

# Service in the Taekwondo Community

Barbara Brand

## Introduction

At age 55, with 35 years of Taekwondo experience, I enjoy looking forward more than backward. And as I plan for the future, I increasingly ask myself how I can positively impact people in general and the Taekwondo community in particular in long lasting ways. It was natural then for me to choose service as the topic of my research. This paper discusses service, the act of providing for and promoting well-being and self-sufficiency among individuals of this and future generations. The focus is on the mutual benefits that service offers volunteers and recipients. This paper also details the benefits the Taekwondo community may derive as a result of an organized service development program. The discussion begins with a general description of psychosocial development and highlights generativity, the development stage most relevant to the topic. A description of the benefits of volunteering in organizations and volunteering in Taekwondo programs follows. Finally, methods to promote, develop, and support service in the Taekwondo community are offered.

## Psychosocial Development

Erik Erikson was the first to describe psychosocial development as eight stages that span from infancy

through late adulthood. His theory includes the epigenetic principle, that there is a predetermined order of personality development and that each of the eight stages builds upon the success of the previous stage.<sup>1</sup> As each is successfully completed, an individual attains character strengths which help resolve the issues in the next stage. Those who successfully progress through the stages develop a healthy personality, which includes the ability to trust, a sense of identity, and a desire to guide members of future generations.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Stages of Psychosocial Development**

Stage	Age	Psychosocial Crisis	Basic Virtue
1	Infancy	Trust vs. Mistrust	Hope
2	Early Childhood	Autonomy vs. Shame	Will
3	Play Age	Initiative vs. Guilt	Purpose
4	School Age	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competency
5	Adolescence	Ego Identity vs. Role Confusion	Fidelity
6	Young Adult	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love
7	Adulthood	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Care
8	Maturity	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom

## Generativity

During the seventh stage of psychosocial development, Generativity vs. Stagnation, an individual must decide whether to be disconnected, uninvolved and unproductive in the community or make the world a more positive place by nurturing and guiding those of the next generation. According to Son and Wilson,

"Erikson maintained that in midlife, men and women become more concerned with the well-being of future generations, having spent their earlier years establishing an identity for themselves. They feel more demands on them to generate a positive legacy that would outlive them. Generativity was thus, from its first formulation, two-sided, consisting of 'agentic and communal desires that motivate a person to seek out opportunities for both symbolic immortality and caring nurturance for others' on the one hand and 'age-graded cultural demands that provide standards and expectations concerning how people may and should begin to take responsibility for the next generation' on the other (McAdams, 2001:405). For generative people, midlife is time to 'give something back' to society. They become more interested in those institutions and cultural practices designed to promote positive functioning and social life in the future—schools, churches, charities, community organizations, professional societies, and so on (McAdams, 2001:405)."<sup>3</sup>

## Generative Characteristics of Volunteers

As adults settle into their professional careers and begin families, they face the big picture and their place in it. They must choose to be inactive and self-centered

or active contributing members of society.<sup>4</sup> Contributions may take many forms, for example volunteering in community groups, mentoring young professionals, students, athletes, etc., or donating time, expertise, or funds to social causes. While recipients receive clear benefits of financial donations and resources, there are many positive effects for volunteers as well. "Formal volunteering is highly correlated with both indicators of well-being and the more frequently a person volunteers, the greater is the increase in the probability that such person will report being healthy and happy."<sup>5</sup> The positive effects of volunteering begin with a modest commitment,

"...a person who volunteers less than once a month is 4.5% more likely to report being in excellent health and 7% more likely to report being very happy than a person who does not engage in voluntary work...people who volunteer more than monthly but less than weekly are 12% more likely to be very happy and people who volunteer weekly are 16% more likely to be very happy. The health improvement associated with monthly volunteering is similar to the one observed among individuals with incomes rising from less than \$20,000 to incomes between \$20,000 and \$30,000...Results indicate that people who volunteer weekly have the same increase in the probability of reporting being very happy as moving from a personal income of less than \$20,000 to incomes between \$75,000 and \$100,000".<sup>6</sup>

