

CHAPTER IV: A SYMPOSIUM OF TAIJIQUAN TEACHERS

sym-po-sium (Latin, from Greek symposion, sympinein, to drink together)

1 a: a convivial party with music and conversation

b: a social gathering at which there is free interchange of ideas

2 a: a formal meeting at which specialists deliver short
addresses on a topic or on related topics

b: a collection of opinions on a subject

c: discussion.

--Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary

A Group Photo

This study could be characterized as a symposium--a party--a gathering of Taijiquan teachers for conversation and the free interchange of ideas. The invitation to this symposium, an extensive questionnaire, was sent to all teachers whose addresses the researcher could ascertain. Through their responses, 216 teachers participated in the symposium and shared their thoughts on Taijiquan and teaching.

The first research question posed in Chapter I asked "*Who is teaching? Specifically, can we characterize the population of Taijiquan teachers in the United States according to experience, training, and various demographic measures?*" This can now be attempted. The criteria for participation were that each

respondent had to live in the United States and had to have been teaching for at least one year. Of 216 respondents, 21 (9%) had Chinese names and 57 (26%) were women. The 216 had 132 different primary teachers, and lived in 38 states and the District of Columbia. From the information they provided about themselves, the following group picture came into focus--a snapshot, taken in 1988, of a sample of the population of Taijiquan teachers.

To make the presentation of this data more palatable and to provide a frame for its orderly introduction, the scenario of a person looking for Taijiquan instruction will be employed. The would-be beginner narrates, with statistical detail interjected as comment:

A friend recommended that I try Taijiquan, and I was game, but I didn't know how to begin. I saw a magazine advertisement for a videotape, but decided that before I ordered the tape I would see if there were any books about it in a local bookstore. There were. I bought the one with the most pictures and the least text, and tried a few moves at home. Whew! It was difficult to imitate photos of a person who didn't look like me while having to go back to the book again and again to read the directions about how to put me the way he was. I figured Taijiquan couldn't be just this "insert tab A into slot B" thing. I decided to see if there were any teachers listed in the Yellow Pages, but drew a blank.

Only 4% of respondents said they get new students through a phone listing, while 56% said that most come by word of mouth or referral; 24% use fliers and posters; 12% teach in locations that advertise for them, such as adult

schools, community centers, parks departments, YMCAs, and colleges; and 10% rely on community calendars and local events directories in newspapers.

Table IV-1

Most Common Settings for Taijiquan Classes

Setting	% of respondents
Outdoor location	57.9
non-credit course at school or college	54.6
Private home	49.5
Rented room (church, mall, etc.)	49.1
Martial arts school or Taijiquan studio	47.7
Arts center, dance studio	42.2
Health or sports facility (YMCA, spa)	42.2
Student club or rented space at a school	25.9
Credit course at school or college	23.6
Nursing home, retirement center	18
Hospital or clinic	14.3
Employees' program in a business	13.9

At this point, a would-be beginner plays a form of roulette. Most beginners know very little about Taijiquan. Many have never even seen it performed. It is easy for them to get the impression that they should be looking for the particular version of Taijiquan they saw on a tape or in a book. Someone with an air of authority who knows a few esoteric-looking motions and a few phrases can definitely pass as a Taijiquan teacher before a

gullible group of beginners. What protection does an interested beginner have against that? This will be considered later in this chapter in the section called “Accountability.” But three cardinal rules might be whispered to the prospective player:

1. *don't get turned off to Taijiquan by the first teacher you try*
2. *don't stop looking even if you find a good teacher*
3. *try more than one.*

To return to the scenario:

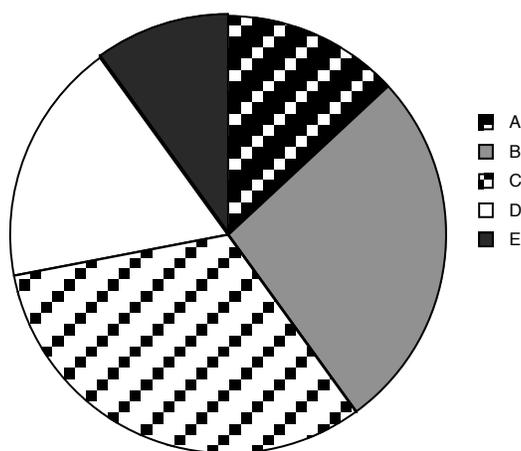
I asked around. Finally, I discovered that a class was being offered as a non-credit, continuing ed course at a community college [see Table IV-1]. The class was scheduled to meet once a week in the early evening for an hour. [41% of classes meet for an hour; 31% meet for an hour and a half.] When I arrived for my first class, I was one of a group of 10 beginners. It was an “average” beginning class, and our instructor was the “average” Taijiquan teacher: he looked to be between 30 to 50 years old, and he wasn't Chinese. I guess I had been expecting a robed monk or some character from a *gongfu* movie. I learned later that he was a high school teacher [see Figure IV-1, Formal Education of Respondents.]

Job categories that seem under-represented among Taijiquan teachers are those in customer services--such as beauticians, police officers, waitpersons, etc.--those in manual or clerical jobs, and those in personal services--such as phys ed teachers, EMTs, and nurses aides. It seems that Taijiquan has yet to

have the impact on the “working class” or blue-collar workers in America that it has had in its native land.

Figure IV-1

Formal Education of Respondents



<u>Legend</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
A = doctorate or professional (e.g.: J.D., M.D.)	28	13
B = masters	59	27.3
C = baccalaureate	70	32.4
D = high school or associates	38	17.6
E = none, other, or not answered	21	9.8

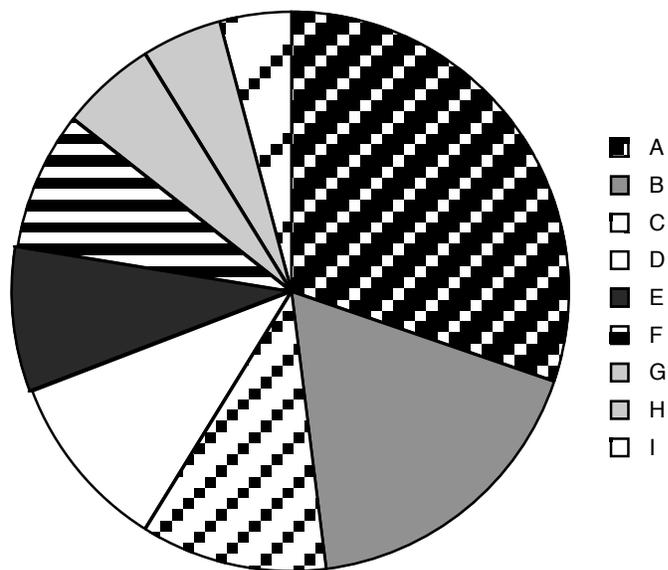
The class began with a demonstration of a part of the form we were to learn. Two students who had been studying Taijiquan for a couple of years, another man and a woman, demonstrated the form along with our teacher. This was impressive to me; I remembered how

jerky I felt trying to learn from that book! These three looked strong

yet

Figure IV-2

Forms and Styles Taught by Respondents



<u>Slice</u>	<u>Legend</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>% of 214</u>
A	Yang short form only	65	30.4
B	Yang long form only	38	17.8
C	Yang long and short only	23	10.7
D	Chen only (f=3) or Yang and Chen	22	10.3
E	Wu, Hao, &/or Sun only (f=4), or Wu, Hao, &/or Sun plus	18	8.4
F	Some "other" style, plus	17	7.9
G	Combined form only (f=2) or Combined form plus	12	5.6
H	Some "other" form or style only	10	4.7
I	Kuang Ping only (f=5) or KP plus	9	4.2

soft, alert yet peaceful. A demonstration was worth a thousand words. I was hooked. The teacher explained that we would be learning a Yang style form. He assured us that we would be able to perform the entire sequence on our own in eight months.

In 1988, if respondents to this study were representative of the teachers teaching in America, 76% of all beginning classes were Yang style, and 54% focused on a Yang style short form. Yang style was clearly the dominant style in this country (see Figure IV-2: Forms and Styles Taught by Respondents). Two-thirds, 66%, had studied a shortened Yang style form and 59% taught it. Chen had been studied by 33%, but was taught by only 14% of respondents, and the other three major styles, Wu, Hao, or Sun had been studied by 16% but were taught by only 8%.

Then he talked to us about Taijiquan and some of the philosophy related to it. He seemed knowledgeable and enthusiastic, but this part went on a little too long for me--of course I was tired, having just come from work, and had some difficulty concentrating. A lot of it went over my head in that first class, but in the weeks to come I began to appreciate some of the ideas. I bought a book with fewer pictures and more text! When he came to the end of his introduction, he led us in a series of warm-ups and stretches, and taught us the opening stance. He and his two students came around to each of us and pushed a little here and pulled a little there. At last we achieved some semblance of what he was looking for. My first book hadn't spent so much time on one posture! Then we followed him and the two experienced students as

they did the first part of the form--just to get a feeling for it, he said. Moving in this new way felt wonderful.

After our second class, we all went to a local pizza parlor and got to know one another a little better. Our teacher said that he taught 2.5 classes per week [remember he is the *average* teacher]: another class held outdoors in the park, and “half a class” in a local dance studio. He had about 25 students in all. The fees for his regular classes were \$5.30 per hour.

Forty-one percent said they teach for free or make less than \$1,000 per year from Taijiquan teaching; 25% earn between \$1,000 and \$5,000; around 8% each reported earning more than \$5,000 but less than \$10,000, and more than \$10,000 but less than \$15,000 at Taijiquan teaching alone, apart from any other income. Ten percent reported a gross annual income from Taijiquan teaching of more than \$15,000. Just under 10% said they support themselves solely through Taijiquan instruction.

