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A Philosophy of Pragmatism:
Canadian Instructors' Take on Taekwon-do

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

MARCH, 2000

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ABSTRACT

Since its traumatic birth in the Cold War Korea of the 1950s and its rapid transplantation to Canada in the early 1970s, Taekwon-do has undergone many changes. By asking what Canadian instructors have been doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do for the last thirty years, this research examines what aspects of Korean culture came to Canada with Taekwon-do, what happened to them, and why. It suggests that the process of cultural and knowledge transmission in Taekwon-do has been erratic, as a result of the uneasy student-instructor relationships within the martial art.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was completed against all odds and in the most stressful and strenuous circumstances, and I owe a lifetime debt of gratitude to a lot of people. Key among them, I want to thank:

- My thesis supervisor, Josie, for not excommunicating me when I accepted the opportunity of a full-time job not quite a year into my master's program, and for working with me around my intense work schedule. We're finally done!
- Lorna and the client relations/marketing gang at Bennett Jones, for supporting me in my irregular work hours. See? I really was working on a thesis!
- Sean for not letting me go canoeing until I had finished the day's quota of writing, and for making me blueberry pancakes and raisin toast pudding while I pounded away on my lap-top. Here's to the rest of our lives!
- My parents for their ceaseless nagging, without which I would have finished anyway... I think.
- Greg for proofing, Alex for cautioning, and "the girls" for patiently listening to my circular arguments and operational definitions, and pretending they made sense. Also for winning the nationals. Way to go, champs!
- Frank, Mike, Mike, Quy and everyone at Chinook for being everyone at Chinook, and for thinking beyond politics.
- Everyone who participated in this project, for taking the time and for having the passion.
- Glenda, for being a role model and an inspiration.

M.A.C.

DEDICATION

*To my brother, Adam Czarnecki,
my most challenging sparring partner,
my most merciless coach
and my most supportive friend.*

Thank you for never taking it easy on me.

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GLOSSARY OF UNUSUAL TERMS

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Taekwon-do	The Korean martial art that's the topic of this thesis. Various authors anglicize it as taekwondo, Tae Kwon Do, Taekwondo and Taekwon-Do.
ITF	International Taekwon-do Federation Official Headquarters: Vienna Real Headquarters: Mississauga, Ontario
WTF	World Tae Kwon Do Federation Headquarters: Seoul, South Korea
KTA	Korean Taekwon-do Association, also, concurrently at one time Korean Taesudo Association. Not to be mistaken for the Korean Tangsudo Association, which is not discussed here.
Dan, dans (<i>degree, degrees</i>)	Level of black in Taekwon-do (as well as other martial arts), of which there are nine.
Dojang (<i>do-jung</i>)	Training hall in Korean. The Japanese equivalent, much more commonly known, is <i>dojo</i> .
Dobok (<i>do-bok</i>)	Training uniform in Korean. The Taekwon-do uniform has evolved to be markedly (and consciously) different from the karate uniform. Each of the WTF and ITF champions a visibly different official uniform. Both, however, are white.
Belt levels (Colour belt levels, <i>gup</i>)	Rank in Taekwon-do is measured in belt levels, starting at white and ending at black. The official ranking systems vary between the WTF and the ITF, and also within individual schools. The topic is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.
Sparring	Fighting with rules, usually engaged in by two opponents. "Free" sparring is spontaneous. "step" sparring is pre-arranged.
Patterns	Series of pre-arranged blocks and attacks, practised by the practitioner alone, through which technique, timing, breathing etc. are learnt.
Partner exercises	Exercises performed with a partner, which usually consist of one partner performing an attack, and the other performing a defence.
Line exercises (Solo drills)	Exercises in which practitioners are lined up in some sort of formation and performing techniques or drills solo, usually to the count of the instructor.

“Correction is changing whatever is not effective.”

Peter Ralston

Chen Hsin School of Ontology and Martial Arts




(Grossinger 1998: 134)

Part I (The Mind)

I

SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS:

Unraveling The Problem

<i>Tae</i>		<i>to fly or smash with the foot</i>
<i>Kwon</i>		<i>to strike with the hand, fist</i>
<i>Do</i>		<i>way, path, art</i>

Taekwon-do in Canada: an experiment in cultural transmission?

The martial art of Taekwon-do was born on April 11, 1955,¹ in a stuffy boardroom in Seoul, South Korea. In 1959, the first Taekwon-do demonstration teams started touring the world. In 1965, Taekwon-do was proclaimed South Korea's National Martial Art, and in 1966, the first international Taekwon-do organization was formed. Two years later, Canada got its first Korean Taekwon-do instructor. Others soon followed. The first Korean instructor in Canada promoted the first Canadian Taekwon-do student to first degree black belt level in 1972. By 1974, almost every major Canadian city had a Korean Taekwon-do school, and branch schools, usually managed by Canadian instructors, started cropping up in community centres, suburbs and small towns.

¹This birth date, like much of Taekwon-do's "history," is apocryphal and controversial. See Chapter 4 – Unification and Mayhem.

It is not an empty boast when Taekwon-do spin doctors call theirs the world's most popular and fastest growing martial art. Each of the two major Taekwon-do organizations claims about 20 million practitioners worldwide. Through some clever political play, Taekwon-do has succeeded in being the only formally recognized martial art in a few South American and African countries. And, of course, every able-bodied South Korean man who served in the military comes out a Taekwon-do black belt.

Canada is home to 675 major Taekwon-do schools, which sign up 15000 new students and churn out 3000 new black belts a year. About 450,000 Canadians have at one point been Taekwon-do students.² Most of the original Korean instructors are still active—in name, at least—but they head an ever-decreasing percentage of Canadian schools. If you study the martial art of Taekwon-do here and now, you are probably learning it from a Canadian instructor, who most likely learned it from another Canadian instructor. Are you learning a Korean martial art? Are you learning anything about Korean culture? The stage is set for a dynamic experiment in cultural transmission, interpretation and change.

Or so I thought.

² These statistics are not particularly accurate, and I recommend all readers take them with a barrel of salt. They are based on an interpretation of the official statistics of the major Taekwon-do organizations, which tend to be simultaneously out of date and bloated. An argument can be made both for these numbers being too high (the Taekwon-do organizations are notorious for inflating their numbers) and too low (there are many unaffiliated schools, which are also unlisted in telephone or web directories).

This on-going experiment in cultural transmission was to be my research project, Taekwon-do schools my laboratory, and Taekwon-do instructors my subjects. I started with the premise that the Korean instructors who first brought the martial art to Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s also brought with them certain aspects of Korean culture. As they taught Taekwon-do to their Canadian students, they probably transmitted some of these cultural aspects along with the martial art. I saw Taekwon-do as a potential ambassador of Korean culture, an ambassador who apparently had been passionately embraced by almost half a million Canadians. But how much of the ambassador's creed was heard and accepted?

I had a series of interwoven questions. Exactly what aspects of Korean culture came to Canada with Taekwon-do? Were these cultural aspects merely absorbed and reproduced by the Canadian practitioners? Were they resisted and refuted? Or were they translated from a Korean cultural framework into a Canadian cultural framework by the Canadian students-turned-instructors?

I was expecting to see evidence of change/translation, some realignment and reinterpretation of the cultural things in Taekwon-do in the Canadian context. While Taekwon-do and other Korean martial arts have not been widely studied, numerous explorations of cultural change have been done on Japanese martial arts as they flourish in Great Britain and in the United States. The main thrust of this sizable body of work (which also includes some studies of Chinese martial arts)³ is that the martial arts are

³See Chapter 2 – Authors and Audiences.

undergoing transformation as a result of being in a new cultural environment. However, I was not interested in creating another “Look at how culture changes the martial arts” ethnography, merely with a Korean and Canadian twist. That has been done too often and too well to merely be reproduced. My particular interest was the Canadian Taekwon-do instructors in their roles as receivers, transmitters and interpreters of Taekwon-do—and Korean—culture, philosophy and ideology.

At the outset of this project, I set out four research objectives. I wanted to:

1. Identify what aspects of Korean culture (Korean cultural signifiers)[†] were brought into Canada with the martial of Taekwon-do.
2. Identify how these cultural signifiers changed from the time of their initial introduction to Canada to the present.
3. Explore the interpretation and translation of these signifiers by (two subsequent) generations of Canadian instructors; specifically, look at their roles as receivers, translators, and transmitters of Korean Taekwon-do culture, their actions in these respective roles, and their awareness of their roles in the process of cultural transmission and translation.

[†]A list of the Korean cultural signifiers with which I worked is described in Table 14, Chapter 6 – Experience and Interpretation, and is part of the questionnaire attached as Appendix D.

4. Explore the possibility that some of those Korean cultural signifiers have also been reinterpreted by the Korean instructors themselves, as a result of their life in a new culture.

As the project progressed, its focus changed quite significantly, but I still fulfilled the first three of these objectives reasonably well. I gained a comprehensive understanding of which Korean cultural signifiers survived 30 years in Canada, which disappeared and which did not come over initially, but were discovered by Canadian instructors later. I was able to see how some of these signifiers changed over time, and, most importantly, I gathered a great deal of information about Canadian Taekwon-do instructors' roles, thoughts and actions in this cultural change process.

Unfortunately, I failed to fulfill the last objective: my work with Korean instructors was not a success, and I gained very little first-hand, credible evidence as to what they really thought, felt and did.⁵ As a result, the image of Korean instructors that makes its appearance in this thesis is the result of their Canadian students impressions, supplemented by the official written record.

I identified the probable and impending failure of the fourth objective quite early on in the project. It was not until the half-way point of the research, however, that I realized my basic premises were questionable and the answers to the questions I was asking were addressing issues other than cultural change.

⁵ I discuss the details of this "incomplete success" in Chapter 3 – Order and Chaos.

Change in focus: instructors and students

Obviously, I started this research with a number of expectations. I did a lot of planning and preparatory research, and I had intended for the project to look something like this:

I would identify a number of obvious and some perhaps not so obvious cultural aspects of Taekwon-do. I would research the significance and meaning of these in Korean culture. I would ask Canadian instructors what these cultural signifiers mean to them. I would compare their answers to the actual meaning of the signifier. I'd analyze the answers according to such variables as age, gender and cultural background. I'd get a more or less cohesive idea of what Canadian instructors were doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do (which had been the working title of my project). Instead of anthropomorphizing the martial art and discussing how Taekwon-do changed or what Taekwon-do did, I would give agency where its due—to the actual actors—and put the focus on them. I would speak with the voices of my 50 respondents—who represent the 5,000 Canadian Taekwon-do instructors—faithfully articulating their experience.

That plan and framework began receiving blows during the preliminary questionnaire pre-testing, and it fell apart by the twentieth interview. I realized that the key topic of my thesis had changed, chiefly as a result of my avowed focus on agency and actors. I was asking questions about cultural change, about meaning, interpretation, symbolism and understanding. I was getting answers about making a living, teaching, maintaining authority, getting respect, giving respect, getting into ruts, repeating mistakes

and avoiding politics. I need to stress here that the respondents were indeed answering my questions: the questions and answers did fit together. But, the real significance of the answers forced me to rethink my focus.

The issue at hand was not Korea and cultural change. The core of my questions and answers, the core of the entire research project, and to a certain extent the core of Taekwon-do's troubled and traumatic history was the interaction between students and instructors.

This idea should not have taken me by surprise. After all, I was interested in the transmission of knowledge and culture—therefore, teaching—and my questionnaire included many questions about teaching. I even had a substantial section devoted to the student-instructor relationship. However, I had cast this relationship as just another part of the greater whole, one of the tools through which I would find out about cultural change. Instead, the student-instructor dyad became the nexus of the project. Each participant in this research project, whether live, electronic or paper⁶, was both an instructor and a student.

The overall research question, as it drove my research and as I present it here, remained more or less the same: how have Canadian instructors changed Taekwon-do? I identified the Korean cultural signifiers that came to Canada with the martial art of Taekwon-do, and discussed their nature in the context of Taekwon-do's history and

⁶ Live = interviewed; electronic = website author/e-mail correspondent; paper = author. Details in Chapter 3 – Order and Chaos.

professed political objectives. Through analysis and discussion of interview results and other project data, I attempted to illustrate how these cultural signifiers have changed over the last thirty years, sometimes in form, inevitably in substance, as a result of the actions of Canadian instructors. But the underlying theme, the unifying focus and the final framework shifted from cultural change to the student-instructor dyad.

The interaction between the people who fill these opposing and complementary roles is what shaped the history and development of Taekwon-do. The cultural change process, the “how” and “why” of the research question, is in the student-instructor relationship. And the student-instructor relationship is one fraught with tension and conflict. The data from my interviews resembled nothing so much as an on-going, ever-repeating argument—cultural, political, historical and economic argument—between the student and the instructor.

Role of researcher: narrator versus protagonist

I was thirteen years old when I became a Taekwon-do instructor.

I was the youngest and smallest student in the class, and the only female. However, rank-wise, when the clock struck 7 o'clock and it was time to start the class, I was the senior and that meant I, with a whole two years of training experience under my belt, had to teach. I commanded the class of 23 adult men to line up, was bowed in by them and recognized as the instructor, and I taught.

By the time I received my black belt, at the ripe old age of 16, I considered myself to be an experienced Taekwon-do instructor. My Taekwon-do club was my second home, my weekends were spent at tournaments and seminars, and my instructor was, if not God, then definitely one of the Saints. My passion for Taekwon-do dictated my immersion in anthropology and East Asian studies courses at university, led me to study Japanese and Korean, and sent me on a year-long stint to nominally teach English (but really just live and train) in Korea.

My passion for Taekwon-do is also the obvious reason I decided to pursue this particular type of research.

I could not have conceived, much less conducted this project, if I wasn't an active agent and a first-hand participant in the Taekwon-do world. That, more than my anthropological background, has dictated the structure and thrust of this project. However, it has been my explicit intention, from the beginning of this project, to leave myself as much out of it as possible. My literature review contains too many first-person, participant observation accounts of the martial arts milieu, in which the author is simultaneously the actor, the anchor and the interpreter of all that takes place around him. Although I write in the first person, I try to cast myself as a reporter, narrator and interpreter, and not one of the protagonists.

My literature review also contains too many romanticized, mystical accounts of the martial arts experience. This particular account is not romantic. The fifteen years that I have practiced and loved Taekwon-do include memories of sweat, bruises, twelve-hour

car trips to tournaments, brutal disagreements between instructors and senior students, political betrayals and questionable behaviour on part of respected seniors. Operating a Taekwon-do school, something I have been doing with my brother and a group of colleagues for many years, is difficult and mostly routine work. Any vestiges of Taekwon-do's Oriental mystique, which somehow managed to survive the sordid discoveries of some of my Korean instructors' personal lives and the fall-out of three school civil wars, burnt away during my time in South Korea. It's hard to be mystical about Asian culture while you're breathing in the stench of an open sewer, getting your back scrubbed by old ladies in bathhouses, haggling over the price of tomatoes and watching Korean boys misuse their Taekwon-do skills in playgrounds.⁷

A caveat about generalization and extrapolation

This research focuses exclusively on Canadian Taekwon-do instructors. The narrowed focus on one martial art and one country was consciously chosen here, for reasons I explain in Chapter 2 – Authors and Audiences. How applicable, then, is it to other martial arts, other martial arts instructors, and other countries?

⁷ I loved and valued my time in Korea, and I think Korean culture and history are fascinating. But life in any country is not a visit to a museum. Open sewers, be they in Poland, Libya or Korea, stink. I spent my childhood moving between workers' camps throughout Eastern Europe and North Africa—perhaps therein lies the root of my lack of cultural romanticism.

It's a question that's difficult to answer. Certainly, many martial arts that are popular in Western countries today have had histories similar to Taekwon-do's, and all experienced cultural change.⁸ I would expect that many of the observations I make throughout this thesis are applicable to other martial arts, as they developed in Canada and the United States. I would hesitate to extend this application to other countries, the United Kingdom included, as the development of martial arts there has followed quite different paths.

There are some very unique aspects to discussing Taekwon-do, however, particularly Taekwon-do in Canada. The history of Taekwon-do, as we will see in Chapter 4 – Unification and Mayhem, was quite different from the history of most Japanese and Chinese martial arts, as well as other Korean martial arts. Canada was the temporary world headquarters for one of the major Taekwon-do federations, and remains the home of one of the key figures in the martial art's development. The sheer vastness and relatively sparse population of the country also pose some unusual challenges for all the Canadian Taekwon-do federations and associations, and likely is a contributing factor to the detached relationship most Canadian instructors have with their governing bodies.

Few other martial arts are as polarized as Taekwon-do: I know of no case where a martial art is ruled by two competing federations with as much historical venom between

⁸ For a case study of one instructor's adaptation of Asian martial arts to his American culture, check out Bob Orlando's *Martial Arts America: A Western Approach to Eastern Arts* (1997). Others who tackle various facets of the subject include Eisen (1993) on kung-fu (*gong-fu*) and Watson (1997) and Crawford (1992) on different aspects of aikido.

them as the ITF and the WTF. That situation results in a number of unusual experiences and perspectives on the part of Taekwon-do instructors.

Finally, I cannot in good faith make any parallels or contrasts with other martial arts. I have spent fifteen years practising Taekwon-do in the Taekwon-do community; I have but the most transitory experience with other martial arts, and inadequate knowledge of their histories, traditions and challenges to make authoritative extrapolations.

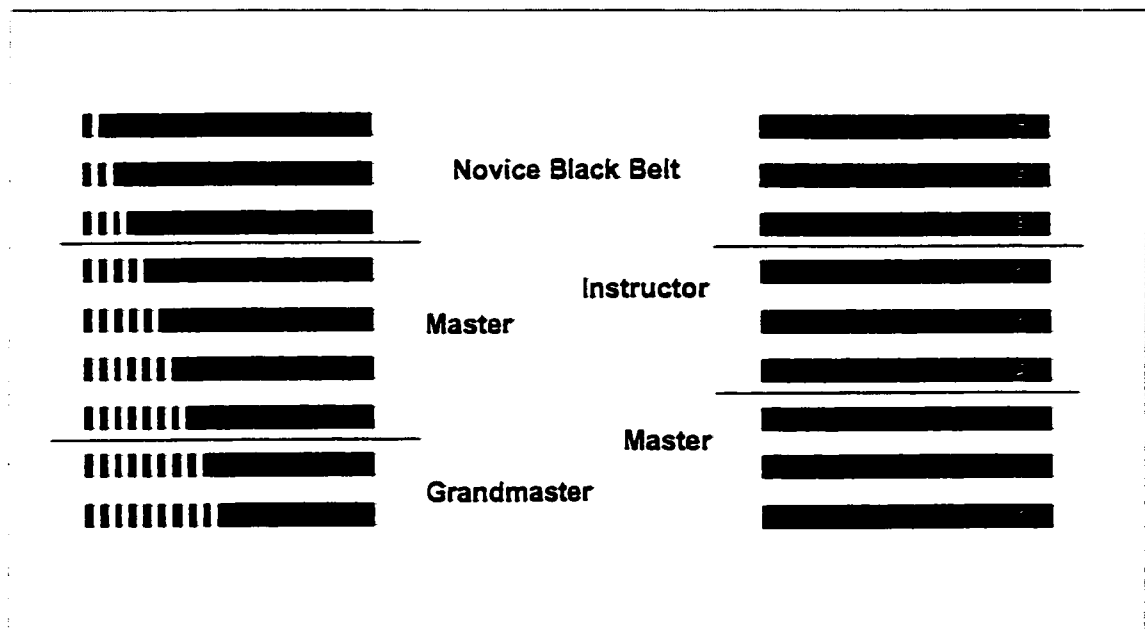
About the language and structure of the narrative

The tone, pace and language of this thesis is intentionally not academic. My explicit intention throughout this work has been to write in a clear and readable style. This research has not been conducted: I conducted this research. I've written in the first person, I've used active voice and contractions, and I've kept the specialized vocabulary and esoteric Taekwon-do and social science terms to a minimum. I want Taekwon-do instructors to read and use my work, and I want them to enjoy reading it.

I've also played with language in my chapter titles and subheadings to reflect some of the symbolism, overt and hidden, in Taekwon-do, and in the conclusions of this thesis. The most obvious example of this is the structure of the thesis: three sections and nine chapters. There are nine levels (degrees or dans) of black belt (instructor level) in Taekwon-do, because in Taekwon-do's numerology, as in many others, nine is a

significant number.⁹ My nine chapters are divided into three three-chapter sections, somewhat precociously entitled the Mind, the Body and the Spirit. The nine levels of black belt are also further subdivided into three three-level parts: novice (first through third degree), instructor (fourth through sixth degree) and master (seventh through ninth degree).

Illustration 1: The nine levels of black belt in Taekwon-do



On the left, the most common way of indicating black belt level in the martial arts—with a white bar on the belt (white stitching is slowly replacing electric tape). On the right, the system currently being promoted by the ITF, in which dan levels are indicated by Roman numerals, to differentiate Taekwon-do black belts from other martial artists.

⁹ See Choi (1995: 726) for a full exposition of Taekwon-do's amalgamated numerology, which includes the assertion that the number nine is significant because it consists of three threes, three being "the most esteemed of all numbers."

The chapter titles echo an aspect of my central student-instructor theme, as each is identified with an opposing dyad.¹⁰ Part I (The Mind) consists of the necessary chapters: Chapter 1 – Subjects and Objects: Unraveling the problem, Chapter 2 – Authors and Audiences: The literature review, and Chapter 3 – Order and Chaos: Methodology. Part II (The Body) contains of the bulk of the data, as well as some of the background and discussion necessary to understand the problem: Chapter 4 – Unification and Mayhem: A brief history of Taekwon-do, Chapter 5 – Loyalty and Agony: Learning from Korean instructors, and Chapter 6 – Experience and Interpretation: What Canadian instructors are doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do. Part III (The Spirit) combines data analysis with exploration of themes and trends, through Chapter 7 – Philosophy and Pragmatism: Filing the empty suitcase, Chapter 8 – Instructors and Students: Perpetuating the cycle, and Chapter 9 – Future Trends and Beaten Paths: A conclusion, and more questions.

In Chapter 2, I examine the lack of research on Taekwon-do and martial arts in Canada, and the cornucopia of research on other martial arts, elsewhere.

¹⁰ Any echoes of structuralism here are used here solely as a literary and organizational device, not as an analytical tool.

II

AUTHORS AND AUDIENCES:

The literature review

*The focus of this study... is not to tie some cute Zen-like phrases
into descriptions of karate-chops.*

*Carl B. Becker
(Becker 1982: 20)*

Psychology's guinea pigs

Taekwon-do and its sister Korean martial arts have not been studied widely. Luckily, the same cannot be said about martial arts in general. Psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists have all had a crack at analyzing this paradoxical activity that leads peace and serenity through teaching martial skills.¹

Martial artists have been a favourite guinea pig of psychologists ever since the phenomenon of martial arts hit the mainstream of Occidental cultures in the early 1970s. The psychological research on martial arts can be quite neatly split into three major areas. The first group of studies focuses on aggression disproving the "common sense assumption" that participation in the martial arts increases aggression (Nosanchuk 1981, French 1992, Skelton *et al.* 1991). The second type consists of self-esteem and self-image studies that generally conclude practitioners of the martial arts are relatively

¹ Hence book and article titles along the lines of "The Paradox of the Martial Arts."

psychologically healthy and well-adjusted people (Konzak and Klavora 1980, Boudreau *et al.* 1995, Morris 1996, Prince 1995). The third, coming into its own in the 1980s, has to do with gender-difference research on male and female martial artists (Knoblauch 1984, McCaughey 1995).

The work of psychologists has had a positive influence on the academic image of martial arts. It dispelled the idea, prevalent among many people and promoted by the popular media, that the physicality and apparent violence of martial arts attracts social psychopaths bent on mayhem² (Levitt 1996). But, it has not proven very useful in teaching us, researchers and lay people alike, much about the social and cultural aspects of the practices. The unusual social environment in which the martial arts are practised and transmitted is usually given cursory treatment in psychological studies. It tends to be limited to general description of mechanisms inherent in Eastern approaches to life and philosophy that encourage “formation of good moral character... non-violent attitudes and behaviours” and, of course, “lead to enlightenment” (Bäck and Kim 1978: 24). The cultural rooting of both the physical skills and the rituals that surround them are generally breezed over in introductions and when they are considered, the consideration is tentative and mystical.

² An image further perpetuated by the bloody, gory and violent films of silver screen martial arts such as Jean Claude Van Damme and Steven Seagal (*Blood Sport, Above the Law, Out for Justice, Double Team, Hard Target*) or the Hong Kong movies, pre- and post- Bruce Lee. There is some interesting work on the media and the martial arts. See Levitt 1996 for a good start and an extensive bibliography.

The understandable social and cultural oversight of psychology has been addressed to a certain extent by its sister social science disciplines. Research on the martial arts that attempts to map the social world of these activities eventually found its way into the subdiscipline of sociology of sport and related leisure and recreation studies. While cultural issues are still often skirted in that literature, they are given a fuller treatment in anthropological studies of play and education, as well as interdisciplinary cultural studies.

Whether discussing aggression, cultural practices or the organizational structure of a martial art, at the most basic level all these studies deal with students and instructors—the practitioners—of the arts. Some do it more directly than others, but even the researchers who focus on the martial art rather than the martial artist are usually themselves students, instructors or both.

Martial arts as sport: drawing the skeleton

Sport is a difficult concept to define (see Prebish 1993: 20-41, Huizinga 1955, Caillois 1955, McIntosh 1976 for a definitional smorgasbord). Applying it to the martial arts, many of which claim to come with a philosophy that sees sport as anathema, complicates definitional issues further (see Carlton 1975 for a direct treatment of the “sport as art” concept). Many scholars see Western sports and the eastern martial arts as directly opposed ideologies (*e.g.* Singer 1978, Lee 1993). Others see the influence of (Western) sports on the martial arts as a corruptive, corrosive force (*e.g.* Abernathy 1995, Forster 1986, Lester-Park 1993). Yet others have no qualms about treating at least some

martial arts as sports, or martial sports (Pieter 1994a, 1994b, Pieter and Taaffe 1992, Beasley 1978, Yoon 1989).³ Taekwon-do, particularly since ascending to Olympic glory, is often treated this way.

The earliest work on martial arts in a sports milieu belongs to sociology and philosophy of sport and is not centred on any actual research or study. Instead, it is an exposition and explanation of this bizarre, Oriental phenomenon that the sociologist takes upon himself to explain to his (presumably) Occidental reading public in readily digestible, “Western” terms. Thus, Brownridge (1975: 56) draws parallels between karate and Christianity in the martial art’s and the religion’s “motivation, discipline, and resultant change”; Bäck and Kim (1978) reach very far back into the coffers of Western philosophical tradition, and explain the philosophy of the “Eastern Martial Arts” using the language of Aristotle, Pythagoreas, Nietzsche and Descartes,⁴ and Becker (1982: 19) scrutinizes “the claims that the martial arts have a direct bearing on morality, disciplined ritual, and knowledge of man in the universe” by critically examining martial arts-Zen literature. Numerous others also attempt this East/West synthesis or debate (Abe 1986, Abe 1987, Kleinman 1986, Koizumi 1986, Canic 1986, Hsu 1986), juxtaposing Western sports concepts with Eastern martial arts and mind-body ideas. Most

³ There are problems with all the attempts at definition. For example, competition, which is part of many sport definitions, is now an integral part of most martial arts. But there are athletes and sports fans who do not compete, and sports that do not (yet?) have a competitive component. I’m not going to add another definition to the table, but allusion to sport versus martial art will occasionally crop up in subsequent chapters.

⁴ Applying Cartesian philosophy to the martial arts. If it seems odd, that’s because it is.

do not give cultural complexity and influence its due weight; all do it based on primarily popular literature rather than first-hand research.

The work of James and Jones (1982) and Jacobs (1969) partially addresses this lack of depth and research, by providing ethnographic case studies of karate schools. Jacobs attempts to show “the realities of group life” in a *dojo*⁵ by peeling away “the veils of mystery and secrecy” (1969: 577). James and Jones are more ambitious—they intend their work to lead towards “developing a sociology of the martial arts” (1982: 337). They identify karate as “highly complex and dynamic in form and style and extremely successful in adapting to the cultural contexts of the West” (1982: 337, 351), and they urge that sociologists turn their analytical skill to this “contemporary cultural form” (1982: 351). Although their article does not deal specifically with cultural change, Jacobs and James recognise karate as a changing form and they argue that “by focusing upon the changing nature of minority sports a more varied and dynamic sociology of sport is likely to emerge” (1982: 352).

Goodger and Goodger (1977, 1980) move beyond the case study in their seminal work on organisational and cultural change in judo in Great Britain. An ambitious project, their study identifies various areas of change in judo since its introduction to the U.K. (one of the chief ones being a weaker connection to Japan and a devaluation of things Japanese) and attributes them mostly to the growth and internationalisation of the

⁵ *Dojo*—Japanese term for karate school (gymnasium). The Korean equivalent is *dojang*.

sport—which affect the “processes of cultural transmission”⁶ (1980: 21) at work in judo. While their discussion of affective factors is detailed and intense, their exposition of these “processes” is murky and unclear, as is their portrayal of the role, position and influence of the judo practitioner.

It is unfortunate that, while sports sociologists are paying increasing importance to issues of cultural change in sports in general (see Donnelly and Young 1985, Tomlinson 1992, Harris 1989, MacLoon 1987, 1992 for a sampler), they have not explored these same issues in their sporadic studies of martial arts.⁷ The researchers who approached the martial arts from a sports perspective have sketched out the general shape of what the martial arts are. To this general sketch, they have also added how martial arts philosophically differ from more traditional (in our society) sports, and what goes on, manifestly and ritually, in martial arts classes and schools. But, while aware of the cultural component and the changing nature of this component, they have not looked in any detail at the cultural interaction taking place in martial arts schools across Canada, the U.S. and Europe.

⁶ Goodger and Goodger DO NOT use culture the way most anthropologists would use it, nor, I think, the way most sociologists understand it. While they do not provide readers with an explicit definition of culture, they apply the term specifically to the rules and traditions of individuals judo clubs active in Britain. They speak of the culture of this club and that, and occasionally of an overall culture shared by the judo clubs. However, the concepts of culture in the broader sense—Japanese and British, specifically—necessarily underlie much of their discussion.

⁷ Wacquant (1992, 1995) walks the liminal line between sports and martial arts in fascinating studies on boxing.

Play: putting on flesh

To address the cultural short-comings of sports-focused research, scholars working primarily in the field of anthropology of play have approached the martial arts (and some sports) as play.⁸

The power of sports, games and play⁹ to transmit, enforce and reproduce social and cultural value, meaning and behaviour is now a given for most anthropologists and their sociological brethren. Anthropology of play gives serious treatment to sports and their cultural aspects, and includes a few studies of the martial arts. Jackson (1977: 83) makes an argument that the Japanese martial art of kendo should be treated by anthropologists as “an expressive institution that has served to preserve and convey traditional values.” He highlights the simultaneous adaptability of the martial art with its “admirable” retention of traditional values through several periods of Japanese history, culminating with its post-World War II transformation, both in Japan and abroad, from a military art to an “aesthetic sport” (1977: 90). Draeger (1977) also champions research into the martial arts, but with very specific emphasis on their historic and (original) cultural context, as does Dann (1977).

⁸ A field that arguably owes its very existence to Johann Huizinga. See Huizinga (1955) for the beginning and Norbeck (1975) for an explanation.

⁹ Here again we encounter a definitional quicksand. Depending on the researcher, an activity can be sport, game and play, or only one at a given time. The early “playologists” devoted a great deal of time and effort to defining the concepts and dividing activities into them. The later ones seem to have decided that it really didn’t matter that much whether golf was sport, game or play. I join forces with them.

Dann places martial arts very firmly within their Asian origin. He states:

...it is doubtful that an accurate assessment of any combative system as a whole can be made through research conducted in America or Europe without baseline studies first being made in the culture of its origin. (1977: 81).

He also traces the many “variations” of kendo, from classical to cultural to sports, and cautions future scholars that

...if the [martial arts] research is based upon systems that have found acceptance in cultures outside the country of their origin, it must be realised that they may represent highly variant forms and that they are probably in a dynamic state of change as they adapt to new cultural contexts. (1977: 80)¹⁰

Draeger, Dann and Jackson all stress the (originating) cultural importance of the martial arts. Although they are aware that the martial arts are dynamic and changing cultural forms, none specifically addresses the cultural interchange and translation inherent in the transplantation of these practices from Asia to the West. They also look at change processes as located in the martial arts *form*, and not the martial arts *practitioner*—agency is not considered at all. See also Draeger and Smith (1980) for an equally historically and culturally sensitive discussion that does not spend much time on the question of what is happening today.

¹⁰ Here is one example of how the playologists differentiate between sport and play. Draeger, Dann and Jackson all identify the martial arts as play rather than sport, mainly because of that elusive “something indescribable” that makes them incompatible with sports. But what is sport? That question, they do not answer.

From the first day they were taught in Canada, martial arts became a “game in transition” and a great deal of anthropological work deals with such games in transition and other forms of cultural change exhibited in physical or sports-like activities. Heider (1976) was lucky enough to witness first-hand as Dani children “translated” a Javanese game to better reflect Dani cultural values and social expectations. Heider argues that the children’s transformation of this game is an indication of the traditional culture’s strength and resistance to change (1976: 79); he sees the case of “game translation” as an isolated and weird incident. Orthodoxy has changed since then; most later playologists and social scientists see cultural translation as a natural and prevalent, even inevitable, process.

According to Tindall,¹¹ issues of change and development are at the heart of socially structured sports, game and play activity (1976c: 356, 1976a, 1976b). Tindall’s work with Mormon and Ute boys on high school basketball teams shows that students would, despite pressure to play “by the teacher’s rules,” modify the game significantly for their cultural milieu (1976c). He hypothesises that this ongoing modification, negotiation and change process is standard whenever people encounter an activity, game, sport or other, which is a “culturally foreign mode of interaction” (1976c: 357).

¹¹ Tindall, who died from cancer in 1976 at age 34, was one of the pioneers of anthropological study of sport and “adult” play. Also see Lancy and Tindall (1975), Mouledoux (1975) and Stevens (1976).

Education: molding the mind

The early play theorists honed in on the fun and impractical aspect of play. Most of their successors have been more practical, paying attention to the prosaic issues of socialisation and transmission of knowledge. These issues have often blurred the boundary between the study of play and the study of learning—that is, education. Education, after all, is primarily about transmission, and, from an anthropological standpoint, culture:

We see education as cultural transmission, and of course, cultural transmission requires cultural learning... We are interested in the learning that takes place, whether intended or unanticipated, as a result of calculated intervention (Spindler and Spindler 1987: 3).

The work of Spindler and Spindler and their colleagues (*e.g.* Scribner 1985, Camilleri 1986, Hendricks 1995) shares the desire to identify (or even discover) more effective vehicles of transmission: transmission of knowledge, transmission of culture, transmission of values. Abernathy (1995) directs this desire specifically towards Tae Kwon Do. She argues, based on an intensive case study of an elementary school, that the inclusion of traditional Tae Kwon Do in an elementary school physical education curriculum would be beneficial to the children, because of Tae Kwon Do's combined emphasis on physical skill and transmission of morals and values. Abernathy also stresses that introducing students to the *cultural heritage* of Tae Kwon Do adds to the efficacy of the martial art as an educational tool, as it encourages tolerance and understanding.

Abernathy is one of many educators who see the martial arts as a particularly effective way of transmitting desirable values. Cerny suggests that the martial artist “works on personal character and attitude” (1981: 47); he also “learns to work with all people regardless of cultural background, for this background has no significance in the karate world” (1981: 48). Vockell and Kwak claim that martial arts “students are indoctrinated with the idea of respect” (1990: 61), and suggest that some of the teaching methods of the martial arts be transferred to school classrooms, and the martial arts themselves made a part of the curriculum (1990: 63); Boudreau et al. (1995) make similar claims, and Linden (1986) calls aikido “philosophical education in action.” Min lauds martial arts as “a unique learning method serving mankind through mind and body training” (1979: 97). He also suggests the martial arts become a regular part of Western physical education curricula. Levine (1984) goes a step further and uses instruction in the martial arts as a model for instruction in liberal education generally. Also of note, and in a similar vein although presented with a more critical eye, is the work of Trafton (1992) on martial arts and the concept of life-long learning, Moyer (1994) and individual experiential education, and McBratney (1994) on the teaching behaviours of martial arts instructors. This belief that practising martial arts somehow makes good citizens is not an isolated Western fad, but the official policy of, among others, the governments of South Korea (Park 1974, Kim 1996) and Japan (Neide 1995).

Much of this work lays great stress on “traditional” forms of martial arts as opposed to “today’s commercialised martial sports concept” (Abernathy 1995: 22).

Abernathy, for example, distinguishes very strongly between the art of her Korean instructor and the *changed* art (or sport) many American practise.¹² Yet, despite an apparent denial of any positive value of the cultural change and translation undergone by martial arts, these researchers are perforce participating in it. They are taking combative systems specifically designed for military and self-defence purposes, and forging them into “innovative curricula” for Western education, which they often perceive as stagnated and static (Abernathy 1995; Vockell and Kwak 1990; Levine 1984; McBratney 1994).

In addition to themselves participating in cultural translation, these education-concerned authors try to explain how (if not always why) participating in the martial arts may encourage the transmission of certain values. The most striking defect, to me, in this educational research is the objectification of the martial art as something external that is having an effect on the practitioner, and the lack of attention to what the practitioner is doing, feeling and thinking. The effect is akin to antropomorphizing the martial art: Taekwon-do does something to the student. But Taekwon-do is just a form: there is nothing inherent in a kick or a punch that does anything, other than physically hurt, a person. It is in discovering how the kick is taught—and by whom—and how the kick is learnt—and by whom—that the really interesting information lies.

¹² See Cox (1993) for a review of “traditional martial arts training.”

Cultural studies: breathing in life

The cultural studies-oriented martial arts research produced in the 1970s has many similar similarities to the early sociology of sports work. Key among these is the tendency to envelop the subject in veils of Asian mystique and mystery—falling prey to the “Oriental mystique” (Said 1978).

The work produced by cultural insiders—Chinese, Japanese or Korean scholars working or publishing in Canada or the United States—also, consciously or not, mystifies the Asian martial arts, and tends to treat the practice and transformation of these on North American soil with a dollop of contempt. The Asian martial arts are the *real* thing; the American¹³ version is at best a copy. A prime example of this view is Chang (1978)¹⁴ who concludes, after an exhaustive historical study of kung-fu, that Chinese kung-fu teachers were forced to change some of the traditional practices of the art to attract (implicitly lazy) American students who were more concerned with some kind of immediate or at least short-term gratification (e.g. a rank promotion), and less or not at all concerned with kung-fu’s traditions and cultural past. Chang explains the numerous

¹³ There is no Canadian research on the martial arts that I have unearthed. Kimberly Taylor (Donohue and Taylor 1994) is Canadian, but none of his work is on Canadian content.

