

CHAPTER V: A TAXONOMY OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING

“How thoughtful one must be in what one says!

The work done, business takes its course,
and all people think: ‘We are free.’”

--Lao Zi, *Dao De Jing* 17 (Wilhelm, Trans., 1985)

This chapter outlines a taxonomy of effective Taijiquan teaching derived inductively from the data provided by respondents to the question: “*Please describe the most effective thing you do with beginning Taijiquan students.*” The term *taxonomy* as used here refers to a comprehensive, systematic, classification scheme. The categories of this taxonomy are proposed as comprehensive in that they are intended to be sufficient to catalog the range of effective practices in the delivery of Taijiquan instruction. They do not extend over the full range of the teaching process, to curricular planning, design of learning hierarchies, or formative evaluation, for example—events that occur outside the implementation phase. The taxonomy is systematic in that practices from all categories must be implemented for an overall teaching strategy to be fully effective. As a classification scheme, each category theoretically contains an unlimited number of techniques that would accomplish the goals of the category. The following is an outline of the taxonomy that will be described.

Outline of a Taxonomy of Effective Taijiquan Teaching

A. Receptivity (goal: release tension, relax into new learning)

1. foster physical relaxation
 - a. promote awareness of tension in body parts
 - b. provide warm-up period
 - c. promote stretching, flexibility
 - d. encourage loosening in motion
 - e. promote progressive relaxation
 - f. encourage slow, continuous movement
 - g. encourage suspension (up) and sinking (down)
2. foster mental focus
 - a. provide visualizations, mental devices, concentration aids
 - b. promote breathing
 - c. provide music
 - d. promote inner sensitivity to personal energy
3. foster positive attitude
 - a. provide consistent praise, gentle prodding
 - b. provide humor, fun: a relaxed approach
 - c. promote quiet atmosphere
 - d. exemplify generosity, availability
 - e. promote patience, self-confidence

B. Demonstration (goal: enable proprioception)

1. perform (foster visual imaging)
2. lead (foster continuous sensory feedback)
 - a. provide instructional model of new movement
 1. do mirror-image forms
 2. decompose or analyze movement parts
 3. movement applications
 - b. provide perspectival model of learned movement
 1. provide guided practice

2. have individual students lead class
3. encourage fresh approach by new emphasis
4. movement applications

C. Repetition (goal: enable interiorization)

1. foster learning of part skills through segmentation
 - a. encourage postural self-examination
 1. holding postures, standing meditation
 2. provide for kinesthetic learning
 - b. promote familiarity with proper stances
 1. holding postures, standing meditation
 - c. provide movement vocabulary (component skills)
 1. auxiliary exercises: eight brocades, etc.
 2. applications
2. foster integrated synthesis of part skills (total skills)
 - a. encourage smooth, continuous sequencing
 1. mini-forms, endless loops
 2. Taijiquan walking
 - b. encourage interconnectedness through circularity
 1. silk cocoon practice
3. foster retention
 - a. provide spaced / intermittent practice even in one session
 1. the “soak” method: let it soak in, then do again
 - b. encourage practice on their own

D. Individualization (goal: personalize the experience)

1. foster individual comfort and confidence
 - a. provide reinforcement of pre-requisites
 1. be sensitive to individual needs
 - b. accommodate various learning style preferences
 1. provide verbal cues
 2. provide visual models (self, books, videos)

3. videotape student performance
4. provide hands-on correction and guidance
- c. provide appropriate pacing of instruction
2. foster individual improvement
 - a. encourage soloing (individual solo performance)
 - b. provide feedback
 1. provide verbal description of correct movement
 2. provide hands-on guidance
 3. provide contrast modelling (show error vs. other way)
 4. encourage self-evaluation
3. foster individual instructional experiences
 - a. allow small group work in class
 - b. encourage peer critiquing (student/student)
 - b. provide tutoring, private lessons

E. Delivery (Three Vs)

Verbalization (goal: engage mentation)

1. foster conscious process (articulation of mind/body)
 - a. talk students through movements (narrate)
 - b. explain subtle points
 - c. relate experiences
2. foster knowledge of principles
 - a. read or quote in class
 - b. suggest readings

Visualization (goal: enliven sense of energetic shape)

1. foster active extension of energy
 - a. provide similitudes, evoke vivid imagery
 - b. use traditional movement names
 - c. encourage imagination of opponent
 1. show self-defense applications
2. foster mental training
 - a. meditation on movement sequences

Variety (goal: enhance retention, interest, motivation)

1. foster multimodal perspectives

- a. provide variety of approaches to single concept
- b. show connection to other Chinese arts
- 2. foster variation in class agenda
 - a. change activities every 15 to 20 minutes
 - b. spend enough time on each activity
 - c. avoid belaboring

F. Empowerment (goal: empower learners to accept responsibility)

- 1. foster self-instruction
 - a. provide cues to encourage self-correcting
 - b. alert students to the “feeling” of correctness
 - c. encourage listening to their own bodies for feedback
 - d. let students help one another
- 2. foster awareness of *qi*
 - a. provide practice of *qigong*
 - 1. use of animal frolics
 - 2. standing meditations
 - 3. encourage sense of energy ball
 - 4. practice silk cocoon
 - b. encourage transfer of *qigong* learning to Taijiquan forms
- 3. foster self-reliance
 - a. provide opportunities for students to lead class

G. Mutuality (goal: share the way with others as equals)

- 1. foster situations in which teacher and students are *learners*
 - a. encourage transfer of principles to daily life
 - 1. share personal failures as well as successes
 - 2. drop infallibility as an aspect of teaching persona
 - b. push-hands without competing or “teaching”
 - 1. promote reading and sticking
 - 2. move together without form
- 2. foster the humility of beginner’s mind in one’s self

There is general agreement in the field of instructional design that certain steps must occur in the effective teaching of motor skills. Gagne & Briggs (1979), for example, refer to practice combined with feedback in the learning of part-skills and total or integrating skills. They offer a list of instructional events as the conditions of learning a motor skill which includes "demonstration," "recall of prerequisites," "practice with feedback," and continued practice (p. 166). Taijiquan might be considered a motor skill, but in light of the definitions offered by respondents and summarized in Chapter I of this study, it would seem to overlap the capabilities that Gagne & Briggs (1979) refer to as intellectual skills and motor skills. Others prefer the term "psychomotor domain" (e.g., Harrow, 1972); and indeed, this term implies not merely the rote and repetitive learning of a physical skill, but the kind of application of mental powers that leads to greater awareness and energy.