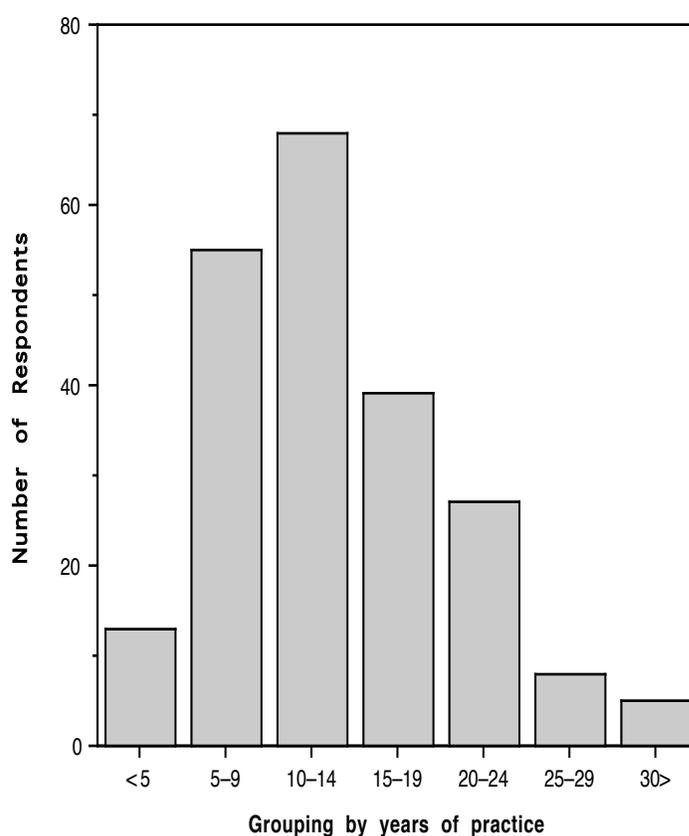
Gradually, I learned more about my teacher. He had been studying Taijiquan for 13 years, and had been teaching for 8 years.

These were averages for the respondents to this study. See Figure IV-3: Years Respondents Had Been Studying Taijiquan. The art is definitely growing in America. Many respondents commented that they noticed this and were pleased by it. Only 18% of respondents had been studying for 20 years or more, and 36%, had been teaching less than 5 years, the largest grouping by five-year intervals. Although this study was cross-sectional, the data suggests

that Taijiquan instruction is dominated by new teachers, and each year their numbers are augmented by a host of teachers who have been studying for 5 years or so, more or less.

Figure IV-3

Years Respondents Had Been Studying Taijiquan



My teacher had studied a Yang style long form and a Yang style short form, as well as a sword form and push-hands. He explained that he did not teach the sword form, but that he sometimes showed push-

hands after his outdoor class to those who were interested [see Figure IV-4: Auxiliary Studies Taught in America].

Very often, there is considerable discrepancy between what a teacher has studied and what they teach. Of respondents, 42% reported having studied only one *style* of Taijiquan, but 69% teach only one style. Twenty-three percent had studied only one *form* of Taijiquan, but fully 55% teach only one form. In other words, one third of all respondents taught only one form even though they had studied more than one form. Chances are, then, that if a student studies with only one teacher, they will learn only one form, though their teacher may have studied more than one form and even more than one style. This line of reasoning also suggests that there is an *evaporation effect*: the majority of teachers offer less to their students than they received from

Table IV-2

Auxiliary Subjects Taught by Respondents

Subject	% of 216	Subject	% of 216
Push-hands	75	Other Martial Art	29
Qigong	55	Big Knife	25
Meditation	51	Staff	18
Sword	41	Stick	14
San-shou	34	Spear	9
Free Fighting	31	Bagua, Xingi	8

their teachers. This has interesting historical implications, and also lends support to one of the arguments for the value of lineage.

As we talked, I learned that my teacher felt that the inner growth and meditative aspects of Taijiquan had personally been of most value to him, followed closely by the cultivation of energy. His students, he felt, stayed with Taijiquan more for exercise and general fitness. My teacher was of the school that believes players should stick to one style for life [though only 17% agreed with this, only 50% disagreed, and 41% said they would not encourage their students to study more than one style]. He seemed a little miffed when I said I thought I'd check out another class I'd heard of across town. I was unaware at the time that some teachers feel there is a kind of etiquette involved in these situations. Seeing my eagerness and openness, however, my teacher relented. He said he had met half a dozen other teachers in the area, including the one I had heard about. He said they each had a different approach to the art, and that he thought I'd enjoy the exposure. He also advised, however, that he felt it best if I then settled into learning one form well, and that if I chose to study with one of the other teachers it would be alright with him. He suggested I call each of the other teachers and ask permission to visit a class. Turned out the class I'd heard about was taught by one of his students!

This part of the narrative is wishful thinking: a "Miracle on 34th Street." However, in Seattle, for example, teachers from different backgrounds keep in touch with each other and plan opportunities to get together. Hopefully, this kind of networking will spread to all parts of the country.

This section has presented a picture of an *average* teacher. There really is no such thing as an average individual, because averages are just that: they are composites of a great many individuals, each of whom will differ to a greater or lesser degree from the average profile. A male teacher was used in the scenario, as the proportion of men and women among respondents to this survey suggests that in 1988 only about 21% of Taijiquan teachers in America were women. As our beginner-narrator discovered, there is a remarkable variety among teachers, their instructional approaches, their opinions and beliefs about the art.

Among the teachers that the first teacher recommended and several others that our beginner-narrator discovered were two who taught private lessons only, and did not offer classes; another instructor had been a Taijiquan teacher for 25 years, but two had been studying less than five years, and one class the narrator visited was the first that teacher had ever taught; one was a young Chinese graduate exchange student from the PRC; another promised the students they would learn telekinesis and other psychic powers through Taijiquan; and another taught a Yang style variant which he claimed was the original Chen style. In one class the Taijiquan seemed to have been amalgamated with a number of feel-good fads into a metaphysical hodgepodge. Some classes concentrated wholly on form; but in one, an hour of warm-ups preceded any work on form. Some teachers had literature to hand out regarding classes and about Taijiquan, while others simply showed up and began teaching. The narrator formed a general impression of a community, not always aware of itself, comprised of beings succeeding at being human with all the attendant faults and frailties, but striving for the

qualities of spirit: magnanimity, warmth, sensitivity--that help strike a balance.

The narrator resolved to visit a couple of teachers at a later date so as to learn another style and other forms--but decided after all to return to the first teacher and learn his form. There was something about him that touched a responsive note. In class, the teacher looked at a new group of beginners. Fewer than 1 in 4, and most often not more than 1 in 10 Americans stick with Taijiquan and become dedicated players. It was good, he thought, to see that curious, earnest player back in class.

Texts Preferred by Respondents

“Learn from many teachers, read many books.
But only by serious practice can you discover the truth for yourself.”

--T.T. Liang, quoted by Gallagher in Liang (1977, p. ix)

Can Taijiquan be learned from a book or a videotape, rather than in person from a qualified teacher? Eight percent the respondents to this survey think it can be learned from a book; 16% think it can be learned from a good quality videotape. Although overwhelming majorities, 83% in the case of books and 65% in the case of videotapes, feel that this is not possible, yet it is interesting that some feel that it is. This would undoubtedly hinge on individual definitions of what it means to "learn" Taijiquan.

The premise behind asking respondents about books was that texts available in English, especially those popular among teachers, exert an influence on current views of the art, and are therefore another means of characterizing approaches to Taijiquan instruction in America. Though there was a strong upsurge in the popularity and availability of videotapes as an instructional medium in the late 1980's, a survey of this medium was beyond the scope of this study. This section reports the top 10 books chosen by respondents in two categories, and the top 20 in a third category, as of the date of this survey. It concludes with an analysis of the format and contents of books in the first category--those respondents said they would recommend for beginners--and with a discussion of the implications of their popularity.

In order to discover which texts have had the most widespread influence in America, respondents were asked to name two books on Taijiquan which they would recommend for beginners. The combined list numbered 60 titles in English. Nine respondents left this item blank; five said they did not recommend any books. Of the 60 titles, 25 were mentioned by three or more respondents. Here is a list of the top 10, with the number of respondents mentioning each one in parentheses:

Top 10 Texts Recommended for Beginners.

1. Jou, Tsung Hwa. *The Tao of Tai Chi Chuan: Way to Rejuvenation*. 1981 (5th ed. 1988). (76)
2. Liang, T.T. *T'ai Chi Ch'uan for Health and Self-Defense*. 1974. (29)
3. Cheng, Man-ch'ing and Robert W. Smith. *T'ai-Chi: The "Supreme Ultimate" Exercise for Health, Sport, and Self-Defense*. 1967. (28)
4. Lo, Benjamin Pang Jeng, Martin Inn, Robert Amacker, Susan Foe. *The Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Literary Tradition*. 1979. (21)
5. Kauz, Herman. *T'ai Chi Handbook*. 1974. (18)
6. Chen, William C.C. *Body Mechanics of Tai Chi Chuan for the Art of Self-Defense* (3rd ed. 1985). (16)
7. Huang, Al Chung-liang. *Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain: The Essence of T'ai Chi*. 1973. (14)
8. Horwitz, Tem, and Susan Kimmelman. *Tai Chi Ch'uan: The Technique of Power*. 1976. (13)
9. Klein, Bob. *Movements of Magic: The Spirit of T'ai-Chi-Ch'uan*. 1984. (11)
10. Cheng, Man-ch'ing (Douglas Wile, trans.) *Master Cheng's Thirteen Chapters on T'ai-Chi Ch'uan*. 1982. (10)

There was less of a consensus when respondents were asked to name the book they personally valued most on Taijiquan. While the first question specifically asked for books useful to beginners, the presumption in this

question was that these books would be of greater value to players who have been studying Taijiquan for some time. Jou Tsung Hwa's *Tao of Tai Chi Chuan* again topped the list by a considerable margin, but there were a few new titles that did not make the top 10 in the first list:

Top 10 Texts of Personal Value to Respondents.

