male Tai Chi teacher:

I have had students who wanted to learn [self-defence]. They just couldn't wait to get on to, 'How do you use this? How do you use that?' Well, first of all you've got to learn to do it properly. So I found those students were so oriented on using it, 'Oh, this'll never work!' and that sort of stuff, that they didn't last very long, they would go off to something that was more practical.

The situation is not improved by the fact that what students do learn may be more complicated than they first expected. The complexity of the techniques may mean that students find them difficult to learn, or they may realise that they would be unable to execute the techniques properly in the short term. This further thwarts their sense of dealing with their perceived needs for self-defence.
A paradox is established in this discussion of responses to risk consciousness, in that people who seek martial arts training as a way to protect themselves against perceived dangers are in fact placing themselves in greater danger than that faced in their everyday lives. Furedi (1998) acknowledges that, ironically, 'the search for safety is bound to backfire. Indeed, the search for safety is no less “risky” than any other human activity' (Furedi, 1998: 12). In addition to the false sense of security that may come with too little knowledge and too much confidence, martial arts students may encounter other physical and emotional risks. For example, it is not uncommon for trainees to sustain bleeding noses, sprains, bruises, torn ligaments, broken bones and cuts, and to suffer physical exhaustion during some advanced gradings; none of which would probably occur during their normal daily routines. Staged attack situations in the classes may oblige trainees to sacrifice emotional safety, and the relative unpredictability of sparring can also be intimidating. If some trainees have suffered a previous physical attack (street assault, domestic violence), the situations they meet with while training may present challenges. McCaughey (1997) supports this last observation in her research. She confirms that mock attacks are sometimes traumatic for female participants; those who have had similar real-life experiences remember them and find the mock attacks frightening; even those who have not feel like they are 'fac[ing] their worst nightmares' (McCaughey, 1997: 62-4). In addition, trainees who have suffered a previous attack may be faced with the disturbing realisation that they are being armed with skills similar to those of their aggressors. Furthermore, as Twemlow (1996: 102) points out, it is not only victims, but attackers, who could be attracted to martial arts training.

Naturally, such testimonies raise the question of why (especially female) martial arts trainees place themselves in situations that have the potential to be physically and emotionally dangerous. This question is particularly applicable to those trainees who commit to the experience for longer periods. Naturally, some may relish the thrill of competition, others may enjoy the physical workout, while some may take pleasure in the practice of an art form. However, Rojek (2000) suggests that, for those who become involved to deal with personal fear, it is precisely the physical and emotional risk involved in such activity that makes it attractive. In his discussion of ‘abnormal forms of leisure’, Rojek defines ‘risk-taking activity’ as behaviour that places the individual’s physical or mental health or sense of ordered existence in danger. This
definition covers all kinds of hazardous activity, from skydiving to drug-taking (Rojek, 2000: 151-2), but can be applied to martial arts. Rojek argues (via Lyng’s (1990) study of ‘edgework’) that risk-taking activity is pleasurable, as pushing one’s limits elicits feelings of self-actualisation and self-realisation. As a female Zen Do Kai brown belt explained:

I look forward to [sparring]; although it challenges me a lot, I almost look forward to it because I like that challenge, because I know that it’s going to make me a better person. Not just necessarily a better sparrer or fighter, but actually a better person, because I will have faced something that I may be afraid of. I mean, I’m not so much frightened of it now, but when I began I was frightened of getting hurt, or broken ribs.

The risk-taking activities to which Rojek (2000) and McCaughey (1997) refer must take place in controlled environments in order to ensure their success. Although martial arts and self-defence course students may experience injury at some time, instructors try hard to prevent this from happening. Therefore, the risk society safety implications for martial arts should be considered, especially the extent to which risk consciousness has affected martial arts practice and philosophy.

Significantly, the practice of martial arts has become a safety situation. Students of styles that include striking techniques are equipped with Shin-pads, mouthguards and gloves to protect themselves and their training partners. Styles that incorporate falling and throwing techniques often hold their classes on specially padded mats. Instructors are expected to gain first-aid certification. In some cases, instructors must insure themselves and their dojos, for one result of risk consciousness is an increasing litigiousness in society; for instance, in Australia, instructors have been sued by students who have been injured during a class (Jones et al., 1994: 121-22).

The content of some martial arts classes has also been modified to include safer and more informed exercises and approaches garnered from sports science, medicine and psychology. Although some styles have devised classes to teach tough, street-oriented techniques in response to perceived risk, the majority of styles have actually made their classes less challenging to accommodate a wider range of participants, especially those who are weaker or more timid. A male Zen Do Kai godan described how, over

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23 Therefore, waiting around to be assaulted or raped would not constitute a ‘risk-taking activity’ in Rojek’s terms.
a period of twenty years in New Zealand, Zen Do Kai had become a more accessible, safer martial art. He explained that:

The guys that were training [in the beginning] tended to be hard boys ... perhaps they were guys from other martial arts clubs that didn’t like the disciplinary factor in traditional martial arts, or maybe they’d been turfed out for doing something, beating up on somebody, or a lot of them were just sort of tough guys from the streets. A lot of them had rather chequered backgrounds. So, it tended to be pretty hardcore. ... It's become a lot more scientific and there's been a lot more technical input. There’s been a lot more analysis of things, a lot of streamlining, it’s become a lot more structured. It’s become less demanding physically, but more challenging mentally. ... It’s become a lot more balanced. Because what people don’t realise is that martial arts obviously has to appeal to a wide array of people, so you have perhaps a forty year old family guy with three kids who might be a lawyer or an accountant or something that doesn’t want to go to work with black eyes and dislocated fingers and whatever else, and then by the same token you’ve got the twelve or thirteen year old kids that want to run round and burn off energy, and mixed with that you know perhaps you’ve got people who want to get into it for physical reasons, for the fighting side of things.

It is important to many instructors that students feel safe, secure and unintimidated in the dojo. A male Seido Karate seventh dan argued that the martial arts had real purpose in this respect, because, ‘There’s not too many things in life that people can be tested to their limits in a relatively safe place.’ He explained that, ‘Even though we practise a contact style, there’s still obviously quite a degree of control attached to it’ and pointed out that:

In the former system of karate that I did [Kyokushinkai], beginners would come along and start fighting straight away. Well, that kind of system is good if you want to breed tough people, but people who survived in that system were tough anyway; they were tough when they started, they didn’t have to develop that, they already had it. Whereas I feel that it’s more important to develop skills and do that in a relatively safe environment; that’s important from our perspective, that safety.

Despite the good intentions apparent in this philosophy, it is possible to argue that by making the classes easier, safer and more affirming for students, instructors may place students in greater potential danger. In other words, by ensuring students’ safety in the short term, instructors may be sacrificing students’ safety in the long term. For example, a female Seido yondan believed that allowances were made for female
trainees in her style and that this was problematic, as they would be successful within the system, but be ineffectual as fighters. She asserted that:

You've got women out there now that aren't really doing it. They are being allowed to do it in that way, but they're not - there comes a time, for example, when you start to fight, that the barrier's kind of been dropped a bit, so women aren't expected to get to the same level and fight the males on an even keel. So it's changed. There's more women now because it's easier. And that might sound quite a sexist comment, but it's true. I mean, you know, I can remember instances where men wouldn't want to partner me because I was female. Now that just wouldn't happen nowadays because they wouldn't get away with it. But when I started, if a male refused to partner me because I was female, I just fought harder and got fitter. So I just think it's changed, we've made allowances, really, which is a good thing, it's a very good thing. ... Men have had to learn to be tolerant, and they are. Women got very hurt some years back. But a lot of them don't know they're not getting hurt.

A male Zen Do Kai godan also questioned the long term value of a more sympathetic type of martial arts training and the extent to which instructors were actually meeting students' needs:

There's a certain danger in that ... In bringing students through martial arts, do you 'baby' them to some degree? ... And perhaps you put them through gradings that aren't that physically demanding because you feel that you don't have any right to impose your standards on somebody else; or do you set a standard and push people through a very physical grading? And that's quite a dilemma, I reckon, because there was one thing about coming through the way some of us older guys did, is that it wasn't technically very good, and the skill sets that you were learning weren't that great. But you learnt to take a beating, or give a beating, and that's a lesson for life in itself. You kind of think, Well, if I could survive this, I can survive anything! But the problem is, of course, if you did that, you'd have a class full of six people.

Although students commonly turn to martial arts training for self-defence, it seems that their search for safety is problematised by the incongruence between their expectations of self-defence and the experience actually offered; specifically, the length of time needed to become proficient, the complexity of the techniques, the physical and/or emotional risks involved in training, and the wide focus on aspects of the martial art unrelated to self-defence. This may go some way towards explaining why so many students pull out during the early stages of training. It is probable that risk-driven safety considerations may encourage more students to continue their training, but, significantly, none of the questionnaire or interview respondents listed
‘self-defence’ as a reason for continuing with martial arts training. There were four main reasons for this change in perception. First, over time, students tended to gain sufficient physical and personal confidence to no longer feel threatened by potential aggressors. Second, the general self-defence awareness acquired during the training process brought many students to the realisation that their fears were not a true reflection of reality. Third, some students eventually questioned their own motivation for learning self-defence. Many felt that training for years for a fight they would perhaps never get into was a shallow reason for the long-term study of a martial art. Fourth, as the students engaged with their martial arts, they tended to recognise and privilege more abstract facets of the experience, such as the social aspect, or historical, aesthetic, philosophical or spiritual components. As one male Seido Karate black tip said,

Self-defence – I’m sure some people come up to Seido and think, ‘I’d like to learn karate for self-defence.’ That changes. I think when you do anything for several years you must change – your life changes, so your perception or what you want out of it definitely changes. And it’s a journey, too, there’s no end to it.

Similarly, in the experience of a male Seido seventh dan, ‘What they start for might be [self-defence], but what they carry on for are the other beneficial aspects of it.’

6.2.2 Martial arts training and the search for health and fitness

Many of the identified risks in the risk society are related to human health. These risks operate on a global level (for example, depletion of the ozone layer, water and air pollution, nuclear power), and on a personal level (for example, germs, obesity, habits such as smoking). Society has become increasingly health conscious (Furedi, 1998), demonstrated by the growing number of gymnasiums, the sale of vitamins and other ‘health’ supplements, the development of antibacterial household products, and so on. The popularity of ‘natural medicine’ also suggests a mistrust of industrial processes. As a result, people are given the impression that many aspects of contemporary society may be threatening to their health and wellbeing; therefore, they are encouraged to search for some means of protecting themselves.

