

Reconciliation of Martial Arts Culture and American College Campus Culture through British Cultural Theory in the Areas of Hierarchy, Race, and Gender

Cultural Studies is a broad term for the field of critical exploration into the social structures which establish and indicate the boundaries of what we call "cultures." In the past, the term culture was something of a sweeping generalization. Its usage was based upon obvious visual cues such as skin color or bone structure and sets of behavioral characteristics including body language, temperament, or a particular cuisine. In a world of information superhighways and melting pots, however, there is a skyrocketing need for "culture" to define small, precise subsets. In discovering how very alike all people are, the individual begins to crave a way to differentiate the self in ways other than by using names, colors, and geographic locations.

The way that most people understand cultures is by imagining them as nesting subsets of larger groups or societies. Particularly when something appears foreign to an onlooker, he uses both the exact subset and the umbrella sets to help define the item, custom, or person. Hence the average American, seeing a televised film about the daily life of African tribesmen, might understand the culture as an undeveloped society, a foreign entity, in Africa, performing tasks obsolete in the United States. Because neither an individual's definition of a culture nor that individual's use for his definition are free from bias, that average American might use any one of those subsets as a reason to dismiss the significance or legitimacy of the entire culture. This pattern holds especially true when aspects of foreign culture begin to "invade" the onlooker's own, idealized boundaries.

The popularity of martial arts in America brings such a cultural collision to the fray. A typical construction of martial arts culture would likely read anthropologically. Ultimately, a simplistic diagram might run, "Asia, male, warriors, martial artists," easily allowing an eager interpreter to emphasize the foreign-ness of the arts. Instead, Cultural Studies asks the question, is there no other way to approach a culture such as the martial arts? Though hardly the anthropologically intuitive approach, there is no reason one couldn't rewrite the tree from an American participant's viewpoint to read: fitness, muscular/cardiovascular workout, self-defense, martial arts. In this configuration, martial arts seem as American as football or baseball.

A Concrete Approach to Cultural Systems

Today, many cultural theorists are working on new models which approach the idea of cultural production and progression in revolutionary ways. Perhaps the most effective and manageable model is British cultural theorist Richard Johnson's. It is through his model,¹ sketched above, and the critical thought of cultural academic Stuart Hall that we will examine the problem of reconciling the intersection of the traditional culture of martial arts and the culture of the American college campus.

What is most significant about Johnson's model is that it takes into consideration the fact that culture is never stagnant. Rather than ploddingly progressing in a single direction as traditional, linear models indicate, Johnson's circle elongates across time to become a spiral which, given the right conditions, is capable of doubling back on itself. That is, any act by any individual creates ripples which eventually return to affect the initially acting individual. This return may influence that individual in virtually any imaginable way. Johnson's model has roots in both economics and literary criticism and in fusing a highly methodological process with a largely creative one, he creates a dynamic analytic tool.

To facilitate my reading of Johnson's model I will assign a compass to it, north oriented towards 2, Texts. On the circle, the poles represent arguably tangible items or ideas while east and west are the directions of the actions which guide some aspect of the poles into one another. By starting at 1, Production, one can trace the ripples which any cultural product may have in society. According to Johnson, an act produces a "text" which can be anything from a pair of shoes to a tradition or slang cultural term. Some group of individuals receives the text and "reads" it, producing responses which are exhibited in their lifestyles, or lived cultures/social relations. These in turn determine whether or not the act of production is repeated and whether or not the text is "read" well by others. Of course, entire cultures are considerably more complex.

It is impossible to find a starting point for a given culture. The search for a genesis is as pointless as a chicken-or-the-egg argument. Instead, we assume that the culture was produced at some unknown point and start our examination of the culture at 4, Lived Cultures, in order to see what ideologies are feeding into *current* acts of production. Stuart Hall, one of the fathers of modern Cultural Studies, writes of these ambient ideologies:

We have to 'speak through' the ideologies which are active in our society and which provide us with the means of 'making sense' of social relations and our place in them... Ideologies produce different forms of social consciousness, rather than being produced by them.

