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CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES, MARTIAL ARTS, AND SOLIDARITY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE*

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How could I turn down this invitation to reflect on a life in academic leadership, especially with such a trinity leading the title? Even more appropriately, how dare I write such a thing? I have extended their sociologies sequentially, but it is only through this essay that I think about their synchrony and the ways in which they have combined – not only to enable a certain kind of academic leadership but also to refigure the place from which such leadership is most properly exercised in this stage of my life.

This is an autobiographical reflection; not the autoethnography or first-person narration one might expect from someone working in contemplative studies. That is, in part, because I am newly engaged in that field. Nevertheless, I find contemplative studies and its practices enormously

* I am most grateful to so very many people for this article's realisation. The anonymous reviewers not only gave me license to elaborate but were especially helpful in opening doors to future work in contemplative studies. Some of my Polish friends and colleagues – Michał Łuczewski, Tomek Zarycki, Ania Giza, and Filip Łapiński most immediately – shaped much of what I write but so many others are apparent in the pages that follow. As are my colleagues in martial arts and contemplative studies. In the end, to express gratitude to those who shape a life seems impossible when naming is convention, but gratitude permeates this time of life. And so it does in the experiences that shape this paper.

productive not only for addressing the stress that accumulates with academic institutional responsibility but additionally for rethinking how leadership within the academy might be more properly exercised in these most challenging times.

Below, I will consider the serendipity realised through Polish solidarity that – relatively early on in my academic career – led me to be offered meaningful institutional leadership. I recollect next a story of how martial arts practice became martial arts sociology, a translation that enabled me to recognise the power that comes with appreciating the immanent and irreducible presence of violence in everyday life. Rather than an academic or athletic preoccupation, martial arts has become part of my habitus, an asset to be sure when addressing academic contests and their relative importance in the bigger questions organising our lives. I turn in the following section to consider my growing engagement with contemplative studies, facilitated by tai chi and yoga, but finding additional philosophical legs in its exploration of awareness through and beyond mindfulness. Its practice, I propose, is invaluable in the exercise of academic leadership. In that function, we need not only to manage resources and people but to work with all involved to realise the intellectual responsibility these awesome institutions organised as higher education deserve. And that, sometimes, means going beyond familiar charges to realise new purpose, especially emergent in times of need. In these times, the relevant question is perhaps best posed simply: solidarity with whom?

This essay has proven longer than I expected it would be. That is, in part, because I have had a wider range of scholarly experiences than most fellow sociologists, as the trinity of foci in the article's title suggests. But it is also because Michał Łuczewski's reaction to my first draft prompted even more recollection and reflexivity. And while solidarity, martial arts, and contemplative practice might still serve as organising themes, there is an underlying commitment that allows me, if not also you, to anticipate the connection.

My academic focus in sociology is not just an expression of social science. Although I did not have the words back in the 1970s and 1980s I now use, I clearly saw my wish to go to graduate school as a way to figure out my politics. During that period – and in my first years of graduate study – among my intellectual inspirations beyond conventional sociology were C. Wright Mills (I wrote a paper on his corpus at Davidson College), Black Panthers' Huey P. Newton (*Revolutionary Suicide*) and Eldridge Cleaver (*Soul on Ice*), Michael Harrington (I was active in the Democratic Socialists

of America movement in the early 1980s), and Irving Howe (reading his 1982 intellectual autobiography, *A Margin of Hope*, sustained me during my fieldwork in Poland in 1983–1984). I even remember how Gerhard Lenski, my most senior mentor, told me on my second preliminary exam in 1982 that I seemed more like a socialist than a sociologist with my failure to reference Seymour Martin Lipset in my political sociology prelim response to a question around democracy and inequality; I focused instead on Alan Wolfe (1977). Lenski was wrong. And right.

I have never defined myself first as a sociologist, but neither was I ever simply a socialist or activist. It took me decades, but I am quite comfortable today identifying my work with a knowledge cultural sociology[1] as knowledge activism: the quest to bring scholarship, and especially sociology, into the struggle to realise social justice, and to bring the questions of injustice to the heart of academic work (Kehal et al. 2019). That articulation congealed when I was recruited to different academic leadership positions across 15 years at the University of Michigan, before my departure for Brown University when I was recruited to lead the Watson Institute for International Affairs. I retired from serious academic administrative work in 2011, but my quest for meaningful academic engagement has continued in surprising ways – around martial arts sociology and most recently in contemplative studies. That combination has proved most helpful for me today in wrestling with questions: with whom ought I express solidarity and how might love inform that quest? Below, I begin with the ties that led me to knowledge networks, which enabled the invitation to publish in this journal.

/// Solidarity and Poland

When I applied to graduate schools, I declared that I was interested in the sociology of religion, especially of Hinduism; during my senior year of college, I took a most meaningful course on Hinduism and wrote a substantial essay about Sri Ramakrishna. Alas, I did not get good advice about where to continue work on that subject, but that was probably all for the best. I went to the perfect university for my PhD in sociology, as it turned

[1] Knowledge cultural sociology (KCS) recognises the importance of explaining how social relations and positions shape the articulations and validations of knowledge. However, KCS also works to understand how knowledges' symbols, schemas, institutions, and networks shape the terms of social reproduction and transformations within the sites of practice privileged by particular knowledge cultures while simultaneously recognising their implication in larger social forces shaping their contents and effects.

out, even if I could not have known that during my application process in the fall of 1978.

For practical reasons, I decided to go to the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, following my undergraduate education at Davidson College, both of which are in North Carolina. Excited by the prospects of dedicating my life to scholarship, I moved to Chapel Hill early. Browsing through sociology journals in those early days, I came upon a special issue of *Social Forces* (57[2], 1978), dedicated to the analysis of social change in societies ruled by communists. And lo and behold, that issue happened to feature two professors in the UNC Sociology Department: the already distinguished Gerhard E. Lenski wrote the lead essay on Marxist experiments in destratification, and Assistant Professor T. Anthony (Tony) Jones was the special issue's guest editor. I can still remember the look of astonishment on Tony's face when I entered his office to ask if he thought I should learn Russian, given how much I liked that issue. "Of course," he said, marvelling at my naivete. Looking back, I myself marvel at the serendipity.[2] How fortunate to find, quite by chance, the perfect department for my work, additionally for the approach to critical social theory I was afforded.

