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UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO
Hahn School of Nursing and Health Science
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN NURSING

TRANSFORMATIONS WITH TAI CHI:
THE EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY-DWELLING TAI CHI PRACTITIONERS

by

Sunny Yim Alperson

A dissertation presented to the
FACULTY OF THE HAHN SCHOOL OF NURSING AND HEALTH SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

In partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN NURSING

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Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

While Tai Chi practice has dramatically increased across the U.S., its mechanism is unknown, and overall understanding of the phenomenon is lacking. The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of community-dwelling Tai Chi practitioners through a qualitative study, detailing its social and personal appeal, the reasons for their continued involvement, its symbolic meanings, and its impact on their lives.

Utilizing the grounded theory method and dimensional analysis, in-depth interview data from 23 practitioners, aged 49-82 were audio-recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed to derive a grounded theory. A theoretical model, *transformation with moving meditation* was developed, reflecting the internal and external changes that occurred with their experience of Tai Chi. The following dimensions were identified: *seeking wellness and meaning, beginning a Tai Chi path, cultivating new perspectives, and finding Natural wholeness now.*

Initially, the majority of informants sought wellness and meaning with minimal expectations from Tai Chi. However, the learning process and practice demanded cultivating new perspectives, such as *centering, letting go, and changing.* As they explored Tai Chi's multiplicity, including its philosophy, they experienced changes in lifestyles, their views of self and the world. They increased their capacity to live in the present moment, transferring the practice of moving meditation into their daily lives. Tai Chi acted as a conduit for a continuing self-transformation process.

The study also found that Tai Chi had numerous symbolic meanings that were directly linked to their changes. *Finding Natural wholeness now* was experienced by these practitioners through *stillness in motion, living in the present, and experiencing a sense of well-being*. These practitioners experienced Tai Chi as a process, integral to their life journey, giving them a sense of spiritual and social connectedness. Implications for further research include refinement and testing of the model with varying age groups, types of Tai Chi in different settings and with populations experiencing various types of chronic illness.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to a Bodhisattva,

Dr. Jay Alperson,

my best friend, my husband, my angel.

Acknowledgements

I humbly present this dissertation project to my committee members from the Hahn School of Nursing at the University of San Diego. It appears that I took on an abstract subject which is at its initial stage of knowledge development. It would have been an exceedingly difficult journey if I did not have the support and guidance of my committee. First, I would like to acknowledge my chairperson, Dr. Patricia Roth, for her unwavering trust in my capacity and her warm support throughout my academic career. I thank her for serving as my chairperson. Her clarity, her integrity as an educator, and her beauty and kindness as a person were all essential for my success. I thank Dr. Mary-Rose Mueller for teaching me the meaning of qualitative theory and for her methodological guidance during my research. I thank Dr. Lois Howland for her focused and detailed feedback on preliminary drafts of my dissertation. I also appreciated her knowledge regarding mindfulness. I could not have completed my dissertation without my wonderful committee. I would also like to acknowledge the scholarship support I received from the American Academy of Colleges of Nursing in collaboration with the University of San Diego Nursing Department; it enabled me to publish my first article as a scholar. Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Tai Chi practitioners who volunteered to participate and share their life experiences with me, and the Tai Chi teachers who willingly supported my research. Without their assistance, this project would not have been possible.

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Chapter I: Focus of the Study

Tai Chi is an exercise consisting of deliberately slow postural movements that are designed to be a meditation. It has evolved from an ancient Chinese martial art into a gentle form of health practice. Tai Chi (Tai Ji) is based on a philosophy of body, mind and spiritual unity of a person. Cultivation of health and wellbeing in physical, mental and social aspects of the individual is integrated with mindfulness of particular body movements. Tai Chi was introduced to the U.S. during the mid 20th century (Oldmeadow, 2004; Huang, 1973).