¹⁴ Chang’s thesis traces the development and spread of kung-fu from Northern China to “the rest of the world and particularly America” (1978: iv).

changes in kung-fu by his own (unflattering) interpretation of the American character.¹⁵ A fascination with the history of the martial arts is not limited to cultural insiders. Kostyniuk (1988), for example, offers a laudable treatment of the historical development of the martial arts in China and Japan.

Singer (1978) makes an attempt to move beyond historic studies of the cultural to explain the popularity of martial arts in the United States. His work is dogged by a myriad of problems, not the least of which is that he lumps the cultures of China, Korea and Japan into one pot and treats the countries' respective martial arts traditions as a monolithic, immobile construct. The impression one gets from Singer is that Americans embraced and adopted the martial arts wholeheartedly in their original form—cultural transformation is not dealt with; cultural transmission is unsullied by change.

As studies of sport and of cultural change and transformation generally became more sophisticated,¹⁶ the quantity of research on the martial arts also increased. Although the number of cultural scholars attempting to tackle martial arts research in the 1980s was not significant (Anyanjan 1980 on power orientation; Barde 1984 on the historical development of the samurai in Tokugawa Japan and its effects on modern martial arts practice; Schaer and Neal 1987 on attitudes towards martial arts; Staley 1983 on conflict in the martial arts; Donohue 1988 with his first publication on the Japanese martial arts in

¹⁵ I am not saying Chang is wrong: I think he very well could be right. What bother me is that he makes this claim repeatedly without backing it up in any way. Rather fortunately, Chang is quoted very rarely in subsequent literature.

¹⁶ I make this quasi-evolutionist statement with trepidation at anthropologists' reaction, yet, it is true. The chief value of the older work today is that it inspired *better* new work.

the U.S.), the 1990s saw an explosion of culturally focused research. Dunbar (1991), walking the line between educational anthropology and cultural studies, creates an exhaustive profile of teaching techniques (“effective methods of knowledge transmission”) of Taijiquan in the United States. Thomas (1992), also incorporating an education agenda, explores “transcultural educational paradigms” through the martial arts. Wingate (1993a; 1993b) contributes a much needed discussion of how karate participants understand the “karate way of life.” Dykhuizen (1996) does something similar for aikido, focusing closely on the Japanese martial art’s “cultural context.”

A work that borders on phenomenology¹⁷ is Yang’s (1996) *American conceptualization of Asian martial arts: an interpretative analysis of the narrative of Taekwondo participants*. Using free-form, unstructured interviews with Taekwon-do participants, and the narrative works of Wiley (1995) and Atkinson (1983), Yang allows his subjects to speak for themselves. He contrasts their experiences—the “real” narrative of Taekwon-do practitioners—with popular martial arts literature on Zen and Japanese swordsmanship, Karate as a way of life, the philosophy(ies) of Aikido, Chinese civilisation, philosophy and natural symbolism, portrayal of kung-fu on the silver screen, and academic work that covers all of the martial arts and studies almost all of their different aspects. He finds the experience of the practitioners, as told to him, to be considerably different from that described in books. Yang reminds us that we should pay

¹⁷ And as such is a welcome change of pace.

attention to what people tells us: that we should listen, hear and understand before analysing.

Yang works exclusively with Taekwon-do practitioners, and this emphasis on *one* kind or one national origin of martial arts, which allows the scholar to be attentive to the individual caprices of their specific cultures and styles, is one of the similarities of 1990s social research on the martial arts. Anthropologist John J. Donohue's focused studies of the Japanese martial arts in their country of origin and in the United States are marked by an anthropologist's paramount cultural awareness: he approaches the martial arts first as a cultural phenomenon:

The martial arts as cultural phenomena have been modified and reinterpreted over time to achieve a closer fit between the perceived theory and organisation of these arts and the societies they are practised in. This process of adaption is not merely technical or philosophical in nature, but cultural and social as well. (1994a: 54)

Donohue's own work has a timely progression from an immersion in the Japanese origin and history of the martial arts of kendo and karate (1988) to his more recent fascination with the present-day interpretation of these martial arts by American practitioners and the general public (1994a, 1994b, 1997, in press). His work is a good example of what is needed in the field of martial arts research: an examination of the cultural forces and adaptations at work in the genesis of the martial arts here and now, as well as there and in the past.¹⁸

¹⁸ "There," of course, refers to the country of origin.

Although perhaps the most prolific, Donohue is not alone in his martial explorations. Hershey suggests practising karate is “non-discursive cultural exchange” (1994: 53). Horne ponders how it is that karate teaching methods encourage transmission of culturally desirable (in Japan) values and after identifying the (Japanese) cultural themes that echo throughout karate training, argues that the Japanese samurai warrior is often “misrepresented” (read translated?) by Westerners to fit their own image (1996: 18). Pepper-Harrison (1993) treats martial arts as “rites of passage” and “dramas of persuasion.” Rosenberg (1995: 21) traces the American “twist” on the “paradox” of martial arts and violence, and discusses the temptation to “form the martial arts in the United States in the image of their own values, with more than a grain of assault.”¹⁹

These scholars are all conscious of culture, change, and complexity, and the inadequacy of any discussion that does not address all three of these “C’s.” They are aware of the shortcomings of most of the earlier martial arts research, in which, as Monday cautions,

We have, in effect, plucked an aspect of a culture out of its cultural “nest” and set it down in a foreign cultural setting minus its values, most of its philosophical trappings and the support system which nurtured it through centuries (1994: 73).

These writers all have the same advantage that time has given me: they are writing in the jaded and (post)post-modern 1990s, when exports from the East are no longer given the kid glove, star-struck treatment, and when nothing is allowed to be

¹⁹ The “assault/of salt” pun is intentional on part of Rosenberg.

simple and straightforward. What they, and the scholars who cut their teeth on the martial arts earlier, have given me is a rough map of the field, with its numerous pitfalls clearly identified.

They have, effectively, told me to focus on one style and on one originating nation, to be careful of what I read and accept as authority, to listen to my subjects/respondents instead of assuming that they experience and feel what I as a practitioner experienced and felt, and to go boldly where no one has gone before—there's a lot of unexplored terrain out there.

Popular literature: creating a mythology

Almost all of the academic martial arts literature has been produced by insiders:²⁰ *judoka*[s] writing as sociologists, *karateka*[s] writing as anthropologists, kung-fu *sifu*[s]²¹ writing as historians, taekwon-do practitioners writing as educators. Most of them tried to subsume their martial arts personae under a social researcher one; some succeeded and most, inevitably perhaps, failed. All relied to a lesser or greater extent on the literature produced by non-academic insiders: the Chinese, Japanese and Korean “great teachers” who brought their respective arts to Canada and the United States. There is bookshelf

²⁰ With the possible exception of a couple of the psychologists, who do not explicitly identify themselves not have been insiders.

²¹ *Judoka* and *karateka*—(Japanese) practitioner of, respectively, judo and karate; *Sifu*—(Chinese) term used in many martial arts to denote “teacher.” There are no popular equivalents in Taekwon-do. Some writers have used “taekwondoist” but the awkward term has not caught on. The Korean terms for teacher, instructor and master, while used in certain formal situations, are also not common in everyday speak.

upon sagging bookshelf of this literature, some encyclopaedic, some philosophic in nature, most of it presented as instruction manuals.

A potentially rich source of information, this body of work has a very troublesome flaw: a combination of politics and ignorance tends to obfuscate facts and “truth.” For the most accurate accounts of Taekwon-do historic development you have to turn to very recent work of professional scholars such as Maliszewski (1992a; 1992b; 1996), Pieter (1992; 1994a; 1994b), Burdick (1997a; 1997b), Pia (1994; 1995) and Young (1992) rather than to the “history” sections of Taekwon-do and martial arts manuals written by masters and promoters.²² As a result, the scrupulous reader generally has to become a researcher to get a clearer view.²³ Perhaps that is why I am pursuing this work: to write what I have always wanted to read but never could find.²⁴

²² The history of Taekwon-do is wonderfully fascinating—full of politics, invasions, assassinations, backstabbing, embezzling, and all sorts of other mortal sins. See Chapter 4 – Unification and Mayhem for a semi-sanitized version.

²³ This sentiment is implicitly expressed by Burdick (1997a). However, I think my phrasing is more apt.

²⁴ Hardly a unique situation, I should note. Another paradox of the martial arts is that the people attracted to this larger than life, holistic, encompassing group activity are all highly individualists. The result is that everyone’s writing what they want to read.

This contribution

Taekwon-do is a martial art, a sport, a cultural phenomena, an ideology and an educational tool, and so one of my goals in this research has been to remain aware of the interplay of change in culture, culture in sport, sport in education, and education in play—to combine the strengths apparent in the approaches discussed above.

The contribution of this project to discussions of martial arts in sociology of sport is a solid, prosaic and somewhat irreverent understanding of both Korea's and Taekwon-do's culture and history. I discuss the changes and problems witnessed by Taekwon-do instructors without succumbing to the perverse Oriental mystique that colours much academic research on the martial arts and almost all of the popular literature.

To the tradition of anthropology of play, my research adds more data about how Taekwon-do instructors experience, perceive and interpret the “serious play” they participate in. Most respondents pay lip service to the practical claim of self-defence, the esoteric claim of transcendence, and the stereotypical claim of character building, and then summarize their reason for being in Taekwon-do with “It's fun. Wouldn't do if I didn't enjoy it.”

To education-focused studies of transmission of knowledge and culture, my work adds a focus on agency,²⁵ and most significantly, it delves deeply into the problems surrounding the student-instructor dyad in Taekwon-do. The cultural translation aspect of this work adds a historical and a motivational component to cultural transmission.

And, well—I wouldn't do it if it weren't fun.

²⁵ I need to acknowledge here the profound influence of Bourdieu and Passeron's *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1990 [1970]) on the way I ended up thinking about transmission of knowledge. Defrance (1995) and Clement (1995) clarified much of Bourdieu's work for me.

III

ORDER AND CHAOS:

Methodology

*Taekwon-do... is the scientific use of the body
in the method of self-defence.*

– Choi Hong Hi (Choi 1995: 15)

*...The martial arts would claim that a knowledge of the nature and
structure of the whole is possible through investigation and
experiences of the parts of it which we contact.*

– Carl Becker (Becker 1982: 21)

The Taekwon-do instructors you will meet in these pages like explanations. For many, the appeal of Taekwon-do, as opposed to other martial arts they have tried, is that “there is a reason—a practical reason—for every technique. It all makes sense, and if it doesn’t, you’re doing something wrong.”¹ The search for the explanation and the understanding of purpose are the defining features of an instructor:

As a student, you just do things, really. You don't know what questions to ask. As you become an instructor, you start to ask 'why.' And by the time you become a good, experienced instructor, you know how to answer 'why.'

¹ This quote and all unattributed quotes that follow are from the interviews conducted during the course of this project. Long quotes are set apart from the body text, indented and italicized. Short quotes—sentences, phrases or sentiments—appear in unreferenced quotes within the body text. Quotes from other sources are, of course, referenced.

Perhaps that is one of the reasons they have been such enthusiastic participants in this project.

The data for this research project comes from three sources:

1. an extensive academic, popular and personal² literature review,
2. participant and non-participant observation, and
3. semi-structured interviews with Taekwon-do instructors.

Respondents and sampling

Interviews with Canadian Taekwon-do instructors form the bulk, and the most formal and structured part, of this research project. I selected interview participants through modified snowball sampling. As I had been part of the Canadian Taekwon-do community for fourteen years, I knew and was known by many of the project's potential participants. I had discussed my research project with some of them during its conceptual stage. They in turn suggested other persons for me to approach. I also wrote to all the Taekwon-do schools in the Western provinces, as well as schools in specific cities in Eastern Canada, inviting the instructors to participate in the research project, and supplemented my sample from among those respondents. A copy of the letter, as well as its Korean translation, is attached as Appendix A.

² Web pages, and schools' student manuals, proved to be an invaluable and unplanned resource in this research project. They were a convenient yardstick, against which to measure my data analysis.

It had been my goal to interview 50 instructors. My final sample of completed interviews is 43. Of these 43 interviews, only 37 are textbook-complete.³ In 37 interviews, respondents discussed all the questions in the questionnaire, completed a release form and allowed me to tape the interview. Five additional interviews were partially taped, with a verbal release (a signed release form was sent to the respondents for execution later). Most, but not all of the questions were dealt with in these five interviews. These five interviews were opportunistic: the respondents volunteering or agreeing to an interview on the spot. Some of these respondents were actually part of my initial sample proper, but scheduling an interview time proved to be difficult, and we simply took advantage of whatever opportunity presented itself. In the tables that follow, this group is identified as Group 1.

Copies of the release form and the data sheet I used to code answers are attached as Appendix B and Appendix C respectively.

Two additional groups of respondents provided valuable and extensive input into this project. They were not formally interviewed and are not included in any of the more quantitative data discussed in the project, but they certainly, indirectly and informally, informed the qualitative discussion.

The first of these consists of my closest colleagues, the black belt instructors in the Calgary and area clubs with whom I have worked for the last fifteen years. I had

³ Even in a few of the “complete” interview, I found, while coding the data, that I did not have some of the information for which I had asked. I identify the total respondents from whom data was collected in each of the tables throughout the thesis.

originally intended to interview them for the project, but after pre-testing my questions on a few of them, I decided to eliminate them from the formal process. We knew each other too well: they put thoughts in my mind and I put words in their mouth. However, their experiences, some similar to mine, some vastly different, necessarily inform how I understand Taekwon-do and how I filtered the stories told by the study's respondents. I have coded their experiences using the same data sheet as I used with Group 1, and included some of these data into a few of the tables that follow. They are identified in these tables as Group 2.

Additionally, there have been other martial arts instructors, Taekwon-do and other, with whom I've spent hours, in the *dojang* and over coffee or beer, or on the phone or via-email, discussing Taekwon-do, our frustration with it and our passion for it. Many of them wanted to participate in the project—and I wanted them in it too—but real life intervened and their contribution remains informal.

Table 1: Respondents by Organization

	<u>ITF</u>	<u>WTF</u>	<u>Other</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=43)</i>	23	11	9
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	10		2 (8)

**Eight of Group 2 were, in addition to the ITF, affiliated with another organization.*

It had been my intention to interview instructors from each of the two major Taekwon-do federations in equal ratios, along with equal representation of unaffiliated or otherwise affiliated. Unfortunately, because of my close ties to the ITF⁴ community, ITF instructors are slightly over-represented in the final sample (and significantly over-represented in the two informal respondent groups). Also, I did not find as many unaffiliated instructors as I had expected, but considering the 1980s recruitment effort by both major Taekwon-do federations (see Chapter 4), that is not surprising. Nonetheless, to the best of my knowledge, this is the first social research on Taekwon-do that deals with both of the two styles of Taekwon-do.

Table 2: Respondents by Age

	<u>-25</u>	<u>26-39</u>	<u>40+</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=43)</i>	9	21	13
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	2	7	3

To qualify for the sample, instructors had to be adults, at the black belt level, preferably second degree or higher. “Black belt” is the standard instructional level in most martial arts ranking systems. In Taekwon-do, there are usually 10 levels of belt below black, and nine levels of black belts. The levels are called dans and degrees. The

⁴ The two styles/federations are the International Taekwon-do Federation (ITF) and the World Taekwon-do Federation (WTF). I am affiliated with the ITF. The two federations have a very acrimonious relationship, discussed in Chapters 4 and Chapter 9.

higher the degree, the more (presumably) experience the instructor has. A second-degree instructor has held the black belt rank for at least two years, and likely taught for twice that long. There are three first degree black belts in my sample, but two of them had as much instructional experience as I, as a third degree black belt, have, and the third was strongly recommended by his instructor. Also, to participate in the project, all these instructors had to have been teaching regularly.⁵

Table 3: Respondents By Teaching Status

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=43)</i>	17	26
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	2	10

Interview settings and procedure

Most of the interviews took place in Alberta, Winnipeg and the Greater Vancouver area. My setting of choice was the respondent's school, and 30 of the interviews were conducted there; however, necessity dictated the location of some interviews and these varied from people's homes to bars, restaurants, cafes, gymnasiums

⁵ I defined, for myself, "regularly" as a minimum of three times a month, as I wanted to include part-time instructors in my sample. However, the real definition has become both looser and more stringent. When they teach, part-time instructors tend to teach a lot—two to three times per week. Then they will not teach for a month or two. More on this in Chapter 6.

and park benches. One interview took place in a van, zipping along the TransCanada Highway.

I had initially planned to conduct a bulk of my interviews at competitions. This did not happen: precisely two interviews were completed at tournaments, and neither was a success. As a tournament veteran, I'm still uncertain why I had made such a colossal strategic error. My respondents were all black belts. This meant that they were instructors, coaches, judges, referees and competitors: each of them had more urgent things to do at the tournaments than an interview. I too had coaching and judging duties to perform at many of these tournaments; at one, I was testing for my third degree. However, for research projects requiring interviews with colour belts, parents of participants and spectators, tournaments are a good setting, as all of those parties do a lot of sitting around and waiting. Instructors and black belts do not.

To address the irregular setting of the interviews I standardized the format of the interviews as much as possible. Each interview started with the respondent and me both fumbling with the tape recorder and talking about the research project. An explanation and signing of the consent form followed.⁶ The interviews were semi-structured, with a

⁶ I had used the form recommended by the University of Calgary, which is intended as a catch-all for science, psychology and other social science experiments. While all of the respondents were comfortable with the project prior to me producing the form, after we had gone through the form, they expressed concern over what exactly was it that I was going to do them if I needed all these caveats. Eight of the first ten respondents raised this issue; after that, before producing the form, I explained its catch-all purpose to maintain their level of comfort.

pre-determined set of questions, and semi-formal: the extent of the formality was dictated by the respondent's comfort level.

With the respondents' consent, all of my planned interviews, most of the opportunistic ones, and a few beer-and-coffee conversations were taped. The tape recorder was placed in front of the respondent, and I made it clear that the respondent could stop it at any moment—to think, rewind, or say something off the record. Almost everyone I interviewed paused the tape at least once to say something off the record. Everyone had something to say after we officially concluded the interview. These statements obviously shaped my thoughts and analysis—they were impossible to disregard.

Each respondent will receive a copy of the interview tape, along with a summary of the research and the bibliography. A few have requested a copy of the thesis, and I will forward the complete write-up to them once it is finished and approved. I have seen most of the respondents since the interviews at tournaments and seminars and informally discussed the research with them.

The questions

The questionnaire consisted of six major parts:

1. Personal Information (Set A) and Timeline in Taekwon-do
2. Pre-Taekwon-do Knowledge and Experience
3. Philosophy of Taekwon-do and Teaching Styles
4. Cultural Signifiers
5. Post-Taekwon-do Knowledge and Experience;
6. Personal Information (Set B) and Wrap-Up

The goal of the questions and the questionnaire was to gather data about the instructor's Taekwon-do career and experiences, and to look for evidence of cultural change, transmission and interpretation.

The first section, Personal Information and Timeline, accomplished two objectives. First, it gathered quantitative information such as when the instructor took up Taekwon-do, which instructors she trained with, how old she was when she became a Taekwon-do instructor, when she received a black belt and subsequent degrees, and so on. This section was also meant to relax the respondent, by asking simple, easy-to-answer factual questions.

The second section, in addition to gathering more factual information, also started the instructor thinking about how practising Taekwon-do changed her life—what experiences she had because of it, and also, what led her to Taekwon-do in the first place.

The third section made a jump from the past to the present, and focused on the instructor's teaching experience and philosophy. This section contained a lot of comparison questions: how is what you're doing different from what your instructor did? Describe X as you do it. Now describe X as your instructor did it. Why is it different? Why is it the same?

The fourth section took specific instances of Korean culture present in Taekwon-do and explored what they meant to and how they were learnt and taught by the instructor. A list of these cultural signifiers is attached as Appendix D, and also makes an appearance in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6.

Section five consisted of a set of questions almost identical to those asked in section two, except that they dealt with post-Taekwon-do experiences. For example, a question in section two asked, "Did you have any Korean friends (before you started Taekwon-do)?" and a question in section five asked, "Do you have any Korean friends now?" The purpose of these two sections, combined, was to see how much of an exposure to Korean culture occurred as a result of participating in Taekwon-do.

Section six was a wrap-up. It included some touchy personal questions—age, religion, ethnic background—as well as some inquiries about the instructor's school. The interview concluded with a question about the future of Taekwon-do, and a chance to talk off the record. A complete questionnaire is attached as Appendix E.

I pretested my question set three times before setting out on the formal interviews. I revised the questions extensively after the first pretest, somewhat after the second, and a

little after the third. In addition to revising the questions, I also decided against interviewing my close colleagues in this project.

During the actual interviews, I tweaked the questions somewhat, but the overall structure and sense of all the questions remained the same. Some of the senior instructors made natural jumps from topic to topic, which led me to revise the placement of certain questions.

The most significant revision that took place as a result of the pretest was the removal of questions that had a right or wrong answer. For example, part of Taekwon-do training involves learning patterns—series of movements, ranging in number from 19 to 73, that follow a predetermined pattern and allow a solo student to practice a variety of attacks and defences. Each pattern or each pattern set has a meaning that's straight out of Korean culture: *e.g.* ITF pattern Dan-Gun is “named after the Holy Dan Gun, legendary founder of Korea in the year 2333 BC” (Choi 1995: 421). When I was first designing the questionnaire, I had intended to include a question along the lines, “What does pattern X mean?” or “Do you know anything about X, after whom pattern X is named?” Unfortunately, while the answer “I don't know” gave me information, it also made the respondent feel stupid, and reluctant to give thoughtful answers to subsequent questions. I had to recast all of those questions. “What does pattern X mean?” became “Why do we do patterns? What do the patterns mean to you? Do you care about the individual meaning of each pattern?”

A few interviews into the project, I removed or recast a couple of other questions, which had the unintended effect of killing the flow of the interview. One of these was a question about the symbolism of the Korean flag. The implications of this questions and its removal from the questionnaire are touched on in Chapter 6.

I designed the questionnaire to be completed in ninety minutes, and most of the interviews averaged just under two hours. Interviews with senior instructors, who had more than 20 years experience, tended to stretch into three, four and one five and a half hour session. One interview was over in thirty-eight minutes, with all the questions answered... succinctly.

Why there are no Korean instructors in this sample, and other problems

...the development of Western martial arts lagged far behind that of their Eastern counterparts. The cause of this unequal evolution is complex [... but] the result is that Eastern martial arts reached a much higher developmental plane than any in the West. Not only were Eastern martial arts far ahead of the West on the physical scale, but they exceeded them in the intellectual moral and spiritual realm as well. (Orlando 1997: 43)

It had been my intention to interview three categories of instructors in this project:

1. Canadian instructors who learnt from Canadian instructors
2. Canadian instructors who learnt from Korean instructors
3. Korean instructors themselves.

The experiences of the Korean instructors would have been instructive and invaluable: they would have been both witness to and actor in thirty years of cultural and philosophical change. It was, unfortunately, not to be.

I completed one full interview with a Korean instructor, and as he was in a class all by himself, I have not included him among the 37 respondents. He stands alone, because I could not get other Korean instructors to participate in this research. I had sent a letter about the research to most of the Korean instructors in Western Canada, as well as some in Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal. I had the letter translated into Korean, and sent each instructor both an English and a Korean copy (the Korean letter is attached as Appendix AA). I received no response to any of these letters—conversely, 90% of the letters directed to Canadian instructors drew a response. I started calling the instructors to follow up. And, at one point—most of my interviews having already been completed—I make the conscious decision that further perseverance was useless, and my time and mental health too valuable too waste. I was tired of being yelled at, hung up on, or accused of spying and a myriad of other sins.

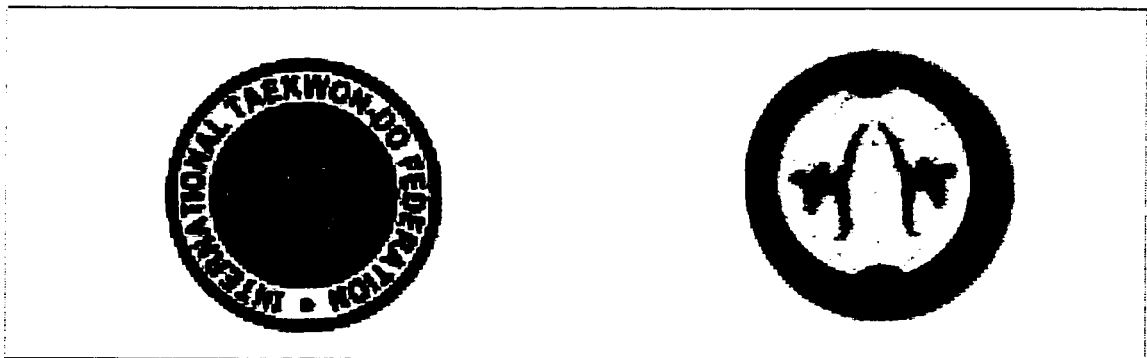
Some of the instructors were simply not interested, and did not return my telephone calls or respond to my messages. Two wrote me polite letters saying they wished me luck but were simply too busy. And several were belligerent, if not outright jingoistic. How could I presume to know anything about Taekwon-do?

I believe the problem, for most of them, was two-fold. First, I am an ITF-affiliated practitioner. There are very few Korean instructors left within the ITF; only two who

work in Canada. The remainder are independent or, increasingly, part of the WTF. The WTF and the ITF are, as I alluded to before, not on the best of terms.⁷ I had foreseen my ITF affiliation as a potential problem, but I had underestimated it. I expected that my experience in WTF schools in South Korea should aid me in gaining some acceptance. It was not enough, particularly when combined with the second problem: I did not have a good local pedigree.

The man with the dubious distinction of being my primary instructor has the even more dubious distinction of being one of the first Canadian instructors to (acrimoniously) split up with his Korean instructor, and set up a competing school in the same city. When the Korean instructors in Calgary—who could have been my connection to the Korean instructors elsewhere—heard my answer to the question “Who was your instructor,” they did not care that I no longer trained with this man. I was the enemy.

Illustration 2: The Crests of the ITF and the WTF



The two federations that govern the majority of Taekwon-do practitioners today. Note the similarities, in colour and symbolism, between the two crests.

⁷ I again refer you to Chapter 4.

To make matters worse, the only Korean instructor I could lay tenuous claim⁸ to was a well-known ITF figure. And, even after the door was slammed on me a few times, I did not think it right to conceal either my ITF affiliation or my pedigree—or lack thereof.⁹

In short, I had underestimated the anti-ITF sentiment among most of the Korean WTF instructors. I elaborate on some of the causes of this antipathy in Chapter 4, and I discuss the likely bias resulting from the absence of WTF Korean instructors (and their currently faithful students) on this study in Chapter 5.¹⁰

I was very proud, at the outset this project, that this would be the first social study on Taekwon-do that included members from both of the key federations. I see now that there are very practical reasons why researchers in previous studies limited themselves to one or the other. However, I still think that the value of a joint study, particularly in matters of culture, philosophy and teaching style, is great. Moreover, it is necessary to fully understand Taekwon-do. As I will stress throughout this thesis, however many differences between Canadian instructors emerge, none correlate along lines of

⁸ Really tenuous: so tenuous that if someone asked him who I was, I don't think he could tell them. Or else he would think I was still twelve.

⁹ The Ethics Statement I had prepared at the outset of this project is attached as Appendix G.

¹⁰ I cannot do it justice here: you need the historical background of Chapter 4 to understand what happened in the Canadian Taekwon-do community in the 1970s and 1980s, and you need to know what was going on in Taekwon-do schools in the 1980s to understand why loyalties are so torn in the 1990s.

affiliation. I talk about the future of these affiliations and federations explicitly in Chapter 9.

Should I have tried harder to interview Korean instructors? Could I have tried harder? I don't know—probably. But my decision to abort was also influenced by the path my research was taking. When I decided to stop pursuing Korean instructors, I had completed 21 interviews. My focus, as discussed in Chapter 1, had shifted. The questions I had for the Canadian instructors were becoming more pointed; I had a much more clearly defined purpose. I wasn't looking just at cultural change anymore. I was looking at the student-instructor relationship, as experienced by Canadian instructors. The perspective of Korean instructors may have added an extra dimension to the project, but it also might have kept the focus on cultural change. I would venture to guess that the Korean instructors would have downplayed the conflicts about which the Canadian instructors were so frank.

The instructors in this sample are mostly from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They are, unfortunately, representative of neither population nor regional distribution. The make up of the sample is partly intentional and partly dictated by necessity. Initially, I wanted a very representative sample, with x instructors from this province and x instructors from that province. I had planned to interview the instructors from the Eastern and Atlantic provinces at tournaments—as I mentioned earlier, I learnt quickly that plan was impossible to execute. After evaluating the financial and chronological resources at my disposal, I decided to focus on the

instructors in Western Canada, and leave Eastern Canada to someone else. However, a number of the instructors in the sample are originally from east of Manitoba.

The urban-centricity of the sample can be defended as representing the reality: most large Taekwon-do, and martial arts, schools operate in large urban centres, where the potential student body is larger. Small towns are usually home to branch schools, which are affiliated with a city-based head instructor.¹¹

I have decided not to make any kind of special effort at gender representation in my sample. Any such representation would be artificial: Taekwon-do and the martial arts generally are, particularly at the higher levels, practised predominantly by men.¹² As the chief focus of my inquiry is not women or gender differences in Taekwon-do teaching or experience, I let the gender issue unfold on its own. A quarter of the sample is female, reflecting partially the more equalized gender ratio in Taekwon-do schools today, as well as the eagerness of the female instructors to participate in the project: all of the female instructors I approached to participate in the project agreed to do so.

¹¹ This situation is changing and Alberta is a prime example. The big cities—Calgary and Edmonton, and to a lesser extent, Red Deer—are saturated, and high ranking Taekwon-do instructors have been moving into the smaller towns.

¹² But this too is changing. All but one of the schools that participated in this study reported a gender ratio of 1:1 in their adult classes, and said that the main growth in their student body was adult women. Children's classes, on the other hand, still seem to consist mostly of little boys.

Table 4: Respondents By Gender

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=43)</i>	31	12
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	11	1

In 1999, the Oxford Dictionary blessed the use of “they” and “their” as acceptable gender-neutral singular pronouns. I still use the singular pronouns throughout, alternating between the feminine and masculine form. As I do not identify the instructors by names, when I discuss relationships or events between two people, I usually assign the feminine pronoun to one and the masculine to the other. There are no power or character judgements associated with the use of either pronoun.

Generations versus waves

In the initial stages of this project, I thought in terms of “generations” of instructors. The Korean instructors who came to Canada were point zero, the Canadian instructors who learnt from them were first-generation instructors, the instructors who learnt from them were second-generation and so forth. I expected three-generations at the most; I found five and more (different numbers of generations in different schools). The culprit: a short apprenticeship period between instructor and student, resulting in young instructors begetting younger instructors (a warped echo of babies having babies). This short apprenticeship makes a frequent appearance in subsequent chapters, being root,

cause and result of many of the student-instructor problems. An added complication was that, of course, the point zero reference—the Korean instructors—kept on churning out more theoretically first-generation instructors. For the purpose of this project and to make sense of reality, I have divided my sample, therefore, into three waves:

1. The first-wave consists of Canadian instructors who started taking Taekwon-do in the 1970s from Korean instructors, and who are now full-time professional instructors running their own schools.
2. The second-wave consists of Canadian instructors who started taking Taekwon-do in the early 1980s. Most, but not all, are also full-time professional instructors running their own schools. Most are students of Canadian instructors.
3. The third-wave consists of Canadian instructors who started taking Taekwon-do in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most of these instructors are part-time instructors, teaching in someone else's schools, although a few run independent schools. All are students of Canadian instructors.

Table 5: Respondents by Wave

	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=43)</i>	13	22	8
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	2	8	2

This three-wave divide does not split along three opinion lines. On some issues, including many of the cultural change and teaching philosophy issues, the sample tends to split along first-wave/second and third-waves lines. On issues such as school discipline, the split was likely to be along first-wave and second/third-wave lines. When professional and practical issues arise, the sample would usually split along full-time instructor/part-time instructor lines.

Table 6: Full-Time and Part-Time Instructors by Wave

	<u>First</u>	<u>Second</u>	<u>Third</u>
<i>Full-Time (n=19)*</i>	9	6	4
<i>Part-Time (n=36)*</i>	6	24	6

**Respondents comprising Group 1 and 2 are combined in this chart.*

Participant observation

When I started to schedule my interviews, I had not intended to rely a great deal on the anthropologist's mainstay, participant observation. My intention was to avoid the pitfalls I saw in the work of others who attempted to dissect the social fabric of the martial arts by relying on participant observations and their own experience in the martial art. It is difficult to be participant and observer; and it is impossible be an objective, or even a fair one, when one is an instructor, a referee and a competitor. It gets even more complex when one is a colleague, or a student.

Yet it was impossible to avoid. During the entire course of this research, including the preparation stage and write-up, I participated in a variety of Taekwon-do activities, and what I experienced influenced what I thought, how I was perceived and what I wrote.

Examples of this participant observation include:

1. Teaching and training at my school, with six fellow instructors (2-3 times per week, on-going)
2. Training with an affiliated local school (irregularly)
3. Observing, judging, competing and socializing at ITF tournaments
4. Observing three WTF tournaments, at which I had many informal discussions with spectators and competitors
5. Observing several Taekwon-do demonstrations, ITF, WTF and other
6. Attending Alberta-ITF and Canada-ITF black belt meetings
7. Participating in a three-day seminar with General Choi Hong Hi, (one of) the founder(s) of Taekwon-do¹³
8. Participating in several instructors' and referees' seminars
9. Training and testing for my third degree black belt
10. Observing classes taught by most of the interview participants
11. Participating in classes taught by some of the interview participants

¹³ Choi is "the" founder of Taekwon-do in ITF lore, one of the founders in more objective accounts, and completely absent from WTF accounts. See Chapter 4 for edification.

I had found the last two points particularly useful. They were a way of seeing whether the instructor walked the talk—most did—and of giving me a better understanding of some of the instructor’s statements, particularly regarding the “mood” of classes, the discipline enforced and the formality or informality observed by the school.

Literature as informant

Immersing myself in literature, academic and popular, on martial arts and Taekwon-do, was on the whole a pleasurable and somewhat self-indulgent exercise. The initial purpose of the literature review was to provide a background, backdrop and context for the “real” research: the primary source interviews with Taekwon-do instructors. However, as the research project progressed, so did my exploration of and reliance on existing literature. While academic forays into martial arts study continued to be the yardstick against which I measured my efforts, I began seeing popular books and articles in martial arts magazines (traditionally not a well-respected source of information) as another source of informants. Reflexive informants, informants with agendas, edited and possibly insincere informants, but informants nonetheless.

The literature served three main purposes.

I read books and articles written by Korean instructors of Taekwon-do (and other martial arts) to get a fuller picture of the men who would not talk to me. The picture I paint of Korean instructors in Chapter 5 came primarily from descriptions given by

estranged Canadian instructors. But much that was written by the Koreans themselves provided supporting evidence to the Canadian instructors' statements.

I read books, articles and website content written by Canadian, American and other English-speaking instructors and practitioners of Taekwon-do as a counter-check to my small sample of interviews. Were my inferences and generalizations fair? For the most part, my virtual informants bore me out.

I read extensively on spiritual and philosophical traditions in the martial arts, often following up on titles suggested in interviews by respondents. This reading gave me a much better understanding of what respondents said during the interviews, as well as an awareness of just how much philosophy there is to choose from.¹⁴

It's a small world after all: about confidentiality

One of the points on the release form I used in this project¹⁵ asked respondents to indicate whether they would permit me to use their name, their school name and their affiliation in the write-up of the thesis, or whether they wished me to maintain their anonymity. All but one of the respondents gave me permission to use their names. Several said, "I'm ready to stand behind everything I say," or "I'm not ashamed of anything I'm going to say."

¹⁴ I read, unfortunately, only in English.

¹⁵ Attached here as Appendix B.

There are no names mentioned in this thesis. Not only are there no names of the respondents, but I have withheld their ranks, geographic locations, affiliations and most other identifiable information. I did this after I had sent a draft of a chapter that contained a quote from “fifth degree ITF instructor in [province]” to one of my colleagues for review. After reading and commenting on the chapter, he also asked, “That quote—was it X who said it, or Y?” There were sufficiently few instructors at that level in this particular province that the rank I mentioned narrowed the field down to two. The quote was neither salacious nor slanderous; still, I felt the particular instructor would prefer that it remain anonymous. The same would apply to many others. There are many sensitive topics in the Taekwon-do community, and it would be inappropriate for me to bring any grief to my respondents for their frankness and honesty.

It’s a small community. If you don’t know Joe, you probably know his instructor. Or one of his students. And if you don’t know them, they nonetheless know you.

Chapter 4 explains how this small community developed in Canada, by looking at the brief, but very eventful, history of Taekwon-do.

Part II (The Body)

IV

UNIFICATION AND MAYHEM:

A brief history of Taekwon-do

Taekwondo is the name of the martial art turned modern international sport which has been independently developed over about 20 centuries in Korea.

(Lee 1995: 2)

The earliest records of Tae Kwon Do practice date back to about 50 B.C.

(Park, Park and Gerrard 1989: 1)

The history of Taekwon-do in Korea is based more on legend and speculation than on hard fact.

(McCarthy and Parulski 1984: 1)

History and tradition play an important role in the martial arts. The roots and origins of a style are a source of pride and a basic way for practitioners to differentiate their art from everyone else's. A documented lineage also lends a certain authenticity and increased value to both the style and the skill of practitioner. It is hardly surprising that having an ancient history and a legitimate lineage is important to most martial artists.

It may perhaps be a little more surprising that much of this history is manufactured, more so in the case of Taekwon-do than in most other martial arts.

The history of Taekwon-do is a kaleidoscope of myth, half-documented anecdote, quasi-historical events, loose connections, questionable interpretations and sparsely noted facts. Depending on how the kaleidoscope is shaken—and by whom to what purpose—the story of Taekwon-do's origin changes.