In Taijiquan, it is necessary not only to execute movements with facility, or in Gagne & Briggs' terms, with precision and speed (1979, p. 232); it is also considered essential to inform each movement with what, for want of a more precise description, Chang (1970) calls "a genuine idea" (p. 155). This focused application of the mind or imaginative faculty to movement distinguishes the art of Taijiquan from other skills that might be considered simply "motor." The word "motor" itself suggests an automated quality not characteristic of the animated motions of Taijiquan. Gagne & Briggs (1979) believed that the term motor skills implied the use of "the senses and the brain as well as the muscles" (p. 89), and so did not feel that terms such as "perceptual-motor skills" or "psychomotor skills" were necessary. Taijiquan, however, seems to

constitute a special case, and suggests a class of human action not comfortably accommodated by the term "motor skills" as it is currently used.

A Taijiquan player executes a series of movements with the intent of having an effect within the player's own subjective universe, rather than in the world of observable reality. While there is an observable performance, and the player is certainly using "motor skills" to accomplish his/her purpose, the motor skills are not a "doing" in the usual, outward way. The observable behavior, especially in a player of some experience, is a tool rather than a performance. Unlike swimming the crawl, whose purpose is to move through water efficiently and perhaps to get exercise or to compete against time, there is a meditative component to Taijiquan, and meditation could be comfortably classed neither as a motor skill nor an intellectual skill. The visible motor skills of Taijiquan are really part skills (Gagne & Briggs, 1979) of a total skill which transcends the motor domain. While it is beyond the scope of this research to find a suitable term to categorize the kind of learning involved in Taijiquan, it must be a combination of attitude, motor skills, and cognitive strategies as defined by Gagne & Briggs (1979), with an emphasis on the first two in the beginning stages, and an increasing emphasis on cognitive strategies over time: that is on the ability to originate or invent effective approaches to the internal challenges laid out in the Taijiquan classics.

Built into this taxonomy by the respondents themselves are the commonly delineated conditions or events necessary to motor and/or psychomotor learning; e.g., demonstration, instruction, practice, observation, correction. These events are recursive and form a loop that may be entered at any point. The taxonomy also contains strategies that provide instructional

context for this learning process, such as considerations of atmosphere, attitude, method, and approach. There was an agreement among respondents regarding the most successful components of an instructional approach which suggests that the best instructional moments touch and thereby reveal the presence of a theoretical model of effective teaching.

All but nine teachers responded to the survey item which yielded the data for this taxonomy. Some wrote single words such as "Stretch" (8). Some responded with very brief phrases, such as: "Holding postures" (92), "Teach them to teach" (46), "Private lessons" (246), or "Eight brocades" (328). Two wrote "Teach form" (308, 400) and two wrote simply "Teach them to relax" (142 and 181). To arrive at a summary of this material, a content analysis of individual responses was conducted, and 29 descriptors were derived from the material itself. These were grouped into seven composite categories which seemed to characterize the material as a whole. These seven categories were assigned the following labels: (1) Receptivity, (2) Demonstration, (3) Repetition, (4) Individualization, (5) "Three Vs": Verbalization, Visualization, Variety, (6) Empowerment, and (7) Mutuality.

Receptivity

Relaxation strategies were most frequently mentioned by respondents as their most effective techniques. The term Receptivity was selected as the heading for this category because it suggests more clearly the dual meaning of *sung*, the Chinese word for the kind of relaxation sought in the practice of Taijiquan. It is fairly common knowledge that this word does not refer to the state we think of in the West when we think of "relaxation:" a flaccid, passive condition such as that typically associated with TV watching or sunbathing. *Sung* refers instead to a state of relaxed awareness, a condition in which the body is loose, but poised, with the mind fully alert. It is compared to the state of a cat preparing to pounce upon its prey. *Sung* was the principle most frequently mentioned by respondents when asked which classical principle received the greatest emphasis in their classes. Here again, relaxation is the focus of some of the most effective instructional techniques employed by respondents. This should not be surprising. Mind alert, body relaxed is the paradoxical state associated with seated meditation. There is a sense that through Taijiquan, a player can achieve this state while in motion, and that the opposite state is also close to the same experience: that of the body in motion with the mind poised in quietude. Each of these states results in a kind of receptivity: the seated meditator is receptive to internal impressions, the moving meditator, through receptivity, is able to interpret and respond appropriately to actions. Both make use of the energy that becomes available when the ordinary states of physical tension or mental preoccupation are momentarily supervened. In Taijiquan, relaxation seems to be both a necessary prerequisite to efficient learning, and an outcome of that learning.

One respondent said: "getting a student to lose any tension so that they feel looser or lighter or freer validates Taijiquan and their own bodies, and encourages them to go on" (237). Another said, "[I get] them to notice how they are tensing their bodies, especially shoulders" (89). For some, relaxation exercises are a standard item on the class agenda: "[I] string a class from warm-ups through relaxation exercises through part of the form" (86). In this regard, this response is particularly detailed: "The very first thing I teach is progressive relaxation so the student can immediately distinguish between physical relaxation and tension. I then teach them visualization drills so that they have a technique to recall the physical relaxation. Relaxation needs to be reflexive. They walk away from their first class with an effective stress management system of breathing, physical relaxation, and visualization" (335). Note that this respondent believes that techniques for relaxation are the most important benefit beginners can take away from Taijiquan, even if they never return to class.

Making students aware of tension is sometimes enough to permit them to release it. One respondent said: "during warm-ups I point out times when the body is tense" (48). Another said "[I teach] the methods of loosening during movement" (223). While calling attention to tightness may sometimes effect a change, in many instances considerable work is necessary to erase the old pattern of holding. One respondent suggested a way to mask the tedium often entailed in this work: "[I help them] loosen the hip area through lots of repetitive movement with music" (152). This seems a creative approach to releasing tension in an essential yet very difficult area. Visualization, an aspect of teaching covered below in the "Three Vs" category, is an invaluable relaxation technique. One respondent offered a very clear statement of this

relationship: "[I] provide the students with mental devices (concentration focal points) to be used simultaneously with the movement. The mental devices are designed to be relaxing, enhance learning, and increase energy sensitivity. This procedure has three benefits: impressed on students that Taijiquan is as much a mental exercise as well as a physical one, helps students break down their mind-body dichotomy, and achieves the relaxation benefits of both mental (meditation) exercises and physical exercise at the same time" (156).

In addition to strategies designed to induce physical relaxation and release tension, the category Receptivity includes techniques which foster a relaxed class atmosphere. One respondent valued a "quiet atmosphere" (251) as an effective teaching tool. Another referred to the "friendly feeling" created when students have opportunities to share with one another (255). Many used the word "fun" to describe the class atmosphere they try to create: "have fun while training" (105) "I think the most effective thing I do with beginners is to establish a positive attitude toward learning: finding fun and joyful aspects about discovering...how the body moves and performs" (131); "I show them how to begin to achieve mind-body connections and harmony as a way of gaining insight into themselves. Also we have some fun and keep the classes light: not too lugubrious" (189); "make the movement, explanation, class-time fun! They should enjoy themselves as they learn" (291). One respondent simply says "have a good time" (193), another: "celebrate the joy of Taijiquan" (339); and another: "infect them with my incredible enthusiasm for this magical discipline. I have a very exciting class with many different things from warm-ups to breathing, form practice, push-hands, meditation, short lectures. We laugh a lot and always close class with a bow and much

hand-clapping. It's fun!...Entertaining!" (302). Even reading this, it is easy to be infected by this teacher's contagious enthusiasm.