Public interest in Tai Chi (TC) practice has re-emerged in recent years and has been increasing rapidly. A Google search for references to TC websites shows a 10 percent average increase per year from 2002 to 2007. Oden (2004) states that people in United Kingdom did not know what Tai Chi or qigong was 20 years ago. Today, with TC's increasing popularity, more and more books are getting published. He sees the interest and explosive growth as a response to the rapid pace of modern life in the Western world, a desire to return to a slower more deliberative lifestyle.

At a local level, many universities and colleges now have Tai Chi programs. In particular, community colleges and adult schools offer extensive programs for each geographical region, and they are available free or for very small fees. The local Joslyn Senior Center, which serves active community seniors, also provides Tai Chi programs. Of the community college extension Tai Chi programs, one particular program this researcher visited has been established for over 20 years. During semester breaks when

classes are not offered by the college, the same students get together in their own designated areas to continue their practice as usual. A teacher who has been teaching TC in the community college extension for the last 20 years complains, “I have to somehow organize another classroom; there are just too many people and not enough room for all these people!” She states that each semester about 90 percent of the enrollees are between 50 and 80 years old.

The research community has published an increasing number of Tai Chi studies, with numerous replications of earlier studies. The frequency of TC study, as indicated by a search of the Medline computer database from the National Institutes of Health, shows a dramatic increase:

Figure 1. Medline Studies on Tai Chi from 1981 to 2007

Figure 1 shows that there were only six published Tai Chi articles in 1997, while 10 years later in 2007, 59 articles were listed.

Considering the increasing trends of TC practice in the public (Gallagher, 2003),

the popularity among particular age groups, and the increasing frequency of published research, several questions arise. What is the source of the increasing trend of this exercise? What do people see in this imported exercise from a vastly different culture? What is responsible for this explosive re-emergence, when TC has been available in the U.S. since 1960? Why is this particular age group of 50 and older more interested in the exercise? And finally what makes TC practitioners continue to commit for years?

Purpose of the Study

While many research studies (Klein & Adams, 2004; Taylor-Pilliae & Froelicher, 2004; Wolf, Barnhart, Ellison, & Coogler, 1997) claim that the health benefits of Tai Chi account for increased TC practice, a deeper investigation of the phenomena is needed to understand this particular social process. In an intriguing but small-scale study, Scourfield (2006) explored TC practice patterns for fall prevention. He discovered that the self image associated with TC practice was more responsible for the continuing practice of his informants than their belief in preventing their falls. An explorative qualitative inquiry with in-depth interviews into the experience of TC practitioners may explain why the practice is increasing.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of community-dwelling TC practitioners through a qualitative study, detailing the significance of TC meanings and associations to their lives. The specific lines of inquiry were

- 1) What is the appeal of TC for these practitioners? (analyze and describe the social personal context of TC's appeal)
- 2) What makes people stay in TC? (analyze what makes them continue)
- 3) What are the symbolic meanings of TC with these practitioners? (analyze

their relationship with TC)

- 4) What is the impact of TC practice on their lives? (analyze and describe the function and influence)

A knowledge contribution to the TC literature was intended by exploring the symbols and roles of TC in the experience of community-dwelling practitioners.

Qualitative research with grounded theory methodology and the symbolic interactionist framework was utilized to achieve the specific aims of the study.

Philosophical Underpinnings of the Study

The philosophical underpinnings (theoretical framework) of this study were from *symbolic interactionism* (SI). SI is a humanistic perspective that focuses on humans' "symbolically shaped cognitive processes" to understand and explain human behaviors (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). It takes the view that human life experience is a relativistic construction of reality. Its main premises can be divided into two major intertwined philosophical trends. The first notion of SI is that human consciousness is always interpretive and experiential; people never react to "facts" but react to interpretations of consciousness from their own constructed inner reality. The second notion is more empirical and counterbalances the first; human reality is not just a projection of individual interpretations, but certain things are forced to be cognized by a social world. Humans are actors confronted by situations, and they act by defining situations that confronts them (Blumer, 1969; Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Thus, SI provides a pragmatic philosophical frame that analyzes the social process of human interactions.