1. Jou, Tsung Hwa. *The Tao of Tai Chi Chuan: Way to Rejuvenation*. 1981 (5th ed. 1988). (46)
2. Lo, Inn, Amacker, Foe. *The Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Literary Tradition*. 1979. (12)
3. Wile, Douglas. *T'ai-chi Touchstones: Yang Family Secret Transmissions*. 1983. (12)
4. Huang, Al Chung-liang. *Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain*. 1973. (9)
5. Cheng, Man-ch'ing, and Robert W. Smith. *T'ai-Chi: The "Supreme Ultimate" Exercise for Health, Sport, and Self-Defense*. 1967. (6)
6. Cheng, Man-ch'ing (Douglas Wile, trans.). *Master Cheng's Thirteen Chapters on T'ai-Chi Ch'üan*. 1982. (6)
7. Lao Tzu. *Dao De Jing*. (no specific edition) (6)
8. Liang, T.T. *T'ai Chi Ch'uan for Health and Self-Defense*. 1977. (5)
9. Cheng, Man-ch'ing. *Thirteen Treatises*. (5)
10. Huang, Wen-shan. *Fundamentals of T'ai Chi Ch'uan*. 1973. (5)

Over half of the books on each of these lists were authored by Cheng Man-ch'ing or by his senior disciples or students. This does not come as a surprise, as his form of Yang style Taijiquan has been predominant in America since the early 1960s. What might come as a surprise to those unfamiliar with it, is the apparent popularity of Jou Tsung Hwa's *The Tao of Tai Chi Chuan: Way to Rejuvenation*. It might be asserted that this calls into question the representativeness of the respondent population of this survey, as Jou Tsung Hwa is the researcher's Taijiquan teacher. Any who would

make this assertion, however, are referred to the section on Sampling Considerations in Chapter II. The pool of respondents extended far beyond the researcher's circle. Only 12 respondents claimed Jou Tsung Hwa as their primary teacher, and 8 others listed him in their lineage. This is compared to 25 listing a single disciple of Cheng Man-ch'ing, and many more who list Cheng Man-ch'ing in their lineage. The conclusion of the matter must be that there is something about Jou Tsung Hwa's book that appeals to a great number of Taijiquan instructors from different schools and backgrounds.

Thirdly, respondents were asked to choose four books, *not necessarily on Taijiquan*, as required reading for all Taijiquan players. The following is a listing of the top 20:

Top 20 Books On the "Must Read" List.

1. Lao Zi [Lao Tzu]. *Dao De Jing*. (95)
2. *Yi Jing*, or *Book of Changes*. (49)
3. Jou, Tsung Hwa. *The Tao of Tai Chi Chuan: Way To Rejuvenation*. (39)
4. Wile, Douglas. *T'ai-chi Touchstones: Yang Family Secret Transmissions*. (23)
5. Lo, Inn, Amacker, Foe. *The Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Literary Tradition*. (20)
6. Huang, Al Chung-liang. *Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain*. (16)
7. Zhuang Zi [Chuang Tzu]. (16)
8. Cheng, Man-ch'ing. *Thirteen Treatises*. (15)
9. Sun Zi. *The Art of War*. (14)
10. Liang, T.T. *Tai Chi Chuan for Health and Self-Defense*. (13)
11. Cheng, Man-ch'ing (Douglas Wile, tr.) *Thirteen Chapters*. (11).
(Note that this is the same text as #7, but a different translation.)
12. Huang, Wen-shan. *Fundamentals of T'ai Chi Ch'uan*. (11)
13. Klein, Bob. *Movements of Magic*. (9)
14. Yang, Jwing Ming. *Advanced Yang Style Tai Chi Chuan, vols. 1 and 2*. (9)

15. Smith, Robert W. *Chinese Boxing*. (8)
16. Chen, Wei-ming (Lo, Benjamin Pang Jeng and Robert W. Smith, trs.). *T'ai Chi Ch'uan Ta Wen: Questions and Answers on T'ai Chi Ch'uan*. (8)
17. Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*. (8)
18. Cheng, Man-ch'ing, and Robert W. Smith. *T'ai-Chi: The "Supreme Ultimate" Exercise for Health, Sport, and Self-Defense*. 1967. (6)
19. Herrigel, E. *Zen and the Art of Archery*. (6)
20. Deng, Ming-dao. *The Wandering Taoist*. (6)

These then are the volumes that come most highly recommended to Taijiquan teachers by their peers. Lao Zi, who made an appearance at #7 in list two, rockets to the top of the chart on this last list, and with him come the *Yi Jing* at #2, Zhuang Zi at #7 and Sun Zi at #9. So Americans are reading some of the culturally-related "classics." It is interesting to note that the ranking would be somewhat rearranged if the books were clustered by author, as has already been done with versions of Lao Zi, the *Yi Jing*, and Zhuang Zi. This method of classification also brings Mantak Chia, whose books *Iron Shirt Ch'i Kung* and *Awaken Healing Energy Through the Tao* were named four times each, up into the top 20:

Top 20, "Must Read" List, by Author.

1. Lao Zi [Lao Tzu]. *Dao De Jing*. (95)
2. *Yi Jing*, or *Book of Changes*. (49)
3. Jou, Tsung Hwa. (all titles: 42)
4. Cheng, Man-ch'ing. (all titles: 39)
5. Wile, Douglas. *T'ai-chi Touchstones: Yang Family Secret Transmissions*. (23)
6. Lo, Inn, Amacker, Foe. *The Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Literary Tradition*. (20)
7. Huang, Al Chung-liang. (all titles: 19)
8. Zhuang Zi [Chuang Tzu]. (16) [includes Feng & English, *Inner Chapters* (9)]

9. Liang, T.T. (all titles: 16)
10. Sun Zi. *The Art of War*. (14)
11. Yang, Jwing Ming. (all titles: 12)
12. Huang, Wen-shan. *Fundamentals of T'ai Chi Ch'uan*. (11)
13. Klein, Bob. *Movements of Magic*. (9)
14. Smith, Robert W. *Chinese Boxing*. (8)
15. Chen, Wei-ming (Lo, Benjamin Pang Jeng and Robert W. Smith, trs.). *T'ai Chi Ch'uan Ta Wen: Questions and Answers on T'ai Chi Ch'uan*. (8)
16. Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*. (8)
17. Chia, Mantak. (all titles: 8)
18. Herrigel, E. *Zen and the Art of Archery*. (6)
19. Deng, Ming-dao. *The Wandering Taoist*. (6)
20. *Taijiquan Classics* (general); Hyman, J. *Zen and Martial Arts*; Lee, B. *The Tao of Jeet Kune Do*; Millman, D. *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*; Watts, A. *Tao the Watercourse Way*: each mentioned five (5) times.

Content Analysis.

Taijiquan is a multifaceted art. It combines many disciplines, including philosophy, metaphysics, Chinese medical theory, martial arts, energy cultivation and meditation into a single practice. Its complexity has produced a rich art, with great depth and texture. Players often say it takes a lifetime to master. Its complexity also means that it is difficult to present a comprehensive view of the art, either in direct instruction or in presentations through indirect media, such as books or videotapes. Yet English-language books have a powerful and pervasive effect on the understanding of the art by American players; a single book is far more widely available than the instruction of any single teacher.

Early texts sometimes passed on misinformation about styles of Taijiquan other than the one advocated by the author. One example will serve to point out the perniciousness of this phenomena:

Besides the classic Yang widely practiced everywhere, there are three minor-league forms of Chinese exercise more sparsely in evidence at the present time [1963] and also called Tai Chi. Of these little need be said here--with one exception. A special note of warning about this one is in order for the benefit of Americans... it is entirely different in movement and has certain disadvantages from the viewpoint of health benefit... It is most important for the student of Tai Chi, then, always to be alert and certain that he is dealing with the classic, or Yang, form of the exercise (Maisel, 1963, pp. 197-198).

Today, the bias and ignorance exemplified in this statement would be readily apparent to many American players; but the belittling sentiment is still by no means as uncommon as those who are now familiar with the legitimacy of many styles might wish. This is just one example of many ways in which books written by those who buy into the prejudices of their teachers could affect the opinions of American players.

What aspects of Taijiquan are commonly emphasized in English texts? To investigate this, a content analysis was conducted of the top 10 texts appearing on the first list, above. The analysis consisted of the categoric identification of the contents of the books, followed by an estimation of the number of pages in each book devoted to each content category. The results of this analysis are contained in Table IV-3. For comparison among books, the number of pages devoted to a content category in each book is given as a rough percentage of the total number of pages in that book.

All of the books analyzed in Table IV-3 are very popular within the Taijiquan community. Some have demonstrated widespread public appeal over the course of many years. Table IV-3 allows certain general statements to be made about the content of the books on the top 10 list, and invites conjecture about the probable reasons for their popularity. Three of the top 10 seem to be primarily “how-to” manuals; four are discursive; one is a specialty text, one is strong on general background, and one seems to be a mix. These judgments are, of course, abstractions from a Table that is itself an abstraction; they do not convey the individual character, quality, nor the intrinsic appeal of the books themselves.

The contents of Cheng & Smith (#3), Kauz (#5), and Chen (#6) are all weighted toward posture pictures and instructions on how to do the forms they present. These are the “how-to” manuals, and have proven steady favorites for many years among players who practice the forms they teach. These also tend to be bought by novices looking to learn Taijiquan from a book, especially Cheng & Smith (#3) and Kauz (#5). The contents of Huang (#7), Horwitz & Kimmelman (#8), Klein (#9), and Cheng (#10) are primarily discursive. They are weighted toward the authors’ personal approach or perspectives on Taijiquan, and it is for this that they are valued. They are strong in the areas of philosophical discourse and precepts for practice, though “how-to” instructions are light or non-existent. Among these books, Huang’s (#7) is strong on related arts and guidelines for embodying the

Table IV-3

Comparison of “Top Ten Books Recommended for Beginners” by Percentages Based on an Approximation of Their Contents by Categories

Content Categories / %	Top 10 Books Recommended for Beginners									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Descriptive, personal	2	8	2	8	2	7	24	23	51	15
History	9	10	1	6	1	3	1	4	0	0
Health benefits	1	0	1	0	3	1	0	0	2	18
Form pictures, lists	22	15	41	0	45	43	0	8	0	0
How-to instruction	0	0	24	0	32	41	11	0	2	0
Applications, push-hands	13	7	12	0	10	1	7	0	25	0
Precepts for practice	15	12	11	5	4	3	20	10	9	23
Philosophy	13	5	1	6	1	1	19	31	3	23
Qigong: health	7	3	0	0	1	0	2	3	4	10
Qigong: martial	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Related arts (meditation, dance, brushwork, massage)	3	0	0	0	2	0	16	7	5	3
Classics	10	40	7	75	0	0	0	14	0	3

feeling of Taijiquan (precepts). Horwitz & Kimmelman (#8) are strong on traditional philosophy and related arts. Klein’s book (#9) presents an idiosyncratic, well-developed view of the art; its emphasis on defense principles, interaction, and push-hands is a major feature of the discourse. Cheng’s *Thirteen Chapters* (#10) shows a strong orientation toward health and health benefits, philosophy, and precepts.