Here is one version of this history,¹ told with a specific and overt purpose. The purpose of this story is to illustrate how historical and political events contributed to the creation of a martial art that, despite overt Korean patriotic and cultural overtones, became an easily adaptable world export. This history of Taekwon-do begins with the myth of the origins of the martial arts in Indian monasteries, travels along with monks to China and then Korea, intertwines with the historical path of Korea, and then comes into full bloom in the chaotic latter half of the twentieth century.

Attempting to define Taekwon-do in 1961, one of its founders, Choi Hong Hi, whom we will meet frequently in the pages that follow, called it “almost a cult” (Choi

¹ There are a number of versions of Taekwon-do's history. Each of the major federations has a preferred one. The ITF version celebrates Taekwon-do as the brainchild and lovechild of General Choi Hong Hi; the WTF version erases Choi out of the sequence of events completely. The more objective versions, penned by unaffiliated instructors or conscientious scholars, are often forced to piece the truth—or what they believe to be the truth—together from hearsay. They choose who is most believable (or least unbelievable), much as I have had to do here. Is it true?

1961: 2)² Taekwon-do's history lends itself comfortably to a variety of religious metaphors, and so this story of origin will start not with the Big Bang, but with the Garden of Eden.

The garden of eden

The most common myth of origin for all martial arts starts with an Indian monk travelling to China. The year was 520 A.D., the monk's name was Bodhidharma and he is posthumously considered to be both the first patriarch of Ch'an/Zen Buddhism and the founder of the martial arts.

Bodhidharma makes an appearance in one eyewitness account of the period.³ He then disappears from written records for 500 years. His existence is held as indubitable fact by some; others see him as an amalgamated creation that embodies all the principles latter day practitioners wanted in their first patriarch (Spiessbach 199: 11).

Bodhidharma's connection with Buddhism is slightly better documented than his connection with the martial arts, which is rooted in legend and oral tradition rather than historical documented sources. Regardless of his historicity or veracity of the story, most martial arts claim him as their originating founder, and tell a version of the following story.

² As he was first writing those words in 1967, cults perhaps did not have quite as bad a name as they do now. But Choi has not removed the reference from the 1974, 1983, 1993 or 1995 editions of his Taekwon-do Encyclopedia.

³Yang Hsuan-chi's *Record of the Monasteries in Lo-yang*, written in 547 AD (Reid & Croucher 1995: 26)

While in China, Bodhidharma reputedly visited the Songshan Shaolin Monastery, and led its monks in long meditation sessions, which they could not physically handle. To make the monks stronger and thus able to endure the marathon meditation sessions, he started to teach them the movements that would eventually become Shaolin boxing (Singer 1978, Reid & Crowther 1995; see Haines 1989 for a truly original treatment of the legend and Spiessbach 1992 for a scholastic and critical one).

And the martial arts were thus born.

There is an assortment of evidence of ritualized systems of fighting throughout India, China and the Korean peninsula that dates back to before Bodhidharma's sixth century journey. And, obviously, India and China had long histories of warfare and warriors by the year 520. Korea's own martial arts tradition has the Chinese army introducing a fighting style called "Tang hand" (in honour of the Tang dynasty) around the same period. The value of the Bodhidharma story, to martial artists past and present, is that he is the origin of the paradox of the martial arts:

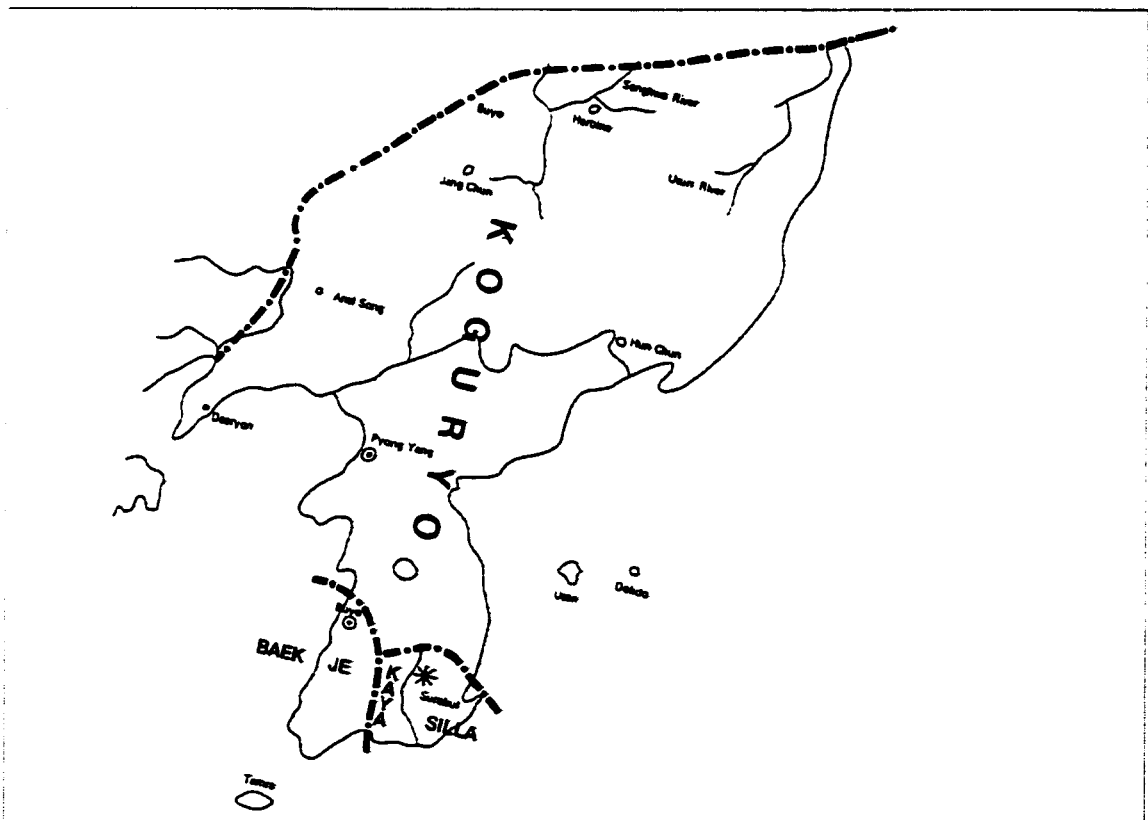
Prior to the arrival of Ta-Mo [Bodhidharma], Chinese martial artists trained primarily to fight and were fond of bullying weaker folk. Ta-Mo brought *wu-te* [martial virtue], which taught that the martial arts are really meant to promote spiritual development and health, not fighting.

– Master Hung I-hsiang
(Reid & Crowther 1995: 27)

The old testament, featuring Confucius

Exactly when ritualized martial arts made it to the Korean peninsula is not certain, but when they did arrive, they found a fertile soil. In popular Korean mythology, Tan-Gun, a man born of a she-bear and a god, founded the nation in 2333 B.C. Chinese influence, mostly in the shape of expansion-minded armies, was present in the peninsula since 1000 B.C., and, according to another origin myth, Ancient Choson (Korea) was founded by a Chinese prince, Kija, in 1122 B.C. (Macdonald 1990: 27).

Illustration 3: The three kingdoms of the Korean peninsula c. 6th century



The Kingdom of Silla euphemistically "unified" the Korean peninsula around 668 A.D. (Illustration taken from Choi 1974: 16).

By the turn of the calendar, three kingdoms, more or less independent of the Chinese empire, flourished on the Korean peninsula: Koguryo in the north, Silla in the east and Paekche in the west. The borders between the three kingdoms fluctuated wildly, and not by peaceful means or amicable negotiations.

Paekche, considered the most cultured and least warlike of the Three Kingdoms, had ties to both China and Japan, and it was through Paekche that Buddhism and much of Chinese scholarship was transmitted to Japan (Macdonald 1990: 28). Koguryo was the most militant state, and, in its heyday, its influence reached as far north as present day Manchuria. It is in Manchuria that the earliest evidence of Korean martial arts is found: Koguryo tombs, built between 3 to 427 A.D. and excavated in 1935, painted with murals of warriors performing striking and kicking techniques. The Koguryo murals are mentioned in all Taekwon-do literature as proof that “indigenous” fighting arts existed in Korea for two thousand years or so (Soo 1972: 11; Choi 1995; Park 1989; McCarthy and Parulski 1984—it’s a topic that recurs in every discussion of Taekwon-do’s history). The Koguryo fighting arts, whatever their link to modern Korean martial arts such as Taekwon-do, likely had their roots in the Chinese Han Dynasty styles, as in fact did much of Koguryo’s culture (Burdick 1997a: 31).

It is the Silla Kingdom that is the most prominent in both Korea’s and Taekwon-do’s history (although in North Korea, for understandable geographic reasons, the role of Koguryo is more prominent). Silla is credited with unifying the Korean peninsula: a historical euphemism for successfully carrying out a complex military campaign against

its neighbours, which involved a variety of changing alliances, including one with the Tang Dynasty of China. By 668 A.D., most of the Korean peninsula was controlled by Silla, which became a 300-year long dynasty in a tributary relationship to China (Macdonald 1990: 28-29).

Buddhism flourished during the Silla Dynasty, and it is in Buddhism that we find the next oft-quoted evidence of Korean indigenous martial arts. An artificial stone grotto near Kyong-ju, the capital of Silla, features “one of the finer examples of the Buddhist art and architecture of the period” (Macdonald 1990: 29): a large stone sculpture of the Buddha, flanked on either side by Guardians, frozen in fighting poses reminiscent of modern-day Taekwon-do (Choi 1995: 12).⁴

Naturally, Silla did not achieve and maintain its dominance without a warrior culture. The *Hwarang* were a warrior elite somewhat similar to the feudal Japanese *bushi* or samurai that would develop a few centuries later (Macdonald 1990: 29). Hwarang is usually translated as “flower of youth” (e.g. Choi 1995) and occasionally as “flower boys” (Burdick 1997a and Malishewski 1992a, 1996), and there is some argument over how warrior-like these flowers were, particularly towards the end of the Silla Dynasty. Sons of the aristocratic elite of Silla, they formed a “military, social and educational organization” (Lee 1995: 15), which, in addition to its military and physical training, had a strict code of honour much romanticized in Korean and martial history (Lee 1995: 15).

⁴The warrior-guardians are found throughout East Asia, in very similar positions, and are not unique to Korea (Burdick 1997a: 31).

The Code, with clear overtones of Confucianism before Confucianism rose to its height of influence in Korea, emphasized “loyalty to the nation, respect and obedience to one’s parents, faithfulness to one’s friends, courage in battle and avoidance of unnecessary violence and killing” (Lee 1995: 15).⁵

In 963,⁶ as a result of political decay and corruption, Silla fell and was replaced by the Koryo dynasty (the similarity of name to the former Koguryo kingdom is not a coincidence) (Macdonald 1990: 30), which revitalized the position of the warrior class in Korea. In 1170, Korea experienced its first military *coup d’etat* when military officials seized power from the civil government, holding onto it until 1231, when Koryo fell under Mongol control. Although Mongolian influences spread to the ruling class and are still found in some aspects of Korean culture, particularly food, a distinctively Korean culture continued to flourish. The political influence of Buddhism reached its zenith during the Koryo Dynasty, but Confucianism started to grow as well. Koryo fell along with the Mongol Empire, to be replaced in 1392 by the Yi, or Choson, Dynasty, which would turn Korea into “a more perfect Confucian state than China itself” (Macdonald 1990: 32).

⁵ The most popular image of the Hwarang is that of a “patriotic youth corps” made up of “young men of noble birth who chose the art of warfare as a way of contributing to their kingdom” (Saccone 1993: 81). Other, less noble version, which cast the Hwarang as a group of useless, effete courtiers also exist (Burdick 1997a, Young 1997), but are obviously less popular. However, both images may be true: the Hwarang likely decayed along with Silla.

⁶ From this point on, all dates are A.D., taking place in the common era.

In the early days of Choson, Buddhist priests were banished and the Confucianism of Ming China became the state philosophy. The first two centuries of the dynasty saw a pay-off for the Confucian focus on scholarship in a myriad of inventions, such as *hangul*, the Korean indigenous syllabry/alphabet, often considered the most phonetically and scientifically perfect system of writing.

Under the influence of the scholastically minded Confucians, military arts went into relative decline and lost court favour. Despite the unfavourable climate, three significant martial arts events occurred during Choson. The first was the development and rise of *ssirum*, a form of wrestling that was already popular as a sport by the thirteenth century (Burdick 1997a: 32).

The second was the publication of Korea's first *Illustrated Manual of the Martial arts*—*Muye dobo tongji* by Lee Do'k Mu—in the 1790s. The fourth volume of the manual deals with weaponless fighting (Pia 1994: 63). The extent of Chinese influence on the author of the manual and on the society in which he lived is enormous; Lee's list of references includes many histories of the various Chinese dynasties, writings of Confucius and Mencius, and histories of Shaolin boxing and Chinese *quanfa* or "fist law" (what we today call *kung-fu*) (Pia 1994: 64). The manual shows that martial arts, complete with solo-practitioner forms and two-partner step-sparring and similar exercises—very similar to the modern martial arts systems of today—were known and practised in Korea, under the names *soo bahk* (striking hand) and *kwon-bop* (fist

method/boxing). But there are a number of things that today's Taekwon-do writers claim the manual proves that it very clearly does not do:

...it does not attempt to show a unique Korean art. It was intended to provide information on martial arts for the benefit and training of the army and to that end... used all possible sources, most of which were Chinese. (Pia 1994: 70)

The third was the appearance of *taekkyon* in the early 1800s (Burdick 1997a: 32):

...a combat between two players, chiefly with the feet. They take their positions with their feet apart, facing each other, and endeavour to kick the other's foot from under him. A player may take one step backward with either foot to a third place. His feet, therefore, always stand in one of three positions. One leads with a kick at one of his opponent's legs. He moves that leg back and kicks in turn. A high kick is permitted, and is caught with the hand. The object is to throw the opponent.

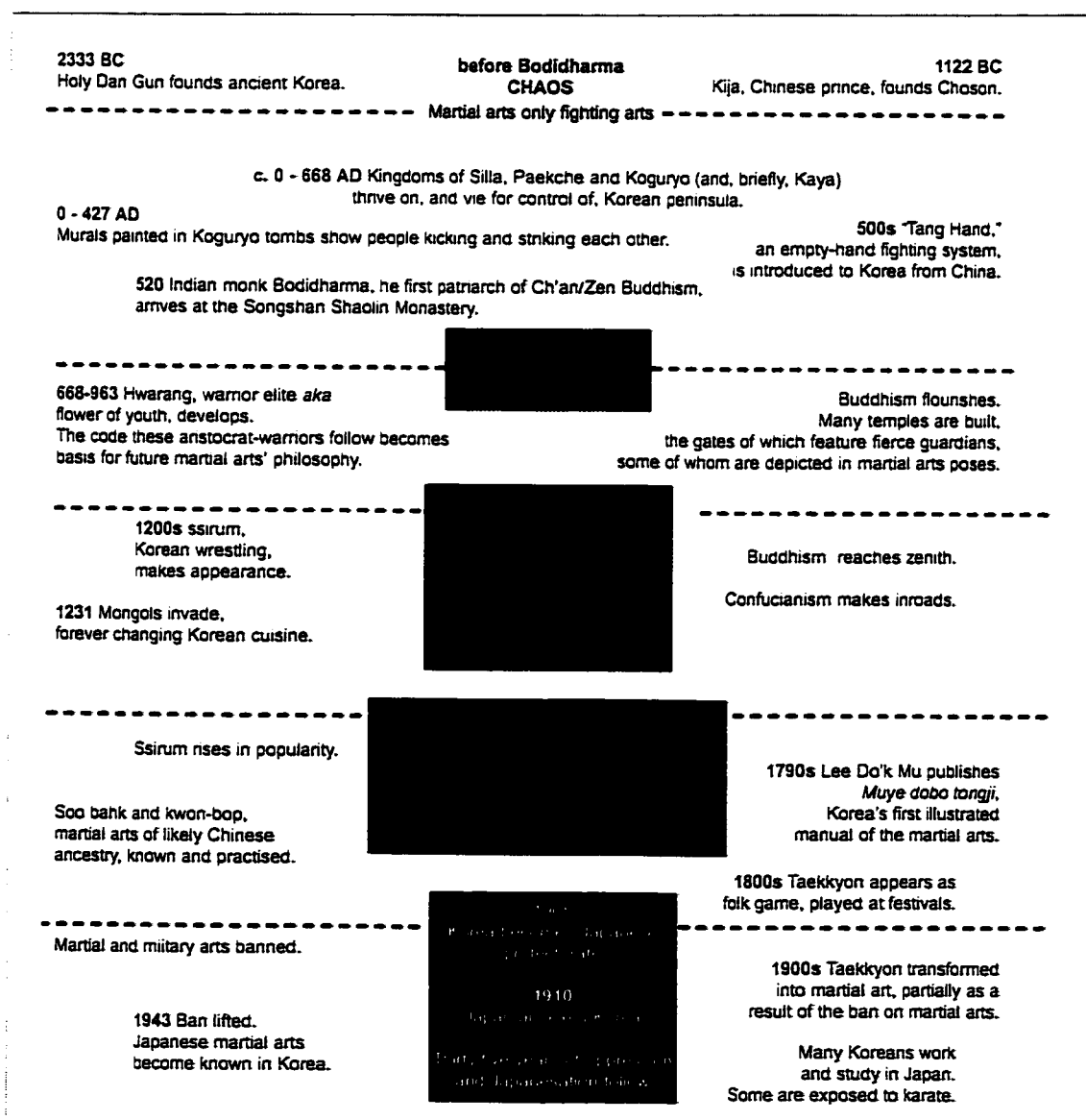
– Stewart Culin, *The Games of Korea* (1895)
(quoted in Yung 1997: 28)

Taekkyon was developed and practised as a game, and there is no evidence that it was formally taught, in schools or as a system, throughout the Choson Dynasty, although it was a very popular game at festivals and on the streets (Yung 1997: 78-79).

During the later part of the Choson Dynasty, Japanese and Manchu invasions, although not always successful, weakened Korea. In addition to external attacks, the perfect Confucian state was plagued by internal dissension and warring factions, and it reacted to clamours for reform with rigid adherence to “the rigid Neo-Confucian order” (Macdonald 1990: 35). Finally, in 1910, the disintegrating Choson dynasty was annexed

by Japan, and Koreans found themselves undergoing an increasingly aggressive process of cultural suppression and “Japanizations.” As part of both cultural suppression and state control, practice of all fighting arts was forbidden.

Illustration 4: Development of martial arts in Korea to 1945



The martial arts undoubtedly have a history before the sixth century. This figure focuses on the events specifically relevant to the development of martial arts in Korea.

The new testament, featuring a myriad of messiahs and at least one martyr

The years of Japanese occupation (1910-1945) have left a profound and bitter mark on Korean culture. Japan forced Korea into the modern world, but chiefly to harness its economic and human power in the service of Japan's imperial and colonizing activities. Individual Koreans, with the exception of "faithless collaborators," reaped very little immediate benefit from the modernization of their country—the standard of living for most fell, uprisings and demonstrations against the Japanese were brutally suppressed, and, particularly from the 1930s, intense "Japanization" of Korean subjects was enforced (Macdonald 1990: 41).

The Japanese ban on martial arts practice was not very effective—or insufficient to prevent informal teaching—as self-styled masters of Korean and Japanese martial arts appeared on the national scene very soon after liberation (Burdick 1997a: 34). Many of them had spent years in Japan, practising Japanese martial arts, and most of the schools that started to crop up throughout Korea after liberation bore a very clear *karate* stamp (see Burdick 1997a for direct evidence, Cho 1968 and Choi 1995 for indirect evidence). Many claimed to have studied martial arts with "family friends," "uncles" or other relatives; some said they studied from books "the Japanese failed to destroy" (Burdick 1997a: 33). Interestingly, the ban on martial arts had the unintended effect of transforming the game of taekkyon into a fighting system, and, by moving it off the

streets were it had been casually played, it may have created underground *taekkyon* *dojangs* (Yung 1997: 79).⁷

The ban on martial arts in Korea was lifted two years before Japan's 1945 surrender to the Allies, and at least Japanese martial arts—under Koreanized names—had a considerable popularity in Korea at the time of liberation. These included *yudo* (judo), *kumdo* (kendo), *yusul* (jujutsu) and *kongsudo* (karate). The first two remain, today, virtually indistinguishable from their Japanese counterparts. *Yusul* begat the Korean grappling art of *hapkido* and its derivatives (Burdick 1997a: 35).

Kongsudo—Korean karate—would eventually beget Taekwon-do. But, in 1945, Taekwon-do was yet to make an appearance.

If the years 1910-1945 were a painful chapter in the history of the Korean peoples, the decade that followed was not much easier. Korea was struggling for self-determination during the Cold War, and its attempts at regaining statehood were complicated by the machinations of foreign powers. The result was a bloody civil war, which is still, technically, not over. The border at the 38th parallel⁸ and the four-kilometre wide and 248-kilometre long Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea are the heritage of a 1953 armistice that did not end Korea's civil war, but merely put it on hold (Macdonald 1990: 51-52).

⁷ I should say here that I am interpreting Yung rather broadly here.

⁸ Which, coincidentally, marks the birthplace of the majority of the Korean sages, philosophers and heroes as retold in the official history of Taekwon-do.

North Korea, under the leadership of Kim Il Sung and the Communist Party, experienced rapid growth immediately following the war. Shortly after coming to power, the communists suppressed private practice of the martial arts in North Korea as a subversive, state-resisting tactic. Until 1981, unarmed combat, called *kuksul* (national sport), was practised only by the military (Burdick 1997a: 37).

The political situation in South Korea following the armistice was extremely volatile, and economic reforms were hampered by U.S. and U.N. bickering, as well as the incompetence of South Korea's first president, Syngman Rhee (Macdonald 1990: 52). In this climate of confusion, uncertainty and conflicting priorities, everyone jockeyed for power, and heads of martial arts schools were no exception.

Various *kwans*—schools—active from liberation throughout the war started to organize into associations and discuss unification of systems. These discussions started as early as 1946, and led to a few abortive attempts at forming a Korean [insert martial art name here]⁹ Association.

In the 1950s, there were three contenders in the attempt to unify Korea's martial arts. The first was the Korean Kongsudo (karate) Association, which brought together instructors of various karate-style kwans as well yudo stylists—the Japanese stylists' camp. The second was the Korean Tangsudo Association, whose very name, harkening back to the Tang Dynasty, was meant to reflect "Korean's long cultural brotherhood with

⁹ This is not a typo or an omission—it took some time before a name was chosen.

China” (Burdick 1997a: 38). The third was Choi Hong Hi’s aggressively Korean Taekwon-do. A battle rather than a peaceful unification ensued.

Eventually, Choi won.¹⁰ At least for a little while.

Born in 1918, Choi Hong Hi spent from 1938 to 1945 in Japan, first as a student at the University of Tokyo, where he also studied karate, then as a political prisoner.¹¹ Upon liberation, he joined the Korean army and rose quickly through the ranks. He continued training in, and teaching karate:

I began to teach karate to my soldiers as a means of physical and mental training. It was then that I realised that we needed to develop our own national martial art, superior in both spirit and technique to Japanese karate. (Choi 1995, 1: 39)

A combination of talent, ambition and plain good luck gave Choi several advantages over other Korean martial arts instructors with similar ambitions. By 1948, he was teaching his style of karate to Americans at the American Military Police School in Seoul, and in 1949, he was giving a martial arts demonstration in the U.S., at the Fort Riley Ground General School in Kansas. In 1952, his soldiers demonstrated their martial arts skill before President Rhee, who was apparently so impressed that he ordered that all students train in what was then still called kongsudo (Burdick 1997a: 39).

¹⁰ I’m not going to go into the grisly details of the battle. If you’re interested, I refer you to Burdick 1997a and hopefully his future research.

¹¹ Choi often alludes to the time he spent as Japanese political prisoner, and it was there that he started turning the Karate and Taekyon he had learnt in Japan and Korea into Korea’s national martial art, Taekwon-do. In fact, he spent eight months being interned for his role in the Pyongyang Student Soldiers’ Movement, his sentence of seven years being terminated by Japan’s defeat (Burdick 1997a: 38).

In 1953, Choi founded the Odokwan, and in 1954, he took over the leadership of the Chongdokwan, one of the largest and oldest (founded in 1944) of the modern martial arts schools in Korea. Chongdokwan meant “True Path Hall”; (Burdick 1997a: 35) the meaning of Odokwan—“School of My Way”—tells us perhaps more about its founder’s character than it was meant to.

On April 11, 1955, by which time Choi was a major general, masters from the various kwans got together once again to discuss unifying Korean martial arts into one organization and possibly one recognizable style. Choi claims that it was on this very day that the name Taekwon-do, suggested by himself, was unanimously chosen to represent the new Korean martial art, but the name “taesudo” seems to have been in popular parlance from 1955 to 1965.¹² Choi had an enormous advantage over his colleagues: his style of Taekwon-do was being taught by the military, and every Korean man had to undergo three years of military training (Burdick 1997a: 41). In 1959, he managed to organise the Korean Taesudo/Taekwon-do Association (KTA), members of which started practising the forms he designed.

¹² Burdick, quoting informal observations from participants in the events 1950s of 1960s, suggests that “taesudo” was used between 1955 and 1962 to refer to the emerging art of Taekwon-do (Burdick 1997a: 41). The suggestion is certainly possible and plausible. Finding out who introduced the use of which term when is difficult. Choi is adamant the name taekwon-do is his, and does not acknowledge the term “taesudo” anywhere. The confusion surrounding the name is typical of this period of Taekwon-do’s history.

In 1961, Choi scored the greatest coup of his career thanks to the military *coup d'état* which toppled the corrupt Syngman Rhee government and made General Park Chung-hee the virtual dictator of Korea. Choi, an ardent supporter of the General and the coup, now had an enormous amount of influence. He was elected president of the KTA, and the KTA became an affiliate of the Korean Amateur Sports Association, something all of the various martial arts association had been unsuccessfully striving to achieve for several years (Burdick 1997a: 41-42).

Backed by the government, the KTA under Choi's leadership railroaded the opposition, members of which either left—like Hwang Kee and his Tangsudo association—or gritted their teeth and bid their time—like Cho Hee-II, a former tangsudo instructor and now one of the best known Taekwon-do instructors in the world.

The Park government backed the KTA because it fully supported Choi's vision of "our own national martial art, superior in both spirit and technique to Japanese karate" (Choi 1995: 7). Japan's economy was booming, and Japanese martial arts—judo, kendo, jujutsu and karate—were spreading throughout Asia and the West. Korea's economy was hobbling along, but its martial art was ready to be internationalised. In fact, Choi was demonstrating it internationally before he had cemented its hegemony in Korea: his military demonstration team put on Taekwon-do demonstrations in South Vietnam, Taiwan and the U.S. in 1959.¹³

¹³ For an even more politicized version of a martial art's history in the twentieth century, see Sutton (1993) for a discussion of "state appropriation of martial arts in China."

After judo made it into the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the KTA and the South Korean government pushed the internationalisation of Taekwon-do even more intensely. Choi spent 1965 leading a “Goodwill Mission of Taekwon-do” to fourteen countries. It was also likely in 1965 that the Korean Taesudo Association formally became the Korean Taekwon-do Association (Burdick 1997a: 42).¹⁴ It was in 1965, too, that the Park government gave Choi and the KTA permission to “declare Taekwon-do Korea’s National Martial Art” (Choi 1995: jacket). The following year, the International Taekwon-do Federation (ITF) was established.

The Kukkiwon, the Taekwon-do world headquarters, was build in Seoul in 1971, along with a Taekwon-do University. In 1972, Taekwon-do became a part of the physical education curriculum in Korea (Burdick 1997a: 43) It had by then been introduced to 30 countries. Choi was at the apex of his career. Taekwon-do was poised to storm the world, to actually achieve what a mere ten years ago seemed like a pie in the sky dream: to become the world’s most popular martial art.

And then, something rather odd happened. Choi Hong Hi, almost overnight, went from being the President’s resident favourite to a traitor and a pariah. In his own words:

...my troubles began soon after the formation of the South Korea Armed Forces. Despite fierce opposition from my colleagues, I succeeded in introducing Taekwon-do as a compulsory course in the military curriculum.

¹⁴ Burdick gives August 5th as the exact date of the changeover.

I was repaid with jealousy, slander and finally oppression. As a result, my army career came to an abrupt end. This was merely a prelude for what was to follow. The civilian gyms practising Dang Soo-Do (Karate-do) and Kong Soo-Do (Karate-Do) saw Taekwon-do as a possible threat.

They reacted with bitter criticism. It is no wonder that these people, in whom a sense of nationalism is totally lacking, still hold a grudge against me. The incredible popularity of Taekwon-do, in Korea as well as abroad, rapidly drove the practitioners of inferior martial art forms out of business.

My obsession with Taekwon-do further led me to stand firm against the desire of corrupt government officials who wanted to use Taekwon-do as a political instrument to strengthen their dictatorship. My outspoken criticism of the south Korean government—both then and now—has been frequently misinterpreted, making me appear as an enemy of my own people. (Choi 1995: 7)

Before the end of the 1960s, Choi Hong Hi, a two-star general in the Republic of Korea and one of the founding fathers of Taekwon-do, was living in Toronto. The headquarters of the ITF went with him.¹⁵

¹⁵ Why? Why did Choi Hong Hi decide to move the headquarters of the International Taekwon-do Federation to Canada? The martial arts community is afire with rumours and varying degrees of informed and uninformed opinions on this topic. Certainly, South Korea was becoming a little uncomfortable for him. A driven, ambitious man, he made his share of enemies while building Taekwon-do and his military career. His 1961 Goodwill trip to North Korea wasn't received favourably by the Park government. Choi's own account of these events stresses that he had supported the Park coup without possessing full information, and that he quickly came to disagree with General Park's philosophy and policies. As he was neither a dissimulator nor a sycophant, he did not keep those views to himself. And so, he left. As the additional information I possess regarding these events is undocumented hearsay, I will not speculate further.

The great schism

The KTA and the South Korean government were not going to allow the international headquarters of Taekwon-do to reside outside of Korea. The Korean Taekwon-do Association, which had suffered from internal dissension and dissatisfaction from its inception, and which lasted as long as it did mostly because of Choi's velvet hammer, splintered, creating two organisations, two philosophies and, for all intents and purposes, two vastly different martial arts.¹⁶

The Kukkiwon played host to the first World Taekwon-do Championship May 25-28, 1973, and during the Championship, under the leadership of the KTA's new president, Kim Young-wun, the World Tae Kwon Do Federation (WTF) was founded. The ITF held another First World Taekwon-do Championship in 1974, in Montreal.

The relationship between the two organisations—if we can presume to call it a relationship—started out badly and grew worse. Choi was completely written out of the WTF version of the history of Taekwon-do; in turn, he wrote everyone else out of the ITF's version of the history of Taekwon-do. The situation gives us a chance to see revisionist history in action. Students who started Taekwon-do in Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s were all told about General Choi, president of the ITF and KTA, and one of the most important people in the creation of Taekwon-do. In 1974, General

¹⁶ For a reason lost somewhere in the annals of trivial history, ITF anglicises the martial art's name as Taekwon-do while WTF anglicises it as Tae Kwon Do or taekwondo.

Choi stopped being mentioned. Some students, whose instructors went the way of the WTF, were told Choi was dead; others that he was a traitor banned from Korea.

Choi retaliated vehemently,¹⁷ by claiming the Odokowan and ITF way were the true, “traditional” Taekwon-do and the WTF form practised in South Korea and condoned by the South Korean government “a bastardised imitation of the real original Korean martial art” (Franks 1995: 10). He also calls on all practitioners of the true Taekwon-do, “no matter what grade, [to] weed out those who seek to destroy his teachings” (*Ibid.*).

The immediate effect of the ITF/WTF schism—apart from great confusion on part of non-Korean students and instructors—was an acceleration of the already rapid speed of Taekwon-do’s expansion worldwide. Whereas before 1974, the goal was for every world metropolis to have one Taekwon-do instructor, after 1974, every city had to have two.

The second notable effect was the reintroduction of martial arts into North Korea. In 1981, Choi took a demonstration team of sixteen black belts—all non-Korean—to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. At some point during the ten days of intensive demonstration and teaching, Choi also had an audience with President Kim-Il Sung (Burdick 1997a: 43)—a rare honour, which subsequently gave rise to rumours that the North Korean government was pumping money into the ITF. The first complete edition

¹⁷If rather impotently, publishing his views in ITF-targeted publications which preach exclusively to the converted.

of the ITF Taekwon-do Bible (the 16 volume *Taekwon-do Encyclopaedia*) was photographed and produced in North Korea and published in the former Soviet Union. It included a new black belt pattern: *Juche*. Juche, according to Choi's Encyclopedia, is

a philosophical idea that man is the master of everything and decides everything, in other words, the idea that man is the master of the world and his own destiny. It is said that this idea was rooted in Baekdu Mountain which symbolises the Korean people (1995: 527).

It is also, incidentally, the title of Kim Il-Sung's book, which is North Korea's national Communist doctrine, a "new and higher stage of Marxism-Leninism" (Macdonald 1990: 169). The Baekdu Mountains are the border between China and North Korea, and they are the place where Kim Il-Sung spent much of World War II as a "guerrilla leader active against the Japanese" (Macdonald 1990: 49) in the Soviet Army.

Whatever his intentions and allegiances in 1974 when he left South Korea under dubious circumstances, Choi needed to be allied with *a* Korea in order for his Taekwon-do to have legitimacy worldwide. And his Taekwon-do and the ITF had a lot to compete against.

The WTF gained a major victory when it was recognised by the International Olympic Committee in 1980; in 1992, WTF Taekwon-do was a demonstration sport at the Olympic Games in Barcelona, and in the 2000 Games at Sydney, it will be a full, official sport. The desire to get into the Olympics and government funding issues—most governments not seeing any reason to provide funding to two Taekwon-do organisations—are the impetus for sporadic reunification talks, which proceed with the

same success as the reunification talks between North and South Korea. Hearsay has it that on at least one occasion, unification talks were one issue away from success. The final point of contention: the recognition of Choi as the founder of Taekwon-do. The WTF delegation—hearsay has it—was willing to have him acknowledged as one of the founders of the martial art. The ITF delegation—or rather, Choi himself—was adamant on “the.” The talks broke down and while Choi, now in his eighties, says it is his dream to see both his martial art and his nation reunify before he dies,¹⁸ the ITF and the WTF for now remain the two solitudes.

The reformation

The ITF/WTF Schism of the early 1970s was followed by about five years of intense growth and aggressive expansion programmes on both sides. The political lines of this first split were relatively simple: on one side, Choi and his loyalists, on the other side, Choi’s enemies. The glue that would hold the ITF together was Choi; animosity towards Choi was, from the very beginning, not recognised as a sufficient glue for the WTF. The Olympic Games, however, were.

Perhaps the men left at the KTA-*cum*-WTF learnt something from Choi’s mistakes. Perhaps they lacked his passion. Perhaps, as Choi loyalists say, they were willing to compromise almost anything for the Olympic dream. Whatever their reasons,

¹⁸ Choi’s own words, at the September 25, 1998 ITF instructors’ seminar, Edmonton, Alberta.

they set to work on building on organization that, although not free from corruption and conflict, was to a certain extent independent of personalities.

The ITF was, and is, personality. The ITF is General Choi. While every attempt was made to run the WTF was like a professional organization, the ITF was (and is) run as “a family concern.” But, in each federation, the law came down from the top, and from the Koreans in the federation. And, outside of Korea, that did not go over very well.

Taekwon-do fractured and splintered: instructors, students, and schools left in droves over arguments over money and clashes of personality. Both federations shrunk and expanded at the same time: there were new converts and new schools mushrooming constantly to replace the ones that left.

Thus far, the development of Taekwon-do followed one path. With the schisms and international expansion, it started to follow many, differentiating along both federation and country lines.

Canada got its first Taekwon-do instructor some years before it became the new headquarters of ITF, in 1968.¹⁹ Korea exported a lot of instructors to Canada before the WTF/ITF schism; the years immediately following the schism saw some fence-sitting and side-switching. The two Korean instructors in Calgary were each, at various times, ITF, WTF and unaffiliated (not necessarily in that order), and they are typical of their peers in other cities.

¹⁹ Although the formal home of Choi Hong-Hi is Mississauga, Ontario, the official address of the ITF headquarters is Vienna. Taxation laws are the most often supposed reason—but this, again, is hearsay.

Choi's trip to North Korea in 1981 cost him a few adherents, but the mass desertions from the ITF and the WTF during the 1980s and the formation of small counter organisations—Global Taekwon-do Federation, United Taekwon-do, International Jidokwan Federation, Action Martial Arts International to name a few—were not, generally, ideologically motivated. Masters, senior instructors, not-so-senior instructors and fledgling students, around the world, but particularly in Canada and in the U.S., left in droves for one simple reason: affiliation cost money and you got very little in return. Students did not know, nor did they care, what the ITF or WTF were. Instructors asked “What can the organisations do for me?” and the answer was, “Nothing. They take money” in the form of association fees, seminar fees, certification fees and merchandise cuts “and give nothing back.”

In 1988, when the WTF style of Taekwon-do debuted at the Seoul Olympics, the smattering of WTF-affiliated schools in Canada had weak and distant relations with the Kukkiwon. The Olympics stimulated public interest in Taekwon-do and saw a growth of the WTF. Provincial and federal governments, through their Sports Council Associations, opened up their purse strings. Meanwhile, there was only one ITF school west of Ontario.

Choi Hong Hi wasn't going to take this laying down.

The counter-reformation

They came wearing navy suits, white shirts and navy ties, sporting gold and blue ITF pins. “It’s not what the ITF can do for you,” they sermonised. “It’s what you can do for the ITF.”

“Together, we are stronger.”

“Together, we can compete for government funding.”

“Together, perhaps we can join the WTF in the Olympics.”

“Together, maybe we can oust the WTF from the Olympics.”

”Together....”

It was a hard sell, coming to independent schools, regardless of whether they were financially struggling or financially secure, and convincing head instructors to give up some of the control over their fiefdoms. Because, whatever lessons Choi had learnt from the desertion of the 1980s, compromising on his Taekwon-do was not one of them. Returning to the fold meant re-learning to do things the ITF way: technically, politically and, most importantly, financially. And it was the “financially” that was inevitably the point of greatest contention. The CTFI—the Canadian branch of the ITF (Canadian Taekwon-do Federation International, a soupçon to Quebec) had one approved uniform and gear supplier.²⁰ ITF dan certificates, instructors’ seminar certificates and almost all

²⁰ While there is no real proof that anyone in the ITF receives a kickback from wholesalers of uniforms and equipment, most CTFI instructors assume this is the case. Does it bother them? Perhaps, but then, “The WTF puts Adidas on its uniforms...”

other fees were high and payable in U.S. dollars. And, under ITF rules, only fourth dans and higher could operate independent schools, conduct examinations and buy equipment from wholesalers.