24 Just as some people find martial arts ‘too hard’ for self-defence training, it may be that others join a martial art club for self-defence training, gain sufficient skill to be satisfied or reassured, and then discontinue.
Once more, the mass media is instrumental in disseminating such messages. In particular, physical health is often portrayed as being related to other kinds of ‘health’ (mental, social), and to improved performance in all areas of a person’s life. It is implied that if one does not have physical health, one will not be effective as a human being.

Consequently, martial arts training may also be pursued for health reasons. The holistic form of exercise gained from martial arts training may fulfil a desire for improved health, fitness and physical performance.

Amongst the questionnaire and interview respondents, after ‘self-defence’, the most common reason for beginning martial arts study was ‘fitness’. Several also wrote that they desired ‘to become healthy’. For many respondents, martial arts training was considered an ‘interesting’ alternative to going to the gym. Although the majority of martial arts practised in New Zealand provide fitness and improved health, for some styles in particular, this is a major focus. For example, Tai Chi is extremely effective as a martial art, but most students practise it for health and relaxation, without any knowledge of its combat applications.

The data showed that most respondents who took up a martial art for reasons of health and/or fitness continued training for different reasons. Chiefly this is because as soon as students started to feel fitter and healthier, their fear alleviated. Although some students continued training to maintain their levels of health, fitness and relaxation, it appeared that these experiences alone were not sufficient to support the concentrated study of a martial art. As with self-defence, many respondents said that as they developed a deeper appreciation of their martial art, they started to favour less concrete elements; in particular, many mentioned that their focus had shifted towards the ‘pure study’ of their art form, or towards an understanding of their martial art as a ‘way of life’. For example, a female Seido brown belt began training ‘to become fitter and learn self-defence ... [and] better co-ordination.’ Her reasons for continuing were very different and reflected a change in her perception of the martial art, which included a more holistic understanding of the practice. She explained that:

It is far more complex, not only in a physical way, but in an intellectual way to apply mind, spirit and body. ... It is far more important then I ever thought it could be. I need
to train: it has become an essential part of my life. It is not another sport that I will do, then give up – I can do this forever, regardless of age, situation. Many sports have time limits, single goals. In martial arts one never reaches the top – they keep on growing. ... It has helped me achieve a lot more in life by allowing me to be more confident in my ability and know my limitations, and be more understanding and sometimes more determined and mentally tough.

6.2.3 Martial arts training and the search for belonging

One of the defining characteristics of the risk society is the process of individualisation. Furedi (1998) writes that the 1980s saw an acceleration in the disintegration of social solidarity and communities. During this period, virtually all forms of collective institutions became weakened. Binding relationships lost their salience, giving rise to an atmosphere of mistrust and, consequently, an intense sense of isolation (Furedi, 1998: 129, 171), reinforcing people’s perception of powerlessness.

Individualisation without a parallel process of reintegration into some new social network can intensify the feeling of isolation and mistrust (Furedi, 1998: 141). People may seek an alternative social structure to give themselves a sense of belonging and security, and this may account, in part, for the increasing popularity of the martial arts. Although the martial arts are not ‘team sports’ and focus largely on the progression of the individual, at the same time, most styles operate according to a pseudo-familial structure that incorporates shared philosophies and values. The sense of belonging and camaraderie that results from being affiliated to a club reinforces social solidarity and personal identity.

A significant number of the questionnaire and interview respondents stated that one of their key reasons for choosing to take up a martial art was a search for camaraderie and social support. For example, one of the reasons why a male Seido Karate blue belt began was to ‘meet new people’, and he continued because he ‘made new friends’. A female Seido yondan continued training because she enjoyed ‘the training and the people.’ A female Seido brown belt wrote that ‘I have met “like-minded people”.’ A male Zen Do Kai blue belt began because of ‘family and friends’ and also continued because he had made ‘new friends’. Similarly, a male Zen Do Kai brown belt began
for 'social reasons', and a male Zen Do Kai blue belt began for 'socialisation'. A male Taekwondo yondan started his martial art because the 'atmosphere [was] friendly and effective.' A female Zen Do Kai black tip noted that one key personal change in her experience had been 'more confidence ... in general socialising.' Significantly, many respondents also identified social support as a chief reason for continuing training.

A male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho claimed that the social aspect was one of the key factors in his motivation to begin, and continue with, training. He felt that martial arts training offered a very social experience, despite popular perceptions of strict discipline and internal focus. He recalled that:

When I first started, I went along and I was motivated, but what really made a difference was how people behaved towards each other. Everyone was friendly, and that's still the case. And that really keeps you going, because you know you can go along and they're not just people, you don't just go to a room - not like going to aerobics or something that you don't know anyone there and you do your thing and buggle off - you go along, and everyone's your mate, you know who everyone is and you chat away, it's not all strict; have a wee chat in between doing techniques and you learn things about people, go with people for a drink after training and things like that. ... I mean people talk about martial arts as being strict; well, go to an aerobics class. You're not allowed to talk. They have an instructor up the front, all they do is show you the moves and you just copy them. And people think martial arts is like that, you go along, you line up, the guy at the front says, 'Do this, this and this,' and that's what you do, and you do that for a whole session. Well, that's not what you do. You partner up with people - you're never partnering up with the same person, and so you train with all these different people, you get to know all these different people, chat away to them. I mean, you're not quiet while you're sparring, or while you're doing yakusuko, you're talking to them: 'Oh, what do you think of this?' or, 'How about if I do it that way?' And you just chat away.

A female Zen Do Kai brown belt believed that her art's structured system contributed to her feeling of belonging and support. She explained that:

With martial arts, I've found that because it's very structured: white, blue green, brown, black, you know where you're going, you've got that support there. Although it's an individual sport, I always feel it is like a team sport, because you're there with your colleagues all the time. And I think with a lot of other sports, although you have opponents, you don't necessarily train with them. It's very much motivating yourself to get out there and do it. And that can be really tricky. Like, you know, I used to know with going to the squash courts for practice for two hours after school by myself, it's not as much fun as going to the dojo and catching up with your friends for two hours -
totally different. So, that’s one of the main reasons why I’ve actually stuck with Zen Do Kai, is that friendship, the camaraderie.

Practitioners in other martial arts also believed that having one’s place within a system contributed to an atmosphere of social acceptance and support because it provided a point of constancy regardless of other events or commitments in the student’s life. A male Seido Karate seventh dan gave the following explanation:

If someone wants to do [a martial art] in the long haul, then obviously their motivation and their perception of it will change, and their intensity levels will change from time to time. And I think one of the reasons why Seido’s been successful in terms of membership and of retaining people over a long period of time is because it has allowed for people’s individual intensity levels to change throughout the span of their training. So you’ll accept that sometimes people can put in a really good effort, but sometimes they can’t, because obviously there are more important things in their lives. And from my perspective that needs to be taken into account. So what happens is, sometimes we’ll have people drop out for twenty years, they’ll come back, they still have their place in the line, they still have their turangawaewae – is that what they call it in Māori? A place to stand. And that is, I think, absolutely critical in the dojo.

Similarly, a male Seido black tip felt that the ongoing sense of unity was, ‘Amazing. I know just in the last eighteen months, two years, just how many have come back exactly like that, and they stand in their place. It’s amazing how many have come back from fifteen, twenty years ago.’

The system also provides acceptance and support for minority groups. The Christchurch Seido Karate dojo, for example, includes a number of lesbian students. According to a female Seido yondan, ‘I think they just started to feel more accepted. I mean, for a long time there were none ... but I’m thinking the first one would have started training in the early 1990s ... I just think it’s like where one has felt accepted then another comes along and another comes along. There’s probably a core now of about ten. And they’re very, very hard trainers, all of them.’ Similarly, the male Seido seventh dan believed that lesbians trained, ‘because they feel safe there, you know, which is great.’

This solidarity also extends from within the dojo to outside activities. A male Zen Do Kai godan with experience in the security industry said how working with fellow martial arts students made him feel safer and more effective. Significantly, he felt that
his martial arts experience had given him the ability to trust others (the antithesis of the risk society). He said:

I think there's some interesting things that came from the security work and one of the things that really stands out for me was the ability to put your faith in somebody else. And this is where a lot of the brotherhood thing, the backing side of it came from. And if you have a tried and true trusted friend that you train with and that you have faith in, you know that if you got into some kind of situation that person was going to be right there with you; they weren't going to back down and they weren't going to leave you in the lurch, regardless of the odds. So that created, to some degree, almost this brotherhood-type thing.

Because of the ongoing support provided by many martial arts, those who join a martial art club in a search for social companionship and belonging are more likely to continue training for this same reason. Indeed, some respondents who began training for different reasons, such as self-defence or fitness, continued because of the camaraderie.

6.2.4 Martial arts training and the search for meaning and purpose

Sjöberg (1987) notes that a further consequence of the process of individualisation is an increased feeling of existential anxiety. He argues that the weakening of collective institutions, commonly-shared values and ideological systems has meant that there is no longer a uniform structure in private life (Sjöberg, 1987: 123) and people have lost their sense of purpose, self-respect and identity (Sjöberg, 1987: 117). Although this loss of collective meaning and purpose is associated with the risk society, it is also characteristic of an increasingly secularised society. It may be, therefore, that some people are drawn to study martial arts to compensate for a lack of tradition and salient belief systems in their everyday lives.

Most of the martial arts are underpinned with some kind of philosophy. Although these philosophies are not always religious, they still function as belief systems. Despite Maslow's (1968) suggestion that philosophising may actually be driven by a need for security, these shared values may contribute to a sense of order and meaning in students' lives. Additionally, because many of the philosophies are based upon ideas of human nature and ways of understanding the world, they may provide an
ethical or moral guide where before students had none. This aspect is of considerable importance to some students; for example, a male Seido Karate shodan said that, ‘I and others continue [training] because of a consistency and strength of beliefs in Seido that is placed at a higher moral standard than much of life.’

Participants may also gain a sense of order and meaning through the regular, established patterns extant in martial arts training. Donohue (1991) suggests that much of the attraction of the martial arts stems from ritual performances which symbolically assist the individual in dealing with a number of existential questions related, for example, to mortality, the quest for control, the hunt for power, and the search for identity. Most martial arts classes incorporate some element of ritual: the customs, rules and etiquette, and the concomitant discipline and respect were of value to many martial artists in my sample. For example, a male Aikido fifth kyu observed that:

I’ve appreciated the bowing and the ritual stuff, [a] spiritual thing, I think. Discipline is freedom – discipline is an ability to choose. And if you don’t have discipline and you wake up in the morning and you’re feeling a bit groggy, had a big night, can’t be shagged getting up and going to training, then you can’t actually choose to go to training, you’ve got no choice there. If you’ve got the discipline to drag yourself out of bed, then you can say to yourself, ‘Right: do I want to go training?’ You can actually make the choice. All the bowing and things, I think it helps for the whole vibe, you do show respect to your partner. ... It gives you an ability to choose, to build a little bit more about yourself, maybe.

