

MMA sport is more than just violence and fighters in a cage

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Ethnologist Magnus Stenius from Umeå University in Sweden has, in his dissertation on the subject of mixed martial arts (MMA), made a three-year study in Sweden and around the world. He has conducted participant observations in various gyms, has practised MMA himself and has taken part in fights against sparring partners.

MMA is a [martial arts](#) form that has spread rapidly and has attracted thousands of practitioners worldwide. It is a global athletic movement which shapes fighters' bodies and mentality, and the seemingly wild fights are, in fact, highly disciplined.

In matches controlled by referees, the rules for what one may and may not do in the cage are very clear. This is shown in a study performed by Magnus Stenius at the Department of Culture and Media Studies at Umeå University.

"MMA attracts both practitioners and spectators, thanks to being a sport that borders on the potential of the body's dramatic staging and spectacular shows. Matches in the cage are choreographed as a kind of dance, with painstakingly rehearsed battle elements. MMA includes displays of athletic performances that fascinate many," says Magnus Stenius.

Despite the spectacular violence, the practitioners are a part of a large community in which members show respect for one another, practice together and show a strong affinity. It brings together men and –

nowadays – also women of different ages.

"Through the hard training, MMA practitioners learn to control their bodies and to transform their weaknesses into strengths. In training, they also learn to deal with violence and pain – and not least, to show concern for each other," says Stenius.

The dissertation also discusses the process MMA is undergoing to become accepted as a real sport. It means that MMA more and more has become an open arena that welcomes transparency, discussion and questioning.

More information: umu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?aq2=%5B%5B%5D%5D&c=11&af=%5B%5D&searchType=LIST_COMING&query=The+Body+in+Pain+and+Pleasure.+An+Ethnography+of+Mixed+Martial+Arts+&language=sv&pid=diva2%3A848305&aq=%5B%5B%5D%5D&sf=all&aq=%5B%5D&sortOrder=author_sort_asc&onlyFullText=false&noOfRows=50&dswid=3853

Provided by Umea University

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