In 1988, there was one fourth dan instructor in Alberta. All the major schools were operated by holders of third and second dans, and lower. The return to the fold, for most instructors, meant a significant financial outlay and significant decrease in revenue.

But somehow, General Choi's emissaries sold the return, and more and more formerly independent or otherwise affiliated schools returned to the ITF banner. By 1999, ITF's position in Canada had improved tremendously. In Alberta, one of the smaller ITF chapters, there are now seven ITF-certified fourth dan and higher instructors.²¹ And while schools continued to split and instructors to fight, fewer choose to solve the argument by leaving the federations.²²

Taekwon-do's current political structure is perhaps the most stable it has ever been.²³ The two major federations continue to vie for power, funding, position and

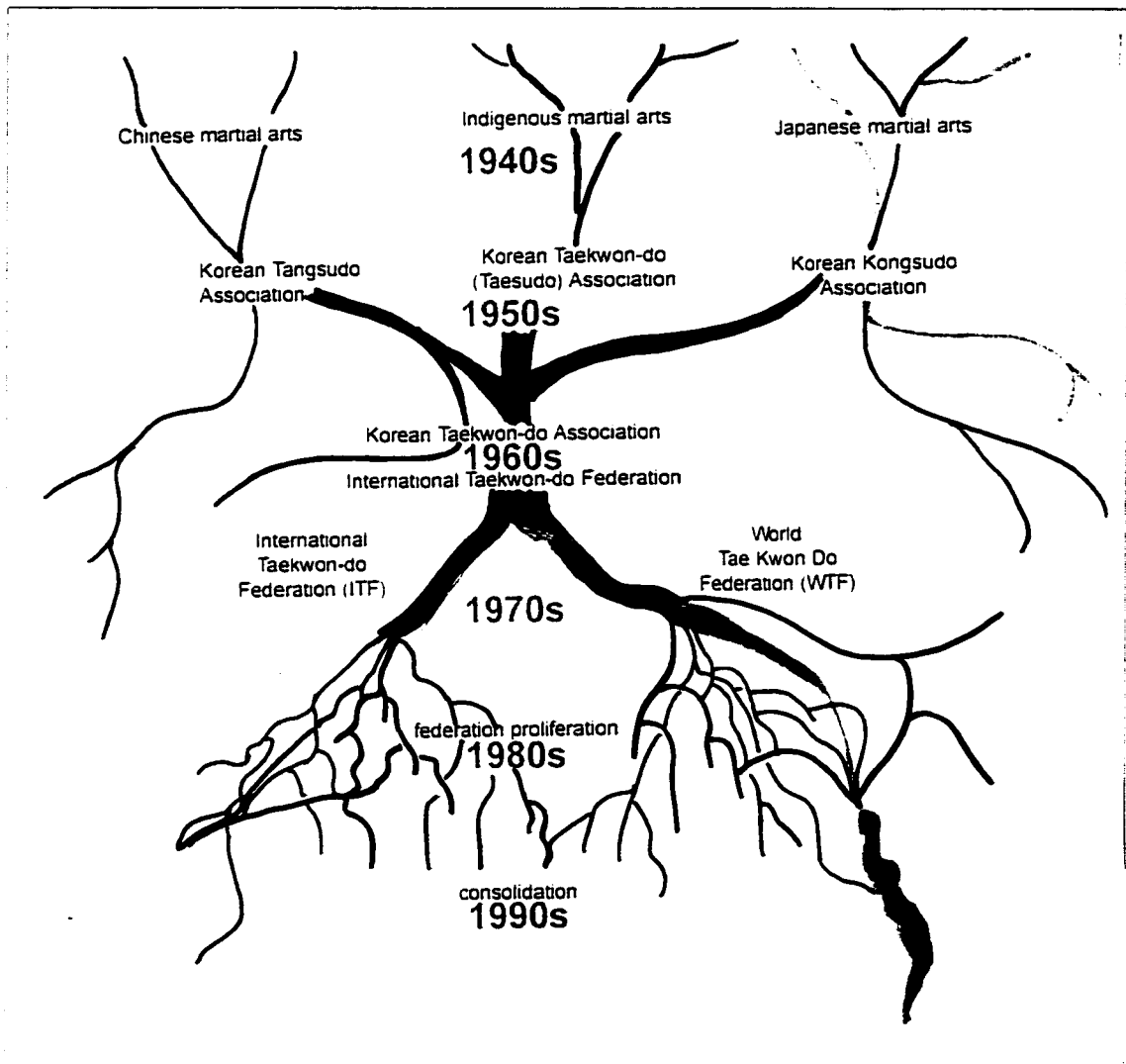
²¹ While General Choi was unwilling to compromise on most points, it seems that he never attached much value to dans, and saw them as an easy way of placating people. Most of the Canadians who returned to the ITF in the 1990s came back a dan—or two—richer.

²² The reasons for this change in conflict resolution are discussed in Chapters 8 and 9.

²³ Which, unfortunately, does not mean it is very stable.

students. The threat of the alternative federations is increasingly insignificant—to date, none have managed to offer a viable international organisation.²⁴

Illustration 5: The history of Taekwon-do 1945-2000



I omit the specific names and dates of the myriad of small federations that followed the great schism: many were short-lived; none became a real global contender.

²⁴ The American Tae Kwon Do Association/World Traditional Taekwon-do Union has had considerable success on a North American scale (more so in the U.S. than in Canada). However, despite its new name, it remains a regional player.

The book of revelations

And that is the history of Taekwon-do, from the mythical origins of martial arts in ancient India to the Year 2000 Olympic Games. It is not a pretty history. Scandal, corruption and betrayal, most of it in the higher echelons, make frequent appearances. The continued fracturing of organisations and individuals schools is generally motivated by lack of faith in instructors and masters. Loyalty, to your instructor and your federation, is an ongoing and difficult issue for most practitioners: “How do you trust someone, an individual or an organization, who is repeatedly screwing you over?” And why should you trust them?

While every martial art from every other originating country has a fascinating and difficult history that affects its subsequent development in the West, this historical and political background of Taekwon-do has several unique features which have significant implication for what happened to it in Canada.

The manifest purpose of the modern Taekwon-do was to be an instrument of nation building for the shell-shocked South Korean nation. Such a manifest purpose suggests that a great deal of patriotic ideology would be taught along with the martial art, at least in Korea.

But, from its inception, Taekwon-do was also meant to be exported to the world, and quickly. Thus it had to have an easily digestible form. How are these two opposing

factors resolved in Taekwon-do's philosophy, and how have the Canadian instructors of Taekwon-do interpreted them?

The acrimonious split between the ITF and the WTF created two opposing but parallel camps, with two active, governmentally funded propaganda machines aimed as much at denouncing the other as at promoting oneself. At the core, are there any real philosophical differences between ITF and WTF instructors?

Taekwon-do was designed to be taught quickly and to spread fast. The ITF/WTF split sped up the process even more. Avaricious, or simply financially struggling, masters and head instructors accelerated it further by setting up scores of branch schools led by relatively inexperienced students. From the 1970s to the present, Canadian Taekwon-do instructors generally underwent a very short apprenticeship before being laden with teaching responsibilities, because of pressure to expand and start branch schools. What is the impact of this short apprenticeship period on the transmission process?

And, finally, the history of Taekwon-do suggests an explanation as to why the issue of competition and the sport versus martial art debate is effectively absent from Taekwon-do. Was Taekwon-do at any point what today's purists would call a pure martial art? It was clearly designed with a purpose in mind, and there's no evidence that its founders had any qualms about commercializing it. Much of the research into cultural change on the martial arts focuses on the "corruptive" influence of Western sport. What happens if the martial art can't wait to be corrupted?

The next chapter looks at the foundation of Taekwon-do in Canada: the experiences of the first-wave students, who flocked to the newly established schools led by Korean masters. As we will see, Taekwon-do's first days in Canada were by no means halcyon ones. The environment in which the first-wave Canadian instructors learnt the martial art did not exactly foster a deep appreciation of Korean culture; rather, it gave root to many of the student-instructor conflicts that continue to affect Taekwon-do practitioners today.



**LOYALTY AND AGONY:
Learning from Korean Instructors**

"Father and mother are the parents who bring me up while a teacher is the parent who educates me."

*Korean proverb, quoted by Choi Hong Hi
(Choi 1995: 43)*

The first Korean instructors came to Canada in the late 1960s and more followed throughout the 1970s. Many were emigrants, their hodge-podge of martial arts skills—now called Tae Kwon Do by the Korean government and the Korean Taekwon-do (Taesudo) Association—one of their unique assets and a way of earning a reasonable livelihood. The select few were apostles: sent and sponsored by the Korean Taekwon-do Association (after the schism, the ITF or the WTF) to "spread the word."

They were, for the most part, very young men, in their twenties or early thirties. They had lived through an ugly time in their country's history. Some came from well-off families, some from the poorest. Most of them had known privation, many endured imprisonment, all had seen the unappealing underbelly of military life. A few were well educated; most were not. All had feet of clay when they got on the plane that would take them to Canada.

When they got off that plane, they were gods.

The pedestal and the Oriental mystique

The first wave of Korean instructor-émigrés to Canada were not quite the old men of martial lore portrayed on *Kung Fu* or the silver screen (Singer 1978; Levine 1994) but the powers they wielded were unfathomable nonetheless. They could break boards and bricks, jump over cars, do the splits in the air—and kill you with a look. They were amazing, exotic and mysterious, and as most of them spoke little or no English, there wasn't much they could do to dispel this image. Canadian and American cultures were enthusiastically embracing the Oriental mystique of movies and television, and even serious social researchers (e.g. Thirer and Grabiner 1980, Nosanchuk 1981, Levine 1984) succumbed to it. How could more be expected of the first generation of Canadian students, who were suddenly offered the opportunity to learn the miraculous things Bruce Lee did in the movies?¹

Edward Said called it Orientalism and defined it as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (Said 1978: 2). Others have simply called it the Oriental mystique: that belief that the East is mysterious, dark and unexplainable, that its practices, be they religious or martial, have an added depth and dimension Westerns cannot hope to grasp with their limited, linear thinking. The mystique is a useful out, a

¹ Death under questionable circumstances hasn't done anything to diminish Bruce Lee's star-status, both among martial arts practitioners and the general public. Most would argue he has no equal to this day. Incredible physical talent aside, his enduring fame is owed at least partially to the fact that he was the first Asian martial artist to willingly and publicly teach non-Asians.

way of dealing with something unexplainable *without* actually explaining or understanding it. Those who are prey to it accept “the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point” (*Ibid.*) for their theories; a classic example the philosophical fallacy of begging the question.²

When the dust from the landing settled somewhat, sociologists and anthropologists turned a slightly more critical eye to the phenomenon. The first crucial steps, taken simultaneously by a number of researchers employing a more critical form of participant observation in North American training halls, was to identify this mystique and ask how it was created. Donohue (1990, 1991a, 1993b) and others (DeMarinis 1995, Dunbar 1991, Hendricks 1995, McBratney 1994 to name a few) discussed the distance between instructor and students, as well as senior students and beginners, and looked at the ways in which this distance was created and maintained, as well as what purpose it served.

Who made the Oriental mystique swirl around the Korean master? Authors of the earliest studies wondered whether the master’s “detachment” was real, and suggested that he was aware of and used the mystique. Jacobs (1969) went a step further to assert that the master consciously created and used to his advantage the culture and power gulf that separated him from his students. But it was those researchers who treated the martial arts as a religion rather than a sport who identified the complicity of the students themselves in the creation and perpetuation of the Oriental mystique (e.g. Singer 1978: 38-39).

² See Brunner 1986, Schmidt 1986, Fee 1995 and Huang and Lynch 1992 for various explorations and uses of this assumed distinction.

Most of the Canadian Taekwon-do instructors interviewed in this project—all among those who ended up discussing the topic at length—saw themselves as engaging with full complicity in the Oriental mystique conspiracy.

“His students treated him like he was a God,” said one first-wave instructor about a Korean master. “He could do no wrong in their eyes. He never punished anyone: he rarely ever raised his voice.” He didn’t have to: his students did the disciplining for him and by the time a student was around for a few months, telling him “Master X will be angry if he sees you doing that” was sufficient discipline.

In the 1960s and 1970s, most Korean instructors got full and total obedience, complete respect and almost fanatical adoration from their students.

“Students were so completely in awe of him,” said another instructor. “They’d do anything for him. Most of the time, he didn’t even have to ask.” Another student of the same instructor concurred. “He pronounced rules that now seem to us ridiculous, and even then, we must have known they were ridiculous. But we didn’t protest.” One of this particular master’s rules was forbidding dating, or even close friendships, between his students, especially his black belts. Socializing as a club at select occasions was okay: pursuing individual relationships was inappropriate.³

³ This particular master was among those who married one of his students, so we might assume his rules did not apply to him. The particular decree faded out of his school by the early 1980s, with a couple of marriages taking place and the younger students socializing and dating with less discretion than their predecessors.

Singer posits that “the unusual respect paid to the teacher” in martial arts training halls comes because “the teacher’s bearing seems to demand it” (1978: 39). The teacher is almost like a prophet, a descendant of fourteen generations of martial arts masters, whose lineage goes all the way back to the Bodidharma—how can you not respect such a person? This poetic overstatement is echoed to a certain extent by other writers and is the foundation of many behavioural and pedagogical theories: the teacher is much more than the person teaching the class. He is mentor, role model, hero and the representation of everyone who came before him.

During the 1960s and 1970s, then, the Korean instructor was not just a person teaching martial arts. He was a demigod with unearthly powers, who received the unconditional respect and obedience of his first wave of students so naturally, it seemed he demanded it. “It seemed” is a necessary qualification. The Korean instructor spoke no, or very little, English, and his conversation with his students was generally limited to barking out training commands.

Particularly for new students, it was difficult to see what the instructor was thinking. Was he pleased? Angry? Bored? “That’s just the way he is,” the more experienced students would tell the beginners. When the senior students said the master was angry, the beginners usually had to take them at their word, until one day, they too could impute emotion and feeling to the master.

“I saw him as none of his other students saw him,” said an instructor of her master, who was also her husband. “And even I, most of the time, felt like I was walking

on egg shells. Did I do well today, or is he thinking why am I bothering to teach these clowns?" Then, every once in a while, the master would smile—or (egads!) laugh—and suddenly, everything was worth it.

"We trained so hard," said another first-waver. "We'd be wringing out our uniforms after class from the sweat. We'd barely make it to the change room. And Master X, he'd still be pounding on the punching bag. None of us could ever hope to be as good as he was."

And these first students—who had flocked to the dojangs ready to worship—taught newcomers how to treat the master they molded according to their desire. They spoke in hushed tones of the master, and they screamed, "Yes, sir!" in response to every question.

"He didn't put himself on a pedestal. We dragged him there, and elevated him and wouldn't let him come down. And when he did, we didn't know how to deal with it," shrugged a first-wave instructor who had been a first-hand witness to his instructor's fall.

The fall from grace

You've heard the stories about the military discipline in the dojang, right? The master everyone worships and adores? I really wish I had started Taekwon-do earlier, because I missed all of that. I heard about it, from a few of the real old-timers. By the time I started training, there was yelling and push-ups. And I had only trained a few months before I started thinking... heretical thoughts about Master X.

– Second-wave instructor

Perhaps the fall was inevitable: the students had set such high expectations and standards for their Korean instructors, no mere human could have lived up to them. And, while Confucius would vest absolute power—backed by the mandate of heaven—into the hands of the ruler, most Western philosophers caution that power corrupts (and absolute power corrupts absolutely). Imagine yourself, in the space of a ten-hour plane flight, transforming from a regular Joe, mostly average, mostly unexceptional, to an adored icon whose students volunteer to shingle your garage roof in their free time. Would you survive year after year of this treatment without starting to expect it? Without, perhaps, reacting with anger when the students didn't give you what you had been taught for years was your due?⁴

⁴ I observed a version of this among English teachers in Korea. The pattern was common and, to those of us who observed it, very amusing. The American underachiever—pasty, skinny, uninteresting and unemployable—lands in Seoul and overnight, his blue eyes and blond hair make him a Leonardo Di Caprio. It's very easy (and pleasant) to lose yourself in that particular paradigm shift.

The Korean instructors' undignified fall from the pedestal onto which their students had thrust them had a number of causes. The first, both in chronological order and order of magnitude, was that reality intruded on the Oriental mystique.

As a community, Taekwon-do practitioners have a code of rules which govern interaction among its members. These rules help to maintain the central tenets of Tae Kwon Do: loyalty, respect, courtesy, perseverance and justice. (Park, Park & Gerrard 1989: 186)

The central tenets of Taekwon-do—which vary slightly from association to association and dojang to dojang—are often recited at the beginning of a class (particularly in ITF schools) and are almost always posted (in a decorative frame) somewhere in the dojang. The origin of the tenets is, say all the books, in the Code of the Hwarang Do.⁵ and the earliest and most popular Taekwon-do version is Choi Hong Hi's: courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit. It would take several years, but eventually, Canadian students would realize that their masters did not practice what they preached.

⁵ ...which, while not false, is as true as saying that the origin of the "Don't Drink and Drive" campaign can be traced back to Bacchanalian rites. Some of the tenuous connections between Taekwon-do and the Hwarang are discussed in the previous chapter. There is also a present-day Korean martial art called Hwarang Do that bases its philosophy on that of the Silla Flower Youth, although the real connections between the two are equally tenuous as those between Hwarang and Taekwon-do.

The reasons, some of which were touched upon in Chapter 4 and some which will be revisited in subsequent chapters, for the mass exodus from the federations of the 1970s and 1980s were complex. However, a common theme ran through them. Many instructors didn't leave the federations: they left their instructors. The Canadian instructors' answer to the question "Why did you leave your instructor?" would usually contain a reference to lack of respect and lack of trust.

Courtesy is the central tenet of Taekwon-do because unless we have consideration for others—and that includes humility and politeness—we have no redeeming social or human value in Taekwon-do. It is the most important tenet. And instructors, of course, have to lead by example.

– First-wave instructor, reading from school's training manual

Did the Korean instructors treat their students with courtesy? Some of them did, at least some of the time. But most first-wave instructors recall a lot of... discourteous behaviour:

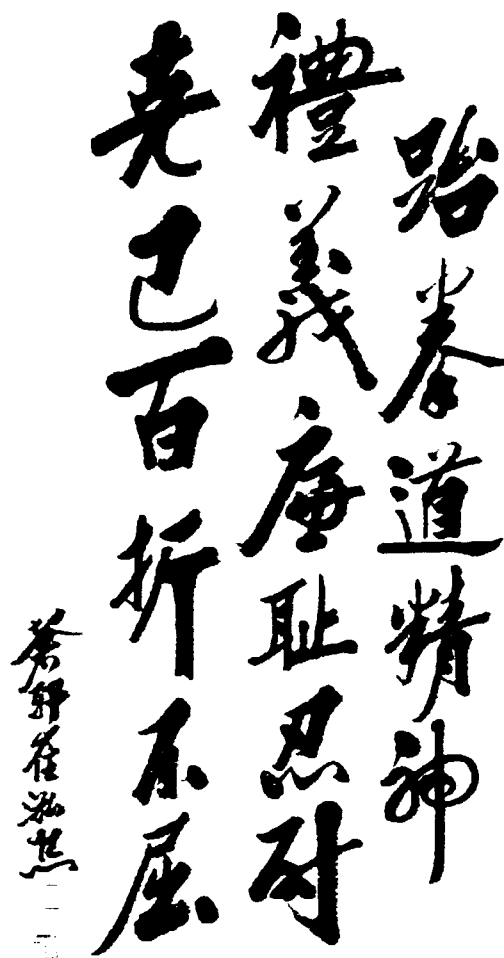
When you did something that displeased him, he would humiliate you. He would yell at you and abuse you in front of the class, and you would just want to sink into the floor.

– First-wave instructor

He mostly punished us by the silent treatment. You know: he wouldn't pay any attention to you at all. You'd be like air. He wouldn't even look at you. It made people sick; and half the time, they didn't know what they did wrong.

– First-wave instructor

Illustration 6: The Tenets of Taekwon-do



Before becoming "the father of modern Taekwon-do," Choi Hong Hi studied calligraphy under Han Il Dong, one of the most famous calligraphy teachers in Korea. The above is his calligraphy of the tenets of Taekwon-do, from Choi 1974: 6.

He would spar people to punish them. He would beat the crap out of you, humiliate you utterly, and laugh. And you never wanted to come back.

– First-wave instructor

Hand in hand with courtesy went the concept of integrity:

Integrity [is] being able to discern right from wrong and have the conscience, if wrong, to feel guilt. It is also important to add that after feeling the guilt there should come a strong motivation to change one's behaviour and try one's best to make amends. (Hart 1998: 13)

And the more students got to know their instructors, the more they questioned their integrity:

A lot of us lost respect for him when we heard about the women in Korea. He had a wife and kids here, in Canada, and when he was in Korea, this other woman travelled with him half the time. When she wasn't there, there'd be others. Some of the younger black belts took that really badly. He used to lecture us about morals, too.

– First-wave instructor

Both of them beat their wives. People tried not to notice for the longest time. [He] took a golf club to her once.

– First-wave instructor

He was always thinking about money. He was an excellent businessman, I suppose, but a lot of it just didn't seem right, or honest.

– First-wave instructor

Well, there was a gambling scandal. And rumours about embezzlement [from federation funds]. We weren't supposed to know, but people talked.

– First-wave instructor

A lot of people started feeling like he was selling belts.

– First-wave instructor.

He was teaching a pattern and, in the middle of it, he missed some moves. One of the senior students tried to point it out, and he was punished. Mr. X yelled. 'You think I don't know my patterns?' And then, we did the pattern wrong for a few weeks. Until he did it correctly again.

– First-wave instructor

When I got higher in the ranks, and started going to more tournaments, I started to see things. People winning when they shouldn't. And I'm not talking about incompetent judging; I'm talking about physically taking away a trophy from someone; switching belt colours on opponents, etc. We all thought bribery was involved.

– First-wave instructor

From there on, it could only get worse. Whether your tenet of choice was perseverance,⁶ self-control or indomitable spirit,⁷ chances were your instructor was violating its prescriptions as a matter of course:

⁶ "To achieve something, whether it is a higher degree or the perfection of a technique, one must set his goal, then constantly persevere ... One of the most important secrets in becoming a leader in Taekwon-Do is to overcome every difficulty by perseverance." (Choi 1995: 13)

⁷ "There are two words that apply to indomitable spirit: courage and conviction. There are also two words that mean absolutely nothing to a person who has indomitable spirit: success and failure." (Hart 1998: 15)

He just started losing interest in things. He used to teach all the classes. Then he started passing them off to senior students, not even black belts. He'd just sit in his office and watch. Then he stopped coming. He just faded out of the picture.

– First-wave instructor

He had a very clear agenda: he wanted schools in all the small towns within driving distance of [the main school]. And he pushed us, at the black belt level or even just senior students, to open up branch schools. He was in a real rush.

– First-wave instructor

He never did learn English. He used to say he was trying at the beginning. Twenty years later, he's still the same.

– First-wave instructor

He'd lose his temper, if people weren't getting it, or if they weren't paying attention. He'd yell.

– First-wave instructor

Sometimes, he smacked people. Across the face. Not often, only when he was really angry, but that was bad.

– First-wave instructor

He was... well, a little psychotic. When he raised his voice, or when he was sparring with you when he was angry, you were pissing your pants.

– First-wave instructor

One day, we came to class and the school doors were locked. We waited for two hours. Apparently, he just left town. He owed money to a lot of people.

– First-wave instructor

Whatever the specifics, the end result was usually the same: “he” somehow betrayed the student. And the student usually left.

I want to clarify the intentions of my respondents when providing the above quoted information. These quotes are excerpts from discussions about school disciplines, teaching styles, experiences, or meaning of the various culture signifiers. They are presented here out of context. A question along the lines of “How did your Korean instructor violate the tenets of Taekwon-do?” was not asked: as per the discussion in Chapter 3, had I asked such a question, it certainly would not have been answered, much as the question “What were the weaknesses of your instructor as a teacher?” was skirted and avoided by most respondents. In a show of loyalty and courtesy their Korean instructors may well have envied, Canadian instructors were very reluctant to say anything negative about their masters, and when they did, it was often unintentional. The majority of the respondents of this project are likely unaware of how damning an indictment they have provided of the ethics and personalities of the men who taught them in the 1960s and 1970s. This turn of events was among the reasons why I decided to keep names of all respondents and their instructors anonymous, and to suppress details that could contribute to the identification of respondents.

The fall-out

"I left the ITF because I got tired of being treated like shit by [name of high ranking official] and the organization," a first-wave instructor, who declined to formally participate in this research because of my ITF affiliation, told me. "They recite the tenets every class, and they break them every day. I want to work with people who actually know what integrity means."

For many Canadian instructors, one day, the blinders came off. The final incident was usually insignificant: a squabble over money, a tournament that was (or was not) attended, a testing session at which a student was unfairly penalized (or equally unfairly over-promoted), an organizational meeting at which tempers flared. What followed was either a slamming of the door and a subsequent opening of a competing school (or of declaring independence for a former branch school), or a gradual fading away from active participation in the life and financial well-being of the dojang. Most first-generation Canadian instructors left with a slammed door, and those who faded away, left with a bad taste in their mouths. It cast a pallor on their past training, at least temporarily diluted their commitment to their martial art, and often had a long-term dampening effect on their enthusiasm for things Korean.

The fall from grace of the Korean instructors in the eyes of their Canadian students can partially be laid at the feet of the shattering of the Oriental mystique and the less-than-ideal ethics and lives of the masters. Skill-learning was another issue of contention between many instructors and students. Most first-wave students—in a trend

that sadly continues today under Canadian instructors⁸—found that the more advanced they got, the less teaching and consideration they received from their masters. And, not surprisingly, the more frequently they butted heads.

One instructor articulated the common sentiment succinctly: “The Korean instructors—ours was no different from the rest—expected everything from you, and gave you nothing. It was supposed to be enough that he condescended to teach you.” And then, it seemed as if he stopped teaching you. It usually happened at first or second degree black belt, sometimes earlier: the students would suddenly start to feel as though they were being held back. The advanced classes stayed the same, whether you were first or second or third degree black belt. The money for assisting classes didn’t get better. “At some point, you realized you hadn’t learnt anything new in months,” commented several instructors.

“All you’re doing is teaching. When you raise the issue with the instructor, he tells that this is how you learn now. And at first you believe it,” goes the story. Then, you decide the instructor was not going to teach you any more. And finally, one day, you leave—and throughout the 1980s, Canadian instructor-level students left their Korean masters in droves.

Was the Korean “master” holding out on his Canadian disciples? There are two main schools of thought on the matter still: on the surface in direct opposition to each other, underneath, both subscribing to the same truth.

⁸ ...and is thus further discussed in Chapter 8 – Instructors and Students.

The first resurrects the Oriental mystique and posits that the Korean instructors found their Canadian students “unworthy.” Using Confucian sayings such as “if I lift up one corner of the table cloth, I expect the student to lift up the other four” and remembrances of their instructor bellowing “you never ask the right questions,” adherents of this school conclude that the Koreans kept something back. (Interesting speculations would then arise in cases where Korean, or other Asian, students were present in the schools. I had no such situation in my sample, although the two Asian-descended instructors I interviewed had better relationships with their Korean instructors than everyone else in the sample).⁹

The adherents of the second school reject the Oriental mystique almost completely. They look at the assortment of recent dates and bizarre facts that contributed to the creation of Taekwon-do through brown-coloured glasses. They point out that many of the Korean “masters” had only a few years training in the martial arts before being exported to Canada as teachers. They repeat stories of someone getting on the plane in Seoul a second degree and landing as a sixth dan. They recall that many of the instructors did very little physical demonstration. And they conclude that the Korean instructors didn’t teach more for the very simple reason that they didn’t know more.

Disparate as they at first seem, both these schools believe that there is more to be learnt and the Canadian instructors who belong to them believe that they now know more

⁹ One was “positive,” the other “indifferent,” but both were with the original Korean instructor. See Table 7 on the following page.

about Taekwon-do than their Korean instructor taught them¹⁰—a thread I will follow a little further in Chapter 6.

Of the Canadian instructors in my sample who had had a Korean instructor, two were on true “good terms” with that instructor. They saw each other frequently, socially, and one pair was still in a professional partnership.¹¹ Two were on “speaking terms,” along the lines of “I see him at tournaments every once in a while and we’ll nod at each other.” Everyone else, for all intents and purposes, hadn’t exchanged a word with their first Korean instructor since the day the day of reckoning.

Table 7: Canadian Instructors Relationship to Korean Instructors

	<u>Estranged</u>	<u>Indifferent</u>	<u>Positive</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=11)*</i>	7	2	2**
<i>Group 2 (n=2)</i>	2	-	-

**Thirteen instructors in the sample proper had a Korean instructors. In two of the interviews, I did not find out what the current relationship was.*

***In one of these cases, the ‘positive’ relationship is with a second instructor, and the respondent is not on speaking terms with his original Korean instructor.*

¹⁰ As a brief aside, there is another school of thought, not prevalent among my respondents but shared by “drop-outs” and “retirees,” or those who abandoned Taekwon-do for another martial art, and that is that there is no “more.” I had three such adherents in my sample, and they were very disheartening to talk to. Two were still looking for answers, but in other martial arts (one had fully retired from Taekwon-do, the other, was still actively teaching it). The third accepted Taekwon-do as he had been taught it, with all the limitations he recognized, as all that there was and did not seek anything more, passing down exactly and only what he was taught.

¹¹ However, in one case, this was not his first Korean instructor. “We don’t talk about him,” this instructor said of the man who introduced him to Taekwon-do.

And yet, for most of these Canadians, for a long time favourite students and heirs-apparent, the door that they slammed did not close a chapter.

“After the anger wore off, I remembered that I learnt a lot from him. To this day, I recognize him as my instructor, and I do not permit anyone to speak badly of him.” one instructor said firmly. And that respondent is not alone: no matter how bad the terms on which they parted, the Canadian students talk of the Korean instructors as Master X and Mr. Y, and if the occasional “Old Z” creeps in, it’s said either with affection or with a half-guilty smile, an awareness of saying something not quite proper.

“He trained a lot of really good people.” is a sentiment echoed by many of the respondents: self-serving to a certain extent, because if your instructor trained a bunch of incompetents, that would include you.

A third significant factor behind the demise of first-wave Canadian instructors’ apprenticeships to their Korean masters was money. Canadian instructors felt they weren’t paid enough for their teaching duties, or that the fees they had to pay for continued training and testing were too high. If they were running branch schools for the Korean master, the money issues became more acute: the instructor was responsible for all the overhead, but much of the income went to the master. However, while many of the “last straws” resulting in a termination of the relationship were financial, no student left his instructor primarily because of money. The financial question was usually tightly entwined with personal issues. I discuss this factor in more detail in subsequent chapters (particularly Chapter 8).

As a result of these three factors—the crumbling of the mystique around the instructor, the belief of the students that the instructor stopped teaching them, and conflicts over finances—few Korean instructor-senior Canadian student relationships survived the test of time. My sample is clearly skewed: because of the lack of Korean instructors in the sample, there is an associated lack of Canadian instructors still under a Korean instructor. However, I am familiar with the student body make-up of several Taekwon-do schools under the control of a Korean instructor. While these schools are full of students who swear by their masters, they have very few senior black belts. And they have virtually no first-wave survivors.

The implications

The transmission of both cultural and physical knowledge in Taekwon-do did not run a smooth course for first-wave instructors. Starting with poor communication between the Canadian instructors and the Korean masters,¹² continuing through with a relatively short apprenticeship period,¹³ and finishing with a traumatic termination of the relationship, the first-wave instructors came out of their Taekwon-do experience with little love for their Korean master—and his culture.

¹² Resulting from the Korean master's imperfect English, as well as cultural communication differences.

¹³ No lifelong relationships here—although many of the first-waves stayed with their masters for about a decade, which by current average apprenticeships is a long time indeed.

We will see shortly that these instructors had little affinity for Korea, and that they taught future generations of students very little about Korean culture or official Taekwon-do philosophy. If they did not learn much about Korean culture during their time with the Korean masters—the next chapter will show that they learnt very little indeed—they nonetheless made the Korean masters their yardstick. The Korean masters, whether demigods or demons, became the identifying point against which Canadian instructors defined themselves: often in active opposition, sometimes in faithful imitation, and sometimes, paradoxically, in both. What this point of reference did to the process of cultural transmission and future student-instructor relationships is explored in the next three chapters.

VI

EXPERIENCE AND INTERPRETATION:

An overview of what Canadian Instructors are doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do

For decades, Americans have been told that to gain the full benefit from their study of the martial arts, they must submit to Eastern teaching methods. In general, these methods require that students take instructor's word as undeniable fact. There is no acceptable format in which students may question technique or doctrine. American students, desperate to grasp the intricacies of Asian martial arts, have uncharacteristically acquiesced.

*– Robert Pickett
(Orlando 1997: xiii)*

Chapter 4 summarized the chaotic historical and political context within which Taekwon-do was developed, and as a result of which it came to Canada. I have stressed that Taekwon-do is a young martial art, the very existence of which was politically motivated, and that from the very beginning, Taekwon-do was meant to be a global export. Korean Taekwon-do instructors were given a mission to be fruitful and multiply, and that they did.

In Chapter 5, we looked at some of the unintentional results of the above mission. Through the stories of first-wave Canadian instructors, I illustrated that the transmission of knowledge in Taekwon-do was fraught with many problems from the get-go.

beginning with basic communication issues between instructors and students. Another likely reason why so little Koreana was passed on with Taekwon-do was the immediate delegation of basic instruction to (marginally more) advanced students, further shortening the apprenticeship period between Korean master and Canadian student.¹ Chapter 5 ended with Canadian students leaving their Korean instructors in droves and setting up their own schools. And that is where Chapter 6 begins.

This research is about these Canadian instructors, and their students-*cum*-instructors, and what they have done with the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do. In this chapter, I will outline the basic common experiences—and divergences—of these Canadian instructors. Chapter 3 offered us a brief introduction to who they were, in terms of age, gender, and other quantitative factors. The goal of this chapter is to flesh out that picture. Why did they come to Taekwon-do? Why have they stayed in Taekwon-do? What role does Taekwon-do play in their lives? Where do they practice Taekwon-do, and how do they personalize that place? What does Taekwon-do mean to them? How are they changing the practices² that they have learnt?

Chapters 7 and 8 take two specific areas of meaning and change and explore them in more detail. Chapter 7 focuses on philosophy and ideology, whereas Chapter 8 delves in-depth into the complexities of the student-instructor relationship in Taekwon-do.

¹ This aspect of the process will be revisited in Chapter 8 – Instructors and Students.

² I don't want to call them traditions: we have seen how short-lived these traditions are.

The lunatic fringe?

When people find out I do martial arts, they're usually surprised. I'm not sure why. One of my friends once said it's because I seem so normal. I was almost offended. What do they think we are? The lunatic fringe?

– Third-wave instructor

If you watch a lot of movies, you might think martial arts are cool and mysterious, and the people who do them cool and sexy. If you actually do them... it's just people. Boring, interesting, short, tall, fat, fit, all sorts.

– Second-wave instructor

Most of the Taekwon-do instructors who made up my sample think of themselves as pretty average, normal people, who happen to make their living by teaching a martial art (or who spent much of their free time practising a martial art). The part-time instructors “daylight” as teachers, plumbers, dieticians, florists, doctors, car salesmen, civil servants, engineers, computer programmers, bankers, managers, opticians, construction workers, police officers and university students. The full-time instructors often supplement their incomes with seasonal or contract work. Most have families and children. They are a fairly representative cross-section of the population—the cost of martial arts classes makes them fairly accessible—spanning various economic and social levels, and coming from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

In the pages that follow, we will explore these instructors’ life and experiences within Taekwon-do. In their life outside the *dojang*, Taekwon-do instructors are probably a lot like your next-door neighbours.

Coming to Taekwon-do

Before they left their Korean instructors, Canadian instructors first came to them. Their reasons for coming to Taekwon-do are much the same as those of their students—for my respondents at least, the passage of time did not have much change on motivation.

All of my respondents came to the martial arts by design—their own or their parents. However, they ended up Taekwon-do practitioners mostly by accident. Not one person I interviewed (or taught, or trained with, outside the limitations of this research project) recalled being particularly drawn, or even aware of, Taekwon-do at point zero. They wanted to learn some kind of martial arts, with the mystical goal of being like Bruce Lee or the practical goal of learning self-defence. They ended up in a Taekwon-do dojang for one of two reasons: convenience of a school's location ("There was a Taekwon-do school two blocks from my office, so I signed up there") or the reference of an acquaintance ("My father's friend had two little boys who were in Taekwon-do, so that's where they signed me up").

None of my respondents came to Taekwon-do because of an interest in Korean culture, philosophy or religion. This finding contrasts with several studies that focus on Japanese martial arts (e.g. Goodger and Goodger 1977, 1980, Donohue 1988, 1990, Draeger 1978, Draeger *et al.* 1980) which find some type of correlation between interest in Japanese culture and choice and practice of a specific Japanese martial art. The lack of correlation here may be partially explained if we consider how Korean culture is overshadowed by China and Japan in Westerners' imaginations. But that is a very

unsatisfactory answer, particularly as none of the respondents had much of an interest in Asian culture, philosophy or religion in general when they began Taekwon-do. A few said they had a “passive interest” in Asian philosophies (they defined a “passive interest” as learning about Asian philosophy and culture with interest if they happened across it, but not actively seeking it out).³

Table 8: Respondents’ Interest in Asian Culture Before Starting Taekwon-do

	<u>Active Interest</u>	<u>Passive Interest</u>	<u>No Interest</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=36)</i>	6	20	10

If they weren’t interested in Asian culture, why were they interested in the martial arts? If it was for the sheer physical challenge, why didn’t they pursue a western sport, be it skiing, rugby or gymnastics? Two of the respondents did choose the martial arts partly because they were indeed looking for a new physical challenge, but even for them it was not all about physicality.

³ My respondents provided this operational definition for me. “What do you mean by passive interest?” I asked the first respondent who used the phrase. “You know—I’ll learn about it when I come across it, and I think it’s cool. But I don’t go out of my way to look for it.” he answered. Others provided virtually an identical definition.

