The Philosophy of the Karate Kid

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The film The Karate Kid is the story of a young boy, Daniel who experiences the same troubles that are common for a person his age (Avildsen, 1984). He is bullied by the ex-boyfriend of the girl he starts to love. One day, during one of the many beatings he receives from a bully, Johnny, he is rescued by the Handyman, Mr. Miyagi who later trains him in the practices and philosophies of karate. To the untutored and common folk, the movie is very straightforward. Daniel trains and rises against Johnny and wins the local karate tournament, defeating his enemy and taking the revenge of his hardships.

The main argument of the movie is not the fact that karate is the answer to our bullying problems, rather it is about what causes such bullying behavior in most teenagers and how bullying affects the lives of teenagers for the rest of their lives (Robin Malinosky-Rummell, 1993). It can be seen that the hero Daniel, as well as the bully Johnny, have deep-seated family issues, and as Johnny is stronger than Daniel, therefore he takes his frustrations out on Daniel. The movie however at the same argues that adult guidance can play a pivotal role in the shaping of the destiny of teenagers affected by family problems. This can be observed by the role of Mr. Miyagi as a father figure rather than a teacher. He does not teach the same violent brand of Karate to Daniel as Johnny’s trainer, rather Mr. Miyagi teaches Daniel how to control his emotions and channel his energies not just to beat his enemy senseless. This shows that victims of teenage violence can the development of close relationships with their peers out of fear of suffering another act of violence.

To conclude the argument, the whole film highlights the issue of bullying rather than just portraying flashy karate moves for the entertainment of kids. This film shows how bullying is a serious problem, that needs the guiding hand of an adult if the teenagers are to solve it.

# End Notes

1. Avildsen, J. G. (Director). (1984). *The Karate Kid* [Motion Picture].
2. Robin Malinosky-Rummell, D. J. (1993). Long-Term Consequences of Childhood Physical Abuse. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*(1), 68-79. DOI:10.1037/0033-2909.114.1.68