

Self-Reported benefits of participating in the Lee Style Taijiquan

BY

Julie Ann Snowden
Student Number: 25001305

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
MA Philosophy of the Body: Eastern & Western Perspectives

SUMMARY

A brief exploration is undertaken of the origins of the Daoist walk in the Lee Family Style Taijiquan. This walk is situated within the Chinese perspective of a subtle body, and a survey of the internal landscape of the body, its deities, and its relationship with the cosmos is identified. The phenomenon of qi is investigated in relation to the subtle body and Taijiquan.

The value of Taijiquan and meditation is then examined, for these techniques have been practised to facilitate health promotion and self-defence for many years. A brief account of the Taijiquan of the Lee family system in the west is also provided.

Evaluation of the growth of Taijiquan in the west and its alleged health benefits is reviewed, identifying the contrast between holistic eastern notions of health and western approaches of mind and body dualism.

Analysis of a Healing Manual produced by the Lee Family System Taijiquan was undertaken to identify the focus of health intervention. This was then compared with data gathered from diaries kept by Taijiquan participants and a focus group of Taijiquan participants, in order to ascertain their reasons for attending Taijiquan classes and the benefits they felt they gained from attending, in order to identify any correlations.

It was identified that the Taijiquan participants had different motivations for attending the class, some having a strong belief in energies and healing, whilst others attended purely as a leisure activity. However, whatever the reason for attending the classes it would seem that the practice of Taijiquan, the Daoist walk, and breathing exercises have an important role to play in enhancing the coping mechanisms of its participants. Giving participants enhanced mood, peacefulness, calmness, and de-stressing them. The value of Taijiquan for these participant is to provide a haven for peace and relaxation which is beneficial for spiritual and general well-being.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| PROLOGUE | 5 |
| <i>Observation: Daoist Walk and Breathing Exercise</i> | 5 |
| BACKGROUND | 9 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| What is the Daoist walk? | 11 |
| Eastern Perspectives of the Subtle Body and Health | 14 |
| <i>The power of qi</i> | 19 |
| Introduction to the concept of Taijiquan | 23 |
| Lee Family Style Taijiquan | 26 |
| Benefits of Taijiquan | 28 |
| Meditation | 30 |
| Western Perspectives of the Body and Health | 32 |
| Summary | 36 |
| METHODOLOGY | 39 |
| Introduction | 39 |
| Research Design | 39 |
| The Sample | 42 |
| Research Instrument: Diaries | 43 |
| Research Instrument: Focus Group | 47 |
| Ethical considerations | 49 |
| Gatekeepers | 51 |
| Analysing the data | 53 |
| RESULTS | 56 |
| Introduction | 56 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| | 4 |
| The Participants | 56 |
| Diaries | 57 |
| Reasons and effects of undertaking ‘meridian enhancing’ activities | 60 |
| <i>Effects of ‘meridian enhancing’ activities</i> | 61 |
| Analysis of the ‘Healing Manual Volume 1(Dickinson 2009) and May Newsletter | 64 |
| <i>May Newsletter</i> | 64 |
| <i>Healing Manual Volume 1 Dickinson (2006)</i> | 65 |
| Questions generated from the diaries and Healing Manual Volume 1 Dickinson (2009) | 70 |
| Focus group | 72 |
| DISCUSSION | 78 |
| The participants | 78 |
| Completion of Diary | 79 |
| <i>Frequency of the Daoist walk by the participants</i> | 79 |
| Healing Manual 1 (Dickinson 2009) & May 2011 Newsletter | 82 |
| Focus Group | 83 |
| <i>Reasons for attending Taijiquan</i> | 83 |
| <i>Perceived effects of the Daoist walk</i> | 85 |
| <i>The concepts of ‘centred’, ‘connected’ and balance</i> | 87 |
| <i>Health and locus of control</i> | 89 |
| <i>Motivation to attend Taijiquan</i> | 91 |
| REFERENCES | 98 |
| APPENDIX 1 | 113 |
| APPENDIX 2 | 116 |
| APPENDIX 3 | 120 |

PROLOGUE

Observation: Daoist Walk and Breathing Exercise

The participants have completed a number of warm-up exercises and much banter and laughter has ensued. The atmosphere is light and people seem genuinely keen to meet and greet each other.

The instructor then announces it is time for the basic Daoist walk, and everyone moves to one end of the hall. The instructor then briefly demonstrates how he wants them to walk and where he wants them to place their hands. A silence descends upon the room as each person finds a space in which to stand, each turning around and from side to side to see where their colleagues are, and making sure that they have enough space around them. As the instructor finishes the demonstration, everyone faces forward and with one last check that they have enough space, they settle into the activity.

Some of the participants appear to be frowning and their eyes are focused on the floor about three feet in front of them. Their heads are slightly bowed down and there is a look of concentration on their faces. Another looks straight ahead a small smile playing around their lips, but their eyes are slightly glazed over and they too have a look of concentration about them. The instructor reminds them that they should not be tense, nor should they be limp, they should hold their body in a relaxed tension. They are instructed to sink their qi into the dantian and to breathe from the stomach.

They all stand very still with their feet apart but in line with their shoulders with the knees slightly bent and shoulders rounded. Their elbows are placed at the side of the body with the fore arms approximately 90° to the body. Their hands are open, rounded and facing towards each other. They are instructed that everything should be relaxed, so the elbows are gently held at the side of their bodies and the upper arms are held gently in place by the shoulders, no tension.

Slowly, they take all their weight onto the left side, swaying gently to the left, making the right foot 'empty', so that it can be lifted from the floor; and then they lift up the right foot, without upsetting their balance. Then taking a very small step, they slowly place the heel on the floor (the legs are still the shoulder width apart, and the back of the heel is in line with the toes of the left foot) and roll the rest of the foot forward as they slowly take the weight onto the right hand side. At the end of this movement the toes, heel, and hip are in line.

All of them move in this shuffling gait, rocking from side to side and with an internally focused view. During this particular process, the participants should be breathing in through their nose, with the lungs full as they finish the movement.

One appears to be slowly counting to themselves, as their lips move slowly as they count the numbers. Another is slowly drifting across the path of another, which is not surprising as it appears as though their eyes are closed. Yet, no one crashes into each other and the one with their eyes open adjust their pathway to avoid a collision. No sound is made, no warning is given, just adjustments and the slow shuffling movement.

Once the weight has moved across to the right side of the body, the left foot is picked up. Then slowly the heel is placed on the floor (the legs are still the shoulder width apart, and the back of the heel is in line with the toes of the right foot), the rest of the foot is rolled forward as the weight moves over to the left hand side of the body. During this phase of the walk, the participants are required to breathe out, with all the breath exhaled through the mouth by the time the weight has moved over to the left.

This extremely slow and 'shuffling' walk is repeated as the participants move along the length of the room, taking in breath as they move to the right and breathing out as they move to the left. All this requires deep concentration in order to match movements and breathing together. Although the walk seems shuffling, every movement is slow and deliberately executed. How the heel is

placed on the floor, how the weight is moved from one side of the body to the other, and the breathing all appears to be measured, focused and purposeful.

Some are naturally faster than others and reach the end of the room first, they slowly look around and almost seem to shake themselves, as if they are awakening from a deep sleep, they move to the side of the room to leave the centre unhindered for the rest of the participants. In those that are finished it appears that their facial features become more toned and they look more alert and seem to look outward rather than inward.

I wanted to understand what they were doing and why; apparently, this was the Daoist walk. It was pointed out to the participants, that these steps (but not the arm movements) could be found in aspects of 'the form', the slow shifting of weight from one side of the body to the other that encourages the qi to flow from the pelvic area to other parts of the body. The walk always remains the same, but different arm movements can be used to stimulate the different meridians.

Once this activity has been completed the participants stand in a circle and begin a breathing exercise.

They are instructed to breathe in through the nose as they raise their arms, place their fingertips on their temples, and gently massage the area whilst holding their breath. Then they are instructed to breathe out through the mouth as they return their arms to their sides, and are advised that the breath should be fully out of the body by the time their arms have moved to their sides.

Then they are instructed to breathe in through the nose as they lift their arms over their heads and place their first two fingers into the 'holes' at the base of the skull and gently massage, whilst holding their breath. Then they are to breathe out through the mouth as they lower their arms back to their sides.

The students then commence to repeat the movements in silence following the instructor. Once again, the participants begin to concentrate and quietness

descends on the class. What appears to be holding their attention is the timing of the in and out breath to the actions of the arms.

As the activity continues, the majority of the participants seem to have a slightly glazed look on their faces and appear to be 'elsewhere'. They are not attending to each other they do not appear to be focusing on anything in the room but their breath.

They almost appear to be in a slight trance, but the instructor is not speaking they are just following the actions, all within a world of their own concentrating on their breathing, which is slow and measured.

The activity draws to a close and two or three of them comment on how peaceful and uplifting they feel after this, with one saying that it has helped her headache.

It was watching the activities that made me curious about what was happening, what attracted participants to Taijiquan, what did the participants gain from these activities of the Daoist Walk and breathing exercises that allegedly stimulated meridians? Did they find these activities so useful that they undertook them outside of the class setting? Thus began my research into the Daoist walk of the Lee Family System of Taijiquan, the Chinese subtle body, Western perspectives of the body, meditation and whether or how all of these fit together into a coherent pattern.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

The underpinning theory to this research is multifaceted and this introductory chapter attempts to assemble the threads in order to present a coherent argument. In the first instance, a brief exploration is undertaken of the origins of the Daoist walk, utilising published material from both an academic perspective and from a less rigorous popularist perspective.

The Daoist walk is then situated within the Chinese perspective of a subtle body, exploring the internal landscape of the body, its deities, and its relationship with the cosmos. It appears that the Daoist walk has a long history, with its origins in shamanistic dances associated with the mythical Yu, who regulated the earth by walking it after the great flood (Andersen (1989-1990:21).

These origins of the Daoist walk were an attempt to align the circle walker with the celestial heavens and strive for “stillness in motion”. As the Daoist holds that man is a microcosm of the macrocosm of the heavens, any disturbance in either part has repercussions in the other, and therefore it is important to ensure that balance between the two is maintained (Pregadio: 2009).

Balance is achieved through the energies of yin and yang and an important source of these energies within the body is qi. Qi is considered the ‘breath or ‘vital energy’, and the body contains different types of qi which is replenished through food, with stagnant qi expelled via the lungs. It is important to have free-flowing qi along the meridians of the body in order to vitalise it. If qi is stagnant or ‘blocked’ then individual meridians can be stimulated at particular points by finger pressure, massage, needles, or heat to encourage it to flow.

The notion of Taijiquan and meditation is then examined, for these techniques have been practised to facilitate health promotion and self-defence for hundreds, if not thousands of years. A brief account of the Taijiquan of the Lee family system in the west is also provided, as this is the school that practices

the Daoist walk. The growth of Taijiquan in the west and its alleged health benefits has led to various medical professionals to adopt Taijiquan in order to improve poor balance and thus reduce falls in the elderly, ameliorate anxiety and depression and aid sleep (Wolf, Barnhart, Ellison & Coogler 1997; Jacobson, Chang, Cashel & Guerrero 1997; Hain, Fuller, Weil & Kotsias 1999; Voukelatas, Cumming, Lord & Rissel 2007).

Due to the increased popularity of such different and alternative approaches to health, there has been an increasing demand for many non-conventional interventions to be provided by the National Health Service (BBC News, 23 May 2006).¹ A number of studies have been completed (Sandlund & Norlander 2000; Fransen, Nairn, Winstanley, Lam & Edmonds 2007; Wang, Collet & Lau 2004) in order to identify the value of Taijiquan, and many have been criticised for their non-randomised sample group, lack of comparison group and small sample size, all of which impinge upon reliability and validity. Other confounding variables include the different styles of Taijiquan used in the various studies and the abilities of both the instructor and participants. However, the purpose of this research is to explore the reasons why people voluntarily attend Taijiquan classes and what benefits they feel they gain from attending, in order to ascertain whether Taijiquan is perceived as a health benefit or purely a leisure activity.

Most of the research about Taijiquan is undertaken from a western perspective of health, which contrasts sharply to the more holistic² eastern notions of health. In the west from the time of Descartes, the human body has been regarded in a mechanistic way, where mind and body are two different and distinctive substances. The human body is regarded as material whereas the mind is non-

¹ However, as the health service is required to achieve the maximum benefits from the limited healthcare resources and funds available (Canter et al 2006:426) all interventions whether they belong to the mainstream or not are subjected to intense scrutiny, in order to ascertain their effectiveness. In Britain, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has been created and empowered with the responsibility for providing guidance on public health, health technologies, and clinical practice. Advice from NICE contains best practice and highlights the level of evidence utilised to produce guidelines. All guidelines appear to use Sackett's (2000) hierarchy of evidence which places systematic reviews and meta analysis at the top of the hierarchy, followed by randomised control trials (RCT), then cohort studies, case control studies, cross sectional surveys and case reports at the bottom.

² An understanding that there is an interrelationship between mind, body, and spirit. the theory holds that the parts of any whole cannot exist and cannot be understood except in their relation to the whole (Hedlund & Jeffrey 1993:9)

material leading to the dualism of mind and body. Thus, the body became to be examined and placed within a biomedical model of health. In this approach, disease is seen as a deviation from normal biological functioning, with particular micro-organisms causing specific diseases. Such diseases are not influenced by culture, time, or place, and medicine is scientifically neutral. Such a view allows patients to be compared with each other and so there is a propensity to measure what can be measured such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and the amount of movement in a limb. This is not the ethos of Taijiquan, for Taijiquan is more holistic and an encompassing approach to the body.

What is the Daoist walk?

The only direct source found about the Daoist walk was Dickinson (2001:12) who argues that this movement of weight from one leg to the other in the special subtle way is not only working one leg while the other rests, it is the use of the forces of yin and yang. The working leg is regarded as the yang leg and the resting leg is viewed as the yin aspect. She further states that the weight of the body should be moved from one leg to the other before attempting to alter the position of the foot on the floor. This alignment of the back, hips, knees, and ankle is used in all the form sets, and can be incorporated undetectably in your everyday walk (Dickinson 2001:13). For Dickinson (2001:14) this walk helps move the qi energy from the lower part of the body to other areas. She argues that in the west congestion of the pelvic area with qi leads to a stagnation, which results in a number of health difficulties.

In the search for information about the Daoist walk little information was gathered, the most frequent citations were related to the art of Ba Gua Zhang (The Pa Kua Chang Journal: 2011), Ba Gua (Bracy & Xing-Han 1998), Bagua Daoyin (He Jinghan 2008) and Andersen (1989-1990).

It is believed that Dong Haichuan developed Ba Gua Zhang or bugang during the 1800's, but it is also believed that early Daoists had a method of Circle Walking called zhuan tian zun (Rotating in Worship of Heaven); and it was from

this that Dong Haichuan initially developed the circle walk (The Pa Kua Chang Journal: 2011). Andersen (1989 – 1990:17) argues that there are two basic forms of circle walking, which were recorded as early as 364 – 370 AD (Andersen 1989 – 1990:18). One of the walks follows along the seven stars of the Big Dipper, commencing with the star closest to the celestial North Pole and the second being a walk through the eight trigrams arranged in the pattern of the Luoshu³. Kerman (2006:10) concurs with such a walk and describes Quanzhen a Daoist practice of walking in eight-sided circles whilst reciting mantras⁴.

Circle walking is associated with Yu, who regulated the waters after the great flood. In mythic times, a great flood covered most of China causing death and disease. The legendary shaman-emperor Yu cleared the land and diverted the water into rivers by dancing a bear dance using the power of the Big Dipper Constellation. According to Andersen (1989-1990:22) the flood represents primordial chaos, Yu established cosmic order when he walked the patterns of time providing a model order and system for rulers to follow. It can also be argued that this movement and exercise aids the body, by allowing internal rivers (meridians) to flow smoothly and aiding health⁵.

Circle walking meditation became a sacred practice for the Daoist monks, helping the monks to increase the quality of their internal qi. This allowed them to reach deeper states of consciousness/awareness, with the ultimate purpose of spiritual immortality. Andersen (1989 – 1990:17) argues that there are two basic forms of circle walking, which were recorded as early as 364 – 370 AD (Andersen 1989 – 1990:18). One of the walks follows along the seven stars of the Big Dipper, commencing with the star closest to the celestial North Pole and the second being a walk through the eight trigrams arranged in the pattern of

³ Commonly following the sequence of the numbers arranged to form the so-called 'magic square'.

⁴ A description of bugang preserved in Zhengyi material from the Sixth Dynasties, where each part of the body is identified with a specific deity. The incantation concludes 'My feet are white horses, I step through the Three Officials. Each of them leads a host of seven million who, riding in a large chariot, issue forth from my body to assist me in writing the talisman and to manifest their power and exterminate evil demons, monsters, goblins, wicked devils, and noxious influences.'

⁵ The belief that to balance one's own movements it is possible to bring balance to or maintain the balance of the macrocosm.

the Luoshu⁶ Kerman (2006:10) concurs with such a walk and describes Quanzhen a Daoist practice of walking in eight-sided circles whilst reciting mantras⁷.

Andersen (1989-1990:17) argues that the Bugang was accompanied by an incantation for transforming the body, as each part of the body is identified with a specific deity. Andersen (1989-1990:27) also describes how the priest often walked with the thumb in the hand. It was held that the practitioner should repeat a mantra with each movement in the circle walk practice so that "one replaces one's myriad thoughts with a single thought in order to calm and ease one's mind" (The Pa Kua Chang Journal: 2011). The Daoists said that when walking the circle, the body's movements should be unified and the practitioner strives for "stillness in motion." This practice was described as a method of "training the body while harnessing the spirit."

The general requirements of the Daoist practice were to walk with a natural position to the body and the movements comfortable. The practitioner strived to achieve a feeling of balance while moving slowly. The Daoist practitioners walking slowly and gently in such a manner that their Daoist robes were only slightly disturbed by the walking movement. Andersen (1989 – 1990:16) calls these movements the 'Steps of Yu', and declares that Yu developed unilateral paralysis, so that his steps did not pass each other, and this way of walking became known as the 'Steps of Yu'.

In order to explore the Daoist walk⁸ and the concept of qi and meridians, there needs to be some understanding of the subtle body in Chinese culture.

⁶ Commonly following the sequence of the numbers arranged to form the so-called 'magic square'.

⁷ A description of bugang preserved in Zhengyi material from the Sixth Dynasties, where each part of the body is identified with a specific deity. The incantation concludes 'My feet are white horses, I step through the Three Officials. Each of them leads a host of seven million who, riding in a large chariot, issue forth from my body to assist me in writing the talisman and to manifest their power and exterminate evil demons, monsters, goblins, wicked devils, and noxious influences.'

⁸ A number of religions have utilised walking for spiritual reasons from walking meditations to walking the spiral or labyrinth. The labyrinth is a "unicursal" or one path design - there are no tricks or decisions to be made – it is the surrender to walking a sacred spiritual path in life. Many religions have a history of walking the labyrinth from Hindus, Hopi Indians, Crete, and medieval European religions.

Some of the earliest forms of labyrinths are found in Greece, dating back to 2500-2000 BCE. So much a part of the fabric of this early society was the labyrinth, that it was embossed on coins and pottery. Early

Eastern Perspectives of the Subtle Body and Health

The eastern idea of health and disease is viewed as two sides of a coin. Every individual is in a state of balance between external abuse and internal defensive mechanisms (Tsuei 1978:552). Disease occurs when there is disruption of the meridian channels (Langevin & Yandow 2002:257); therefore, from a Daoist viewpoint, health is not just the absence of symptoms and ailments; it requires a strong internal presence of vital flowing energy of qi (Kohn 2006:3). In order to appreciate the Daoist notion of qi, health, and longevity, it is necessary to explain how Daoists view the body and its relationship to society and the cosmos.

The Daode jing attempts to describe the Dao, which is regarded as being beyond words and human comprehension, it is magnificent and awe-inspiring (Kohn 1993:11), it is considered as being 'the Way'; it is the foundation upon which all beings are transformed and it controls the natural cycle of the universe (Schipper 1993:3). In addition, Daoist philosophy stresses the importance of

Christian labyrinths date back to 4th century CE, a basilica in Algeria and there is a labyrinth laid into the cathedral floor at Chartres, France in the thirteenth century. (cont)

One walks a labyrinth by stepping into the entrance and putting one foot in front of the other. After travelling through all the paths and windings, the walker comes into the centre - the six - petal rosette, after a time there, the walker returns out to cover the same path out as in. Labyrinth walking is an ancient practice used by different faiths for spiritual centring, contemplation and prayer. It provides a metaphor for life's journey and is a symbol that creates a sacred space. It only has one path, the way in is the way out.

Buddhism and Daoism also have walking meditation where the experience of walking is focused upon. The attempt to become mindful of the experience of walking enhances physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, transforming a mundane activity into a healing and nourishing tool.

Daoists use a refined everyday practice of walking to foster health and wellbeing, and in the west walking has been identified as a fitness regime.

In addition, sayings about walking have permeated our everyday language as people can 'talk the talk' but need to 'walk the walk'. In order to demonstrate empathy we 'walk in another's shoes'.

Walking can therefore, be said to be a way to access fitness of the body, mind, and spirit.

Hanh TN (1996) The Long Road Turns to Joy: A Guide to Walking Meditation USA: Unified Buddhist Church

Metras M (2006) Meditations on the Pilgrimage of Life USA: Lulu

Morris JN (1997) Walking to Heal Sports Medicine May 23(5) 306 – 332

Nicholson G (2008) The Lost Art Of Walking: The History, Science, Philosophy, Literature, Theory And Practice Of Pedestrianism USA: Riverhead Hardcover

Pittman A (2008) Walking the I Ching: The Linear Ba Gau of Gao Yi Sheng California: Blue Snake Books

Rippe JM, Ward A, Porcari JP & Freedson PS (1988) Walking for Health and Fitness The Journal of the American Medical Association 259(18) 2720 – 2724

how one should behave, there is a purist belief of the 'correct' thing to do in order to follow 'the way' (Ram-Prasad 2005:16). From the time of Huang Di various texts emphasise the need to aim for transcendence and liberation from the physical and social constraints of the human condition, which by the second century BCE included a quest for immortality (Verellen 1995:322).

The human body is defined in three ways in the traditional Chinese perspective. The first aspect *ti* or 'body' indicates the physical body consisting of interdependent parts. The second aspect, *xing* or 'form' regards the body as being the residence of the spirits. The third, *shen* or 'person' consist of the whole being, which includes aspects such as thinking, feeling, personality and social role (Robinet 1992:252).

The traditional Chinese view of the human body has parallels to the country / state, whereby both the state and the body are regarded as two microcosms related not only to the macrocosm but also to each other. The country with its human community, codes, hierarchies, and physical seats of power should mirror the configuration and order of Heaven. Heaven has an organizational system managed by means of bureaucratic measures comparable to those followed at court and in government offices (Hymes 2002:207).

For the Daoist the body is not a self-enclosed system, it reflects the familial, societal, and cosmic networks of influence (Tsai 2006:1452); therefore, any event or actions that occur in the macrocosm will be reflected in the microcosm (Pregadio: 2009). The body is frequently described with bureaucratic images, and descriptions of how the state should be governed are frequently likened to self-development. Therefore, all altars are ritually aligned to match the cosmos and its temporal and spatial configurations (Miller 2006:23). Other areas such as gardens are also designed to represent the 'cosmos in miniature'(Craig 2006:97). Consequently, cosmos, human being, society, and ritual spaces are analogically interconnected, so that an event or an action that occurs within any of these domains can be pertinent for the others Fruehauf (2011:3). This is governed by the principle of 'resonance', by which things belonging to the same category influence each other. By this theory, ritual re-establishes the initial link

between humans and gods, and a 'True Man' (zhenren) or 'Saint' (shengren) benefits the entire neighbourhood where he lives by aligning himself with the forces that rule the cosmos; but a ruler who ignores the omens from Heaven causes natural catastrophes, strife and conflict (Pregadio 2009).

According to the *Simple Questions of the Yellow Emperor* (cited Schipper 1993:100), the heart is described as the prince of the body that governs through the shen (spirit), whilst the lungs are officers who ensure that rules and regulations are kept and the liver is the general that devises strategies. Schipper (1993:101) states that Daoist tradition holds that particular regions produce a certain type of people and skills, which are useful when governing a country. The Daoist master Sima Chengzhen told the emperor of the Tang Dynasty that the country is like a body and it is important to ensure that the natural law of the universe is followed in everything whether it is looking after one's body or a country; as there is a natural law to everything (Schipper 1993:102). Therefore, health requires harmony and a balanced state, not only within the individual but also within society (families, villagers and states) in order to obtain a state of Great Peace (Kohn 2006:4).

Daoism also notes a correspondence between the cosmos and the human body and Schipper (1978:355) describes an internal landscape of the body consisting of valley (nose), clouds (lungs), Sun and Moon (breasts) as well as buildings such as the Scarlet Palace (heart), the Yellow Court (spleen), Purple Chamber (gall bladder) and the Cinnabar Fields (dantian). According to Kohn (2006:5), the Laozi bianhua jing (Scripture of the Transformations of Laozi) and the Kaitian jing (Scripture of the Opening of Heaven) describe stories of how the physical body of the deity Pangu and latterly Laozi is 'dismembered' in order to form the universe.

Laozi transformed his body. His left eye became the sun; his right eye, the moon; his head, Mount Kunlun; his beard, the planets and constellations; his bones, the dragons; his flesh, the quadrupeds; his intestine, the snakes; his stomach, the sea; his fingers, the five peaks (wuyue); his hair, the trees and the herbs; his heart, the

Flowery Canopy (huagai, i.e., Cassiopea in heaven and the lungs in the body); and his kidneys, the Real Father and the Real Mother of humanity. (Xiaodao lun; cited Kohn, 2006:5).