Every study on martial artists and motivation ascertains that people pursue the martial arts because they are looking for something more than just exercise (Konzak and Klavora 1980, Nosanchuk 1981, Rice and Rehberg 1986, Zambo 1993). People with a strong interest in Asian culture tend to be drawn to martial arts with very overt and obvious cultural trappings—for example, kendo, with its armour, swords and complex rituals (Jackson 1978 and Draeger 1978 offer examples of the power of this attraction). However, many people who are drawn to the martial arts aren't interested in *real* Asian culture—they just share the passive interest experienced by many of my respondents. They are looking for something they lack: "I was missing an element in my life." "I was looking for something to keep me active, and I wanted something structured." In other words, they are still prey to "daydreams packaged inside Oriental clichés" (Said 1978: 190), the Oriental mystique: "I thought I needed something that would teach me discipline": "the martial arts just seemed to have something that I wanted."

They're looking for more than sport, and martial arts, Taekwon-do included, claim to be just that.

The "more than sport" is often self-defence. Most of the women in my sample, a few men from "tough" neighbourhoods and some parents of bullied children chose the martial arts because they were looking specifically for self-defence.⁴ the pragmatic promise of the martial arts.

⁴ But they don't stay for it: if they are looking purely or primarily for self-defence, they are likely to drift away towards grappling focused arts like jujitsu and aikido. Many of the "retired" Taekwon-do practitioners I've known have followed this path.

Almost a third of my sample was young enough at point zero to come to Taekwon-do “because my dad made me.” The children may have been too young to buy into the Oriental mystique—other than idolizing Bruce Lee and, later, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles—but the parents were convinced the martial arts would teach their children discipline and self-confidence (e.g. Min 1979, Vockell and Han 1990).

Regardless of age, none of the respondents had any (conscious) intention of becoming a Taekwon-do instructor until they actually became one.⁵ Most of them had no teaching experience until they started teaching Taekwon-do, and the majority, regardless of how long they have been an instructor, have no additional teaching or coaching experience or certification.⁶ For all, modelling on their instructor was their primary way of learning how to teach, and later, anti-modelling was the chief method of developing their unique teaching style.

For most of them, Taekwon-do is a major time commitment and a defining and limiting lifestyle choice. It dictates when they take, or don’t take, vacations, it means that they spend their Saturday mornings working, and it often has an impact on what other activities they participate or don’t participate in (“I quit smoking after my first tournament,” said one instructor; “I can’t remember the last time I had two days off in a

⁵ Being a black belt and being an instructor are not equivalent goals. Just about everyone wants to be a black belt when they join up.

⁶ My sample has two teachers in it, both of whom had chosen their vocation before starting Taekwon-do, and four people who took National Coaching Certification Program courses—three of those people are from the same club, and the fourth took the course acting on a suggestion from the head instructor of the above club. More on this topic in Chapter 8 – Instructors and Students.

row,” said another.) Three-quarters of the respondents rely on Taekwon-do as a source of income: for the full-time instructors, it’s their sole or primary means of earning a livelihood. Most of those working as full-time instructors have completed high school and perhaps vocational programs or some community college courses. Only two have a university degrees. Their supplemental jobs are predominantly blue collar or seasonal. Conversely, most of those who are part-time or volunteer instructors hold one or more university degrees, and have professional or career jobs. None pursued their education with an eye to furthering their position as Taekwon-do instructor: if their education or vocation proved useful, that usefulness was coincidental.

Table 9: Respondents’ Education

	<u>High School</u>	<u>Vocational/ some courses</u>	<u>University</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=39)</i>	17	8	14
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	3	3	6

Table 10: Full-time Instructors’ Education

	<u>High School</u>	<u>Vocational/ some courses</u>	<u>University</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=17)</i>	7	8	2
<i>Group 2 (n=2)</i>	1	1	-

They all believe practising Taekwon-do has contributed to making them better people, both morally and physically. Most are able to provide specific examples or character traits that they believe are stronger and better as a result of their Taekwon-do training. They often attribute their state of health and physical well-being to their continued practice of Taekwon-do. Their level of confidence and their ability to deal with stress are the two other commonly mentioned factors.

Thus far, the instructors have tended to be a homogenous group. There are several characteristics, however, on which the instructors diverge significantly. They either have had one instructor, or in excess of four. They're either self-described "martial arts sluts"⁷ who have experimented with and continue to explore other martial arts to supplement their Taekwon-do training, or complete purists who believe Taekwon-do is a complete and self-sufficient system. They were either stellar, professional-level athletes in sports such as gymnastics, track, football and skiing, or they grew up having two left feet and being the last person picked for the team.

⁷ This phrase is said with a smile, as a joke, although the choice of the derogatory noun is certainly no accident; it cropped up in fifteen interviews (unsolicited in each case; applied to oneself in eleven interviews and to friends in the other three).

Table 11: Do you have experience with other martial arts?

	<u>Taekwon-do Only or Mostly</u>	<u>Many Kinds</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=39)</i>	25	14
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	4	8

Table 12: Are you involved with other sports?

	<u>Many Sports</u>	<u>Some Sports</u>	<u>TKD only</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=39)</i>	14	7	18
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	4	3	5

Table 13: How many instructors have you had?

	<u>One</u>	<u>Two to Three</u>	<u>Four+</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=41)</i>	20	7	14
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	1	2	9

On a few other traits and issues, the instructors are a heterogeneous but lukewarm sample. Is Taekwon-do a martial art or a sport? Equal numbers say art, sport and both: few consider it a major issue. Some are avid competitors, some eschew competition.

some see it as the best way of promoting the art, some see it as a polluting force, but regardless of the opinion, the majority are lukewarm on the topic.⁸

A few are very religious, a few are enthusiastic atheists, and most are somewhere in-between, calling themselves everything from “lapsed Catholics” to “Pagan Buddhists.” Only one made a concentrated effort to combine the practice of Taekwon-do with her religion.⁹

These characteristics are spread about erratically among first-wave instructors and those of subsequent waves, and have no significant correlation with instructors’ attitudes towards Korean culture, Taekwon-do philosophy or teaching style. For obvious reasons, age is the only variable clearly correlated with an instructor’s placement in the first or subsequent wave category. The variables of note, which have a strong correlation with how instructors react to Korean culture and what they think they’ve done to Taekwon-do culture are gender, age of which they started Taekwon-do and ethnic background. I will explore these relationships further on in this chapter, and return to them in Chapters 7 – Philosophy and Pragmatism and 9 – Beaten Paths and Future Trends.

Next, let’s look at where the Canadian instructors teach, and what vestiges of Korean culture we find there.

⁸ See the conclusion of Chapter 4 for a discussion of the potential reasons behind this lack of passion.

⁹ I had asked a series of questions trying to gauge respondents’ religiosity or spirituality, expecting that there would be some kind of correlation between that and attitude towards Korean culture. There was none, although the theme is revisited again in Chapter 7 – Philosophy and Pragmatism.

Keeping the foundation

The first thing, really, that we have to teach our students is that this is a dojang, not a dojo—that's Japanese—and the person teaching is not a sensei. I made that mistake myself on my first day. I actually asked the instructor, 'Can I call you sensei?' and he just about took my head off. 'Taekwon-do is a Korean martial art, young man!' he thundered. It's funny how many times since then I've had that conversation, as the instructor.

— Second-wave instructor

The dojang—literally, training hall in Korean—was the place where I conducted most of my interviews. It was a good psychological choice: the dojang was the instructors' "place of power" (as one of the respondents dubbed it), a place of comfort and straight-forward rules, in which they held authority.¹⁰

"This is where I live," several instructors said. "It's where I teach, where I train, where I talk with friends. It's not just a gym."

Although sometimes that's *where* "it" is. The full-time professionals, and their home school¹¹ assistants, usually teach in a dojang that is also a permanent, physical

¹⁰ The interviews conducted in neutral places—coffee shops, parks, non-Taekwon-do workplaces—contained more passive language, and lacked the passion of those conducted in the dojang. Interviews that took place in participants' homes were somewhere in between the two, and were also among the longest, with many distractions and tangents lengthening the interview.

¹¹ Meaning the main dojang of the school, as opposed to branch school, the characteristics of which are discussed further on.

school, where photographs and trophies can be displayed, training bags can be hung from the ceiling, and permanent training stations can be set up. But many instructors, particularly when starting up, teach in school gyms, community halls or even garages and basements—places where the rent is cheap (or free) and where the functionality of “dojang” ends with the bow-out.

The dojang didn’t change much when Korean instructors came to Canada, and it changed less when Canadian instructors left their Korean masters. The foyer is a repository of shoes, as bare feet only are allowed in the training area. The walls are adorned with group photographs, trophies and medals. A quote from Confucius or some other Asian sage appears intermittently. The front of the actual training area is identified by flags, and the walls display the school’s ranking system, laminated sheets of test requirements and the student creed or the Taekwon-do tenets.

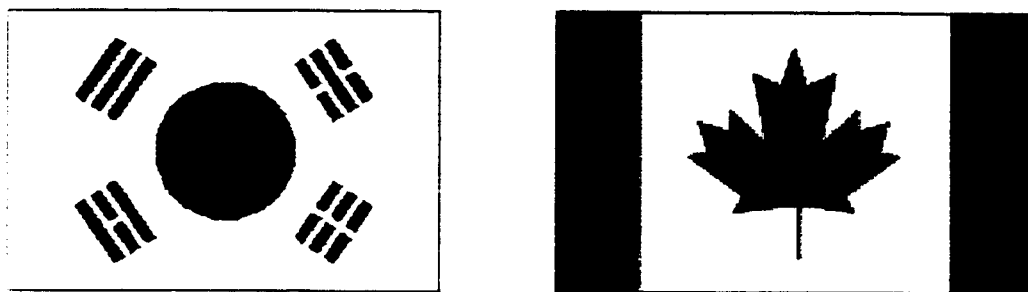
The practice of taking shoes off before entering the dojang continues in all the schools in my sample: in all of them, Taekwon-do is practised in bare feet. Taking shoes off before entering the training area is hygienic, safe and practical—it keeps the floor clean.¹²

The flags give away the school’s political affiliation. ITF schools sport usually only the Canadian flag (provincial flags are starting to make more frequent

¹² Some martial artists train in shoes traditionally; other instructors have added training in shoes to their regimens to make the training more realistic. Not so in Taekwon-do. When I asked “Why do you train in bare feet?” I invariably first received a “what sort of half-witted question is that?” look, before getting the patient “clean, safe, practical” answer.

appearances—I noticed a change in this respect over the course of the interviews). WTF schools have both a Korean and a Canadian flag displayed with equal prominence, as do independent schools, although in those, the Canadian flag may be larger. ITF schools under the direct tutelage of a fourth degree or higher instructor will also sport the official federation plaque (affectionately called the “turtle” by some, as it’s in the shape of a turtle). Most will also have a framed picture of Choi Hong Hi, if not next to the flags, then somewhere else in the dojang.

Illustration 7: Flags of Taekwon-do



The South Korean flag and the Canadian flag have equal prominence in most Taekwon-do schools, although the use of the Korean flag is disappearing from ITF schools, in response to instructions from on-high. The Korean flag is possibly the most symbol-heavy flag in the world. The interlocking red and blue, locked in perfect balance, represent the Yang and Yin (Um); the resulting symbol is called the Tae Guk. The four trigrams at each corner of the Tae Guk represent heaven, fire, water and earth (from top-left clock-wise). The white background represents one/all of Confucian purity, the Buddhist concept or emptiness, or peace. I had to remove the question about the meaning of the Korean flag from my interviews, as it had the effect of killing the flow of the interview. See Chapter 3 – Order and Chaos.

The temporary gyms and halls are more likely to have high school championship banners or community bingo posters on their walls, and most instructors admit that it’s harder to have the “right” atmosphere in a rented gym. “My own school” for most of

them means a permanent location where their flags and punching bags don't have to be taken down for the 8:30 jazzercise class.

The first thing a person, be he an instructor or student, does upon entering the dojang is bow. An instructor bows to the flags, and in absence of flags, "out of respect for the art."¹³ A student does likewise, and then bows to the instructor or senior students.¹⁴ The class begins with a command to line up, either by the instructor or a senior student, followed by a formal bow-in. About half the schools either begin or end the class with a recitation of tenets or a student creed. A brief warm-up is followed by line exercises,¹⁵ then partner drills, solo or group pattern practice and step or free sparring. The class concludes with a warm-down and, in about a quarter of the schools, a short meditation session. Class is dismissed with a bow to the instructor, as well as (in most schools) a bow to any other black belts who may be present.

The Korean dojang in Korea,¹⁶ the Korean master's dojang in Canada and the Canadian instructor's dojang, their lesson plan and their curriculum are essentially the same. All classes start with a warm-up and end with a warm-down, and the in-between

¹³ Or habit: there was no consensus among respondents whether it was proper to bow to an empty gym, but it seemed a safer choice. "No one has ever been punished for excessive bowing," quipped one third-wave instructor.

¹⁴ All schools and all instructors enforce a "bow to seniors" rule: some more strictly than others.

¹⁵ Line exercises: students are lined up much like in an aerobics class and perform exercises solo, to the instructor's count, either moving up and down the gym, or on the spot.

¹⁶ While living and working in Korea (February 1996–March 1997), I visited about ten Tae Kwon Do schools.

drills vary in degree, not kind. Some schools do more patterns and less sparring; some schools have all but eliminated line exercises in favour of partner-drills; and in some line exercises are *de rigeur*. The setting and the class plan have transformed very little: the Canadian instructor's dojang is very similar to "my first dojang." After all, that is what it's based on.

The dojang serves as the foundation, providing the evidence of stability, roots and tradition that allow the instructor to feel she is teaching (and the students to feel they are learning) the "traditional" martial art, regardless of how many changes have been effected.¹⁷ And while tradition is important to instructors—all but one respondent from my sample stressed that they taught the traditional / original / true Taekwon-do—as a way of legitimizing their position, they are increasingly aware that what defines each school, what gives it its unique character and determines its success is the instructor and her teaching style. In the increasingly competitive martial arts market, the sophisticated consumer is no longer looking for the ultimate martial art—he has become jaded about that. Instead, he is looking for an instructor he likes and respects.

¹⁷ There are a few interesting journal articles on the symbolism and ritual of the training hall in martial arts. See Donohue 1993b, 1990, Beasley 1979 and Jacobs 1969 among others.

Changes in meaning

Taekwon-do is a Korean martial art. So how Korean is it?

The origin of Taekwon-do, as discussed in Chapter 4, is undeniably Korean. The martial art was crafted largely for export—of the millions of people who practice it today only a fraction resides in Korea¹⁸—but it was arguably intended to be a tool for promoting certain aspects of Korean culture to the world. How effective was it in the hands of Canadian instructors? Taekwon-do left Korea with a minimalist but strategic philosophical and cultural package. Its ambassadors, the Korean instructors, for a variety of reasons—a language barrier key among them—did a less than stellar job of transmitting this knowledge. Many of their first students left their Korean instructors with a pronounced distaste for anything Korean (“I haven’t even eaten Korean food [since I left my master],” confessed one first-wave instructor). If considered as a simple propaganda/transmission tool, then Taekwon-do was hardly effective at all. In fact, it failed almost completely, passing on forms without meaning.

Most of these forms—from here on called Korean cultural signifiers—were passed on, reproduced and little altered in form. In meaning, however, they altered a great deal, and in some cases, the meaning was created and infused into them by the Canadians instructors.

¹⁸ That would be South Korea, as the teaching of ITF Taekwon-do in North Korea is still limited to the selected few (personal communication).

Table 14: Some Korean cultural signifiers in Taekwon-do

<u>Signifier</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<i>Set up of dojang</i>	<i>very little change</i>
<i>Bow</i>	<i>assignment of meaning</i>
<i>Taking off shoes</i>	<i>accepted, not thought about</i>
<i>Handshake and hand position when handing/taking objects</i>	<i>imported early 1990s</i>
<i>Tenets</i>	<i>various</i>
<i>Student Oaths/Creeds</i>	<i>various</i>
<i>Korean Flag</i>	<i>removed from interview</i>
<i>Patterns</i>	<i>changed questions to ask about purpose, not meaning</i>
<i>Belt System (purpose of rank/meaning of colours)</i>	<i>changed significantly in form</i>
<i>Korean vocabulary</i>	<i>used a little</i>

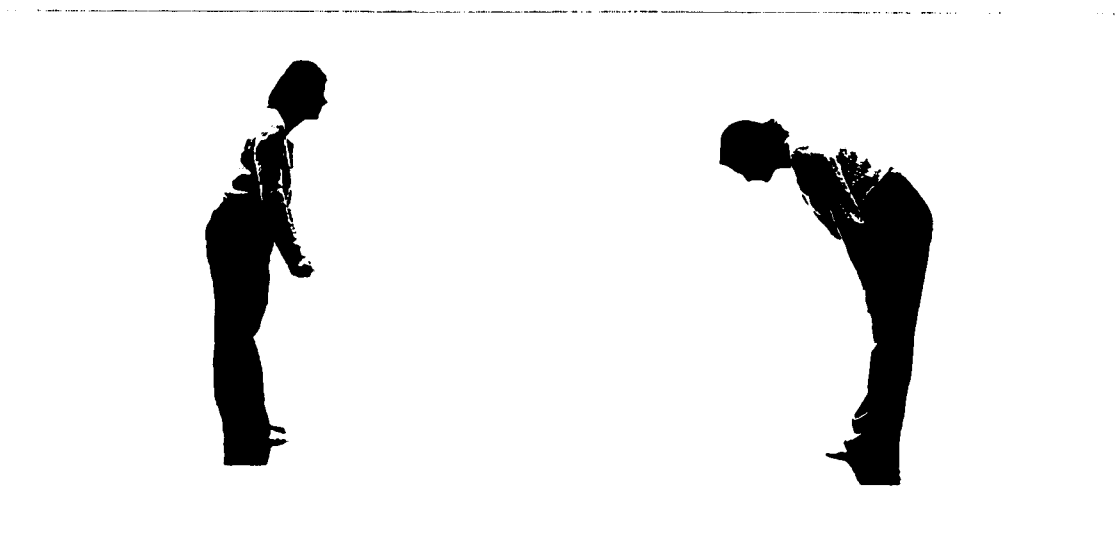
The Korean cultural signifiers about which I asked questions in my interviews included the bow, the Taekwon-do handshake, use of Korean vocabulary during training, names and meanings of Taekwon-do patterns and the belt ranking system.

A Taekwon-do class begins and ends with a bow, perhaps the simplest identifier of Asian culture versus current Western practice.¹⁹ Instructors explain it in a variety of

¹⁹ I had expected someone to mention that until recently, the bow (and the curtsy) were common practice in the West, and tipping your hat and bowing to women is still a courteous practice in many European countries. No one did, accepting the bow as an Asian cultural practice, versus the Western handshake.

ways: “A bow is a greeting, with an added degree of respect you don’t find in a handshake”: “It is a more efficient way of saying hello in a class rather than shaking everyone’s hand, and it’s useful for recognizing the belt hierarchy”: “You bow to show respect, say hello, thank you—it’s very versatile.”

Illustration 8: The two Taekwon-do bows



The 15 degree ITF, left, and the full WTF bow, right, is each infused with meaning by Taekwon-do practitioners. Both bows, incidentally, appear in the ITF Encyclopedia. The bow on the right, according to Choi, is the “incorrect” way of performing the movement.

There is symbolism in every paradox. In the 15 degree ITF bow, you keep your eyes on the opponent to show you are always alert. In the “traditional” deep bow (practiced in all non-ITF schools in my sample), you take your eyes off the opponent during the bow as a sign of respect and trust.

Everyone knows what the bow means: the answers came easily because they have been given before to students. But the answers to “How did you learn that?” are halting.

“I don’t recall...” “My instructor must have said something sometime...” “I read it somewhere...” “I think it’s in our manual...” “Everybody knows...”

The ITF Encyclopedia contains instructions on how to *execute* a bow correctly: as do WTF books and independent school manuals. The meaning of the bow has been created and told by the instructors.

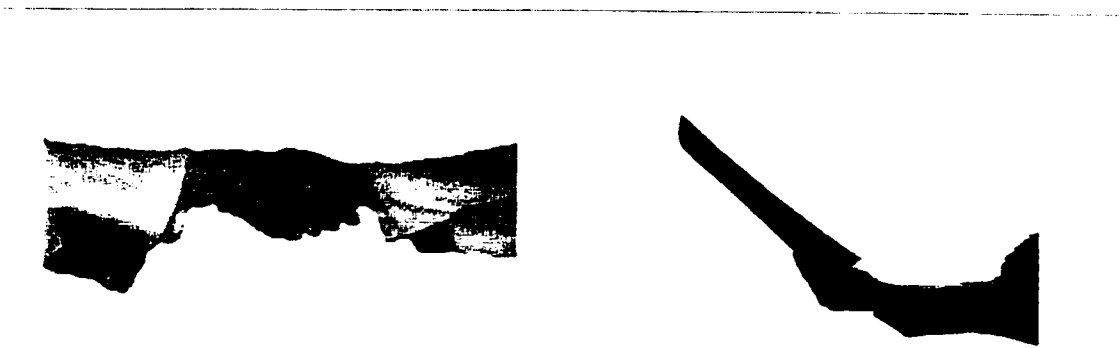
Today’s practice of bowing to your partner/opponent at the beginning of partner drills or sparring matches and then bowing *and* shaking hands at the conclusion of the match is also a creation. First-wave instructors recall just being commanded to bow, and the handshaking being an occasional expression of “Good fight!”, which slowly made its way into everyday practice, until, today, it is part of the regular procedure.

In the “Taekwon-do handshake”—practiced in all ITF schools, half the WTF schools and none of the independently affiliated schools—the left hand is placed under the shaking right hand “to support the weight of the friendship,” “to show respect,” “to show you have no weapons in your sleeve,” “to keep your uniform sleeve from getting tangled,” and “to make the handshake more Korean” (the likely “correct” answer, considering the genesis of the move).

The handshake was one of the latecomers to Canadian Taekwon-do. The earliest any of my respondents recalled doing the hand-supporting elbow handshake was 1988; most saw it introduced around 1992. It is now part of the standard etiquette at ITF schools, and is erratically applied in WTF schools. Of the instructors who do it, a few think it “goofy,” but most like it. “It’s another way of showing respect to each other.”

said one instructor. It's also, perhaps, another way of differentiating between the meaning of shaking hands in Taekwon-do, and the everyday Western handshake.

Illustration 9: The Taekwon-do handshake



The Taekwon-do handshake, left, which incorporates the Korean practice of touching the hand at the elbow, right, as a sign of respect when handing a senior an object, became part of Taekwon-do in the late 1980s/early 1990s.

Korean commands are still part of the regular soundtrack in a Taekwon-do class, but Korean vocabulary is not. Instructors from all schools but one²⁰ in my sample use Korean words to command actions such as attention, bow, ready, begin, stop and rest. Most count to four (or ten) alternately in Korean and English, and all do it partly out of habit and partly out of awareness, borne out by their own experience, that "it's easier to

²⁰ The one exception uses absolutely no Korean vocabulary at all in class—the students of this particular instructor, however, when they teach, do use Korean commands.

do four more kicks when you hear 'hana tul set net' than when you hear 'one two three four.'"

The Korean commands and numbers have a specific utility to the Canadian instructors and their students. Saying technique names in Korean apparently does not, as none of the instructors use a significant amount of Korean vocabulary in class. I participated in and observed several classes given by the two instructors who claimed to use a substantial amount of Korean vocabulary when teaching, and neither used more Korean than the basic commands during the course of the class. Most admit they do not, and show no particular guilt about it, nor desire to change:

My Korean master counted in Korean and that's about it. He said front snap kick, punch, L-stance. I don't think it helps anyone's Taekwon-do to know that a side kick is called yap chagi in Korean.

– First-wave instructor

Some echo Ed Parker's²¹ thoughts:

Taekwon-do is hard enough, and there's enough technical detail to learn, without complicating it by getting people to learn another language [particularly if it's] useless bits of another language. Can you imagine ever using 'roundhouse kick' or something like that if you were actually in Korea?

– Third-wave instructor

²¹ Ed Parker was the first American karate instructor to teach karate in the U.S. in English and English only. The act won him many admirers, and many more enemies (Orlando 1997).

A few are outright hostile to the idea of learning and teaching Korean vocabulary:

For a while, we had to learn dozens of Korean words for techniques for our tests. We never, ever used them in class, so you always had to cram them before a test. And then forget them until the next one. It was a waste of time, and I don't want to waste my students' time that way.

– Third-wave instructor

Korean vocabulary is part of the test requirements in about half the schools in my sample. In no school does failing that part of the test result in an outright failure of the entire test. At worst, the student will get a stern talking to. In many cases, the instructor is in full sympathy with the student. And, the student demographic has changed significantly over the last thirty years: the majority of students in almost any school are under twelve years old. “Even if I thought Korean vocabulary was important, parents would not appreciate me forcing it on their kids. They have enough to learn at school.” shrugged one first-wave instructor, explaining why he had gradually phased out Korean vocabulary out of his test requirements.

Further soundbytes of Korean culture are to be found in the meaning of Taekwon-do patterns. The way patterns are referred to in Taekwon-do schools is perhaps an accurate illustration of how unimportant Korean vocabulary as a whole is to instructors. In all Japanese martial arts, patterns are called *kata*, the Japanese word for patterns. In Taekwon-do, patterns are called patterns. The Korean words—*tul*, *hyung* and *poomsue*—are known (and political: different federations use different terminology), but not used.

The name of each individual pattern, however, is said in Korean. The ITF patterns are each named after “the ideals and exploits of great men from Korean history” (Choi 1995: 47); the WTF pattern-categories hold names of significant Korean philosophies, dynasties or geographical regions. Do students learn the soundbytes? Again, as with the Korean vocabulary, they do memorize them periodically, in order to pass tests. And then most forget them. So are the pattern names meaningful and useful?

About a third of the instructors in my sample, mostly older, second-wave instructors, reply to that question with a resounding no. They’ve never gotten anything about of learning that Dan-Gun (a yellow belt-level ITF pattern) was the legendary founder of Korea in the year 2333 B.C. or that Koryo (one of the pattern sets in WTF styles) is the name of an ancient Korean dynasty. As a result, they don’t push it on their students.

The majority—all but one of the first-wave instructors are in this group—have given the patterns relevant meaning and identified their utility:

By the time you get to first, second whatever degree black belt, you know that Won Hyo (a green belt-level ITF pattern) was the noted monk who introduced Buddhism to the Silla Dynasty of Korea in 686 AD. And you know about the Hwarang Do, and who assassinated the first Japanese governor of Korea and which king reconquered Manchuria.

It gives you a nice connection. I don’t think knowing who a pattern is named after helps you much to learn the pattern, or helps you perform it. But it gives it an added dimension.

– First-wave instructor

While travelling through Korea, I was taken aback by how many historical triggers I had in the back of my mind as a result of memorizing pattern names for fourteen years. There was a statute of Choong-Moo—the name of a red belt pattern—in every town on the coast: Choong-Moo being the pseudonym of Admiral Yi, who invented a kind of pre-cursor to the submarine and drove the Japanese away from the Korean peninsula. Here was a plaque honoring An Chang Ho, the man the green stripe pattern To-San is named after (above mentioned assassin of Hiro Bumi Ito, the first Japanese governor-general of the annexed Korea). Incidents like that made both Korea and Taekwon-do somehow more real to me: a sentiment echoed by the two of the four people in my sample who travelled to Korea (another became interested in the Korean cultural side of Taekwon-do *after* visiting Korea: his first visit was business-motivated).

Most instructors, then, treat these soundbytes of Korean culture as learning and measuring tools. “How do you measure a student’s attitude? Well, if he’s too lazy to learn the meanings of his patterns, that’s one way.” And while most are complacent about them—the true “meaning” of the patterns lies in the physical skills they teach and the patience and perseverance it takes to master them—none resent them. Three respondents raised the issue of alternatives: “What would we call them instead? Pattern one, two and three? Or John A. MacDonald, if we wanted to name them after Canadian patriots? The names go with the art’s heritage.”

The cultural signifiers discussed so far—bow and handshake, Korean vocabulary, meanings of patterns—were not changed in form: the interpreting that took place centred

on the meaning. The meaning was added gradually and unconsciously, so that the process of change wasn't particularly noticed, as the form evolved to be more useful to the instructors.

Such was not the case with the belt ranking system, where the evolution of the meaning and purpose of the belts in Taekwon-do was accompanied by a real, and in many cases major, modification of the system.

Changes in form

Taekwon-do schools use a number of belt ranking systems. Each begins with the white belt and ends with a number of levels of the black belt (dans or degrees).²² The ITF system, which is also the system most frequently used in independent schools, mixes two metaphors: nature and the opposition of black and white. White is innocence and ignorance: black is knowledge and wisdom (as well as "imperviousness to fear" and "ability to fight in the dark").²³ In between are yellow (the seed which is the foundation of knowledge and skill), green (the plant which sprouts from the seed), blue (the sky for which the plant reaches), red (danger and the sun). Each of these colour belts has an in-between level, where a stripe of electric tape of the next colour on the belt—yellow on white, green on yellow—denotes the holder's rank. The colours may have some historical significance with the bone ranks of the Silla dynasty, but the connection is not made

²² Usually nine, as shown in Illustration 1, Chapter 1, page 13.

²³ One hopes something is lost in the translation...

overtly in any ITF training materials (but it's all over the personal web pages of its youngest practitioners).

The standard WTF system has eight belt colours from white to black, including usually yellow, orange, green, blue, red and brown, to which is assigned a meaning specific to Korea's history and culture.²⁴

Independent schools may use one of the above systems, or modified versions that may have up to fifteen full belt levels. The instructors who use one of the modified systems do not feel the need to justify diverting from the "traditional" ranking systems. There is no such thing:

No belt system is traditional. They're all modern creations. Western creations, to give people a sense of achievement.

– First-wave instructor

The story of the black belt is that when you started to train martial arts in the old days, you tied your clothes in the middle with a white belt or cord, to keep them out of the way. As you practiced and practiced, the cord got dirtier and darker. Finally, by the time you were a master, it was black. That's what matters: beginner and master.

– Second-wave instructor

²⁴ The WTF colour belt system, in the schools that I visited, varied a bit. Some schools had a purple belt, some did not have a brown belt; others didn't have a red belt but had two shades of brown; one had two types of red belts and no brown, etc.. The belt colours seem to be less standardized than the ITF colours, where even the thickness of the stripe and its distance from the edge of the belt is codified.

The colours between black and white don't matter that much, and this way, students feel a real sense of achievement every time they test. In half my tests, I ended up with a piece of electric tape on my belt. How do you get excited about that?

– Second-wave instructor

Belts are how you stay motivated, the little steps along the way. But they don't really hold any meaning in and of themselves.

– Second-wave instructor

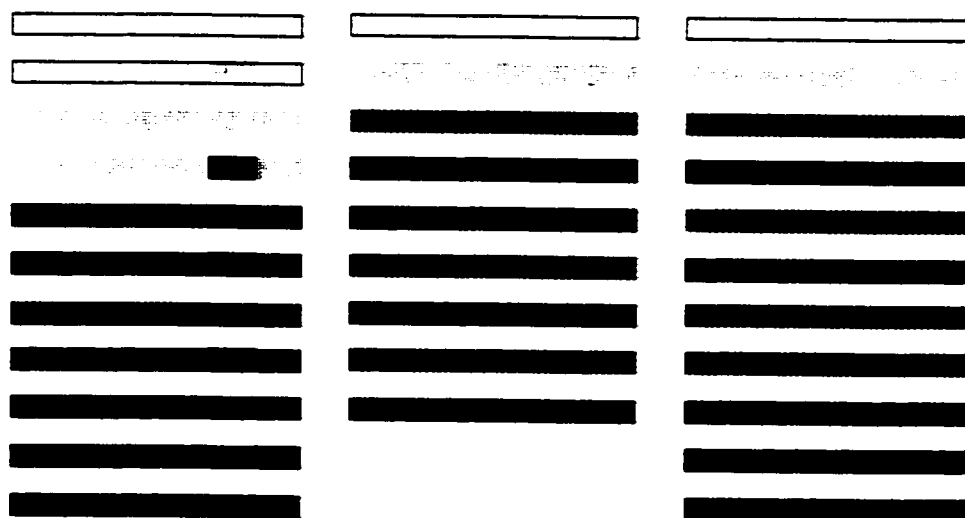
Even the schools using a “traditional” belt system find the need to modify it—for their principal customers: children.

“You can take an adult from white belt to [the next level] in the proscribed eighteen classes. This is basically impossible with a child of six. It takes that long to teach them the stances,” say the instructors.

And if you keep the child at white belt for six months, the child will get bored and frustrated. And that the child—and perhaps its brothers and sisters, as well as parents—will quit. So what do you do?

You improvise, to please your clients.

Illustration 10: Three examples of a colour belt ranking system



Each of the above systems starts with white and ends in black. The variations in-between all have an official, assigned meaning.

Most Canadian Taekwon-do schools have a program called Little Dragons. Little Ninjas. Shadow Warriors or Junior Instructors. along with which they have created an entire white belt level ranking system. This system lets an instructor effectively keep children at the white belt level for the six months or year they need. while allowing them to “promote” and get a new “rank” every one or two months.

Said one instructor:

Sometimes you get a really talented little tyke who doesn't need the program. But I've never had a little boy or girl who would be happy staying at white belt for six months. Even three months, without any sign that, "Hey, you've learnt something! Congratulations!" It's an eternity for the children.

– Second-wave instructor

A second, less frequent modification takes place at the other end of the spectrum—the black belt.

I was losing my black belts and I tried to figure out why. And then, it was so obvious: for the last four years, they had a test of some sort every three or four months. Every three or four months, I was giving them an indication that they learnt something and got better. Then, at black belt, I took it all away. Sure, I had a curriculum and I was teaching them stuff, but they weren't even supposed to think about testing for a year and a half. So now, I have a program where they have to achieve something and do a test every three months. And it's working.

– Second-wave instructor

At this level, the needs of children are paramount once again, although adults benefit from the post-black belt curriculum as well. About a quarter of the schools in my sample had a first-to-second degree black belt milestone system (one had such a system all the way to fourth degree). Three-quarters of the schools had a special program for children that consisted of additional stripes, belt colours or achievement badges.

Table 15: Modifications of the belt system by school

	<u>No Changes</u>	<u>Changes to Junior White Belt</u>	<u>Changes to Black Belt Levels</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=15)</i>	4	11	3*
<i>Group 2 (n=5)</i>	2	3	-

**All the schools with changes at the black belt level also had changes to the children's white belt levels.*

Why was the belt system modified so extensively and so actively in form while the other signifiers discussed here—the bow, handshake, vocabulary—changed very little, if at all, in kind? At the danger of oversimplifying, I think the cultural baggage attached to bowing, counting in Korean and learning the Korean trivia around pattern meanings was both ambiguous and unimportant enough so that the form did not have to be tinkered with for the signifiers to be useful pedagogical tools.

In contrast, the belt ranking system, once the demographic of the student body shifted from adult males to very young children, was found inadequate to its task. Instructors consciously modified the belt system to provide their young students with a more frequent reward system. Notably, all of these changes have taken place at the individual school level, and most date to the late 1980s and early 1990s. None, with the exception of the level of “junior black belt,” have yet been institutionalized by any of the governing bodies, the official publications of which are still targeted at an adult student body.

It was while listening to instructors' comments about the belt ranking system and motivation issues involved in teaching children that I became aware of how conscious Canadian instructors—particularly the younger, second-wave and third-wave instructors—were of shifting demographics and market pressure.

Market pressures and discipline

In the 1970s, the Korean masters had it easy, at least the way the first-wave Canadian instructors tell it. The first Canadian Taekwon-do students were dedicated, disciplined and devoted. Also, they were ignorant and naïve, and had very limited choice as to where they could learn martial arts.

They trained almost every day, attended every tournament their instructor supported, and “when the old man said jump, you asked how high.” Even the students who looked at their masters with more realistic eyes put up with a lot, because if you left, where were you going to go? In the 1970s, most cities had one Taekwon-do school, and two or three other martial arts schools, if that.

The first schools operated by Canadian instructors were sown in an equally fertile and indiscriminating land. Branch schools that opened in small towns and rural centres usually enjoyed a martial arts monopoly, and when the first-wave instructors started

opening their own schools in major cities, they were an increasingly welcome alternative.²⁵

There are many, many more schools today. Cities the size of Calgary, Edmonton and Winnipeg have sixty or more major martial arts schools each.²⁶ Martial arts schools are everywhere, and the supply of instructors is still increasing. At the same time, the make-up of the clientele is changing.

The first students were adult males, in their late teens and twenties, with thirty-somethings appearing old. Women were few and children unheard-of: they wouldn't be able to handle the work-outs. Over the last three decades, the demographic of the student body changed drastically. Today, an influx of women students has almost completely evened out the gender ratio, and the even greater influx of children has reduced the mean student age in all clubs.

Young martial artists—as young as four years old—are the fastest growing demographic, and where in the 1970s, most Taekwon-do (and other martial arts) schools simply did not take children, in the 1990s, most schools depend on children to pay the bills. “Children are how you make money; adults are the icing” is a common sentiment.

²⁵ An alternative to the Korean masters, who were, in the 1980s, losing much of their exotic appeal.

²⁶ Based on 1999 Yellow Pages listings. Interestingly, Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal have significantly fewer listings of martial arts schools. Do a few larger schools dominate the market more completely? That certainly appears to be the case in Ottawa, for Taekwon-do as well as other martial arts. I would love to see someone conduct a comprehensive demographic study on the state of martial arts in Canada, and so would other martial arts instructors. It would help plot marketing plans.

A school of a 100 students today is likely to have 70 junior members and 30 adults. And while among the juniors there are still significantly more little boys than little girls, the adult gender ratio is 1:1 at most clubs. Older adults, in their 40s, 50s and 60s, are also becoming an established and regular demographic in martial arts clubs, with some clubs offering Senior Tiger classes as well as Junior Tykes programs.

Second-wave instructors accept these demographic changes: first-wave instructors are a little prone to resenting them:

There's a lot talk in the media about the popularity of martial arts. What most of those stories miss is that these new people who are taking Taekwon-do now, they'd never have the nerve to walk into a dojang in the old days. The instructors would scare them away! I'm not sure if they really had the luxury to be picky, or whether they were stupid—considering the mess a lot of them ended up in they might've just been stupid—but now, you're always looking for not new students, but new types of students.

– First-wave instructors

Women's self defence programs were popular for a while. That's declined a bit. Then there was an explosion in kids. I used to have just one kids class. Now I have four different ages and levels, and we're talking about starting a fifth.