Interestingly, this respondent believed that the ritual and discipline experienced through martial arts training enabled him to exert control over his life, and afforded him a sense of power.

The discipline and respect in the martial arts is facilitated by a hierarchical structure. This hierarchy is more clearly demarcated in certain martial arts (for example, those that use coloured belts to denote rank), but is also present in those that do not provide any obvious outward manifestation of the student’s level of ability. I have explained how this structure contributes to people’s sense of social support and belonging; however, in this context, a further consequence is that students may derive an inherent sense of foundation from that structure, which helps them to define their sense of self. A male Seido seventh dan remarked that,
My sense of people is that they yearn for some kind of structure, and they desire to have some sort of parameters in their lives, and the karate system as such provides that. Also, it's quite a supportive environment, so you don't have to be the elite athlete to be supported and feel that you're supported. We try and endeavour to support everybody's effort.

According to a female Seido yondan, the support provided by the reliability of the structure has proved therapeutic for many of her students:

You certainly see people change. ... We've seen massive changes in people, and women coming through who have been abused - serious abuse, sexual abuse, whatever, and they've ended up happy, adjusted people. Not simply as a result of karate, but I think it's more as a result of the support and the structure, and the structure that affords the support.

Additionally, the common conception of martial arts training as a lifelong journey and way of life, incorporating a long-term goal, may encourage a greater sense of purpose in the individual. The martial arts journey connotes self-improvement and self-enlightenment over time and so provides an ongoing affirming experience, although the end goal may never be reached. Martial arts training can be sustained over a lifetime, which is a comfort to some trainees, especially senior black belts. For example, a male Zen Do Kai godan valued, 'The forever progression of this art' and a male Taekwondo yondan enjoyed the notion that, 'There is no end if you choose.'

Therefore, those who seek martial arts training as a way to combat existential anxiety arising from risk consciousness are inclined to continue for that reason. Although involvement in a structured martial arts system may salve students' initial anxieties, long-term self-improvement is possible only if students persevere with their study. Indeed, students may combat existential anxiety precisely by undertaking a journey of self-development, thereby gaining a sense of meaning, purpose and self-identity.

6.3 Conclusion

It appears that Beck's notion of the risk society helps explain four different reasons why people begin training in a martial art: to search for safety (self-defence); to search for health and fitness; to search for belonging and social support; and to search for a meaning and purpose in life. However, it seems that the theory is less germane in explaining why people choose to continue training. The data suggest that people who
begin for self-defence continue for a number of different reasons. People who take up training for reasons of health and fitness may continue, in part, for maintenance, but tend to focus mainly on non-physical aspects of the martial arts experience. However, those who seek martial arts training for reasons of social solidarity are more likely to continue for this same reason, as it is an integral part of their enjoyment of the martial arts experience. This is even more so in the case of people who begin training to search for purpose and meaning in life, as their purpose and meaning may be derived directly from their long-term perseverance with training. It may be argued that, in this context, those who join for physical reasons tend to continue for non-physical reasons (which may or may not arise from their experience of physical training), while those who join for non-physical reasons tend to continue for those same reasons; and that over time there is a general shift away from concrete, literal aspects of the martial art, towards a focus on more abstract, metaphysical elements of the experience.

Chapter Seven considers the myth of the black belt. Many respondents saw the black belt as representing the most appealing elements of the martial arts. Consequently, the black belt will be examined in terms of its role in motivating people to begin, and continue with, martial arts training.
Chapter Seven
The Myth of the Black Belt

7.0 Introduction

One of the most widely known features of the martial arts is the black belt. Although the actual function and purpose of the black belt within the many martial arts systems is not understood by most non-martial artists, they hold collective assumptions about what it entails. Like many aspects of the martial arts, but even more so, the black belt is mythologised in popular culture, invested with an auratic quality and associated chiefly with mastery of the martial arts, expert fighting skill, and an insight into abstruse, possibly spiritual, elements of the practice. Additionally, the risk society and its concomitant heightened awareness of personal danger has highlighted martial arts training as a self-defence medium and has exaggerated the status of the black belt within that context. Basically, the black belt represents what is perceived to be the essence of the martial arts, and those who hold the black belt are often considered ‘special’. Therefore, it can be argued that the black belt underlies and crystallises the motives for both beginning, and continuing with, martial arts training identified in the data.

This chapter examines the institutionalised function of the black belt and some of the less obvious features and connotations associated with its symbolic nature. These investigations are developed in relation to the role of the black belt and the grading system in motivating people to begin, and continue with, martial arts training. The chapter investigates some of the popular perceptions of the black belt, and the ways in which the experience of training changes, develops, challenges or reinforces these initial views. Specifically, it looks at the ways in which the black belt is understood at various stages of the training process by considering martial artists’ recollections of the place and meaning of the black belt before commencing training, as coloured grades, and after having gained the black belt.
7.1 What is the black belt?

'The black belt' occupies a prominent position within the martial arts discourse; however, most non-martial artists do not have a clear idea of what the black belt actually represents. In part, this is due to the fact that most of the material about the martial arts available to the public provides little information on the subject. As Orlando (2000: 1) points out, '[D]espite the plethora of martial art publications today, there are surprisingly few books or articles that attempt to define or describe exactly what a black belt is.' A common belief is that the use of coloured belts to indicate a martial artist's rank is an integral, traditional component of the Asian martial arts. In fact, the use of ranks and belts is a relatively new phenomenon. The system was pioneered in Japan by Jigoro Kano, the founder of Judo. He created his 'kyu/dan system' in 1883 and awarded his two top students with a kyu (rank) rating. In 1886 Kano began awarding black sashes to his students to be worn with their practice kimonos. These sashes replaced the traditional scrolls or diplomas used in older martial arts (Ohlenkamp, 2002: 1). Eventually, the kimono was replaced by the full keikogi (uniform with pants) around the turn of the twentieth century. In about 1907 the black sash was replaced by the kuri obi (black belt) (Caile, 2000:1).

Kano decided it was necessary to distinguish between his beginning and advanced students. Initially, beginners wore white belts and were considered unranked, but Kano implemented ten levels of kyu, in which new beginners started at tenth kyu and worked their way to first kyu, before grading to the first dan level, symbolised by the black belt. Kano also introduced the brown belt to be worn by students in preparation for black. In addition, ten levels of dan, or degrees of black belt, were created to classify advanced students. This system emphasised a martial arts hierarchy, in line with a more 'military' perspective. The kyu/dan system proved popular; karate adopted the system in Japan in the early 1900s and the first karate dans were awarded by Gichin Funakoshi to seven students in 1924 (Caile, 2000:2; Gombosi, 2002).

The kyu/dan system is now present in most of the modern Japanese martial arts, and several other arts have adopted the system from the Japanese, such as Taekwondo (Korea) and Zen Do Kai (Australasia). It is only within the last thirty to forty years.

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25 In Taekwondo the term kyu is translated as gup.
that some martial disciplines have used a range of coloured belts to signify different levels of kyu, designed to give students a sense of accomplishment and an outward manifestation of their progress. Almost all of these arts are consistent in their use of white belts for beginners and black belts for first dans and above, but the number, array and order of coloured belts for kyu ranks vary greatly. Some styles will provide a coloured belt for every kyu, while others will have fewer belts (for example, one for every second kyu) but will provide coloured tips on the belts to indicate intermediate kyu ranks. Although all dan ranks wear black belts, some styles may include red, black, white or yellow detailing on the belt to indicate dan rank and/or teaching title, such as stripes on one belt end (Caile, 2000: 3).

The black belt, therefore, has a transitional significance within the kyu/dan system. The attainment of a black belt usually also signifies that a student has gained adequate proficiency in the art to instruct other people. In most of the introduced styles practised in New Zealand, it takes a student, on average, four to seven years of consistent training to gain his or her first black belt. The student undertakes a demanding test to grade to this level and is expected to demonstrate competence in all fundamental aspects of their art. The exact nature of each grading is dependent on the respective style: some gradings will last for several hours and will be physically gruelling, whereas others will place specific focus on technical skill. In addition, the student may be required to reflect on their past martial arts journey by submitting an essay or delivering a speech that describes their motivations, progress and discoveries. In many styles, black belts are also expected to exhibit some personal development, manifested in an application of ethical and moral principles of their martial art. Ultimately, the awarding of a black belt means that the student has completed the equivalent of an apprenticeship and is ready to begin more profound study. This study at dan level comprises the majority of a martial artist's training. For instance, in a sixty year martial arts career, the first five years may be spent working towards black belt and the remaining fifty-five may be spent progressing through the black belt grades.

It must be remembered, however, that Japanese, Japanese-derived and Japanese-inflected martial arts comprise only a proportion of the martial arts studied in New Zealand. The kyu/dan system is certainly not a feature of many other arts. For
example, Chinese styles, such as Tai Chi, Ba Gua and Hsing I, have only teachers or students, and no intermediate ranks, although students are classified within the class based on the length of time they have been studying. In Thai Kickboxing, although ranks are denoted, students and instructors wear coloured singlets rather than belts.

7.2 General perceptions of the black belt

Despite the diversity of martial arts systems, the symbolism of the black belt stands out in the imagination of the public. Those martial artists who wear a black belt are often perceived by the public to be surrounded by mystique, privy to special knowledge, and potentially dangerous. In this context, it is useful to explore the nature and origin of ideas commonly held by non-martial artists about the black belt. Ohlenkamp (2002) argues that the public holds 'general misconceptions' about what the black belt is. He contends that:

The general public today sees black belts worn by very young children, contracts at martial arts schools that guarantee a black belt within a short time, mail-order black belts for sale in martial arts magazines, and demonstrations of black belt skill involving walking on nails, swallowing swords and other feats. This raises general questions about the meaning of the black belt, and threatens the legitimacy of all martial arts ranks (Ohlenkamp, 2002: 1).

My data, being based on respondents involved with martial arts and not the general public, do not provide an account of the ways in which the New Zealand public may read 'the black belt'. Many respondents, however, had strong opinions about public attitudes. They felt that the public held a number of collective assumptions about the meaning, function and significance of the black belt, some of which were fair, but most of which were exaggerated. Of especial note was the way in which 'the black belt' was ubiquitous in conversations about the martial arts. One Zen Do Kai shodan-ho black belt described the general response he encountered on the subject: "'Ooh - black belt!' ... 'I've got to be a black belt.' And that's all most people talk about. If you talk to anybody about martial arts, they talk about black belt. Nobody talks about white belt, they talk about black belt.'