The other three, Lo, et al (#4), Liang (#2), and Jou (#1) are unique. Lo, et al., *The Essence of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Literary Tradition* is referred to here as a "specialty" text. Table IV-3 shows that it is almost exclusively devoted to a presentation of the *Taijiquan Classics*. This was in fact its aim, and as such it has proven to be a highly popular book among players of all styles. Even though other books include the classics and commentary, such as 1, 2, and 8, Lo, et al. has the advantage of a clean, uncluttered look and elegant presentation. Liang's book, the number two choice, is strong on background. The purpose of the photographic illustrations is not to instruct, but to give a flavor or feel to the book. Liang is strong on history, precepts, and especially in its commentary on the classics. As such, it is an ideal background or introductory text. Its showing on the second list above indicates that it retains its place in the hearts of players even as they become "bigger potatoes," as its author would say.

Jou Tsung Hwa's *The Tao of Tai Chi Chuan: Way To Rejuvenation* (#1) tops the first two lists and is third on lists three and four. Table IV-3 shows it is a mix of the practical and philosophical aspects of Taijiquan. Unlike all other currently available how-to books, which present a single form, Jou includes illustrations of the postures of four forms from three different styles: Chen, Yang, and Hao. The author did not use himself as a model, but used pictures of well-known exponents of those styles, expanding the book's appeal and usefulness to students of other teachers. Its other strengths are well-distributed over many of the remaining content categories. This book offers an open-minded insight into the variety inherent in the art, and this feature, as much as its thorough presentation of authentic material from Chinese sources, probably accounts for its popularity.

Snake Oil: Anecdotal Evidence for the Benefits of Taijiquan

"How wonderful! I have always considered philosophy to be simply philosophy,
but now I realize that philosophy is the science of the future."

--Ts'ao Chung, quoted by Cheng Man-ch'ing (Wile, tr., 1982, p. 5)

The purpose of this section is to present what amounts to anecdotal evidence for the health benefits of Taijiquan. The section was called "Snake Oil" after the infamous miracle cures hawked by phony doctors in traveling medicine shows--not to imply that the researcher disbelieves the health claims made for Taijiquan--only that it seems claims are often made on the basis of hearsay by people who have limited or faulty knowledge of human physiology and of either traditional Chinese or allopathic medical science. In a network of individuals closely connected by lineage and common interest, it would be easy for a fallacious report to circulate through several generations and multiply until it had achieved the semblance of a truism. The difference between the ordinary form of anecdote, in which a belief passes from one person to another without anyone bothering to test it with anything but their mouth, and the evidence presented here is that:

- what appears in this section is a listing by consensus from 216 Taijiquan teachers, and
- the question was phrased so as to reduce the possibility that individuals would report hearsay.

The survey item which elicited the responses reported in this section was *"What medical or physical conditions in you or your students have been*

corrected or helped by Taijiquan?" The item did not ask respondents for what they believed the benefits to be, or for what they had read or heard their teacher say. Some of the ways Taijiquan's benefits are presented in the top 10 texts recommended by respondents will be discussed first, followed by the results of the tabulation and aggregation of responses to the item above.

Taijiquan is generally considered to be an exercise that promotes health and well-being. After its unitive and martial aspects, its reputation as a health exercise was the most frequently mentioned descriptor for Taijiquan, included in 46% of the definitions received. Each of the top ten texts on Taijiquan recommended for beginners mentions that Taijiquan is a system of health. Some books present information from personal experience or report the experiences of others; some attempt to document benefits in a scientific tone, some simply repeat oft-told tales without substantiation, some keep their claims vague. There is a general consensus that Taijiquan confers the benefits of any moderate exercise, and that its usefulness is dependent in part on regular, sustained practice. It is considered especially attractive as an exercise for older individuals and those who are not in top physical shape because it is gentle yet sustained, and the risk of injury is low. There is considerable belief among teachers and authors of books on Taijiquan that its further therapeutic effects, beyond those that would pertain to any exercise, are due to its effect on the flow and balance of *qi* in the body. This entire area of the health benefits of this ancient art is one deserving rigorous and extensive scientific examination.

In his *Tao of Tai-Chi Chuan* (1988), Jou Tsung Hwa claims it cured him of a heart condition and of gastroptosis. T.T. Liang says in *T'ai Chi Ch'uan for*

Health and Self-Defense (1974) that if you practice correctly "for a certain period, your health will be perfect" (p. 4). He says "I took up [Taijiquan] in order to save my life after a very grave illness" (p. 7), and further, "Of all the exercises, I should say that [Taijiquan] is the best. It can ward off disease, banish worry and tension, bring improved physical health and prolong life" (p. 11). Cheng and Smith (1967) say that Taijiquan offers its practitioners "the health of a lumberjack" (p.1). They state further

The amazing results achieved suggest that this is not just idle boasting, that perhaps, in some way unknown to Western science, [Taijiquan] can indeed do all this, and more. Stressing slow respiration and balanced, relaxed postures, it certainly promotes deep breathing, digestion, the functioning of the internal organs, and blood circulation. And perhaps there is also basis for the claim that [Taijiquan] can relieve, if not actually cure, neurasthenia, high blood pressure, anemia, tuberculosis, and many other maladies (p. 1).

In his Foreword to William Chen's *Body Mechanics*, Robert Smith says

In China, Tai Chi Chuan is prescribed by native doctors as medicine, often given a higher priority than herb or acupuncture therapy. Its harmonizing effect, balancing yin and yang, and its gentle triggering of an enduring energy cannot be gotten in pills" (p. iii).

In the same book, Chen says Taijiquan "prevents or even cures certain forms of sickness, such as arthritis, rheumatism, and hypertension" (p. vi) He also says

a person who has faithfully practiced Tai Chi Chuan for a long time derives many physical benefits from it. His body weight is properly adjusted, whether he was originally overweight or underweight. His blood vessels become softer, helping him to avoid

and often reverse high blood pressure or the hardening of the arteries. His skin is smooth and rosy. His muscles are flexible and elastic" (p. xi).

Staying with his mechanical analogy, Chen also claims that Taijiquan "tunes up its (the body's) natural functions" and "'lubricates' every part of the body" (p. xi-xii). In the presentation of information that purports to be factual, figurative language possesses only limited utility. Hopefully, research will one day substantiate traditional claims that were based on the subjective experience of generations of players.

Al Huang (1973) talks about Taijiquan as a way of releasing tension and getting in touch with the natural, healthy flow of energy within and around the body. "[Taijiquan] can be a way of letting your body really teach you and be with you and help you to get through the conflicts you encounter every day" (p. 13). Klein (1984) devotes an entire chapter to "Healing," but much of that chapter is concerned with ceremonies and colors, crystals and attitudes, and with a comparison of differing Western, New Age, or Eastern health theories. When he speaks of Taijiquan, he also relates its healing properties to the release of tension and the balancing of *qi*. The organizing principle of his book is the concept of magic, and of the Taijiquan player as a potential "Daoist magician." Horwitz & Kimmelman (1976) offer an extensive discussion of Taijiquan in relation to dance and sports and movement arts in general, concentrating on the virtues of alignment, relaxation, *qi* flow and naturalness, without cataloguing specific health benefits. In an earlier section, they do say that Taijiquan is "a help with circulatory problems and pre-arthritic conditions" (p. 30). They write that Taijiquan "is not a magic panacea or any kind of instant short-cut. It's a fair deal--you receive in proportion to

what you give" (p. 34). In one book we learn Taijiquan is magic--in another, that it is not.

In his *Thirteen Chapters on T'ai-Chi Ch'uan* (1982), Cheng Man-ch'ing claims that the practice of Taijiquan cured him of tuberculosis. He also states "Having studied T'ai-chi ch'uan for the past twenty odd years, what I have personally witnessed is its ability to rouse the infirm, raise the weak, and eliminate illness" (p. 13). Cheng states further

the internal organs enjoy a spacious and light rubbing against each other. Not only does the main connective tissue become daily stronger, but we can be exposed to heat and humidity without suffering illness. Moreover, the strength of back, heart, and brain increase accordingly. This summarizes the benefits obtained. They are the result of sinking the ch'i to the tan-t'ien, which enables each of the internal organs to be exercised. This, then, is T'ai-chi chuan's benefit to the internal organs. There is nothing else to it. It is not in serving externals, but can only be found internally--simply by emphasizing ch'i (p. 40).

Cheng was a traditional Chinese physician. It is precisely these claims for the efficacy of the exercise, arising out of the Chinese medical perspective, which must receive scientific attention. Chapter 10 of the *Thirteen Chapters* is entitled "Curing Tuberculosis." Unfortunately, it is flawed by misinformation. For example, Cheng says

in sixty to seventy percent of tuberculosis cases, the cause is exhaustion of the testes. Most often this arises from youthful addiction to masturbation, wet dreams, abnormalities from unsatisfied sexual desires, and incontinence in middle age. In women it often results from irregular periods or a depressed irritable temperament (p. 48-49).

Contrary to Dr. Cheng's belief, tuberculosis is known to be a communicable disease caused by the tubercle bacillus.

Numerous assertions of dubious validity can be found in the *Thirteen Chapters*. He says, for example, "saliva from the lungs is conveyed to the testes" (p. 49); "when there is food in the stomach, it must be ground up and transformed by the spleen" (p. 49); "if...one's belly is starving, the stomach will first feel hungry, and following that the lungs will starve" (p. 50); and in chapter two, he reports

In a short time the ch'i transmuted from semen once again reverts to water, and then gradually to fat. The fat then once again becomes solid matter in the form of bone marrow which sticks to the insides of the bones... after a long time, the marrow becomes very full, and the bones firm and strong. This is why we refer to them as essentially hard. Their ability to smash even the hardest object is a result of the process just described (p. 7).