The Wushang biyao (Supreme Secret Essentials, 41.3b) associates the Authentic Talismans of the Five Emperors (wudi zhenfu) with the five planets in heaven⁹, the five sacred mountains on earth¹⁰, and the five viscera / orbs¹¹ in the human body (Pregadio: 2009). The body is frequently portrayed as a mountain, thus illustrating that the body is important for the practices of Nourishing Life (yangsheng) and internal alchemy (neidan). Internal alchemy consists of gathering, storing and circulating the energies of the human body to cultivate qi, in order to improve physical, emotional, and mental health (Schipper 1993:175).

Within the Daoist tradition the universe contains gods and demons, and as the body is a reflection of the universe that too consists of gods and demons. The Huangdi Neijing (Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon) contains numerous references to 'spirits' that are said to reside within and rule the body, these being shen, hun, po, yi and zhi (Qu & Garvey 2010:6). The spirits of the viscera have a human shape and the texts provide details on their names, heights, garments, and functions.

According to Ishida (1989:45), a review of medical texts of traditional medicine appears to have two different methods to depict the human body. One is similar to Western illustrations, identifying the shape of various organs and the intestines, whilst the other depicts the Charts of the Hall of Light which shows the blood and energy channels. Ishida (1989:45) argues that the ancient Chinese paid much more attention to the fluids and energies circulating around the body than to any of the fixed organs. Zheng Xuan (cited Ishida 1989:45) makes a clear distinction between the physical five orbs (inner organs) and the energy of the Five Agents¹² that resides in them, emphasising that in healing

⁹ Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn

¹⁰ Tai Shan, Heng Shan Bei, Hua Shan, Heng Shan Nan, Sang Shan

¹¹ Heart, Lung, Spleen, Liver, Kidney

¹² Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water

you need to rely on the Five Agents or constants (Ishida 1989:50). Essence and spirit belong to heaven and when people die this essence and spirit returns to heaven and their bones and shape go back to the earth¹³ (Ishida 1989:47).

Ishida (1989:47) believes that 'essence' should be aligned with 'spirit' and should be understood as referring to the mind. The mind needs to be stable in order to keep the spirits or energy permanently active and alive, and the source of these fluids is referred to as a quiet, harmonious pool. Ishida (1989:48) would also argue that the essence from this pool needs to flow around the body and it is this continuous flow that keeps people alive. The mind energy is in constant circulation around the body, which gives rise to the various emotions, and there was a need to control the body and regulate the emotions in order to attain tranquillity and emptiness of mind.

Tsai (2006:1452) argues that within the Daoist tradition there are three dantian or Cinnabar Fields of the upper (brain), middle (heart) and lower (stomach) regions and it is held that the 'Three Pure Ones' lived within these areas of the body.

However, Schipper (1993:143) states that certain adepts would argue that the Cinnabar Field does not correspond to any exact place in the body and has to be found by each person during meditation. Within the conventional view the brain is believed to be the site of the upper dantian which is good for planning and detailed figuring; but it is believed to be exhausted by too much thinking (Chia 2006:16). This site is designated as the monkey mind, in that it does not rest and uses much of the body's energy and so it is important to train the upper mind to rest within the lower dantian in order to become conscious and aware.

The heart or solar plexus is the area of the middle dantian and is deemed to be the seat of consciousness and emotion (Chia 2006:16). It is also here that the post – birth qi resides which is produced from the essence of air and food and it is also where vital energy is refined.

¹³ Huainanzi cited in the *Sibu congkan*

The lower dantian is the primary energy centre of the body and it can be found behind and below the navel and opposite the mingmen (Gate of Life) and the hui-yin (Gate of Death). It is the most important of the three dantian, being the major generator and storage place for qi and is a centre for awareness and physical strength (Chia 2004:3). This dantian gathers and contains the healing power of qi. Yü (1996:10) describes it as the cavity of real vitality, or the Golden Stove (chin lu) and the seat of eternal life. According to Schipper (1993:106), this is the embryo's home and where men keep their semen and women their menstrual blood, it is where yin and yang live harmoniously together and when the energy here becomes transformed it changes into shen qi.

Chai (2006:17) argues that the lower dantian is a second brain that works far more effectively than the upper dantian. Within Daoist practices this has a pivotal position as it supplies the mind and body with an uninterrupted flow of energy ensuring unity between heaven and the earth within the body (Chai 2004:4). Many practitioners describe this as being 'rooted and grounded'; it is also described as an inner cauldron, the store house of the individual's qi energy, and the practice of Taijiquan increases the quantity of energy in the dantian with the Taijiquan movements enabling the qi to move freely around the body.

The power of qi

Chinese philosophy maintains that the universe (including the human body) consist of two different but complementary 'forces', yin and yang (Lu 2003:68). Yang is regarded as being a masculine force with a propensity towards movement, creativity, heat, dryness, and energy. On the other hand, yin is viewed to be feminine with an inclination towards inertia, cold, and humidity (Oshawa 1973:11).

The two forces are interdependent and within Chinese cosmology, it is argued that when yin reaches its apex it changes into yang and vice versa (Schipper 1993:35). The fact that there is such diversity of beings, plants, and living

creatures is due to different combinations of yin and yang. Therefore, everything is a dynamic balance between yin and yang, nothing is stable, and everything is in a perpetual motion (Oshawa 1973:12). For the Daoist both the soul¹⁴ and the body contains yin and yang, therefore, there is no separation of body from soul and so there can be no soul without the body.

The repeated alternation of yin and yang provides the energy necessary for the cosmos to sustain itself. Their continuous joining and separation is at the origin of the rise and the disappearance of all phenomena. The movement of yin and yang at its pinnacle creates water and fire, with wood and metal created during the two intermediary phases, with Earth as the fifth element that makes it possible for the four to join (Schipper 1993:35). These elements structure Chinese cosmology (Kohn 1993:161) and as Daoists believe that the human body incorporates the entire cosmos; every single part of the body corresponds to a celestial or geographical feature of the world (Kohn 1993:162). In addition, Fruehauf (2011: 5) describes a regular energetic cycle which in combination with geographical position could yield information about weather, patterns of plant growth, and diseases that are specific to each year.

Although there is an understanding of the physical body as a network of channels, pulses, and moving fluids and breath, there is also the belief centred on the five orbs (Kohn 1993:162). For Kohn (1993:162) the five inner organs (liver, heart, spleen, lungs and kidneys) are considered to be associated and linked with the 'five' senses, emotions, body tissues and psychic centres. These are then linked with the five agents (wood, fire, earth, metal and water), as well as aligning with the directions of north, east, south, west and centre; seasons, colours, and taste. Therefore, everything has its own qi, which circulates in harmony with the five elements (Crozier 1970: 278), and it is a vital substance (Picone 1989:473). According to Allchin (1996: S107) qi preserves the balance between yin and yang in the body, with health sustained by the flow of qi along the meridians and when this flow is hindered it results in disease and pain (Allchin 1996:S110).

¹⁴ 'Soul' is a Western concept that does not have an exact equivalent in Chinese, it is used here as a shorthand to translate 'shen' which has a wider meaning of soul, spirit, thinking and feeling.

Qi is translated and understood to be 'wind', 'environmental influence', 'breath' or 'vital energy' (Picone 1989 473). It is believed that the body includes an innate qi (Yuan-chi) which one is born with; and a protective qi (gu-qi) which is obtained from the food and air that one breathes (Unschuld 1985:72 - 78 cited Picone 1989: 473). Despeux (2006:37) identifies that heavenly qi (air, sunlight, cosmic energies) enter the body via the lungs and it is transformed into ancestral qi. This ancestral qi moves down to the kidneys, where it is amalgamated with original or primordial qi to be transformed into the perfect qi. Schipper (1993:35) also argues that there is a multiplicity of qi within the human body which is expressed by a number of 'souls' which correspond to the essences of qi, these being shen, yi, zhi, jing, hun and po. Whilst Tsuei (1978:555) speaks of five tsang (stores) each of which is associated with a particular element.

Shen is the purest of the celestial energies, it resides in the heart and is considered to be the regulating element (Schipper 1993:36) incorporating both physical and mental activities, thus linking mind and body together (Garvey & Qu 2008:14). The spleen stores yi, which governs thinking attention and recollection; whilst the kidneys are a storehouse for Zhi that opens the ears allowing perception of auditory information (Garvey & Qu 2008:15). The liver holds the hun, which facilitates the perception of visual information while the movement and functions of the joints store jing. Finally, the lung store po (the corporeal soul). Jing and po work together in perceiving sensations and information (Garvey & Qu 2008:15). The five spirits work together to facilitate human consciousness and are affected by factors inside and outside of the body.

Qi enters the body through food into the stomach from where it is transmitted to the lungs and the five organs ensuring nourishment (Tsuei 1978: 555). According to Tsuei (1978:556) qi appears to represent all the invisible functions of the body ensuring harmony. Daoists recognise constant fluctuations of qi due to the time of day or night, the lunar cycle and the seasons (Wong 2003). It is therefore necessary to take into account these fluctuations in energy when

organising one's life. In order to live harmoniously and follow The Way one should use energy in the morning when it is plentiful and rest during the evening when the energy flow is low. Thus the ideal state is to have free flowing qi which creates harmony in the body and a balanced state of being in the person (Kohn 2006:4).

Despeux (2006:56) argues that it is important that qi remains pure, so stale qi needs to be expelled from the body via exhalation. This is the reason why breathing exercises have played an important role in the art of nourishing life in the Daoist perspective, in activities such as Qigong; breathing exercises still have an important role in Daoist health practices.

Qi circulates through the body along meridians. The meridian system is believed to be a crucial link between the surface of the body, its internal organs, transportation of nutrients, blood and qi (Yung 2004:816), with each meridian serving a particular organ (Yung 2004:816). Meridians are frequently described as streams and rivers allowing spiritual energy to flow to all areas of the body forming an interconnecting web that supports and vitalises the body (Langevin & Yandow 2002:263). According to Mann (1965:33) they are arranged in such a way that they tend to follow 'embryological paths' and even take into account the twist of the foot through 180° during embryonic development.

The meridians form a recognizable structure throughout the body (Oshawa 1973:37), there are twenty-six principal meridians, twelve of which are 'doubled' and symmetrical in relation to the median of the body (Langevin & Yandow 2002:263) and two which are simple meridians, with each meridian associated with either yin or yang (Oshawa 1973:37). Meridians have their own particular function (Mann 1978:34). For example, the meridian of the liver goes from the big toe, up the inside of the leg and thigh, to end on the front of the abdomen in the region of the liver (Mann 1965:33).

Ishida (1989:59) identifies 365 nodal points along the meridians, these are points of contact where the various parts of the body meet and are frequently known as pressure points and it is at these points where the spirit and energy

come and go. If the liver is diseased then the various acupuncture points on the liver meridian will become tender to pressure. It is argued that stimulating the meridians at particular points by finger pressure; massage, needles, or heat encourages the qi to flow to the corresponding organs (Oshawa 1973:50, Schöter 2011:3).

Thus, for the Daoist the body is a microcosm of the heavens and cosmos (macrocosm), it has parallels to the state and any events that occurs in one domain will have an effect in the other due to the principle of resonance. So the Daoist body is not a self-enclosed system it reflects the societal and cosmic networks of influence. The internal body is viewed as an internal landscape consisting of valleys, clouds, and buildings and inhabiting these areas are spirits whose energies have the power to heal.

Qi consisting of energies, essence, and mind are initially stored within the dantian and flow along meridians in the body in order to nourish it. However, any blockage within a meridian or disturbance of qi causes ill health to occur. As each meridian has a number of acupuncture / pressure points these can become tender when there is a blockage and by stimulating these points by finger pressure, massage, needles, or heat encourages the qi to flow and promote healing. It is argued that the practice of Taijiquan increases the quality of energy in the dantian enabling the qi to move freely around the body.

Introduction to the concept of Taijiquan

Taijiquan is a traditional Chinese exercise that has been practised in China for many centuries for health promotion and self-defence (Lin, Hwang, Wang, Chang, Wolf 2006; Liao 2000:3). No one is sure of the origin of Taijiquan (Kit 2001:18) and so it is difficult to provide a full and accurate account of the history of Taijiquan as it is surrounded in legend, fantasy and mythology (Crompton

1991:1). Various sources argue that Taiji was first mentioned in the Yijing¹⁵, an ancient Chinese oracle and book of wisdom written in antiquity with some sources identifying 3000-1100 BCE (Rochford 2003:11; Kit 2001:18), however, the actual art can be traced back only 300 to 700 years (Kurland 2000).

Taijiquan is considered to be an internal martial art (Kerman 2006: 11) that involves the practice of neigong, Daoist internal alchemy. External arts require strength, tendons, bones and skin; whereas internal arts power their moves with qi, natural energy flow (Bidlack 2006:183). It is a form of body cultivation that improves health and long life and aids in the ultimate goal of a return to cosmic origins accompanied by the creation of inner harmony (Bidlack 2006:181).

Kit (2001:18) suggests that a hermit Xu Xuanping practised an art known as the thirty-seven patterns of Taiji during the Tang Dynasty. Folklore holds that Zhang Sanfeng, a Daoist sage in the fourteenth or fifteenth century, developed Taijiquan after watching a fight between a snake and a crane (Rochford 2003:13) which gave rise to the thirteen movements of Taiji that still exist today. Bidlack (2006:195) argues that Taijiquan and Daoism was connected in the mid-Qing dynasty when Zhang Sanfeng manifested during a séance and dictated his spiritual autobiography. This was adopted and adapted by Taijiquan followers who linked Yang Lauchan to the divine origin of the art by studying Daoist meditation and the soft aspects of martial arts.

The next major historical figure was Wang Tsung-yueh (Wang Zongyue), who wrote the Taijiquan classic, *The Taiji Treatise* in the eighteenth century, and first referred to the art as Taijiquan. Another contender for the role of founder of Taiji is Chen Wang-ting, a Ming Dynasty general, who based his art on his military experience (Kurland 2000). China has always had a strong martial art tradition (McFarlane 1997:9) due to the need of small warring states to protect their land. Warriors took part in ritual archery tournaments, testing self-control, poise, and resilience some of which are still important aspects of Taijiquan today (McFarlane 1997:9). Chen developed several forms, these were passed only to

¹⁵ Yijing, an ancient Chinese oracle and book of wisdom written in antiquity with some sources identifying 3000-1100 BCE (Rochford 2003:11; Kit 2001:18), whereas other sources Schipper (1993:222) places it in the time of Confucius (400 – 500 BCE) and Bidlack (2006:181) states 1027-221BCE.

family members, and it was not until the late 1700s and the early 1800s that outsiders began to learn the art.

Taijiquan is translated as 'supreme ultimate boxing' (Sandlund & Norlander 2000:140) and various styles of Taijiquan have evolved, including Chen, Wu, Sun, Lee and Yang style (Wang, Collet & Lau 2004: 403). Though each style has a different focus on posture, all the styles emphasise relaxation, mental concentration, and movement co-ordination (Esch, Duckstein, Welke, Stefano & Braun 2007:CR489). Taijiquan consists of deep diaphragmatic breathing and relaxation with a number of slow sequential movements (Thornton, Sykes, & Tang 2004:33). These flow indiscernibly and smoothly from one to the other (Greenspan, Wolf, Kelley, & O'Grady 2007:526), to produce balanced movements between yin and yang and thus achieve harmony between body and mind (Wong, Lin, Cho, Tang, & Wong 2001:608: (Bidlack 2006:189). All the sequential graceful movements are undertaken in a slow, meditative, and relaxed way, that emphasize the smooth integration of trunk rotation, weight shifting, and coordination and a gradual narrowing of the lower extremity stance (Lin, Hwang, Wang, Chang & Wolf 2006:1191).

Taijiquan is not only a physical exercise, it involves the mind and is frequently considered to be 'a moving meditation' (La Forge 1997:53), with the attempted integration of mind and body in every movement (Yan 1995:50). According to Sandlund & Norlander (2000:140) Taijiquan consists of five basic principles, the first one being relaxation as all movements should utilise just enough strength for each posture and conserve energy and maintain stamina. Secondly, yin and yang is utilised as each movement consists of relaxation, speed, stillness, and movement. Thirdly, a strong waist and fourthly an erect back ensures that the upper and lower body are connected and that the body remains perpendicular to the ground in order to achieve balance, comfort, and relaxation. Finally, Taijiquan requires that the whole body moves and flows together throughout the sequences.

Schöter (2011: 6) identifies three distinct stages in the development of the practice of Taijiquan, the first is that the breath and movement are harmonised.

In the second stage, the mind directs every action; this is where consciousness of movement comes to fruition. In the final stage, the practitioner has moved beyond formal technique, and every movement and action is naturally in accord with the flow of movement.

Lee Family Style Taijiquan

According to Chee Soo (1985:14-15) the Lee family style of Taijiquan has its origins from Ho-Hsieh Lee in 1000 BC who lived just outside of Beijing, but when he developed his practice he took his family to a fishing village Wei Hei Wei and there they remained. The family has always been Daoist and practised a number of Chinese Daoist arts. It was a family group and they practised together, and in 1930 Chan Kam Lee who had fled war torn China brought the Lee Family Art to Britain. He had no heirs and so he instructed a young orphan boy called Clifford Chee Soo in the Family Art. Together they ran a Taijiquan school in London until the war in 1939. During WWII, Clifford Chee Soo fought with the British Tank Regiment in Burma where he was captured and held prisoner by the Japanese. He escaped with a member of the Ghurka Regiment, spending six months dodging recapture in the jungle before finally reaching allied lines and relative safety.

On his return, he resumed his Daoist studies and after the death of his Master, Chan Kam Lee in the 1950's, he became the President of the International Daoist Society. Chee Soo made certain changes to make the arts more accessible to a western audience, the main change being that the more martial aspects of the arts are taught in separate classes to the health and relaxation aspects of Daoist Yoga and Ch'ang Ming Diet.

Chee Soo (1985:18) argues that if only the physical side of Taijiquan is practised then people are not gaining the full benefits from the art. He argues that there are five important aspects to Taijiquan, these being physical aspects, mental aspects, breathing techniques, development of sheng chi, and utilisation of ching shen li. Chee Soo argues that sensible eating and drinking is

necessary for permanent good health and suggests that people should follow the Ch'ang Ming Diet¹⁶ and practice 'the form' every day. He also argues that from undertaking this physical practice the mind becomes concentrated in order to harmonise the movements of the body, in addition, meditation should be undertaken in order to practice mental control. Chee Soo (1985:19) also believed in breathing techniques to assist in the cure of different illnesses. Sheng chi or vital power needs to be cultivated in order to develop robust qi, and finally, participants should be able to harness and utilise Ching Sheng Li, the macrocosmic or external energy.

After Chee Soo's death, various students could not agree on how to progress with the teaching and as a consensus could not be attained, various factions of the Lee Family Style developed. It is one of these factions that has been the focus of the research. Interest in the class arose due to its overt publicity material regarding the health benefits of Taijiquan, and curiosity was aroused as to whether attendees at the classes did so because of these potential benefits.

¹⁶ A diet that does not allow white bread, refined or processed foods, fried food, potatoes, tomatoes, aubergines, many dairy products, eggs or anything with chemical additives. Stimulants such as caffeine are to be avoided, as too are spices, pork, red meat and red and blue fish. However, wholemeal, rice, locally grown fruit and vegetables, dried foods, shrimps, yoghurt, skimmed milk, herbs, seaweed and noodles are allowed.

Benefits of Taijiquan

For many centuries, Taijiquan practitioners have identified a number of valuable effects including relief from muscular tension, reduced anxiety, stress and pain, as well as increased balance, self-awareness and strength (Sandlund & Norlander 2000:141). According to Qu (1986 cited Yan 1995), there are a number of reasons that Taijiquan practitioners experience health and fitness benefits. As participants concentrate on their performance, they exclude external distractions and generate a sense of internal peacefulness. As the motion of Taijiquan is slow, smooth, and graceful, this facilitates mental and muscular relaxation while increasing range of motion.

Taijiquan is now practised in a number of countries as a form of exercise for health and fitness, to promote good health, memory, concentration, digestion, balance, flexibility, and to improve the quality of life (Fransen, Nairn, Winstanley, Lam & Edmonds 2007:408). According to Wang, Collet, & Lau (2004:493) Taijiquan is also believed to improve conditions such as anxiety and depression, as well as ameliorating decline frequently associated with ageing and inactivity.

Due to such claims, numerous medical professionals have begun to research them in an attempt to discover the effectiveness of Taijiquan upon various medical conditions. Due to the nature of Taijiquan, many studies explored balance control, strength, flexibility, and postural stability (Wolf, Barnhart, Ellison & Coogler 1997; Jacobson, Chang, Cashel & Guerrero 1997; Hain, Fuller, Weil & Kotsias 1999; Voukelatas, Cumming, Lord & Rissel 2007). These studies claimed that a programme of Taijiquan training (eight to sixteen weeks) significantly improved balance, flexibility, and strength of the extension and reduced the cases of falls in older people (Wang, Collet, & Lau 2004:496).

However, research and the results obtained must be scrutinised for quality reliability, validity, and rigour (Bowling 2009:162). Research methods and their results are viewed as a hierarchy, with grades of evidence and levels of complexity of the research methods. Sackett's (2000) hierarchy of evidence

places systematic reviews and meta analysis at the top of the hierarchy, followed by randomised control trials (RCT), then cohort studies, case control studies, cross sectional surveys and case reports at the bottom. RCTs is the classic experimental method, and the features that mark out such an approach to groups (experimental and control) and the random (chance) allocation of participants to either group (Bowling 2009:203). However, even in orthodox healthcare such a 'pure' approach is seldom used, as Bowling (2009:261) would argue that ethical debates impinge upon such a process.

Wang, Collet, & Lau (2004:496) in their systematic review on balance and falls record that most studies on the effectiveness of Taijiquan on balance and falls either tended to be non-randomised sample groups, or had no comparison group, or were of small sample size all of which impinge upon reliability and validity. Another confounding variable is that different styles of Taijiquan had been used and little acknowledgement was made whether the exercises were based on the traditional Chinese styles or westernised forms of Taijiquan. Another factor that may affect the results was the abilities of both the Taijiquan instructor's and the participants.

Verhagen, Immink, van der Meulen & Bierma – Zeinstra (2003:109) systematic review of Taijiquan in older adults with the main focus on cardio-respiratory research, noted that a comparison group tended to be included; but once again most studies did not use a randomised design and some studies allowed the participants to choose their intervention, thus introducing a potential bias. There was some consistency in the style of Taijiquan as the majority of their studies used a modified Yang style, but the number of forms differed from ten to twenty-four. However, the reviewers questioned the compliance to the exercise regime by the participants and the fact that only one study completed a follow-up assessment.

Taijiquan has also been subjected to systematic review for osteoporosis as it is seen as a safer and cheaper treatment in comparison to orthodox treatment with drugs (Lee, Pittler, Shin, & Ernst 2008:141). Once again, the studies were criticised for not being RCT and had small sample sizes; the authors concluded

that the studies they reviewed failed to show an increase in bone mineral density. However, the authors note that the treatment periods could have been too short to generate significant effect, as they would suggest that it takes a year or more to gain observable changes in bone mineral density (Lee et al 2008:1410). The authors also argue that Taijiquan does not provide for loading on weight bearing joints regarded as a precondition to affect bone metabolism.

Earlier, Lee, Pittler, & Ernst (2007:1648) investigated the effectiveness of Taijiquan for rheumatoid arthritis, taking into account issues such as fatigue, range of motion and joint function, depression and mood and quality of life. There were contradictory studies on whether fatigue and range of motion were improved or not by following a Taijiquan regime but interestingly depression and mood as well as quality of life was perceived to be improved by Taijiquan. However, once again the majority of studies were criticised for being of low methodological quality in that only two were randomised and the other trials appear to be open to selection bias and likely to generate false positive results (Lee et al 2007:1649).

Meditation

According to Rodgers (2006:292) meditation realigns the mind and the body enabling a 'more harmonious interaction' (Rodgers 2006:293). There are a number of different types or methods of meditation and many of them have their origins in Eastern religious practices of India, China, and Japan. They include practices such as yoga, Taijiquan, transcendental meditation, Sahaja yoga, and mindfulness, or Vipassana meditation. The aim of meditation is to reduce mental activity by concentrating upon the breath, single thought, or mantra for a period of time. Whichever type of meditation is practiced, it is believed that it can provide positive effects on both physical and psychological functioning (Manocha 2000:1136). It is believed that meditation, which is a spiritual practice, can also facilitate a highly developed form of relaxation that reduces the effects of the sympathetic nervous system.

Transcendental meditation and mindfulness meditation have been shown to increase life expectancy and has been associated with a better quality of life (Benson (1977 cited Rodgers 2006) and Cooper & Aygen's research (1978 cited Rodgers 2006:293) demonstrated that transcendental meditation reduced anxiety, lowered blood pressure and reduced serum cholesterol levels. Other claims for transcendental meditation include improvements with coronary heart disease (Paul-Labrador et al 2006:1120 and Zamarra et al 1996:867), reduction in blood pressure and heart rate (Sivasankaran et al 2006:398) and greater immunity to influenza (Davidson et al 2003:564). In addition, mindfulness meditation aims to balance the mind in order to enable the individual to cope effectively with their situations in life, having greater understanding and stability. The individual should then be able to accept the stresses, pain, frustration, disappointment, and anger of life (Rodgers 2006:294).

Specia et al (2000: 614) researched the effects of meditation upon the individual; finding that the participants had significantly lower scores on Total Mood Disturbance and subscales of depression, anxiety, stress, and emotional irritability. However, they used a convenience sample, so it is difficult to ascertain whether the results are representative (Robson 2002:265). Nevertheless, this conclusion is echoed by Grossman et al (2003:38) findings as they indicate that mindfulness meditation proves to be a useful intervention for a broad range of chronic disorders, from distress, pain, depression, and anxiety to improving the quality of life.

From such a brief exploration of meditation findings, it implies that there are benefits to be gained from their practice in a number of chronic disorders, from stress, distress, pain, quality of life and in numerous cases, there are reports of improvement with the management of pain, depression, and anxiety. However, a number of the research studies use only a small number of participants, which makes it difficult to generalise the results to other populations, as the results may hinge upon the adherence to the regime imposed or on the quality of the relationship of the patient to the practitioner concerned. Many of the researches into mediation do not clearly indicate the dropout rate of the participants, nor how well participants adhere to the meditation regime. A number of studies also

fail to indicate the competence and qualities required by the therapists and the effects of these upon the individual practicing meditation (Grossman et al 2003:41).