¹ Johnson, Richard. "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" *Social Text* 16. Duke University Press. 1987. p. 47

They work most effectively when we are not aware that how we formulate and construct a statement about the world is underpinned by ideological premises; when our formations seem to be simply descriptive statements about how things are (i.e. must be), or of what we can 'take-for-granted.'²

Such statements are precisely the aspects of Lived Cultures to which Johnson's model refers. Unspoken ideologies exist for and about nearly every culture or cultural product in existence. The cycle of these ideologies and individuals' reactions to them formulates the complex spiral of input and output which defines the culture. Applied to the study of martial arts while surrounded by the culture of a college campus, this axiom indicates that one is never to be free of the bevy of enthusiastic but somewhat misinformed questions which flood the martial artist: "Can you break bricks with your head?" "Can you kill people in less than ten seconds?" "Karate, Kung Fu, they're all the same thing, right?" The axiom also implies that we should welcome rather than discard such questions, for they form a window through which the martial artist can interject his own premises and thereby help to alter the flow of the spiral. In order to pass a fair judgement on this assessment, it is vital to have a clear understanding of what external aspects of American culture influence the study of martial arts and what aims the study of martial arts may possess. In addition, we must examine what problematic relationships the culture of the college campus brings to the equation.

Media & The Martial Arts

What then are the ambient ideologies surrounding martial arts? What we seek are the ideas which the majority culture processes as 4, Lived Cultures, and which help to program the cultural production of our practices. In a complex and highly developed society like the United States, the best and perhaps only way to generalize the entire society's feelings is by analyzing the media. Through the media, individuals in every walk of life are fed opinions and dissents about everything from consumer products to social interactions on distant continents. How the media spotlights or ignores an event almost wholly dictates how it will be received by the masses.

With this in mind, it is apparent that martial arts differ from most other physical activities in many regards. Unlike other activities which involve physical altercations like wrestling and boxing, martial arts competitions are rarely televised. Those channels which do occasionally televise or broadcast pieces of competitions are almost invariably Asian broadcast

² Hall, Stuart. "The Whites of Their Eyes." *Silver Linings*. London: Bridges & Brunt. 1981. p. 32

channels which are rarely subtitled. Martial arts are not taught in high schools where physical activities with an equal or even higher potential for injury -- wrestling, football, sometimes gymnastics -- are encouraged. This is immeasurably problematic, since it leaves the media as the sole source easily accessible information.

There can be no surprise in the failure of American cinema to capture an accurate portrayal of martial arts. With an interest in turning every event into a story, complete with suspense and climactic moments of triumph or defeat, American films rely on stereotypes. Since the average American is content to accept martial arts as a very foreign, even threatening aspect of Asian culture, this is simple. Because martial arts historically originated in Asia and because the United States has been unable to surmount problems of racism and discrimination between all ethnic groups, martial arts in America have fallen into the center of racial discourse. The culture of martial arts has thus taken on the social characteristics of Asia and has equally inherited the accompanying stereotypes, what Edward Said categorizes as Orientalism.³ Orientalism, Said argues, was the West's attempt to achieve cultural superiority by harnessing the power of discourse to signify all of Asia as child-like, feminine, and in need of guidance and leadership from the Occident.

In contrast, the martial arts stand out as the one small aspect of that conception of the Orient which, no matter how great the emphasis on martial artists' reliance on meditation or their humble subservience to their teachers, could not be subordinated to this viewpoint by the majority culture. Nevertheless, the rest of the stereotypes were devastatingly successful and all things associated with Asian culture are to this day viewed in film and much quotidian thought as somehow 'other.' The result is that the martial arts remain teetering on the brink of this 'otherness,' pulled toward other Asian stereotypes by immutable geographic and philosophical connections and yet hovering in a state of exoticized mysticism because of its failure to conform to the other aspects of the Asian stereotypes.

On film, this duality is tacitly acknowledged only in the genre of martial arts roles portrayed on screen. Martial artists are either heroes with mystical pasts and powers or vicious villains, lacking personalities and redeeming qualities. Martial arts masters are invariably ascetics who speak in riddles and humiliate their disciples. They are never wrong, possessing a kind of sixth sense about danger, the past, and the future. While this may leave American audiences with a feeling of smug superiority, sure of the outcome of the story, it destroys any hope that a real martial artist has for integrity from within the majority culture.

³ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books. 1979.