Perhaps we do not have the medical, cultural, or linguistic insight necessary to understand what Professor Cheng was saying. The Chinese worldview, from which its traditional medical system arose, is after all very different from Western perspectives. Defenders might say he was speaking of energy, and the translation is too literal. But at face value, these statements are good examples of the need for wariness. Bones are really not that strong. Water does not turn to fat. The spleen does not grind food. Masturbation, incontinence and irritability are not the causes of tuberculosis. In the search for understanding, Taijiquan players must examine critically even the most highly regarded sources, and be discriminating. Cheng's second chapter concludes with a statement epitomizing the imaginative approach to science:

"Mr. Ts'ao replied, 'That's enough! I understand from just hearing you. If the principle exists, then the demonstration must necessarily follow, but let us leave the proof for another day'" (p. 8). Hopefully, that day has come.

Herman Kauz acknowledges that "extravagant claims have been made for [Taijiquan] regarding its health-promoting and health restoring qualities" (p. 15). He then discusses the factors he believes to be the legitimate basis for these claims. Kauz argues that through its emphasis on gradualness, relaxation, and moderation, Taijiquan avoids much of the danger of injury inherent in many sports, and can help reduce the physical and mental effects of stress and tension. He quotes Paul Dudley White, M.D., on the importance of leg strength for cardiovascular fitness, and Ostrander and Schroeder, authors of *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* to support his discussion of the reality of *qi*. Kauz reasons that

the ch'i written of by ancient teachers of [Taijiquan] may be more than an indulgence in poetry or an effort to imbue their art with magic. It may be totally in keeping with reality to think that, when we are doing the [Taijiquan] form in a correct, relaxed way, we are opening the pathways along which this vital energy flows. Opening these pathways may have the effect of correcting imbalances in this energy flow with consequent benefits to our health. The evidence already in certainly suggests that it would not be amiss to do [Taijiquan] with the expectation of insuring or aiding the proper functioning of our internal organs (p. 20).

What kinds of evidence are there? "Scientific" evidence tends to be thought of as information gathered in a laboratory, where a researcher is controlling for other factors which may be responsible for producing the same results. Few of these studies have been conducted on Taijiquan. It is

hard, therefore, to say whether a person's increased energy, weight loss, or relief from arthritis pain was *due* to Taijiquan or to other factors, such as a better diet. Another form of evidence is the subjective reports of individuals who experience improvement in various areas of their life and *attribute* it to Taijiquan. This form of evidence is termed anecdotal rather than scientific, because it relies on the opinions and feelings of individuals. This may often be quite valid, but may not be a reliable predictor of outcomes for others, or of scientific inquiry.

Most studies done up to this point in the West have been based on current theories of aerobic exercise rather than on traditional Chinese energetics. A review of some of the studies that have been conducted is contained in the "Previous Research" section of Chapter I. In contrast, the present study collected "anecdotal" evidence of the effects of Taijiquan. What is the value of such evidence? Specifically, when the personal experience of a benefit is reported frequently enough within the population of practitioners, these reports take on a consensual strength. In China, until recently beyond the reach of the scientific method, the experiences of generations of players served as sufficient "proof" of certain claims. Yet consensual data cannot be considered "proof" of anything: that must wait upon controlled experimentation and the scientific method. However, consensus such as that represented by the list below should at least suggest to those for whom the scientific method is the only valid measure that there is sufficient justification for attempting to verify the top ten, the top five, or even only one or two of the top claims.

Here are the top 25 benefits attributed to Taijiquan by teachers participating in this survey, responding to the question *“What medical or physical conditions in you or your students have been corrected or helped by Taijiquan?”* Order of frequency determined the placement of conditions within categories as well as the placement of categories in relation to one another. Category frequencies--the sum of the frequencies for all items listed in the category--are given in parentheses.

Top 25 Health Benefits Attributed to Taijiquan by Respondents.

1. Relief from back trouble, including lower back pain, chronic pain, backache, upper back tension, weakness, strain, and inflexibility, scoliosis, subluxation of spine, lordosis, herniated discs, ankylo-spondilitis (93).
2. High blood pressure, hypertension (47).
3. Stress, stress-related syndrome and stress-related disorders identified as such (41).
4. Arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatism (40).
5. Knee problems, including knee injuries and weak knees, chondromalacia of the knee (34).
6. Breathing problems, lung conditions, asthma, shortness of breath, irregular respiration, stamina, bronchitis, emphysema (28).
7. Poor posture, misalignment, skeletal adjustments, musculoskeletal disorders (26).
8. Low energy, general anemia, fatigue, lethargy (23).
9. General poor health, lack of overall strength, poor physical condition (23).
10. Muscular tension (22).
11. Nervousness, anxiety, fear, agitation, worry (21).
12. Balance, poise, bearing (20).
13. Stomach problems, poor digestion, indigestion, colitis or nervous stomach, gastrointestinal disorders, ulcers (18).

14. Stiffness, inflexibility (17).
15. Poor concentration, lack of awareness, insensitivity, insecurity, lack of confidence, indirection or purposelessness (16).
16. Headaches, tension headaches, migraines (15).
17. Joint problems other than the knee, hip weakness or replacement, ankle problems, ankle sprain or pronation (15).
18. Poor circulation, Raynaud's syndrome and disease (14).
19. Leg weakness, injuries (14).
20. Depression, manic depressiveness, emotional upheaval, mental/emotional balance, mental problems, psychiatric disorders, neurotic disorders, schizophrenia (14).
21. Heart conditions, disease, cardiac rehabilitation, stroke recovery, congestive heart failure (13).
22. Poor coordination, clumsiness (12).
23. Weight problems (10).
24. Insomnia, sleep disorders (9).
25. Recovery from injuries and operations (7).

This list, compiled by consensus, in no way constitutes proof that any of these claims is reproducible by individual players. As one respondent said, "I think physical problems can be caused by Taijiquan if one is not very careful or doesn't have an excellent teacher" (150). Other teachers said benefits come "after a few years practice" (27). If one person reports an effect, it might have been the result of anything: attributable to diet, atmospheric change, removal of an allergen, self-delusion, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, etc. But if two who have had no contact with one another report the effect, it might be worth looking into. If 10 or 20 report it, the phenomena becomes highly suggestive.

Consensual data supports a greater likelihood that the conditions mentioned here might be affected by Taijiquan. As anecdotal evidence mounts, the probability also increases that a real therapeutic effect exists. While consensus

is not proof, it dampens the “noise” of hearsay and may help investigators focus on effects which are more likely to be replicable.

The Knees

“Synergy is the only word in our language that means behavior of whole systems unpredicted by the separately observed behaviors of any of the system’s separate parts or any subassembly of the system’s parts.”

--R. Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*, p. 64.

One of the more important findings of this study came about almost by accident. The obvious question regarding Taijiquan’s positive effect on medical or physical conditions was part of the first versions of the survey instrument, and yielded the data which was the subject of the previous section. At the last moment, a complementary item was inserted in the final version: *“To what injury do Taijiquan players seem prone as a result of playing Taijiquan?”* The researcher honestly believed this question would draw a blank. Instead, it elicited significant and what might even be considered shocking data: nearly two-thirds of all teachers surveyed (61.2%) reported injuries to the knees in themselves or their students as a result of playing Taijiquan. Such a consensus was completely unanticipated; yet it is overwhelming evidence of the need for all Taijiquan teachers to take steps to correct this problem.

In the light of the incidence of knee injuries in the national population, this data might not seem so surprising. An article in the New York Times (Nelson, “Care and Heeding of Knee Injuries,” December 4, 1989) reported that, according to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, knee injuries constitute 26% of all injuries--the largest category. Fox and McGuire (1988) state “the knee is the most vulnerable joint in the body... an estimated 50 million Americans have suffered or are suffering knee pain or injuries” (p.

3); that is, one in every 4 or 5 Americans. Knee problems are especially prevalent in sports, such as running, aerobics, skiing, tennis, volleyball, basketball, cycling and even swimming, both among seasoned athletes and occasional participants.

Taijiquan places increased emphasis on the knees depending on the height at which it is performed, width of stance, and duration of practice. Those with weak or imbalanced knees will certainly have this vulnerability called to their attention by Taijiquan; those who have injured their knees in the past may receive a painful reminder. However, its measured pace, its careful placement of the feet, and its postural considerations *should* make Taijiquan an ideal rehabilitative and preventive exercise for present or potential conditions of the knee. That it often aggravates and even causes knee injuries must be a matter of grave concern to Taijiquan teachers.

When asked what was most troubling about Taijiquan in America, one respondent said “people are hurting their knees” (280). Others feared for beginners at the hands of instructors who teach forms incorrectly “so that in time they will be detrimental to students’ backs and knees” (76). One instructor was particularly candid: “I presently am having knee problems, so have cut back on my classes and now teach one private student and one other class” (391). Unfortunately, knee problems are “communicable:” if the instructor did not have the training to avoid them, it is to be feared that the instructor’s students will not be coached in measures that safeguard against them.

No one can afford to be smug. This survey suggests that the problem is not limited to those with the least experience: teachers with decades of training and national reputations also do not know enough about knee function and structure to teach proper mechanics. One respondent with credentials wrote: “the most important texts on Taijiquan demonstrate a seriously incomplete understanding of the physiological principles which may underlie Taijiquan’s functioning: the actual biomechanical properties of Taijiquan movement.” Figure III-2, Importance Rating Assigned to Benefits, shows that respondents scored “sport/performance” lowest as an emphasis in their classes. This may seem an innocuous finding; but the clear implication is that teachers do not regard Taijiquan as a sport, and if they do not, it is more than likely that teachers will not keep themselves abreast of the growing body of scientific information in the fields of exercise physiology, athletic training, sports medicine, and physical therapy. It is frightening to think that many teachers are applying in their classes a level of knowledge regarding physical training that they may have picked up in their high school gym classes decades ago.

Forty-three percent of all respondents said they felt they did not have the right to consciously alter their Taijiquan forms. This tendency to regard “form” as sacrosanct may help to preserve the best instincts of the best teachers; but it will also preserve the idiosyncracies of the most mediocre teachers. An abstract concept of what constitutes “correct” form does not guarantee proper function. Form should follow function; but in time, rather than following function, form begins to follow form. Taijiquan teachers must take the initiative: they must study the design of the body to distinguish externally imposed posturing from movement that is truly *natural*: that

follows the body's own internal lines of least resistance and best support. To quote Dr. James M. Fox in his introduction to *Save Your Knees*, "people [we would specify Taijiquan teachers] need to understand how the knee is constructed, the function of ligaments, bones, and cartilage, the particular problems which even the best knees are heir to, and the best solutions that are presently available" (Fox & McGuire, 1988, p. xv).