Receptivity also refers to the teacher's relaxed approach and to attitudes and techniques which engender student comfort and self-confidence. Respondents feel their own attitude can be an effective instructional strategy. Attitude is frequently expressed in terms of personal qualities or behaviors exhibited toward students. Patience was most commonly mentioned. Taijiquan teachers feel they must exhibit patience, especially when the students themselves become frustrated or impatient; or when they seem to repeat the same errors again and again, and seem not to be "getting it." One listed three aspects of their approach as "patience, encouragement, adherence to fundamentals." (20). Indeed, patience could almost be defined in this case as "adherence to fundamentals:" the idea that sticking to what is most essential, even if it seems simple or basic, will result in the most gain in the long run. A teacher possesses an overview, a perspective, while the student, especially in the beginning, is floundering in what seems to be an overwhelming amount of small considerations and nuances of movement. One approach seems to be to help students adopt a longer view toward the training: "[I] have them set their goal of learning the form to a year away. That way, there is no pressure of falling behind or not getting it. Then they relax, knowing I do not move ahead until all have understanding. For the faster learners, I add on various principles for them to work on in that move" (197). This is also a good example of individualizing instruction, which will be addressed in Individualization, below. Another respondent added "encourage them that it gets easier and more interesting and more relaxing after a month or two" (229).

Encouragement could be seen as a combination of what one respondent called "consistent praise and gentle prodding" (264); a combination particularly effective in producing just the right instructional balance of comfort and challenge. One respondent said "make them feel comfortable, praise their efforts" (164), while others said persistence (174) or perseverance (399) on the part of the teacher was most effective.

Respondents said they are most effective as teachers when they offer "basic support, encouragement, and reassurance" (270). It was clear also that this attitude goes beyond lip service. One said, "[I] make the student feel I can be approached anytime" (161). Another said "I try to make myself available to them if they get stuck in practice at home and need to ask a question right then" (263). Remember that these are not merely aspects of a teacher's approach, but were reported by them to be the *most effective* things they did with beginners! Many respondents seemed very aware that effective teaching is not limited to "instruction." One respondent described the attitude of generosity on a related survey item: "I am always available to my students during class and after class. I am always at class, rain or shine, usually on time. I am at their service. My teacher was the same. He would help you fix your car, take you to the airport, teach you for free, let you stay in his spare room. If your car broke down a hundred miles from home, call [him]" (372).

Receptivity includes caring and friendliness, by which teachers invite learners into the experience of Taijiquan and share it with them. Quotes from a few more respondents will illustrate this: "I enjoy teaching and practicing. It creates a 'mood' that is uplifting and encourages students to practice so they

too can enjoy themselves" (188). "With beginners I feel it's important to affirm what they do correctly and stress what they have learned, rather than what they have yet to learn. Benefit can be derived from one movement or one principle. The more they learn, the better, but even a little Taijiquan is a good thing. I also point out that Taijiquan is noncompetitive. They don't have to be better than anyone else. They only have to be the best they can be" (367). "Hopefully, I make them feel comfortable and relaxed in my class" (136); "[I] help them to relax and enjoy the slower pace of life" (121); "[I] Respect them and love them" (215).

Demonstration

Many respondents felt that demonstrating form was one of their most effective teaching techniques. This might seem obvious; but if we are not reminded of the obvious, the obvious is often the thing most easily overlooked. Three kinds of demonstration might be distinguished: performing, leading, and refining. The instructional strategy of showing form to students who are watching and not trying to imitate the movements with their own bodies might be called "performing." If students not familiar with the movements are simultaneously attempting to imitate the instructor, this might be called "leading." When an instructor leads students who are practicing a form or part of a form they have learned, this might be called "refining."

Respondents mentioned demonstration as one of their most effective strategies in the very first class of a beginning course. "I started out with demonstration. I handed out articles and a brief description for reading. The lesson consists of warm-up, standing, and practice. I emphasize practice and patience" (334). "A brief clean introduction, a demonstration, let everybody try a little, never do too much of anything" (337). "Opening presentation: which explains the benefits, demonstrates form, raises some questions, motivates and creates interest" (176). Performance is also used as an ongoing instructional component in classes. One respondent (160) said "repetition of moves [and] watching [the] teacher" were the two most effective techniques. Others reported that demonstration was effective when combined with other aspects of instruction: "demonstrate, teach, correct" (75), or "demonstrations combined with corrections--opening the interconnectedness of inner and

outer Nature through form practice" (154). Some exaggerate certain aspects of movement while performing in order to illustrate certain principles: "demonstration of roundness in postures" (22), for example.

Some respondents find that demonstrating push-hands or the martial skills and applications of Taijiquan can be effective in beginning classes: "Displaying the force generated in Taijiquan strikes seems to be the most effective in getting their attention and respect (even if the course contains little or no martial arts). About equivalent is avoiding their pushes by yielding" (73); "Explain the purpose of proper posture: give examples of applications" (147); "Demonstration of Taijiquan self-defense principles" (175); "[I demonstrate] the application of any movements of the first section" (256).

Respondents said that leading students through a form can provide a kind of "big picture," a sense of the potential of the art, and that this can be the most effective instructional technique they use: "[I] take them through the form so they can see and experience what Taijiquan really is. I review several times beginning movements so they can take something home to practice. Both techniques allow students to see the big job ahead to master the form, but at the same time they get the sense that if they are willing to try, practice, they will learn it" (12). One respondent said "[I] allow them to feel the movements and flow with them" (281).

In addition to providing an overview, leading is also the primary technique for teaching form. Indeed, what else is there? Verbal directions fall far short in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. One respondent said, "students do not remember any correction in the beginning. The main goal

first is to remember the sequence of the form, before anything else can take place. Therefore I spend a lot of time leading class in form" (194) Creative approaches to the necessity of leading form vary. Some instructors have students take turns leading the class. Others find techniques such as mirroring to be effective: "[I] lead them through movements facing them (like a mirror)" (173) For some, the necessity simply dictates method: "I have the student follow me a few times before practicing on their own" (101).

One respondent said "I move through new material very slowly and with a lot of verbal and visual reinforcement" (344). Good teachers vary their mode of presentation, as shall be seen under "Individualization" and "Three Vs." Demonstration is a way to "foster an image in their minds of the way postures should look" (265). But more is conveyed than just an image in the mind. As one respondent said, "[I] have them empathize with my movement" (3). Choice of the word "empathize" over less expressive words such as "imitate" suggests layers of emotional significance beneath the physical surface. Demonstration is modelling: it provides students with a model of what they hope to accomplish through their study of Taijiquan. This transcends simple imitation, and goes beyond form. The best teachers strive to be examples of the effect of Taijiquan on life apart from teaching; on behavior beyond form.