I thrived in that department during my first year, in large part because I learned from Assistant Professor Craig Calhoun both classical sociological theory and about Marx and Marxism. At the time, Craig was engaging, among others, Leszek Kołakowski and his *Main Currents of Marxism* (Calhoun 1981). My approach to critical social theory (Calhoun 1995; Kennedy 2006) and sociology came to be largely shaped by Craig's influence. That is even evident in an essay I wrote especially for Polish colleagues (Kennedy 1999b).

Towards the end of my first academic year, in April of 1980, I met with Gerhard Lenski, seemingly impressed with my performance on the first general preliminary exam in the department. He asked about my interests. I told him I wanted to develop a sociology of the Soviet Union. He replied, kindly, that I might want to reconsider. It would be better, if I were interested in studying actually existing socialism, that I study Poland. After all, its sociology was far better than in the USSR, and its research environment was much more open. He said that I might even be able to study inequalities in occupational prestige and not just the sociology of sport I might be able to manage in Russia.

[2] I might have devoted my career to the sociology of serendipity rather than of solidarity if I had been more reflexive over time. But then Merton and Barber (2006) have provided a much more suitable substitute.

With little effort, I learned that I could end my year of Russian language study with Victor Friedman and begin learning Polish from a graduate student at UNC – Piotr Drozdowski, the son of the Polish poet Bohdan Drozdowski. And so it was arranged in May of 1980. But it was what happened in August 1980 that genuinely recharted the course of my scholarship, and my cultural politics.

Before 1980, as many sociologists in the USA – then and now – I was principally interested in inequality. I might have also said "social justice" at the time. I still would, but it had then, and even now, a particular kind of ring in its accent. It did not overly concern itself with normative justifications for its utopian and transformational politics, instead presuming equality and justice sufficiently similar and evident without any need of further elaboration. Even before I began my own research and dived deeply into Polish sociology, I knew that was not quite enough to satisfy me. But I began to learn more positively what I sought in the Polish Solidarity movement of 1980–1981.

My 1985 dissertation and subsequent book (Kennedy 1991) were organised around the question of solidarity as an ethos, as a sociological process, and as a social movement. I focused in particular on the inequalities between professionals and workers, and how those inequalities might have been transcended in the formation of a social movement and trade union seeking freedom and dignity. In that early work, I continued to emphasise a cultural politics based on material conditions; I did not engage the symbolic sphere much; neither did I take national identifications very seriously. At the time, I thought that to explain this transformational movement as an expression of a national spirit is too simple. Of course, most scholars now recognise that there are many ways to be Polish, thus justifying my previous scepticism; but I did not have the learnedness to recognise the importance of thinking about how the nation offers a medium with which to express deeper ideas of and commitments to solidarity that go beyond declarations of citizenship, memory, or belonging.

In subsequent scholarship, I worked to make up for that deficit by exploring postcommunist cultural studies (Kennedy 1994), intellectuals and the articulation of the nation (Suny & Kennedy 1999), transition culture (Kennedy 2002), and why Poland is important in the study of global transformations (Kennedy 2015). Ironically, it was in that second volume that my co-editor, Ronald Grigor Suny, and I decided to ask our contributors not only to write about their subject matter but also reflect on how their own national identity shaped their intellectuality. Even though that idea

was mine, I found my own autobiographical expression the least interesting of that set of scholars: Ron Suny, Andrzej Walicki, Janet Hart, Katherine Verdery, Alexander Motyl, Khahig Tololyan, Yuri Slezkine, and John-Paul Himka. After all, being a white (Irish) American cis-gender straight man studying a country most receptive to Americans is, well, rather uncomplicated. Or so I thought.

We published that volume at last century's end, before whiteness studies became so obviously important in studies of racialisation and US sociology. Increasingly with decolonising sociology and other such endeavours, we can see greater efforts in the articulation of Du Boisian and Polish and other Central and East European studies, including my own work for *Kultura i Społeczeństwo* (Kennedy 2019b). I especially appreciate my former University of Michigan colleague's approach to Polish history in this vein (Valerio 2019).

One could see my more recent efforts in the extensions of Du Boisian (Kennedy 2019b) and decolonising sociology (Kennedy & Tadesse 2019) as a new expression of solidarity but now around racial formations. However, this articulation only restores my original interest in sociology.

My first sociology course at Davidson College was in race and ethnicity with Joseph Drake (Kennedy 2019c), a professor about to retire even when I was in college in the 1970s. His work at the time was an expression of solidarity, looking for ways a privileged white man might find some greater justice in a profoundly racist southern United States. His Davidson College successors – as professors (like Piko Ewoodzie) and as former students (like Clint Smith) – are all part of this transformational practice in struggles against US, and global, racism. And while I contribute, especially given the number of students at Brown University I have supported in this field (Kennedy 2023), this aspect of transformational sociology is not the focus for which I might say I am more distinctive.

Instead, that relative distinction resides in the dialogical process moving the quest for justice. Its greatest expression was my engagement with the Polish Round Table negotiations of 1989; the event we organised in 1999 at the University of Michigan. To address that transformational practice (Kennedy et al. 2000) may have been the most consequential expression of knowledge activism, and academic leadership, in which I have ever been involved.

The University of Michigan has enjoyed one of the best and broadest assemblies of Polish studies scholars in US universities. Its Copernicus Lecture series has brought notable scholars and public figures to Ann Ar-

bor. Marysia Ostafin was the abiding intellectual and administrative force across decades of that work, and during my time in Ann Arbor. But it was 1999 that represents, to my mind, a real reflection of what she and her faculty, staff, and student colleagues could realise.

We sat in the reading room of the Center for Russian and East European Studies in 1998, discussing how we might recognise the transformations of 1989 in the upcoming tenth anniversary of this miraculous event. Adam Michnik had come before, and he would certainly be a central figure again. But who else? Our Polish studies team deliberated and wondered whether we could bring not only those more familiar but also those associated with the more conservative traditions of Poland, as well as Church leaders central to the roundtable dialogue. We discussed whether we could, or should, invite communists who participated in and helped to shape the negotiations. Josef Blass, an émigré from the 1968 wave, was critical to all of this, for his own knowledge activist networks and broader intellectuality helped us appreciate the opportunities and challenges.