The Cultural Intersection

If this is the ambient ideology which dominates the space of discourse for martial arts, how does it affect the reality of martial arts culture and study? Since only the poles are tangible, in order to study our real focal point, 1, Cultural Production, we need to choose a definable 2, Texts. We can use some of my own experiences as a basic text in order to study the cultural production. From a traditional standpoint, as a Caucasian woman without much athletic experience prior to my engagement in martial arts, I am a sufficiently unlikely martial artist. What effect, then, do the culture of the college campus and my own membership in the cultures of both women and racial majority America have on my study of martial arts and me as a text, a product of this cultural intersection?

Having defined 4, Lived Cultures, we may extrapolate a bit about what possibly false expectations the average, new martial artist brings to their training. When an individual, whose preconceptions are the product of the media's violent dramatizations, actually enters a space in which the reality of the same Text which spawned those dramatizations exists, the result is an unstable medley of misunderstandings and realizations. The trouble spots center primarily around three issues: hierarchy, race, and gender. In examining each of these, we will trace the spiraling production and input of both American martial arts folklore and the college campus contributions which further distress the cultural integrity of the current product.

Hierarchy

One of the largest preconceptions held by new martial artists concerns the hierarchy about which they have seen and read so much. Most imagine that their teacher(s) must be able to beat anyone in the room in any kind of altercation. It is important to note that coaches for other activities like football, basketball, or hockey are not expected to be able to play the game better than members of their team. Still most people new to the martial arts fall into the realm of the skeptic or the believer. The skeptic insists upon testing his instructor's skill whereas the believer's faith may be crushed if he witnesses mistakes. Many individuals insist on testing their instructors' skills at the onset of training. During the semester I spent as a teaching assistant for a University physical education class, I was called 'Newton,' 'Red Belt,' and 'Hey, Teacher!' by many of the students in the period between their losing their initial fear of me and my quick refresher course on how it was and was not appropriate to address me. In larger classes, it is not unusual for (primarily) men who are new to the martial arts to test members of the upper ranks to see if they are 'tough enough' to deserve their ranks by resisting techniques or focusing on strength rather than skill in order to obtain the upper hand or "win."

What new students often fail to understand is that the hierarchy exists for many different reasons, not all of them clearly illuminated by the legends of American martial arts cinema. The assumption is that the higher in rank an individual progresses, the more skilled that person has become. While this is true, the test of skill is how much the individual has progressed when graded against their own abilities, not against a universal yardstick of high jumps or fast kicks.

One of Dr. Ken Min's favorite riddles for new groups of white belts runs:

One day a spear maker enters a village and in the process of selling his wares proclaims that his spears are sharp enough to pierce any shield ever made. The next day a shield craftsman enters the same village and sets up his shop, explaining that his shields are so strong that they can withstand a blow from any spear ever created. Who is right?⁴

The answer, he explains, is that it depends upon who uses the spear and who the shield. Each person has their own strengths and weaknesses and it is not the spear or the shield which serves in battle, but the person behind the implements. The aim of martial arts is not to strengthen the weaknesses so much as to strengthen the strengths sufficiently to protect the weaknesses. Although for some people, the illusion of mysticism and the other stereotypes is more compelling than what they discover to be the "real thing," most trade the magic for the hard working reality quite happily. At the intersection of exposure to Dr. Min's private reading and the background in America's public reading, most students are swayed more by the power of a private reading. It is something which ultimately feels achievable, in contrast to the bizarre circumstances under which most martial artists get their starts on the big screen. Those who accept the reality and are willing to surrender the myth begin to recognize martial arts hierarchy as something more sophisticated than a list of high-scores in a martial arts video game.

Many of the traditional ways in which reverence for hierarchy is shown, however, are particularly problematic for many students. The most obvious symbol of respect and acknowledgement of rank is the bow which is practiced in many Asian cultures on a daily basis. In an exchange of bows, the inferior party bows lower and longer than the superior party, who adjusts the formality of his/her bow according to occasion and own rank. The martial art also exists in and around the martial artists. It too must be acknowledged in proper ways. Hence the bow is also executed when stepping into or out of any space in which one practices the martial art.

⁴ Min, Ken, Dr. Discussions during physical education courses, Spring 1993 - Fall 1995.