Education plays a key role in volunteerism. Educated individuals are more likely to be asked to volunteer and are more likely to do so. Not only do they have the organizational skill set and self-confidence to complete the tasks: meeting planning,

information presentation, and office skills often required of volunteers, they have the social skill sets. Through school and social and civic affairs, they have been exposed to pro-social causes that have helped them develop a social consciousness and responsibility to help others. Eric Ryan, a 51 year old, educated (MBA Santa Clara Univ.), owner of EC Ryan International is a good example. In a June, 2014 written interview, Ryan stated that he is a member of the Rotary Club, one of the world's first service organizations, and attends weekly fundraising and project organization meetings. He volunteers time on Rotary community projects and financially supports Rotary and several other organizations. He focuses on health and education projects because they can dramatically change someone's circumstance in the long term with relatively low resource input. He understands the personal rewards of volunteering, "My motivation is a fairly self- interested desire to improve my own world and promote my values within it. Need, in and of itself, is a factor that motivates me, but not the primary one. And it's usually fun and soul-nourishing and interesting." For Ryan, a connection to the project is important, "I like to know who and what I am giving to rather than to simply give in the abstract or put-in hours volunteering. It is also fun to be part of a good service organization; it is sometimes more about enjoying the people you serve with than the service." During projects he feels connected, empathetic, and energized, and when the project is complete, he feels satisfied and more emotionally balanced with perspective on his own life. Through

the years and many projects, he has impacted the lives of hundreds of people, and found that, "The most satisfying projects have been the most personal ones. Do I over-tip the hardworking waiter saving for school? Do I hold the door for someone struggling if I'm late? We can all promote a more civil, healthy, interesting, enlightened world in little and big ways."

Leslie Machado, MBA Pepperdine University, managing director of Aviareps, an aviation and tourism company is motivated to make a "net positive" contribution to society to repay the benefits the world had given him. In a June, 2014 interview, he estimated that he has directly impacted over 10,000 people through service. For him, the origin of the project is unimportant, "Ownership of the project idea does not really matter. The impact of the final outcome is more important." He selects annual group projects that attempt results or objectives that most people deem unrealistic or impossible to achieve. During a project he feels, "driven and focused and blocks out all communications and people who will create negative energy," and when it is done he feels humbled by the completion of the project. A memorable project that had a significant positive impact was one that focused on, "A group of children (ages 3–10) in India who were orphaned. Their parents either deserted them or were convicts. These children were vulnerable to be picked up for human trafficking. I got my India staff members/employees to go out to the facility, on paid company time, and teach these kids reading, writing and craft. Education is what will get them out of their bondage." As for his

lifetime's contributions, he stated, "I have barely started and have a mountain of opportunities to climb." If he had just one more project he could complete, he would teach entrepreneurship skills to teens and help them shape their dreams and aspirations.

### **Generative Characteristics of Taekwondo Leaders**

In the Taekwondo community, the epitome of visionary, generative leader is 9th dan black belt, Dr. Ken Min, Director of UC Martial Arts Program (1969-2005). He created the organizations that drive Taekwondo in the United States. He was the founder and president (1970-1972, 1979-1986) of the US National Collegiate Taekwondo Association and the first and second term president of AAU (beginning 1974), the first official US taekwondo national organization. When, in 1988, Taekwondo made its debut at the Olympics, Min served as US Taekwondo Team manager and advisor, Olympic Evaluation Team member and US Olympic Team liaison. In 1992, he served as United States Olympic Taekwondo Team Manager and then returned to lead the push to make Taekwondo an Olympic sport in 2000. While he served many organizations, for example the US Olympic Committee as an Executive Committee Member, Educational Council Member, and Games Preparation and Service Committee member and FISU (International University Sports Federation) as Education Committee member, and technical supervisor of eight world university taekwondo championships, he hosted over 100 regional, national, world martial arts tournaments.<sup>7</sup>