It would be too much to rehearse now what we accomplished, but it was because of this event I received among the greatest honours of my life. First, President Aleksander Kwaśniewski awarded Piotr Michalowski, Marysia Ostafin, and me the nation's Gold Cross of Merit in 1999, following that roundtable scholarly event. He even came to the conference and offered the keynote address. We also invited Pope John Paul II to come. He declined, but he also replied – through his secretary of state – with congratulations and appreciation. He hoped that

> [t]his disciplined reflection on the spiritual, cultural and political aspect of Poland's peaceful transition to democracy will highlight their ultimate foundation in a moral imperative arising from man's innate dignity and his transcendent vocation to freedom in the pursuit of truth. (Kennedy 2002: 289)

At the time, the Pope's support was so profoundly meaningful on its own terms. Indeed, we also had many critics saying that we should not have "that side" on the stage, so John Paul II's blessing helped to mute their resentments. We should remember such inclusivity in these days of intensified polarisation.

I wound up becoming Vice Provost for International Affairs and Director of the International Institute at University of Michigan in the academic year following our conference, which was mainly spurred by my Polish en-

gagements, along with the support of my promoter, Nancy Cantor, then provost, whose subsequent academic leadership continues to inspire me. The newfound responsibilities prevented me from following up on all the research and scholarship we produced around the event in the measure of seriousness that I had wished to develop (albeit see Kennedy 1999a). Still, I managed to include some of it in my 2002 book's conclusion, but this is certainly one regret I have in my career. I moved on to other matters, most notably around globalising knowledge, but before I leave this Polish focus and emphasis on solidarity, I need to mark here my return to it in this last decade.

Thanks to the publication of *Solidarity: Step by Step* (Łuczewski et al. 2015), I engaged solidarity once again in a substantial way. That engagement was hardly a matter of destiny – or even of legacy – rather being a function of knowledge networks.

My Polish knowledge networks were shaped by my year of dissertation research in 1983–1984. I was supported generously by many Polish sociologists: Włodzimierz Wesołowski, Witold Morawski, Ireneusz Białecki, Grzegorz Lindenberg, Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, Renata Siemińska, Jadwiga Staniszkis, Edmund Mokrzycki, Andrzej Rychard, Krzysztof Jasiewicz, Jadwiga Koralewicz, Irena Reszke, Anna Titkow, Marian Kempny, and many others – many of whom appeared in a three-issue volume reflecting our University of Michigan–Warsaw University ties (Kennedy & Kirwil 2004–2005). Through that network, I finally wound up working with a scholar younger than I: Tomasz Zarycki. Later, I asked him the boldest question: would you introduce me to some sociologists even younger than you?

During a visit in which I enjoyed commentaries on my 2015 book, I met Marta Bucholc, Michał Sutowski, and Adam Leszczyński in a session Tomasz organised around *Globalizing Knowledge*. During that visit, I also met three younger scholars who profoundly shaped my approach to solidarity: Maria Rogaczewska, Maria Szymborska, and Ola Goldys. Although we were all working on social entrepreneurship at the time, we also developed a sense of solidarity, even if with very different accents. Our discussions therein helped me consolidate an awareness that the sociology of solidarity cannot be treated simply as a dependent variable varying along a single spectrum.

Instead, I came to appreciate something underlying: that articulations of solidarity must be understood before the independent variables shaping their magnitudes. With whom, and around what, do we establish our mutuality? Whose burdens do we carry? To what ends? And around what principles and identifications?

Right around that time, I renewed contact with Michał Łuczewski. We had had some slight contact around his earlier scholarship, but when he wrote to me to ask if I would review their volume on solidarity, and perhaps consider writing a blurb alongside my earlier colleague Jadwiga Staniszkis, I was hesitant. But when I read the volume, all doubts disappeared. It was exactly the kind of discussion of which I sought to be part. While their ten steps might not have been the same steps I would have chosen, their invitations to dialogue were exactly the kind of discussion I thought solidarity deserved, especially if we were to treat it as the foundation for our normatively informed sociology and not just a dependent variable to be measured along magnitudes.

Largely because of that volume, I wound up teaching a course on solidarity and social change with my fellow sociologist Syeda Masood; she went on to write a dissertation on the articulations of justice in Afghanistan. At the time, I wrote this about Łuczewski and colleagues in a summary of the course, drawing also on Jodi Dean (1998). I wrote:

> Traditionally, solidarity has been conceived of oppositionally, on the model of "us vs. them." But this way of conceiving solidarity overlooks the fact that the term "we" does not require an opposing "they"; we also denote the relationship between "you" and "me." Once the term "we" is understood communicatively, difference can be respected as necessary to solidarity. Dissent, questioning, and disagreement no longer have to be seen as tearing us apart, but instead can be viewed as characteristic of the bonds holding us together… Łuczewski et al. invite that exploration. The team devised six steps in realising solidarity – to face reality, seek the good, work on yourself, serve others, strive for agreement and forgive in truth. They introduce each so powerfully, not least because they are able to bring people into dialogue in this history that today cannot speak with one another with their divergent locations across ideological barricades. They contribute meaningfully to an elaboration of this dialogical and transformational solidarity with 10 principles.

In the years since that course, I have continued to work on solidarity in a number of ways, most obviously and profoundly in relation to Ukrainian solidarity in light of Russia's 2022 invasion (Kennedy 2023). More of my work there might be found on X/Twitter via the hashtag #UKRSolidarity.

As the year progressed, I became especially concerned of how to articulate a more global solidarity, mobilising African sensibilities around sovereignty and justice to challenge the manifest Russian imperialism focused on Ukraine's invasion. However, that priority crashed in the wake of the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, and the ensuing war on Gaza that even some experts in the Holocaust call genocidal (Bartov 2024).

More than anything I have done, this conjunction of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the calamity in Israel/Palestine feels pressing: the legacies of the Cold War impose horribly on emergent sensibilities that ought to be shaping what I have also called on X/Twitter #SeekingJustice. My identity at birth – much less the one I have crafted across this lifetime – hardly suffices for the kind of sociological imagination this epoch end invites (Kennedy 2022). Solidarities of all sorts need be cultivated to consider the issues that matter for others and not just for the identifications and commitments we bring to struggle. However, this is not the first time that I have had to find meaningful and enduring solidarity beyond the path of identification my family assumed. They certainly would not have expected my Polish identification, one made even more meaningful for me when others see it too.

During the International Sociological Association 2023 meetings in Melbourne, Australia, I spoke again of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, except this time focusing on "strongmen" as the mobilising concept, with Putin as exemplar (Bavbek & Kennedy forthcoming). However, the principal point of relevance for the present essay was Tomek Zarycki's reaction.