Demonstration is a kind of body language that speaks directly to a student's body, bypassing the ear and the brain. In their desire to convey information and convert beginners, instructors must remember that seeing is more eloquent than hearing about, and that doing is even more powerful than seeing. "[I] tell them not to worry about memorizing the series, that the

etching of neuropathways and subconscious memorization is superior in the beginning to intellectualization. Don't think too much, just Do it, do it, do it" (350). This is a powerful statement, connecting "Demonstration" with the next category, "Repetition."

Repetition (Practice)

Repetition in conjunction with timely feedback is widely recognized as the essential method for learning motor skills. Gagne & Briggs (1979) say "the learning of motor skills is best accomplished by repeated practice. There is no easy way of avoiding practice if one seeks to improve the accuracy, speed and smoothness of motor skills" (p. 91). Respondents report that repetition of movement segments (called "part skills" by Gagne & Briggs) as well as movement sequences, in conjunction with periodic feedback (see Individualization) is an essential and effective strategy in Taijiquan instruction. The category Repetition comprises a variety of instructional methods related by the concept of the practice of movement, primarily of smaller sections of longer forms; auxiliary exercises designed to teach important part skills; mini-forms; and the repetitive practice of movement segments with the aim of learning certain applications, principles, or part skills. Repeated practice is not just another thing respondents do with beginners. Many report that it is the most effective thing.

"Repetitive practice. Keep it simple" (1) is what one said. Others said "I review several times beginning movements so they can take something home to practice..." (12); "Stressing principles. Repetition of early sections of form..." (13); "Having the students repeat movements with individual correction" (79); "Go through movements over and over" (98); "Verbal explanation and repetition of postures; constructive criticism and praise" (107). One respondent just said "hard work" (65), and left it up to the imagination; others offered more explanation: "We take one move at a time and drill it until everyone is comfortable with it. When they can do a move and not

panic, they are learning" (349). It is clear in reading all responses that repetition is a key element in Taijiquan instruction. Researchers have found that spaced or intermittent practice (total practice time divided into sessions separated by other activities) results in more efficient learning than continuous practice. One respondent revealed an awareness of the effectiveness of this principle: "I use what I call the 'soak' method. First we all go through the form, then work on the new move, then I let this information 'soak in' as we correct previous forms, then again go over new moves, etc. It is a mix of thinking about how form is and how form feels" (74).

Repeated practice is the method behind a variety of interesting instructional techniques. Auxiliary exercises, for example, seem to be in fairly general use among Taijiquan teachers. Here are a few responses recounting successful exercises by name. "Stroking the Long Beard and six-part walk. The most interesting and exciting thing, however, are two-person exercises such as sticking games, "rag doll," rudimentary push-hands" (54); "Silk cocoon (*chan si jing*) exercises, because they are learned quickly and we can go deeply into principles before even a short form is learned" (10); "lead them in silk cocoon exercises" (81); "the silk cocoon, one hand, seems to give people a feeling of energy flowing from the inside up, so they say" (419); "give them good basic warm-up and stretching exercises and try and make them feel more at ease about that awkwardness they experience..." (99); "Eight brocades" (328); "Teach animal frolic to get beginning students to feel their *qi*, and get comfortable moving and standing in a 70/30 stance" (331).

Some respondents included more extensive comment or descriptions of the exercises they use: "All of our beginning students learn slow breathing

and movement in the Eight Brocades first. These elementary *qigong* exercises are easy to master in eight weeks and give our students some flexibility, confidence, and a feel for proper posture and stances. When they can 'lead' the class in the brocades, they graduate to the forms instruction which is an incentive to practice" (97) That students reach a point where they "lead" the class is a good example of what would be categorized below as an Empowering technique. Another more detailed response: "[I] see most change in students' movement in a two-person exercise: Wind in the Willows. I break it down into steps until students are working with both yielding and rooting qualities, primary focus on yielding. I do very little except explain the principle I want them to work with" (242) or "Having students pair off and do the centering exercise, then gently push each other to test whether or not they are centered. Then they repeat the exercise, but instead of centering the attention of the *dantian*, they think of a situation that makes them angry and gently push each other" (261).

One of the most popular exercise was what respondents called "Taiji (Taijiquan) Walking." Here are some responses that gave information about how it is used: "What I call Taijiquan Walk, moving forward from 70/30 left forward to 70/30 right foot forward, gives them a feel for the posture and moving (stepping) empty" (91); "Walking forward and backward with center awareness" (111); "...before the form I spend time in Taijiquan walking steps to prepare for form" (194); "Taijiquan Walking, stressing principles. Doing repetitive moves in the form as we do the Taijiquan walking" (211).

Another repetitive exercise is the "endless loop," suggested in the last response in the previous paragraph. This respondent mentioned it explicitly:

"I break the form apart and make endless loop exercises from one gesture, repeating back and forth, from side to side. These can be done in little space" (375). This exercise would seem a particularly effective means of reinforcing the part skills which comprise a more extensive sequence of movements. Work on form components was another strategy that respondents found effective. For example, what one respondent finds most effective is "Kinesthetic learning, using supplementary floor exercises (Feldenkrais, Awareness through Movement). Once they can sense and image the movements on the floor, without strain, it is easier to learn. Also, I teach them the eight core movements, the 'vocabulary,' rather than discrete movement" (49). The concept of a body language "vocabulary" corresponds to Gagne & Briggs' concept of "part skills." Another said "The teaching of the Thirteen Primary or Elemental Postures is perhaps a most effective thing in the beginning of the fundamental course and from time to time throughout thereafter" (316). The movements or energies associated with what are referred to as the thirteen postures could be considered a basic vocabulary of Taijiquan motor skills. This would be an intriguing area for further research.

Other respondents find helping their students to build this "vocabulary" effective: "[I] break each posture and transition into small parts and show how the principles apply" (61); "[I] break a new step down into small, easily digestible pieces and explain and show it in several ways, observing which one seems to have the best result and following up on that" (95). One respondent refers to this method as "piecemeal format" (304). Another explains: "I break the form down into small sections and teach a little bit at a time. When everyone has been looked at individually and has it down fairly decent, I go on to the next piece" (326).

Martial skills can also be effective as the focus of repetitive practice. For the most part, instructors seem to introduce applications for the purpose of demonstration (see Demonstration, above), and to help students visualize the reason behind the configuration of postures (see Visualization, below). But in some instances, respondents reported that repetitive practice of applications drills can be very effective: "I demonstrate the four major internal strengths that will be needed to do the form and push-hands correctly, then I work with each one until they can, at least weakly, perform the strengths. Since they can quickly get the idea and actually use these extraordinary strengths, they get very excited" (383).