The social aspect arises because people have the capacity to understand the world, themselves and others symbolically. People make sense of the world by deciphering the

social scene, interpreting the meanings of gestures, signals and situations that are in continual interaction with one another. These capacities to understand and synthesize symbols enable humans to anticipate others' reactions and respond with their own behaviors, producing the meanings of their relationships (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, J. & Lofland, L., 2001).

For this study, two important terms in symbolic interactionism are *significant gestures* and *significant others*. Significant gestures are “actions towards an object that are rehearsed in the imagination;” and significant others are “those who count the most in the formulation of the significant gestures.” Significant others do not have to be physically present to affect the self, nor do they have to be people. Significant others are symbolically shaped in the self, and they can affect actions. For example, ideas and images can strongly influence the individual to behave and feel in certain ways. Examples are a religious symbol that is fervently held, a political ideal with which one strongly identifies, or a tranquil image of a favorite island.

Characteristic of this symbolic human reality is our capacity to touch and merge with others' symbolic realities. Through the ability to be the other reality at the same time, the symbol becomes significant. This study situates itself within this “significant others” context from a symbolic interactionism framework in order to explore symbolic meanings and gestures of TC in the realities of community-based experienced TC practitioners (Atkinson et al., 2001; Clarke, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Method

Rooted in the philosophical framework of symbolic interactionism, the *grounded theory method* is an empirical approach to the study of social process through qualitative inquiry and analysis of data. Clarke (2005) argues that the postmodern notion of grounded theory maintains Mead's conception of social constructionism; human consciousness is not static, in that human perspective is social and apt to change any time. Thus, grounded theory assumes life experience as processual and complex. And this complexity of social and psychological processes can emerge through interactions. Grounded theory develops a theory grounded in the data, provided the researcher sensitively explores the informants' experiences.

The overall positioning of the grounded theory method in this study is a postmodern frame of interpretative grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). The specific data analysis was organized and conceptualized through Schatzman's (1991) *dimensional analysis*. Dimensional analysis is an alternative method to arrive at a grounded theory. For this study, it provided an overarching structural guide which articulated the analytical process of data more explicitly, while focusing on the integration of "all" involved dimensions. Furthermore, the emphasis on the importance of natural analytical process of individuals seemed a better fit to this study. The integration of participants' thoughts and feelings with analyses of their TC practice was critical for discovering the role and symbolic meanings of TC in their lives. Grounded theory and dimensional analysis were methods for inductive theory generation, with the central feature being simultaneous data collection and analysis, leading to multiple relationships among the categories and dimensions of phenomena.

Significance of the Study

This study explores the role of TC, its symbolic meanings, and its impact on the lives of the practitioners. It utilizes a qualitative inquiry with in-depth interviews and a grounded theory method to derive a theory based on the common experience of a group of TC practitioners in the community. The significance of this study involves two aspects. First, an inadequate body of literature regarding philosophical and conceptual understanding of TC practice leads to uncertainty about its appeal. Learning about the views, feelings, and thoughts of experienced TC practitioners contributes to the body of knowledge regarding TC phenomena, including the explosive increase in practice in recent years.

Furthermore, developing a grounded theory about Tai Chi enables applications to the practice of nursing and healthcare. Comprehending TC from multiple perspectives beyond the physical level of current understanding should help professionals utilize it better. This grounded theory, built on the experience of community-dwelling practitioners, provides an initial theoretical structure of Tai Chi to further knowledge development and to advance implementation strategies (Alperson, 2008; Cutcliffe, 2000; Morse & Richards, 2002).

Chapter II: Context of the Study

Tai Chi (TC) is a philosophical system of health practice originating from ancient China. It is composed of a series of specific postural movements that are practiced with a deliberately slow pace in a continuous flow of an artful dance. However, TC's multiple properties are more than a mere form of physical exercise. As a cultural and philosophical product of Chinese efforts since antiquity, Tai Chi bears the historical evolution of Chinese thought and culture. It is a complex fusion of three major Chinese philosophical traditions: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism (Alperson, 2008; Chan, 1963; Cheng, 1985; Huang, 1973; Watts, 1957).