Western Perspectives of the Body and Health

Another important aspect that deserves further consideration is that western approaches to health are very different from the eastern perspective. These approaches to health are almost diametrically opposed and are based on two very different premises regarding the body and health.

In the west from the time of Hippocrates to Galen in the second century and the seventeenth century with writers such as Robert Fludd (English physician and alchemist (*Utriusque Cosmi Historia*)) and Sir Thomas Browne (*Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial and The Garden of Cyrus*), believed that man was the centre of the cosmos. It was argued that the same patterns were reproduced in all levels of the cosmos, from the largest scale (macrocosm or universe-level) down to the smallest scale (microcosm or sub-atomic or even metaphysical-level), thus man becomes a reflection of the cosmos (Narayanasamy & Narayanasamy 2006:1185). This idea was advocated by the Hermetic doctrine, in that God is all, and God is within, and appears very similar to the Chinese ideas surrounding the subtle body. Hermetic tradition held that the Divine is within all things including the universe and the human body; as well as existing beyond the universe. The basic tenet of the Hermetic doctrine is the unity of all things and gave rise to the edict 'as above, so below' (from 'The Emerald Tablet of Hermes' presumed to have been written in the eighth century BCE (Watson 1993:155; Lockhart 2009:191)).

In this system, the world and the human body consisted of four humors based upon the four elements of fire, water, air and earth (Naidoo & Willis 2001:3). The element of fire was represented in the body by the choleric humor (represented by yellow bile); air was represented by the sanguine humor (represented by blood), whilst the phlegmatic humor was represented by the

element of water and the melancholic humor was reflected in the element earth (represented by black bile). Health depended upon the balance of the humors; so early medicine regarded man as a reflection of the cosmos, which is very similar to the Chinese philosophy, whilst health was a balance of humors not qi.

This view was challenged by Descartes in the seventeenth century in his *Treatise on Man*, who postulated a mechanistic view of the material world, where matter follows its own rules but the body needs the mind to activate it (Hatfield 2003:305). Descartes believed that the mind and the body were different distinctive substances (Heil 1998:56), for him the body was material in that it inhabited a location in space and consisted of spatial dimensions (Popkin & Sroll 1972:97), whereas mental objects such as thoughts and sensations are non-spatial. For Descartes every substance possess only one attribute, therefore, if a substance such as a body has the attribute of extension it cannot possess the attribute of thought and vice versa; therefore the mind and body must be different as they mutually exclude each other (Heil 1998:56). However, Descartes did view the two substances as being intimately related, believing that the interaction between the two took place in the pineal gland.

Descartes also believed that the world was a grand machine (Hatfield 2003:305), not a machine of wheels and cogs but one of fluids, pressures and spinning particles, the body too was a machine composed of skin, bone and nerves. Descartes' mechanical philosophy discarded animism except for the human body and was thus criticised for placing the ghost in the machine (Hatfield 2003). Descartes in his *Treatise* described how human bodies respond to environmental circumstances and internal states without recourse to the mind (Hatfield 2003:306).

Thus, the legacy of Descartes is the mind and body dualism where the body is a machine, one that can be mended by replacing parts of it with other parts as in the use of wooden legs and then blood and latterly body organs. Thus for many years the medical profession sought to expand and develop the use of technology in order to repair damaged and ailing bodies. The mind did not have a role to play in healing or well-being as chemical compounds could elevate or

depress mood. However, the disadvantage of this approach was to refute the influence of factors outside the body such as diet, income, housing and employment on health status.

In the West, the paradigm shift of the separation of mind and body allowed the corporal body to be freed up for exploration through the methods of science (Naidoo & Wills 2001:3). The difficulty presented by the dualism of mind and body in the West is that of interaction (Robinson & Garratt 1999:108). If material events have only material causes and effects, and if mental events are not material, then mental and material events cannot interact. Yet the human mind is non-material and the human body is material but it is postulated that the human mind interacts with the human body (Russell 2007:514).

Medicine from the 1700s followed a trend towards empiricism focused on organs, tissues and cells rather than the whole body (Tortora & Derrickson 2009:2). The increased understanding of anatomy was facilitated by Vesalius and the dissection of the body, which ultimately led to disease becoming disassociated from the person and redefined as anatomical pathology (Bury 1998:1), where external symptoms were correlated with the internal lesions within organs and tissues of the body (Williams 2003:11).

Western medicine has tended to accept health as a natural given state with ill health as a deviation from the norm (Naidoo & Wills 2001:3). Mishler (1989 cited Williams 2003:12) identified four characteristics of the biomedical model of health, firstly, disease was seen as a deviation from normal biological functioning; secondly, particular microorganisms cause specific diseases; thirdly, diseases were not influenced by culture time and place and finally medicine was scientifically neutral. This allowed medical practitioners to further research the causes and manifestations of illness such as typhoid and cholera (Armstrong 1999:17). This mechanistic view of the body allows patients to be compared with each other; with a propensity to measure what can be measured such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and range of motion, in an attempt to identify commonalities and the cause of illness, and the shared aspects of both illness and treatment (Bury 1998:6).

Until Descartes (and for sometime beyond) health was seen as a holistic phenomenon, a state that had to be achieved and maintained. However, the legacy of the mind and body dualism meant that parts the body were increasingly disassociated from other parts of the body, giving rise to numerous medical specialities such as cardiology, gynaecology, and rheumatology to name but a few. Each speciality has its own tests, measurements, and treatments, to ensure their health of that part of the body; but these are frequently at variance with other parts of the body. This reductionist approach to health is incompatible with the wider holistic approach taken by the Daoist approach.

Most of the research into the benefits of Taijiquan does not meet the rigors of a western empirically based research perspective with the gold standard of RCT. In addition, this type of research requires the reduction of the body to its individual parts, parts that are small enough to be analysed and measured, which is not the ethos of Taijiquan for as identified above Taijiquan has a more holistic and encompassing approach to the body. So those the Western researchers attempting to elucidate whether balance, strength, flexibility, and postural stability are improved, whether it leads to a reduction in falls in the elderly, are only addressing a small aspect of Taijiquan.

It is the intention of this study to explore not only the physical aspect of Taijiquan, but to consider the motivations of people to attend this particular Taijiquan class with its overworked publicity on health promotion. What was the Daoist walk? Why did people attending a particular Taijiquan group undertake the Daoist walk? Why did they undertake 'meridian enhancing' activities? What did they gain from engaging in such an activity?

Summary

This section began with a description of participants performing the Daoist Walk, which according to Dickinson (2001:12) aids the movement of qi from the lower part of the body to other areas. Dickinson states that the stagnation of qi can lead to a number of health difficulties. The Daoist Walk has similarities to the art of Ba Gua Zhang, and both appear to have emerged from the Daoists method of Circle Walking called Zhuan Tian Zun (Rotating in Worship of Heaven).

The Chinese ideas of the subtle body is based on the notion that the human body is a mirror of the configuration and order of Heaven. There is a strong belief that what happens in the cosmos is interconnected with human beings and society with an ability for each to influence the other. The most important parts of the body are the three dantian, which are found in the brain, heart, and lower stomach, and act as an intermediary between the self and the universe. However, the most important is the lower dantian, as this is the primary energy centre of the body and is a centre for both awareness and physical strength; this dantian contains the healing power of qi.

Qi is understood to be a vital energy composed of the opposing but complementary forces of yin and yang. The body has innate qi but qi is also obtained from food and air. Once qi has entered the body, it then moves along structures in the body called meridians in order to nourish the body. Meridians have their own particular function and by stimulating meridians at particular points with fingers, massage, needles, or heat encourages qi to flow to the corresponding organs.

Taijiquan has been practised in China for many centuries for health promotion and self-defence. The origin of Taijiquan is surrounded in legend and fantasy, but there has always been a strong martial arts element to the practice. However, Taijiquan is held to be an internal art, which consists of deep diaphragmatic breathing and relaxation with a number of slow sequential movements. The aim is to produce balance between the yin and yang forces of

qi in order to achieve harmony between the mind and body. Taijiquan is not only a physical exercise; it involves the mind and is often considered to be a 'moving meditation', with the aim of integrating the mind and body in every movement.

Historically, Taijiquan practitioners have claimed a number of valuable effects of Taijiquan ranging from reduction of muscle tension, reduced anxiety, stress and pain, as well as increased balance, self-awareness and strength. It is also argued that its participants concentrate on performance they generate a sense of internal peacefulness, which facilitates mental and muscular relaxation.

Numerous studies have been undertaken in the west to quantify the benefits of Taijiquan. Research into balance control, strength, flexibility and postural stability, and fall reduction in older people has taken place. However, many of these studies have been criticised for being of low methodological quality, as they have not adhered to the gold standard of randomised controlled trials, and in some cases, it has been unclear which school of Taijiquan has been followed.

However, much research fails to address the meditative aspects of Taijiquan and other associated activities such as breathing exercises and Kai Men (not part of this study). Meditation reduces mental activity by concentrating upon the breath, and provides positive effects both physically and psychologically (Manocha 2000:1136); clearly linking mind and body together. Other claims for meditation include reduced anxiety, lowered blood pressure and reduce serum cholesterol levels, as well as enabling an individual to cope efficiently and effectively with their situation in life such as stress, pain and frustration (Rodgers 2006:294).

Taijiquan is regarded as a moving meditation and therefore, one would expect that participants of Taijiquan would also gain some of the benefits identified with meditation.

Taijiquan utilises Chinese medicine which is conceptually different from western ideas of health and the body. In the west from the time of Descartes the mind and body have been separated, and the body reduced to a complex machine of skin, bone, and nerves. Disease is seen to be a deviation from normal biological functioning is not influenced by culture, time, and place. Such a mechanistic view of the body meant that patients could be compared with each other all in an attempt to identify commonalities and causes of illness (Bury 1998:6).

Research into the benefits of Taijiquan does not conform to the rigours of a Western empirically-based research with the gold standard of RCT. In addition, such research tends to concentrate on aspects that are small enough to be analysed and measured. Such a reductionist approach to health is incompatible with the holistic Daoist approach that regards the mind and body as working together in the larger system of the cosmos. So whilst the Western researchers attempt to elucidate whether balance, strength, flexibility, and postural stability are improved, whether it leads to a reduction in falls in the elderly, are only addressing a small aspect of Taijiquan and not appreciating the ethos of Taijiquan.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will explain how the research was organised and implemented. It will begin with some considerations about the research design and will explain why this type of design was selected as an appropriate means of answering the research question. Discussion will then take place on how the sample size was generated, and how that impinges upon reliability and validity. The research instruments of diary and focus groups are explored, identifying the benefits of utilising such approaches, recognising their limitations, and describing how these limitations were managed and reduced. How the data was gathered will also be discussed. The chapter will conclude by considering, the difficulties of working with 'gate keepers', as well as describing the ethical considerations in the research.

Research Design

Bowling (2009:158) argues that the choice of appropriate research design is essential, for it is the research design that structures the plan of the research, whether it be a descriptive or experimental study, and whatever the target population. Robson (2002:80) believes that research design is concerned with turning research questions into projects; arguing that it is a crucial part of any enquiry, yet there is a tendency not to award any real consideration to the issues and possibilities of research design. Hakim (2000:xi) concurs with this view arguing that researchers often fail to think through the design of a project and how it addresses substantive questions. Hakim (2001) argues that the research design is comparable to the role of the architect in designing a building, with the research methods analogised as the builders.

Robson (2002:81) identifies five aspects that need to be in the forefront of all research projects. Firstly, the researcher needs to be clear on the purpose of the study. Secondly, the researcher needs to understand the theory that guides

or informs their study; and so there is a need to identify the conceptual framework that links the phenomena being studied. Thirdly, there is a need to be clear about the research questions and to be aware of how the research will achieve the purpose of the study. Fourthly, the researcher needs to decide how the information will be collected and analysed, which according to Hakin (2000: x) is where most researchers erroneously start. The final aspect is the group where the data will be sought from, in other words the sampling strategy. Therefore, a good design framework will have a high compatibility amongst purpose, theory, research questions methods and sampling strategy (Robson 2002:82).

The purpose of the study was to explore what motivates people to participate in Taijiquan. Is it for health benefits or leisure, and whether participants who completed the 'Daoist walk' and / or specific exercises (acupressure, massage, or breathing exercises for specific meridians or conditions) believed this activity aided their health. I was also curious as to whether the people who attend Taijiquan classes continue with these exercises outside the class setting and again what motivates them to do so.

Whilst numerous studies in the west have been undertaken with the aim of examining Taijiquan and its benefits from predominantly physiological aspects such as leg strength, postural stability, and reduction in falls, little research appears to have been undertaken regarding the self-reported benefits of Taijiquan from a psychological aspect. Nor has any research being undertaken regarding the flow of qi along meridians. As this type of information cannot be quantified externally, the research is based on self-reporting and so is qualitative and exploratory in nature. Therefore, the design of the research needs to be flexible, as the collecting and analysing of data may identify different perspectives that require further clarification or review (Robson 2002:81). Maxwell (1996:5) refers to this as an interactive model of qualitative research design. A qualitative study also allows the research to explore people's individual perspective of that situation (Smith & Osborn 2007:53).

In order to realise this the research is undertaken within the usual environment producing written information rather than with information gathered from observations, interviews, and documents (Robson 2002:85). The resulting data can then be analysed by a number of systematic techniques such as content analysis, where researchers quantify and analyse the incidence, sense, and relationships of words, then make conjectures about the underpinning meanings of the text or the participants (Bowling 2009:415). Qualitative approaches are useful in understanding causal processes and frequently hypotheses are developed during the study in order to accommodate the insight acquired during the research. Within this type of study the threats to validity should be addressed during the collection of the data and its analysis (Robson 2002:170).

Validity is the degree to which the study accurately reflects or assesses the concept(s) that is being studied (Bowling 2009:167). In other words, the question is whether the study is successful in measuring what the researcher set out to measure. It is important for researchers to be concerned with internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the meticulousness of how the study was implemented and analysed (Bowling 2009:173); whilst external validity is the extent to which the results of the study can be generalised or transferred (Robson 2002:189). Robson (2002:168) notes that the trustworthiness of flexible research is the subject of much debate. It is difficult to ensure reliability as issues such as inter-observer agreement or replication by an independent investigator cannot be carried out, because it is not feasible to recreate the exact circumstances being researched.

Robson (2002:169) argues that there are certain skills required by flexible design investigators and these include the need for an enquiring mind and also requires someone being good at asking questions. Researchers in this arena also require good listening skills, for there is a need to include all observations and senses. It requires the researcher to review information without bias, noting exact words, and capturing the mood and affective components, and an ability to appreciate the context. Frequently researchers need to be adaptable and flexible, as studies will rarely proceed as planned. In addition, the investigator

needs to interpret information and not simply record it, for without a firm grasp of the issues false claims may be made, contradictions ignored and further evidence will be omitted. There is also the need for investigators to be open to contradictory findings and it is a useful strategy to allow critical colleagues to review the data collected in order to offer alternative explanations and suggestions.

The Sample

It was apparent that my initial sample group was small, but as Robson (2002:161) points out minimum numbers are required for statistical analysis, and Bowling (2009:409) identifies that qualitative research is based on small sample sizes, with the sampling techniques of convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowballing, and theoretical sampling being the preferred sampling techniques.

By using participants who were seen on a regular basis this constitutes convenience sampling for they are easy to recruit, near at hand and are likely to respond (Bowling 2009:207). Robson (2002:265) argues that convenience sampling is a cheap and dirty way of doing a sample survey and you do not know whether your findings are representative. Whilst Bowling (2009:409) agrees that such a sample group cannot be generalised, it is a useful strategy to increase insight into social phenomena. Sampling error is the probability that any one sample is not completely representative of the population from which it was drawn (Bowling 2009:197). It is argued that sampling error cannot be totally eliminated but it needs to be reduced to an acceptable level. Bowling (2009:409) also argues that even if a random population was generated, due to the small numbers involved the chances of it being representative of the wider population are slim.

Another difficulty with the sample is that it is a self-selecting group and therefore a self-selection bias will result, as it is believed that respondents who choose to participate will represent the entire target population (Olsen 2008). However,

the whole purpose of this study is to explore an already self-selected group, that being people who have elected to spend their leisure time attending Taijiquan classes. The aim of this study is to explore what motivates them to attend Taijiquan classes and how far they adopt Daoist ideas and ideals of health and their acceptance of the role of the subtle body within this.

To conclude, although the sample size was small and a convenience sample utilised, the aim of this study was to explore the reasons and motivations of participants of one particular Taijiquan class. It was never envisaged that this information alone would be generalisable to all the groups within the same 'school of Taijiquan', and especially not outside of the Lee Family Arts Taijiquan. The initial idea was to gain insight into one particular group's motives for attending Taijiquan and then generate a questionnaire in order to ascertain whether there were common themes with other groups within the same school of Taijiquan.

Research Instrument: Diaries

I was interested in whether participants of the Daoist walk believed that this activity aided their health in any way and whether they undertook such an activity outside of the classes. I wondered whether a diary completed by the participants of the Taijiquan class would give me any further insight into the frequency and reasons for undertaking the Daoist walk.

Whilst Bowling (2009:447) argues that unofficial documents such as diaries are subjective and unscientific, they do allow respondents to keep a daily record of activities and such methods can be valuable when detailed information needs to be collected (Bowling 2009:458). Bell (2005:173) concurs that diaries can provide valuable information about patterns and activities amongst participants, as long as the diary keepers are clear about what they are being asked to do, and why. It is necessary that instructions are explicit (Bell 2005:173) and it is essential to contact and meet the people who will be participating and giving up their time so that an explanation of the purpose of the diary can be fully

discussed and any possible difficulties can be raised, explored and resolved (Bell 2005:181). Bell (2005:180) believes it is necessary for respondents to be in sympathy with the task.

The people who agreed to complete a diary are people I meet regularly and know fairly well; they were aware of my growing interest in Daoist philosophy and the subtle body¹⁷ of Daoism and how Taijiquan was connected to these. We frequently discussed issues with the instructor before classes commenced. In addition, we meet every week so not only did I have contact with the people; I was able to explain my purpose for doing this study and clarify any misunderstandings about the type of information required. Due to my closeness with the group, I believed there was sympathy with the aims of my study. However, this then raised other issues such as would the participants record what they thought I wanted or would they be overly vigilant so not to offend me, or even would they fabricate information in order to give me material for my study. This is frequently referred to as the response bias and could occur if the participants wanted to keep me 'happy' (Robson 2002:172). In an attempt to control this potential problem, I asked and repeatedly asked, the participants to be as honest as possible and to give me their thoughts, rather than what they thought they should do.

Another issue that needed to be considered was the question of whether my intervention into their lives outside of the Taijiquan class was too invasive into their personal lives (Burgess 1994:308). Any type of research has an ethical dimension and my closeness to this group was an additional aspect to this, and this will be considered later in the text.

As with all types of research, it is advisable to pilot questionnaires and instructions wherever possible, in order to identify early on in the research what difficulties there may be with the questions, the format of the questions, or the type of information generated from those questions. It was to this end that a number of diary instructions were generated with non-participants being asked

¹⁷ One of the most enduring beliefs held by humans throughout history is the belief that the physical body is a reflection of a series of subtler bodies, which mirror the nature of the spiritual realm and for a number of societies the subtle body is the key to the nature of God and the universe (Tansley 1977: 5).

their views of the directions given to participants. (The development of the instructions can be found in appendix 1).

Corti (1993:1) argues that diary methods can be structured or unstructured. I decided to give the participants a broad remit –

The purpose of the diary is for you to record your experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the Daoist walk.

It would be useful if you would record when you undertake the Daoist walk both inside and outside the class setting.

I would also like you to record your reasons for doing the Daoist walk as well as what you feel you gained (or not) from doing the Daoist walk.

On reflection, I appear to be using a useful format similar to that suggested by Zimmerman and Wielder requiring participants to complete the what? when? where? how? However, in my case participants were asked to record when? why? and effects. Corti (1993:1) suggests that participants should receive an A4 sized diary, the participants were given an A5 exercise book, along with a set of instructions on how to complete the diary, again following Corti's advice (Corti1993:1).

It is argued that respondents are less constrained by diaries when compared to questionnaires, which frequently require a fixed choice response (Corti 1993:1). However, diaries are only a practical method to use with a small and committed sample of people, and it is also unreasonable to expect people to complete diaries for long periods (Bowling 2009:458). For this reason, diaries tend to cover an agreed time span, depending on the type of information required. I hoped that the members of the Taijiquan group would complete a diary, and in the end, eight people agreed to do so. They were fully aware that this was a voluntary activity and they could stop completing the diary at any time i.e. withdraw from the study. They were also aware that it was my intention to use the diary for an academic piece of work and that any information used within the dissertation would be attributed to a pseudonym in order to maintain their

anonymity. A time limit of twelve weeks was agreed, as it was deemed that this would allow time to gather sufficient information and not be too onerous on the participants. Bell (2005:178) argues that the researcher needs to remember that completing a diary can be time-consuming for the participants, especially if they have to stop what they are doing in order to make an entry.

Oxtoby (1979) argues that self-recording can be inaccurate with the number of episodes being missed, and argues that completing a diary can be a tiresome and onerous business. Arnera (2009) also contends that respondents frequently fail to complete the diary, or fail to complete it on particular days, and may even complete it retrospectively before handing it back to the researcher. Hyland (1996:8) reasons that it is wise to accept that non-completion on some days should be expected and the researcher should allow for this in the design; this was another contributing factor in deciding upon a twelve-week time span.

Over the course of the twelve weeks, I was able to meet with the majority of the participants on a weekly basis. Such regular meetings were helpful as I was able to offer encouragement to the participants to continue writing their diaries and to keep the momentum going. Laurie & Lynn (2008:3) maintain that letters and phone calls offering encouragement may motivate respondents to continue to complete the diary. At some time during the Taijiquan class participants were asked if they had been completing their diary and reminded to do so. In the beginning a number of questions were still being asked about how the diary was to be completed, therefore, it was apparent that the instructions they had been given were not explicit. Corti (1993:2) suggested that a model example should be provided, unfortunately I did not follow this advice, which could have prevented some of the confusion of the participants. Bell (2005:181) believes that it is important to thank respondents for the time and effort they have given into compiling the diary, this advice was adhered to, and the eight participants who completed their diary were provided with a small cake on the day the diaries were collected as a token of appreciation.

Bell (2005:181) identified that it is necessary to consider how responses will be dealt with before asking for diaries to be completed. It was the initial intention to

use the diary as a complementary method, as the diary should not be a substitute for a questionnaire or interview methods but it is a useful tool for gaining further insight (Bowling 2009:458). It was deemed a diary would give me a baseline and overview of the frequency participants undertook the Daoist walk; and what motivated them to do so. For example, do they attempt the Daoist walk because they “feel under the weather”, or did they feel that they needed more energy, or are they doing it with the specific purpose of stimulating a particular meridian. I then intended to devise a questionnaire to be completed at a monthly gathering of different Taijiquan classes across the region.

Research Instrument: Focus Group

In order to progress the study further it was decided that a focus group may provide further detail and allow greater exploration of the issues raised in the diaries. There are a number of definitions of focus groups, but they tend to include aspects such as an organised discussion (Kitzinger 1995:299) and a collective activity (Powell, Single & Lloyd 1996:193). Whilst focus groups are a form of group interviewing it is important to identify that while a group interview involves interviewing a number of people at the same time, focus groups rely on the interaction within the group on the topic supplied by the researcher (Morgan 1997:12). The key characteristic that distinguishes focus groups is the interaction between the participants (Gibbs 1997:1).

Another benefit is that the method is relatively inexpensive, flexible, and quickly organised. It is also argued that focus groups allow participants to make comments in their own words, whilst at the same time being stimulated by the comments of others within the group (Kitzinger 1995:300). The advantages of such an approach is that not only can a large amount of data be collected from a number of people at the same time (Morgan1997:8), but that this information illustrates attitudes, feelings and beliefs that are more likely to be revealed in a social gathering and the interaction between the group members (Gibbs 1997:10). It was also envisaged that the group dynamics would help in focusing

on the most important topics and that consistency and a shared view would emerge. Group discussion provides direct evidence about similarities and differences of the participant's opinions and experiences, which relies less on the conclusions drawn from separate statements by the researcher (Morgan1997:10). In addition, there are natural quality controls, as participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other with extreme views being weeded out (Robson 2002:284).

The focus group was arranged to take place at a convenient location with refreshments of sandwiches and drinks provided, partly as an incentive for them to attend and partly as a thank you for participating. It has been suggested that focus groups should be between six and twelve people (MacIntosh 1993:1981) as this allows enough people for the discussion but ensures that individuals do not feel singled out, as well as allowing for everyone to have an adequate opportunity to express their views. It has been recommended that icebreakers should be utilised in order for people to begin talking and that a session should last about one hour. It has also been advised that the provision of refreshments acts as an icebreaker and gives people opportunity to talk to one another (Kitzinger 1995:299).

Gibbs (1997:2) postulates that participants need to feel comfortable with each other and Kitzinger (1995:300) argues that groups can be 'naturally occurring', which this group is as everyone attends the Taijiquan class. This has the additional advantage of the participants relating to each other's comments as part of their shared activity, as they may challenge each other regarding contradictions between what they profess to believe, and how they actually behave (Kitzinger 1995:300). On the other hand if they are too alike diverse opinions and experiences may not be revealed (Gibbs 1997:2).

With focus groups there is a need to carefully plan the questions for the focus group and these should be open questions in order for people to expand their ideas (Gibbs 1997:2). In addition, the number of questions that can be addressed within the time is limited, on average about five or six questions (Kitzinger 1995:301).