Some instructors make use of *mini-forms* to practice integration of part skills and to illustrate principles. One found "A series of movements introduced by Ai Huang known as the 'five elements'" (338) to be most effective. Another elaborated, "I've stopped teaching form in the workshops, realizing that the form retention rate was not good, and that it distracted me and the students from the actual Taijiquan principles. I rely more on mimicry, and a sort of made up 'mini-form' now, and the students seem to do a lot better: less uptight, no excuses for not remembering the form, as the mini-form is simple everyday movements they could hardly forget. We are starting all beginners on this format now. Trying to keep them from getting materialistic about hurrying and learning the whole form, but rather coming and accepting whatever happens in class" (388). Another said "I teach a very short sequence which has a good deal of repetition that students can accomplish easily and this inspires them to go on to the more difficult forms" (391).

Repetitive practice should not be mistaken for the tedium of repeating motions over and over in the same manner after they have been learned. One way to avoid this is *spaced practice*: multiple practice sessions interspersed with other activities, as mentioned above; other methods of avoiding tedium are discussed in *Variety*, one of the Three Vs, below. Repetition can also be thought of as following the course of an ascending spiral, in which practice of a movement sequence moves to new levels of learning when students are ready for new insight. This can be done by introducing principles from the *Taijiquan Classics* to spotlight different aspects of posture and motion. As the student's awareness shifts to a new focus, the same sequence can feel new again, and the boredom of monotonous repetition is avoided. "[I place the] emphasis on key concepts in 'the classics' from the first lesson" (55); "[I] develop the principles out of the first three moves. Preparatory step: no double-weighting, move body as a unit, axis/hinge for pivoting on one side, movement originates in the legs, etc. Commencement: arms move following shoulders, following back, *qigong*. Grasp sparrow's tail, right: use waist to bring the legs and arms together" (135). How many repetitions would it take the respondent above to teach those principles? Yet the class need not be bored, as there is so much to learn even within a small segment of the form. If the focus were only on mimicking motion, form learning could easily become monotonous. Another approach, still incorporating principles, is to focus on different body parts: "I attempt to demystify the form so that they understand the process and not feel as overwhelmed as they do when confronted with the entire form. I do this by teaching stance training with no hand forms first, while stressing the basic principles of the classics" (178). The natural corollary to this aspect of repetitive practice is that the teacher must

turn around from the position at the front as "leader" and become a "coach."

That respondents find this role effective will be seen in the following section.

Individualization

Individualized instruction permits a teacher to customize the instructional process to the differing needs, abilities, entry characteristics, pace, and learning style preferences of individual learners. This concept has received considerable attention in educational literature, and is a major organizing concept driving much of the field of curriculum design and implementation. A good reason for Taijiquan teachers to pay particular attention to individuals is that Taijiquan is a very personal phenomena. It is educed from within, and manifests differently in each person. Standardization and regimentation are detrimental to it. Recognition of individual differences in motor performance and the search for their causes and significance is also an interdisciplinary focus of physiology, differential psychology, biomechanics, etc. (see, for example, Kirkaldy, 1985).

Even in large classes, it is possible to individualize instruction to a certain extent, through small group work and peer critiquing within class and tutoring sessions outside of class, for example. Even more can be done within class if the teacher is willing to relinquish the role of "leader." One way to do this is to set the class to a certain task, such as practice of a segment of a form, and then to move from one player to another, offering hands-on postural corrections or suggestions. This can be most effective if the critique is focused on one or two points the instructor feels each student could work on most profitably. Some teachers even conduct classes as if they were just so many private lessons, moving slowly from one player to the next.

This category includes references to work on posture, corrections, and to techniques that helped respondents individualize instruction.

Individualized instruction was the primary focus of these responses. Postural corrections can, of course, be delivered to a group of learners with the expectation that through demonstration and verbal explanation, they each will understand the correction well enough to incorporate it into their individual practice. This method is also common in Taijiquan teaching, though respondents did not mention it as "the most effective thing they do with beginners." Individualized instruction may not seem as efficient to those who have not tried it, as it requires extra time and effort from the instructor; but its effectiveness reveals that it is more efficient in the long run.

Personalized feedback completes the loop that began with demonstration and is supported by repetitive practice, allowing each learner to resume practice at a level appropriate to their own individual progress.

Nearly one quarter of all respondents mentioned some aspect of individualization. As a statistic this may not be impressive, but only strategies categorized under Repetition and Receptivity were mentioned by more respondents, and we must remember that this question does not reveal how many employ a certain method, but how many find it to be the most effective thing they do with beginners. In this light, mention by one quarter of respondents is an overwhelming vote in favor of Individualization.

The entire instructional process may be individualized, as in the case of teachers who do not offer Taijiquan "classes" at all, preferring instead to conduct all their teaching through the medium of private lessons. Some offer private lessons, or tutoring in addition to classes. Others may hold scheduled

classes, but will spend the time moving between individuals or small groups, tailoring their instruction to the needs of individuals. Individualization may be implemented only in certain stages of the process. Some teachers may demonstrate, talk, and offer instruction to a class, and then give corrections and comments to individuals as they practice. Others organize classes so that students have time in every class to gather in small groups for peer critiquing. Some instructors individualize their instruction outside of class, by being available to students for individual help or by scheduling more informal practices. Others do not individualize until students are ready to take special "corrections classes." In general, any method which removes students from the formal setting of a group class with a single leader is a step toward Individualizing instruction: a step toward inviting each student into a more personal connection with the art.

Here are responses that specifically advocated teaching strategies which help to individualize instruction: "I go over with each person what they are doing right and wrong and try to have them have success in each class" (27); "Having the students repeat movements with individual correction" (79); "Spend time with each student and give hands-on help to them" (98); "Individualize: teach in group and separately, step by step" (115); "Treat each individual as a special case. Correct the most important weak point first (do not correct everything at one time). Check progress at that weak point" (120); "I give each person individual attention and praise" (146);

Correction is a nearly universal concept in movement learning. It is necessarily individualized, and also accommodates the learning style of those who are unable to see a correction until they have it pointed out physically on

their own bodies. Many respondents mention this hands-on approach: "Holding [postures] Practice' with adjusting their positions" (406); "Hands-on help: helping the student feel what is happening in the movement by making physical corrections while they are moving (versus while they are holding a static posture)" (169); "[I] correct posture [especially] hips and lower spine" (57) "Push them into the correct positions so they can feel it" (110) "[I] correct alignment" (136) "Providing them [with] feedback regarding basic body mechanics, posture, and movement. This provides them new vistas with which to view themselves and deepen relaxation. Basic support, encouragement and reassurance are also effective and necessary to enhance the teaching" (270); "I attempt firstly to determine how a student is best able to receive and implement new information. Then I demonstrate, using the student's own body, how 'minor' structural rearrangements can effect major changes in structural integrity" (132).