– Second-wave instructor

We noticed that a lot of parents asked about joining, but then they wouldn't, because they were already here two nights a week with their kids, and didn't want to spend two more nights here training themselves. So first, we doubled up the kids and adults classes, and then we created a kids and parents class.

– Third-wave instructor

The younger instructors are very aware of something the first-wave instructors took a long time to learn: “This is my business. They’re my students, but they’re also my clients.”

“A lot of the old time instructors just never got that: that you have to change with the times. Not compromise the art, just recognize that people are looking for different things.” explained one young, and very financially successful, instructor.

The current enthusiasm for Tae-Bo and Taekwon-do aerobics²⁷ is being co-opted by “traditional” instructors, as a temporary source of cash flow and perhaps a longer-term way of getting new students.

Even the most reluctant first-wave instructors have bowed to market pressure one way or another. The level of discipline and punishment currently expected and meted out in most dojangs is the clearest indication of this change.

²⁷ Tae-Bo, Cardio-Kick, Boxercise, Taerobics, Martial Dance etc. are all permutations on the theme of performing certain martial arts moves to music, as a variation on aerobics. Martial arts being traditionally an anaerobic type of exercise, the application is... interesting. You can perhaps discern that I am not a fan.

I'm much more flexible now than I ever was. Some of my junior black belts say that I'm softer—they miss the discipline of the old days—but you can't be who you were back then now. Times have changed and so have people. And so have I.

– First-wave instructor

Today's schools, says a unanimous consensus of my sample, have less discipline and less punishment than schools of old. None of the full-time instructors or first-wave instructors think this loosening up is a bad thing.

I can't maintain discipline the way the Koreans did and I don't want to. I don't yell, I don't ostracize and I don't want my students walking on egg shells. I give out punishments for similar things as my instructor did—hurting a student, excessive talking or giggling for the kids, not trying hard enough, stuff like that—but I do it different.

– Third-wave instructor

I'll never yell 'You so-and-so, do 50 push-ups!' I'll just say, firmly but pretty quietly, 'That'll cost you 50.'

– Second-wave instructor

I don't expect total silence in the class like my instructor did. I talk with my students, and I want them to talk with each other. If it gets too much, I'll tell them and they listen.

– First-wave instructor

One of the things student expect to get from us is discipline, rules, a structure. So we have to provide some of that. With the adults, it's easy. I don't think I ever punish adults. With the kids, it's harder.

– Second-wave instructor

The full-time instructors are in consensus that the discipline they maintain is different, and positively so, from that of their instructors. Their part-time assistants disagree. Many of them long for the days of the iron rod, which many did not ever experience. These sentiments:

*Students today are allowed to get away with too much. I remember being booted out of class when I was nine years old for having a bad attitude. Now, you might just ignore the kid, or at the worst give him push-ups or a stern talking to ... You don't want to upset his parents.*²⁸

– Second-wave, part-time instructor

I think there's less discipline now than there was. But, if I was running my own school, I'm not sure that I could enforce it more strictly. I'd like to try.

– Third-wave, part-time instructor

are very typical of the group.

There is a clear age and generational divergence on the crime and punishment issue among Canadian instructors. The first-wavers, conscious perhaps of unjust punishments during the true days of old, and also “older and mellow and more confident,” are settling for real respect and a sense of camaraderie with their students.

Explained one senior instructor:

²⁸ Incidentally, push-ups, the traditional punishment tool in martial arts schools, while not dying out, are getting an image make-over. They're part of warm-ups, drills and games. “I love push-ups and I want the kids to love doing push-ups. So I don't want to associate them with punishment,” said one first-wave instructor.

I don't need the external signs of respect as much as I did when I was younger. I know it's there. The real discipline is there: people are learning and working hard. They're just not afraid to laugh and talk.

– First-wave instructor

The younger instructors—specifically those who are now in their twenties—are not necessarily advocates of more punitive actions, but they want to enforce a stricter discipline. “Less talking, less goofing off, less complaining. I don’t want my students to even think about saying they’re tired or making faces when they don’t like an exercise. More sweating,” one young instructor set out the changes he would make to the level of discipline in the school where he trained.

For the first-wave instructors, the memory of the iron discipline exercised by their Korean masters is not a pleasant one, and it tempers how much discipline they expect, and the sort of punishment they give out. In Chapter 5 – Loyalty and Agony, I said that the Korean masters became the yardstick against which Canadian instructors measured themselves. In the case of discipline and punishment, they usually did it in active opposition. Most of the younger instructors, conversely, have no traumatic memories of excessive punishment, and they would like to see a higher level of discipline in their schools—setting themselves up in opposition to their own “mellow” instructors.

But even these young part-timers do not have a romantic view of the Korean instructors, Korean culture or Korean Taekwon-do.

Our martial art

It was created in Korea, but it's our martial art now.

– First-wave instructor

The way I feel about Taekwon-do and Korea is best said: thank you for coming up with Taekwon-do. It's great. But it's ours now.

– Second-wave instructor

Four of the instructors I interviewed have been to Korea: one on business, one as a tourist, one to an ITF Taekwon-do World Championship (in North Korea), and one to train at WTF headquarters. All enjoyed their trips; only the one who travelled specifically to train was enthusiastic over Korea. None feel a burning desire to go back—“There are a lot of other places I haven't been to that I'd rather see first,” said one. Of the rest of the respondents, consisting of those who have never gone to Korea, none really wanted to go. “I wouldn't mind going, but I don't really, really want to go.” was a standard response. One instructor was learning Korean at the time of the interview, two others had tried learning *hangul*, the Korean syllabry, at some point. But for most, “there are more useful languages to learn.”

Table 16: Have you ever been to Korea?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=43)</i>	4	39
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	1	11

Table 17: Would you like to go to Korea?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=39)</i>	7	31
<i>Group 2 (n=11)</i>	2	9

Table 18: Do you speak/have tried to learn Korean?

	<u>Speak (a little)</u>	<u>Tried learning</u>	<u>No, but would like to</u>	<u>No, and don't want to</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=42)</i>	1	2	8	31
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	-	1	1	10

While most instructors feel that practising Taekwon-do has increased their knowledge of Korean culture, they don't consider the increase significant. "I knew so little about Korea before that now, knowing that Taekwon-do is a Korean martial art and

knowing what the flag looks like, that's more than I knew before," said one second-wave instructor, in an answer echoed in content by many others. And none think that the Taekwon-do taught in Korea is better than the Taekwon-do they are learning and teaching in Canada.

Table 19: Respondents' interest in Asian culture after Taekwon-do

	<u>Active Interest</u>	<u>Passive Interest</u>	<u>No Interest</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=36)</i>	6	10	20

Table 20: Do you know more about Korea as a result of Taekwon-do?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=39)</i>	30	9
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	6	6

I rather expected to hear this last sentiment from the ITF affiliated instructors, as there is effectively no Taekwon-do in North Korea and the Taekwon-do practised in South Korea is, according to ITF's founder and president, a "bastardized imitation." I did not expect it from the WTF instructors: Seoul is still the world capital of Tae Kwon Do, home of its political headquarters and the Tae Kwon Do University. But the WTF instructors don't have a pull towards Seoul either. Even the one person who trained at the

Kukkiwon, while awed by the intensity of the eight-hour-train-until-you-drop days, was not awed at the quality of the Taekwon-do. Neither are others.

I've heard a lot of the good instructors emigrated, and the general quality of Taekwon-do abroad is better than in Korea. The Olympic demonstration team or things like that, they're really impressive, but people say the regular training is just not that good.

– Second-wave WTF instructor

I don't think I could be learning anything better over there. I'm learning the best I can right here.

– Third-wave WTF instructor

This change in sense of ownership is perhaps most apparent in the names of Canadian Taekwon-do schools. The first Taekwon-do schools were named after the Korean masters: Bae's Taekwon-do Club, Cho Taekwon-do College, Choi's Taekwon-do School, Park's Taekwon-do Centre, Lee's School of Taekwon-do, Kang's Tae Kwon Do Academy.²⁹ The first schools opened by Canadian instructors had ambiguous, but Oriental-sounding names: Ironfist, Dragon, Tiger. Then, when being a non-Korean instructor became a marketable asset, schools with names like Mike's Taekwon-do and Ray's Taekwon-do appeared. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, however, schools started to be named for Canadian geographic or climatic features—Chinook, Foothills, Wild Rose, Kitslano, Greater Vancouver, Pacific Rim, Tecumseh, Western, Beaches, Medicine Hat (there are four schools in Calgary called the Calgary Taekwon-do College / Academy

²⁹ And that about exhausts the supply of Korean family names.

/ School / Club). There may be a countertrend starting, though, with schools that opened more recently bearing names such as Chon Ji (Heaven and Earth in Korean and the name of the first ITF pattern), Tien Lung (dragon in Chinese) and Kirin (unicorn in Japanese). The trend suggests a renewed interest in (and saleability of?) Asian, but not specifically Korean, culture.³⁰

Who cares about Korean culture, then? Well, the female instructors do not. Of the twelve female instructors in my sample proper, only one was enthusiastic about things Korean and Asian. She was learning *hangul*, she read extensively about Korean history, and she researched into the meaning and symbolism of many of the cultural aspects of Taekwon-do. A second was appreciative of what she knew of Korean culture, wished to learn more, and regretted not having done so in the past. The rest did not care. They referred, on several occasions, to the sexist cultural baggage of Taekwon-do, of the stupidity of adhering to traditions just because they were traditions, and of the inapplicability of Korean philosophy to Canadian students.

³⁰ The inclusion of these schools names here does not mean that its instructors participated in this research project: it means that I am aware of the existence of their names.

Most first-wave instructors, too, have little love for Korean cultural traditions. I've tried to show, in Chapter 5 – Loyalty and Agony, that the Korean master did not pass on very much Korean culture to his Canadian students (some students would also claim that he did not pass on very much Taekwon-do). I've also suggested that the dramatic and negative circumstances under which many of the first-wave instructors left their Korean masters contributed to their lack of enthusiasm towards Korean culture. As a result, most of the first-wave instructors taught their students very little Koreana, and did not infuse them with an appreciation of Korean culture.

But, some of these students learnt to appreciate it anyway. I suggest that this attitude towards culture is changing again. Young instructors, particularly those who have started Taekwon-do as children, and those who are strongly rooted in a non-Canadian cultural background, are becoming more interested in Asian—although not necessarily Korean—culture. As one of these instructors put it, “culture is so cool, man, and we should do more of it.”

Many of them feel “the cultural stuff” wasn't stressed enough by their instructors. They have been searching it out on their own, and planning to pass it on to their students. They're trying to learn about martial arts philosophy and Asian history and culture. The result is a rather peculiar philosophy-ideology, as we will see in Chapter 7.

Underlying all of these issues is, of course, the student-instructor relationship, which will be the topic of Chapter 8.

Part III (The Spirit)

VII

PHILOSOPHY AND PRAGMATISM:

Filing the Empty Suitcase

The utmost purpose of Taekwon-do is to eliminate fighting by discouraging the stronger's oppression of the weaker with a power that must be based on humanity, justice, morality, wisdom and faith, thus helping to build a better and more peaceful world.

...

The philosophy of Taekwon-do is based on the ethical, moral and spiritual standards by which men can live together in harmony, and its art patterns are inspired by the ideals and exploits of great men from Korean history.

*from Philosophy of Taekwon-Do,
ITF Encyclopedia (Choi 1995: 47)*

When I first envisioned this project, I had thought of it in terms of change in Taekwon-do's ideology. My choice of words here is telling: after more than a decade of Taekwon-do training, the first word that came to mind when I thought of the non-physical aspect of Taekwon-do was ideology—not philosophy, and certainly not spirituality.

In this chapter, I use the metaphor of filling the empty suitcase (a phrase coined by one of my respondents) to represent how Canadian instructors assembled their own

individualized Taekwon-do philosophy. Here, the student-instructor interaction is conspicuous by its absence, underlining the erratic process of knowledge transmission in Taekwon-do. What Taekwon-do practitioners learn and know about the philosophical and spiritual side of their martial arts comes to them from many sources, but their instructor is not one of them. Instructors do not teach philosophy—in the words of one respondent, “it’s not the Canadian way.”

The philosophy we will discuss in this chapter, for the most part, does not refer to teaching philosophy or style—those will be the topic of Chapter 8. The philosophy we’re exploring here is the elusive “*do*” of Taekwon-do.

Martial arts enthusiasts and authorities alike often state that we in the West miss the entire point of the martial arts because we learn them “accompanied by little or no historical background” (Lohse 1999: 12) and “ripped out of their cultural context” (Draeger 1978: 69). They urge the ardent practitioner to educate herself and learn the philosophy—the implied cultural heritage—of her martial art.

Philosophy, and its implicit promise to make the practitioner a better, more complete person, has been the justification for the martial arts throughout the twentieth century. The modern day founders of the Asian martial arts, such as judo’s Dr. Kano and aikido’s Morihei Ueshiba, stressed the non-physical benefits of their respective arts as the true student’s real goal. Physical prowess and self-defence were at best the penultimate objective and ideally merely the means to the end.

The very definition of a martial art, particularly to differentiate it from a sport (or martial sport), is usually tied to this philosophy. Academics and practitioners alike, including the majority of the respondents in this study, believe that it is the philosophy, the supplement to physical skill, that makes this thing they practice a martial art rather than a sport, exercise or pure self-defence (Lester-Park 1993; Orlando 1997).¹ After all, if you strip away the rhetoric of self-actualization (Thirer and Grabiner 1980), non-aggression (Nosanchuk 1981) and mind-body union (Kleinman 1986), you are left with either a codified system of brutally maiming and killing people or a dangerous-in-the-ring but otherwise impractical contact sport.²

It seems a logical plan of action, if you are interested in exploring the cultural changes a martial art has undergone, that you should focus on the martial art's philosophy and how that is understood by practitioners.

That plan may well work for other martial arts. It doesn't quite work for Taekwon-do.

¹ Once again, I am somewhat sidestepping the sport/martial art question. As I mentioned before, none of my respondents were particularly interested in it. And sport, after all, is also not just purely physical activity. The belief that sport shapes or at least contributes to good character is prevalent in Western society, as exemplified by such cultural phenomena as muscular Christianity, the legacy of the YMCA and the proliferation of Little Leagues.

² Depending on the predilection of the instructor, Taekwon-do can be either of these.

The chief challenge in studying martial arts in their adoptive countries is that not only did they transform significantly and immediately upon their emigration to the West, but they transformed even more significantly in their country of origin during the early half of the twentieth century. With perhaps no art is this truer than with Taekwon-do. The brief history of Taekwon-do presented in Chapter 4 clearly shows that the Taekwon-do that was named in the 1950s and that arrived in the West in the 1960s and 1970s had but the most tenuous ties with "ancient" Korean martial arts. As Taekwon-do was created to be a Korean "instrument of nation building" (Park 1974), both at home and abroad, it seems a reasonable hypothesis that the art would have a nationalistic, patriotic type of philosophy. But, Taekwon-do was also designed for mass export to the world, which was probably not really interested in Korean patriotism. So exactly what is it that you get in Taekwon-do's spiritual suitcase?

You get a smorgasbord of information, rooted in Korean culture and peopled by Korean heroes, delivered in pre-masticated, easily digestible chunks. Taekwon-do's official philosophy is secular in the main, but it also delivers tidbits of Buddhist, Neo-Confucian and "ancient Oriental" wisdom... along with a sprinkling of quotes from Western philosophers. But before looking at how Canadian instructors have changed Taekwon-do's philosophy, we have to deal with two questions.

What is Taekwon-do philosophy? And, have Canadian instructors learnt it?

The model philosophy

The goal in martial arts is... awareness. It is in having a mind, and a spirit, like the reflection of the moon in water, with one's mind and body reflecting the totality of the other, eliminating separation between the two.

– Takuan (Lohse, 1999: 10)

From Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* and the spiritual bent of Dr. Kano,³ the martial arts and spirituality have a long historical and pseudo-mythical association. The most popular martial arts origin story features a Buddhist monk (see Chapter 4), and warrior codes and stories of spiritual attainment and perfection found at the end of a sword abound in both Eastern and Western histories (Fields: 1991).⁴

All of the major spiritual and philosophical traditions of Asia have at some point intertwined with the development of martial arts, and have, in the 20th century, been re-conscripted into their service. Taoism and Zen Buddhism have played the most significant roles, and books with permutations on titles such as *Zen and the Martial Arts* and *The Tao of Martial Arts* continue to crop up regularly today.

³ Kano Jigoro (1860-1938) was the founder of judo, likely the first modern global martial art/sport.

⁴ I will not get into this fascinating question—Warrior Codes and cultural justifications of professional corpses of murderers—here, but I highly recommend Rick Field's *The Code of the Warrior* as a starting point to further reading. It's popular rather than scholarly, and more romantic than critical, but well researched and thorough, and suggests all sorts of avenues for more research.

In China, the relationship between spirituality and the martial arts begins before the beginning, with India's Bodidharma (see Chapter 4), and continues to be close to this day, particularly in the "soft" or "internal" martial arts (Maliszewski 1996, Chang 1978). Tai Chi is one example of a martial art that is indelibly tied with Taoist practice, where the martial aspects, hidden within soft, slow movements, are tools through which students learn Taoist principles. In Japan, the relationship was codified into *budo*, the samurai code of the warrior that captured the imaginations of martial arts and laymen worldwide. Closely associated with Zen Buddhism, *budo* made its mark on art and poetry that idolized the samurai, and it was to this tradition that fathers of modern day Japanese martial arts, from judo to aikido to kendo, went for their core philosophy.

In Korea, the Code of the Hwarang, which preceded the Japanese *budo* phenomenon by half a millennium, gradually became infused with Buddhism (Maliszewski 1996: 53) and then gave way to Neo-Confucianism. The impact of classical Confucian thought and Neo-Confucianism on East Asian culture, social organization and politics is a popular topic: a Neo-Confucian influence in the historic development of martial arts in the region is also now being documented (Nemeth 1992; Seckler 1992). Korea, the most Confucian of the East Asian nations (Macdonald 1990), embraced a strongly Neo-Confucian state policy for the six hundred years prior to Taekwon-do's creation. It was, then, in a land of primarily Neo-Confucian thought, with a retrospective nostalgia for the Hwarang, that modern Korean martial arts developed. The influence of Japanese Zen Buddhism, and its particular martial arts permutation, was also prominent.

as the majority of the twentieth century masters studied Japanese martial arts, many of them (Taekwon-do's Choi Hong Hi among them) in Japan.

But Taekwon-do's official philosophy was not organically grown from Neo-Confucianism, Buddhism, or pre-Hwarang animism: the Korean Taekwon-do Association, and after it each of the WTF and ITF, patched together a philosophy that, although rooted in Korean culture, addressed each organization's political goals and needs.

Each of the major federations has developed its own model of Taekwon-do philosophy, and the smaller splinter federations further modify their own. I will limit discussion here to the official philosophies of the WTF and the ITF, which are both vague enough to house the variations of the splinter groups. Here's an example of one author trying to cover all the metaphysical bases:

A major feature of the art is the development of a certain *spirit* which carries over into all aspects of life. ... *Do* in Korean means "art," "path" "way" or "way of life." It is the way in which the dynamics of the human personality interact with the forces of the universe.

The philosophy of Taekwon-do has as its roots many of the tenets held by religious masters and devout laymen throughout history. These qualities can be traced back to the influence of Buddhism, and its aim of the "Master of Self." ...

The focus of Taekwon-do philosophy is to offer a means by which the student can rid him/herself of the ego, or what Zen-Buddhists call "discriminating mind," in order to live in harmony with the universe.

from Philosophy of Taekwon-do.
WTF Reference Guide
(Park, Park & Gerard 1989: 185)

The WTF model, as befits an Olympic sport, is rooted in physicality. Healthy, strong, skilled bodies make their owners self-confident, generous and virtuous, because all virtues start in self-confidence.⁵

The practitioner of Taekwondo learns "respect, confidence, self-control, discipline, concentration and patience" while his body is gaining "balance, speed, flexibility and endurance."⁶ The goal of Taekwon-do's philosophy is "the realization of the relationship between man and nature or the universe as discovered through practising, and how to live in harmony with that universe" (Lee 1995: 27). Part of the way you achieve this realization is by developing "Taekwon-do spirit," which is "the mental frame of the ideal human being into which Taekwondo training seeks to develop" (Lee 1995: 28) And, ultimately,

Taekwondo in the form of education, sport of human personification (or "*do*") seeks a practical philosophy based on a martial morality which gives man a way to think and act with propriety recognized as an intrepid, altruistic human being. (Lee 1995: 29)

⁵ <http://www.worldsport.com/sports/taekwondo/home.html>. I should also add a caveat here that, obviously, I understand the ITF model much more intuitively than I do the WTF model, and I apologize to WTF practitioners for any misinterpretation. I also found the WTF model to be much more diverse, with various authors personalizing their interpretation of Taekwon-do's philosophy. The ITF model is codified, the Odokwan way.

⁶ <http://members.aol.com/ustcgyd/ustcinfo.html>

Whatever adjectives come to your mind as you read these soundbytes of philosophy.⁷ secular must certainly be one of them.

The ITF model, while very similar, is also (officially) more cohesive as it reflects the personal beliefs of its one author, Choi Hong Hi.

Consisting of five basic tenets loosely based on the Code of the Hwarang, moral culture, a predication of the mental effects of training and a one-page philosophy summary, Choi's Taekwon-do philosophy is completely and unabashedly secular.⁸ But it is neither a humble nor a subtle philosophy: it begins with the premise that human beings are the lords of creation (Choi 1995: 47)⁹ and echoes throughout with the fervent belief that adherence to this philosophy will make the world a better place.

A fascinating aspect of the ITF model is the integration of bits of Western philosophical history into Choi's martial art for the world. In the explanations of the tenets, Korean proverbs, Confucian sayings and quotes from Lao-Tzu are interwoven with mentions of Scotland's Robert Bruce, Persia's Xerxes and Sparta's heroes.

⁷ "Hokey" and "cheesy" are among them for me. I love Taekwon-do, truly, but I think most of its propaganda could have used a better translator and better editor. What exactly is "martial morality," anyway?

⁸ Yet the General himself is a deeply spiritual man, leading one of the respondents to suggest that the secularity of Taekwon-do's philosophy was conscious, so that it could be easily accepted and personalized by the individual.

⁹ It's likely that statements like the above that contribute to Choi's reputation (within the WTF) as a North Korean sympathizer and Communist. Introducing the pattern Juche into the ITF cannon probably didn't help either (see Chapter 4).

The key assumption of both models is that for the “true practitioner,” cultivation of the spirit must accompany the cultivation of the body.

Most books written by Taekwon-do instructors, Korean or otherwise, and intended for a North American audience, are heavy on pictures of techniques and light on text. Nonetheless, each of these books contains the requisite page or two on “The Philosophy of Taekwon-do,” in which the authors ascertain that Taekwon-do is “more than just kicking and punching” (Park, Park & Gerrard 1989: 185).

But is it?

Olympic-style Taekwon-do has been, along with judo, the most sport-like martial art. Its organizing body, the WTF, is devoted almost completely to regulating, proscribing and organizing competitions. WTF manuals, books and web pages focus primarily on competition rules and announcements of tournaments past, present and future.

ITF-affiliated sources, in turn, focus on correct execution of techniques, proper style and the theoretical explanations behind movements. Neither propaganda machine puts much effort into philosophy.

The core philosophy put forward by Taekwon-do authors is very similar, regardless of political affiliation. It talks of mind-body union, justice, morality, peace and goodwill towards all men. It has all the elements necessary to make the practitioner a better (if not complete and spiritually enlightened) person. However, the “party line” is not much use if it’s not taught.

And it's not, despite Taekwon-do's founders' attempts to create a culture-light, easily translatable, ecumenical and inoffensive philosophy.

The reality

Does Taekwon-do have a philosophy?

Does Taekwon-do have a philosophy? Yeah. Sure. Well, of course it does.

So, what is it?

It's the... you know. It's a personal thing.

– Second-wave instructor

Regardless of generation, gender, age, ethnicity and personal, spiritual or religious convictions of instructor, teaching of philosophy has played a minimal role in most Canadian Taekwon-do schools. No instructors recalled being taught "philosophy" or discussing "spirituality" with their instructors. Yet, all believed that 1) Taekwon-do has a philosophy, 2) they learnt it, 3) they follow it, 4) it has made them better people and 5) they somehow pass it on to their students.

For the purpose of my interviews, I defined the terms "philosophy," "spirituality" and "religion" as "whatever they mean to you." I had ready, simple definitions prepared in case a respondent asked me for an example of a definition, but none did. In their own

minds, they had clear ideas of what each term meant and how each differed from the others.¹⁰

Three of the respondents felt they were neither religious nor spiritual. One described herself as a very spiritual Christian. The rest considered themselves spiritual people, some with associated institutionalized religions, many more brought up in a religion and no longer practising, a few with articulated and well-thought out anti-institutional religions feelings.

Their experience with party line Taekwon-do philosophy was overwhelmingly similar, regardless of age, generation or gender.

Table 21: Are you a spiritual/religious person?

	<u>No</u>	<u>Non-practising, Spiritual*</u>	<u>Practising, Spiritual</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=40)</i>	3	36	1

**Non-practising, spiritual includes those respondents who were raised in religious families, but who were not currently participating in any official religious practices.*

No one was taught much philosophy by their instructors. It began with the Korean instructors, perhaps, who could not teach it even if they wanted to because of the initial

¹⁰ My quick definitions were: “philosophy—a way of thinking”; “spirituality—a belief in something more than the material”; “religion—an organized belief system, like Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism.”

language barrier (which most of them never overcame). But, just because they were not taught doesn't mean that they didn't learn. After all, all popular books, and the ITF Encyclopedia (published periodically since 1967), always described what the philosophy of Taekwon-do was. Every instructor has read something about the topic; about half of the ITF instructors had read their encyclopedia often enough to quote sizable bits of it at me. But, once they learnt it, most did not feel inspired to "spread the word" and enlighten their students. Why?

Because, as one second-wave instructor put it ruefully, "the philosophy was... well, kind of silly."

The philosophy stuff that's officially part of Taekwon-do is... well, let's just say it loses something in the translation. Let's take the student oath, for example, which we're supposed to say every class, but we don't at my school. We don't because I can't say it with a straight face. The first one—I shall observe the tenets of Taekwon-do—that's fine. The second one—I shall respect instructors and seniors—that's really good. Everyone should know and believe that. The third one—I shall never misuse Taekwon-do—that's okay, but we're starting on the slope. Next... I shall be a champion of freedom and justice and the last one, I shall build a more peaceful world. I mean, come on! Can you see a bunch of twenty-year-old Canadians saying that?

– Third-wave instructor (ITF)

I've read it, but I don't understand it, and I don't think it's because I'm stupid. It's because it's incomprehensible.

– Second-wave instructor (WTF)

I think there are two things wrong with Taekwon-do philosophy. The first is that whoever translated it into English didn't speak English very well. The second is that it hasn't been taught by example.

– First-wave instructor (ITF)

The philosophy in the Encyclopedia... it's so basic. There's nothing unique about it, really, it's all the same eternal theme: be a good person, be just, be moral.

– Second-wave instructor (ITF)

I know the definitions, I know the creed, and I have students learn them for tests. Other than that, I don't use them. I think the real philosophy, the real meaning of Taekwon-do is taught by living it, by being a good role model for your students.

– Second-wave instructor (WTF)

The official philosophy, then, did not offer much to most Taekwon-do practitioners. In the case of several young second-wave and later instructors, role-modeling themselves on a respected instructor or senior peer became the way to the “way” of Taekwon-do. Those who did not approve of their instructors’ morals and ethics looked for an alternate model.

And so how do you find this philosophy that exists yet has not been taught to you? Here, the respondents split, unequally, along two lines.

The first group, the somewhat larger of the two, has “to be frank, not thought about it very much.” The physical practice of Taekwon-do has given these practitioners a sense of discipline and self-control that they believe makes them better people—the goal

of any good philosophy, ideology or religion. They hope to impart those same benefits to their students through rigorous training of the body. "A good instructor should not talk too much." is one of the tenets of this particular philosophy.

The second group has gone shopping.

Supermarket philosophy?

I've read a lot of the Taekwon-do books, not really for the technique, but for philosophy and history. And, I'm sorry to say, the philosophy doesn't do that much for me. I'd rather read some of the things written on the Japanese martial arts, especially aikido.

– Second-wave instructor

Probably the best thing I've read on martial arts philosophy was The Way of the Samurai. And Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.

– First-wave instructor

I read a lot of self-help type psychologically books rather than martial arts books. The martial arts philosophy stuff that's out there doesn't help me. Right now, I'm reading Seven Habits of Highly Effective People and that's helping me train myself better and run my business better.

– First-wave instructor

I've explored a lot of the Zen and the martial arts writing when I was younger. Now, I'm going back to my Christian roots and finding that my spirituality is very Christian. And I'm looking at Taekwon-do philosophy that way.

– First-wave instructor

I've gone through a Korean philosophy phase, and a Zen Buddhism phase. Never got into Taoism. Now, what I'm really into is learning about coaching and teaching.

– Second-wave instructor

One respondent, of a very strong and original spiritual bent, has delved into the more occult writings of both Eastern and Western writers, creating a personal martial arts philosophy that has a great deal to do with Taoist mysticism... and even more with Celtic magic. Most, however, are less final-product oriented, and more interested in specific aspects of the philosophies they are exploring.

"I find Zen most applicable to sparring," one instructor explained her interest in Japanese Zen Buddhism. "When I think during sparring, I make mistakes and I get hurt. I do best when my mind is empty and my body just does."

This eclectic, open approach to philosophy among these instructors is not unique: purists are a minority in the martial arts as practiced and written about in the West. Practitioners of Korean martial arts have very few sources of Korean spiritual and philosophical tradition available to them. The only book on martial arts spirituality written by a practitioner of Korean martial arts (Shaw 1998) is full of predominantly Japanese Zen references, and Michael Maliszewski, who writes on spiritual and healing traditions and the martial arts, is the only author who treats that aspect of Korean martial arts with any depth (Maliszewski 1992a, 1996).

Once they assemble their personalized philosophy, instructors are reluctant to share it with their students. “Maybe it’s the Canadian trait of not pushing our opinions on anyone,” said one instructor. “I just wouldn’t feel comfortable.”

“It’d be like preaching to my students,” concurred another.

“If students ask me about it—about the philosophy of Taekwon-do or the martial arts—I might refer them to books I’ve read. But I would stress that it’s personal.”

Part of the reluctance to share lies in a lack of conviction in the legitimacy of the philosophy. “This is the right thing for me. I like it. I wouldn’t want to define it for someone else, just as I didn’t want someone to define it for me,” a young third-wave instructor explained.

Is students’ character development my responsibility? A little, yes. But my role is to teach them skills and to provide them with a good example and strong leadership. I teach the tenets by trying to demonstrate them in class. Their religion, their spirituality—that’s all a very personal thing.

– First-wave instructor

I’ve referred students to sources when they’ve asked. I’ve been cautious about offering advice where it wasn’t asked for, but these days—I guess I’m getting older and bolder—I’m likely to lend a student a book or an article, if I get a sense that they need it.

– First-wave instructor

If the cycle or continuity in the learning and transmission of knowledge in Taekwon-do generally is erratic—and I’ve tried to show that it is—in the case of

philosophy, it is effectively nonexistent. Instructors teach their students the physical skills of Taekwon-do, and feel that the students should also learn the philosophy of Taekwon-do. But they don't feel comfortable talking about it. Most Taekwon-do practitioners with an interest in the philosophical and the spiritual reinvent the wheel each generation, with possibly a small amount of cautious, disinterested help from their instructors. Most instructors prefer to teach philosophy by example, not by word. And although actions may speak louder than words, they're also open to more interpretation. The result of this reluctance to share and transmit is a highly eclectic, individualized philosophy, much of which is quite estranged—if not completely divorced—from the official philosophy pandered by the federations.

Discussing cultural change then, in the philosophy of Taekwon-do, is nearly impossible. What occurs instead is not really change but discovery, or recreation. This process does not negate the official philosophy: it either ignores it or supplements it. In the end, however they get there, most Canadian instructors end up with a philosophical suitcase that's as full as they need it to be. Their philosophical clothes fit them, and conform to the day's fashions.

The contents are shaped by what they brought to Taekwon-do, and the amount of Korean merchandise in the suitcase has most to do with the age at which they started Taekwon-do and the place where they were (not) born.

Learning from Korean instructors, for the respondents in my sample, did not bode well for a respondent's future interest in Korean culture, or Asian philosophy. This

particular correlation is rather sad, but very clear: those who were taught by a Korean instructors were either indifferent or outright negative towards the Korean cultural aspects of Taekwon-do, philosophy included. Several respondents, who had profoundly negative experiences, were consciously hostile and took some pains to “de-Koreanize” their schools, their teaching styles and their philosophies. The four instructors who did not have a negative experience with their Korean master¹¹ did not experience the opposite effect: their reaction to Korean culture, from the bow to the flag, was accepting, uninterested and indifferent (versus enthusiastic).

This more or less complete lack of sympathy and antipathy characterizes most instructors’ attitudes to Taekwon-do philosophy, and Korean culture.

But philosophy and culture are not completely without their advocates. Many of the younger instructors think that “culture is really cool and we’ve kind of been robbed.” They’ve been in Taekwon-do since ages six to twelve, spending most of their formative years in the company of older Taekwon-do practitioners and now, in their twenties, they’re just now coming into their own as professional instructors. They have teaching experience under their belts, and what they are interested in now is philosophy. And history and culture are tied into philosophy for them. When they say they want to learn more about Taekwon-do’s philosophy, they often mean that they want to learn more about Korea. They feel the “cultural stuff” wasn’t stressed enough by their instructors.

¹¹ See Table 7 in Chapter 5 – Loyalty and Agony.

and they're seeking it out on their own, many with the intent of teaching it to their students.

Instructors who are strongly rooted in a non-Canadian cultural background are also interested in Asian philosophies and Korean culture. Immigrants, children of immigrants, or people who have maintained a strong link with their cultural heritage, are much more interested in the Korean/Asian cultural aspects of Taekwon-do than people who define their cultural background as "Canadian."

The "*do*" of teaching

Two points from this discussion deserve to be highlighted. The first is that the student-instructor tension, so prevalent in the previous three chapters, is absent from my respondents' discussion of philosophy. It's a non-issue: as they did not talk about it, the students and instructors did not have a chance to fight about it. The second is that, perhaps not surprisingly in the case of the world's most secular martial art,¹² mystical "*do*" doesn't really interest most instructors. The group of my respondents who "went shopping" for a personal philosophy is outnumbered (three to one) by the group who didn't. For these instructors (as well as many in the other group), the important philosophy is teaching philosophy. And here, the instructor-student dyad, and conflict, is paramount.

¹² A modified quote from one of my instructors, who was very proud of Taekwon-do's secularity.

It is within the bounds of that relationship that knowledge in Taekwon-do is transmitted, and the complexities of the student-instructor relationship, and the pragmatic and practical teaching philosophy of interest to this project's participants, form the subject of Chapter 8.

VIII

INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS:

Perpetuating the Cycle

Taekwon-do Student Oath

*I shall observe the tenets of Taekwon-do.
I shall respect instructors and seniors.
I shall never misuse Taekwon-do.
I shall be a champion of freedom and justice.
I shall build a more peaceful world.*

The Martial Arts Students' Charter of Rights

*.Not student need submit to physical or mental abuse under any
circumstances. Students have the right to physical safety and trust.
The students' mental and physical well-being should be the
instructors' utmost concern. Students have the right to a proper
training regimen—a safe warm up, meaningful drills, a systematic
program and realistic goals. Students have a right to be treated
with respect, and an obligation to treat others with respect.
Students have the right to information—to ask questions and
receive adequate answers.*

(Hart 1998: 3)

During their interviews, Canadian instructors were voluble and helpful while I asked about their own experience in Taekwon-do, reticent and cautious while they talked about their instructor, polite but disinterested when we discussed Korean culture and philosophy, and passionate and outspoken when the questions had to do with teaching.

responsibilities of the instructor and student, and their ideal relationship. It had been my intent to look for changes in how the student-instructor relationship was perceived by different generations of Canadian instructors as an indicator of greater cultural/philosophical changes. It turned out that the student-instructor relationship was the focal point of the research—it is, after all, within the bounds of that relationship that knowledge in Taekwon-do is transmitted. More significantly, however, it was clear that the student-instructor relationship underlies the everyday core concerns of the respondents. To be good instructors and to have good students is the definition of success, commercial and otherwise. And you can't be a good instructor, nor can you have good students, if you can't retain them.

The vicious cycle

The saga of the student-instructor relationship in Taekwon-do is the subject of this chapter, and it goes something like this:¹

Ever since you've started Taekwon-do, you've spent four or five days a week at the dojang, first training, then training and teaching, finally, almost exclusively teaching. You were the favourite pupil—the heir apparent—since day one, and now, you're looked up to by the students with almost as much authority as your head instructor. Some of them have confessed to you that they actually prefer it when you teach—your classes are much more interesting, and you explain things better. You've had that black belt around

¹ A version of this story was told to me, in the course of the interviews, by all but one of the full-time instructors ($n=17$), and two-thirds of the part-time instructors ($n=26$).

your waist for so long, you can hardly remember when being a “Taekwon-do instructor” wasn’t a crucial part of your identity.

You develop a strong feeling of ownership in the school and in the students. As you gain more self-confidence and more self-assurance, you start to raise certain issues with your instructor. You point out that a certain student has been overlooked for promotion. You suggest a new way of doing warm-ups. Sometimes, your instructor agrees with you and sometimes he doesn’t. Your motivation is to make the school better and stronger. After all, it’s your school, too.

One day, there is a showdown between you and your instructor. You initiate it: in fact, you bulldoze the way to it, trying for some time to force a confrontation so that these issues—teaching styles, money, technique—would be out in the open. But, as you walk out of the school, knowing that you’re doing it for the last time, you are conscious that even at that time, your motivation was just to make the school better and stronger. You do not want to do this: warts and all, the man you just walked out on (although he will tell people he threw you out) is your instructor.

Are you going to give up Taekwon-do? Of course not. By this point, you have been teaching regularly. Taekwon-do is a regular supplement to your income: and now, without the master taking the lion’s share of all the profits, you might actually have a chance of making it your livelihood. Your students are loyal to you, personally, not the master and not the school, and more will come. You can now do things your way. And

when you have black belts, you'll treat them much better than your instructor ever treated you.

And so you start your school, with your primary instructor as the model and anti-model of everything you do.