He told me that the way I spoke of Ukrainian solidarity revealed my identification with and membership in the Polish intelligentsia. Michał Łuczewski reminds me Marta Bucholc said something similar in a 2015 Warsaw symposium devoted to globalising knowledge. As we continued in that public session, both he, Piotr Kulas, and others turned a general discussion of strongmen into a discussion of the qualities of leadership Józef Piłsudski and Jarosław Kaczyński bear, and their complicated resonance with the term so popular today. As it so often happens, Poles complicate concepts whose roots lie elsewhere; strongmen ought to be rethought as a concept with Piłsudski and Kaczyński in mind.

Today the antipodes of strongmen are most clearly found among those who struggle to defend democracy from authoritarian assault. Those who defeat strongmen in democratic elections – Biden and Lula being the most prominent global examples. Pope Francis has also been so identified given his commitment to peace (Elie 2018) and work to end the war in Ukraine. Those leaders of democratic nations who resist imperial pressures, like

President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan in 2023, are also obviously antipodes of authoritarianism. Given Putin's most gross expression of strongmen, President Zelensky is the most profound antipode with his alternative expression of masculinity (Sheridan 2022).

Instead of negotiating peaceful if still radical transformations, today we are discussing solidarity in terms of sanctions against Russia and supplying Ukraine with some of the most advanced weapon technologies. We also debate in the USA whether sending weapons to Israel is consistent with the Leahy Law that prohibits assistance to any military accused of violating human rights (Fadel 2024). Clearly violence sweeps the world in ways it did not in the time when Poland could be seen as a leader in peaceful if still radical democratic transformations.

A significant current in my work around Ukraine involves rethinking the place of violence in transformational solidarity, much as Huey P. Newton and the Black Panthers in the 1970s explored how bearing arms could move the needle around racial justice towards greater freedom, dignity, and equality. Again, with serendipity at my side, I have been able to draw on my interests in martial arts; it may not help me to rearticulate solidarity, but it does help me rethink the relationship between violence and justice and the place of intellectual responsibility in their articulation.

/// Martial Arts and Violence

Superheroes can shape the sociologist and not only the sociological imagination. I have published a few articles on the subject (Kennedy 2018a, 2018b, 2018c), but my superhero sociology book manuscript – completed in 2015 – remains buried beneath the wave of social and cultural transformations occasioned by the Marvel Cinematic Universe (see the works of Julian Chambliss). But in the course of researching that volume, I realised where my martial arts interest came from.

When I first began reading those comic books in 1965, with Batman featured, martial arts figured prominently. Crudely, of course, but filled with references to karate and judo. And on the advertisements in the back pages, one could find assurances that a black belt was awaiting you in just six weeks for a small fee of $5.95. Something like that. It took me some time, however, to find my path into real martial arts.

In the early 1980s, alongside my sociology graduate school training, I began to learn taekwondo. I never went further than a lightly coloured belt in that episode of my learning; then, later in that decade, I thought I might

learn aikido, especially since my primary relations at the time abhorred violence and sought, rather, to emphasise peace.[3] As the most non-violent martial art I knew, aikido fit the bill. But that, too, lasted less than a year.

My children were born in 1989 and 1992. I was almost biding my time to get them into martial arts, figuring that it would not only be good for them but also give me a reason to become involved in such community. Thus, at ages eight and six, Emma and Lucas began their classes at the Asian Martial Arts Studio (AMAS). Like so many other practitioners I have come to know, that became the pathway for the parent to begin their own martial arts training.

The AMAS offered training in aikido, karate, kung fu, and tai chi. Unleashed from concerns about non-violent martial arts, I leapt at the chance to learn karate (I worked on Shuri-te and Shudokan); after all, that was the familiar term of reference for the Batman of my youth. And so, in 1998 I began my martial arts training. I have not stopped in the 25 years since. My martial arts sociology began later.

I began karate without an idea that its sociology could be important. Although I had known Loic Wacquant from the 1980s, during his visiting lecturer status at UNC, his book on sociology *from* the body had not yet appeared (Wacquant 2006). But once it did, I realised that a martial arts sociology could complement wonderfully his own carnal sociology. After all, karate, and most other Asian martial arts, claimed a bodymindfulness quite different from the knowledge cultural claims of boxing. Hence, I began my own quest to develop a martial arts sociology not only from the body but from within the knowledge culture(s) of martial arts.

I began teaching martial arts sociology in the first decade of this century at the University of Michigan. I suppose being allowed to teach this course was something of a gift for having served in academic administration between 1999 and 2005; being Vice Provost for International Affairs and Director of the International Institute was quite demanding, especially in the midst of the 9/11-related transformation of our university's global sense, along with budget cuts in the wake of that attack on globalisation's academic habitus. I returned to the faculty after a year sabbatical, in the fall of 2006; I developed this course shortly thereafter.

I relied heavily on counsel from my AMAS sensei, Karl Scott, but I also took that sabbatical year to explore martial arts comparatively. There was not much sociology out there, but lots of what has been called hoplology.

[3] In fact, even then, I was working to figure how to connect Polish lives and Western sentiments around the Cold War by working on the Freedom and Peace Movement (Kennedy 1990).

Anthropologists were also critically important. Historians offered much. But nobody, at that time, was quite offering what I sought: a comparative and historical sociology of the various articulations of bodymindfulness embedded in martial arts, and the social forces shaping their different expressions, most notably around peace, justice, and violence.

As I worked through that first course, and then in seven instances over the succeeding years, I have come to be ever more awestruck by the importance, and challenge, of this work. In the meanwhile, I moved to Brown University in the summer of 2009, in order to direct the Watson Institute for International Studies. My tenure was relatively brief, as I had a different sense of what Brown could and should do around international affairs than other stakeholders thought. But that release from administration in 2011 was a gift; it allowed me to focus even more on what martial arts sociology could look like. I began teaching it regularly in 2013, thanks to the generosity of our sociology department. After all, I could imagine their asking why we need martial arts sociology anyway. Is it not a bit of a digression from the study of inequality?

Indeed, we *can* figure martial arts' articulation with inequality, most notably in the ways in which martial arts practice informed the Afro-Asian solidarity movements of the 1970s, something that Bruce Lee symbolised so powerfully as he kicked apart that sign that declared, in that British colonial way, no dogs and Chinese allowed. Vijay Prasad (2002) was among those more critical theorists who moved that general awareness, but the wave of studies subsequently emphasising Bruce Lee has been substantial. Indeed, that emphasis has been an important part of a journal called *Martial Arts Studies*, giving me far more substance on which to draw in my martial arts sociology courses. Inequality is important, but what we might learn from martial arts sociology about violence is far more critical.