To explore the context of this study, the review first addresses the philosophical and socio-historical underpinnings of TC practice. Included are Chinese cosmology and the three Chinese philosophical traditions that ground the practice. The Eastern body-mind concept is discussed along with its implications on health and TC. Then, historical accounts related to TC's Chinese roots and their introductions to the U.S. are described. Finally, the empirical research literature on TC is briefly summarized.

Before proceeding with our discussion of Chinese cosmology, a brief mention needs to be made regarding terminology. Due to varying translations, all references to Tai Chi will use the Western term "Tai Chi" rather than "Tai Ji," though the latter is closer to native Chinese pronunciation and spelling (Wawrytko, 2006). Furthermore, while being respectful to various terms TC scholars have used in the literature, such as Tai Chi, Tai Chi Chuan (Qwan), Tai Chi Chi, Taichi-kung and Tai Ji, for the purpose of

simplicity, I will designate any derivatives of names and types simply as Tai Chi. And, due to their intertwined nature, the terms Tai Chi and Tai Chi philosophy will be used interchangeably. Finally, the word “nature” will be capitalized as *Nature* when the intention is a broader meaning more similar to Spinoza’s usage, which includes humans, the world, God, and the universe (Scruton, 1999). When the intention is to refer to the physical world with plants and animals, *nature* will be used.

Chinese Cosmology

Contributions from different components of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism in various time periods of Chinese history are synthesized into this slow moving exercise in the centrality of body. To understand Tai Chi as a historical and philosophical merging of Chinese culture since ancient times, we begin with a brief accounting of its cosmology, which provided a basis for all major TC philosophical traditions to come.

The I Ching or The Book of Changes (trans. Wilhelm & Baynes, 1972; also known as *Yi Jing* and *The Classic of Change*) is the most comprehensive primary source of cosmological building blocks that ground Chinese philosophies and TC practice. *Yi Jing* started as a guarded possession for elite politicians and religious figures; it later became a philosophical system of moral guidance for Chinese and other East Asian societies. *The Book of Changes* is an experience of a vastly different system of the world. According to Eastern thought, it engages human imagination and intuition beyond mere intellect (Huang, 1989; Wawrytko, 2006).

“Yi” means change and “Jing” means classic or book. Beginning as an oral tradition of divination in ancient China with a speculated origin going back 5000 years,

legend has it that the cultural hero and the first mythical ruler of the Fu Hsi dynasty created *Yi Jing*. The enigmatic symbols in *Yi Jing* are said to be the correlations and interactions of Heaven, Earth and Man in multiple layers as expressed in 8 trigrams and 64 hexagrams. Around 1100 BC they were interpreted by founders of the Chou dynasty to counsel and govern their people (Huang, 1989; Wawrytko, 2006).

Yi Jing was an early civilization's attempt to understand the world around human and universal principles that were based on empirical observations from nature. For this reason, some view *Yi Jing* as proto-science (Capra, 1999; Milburn, 2001; Needham, 1983). Its primary means of expression is through images of natural phenomena, and these aesthetic metaphors correspond to the core images of Chinese philosophical traditions today. Fang (1981) organized Chinese philosophy to represent the most common themes, giving characteristic names for the developmental emphasis of each philosophical tradition. They are the *Confucian sage*, the *Daoist aesthetic poet*, and the *Buddhist prophet*. These three categories are all suffused throughout *Yi Jing* (Fang, 1981). Some major assumptions about the relationship of man and Nature in *Yi Jing* are:

- 1). Metaphysical primacy of change: everything changes except change itself.
- 2). Cosmic correspondence: humans are interdependent with Nature, mutually reflecting each other in events.
- 3). The logic of change (the principle of reversion): Natural forces have a cyclic tendency, from external seasons to the interiors of human life.
- 4). Recognition of natural limits: reversion patterns of forces are balanced and harmonious; excess is counterproductive.