Interestingly, this comment draws attention to the fascination that non-martial artists appear to have with the martial arts ranking system. Often, martial artists find that they tend to be categorised by non-martial artists according to their belt colour or
rank. In itself, this is not wholly unusual or unexpected; for example, rugby players may be asked about their team or club, squash players may be asked the grade they play at, or golfers may be asked to reveal their handicap. Nevertheless, the interest in the black belt exposes the popular perception that all martial arts use belts. According to one Aikido fifth kyu, 'If I'm talking about Aikido to somebody who has no martial arts experience, one of the first questions you get is: "So, what grade are you, what colour's your belt?"' Correspondingly, another Zen Do Kai male shodan-ho recalled:

I go, 'I do martial arts, I do Zen Do Kai.' And they're like, 'Really?' And the first thing people ask you when you tell them that you do martial arts is, 'What belt have you got?' It's the first thing. It's like, 'Well, does it really matter that much?' But to me, who does Zen Do Kai, it doesn't matter so much, you know, I do martial arts. But for some reason, for non-martial artists, it's all about what belt you're up to. And I tell them I'm a black belt and they go, 'Ooh! He's got a black belt! Let's keep away from him!'

According to my interviewees and their interpretation of others' responses, it appears that such questions are more than simply a conventional enquiry into rank, because when non-martial artists discover that their addressee is a black belt, they evince a number of other reactions. One is a response to the black belt/black belts as awe-inspiring. A female Zen Do Kai brown belt revealed that: 'I still get this all the time: people find out you do martial arts, they ask what you're doing, you say you're training for your black belt and they go, "Wow! That's amazing!" It's like you're playing professional tennis or something. It's like, "Wow! You must be amazing!"'

The notion of black belts being 'amazing' in itself is indicative of another widely-held belief, that of black belt representing the ultimate goal or endeavour. People who hold the black belt are often considered expert, and equated with top sports people. One male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho claimed that a common perception was that: 'If people've got the black belt, they've achieved the highest honour.' Similarly, a male Zen Do Kai godan explained that:

People still don't see the whole picture. They don't see what it's for ... They just think black belt: whoosh! First thing in their mind, 'Wow! You're awesome!' ... Everybody learns different skills; some people play rugby, some people play soccer. Well, I'm just playing a game where people go, 'Wow! You've really achieved in that game, well done.' They don't see that straight away, but that's how it should be viewed. Unfortunately, it's not; they go, 'Wow! Martial arts! Maybe he can walk on water, maybe he can float!'
These responses also indicate that the black belt is associated not only with awe, but fear, shown for example by the comment: ‘Let’s keep away from him.’ This reveals the interviewees’ common observation that black belt martial artists are perceived as dangerous, even lethal, with the implication that, consequently, they have a heightened propensity for violence. Possibly this is because another of the popular mythologies surrounding the black belt is that black belts are extremely accomplished fighters – a corollary of being a martial arts ‘expert’. A male Seido Karate black tip asserted that: ‘People perceive that you’re a fantastic fighter or something if you’ve got a black belt.’ Likewise, a male Aikido fifth kyu believed that the public view of having a black belt was that: ‘You’re undefeatable, you’re expected to be the ultimate killing machine, have no flaws.’ This is similar to the response of one male Zen Do Kai godan who said that: ‘They think, Wow! You’re the ultimate. You can beat up everybody.’

Equally, if black belts are seen to be able to ‘beat up everybody’, then this has obvious implications for their perceived self-defence efficacy. In contemporary society, heightened awareness of risk, especially personal risk, encourages people to seek means of self-protection. Because martial arts training is commonly perceived to provide effective self-defence, the black belt as the epitome of such systems may be seen to provide a security of ‘mythic’ proportions.

It is not uncommon for black belt martial artists to find that these various responses affect the way in which they are perceived in more formal areas of their lives, such as at work. One male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho recollected that in an initial job interview his employer considered the black belt a salient feature of his curriculum vitae and an effective conversation starter. Although this martial artist did not consider that his black belt skills related directly to the job description, he acknowledged that his employer’s view of the black belt was possibly one of the reasons he was appointed. As he explained:

They’re like, ‘Ooh!’ And they’re like, ‘Wow! Black belt. That’s as good as you can be. Wow! He must be awesome!’ And especially when I started work … I went into my interview, and I put on my CV that I’m a black belt. And I went in there [to my employer] and I sat down there … ‘So, you’re a black belt?’ First thing he said!
Similarly, a female Zen Do Kai brown belt felt that mentioning her rank 'is going to look good on my CV, because when I put on my CV that I am training for my black belt, an employer thinks, Okay, she’s ambitious, likes to follow things through, self-disciplined, motivated, and they’re great skills that I think a lot of employers are looking for.' An element of presupposition is evident here, based on her awareness of how she may be perceived by non-martial artists; the attributes she lists is what she surmises the employer will infer from her mention of 'black belt'. However, her comments signify more positive, reasonable perceptions of the black belt.

Therefore, in public perceptions of the martial arts, the black belt is representative of a number of related but somewhat contradictory qualities: ultimate mastery of the martial arts; invincible fighting ability; potential hostility; a high degree of self-discipline, motivation and ambition; and an element of inscrutability – in short, the black belt exemplifies the core of the stereotypes about the martial arts. Accordingly, it is important to consider the origins of such ideas. It appears that these ideas stem from a number of sources: from the popular media, from heightened awareness of personal danger created by the risk society milieu, and from historical fact.

The cyclic system of popular culture helps construct notions of the black belt. Popular culture producers take the black belt as a feature of the ‘real’ experience of training, then endow it with their own inventions, and present it to a wider section of the consumer audience. Consequently, the majority of these popular representations are fictional and tend to idealise the black belt, rather than rationalise it. Respondents across the martial disciplines ascribed some of the public perceptions of the black belt to popular culture representations. According to a senior Zen Do Kai godan, ‘A lot of it comes from the movies and the fantasy of the media.’ A Zen Do Kai shodan-ho also said that: ‘The movies, to a degree, used to portray people [who] wanted to get black belt and black belt was all they ever used to talk about; they never used to talk about anything apart from black belt, because that was the goal that they always had.’ A female Zen Do Kai brown belt had a similar response: ‘I think it comes back to popular culture, I think it comes back to stereotypes in films, where the person [has] achieved this black belt, whether it’s some cool guy like Van Damme or Bruce Lee or whatever who’s got this black belt and he is the all-knowing master, or whatever it’s set up to be.’ Moreover, a Seido Karate seventh dan argued that many of these ideas
come from: 'TV, Bruce Lee, all these people who flash around and do all this sort of stuff – Jet Li, and Jackie Chan, all those kind of guys, they all contribute to that image.'

In addition to visual media, ideas about the black belt are promulgated through hearsay, the ‘urban legends’ that arise from, and are circulated within, popular contexts. A male Zen Do Kai godan attributed the public comprehension of the black belt to, ‘Stories. It’s a bit like a rumour or a Chinese whisper.’ A male Aikido godan also made the same point: ‘It’s popular culture, it’s just been passed around, you know. The only way we’re ever going to change it, probably, is by throwing away black belts. Because that’s what people think is the ultimate.’ Significantly, many of these urban legends are anecdotes of self-defence, highly topical in a society where increasing numbers of people consider themselves to be at risk of attack.

However, particular notions of the function, purpose and significance of the black belt are due not only to popular renderings or risk consciousness, but may be grounded in socio-historical fact. The majority of the Asian martial arts arrived in New Zealand thirty to forty years ago. During this initial period, practitioners with senior dan ranks did not exist; therefore, a shodan black belt was considered highly advanced. According to a male Seido Karate seventh dan with further black belts in Judo and Kyokushinkai Karate, early black belts were seen to have numinous qualities:

> When I started training [early 1960s] there were hardly any black belts in karate; you know, they could walk on water, godlike, and all that sort of stuff – bit of a shock when you got it and realised that, actually, it wasn’t like that at all. And for some reason … it’s still held up as a thing that people aspire to.

This reason is perhaps a hangover from the martial arts’ original novelty, perpetuated by the fact that martial arts training remains a minority activity. Because an increasing number of new styles were devised and imported into New Zealand, this perception of the black belt/black belts continued into the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, An Aikido godan remembered that: ‘In those days [late 1970s] shodan was seen as pretty near as far as you could go … We had fourth dan, and a couple of shodans. So to reach black belt was sort of like – can’t do that, that was just amazing!’
As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, an element of Orientalism feeds into the general opinion of the martial arts (and, therefore, the black belt) as arcane. One male Zen Do Kai godan made the connection between this view of the martial arts and the Orient as a polysemous site of otherness, origin and esoteric knowledge: ‘With martial arts predominantly coming out of the East, there’s always been this mystical secret surrounding martial arts.’ This mystique is compounded by the closeted nature of most senior level martial arts classes. A female Seido yondan explained: ‘A lot of people don’t understand [the idea of the black belt], because most black belt classes are behind closed doors; certainly senior grade black belt classes are not open for the public to view, so there’s an element of secrecy there. It’s just something that you can’t understand until you actually do it.’

Given the intriguing nature of these perceptions of the black belt, it is not surprising that the black belt is a chief motivation for people to begin martial arts training.

7.3 The black belt: a focus of desire

Despite its exaggerated symbolic status, the road to black belt is certainly a long journey and involves hard training. As one female Seido yondan remarked: ‘Black belts don’t get given out like sweets.’ As with many activities or occupations that require a high level of commitment, the overcoming of challenges and the accomplishment of a number of discrete skills, there is a high drop-out rate. For example, a male Aikido fifth kyu said that: ‘I keep getting told one in ten will make their first grading, and one in ten will make black belt, from those people that stay.’ Consequently, it may be that black belt candidates demonstrate certain personal qualities that influence a perception of black belts as ‘special’, as identified by one senior male Zen Do Kai godan:

I think what people tend to see is that the people who have stuck at martial arts, in any type of martial arts, have either had to learn some sort of discipline, or have had to have some sort of inner strength or some sort of work ethic to work their way through. So the ones that don’t have that tend to drop out along the way. So the point I’m making is that the ones who have credibility, perhaps they portray some sense of something extra, that X-factor.
The attainment of a black belt is an important goal for many students of the martial arts. Significantly, when interview respondents were asked to describe prominent experiences during their years of training, almost all spoke about grading, or meeting senior exponents in their arts. Therefore, working towards black belt can be a definite motivation to train and, eventually, a priority in some students' lives. According to a Seido seventh dan, 'Most people that start kind of desire to become a black belt, and whatever that symbolises for them.' Consequently, as Ohlenkamp (2002: 1) writes: 'One of the questions most commonly asked of martial artists is: “How long does it take me to get a black belt?”' Many of my senior black belt respondents confirmed this. An Aikido godan acknowledged that among his new students, 'That’s a very, very common question: “How long will it take me to get my black belt?” Or, “How long will it take me to get good?” And then the next question is, “How long will it take me to get my black belt?”' The black belt was a goal for many students interviewed. For example, a male Seido shodan began karate training due 'probably to a small extent that whole “black belt” fantasy with its associated greatness.' A male Aikido sixth kyu admitted that his chief goal was to become a shodan black belt, and a female Seido Karate blue tip said of herself and her son that: 'our main goal is to become black belts.'