As Dr. Min asserts, however, most individuals of American background are not used to the idea of bowing or of lowering themselves toward the ground.⁵ That particular brand of humility is foreign and therefore harder to understand. Further, the bow is also used outside of martial arts space when one sees a master and makes eye contact. For many college students, this generates a schizoid intersection of martial arts obeisances and the American, erudite culture of independence and high self-esteem. With increased participation in martial arts affairs and events from planning and attending fund-raisers to celebratory dinners, this intersection becomes increasingly trafficked and poorly policed. For me, it is the college student self from whose culture I draw upon to be responsible in my duties and the martial arts self who executes the polite and expected etiquette. It is difficult to reconcile the sense of having two selves who must work somewhat independantly in order to accomplish one goal.

Race

A second major misconception brought into the reality of martial arts from film and television is that martial artists are inherently "Asian" in their thoughts and behavior. America's majority culture assumes that because martial arts are historically an Asian construct, martial arts and Asians as they have been translated and have translated themselves into America still necessarily belong together. On the college campus, Asian-Americans who decide to join a martial art are thought to be 'recapturing their ethnic self.' In contrast, majority culture reads white people (and other ethnicities to some extent) in the martial arts as attempting to become or act more 'Asian' in a traditional and somewhat stereotyped reading of 'Asian-ness.'

The battle over ethnic identity is not something only just now being added to the cultural production loop, though. It has existed for decades and has had plenty of time to saturate Lived Cultures and begin affecting itself again. One result is the hegemonic reinforcement of racist thoughts and practices. Having spent days privately mumbling the pronunciation of Korean words in preparation for leading the bowing ceremony which begins and ends each instructional session, I was told not unkindly, "Hey, you don't say that too badly *for a white person*," after my first attempt. On other occasions I have heard, "Your uniform looks good on you -- it matches your skin!" and "Don't worry about understanding this -- you're white, you don't know anything about [any Asian tradition or icon]." The martial artists who said these things are certainly not dismayed to have Caucasians practicing the arts. Instead, they unconsciously rely on what Stuart Hall defines as inferential racism:

⁵ Ibid. Fall 1995.

...those apparently naturalized representations of events and situations relating to race, whether 'factual' or 'fictional', which have racist premisses and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions. The enable racist statements to be formulated without ever bringing into awareness the racist predicates on which the statements are grounded.⁶

The martial artists who say and feel these things -- and who can claim to be always exempt from such a widespread problem? -- fail to recognize that they are mutely accepting the majority culture's assignation of racial domain to a physical practice and culture which is one of the few "sports" truly equalizing different racial groups. The skill needed to excel in the martial arts, unlike the basis for American and European sports, is not based on muscle or height, but instead on speed, accuracy, and thought which together produce power.

Rather than confronting the problems of inferential racism, American martial arts films take the easy way out. Most Caucasian martial artists in film sidestep the problem by portraying themselves as socialized Asians in most of their films. Just as Hall argues that it is the social characterization more than the biological which is inherent in racial assumptions,⁷ so white martial artists who engage in the residual, Oriental traits with which martial arts are linked such as meditation, humility, and deep respect for elders are accepted as almost-Asians. In their films, these martial artists often pit themselves against Asian adversaries, but these opponents are always dishonorable and often framed as ridiculously traditional or modern. This enables the audience, regardless of race, to feel that the appropriate casting of good versus evil has been accomplished. The "good" martial artist maintained the cultural Asianism necessary for the part while his opponent was duly dealt with. Further, precisely as Johnson's model promises, we have come full circle to the point where ambient ideologies are influencing film which are, in turn, influencing public ideologies once again.

The Gender Gap

Finally, there is the dreaded gender issue. Martial arts films portray women mostly as girlfriends and cheerleaders who shriek whenever their hero falters or bleeds. Those who do fight, in martial arts or any other manner, ultimately fall into one of two categories. The first is the gratuitous show of equality, where the film allows a female lead to injure an attacker, either for comic relief or to protect herself or her children in an anti-climactic moment. The second is the damsel in distress division which allows women to fight successfully until the climax of the film when they invariably need to be rescued by the man they've been fighting to protect. Any

⁶ Hall. "The Whites of Their Eyes." p. 36

⁷ Hall. "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance." Sociological Theories. London: UNESCO. 1980. p. 306.

James Bond film will fit this description. Clearly, the ambient ideology surrounding a woman's ability to protect herself is quite negative.