Facilitating the group requires considerable expertise so as to include those who are less articulate and the fear that extreme views may predominate by the domination of the group by one or two people (Morgan 1997:15). There is also a fear that conflicts can arise in such a situation and that the resulting power struggles may detract from the interview (Gibbs 1997:2). It is the role of the facilitator to ensure that the discussion continues to flow and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute. It is important to keep everyone focused on the topic. The interviewer especially needs to explore symbols and meanings from the participants, and recognise that their own perspective is only one way of looking at the world (Bowling 2009:411). The interviewer must be trained to cope with alternating phases of openness, withdrawal, trust, distress, and embarrassment (Bowling 2009:411). It is also important that the interviewer should avoid asking leading questions, double negatives and the use of two questions in one; and there is a need to use neutral questions and prompts (Bowling 2009: 412). It is recommended that the questions should be initially addressed to different people in order to include everyone (Kitzinger 1995:300). Another potential difficulty is that confidentiality can only be achieved between the group members and therefore the group needs to feel at ease discussing the topic (Kitzinger 1995:300).

Once again, the results cannot be generalised as they cannot be regarded as representative of the wider population (Robson 2002:285).

Ethical considerations

As previously mentioned all research generates ethical considerations and these consist of the need to consider whether there is harm to the participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy, whether there is deception involved, and finally whether there is a benefit to the participants.

All research should abide by the principle of non-maleficence, which means that research should not harm the participants in any way, and it is recognised that any research that results in the participants being harmed is unacceptable. Unfortunately harm is not as easy to identify as one may think, and there are different kinds of harm such as harming the person's development; harm to their self-esteem, or causing the person stress. This principle of non-maleficence also includes the gathering of information, as this should not be distressing or harmful to the participant. It also requires that data should be reported in a way that preserves the privacy of the subject so that they have complete confidentiality and anonymity.

It is also important that the participants should give their consent to being involved in any study. The principle of informed consent requires the participant to give their consent freely and to understand exactly what they are consenting to, these principles underpin the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) and the Social Research Association (SRA) Ethical Guidelines (2003) as well as the British Sociological Association (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice: (2002). Participants must receive a description of the project in a form that they understand, be given time to consider their reply, and agree to sign a consent form. Participants should be free to withdraw their consent at any time during the research. Such a voluntary consent safeguards the freedom of the participant to choose whether to participate in the research or not and also reduces the legal liability of the research (Bowling 2009:176). (See Appendix 2 for the consent forms).

The other main issue with this study concerned the information required from participants, could it be construed as an invasion into their privacy? It is important that participants have the right to refuse to answer any questions they feel are delving into their personal arena. In addition, SRA (2003:27) and BSA (2002:4) point out that even a researcher's attitude and demeanour may be interpreted as an injustice to the participants, for an offhand manner on the part of the researcher can be interpreted as a form of social disruption.

Another important ethical aspect is respect for others especially their rights and privacy. An underpinning aspect of Taijiquan is respect of the teacher and other students. Therefore, respect permeates the whole class and before the study commenced a number of discussions were held with both the teacher and other Taijiquan students about my interest in the topic along with an attempt to ascertain their views about participating and helping with the study. In fact, people who had been missing one week had spoken to other members of the group who had already volunteered their services, and had decided that they too were willing to help. No one was compelled to participate, all were aware of the nature of the study (BPS 2009:16).

The British Psychological Society (BPS) (2009:15) states that there should be a higher standard of competence in professional work and that there is a need to maintain an awareness of professional ethics and this would include seeking supervision or peer-review. Sometimes when one is immersed in a study, the wider implications of one's actions and methods are not given the consideration they deserve. An independent view provides an alternative interpretation of both actions and methods, ensuring that various issues are raised and discussed. In completing this dissertation supervision was sought and gained from a senior member of the academic staff. Discussions and decisions took into account confidentiality and scrupulous awareness of the need for ethical considerations to be addressed, especially regarding the limits of competence on the part of the student and awareness of their responsibility to avoid harm to participants.

Gatekeepers

According to Robson (2002:378) undertaking research in the real world often requires you to obtain formal agreement in order to gain access to participants. It is therefore important that access issues are addressed and the researcher needs to be clear about their intentions of the research.

Initial discussions with the Taijiquan teacher were very positive and they too were interested in the study. Participants were identified, consent obtained and

the diaries commenced. As previously mentioned, the intention was to compile a questionnaire using the material gained from a review of the literature and the information from the personal diaries. It was at this stage that the 'gatekeeper' to the rest of the Lee Family Arts Taijiquan appeared. Gatekeepers can influence research in a number of ways, by limiting the conditions of entry to either data or respondents, redefining the area of study, restricting the scope of analysis, and keeping control over subsequent publication (Broadhead & Rist 1976:326).

The intention had been to create an agenda to be clear about my intentions, and present the pre-structured design to the gatekeeper (Robson 2002:378). Unfortunately, the Taijiquan teacher discussed the potential research with the gatekeeper, who had had a bad experience with a previous researcher and stated categorically that no research could take place. This information was relayed to the group and was discussed with the participants and they all agreed to continue with the diaries and help in any way possible. Further attempts at contacting the gatekeeper were to no avail. This raises the issue of the grounds on which this decision was made, was there fear that participants would be coerced or fear of how the results would be used (Miller & Bell 2005:54). The decision not to allow access was not based on any consideration of this research, its perceived level of competence nor its complement to the knowledge base of the school; the decision was based on someone else's research and how the organisation perceived that the researcher had misused the information they had obtained from the group. This highlights the considerations suggested by Grinyer (1999:3) that discussions should take place about the type of data to be collected and its use, as well as an agreement made about who approves of any publications and whether the gatekeeper should see the material before publication. In addition, it also highlights both the ethical and moral responsibilities of the researcher to be candid, reliable, and honest with the people who participate in research, and to be aware of the effects of their actions upon others.

It became apparent that the study could only continue using the Taijiquan class participants, but under no circumstances would the results be attributed to the

Lee Family Arts Taijiquan School. A number of their publications are available for purchase, and these have been reviewed and analysed. It was the intention to compare the overriding 'philosophy' and message / discourse of the Lee Family Arts Taijiquan School with that of the participants, to see if there is commonality or not. It was envisaged that thematic analysis would also be utilised for analysing the publications

Analysing the data

Robson (2002:455) argues that qualitative data can be regarded as an 'attractive nuisance'. Narratives and accounts are frequently described as 'full', 'rich' and 'real' all of which makes them attractive; whereas the nuisance factor is the difficulty of analysis. There is no clear or accepted convention for analysing qualitative data, and any attempt is often regarded to be more of an art than a science (Robson 2002:456). Bowling (2009:415) argues that the investigator must be thoroughly familiar with the notes, tape recordings and their transcripts. For once the discussion has been transcribed the data can be organised by topic, and themes coded into categories (Bowling 2009:415).

There are a number of different ways that discussions can be analysed, thematic analysis, discourse/conversation analysis, content analysis, and interpretive phenomenological analysis. Content analysis is a method of coding the content of the text, often identifying the frequency of words that are used and is concerned with what is actually written and said rather than the meaning (Krippendorff 2004:18). This did not seem suitable for the type of data I collected. In discourse/conversational analysis the text is analysed to identify how a person addresses a subject, what metaphors they use, and an attempt is made to uncover the social constructs, ideas, views, and roles behind the written or spoken text (Alba-Juez 2009:7). Whilst the intention was to identify people's motives and reasons for attending Taijiquan class, this approach did not seem to be appropriate. However, interpretive phenomenological analysis attempts to interpret the data from psychological perspectives. It is concerned with how individuals interpret and make sense of the world they experience and

live in. Participants are selected based on their contact with a certain phenomena or experience, and it is usual that data is collected using diaries and focus groups. With this approach, participants are asked to reflect and interpret their experiences, and this approach is aimed at understanding the lived experiences of individuals (Smith & Osborn 2007:53). Coding the data is undertaken through the coding of themes in the same way as thematic analysis, but the interpretation of the data is undertaken through understanding the experience phenomenon (Smith & Osborn 2007:67), therefore this approach seemed to be the most pragmatic one to utilise.

Coding is essential for the analysis of qualitative data, this means relating sections of the data to categories which the researcher has either previously developed or is developing on an ongoing basis as the data is collected (Bowling 2009:419). The framework approach involves reading the interview transcript to obtain an overview of the material, which then identifies the thematic framework (identifying themes within the text), there is a need to then map and interpret the data.

The first stage requires the development of categories or themes into which the data can be coded. Seidel (1998) developed a useful model to explain the basic process of qualitative data analysis. This model consists of three interlinking activities, noticing, collecting, and thinking about the texts, the analogy being likened to a jigsaw puzzle. One notices things within the data and assigns codes to them, based on either a topic or theme. The codes that have been generated then act as a sorting and collection device (Seidel 1998). This can begin with the first text that is analysed, these categories are then compared with subsequent text, and the similarities and differences between them are examined. This is a time consuming aspect of this research, for all interviews need to be transcribed before they can be analysed, and a one hour tape recording can take between two and four hours to transcribe, depending on the skill of the transcriber (Bowling 2009:417).

In order to ensure reliability the categories identified need to be agreed or challenged by an independent investigator. The categories should then be

compared and any discrepancies disclosed before final categories are agreed on (Bowling 2009:417). Robson (2002:460) identifies a number of difficulties that need to be addressed by human analysts. Firstly, there can be data overload as there is a limitation on the amount of data that can be dealt with. There is also a tendency for early input to make a large impression on the analyst so frequently subsequent revision is resisted. Sometimes there is an inclination to discount information that is at variance with the hypotheses already held. In addition, many analysts have an unwarranted belief in their own judgement once a decision has been made. Therefore, in an attempt to gain consensus a colleague agreed to act as an independent invigilator.

It was believed that these methodological approaches would provide an answer to the questions of what motivates people to attend Taijiquan classes, what affects did they gain from undertaking the Daoist walk and / or breathing exercises and did the participants undertake these activities outside of the class setting and why?

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter begins by introducing the participants and a brief outline of their occupations and educational attainments. The results of the diaries are then analysed in order to identify the frequency with which the participants undertook the Daoist walk, whether they did it at home and if so when. Exploration of the reasons and effects of undertaking meridian enhancing activities was also explored, identifying the physical and affective aspects. This information was then utilised along with content analysis of the newsletter and healing manual in order to generate questions for the focus group. The data generated from the focus group is then examined.

The Participants

In total twelve participants contributed to this study. Eight participants completed a diary and four more participants attended the focus group. The age, occupation, and length of time attending Taijiquan are detailed below.

Table 1: The Participants

| Participant | Age | Length of Taijiquan | Occupation |
|--------------------------|------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Lillian | 52 | 12 years | College lecturer |
| Jennifer * ¹⁸ | 59 | 8 years | Factory worker |
| Brian * | 61 | 8years | Refractory Production Worker |
| Fallon | 48 | 3 years | Manager in the civil service |
| Chris | 42 | 2.5 years | University lecturer |
| Alice | 39 | 3 years | PhD Student |
| Peggy | 50's | 18 months | Carer |
| Jill | 57 | 15 years | Nurse manager |
| Matt | 55 | 20 years | IT Consultant |
| Brenda | 36 | 18 months | Tutor |
| Helen | 51 | 3 years | Nurse |
| Joe | 63 | 2 years | Retired |

¹⁸ * Denotes Instructor

The regular participants of the Taijiquan class took part in the study, only two people did not participate, and these only came on an irregular basis. Therefore, I was able to gain insight into the whole class' motivation for attending Taijiquan and what they reportedly gained from attending the class and undertaking the Daoist walk and breathing exercises. However, it must be remembered that it is a small sample and as such the findings cannot be generalised to other types of Taijiquan and other classes within the same school of Taijiquan.

Diaries

The purpose of the diary was to identify whether the participants of the class undertook the Daoist walk outside of class time, and what their motivations were for doing so. It was also envisaged that the diary would give a clearer indication into the frequency and emerging pattern for completing the Daoist walk. There was an expectation that the patterns may emerge such as what time of day did they undertake their activities, whether it was incorporated into their daily routine, or whether it was completed for a specific need only, or was it just an activity that remained within the lesson. In addition, it was hoped that further insight could be gained into how they felt after the exercise, did they gain increased energy, or a reduction in stress and did they attribute the changes to stimulated meridians and the improved flow of qi.

The diaries were handed out on 6 January 2011 and collected in on 14 April 2011, which was actually a fourteen week period. Bowling (2009:458) argues that it is unreasonable to expect people to complete diaries for long periods of time. It was believed that allowing such a length of time would generate enough material to analyse, as well as allowing for periods of non-completion as suggested by Oxtoby (1979), Arnera (2009) and Hyland (1996:8). The dairies were A5 lined exercise books consisting of twenty double-sided pages, bought cheaply from a local discount store.

From eleven diaries distributed eight diaries were returned, each one completed differently. All except one provided a date and then a description of what they did, with a brief indication of the effect. One gave the day or a date and sometimes both, one identified the activities they undertook but did not identify any effects from the activity, whilst another hardly provided any information at all other than a basic description of what they felt from doing Taijiquan in general.

Despite seeing the participants every week and giving encouragement and clarifying how the diary should be completed, it still resulted in a number of different formats for the diary. From undertaking a pilot study, it was assumed that the instructions given to the participants were clear; apparently, this was not so and perhaps taking Corti (1993:2) suggestion of providing a model answer would have led to less confusion for the participants and generated a more consistent data set.

Frequency

The first part of the analysis concentrated upon the frequency with which the participants undertook the Daoist walk. Initially, the number of days that someone stated they had completed either the Daoists walk or a particular 'meridian enhancing' activity (breathing) was counted. The frequency with which the participants undertook such activities varied from 8 to 55 during the fourteen week period. However, a further review of the data identified that one participant did not attend for a number of weeks nor complete a large proportion of the diary, but it was noted that on two occasions they did undertake some particular type of 'meridian enhancing' activity outside of the class. In addition, two of the people who completed a large number of exercises during the time were instructors and they included in these recordings a number of class time activities. It therefore seemed that greater insight could be achieved by further subdividing the totals into 'inside' or 'outside' of class, as this would give a clearer indication into the use of the 'meridian enhancing' activities in daily life.

However, what cannot be ascertained is whether the instructors would be undertaking more activities outside the class if they did not take a class.

Table 2: Frequency of the Daoist Walk and / or breathing activities

| Participant | Total number of days activity occurred | Occasions in class | % of occasions in class | Occasions outside of class | % of occasions outside of class |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Peggy | 20 | 11 | 55% | 9 | 45% |
| Brian * | 55 | 24 | 43.6% | 31 | 56.4% |
| Jennifer * ¹⁹ | 45 | 25 | 55% | 20 | 45% |
| Brenda | 12 | 11 | 91% | 1 | 9% |
| Fallon | 11 | 11 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| Jill | 8 | 6 | 75% | 2 | 25% |
| Alice | 12 | 12 | 100% | 0 | 0% |
| Lillian | 25 | 13 | 52% | 12 | 48% |

Nevertheless, it quickly became apparent that the instructors on many occasions carried out activities (Daoist walk or breathing activities - 'meridian enhancing' activities) both at home and in class on a number of days. Analysis of the frequency that participants undertook 'meridian enhancing' activities identified four members of the group who appeared to utilise the 'meridian enhancing' activities on a frequent basis i.e. once a week outside of the group. The other members of the group only completed these activities within class time.

It was also noted that one instructor always completed some 'meridian enhancing' activities in the morning before going to work. The other instructor also seemed to do most of their 'meridian enhancing' activities in the morning too, but not on such a regular basis. However, they also stressed the importance of doing Taijiquan on a daily basis. None of the others identified a time for their activities.

¹⁹ * Denotes Instructors

Reasons and effects of undertaking 'meridian enhancing' activities

The diary was intended to be used as a complimentary method and not a substitute for a questionnaire, it was thought that the diary would produce a baseline of the reasons, frequency, and affects of 'meridian enhancing' activities; generating enough information to develop specific questions in order to gather richer detail of the activities and results.

Two participants identified the effects of the Daoist walk, but did not state their reasons for doing so. Two of the participants only completed the 'meridian enhancing' activities within class and so only noted the affects. Another participant only identified the frequency with which they did the 'meridian enhancing' activities, not giving a reason for doing so, and three participants identified the reasons for doing so and an acknowledgement of the effects of the activity.

Reasons for undertaking 'meridian enhancing' activities

Two of the participants appeared to use the 'meridian enhancing' activities to manage minor ailments, these being headache or sinus difficulties. These activities consist of a small sequence of breathing with or without acupressure carried out in a particular order, with breathing and acupressure synchronised which is believed to affect the flow of qi along the meridians, in order to relieve the pain. The other participant appears to use breathing sequences as a stress reduction aid, to keep calm whilst on a plane and to manage frustration in a meeting. Another stated that some days they felt a real need to do Taijiquan, and that when they had done so they felt totally satisfied, content and peaceful. They also said it made them feel much better and that through study you can correct any imbalance through 'meridian enhancing' activities. They identified that doing the 'meridian enhancing' activities often made them feel weepy, happy, giddy, or excited. However, they did note that this is not a quick fix, but it requires time and dedication.

Effects of 'meridian enhancing' activities

When analysing the data it was imperative to recognise and identify themes that the participants documented. This required the diaries to be thoroughly read and relevant themes identified. Due to the nature of the diary, the themes occurred in different locations, so the diaries needed to be scanned and interrogated.

First, one diary was reviewed and emerging themes were identified, subsequent diaries were interrogated and further themes were identified or duplicated with the first diary. This lengthy and detailed process was repeated for all eight diaries. A number of different effects were identified from doing the Daoist walk and the other 'meridian enhancing' activities.

Physical aspects

On the first reading of the diaries, the number of physical aspects relating to Taijiquan identified was not fully appreciated. However, once the diaries were minutely interrogated it was surprising to identify a number of physical aspects arising from the activity. A few participants mentioned an immediate effect in that their hands tingled when doing the actual activity. However, the majority of participants identified aspects over a longer period, but within the hour of the class, and this included aspects such as a slowing down of breathing, an easing of back pain, improved posture and balance, a loosening of stiffened joints, feeling physically revived and reduced blood pressure.

It seemed that the effects could be categorised into three main areas, those relating specifically to aspects of the body, such as hands, back and joints, whilst others seemed to be related to the respiratory system with the third category described as well-being. This final category, is perhaps more a link between mind and body with participants feeling more energised and 'uplifted'.

Table 3: Physical aspects from undertaking the Daosit Walk

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Body 'parts' | Tingling in hands Easing of back pain Improved posture Improved balance Loosening of stiff joints |
| Respiratory | Slowed breathing and pulse Reduces asthma symptoms (Reduces blood pressure) |
| Well-being | Less exhausted Increases energy Physically reviving Get me moving Feel lifted Refreshed Wakes me up Happy Giddy Excited (Reduces blood pressure) Nothing significant in ages (referring to ailments) |

Affective aspects

The other descriptions could be given an overall classification of effective aspects, and this included descriptions ranging from feeling more centred, better connected to myself, allows me to shut out everything around me, calms me down, clears my mind and relaxed. The main areas that seem to be addressed in this section were the feelings, psychological, and intellectual.

Table 4: Affective aspects from undertaking the Daosit Walk

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Feelings | Peace Calm Centred 'in the zone' |
| Psychological | Relaxing De-stressing Balanced Connected to myself Self-awareness Self-confidence |
| Intellectual | Clears the mind Concentrate on self Shut out everything around me |

An unexpected outcome of the participants completing the diary was that the majority of them ended the diary with a paragraph or two about their perspective and feelings about their philosophy towards Taijiquan or a comment about how Taijiquan has helped them. This was unexpected but offered a wealth of information to draw upon.

One participant has been very interested in energy for healing and believed that Taijiquan is another aspect of energy that can be utilised for healing or energising. Whilst another identified it gave them energy and commented that they had not had a significant illness whilst attending the Taijiquan class. Two participants described how Taijiquan influences their life, with one noticing that they now consider balance in a wider context, not only a physical balance (from a hip replacement) but also balance as a moderation in other aspects of life from diet and energy. There is also some acknowledgement of how it reduces the symptoms of asthma. In addition, this participant had been doing Taijiquan for a number of years and during that time, their blood pressure had decreased. Another long-term participant of Taijiquan also mentioned that their asthma had improved as well as an increase in leg strength and balance.

The other participant stressed the dedication and the adoption of Taijiquan as a way of life as being important to general physical and mental health. They also stressed the fact that each movement is related to organs of the body and that by study and implementation of Taijiquan balance of the organs can be achieved. They also identified psychological effects of self-confidence and awareness; however, they caution that it is not a quick fix and that daily practice is required. Another participant tended to concentrate on two sequences that fitted into their lifestyle and helped with the particular and specific problem, arguing that the sequence gave them a sense of control over of their pain and sinus relief.

Analysis of the 'Healing Manual Volume 1(Dickinson 2009) and May Newsletter

In addition, it was felt necessary to place the participants and the activities within the context of the Lee Family Taijiquan School. It was therefore decided to analyse material that is freely available and to attempt to interrogate this material in order to identify themes and perspectives. A newsletter (A4, printed on one side is circulated every month), the May newsletter was analysed and one of the two 'healing manuals'.

May Newsletter

A third of the letter was taken up by advertising a day course, identifying the types of activity that would be available on the day, and this included the Daoists walk, specialised breathing techniques, and awareness techniques ('meridian enhancing' activities) with the option of looking at Chinese medicine exploring the relationship between the liver and gall bladder meridian. It also identified that there would be a healing meditation.

One sixth of the newsletter was taken up by an introduction to the Lee Family System, and another sixth was a breathing exercise to help the liver meridian ('meridian enhancing' activities), whilst the remaining third was partly an advert for daily exercise sheets aimed at people suffering from the gall bladder meridian and the liver meridian.

It was stated that the gall bladder meridian (when imbalanced) cause bitterness in the mouth, sighing, pain in the rib cage, headaches, migraine, pain in the ring finger, pain in the knee, thyroid, perspiration.

Working with the liver meridian was claimed to effect feelings of frustration, rage and anger, anaemia, diabetes, neuralgia, night sweats, weakness caused by cold weather, pains in the chest and abdomen and lower limbs, cystitis, arthritis in the knee, urine troubles, muscular spasms in the chest and shortness of breath.

Table 5: Using the categories identified above and identifying other emerging categories, the following were identified:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Physical aspects | |
| Body 'parts' | Mouth Pain in the rib cage Headaches Migraine Pain in the ring finger Pain in the knee Pain in the lower limbs Arthritis in the knee Urine troubles |
| Respiratory | Muscular spasms in the chest and shortness of breath Pains in the chest and abdomen |
| Well-being | |
| Body 'systems' | Thyroid Perspiration Neuralgia Night sweats Cystitis |
| Health issues | Anaemia Diabetes |
| | |
| Affective aspects | |
| Feelings | Frustration Rage Anger |
| Psychological | |
| Intellectual | |

There is an increase in the number of body parts identified, as well as an emerging category of body systems and health issues. Little is made of 'well being', or psychological and intellectual advantages. The focus is primarily on bodily health with little acknowledgement to the more holistic aspects of health.

Healing Manual Volume 1 Dickinson (2006)

This consists of fifty-two pages, there is one page acknowledging past masters and one publicising other publications available from the Lee Family Taijiquan School. Pages for an index, introduction, and conclusion amount to four pages, with seven page 'sections'. The rest of the book is split into six sections, one addresses headaches (seven pages); another stress, depression and panic attacks (eleven pages); another section for back pain (twelve pages); another for shoulders, arms, wrists and fingers (sixteen pages); another section on

tiredness and fatigue (ten pages); with the final section on lungs, influenza, sinuses and ears (seventeen pages).

Each section is then further divided into different activities to address a particular problem, there are titles such as 'acupressure point to help relieve headaches', then the advice 'not to be practised by pregnant women' followed by photographs of the area to be 'pressed' and a picture of the hands in position. Written content tends to identify health benefits such as, 'eases tension, headaches, cataracts, tinnitus, benefits eyes and ears, poor memory, dizziness, vertigo. In addition, other written comment would be an instruction of how to carry out the activity, 'place the palms of both your hands on each side of your head, with the pads of your fingertips, massage to the crown of your head'. The above technique may be used as required throughout the day.

In order to identify the focus of the 'Healing Manual' thematic analysis was undertaken, it was envisaged that a global picture may appear regarding whether the emphasis was placed on the body, meridians or psychological aspects. It was also expected that it would be able to gauge the types of intervention used, such as acupressure (which would relate directly to meridians), massage, or herbal remedies.

The following table is an attempt to identify the focus of the 'body' and the type of activity advised. For example, there were five activities addressing headaches, which totalled seven pages of description of how to manage the situation. Whilst acupressure was mentioned three times covering four pages of description.