This does not mean that teachers necessarily need to get a degree in biomechanics or sports medicine; it means that attention must be paid to knee mechanics during form work, and that auxiliary exercises detrimental to the knees, such as knee rotations, hurdler's stretches, and deep knee bends must be replaced with others that will improve knee strength and stability. It means also that Taijiquan teachers should try to acquire a working knowledge of the etiology, treatment, and rehabilitation of injuries such as sprains and strains, so they can advise students having problems and refer them for appropriate medical treatment if necessary.

As stated above, Taijiquan could be an ideal rehabilitative and preventive exercise for present or potential conditions of the knee. All we have to do is add a chapter to already excellent Taijiquan books--but it should be chapter one. All we have to do is add a lesson to already excellent Taijiquan instruction--but it should be the first lesson. Some teachers already know these things, and take immediate steps with beginners to correct lifelong habits of misuse--realizing that if they do not, those students will not stay with Taijiquan long enough to garner its other benefits. Specifically, these teachers know they must alert their students to three aspects of proper knee mechanics: *strength, structure, and configuration*.

The knee joint is a hinge or ginglymus joint. It is positioned between the strongest articulation in the body, the hip, and one of the weakest joints, the ankle. While the knee is skeletally weak, both the ankle and the hip are skeletally strong; and though the musculature of the knee is stronger than that of the ankle, both are both weaker than the hip in their ligamentous and muscular array (Arnheim, 1985, p. 224). Since the foot is often fixed or planted, the knee receives the brunt of stresses that force it into positions for which it was not designed. The knee, in effect, is bullied about by the laziness of the larger, less flexible ball-and-socket above it. The aim of any program aimed at knee safety must be to increase the *mobility* of the hip and the *stability* of the knee. This can be accomplished three ways: by strengthening the supporting musculature, by respecting the natural limits and function of structure, and by becoming conscious of the way in which energy and intention are configured by the alignment and relationship of parts.

Strength: Dynamic Relationship.

The muscles that support each knee (the three major groups being the quadriceps, femoral biceps or hamstring, and calf muscles) can be strengthened and balanced. One respondent alluded to this: “weak knees give trouble unless muscles are correctly used” (52). Fox and McGuire (1988) point out that “hidden weakness,” muscular deficiency which may be the result of an old knee injury, “may be one of the biggest threats to knees today” (p. 103). Individuals may be unaware of imbalances of this sort, but they can be detected by muscle testing, and rehabilitated with specific

exercises in a few months. A strong, balanced musculature can compensate for structural weaknesses such as a torn ligament, and for minor variations in configuration. Muscular strength also supports the knee so as to safeguard to a certain extent against damage to knee structure due to configurative misalignment, though strength alone cannot prevent injury.

Structure: Functional Relationship.

The ligaments (the major ones being the two cruciate and two collateral ligaments), bones, menisci, tendons, and other structures of the knee must be respected. The job of the ligaments, for example, is to keep the knee acting like a hinge; ligaments do not take kindly to being stretched. The more often the knee exceeds its dynamic limits, the less stable it becomes. Players can support the ligaments during Taijiquan practice by imposing mental limits on motion and by practicing movements that conform to the knee's structural specifications. For example, the knee functions optimally when in motion along a linear path defined by its own hinge. Curvi-linear or rotational motions weaken it. To use terms employed by Jou (1988), the knee is responsible for *translation* forward and backward, the hip is responsible for *rotation* about an axis (p. 167-168). The knee must not be coerced into doing part of the hip's job.

The forceful stamping of the foot in Chen style, for instance, can damage the fibrocartilages (menisci) that cushion the knee against shocks. Players should avoid high impact movements until they are certain they can execute them without mindless force. Some respondents made reference to

structural considerations: “twisting the knee joint [is detrimental]” (93); “incorrect postures lead to ‘Taiji Knee’: repeated torque on ligaments” (178); “knees [are injured] usually from overextending or twisting the weight-bearing leg” (345); “knee ligament stress if their form is incorrect” (87). Some respondents seemed to feel that injuries only occur in Taijiquan during martial practice: one, for example, answered the question above “I don’t teach the fighting part at all” (8). This is clearly not the case. Trauma to the knees can develop slowly, occurring as a gradual deterioration. One respondent was aware that these injuries may not necessarily occur as suddenly as in other sports, but may appear over time: “if the structure is wrong, [players] will eventually harm their knees” (107). Another respondent pointed to the need for self-awareness during practice and for hands-on corrections by a knowledgeable instructor: “knees [will be injured] when done following visual/ imitative instructions” (49).

Configuration: Energetic Relationship.

Configuration is defined here as the spatial array of the body’s structural elements: the dynamic, functional, and energetic (or synergetic) relationships among them. It can be perceived as a relationship among parts at rest, or as still frames within a continuum of motion. The relationship of the arms, the sternum, and the third thoracic vertebrae, of the foot, knee, hip, and dantian, of the crown, ming men, and wei lu are all configurative. Configuration enables energy. The body moves slowly in Taijiquan so that the mind can attend fully to the integration of each action. Integration is the result of optimal configuration. Attention must first be directed to proper

foot placement, as this is the root of configuration among the elements of the body.

The situation of the knee should be the second concern in the configuration defined by the relationship of the foot, the ankle, the knee, the hip, and the dantian, and by the proximity of the legs. It is simplistic to think that correct knee position is one in which the knee does not exceed the toes in a vertical plane, or in which the knee remains over the foot, as some respondents stated. There are postures where the stability of the knee is compromised if it remains over the foot. These rules are insufficient to describe proper knee mechanics, though it seems they are the only rules some instructors know about the knees.

If the rotation of the waist is transferred through a stiff hip to an overly compliant knee held in place by a fixed foot, the knee will be strained. The foot must be properly placed, the knee must be constrained to move within a fairly narrow plane intersecting the foot and the dantian, while the hip must be loosened by folding and opening. As the hip joints accept more of their rightful responsibility for rotation, the knee will be able to keep to its “straight and narrow” track. The joints must be taught to overcome old habits, and to function, in the case of the hip, with greater mobility, and in the case of the knee, with safety and greater stability. Two respondents referred to this relationship among the joints: “I find [knee injury] is usually a consequence of doing too much too soon and/or faulty hip-knee-foot alignment” (55); “knee pain [is] due to poor placement of knee with reference to the foot--should be in the same direction--and changing the foot position with body weight on it” (121).

Twenty-five percent of all respondents listed injuries other than or in addition to knees. Some of these were ankle strain, sore muscles, hip pain, heart problems from rounding the shoulders and collapsing the chest through improper training, and nausea from slow movements or meditative practices. One respondent reported that a student hit *himself* occasionally with Chen punches! Most other injuries were related to push-hands, or what passes for push-hands in some schools: back injury from being pushed into a wall, lumbar strain, dislocated shoulders, scratches, bruises, and whiplash.

Nearly one quarter (24.1%) of respondents said they did not know of any injuries resulting from Taijiquan, or that none had occurred in their classes. Some teachers surely have a sufficient grasp of functional anatomy to have implemented training methods that safeguard against knee injuries. Judging, however, from the pervasiveness of knee injuries and from respondent comments, it is likely that a portion of that 24% are deluded regarding the causes of such injuries, or blind to injury in their students--perhaps because students quit before telling instructors of their injury, or do not mention it because Taijiquan is not supposed to be harmful.

Some respondents are ready to believe that injuries that surface during Taijiquan play were prior conditions: "many come with knee ailments" (76); "I don't think playing Taijiquan necessarily makes one prone to any injuries. I have seen people deal with knee problems, but I think this was in them before they started and not necessarily a result of their study" (308); "I'm not sure it's as a result of practicing Taijiquan, but problems in the knees, hips, and low back seem to be revealed or noticed when beginning Taijiquan"

(309). While many new students undoubtedly come from the ranks of the 50 million Americans with pre-existent knee conditions, there is in Taijiquan a potential for first-time injury to the knees as well. Teachers should realize that, in both cases, knowledge of functional dynamics can make the difference between rehabilitation, safety, and increasing stability, or the frustration and eventual discouragement of repeated injury.

Other respondents seem to have simplistic notions about the etiology of knee injuries, or offer simplistic solutions: “beginners usually feel discomfort in knee area because they do not place knee over ankle” (162); “[students experience] minor knee problems if they practice too much or get into stances deeper than they are ready for” (176); “knee injury--stress and strain from low postures” (86); “If a student has a current knee injury or weakness, it can occasionally be aggravated by low Taijiquan postures. One of my solutions for this has been to raise the stance in these cases” (404); “knee or leg discomfort initially if not used to the pivoting action of the feet” (270); “if [there are injuries] at all, generally knee problems. However, this is usually good pain, a sign of growth” (226). While some Taijiquan players have been known to espouse the slogan “no pain, no gain,” Fox & McGuire (1988) offer as counterpoint: “no pain, no gain = no brain” (p. 225).

Knee injury happens in Taijiquan, and can happen to anyone. It would be unrealistic to think that there is a panacea; but rather than laying the blame at other doors, Taijiquan teachers would do well at least to study texts such as Arnhem’s *Modern Principles of Athletic Training* and specific guides to the knee such as Fox and McGuire’s *Save Your Knees*. A conscientiously designed instructional program gradually builds sufficient strength to support lower

positions, develops mobility and flexibility in the hips and a habit of safe, structurally appropriate movement in the knees. As one respondent said, tersely: "I emphasize proper knee mechanics early on" (227). Another stated "We take care to do warm-ups, in particular for joints such as the knees" (367). Arnheim (1985) specifies "ten cardinal principles [which] can be applied to sports conditioning to prevent injuries" (p. 116), including among them the need for a warm-up period, for gradualness, the need not to overdo, for increasing intensity and the development of a daily routine. If Taijiquan were viewed by more players as subject to guidelines for athletic activities rather than as somehow exempt from them, and if the requirements of strength, structure, and configuration could be kept in mind, Taijiquan might indeed become an ideal rehabilitative and preventive exercise for conditions of the knee.