The desire to gain the black belt possibly becomes more burning as the goal draws nearer and seems more attainable. One female Zen Do Kai brown belt, who had been very unwell, was actually willing temporarily to give up the martial arts training she loved in order to give her body time to recuperate so that she could eventually attempt her black belt. She explained: ‘I know that I have to give [martial arts] up for a year or six months or whatever if I actually ever want to get my black belt, and I had to weigh up what was more important. And getting my black belt is something that I’ve always really wanted.’

It is apparent, therefore, that the opportunity to gain a black belt is a key motivator for students not only to begin training, but to continue. Those respondents within the kyu/dan system appreciated the certainty and the incentive that the structure provided. According to a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho:

It’s good to go up the rankings and develop as a person. It does give you a boost. And that’s why it’s there. It keeps people there. Because if you were just a white belt
forever or no rank or anything, then you really don’t have an achievement, it doesn’t give you a goal to work to. And by having the belts it gives you good goals and you know what you’ve got to achieve. You achieve it and then you’re on to the next step. And that’s a really good way of doing it.

Conversely, some respondents who practised martial arts without a ranking system said that they had been attracted to their art precisely for that reason. For example, a male Tai Chi teacher with experience in Aikido believed that the kyu/dan system tended to facilitate a more goal-oriented, less process-oriented approach in students. He weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of the two systems, saying that:

The Tai Chi system was [an attraction], because I didn’t have to work for anything. I think the ranking does get you learning; you learn for this level and then you learn for that level, whereas, really [in Tai Chi] there’s just student and teacher, or student and master, and so you don’t do it stepwise in a way, it’s a continual improvement that you’re aiming at. But yeah, I quite like it that it’s not [graded]. I’m doing Aikido and I just did a grading on Saturday, so I quite like the idea of testing myself. And I can see if you do it the right way, I find I am improving with these gradings; I’m getting smoother and smoother. But I can also see someone just learning the postures just to pass the grading, which I don’t think is the right way. And like in some of the karates you’d learn the kata, and you can know them externally without internalising them and get yourself through. Yeah, some people are for grades, some people are against it.

7.4 To black belt and beyond: a journey of discovery

Because both martial artists and non-martial artists perceive the black belt to be significant (although for different reasons), it is valuable, in order to help understand the nature of the training experience over time, and the ways in which students are motivated to continue training, to investigate the way in which the black belt is understood by martial artists: prior to beginning training, as coloured grades (kyu ranks), and as black belts; and the extent to which their understanding changes or develops. This analysis is based on information gathered only from people involved in Japanese (derived) martial arts that employ versions of the kyu/dan system. These respondents comprised students and instructors of Seido Karate, Aikido, Zen Do Kai and Judo. Their experience ranged from white belt through to seventh dan black belt.

In considering martial artists’ perceptions of the black belt prior to beginning training, it is apparent that as members of the general public they subscribed to popular views
and saw the black belt in a positive light. When considering black belt, one female Zen Do Kai brown belt remembered that:

I thought kudos. Wow! Imagine that! That is awesome! Black belt – you must be really excellent. That is probably the one thing that really stood out. Kudos is the word I would use, because I think that sums up I think what a lot of people think about it. So that’s what I thought before I started.

‘Kudos’ in an interesting choice of term because it reveals how, in her understanding of the black belt’s symbolism, she considered how she would be ‘read’ by other people, thinking of the black belt as bringing great cachet. This is probably because of the lay perception of the black belt as being the ultimate goal. One Aikido godan stated that, as a beginner, ‘Black belt was seen as being the be-all and end-all.’ In the opinion of a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho: ‘When I first started martial arts I thought once you got your black belt you were the best.’ Another Zen Do Kai shodan-ho concurred, explaining that:

You always used to think that black belt was the goal and the aim that people were trying to get to. And you never really thought, before you got into martial arts, never really used to think there was anything above black belt. Like you used to think that, obviously, there were better black belts than others, but the perception was that black belt was the goal … You used to think that black belts were pretty invincible and could fight really well and had all the proficiencies.

Amongst white belts, if the prestige of the black belt is inherently connected with its status as an ‘end goal’, it may be applicable in explaining to some extent why so many students drop out before black belt (passing up the challenge as too difficult), or at the first black belt rank. As one Zen Do Kai godan observed: ‘I think there are different stages where having a break becomes more prevalent. People get through to black belt and … they think, well, maybe I’ll just stop here. I’ve got a black belt, I’ve achieved my goal, I don’t need to go on.’ An Aikido godan found a similar attitude among some of his students: ‘I’ve had students that have said to me, “I just intended to get my black belt and leave.” And [a] particular person I’m thinking about – he’s a nidan now – he said, “Oh, damn! I just got to black belt and realised how much I didn’t know!” It’s seen as The Thing, and really it’s just a piece of material. It doesn’t mean a thing.’
This student's new awareness implies that although some students continue to consider the black belt the final goal, achieve it and leave to pursue other activities, for others, a shift of perception occurs *en route* to black belt, where the function and purpose of the black belt is re-evaluated. Therefore, for the purpose of further understanding students' motivations to continue training, it is useful to interrogate the respondents' perceptions of the black belt during their period as coloured grades. This data was collected from coloured grade questionnaire respondents who described their current perceptions, and from black belt interview respondents who recalled their experiences of training while coloured grades.

In the early stages of training, it seems that students cease to think of the black belt as awesome and intangible, and regard it as a potential goal. At this stage of training, students are still inclined to idealise the black belt to a certain extent, considering it to be something reached far in the future, and reserved only for those who display excellence in martial arts skills. For instance, a male Judo green belt recalled that: 'When I started Judo, black belt meant really, really good. I don't know if I'd go as far as undefeatable, but really, really good. Lots of work to get there.' Similarly, a female Zen Do Kai student remembered that:

> When I first started, and I was a white or a blue belt, the black belt seemed so far above me, so out there beyond – years away – years and years away – and so many press-ups and sit-ups away! ... And I thought you really had to train for years and years, and that you only really got there if you were really, really good. Like, if you were naturally talented at martial arts, that you were going to be better than the average person anyway.

In general, as students progress through the grades, their view of the black belt continues to develop and become more concrete and realistic. An Aikido godan said of his students that: 'I would suggest that anyone that's been in Aikido for one or two years would have quite a different concept about what the black belt means.' Once students are part of a club, and engaging with the culture of their particular art, they become increasingly *au fait* with the place of the black belt in their system. It is likely that the student will meet and get to know a number of black belt martial artists and, depending on the dynamics of the particular club, may even socialise with them outside the dojo. As students develop their skills, they may come to understand the black belt as representing advanced competence with techniques with which they may
already be familiar and, therefore, simply the next step of their training. For example, a male Aikido fifth kyu said that, after a year of training: ‘I’d realised that a black belt means you’ve learnt something. The way I’m thinking about it nowadays is, black belt, you know enough points and techniques in order to start thinking beforehand and doing in imitation and things. And, at that stage, then you can think about what you’re doing and why.’ In addition to representing technical competence, the black belt also assumes a transitional significance as students approach that grade. A female Zen Do Kai brown belt discussed the way in which her perception of the black belt evolved during her passage through the coloured grades:

[Achieving black belt] didn’t occur to me because it was too far away, and I didn’t really understand it. So, I just didn’t think about it, put it out of my mind and just saw black belt, not as the limit, but the limit for me at that point. Now that I’m actually closer to black belt, I don’t see it as a limit. I see it as a stopping point, where I re-evaluate where I want to go, but as time goes by I do see myself definitely wanting to go above and beyond that.

At the point where students are drawing near to their black belt grading, the black belt is no longer an end goal. Rather, it is seen as a place at which students look both back and forward, and evaluate their participation in their martial art. Now about to sit her black belt grading, this Zen Do Kai student provided the following explanation of what the black belt meant to her:

To me, personally, I think that it means resilience. It would be one of the words that comes to mind, because, when I get it, I know that I will have really earned it and really, really deserved it, and that I will have overcome a lot of personal difficulties to get there. And the fact that I overcame those and was able to then continue training, that will have made me quite resilient in myself. I think physically, in terms of a fitness or a sporting thing, I think I will feel that physically I’ve achieved at a high level, so there’ll be that side of it that’s very important. And, maybe third, it’s just a tangible reminder that I can achieve my goals or my ambitions. It’s something that you can look at and I think it obviously has a deeper symbolic meaning of being that resilience or whatever, or being proud of yourself for achieving something like that that maybe you thought you never once would have been able to. ... it symbolises how much I’ve grown as a person.

The eventual attainment of a black belt has enormous significance for most martial arts students. Its exact meaning is dependent on the individual and their expectations and experiences, but many black belts recognise the benefit of the journey undertaken to reach this level; in particular, the personal development that comes from meeting
and overcoming physical and mental challenges, and through fulfilling certain ethical, 
social and moral expectations. Essentially, the black belt is a tangible reminder of the 
development of less tangible qualities. Additionally, the black belt represents 
completion of an ‘apprenticeship’ and an entree into the rights and responsibilities of 
an instructor. As such, it has institutional status. In addition to the belt itself, this 
status is often demonstrated by certain accoutrements, such as a change in the colour 
and/or style of the student’s uniform. It is common for students to feel a strong sense 
of achievement, which may be enhanced by their understanding that they have 
attained something generally perceived to be highly prestigious. A male Aikido godan 
affirmed that:

I’ve taught a lot of people and I’ve had a lot of people go through as black belts, now, 
and some of the people I’ve taught are yondan. And almost without variation, I’d say 
the first time that they walk on the mat their chests puff out – they’re different. And 
once they’ve got over the ego side of it, they also, I think, take a different attitude, 
and it changes in terms of being able to help other people, helping pass that 
knowledge back to people. I think it’s partly because they’re wearing a black belt and 
a hakama and they’re visually different, they’re seen as quite different sorts of 
people, they’re treated as different and they respond to it.