Table 6 : Thematic analysis of the 'Healing Manual'

| Section 1: Headaches | | Occurrences | Length of activity description |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| Body Parts | Headache | 5 | 7 |
| | Cataracts | 1 | 1 |
| | Tinnitus | 1 | 1 |
| | Vertigo | 1 | 1 |
| Body System | Dizziness | 1 | 1 |
| Well being | Stress | 1 | 1 |
| | Tension | 1 | 1 |
| Intellectual | Poor memory | 1 | 1 |
| Psychological | | | |
| Activity | Acupressure | 3 | 4 |
| | Massage | 1 | 1 |
| | Breathing | 1 | 2 |
| | | | |
| Section 2: Stress, depression, panic attacks | | Occurrences | Page Total |
| Body Parts | Frozen shoulder | 1 | 1 |
| | Wrist, hands, fingers | 1 | 3 |
| | Spine | 1 | 3 |
| | Shoulders | 2 | 5 |
| | Neck | 1 | 3 |
| | Lungs | 2 | 5 |
| | Arms | 1 | 2 |
| Body System | Chest | 1 | 1 |
| Well being | | | |
| Intellectual | Calms the mind | 5 | 7 |
| Psychological | Anxiety | 1 | 1 |
| | Depression | 2 | 2 |
| Activity | Acupressure | 2 | 2 |
| | Massage | 1 | 1 |
| | Breathing | 3 | 8 |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|--|------------|-------------|------------|
| Section 3: Back pain, hip and knee problems | | | |
| Body Parts | Lower back | 1 | 1 |
| | Back | 1 | 1 |
| | Knees | 1 | 1 |
| | Top of leg | 1 | 1 |
| | Hands | 1 | 2 |
| | Arms | 1 | 2 |
| | Spine | 1 | 2 |
| | Hip | 1 | 2 |
| Body System | Kidney | 1 | 1 |
| | Arthritis | 1 | 1 |
| Well being | | | |
| Intellectual | | | |
| Psychological | | | |
| Activity | | | |
| Acupressure | | | |
| Massage | | 4 | 4 |
| Breathing | | | |
| Daoist Walk | | 1 | 2 |
| Herbal Remedy | | | |
| Ginger Compress | | 1 | 3 |
| Cabbage poultice | | 1 | 3 |
| | | | |
| Section 4: Shoulders, arms, hands, wrists, and fingers | | Occurrences | Page Total |
| Body Parts | Shoulder | 2 | 4 |
| | Arm | 1 | 3 |
| | Hands | 2 | 5 |
| | Wrist | 1 | 3 |
| | Finger | 2 | 8 |
| | Neck | 1 | 1 |
| | Elbow | 1 | 1 |
| Body System | Arthritis | 1 | 2 |
| Well being | | | |
| Intellectual | | | |
| Psychological | | | |
| Activity | | | |
| Acupressure | | 1 | 1 |
| Massage | | 4 | 10 |
| Breathing | | 1 | 2 |
| Herbal Remedy | | | |
| Cabbage poultice | | 1 | 3 |
| Ginger Soak | | 1 | 1 |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Section 5: Tiredness and fatigue | | | |
| Body Parts | | | |
| Body System | Low iron | 1 | 1 |
| Well being | Tiredness | 1 | 2 |
| | Re-energise | 2 | 4 |
| Intellectual | | | |
| Psychological | | | |
| Activity | | | |
| Acupressure | | | |
| Massage | | 1 | 1 |
| Breathing | | 1 | 3 |
| Daoist Walk | | | |
| Herbal Remedy | | | |
| Ginger Compress | | 1 | 3 |
| Cabbage poultice | | | |
| Black strap molasses | | 1 | 1 |
| | | | |
| Section 6: Lungs, influenza, sinuses and ears | | Occurrences | Page Total |
| Body Parts | Chest & asthma | 1 | 1 |
| | Sore throats | 1 | 1 |
| | Ear | 2 | 2 |
| | Tinnitus | 1 | 1 |
| | Sinus | 1 | 2 |
| | Upper back | 1 | 4 |
| | Neck | 1 | 4 |
| | Shoulders | 1 | 4 |
| | Arm | 1 | 4 |
| Body System | Feverish temperature | 1 | 1 |
| | Deafness | 2 | 2 |
| Well being | Develops qi energy | 1 | 4 |
| Intellectual | | | |
| Psychological | | | |
| Activity | | | |
| Acupressure | | 2 | 3 |
| Massage | | 4 | 5 |
| Breathing | | 1 | 4 |
| Tapping | | 1 | 1 |
| Herbal Remedy | | | |
| Ginger Compress | | 1 | 3 |
| Onion poultice | | 1 | 2 |
| Ginger steam | | 1 | 1 |
| Ginger tea | | 1 | 1 |

The table highlights that the most frequently used intervention was massage, with fifteen occurrences, acupressure had eight occurrences, and breathing techniques were suggested on seven occasions.

Table 7: Summary of 'focus' of intervention

| Section | Body Parts | Body System | Well being | Intellectual | Psychological |
|---------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| 1 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 |
| 3 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 37 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 2 |

The head (headache), shoulder, hands, wrist, and fingers were the most commonly parts focused upon for an intervention, whilst arthritis was the most common body system addressed. However, the table clearly demonstrates that the main focus of any of the interventions was the physical body, with some acknowledgement to intellectual issues such as stress and tension.

Questions generated from the diaries and Healing Manual Volume 1 Dickinson (2009)

From the information gathered, a number of areas were identified that deserved greater exploration. Firstly, curiosity as to why participants attended Taijiquan classes; whether they had attended different classes before and if they had found any differences that they either liked or disliked about this type of Taijiquan in comparison to another. In addition, there was inquisitiveness about whether participants had ever experienced the Daoist walk before, and the need to delve further into the concepts of balance, connectedness, and being centred.

There was also the curiosity as to whether Taijiquan fitted into a larger picture of health, and the use of therapies such as meditation or complementary therapies and whether participants viewed themselves as having an active role in maintaining their own health. These two questions were generated due to the amount of information circulating at both the class and the 'weekend school', about activities / sequences that help with various ailments by stimulating meridians within the body. This led to the final question of whether the

participants acknowledged or believed in meridians and whether they could actually help them.

As previously identified by Gibbs (1997:2) the questions for the focus group need to be carefully considered and there is a need to ensure that the questions are open in order for the participants to develop their ideas. In addition, as Kitzinger (1995:301) identifies, the number of questions need to be limited in order to give participants enough time to build and strengthen their ideas and commonly six questions should be adequate. However, more questions were generated than Kitzinger (1995:301) suggests, but the final questions arrived at for the focus group were:

1. What motivated you to begin Taijiquan?
2. When you are doing the Daoist walk can you describe any effects you get when doing it?
3. Whilst reading the diaries concepts such as being 'centred' and 'connected' either with the activity or with others has been identified, can anyone expand on this further?
4. People have also mentioned they gain 'balance' from undertaking the activity, and a few commented that it is a physical balance but it is also more than 'physical', has anyone any more thoughts on that?
5. Do any of you use other methods to keep healthy, such as complimentary therapies?
6. Do you perceive yourself as having an active role in maintaining your own health?
7. Can you tell me more about your thoughts on meridians?
8. If I were to ask you your reasons for attending Taijiquan classes would it be for health reasons, leisure, or that you see it as part of your lifestyle?

Focus group

The focus group consisted of members of the Taijiquan class and eleven people attended the session. This concurs with MacIntosh's suggestion (1993:1981) that focus groups should be between six and twelve people, giving you plenty of opportunity to discuss issues without leaving individuals feeling singled out, as well as giving everyone an adequate opportunity to expound their views. In addition, as the participants knew each other it was apparent that they felt comfortable with each other as recommended by Gibbs (1997:2).

It was envisaged that the group dynamics would help in focusing on the most important topics and that similarities and differences of participants opinions and experiences would emerge, which relies less on the role of the researcher (Morgan1997:10). Robson (2002:284) also suggests that participants would provide checks on each other and as the group knew each other it was envisaged that they would challenge each other more than a group of strangers (Kitzinger 1995:300).

For a focus group to be effective, it relies upon the skills of the facilitator to ensure that the conversation flows and to ascertain that everyone has the opportunity to contribute and remain focused on the topic (Bowling 2009:411). It is argued that it is important for the interviewer to avoid leading questions, asking two questions at once and to remain neutral (Bowling 2009:412).

On reviewing the transcript of the focus group (Appendix 3), it was apparent that as the facilitator I had taken on board the notion of avoiding leading questions, and not asking two questions at once. However, in an attempt to remain neutral I do not think that I probed enough into some of the new concepts raised, and on reflection some of the ideas disclosed would have benefited from greater investigation in order to achieve a greater clarity of the ideas expressed. In addition, Brenda, Alice, and Chris could have been involved further in the discussion.

1. What motivated you to begin Taijiquan?

In one respect, it seems that a number of people who attended the Taijiquan class had arrived there almost by accident. Two of the participants had seen aspects of Taijiquan and had been attracted to the 'slow stuff' (Brian and Jennifer), stating that it appeared calm and graceful. Other participants identified the relaxation aspect of Taijiquan (Jill and Lillian) and Lillian the meditative aspect of it, whereas Fallon hoped to gain release from stress. However, three participants definitely identified physical health benefits and an exercise aspect to Taijiquan believing that it would be a gentle exercise for their back (Fallon) and their blood pressure and balance after her hip replacement (Jill), a toned body (Lillian) and improvement with asthma (Jill and Lillian). Peggy believed that there were other aspects to Taijiquan which she was not gaining by attending the first class. Jennifer states that she did not consider any health aspects to it, just believing that it was natural and peaceful.

Three people had been to a different type of school within the same Taijiquan system, all of whom 'complained' about the physicality of the system (Jill, Lillian, and Joe). Joe describes how there was a need to be correct in your stance, with people walking round and pushing wanting to make sure that the weight and balance was in the correct place. Lillian describes how she attended the Yang system and how she felt for the first time the more mystical aspects of Taijiquan.

So despite the wealth of information from the Master Instructor and President of the LFA Health Arts regarding the health benefits of the system, most of the participants were attracted to a more amorphous aspect of Taijiquan. Those who did consider health benefits did not identify or concur with the health benefits identified by Lee Family Arts.

2. When you are doing the Daoist walk can you describe any effects you get when doing it?

One participant definitely did not gain anything at all from undertaking the Daoist walk (Jennifer); whilst another (Helen) found the synchronising of the

movement difficult and needed a great deal of concentration. Fallon had some ambivalence towards the Daoist walk, (for although the steps remained the same the arms are moved in different ways in order to stimulate different meridians). For Fallon some of these movements were not conducive to relaxing, whilst other movements produced an almost meditative state or 'switcher off'. However, a number of participants found the activity calming, with Peggy describing it as being placed within a bubble, almost cut off from reality and a small world of their own. Other descriptions included calmness, de-stressing, peaceful, focused, meditative, and moving like a gentle rolling tide. Two participants described how it helped with sciatica (Joe) and another incident described by Brian with a colleague who does not even do Taijiquan but found the Daoist walk as being useful in reducing pain.

3. Can you tell me more about your thoughts on meridians

One participant had no understanding of meridians at all (Helen), whilst others were aware of them and their relationship to acupuncture and the type of work that can be achieved with acupuncture; such as open heart surgery and relief of pain. Brian, took a pragmatic view of if you rolled one part of your body it relieves the symptoms here, and because it had worked for him then it seemed a reasonable activity to undertake. Both Jennifer and Peggy had a strong belief in meridians and how they could be energised in order to control different organs and pain. There was also some discussion about the 'finding' of acupuncture points using thermal imagery. However, it was interesting to note that the thought of allowing open heart surgery just using acupuncture was still a 'step too far' for Jennifer. Jill described a mechanical view of acupuncture, comparing it with a spinal block, which is used regularly in the West and is deemed to work, but still could not trust in the acupuncture. Fallon, once again, revealed an ambivalence to the idea of meridians, stating that she was not feeling her meridians doing anything, but what she did get from it was be switched off from the office, which she seemed to want.

4. Whilst reading the diaries concepts such as being 'centred' and 'connected' either with the activity or with others has been identified, can anyone expand on this further?

This question brought up quite a debate with two differing perspectives arising. For a number of participants this feeling of connectedness is associated with a concentrating on the body, not being aware of other people but it was more about being connected to the self. Peggy identified this feeling as being isolated from the world. The alternative perspective was that this was collective energy where people may be separate but also unified in a group energy or rhythm, Jennifer describing it as being like a group of ants, each one separate but connected and flowing with one aim in mind. Lillian described the experience as being 'at one' with everyone, with Jill describing the concept as being IN it rather than doing it, and a feeling of 'rightness'.

Other aspects surrounding this idea of 'centredness' or 'connectedness' was to 'shut up the constant thinking' of the mind (Alice) along with the notion of not to try hard, but to let everything flow (Peggy). However, Brian and to some extent Peggy, argue that the activity itself of making sure where their hands and feet are, as well as concentrating on the breath, is enough information to occupy the mind. For Peggy, the slowness and the balance takes time to perfect, and whilst it may look easy it is quite difficult because it needs your full attention; so other things cannot get into your brain and so you are centred (Brian).

Yet again, many of the participants identified the concepts of peace and quiet as to being part of being 'centred' and 'connected'.

5. People have also mentioned they gain 'balance' from undertaking the activity, and a few commented that it is a physical balance but it is also more than 'physical', has anyone any more thoughts on that?

Whilst Peggy described a physical balance of putting their foot down, focusing on the foot and checking the different parts of the body to make sure that they were in the right position again the concept of peace, rhythm and movement were also alluded to, which in turn gave rise to an emotional and mental

balance. For Jennifer it was definitely a mental balance, a feeling of being satiated, fed and watered with everything set straight. For Brian, the purpose of undertaking meridian enhancing activities was to prepare for the day, he described the need to get into the right state, in order to deal with everyday work. In one way it was almost as if he was talking about putting armour on, so that he could go to work and be safe.

6. Do any of you use other methods to keep healthy, such as complimentary therapies?

Three of the participants used complementary therapies, with aromatherapy and reflexology being popular. Peggy was interested in healing energies and uses magnets to cleanse her blood. A number of the participants also meditated on a regular basis, and Brian pointed out that part of Taijiquan did consist of meditation, but with classes only being an hour-long this was only practised at the weekend schools.

7. Do you perceive yourself as having an active role in maintaining your own health?

The majority of participants believed they had a responsibility to care for their health. Brian and Peggy both described a very active role in their health, one with taking ginger or onion and the other participating in healing activities. Both saw a role for Taijiquan in aiding their health, with Brian clearly describing a whole body approach and the need to keep the body in the best way he could. He was also very critical of the western approach to isolating parts of the body and treating that one part regardless of its effects upon other parts of the body. Lillian identified that in the west health is frequently viewed as being a static state, whilst in the east health is seen as more fluid and fluctuating with the need for constant adaptations in order to remain healthy.

8. If I were to ask you your reasons for attending Taijiquan classes would it be for health reasons, leisure, or that you see it as part of your lifestyle?

The participants produced a mixture of answers, two of them (Brian and Jennifer) definitely saw Taijiquan as part of their life and lifestyle, although they admitted that there were aspects of the Lee Family System they did not fully adhere to such as the strict diet. However, a number of aspects were followed on a daily basis and these were the Daoist walk, breathing exercises especially the 'vitality set', and herbal remedies. At the other extreme, four of the participants definitely saw their attendance at the Taijiquan class as a pure leisure activity, with one describing it as a leisure activity with added benefits (Joe). A number of the participants in the group described attending the Taijiquan class as a lifestyle choice; it is something that is taken into account throughout the week, not just in the class setting, but they did not consider it their 'lifestyle'. Lillian and Peggy identified how the meditative aspect of Taijiquan aided their sense of peace and calmness. Jill concurred with this, but she also saw it as a health choice and a way to gain gentle exercise, strength, and stability. Fallon agrees with Jill regarding Taijiquan as a way to engage in gentle exercise, but also noticed that peace and relaxation was gained from attending. Alice too perceived that she gained health benefits but once again it was not physical health but mental health, as it was the reduction in stress that was important.

DISCUSSION

This study began with my desire to explore the Daoist walk. What was it? Why did people attending a particular Taijiquan group undertake the Daoist walk? Why did they engage in 'meridian enhancing' activities? What did they gain from engaging in such an activity? There was also the notion that people were attracted to this particular group due to its overt publicity regarding health benefits, "The form we teach is purely a health art, based on the principles of Chinese medicine and it has been in existence for over three thousand years find out about the Lee style" (Dickinson 2011: LFA Website).

It was important to explore the thoughts and feelings of the participants and whether they perceived they gained any benefits from this aspect of Taijiquan. It was envisaged that this would be interesting especially as the participants were undertaking this activity voluntary and were not part of an orchestrated research study. However, it needs to be noted that this is a convenient and small sample and so the findings cannot be generalised to other groups, although it may provide an indication of some people's motivation to undertake Taijiquan.

The participants

The Taijiquan class took place in Hillsborough, Sheffield, an area perhaps mostly known for its football team. This is a predominantly white area (97.1%) and has a higher than average employment of 70% compared to 55.7% for Sheffield as a whole. The majority of people are homeowners (79.4%) and living in terraced housing (64.7%). In this area the largest age groups are 25 to 64 years old accounting for 52.7% of the population. However, the majority of people attaining 1+ GCSE is 40.8% and 26.7% have no qualification whatsoever and only 18.6% have a first degree (all statistics supplied by the Public Health Analysis Team 2004).

The makeup of the Taijiquan class was that all participants (except the instructors) had a first degree, five had a second degree, and three had a professional qualification. Considering the area in which the Taijiquan took place, it seems that there was a definite educational bias within the group, as well as it being a predominantly female group. The people who attended the Taijiquan class did so due to a random leaflet drop, so it is interesting to note that the majority of people have this particular educational and class bias.

Completion of Diary

The research began with eight participants completing a diary identifying the time, frequency, reasons for, and benefits gained from completing the Daoist walk and other 'meridian enhancing' activities. The diary was completed over a fourteen-week period, allowing time to generate material for analysis and allowing for periods of non-completion.

Frequency of the Daoist walk by the participants

Half of the participants (Brian, Jennifer, Peggy and Lillian) completed either the Daoist walk or other 'meridian enhancing' activities on a regular basis outside of 'class time'. In the focus group, three of the participants (Brian and Jennifer (the instructors) and Peggy) stressed the need to engage in aspects of Taijiquan on a daily and regular basis. Brian (instructor) believed in the need to complete the activities in the morning in order to get into a particular state so as to be prepared to go to work and deal with the stresses of the working day. Brian regarded aspects of Taijiquan as part of his daily routine, whilst Jennifer appeared to do this in the morning, but without a particular aim in mind. Peggy worked different shift patterns, but incorporated some aspect of Taijiquan every day, commenting in the focus group, "I do it and it just works, so fabulous", following that with, "the more you do it, the more you feel it".

It would appear that these participants regarded Taijiquan as more of a way of life or lifestyle, as the activities were incorporated into everyday life. For Brian, it was definitely a way to manage his life and cope with everyday stresses and strains, as he undertook his activities first thing in the morning. The other participants seem to incorporate elements of Taijiquan regularly into their life, but on a more ad hoc basis.

Three of these participants seem to actively engage with the notions of the subtle body, believing that the meridians could be stimulated or energised and found that there were benefits when incorporating aspects of Taijiquan in their daily life and routine. Lillian used particular techniques to deal with a specific problem, that of headaches and sinus difficulties. This was utilised because it seemed to give relief of the symptoms, but little was said about whether there was a belief or acceptance of the subtle body and how it worked. Lillian's approach seemed to be more pragmatic, utilising breathing activity and massage for a specific reason.

It is argued in Chinese medicine that disease occurs when there is disturbance within the meridian channels of qi (Lanevin & Yandow 2002:257). For as Kohn (2006:3) points out, from the Daoist perspective health is not just an absence of symptoms and ailments, it requires a strong internal presence of the vital flowing energy of qi along meridians. Meridians form recognisable structure throughout the body, containing twenty-six principal meridians (consisting of two groups of twelve symmetrical in relation to the median of the body, plus two others (Lanevin & Yandow 2002:263)), with each meridian having its own particular function (Mann 1965:33) and associated with either yin or yang (Oshawa 1973:37). It is argued that by stimulating the meridians at particular points by finger pressure, massage, needles, or heat this encourages the qi to flow to the corresponding organs (Oshawa 1973:50, Schöter 2011:3).

Although Lillian took a pragmatic approach to the Daoist approach to health, in Chinese medicine terms she was breathing in qi, expelling stagnant qi and massaging a particular point on a meridian. In the focus group, Lillian seems to be debating whether doing the activity makes her headache better, or really

makes her feel more able to cope with the headache, but either way it seems to help and so she does it. Peggy totally encompasses a belief in energies, healing, and meridians.

The Daoist walk is regarded as stimulating qi along meridians and forms part of the practice of this Taijiquan school. It has been argued that the traditional Chinese exercise of Taijiquan aids health promotion by the utilisation of deep diaphragmatic breathing and slow sequential movements (Thornton, Sykes & Tang 2004:33) to induce relaxation and balanced movements between yin and yang and thus achieve harmony between the mind and the body (Wong, Lin, Cho, Tang & Wong 2001:608). From the research undertaken, it would appear that the Daoist walk has its roots in the circle walk of Bugang in the fourth century AD. The work of Bracy & Xing-Han (1998), He Jingham (2008) and Andersen (1989 – 1990) believe that the circle walk was undertaken to align man with the cosmos, to induce a sense of calm, and to ease one's mind. However, the Daoist walk undertaken by the group is in a straight line, but the small shuffling steps echo the description of the 'Steps of Yu'. For the Taijiquan group there was a belief that this small shuffling walk along with different arm movements stimulated the forces of yin and yang causing stagnant qi to flow from the pelvic area and to energise and improve health (Dickinson 2001:12).

In the diary, people identified that the physical effects of the Daoist walk helped improve posture and balance, loosened stiff joints and eased back pain, with one person identifying tingling in their hands. Other aspects included rejuvenation, feeling physically revived, and a feeling of being refreshed. However, other issues identified included feelings of peace, calm, centred, de-stressed, and balanced. Some participants mentioned that they felt connected to themselves and became more aware, with an ability to concentrate on the self, clearing the mind and shutting out everything around them. It was these concepts that I wanted to explore in greater detail in the focus group.

Healing Manual 1 (Dickinson 2009) & May 2011 Newsletter

What is interesting to note from both the May Newsletter and Healing Manual, is the concentration on the physical health of the body. They spent a great deal of time discussing body parts and systems, and the only affective aspects identified in the newsletter were frustration, rage, and anger.

However, these publications recognised the subtle body consisting of meridians and the flow of qi, and a fair proportion of the publications were devoted to acupuncture, massage, and breathing techniques in order to either stimulate or reduce the flow of qi along meridians. This concurs with ideas expounded by Despeux (2006: 37) that breathing exercises have held a prominent place and an important role in Daoist body cultivation along with Engelhardt (1989:291) and Miura (1989:356) assertion that the nourishment and are guiding of qi is important for a long and healthy life.

However, it does seem that there are two competing discourses. One that surrounds the physical body from the Healing Manual (Dickinson 2009) and the other discourse arising from the participants that appears to consider the more affective aspects of the mind and body. The participants are commenting on the effects they perceive on their own body by undertaking the Daoist walk and the breathing exercises, whereas the Healing Manual is identifying actions that participants need to undertake in order to improve various ailments. It seems that the Healing Manual whilst adopting a traditional Chinese approach to health of meridians and the flow of qi, it fails to encompass the whole (mind and body). However, if mind and body are one within Chinese health, is it a Western approach to consider the mind without recourse to the body? Perhaps some of the concepts raised and explored further in the focus group are western attempts to consider the mind and body as one.

Focus Group

It was envisaged that a focus group would provide further detail and exploration of the issues raised within the diary. Eleven people attended the session, which allowed for plenty of discussion. The skills required for a focus group to be effective relies upon the facilitator to make sure that the conversation flows and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute and remain focused on the topic (Bowling 2009: 412). On reviewing the transcript, it seemed that in order to attempt to remain neutral as the facilitator I did not probe in detail on some of the concepts raised within the group. This meant that less substantial material was generated and that some issues were only superficially addressed.

Reasons for attending Taijiquan

Four of the participants had previously attended Taijiquan classes and the Taijiquan styles of Yang and Wu. Three had also attended a different class of the Lee style. The other four had not attended any Taijiquan class and so it was new and unfamiliar to them.

When asked, the majority of the participants had arrived at this particular Taijiquan class almost by 'accident'. Brian and Jennifer had been attracted to the slow and peaceful movements of Taijiquan from excerpts on the television. Others (Fallon, Jennifer, Peggy, Chris, and Alice) had decided to attend after a leaflet had been pushed through their door. Even Jill and Lillian who had previously undertaken Taijiquan had done little research into the type, style, or ethos of the first Taijiquan class they attended; and for many years had attended the class thinking that all classes were similar. It was only with the attendance at different classes that the vast array of Taijiquan was revealed. This seems to echo some of the criticisms regarding the research by various academics into Taijiquan for as Wang, Collet & Lau (2004:496) identify, the different styles of Taijiquan, the abilities of the instructor and of the participant's are all confounding variables that makes comparison of results difficult. As these participants identified, some Taijiquan classes are very physical, with an

emphasis on stances and weight balance, whilst other Taijiquan classes appear to be more relaxed with importance given to the health aspects and to working within your own limitations.

Two participants (Fallon and Jill) did say that they attended Taijiquan for physical health reasons. Fallon because she had hurt her back and was not taking any form of exercise at all, so it would appear that Fallon regarded Taijiquan from a more physical and exercise perspective. Jill had had a hip replacement and had been actively searching on the Internet for a Lee Style group to join. She was attracted to this style because previously her blood pressure had fallen from participating in Taijiquan. This had not been anticipated beforehand but monitoring from the General Practitioner identified a lowering of blood pressure whilst attending Taijiquan. However, this time the motivation to attend a Taijiquan class was an attempt to gain movement and flexibility in the hip; so it would appear that Jill regarded Taijiquan as a form of exercise rather than a health system.

Although some participants had been attracted to Taijiquan for health benefits, it was not the publicity of one particular school that had attracted them, it was the general idea that Taijiquan could help by providing gentle exercise.

All the participants had been attending this particular Taijiquan class for at least eighteen months on a weekly basis, and every week the Daoist walk and a 'meridian enhancing' activity were performed. Curiosity was aroused regarding the participants views on this activity. Did they only participate because it was part of the class activity? Or did they feel that they gained something from the activity and once a week was enough for them, or did they feel they achieved something that they wanted to repeat on a regular basis?

I was also curious whether participants believed in meridians and the flow of qi. Whilst Helen did not have any idea about meridians at all, three of the participants (Jennifer, Brian, and Peggy) were very vociferous in their beliefs of meridians, with Jennifer arguing that you cannot function without them and that they are the root of everything in your body. Brian took a more pragmatic view,

arguing that if one area is stimulated and a tickling cough goes, then there must be an element of 'truth' in it. This was endorsed by Jennifer, who argued that pressure on a meridian can have an effect on different parts of the body. Although Lillian did not seem to agree or disagree with meridians, she did mention that she had read an article when thermal imaging was first used on the body. Little hotspots were found which corresponded to acupuncture points on an old Chinese chart, so she did not totally dismiss the concept of the meridians.