Among the articles in *Martial Arts Studies* from which I have learned most is the one by William Little (2018). He explains the distinction of martial arts practices of the self in "their formulation as spiritual practices and their freeing relation to violence." He argues – properly in my view – that these truths are revealed only through intensive bodily training over many years. Their sense cannot be understood from without; they are only realised through a transformed subject. But more than offer skills and strategies to win in violent contest, this martial arts knowledgeability can transform one's relationship to a quality of human existence: "the idea of unlimited and irreducible insecurity as an always immanent, ever present condition of life."

In this sense, martial arts is all about violence but also its transcendence. It is not an expression of simplistic political slogans like "peace through strength." Instead, it embodies deep and profound knowledge about the presence of violence in existence as such, and a preparation for this violence so that one is not overwhelmed by it in its sudden appearance or by the lack of awareness of its destructive power, once it is deployed.

I am working to elaborate these ideas elsewhere, but I mention it here because it is important for those beyond security and martial arts studies to recognise how violence is often ghettoised from so many studies devoted to understanding solidarity and emancipatory change. Recognising what my former student, Juho Korhonen (2019), calls "sociological occlusions" is a critical part of knowledge cultural sociology. But to recognise the occlusion of this profound point about harm in harmony – as Little (2018) puts it – required a transformation in my own martial arts practice, one that moved me more towards internal strength and love through martial arts itself.

On moving to Providence, I followed the advice of my sensei in Ann Arbor and took up a different martial art style so as not to mix up my karate practices. I met a colleague at Brown, Robert Lee, who was particularly enthusiastic about a studio in East Providence called Way of the Dragon; not particularly associated with the film of Bruce Lee, of course. Its Sifu, Wen-ching Wu, turned out not only to be a terrific martial arts instructor but also an inspiration for figuring the articulation of the knowledge cultures of sociology and Chinese martial arts.

Since 2010, I have learned from Master Wu and the other instructors of the school. I have studied both northern and southern styles of kung fu as well as what some would call internal martial arts, most obviously associated with tai chi, but not only. As I have aged and suffered occasional injuries, my turn towards less acrobatic and more bodymindful practices like tai chi and qigong has become more important. I have also sought to learn from other scholar practitioners and to the extent possible included others in my scholarship, and in my course.

Over the various iterations of my "Martial Arts Sociology" course, we have enjoyed visits by other martial artists and scholars: Kumu Ramsay Taum whose workshops on Lua in Providence were attended by many of my students and fellow practitioners, Donald Levine whose fusion of sociology and aikido long predated my own efforts, and others. I have also enjoyed the counsel of other, more local, martial artists and scholars beyond them, including Robert Lee, Madison Ski Krieger, Colin Swanson, and

Larson DiFiori. I have begun writing a book on martial arts sociology that draws on this course's learning, as well as my broader engagement in the field. But just as significant as this breadth, I have turned towards the extra-martial sides of martial arts, most notably around the cultivation of energy.

By now, many in the West are familiar with the notion of qi, the energy that connects us all across the universe, that flows through and around our body. Health practitioners familiar with this approach would emphasise the importance of that free flow within the body, something tai chi is designed, in part, to facilitate. Over this last decade of its study, I have become able to provide at least rudimentary instruction in its most basic form – 24-form tai chi – and to demonstrate even to the skeptical how we might "sense" chi and transmit it to others. Of course, it is not just my parlour trick; I am fascinated by how health sciences have begun to research the health benefits, for body and mind, of these Chinese martial arts (e.g., Wayne & Fuerst 2013).

That "first person" learning has become, in fact, one of the most appealing parts of my martial arts sociology course, which takes "sociology from the body" to another level. It is not just the existing body that might become an instrument of sociology and one of the discipline's vectors. We might also imagine the potential body, mind, and spirit that can be cultivated, which in turn can transform our sense of self and society (Yuasa 1993). We might even rethink solidarity and love in its terms and take a cue from aikido's disposition. After all, its founder, Morihei Ueshiba, declared:

> In real budo, there are no enemies. Real budo is the function of love. The way of a Warrior is not to destroy and kill but to foster life, to continually create. Love is the divinity that can really protect us. Without love, nothing can flourish. If there is no love between human beings, that will be the end of our world. Love generates the heat and light that sustain the world. (Stevens 2001: 16)

Over the years, this martial arts sociology course has become increasingly popular, so much so that in both 2023 and 2024 I could not admit every student who wished to learn. I often draw on those who are actively practicing martial arts: from wrestling and boxing to taekwondo and Brazilian jiu-jitsu. Moreover, I have begun more extensive work in yoga, thanks mainly to my partner, Amy Dolan, herself a yoga instructor. I have added yoga as a principal theme in the course, to the considerable enrichment of our learning. It also helps to put the sociology of love at the heart of the course.

Towards the end of his life, Pitirim Sorokin focused on the *Ways and Power of Love* (1954). What led him here was his encyclopaedic approach, apparent in his other works. But what astonished me most was his focus on yoga. In that, one might say that sociology began to explore connections with contemplative studies through yoga's common place in their respective knowledge cultures' address of love and contemplation. I continue in that stream thanks, once again, to the power of serendipity.

/// Contemplative Studies and Love

One of the people with whom I train at Way of the Dragon, Larson Di Fiori, is not only expert in martial arts practice but also a scholar of Daoism and contemplative studies. In solidarity with him I thought I might attend his doctoral dissertation defence of "Early Intertextual Uses of Parallels with the Laozi and Their Role as Sources of Authority" in 2018 under the supervision of Harold Roth. His supervisor was a scholar of Daoism and himself a Zen Buddhist priest. Hal is also the founder of the Contemplative Studies Program at Brown University.

Hal "coined the term 'Contemplative Studies' and designed the first university concentration program in this subject" (Roth n.d.). He has elaborated on its meaning in a number of places, most recently around Daoism (Roth 2021). Based on learning from him and extensive participation in the programme over these recent years, I summarise the initiative:

> Contemplative Studies is a relatively recent academic field in which experiences of focused attention and concentration across cultures and across time are analyzed. These practices are presumed to yield more profound insights about who we are as human beings and how that awareness leads us to make a more just and environmentally sensitive place in which to live.