This instructor’s comment raises three key issues about arrival at black belt. The first 
is an understanding that some students may become egotistical. Usually such egotism 
is a harmless manifestation of the self-esteem boost that comes from goal fulfilment; 
however, there is always the probability that some students will make their way 
through to black belt without having thought carefully about the function and purpose 
of the black belt, and may think that they are invincible. For example, a male Zen Do 
Kai godan asserted that:

The only thing that could really hurt you in black belt is, you get your black belt, and you 
think you’re unbeatable. That’s just the worst thing. Or you get black belt and you think 
your style’s unbeatable. ... The worst thing is people get their black belt and they go out: 
‘Rooooar! I’m a black belt! I’m a black belt! I’m a black belt and my karate style’s the 
best!’ Yeah, whatever, it’s just another notch on your belt, it’s another step on your path. 
You’ve just stepped up one step of the ladder – there’s ten steps! ... Don’t get me wrong, 
I really respect black belt, and it’s definitely a great starting block – and I wish more 
people would see it that way and not perceive it as something different.

26 A hakama is a pair of flowing, black trousers worn over, or instead of, gi pants. The hakama is worn 
by Aikido black belts.
The second, more positive, transition is a shift from a focus on self-absorption to a focus on generativity (see Chapter Four), in which personal goals and needs become subordinate to those of the students, and fulfilment comes from the development of others. This shift may be facilitated by the fact that, at black belt level and as instructors, there is an expectation for them to privilege their students’ needs. The third issue is centred around the way in which nascent black belts respond to how they are understood by junior grades. Interestingly, junior grades may not yet ‘understand’ what the black belt represents, so essentially, black belts are responding to uninformed constructions. But since most black belts respond to such interpretations, the constructions may not be uninformed, but may be some of the very ideas that characterise the black belt. This suggests that there are many ways in which the black belt can be understood and responded to.

The gaining of a black belt may also evoke other, more mixed, feelings in students. In the experience of a male Seido seventh dan and Judo black belt:

> It's such a journey, you know, it's a four or five year thing, and it requires a degree of intensity, a degree of commitment, a degree of suffering, if you want to put it like that, so there's probably quite a sense of achievement. For some there's a sense of disappointment, because they don't quite do it in the way that they perceived that they would, so there's that expectation.

This senior instructor makes a significant point about the ways in which students react to becoming black belts, as it reveals the extent to which some students place a personal investment in their martial arts training, especially the black belt level. It has been suggested in Chapter Five that some students may anticipate and try to construct their general martial arts training experience, and it is likely that this is especially so in the case of gaining the black belt. Some students may have a series of expectations of what they should go through to get their black belt, or what it should feel like when they get it/become one, which may not be congruent with their actual experience.

It appears that, in part, this may be to do with the perception that the black belt rank entails intangible enlightenment or a ‘magic’ change. This is not to argue that such students hold the naïve assumption that they will gain the black belt and suddenly become suffused with some special gift of knowledge; rather, that they feel they should have achieved this special understanding or transmutation by the time they
gain that rank. A male Zen Do Kai godan explained that it was common for students to search for some transcendent element in their training experience as they progressed through the ranks:

The interesting thing is, as you go through all the ranks, whether it's coloured belts or black belts, even as a black belt you think, 'Oh, second dan - I'd just like to be one of those second dans.' So you stay on a little bit longer and you do your second dan and nothing really changes. And you think, 'Those third dans, they're pretty good, maybe I'd just like to be one - that must be where it's at.' And then you get to third dan and you think: 'Hmm, those white gis.\(^27\) They look pretty good. It must be at fourth dan.' So, when you get to fifth dan, and maybe a bit of maturity through fifth dan, you look back and go, 'Well, it's really not anywhere!'

Nevertheless, it is important to reiterate that the martial arts are not devoid of spiritual enlightenment. Chapters One, Four, Five and Six touched upon spiritual elements in the martial arts, their various manifestations and people's diverse understandings of them. None of the black belt respondents felt, however, that 'transcendence' was located specifically at initial black belt level, or that it should have been attained by that stage.

For many, the nature of the martial arts experience changes at black belt level. In addition to increased responsibility, attendance at a greater number of classes and tuition in more difficult techniques, there is a different timeframe for progression. The regular recognition and achievements that characterised the coloured grades give way to a concentration on detail to ensure an in-depth understanding of the art. Whereas students in the junior coloured grades might be promoted every few months, black belts generally train for several years to gain their next dan rank. Therefore, black belts must find their motivation to continue from within, or from teaching. This change can present a challenge for many black belt students. A male Zen Do Kai godan and Kickboxing instructor explained the following:

I try and think ... why black belt's so hard. You get to black belt and it slows absolutely right down. You go, achieve, achieve, you get this belt, get this belt, get this tip, get this belt, get this belt - and then you get to black belt and then it really narrows. And that's when the learning process really takes place. Some people can't handle that; the speed of it all, and then it plateaus out and then you've got to start to break things up and look further into them and start understanding things. That's a much slower process than learning how to punch.

\(^{27}\) In the Zen Do Kai system, white gis are worn by fourth dan black belts and above.
In many styles, it is interesting to note that at senior black belt level the whole notion of ‘achievement’ is different in the grading context. Whereas, in the coloured and initial black belt grades, fulfilment of grading requirements often elicits a sense of pride, senior gradings are seen more as contracts, in which successful completion of the grading simply honours the expectations of one’s fellow senior ranks. It could be argued that such undertakings constitute ‘living up’ to one’s black belt. A female Seido Karate yondan explained that at her level:

It’s not so much the achievement. It’s more just an expectation; you’re just honouring an expectation. In a couple of years’ time I will do another [grading], because the time increases as you go on, between each grade, so it’s at least five, if not seven, years between fourth and fifth [dan]. So there’ll be an expectation that I do well. But a sense of achievement. I don’t know whether you feel that. Rather than a sense of achievement, it’s like a transition. You never think, ‘Oh! I did really well!’ You don’t get that type of feeling ... If you go for a grading, it’s more like you’ve been somewhere and you’ve come back, rather than you’ve passed a big hurdle.

As black belts mature within their ranks, the most salient development is the perception of the black belt as representative of a beginning. This, in itself, may be a strong motivation for black belts to continue training, because they sense that they are at the start of a journey, with further challenges to meet and opportunities to take advantage of. Taking into consideration public perceptions and the nature of the training experience, martial arts practitioner, instructor and critic, Christopher Caile, writes the following:

One of the biggest misconceptions held by new students, as well as the public, is that obtaining a black belt represents being an expert. Nothing could be further from the truth. While training at the brown belt level is very demanding and the attainment of a black belt is seen as significant, black belt status really only indicates a graduation to a new beginning. For this reason first level black belts are known as shodans, rather than ichi (first) dans, ‘sho’ meaning beginning, the same character as in sho shin, meaning beginner’s mind. Reaching this first, beginning rank means you have achieved some proficiency in basics and are prepared to really start learning, and learning means a lot more than techniques. Thus a new shodan becomes a beginner again (Caile, 2000: 1).

Evidence gathered from my respondents certainly validates this point of view. For example, a Zen Do Kai godan commented that:

To [non-martial artists] black belt’s the ultimate goal, whereas to us, the black belt is the starting goal. You’ve learnt your basics, you’ve done your apprenticeship. Analogy: you’re a builder, you do your building apprenticeship, you become a builder, it doesn’t
mean you can build a skyscraper. It means you're a builder. Now you can learn to build, and build houses and stuff like that for yourself. Same thing with martial arts. You've learnt your skills; you've learnt how to punch, kick, elbow, knee, whatever, grapple on the ground, now once you've become a black belt, you're using it. People don't see that. People just don't see that.

A female Zen Do Kai student made a similar point that: 'Now I see it very much, kind of like getting out of ... primary school. You've done your basics, you've learnt how to spell and do maths - you've learnt how to punch and kick. But now you're going to go to high school or college, if you want to use that analogy, and I firmly believe that the black belt really is the beginning, as they say.' Likewise, a male Zen Do Kai shodan-ho admitted that: 'I used to think that a black belt was awesome; a black belt could just walk into a bar and clean it all out. And now, I don't think like that. Black belt's the beginning, you know?' Another shodan-ho from the same style explained that: 'Because you've been in it for so long you understand, you know that the black belt is only the beginning, it does mean that you've got to a stage where you can now start learning more techniques, better techniques, and more things.' An interesting parallel between martial systems was drawn by one senior Zen Do Kai godan, who said that: 'If you could make a Western comparison, you could say it was perhaps something like the army, and when you get your sergeant's stripes, are you a better soldier then when you were a private? Probably not. You just take on a little bit more responsibility and learn to progress a wee bit.'

7.5 Conclusion

Over the past thirty to forty years the black belt has become something of a cultural icon in Western society. Although the kyu/dan system characterises only a proportion of available martial arts, the black belt is probably the most well-known feature of 'the martial arts' and has been mythologised through popular culture renderings. In addition, contemporary risk consciousness has caused martial arts training to be emphasised as a means of self-defence, which has tended to further popularise and idealise the black belt. Therefore, there are a number of collective public assumptions made about the black belt. Many of these differ from the way in which it is perceived by martial artists, but even among martial artists the black belt is representative various qualities and experiences. Throughout the training experience the purpose, function and meaning of the black belt changes. These changes in perception illustrate
how all achievements are relative; as one progresses, the 'achievable' changes. However, more importantly, these changing perceptions also demonstrate how the black belt is a key motivation for people to begin, and continue with, martial arts training. Because the black belt is first understood as an impossible ultimate, it may be an incentive for people to begin training because of its attractive symbolic connotations and what it implies generally about the martial arts. As students progress through the coloured grades, the black belt is understood successively as a possible endpoint and, eventually, a realistic goal; thus the prospect of the black belt encourages students to continue with their training. Those students who gain the black belt may find that their motivation to continue is facilitated by an emerging sense of the black belt as a new beginning, providing new possibilities, rather than exhausting existing ones. Notably, students seem to go *en masse* through the same stages of interpreting the black belt and draw the same conclusions. Given these varying understandings, it is difficult to posit a 'true' or 'false' idea of the black belt. The black belt means different things to different people at different times, and can be, really, all of those things. Therefore, like any symbol, it is possible to understand the black belt as being shifting, multiple and various in its meaning.

Having completed the discussion of the chief issues arising from the collected data, Chapter Eight presents a conclusion to the thesis.
Chapter Eight
Conclusion

8.0 Introduction
This chapter considers the methodological process and provides a summary of the findings, addressing the research questions posed in Chapter One. The chapter also offers suggestions for future research in the area of martial arts practice in New Zealand.

8.1 Brief conclusions about methods
The idea for this study developed from my observations of martial arts students during several years as a student and an instructor. To investigate the development and characteristics of the martial arts experience in New Zealand, the study took three approaches: socio-historical, socio-cultural and motivational. I used a mixed quantitative and qualitative research strategy that employed multiple modes of data collection: documentary research, questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews. The documentary research provided a solid base for understanding the development of martial arts practice in New Zealand. The questionnaire survey was a valuable way to gain responses from a variety of martial arts trainees about the characteristics of their training experiences, and provided a broad information context for the following semi-structured interviews. These recorded interviews afforded the opportunity for certain topics and issues to be pursued in-depth.