Claims such as Taijiquan aids digestion, balance, flexibility and reduces falls have been extensively researched in the west. However, many studies have been criticised for using non-randomised sample groups, not having a comparison group, or having a small sample size, which impinges upon reliability and validity. It is also argued that another confounding variable has been the use of different types of Taijiquan and so little commonality and comparison can be drawn. The participants in this group identified how the differences in ethos and practice of Taijiquan made them feel, from being physically overwhelmed, inept, to relaxed and de-stressed. A number of the participants identified that Taijiquan is not just a physical activity, as it requires people to utilise sequential and graceful movements in a slow, meditative, and relaxed way (Lin, Hwang, Wang, Chang & Wolf 2006:1191) in order to achieve a moving meditation (La Forge 1997:53).

Perceived effects of the Daoist walk

Reactions to the Daoist walk were varied, Jennifer and Helen stated categorically that the Daoist walk did nothing for them; Jennifer argued that she could not feel anything nor were there any visual signs of qi working, whilst Helen said that she found the concentration very difficult. Yet Brenda identified that it calmed her down and that she enjoyed it as it gave her opportunity to de-stress from her life and its events. Three others echoed these sentiments. Fallon described it as being a 'switcher offerer', Peggy said she gained calmness from the activity and that she felt as though she was in a bubble and it was just so calming, whilst Lillian described it as being in a meditative state.

These descriptions seemed to match the results of practitioners completing the Bagua circle walk, as this activity is believed to calm and ease one's mind (Bracy & Xing-Han 1998; He Jingham 2008; Andersen 1989 – 1990). In fact, in the focus group Fallon states, "I think I have read about this actually where people just do it round and round in a circle like for hours and hours, days and days. And it kind of puts you into a meditative state, I've never done it for that long but I kind of get something like that from it."

A popularist writer, Tolle (2001), argues that being calm and present, still and silent can lead to an inner state of peace. Heintzman (1999:2) too notes that settings of quiet, solitude, and silence were conducive to spiritual well-being. He also continues to argue that time and space for spiritual well-being needs to be created. The activity of Taijiquan appears to give this time and space away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. In addition, the activity of the Daoist walk requires the participants to concentrate on their body and coordinate movement and breathing. In order to achieve this, they need to be calm and present, all of which give rise to this inner state of peace.

It is also interesting to note that breathing has an important role to play in spiritual and body cultivation. Due to stress the breath can become shallow and short (Despeux 2006:62), this reduces the capacity of the lungs and causes the breathing process to speed up. This then prevents sufficient amounts of oxygen from reaching the body's cells, instead of exchanging fresh oxygen for carbon dioxide and renewing the energy in their bodies, people only release a little carbon dioxide, and maintain an unhealthy amount of gaseous toxins within – stale qi.

According to Despeux (2006:62) modern medicine would describe this as the blood becoming more acidic and tension building up, which in turn stimulates the hypothalamus and pituitary glands releasing stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. These then create tension and anxiety in the body, learning how to breathe deeply and consciously in a relaxed environment has immediate and direct health benefits, as it increases people's awareness of

their bodies and reduces stress levels giving rise to balance and harmony (Despeux 2006:62).

In the Healing Manual Volume One (Dickinson 2009), the Daoist walk is described as giving health benefits to hands, arms, spine, hip, and knee problems, which are specific physical benefits. Fallon also notes that it provides gentle exercise for her back, whilst Jill felt it had helped to improve balance, and the breathing exercises aided her asthma when troublesome. Joe finds that the activity is good for relieving his sciatica, and Brian described a colleague who undertakes the Daoist walk in the morning which helps reduce their backache, both of which concurs with the ideas outlined within the Healing Manual.

Nevertheless, despite a number of participants finding the Daoist walk beneficial for physical conditions, these particular participants identified more affective benefits of feeling calmness and at peace. Overwhelmingly, participants appear to gain more benefit either from well-being, such as being less exhausted, having increased energy, or feeling refreshed; or affective aspects such as peace, relaxing, de-stressed, and a clearing of the mind, having the ability to shut out everything around them. This concurs with some of the research regarding meditation, in that it is believed it can provide a positive effect on both physical and psychological functioning (Manocha 2000:1136), reduces anxiety (Cooper & Aygen 1978) and balances the mind to enable the individual to cope effectively with their life situation, and Despeux's (2006) view of deep breathing inducing relaxation.

The concepts of 'centred', 'connected' and balance

When these issues were explored in the focus group, two different perspectives were generated. For a number of participants 'connectedness' was associated with the self and the body. Alice described it as being separated from the mind, to stop the constant thinking and to be able to concentrate on your body and your breathing and so become connected to the body. Peggy provided two ideas; one was physical balance and the other concept was of complete calmness, she went as far as describing this sensation as being isolated from

the world. Jennifer likened it to a collective energy being generated, so people may be separate but also unified in their group energy. Jennifer described this as being in a group of ants, each one separate but connected and flowing with one aim in mind. Lillian described the experience as being 'at one' with everyone, with Jill describing the concept as being IN it rather than doing it, a feeling of 'rightness'. Brian seemed to echo this idea and said when "it is right it is right", and agrees with Jennifer that it generates connected energy and what he calls good Taijiquan. Other issues identified with being 'centred' or 'connected', were stillness initially of the room but also of the mind too, a feeling of peace and quiet, as well as people being in the same rhythm.

Such descriptions seem similar to a number of definitions regarding spiritual well-being. Purdy & Dupey (2005:95) argue that most models of wellness tend to include physical, intellectual, social, emotional, occupational, and spiritual dimensions, and argue that connectedness is the feeling or state of being one with others (Purdy & Dupey 2005:101). Heintzman (1999:2) identified that spiritual well-being consisted of a person being able to be in touch with themselves and 'being aware' of themselves. Willcock et al (2009:100) argue that such sensations mean that the barriers between self and not self erode and one experiences a connection to the universe, which leads towards inner peace. According to Fox (2011:2), spiritual experience can be associated with moments of transcendence and spiritual enchantment; and it has been suggested that spiritual experiences are triggered by events, which are enhanced, by nature, self-awareness, and group interaction (Fox 1996: cited Fox 2011:2). There is also the understanding that spirituality is a belief in the connectedness or a sense of oneness towards people, self, and all things. Spirituality is also considered a creation of inner peace, oneness, and strength, which includes experiences such as calmness, happiness, and wholeness (Fox 2011:3).

It seems apparent that the participants of the Taijiquan class experienced a sense of spiritual well-being, delving into their inner selves in order to find peace and calmness. Brian appeared to summarise the experience well when he identified that the concentration on the body and the breath meant that all

the day-to-day things and minor irritations in life cannot get inside one, as there was no room for them and so it is that cutting off from the everyday world that allows one to be centred.

In addition, experiences of balance included a physical balance, but it had wider connotations than pure stability, it was more about balance of the body, of being fed and watered, so that things are set straight with the world, which allowed a mental balance to emerge. The participants appear to appreciate the notion of being in the 'present', with nothing to worry about, just that quiet to focus on yourself.

Unfortunately, my role as a facilitator seemed limited and it was at this stage that I should have probed further into the ideas and notions raised. Spirituality was not fully explored and it would have been useful to have identified whether the participants viewed these experiences as spiritual development, or whether they regarded it as a more secular experience.

Health and locus of control

I was also interested in whether the participants had any strong views of meridians, complementary therapies, or meditation. Generally, a number of participants identified that they held a belief in meridians and energies. Again, it would have been useful to have drawn other participants into the discussion, for only the participants who agreed with meridians entered this discussion.

A number of participants stated that they utilised different types of complementary therapies including crystals, aromatherapy, kinesiology, and reflexology. Many of them seemed to identify with an eastern perspective on health, seeing the need to maintain a healthy diet and to work with their bodies in order to deal with minor health problems. It is interesting to note that the people who believed strongly in meridians also had an awareness and utilisation of complementary therapies. Jill had used reflexology, but still remained a little sceptical about it, but said there had been some unusual coincidences.

My initial hypothesis was that the participants were attending this group in order to obtain health benefits. One aim of the study, which unfortunately could not be fulfilled due to being denied access to a larger group, was to see if there was a significant educational and class bias of participants, as well as an increased use of complementary therapies. A poll undertaken by Research Surveys of Great Britain (1984, cited Sharma 1995) found that people from lower classes were less likely to utilise complementary therapies and be concerned about their health than those from higher social classes. Kemper, Cassileth & Ferns (1999), Vincent & Furnham (2001), and Marian et al (2008) identified that people who use complementary therapies and are concerned about their health tended to be well educated and employed. Fulder & Munro (1985) suggest that such people are able to discern information and to make rational choices about the proposed benefits of any therapies and activities. As already noted, the group members tended to have a good educational background and responsible employment positions.

Pawluch et al (2000) states that complementary therapies seem to appeal to those who have an internal locus of control, i.e. they feel they can affect the outcome in some way or take control of their condition, or at least be an active participant in the management of their condition. It appeared that many in this group had a strong locus of control regarding their health. Brian argued that he regarded health in a holistic manner, preferring to keep the system whole rather than taking a reductionist view where parts of the body are treated in isolation to the rest of the body. So he appears to agree with Pawluch et al's (2000) and Kaptchuk & Eisenberg (2001) view that some people actively reject western medicine viewing the treatment as toxic.

It does seem that a number of the participants have a high locus of control, believing that they have some responsibility for their health. Fallon, takes a pragmatic view that some conditions such as broken leg would not respond to herbal remedies and that there was a need to access western medicine. However, she also noted the need to live sensibly, not to eat an entire gateau every night or drink a bottle of whiskey, take a bit of exercise, drink a bit and eat

a bit, moderation in all things. Peggy stated that people had the energy to heal themselves. There was also some discussion about the different belief systems that people may have, recognising the role of the mind in whether people respond to treatment or not. This was followed by a debate on the use of herbal remedies, clearly demonstrating an understanding that herbal does not mean safe. The discussion at this stage clearly demonstrated the participant's ability to take in information, give weight to that information in order to reach a decision. This certainly concurs with Fulder & Munro (1985) suggestion that well educated and employed people are able to discern information and to make rational choices about the proposed benefits of any therapies and activities. Jill, who pointed out that many of the Taijiquan classes she had attended seemed to be full of people who are relatively well off and / or well educated, with a lot of self-knowledge about how to care for their health, echoes these sentiments. This seems to imply that people who attend Taijiquan classes already have a tendency towards caring for their health. So does Taijiquan offer another way to maintaining health?

Motivation to attend Taijiquan

Jennifer and Brian definitely regarded Taijiquan as part of their lifestyle. They have been attending Taijiquan for approximately eight years, and have become instructors. Three of the participants definitely attended the group as a leisure activity; the majority of these had only been attending for approximately two years. The other participants seem to regard Taijiquan either as a lifestyle or health choice, something that was taken into consideration throughout the week and participated in on an occasional basis outside of the class setting. This was an interesting sub-group, because two of the participants had been attending Taijiquan classes for twelve to fifteen years, but still did not consider Taijiquan to be a lifestyle. Both Jill and Fallon saw it as gentle exercise to gain relief from a painful back or gentle exercise to increase strength and stability, and Alice regarded Taijiquan as an aid for mental health.

It does not seem that the amount of time attending Taijiquan classes makes it a lifestyle choice; it would seem that there needs to be some resonance with the

philosophy of Taijiquan which Brian and Jennifer had definitely adopted. Despite Peggy's limited time participating in Taijiquan she seemed more readily to adopt the philosophy than either Lillian or Jill who had been to various classes of Taijiquan for a considerably longer period.

However, the most interesting thing to note is that whatever the reason for attending Taijiquan, the majority of participants identified that they gained peace, calmness, and a reduction in stress from participating in the activity. This seems to be an important aspect of Taijiquan and one that seems to have been overlooked by many researchers into the value and benefits of Taijiquan. It is interesting to note in Lee, Pittler, & Ernst (2007:1649) critical systematic review of Taijiquan for rheumatoid arthritis note

... some positive findings exist for the effects of tai chi on disability index, quality of life, depression and mood.

CONCLUSION

This research began by wanting to know what participants gained from completing the Daoist walk and whether they completed such an activity outside of the class setting. I was also curious to discover what they believed was happening to them whilst they did the Daoist walk and did they believe in the health benefits of Taijiquan.

In total twelve participants were involved in the study, this was the convenience sample and so little generalisation can be drawn from this study. However, these participants were undertaking Taijiquan on a voluntary basis and have not been recruited for a particular research study, therefore their motivations for attending such a group was personal to them.

The group initially met in Hillsborough, Sheffield, an ethnically white area with a higher than average employment rate, but a lower than average educational attainment. The majority of the members of the group were highly educated with responsible occupations, this group, therefore, was an unusual group for the area.

The thesis began with a description of the Daoist walk and an attempt to identify the origins of this particular activity. The literature is sparse and incomplete little was found in the works of Chee Soo. However, Dickinson (2001:12) (a student of Chee Soo) argues that this particular walk enables qi to move from the lower parts of the body into other areas, for the stagnant qi contributes to a number of health difficulties. However, she says nothing about the origins of this walk.

The practice of Bugang appears to be the nearest similar activity, and this is a ritual walk that follows basic cosmic patterns and is associated with the mythical Yu (Andersen 1989–1990:16). The general requirement of this practice is to walk with the body in a natural position and the movements comfortable, with the practitioners striving to achieve a feeling of balance whilst moving slowly. The aim of the practice is to achieve calm and ease in one's mind.

The Taijiquan class followed the Lee family style of Taijiquan, which addresses physical and mental aspects of Taijiquan, breathing techniques, development of sheng chi, and utilisation of ching shen li. This group has a strong health focus on Taijiquan rather than a martial arts focus.

The Healing Manual Volume 1 (Dickinson 2009) and May's Newsletter has a definite physical health focus, identifying and describing meridians and where to apply pressure in the form of massage to either stimulate or reduce the flow of qi along them. In addition, breathing techniques are also discussed for their health benefits. I was interested to discover whether this type of intervention had been a contributory factor for people to attend the group.

However, from the focus group it appeared that the majority of the participants had attended Taijiquan almost by 'accident', with the majority responding to a 'leaflet drop' in the area. In fact, the majority of the participants had done little research into the type, style, or ethos of the class they attended, and a number of them had attended classes in the past believing that all classes were similar. It was only by the attendance at different classes that the vast array of Taijiquan approaches was revealed. However, a few participants did have a health agenda for attending the class, seeing it as gentle exercise for back and hip problems.

In order to understand the Daoist approach to health, a description of the Eastern perspectives of the subtle body was undertaken. It was identified in the Daoist tradition that disease occurs when there is a disruption of energy or qi along the meridians (Langevin & Yandow 2002: 257). As the members of the Taijiquan class completed this Daoist walk as well as breathing and massage activities to stimulate the meridians, I wanted to discover whether the participants believed that this was happening to them internally.

Eight participants completed a diary and identified the time, frequency, reasons and benefits gained from completing the Daoist walk and other breathing activities. It appears that some of the group regularly engaged in such activities

outside the Taijiquan class, and conversely the other members of the group did not. Those who undertook the Daoist walk and other breathing activities outside of the Taijiquan class setting, also seemed to be more interested in meridians, 'energies' and other types of therapies (kinesiology, reflexology and aromatherapy) than those who only participated in such activities within the group.

However, the majority of the participants appeared to obtain some effects from the Daoist walk, the majority of these effects could be described as belonging to the affective domain, in that they obtained feelings of peace, calm, relaxation, balance, and a feeling of being connected and an ability to concentrate on the self. Exploration of these issues revealed that these feelings could be regarded as aspects of spiritual well-being. Unfortunately, in my role as a facilitator, I failed to explore these issues in greater detail in the focus group and it would have been useful to have delved deeper into this area, especially as most participants gained such sensations from the activity.

Many of the participants had a strong interest in health and maintaining their health, with a number of the participants utilising complementary therapies. Discussions in the group identified that the majority of them had a strong locus of control, seeing the need to monitor their health and to deal with minor health problems. According to Sharma (1995) people from higher classes were more likely to utilise complementary therapies and be concerned about their health than those from lower social classes.

From undertaking the study, it is apparent that there are many different forms of Taijiquan, some with very strong martial arts elements requiring participants to demonstrate high levels of strength and stability, whereas others have a more health focus allowing people to work within their own limits. Therefore, any research into Taijiquan needs to clearly identify the focus and approach used, as little comparison can be made without this knowledge. It is also important to ascertain the motivation of the people attending Taijiquan classes, as this gives an indication of people's concerns and values. It is also useful to consider that the different approaches may appeal to different types of people. Therefore,

consideration needs to be given that participants of a research study may be ambivalent about Taijiquan and may not participate in the activities to the same extent as those who undertake such classes voluntarily; further work in this area may be useful.

Other areas for future work could be longitudinal studies attempting to discover the health benefits of Taijiquan, however, it may be difficult to untangle the different elements of participants lifestyle from Taijiquan.

Whilst only a few participants embraced the 'package' of meridians and flowing qi, some recognised that there were breathing and massage sequences that could bring relief to their physical conditions such as sciatica, back ache and sinus problems.

When asked to categorise their own reasons for attending Taijiquan classes from an option of health, leisure, or lifestyle. Only two participants considered Taijiquan to be part of their lifestyle, they utilised the Daoist walk, breathing exercises, and herbal remedies as a way of managing their life and its stresses and strains. Four of the participants definitely regarded Taijiquan as a leisure activity, with one describing it as having added benefits. Two participants definitely regarded Taijiquan as a way of managing particular health issues, both conditions being 'typical' of the type of issue that Taijiquan is meant to help, hip, stability and back problems. However, there was a group of people that did not see it as a leisure activity nor a lifestyle; they choose to describe it as a meditative and lifestyle choice. A few in this group had been attending various Taijiquan classes for a number of years, but did not fully engage in the Chinese philosophy of the subtle body and health, but appeared to take aspects of Taijiquan to use when required. It almost seemed as though it added to their options on how they managed and coped with situations.

An interesting part of this study has been the willingness of some people to engage in the Chinese philosophy of the subtle body and health. The amount of time spent undertaking Taijiquan does not seem to have a great influence on whether participants adopt this philosophy or not. It seems as though a

willingness has to be already there. This leads me to consider the amount of research that has been undertaken to review the effects of Taijiquan upon various illnesses and conditions, the reductionist approach to health does not 'sit well' with the Chinese philosophy of health and illness. Any research that attempts to identify improvement in one small aspect tends to ignore some of the wider issues that may arise from participants undertaking Taijiquan, such as alleviating depression and mood as well as improvement in the quality of life (Lee, Pittler, & Ernst 2007:1648).

However, from undertaking this brief exploration into what motivates people to attend Taijiquan classes, undertake the Daoist walk and breathing exercises and what they gain from the activity; it was surprising to note that participants who regarded Taijiquan as just a leisure activity, they too acknowledged a benefit from the activity of peace and calmness. Therefore, it is apparent that the practice of Taijiquan has some benefits for all of its participants, with the majority of participants identifying a feeling of calmness and peace along with the ability to de-stress.

To conclude the reasons for attending Taijiquan are varied, from an enthusiasm and an embracing of Chinese philosophy, to an escape from the daily grind and a leisure pursuit, as well as a way of improving health. However, whatever the reason, it would seem that the practice of Taijiquan, the Daoist walk, and breathing exercises have an important role to play in enhancing the coping mechanisms of its participants. Giving participants enhanced mood, peacefulness, calmness, and de-stressing them. Surely, in such a busy and hectic world, finding a haven for peace and relaxation must be beneficial for spiritual and general well-being.

REFERENCES

Alba-Juez L (2009) Perspectives on Discourse Analysis: Theory and Practice
Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Allchin D (1996) Points East and West: Acupuncture and Comparison
Philosophy of Science Philosophy of Science 63 (Supplement) S107 – S115

Andersen, Poul. "The Practice of Bugang." Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie 5 (1989-90)
15-53

Apel A, Greim B & Zettl UK (2005) How frequently do patients with multiple
sclerosis use complementary and alternative medicine? Complementary
Therapies in Medicine 13, 258 – 263

Arnera V (2009) Why paper diaries should be banned in clinical trials
Pharmaceutical Executive.com
[accessed on line 22.05.2011]
http://www.phtcorp.com/why_epro/epro/WhyPaperDiariesShouldbeBanned.pdf

Barnes PM, Powell-Griner E, McFann K & Nahin RL (2004) Complementary
and alternative medicine use among adults: United States, 2002 Advance Data
from Vital & Health Statistics 343, 1 – 19 [accessed 02.06.2008]

BBC News (2006) Doctors attack 'bogus therapies' Tuesday 23 May 2006
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/5007118.stm> [accessed 26.01.07]

Bell J (2005) Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers
In Education, Health and Social Sciences 4th Edition Maidenhead: Open
University Press

Benson (1977) cited Rodgers D (2006) Mind-Body Modalities in Micozzi MS
(2006) Fundamentals of Complementary and Integrative Medicine 3rd Edition
Missouri: Saunders Elsevier

MA Philosophy of the Body: Eastern & Western Perspectives Student Number: 25001305

Bidlack B (2006) Taiji Quan: Forms, Visions, and Effects IN Kohn L (ed) (2006) Daoist Body Cultivation: Traditional Models And Contemporary Practices Magdalena: Three Pines Press

Bracy J & Xing-Han L (1998) Bau Gua: Hidden Knowledge in the Taoist Internal Martial Art Berkeley: Blue Snake Books

British Sociological Association (2002) Statement of Ethical Practice Durham: British Sociological Association

Broadhead RS & Rist C (1976) Gatekeepers and the Social Control of Social Research Social Problems 23 (3) 325 – 336

Bowling A (2009) Research Methods In Health 3rd Edition: Investigating Health And Health Services Berkshire: Open University Press

British Psychological Society (2009) Code of Ethics and Conduct: Guidance Published by the Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society Leicester: British Psychological Society

Burgess R G (1994) 'On diaries and diary keeping' IN Bennett N, Glatter R and Levačić R (eds) Improving Educational Management Through Research and Consultancy London: Paul Chapman Publishing

Canter PH, Thompson Coon J & Ernst E (2006) Cost-effectiveness of complementary therapies in the United Kingdom – A systematic review Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine 3:4, 425-432

Chia M (2004) Tan Tein Chi Kung: Foundation Exercises For Empty Force and Perineum Power Vermont: Destiny Books

Chu WK (1991) Tao & Longevity: Mind - Body Transformation Dorset: Element Books Ltd

Cooper & Aygen (1978) cited Rodgers D (2006) Mind-Body Modalities in Micozzi MS (2006) Fundamentals of Complementary and Integrative Medicine 3rd Edition Missouri: Saunders Elsevier

Corti L (1993) Using Diaries in Social Research Social Research Update 2 Department of Sociology: University of Surrey

Craig RM (2006) IN Moffett m, Fazio M & Wodehouse L (2006) A World History of Architecture London: Lawrence King Publishing Ltd

Croizier RC (1970) Medicine, Modernisation and Cultural Crisis in China and India Comparative Studies in Society and History 12 (3): 275 - 291

Crompton P (1991) The Elements of Tai Chi Shaftesbury: a Element Books Ltd

Davidson RJ, Kabat-Zinn J, Schumacker J, Rosenkranz M, Muller D, Santorelli SF, Urbanowski F, Harrington A, Bonus K & Sheridan JF (2003) Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation Psychosomatic Medicine 65: 564 – 570

Despeux C (2006) The Six Healing Breaths IN Kohn L (ed) (2006) Daoist Body Cultivation: Traditional Models And Contemporary Practices Magdalena: Three Pines Press

Dickinson S (2001) T'ai Chi Stick Great Britain Stairway Distribution Ltd

Dickinson S (2009) Healing Manual Volume 1 Hull: Stairway Distribution Limited

Dickinson S (2011) LFA Website [accessed 19.08.2011]
<http://www.lfataichi.com/>

Downer SM, Cody MM, McClusky P, Wilson PD, Arnott SJ, Lister TA & Slevin ML (1994) Pursuit and practice of complementary therapies by cancer patients receiving conventional treatment British Medical Journal 309: 86 – 89

Engelhardt U (1989) Qi for Life: Longevity in the Tang IN Kohn L (1989)Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques USA: Centre for Chinese studies the University of Michigan

Esch T, Duckstein J, Welke J, Stefano GB and Braun V (2007) Mind / Body techniques for physiological and psychological stress reduction: stress management via Tai Chi training - a pilot study Medical Science Monitor 13 (11) CR488-497

Feuerstein G (1998) Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy Boston: Shambahla Publications

Foltz V, St Pierre Y, Rozenberg S, Rossignol M, Bourgeois P, Joseph L, Adam V, Penrod JR, Clarke AE & Fautrel B (2005) Use of complementary and alternative therapies by patients with self-reported chronic back pain: A nationwide survey in Canada Joint Bone Spine 72, 571 – 577

Fox R (2011) Spiritual Experience in Adventure Programmes [accessed 20.08.2011]
<http://www.wildernessministry.org/ol602readingpack/foxenhancingspiritualexperience.pdf>

Fransen M, Nairn L, Winstanley J, Lam P and Edmonds J (2007) Physical Activity for Osteoarthritis Management: A Randomised Control the Clinical Trial Evaluating Hydrotherapy or Tai Chi Classes Arthritis & Rheumatism (Arthritis Care & Research) 57 (3): 407–414

Fruehauf H (2011) Cultivating the Flow: A Concept of Evolutive Well-Being Integrating the Classical Traditions and Quantum Science Classical Chinese Medicine [accessed 20.04.2011]

<http://www.classicalchinesemedicine.org/2009/04/cultivating-the-flow-a-concept-of-evolutive-well-being/>

Fulder S (1988) The Handbook of Complementary Medicine 2nd Edition Sevenoaks: Coronet Books cited in Sharma U (1995) Complementary Medicine Today: Practitioners and Patients Revised Edition London: Routledge

Fulder S J & Munro RE (1985) Complementary medicine in the United Kingdom: patients, practitioners and consultations Lancet 2, 8454, 542-5 cited Vincent C & Furnham A (2001) Complementary Medicine: A Research Perspective Chichester: Wiley & Sons

Gibbs A (1997) Focus Groups: Social Research Update 19 Department of Sociology: University of Surrey

Goswami SS (1999) Layayoga: The Definitive Guide to the Chakras and Kundalini Vermont: Inner Traditions

Greenspan AI, Wolf SL, Kelley ME, O'Grady M (2007) Tai Chi and Perceived Health Status in Older Adults Who Are Transitionally Frail: A Randomized Controlled Trial Physical Therapy 87 (5): 525 – 535

Grinyer A (1999) Anticipating the Problems of Contract and Social Research Social Research Update (Winter) Issue 27

Grossman P, Niemann L, Schmidt S & Walach H (2003) Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis Journal of Psychosomatic Research 57 (1): 35 – 43

Hain TC, Fuller L, Weil L & Kotsias J (1999) Effects Of Tai Chi On Balance
Archives of Otolaryngolog Head & Neck Surgery 125: 1191 – 1195

Hakim C (2000) research Design: Successful Design for Social and Economic
Research 2nd Edition London: Routledge

Hatfield G (2003) Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Descartes and the
Meditations London: Routledge

Hedlund NL & Jeffrey FB (1993) Overview of Psychiatric Nursing IN Rawlins
RP, Williams SR & Beck CK (1993) Mental Health – Psychiatric Nursing: A
Holistic Life-Cycle Approach 3rd Edition London: Mosby Year Book

Heil J (1998) Philosophy of Mind: A Contemporary Introduction London:
Routledge

Heintzman P (1999) Leisure and Spiritual Well-Being Relationships: A
Qualitative Study 9th Canadian Congress on Leisure Research, Acadia
University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia

Honda K & Jacobson JS (2005) Use of complementary and alternative
medicine on United States adults: the influences of personality, coping
strategies and social support Preventative Medicine 40, 46 - 53

Hyland M E (1996) Diary Assessments of Quality of Life Quality Of Life
Newsletter 16: 8 – 9

Hymes R (2002) Way & byway: Taoism, local religion, and models of divinity in
Sung and modern China California: University of California Press

Ishida H (1989) Body and Mind: The Chinese Perspective IN Kohn L
(ed)(1989) Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques USA: Centre for
Chinese Studies the University of Michigan

Jacobson BH, Chang CH, Cashel C & Guerrero L (1997) The Effects Of Tai Chi Chuan Training On Balance, Kinaesthetic Sense And Strength Perceptual And Motor Skills 84: 27 – 33

Jinghan H translated by Alexander D (2008) Bagua Daoyin: A Unique Branch Of Taoist Learning Of Secret Skill Of The Palace London: Singing Dragon

Kaptchuk TJ & Eisenberg DM (2001) Competing medical systems in North America Varieties of healing 1: medical pluralism in the United States Annals of Internal Medicine 135 189-95

Kemper KJ, Cassileth B & Ferris T (1999) Holistic Pediatrics: A Research Agenda Pediatrics 103(4) 902-909

Kerman S (2006) Climbing the Limitless Mountain: Daoism and the Internal Martial Arts [accessed 22.05.2011]
http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/297

Kit WK (2001) The Complete Book of Tai Chi Chuan: A Comprehensive Guide to the Principles and Practice London: Vermilion

Kitzinger J (1995) Qualitative Research : introducing focus groups British Medical Journal 311: 299

Krippendorff K (2004) Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology London: Sage

Kohn L (1993) The Taoist Experience: An Anthology Albany: State University Of New York Press

Kohn L (ed) (2006) Daoist Body Cultivation: Traditional Models And Contemporary Practices Magdalena: Three Pines Press

Kurland H (2000) The Web of Tai Chi Chuan [Accessed 26.02.2011]
<http://www.dotaichi.com/Articles/HistoryofTaiChi.htm>

La Forge R. (1997) Mind–body fitness: encouraging prospects for primary and secondary prevention. Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing 11(3) 53–65.