Of course, Hal is not alone in developing this field, but there are relatively few sociologists who are so dedicated. However, one scholar is already a critical part of my own knowledge network, and I have only begun to learn from a second.

Inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh, sociologist Hiro Saito provides an invaluable TEDx lecture on mindfulness, social science, and enacting social change (Saito 2022). Drawing on his words, he helps me to appreciate the following. (1) Many of us are aware of how mindfulness practice helps us

cultivate awareness of what is happening in our minds. Social science helps us expand that awareness from what is happening in our minds to what is happening in the world. (2) With this awareness, we can see how sufferings are not only individual problems but systemic ones caused by economic, political, and social structures we have created. (3) The crucial question, however, is how we can draw on mindfulness and social science to change society. (4) The insight of inter-being tells us we can play a part.

It was not until writing an earlier draft of this text that I discovered Krzysztof Konecki's work. In particular, I have come to appreciate his approach to the sociology of contemplation, beginning with its definition as "a kind of activity that leads to a certain state of mind, and at the same time, it is a method of obtaining knowledge about some objects at present, and also about getting knowledge itself, here and now, by mindful insight into the perceived (and also imagined) phenomena or objects, and also into the self" (Konecki 2018: 21). Contemplative social research, as Konecki (2018) frames it, involves the exploration of identity processes and dialogicality of the self with anamnesis engaged, following by suggestions for how meditation and contemplation might inform social scientists and economists alike; considering its applications to research, notably in "experiencing the university," and in hatha yoga's place in higher education; he also provides critical advice in figuring how to conduct self-observation and "Zen experiments" alongside their translation into more familiar sociological expressions. His work is clearly critical for the developing articulation of sociology and contemplative studies.

I am working on another article to explore mindfulness in knowledge cultural sociology's terms, in which both Konecki and Saito will figure even more prominently. But here, I want to turn to what is the most critical part of my potential contribution to contemplative studies beyond its knowledge cultural sociology: its articulation with, and distance from, power relations and violence.

The most obvious problem is when contemplative practices are appropriated for political and especially destructive ends, the most dramatic example of which can be found in Japanese militarism's appropriation of Zen Buddhism (Victoria 2006). However, that is not the only articulation of contemplative practice and kinetic violence worth considering. It is hard for me to imagine a robust contemplative studies that does not consider how it is appropriated by, or implicated in, the reproduction and transformation of power relations in everyday life.

For example, Komjathy (2018: 15) argues that contemplative practices are not only about "positive psychosomatic changes" but also "action directed toward increased peace and social justice." In this introduction to the field, Komjathy (2018) even identifies the importance of critical race theory and other complementary perspectives to contemplative studies' development. However, in his own explication he demonstrates the abiding power of whiteness in defining contemplative studies. Where, after all, is bell hooks in his introduction or in his sourcebook (Komyathy 2015)? And where has bell hooks been in my own learning?

How is it possible, I have often asked myself over this last decade, that I had never seriously engaged bell hooks? It is not a disciplinary thing, of course; hooks transcended her PhD origins. She is widely cited and admired in sociology. For example, the 2023 American Sociological Association President, Prudence Carter, tweeted on 15 December 2021, the day of hooks's passing, that she "modeled brilliance and how to speak truth to power. An outspoken Black feminist scholar-activist who was critical of the dark forces of racism, patriarchy, sexual violence, class exploitation but who often peppered her speech with southern hospitality and kindness." hooks was all "about the politics of love" (Carter 2021). In her own contribution to contemplative studies, sociologist Crystal Fleming (2022: 132) also invokes her. But Kennedy not (until now).[4]

Given my interest in the sociology of love, how could I have never engaged bell hooks even when my students and colleagues encouraged me to do so? Even when I was so focused, I did not recognise hooks's centrality. In our fall 2019 discussion in my graduate seminar on contradictions, solidarities, and reflexivities, Jocelyn Bell, Nabila Islam, Alejandra Irene Cueto Piazza, and I began with an appreciation of how Sorokin (1954) could consider the variety of forms of love, and how "love energy" itself might be accumulated and distributed; at the same time, we were distressed by how remarkably ignorant and even disdainful (considering his approach to jazz) he was of forms of love energy expressed in minoritised populations and marginalised groups.

As an alternative, we considered it so very productive to consider how Cornel West (2017: xxi) elaborates radical love and its example in Black music:

> The distinctive benchmark of Black music is soulful kenosis – the courageous and compassionate styles of genuine self-empty-

[4] For many sociologists in the USA, especially people of colour, they will immediately think about the movement Cite Black Women: https://www.citeblackwomencollective.org/.

> ing that give all one is and has to empower, enable, and ennoble others. In this metaphoric way, the greatest Black musicians and Black freedom fighters are the truth, in that they embody and enact a radical love (especially for an unloved people) by freely giving all they are and have to inspire and encourage others. The condition of truth is to allow suffering to speak, and the condition of being the truth is to transform your suffering with great creativity and compassion into forms and deeds that empower others to do likewise in their own ways.

But even in this most profound of our discussions concerned for solidarities, I did not consider bell hooks, even thereafter, despite Jocelyn's encouragement. It was only when I prepared for a fall 2023 graduate seminar on cultural politics and critical social theory that I developed that commitment, largely, as a result, of women of colour, especially Black women, asking why I have not read bell hooks more. And so I began.

hooks (2001) understood love as a combination of care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, working interdependently. Her work must be central to any sociology of love, if love is to be inclusive and not another performance of white supremacy (Diefendorf & Pascoe 2023). Indeed, within the USA but not only, hooks seems to be one of the best foundations on which to link love and emancipatory politics. As she has said, "the only way out of domination is love, and the only way into really being able to connect with others, and to know how to be, is to be participating in every aspect of your life as a sacrament of love" (Yancy & hooks, 2015). But it is not just the sociology of love. She also needs to be part of the canon of contemplative studies. Consider what hooks writes:

> My belief that God is love – that love is everything, our true destiny – sustains me. I affirm those beliefs through daily meditation and prayer, through contemplation and service, through worship and loving kindness. In the introduction to *Lovingkindness*, Sharon Salzberg teaches that the Buddha described spiritual practice as the "liberation of the heart which is love." She urges us to remember that spiritual practice helps us overcome the feeling of isolation, which "uncovers the radiant, joyful heart within each of us and manifests this radiance to the world." Everyone needs to be in touch with the needs of their spirit. This connectedness calls us to spiritual awakening – to love. In the biblical book of John, a passage reminds us that

> "anyone who does not know love is still in death." All awakening to love is spiritual awakening. (hooks 2001: 83)

As we consider contemplative practices and studies, we should consider not only the place of bell hooks for her insight but also her absence as an indicator of racism's abiding power, even in a field so committed to enlightenment as contemplative studies claims to be. Moreover, it is not only a matter of anti-Blackness, powerful as that is.