One contemporary approach to Taijiquan instruction accommodates a visual or televisual learning preference: "I use a video to record the students form on a posture I wish to work on. I then have the student watch the same move on video, then I record the student after correction" (162)

Pace is an important instructional consideration. Moving too slowly can be parsimonious and lose the interest of quicker learners. Moving too quickly can be frustrating. There are conflicting views on this, illustrated by comparing (197), quoted earlier, who said students "relax, knowing I do not move ahead until all have understanding," with this respondent's idea: "Let them learn at their own pace but allow a competitive dynamic to develop where people desire to keep up with the faster students" (205). Perhaps both

of these techniques can be listed as most effective, because the instructor is acutely aware of the need for pacing.

Another interesting example of techniques at opposite poles to one another being voted most effective relates to student performance in class. One instructor wrote "Help them to overcome feeling of self-consciousness by performing solo each class, no matter how many moves they know and receiving feedback from group plus self-evaluation" (222); while another said "Never single out students in front of group: each person feels as open and unself-conscious as possible" (251). These respondents agree that self-consciousness is one of the characteristic feelings of Taijiquan students, particularly beginners. It is interesting that they reached opposite conclusions regarding what is "most effective" in their classes. This is a good example of the need for open-mindedness on the part of instructors to each other's experience. Certainly, the effectiveness of an instructional strategy will depend on the manner in which it is applied. Even theoretically excellent techniques, supported by the best research, applied in unkind or unfeeling ways will have negative results. Perhaps the first respondent isn't as sensitive to student resistance to solo performing. It's possible, however, that he or she is able to create an atmosphere that encourages students to trust the process. The second respondent might learn something from observing the first respondent's methods: a powerful argument for increasing the sense of community among Taijiquan teachers and the opportunity for exchange.

Here are a few responses that come close to the heart of Individualization: "Show them how each person's body must translate the Taijiquan form for itself. Also, make lots of connections between Taijiquan

and their young lives (especially college experiences, athletics, stress, etc.)" (235); "A technique judged as most effective will depend on individual student: I try to make myself available to them if they get stuck in practice at home and need to ask a question right then" (263); "Work with them individually, making adjustments with the first few movements to help them feel the proper alignment" (284); "I don't look for perfection until the form is completed. At this time, the student undergoes 'fine tuning'" (326). One response read simply "Individual attention" (332).

Delivery (Three Vs)

Verbalization.

Many respondents felt they were most effective in explaining Taijiquan to beginning classes. This correlates with data from other survey items that show a) that every instructor responding to a question on class activities (96%) said they spent some instructional time discussing principles; b) that ability to explain subtle points was rated the third most important quality of a Taijiquan teacher next to performing forms correctly and ability to adjust student postures; and c) that next to warmth, friendliness and humor, more respondents claimed the ability to explain subtle points as their particular strength than any other quality. In responding to a question on how they differ most from their teacher's methods, 13% agreed that it is their willingness or ability to talk or explain more. Respondents mentioned as teaching strengths their ability to speak fluent English and relate to Westerners "My explanations are more 'American,' more direct and in more precise English" (95). Some felt their teachers were limited to "traditional" ways of explaining things, and that they are more "contemporary": "I [differ from my teacher in that I] rely strongly on metaphor and images which come up for me frequently rather than the traditional texts' way of describing a movement" (131). "I am more adaptable to Westerners and I'm a better teacher" (75).

Many teachers agree that Westerners seem to need a great deal of explanation. Chinese teachers are often struck by the unwillingness of many in the West to "just do the movements," and by their desire for extensive

information regarding how Taijiquan works, what it is, and why it must be done a certain way. Westerners seem like children: always asking questions, never content simply to do movements because a teacher says to. This could, perhaps, be viewed as a weakness. It could also be that the Western penchant for information and intellectual as well as physical understanding is one of the strengths Westerners bring to the study of this art. The child that asks questions is showing the healthy curiosity of a growing mind. Whether Westerners need more and/or different information than Chinese students would be interesting questions for further research.

Verbal instruction is not necessarily serious. One respondent said “[I] keep classes ‘light’ in terms of verbal input...in other words, inject humor and praise” (13). Words and the manner in which they are said can be a great aid in producing the instructional atmosphere discussed under “Relaxation,” above. One respondent said “[I] speak freely, openly, and have fun” (161). Respondents felt that answering questions, welcoming discussion and providing verbal encouragement were often the most effective methods they employ. But Verbalization is most often employed as an instructional method. One respondent gave the following list of most effective techniques, in which use of language is predominant: “Explain the purpose of proper posture, give examples of applications, explain fundamental principles, give handouts” (147).

Verbalization is also seen as an adjunct to hands-on corrections and leading and demonstrating movement. One respondent said “I am good at articulating how to do postures” (183). Another said “I move through new material very slowly and with a lot of verbal and visual reinforcement” (344).

Respondents use language to provide precise descriptions of physical movements. This is undoubtedly helpful to learners whose inclination may be to catch on more quickly when there is a verbal component accompanying what can otherwise be wholly kinesthetic and visual. As one said, “I talk them through the movements so they have an easier time following. They associate the verbal direction with the movement, then little by little I use the verbal directions less often. Finally, they do the movement on their own” (134); another: “[I] try to explain clearly the strange thing they are asking their bodies to do. My beginners tend to find helpful the verbal descriptions I give with the execution of the movements. I phase these out as they gain confidence” (258). Language may also be used for its simple mnemonic value, that is, as a kind of incantation. “[I] explain movement in a conceptual format they can learn like a language” (68); or, in the words of another respondent, as a “mental device/strategy for integrating the mind-body” (156).

Use of language to evoke vivid imagery was frequently mentioned as a most effective strategy. Imagery may render movement both more memorable and more meaningful, as shall be seen in the next section.

Visualization.

While Verbalization as it is used here refers more to the narrative, instructional, and expository use of language--that is, language conceived of as a linear string, Visualization involves the imaginative faculty by using language in an evocative, multi-dimensional manner. “Understand the skeletal structure is the handle and the muscles are the rubber bands.

Together these work like a slingshot" (24). This is a good example of a vivid image that this respondent's students probably hear fairly frequently. Images can give learners an insight into the inner dynamic of a movement and trigger the active extension of energy by the imagination. As respondents explained "I use a lot of images to appeal to the 'right brain'" (266); or "I make analogies that relate to principles and feelings for better understanding" (307). Some visualizations can be very simple: "In actual teaching, I give them certain types of visualization to practice: heavy elbow, floating in air, etc." (63). Others might be more elaborate or consciously crafted. In any case the use of "visual imagery and metaphors to teach the moves" (404) has been a custom throughout the history of Taijiquan, as the traditional movement names lead us to suspect. While some names seem to be simple descriptions of actions, such as "Brush knee and twist step," or "Separate foot," others evoke images through suggesting martial intent, as "Turn and chop opponent with fist," and some seem fanciful but somehow very expressive, such as "White stork fans its wings," "Monkey offers fruit," or "Cloudlike hands."