Langevin HM & Yandow JA (2002) Relationship of Acupuncture Points and Meridians to Connective Tissue Planes The Anatomical Record 269 (6) 257 – 265

Laurie H & Lynn P (2008) The Use of Respondent Incentives on Longitudinal Surveys ESRC: Institute for Social and Economic Research

Lee MS, Pittler MH & Ernst E (2007) Tai Chi For Rheumatoid Arthritis: Systematic Review Rheumatology 46: 1648 - 1651

Lee MS, Pittler MH, Shin BC & Ernst E (2008) Tai Chi for osteoporosis: a systematic review Osteoporosis International 19: 139 - 146

Liao W (2000) Tai Chi Classics Boston: Shambhala Publications

Lin MR, Hwang HF, Wang YW, Chang SH, Wolf SL (2006) Community-Based Tai Chi and Its Effect on Injurious Falls, Balance, Gait, and Fear of Falling in Older People Physical Therapy 86 (9): 1189 – 1201

Lockhart M (2009) The Subtle Body in Eastern and Western Traditions
Lampeter: University of Wales

Lu C (2003) An Understanding Of Body - Mind Relations Based On Eastern Movement Disciplines And Its Implication In Physical Education AVANTE 9(3): 66 – 73

MacIntosh J (1993) Focus Groups in Distance Nursing Education Journal of Advanced Nursing 18: 1981 – 85

Mann F (1978) Acupuncture: Cure of Many Diseases London: Pan Books Ltd

Mann F (1965) Chinese Traditional Medicine: A Practitioner's View The China Quarterly 23: 28 – 36

Manocha R (2000) Why meditation? Australian Family Physician 29: 12; 1135 – 1138

Marian F, Joost K, Saini KD, von Ammon K, Thurneysen A & Busato A (2008) Patient satisfaction and side effects in primary care: An observational study comparing homeopathy and conventional medicine Complementary and Alternative Medicine 8: 52

Maxwell J A (1996) Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach California: Sage

McFarlane S (1997) The Complete Book of Tai Chi London: Dorling Kindersley Ltd

Miller J (ed) (2006) Chinese Religion in Contemporary Societies California: ABC-CLIO Inc

Miller T & Bell L (2005) Consenting To What? Issues of Access, Gate keeping And Informed Consent IN Mauthner L, Birch M, Jessop J and Miller T (ed) (2005) Ethics In Qualitative Research London: Sage

Morgan D L (1997) Focus Groups as Qualitative Research London: Sage

Miura K (1989) The Revival of Qi: Qigong in Contemporary China IN Kohn L (1989) Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques USA: Centre for Chinese studies the University of Michigan

- Naidoo J & Willis J (2001) Health Studies: An Introduction Hampshire: Palgrave
- Olsen R (2008) IN Lavrakas PJ (2008) (ed) Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods London: Sage
- Oshawa G (1973) Acupuncture and the Philosophy of the Far East Boston: Tao Publications
- Oxtoby R (1979) 'Problems facing heads of department' Journal of Further and Higher Education 3(1): 46–59 cited Bell J (2005) Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Sciences 4th Edition Maidenhead: Open University Press
- Paul-Labrador M, Polk D, Dwyer JH, Velasquez I, Nidich S, Rainforth M, Schneider R & Merz CN (2006) Effects of a randomised control trial of transcendental meditation on components of the metabolic syndrome in subjects with coronary heart disease Archives of Internal Medicine 166(11): 1218 - 1224
- Pawluch D, Cain R & Gillett J (2000) Lay Construction of HIV and complementary therapy use Social Science & Medicine 51(2) 251 - 264
- Picone M (1989) 'The Ghost in the Machine: Religious Healing and Representations of the Body in Japan' IN Feher M (ed) (1989) Fragments for a History of the Human Body New York: Zone Press
- Popkin RH & Sroll A (1972) Philosophy Made Simple London: Allen
- Powell RA, Single HM & Lloyd (1996) Focus Groups In Mental Health Research: Enhancing the Validity of User and Provider Questionnaires International Journal of Social Psychology 42(3) 193 - 206
- Pregadio F (2009) Macrocosm and Microcosm The Golden Elixir [accessed 25.08.2010] http://www.goldenelixir.com/taoism/macrocsom_and_microcosm

Purdy M & Dupey P (2005) Holistic Flow Model of Spiritual Wellness
Counselling and Values 49: 95 - 106

Qu (1986) cited Yan JH (1995) The Health and Fitness Benefits of Tai Chi The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance 66: 61 -63

Qu L & Garvey M (2010) Shen-Zhi Theory: Analysis of the Signs and Symptoms of Mental Disorder European Journal of Oriental Medicine 5(2): 4 - 16 [accessed: 31.08.2010] <http://www.ejom.co.uk/vol-5-no-2/featured-article/shen-zhi-theory-analysis-of-the-signs-and-symptoms-of-mental-disorder.html>

Ram-Prasad C (2005) Eastern Philosophy London: Weidenfield & Nicolson

Robinet I (1992) Histoire du Taoism des origins au XIVE siède Traslated Brooks P (1997) Taoism: Growth of Religion California: Stanford University Press

Robinson D & Garratt C (1999) Introducing Descartes UK: Icon Books USA: Totem Books

Robson C (2002) Real World Research Second Edition Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Rochford M (2003) Total Tai Chi London: MQ Publications Ltd

Rodgers D (2006) Mind-Body Modalities in Micozzi MS (2006) Fundamentals of Complementary and Integrative Medicine 3rd Edition Missouri: Saunders Elsevier

Russell B (2007) History of Western Philosophy London: Routledge

Sackett, D. L., W. M. Rosenberg, et al. (2000). Evidence based medicine: How to practice and teach EBM London, Churchill Livingstone

Sandlund ES and Norlander T (2000) The Effects of Tai Chi Chuan Relaxation and Exercise on Stress Responses and Well-Being: An Overview of Research International Journal of Stress Management 7 (2): 139 – 149

Schipper K (1978) The Taoist Body History of Religions 17 (3/4) 355-385

Schipper K (1993) The Taoist Body London: University Of California Press

Schöter A (2011) Consciousness of Movement [accessed: 04.06.2011]
www.yijing.co.uk/downloads/CofM.pdf

Seidel J (1998) Qualitative Data Analysis The Ethnographic v5 Manual
Appendix E

Sharma U (1995) Complementary Medicine Today: Practitioners and Patients Revised Edition London: Routledge

Shaw A, Noble A, Salisbury C, Sharp D, Thompson E & Peters TJ (2008) Predictors of complementary therapy use an asthma patients: results of a primary care survey Health and Social Care in the Community 16 (2) 155 – 164

Shen J, Anderson R, Albert PS, Wenger N, Glaspy J, Cole M & Shekelle P (2002) Use of complementary / alternative therapies by women with advanced-stage breast cancer BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine 2: 8

Sherman KJ, Cherkin Dc, Connelly MT, Erro J, Savetsky JB, Davis RB & Eisenberg DM (2004) Complementary and alternative medical therapies for chronic low back pain: What treatments are patients willing to try? BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine 4: 9

Shmueli A & Shuval J (2006) Complementary and alternative medicine: Beyond users and non-users Complementary Therapies in Medicine 14, 261 – 267

Sivasankaran S, Pollard-Quintner S, Sachdeva R, Rugeida J, Hog SM & Zamich SW (2006) The effect of a six week program of yoga and meditation on branchial artery reactivity: do psychosocial interventions affect vascular tone? Clinical Cardiology 29(9): 398 – 408

Smith JA & Osborn M (2007) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis [accessed on line 22.05.2011] http://www.corwin.com/upm-data/17418_04_Smith_2e_Ch_04.pdf

Social Research Association (2003) Ethical Guidelines Social Research Association

Soo Chee (1985) The Chinese Art of T'ai Chi Ch'uan: The Taoist Way to mental and physical health Northamptonshire: The Aquarian Press

Specia M, Carlson LE, Goodey E & Angen M (2000) A randomised, wait-list controlled clinical trial: The effect of a mindfulness meditation -based stress reduction program on mood and symptoms of stress in cancer outpatients Psychosomatic Medicine 62: 613 – 622

Tansley D V (1977) Subtle Body: Essence and Shadow London: Thames And Hudson

The Circle Walk Practice of Ba Gua Zhang: Origins of the Circle Walk Practice in Ba Gua Zhang The Pa Kua Chang Journal [accessed on line: 02.11.2010] <http://pakuachangjournal.com/circleWalk.php?page=2>

Thomas K, Carr J, Westlake L & Williams B (1991) Use of non orthodox and conventional health care in Great Britain British Medical Journal 302 26 January 207 – 10 cited Sharma U (1995) Complementary Medicine Today: Practitioners and Patients Revised Edition London: Routledge

Tolle E (2001) The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment London: Hodder & Stoughton

Tortora GJ & Derrickson BH (2009) Principles of Anatomy and Physiology: Maintenance and Continuity of the Human Body Volume 2 12th Edition
Indianapolis: John Wiley and Sons, Inc

Thornton E W, Sykes K S and Tang W K (2004) Health benefits of Tai Chi exercise: improved balance and blood pressure in middle-aged women Health Promotion International 19 (1): 33 – 38

Tsuei JJ (1978) Eastern and Western Approaches to Medicine The Western Journal of Medicine 128: 551 - 557

Tsai J N (2006) Eye on Religion: By the Brush and By the Sword: Taoist Perspectives on the Body, Illness, and Healing Southern Medical Journal 99(12): 1452 – 1453

Verellen F (1995) Taoism The Journal of Asian Studies 54 (2): 322 – 346

Verhagen AP, Immink M, van der Meulen A & Bierma – Zeinstra SMA (2003) The Efficacy Of Tai Chi Chown In Older Adults: A Systematic Review Family Practice 21 (1): 107 – 113

Vincent C & Furnham A (2001) Complementary Medicine: A Research Perspective Chichester: Wiley & Sons

Voukelatos A, Cumming RG, Lord SR & Rissel C (2007) Randomised Controlled Trial Of Tai Chi For The Prevention Of Falls: The Central Sydney Tai Chi Trial Journal Of The American Geriatrics Society 55: 1185 - 1191

Wang C, Collet JP and Lau J (2004) The Effect of Tai Chi on Health Outcomes in Patients With Chronic Conditions: A Systematic Review Archives Of Internal Medicine 164: 493-501

Willcock B, Curtis RC & Bohm LC (2009) Taboo or Not Taboo: Forbidden Thoughts, Forbidden Acts in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy London: Karnac Books Ltd

Watson D (1993) A Dictionary of Mind and Spirit London: Optima

Wolf SL, Barnhart HX, Ellison GL & Coogler CE(1997) The Effects Of Tai Chi Chuan And Computerized Balance Training On Postural Stability In Older Subjects Physical Therapy 77: 371 - 381

Wong AM, Lin YC, Cho SW, Tang FT and Wong PY (2001) Coordination Exercise and Postural Stability in Elderly People: Effect of Tai Chi Chuan Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 82: 608 – 612

Wong E [Translator] (2003) Lao-Tzu's Treatise on the Response of the Tao T'ai-shang Kun-Ying P'ien: A Contemporary Translation of the most popular book in China: Li Ying-Chang Walnut Creek: Altamira Press

Yan JH (1995) The Health and Fitness Benefits of Tai Chi The Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance 66: 61 -63

Yü LK (1996) Taoist Yoga: The Sexual Teachings of the Ancient Chinese Masters London: Rider (Ebury Press)

Yung KT (2001) A Birdcage Model for the Chinese Meridians System: Part 1 A Channel as a Transmission Line The American Journal of Chinese Medicine 32 (5): 815 – 828

Zamarra JW, Schneider RH, Besseghini I, Robinson DK & Salerno JW (1996) Usefulness of transcendental meditation program in the treatment of patients with coronary heart disease American Journal of Cardiology 77(10): 867 – 870

Appendix 1

Diary Instructions: How they developed

Draft 1

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to keep a diary over the next 12 weeks in order to help with the dissertation.

The purpose of the diary is for you to record your experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the activities that stimulate the meridians or 'ease' conditions such as headache and the 'Taoist walk'.

It would also be useful if you could record when you do these activities and what you gain from them. I would like to collect the completed diary on 14 April 2011.

This is a purely voluntary activity and you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do complete the diary, I will use the information collected to complete my dissertation. Please note others will not see your diary and any information I use within my dissertation will be attributed to a pseudonym.

I would like to invite you to a small tea party on 14 May 2011 at my home at 5pm, where I would like to discuss further the issues and themes about Taijiquan that have come from the diaries and my reading / research.

Would you please answer the following questions:

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Occupation:
4. Length of time practicing Taijiquan:

Thank once again for agreeing to help me, I appreciate your support.

Draft 2

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to keep a diary over the next 12 weeks in order to help with the dissertation. The aim of the dissertation is an attempt to discover whether participants of Taijiquan gain benefits from doing the activities that stimulate the meridians or 'ease' conditions such as headache and the 'Taoist walk'.

The purpose of the diary is for you to record your experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the activities mentioned above and whether you notice any differences. It would also be useful if you could record whether you undertake the activities outside the class and what motivates you to do so. It would also be useful if you could record when you do these activities and what you gain from them. I would like to collect the completed diary on 14 April 2011.

This is a purely voluntary activity and you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do complete the diary, I will use the information collected to complete my dissertation. Please note others will not see your diary and any information I use within my dissertation will be attributed to a pseudonym.

I would like to invite you to a small tea party on 14 May 2011 at my home at 5pm, where I would like to discuss further the issues and themes about Taijiquan that have come from the diaries and my reading / research.

Would you please answer the following questions:

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Occupation:
4. Educational / Professional Qualifications
5. Length of time practicing Taijiquan:

Thank once again for agreeing to help me, I appreciate your support.

Draft 3

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to keep a diary over the next 12 weeks in order to help with the dissertation.

The aim of the dissertation is an attempt to discover whether participants of Taijiquan gain benefits from doing the activities that stimulate the meridians or 'ease' conditions such as headache and the 'Taoist walk'.

The purpose of the diary is for you to record your experiences, thoughts, and feelings about the Daoist walk.

It would be useful if you would record when you undertake the Daoist walk both inside and outside the class setting.

I would also like you to record your reasons for doing the Daoist walk as well as what you feel you gained (or not) from doing the Daoist walk.

I would like to collect the completed diary on 14 April 2011.

This is a purely voluntary activity and you are free to withdraw at any time. If you do complete the diary, I will use the information collected to complete my dissertation. Please note others will not see your diary and any information I use within my dissertation will be attributed to a pseudonym.

I would like to invite you to a small tea party on 14 May 2011 at my home at 5pm, where I would like to discuss further the issues and themes about Taijiquan that have come from the diaries and my reading / research.

Would you please answer the following questions:

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Occupation:
4. Educational / Professional Qualifications
5. Length of time practicing Taijiquan:

Thank once again for agreeing to help me, I appreciate your support.

Appendix 2

Consent Form: Diary

Self-Reported benefits of participating in the Lee Style Taijiquan

Julie A Snowden

Philosophy Department

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

I am a student in the Department of Philosophy, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. As part of my Master's thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr.Jansen. I am inviting you to participate in my study. The purpose of the study is to explore the why people to attend Taijiquan class. Why do people undertake the Daoist walk and 'meridian enhancing' activities? What do they gain from engaging in such an activity?

This study involves completing a diary. The diary will be transcribed, to allow for analysis of the material. I will not discuss any item in the diary with anyone other my supervisor. No one's name will be revealed during the analysis as during transcription all names will be replaced with a pseudonym. The diaries will be stored in locked files before and after being transcribed. Diaries will be destroyed within 2 weeks of completing the transcriptions and the transcriptions will be destroyed 3 years after the completion of this evaluation.

Your participation in this evaluation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the process. If you choose to do so, any information derived from your participation will be deleted from the evaluations findings.

There are no anticipated physical risks to participants.

A potential benefit of participating in this evaluation for you could be having an opportunity to describe your experience of Taijiquan.

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential. All identifying information will be removed from the collected materials.

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

| | |
|--|--|
| | I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation. |
| | I agree to be quoted directly. |
| | I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published (I remain anonymous). |
| | I agree to be quoted directly if a made-up name (pseudonym) is used. |
| | I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me. |

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____

Date:

Researcher's signature: _____

Date:

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Dr Thomas Jansen, Confucius Institute Director, Lecturer in Chinese Studies,
University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Phone: +44 (0) 1570-424879

Email: t.jansen@tsd.ac.uk

Consent Form: Focus Group

Self-Reported benefits of participating in the Lee Style Taijiquan

Julie A Snowden

Philosophy Department

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

I am a student in the Department of Philosophy, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. As part of my Master's thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr.Jansen. I am inviting you to participate in my study. The purpose of the study is to to explore the why people to attend Taijiquan class. Why do people undertake the Daoist walk and 'meridian enhancing' activities? What do they gain from engaging in such an activity?

This study involves participating in a focus group. The sessions will be audio-taped, and then transcribed, to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide. I will not discuss any item on the tape with anyone other my supervisor. No one's name will be asked or revealed during the focus groups as during transcription all names will be replaced with a pseudonym. The audio-tapes will be stored in locked files before and after being transcribed. Tapes will be destroyed within 2 weeks of completing the transcriptions and the transcriptions will be destroyed 3 years after the completion of this evaluation.

Your participation in this evaluation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the process. If you choose to do so, any information derived from your participation will be deleted from the evaluations findings.

There are no anticipated physical risks to participants. Focus group members will be asked to keep the information provided in the groups confidential.

A potential benefit of participating in this evaluation for you could be having an opportunity to describe your experience of Taijiquan with others who have shared the experience.

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential. All participants will be asked not to disclose anything said within the context of the discussion. All identifying information will be removed from the collected materials.

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly. With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

| | |
|--|--|
| | I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation. |
| | I agree to be quoted directly. |
| | I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published (I remain anonymous). |
| | I agree to be quoted directly if a made-up name (pseudonym) is used. |
| | I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me. |

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date:

Researcher's signature: _____ Date:

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Dr Thomas Jansen, Confucius Institute Director, Lecturer in Chinese Studies,
University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Phone: +44 (0) 1570-424879
Email: t.jansen@tsd.ac.uk