Crystal Fleming, Veronica Womack, and Jeffery Proulx (2022) illustrate the variety of ways that racism abides in mindfulness and contemplative practices. They also illuminate ways beyond it. Then name and critique "white supremacy in the representation and appropriation of mindfulness in the United States and other Western societies" in order to "make visible the mutual imbrication of the present moment with historical and ongoing realities of racial domination, structural inequalities and power relations" (Fleming et al. 2022: xv). They ask who is included and excluded in mindfulness's representations and theorisations, and I might add, its practices.

Here, they connect directly with what Hiro Saito identifies as central to sociology's dialogue with contemplative studies. That is not surprising as Fleming is herself a sociologist. Fleming, Womack, and Proulx (2022) – and their coauthors – seek to counter the exclusion of minoritised people in mindfulness practices; they also note its relative value in addressing the stress that the minoritised are more likely to suffer. These authors are also dedicated to linking mindfulness to the emancipation anti-racist and other liberation movements seek, whether in support of these mobilisations' activists or of those who suffer from various structural oppressions including, but not limited to, racism. Collective and racial trauma, here, is critical.

Once we move beyond mindfulness studies or contemplative practices per se – especially to yoga studies – we find far more work pluralising the subjects of contemplative transformation. Stephanie Y. Evans (2021) certainly illustrates the above, but allow me to also highlight the broader corpus of the journal *Race and Yoga* to appreciate what can be done. Given my own life trajectory and relatively recent entry into this field, I have much to learn. But I believe everyone has much to learn, especially when we consider whose traumas we consider relevant to our own knowledge activisms. It is here, then, that my starting points in the sociology of solidarity return, for in that field we should by now be accustomed to ask, "solidarity with whom?"

To ask that sincerely, and recurrently, over a life course is an expression of leadership in quest. Learning from others beyond one's familiars can

signal that culture of critical and compassionate discourse which exemplifies the learned community I most treasure.

/// Solidarity, Violence, and Love

In my autobiographical contribution to Suny and Kennedy (1999), I remarked that my teenage identification with the Black Panther movement and, by extension, my subsequent identification with the Polish Solidarity movement could have been moved by my "childhood fascination with Batman and Spider Man" and my sense of nationhood "informed by the missions of Captain America" (p. 380). At the time, I wrote that relative "nationlessness" resulted from my privilege, allowing me to choose the emancipatory movements of which I wanted to be a part.

Now I can see more clearly that my choice to focus on others' justice struggles was less a matter of righteousness and more a matter of liberal innocence. I believed in solidarity, but I did not experience it in profound ways. I did not feel "oppression on the skin" as my 1994 coauthor, Nikki Harsanyi, did when contrasting our experiences during 1989's tumultuous transformations (Harsanyi & Kennedy 1994). That is privilege. But that is also the past.

In these times of growing violence and manifest antipathy – when homages to "freedom and justice for all" or "Za naszą i waszą wolność" seem at best anachronisms – nobody, even those as privileged as I am, feels secure in their privilege.

Epistemic insecurity is one consequence, moving ever stronger articulations of "us" vs "them." In these exercises, we lose our sociological imagination; we naturalise the bonds moved by conflict, histories of violence, and theologies of fate and destiny. And in that cultural transformation, we come to fear recognition of our own complicity in the injustices moving destruction. We fail to see the contradictions whose clearer articulation might move greater awareness of alternative futures, and our potential contributions to better ones.

In this condition of increasing ignorance, contemplative practice feels like resistance, and a path towards enlightenment. Maybe.

Too many in contemplative studies focus on positive psychosomatic changes presuming that if enough people engage in similar behaviour, whether through meditation or prayer, the world could be transformed. Maybe. But the accompanying sociological imagination in such practice can erase difference. Or it can treat those distant as less deserving of im-

mediate care and action because they cannot be seen. Or even if seen, in the long run their suffering might be mitigated by a politics of love and non-violence that will, in the karmic end, triumph if enough right action prevails. Maybe.

Those more deeply informed in theologies of non-violence are certainly better prepared than I am to address the philosophical possibilities involved here. But my own disciplinary grounds – focused on what can be known not only through third-person scholarship but first-person transformations of knowledgeability through bodymindful practice – demand that I ask how my foci shape not only my explanations of social relations but also: whose experiences do I deem relevant to my concerns? Whose solidarities are worth engaging and on whose terms?

The solidarities I emphasised in this text, and in my life, are variably surprising even while sociologically explicable.

As an American, I find W.E.B. Du Bois obviously right: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line" ([1902] 1969: 54). Even while my friends and colleagues make an argument that this is a profoundly global perspective still applicable in the twenty-first century (e.g., Itzigsohn & Brown 2021), I find its American accent still distracting and in need of adjustment, much as Du Bois himself did when it came to recognising the place of Jews in Poland (Kennedy 2019a). At the same time, any colour-blind alternative – an argument not only offered by those manifestly supporting white supremacy but also those feeling beyond it – is far more destructive to seeking justice and the quest in knowledge cultures to learn from dialogues around difference.

My second life identification beyond assignments at birth with Poland and the spirit of solidarity evident in 1980–1981 is complicated today by the animosities and polarisations that exist within the USA. Now is not the time to declare my sympathies, even if they should be obvious. Instead, I focus on that solidarity moved by my commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and defence from Russian imperialism and criminal war. I explained earlier how my love for Poland came to be; my commitment to Ukraine is its extension. And I extend my knowledge activism into a world where solidarities with Poland and Ukraine are not self-evident. And here the challenges fall into two domains, animating my current work not only as a public intellectual (Kennedy 2024b) but as someone who works to rethink what academic leadership means in these times.

First, on global solidarity in support of Ukraine.