Accountability: the Question of Certification

“A fool will study for twenty or thirty years and learn how to do something, but a wise man will study for twenty or thirty minutes and become an expert.

In this world it isn't ability that counts, but authority.”

--Master Li Kao (Hugart, *The Story of the Stone*, pp. 102-103)

Ninety-two percent of the respondents to this study believe that Taijiquan must be learned from a qualified teacher. The emphasis, if it was not obvious in the previous sentence, is on the word *qualified*. There is a groundswell of concern among teachers that the number of poorly prepared, inexperienced teachers is proliferating. On an open-ended question, one out of every three respondents to this study volunteered that they were bothered by this. Of all their concerns, from competitiveness to commercialization, this was the one most frequently voiced. Whether there is anything to be done about it is, so to speak, another question. The situation is complicated by politics and factionalism among schools and styles, commercial self-interest, teachers' varying expectations of their senior students, the anarchic, isolationistic streak in many teachers, and a lack of communication, coordination and advocacy that might be provided, for example, by a national professional association of Taijiquan teachers.

What is the harm in persons who have limited acquaintance with Taijiquan offering instruction on their own? In many cases, perhaps minimal. Some teachers encourage even relative beginners among their students to teach, especially in informal settings such as to a church group or to a small number of friends, knowing that teaching is one of the best ways of learning. Most teachers would expect those students to continue their own study, to

inform those attending their class about their teacher's classes, to refrain from public advertising, and to keep the fee minimal. Unfortunately, according to respondents to this study, many people are teaching Taijiquan, or what they advertise as Taijiquan, who are not practicing simple courtesy in relation to their teachers. Some are "without visible means of support": that is, they have no connection to a qualified teacher. Some learned Taijiquan from books; some from videotapes; some have taken a workshop or a short series of classes; some are "self-anointed masters" (258). Respondents referred to them as poor, incompetent, untrained, unqualified, "instant", inexperienced, unskilled, undedicated, overnight experts, frauds, bad, the blind leading the blind. What harm can they do? According to respondents, the harm can be substantial. Unqualified instructors misrepresent, distort or dilute the art, truncate it, and cause injury to students.

Perhaps most disturbing is the potential for injury. It should be emphasized that injury can occur in the most tranquil and philosophical of settings; it is not restricted to free sparring. Misalignment of the pelvis and back, and misuse of the knee joint, for instance, can result in disabling pain and even damage if Taijiquan is practiced incorrectly. "Teachers who don't know Taijiquan [can] cause injury" said one respondent (16). Another concurred: "[I am bothered most by] unqualified persons teaching Taijiquan and possibly injuring others" (240). Another was troubled by "people teaching who have had only a few classes or seminars themselves: no depth of understanding, sometimes even teaching forms incorrectly so that in time they will be detrimental to students' back and knees" (76). Who is held accountable for this? The art itself. The injured students blame Taijiquan, and the reputation of the art and its legitimate teachers is compromised.

Unfortunately, these problems cannot be laid completely at the door of inexperience. Responses to this study indicate that many otherwise competent teachers who may be caring and sincere, and who may even have studied many years do not possess enough knowledge of the structure and functional dynamics of the body to help their students avoid doing unwitting damage to themselves. One player communicated by telephone that he had been seriously injured during a workshop demonstration by a widely-known teacher with decades of experience. It is said that Yang Luchan reprimanded his son for only tearing the cuff of his jacket during a bout, and caught his opponents before they fell to keep them from harm. Injuring others surely is not a display of Taijiquan's soft strength.

Another kind of "harm" is misrepresentation (270). Taijiquan is misrepresented, according to respondents, in a variety of ways: dilution, misinterpretation of classics, mixing with other systems or fads, or modification. In the name of Taijiquan, said one respondent, incompetent teachers "string students along and teach incorrectly and turn people off to the beauty of Taijiquan that lies within" (7). Another respondent complained of "dilution, non-adherence to basic principles" (20); another of "[Taijiquan's] simplification and degradation by moving it away from traditional teachers and martial arts. Americans believe they can improve in a few short years what was developed over hundreds" (193). Yet another stated "some instructors are modifying forms and 'selling' a New Age commercial product" (322).

Here are a few more comments related to misrepresentation: “instant teachers [spread] misinformation about technique, lineage, and theory” (40); “Taijiquan [is] susceptible to fads and superficial treatment, especially if taught by inexperienced people” (54); “Esalen-hippie type of Taijiquan being spread as the real thing” (72); “[they] start beginners and then leave them before form is finished or let them hang in forever trying to learn the form” (74); “mixing pop philosophy with Taijiquan theory” (115); “[I am bothered by] how slopped up and free-form it has tended to become, the prevalence of self-anointed masters who proliferate their own styles and dilute the meaning of the practice” (258); “mishmash of disciplines brought into teachings by unqualified instructors, lack of purity in teaching” (399). Of course, the martial/non-martial schism is represented: “I see a lot of hard style (particularly karate) martial arts teachers taking brief instruction in Taijiquan then offering classes because its popular and financially lucrative. The problem I see with this is that most of these people I feel do not have a true understanding of the essence of this art and in many cases are distorting and miscommunicating it” (404). This respondent is answered by: “[I am bothered by] people who teach in leotards [who] completely disregard the martial aspects, teaching it as a ‘dance’ for exercise. They usually have crazy ideas on their fliers such as ‘Taiji will exercise every acupuncture point in your feet” (326). The latter two respondents would probably become fast friends if they met.

A third type of “harm” is done by teachers who truncate Taijiquan, by avoiding push-hands, for instance, or by teaching only beginners’ classes, or not teaching weapons. They teach a *partial art*. Truncation also occurs through the inability or unwillingness of a teacher to work on finer principles

such as those related to *qi* or *i*, to *jing*, *xing*, or *qing*--or other considerations related to the quality of movement. Respondents referred to truncation by various terms, such as degradation, simplification, or narrowing. One said “people who don’t know much can’t have much to impart to others, therefore students will have a narrow view of Taijiquan” (194). Others recalled one of the most volatile issues in the Taijiquan community: “a lot of teachers can do the form but know nothing of application or fighting” (68); “most of the teachers I encounter do not seem to understand or practice basic applications” (375). Another offered this view of the process of truncation: “‘holistic’ types take Taijiquan for what it’s not and let the parts they don’t like die” (205). A teacher who ignores part of an art produces students who are ignorant of its existence.

Four approaches to accountability arose from this survey of the opinions of Taijiquan teachers. Some respondents favored certification and the formation of a national professional association. Some provide guidance and supervised teaching opportunities to students who are potential instructors. Some set standards their students must meet before receiving permission to teach. Some invite less-experienced teachers into the community of players who gather regularly for fellowship and exchange. These approaches to the problem of under-qualified instructors are the subject of the remainder of this section.

Approach #1: A National Professional Association.

The present study is based on a survey completed in the fall of 1988. At that time, 31% of 216 respondents were in favor of adopting standards for certifying Taijiquan teachers, as is done in other professions. However, 45% were against this, 19% percent reported having no opinion, and 4% left the item blank. At the time, 36% were in favor of leaving the question of certification in the hands of individual teachers or organizations of different styles or lineages, while only 13% were in favor of a national association. The time for such an association has clearly not yet come. One respondent stated this succinctly “[I am bothered by] the attempts to ‘organize’ [Taijiquan]. Associations are so like unions: [they] enforce mediocrity so often; ‘standards’ are usually a way for a handful to control others” (235). Yet what can be done?

The issue here is not whether Taijiquan instructors need policing, but whether the community of devoted players cares enough about beginners and about the way in which the art is promoted in America to accept responsibility for considering solutions to this problem. Certification would identify to prospective students those teachers who met at least minimum standards. The only way this might become effective is through some national network, an association (to avoid the term “organization”) of Taijiquan teachers who agree that something must be done to establish such standards. This is already done in other health-related arts, such as massage therapy.

During the writing of this study, the researcher received a letter which read in part:

I have been involved in martial arts for eight years, primarily in karate. I have always had an interest in the gentler arts of Taijiquan and Aikido, but without a way of learning about them other than books. I was fortunate in running across some video tapes from which I learned the Yang long form. I've been doing the form for about a year and have developed a real passion and love for it. I've been reading everything I can get my hands on about Taijiquan and practicing the form daily. I would like very much to teach a Taijiquan class where I live, but I do not want to begin without the proper training. I have been assistant instructor and senior student in our small karate class, so I am experienced at teaching, but Taijiquan and karate are very different. I wonder if you might suggest a way for me to become a qualified instructor....

First, it might be said that anyone would like to have such a student. Daily practice of a form one has never seen performed live and the obvious absorption in the art are characteristics of devotion. The desire to teach also seems to be a mark of enthusiasm. Nine out of 10 Taijiquan teachers, however, would feel a little queasy at the thought of this person teaching; and yet this is the one who wrote a letter. The others who didn't write are undoubtedly "masters" by this time!

A professional association might also be able to cut down on some of the false advertising on books and videos by offering a "seal of approval" to instructional aids that meet minimum standards. Some now give the impression that Taijiquan can be learned "in the comfort of your own home." All books and videos should bear a "surgeon general's warning": do not

think you are learning Taijiquan until you begin study with a qualified teacher.

Approach #2: Supervision of Students.

One of the most direct approaches to the problem of under-qualified instructors is to increase the awareness among teachers of this problem, and encourage them to raise their expectations and the level of support they provide for their own students who wish to teach. The problem is analogous to the proliferation of dogs or cats in some areas. Animal shelters require families adopting a cat, for example, to have it neutered; not necessarily because the first family is presumed to be irresponsible, but because those who receive successive generations of kittens may not always be so careful. Owners cannot find sufficient numbers of good homes, so many kittens are abandoned or must be put to sleep. In Taijiquan, the problem is not necessarily the quality of instruction delivered by the “first” generation, but that subsequent generations spawn litter after litter of instructors, inadequately trained and prematurely left to their own devices.