Appendix 3
Focus Group Transcript

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Interviewer | Why did you all decide to do Taijiquan in the first place? |
| Lillian | For Jill and me, it was a tossup between Taijiquan and line dancing. |
| Jennifer | I had always seen bits of it since been a child and and I thought there was something about that it was so calm and graceful and quiet and I thought that might be nice. I just passed it off and it was not until later on that we got a leaflet through the door and so we went. I thought now is my chance I can do that. |
| Brian | Mine is fairly similar, as I wanted to do some of that slow stuff I had seen somewhere. That is all I knew I did not know the name, I just knew I wanted to have a go at that slow stuff. |
| Fallon | I think for me, a leaflet came through the door |
| Chris | Yes, the same happened for Alice and me. We got a leaflet and decided to give it a go. |
| Fallon | I wasn't taking any form of exercise at all and I had stopped doing karate because I hurt my back, so I thought I'd give it a go. |
| Interviewer | <i>So that was from an exercise point of view?</i> |
| Fallon | Yes. A bit of exercise and a bit of a switchy offy kind of thing, as that is what I used to get from from karate as well. Fitness and a bad back (laugh) – you can concentrate on it and so you switch off from the stresses and strains of the day. |
| Peggy | I did Taijiquan years ago in a class down south and I did not get anything from it at all. Nothing was explained about it, I joined the class when it was ongoing, there was no conversation giving me any information about it; others than pick it up as we go along. So basically, I was all over the place and after a few weeks I felt that I wasn't getting any further forwards. He was the only person taking the class, he did qigong first, and then Taijiquan – qigong was fabulous. I felt that was more to Taijiquan than that - but the man did not have time to do it. Then when I saw it advertised I thought brilliant, and even better it was not far from where I lived. |
| Interviewer | <i>Have any of you seen anything about Taijiquan being good for your health?</i> |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Lillian | We actually said that Taijiquan will be better for is the line dancing, but I never really thought why did I think that. |
| Interviewer | <i>Can you think a little more about that?</i> |
| Lillian | Well, I guess it was more about being calm and having a meditative side to it. I think I expected it to be more silent, still and would help me deal with the strains and stresses of everyday life. I guess I must have thought about it in a physical way, not really martial arts but in a way of strengthening and flexing my body – toning, I guess. |
| Jennifer | Well I did not think of it as health issue – I did not think of it has having to do with health. I just thought it just looked like something natural and and peaceful and nice. I thought I would like to do that but where do you find this sort of thing? There was not anything about when I used to watch little bits of it. |
| Jill | I think it was a relaxation side of it that was attractive, as well is the fact that we could not find any line dancing class. I think that Taijiquan was seen as something that was good for you and also be relaxing. I think I had also just developed with high blood pressure. |
| Brian | Was that at the other place? |
| Jill | Yes. Oh, there were different reasons for coming to this one. Well not different reasons, but for health. More specifically for health reasons coming to you. Previously, with the other group, I had high blood pressure and while I was going to the other class the doctor was monitoring it in order to decide whether I needed to go on medication or not. During the time, I was attending the other group, my blood pressure came down and I did not have to go on any medication. It was rather a nice surprise and not one I was expecting. So, when I had my hip replacement, I wondered whether Tai Chi would help me become mobile and flexible. |
| Brian | How long had you left it between last time and this? |
| Jill | Oh well we went to others in between, we went to 2 of the different types of Taijiquan and we didn't like either of them and when we saw that this was the Lee family system and I found out about it on the Internet and that's when I found out about you after my hip replacement. |
| Lillian | I stayed with the other one a bit longer. I had started going three times a week it was a different style and that had a different ethos I think. |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Brian | That interests me, what was their ethos? Was it different from what we were doing? |
| Lillian | For me the first time I did the Lee system, I found it quite physical more than anything. To be honest, I never thought there would be great differences between styles and teaching, and it was only by going to the Yang style, and it was while at the Yang style I first felt chi. I as we felt the ball and felt that sensation and feeling in between my hands. And I think I'm re - looking for that, for me it's that other element. |
| Brian | You get that now then? |
| Lillian | Yes I think I do. |
| Matt | I went to another class before, but Lillian like you I've found it very physical. They would ask you to get into stances and then walk around you and push you to make sure that you will in the correct stance and had your weight balanced accordingly. To be honest I found it a little to more and it got to the stage when I was not enjoying it. So I moved classes to the same style but with a different emphasis and I'm enjoying it far better, and I think I get more out of it. |
| Jill | Yes they used to do that to us too. |
| Lillian | Another thing that I have noticed is that my asthma has improved enormously, I used to use a blue inhaler every month, if not more. However, I now I only use one every three months if that. Also, I do not think I've taken my brown inhaler on a regular basis since Christmas, and after all that bad weather we've had, I don't think that's bad at all. |
| Jill | Yes, my asthma is a little better, but not as good as that. Mind you, you will have lost some weight as well and that could have contributed to how well you are. |
| Lillian | Yes, you have a point there. However, I do think it's because we are encouraged to breathe with our diaphragm and I do think that really helps. |
| | |
| Interviewer | I have never done the Taoist walk or the breathing exercise before and I think that is the bit I really want to concentrate upon, there's plenty of things around what Taijiquan does generally but there's nothing more to about this Taoist walk – that it is meant to stimulate meridians. I wondered how people found the Taoist walk, from reading your diary some people said they definitely get physical effects, a tingling in various parts, usually their hands. Does anyone think they get longer term benefits? |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| | |
| Jennifer | Taoist walk does nothing for me. It does not connect with me at all. I might as well just sit out. I cannot feel anything in it, no visual signs or anything happening with it. It does not do anything for me. |
| Brenda | It does for me, I find that being calms me down and I love to practice stances as it enables me to de-stress from my life and its events. |
| Interviewer | Now some people said they definitely got different things from different ones. |
| Fallon | Yes I do. Some of them I just do not like at all, I think it is because they make my shoulders go rigid whereas there are other ones, which I find much more relaxing. I think I have read about this actually where people just do it round and round in a circle like for hours and hours, days and days. And it kind of puts you into a meditative state, I've never do it that long but I kind of get something like that from it. A switcher offerer. |
| Peggy | I get something out of doing the Taoist walk, there is certainly a calmness. It would not matter what was going off in the room, whether they were kids playing there whatever, it wouldn't make a difference. It is just a really calming experience, just the slow movement and the balance. It seems to produce, just like a bubble really, so that you are there the room but the outside is just somewhere else. I find that really calming, if I walked out of that room down the street I could just keep going; because it's just so lovely. I think it is wonderful especially if you have had a day that has been a bit irate, and then you do that. I do it at home, just the basics. |
| Helen | I do not find that any of switches me off. I am also concentrating about my left leg my right leg right arm, and check in with others to make sure I have the right one. |
| Jennifer | That will come in time though. |
| Helen | Chilling out is a hell of a lot of concentration (laugh). |
| Brian | I had a colleague who had had a bad back, this is a bit of anecdotal stuff, a colleague asked if there was anything he could do and I showed him a bit of Taoist walk and he swears by it. That is the only Taijiquan he does. He does not do anything else but in the morning, he does this it to the bathroom and back and he has done that for quite awhile. |
| Matt | I do the Taoists walk and I find it is very good for my sciatica. My grandchildren laugh at me for how I am walking, but it certainly helps relieve the pain in my legs. |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| | |
| Interviewer | <i>Where did you see someone doing in a circle?</i> |
| Fallon | I read about it in a book and I cannot remember where. The monks do it don't they? |
| Jill | No it was a TV series, it was this bloke a couple of years ago and he was trying out different religions and there was one of them where, he tried a bit of it that he met someone who did this for years apparently. |
| Helen | It was a mostly up in the mountains, wasn't it |
| Fallon | Was it? I cannot remember. |
| Jill | Did Taijiquan as well but they did it as a martial arts form. |
| Brian | It is one of the things about it, isn't it? Mike Turner who lived in Grimsby started Taijiquan by standing in a sand dune in one position with his leg bent and his arms out to the side for hours on end. He said he wasn't getting anything out of it, |
| Fallon | Well you wouldn't it sounds excruciating |
| Jennifer | It means different things to different people because everybody is an individual and it will not affect everybody the same. But if you can get familiar with the form you can switch off and it becomes so soothing because there is no brain going on at all – so peaceful and that is where you get your benefits. |
| Peggy | I have never bothered much about the breathing, but I now find myself moving and going whoosh with the movements. In a now with the movements, I think it can bring about natural things that you body wants to do with it, to enhance it more. The more I practice it, I always feel that I am bringing something, coming back, coming in, going out – it is like the tide really. So I find that really fabulous, really enjoyable. The movement is really important and that write-up that we were given about it being good for osteoporosis, I think it's really fabulous because the slowness and I'm in the balance and they are strong movements when you are balancing, you need to be focused especially when you are lifting your legs up and things. |
| Lillian | I often closed my eyes when I do the Taoist walk I do not know why I just automatically close my eyes. If I had to think about it, I guess it brings me into a meditative state, so closing my eyes would be a more natural thing to do when one is meditating; although I do not walk straight with my eyes closed! |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Brenda | I do not think I could close my eyes, but I do feel a sense of calm nerves but I just wonder if that's because I'm concentrating on what I'm doing. The main thing I tend to notice is my hands tingling, but I am very intrigued by what other people get out of these activities. |
| Brian | But that's one of the things I mean, when we started off because we'd heard about different styles we also had an inkling that people who had done the Lee family system before were quite elitist. And unless you were physically fit and no more than 30-year-old then you were not really wanted. We did not want that. And before you can dare to think about closing your eyes you need a) realise it doesn't matter about the standards that you hope to achieve or aspire to. And b) that you feel comfortable and that you have that sort of environment that encourages you to think that I am safe enough here to actually to be able to think I could close my eyes if I really wanted to. |
| Jill | It is disappointing that we cannot jump up and fly in the air. |
| Jennifer | It is nice that your belt, this or that or the other does not identify you, that there is nothing that makes you stand out from everyone else – it is about your own personal development. |
| Jill | And that's really important – I think because I couldn't have gone back to the other one because I wouldn't have been able to do most of it and I would have felt, although people would have said it was okay, I would not have felt part of the group. Because some of the things we could not do, I used to feel very uncomfortable because I could not do what everyone else was doing. It used to bug me. |
| Matt | I know exactly what you mean, it used to frustrate me too that I could not be as physical as they wanted me to be. I also found it very stressful and it created tension within me and I thought this isn't what I want to get out of Taijiquan – there needs to be more than this physicality. |
| Lillian | Yes, I find that these breathing activities it is more than being physical, it's about using techniques to help the body help itself. |
| Facilitator | Can you tell me more about that? |
| Lillian | Well, I use the breathing exercises to help with headaches and sinus problems. I just find that sitting there and doing the activity makes me feel better, I feel as though the headache is better. However, I sometimes wonder whether just taking that time out and doing something, actually makes me feel better so that I can cope with the headache better. |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Brian | But the important thing is, those feelings that you get when you do the Taoist walk or anything, and the actual correctness of the moves is in some ways is irrelevant. It's not completely irrelevant because it's only the moves that are getting the energy to flow – but I've said this many times that if your little finger just happens to be in the wrong place – who cares? |
| Helen | However, I get hung up on which foot. |
| Jennifer | You do not need to worry about that – if it goes wrong it does not matter – there is nobody to judge you. |
| Chris | Well, I trained with Chee Soo and I had never done the Taoist walk with him. In fact, I do not know where it came from. |
| Matt | When I trained before, although it was physical, we still did the Taoists walk. However, we were never told what the benefits were as we are now. That is what I like about this class; I find it very interesting learning about the effects that each activity is meant to have. |
| Chris | Yes, I realise that both of the Master Instructors at the two schools also trained with Chee Soo I guess, the Taoist walk must have been taught to the more advanced students, but was not given to more lowly students. So in what respect, this is a widening of participation and understanding. Whilst on the other this particular school seems to ignore some of the more martial arts elements and to me this is not what Chee Soo originally believed and taught. |
| Brian | The bottom line is you are coming down to do some gentle exercise that is for an hour and everything else after that becomes a bonus. |
| Interviewer | What do you think about meridians? |
| Jennifer | Oh yes I am a believer in meridians. You cannot function without them – it's them that you are developing – it's just the root of everything from your spine to your brain and down to your feet and through to all of your body. It's the lines that support the feeling to everywhere. It works every organ – |
| Brian | You can demonstrate it, we haven't done a lot of this in class but – the one I remember is if you've got one of these tickling little coughs – and you massage in the right place it goes away. Now that is good enough science for me. |

| | |
|----------|---|
| Jennifer | You can have a pain somewhere in your body and you do not rub anywhere near that, and you press in a different place and that is because it works along a meridian. |
| Brian | If you do is against your nose and you are not bunged up for half an hour – you learn something has worked. |
| Peggy | Yes, I believe you meridians, there is an energy boost you can get with meridians for that part of your body. I wish we were as open as the Eastern people are. My mother is osteoporosis and I did some healing on her, and she felt better and better after each day and had a good night's sleep, and was full of energy, no pain and she forgot to take tablets, all of which she hadn't had for years. are |
| Helen | I do not have a clue what meridians are. |
| Lillian | I was interested to find that when they first did thermal imaging of the body they found little hot spots all over it and initially they thought it was major nerve endings, however they found that it corresponded to an old acupuncture chart. |
| Jill | I saw this really interesting program on that and it was someone having open heart surgery. |
| Jennifer | I saw that too. |
| Matt | They had open heart surgery using acupuncture. |
| Jennifer | I am believer of it but I do not think I could trust it for open heart surgery. |
| Jill | There is not much difference is there between having acupuncture to block the pain and having a spinal block to block the pain. For a spinal block is only going into a certain parts of your body but they are operating on another part of the body, and if it's put in the right place it blocks lots of nerve endings in various organs, doesn't it? So to me it makes sense, but I still think you have to be very brave to have surgery done like that. |
| Matt | It must be about having the trust then isn't it? For if you have that slight fear about it then it's not going to be any good for you is it? You have to trust completely in the process. Then some people then would say it's simply a matter of mind over matter. |
| | Discussion about placebos. |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Fallon | I do not buy into it completely but I kind of think – well you know acupuncture works to some degree so – yes, there is probably something in it. But I'm not that bothered really, I don't feel I'm losing anything by not completely getting it. If I am going to Taijiquan and I am not feeling my meridians doing anything – that is fine because all I want is to be switched off from the office. |
| Jennifer | Good for you get away from that – it do you good. |
| Interviewer | People mentioned the feeling of centeredness – or connected when they were doing the Taoist walk – can people explain what they mean by those phrases centeredness and connected. |
| Alice | For me it's about being able to shut up your constant thinking just about concentrating on your body and of your breathing |
| Interviewer | <i>Body awareness developing?</i> |
| Peggy | For me the whole Taoist walk is about being centred and that is where your balance is. So if you are centred, you are moving freely without toppling over one way or the other, even so, I think it takes a while to get that, just to get into that very slow with them. For the slower you go the more you balance needs to be the right really and it takes time to get that perfection. Although it looks like an easy thing, when you get people really know what they are doing, but I am sure the slow you are doing it is quite difficult to achieve. Although, I believe the idea is not to be trying hard because I think that throws you off, you have to allow yourself just to practice it and put pressure on yourself and doing every week gives you that opportunity to get it right. |
| Brian | People have alluded to this earlier if you are giving enough information about what to do with this hand on that foot and where your breath is and what you are supposed to be trying to achieve while you are doing it – there is enough information there to occupy most of your brain. So therefore, what is happening in the office and all these things cannot get in as there is no space for them to get in there. That makes you cut off and that is the centring bit. So you are in isolated from the world – the woes of the world if you like. |
| Jill | I think sometimes when you are doing Taijiquan occasionally you can get a feeling of being in it rather than just doing it. You are being it – it does not happen very often but when it does, it made you think I would like to find that again. It happens when you are usually unconscious of doing it – there is normally a little bit that you know really well. You will have a certain peace in yourself, but it is more down peace. |

| | |
|----------|--|
| | |
| Alice | Then you stop thinking about what the next move is – peaceful. |
| Peggy | For me being connected is about not being aware of what is going on around you, that you are concentrating on what you are doing and for me that is a connectedness. For your whole focus is on everything that is just within you and what you are doing. Actually, when you are swaying you do need a fair bit of room at the side of view to take into account the sway, I am surprised about how much room you need to move one foot in front of the other. |
| Jennifer | But it's nice when you feel the connective energy of everyone doing the same thing – like a group of ants all doing the one thing – connected and flowing. |
| Peggy | Actually, I don't feel connected with anyone else in the room at all, I feel the calm within me, for I think it's difficult to do it all together, because we turn around so we cannot see each other and sometimes people go quicker than others, so it throws us all out really, and we're all doing different things. I wonder if people who are not participating in the movement actually feel anything, I did some in work to demonstrate what we did in Taijiquan and a woman sat near me, so that she could feel that. |
| Brian | I think there is, I think I felt when things have gone right I have felt a group energy – a connected energy. You just get the sense that things have gone – sometimes it is like a bag of spanners – and then there is other times when you think – I have my back to you but I get the feeling that this is good Taijiquan and usually it is. |
| Lillian | I know I'm one of the natters, but I find that every so often you get this complete silence and it's all quiet and peaceful and we are all doing it together, and I feel at one with everyone else. |
| Jennifer | Yes that's right |
| Brian | That is what I am saying – I have never thought about it being quiet – it might be but I have never been able to verbalise it if you like – but there is something about it when it is right it is right – a calmness. |
| Jill | It is the doing it together that is very important – because if everyone is doing – sometimes we do do different bits because people forget parts – bit it is about people being in the same rhythm. I think that is so different from when people are doing it in different timescales and then it feels so fractured. |
| Jennifer | It does |
| Brenda | Yes |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Interviewer | The other big thing that came out is people saying that they felt balanced – some said it was physical but also that it was more than physical. I wonder if you have any more ideas about this. |
| Jennifer | Well for me it is like everything going right in here (points to head). It's a balance of mind – it's like being filled up – like being fed and watered. You've had it, you've done it and you feel balanced Everything is set straight, and that's what I feel with Taijiquan – that I have the balance now – it's not that I can balance on my legs or anything like that – it is mental balance and its even and I'm okay now. I feel that. |
| Jill | Sometimes I think, you don't get that, you can have one session and feel really good but sometimes think you can have a session and and come out and think I don't feel like it did anything – I didn't feel much from it. |
| Peggy | I feel balanced well I am doing the Taoist walk, so you can feel what you are actually doing, putting your foot down, focusing on that foot. Because it is slow, you can keep checking on different parts of your body so that you can feel that you are in the right position. So that's how I feel that you get the balance right, that the sway is going with the feet, and the movement so that it's all sort of one. It is just a swaying motion really, and that in itself brings peace as well, that rhythm of just moving from side to side. It is definitely physical, but there is something else, it is emotional and mental. You are not concentrating on anything, you are focusing, and you are just aware of what your body is doing, so that takes out any other thought of anything else. So that gets rid of the day that is gone, so it is really just being in the present. For me that is very important, unless we remained in the present we can drift off and be thinking of all other kinds of stuff, but to be just enjoying the moment is a peaceful thing and then it brings on peace when you get that focus quiet and your attention is just on what you're doing. |
| Brian | A lot of my diary talks about what I did in the morning because I will not go to work unless I have completed some Taijiquan. At the weekend am not too bothered whether I do it daily as I get up or not. But if I have to go to work I need to do something to get me into that state, whether it be balance or not I couldn't say in those terms. But, I need to be prepared in order to go to work and talk to those foolish people who don't know what they are talking about (laugh). I do not need to get myself ready at the weekend but I do in the week. |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Interviewer | Do any of you use other therapies as well? For example meditation or complimentary therapies. |
| Brenda | I am a great believer in all types of complementary therapies, I am into anything to do with healing including crystals, aromatherapy, I think everything is connected. |
| Chris | No, I do not do anything like that at all. |
| Peggy | I do systematic kinesiology and reconnective healing. I see this fitted in with Taijiquan as it is all energy. I have magnets that cleanse my blood on a night giving me more energy. I think it is just different forms of the same thing. I also like aromatherapy, anything to do with smells and reflexology is just fantastic. |
| Jennifer | I do meditation. |
| Jill | I have had some reflexology done and I find it quite interesting, how much I believe in it I'm not sure, but there are frequently some unusual coincidences |
| Lillian | I do meditation too and I also practice a little aromatherapy and do reflexology for some people. |
| Brian | But meditation is part of the Lee family system and I have not done anything with you because in the hour we have we would just be sat round doing nothing. |
| Jennifer | Though a lot of things that we cannot really touch on because people do not want to, people want to do Taijiquan and they are not interested in the whys and wherefores of what is behind it and there is such a lot behind it. It is very interesting and that is what keeps our interests as well – you can never learn it if we do it until we die we can never learn it all. |
| Brian | It doesn't matter why they're there – but you know there's a reason for them – it's lovely – we weren't born doing it it's just since we went to Taijiquan and we have learnt and it's just better. |
| Interviewer | Do you perceive yourself to have an active role in looking after it your own health? |
| Brian | Now I am definitely not passive about anything, I am doer. So if I have something wrong, I am going to try and sort it out – there are things in Taijiquan that helped me – so I'm a ginger taker – a raw onion eater – and I attack it. I have a bit of a cold now and I know that when I get home I shall be attacking it. I do not think I could be looking towards their National Health Service to help me. |

| | |
|----------|--|
| Fallon | Yes but it depends what it's for, for if you break your leg you going to need a pot on it and all the ginger in the world won't do any help. It's about what you believe in and what works for you so you might get one person who is there gets a cold going to take lots of ginger or lemon someone else may just take a load of Lemsip. Each of them might have the same effect on each of those people that if you swap them or offer it might not. Because the Lemsip taker does not trust natural remedies and a natural remedy taken does not trust medicine. |
| Brenda | A lot of modern medicine is based on herbs – but modern medicine is made synthetically |
| Jennifer | Yes but a plant will not hurt you as modern medicine would – |
| Jill | Yes but it depends what it is, there are natural herbs that I wouldn't touch with a bargepole, such as St John's Wort |
| Alice | Very powerful |
| Brenda | Very potent |
| Jill | Yes, it interferes with lots of other things too |
| Alice | It does work and it is very effective |
| Jennifer | Yes but when I read what it did I decided I would not take it |
| Helen | Yes you have to be careful |
| Fallon | I think you do have to be responsible for your health but I do not think it has to be to the extent that you feel that you are failing if you do catch a cold or get the flu |
| Brenda | But you will get yourself over it |
| Jill | Yes but most people will get over a cold in the same amount of time anyway |
| Matt | The old Chinese would pay their doctors when they were well and would stop paying for them when they became ill |
| Jennifer | I have heard that too |

| | |
|---------|--|
| Peggy | People in China into their very old age, you do not see them jogging down the street, but their focus has been on all these types of things and they live to a ripe old age. I just think that our population when they are elderly, a lot of them, are very sedentary, they cannot walk or anything. I think this is to do with our culture, in fact it is expected that you will fit on your backside when you're 80 and not do anything because that's what you do when you're 80. |
| Lillian | I think in their West we look at health and it is quite static but the Eastern perspective is viewing health as a dance, a give and take and listening to themselves. I had a woman tell me that her feet were really dry, so I told her that the best thing is to put cream on, which she says that she does. However, when she stops using the cream her feet become dry again! We appear to have that mentality that we do things to get back to being healthy or health, and then if we do not do anything we should stay there. |
| Brenda | Yes, we don't have a National Health Service we have more of a national sick service. Whereas, what you are talking about is more of health |
| Fallon | Yes more of a health promotion model |
| Jill | Some have been responsible and using preventative side of health is lost |
| | Discussion of NHS |
| Lillian | People who tend to access complementary therapies tend to be people with chronic conditions of the National Health Service struggles to help them to cope with low levels of pain – |
| Brian | For me Taijiquan is a whole-body approach – for me it is about keeping this one body and system whole and the best way that we can keep it. Rather than the Western medicine that says you have something wrong with this bit – so in isolation to the rest of the body – we will do that even though your big toe might fall off. But that's just a side effect, but that's okay. Lots of drugs that make drug companies rich. |
| Fallon | I think I am responsible for my own health to a degree, for example if I trip to and broke my leg I would not beat myself up for failing to notice the uneven pavement. However, in terms of living sensibly – do not eat an entire gateau every night or drink a bottle of whiskey every night. Take a bit of exercise, drink a bit, eat a bit – Everything in moderation. |

| | |
|--------|--|
| Peggy | <p>I believe that I have an active role in maintaining my own health, I do healing myself every night. I do Taijiquan every day, I do it and it just works, so fabulous. You could not do it when it works. I feel that we have the healing power to heal ourselves; we do not need anything else. If we just do it, we can do it.</p> <p>A friend of mine does reflexology, and as soon as she just touches my feet, I can feel it everywhere in my body just buzzing. Colours affect me so much, aromatherapy, in fact everything. I do not use a mobile phone at all because it feels like a knitting needle going through my ear, I cannot find a Digi box that does not give him a toothache.</p> <p>I think it helps my body tuning, and then you are feeling it more. I believe we can all do that.</p> |
| Brian | <p>However, if someone was in a position where their health suffered because they were completely stressed out due to whatever occupation they were in – what we need to do is to take people out of that situation and make it better for them. Not give them tablets that they have to take three times a day. That is not going to be the answer.</p> |
| Jill | <p>I do think that looking after your health is easier if you are in a position where you do not have to worry about how much food costs, how much it costs to go to the gym, or buy nice things to eat. The Taijiquan classes we have been to tend to be full of people who are relatively well off and / or well educated – with a lot of self-knowledge about how to care for yourself.</p> |
| Fallon | <p>Yes but it is not just about money, there are loads of things bound up in it I think. It is very easy to be judgemental and look at someone's baskets in the supermarket and think for all that crap you've just loaded into your basket you could buy loads of fruit and vegetables and in a short period of time make yourself something nice and tasty and good to eat – that will not make you fat. You do not need a gym membership to keep fit; you can just walk and run. It is to be multi dimensional and some other is that the aspiration for aspiration has gone.</p> |
| Jill | <p>Yes but when you are having to live from day to day, there's not much left for aspiration.</p> |
| Brenda | <p>Yes but it is about having the energy left over to deal with other things.</p> |
| Alice | <p>Yes, it is about putting the energy in and to have time to plan things.</p> |
| Jill | <p>It is also, about how you've been brought up, whether you have been brought up to have aspirations.</p> |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Peggy | I am surprised, but I have as much out of Taijiquan as I do. As I done it before and it was a bit of a failure, I thought I will go and see what it's like and I might like it. I have to say it does depend upon your instructor, when he said all you have to bring is a smile; I thought that is my man. This is it I am going to like this. Really, you expect to meet nice people in places like this, and I know it's not always the case, that you would expect to like people. I could not could not do Taijiquan with a class I did not like. |
| Lillian | That is part of the Chinese philosophy, finding a teacher that you relate to. |
| Jill | Yes, that is why we left. We had a teacher we just could not relate to. Their emphasis was a little different we did not gel. |
| Peggy | Yes, you are right it is the teacher. I went to a yoga teacher who was fabulous, and then she left. I went to this other person, and before she did this session she stubbed her fag out on the floor, and then says Right let us get down and do some meditation. Some people would actually be sitting next to the remains of her cigarette butt. So that all ethos was out of the window really. |
| interviewer | If I were to ask you your reasons for attending Taijiquan classes would it be for health reasons, leisure, or that you see it as part of your lifestyle? Just a statement from all of you to end the session would be good. |
| Helen | For me, I would definitely say it is for leisure. |
| Chris | Yes I would agree with that |
| Peggy | No, definitely not, for me it is more about meditating and gaining a sense of peace and quiet. I cannot say it is my lifestyle and so, but it is definitely an important part of my lifestyle. |
| Jill | I think I would agree with Peggy, it is not a lifestyle as such, although it is a lifestyle choice that I consider and take into account, but I am not entrenched in it as they were at the other group. For example, I do not live it such as following a diet and considering it above everything else. But I do see it as a lifestyle choice, and to some extent a health choice. I consider it a way to gain gentle exercise, strength and flexibility |
| Lillian | I think I am seeing it more as a lifestyle choice, becoming more aware of how I feel, and notice in my responses both physically and perhaps more importantly how I react to stress, or should I say not reacting to stress in the way that I used to, becoming more calm and less put out about things. You know, not reacting, especially going over the top and losing my cool about things. |

| | |
|----------|--|
| Jennifer | I see it as part of a way of life, I guess with instructing we do it on a more regular basis already, but we also incorporate it into our everyday life. We do not follow the diet as such, but we do take note of what it says but we do not follow it to the letter. However, we do a lot of Taijiquan at home to make us feel better and cope with some of the stresses of a working life. |
| Brian | Well, I guess I can only agree with what my good lady wife says, dare I say more. No but really, Jennifer is right, we do do a lot of Taijiquan, such as the Daosit walk and breathing exercises, some mornings I couldn't get started without doing the vitality set, so it is part of my life and what I do on a regular basis, my routine I guess. I also use ginger, onion and anything else – herbal stuff – to deal with my colds and minor aches and pains. |
| Fallon | I think I come really for the gentle exercise on my back, I suppose that is a health reason; although, I do get relaxed and de-stressed from coming; but I definitely do not see it as a way of life. Well, not to the extent that Brian and Jennifer do. |
| Alice | I do see it as a health benefit. I feel so much better when I have been, like Fallon, I feel de-stressed, and I think I need it to manage my everyday life. I do not do it as much at home as I would like, but I do see it as an important part of what I do. For me it is more than a gentle exercise or a leisure interest, there has to be more to this than just leisure. |
| Brenda | I keep wanting to do more at home, but I do not seem to be able to remember exactly what I should be doing and I do not want to mix myself up. It is not just a way of passing time but it is not a way of life for me but I think I have had some health benefits from it, such as not having a cold this winter, unheard-of for me. |
| Matt | While I find that the Daoist walk works for me, it really helps, so I do wait. However, I think I see Taijiquan as a leisure interest that has added benefits. |