We cordially invite you to the public defence of the doctoral dissertation of:
JIKKEMIEN VERTONGHEN
which will take place on Tuesday, April 26 at 19:00 in room "D.0.07" located on the campus of Etterbeek

THE ANALYSIS OF CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN YOUTH MARTIAL ARTS PRACTICE

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Presentation of the dissertation

To date, contrasting results are found regarding the presumed effects of martial arts involvement among youth, ranging from very positive to very negative. The variations in these findings could possibly be due to the fact that most authors regarded martial arts as a unitary phenomenon and were primarily focused on measuring outcomes. Research regarding the underlying conditions that give rise to these presumed effects is sorely lacking.

In this PhD study an analysis was therefore made of several contextual factors that might influence social-psychological outcomes of martial arts as practised by youngsters. Based on the literature, these contextual factors are defined in this PhD study as (a) the structural qualities of the martial arts (i.e., type of martial art), (b) type of guidance, (c) characteristics of the participants and (d) their social context.

Prior to the investigation of these factors (chapter 3 and 4), a literature study (chapter 1) and an exploratory research were conducted (chapter 2). The combination of these four studies in this doctoral research was an attempt to gain a better understanding of the true nature of the social-psychological outcomes of martial arts involvement by young participants.

Based on the results of this doctoral research, it was concluded that depending on the type of martial art being practised, differences exist in several contextual factors:

- **Characteristics of participants**: Youngsters practising kick-/Thai boxing show more physical aggression and behavioural problems than the judoka, aikidoka and karateka involved in this study. Furthermore, kick-/Thai boxers and judoka were more ego-oriented than aikidoka, whereas the latter were found to be more task-oriented than participants of judo and kick-/Thai boxing.
- **Social context of young martial artists**: Kick-/Thai boxers are from a lower social class than the judoka, aikidoka and karateka involved in this study.
- **Type of guidance**: Teachers of different martial arts used different teaching approaches (i.e., a traditional approach in aikido vs. an efficiency approach in kick-/Thai boxing). Also different teaching methods were distinguished within one martial art (i.e., traditional, sporting and efficiency approach in karate). Furthermore, by taking the perceived motivational climate into account, it was also concluded that different teaching approaches were perceived differently by participants.

In conclusion, this doctoral research has provided a better understanding of several contextual factors that might influence social-psychological outcomes of martial arts involvement by young participants. Although further research would be relevant to examine the interrelationships between these and possible other contextual factors, this study indicated that in order to formulate statements regarding outcomes of martial arts practice by young participants, the structural qualities of martial arts, type of guidance, participants’ characteristics and social context have to be taken into consideration.

Curriculum Vitae

Jikkemien Vertonghen was born on October 12th 1984 in Asse (Belgium). In 2006, she obtained a Master’s degree in Physical Education (option Sports Management) at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Since October 2006, she works as a researcher at the same university at the Department of Sports Policy and Management, where she started with her doctoral dissertation in May 2007. Her research interest is related to youth sports, with martial arts practice and young people in particular. She has several publications in peer reviewed journals and gave several presentations at international and national scientific conferences. She is also an active member of the Flemish Judo Federation.