It's hard going for a while, but finally you find the right amount of tradition and flexibility. Your school is successful, your students do well at competitions, and Taekwon-do is your hobby, way of life and paycheque. You have a stable of junior black belts: a few first degrees, a few seconds, a couple among whom are already clamouring for their third. It's rather a pity about those black belts: they're just not as... not exactly as good, just not as dedicated and hardworking as you remember being. They do help you out with teaching, and a couple are teaching regularly at branch schools. You pay them well and you try not to take them for granted.

Students seem to enjoy the variety of a different face teaching them now and then, and you remember how much you learned teaching as a junior black belt, so you encourage them to do that. You watch them with pride, as they progress from whispering commands to standing at the head of that class as if they were born there.

They get more involved in the life of the school, and you encourage that. You can't be everywhere at the same time, and they are a great help to you. They point out a student you've overlooked for promotion. They organize a tournament for you. They coordinate the club newsletter.

They make some suggestions you implement, and others you disagree with. You listen, but you do what you feel is right. After all, it's your school.

And one bewildering day, you find yourself on the other side of a showdown, as your pride and joy—your heir-apparent—tells you that it's his school too, and unless there are some major changes, he's leaving and taking his students with him.

You're not quite sure what went wrong, but chances are, you are doomed to repeat this exercise with your best students every five years or so. Just like your instructor did with you.

What's going wrong?

Table 22: Respondents' relationship with primary instructor

	<u>Estranged</u>	<u>Indifferent</u>	<u>Positive</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=37)</i>	19	5	15
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	12	-	2

There are no bad students, just bad instructors

Maybe it all started with the Korean instructors—Chapter 5 outlines some of their failings as people and as teachers—but the Koreans certainly did not have a monopoly on improper behaviour, questionable ethics, sub-par teaching and just plain bad people skills. All the instructors I interviewed made unprompted reference to “bad,” “unethical.”

and “unqualified” instructors who “do damage to their students,” “everyone’s reputation” and “the art.” Many had first-hand dealings with them; some of the younger instructors had such an instructor as their first (or most recent) teacher.

This particular instructor—if you were from [that town], you’d know exactly who I’m talking about—makes a habit of hanging out around X-rated theatres and prostitutes. I’m an open-minded kind of person, and theoretically, what a person does in his free time doesn’t matter and all that, but he’s a Taekwon-do instructor for God’s sake! I don’t want him teaching my kids, and I’m damned if I’ll be part of his school. So I left, and a lot of the other black belts left.

– Third-wave instructor

There were so many things that led up to all of us leaving—it was twelve or thirteen black belts that all left, at the same time. I’m still not sure if his behaviour got worse, or if we just got tired of excusing it. He would abuse people in class for no reason at all, and by that I mean verbally and physically. He’d single you out—and that happened to me quite a few times—and just make you feel like dirt in front of the whole class. If you made him angry, he’d spar with you, and there’d be bruises and occasionally a broken rib or nose. And God forbid if you touched him: he’d kill you. Then, there was the way he talked about women. The way he embarrassed our club at meetings. And then there were a few specific incidents, and then finally, we just couldn’t take it anymore. There was a meeting, we all said our piece—we basically asked him to take a leave of absence—he threw a fit and told us it was his way or the highway. So, we left.

– Second-wave instructor

He was run out of town for [offence].² I stopped training with him a little before then, when I started to get to know him better.

– Second-wave instructor

What could you say about her? It's not that she was a bad person or a bad instructor. She was great to me so long as she needed me and I was useful to her. And then, she got more other black belts, and I wasn't quite as important, I guess, so she stopped being nice to be, basically. And when she stopped being nice to me, I started seeing things I hadn't seen before. Favouritism, and political play, and treatment of students that didn't seem quite right. So I just faded myself out, I guess.

– Third-wave instructor

I left him because I stopped respecting him. I still like him, you know—he's not a bad person, a nice guy, a great talker. Lousy, lousy instructor with no concern for the well-being of his students. And by that I don't mean that he beats on them or does exercises that injure them, like some of these other guys you hear about. I just mean that he doesn't care enough about teaching, or Taekwon-do, to do it right.

– Second-wave instructor

Personal faults aside, students also leave because they feel the instructor has taught them all he has to offer, either because he doesn't know any more or because he isn't willing to teach anymore.

I touched on this point in Chapter 5: the frustration with “stopping learning” was one of the impetuses that prompted first-wave Canadian instructors to leave their Korean

² I can't recount the specific offense without effectively identifying the instructor in question, and significantly narrowing the list of potential respondents.

masters. It's ironic and sad that many of them repeated that experience on the other side of the split. The post-black belt curricula and programs that are now being developed are a direct response to this problem. The damage, however, has already been done.

My instructor was fourth degree and I was second degree when I left. I'm not being arrogant when I say that I knew more about the theory behind Taekwon-do, and had better execution of technique, than he did. And I don't think it's because I was some super star. He had left his instructor just after he got a second degree, and he had no real teacher after that. So how could he learn more? And how could he teach me more?

– Third-wave instructor

My case was slightly different from most other people's. My instructor left me. And after fumbling around for a few months, I found another instructor. Most people aren't so lucky: when they leave their instructor, they're either too angry or too hurt to look for another one, and they decide that they're ready to be completely on their own. Perhaps some of them are. I know I wasn't, then. And now (as a fifth degree), I still have an instructor to help me. Most people, at this level, are left completely on their own. And they get to this level—from the first or second degree at which they left their instructor—very erratically, by self-study, without any consistent guidance or supervision. How well do you think they will teach their senior black belts?

– First-wave instructor

There are no bad instructors, just bad students

Of course, it's not just the instructors who are at fault. There are almost as many bad student stories as there are bad instructor stories. The stories and the conflicts are almost exactly the same:

I've promoted 40 students to black belt so far. I taught all of the exactly the same, I treated all of them exactly the same. I have 39 success stories, and one failure. And this failure was, for the longest time my right-hand man, my Number One.

– Second-wave instructor

I have one black belt right now, who I can see the writing on the wall with. I wasn't his original instructor—he's trained up to first degree under someone else. I have discipline and attitude problems with him already, and he's coming up to a second degree test. I don't think he's quite ready and I probably won't let him test yet. Either way, I'm going to lose him. If I let him test without resolving the attitude problems, he's going to get worse. If I don't let him test, he's going to take it personally and quit, or go to another instructor.

– First-wave instructor

The main reason students leave is they get bored, they feel you've stop challenging them. What they don't realize is that they are largely responsible for their own motivation and learning. If someone decides they know everything, how can you teach them?

– Second-wave instructor

I've asked students to consider leaving on two occasions. Once, it was a group of four and five that just wasn't dealing well with the change in teaching style and so on after I took over as head instructor. I told them the choice was to be helpful and constructive, or to go. Obstructing me was not an option. The second time it was just one student, very nice and all, but he took it upon himself to teach my students techniques and applications that simply were not correct.

– First-wave instructor

Some black belts don't realize that a school is not a democracy. The head instructor calls the shots: he's paid his dues, and he deserves their respect and trust. If he gives them too much authority, lets them take on too much responsibility, then they start expecting to be involved in all the major decisions of the school. If he keeps them out of it, then they get resentful. It's a hard balance, and students aren't always reasonable.

– First-wave instructor

I listen to my black belts and I value their input and contribution to the club. But the bottom line is that it's my school and my livelihood. And if they can't adjust to that, they have to leave.

– Second-wave instructor

The instructors in my sample who had left their instructors under less-than-amicable circumstances all were star pupils. The junior black belts with whom they've had fall-outs were, for the most part, dedicated, hard-working students with a strong sense of ownership in the school and justifiable pride in their Taekwon-do skill. This is not to say that the good students leave and the bad students stay (the bad students drop out and quit altogether). The point is that the students most motivated to operate their

own schools—the next generation of instructors—cut the umbilical cord violently and possibly prematurely.

The template for peace

General Choi equipped Taekwon-do with a simple template for the ideal student-instructor relationship. The *Sajeji Do* consists of twelve responsibilities of the instructor and ten duties of the student, and there is nothing difficult, unusual or onerous about them. The instructor is expected to be an honest, sincere and responsible teacher: the student is supposed to be a respectful and loyal student. The Confucian overtones of the relationship—with responsibility on the side of the instructor and duty on the side of the student—do not create a major philosophical difficulty for Canadian instructors, nor do they give them pause for thought. It's obvious that the instructor is the party with more knowledge and a position of more power (although students are acquiring more power as a result of market pressure). No one in my sample challenged the theoretical principles of the student-instructor relationship, and when asked to describe an ideal student-instructor relationship, what they described was a version of this template:

Table 23: The Sajeji Do (Instructor-Student Relationship)

<u>Instructors (Sabum)</u>	<u>Students (Jeja)</u>
1. Never tire of teaching. A good instructor can teach anywhere, any time, and always be ready to answer questions.	1. Never tire of learning. A good student can learn anywhere, any time. This is the secret of knowledge.
2. An instructor should be eager for his students to surpass him; it is the ultimate compliment for an instructor. A student should never be held back. If the instructor realizes his student has developed beyond his teaching capabilities, the student should be sent to a higher ranking instructor.	2. A good student must be willing to sacrifice for his art and instructor. Many students feel that their training is a commodity bought with monthly dues, and are unwilling to take part in demonstrations, teaching and working around the dojang. An instructor can afford to lose this type of student.
3. An instructor must always set a good example for his students and never attempt to defraud them.	3. Always set a good example for lower ranking students. It is only natural they will attempt to emulate senior students.
4. The development of students should take precedence over commercialism. Once an instructor becomes concerned with materialism, he will lose the respect of his students.	4. Always be loyal and never criticize the instructor. Taekwon-do or the teaching methods.
5. Instructors should teach scientifically and theoretically to save time and energy.	5. If an instructor teaches a technique, practise it and attempt to utilize it.
6. Instructors should help students develop good contacts outside the dojang. It is an instructor's responsibility to develop students outside as well as inside the dojang.	6. Remember that a student's conduct outside the dojang reflects on the art and instructor.

(con't)

Instructors (Sabum)

7. Students should be encouraged to visit other dojangs and study other techniques. Students who are forbidden to visit other dojangs are likely to become rebellious.
 ...³

8. All students should be treated equally. there should be no favorites. Students should always be scolded in private. never in front of the class.

9. If the instructor is not able to answer a student's question. he should not fabricate an answer but admit he does not know and attempt to find the answer as soon as possible. All too often. will a lower degree black belt dispense illogical answers to his students merely because he is afraid of "losing face" because he does not know the answer.

10. An instructor should not seek any favors such as cleaning the studio. doing repair work. etc. from his students.

11. An instructor should not exploit his students. The only purpose of an instructor is to produce both technically and mentally excellent students.

12. Always be honest with the students. and never break a trust. (Choi 1995: 44)

Students (Jeja)

7. If a student adopts a technique from another dojang and the instructor disapproves of it the student must discard it immediately or train at the gym where the technique was learned.

8. Never be disrespectful to the instructor. Though a student is allowed to disagree with the instructor. the student must first follow the instruction and then discuss the matter later.

9. A student must always be ready to learn and ask questions.

10. Never betray the instructor (Choi 1995: 45).

³ The remainder of this dictum goes: "There are two advantages for allowing the student to visit other gyms: not only is there the possibility that the student may observe a technique that is ideally suited for him. but he may also have a chance to learn by comparing his techniques to inferior techniques." Arrogance runs from the top. General Choi frequently slags other martial arts at his seminars.

The problem, obviously, lies not in theory but in practice. A large part of the problem lies in today's students and instructors paying for—and thus repeating—yesterday's mistakes.

The root of the problem

Mutual respect between people and a respect for life in general is the tradition that should be maintained in martial arts. The traditional Oriental way of respect has often been misunderstood by westerner and oriental alike. It is often taken to mean that those who rank higher in the hierarchy have a license to abuse those who rank lower. This is simply not true.

– Martial Arts Students' Charter of Rights
(Hart 1998: 3)

Is it Confucius' fault that there is so much talk about abuse of power in the martial arts and Taekwon-do specifically? Is it that Canadians are incapable of properly understanding and living the Neo-Confucian precepts of the student-instructor relationship?

No. My answer is based on a thin core of evidence from respondents overlaid by a thick layer of speculation, but in view of all the evidence in Chapter 6 of how easily and effortlessly Canadian instructors have interpreted, changed or assigned new meaning to an assortment of Korean cultural signifiers, why would the student-instructor relationship be any different? If it didn't work, it would be changed or thrown out: in any case, if there is a problem with the template it is that instructors and students violate its precepts. Problems between instructor and student most certainly do not arise because one or the other (or both) follows the precepts too faithfully.

The root of the problem in the student-instructor relationship, based on the input from the respondents in this project, is that most Taekwon-do instructors have never learnt how to teach Taekwon-do.

How do you become a Taekwon-do instructor? You're groomed for the role since the day a student junior to you appears in class. You learn to teach by observing your instructor, and any student less experienced than you is your guinea pig. Later, you begin to lead warm-ups and supervise certain drills. Suddenly, you are teaching full classes. What you have learnt and seen in the dojang are usually your only tools for learning to be a teacher. Only one school in my sample requires its black belts to go through first aid and NCCP⁴ certification as part of their black belt tests. Only two instructors in the sample—except those from the above referenced school—pursued NCCP certification on their own, and one of those did it to further his coaching skills in another sport. And although all the Taekwon-do associations have instructors' seminars, the seminars focus almost exclusively on proper technique and teaching procedure as opposed to teaching theory (that is, teaching *how* to teach).⁵

⁴ National Coaching Certification Program.

⁵ See Wiese (1995) for further discussion, as well as an attempt to provide martial arts instructors with some tools.

Table 24: Teaching Experience/Certification

	<u>Taekwon-do Only</u>	<u>Other</u>
<i>Group 1 (n=35)</i>	28	7*
<i>Group 2 (n=12)</i>	9	3

**This category includes those respondents with B.Ed's and other teaching degrees.*

The NCCP holds that a coach can only be effectively if she understands the process of learning, teaches effectively and provides the appropriate skills and drills for participants to practise (NCCP1: 6.1). The average Taekwon-do instructor has learnt the skills and drills of her instructor, and her modifications are usually limited to excluding the drills she didn't like and elaborating on the drills she found particularly useful to herself. And while time is a good teacher, making the instructor more aware of students' needs, trial and error is not the most efficient way of learning. Many instructors' self-lenient attitude—"I make some mistakes, but I never make the same mistake twice"—doesn't sufficiently take into account the impact of their mistakes on students.

Instruction in Taekwon-do and the martial arts, in the Orient and abroad, has been "based on the assumption that the master was a highly successful and skillful martial artist" (Gummerson 1992: 9) and the student learnt not just by performing the techniques, but by attuning himself to the master's values and thoughts, and this "non-teaching method" was seen as the most valuable part of the teaching process (*Ibid.*: 10). Whether this system worked well or not in the past is irrelevant—I suspect that it did as long as the

students were one or few in number—but it did not stand the test of time. As instructors and students proliferated, two related axioms appeared. Firstly, a person who is a technically competent and talented practitioner may not necessarily be a skilled teacher. Secondly, a person who has become an instructor—or even a master—may not necessarily be a skillful martial artist.

Let's give them credit, and assume that every Korean instructor who came to Canada was a skilled master of Taekwon-do.⁶ Most of them were military men (Choi 1995, Burdick 1997a); most of them were not very well educated, and, unfortunately, most of them were not masters of the English language. Novelty and awe were the tools they used to hold onto their students; both wore off eventually. Pedagogical tools and coaching techniques to keep senior students motivated and challenged and aids to deal with training plateaus were absent from their arsenal. And so, the first-wave students left them.

They too lacked teaching and coaching tools and techniques, although they had language and some experience on their side. But they had an additional crutch: when they left, they were not masters. Most of the first-wave instructors in my sample recognized this and sought other teachers or authorities, but even many of those who looked were left to flounder on their own for years, to re-invent the wheel, and to fall into bad habits in-between infrequent and expensive seminars.

⁶ We don't have any evidence but hearsay to the contrary anyway.

And so the cycle was repeated with the next generation of instructors, and the next and the next: all leaving earlier than they should because their instructors did not know how to keep them long enough for the cycle to stop. And here we are again, at the short apprenticeship, which at this point in Taekwon-do's history in Canada is its own cause and its own effect.

The cause and effect of the problem; and a case study

One of the greatest misconceptions within the martial arts is the notion that all black belt holders are experts. ...Too often, novice black belt holders advertise themselves as experts and eventually even convince themselves. ...The first degree is a starting point. The student has merely built a foundation. The job of building the house lies ahead. (Choi 1995: 727)

To become a teacher in Canada today requires, in most provinces, six years of a university education.⁷ This, of course, is preceded by twelve years of primary and secondary education, and followed by a year-long supervised student-teacher period. Even so, there are a lot of poor teachers in Canadian schools.

It can take as little as a year to become a black belt in Taekwon-do. While many WTF schools offer a year-long first degree black belt course, a year and a half to two years is a more common achievement. In most ITF schools, three to four years to black belt is the standard time. And then, you're an instructor. An assistant instructor, or a novice instructor, but an instructor nonetheless. And, while still a novice, you strike out

⁷ A four-year BA or BSc, followed by a two-year B.Ed. in most universities.

on your own, egged on by frustration, ambition and ego. A few years later, your own students leave you, for much the same reasons, and start teaching another generation.

These instructors, in addition to not having any formal training in teaching, also may not have formal training in anything else. Most full-time instructors in my sample did not pursue post-secondary education, as the numbers in Table 10 (Chapter 6, page 118) show. These are the professional instructors who are doing most of the teaching, and of them, only two in my sample proper ($n=17$) had university degrees.

Now, having a university education does not perforce make you a better teacher, just as being a teacher of something else does not necessarily mean you are any better at teaching Taekwon-do than your non-professional Taekwon-do colleagues.⁸ But it has some effect on how you teach, how you think about learning and with how many learning strategies/teaching tools you are familiar. The fact that many of that full-time instructor's part-time assistants are better educated than their instructor is another potential source of conflict.⁹

⁸ There were three teachers in my sample. All them have been involved in ugly "civil wars" with their students or instructors, and while all of them felt that their teaching experience benefited them as instructors, some of their students disagreed: "He's too much of a jaded school teacher. He thinks in time-blocks and filling time, and he teaches students to pass tests." one third-wave instructor said of a school teacher-Taekwon-do teacher instructor.

⁹ Unfortunately, I did not explore this idea in any detail in my interviews, as I became aware of the education discrepancy between full-time and part-time retrospectively, during data analysis.

Is there a way to end the cycle? During the year that elapsed between my conducting interviews and this writing, three student-instructor relationships from this sample have fallen apart, two completely (in the third, the two parties are still on speaking terms, although no longer working together). In two of them, both the student and instructor were part of the sample; in one, only the student.¹⁰

In one of the cases, when I conducted my interviews with them in April, both respondents said they were on good terms. He was a senior first-wave instructor, in Taekwon-do for more than twenty years. She, his right-hand at the time of the interviews, was a first degree black belt (coming up on a second dan test). They shared more than Taekwon-do—they were members of the same profession, they were fairly close in age, and they had other interests in common. She described their relationship as “almost perfect: just the right blend of respect—I respect him immensely for his skill and years of experience—and friendship.” He described her as a very good student and a solid instructor. He was pleased to see her take on the responsibility of teaching regularly while he was laid up with an injury. She was pleased to do it: “I’m learning through teaching now.” She seemed comfortable with the fact that she did the teaching, and he supervised and did the testing.

¹⁰ I learnt of these events because of personal connections through Taekwon-do to someone who knows one or both of the parties.

A few weeks later, she ended class with a brief announcement. “I am running these classes. I am severing all formal relations with [our senior instructor]. We will from now on be tested by another instructor.”

I was unable to do follow up interviews with these two respondents, but I went back to the tapes of our interviews. I had more than five hours of tape from these two instructors. Would I be able to find signs of an imminent break-up? I certainly did not pick up on them during the course of the interviews. What was happening between them?

There was some mild frustration on her part that, by sporadically dropping in on her classes, he was messing up her curriculum. She also didn’t think his stress on patterns was what the students wanted or needed—she liked self-defence and “going to the ground”: in fact, she was taking jujitsu classes and incorporating what she learnt there into her Taekwon-do classes. She also felt that his motivation in pushing her to a second dan test had more to do with his convenience than with her skill, or her being ready for it.

He talked of her with affection, but also mild condescension as to how she was running the classes at his club in his absence—he never referred to them as “her” classes or “our” school.

She mentioned, as an aside when talking about her experience as a woman and a mature adult in Taekwon-do, that she was “too old to be bullied and put upon” the way a younger black belt might be.

He, on several occasions, referred to the act of getting a first degree black as "graduation" or "finishing the course." She was taking jujitsu because she felt no one was teaching her anything new in Taekwon-do.

And so, ka-boom.

There is no question that the student-instructor relationship changes as a student progresses through the ranks. As a student learns, the knowledge gap between him and his instructor is diminished. A white belt is not in a position to be critical of an instructor's technique, or her way of teaching it. A fellow black belt is not only in a position to be critical, he is probably full of ideas of how he could do it better.

And it is no accident that most student-instructor relationships end when the student starts to behave like an instructor but has not yet achieved senior instructor or master level. He has a great deal of skill, but has reached a plateau in his training and feels he's not learning anything new. He's teaching a lot, but he has no real authority. The senior instructor is also not in an enviable position. She has invested a lot of time and effort in the student, and her investment is finally paying off: the student is helping her teach. But, she has taught her student to the level at which she stopped being taught herself. She has no template, or anti-template, to follow any more. She's feeling insecure, and the student's attempts to define himself as an instructor and to deal with his frustration at his learning plateau do nothing to placate her. She feels threatened and she overextends her authority. He feels resentful and shows it. She gives him a stern talking to. He talks back. She delivers an ultimatum.

He leaves.

A further complication (and some hope)

He may then, prior to striking out on his own, go to another instructor. And that causes its own subset of problems.

In Chapter 5 – Loyalty and Agony, we saw that even those Canadian instructors who broke off with their Korean instructors violently and currently are not on speaking terms with them, retain quite a bit of loyalty to the instructor they left. The same is true of Canadian instructors leaving Canadian instructors. Many are aware of the impact.

I spent eight years with this instructor, and, however much I didn't like him in the end, he's the one who shaped me. He made me tough, he made me a competitor, he basically made me what I am today. And I've trained with some good people since then, but he's my instructor, no question.

– Second-wave instructor

It doesn't take very long for this relationship—"I'm his student regardless of who else I'm training with"—to set in.

My first two years in Taekwon-do had the most impact on shaping me as a martial artist, because those were the two years I spent with my first instructor, and he remains my... instructor, even though I've trained with other people.

– Second-wave instructor

As a result of this bond, when these semi-weaned orphans arrive at a new club, they almost immediately set themselves up in opposition to their new instructor.

“I know that I was hypercritical of the instructor here, because of my experience with my own instructor.” one third-wave instructor honestly summarized the situation. Much that is different is perceived as “wrong.” Distance and absence magnifies the good about the first instructor, and diminishes the bad. Unfortunately, it causes no end of problems in the émigré’s new club (“If I hear ‘We didn’t do it that way at my old club.’ from her one more time, I may lose it.” one instructor confided post-class, sighing) and spurs him to leave, once again. He may try a few other clubs (a practice called, appropriately enough, club-hopping) before coming to the conclusion the only person suitable to teach him is himself.

This bond between a student and his first instructor is sometimes strong enough to survive the break-up of a personal relationship. Three of the respondents in this study were married/common-law to their instructor or student, and for all three, the student-instructor relationship survived the break-up of the marriage. One of the respondents was married to her instructor for 15 years—she was a student before they got married—and the unexpected divorce plunged her into great financial and emotional difficulties. A year after leaving her, the ex-husband casually returned to check how her training was going. He spent a week training her, then left again. He periodically returns to check on his student; apparently never thinking of the ex-wife. (In the two other cases in this sample, the situation is reversed—it is the woman who was and remains the instructor.)

The dual relationship of master-student/husband-wife is frequent in Taekwon-do, and the survival of the master-student relationship in wake of the destruction of the

husband-wife (or equivalent) one—seemingly no matter how personally acrimonious—seems common. The most famous example lies south of the Canadian border, in the continuing partnership of Master Chuck Sereff, ninth degree, and his ex-wife Renee Sereff, whom he and General Choi recently promoted to seventh degree (making her the first female master in Taekwon-do).¹¹

For the purposes of this project, which is concerned with the transmission of culture and knowledge, a surviving relationship marked by geographic distances and sporadic communication has a very similar effect to a terminated relationship: not a great deal of information is passed down. But, for the purposes of Canadian instructors struggling to figure out how to keep their top students, it points the way to some solutions.

Good students and good instructors

I've mentioned this before, and I underscore it again: most of the instructors who participated in this project are both good students and good instructors. Those who left their instructors had a hard time doing it: for many, it was a traumatic experience akin to a divorce. Those who have been left by their students feel abandoned and betrayed. And while the majority see themselves as mainly blameless in the event, they do see it as their responsibility to do what they can to prevent a recurrence.

¹¹ This would make a really neat research topic, particularly considering how the traditional model of male instructor/female student has given way to male/female peers and female instructor/male student.

For the sake of Taekwon-do as a martial art and for the sake of future Taekwon-do students, the apprenticeship period between instructor and student must be lengthened. In the ITF, fourth degree is the first level of the professional instructor; in the WTF, it is the level at which an instructor can call himself a master.¹² It takes at least ten years of more or less uninterrupted training to get to that level. All the instructors, encountered in person, by story or reputation in the course of this project, who have stayed with an instructor¹³ until fourth dan level and beyond have remained on good professional terms with their instructor. Most are now operating independent schools, but they still maintain working (and learning) relationships with their instructors. One of these second-generation instructors has already brought at least one other instructor to fourth degree level and he too maintains a good working (and teaching) relationship with this senior student.

What is the secret? I've given the stand-by old liberal arts answer of education already: Taekwon-do instructors have to learn how to teach and coach, to motivate their students through their training plateaus and to keep on teaching them through the dan levels. To keep on teaching them, they have to keep on learning themselves—it is, after all, a cycle.

The senior instructors who expressed the most respect and admiration for their instructor figure, and who thought they had an ideal working relationship with this

¹² In some schools, all black belts are called “master”; in others, the “master” degree is variably and randomly assigned as five, six, etc.

¹³ Not necessarily their first instructor, mind you—that would be too neat a package.

instructor, were those whose instructor was far, far away—thousands of kilometres. This geographically distant instructor was an oracle to be consulted, via telephone or e-mail, on technical issues that cropped up; he was the Mecca to which a periodic learning trip was made; he was the Mountain that occasionally violated laws of nature and came to Mohammed. What he wasn't was a competitor for authority in the school, nor was he responsible for the day-to-day operations and teaching. He was far away and thus disinterested in the everyday affairs of his student's school. Without these pressures, a safe distance away, he was the ideal instructor. But he was still an instructor, and his student—now a senior full-time instructor—was able to keep on learning and, I believe, pass that learning on to his senior students.

The situation of the two instructors who maintained a relatively good working relationship with their Korean instructors¹⁴ suggests that it is possible to get this same relationship without moving across the country. In both cases, the Canadian instructor operates a financially independent school, and the Korean instructor does not interfere—“unless asked to.” In the first case, the relationship was so formalized from the start, and in the second, according to the Canadian instructor, “it evolved.”

¹⁴ Although in one of these cases, this “good” Korean instructor wasn't the original instructor (see Chapter 5).

Breaking the cycle of short apprenticeships and traumatic break-ups, then, requires specific actions on part of Canadian instructors and their federations. Instructors have to learn how to teach, so that they understand the psychology of their students better and are thus better able to retain and motivate them through training plateaus and setbacks. Instructors have to continue to learn themselves, so that they are able to challenge and teach their students. While ideally the federations should spearhead such initiatives—a longer apprenticeship period and solid instructor-student relationships being to their ultimate advantage—for practical purposes, individual instructors will have to pursue these activities on their own.

Standardized curricula may address some of the havoc wrought by émigrés in their new school. As standardized curricula are the purview of federations, and as in the last thirty years, all the federations have standardized are patterns and competition regulations, the responsibility for preparing their students for training at other schools will lie primarily with the instructors.

Instructors have to accept that their top students will want to leave and operate their own schools, and act accordingly, ensuring that when the students leave, they leave with the best education possible, on the best terms possible. Finally, instructors have to allow their students, once they become instructors, to run their schools with little interference. Many a relationship is soured by the head instructor treating, however unconsciously, the student instructor's school as a cash cow for himself, rather than the student's burgeoning business.

One of the most difficult things for me, during the course of these interviews, was hearing the same scenario described, time and time again, and bearing mute witness to the respondent's struggle and frustration. The teaching philosophy and teaching style of most instructors, as they explain it, is not that different—some are stricter, some do more sparring, some explain more and others less, but all are concerned with the same things. They want to be good instructors, with good reputations, good, financially successful schools and good, long-standing students. For the most part, the “ideal” instructor they envision is carved out of the template set out by Choi (or equivalent), and that is who they strive to be.¹⁵

Unfortunately, as I tried to show in this chapter, their training does not prepare them adequately for this task. The disruptive cycle of short apprenticeships is self-perpetuating, and now, both the cause and the effect of many student-instructor problems. None of the challenges set out here have been addressed, or even recognized, by the official organizations. Will they? The federations, as Chapter 9 will show, seem to be far more interested in global domination than practical issues.

In the next, and final chapter, I review the objectives of this research and return again to the role and future of Korean culture in Canadian Taekwon-do, exploring the beaten paths and suggesting potential future trends.

¹⁵ Being a good instructor is, of course, a topic dear to the hearts of all martial arts instructors. See Aalfs (1995), Schine (1995), Schmeisser (1995) and Zimron (1995) in Wiley's excellent anthology on teaching.

IX

BEATEN PATHS AND FUTURE TRENDS:

A conclusion, and more questions

*There's going to be shakedown.
We're reaching critical mass—so many schools, so many
instructors. Students are getting smarter, more discriminating.
They won't put up with a lot of the stuff we put up with.
You're going to see a culling of the bad instructors.*

– Second-wave instructor

In this chapter, I revisit and review the research objectives that have guided this project, and consider the contribution of my research to anthropology and the social sciences. I also consider the future of Taekwon-do, its federations, its practitioners and its consumers, as foretold by my respondents, and suggest some additional areas of research. The key frustration for me throughout this project was of continuously becoming aware of questions that deserved to be followed up, and then having neither the resources, nor the space, nor the time, in which to answer them. I have identified some of these questions in footnotes throughout the text as they occurred; I explore a few more of them at the close of this chapter.

Research objectives revisited

At the outset of this thesis, and this project, I set out four research objectives:

1. Identify what aspects of Korean culture were brought into Canada with the martial art of Taekwon-do.
2. Identify how these cultural signifiers changed from the time of their initial introduction to Canada to the present.
3. Explore the interpretation and translation of these signifiers by (two subsequent) generations of Canadian instructors: specifically, look at their roles as receivers, translators, and transmitters of Korean Taekwon-do culture, their actions in these respective roles, and their awareness of their roles in the process of cultural transmission and translation.
4. Explore the possibility that some of those Korean cultural signifiers have also been reinterpreted by the Korean instructors themselves, as a result of their life in a new culture.

In Chapters 1 and 3, I indicated both how I intended to go about fulfilling these objectives and how, through the course of my research, the focus of my research shifted somewhat, with the tensions of the student-instructor dyad stealing some of the spotlight from general issues of cultural change. I also explained that it quickly became apparent I was not going to be able to do justice to Objective 4, because of political (and perhaps

temperamental) issues. Within the resulting student-instructor focus, however, I worked towards fulfilling the first three objectives.

I began to identify what Korean cultural signifiers came to Canada with Taekwon-do (Objective 1) in Chapter 4. The treatment of Taekwon-do's history in Chapter 4 highlighted the complex circumstances of martial art's creation. Although Taekwon-do was created at a time of great nationalist feeling and although it was seen as a patriotic tool, the founders of Taekwon-do (General Choi Hong Hi key among them) meant for the martial art to be a world export—South Korea's gift to the world. As a result, Korean cultural signifiers were incorporated into the Taekwon-do package in small, easily digestible chunks: bows, belt colours, soundbytes of history hidden in the names of patterns and other aspects of its philosophy-lite.

These signifiers were repackaged for export, and some were never unpacked. Chapter 5 looked at the first years of Taekwon-do in Canada, and detailed how even these small pieces were often undigested in the very first wave of cultural transmission, because of the relatively short, and often traumatically terminated, apprenticeship period between Korean instructors and the first generation of Canadian students. Instead of identifying how these cultural signifiers changed from the time of their initial introduction to Canada to the present (Objective 2), Chapter 5 suggested that many of them were never really taught in the first place.

Yet they were translated. My ultimate goal was to explore the interpretation and translation of these signifiers by Canadian instructors. I wanted to look at their roles as

receivers, translators, and transmitters of Korean Taekwon-do culture, their actions in these respective roles, and their awareness of their roles in the process of cultural transmission and translation (Objective 3). Chapter 6 examined what several waves of Canadian instructors did with and to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do. I suggested that the instructors' attitude towards most Korean cultural signifiers was very pragmatic. They perpetuated and accepted those signifiers that were of practical use to them, changed the meaning of some to make them more useful, and changed the form of those signifiers that were of questionable utility. They also started to incorporate some additional cultural signifiers, which had not made it over with the first Korean instructor-émigrés, as they learned of them in the 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter 7 continued to address Objective 3 by exploring the model and the reality of Taekwon-do's philosophy. I saw two different approaches to Taekwon-do's secular and "lite" philosophy. The majority of Canadian instructors felt they had gained the non-physical benefits promised by the martial arts from the physical practice of Taekwon-do. They were strong, healthy people, with a good sense of self-confidence and self-discipline, and that sufficed.

Most of the first-wave instructors placed themselves within that group. Their traumatic experience with their Korean instructor blighted much of the official Taekwon-do philosophy for them, and convinced them that "true *Do*" was leading by example.

A smaller group felt the inadequacy of what they had—or had not—learnt, and went looking for answers. The philosophical goods they acquired are difficult to

characterize as anything other than eclectic, running the gamut from writings on Zen Buddhism and Japanese martial arts to self-help books like *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*.

Both these groups—in other words, the resounding majority of all respondents—had a practical approach to even this metaphysical issue, and the philosophy that most concerned them was the philosophy of teaching.

In Chapter 8, I dealt with the respondents' main concern, the student-instructor relationship and its challenges. Based on the stories told by my respondents, I identified the tensions and conflicts of the student-instructor as simultaneously the root, result, and cause and effect of the erratic transmission of knowledge in Taekwon-do.

This erratic process, combined with the respondents' own stress on practical issues connected to teaching and day-to-day challenges of practising and living Taekwon-do, resulted in cultural change becoming consumed by and intertwined in the student-instructor relationship. This focus saved me from committing the common philosophical fallacy of attributing anthropomorphic characteristics to both the process of cultural change and the martial art of Taekwon-do. Instead, I had (as was my professed intent) to focus on my respondents as conscious actors and active agents in changing Taekwon-do.

The result is a descriptive ethnography, which presents itself to a number of theoretical analyses. My focus on respondents' interpretation and understanding of Taekwon-do is in the Weberian tradition of symbolic interaction, and with an influence

from interpretive anthropology. I've played throughout with structuralist dyads.¹ There's potential for both classical and post-modern conflict theory here: economics are an important part of the student-instructor conflict, and conflict is an ongoing theme in this thesis. Even basic functionalism makes an appearance, particularly in Chapter 6 and 7, where instructors' interpretation and use of Korean cultural signifiers is tied very closely to their practical utility. On a narrower level, I had briefly flirted with Vygotsky's activity theory and Huizinga's theories of play, and considered each as the overriding framework for this thesis. I had alluded earlier (Chapter 2, page 35) to Bourdieu's *Reproduction* as having a major influence on how I understood transmission of knowledge.

Has this work made a significant theoretical contribution? It remains above all an ethnography. But, I believe I have created an accurate and interesting picture of what Canadian instructors have experienced, changed and learnt during the last three decades of Taekwon-do's tumultuous history. It had been my intention to look at Taekwon-do as a martial art, sport, cultural phenomena, ideology and educational tool, and at various times throughout this thesis, I have looked at it as all of the above. I wanted to add to the considerable and growing body of work on martial arts a solid, if somewhat irreverent, take on the Taekwon-do experience in Canada.

This research makes some level of contribution to the disciplines of cultural studies, sociology of sport, anthropology of play and anthropology of education. To the diverse field of cultural studies, within which much of the most recent work on martial

¹ And Yin/Yang, or *TaeGuk*, dyads as well, I suppose.

arts resides, it adds an awareness of the historical and political developments in Taekwon-do, as well as the practical utility—or lack of utility—of Taekwon-do's Korean cultural aspects. To work that treats martial arts as sport, this research adds cultural awareness and a focus on the agency of the instructors. To the unusual field of anthropology of play, it contributes an example of ongoing cultural translation, interpretation and importation. And finally, to anthropology of education, it adds a brand new chapter about the complexities of the student-instructor relationship, and an example of the unexpected obstacles of, or detours to, the transmission of knowledge in the martial arts.

The protagonist here is not Taekwon-do, but its practitioners and instructors. I have tried to avoid imbuing the martial art itself with anthropomorphic and self-determining characteristic. Instead, I focused on what the instructors have been doing to the martial art, how they understand it, how they use it, how they interpret it and how they change it. I have striven to remain aware that my respondents were the active agents here, and that Taekwon-do was an object here, not the subject.

I, too, am not the protagonist. This was a challenge I had set up for myself from the start: to be the narrator of this work and not the hero. Although I have shared many of the experiences this study's respondents have had, I disagree with much that I have said on their behalf. The conclusions of my research have been a surprise to me. My respondents' relative lack of interest in Korean culture and their martial art's cultural heritage was completely unexpected, as was the shift in focus of this project to student-

instructor issues. My personal take on Taekwon-do's philosophy and issues of spirituality is vastly different from that of most of the respondents, as is my attitude towards teaching the martial art.² The way I myself have understood and interpreted many of the Korean cultural signifiers discussed in this thesis is also significantly different from my respondents' interpretations.

As a narrator, I have obviously had a strong voice, both in the text proper and in the footnotes. If an author's biases are made clear to the reader, that reader can be a much more critical judge of the material the author is presenting. That, at least, was my intent.

