

**Research Article #6—Martial Arts & Self Esteem**  
**Research Requirement**  
**Psychology 350**

This is one of the articles you may read and report about for your research component. Critiquing this article is **worth 1 research credit**. Each report will be graded on a pass/fail basis. To get a passing grade, it must be clear that you read the article and have a basic understanding of it. Only passing grades count towards the research component. **Remember you must pass the research requirement to receive a grade for this class.**

***Instructions***

1. Read the vocabulary words and background information.
2. Read the questions you will be asked to answer about the article.
3. Read the article, making notes on the answers to the questions as you find them.
4. Type up your responses to the questions on separate paper.
5. Keep a copy of your paper (if I can't find it, you have to produce a copy for me or lose the points)
6. Put the complete answers in my mailbox in room 237 Burnett Hall or email it to cgarbin@unl.edu

On the top of the page put **your name, section number, and student ID number**. Please number each question, type out the complete question and then type your answer. Single or double spacing is fine. Make sure your responses use complete sentences.

***Questions for the Report***

1. What is the title of this article?
2. What is this article about? Why does it say it is important for psychologists to study this topic? Use your own words.
3. The independent variable is what the researcher manipulates. How many independent variables & what are they?
4. The dependant variable(s) is what the researcher measures to see what happens with the independent variable. How many dependent variables were there and what were they?
5. Who were the participants in this experiment?
6. If you had been in this experiment, what would you have seen/heard/done? In other words, generally describe what the researcher asked the participants to do. Not all participants did exactly the same thing so be sure to indicate those differences. Use your own words.
7. What was done to control confounds in this study? What confounds were controlled and what do you think were uncontrolled – be explicit!
8. In your own words, describe the primary conclusions from this study.
9. How might the findings in this research be applied (be sure to apply the info from both studies & to say something that the author(s) didn't!!).

## The Positive Influence of Martial Arts Instruction on Preadolescents' and Early Adolescents' Self-Esteem

This investigation attempted to determine whether changes in attitudes toward the self resulted because preadolescents and early adolescents participated in the first level of Martial arts instruction. Findings from a pilot study that indicated both students and instructors believed student's attitudes about them-selves became more positive after receiving martial arts instruction prompted this study (Martin, 1991). This study, therefore, included both students' and their instructors' ratings of each student's self-esteem level. Coopersmith (1990) defines self-esteem as a judgment of worthiness that is expressed by the attitudes a person holds toward self. Her previous research found that students with high self-esteem approach tasks with the belief that they will succeed. Gwin (1990) claims that true self-esteem means more than teaching students to feel good about themselves. She believes that students earn self-respect when they are in instructional settings that support the idea that effort will lead to success. It was hypothesized that the instruction would influence students' self-perceptions and their instructors' perceptions of their self-esteem, creating more positive self-esteem of both types.

### Method and Results

A simple random sample of 950 nine- to fifteen-year-old students enrolled in martial arts classes throughout the United States was selected. Two surveys were administered to students and their instructors: one at the beginning of training and another eight months later. Eight months represented the first complete cycle of martial arts instruction.

The martial arts training centers administered the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (School Form) which included three subscales that measure students' attitudes toward their social, academic, and personal selves (Coopersmith, 1990) during their first week of training and again eight months later. Table 1 shows significant pre-post mean differences were found for all three subscales, with significantly more positive attitudes at post-test ( $p < .01$  for all F-tests).

**Table 1: Martial arts students perceptions of their change in self-esteem before & after training**

	<b>Social attitude</b>	<b>Academic attitude</b>	<b>Personal self attitude</b>
<b>Before Martial Arts Training</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>21.1</b>
<b>After 8 Months of Martial Arts Training</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>27.3</b>

The Behavioral Academic Self-Esteem Rating Scale was completed twice by the students' martial arts instructors, once during the first month of their training and again at the end of their eighth month of training. Instructors rated students on five self-esteem factors; student initiative; social attention; success/failure; social attraction; and self-confidence. Student initiative represented how often a student participated in instructional activities. Social attention measured how well a student exhibited behaviors that facilitated learning. Success/failure assessed how well a student coped with corrective feedback from instructors. Social attraction measured how compatible students were with peers. Self-confidence represented the degree to which a student verbally expressed his/her accomplishments.

Table 2 shows the pre and post means for these five measures. Significant pre-post mean differences ( $p < .01$  for each) were found for all five subscales, with significantly more positive scores at post-test.

**Table 2: Martial arts instructors' perceptions of their students change in self-esteem before & after training**

	<b>Student Initiative</b>	<b>Social Attention</b>	<b>Success/Failure</b>	<b>Social Attraction</b>	<b>Self-Confidence</b>
<b>Before Martial Arts Training</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>3.56</b>	<b>3.42</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>3.37</b>
<b>After 8 Months of Martial Arts Training</b>	<b>4.25</b>	<b>4.47</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>4.33</b>

## **Conclusions**

Students' self-esteem became higher as a result of the first instructional cycle of Martial arts training. The instructional emphasis was on teaching students to take control of themselves in a highly structured and ritualistic environment. Teacher instructions, expectations, and assessments were clear. Students, therefore, gained confidence to master defined goals—that is, students intrinsically valued the instructional process of Martial arts, and thus, applied the necessary effort to achieve. Learning environments that promote students' taking control of their own learning through structured and ritualistic activities create for students an intrinsic purpose for learning. In the Martial arts teaming environment students increased their feelings about themselves and reduced fear of failing after applying effort. As expected, *both* self-perceptions of self-esteem and instructor's ratings of self-esteem increased due to the first eight-month cycle of martial arts training. Thus, these results provide converging evidence the martial arts training raises self-esteem in these important age groups.