Respondents were bothered “that someone who has taken a beginners’ class decides to teach others without further instruction for him/herself” (163); “[that Taijiquan is] becoming watered down: taught by beginners with a year of experience unsupervised” (295); “[that] people with a six weeks course under their belts are teaching classes. I’ve seen this phenomena in its third generation!” (178). One respondent, for example, had only taught for two years at the time of the survey and already had “senior students.”

What can be done? First, teachers might make it clear to their students that learning and teaching are two very different things. Many people can learn Taijiquan, but few will make effective teachers. Teaching requires more than just knowledge of forms. Second, teachers might make it known that they would prefer for students who wish to teach to ask permission before doing so. Nearly 60% of the respondents to this study said they agreed that it is important for students to receive permission to teach from their teachers. Yet 38% said that they had not been expected to receive their teacher's permission. More than one in three respondents, therefore, were "self-certified." Permission, however, must not be held just out of reach, and used as a way to string students along. When a student asks permission, this should be a signal to the teacher to offer that student additional, specialized guidance.

One item on this survey asked respondents to list some of the requirements they were expected to complete before receiving permission to teach. One hundred and eleven responded: all but 11 of the 122 who said they were expected to complete certain requirements before teaching. Collation of responses to this item shows that requirements are often, as one respondent said, "vague--[just] learn forms you were teaching to his or her satisfaction" (61). Completion of a form, with sometimes a demonstration of proficiency or a verbal test of the student's understanding is the requirement most commonly mentioned. One specified "understand the history and uniqueness of the form" (7). In many cases, however, the level of proficiency is unspecified. Even teachers who establish requirements for their students may not be using clearly communicated criteria in judging their students'

performances. On the other hand, some teachers' criteria are painfully clear: "chin-to-toe stretch" (346), for example, though in some cases unrelated to teaching ability. Think of the psychological pressure and tension borne by the poor respondent whose requirement to teach was "not getting knocked down" (293)! How open can that teacher be with students, how willing to learn and make mistakes with them? How paranoid that person must be in any interactive situation!

By itself, form learning is not an adequate course in teacher training. What, for instance, can be inferred from the requirement "to know, understand, and *be* the round" (47)? One respondent commented "Taijiquan is like an orange of which the form is only the skin" (322). If this is so, there are many pulpless rinds teaching and, incredibly, producing seeds.

The second most common requirement to teach was some combination of exercises in addition to form. Self-defense applications, push-hands, rooting, *Taijijian* (sword), expression of *jing*, study of traditional Chinese medicine, *qi* development, internal power, warm-ups and walking exercises were all mentioned. One respondent gave the following list: "three Taijiquan forms, right/left sides and self-defense applications; fast sets, right/left sides, self-defense applications; 52 push-hands sets; sword and saber plus their self-defense applications; ball; ruler; *qigong*;... massage" (107). This list offers an insight into some of the rich variety of traditionally related arts. Other respondents didn't go into such detail, but said only such things as "know all the things he taught" (3), or "complete the entire system" (46).

Other requirements to teach included relatively formal training or testing procedures (mentioned by 13 respondents), and a certain number of years of study, ranging from 3 to 10. One respondent said “[I was required] to put time (10 years) and study (read everything available on the art) into my daily practice. When my teacher told me that daily practice and study for 10 years was necessary to transmit the ‘essence’ of the art I believed him. After 20 years I totally agree with him. Also, await the student to seek me out” (63). On another survey item, teachers were asked “On average, students should expect to study Taijiquan for how many years before teaching it?” Nearly 73% felt that two years was not long enough to study before beginning to teach. Of the remaining 27%, 17% left the item blank, but nearly 10% felt that two years was time enough to begin teaching. Based on these percentages, the extent of the problem of incompetence currently under discussion probably extends to just under 10% of the teachers in the United States. The question of how many years students should expect to study before teaching is probably best answered by the *mode*--the single number mentioned by the largest percentage of respondents--in this case: *five years*.

A few players with high ability, good teaching instincts, and humility may be good enough to teach after a very brief period of study. Unfortunately, many of those who believe themselves to possess these qualities are deficient in all three. Some novices believe that they are “good enough to teach beginners.” However, Quintilian, the famous rhetorician of ancient Rome, said “the first rudiments of instruction are best treated by the most accomplished teacher” (Watson, 1856, v. 1, p. 14). It is safer to let novices teach peers or more experienced players than it is to leave them unsupervised with a group of beginners.

In addition, a few respondents mention “good character” as a teaching prerequisite: “[I was required to] have my life in order; my virtue must be high” (106); “psychological balance” (139); “emotional maturity” (165); “most important, to be on the path of kindness and compassion” (177). One final response is worth mentioning, as it represents another traditional approach, arising out of a personal relationship with one’s teacher: “[I was required to] learn the form a few times [note!], assist him in teaching, learn *san shou* and sword, help him fix his basement and work in his yard (not explicit requirements: I simply did as I thought best until one day he ‘commanded’ me to teach” (156).

Skill at the art of teaching must complement expertise in the art of Taijiquan. The most pertinent and useful training for prospective teachers is to provide them with supervised teaching practice. Nineteen respondents reported that they served as assistant teachers, “learning how to teach” (93), before being given permission to teach on their own. One called this an “extensive apprenticeship” (26). Others said “in the club, with mixed classes of beginners and advanced students, each student was expected to teach some of what he/she knew to those who knew less. The principal instructor supervised and gave corrections” (97); “three years of practice teaching under his guidance” (121); “four years of assistant teaching [and] mastery of posture breakdowns and principles” (227); “my teacher had me assist her with the form for a year, mostly with beginners and at that point she said I was ready to teach on my own” (331); “I assisted under his guidance and scrutiny for several years” (404). These are the exceptional cases. Most teachers are not

showing this level of concern for the future of the art at the hands of their students.

Approach #3: Standards for Teachers.

Even prior to general acceptance of the need for certification, the Taijiquan community might begin developing a set of standards for teachers. The title of this chapter, “A Symposium of Taijiquan Teachers,” suggests a strategy for this. Standards might arise out of the “free interchange of ideas,” out of the dialogue which is the heart of a symposium. Although they were not in the majority, it should be remembered that nearly one in three respondents to this study favored such standards.

Teachers need to be honest with themselves, and open with students about what they do and do not do. It would help if the community acknowledged that there are many approaches to Taijiquan, and many kinds of Taijiquan teachers. Every teacher need not do what other teachers do. It is simply not necessary for every teacher, for example, to teach free fighting or to know forms from five styles. Many teachers will choose to stick with one style; but they should respect the legitimacy of other styles. Many teachers might not teach weapons, but they might consider studying one for the perspective such study offers on form, and because weapons are a traditional aspect of Taijiquan training. Not every teacher has the ambition to run a school; but those who do must not think that commercialism is the equivalent of professionalism, and those who do not must not think the opposite.

In an article entitled “Who is Qualified to Teach?” (*T'ai Chi*, April 1988), Vincent Lasorso concludes with two questions he suggests “every instructor ask themselves”:

1. Am I “qualified” enough to teach the physical, psychological and metaphysical aspects of T'ai Chi Ch'uan...?
2. What is my real motivation for teaching? Is it mainly altruistic or mainly self-serving? How does that balance affect the welfare of my students and my art? (p. 17).

Lasorso proposes that teachers should teach “within their limitations,” and develop “an active plan and commitment to overcome those limitations” (p. 17).

Teachers might begin asking themselves individually what standards they think most essential. These might fall into three categories: a) responsibility to oneself; b) responsibility to students; and c) responsibility to the community and the art. Responsibility to oneself might involve undertaking a schedule of daily personal practice, with a plan for betterment--not just the routine repetition of a form. It might also include a resolution to seek continuing instruction.

Responsibility to students might include regular scrutiny and revision of teaching methods, using tools such as the taxonomy of effective teaching presented in Chapter V. It might include study of the structure and function of the knee, as suggested in the next section, and review of current literature on safe stretching exercises, and the prevention and rehabilitation of common sports injuries. It might include providing opportunities for students to practice teaching with supervision, and developing a plan for continuing the

education of students who have “learned” a form: a study group, perhaps, or an additional practice time.

Responsibility to the community and the art might include knowing at least the names and phone numbers of the nearest other Taijiquan teachers in one’s area. It might include speaking with them, visiting one of their classes, and inviting them to a class. It might include sponsoring a local or regional event or gathering, or attending such an event once every year or two. It might include subscribing to at least one newsletter.

Teachers seem to invest a lot of their own self-image in their teaching persona. How they are viewed by students is important to them. If teachers were very clear and straightforward about what they do and do not do, this would remove some of the unspoken expectations placed on them by students to be or to do everything. At the very least, students have a right to know

- what style they are learning
- that there are other equally authentic and effective styles
- that one cannot simply “osmose” the principles and then move any way one likes and call it Taijiquan
- that any “magic” in Taijiquan is the result of hard work
- that relaxation (*sung*) is the key to every technique
- that Taijiquan is not learned in a weekend workshop or a series of ten lessons
- that they will be able to perform the form on their own in a certain finite time (e.g., “by next May”)

- that connection, interaction, and exchange with the community of other players is essential for open-mindedness and growth
- that their teacher is a member of this larger community and is also working hard at self-improvement.

Approach #4: Extending a Sense of Community to All Teachers (Outreach).

Continuing education would go a long way toward solving the problem of incompetence. Clearly, the first criterion for teachers should be that they continue to learn. It is impossible to make this a national requirement, but there may be ways to circumvent this difficulty. Teachers should consider carefully how to extend further education to instructors who lack the necessary connection with the community of players to realize they are woefully misguided or under-educated. Established, well-qualified teachers might sponsor push-hands study groups, Taijiquan symposiums or Chinese-style banquets, as is already done in some areas, and make a point to invite other teachers for free or at a reduced rate. If the group is fun, if the touch is sensitive, if there is a feeling of “mutuality” (see Chapter V), then the purpose of education will gradually be served. The host teacher might learn a thing or two, as well.

Another approach to continuing education is to support current tournaments and festivals as opportunities for all players to gather in fellowship and share with one another. It is difficult for incompetent teachers to hide behind a mask of mystic authority when their students have seen other, more competent players. The Taijiquan community needs to develop more local and regional opportunities for such gatherings: not necessarily for

competition--but for demonstration, friendship, and discussion. Making connections among schools could be more effective in lifting standards than attempting to enforce certification.