Four different martial arts were chosen for the study. The range included arts that comprised traditional techniques, characterised by a style associated with a particular country and time period, as well as trans-cultural, eclectic forms that integrated a number of different, yet current styles. The range provided a broad view of martial arts practice taking place in Christchurch. Many respondents had also studied other martial arts, and collectively they represented almost thirty different arts and styles.

I chose to analyse the data manually, rather than to use a software programme such as NUDIST. This meant that I became very familiar with the material contained in the
interview transcripts. The re-reading suited the iterative approach taken in the research and the revisions of the material enabled me to draw more subtle connections between issues and comments, and to discern themes that might not otherwise have been apparent.

8.2 Summary of findings

Because of the paucity of social-scientific research into the martial arts, and the total absence of previous research of this type in New Zealand, it was necessary for the study to take a broad view of martial arts practice. The research revealed that participation in the martial arts in New Zealand can be understood as being the result of transformation in the motivation of participants, in interaction with social processes of risk and an increasingly globalising popular culture. As popular culture has developed alongside, and fed off, the risk society, the martial arts in New Zealand have moved from their early roles as vaudeville entertainment and physical training in self-defence for school children, soldiers and police officers, to a partly mythologised encounter between East and West that highlights, and often exaggerates, the physical and spiritual skills available from the martial arts traditions. During this later period of development, a proliferation of martial arts have become established in New Zealand and have gained increasing acceptance.

Remaining constant during this transformation, however, are the roles of the martial arts as both popular spectacle (from vaudeville and public demonstrations, to martial arts films) and security device (from institutionalised ‘sensible’ self-defence, to individualised solutions to perceptions of vulnerability in a risk society). The ways in which the martial arts are presented and perceived have encouraged a notably diverse range of people to enter martial arts training.

My respondents identified a wide variety of reasons for beginning, and continuing with, martial arts training. These can be categorised according to four sets of needs: physical and recreational; intellectual and emotional; integrated self-transcendent; and safety needs. However, aspects of spectacle and security device can still be seen to underlie and inform the respondents’ various motivations.
The martial arts' role as spectacle has been emphasised clearly within some areas of popular culture. Typically, popular culture representations idealise, glamorise and exaggerate martial arts practice and practitioners. Consumers of popular martial arts-related material generally have little knowledge or experience of the actuality of martial arts training, and tend to form collective assumptions about the martial arts. These assumptions may be inaccurate or distorted, but are often very attractive. In some cases, these preconceptions may induce people to take up the study of a martial art; particularly, such action may be driven by a wish to emulate the protagonists of certain martial arts films (the most influential of all the popular genres in which the martial arts are depicted). Significantly, it appears that popular culture plays more of a role in people's decisions to begin, rather than to continue with, martial arts training, due to the disparity between popular preconceptions and the reality of training. This disparity arises not only from the diverse array of practices that constitute 'the martial arts', but from the commonalities between the various arts, specifically their set pedagogies. Consequently, most students who continue training eventually modify their ideas and expectations to conform to the certain forms of experience offered by their martial art.

Popular culture also functions to promote the role of the martial arts as security device by exaggerating the perception of risk in society, and positing martial arts training as a solution to that risk. According to Beck (1992, 1999) and Furedi (1998), the major characteristics of the risk society include increased fears for global and personal safety; mistrust of other people, especially strangers; feelings of isolation and destabilisation; and a lack of focus and purpose. People may take up the study of a martial art in the search for safety (self-defence), health and fitness, belonging and social support, or meaning and purpose in life. Beck's theory, however, is not as pertinent to why people continue training. This is especially so in the case of more physically-oriented motivations, such as a search for self-defence skills, health and fitness, as these problems tend to be solved during the early period of a student's training. Those who seek emotional or existential security may be more motivated to continue training, as it is the continued practice in itself, not simply the benefits derived from that practice, that provides the security.
In many ways, the notion of the black belt serves to coalesce the martial arts’ roles of spectacle and security device. As a result of the chief ways in which the martial arts are perceived, the black belt has gained symbolic status far beyond its original function and purpose. Because the black belt represents in symbolic summary the aspects of the martial arts that appealed most to the respondents, it was a key motivation for respondents both to begin and to continue training. Part of the motivation to continue arose from the way the meaning of the black belt changed according to students’ progress and experience, from being an ultimate goal to a new beginning, which, importantly, left room for further challenges and development.

The two roles (spectacle and security device) are bound together inextricably in the martial arts’ liminal situation between sports and art forms. The motivational changes of the respondents reflected this ambiguous site of the martial arts, in that students began by thinking of their martial art as a sport, but gradually gained an understanding of it as an art form. Significantly, the motivation to continue was often expressed in terms of coming to appreciate the art in more sophisticated, insightful ways.

8.3 Suggestions for future research
Several issues arose as a by-product of the research. These could not be pursued in the current study, but are possible avenues for future research. Researchers could:

- Investigate further the conditions of the establishment and proliferation of the martial arts in New Zealand, particularly the process of cultural transportation and its effect on the imported martial arts. To what extent have Asian martial arts become ‘Westernised’ or ‘New Zealandised’?
- Explore further the notion of the black belt as a ‘status symbol’, and how this affects the way in which black belt trainees are perceived within the dojo and in their everyday lives.
- Explore generally the extent to which a person’s roles and behaviours in their martial arts training are transferred to their everyday lives.
- Consider the concept of the martial arts as a ‘journey for life’, with a focus upon the ways in which prolonged martial arts training may facilitate personal development.
8.4 Conclusion

The martial arts are a complex set of fighting systems that operate on physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual levels. In many ways they seem paradoxical, in that historical traditions and techniques are combined with contemporary principles and exercises; the activity incorporates the characteristics of a sport, but also of an art form; the training experience can be as social as it is personal; and, through a detailed study of the techniques of combat, the student may gain inner peace. The processes by which people engage with these arts have been the chief considerations of this study. An examination of martial arts practice in New Zealand from socio-historical, socio-cultural and motivational perspectives reveals that individual participation in the martial arts is not a discrete activity, but, significantly, is representative of much larger social processes and phenomena.
References

Textual Resources


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**Pictorial Resources**


Appendix One

Glossary of Martial Arts-Related Terms Used in this Thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>art</td>
<td>A martial art that operates as a discrete fighting system, comprising particular techniques, philosophies and approaches, e.g. karate, Aikido, Hwa Rang Do®, Tai Chi Chuan, Iaido.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belt</td>
<td>A coloured piece of material worn around the waist to indicate a student’s rank (employed mainly by Japanese and Korean martial arts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chi (also qi or ki)</td>
<td>(Chinese = intrinsic energy) A biophysical energy generated chiefly through breathing techniques. Potentially, chi can infuse a person with tremendous vitality and power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coach (also BJJ coach)</td>
<td>An instructor of Brazilian Jujutsu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dai-sempai</td>
<td>(Japanese = advanced instructor) An instructor’s title granted in some arts (e.g. Zen Do Kai) to a trainee deemed to be more advanced than a sempai but not yet ready for the title of sensei. Trainees may receive the title of dai-sempai once they have attained second degree black belt (nidan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dan</td>
<td>A rank designation signifying a level of achievement of black belt or above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>(Japanese = art, path, way of life) When this term is used as a suffix for Japanese (derived) martial arts, it connotes a practice that is not only physical, but moral, philosophical and spiritual, the ultimate aim being enlightenment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dojo</td>
<td>(mainly for Japanese-influenced martial arts) School, club, training hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>form(s)</td>
<td>(see kata)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gi (also keiko-gi or do-gi)</td>
<td>The uniform of crossover top and loose-fitting pants worn by most martial arts trainees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>godan</td>
<td>(from Japanese go = five) A fifth degree black belt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 For definitions of particular martial arts, see the list provided in Chapter One. Specific martial arts techniques are not listed in this glossary.
gup (in Taekwondo = kyu).

grading a test of skill and ability undertaken by a student to advance to the next rank.

hakama (Japanese = divided skirt) the flowing trousers or culottes worn primarily in Kendo, Aikido, Iaido and the upper ranks of Judo.

judoka (from Japanese = judo-man) a student of Judo (cf. karateka).

karateka (from Japanese = karate-man) a student of karate.

kata (also forms) a set of choreographed fighting techniques that have been refined and stylised to flow as one cohesive whole. The kata techniques are the fundamental principles of fighting; through performing kata the martial artist practises and improves his or her stances, strikes, holds and other movements, and develops strength and flexibility.

ki-ai (Japanese = spirit-meeting) an abdominal shout used for self-assertion and as a means of focusing energy.

kumite a training format in which two opponents face each other and simulate actual combat within agreed parameters. Trainees may carry out kumite in a class situation to apply their skills, or in a competition situation such as a tournament (cf. sparring).

kyu a rank designation signifying a level of achievement below black belt or dan.

kyu/dan system a martial arts ranking system created in Japan by Dr Jigoro Kano in 1883, whereby students are classified according to a set of beginner (kyu) ranks and advanced (dan) ranks. The student moves from the kyu ranks to the dan ranks after gaining a black belt.

linear attack attack techniques performed against an imagined opponent.

nidan (from Japanese ni = two) a second degree black belt.

poom (in Taekwondo) worn by a student under 16 who has gained the level of black belt. The poom may be replaced by a black belt once the student comes of age.
rank

a student’s position in the hierarchical structure of a martial art, generally based on skill and length of time spent training.

sandan

(from Japanese san = three) a third degree black belt.

sempai

(Japanese = senior) an initial instructor’s title. Trainees may be granted the title of sempai after they have attained first degree black belt (shodan).

sensei

(Japanese = teacher, instructor, mentor) a title given to more advanced instructors. Trainees may be granted the title of sensei after they have attained third degree black belt (sandan).

shihan

a title reserved for very advanced teachers. Normally a trainee would have gained at least fifth degree black belt.

shodan

(from Japanese sho = beginning) a first degree black belt.

shodan-ho

a probationary first degree black belt. (This rank is particular to Zen Do Kai.)

singlet

an item of clothing worn by students of Muay Thai Kickboxing to indicate rank, instead of a gi and belt.

sparring

(see kumite)

stable

(for Muay Thai Kickboxing) school, club, training hall (cf. dojo).

style

a denomination of a certain art (e.g. karate is an art; Yoshukai, Kyokushinkai, Seido and Shotokan are styles of karate).

tip

a piece of coloured material or tape attached to a student’s belt. The tip is the colour of the next belt and usually denotes intermediate kyu ranks not represented by a coloured belt. In some arts the tips are all the same colour (e.g. Zen Do Kai = black) and are presented for outstanding effort and results in a grading, or to indicate that the student is ready to grade to the next belt.

yakusuko

(Japanese = defence with counter-attack).

yondan

(from Japanese yon = four) a fourth degree black belt.
Appendix Two

The Ranking Systems of the Martial Arts Chosen for this Study

Note that although Aikido, Seido Karate and Zen Do Kai use the kyu/dan system, their versions are different. For example, each art starts at a different kyu level, and each differs in terms of the number and array of coloured belts. Tai Chi has no formal ranking system, so is not included here.