Although through 2023 the European Union and NATO and their closest allies have enjoyed surprisingly resilient solidarities around their support for Ukraine, that engagement has not been uniform across the globe. While it comes as no surprise that China might support Russia in their common embrace of a multipolar world – or one in which the USA is diminished in its power – other nations with more experience of American than Russian imperialism reserve their judgement. Cautious positions taken by South Africa, India, and Brazil reflect not only contemporary geopolitical negotiations but also legacies of a global color line defined by Western imperialism more generally. Here, Russia benefits from the effects and memories of a Cold War, in which the Global North could treat the Global South as pawns in a contest animated by different visions of markets and democracy.

Engaging those political actors like Kenya's Martin Kimanji (Ioffe 2022) about how past imperialisms and their enduring effects articulate current geopolitical effects represents, to me, the kinds of transformative theory and practice that might enable all imperialisms to be articulated better. However, this is a long struggle, one that turns the quest for solidarity into something more than recognising convenient alliances based on bargains and deal-making. It invites us to recognise the conditions that make some struggles seeking justice obviously deserving of solidarity, while other struggles seem unfamiliar, if not also alien and suspicious, and hardly deserving solidaristic recognition.

Second, on violence in general, and around Ukraine and Israel/Palestine in particular.

I engaged in debates about détente and peace at the end of the Cold War. I was frustrated with Western European and American friends who sought peace with the USSR above freedom and liberation for those under communist rule. I sought then discursive strategies that could put freedom and peace together, even if it was based on a self-limiting notion of struggle, just as the Solidarity movement practiced in 1980–1981 (Kennedy 1990).

In Russia's war on Ukraine, self-limitation is still in play; where Russians resist, so far, weapons of mass destruction and Ukrainians limit the use of weapons from the West in their attacks on Russian territory. Those red lines are shifting as Ukraine's defence grows more challenging and visions of victory in war demand assaults not only on Russians in the Ukrainian territory it occupies but also Russia itself.

It was much easier for me to express solidarity with victims of Russian imperialism before the greatest expression of that commitment became the delivery of ever more potent weapons. During an earlier revision, I ago-

nised along with the rest of the world over Biden's decision to supply cluster bombs to Ukraine, arguing, properly, these are immoral weapons, especially in their enduring effects on innocent publics after war's immediate fires.

Figuring how to defend Ukraine from Russia's expressly evil invasion invites moral judgments that few, if any, are prepared to address with divine reason much less practical and urgent responsibility. It seems wrong to debate degrees of evil when there are some who might be able to mobilise the sanctity of non-violence against manifest violence. And yet this is what this moment demands. And in this time, I recall the lessons of martial arts.

When violence threatens, a violent response may be the only possible reply. But that limited choice may also be because we denied the very possibility of violence in the first place, and did not conceive of the prospect of Russia's 2022 invasion as real, even after the reality of 2014's events. The habitus of martial arts discourages that kind of denialism. But that habitus is no panacea, especially when powerful norms collide even among the good-hearted.

I finish this essay's last major revision in May 2024, nearly seven months after Hamas's assault on Israel, following months of death and destruction Israeli forces have rained on Gaza. Universities in the USA especially are consumed with questions of righteous action mobilised around swirling tensions pitting Palestinian solidarity against anxieties over antisemitism. My own Brown University recently realised a distinctively non-violent end to an encampment by students protesting the university's refusal to divest from corporations supplying the means for Israeli violations of human rights (Hernandez 2024).

I played no prominent public role in this transformational solidarity, but I was glad to be part of a knowledge cultural infrastructure enabling the tremendously difficult dialogue around violence and peace to move ahead rather than spiral into ever greater injustice and destructive conflict. I am working now on a knowledge cultural sociology of this Israeli/Palestinian catastrophe, drawing on observations recorded here (Kennedy 2024a), but I can conclude with one person's observations about the process of negotiated transformation I also witnessed.

My friend and colleague Tricia Rose (2024) recently published a book on systemic racism for which an interview on the local public radio was scheduled. But before Ian Donnis asked her about her publication, he invited her to talk about how Brown realised such a singular conclusion to this protest tearing other universities apart (Ramirez et al. 2024). She replied,

> I think there's some key people on the campus who have been, who are close to students, respectful of the administration, but, trying to manage that tension w the bigger picture in mind. There's not evil people and good people, and that there are conflicts & disagreements, and we need to figure out how to push people who are comfortable and complacent into change, but still hold on to the notion of a community. I think (Brown University president) Paxson deserves a tremendous amount of credit for being in dialogical conversations. Some boards at other schools and some presidents feel that that's just an irrational thing to do, to talk to young people. I think Brown really benefited from our culture and from our leader and from some strategic people who were really instrumental in keeping the teams together talking. (Donnis 2024)

I agree with her assessment. While we might celebrate those figures who are leaders in their respective communities, movements, and institutions, in conclusion I prefer to draw attention to those colleagues among faculty, staff, and students who remain anonymous by design. They are transformative leaders enabling other leaders to realise points of departure otherwise impossible. These embedded and broadly respected actors are moved by a vision of peaceful transformation, treasuring community, acting out of love for all the actors involved even as they remain moved by a powerful sense of righteousness, justice, and dignity.

To assign responsibility for leadership to those charged to guide higher education's bureaucracies and finances is itself a failure of leadership, especially in these tumultuous times. We all need to be aware of the precarity of this moment, as martial arts would encourage us to sense. We all need to see how our concerns beyond the moment lead us to misrecognise the immediate commonality of our needs. To consider solidarity in these times invites polarisations of disposition, while missing the culture of critical, and compassionate, discourse that might reanimate the spirit of academic freedom. As we reconsider "solidarity with whom" we might even come to value the importance of academic freedom and intellectual responsibility. And in that quest, we can find our collective contribution to academic leadership.

Juxtaposing solidarity, martial arts, and contemplative studies is no recipe for world peace and global justice or even a rethink of leadership in higher education. I know. But their combination does allow us to imagine how figuring love, violence, and contemplative practice might be combined

in a sociology that asks questions far exceeding the currently reigning imaginations and practical solidarities. And that could matter. At least I have bet my life on it.

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/// Abstract

In this reflection on my sociological practice and academic leadership across four decades, I discover abiding themes otherwise hidden by the keywords featured most prominently: solidarity, martial arts, and contemplative practices. Articulations across knowledge cultures and leadership responsibilities distinguished by place, emphasis, spirit, and (non-)violence move me to conclude with an embrace of love as a force across what might

appear, on the surface, incommensurate expressions. However, they are but different manifestations of a deeper unity to be realised in transformation moved by address of the following question: solidarity with whom?

Keywords:
solidarity, martial arts, contemplation, justice, transformation, articulation, love

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