In a 2006 interview, Dr. Min stated that his master instructors and senior ranking black belts influenced his dedicated involvement, and it was natural to Dr. Min to extend the same influence and guidance that he received. He added, "Martial arts, including taekwondo and judo, is a lifelong training and learning experience through self-training, self-discipline, self-confidence building, and self-defense development, and finally, trying to earn self-esteem and self-respect. That is why martial arts have a ranking system through training and learning which is evaluated by higher ranking masters. I am now a 9th dan black belt in taekwondo, 8th dan black belt in judo, and am in position to evaluate lower ranking martial artists".<sup>8</sup>

Currently, there are active American Taekwondo leaders. USA Taekwondo, the national governing body of Taekwondo is fortunate to have Raymond Hsu and Victoria Serbin serve as poomsae referee co-chairpersons. They are passionate in their pursuit to support referees and athletes. On a regular ongoing basis, they travel the world to attend and present referee seminars, direct referees at events, and referee at state, national, and international events. In a June, 2014 interview, 7th dan black belt Raymond Hsu, described his motivation to help others, "I am passionate about Taekwondo. I enjoy teaching others my sport and improving their skills." He said he undertakes new projects all the time, anytime he sees an opportunity, and enjoys bringing poomsae information back to the US, so referees and athletes stay up to date and ready for national and international competition. Hsu prefers to participate



in high impact independent or group projects that can make the most of his skills and can make a difference in people's lives. He enjoys collaborating with others and the synergy that comes from groups. When a project is complete, he feels fulfilled and excited to start the next one. A project of his that had a significant positive impact was when he organized much-needed referee training seminars in Central America. When asked how he feels about his lifetime's contributions, he said, "As long as I have a breath, I can continue to contribute to others." He looks forward to unifying the poomsae standards for the World Taekwondo Federation.

In a June 11, 2014 interview, Victoria Serbin stated that she has been involved in many, continuous charitable organizations' boards over the years because she is motivated by the desire to give back for having a privileged life. While she enjoys contributing to projects conceived by others, she prefers finding where the needs are and creating a variety of practical projects that give acceptable as well as measurable returns. She said, "I don't like spinning my wheels just to volunteer for some project with 'social redeeming' value." During the past eight years, Serbin has used her experience as WTF Poomsae Committee member and World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships Competition Coordinator to help her develop and implement the USAT Poomsae referee training and certification program, which has certified close to 400 referees. Her goal is to ensure that the US can select competitive teams for the World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships. During projects, she feels good because she is on a mission,

and when it's complete it, she feels relieved and fulfilled if the project has had a good outcome. She said that she feels good about her lifetime's contributions, but that she is not done yet and will wait and see what next falls into her lap.

Taekwondo students who meet or learn of leaders like Min, Hsu, and Serbin, may be inspired to follow in their footsteps and could benefit from organized service development programs modeled on those of existing companies and organizations. The best of these have common characteristics in terms of structure, focus, and support.

### **Service Development Programs: Essential Elements**

There are specific essential elements in an effective service development program. According to Melissa Peet, a generative organization includes these three dimensions:

"The creation of an "organizational compass" which is developed by people working together to find purposeful identities and enlivening capacities within individuals, groups and the organization as a whole over time.

The development of generative communication norms, policies and practices (both formal and informal), that support people engaging in storytelling, generative listening, dialogue and documentation processes that continually uncover, validate and circulate the tacit capacities and strengths emerging through their individual and collective efforts.

The enactment of a strategic plan focused on identifying, anchoring and amplifying the core strengths and capacities of people through the development of norms,

structures and information systems that support the creation of generative knowledge over time."<sup>9</sup>

This type of structure requires participants to have a genuine appreciation of their role and that of their generative relationship partner.

"It's also important to have balance in the leader/follower relationships and their perspective on their individual value in it. For leadership to be generative, there must thus be a balance in relationships with followers that supports learning and change. It means sharing information and knowledge generously, but not as a means of moulding co-workers. (Daft and Lengel, 1998).<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the degree of balance achieved by the leader can help in establishing a mindful relationship...