Women face challenges in every sport or physical undertaking because they biologically lack some of the strength and stamina that men possess. Far from conjecture, this has been the case throughout history and is a major part of the reason that events like the Olympics are separated by gender. The winning men's scores and times are almost invariably better than the corresponding women's, despite broken records and superhuman efforts. From a self-defense standpoint, however, there is no rational basis for separating men and women or considering their skills on a sliding scale. Much of what the women in martial arts train for is potential conflict situations with men who are much larger and stronger. It is therefore not merely frustrating to find oneself unable to escape a hold or block an attack by a man, it is almost defeating. To spend years training to be able to keep the ever-present dangers of the real world at bay and then to have an off day during practice and find oneself unable to disarm a lower rank is as devastating as learning that everything one has spent time and energy working toward is useless. Experiencing this feeling of helplessness is very much like looking forward, rather than backward, at the murder of the 14 young, female, engineering students to which Elspeth Probyn alludes in her description of feeling gendered:

The awful recognition, that shock of recognition of where we are as women, the terrible feeling as the very space of the university, of the streets, is rearranged by fear, brought forward another tone. There was no way to avoid a sexed interpretation, there was no way of not speaking as a woman and as a feminist.⁸

By spending as many as twenty hours per week in training, women brace themselves both physically and mentally for what statistics promise will be the inevitability of sexual assault, domestic violence, or a mugging on a deserted street corner. Unlike sports or recreational activities, there is no second chance to avoid the attack. Women cannot shrug off failure by looking toward "next time." Instead, we know that we, as women, exist in a binary state wherein we are part or not part of the terrifying statistics on crime. While men face many of the same statistical odds on crime, women are made to fear crime more, both by the often sexual and intimate nature of the attack and by cultural ideologies which hold that, as American films indicate, women cannot take care of themselves as well as men and are more likely than men to be attacked, a statistic which is generally not true.

⁸ Probyn, Elspeth. "Technologizing the Self: A Future Anterior for Cultural Studies." *Cultural Studies*. Grossberg, Treichler, and Nelson, eds. New York: Routledge. 1992. p. 502

Johnson's diagram explains the problem. Women are the texts. Men read them as vulnerable to attack and therefore attack them. This produces fear in both the women and the non-violent men, *however*, whereas many women respond by training themselves to be fighters, most men continue to read women in the way that the public culture does, as weak and in need of protection from others and even from themselves. This produces a bias against powerful women. The remaining men (those who discard theories of women as weak) have no cultural ideology through which to understand women who fight and therefore translate the women into textual versions of men. That is to say, women in martial arts can be only either weak and delicate or miniature men because there is no cultural niche for a third alternative.

The pivotal issue of women's traditional role in martial arts echoes these concerns. Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*⁹ retells the Chinese legend of Fa Mu Lan, a woman who took a man's place in battle. Kingston explains, however, that whereas the legend simply translates Fa Mu Lan into a male paradigm, this is not a possibility for real, modern, woman warriors. The point of her story is to show that the role of the warrior is rarely a female role; the study of martial arts was essentially forbidden to women until quite recently. There remains a certain amount of discomfort for some men about training with women which necessitates the handling of women's bodies and the vulnerability of their own bodies to women. Many times I have witnessed instructors who pass over a high ranking woman in favor of using a man for demonstration of a technique which does not necessarily require a large or excessively strong attacker. While it is important to demonstrate techniques on different sizes of people and encourage lower ranks to feel included in each lesson, there is a serious backlash which occurs when an instructor is reticent about working closely with women, particularly small women.

First, it revives the issues of hierarchy-testing raised earlier by never illustrating that the women are as capable as the men of attacking and threatening an opponent, regardless of size. Second, it subscribes to both the 'women are delicate' and the 'miniature men' standards and devalues those women who are not big or strong enough to pass for men. Third, the specific use of a lower rank who lacks the experience to demonstrate the safest or most appropriate response to a technique may prevent students from assimilating the process well. Rather than beginning to grasp the subtle, dichotomous relationship of martial arts opponents wherein both are 'doers' despite one's acceptance of a throw or strike, these students often allow one

⁹ Kinston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*. New York: Vintage International. 1989.

partner to be a passive victim, simply waiting for his own turn to attack, rather than responding to the technique. This cheats students out of one of the most basic tenets of martial arts: the principle of the yin and yang, two halves of the whole working at once together and in opposition. Fourth, and most importantly, the experience of helping to teach techniques to a group is an invaluable one. From it, upper ranks begin to gain respect as teachers in the social hierarchy which parallels the ranked hierarchy. Those upper ranks who are chosen frequently to partner the instructor are seen by lower ranks as the most highly skilled, since the instructor apparently prizes their abilities and trusts them to help demonstrate. Already struggling with disadvantages in physical size and social stigmas, a public demonstration of the instructor's faith in women's skills could make a world of difference in the amount of faith that lower ranking students place in those women as teachers and leaders.