### Aikido

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Belt Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sixth kyu</td>
<td>white belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth kyu</td>
<td>white belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth kyu</td>
<td>white belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third kyu</td>
<td>brown belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second kyu</td>
<td>brown belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First kyu</td>
<td>brown belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shodan</td>
<td>black belt, hakama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nidan</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandan</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yondan</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godan (to tenth dan)</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Seido Karate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Belt Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenth kyu</td>
<td>white belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth kyu</td>
<td>white belt, yellow tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth kyu</td>
<td>yellow belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh kyu</td>
<td>yellow belt, blue tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth kyu</td>
<td>blue belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth kyu</td>
<td>blue belt, green tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth kyu</td>
<td>green belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third kyu</td>
<td>green belt, brown tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second kyu</td>
<td>brown belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First kyu</td>
<td>brown belt, black tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shodan</td>
<td>black belt (one stripe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nidan</td>
<td>black belt (two stripes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandan</td>
<td>black belt (three stripes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yondan</td>
<td>black belt (four stripes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godan (to tenth dan)</td>
<td>black belt (five stripes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>Belt Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth kyu</td>
<td>white belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh kyu</td>
<td>white belt, blue (or black) tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth kyu</td>
<td>blue belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth kyu</td>
<td>blue belt, green (or black) tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth kyu</td>
<td>green belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third kyu</td>
<td>green belt, brown (or black) tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second kyu</td>
<td>brown belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First kyu</td>
<td>brown belt, black tip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shodan-ho</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shodan</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nidan-ho</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nidan</td>
<td>black belt, name in katakana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandan-ho</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandan</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yondan-ho</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yondan</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godan-ho</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Godan</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(to tenth dan)</td>
<td>black belt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ho = probationary rank – very popular in Zen Do Kai.
Appendix Three
Letter to Christchurch Martial Arts Clubs

Date

Head Instructor
Martial Arts Club
Address Details
CHRISTCHURCH

Diana Looser
Human Sciences Division
Lincoln University
P.O. Box 94
LINCOLN

Dear Head Instructor,

I am a postgraduate student in the Human Sciences Division of Lincoln University, writing a Master of Social Science thesis. The subject of my research is 'The Development and Characteristics of the Martial Arts Experience in New Zealand'.

The aim of this project is to describe and analyse the phenomenon of martial arts in New Zealand. It seeks to discover the demographic characteristics of people practising martial arts, and to explore the reasons why people become involved in martial arts training and why they continue. It is hoped that this project will contribute to a greater understanding of leisure participation and practice in New Zealand.

For this project I need to gain information from people involved in different styles of martial arts, with varying levels of experience; about 15 people from each style would be ideal. I wonder if you and your class would be interested in being involved with this project?

Participation in this project will involve completing a short questionnaire of about 15 minutes' duration about your experiences with martial arts training.

As a follow-up to this activity, there is the option of being involved in an individual recorded interview to discuss in greater detail your personal experiences with martial arts training. There may be a further brief meeting to clarify or explore issues arising from the recorded interview.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be disclosed without their consents. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, respondents' names will not appear on the questionnaire, and pseudonyms will be used in written or oral presentation of data. The data will be stored in a secure archive on the Lincoln University campus.
You may contact me at the above address, or by email at mrsyanms@hotmail.com. I will be pleased to provide further information and discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project. I have attached a copy of the questionnaire for your information.

The project has been reviewed by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your support; I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Diana Looser.
You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled 'The Development and Characteristics of the Martial Arts Experience in New Zealand'.

The aim of this project is to describe and analyse the phenomenon of introduced martial arts in New Zealand. It seeks to discover the demographic characteristics of people practising martial arts, and to explore the reasons why people become involved in martial arts training and why they continue. It is hoped that this project will contribute to a greater understanding of leisure participation and practice in New Zealand.

Your participation in this project will involve completing a short questionnaire of about 15 minutes’ duration about your experiences with martial arts training.

As a follow-up to this activity, you will have the option of being involved in an individual recorded interview to discuss in greater detail your personal experiences with martial arts training. There may be a further brief meeting to clarify or explore issues arising from the recorded interview.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public without their consents. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, your name will not appear on the questionnaire, and a pseudonym will be used in written or oral presentation of data. The data will be stored in a secure archive on the Lincoln University campus.

The project is being carried out by Diana Looser who can be contacted by phone on 3793970, or by email at mrsyanns@hotmail.com. She will be pleased to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

The project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee.
CONSENT FORM

THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MARTIAL ARTS EXPERIENCE IN NEW ZEALAND

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Signed: ________________________________  Date: ________________________________
You are invited to participate in a project entitled 'The Development and Characteristics of the Martial Arts Experience in New Zealand' by completing the following questionnaire. The aim of this project is to describe and analyse the phenomenon of introduced martial arts in New Zealand. It seeks to discover the demographic characteristics of people practising martial arts, and to explore the reasons why people become involved in martial arts training and why they continue. It is hoped that this project will contribute to a greater understanding of leisure participation and practice in New Zealand. The questionnaire is anonymous, and you will not be identified as a respondent without your consent. You may at any time withdraw your participation, including withdrawal of any information you have provided. If you complete the questionnaire, however, it will be understood that you have consented to participate in the project and consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.
MARTIAL ARTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer these questions as fully as you can. If you need more space, please use the back of the paper.

1. Male □ Female □

2. Age .................

3. Ethnic Identity
   NZ Māori □ NZ European/Pākehā □ Other European □ Samoan □
   Tongan □ Cook Island Māori □ Niuean □ Chinese □
   Indian □ Other .................. □

4. Occupation

5. Highest Educational Qualification

6. a) Style(s) of martial arts studied
    b) Belt colour and/or rank

7. How long have you been studying martial arts?
   (If you have ever taken a break from training, state for how long)

8. Why did you decide to begin martial arts training?

9. How did you eventually become involved?
   Through Yellow Pages □
   Friends □
   Other (please specify)

10. Before choosing your martial art, did you consider or try a variety of different martial arts to find the right one for you?

11. What was it about your particular martial art that made you choose it?
12. a) Have you ever thought of giving up your martial art?

b) Why have you continued training?

c) Are your reasons for continuing different from those reasons that caused you to begin?

13. How would you rate the importance of martial arts training in your life?

   most important  5  4  3  2  1  not at all important

14. List some key words that you would use to describe what martial arts means to you.

15. During the time you have trained, has your perception of martial arts changed?

   If so, how?

16. Do you think you have changed through studying martial arts?

   If yes, in what way?

17. Did you have particular expectations of martial arts before you began training?

   If you did, a) what were they?

   b) where did they come from?

18. How has your actual experience of martial arts training compared to these previous ideas/expectations?

19. If you would be interested in being involved in an individual recorded interview to talk about your personal experiences with martial arts training, please tick this box.  □
Appendix Five

Semi-Structured Interview Notes

When respondents began martial arts training (note age, stage of life).

Reasons why respondents began martial arts training.

Reasons why respondents have continued with martial arts training. (Martial arts as ‘addictive’ – interest often increases with training. Are respondents’ reasons for continuing training different from the reasons that caused them to begin?)

The connection between martial arts knowledge and self knowledge – how is this understood/realised? Several questionnaire respondents wrote about holistic self-development, self-improvement. Perception of self in martial arts training. Do they want to develop into someone/something in particular? Did they visualise a particular outcome? If so, what? Where did that idea come from, and why did they believe martial arts would make it happen? [Sense that they’ll get something specific from martial arts? How do they know? How did the reality of training compare to these expectations?]

Experiences with martial arts training over time – the journey. (The ‘never-ending journey’ aspect of the martial arts = attractive. Why?)

First impressions of training? Thoughts, feelings? Development.

Salient experiences that respondents could name during their training careers.

Are there times when respondents felt like quitting or taking a break? Why (not)?

Interesting to explore the ‘constructed’ element of martial arts experience. That is, respondents testify to having got certain things out of martial arts training, but have they really? Are they saying that because we have a set of assumptions about what martial arts training involves and people think they should get certain things out of the training experience? Or, do respondents expect to have a certain response to the experience, approach their training with that attitude and have that response accordingly?

Idea of martial arts ‘filling a gap’ in people’s lives. In what way? (Similarities between respondents?)

Friendship, camaraderie, social/family atmosphere seems to be important in martial arts training (beginning, continuing). How is this realised? How does this develop?

The black belt. Thoughts and ideas. Previous notions of the significance of the black belt. Myths vs. reality?
Perceptions of the black belt prior to training, during training, having achieved it. The experience of gaining the black belt. Have respondents changed since? Has their idea of the meaning of the black belt changed?
Respondents’ perceptions of their fellow martial artists.

The role of competition in the martial arts.

Differences between the various martial arts styles – attitudes, outcomes, etc.

Previous ideas/expectations of martial arts vs. ‘real’ experience?

Personal change.

As respondents have trained, how have their perceptions of, and attitudes to, martial arts changed?

Change in perception from martial arts as a sport (fitness, toughness, self-defence, fighting, competition; material goals, e.g. belts) to an art form (technical, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic focus). Trainees tend to begin for ‘sporting’ reasons, then, after a period of training, tend to take pride in the art form. Interesting to explore – situated liminally between sport/art form.

Gender differences in experience of training.

(Comparison between women involved in martial arts training and those in tailored self-defence courses? Different goals, experiences?)

Many people (especially women) noted ‘self-defence’ as an initial motivator. Possible option for discussing notion of ‘risk’. (If people did not feel at risk, why bother with self-defence training?)

Popular culture featured frequently in the questionnaire responses as an initial motivator, or responsible for creating/promoting certain views of martial arts training. Explore further – discuss particular ideas, perceptions, preconceptions.

Application of martial arts principles in everyday life. Comparison between ‘martial arts’ role and ‘everyday’ role?

Cultural traditions: with martial arts, one cultural tradition has been incorporated into another. In the process of importation/transportation to the West/Australasia, how have Asian martial arts been affected (e.g. changed, diversified)? Also consider a) differences between Asian martial arts and Western-based martial arts b) whether globalisation and international competition work to standardise martial arts practice?

Opportunity for comment: is there anything respondents have noticed in themselves, their fellow students or their own students arising from martial arts training? Are there commonalities/trends?