Visualization can take the form of imagining the offensive or defensive uses of movements: "I explain the applications of each form movement, understanding the application (martial arts) helps beginners visualize and remember correct body position and angles for each movement" (87); "Connect the movements with martial applications so they know why they are doing a movement" (112). It can also be incorporated into more ritualized exercises: "Provide the students with mental devices (concentration focal points) to be used simultaneously with the movement. The mental devices are designed to be relaxing, enhance learning, and increase energy sensitivity. This procedure has three benefits: impressed on students that Taijiquan is as

much a mental exercise as a physical one, helps students break down their mind-body dichotomy, and achieves the relaxation benefits of both mental (meditation) exercises and physical exercise at the same time” (156). This respondent, as did (335) [quoted in *Receptivity*, above], uses visualization as a device so students can use associated images to elicit the feeling of relaxation and recreate it themselves. Here is another example of a similar use: “I start my classes off by having them all sit on the floor, close their eyes, and I take them through deep breathing techniques. Most have never done breathing exercises or relaxation techniques. When I am finished, I ask them to open their eyes and stand up. From there we go into learning the first steps. They are very, very quiet, and very relaxed. I also use visualization techniques” (319).

Visualization can be a key to helping learners get in touch with personal energy: “Getting them to think and experience the fact that we are energetic beings” (171). Another powerful use of visualization is in mental training (Millman, 1979; Garfield, 1984), the mental practice of movement sequences: a particularly apt tool for an “internal” art.

Variety.

Although few respondents explicitly mentioned “variety,” the variety of responses itself suggests that “variety” is a most effective instructional strategy. The attention span of adult learners, especially during evening classes or when confronted with “lecture” or single, repetitive exercise is surprisingly short. Lenz (1982) says that when they must listen to a teacher

talk, “it has been estimated that the attention span of a typical adult learner attending a class at the end of a working day is anywhere from thirteen to fifteen minutes” (p. 49). If anything, this is an estimate on the high side, probably already assuming students are motivated and the lecturer able. If students are expecting movement or exercise, their tolerance for talk is probably much less. Reflective teachers will realize that varying their program of activities will enhance student interest and retention of the material presented.

One response, cited already under Receptivity, offered a glimpse into a class that seems to make good use of variety: “Infect them with my incredible enthusiasm for this magical discipline. I have a very exciting class with many different things from warm-ups to breathing, form practice, push-hands, meditation, short lectures. We laugh a lot and always close class with a bow and much hand-clapping. It’s fun! Entertaining!” (302) Some might be tempted to scoff at this bewildering array of activities, and certainly a hazard here would be to “do too much,” thereby losing focus as well as the climate of tranquil concentration. But a reflective teacher will strive to balance activities within single classes so that enough time is spent on each, and so that learner interest and motivation remains high.

A further example of variety is the kind of richness that can be introduced by an approach that includes other perspectives on Taijiquan from among the arts of China: “I am making an effort to bring in history, cultural backdrop (calligraphy, painting, language, tea, etc.) as fit to expand people’s understanding of the whole context” (388).

Empowerment

There are two final steps in this taxonomy of effective instructional practices for Taijiquan. These steps are perhaps the most challenging, but they can be the most rewarding. They represent the *yang*, active principle, and the *yin*, or receptive principle in teaching adult learners. The first, *empowerment*, requires the teacher to regard learners as the only true teachers of themselves, and to empower them to become self-directive by removing teacher-ego from the intermediary position between learners and their own source of true knowledge about Taijiquan. The second, *mutuality*, comes as a result of empowerment, and also reinforces and complements it. Mutuality requires teachers to regard themselves as students, to share their own learning process with others, and to join them on an equal footing in mutual discovery.

Instructional strategies designed to give the learners the attitudes and tools they need to accept responsibility for their own learning are empowering. As one respondent put it, these strategies “promote a feeling of ability, help [students] relax, drop fear, and take responsibility for their own development” (284). Nearly one in five respondents described “most effective” strategies that fit in this category. They can be as difficult for the instructor as they are challenging to students. Learners must realize that the passive role of movement-mimic or information-parrot does not put them in touch with their personal power.

Teachers who hang on to their role of authority or font of wisdom will never experience the more fulfilling roles of friend or coach. One

empowering technique which is easy to implement and requires no change in a teacher's current teaching style is setting aside some time during a class for small group work. Groups of three seem to work well for this. The instructor need only offer a couple of simple guidelines, and then resist the temptation to interrupt the group dynamic with further "teaching." Guidelines can be general: each person in the group is to perform for the other two, who are then to offer positive comment plus one or two suggestions each. They might also be specific: to work on a certain move or a particular principle. Respondents find such techniques to be among the most effective they employ. As one said, "After explanation and practice, let them correct each other" (108). Helping one another is empowering, and leads to mutuality. One respondent said, "Teach them to teach" (46). Teaching is, after all, one of the best ways to learn something; and what better way to begin than under the eye (but not the thumb) of an experienced instructor.

One of the primary challenges of a teacher of adults is to find ways to inspire learners to accept responsibility for learning. "Open them up to being responsible for their own study: to investigate for themselves what's true in the matter" (184) "Help them to understand the basic concepts of body mechanics and how to 'feel' correct from incorrect movement" (165). These respondents describe the process by which passive learners become active learners, with the ability to continue the spiral of improvement on their own through practice and reflection. The goal of successful instruction is not a student who has learned all the teacher taught, but one who has learned how to learn. Techniques that seemed to lead to this end were categorized under Empowerment.

Several respondents reported especially good results from attempts to help learners feel their *qi*, or to “confirm the existence of *qi* in their bodies” (106). Respondents generally seem to use simple postures and rudimentary movement coupled with visualization or proprioceptive suggestion to guide learners into having this experience. Some named exercises they use: “animal frolics” (331), “the embrace posture of *qigong*” (354), “energy ball” (366), and “silk cocoon, one handed” (419). Others did not go into detail about the specific exercises: “I am able to teach them to feel a great deal of *qi* flow while standing and while performing the form” (53); “[I] teach them a step-by-step way of thinking about their mind-body which enables them to quickly and efficiently learn the form and feel energy” (227). The latter response may seem a bit too self-assured, but as another respondent said, “exercise to help students feel the flow of *qi* [are] effective because nearly everyone experiences something” (358). One said: “I place great emphasis on *qigong* to get them in touch with their own *qi*. Then we try to carry that feeling into the Taijiquan forms. I like to talk, but restrain myself and just let them focus inward. It’s this quiet, slow-paced, internal focus that makes Taijiquan special and different” (372).

Guiding learners so that they have some experience of their own *qi*, “if only for a short time” (345) as one respondent put it, is empowering. It puts them in touch with something within themselves from which they can find ongoing guidance, and frees them from mindless reliance on a teacher. One respondent said, “[I help them] connect with *qi* and learn from that” (312). As this experience becomes real for them, they reach a stage where they can regard the other person who is their outer teacher in a relationship of mutuality.