Solutions and Stalemates

For the pursuit of reconciliation and progress at the intersection of contradictory cultures, the cultural theorists recommend tolerance and thought. We have examined many of the different ideologies which surround and move constantly through the discourse of martial arts culture. Although they are never in stasis, each constantly tripping through Johnson's model of cultural production and becoming modified and again the modifier, all of these ideologies have a profound effect on the culture itself. Ultimately, however, there is no 'answer' for the many issues which plague the culture. Instead, I suggest a set of possible-solutions which may help to construct yet another ideology necessary to fit people like me into the existing cultural discourse.

The first is that hierarchy must be understood as both an internal and an external exercise. Signs of respect based solely upon hierarchy hold only symbolic value in an American cultural context. It is therefore important for the martial artist to engender within himself a sense of respect which relates to his own individual culture and which is not based upon the trivialities of hierarchy. Those individuals who bow according to belt color rather than respect are more subject to the American cultural crisis of lost self-esteem and self-worth than those who can enjoy the bow because they have allowed it to become an almost joyful expression of their regard for those who teach them a martial art and who learn with them. The latter group manages to incorporate collegiate ideals with new cultural practices and therefore avoids feelings of division or self-betrayal. On the other hand, martial arts culture must recognize the efforts made by individuals whose culture discourages them from lowering themselves toward the ground and allow that the failure to bow with spirit and heart is a much

larger transgression than the depth or correct angle of the bow itself or the occasional forgotten bow on the street.

The second is that there is no racial predilection in martial arts. Due to the ambient racism whose sources lie in Orientalism, hegemony, and responses to hegemony, there is no alternative for those Caucasian martial artists who resist the concessions made by martial arts films in taking on American stereotypes of Asian culture. The existing choices seem to be either to accept the mysticization and renounce majority American culture entirely, or to resign oneself to being categorized as a kind of second citizen of martial arts. To break this cycle, Asian and Asian-American martial artists would have to recognize the racist premises forced onto them by majority culture when they adopt stances which reinforce the idea that martial artists must embrace all culturally Asian values. This is, of course, a difficult task as it is in majority America's best interests to maintain the feeling among other cultural groups that the protection and purity of cultural space is necessary to the survival of the culture. Still, I assert that this task is already in part underway, as Taekwondo enters the Olympics in 2000 and brings competitors of all races together with mutual respect for one another as fighters rather than cultures.

Similarly, there is no gender precedent. In order to prove this, however, women must be willing to collectively break a few molds. Until women stop allowing global cultures to think of them as weak and helpless, men will continue to try to protect them. Until women in martial arts are willing to teach their male peers enough about their strengths and weaknesses, men will continue to figure them as miniature men with certain inabilities. In order to welcome this input from women, however, men must trust that they have the skill and the sensibility to be good instructional partners and must indicate their trust by using women as well as men in lessons about all kinds of techniques. By accepting women's fighting styles and their judgement to keep themselves safe, men can indicate that they are open to women's emerging space in martial arts culture.

While the individual cannot defeat the media or whole cultures of antagonists, this is not the way of martial arts. Instead of fighting an opponent's strengths, martial artists seek out his weaknesses or turn the opponent's strength back at him. Martial arts culture allows ambient ideologies to exist and simply accommodates intersecting cultural positions, recognizing that knowledge is always power. As Johnson's model and Hall's analysis predict, cultural outsiders inevitably ask questions such as "Do you have to walk over hot coals to get a black belt?" and in answering these questions, martial arts culture succeeds in altering the flow

of the cultural production spiral. Those people who do listen to the answers often discover truths about martial arts that make them look differently at the movies and television shows and they realize that the culture is far more complex and engaging than they had supposed.