'Balanced' leaders, moreover, are those who, recognizing that they are incomplete (Ancona et al., 2007)<sup>11</sup>

are willing to achieve completion in the relationship with the follower, leaving room for sharing, an area for full exchange that makes it possible for power to be effectively shared.

This type of structure encourages participants to be humble, purposeful, engaging and collaborative. It allows members to explore non-traditional learning environments that focus on relationship building.

### **Service Development Programs in the Taekwondo Community**

Inherent characteristics of Taekwondo could help form the foundation of both small scale (clubs, schools) and large scale (state associations and

national organizations) service development programs. For small scale programs, the positive attributes include: many masters instructors have great knowledge bases and generative qualities, many club curriculums include assistant teaching requirements which could be used to foster generative leader/follower relationships, and club schedules usually allow for discussion before and after training sessions. The inherent challenges include the hierarchical nature of Taekwondo which sometimes makes it difficult for masters to collaborate with each other and for master instructors and students to enjoy a level playing field in communication and responsibilities. Also, the master instructor's essential tacit knowledge may be difficult to transfer to students, and students' limited view of the big picture may negatively impact their desire to prioritize the growth of the lower belts they serve.

A win/win/win result could be produced if masters, upper belt, and lower belt students recognized their symbiotic relationships. If master instructors understood the value in training instructors that will outlive them, if upper belt students understood the benefits of transitioning from focused student to knowledgeable, accessible mentors while increasing their initiative, repertoire, and soft skills along with technical components of the curriculum, and if lower belts had a desire to emulate the upper belt and master instructor, it could dramatically impact Taekwondo programs' health and longevity. In addition, it could set the stage for the Black Belt's future service on a greater scale.

Large scale Taekwondo organizations, USA Taekwondo for example, can develop successful volunteer programs through the solicitation of new and experienced Black Belts if they understand how age impacts generativity. According to Wei, Bernhardt & Donthu, young people volunteer because of peer pressure, self-image, and self-improvement. They respond to the potential social and personal benefits of the activity. Older adults volunteer because they feel a sense of responsibility for the well-being of their communities and because their contributions bring pleasure and emotional satisfaction. Older adults respond to meaningful goals, positive experiences, and emotional connections.

If USA Taekwondo follows the lead of other successful volunteer organizations, they can create a generative structure and then recruit volunteers by appealing to their subjective well-being. This strategy will provide a positive impact for the organization, its programs, and all of its members.

## **Conclusion**

Through the years, I have learned about service by witnessing the countless selfless acts of my instructor Professor Robert Zambetti of CSU East Bay (formerly CSU Hayward) and from his instructor, Dr. K. Min. As master instructor of Sacramento Taekwondo Club (1990–present), US National Poomsae Team member (2007–2011), USA National Poomsae Team coach (2012–present), USAT AAC representative (2013–present) and US National Poomsae Team Coach/Athlete/Management Coordinator (2014–present),

I have attempted to make a positive impact for all the US Taekwondo athletes by helping to create programs that embrace their generativity.

Like the rest of the contributors of this paper, I feel pressure to do more. The list of important goals is long, and life is incredibly short. Chaim Potok, author of *The Chosen* (1967) fashioned a clear image of just how short our time is,

"We live less than the time it takes to blink an eye, if we measure our lives against eternity. So it may be asked what value is there to a human life. ...a blink of eye in itself is nothing. But the eye that blinks, that is something. A span of life nothing. But the man who lives that span, he is something. He can fill that tiny span with meaning, so its quality is immeasurable though its quantity may be insignificant. ...A man must fill his life with meaning, meaning is not automatically given to life. It is hard work to fill one's life with meaning. ...Merely to live, merely to exist-what sense is there to it? A fly also lives.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Boeree

<sup>2</sup> McCleod

<sup>3</sup> Son & Wilson

<sup>4</sup> McCleod

<sup>5</sup> Borgonovi

<sup>6</sup> Borgonovi

<sup>7</sup> Faletti

<sup>8</sup> Faletti

<sup>9</sup> Peet

<sup>10</sup> Gatti & Ghislieri

<sup>11</sup> Gatti & Ghislieri