Other ways mentioned by respondents that empower learners to discover sources of knowledge in themselves were work with breath and methods which encourage learners to listen to their own bodies for reliable feedback. Two items asked about breath elsewhere in the questionnaire. Over half of respondents, 54%, agreed that subtler things, including breathing and *qigong*, are best taught after a form is learned. Fifteen percent of all respondents never focus on breathing in their teaching of Taijiquan forms, and half of all respondents said they teach a complete form before they begin coordinating normal breathing with the movements. Only 31% teach breathing of some sort to beginners, but of this number, some found it to be the most effective instructional strategy they employ.

One said “I believe correct alignment and deep abdominal breathing may be the most effective thing that I do” (136). Some use breathing to aid in relaxation: “I like to get them to watch their breathing and find the difference between hard and soft (tension and non-tension) in their body” (48); see also (319) above under Visualization, who reported using deep breathing to promote relaxation. Only 15% of all respondents coordinate breathing with form instruction, yet some reported this to be a most effective strategy: “I coordinate every move with breathing. I spend a lot of time understanding breath and push-hands and apply this to movement in the form” (7).

Empowerment requires teachers to relinquish authority and students to accept responsibility. Students must learn to listen to themselves: and not just to what they think they are thinking or to what they think they are doing, but to what they are really thinking and to what they are really doing: “making

them 'let go,' surrender to the body energies and sensations and getting out of their heads" (346). Students must also listen to what they feel, to where each part of their body is in space and to the messages that part is sending to the whole. This is the way of the Taijiquan *player*, who is a perennial student as well as being "self-taught." Some respondents believe that their most effective strategies are those that foster "getting in touch with the whole body" (41). One called it "guiding them to tune in to their bodies, [to] bring the mind and body into harmony" (52). Another described this as a way of becoming "aware of the possibilities of their body and mind" (72). One respondent said "I introduce them to their bodies as the source of workable feedback rather than believing in something" (204). This image of the teacher as one who introduces two who eventually become best friends is a memorable analogy for the effective teacher, who is an enabler, a facilitator. The power of Empowerment is not to be found in antiquity, nor in vicariously adopting the beliefs of others about the benefits of practice. Students must acquire this power individually, aided by teachers who believe empowerment to be an effective teaching strategy: "[I] encourage them to begin respecting their own bodies, with their capabilities and limitations" (324).

Mutuality

Mutuality refers here to the acknowledgement, in word and deed, by instructors that they have adopted a position of equal footing among their students. These responses often list push-hands, daily life, or other situations in which this stance can be played out to the benefit of both partners in the learning process. Mutuality comes about when instructors as well as students see themselves as learners, as players: when the roles of "teacher" and "student" are interchangeable. Mutuality could be considered a goal of instruction, but it is also a method or mode of instruction. Knox (1990) refers to this mode as

inquiry, in which instructors and participants work together to solve problems that neither has completely mastered. Usually the emphasis is on the process of problem solving, the educational goal is mastery of inquiry procedures so that participants can discover and formulate the most satisfactory solutions, and the process is practice... Typically instructors help learners discover major rules and concepts (p. 143).

Like empowerment, mutuality is a process; an attitude toward interaction that must be adopted by the instructor before it can blossom in learners. Respondents described this attitude as one of the most effective aspects of their teaching. This collection of quotations is worth reading without interruption: "Help them realize that we are all beginners and that we can become comfortable with this as a concept. It's okay to be 'wrong,' as there is no wrong. It's all a process" (138); "Stress the fact that I learn from them as well as they are learning from me (*yin/yang*)" (13); "I tell them I'm a student who knows a little more than they do and we'll just spend this time

together sharing it" (113); "Relate to them on their level" (116); "Learn along with them for you must test yourself when they ask questions" (185); "To let them know that I as well as they, am a student. To tell them that I have been where they are now and to assure them progress is a certainty, that it has (the teaching) been done this way for over 3,000 years [sic]" (226); "I grow and learn with each student I teach" (273); "Openly talk about my own weak points and difficulties in my practice and encourage patience, gentleness, and good humor with oneself, emphasizing that this art is a continuously evolving journey of discovery, and no one is ever 'done'" (280); "I explain the need for patience and how I overcame many struggles while I learned my form. I say 'if I could do it (when I was so uncoordinated,) you can do it'... and it works" (301); "I encourage them to practice. I tell them that I'm having as much trouble working on what I'm working on as they're having with what they're working on. The idea of refining the movements endlessly rather than judging how they 'rate' at any given point in their studies" (309); "I myself now work out harder in class..." (388). These are inspiring teachers.

If done properly, push-hands is a supreme method for fostering empowerment and mutuality. In too many places today, however, push-hands is just another way for one person with a little knowledge to lord it over someone else. With the emphasis on listening and sticking, guarding against ego, push-hands is a great equalizer: "Gentle pushing to increase strength, fortitude and attention (139); "expose them to *tui shou*. I believe that, in push-hands, we find the essence of Taijiquan. Feeling, proprioceptively and intuitively, how push-hands incorporates the movement and philosophy of Taijiquan is one of the best introductions of the art" (320).

Finally, the effective teacher expands the perspective of Taijiquan from form to daily life, as these examples suggest: “I explain to them that the Taijiquan principles are the key. Through the playing of the form they will learn the principles. Once learned, these principles will spill over into their daily life. I explain that Taijiquan is a life art and tell them to expect their quality of life to change for the better” (63); “Make them aware of the fundamental principles of Taiji movement and show them how to incorporate these principles in the practice of the form and daily life” (109); “Relate Taijiquan to their everyday lives” (110); “Point towards the potential efficacy of using softness/yielding qualities to help promote their physical health, mental outlook, and interactions in daily life. Helping students to consider options of being kinder/gentler to themselves” (118); “Help them to begin an awareness of who they are and how they move forth in the world how they can apply what they learn in class to real life situations” (163); “Show them how each person’s body must translate the Taijiquan form for itself. Also, make lots of connections between Taijiquan and their young lives (especially college experiences, athletics, stress, etc.)” (235).

Shifting the emphasis from the arcane to the mundane empowers students and validates their experiences. In the struggle to apply Taijiquan principles in ordinary situations few are masters, and few should presume to be teachers. Teachers who can relax the didactic muscle and yield the floor discover they too can learn from their students’ insights. Sometimes students are older than their teachers. But even those with fewer years possess a wealth of unique life experiences. Teachers are tempted to date a student’s knowledge from the time of their first Taijiquan lesson. Yet in mundane applications, Taijiquan is not a body of knowledge to be learned, but a set of

organizing principles which suggest new ways of arranging one's perception of ordinary reality. Students who began yesterday sound like masters when they relate how a Taijiquan principle has already affected their daily life.

Mutuality is the teaching practice of "allowing," as this respondent said:

"allow them examples and experiences so that they may apply the principles of Taijiquan in their daily life from the beginning" (240). To alter an old adage, "When the teacher is ready, the 'student' *disappears*"--and fellowship and mutuality spring up.