Canadian instructors have been active and conscious actors in the development of Taekwon-do over the last thirty years. They are also aware of the problems and challenges that come with the martial art, particularly in their role as teachers. Although the main large organisational bodies pass down many directives, technical, political and even cultural, most of the real solutions to Taekwon-do's real problems are grassroots efforts. The many changes to Taekwon-do's ranking system, for example, have all taken place at the instructor- or school-level. The federations seem content to devote their time and effort to political, rather than practical, issues.

² For example, I believe teaching Taekwon-do to most children is a waste of time and effort, and in my club, we don't teach children. For most of my respondents, thriving children's classes are the only chance at making a living.

Which brings us to the fascinating topic of the future of the ITF and WTF, a topic that often came up at the close of my interviews, when I asked respondents to muse about the future of Taekwon-do.

The future of federations

The history of Taekwon-do, as we have seen, is a history of conflicts, schisms, fall-outs and separations. Born in the middle of the worst schism in Korean history—as the country, instead of celebrating its liberation from a half century of Japanese occupation, was halved into two ideologically opposed regimes—Taekwon-do's history has continued to be highly fractured and political. The politically forced unification of indigenous (and other) Korean martial styles under the banner of Taekwon-do was short-lived, and resulted in the great schism between the International Taekwon-do Federation and the World Taekwon-do Federation. The precedent of the split, along with the tensions and conflicts pandemic in the Taekwon-do student-instructor relationship, led to the continued splintering of Taekwon-do into minor federations. Leaving a federation and starting up a new one became the standard solution to many arguments between a student and his instructor, or between political opponents and economic competitors.

The late 1980s and 1990s saw the trend reverse, with many of the smaller federations or unaffiliated schools returning to the outstretched arms of the ITF and WTF. Is this trend likely to continue? Probably. Does it mean that the federations have redeemed themselves, cleaned themselves of corruption and inspired newfound loyalty in Taekwon-do practitioners? The answer, unfortunately, is no.

Canadian instructors have returned to the federations for three chief reasons. First, senior instructors need federations to get subsequent degrees. If you're on top of the food chain in your federation—and most of the splinter federations are led by holders of relatively junior dans—who can promote you to the next level? Most of the instructors have a healthy contempt for self-promoters (although my interview sample did include one instructor who, officially promoted within a federation to second degree, decided to style himself a master when he struck out on his own). They want to feel they have earned their degrees, and that their degrees are legitimate. The federations give them that.³

Second, the two major federations are the only route to any international competitions of note. Obviously, the WTF has a significant advantage: its style is actually in the Olympics, the ultimate measure of sports prestige. The ITF offers competitive national teams and regular world competition, as well as the hope that one day, the five rings will welcome its members as well. The higher level of competition helps instructors retain and motivate advanced students: Joe Blow's Federation's national competition has forty competitors and its world championships consist of two countries. By comparison, the ITF's Canadian National Championship will host more than 1000 black belt competitors alone, and the WTF World Championship will host competitors from potentially 158 countries.

³And more. The federations have used dans as carrots to lure defecting instructors back. "You're second degree? If you come back, you get fourth!" Many an instructor has returned to a federation a dan or two richer than he had left it... and possibly deserved.

And, finally, many came to see the smaller federation as having exactly the same political problems as the large ones—but without any of the key benefits.

The return to the fold has not been accompanied by a return of loyalty. The instructors, who as students saw so much splintering and federation-hopping during the 1970s and 1980s, are understandably jaded. Very few have significant faith or trust in their respective federation. They usually return to the federation they left—it's quite rare for an instructor who left the ITF to join the WTF and vice-versa (although students, particularly at the lower rank levels, are less dogmatic)—and despite official protestations to the contrary, they see “different people, same garbage.” And it doesn't matter which federation an instructor belongs to. The complaints are the same, the most common being—what else?—money.

The ITF, say ITF-affiliated instructors, is “very expensive for instructors. Between the cost of your tests, your yearly school and registration fees, and the costs of the instructors seminars—it all adds up.” None of the WTF instructors interviewed made a habit of attending official WTF technical seminars chiefly for cost reasons—“They're expensive and you learn nothing you shouldn't already know.”

Both the ITF and WTF have a reputation for charging “ridiculous sums” for black belt certification, instructors' seminars and technical seminars. But there are other problems. WTF-affiliated instructors see the WTF as run by a closed clique of Koreans: ITF-affiliated instructors see the ITF as General Choi's family enterprise. Officials in both federations are “corrupt,” “self-serving,” “hypocritical” and “small-minded.” And

the politics—the politics beat all.[†] At local, provincial, regional and national levels, each federation has its share of political power struggles and constant competition for power, prestige and position.

“If I ever quit Taekwon-do, it’ll be because of the politics,” is a sentiment echoed by many a Canadian instructor. Most of them don’t play the political game, leaving the running of the federations to those with greater ambition and thirst for status. Nonetheless, all are affected to some degree by the machinations of the upper echelons.

Why do they stay? For the same reason they came back. The main lesson of the Taekwon-do Reformation—the mad federation splintering of the 1970s and 1980s—has apparently been that the devil you know is better than the devil you don’t know. Said one prodigal daughter:

I think these days, you have to be in a big organisation, for your students and for yourself. For yourself, for the accreditation, so that your fourth, fifth whatever degree means something. For your students, to offer them a chance at good competition, all the way to the international level. And the problems we have here, they’re just the same, if not worse, everywhere else.

– Second-wave instructor

But, this cynical commitment to remain within an organisation should not be mistaken for loyalty. In the words of one ITF instructor:

[†] Not just in Taekwon-do. See Friman (1996) for a discussion of politics and finances in American martial arts.

I'm loyal to my instructor, and I'm loyal to the style—I think the style is great. I guess I'm loyal to the principles set down by General Choi. Am I loyal to the ITF? I don't know. I don't plan to leave, and I plan to always practice and teach ITF Taekwon-do. But loyalty to an organisation is a difficult thing.

– Second-wave instructor

“I'm as loyal to my federation as it's loyal to me. How's that for an answer?”

quipped a WTF instructor. Another was even more cynical:

The WTF leaves me alone, and I leave it alone, and we both like it that way. The way to the Olympics is open to my students—I have one who'll be trying to make the team—and that's what they give me. What I give them... numbers. And dollars.

– First-wave instructor

The higher level instructors have to navigate the white waters of federation membership to stay abreast of political developments, and to continue to move up in Taekwon-do dan hierarchy. Most of them identify a number of benefits that federation membership gives them and their students. However, they all know that practically, choice of federation, much like choice of martial art, is largely a question of geographic location and convenience. If the school kitty-corner to your office is a WTF school, you will join the WTF. If the instructor who teaches at your local Y is affiliated with the ITF, you will join the ITF. If there's a karate school on your parents' way home, you'll bypass Taekwon-do altogether.

“Students—junior students—couldn’t care less about federations,” assert Taekwon-do instructors. They don’t know about the ITF and the WTF, they don’t know that their style isn’t allowed at the Olympics, or that their instructor is a pariah in General Choi’s eyes. They’re just learning to kick and punch. Many learn about federations when they move and start looking for a new Taekwon-do school. They find one that’s convenient and affordable, show up for class, and realize that the patterns, exercises and dogmas of this new school are a little different. Some adapt quickly, some never. Senior students, who have learnt more and thus have more to relearn, may be more discriminating. Instructors, these days at least, tend to stay within their federations.

Will the ITF and the WTF unify in this millennium? This was the only question I asked in the course of my research to which answers correlated along federation lines.⁵ ITF instructors say no, WTF instructors say maybe—particularly once General Choi (God bless his 82-year-old soul) is no longer an active player. ITF instructors are more conscious of the technical differences between the two styles of Taekwon-do. “They’re basically two different martial arts at this point,” they say. WTF instructors tend to focus on the political division instead. Neither group is particularly enthused about the possibility of unification. It is much easier to split up than to unify. And it’s more interesting to fight and squabble than to come together.⁶

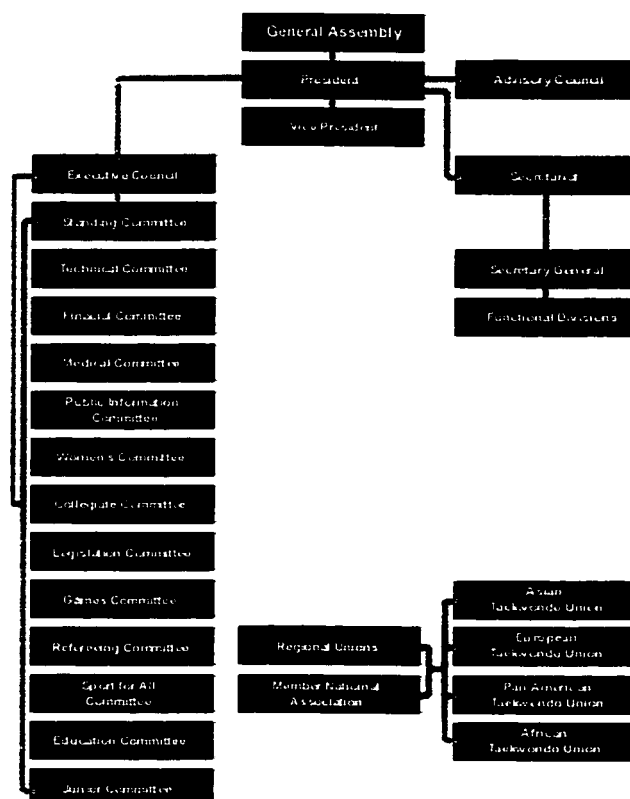
But there certainly is potential for unification. With the exception of the above, there was no split along federation lines in any of the questions Canadian Taekwon-do

⁵ I should clarify here that I did not actually ask this specific question. I asked respondents to “Look down the road ten years. What’s happening with Taekwon-do?” The first issue all ITF and WTF affiliated instructors tackled was unification.

⁶ After all, sharpening their fighting skills is part of what Taekwon-do practitioners learn in the *dojang*.

instructors answered about culture, philosophy, teaching style, motivation, spirituality and ideology. Canadian instructors are far from comprising a homogenous body. They have different philosophies, teaching styles and personal experiences. Federation affiliation, however, has no bearing on an instructor's teaching philosophy or a student's learning experience. It even has no bearing on his attitude towards things Korean, South or North.

Illustration 11: The organisational chart of the WTF



The WTF has been significantly more organised than its rival, which has used General Choi's personality and charisma as a key organisational tool.⁷

⁷ A Choi Hong Hi seminar I attended in 1999 was made memorable by the presence of a WTF sixth dan, a member of South Korea's Olympic team. The South Korean government has apparently sharply reduced the WTF's funding (reasons unknown) and, for a reason I don't quite understand, this has made relations between at least some members of the two federations warmer. Choi's attitude towards the technical competency of the WTF has not changed, however. Although he spent a great deal of time on the visitor's technique, often explaining a technical point to him in much more detail than he had to the rest of the seminar participants (in Korean, of course), he also incorporated his usual anti-WTF tirades into the seminar. His favourite put-down, if a practitioner executes a technique incorrectly, remains, "What? Are you from the WTF?"

The future of things Korean in Canadian Taekwon-do

As I've said earlier, the low level of interest most Canadian instructors have in the Korean aspects of Taekwon-do surprised me. Most of them think of Taekwon-do as "our martial art"—neither Korean nor Canadian, simply ours. Despite the current cultural paucity, there may be an increased emphasis on Taekwon-do's cultural heritage in the future.

The size and scope of international competitions and seminars already necessitate the use of a common vocabulary. The language of convenience has often been English, although the official language was supposed to be Korean. At most WTF competitions, commands are usually given in Korean. Over the last few years, the official policy of the ITF has also returned to Korean vocabulary. General Choi's latest decree has been that all techniques should be taught by their Korean names. It will be interesting to see whether instructors, and students, will follow suit. To date, efforts have been half-hearted at best.

Many of the youngest instructors I interviewed, who had spent most of their childhood and adolescence immersed in Taekwon-do, are only now learning about the martial art's cultural heritage. They are discovering it on their own, and not through their instructors, and are perhaps likely to prize it more because it was self-discovered. They may value it enough to teach their students about it; then again, that may not be the Canadian way.

The pendulum could swing the other way as well. Women already form half of most colour belt classes, soon they will form half of the instructors. Today's female instructors are the least enthusiastic about incorporating Korean traditions into their teaching methods. Will that predilection continue once they are no longer a minority? And what other changes will the women instructors make to Taekwon-do? The women I interviewed were among the most innovative and creative teachers. They were also the ones most conscious about being "different" from their own instructors.

A final miscellany of ideas

Perhaps because of the focus on the student-instructor relationship, I was often aware and interested in the ramifications of other relationships. There are a lot of husband-wife, father-son, father-daughter and other familial business partnerships in Taekwon-do, as well as other martial arts. A number of interesting research topics could be explored within that rich vein. The dropping age demographic is also resulting in children introducing their parents to Taekwon-do, and in some cases, becoming their instructors. Would not that be a wonderful Pandora's box to open?

To return to the issue of gender again: Is there a difference in retention rates between male and female students? I can't even hazard a guess, but there would be a fascinating project. The sexes are joining in equal ratios. Are they staying in equal ratios?

No one has ever documented the lineages of current Taekwon-do instructors in Canada and in the U.S. It would be interesting to see who the most prolific fathers of

Canadian Taekwon-do were. There are also no real demographic studies on the topic. Why does a certain martial art flourish in one city and not another? Is it due entirely to the charisma of the specific instructor, or something else? Why are some schools and some instructors able to corner, and successfully defend, a market for decades, while others are constantly being challenged by newcomers? How influential are the federations, really, when it comes to the every day issues of running a school and a business?

How are the experiences of Taekwon-do instructors different from their peers in the U.S., Australia, the U.K., or Europe? How, for that matter, are they different from their local peers in different martial arts? Within Canada, are there regional differences? Or differences in the cultural interpretations between French Quebec and English Canada?

Are the consumers of Taekwon-do, the lower belt students, really acquiring power? They seem to be more discerning than students in the past, and they certainly have more choices? How are they exercising this power of choice? Will there be, as the respondent quoted at the opening of this chapter predicted, a shakedown?

What's going to happen to Taekwon-do when Choi Hong Hi dies?

At the close of each interview, I turned off the tape recorded, thanked the respondent for his time, and asked him if there was anything else he wanted to say, anything else that was on his mind. Everyone said something, most often about the future of Taekwon-do and their future in Taekwon-do, or the challenges of running a martial

arts business. In one case, the post-interview interview lasted nearly two hours, with the respondent neatly reversing our roles, and asking me the same questions I had asked of him. Most respondents did the same to a lesser degree, asking me how things were done at my school, who my instructors had been, and why I was pursuing this research. Several of the respondents, strangers to me before I started this project, are now valued friends and colleagues. Throughout the entire process, I was struck, again and again, by the passion for Taekwon-do that drove them.

To each of you: thank you for taking the time to participate in this project. I hope it helps.

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APPENDIX A
Letter to Instructors (English)

[Address]

January 16, 1998

ATTENTION: Head Instructor

Dear Sir:

The Korean martial art of Taekwon-do has been part of the Canadian landscape for almost thirty years now. During these three decades, Taekwon-do has continued to grow, evolve and change, in response to the needs and desires of its practitioners and its new cultural environment. Have you ever wondered how your martial art has changed? Have you ever wondered how *you* have changed it?

I have been a student of Taekwon-do for twelve years, and more recently, I became a student of cultural anthropology. My concurrent studies of culture and Taekwon-do have come together for me in my Master of Arts thesis, in which I am exploring how Canadian instructors and Korean instructors who are teaching in Canada have "translated" Taekwon-do to fit their own way of life and their culture. I want to know what the transmitters of Taekwon-do knowledge — teachers, instructors, masters — think of Taekwon-do, how it is taught and learnt, and how (if at all) it has changed in Canada.

Such research, I believe, is necessary both in anthropology, to broaden the discipline's knowledge of the forces of cultural change, and in Taekwon-do. There is no work available which brings together the thoughts and experiences of Canadian and Korean martial arts instructors, and the existence of such a work would be beneficial to Taekwon-do and also the Canadian martial arts community in general.

I would like to invite you, and/or one or two of your black belt-level students, to participate in this exciting research project. What I ask of you is one to two hours of your time during which you would talk about your experiences as a student and teacher of Taekwon-do. The interview would, with your permission, be taped for my reference, but would not be disclosed to anyone else. At your request, your identity and your school's name can be kept anonymous as well. Shortly after the interview, I would provide you with a complete transcript of it, for your comments and clarifications. You would also receive an extensive annotated bibliography of martial arts research in the social sciences, for your use and reference.

As in a master's level research time is of the essence, I would be very grateful if you got back to me as soon as possible. I will call you in the first week of February to confirm that you received this letter. Should you have any immediate concerns or desire more information, please contact me via fax, e-mail or at my Taekwon-do school's toll-free pager (1-888-796-1543), and I will get back to you immediately.

Yours very truly,

Marzena Czarnecki

APPENDIX AA

Letter to Instructors (Korean)

지도자분들께,

한국의 전통무예, 태권도는 30여년동안 캐나다 스포츠와 예술의 부분이 되어왔습니다. 이 30년 동안의 기간동안, 태권도는 관련 종사자들의 열의와 요구 그리고 새로운 문화적 환경에 부응하여 성장과 발전 그리고 변화되어왔습니다. 귀하께서는 귀하의 전통무술이 어떻게 변화되어왔는지 관심을 가져본적이 있으십니까? 귀하께서는 귀하께서 어떻게 이 전통무술을 변화시켰는지 궁금해 본적이 있으십니까?

저는 12년동안 태권도를 익혀왔고 현재는 문화인류학의 학생으로서 최근의 저의 태권도와 문화에 관한 연구는 예술이론 석사과정에서 되었으며 이 석사과정에서 저는 캐나다인 지도자들과 한국인 지도자분들이 어떻게 태권도를 그들의 삶과 문화에 적용시키고 있는지 탐구해 가고 있습니다. 저는 태권도 관련지식에 관한 전달자들이 - 교사, 사범, 전문가 - 태권도를 무엇이라고 생각하는지 어떻게 태권도가 전달 숙지되어왔는지 그리고 캐나다내에서 어떻게 변화되어 왔는지 알고 싶습니다.

이러한 연구조사는 태권도와 인류학 양분야 지도자분들 모두에게 문화적 변화의 요인들에 관한 지식을 넓히기 위해서 필요하다고 믿습니다. 캐나다와 한국의 전통무예에 관한 전달자의 경험과 견해를 결합시킨 연구는 아직 존재하지 않습니다; 이러한 연구가 실현된다면 태권도와 캐나다 전통무술계의 총체적인 이익이 될 것입니다.

저는 이러한 흥미로운 연구계획에 귀하를 초대하고 싶습니다. 저의 요청사항은 태권도의 전달자나 전수자로서 귀하의 경험에 관한 내용을 1-2시간동안 나누는 것입니다. 이 인터뷰는 귀하의 동의하에서 저의 연구자료의 참조를 위해 녹음되어질 것이며 타인에게 누출되지 않을 것임을 보장합니다. 원하신다면 귀하의 신분과 학교명은 무기명으로 처리해 드리겠습니다. 인터뷰후 즉시 귀하의 의견과 관련내용에 관한 설명을 담은 동일사본을 제공해 드리겠습니다. 또한 귀하의 이해를 돕기 위해 사회과학 전통무예 연구에 관한 총괄적인 주석이 담긴 일람을 제공해 드릴 것입니다.

시간은 대학원 연구과정에 있어 가장 중요한 요소이기에 귀하께서 가능한 조속한 시일내에 저의 질문에 답해 주신다면 진심으로 감사하겠습니다. 1월 중순경에 이 서신이 귀하에게 도착했는지 확인하기 위해 전화를 드리겠습니다. 만일 귀하께서 어떤 궁금증이나 알고 싶은 정보가 있으시다면 제게 팩스나 전자사서함 또는 제가 소속된 태권도 학교의 음성녹음기(1-888-796-1543)로 연락하여 주십시오.

Marzena Czarnecki 드림

APPENDIX B

Release Form (Page 1 of 2)

Participant Consent Form

Project: What Canadian Instructors are doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do
 Researcher: Marzena Czamecki
 Institution: The University of Calgary

Participant Name: _____
 (please print full name)

Please initial each number.

1. _____ I agree to be interviewed by Marzena Czamecki in the Project listed above.
2. _____ I understand and agree that the interview will be used in the research project.
3. _____ I understand the nature of my involvement: that is, giving answers to open-ended questions about my Taekwon-Do experience.
4. _____ The research project has been explained to me to my satisfaction.
5. _____ I understand that I am free to refuse to answer any questions or to end the interview and my participation in the interview and study at any time.

-
6. _____ I agree to have my full name, the name and location of my school, and my and my school affiliation to be used in the final write-up of the research project.

OR

7. _____ I request that my answers be kept strictly confidential and at no point during the future analysis will my name, the name and location of my school, or my and my school's affiliation be identified or made public.

-
8. _____ I understand and agree that the interview will be taped, and that the tapes are going to be heard only by Marzena Czamecki, and used only for the purposes of this project.

DATE: _____ 1998

 Signature of Participant

 Signature of Researcher

Release Form (Page 2 of 2)

Participant Consent Form - Mandatory and Verbatim Consent

Project: What Canadian Instructors are doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do
Researcher: Marzena Czamecki
Institution: The University of Calgary

Participant Name _____

(please print full name)

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Please take the time to read this form carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

**MANDATORY
AND
VERBATIM**

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate in it. In no way does this form waive your legal rights nor release the investigator, sponsors (if any), or involved institutions (the University of Calgary) from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, contact:

Marzena Czamecki
at (403) 220-7373
or (1-888) 796-1543
or maczame@acs.ucalgary.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

DATED _____, 1998

Signature of Participant_____
Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX C

Data Form (Page 1 of 2)

City and Province		Code	
Education		Affiliation:	
Occupation		Past Affiliation(s):	
TKD Income		Gender:	
Cultural Background		Date of Birth:	
In Canada		(Age in 1998):	
<hr/>			
Timeline			
Date Started TKD:		Started to Teach:	
1 st Dan Received:		Rank at Above:	
2 nd Dan Received:		Previous T. Ex:	
3 rd Dan Received:		Started School:	
4 th Dan Received:		Rank at Above:	
5 th Dan Received:		Years T. Ex:	
6 th Dan Received:		8 th Dan Received:	
7 th Dan Received:		9 th Dan Received:	
<hr/>			
Lineage			
First Instructor:		Dates With:	
Second Instructor:		Dates With:	
Third Instructor:		Dates With:	
Fourth Instructor:		Dates With:	
Primary Instructor:		Number Above:	
<hr/>			
Marital Arts			
Other Marital Art:		Dates:	Rank:
Other Marital Art:		Dates:	Rank:
Other Marital Art:		Dates:	Rank:
<hr/>			
Sports			
Sport:		Dates:	Level:
Sport:		Dates:	Level:
Sport:		Dates:	Level:
<hr/>			
Motivation			
Why martial arts			
Why Taekwon-do			
Why Taekwon-do still			

Data Form (Page 2 of 2)

Before Taekwon-do	After Taekwon-do
Korea knowledge _____	Korea knowledge _____
Asia knowledge _____	Asia knowledge _____
Eastern rel interest _____	East rel interest _____
Korean friends _____	Korean friends _____
Korean food _____	Korean food _____
Korean C. event _____	Korean C. event _____
Athletic _____	Athletic _____
Knew TKD Korean? _____	More knowledge? _____
Korean Signifiers	
Bow _____	Kor voc in class _____
Handshake _____	Speak Korean _____
Tenets _____	Learnt Korean _____
Student Oath _____	Been in Korea _____
Patterns (why) _____	Want to go _____
Patterns (meaning) _____	Train in Korea _____
Belts/rank _____	_____
Philosophy	
Martial art _____	Better person (you) _____
Sport _____	Have a phil? _____
Difference _____	What phil _____
Competition _____	How learn _____
Spiritual aspect _____	How teach _____
Religious _____	Books _____
Better person (Pro) _____	Magazines _____
School Details	
Name _____	Flags <i>Dobok</i> _____
Crest _____	Gender Ratio _____
Flags <i>Do-jang</i> _____	Own School _____
Future	
In TKD in 10 years? _____	
WTF/ITF _____	
TKD in 10 years _____	

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire (Page 1 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
I. Personal Information (Set A)	
<i>Objective of these questions: Gather information that may be used as variables in interpreting the data about each Instructor's personal history</i>	
Introduction	<p>Name <i>[will know ahead of time]</i></p> <p>- How would you like me to address you?</p> <p><i>[signing of the consent form]</i></p>
Timeline	<p>First, I want to establish a timeline of your Taekwon-do history, when you started taking it, when you started teaching, who your instructors were and so on, to help both of us put things in order. All right?</p>
	When did you first start taking Taekwon-do?
	<p>When did you first start to teach Taekwon-do?</p> <p>- What rank did you hold at that time (black belt or other)?</p>
	<p>When did you receive you 1st Dan Black Belt?</p> <p>When did you receive you 2nd Dan Black Belt?</p> <p>When did you receive you 3rd Dan Black Belt?</p> <p>- continue for subsequent dans</p>
Instructors	How many instructors have you had?
First Instructor	<p>- Who was your first instructor?</p> <p>- What was the name of school?</p> <p>- Where was that? (city, province)</p> <p>- How long did you study with this instructor? (try to get dates)</p> <p>- Could you tell me why you stopped studying with that instructor? <i>[repeat for second, third etc. instructors]</i></p>

Questionnaire (Page 2 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Primary Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who do you consider as your primary, most important instructor? - What was/is the name of school? - Where was that? (city, province) - How long did you study with this instructor? (try to get dates) - Are you still studying with that instructor? NO: Why not?
Now, I would like to talk about your experience in other martial arts and sports.	
Other Martial Arts	<p>Have you studied, or do you still study other martial arts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which one(s)? - For how long? - Before, after or during learning Taekwon-do? - Why?
Other Sports	<p>Are there any sports you played, or still play, regularly?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Which one(s)? - For how long? - Before, after or during learning Taekwon-do? - Why?
	Is your commitment to Taekwon-do greater than your commitment to these other martial arts or sports? Why/why not?
O.K., let's focus in on your current Taekwon-do experience.	
Time Commitment	<p>How often do you teach Taekwon-do?</p> <p>Do you have your own school, or do you teach in someone else's school?</p>

Questionnaire (Page 3 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Occupation	<p>Is teaching Taekwon-do a source of income for you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - primary source of income / full-time job - a source of income, but not the main one / part-time job - not a source of income at all / volunteer work <p>Do you have any other sources of income?</p> <p>What is your occupation – teaching Taekwon-do or something else?</p>
II. Pre-Taekwon-do Personal History	
<i>Objective of these questions: Determine knowledge and importance of Korean culture to the Instructor before undertaking Taekwon-do training</i>	
<p>Now, let's take a trip down memory lane, to before you started to learn Taekwon-do. I will ask you to remember some things you did, thought and knew, about martial arts, sports, [and Korea, Asia] before you became involved in Taekwon-do. If you don't remember something, just say so, it's okay.</p>	
	Why did you take up a martial art?
	Why did you choose Taekwon-do instead of another martial art?
	Did you know Taekwon-do was a <u>Korean</u> martial art when you chose it?
Korea	Did you know anything about Korea before you begun Taekwon-do? Did you have any Korean friends or acquaintances? Did you ever participate in a Korean cultural event?

Questionnaire (Page 4 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Asia	<p>What did you know about Asia, and Asian philosophies and religions before you begun Taekwon-do?</p> <p>Did you ever participate in any Asian cultural events?</p> <p>Were you interested in Eastern religions or philosophies? (such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism)</p>
<p>We talked earlier about some of the sports you have participated in. I would like to know, specifically, about your sports participation before Taekwon-do.</p>	
Sports	<p>What kind of sports did you participate in?</p> <p>Did you compete in any of these sports?</p> <p>Did you think there was a philosophical / non-physical aspect to these sports?</p> <p>Did you find the sports challenging? [pursue more if necessary in interview]</p> <p>What is the chief difference between these sports and Taekwon-do?</p>
<h3>III. Teaching Philosophy / Taekwon-do Philosophy</h3> <p><i>Objective of these questions: Gather information on how the instructor teaches, how s/he was taught, what s/he believes teaching Taekwon-do entails; glean individual philosophy and its sources</i></p> <p>Let's return to the present. This next set of questions deals with how you teach Taekwon-do now, and how you feel about Taekwon-do now. So first, let's start by defining Taekwon-do.</p>	
	<p>Give me a definition of Taekwon-do.</p>

Questionnaire (Page 5 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Sport/martial art definitonal limbo	<p>Is Taekwon-do a martial art? Why/why not?</p> <p>Is Taekwon-do a sport? Why/why not?</p> <p>What is the difference between martial arts and sports?</p> <p>Is it possible for an activity to be both sport and martial art?</p> <p>Is this a controversial issue among the instructors you know?</p>
<p>I will ask you to describe some typical teaching scenarios for me, and to tell me a little about how you teach and how you were taught.</p>	
Initial Teaching	<p>When you first started to teach Taekwon-do, did you have any other teaching experience?</p> <p>YES: What kind? For how long? Did it help you in teaching Taekwon-do?</p> <p>NO: How did you decide how to teach?</p>
Other Exp.	<p>Now, do you have any experience teaching something other than Taekwon-do?</p> <p>Do you have some non-martial arts teaching certification? (for example, National Coaching Certification)</p>

Questionnaire (Page 6 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Typical Class	<p>Describe a typical <u>adult</u> class taught by you, from beginning to end.</p> <p>- <i>[elaboration questions: Look for: - breaks for water (arduousness of training)/ protocol / type of training / level of explanation / instructor address / delegation to lower level students / non-physical teaching / ritual and form]</i></p> <p>Describe a typical adult class taught by your [primary] instructor, from beginning to end.</p> <p><i>[repeat for kids class if need more information]</i></p>
S-I Relationship for Your [Primary] Instructor	<p>How did/do you address your instructor in class?</p> <p>How did/do you address your outside of class? Why?</p> <p>For what would your instructor punish you? Give me an example of the wrong-doing and the penalty. Did you think that was fair?</p> <p>Did you ever go to your instructor with personal problems? Would you?</p>

Questionnaire (Page 7 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Student-Instructor Relationship	<p>How do students address you in class? Why?</p> <p>How do students address you outside of class? Why?</p> <p>Describe a perfect student-instructor relationship.</p> <p>Now, describe a typical student-instructor relationship.</p> <p>Do you punish your students for infractions? How? Give me examples of when you would punish a student and how.</p> <p>Do students ever come to you with personal problems?</p> <p>Do you encourage students to ask questions? Did your instructor?</p> <p>Describe a "good" instructor.</p>
You and Your Instructor	<p>What were the strengths of your instructor, as a teacher?</p> <p>What were the weaknesses of your instructor, as a teacher?</p> <p>Compare yourself to your instructor.</p> <p>How are you different as a teacher?</p> <p>How are you the same?</p>

Questionnaire (Page 8 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Literature	<p>Do you read any books about Taekwon-do?</p> <p>Do you read any books about martial arts in general?</p> <p>- Why do you read them?</p> <p><i>[elaborate: technical information? philosophy? pleasure]</i></p> <p>Do you read any martial arts magazines? Why or why not?</p> <p><i>[expectation: few people will read them, and if so, they will feel need to "justify" it]</i></p>
Non-physical Aspect	<p>Does Taekwon-do have a philosophy? Describe it.</p> <p>Definition of philosophy: a way of thinking.</p> <p>It's common wisdom that practicing martial arts makes you a better person. Do you think that's true? Was it true for you? Why? How?</p> <p>Did Taekwon-do affect you positively? How?</p> <p>Many martial arts have a strong association with spirituality and religion – for example, aikido and taichi with taoism, karate with Zen. What about Taekwon-do?</p> <p><i>[What about a spiritual aspect to Taekwon-do? Generally? Specifically, for you?</i></p> <p><i>Are you a religious person? Why do you say that? What is your religion? How do you practice it?</i></p> <p><i>Would you describe yourself as a spiritual person? Why/why not? What kinds of things do you do that are "spiritual"?</i></p>
You and Your Students	<p>Does Taekwon-do mean the same thing to you as it does to your students?</p> <p>How are your students different?</p> <p>Is tradition important?</p>

Questionnaire (Page 9 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Signifiers	Let's talk about the [signifier].
1. Bow	- How was it done when you were a student]
2. Handshake	- Why was it done?
3. Tenets.	- How do you do it in your club?
4. Student Oath.	- What does it mean to you?
5. Patterns.	- How do you teach it / explain it to your students?
[Removed: Korean flag.	- What do you think it means to your students?
	How relevant are the origins (Korean) of this signifier to you and your students?
	<i>[repeat for each signifier]</i>
Patterns	All the Taekwon-do patterns are named after an important person in Korean history. Do you know something about <i>[name of pattern]</i> ? <i>[stopped asking; replaced with:]</i>
	Taekwon-do patterns are named after Korean patriots. How relevant is learning their meanings to Canadian students?

Questionnaire (Page 10 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
Korean Vocabulary	<p>Do you use Korean vocabulary when you teach? What kind?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>Is Korean vocabulary part of your test requirements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How important is it? - What happens if a student fails the vocabulary component of a test? <p>Do you speak Korean?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have you ever tried to learn Korean/ thought about learning Korean?
<p>V. Present Korean Culture Knowledge / Importance in Taekwon-do Training</p> <p><i>Objective of these questions: Measure importance of the Korean cultural component to Taekwon-do training and life in general.</i></p>	
<p>What I want you to talk about now is how important the Korean aspects of Taekwon-do are important to you in Taekwon-do training. I'll be asking you some general questions, but feel free to elaborate.</p>	
Travelling to Korea	<p>Have you ever been to Korea? Why/why not?</p> <p>Would you like to go? Why/why not?</p> <p>Would you like to train/learn TKD in Korea?</p>
General	<p>Has Taekwon-do taught you anything about Korea?</p> <p>If you ignore information you learned about Korea through Taekwon-do (directly or indirectly) what would you know about Korea now?</p> <p>Do you have any Korean friends?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taekwon-do? Non-Taekwon-do? <p>How often do you eat Korean food?</p> <p>Do you participate in Korean cultural events?</p>

Questionnaire (Page 11 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
School	<p>Your school's name is _____.</p> <p>What does it mean?</p> <p>Who chose your school's name? Why? How?</p> <p>Do you (you=you and your students) wear Korean flags on your <i>dobok[s]</i>? Why?</p> <p>Do you wear Canadian flags on your <i>dobok[s]</i>? Why? How about provincial flags?</p>
VI. Personal Information (Set B)	
<i>Objective of these questions: Gather information that may be used as variables in interpreting the data about each Instructor's personal history</i>	
Age	<p>Date of Birth – have R. write down</p> <p>- Has your age had any influence on your experience as a Taekwon-do instructor? Would things have been easier if you were younger? Older?</p>
Gender	<p>- Has your being a man/woman had any bearing on your experience as a Taekwon-do instructor? [elaborate in interview if necessary]</p>
Cultural Background	<p>Where were you born?</p> <p>Where did you grow up?</p> <p>Where were your parents born?</p> <p>SOME: How long have you lived in Canada?</p> <p>What do you consider to be your cultural background?</p> <p>Has your cultural background had any impact on how you approach Taekwon-do?</p>

Questionnaire (Page 12 of 12)

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS
VII. Wrap-up	
We've covered a lot of information. I have one more tough questions before we finish. I want you to look in a crystal ball and predict what the future holds for Taekwon-do, let's say within the next 10 years.	
	Is there anything we haven't talked about that you would like to say?

APPENDIX E
Follow-Up Letter

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name],

Re: "What Canadian instructors are doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do"

Thank you for your participation in the research project, "What Canadian instructors are doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do." I enjoyed our meeting and interview very much.

I will forward your [transcripts or/and interview tape] to you shortly.

[Personal message pertaining to situation]

Again, thank you for your participation, and I notify you once the write-up of my research is complete. Should you have any questions or concerns before then, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

Marzena A. Czarnecki

APPENDIX F
Concluding Letter

[Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name],

Re: "What Canadian instructors are doing to the Korean martial art of Taekwon-do"

So much time has elapsed from our interview, you may have forgotten all about this research project you were kind enough to participate in the [spring/summer of 1998].

I'm pleased to report that the project is finally completed. Enclosed is a copy of the [tape and/or transcript] from our interview, as well as a summary of my research and an extensive bibliography on martial arts research in the social sciences. [Some: copy of the complete thesis as you requested].

Again, thank you for your participation in this project. Should you have any questions or concerns before then, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

Marzena A. Czarnecki

APPENDIX G

Ethics Statement

(I prepared this Ethics Statement as part of my research proposal in April 1998)

Although this research project requires no permits or consents other than those of the individuals who will participate in the interviews, I will inform both the International Taekwon-do Federation and the World Tae Kwon Do Federation of my planned research and of the completion of the research. I will also make available to them, upon request, a copy of the completed research. Such a courtesy may, to a certain extent, alleviate any perceived conflict of interest on part of the WTF and ITF. The two organisations are on adversarial and estranged terms because of their stormy history and continual competition for the world limelight. Their members may have concerns about participating in a research project that gives weight and voice to both styles. However, because my research will rely in equal part on informants from both styles, I do not consider there to be any significant conflict of interest. It is highly unlikely that this research will have any political, funding or other negative impact on either the ITF or the WTF and their member schools.

The primary research method of this study is the interview. Prior to the interview, I will explain the project to the participant in as much detail as s/he desires. I will answer any questions that the participant may ask about the study or my research methods fully

and truthfully. Participation in the study will be on a voluntary and informed basis. I will obtain a signed consent form prior to the interview. Regardless of the signing of the consent form, each participant will be free to terminate participation in the interview at any time.

The interviews will be tape-recorded. The tapes will be listened to and transcribed by me and no one else. The tapes and the transcripts will be stored securely. If participants elect to conceal their identity, their identity and any potentially identifying facts or descriptions will not be revealed in any future publications. If participants choose not to conceal their identity, I will make all possible efforts that they and the information they provided are represented honestly. The participants will be made aware of these precautions. The participants will also be informed that my research will pose no anticipated physical or psychological risk of any kind to them, now or at any time in the future.

As an insider of the martial art, I will use my best efforts not to project my own feelings and experiences onto the participants of the study and to portray Taekwon-do and its practitioners accurately and fairly, with a constant awareness of my potential bias and insider “blindness.” As an outsider of the specific schools and, in the case of WTF, the style, I will do my utmost to understand and responsibly depict the practices and experiences of the Taekwon-do instructors and students participating in this study.

I will abide by these ethical provisions, keeping the well-being of the participants foremost in my mind, as I carry out quality, conscientious research.