- 5). Primal components of change: *yin* and *yang*, the receptive and assertive interact to produce changes (adapted from Wawrytko, 2006, p. 51).

These Eastern approaches reflect different cultural values, attitudes, and philosophical assumptions than found in the West. For example, linguistic prowess was important in the makings of Western philosophies, having a dominant power over Nature. In contrast, Chinese philosophy uses pre-linguistic and pre-conceptual images which evolved from observations and interactions with Nature. This difference in attitude and approach is also reflected in the original use of written language. In the West, archeological evidence suggests that the first written language served to keep track of material goods. In China however, written script was first used for *Yi Jing* divination (Wawrytko, 2006).

Yin Yang Theory

In *Yi Jing*, we find the TC diagram known as the yin yang symbol in the West.

Figure 2. Tai Chi diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (adapted from Capra, 1999)

Yin and yang are the metaphorical terms given to represent interactions of Natural forces in the universe; they are the archetypal polarity of the opposites. The diagram of Tai Chi (see *Figure 2*) symbolizes the undifferentiated great ultimate, the world of primordial wholeness, or the original oneness from which yin and yang proliferate into phenomenal

manifestations. The flowing line dividing yin and yang within the diagram symbolizes the cyclic movements of forces in Nature, that is, the interactive mutuality of opposites. According to *Yi Jing*, the phases of continuously flowing forces of yin and yang between the persons and environment are the basis of all human experiences (Capra, 1999; Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981; Wawrytko, 2006).

The yin yang doctrine is pervasive and persistent in Chinese history, whether in metaphysics, medicine, government, or art. The harmony of yin and yang accounts for much of Chinese life and thought, and it acts as the basis of all other philosophical branches. Despite the significance of the yin yang theory, limited information of its genesis is available. What comes with it is the *Doctrine of the Five Agents* (also called *Five Elements* or *wu-shing*: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth), representing early Chinese ideas of interrelationships of nature. Though Tsou Yen (305-240 BC) is sometimes credited with combining the theory of *wu-shing* as contained in the *Book of History* and yin yang theory, the ideas were present in the early Daoist philosophers Lao Zi and Zuang Zi before the 5th century BC (Chan, 1963).

Yin yang and the Five Elements both operate in cycles of rise and fall, and are part of a universal pattern which unites man and Nature. Together, this view indicates principles and laws of reality as a pair of opposite forces in operation. The five agents are represented as dynamically interacting abstract forces, not simply material elements. There is order among the flux; the process includes contradiction as well as harmony. The reality presents unity in multiplicity, accommodating the one and the many (Chan, 1963; Clarke, 2000; Fang, 1981).

Wawrytko (2006) contends that yin and yang are analogous to positive and negative electrical charges in the nature. They are opposites but complementary, mutually interacting to manifest their completion as light. Yang energy symbolizes the force of motion, strength, and creation; it is bright and vast like the sky. Like the Earth, yin energy is the grounding force and is yielding, dark, gentle, receptive, and nurturing. Yin and yang are neither good nor bad; rather they are polarities that complement the other in each human experience and within individuals. The initial assumption of TC practice involves understanding the mutuality of opposites and learning to balance these two forces within and around the person (Clarke, 2000; Huang, 1973).

The notion that all forces become harmonized has become an embedded concept within Chinese cosmology. Yin yang theory places Chinese ethical and social teachings on a cosmological basis; all things are related among themselves in Nature, and reality is a process of constant harmonization and transformation. Chinese philosophical thought involves *correspondence*, with human activity reflecting Nature, and Nature activity reflecting our circumstances (Fang, 1981; Wawrytko, 2006).

Humanism: Early Beginning, Man and the Universe

Man's relationship with the universe was a great concern from the beginning of history for the Chinese people. As Chan maintains (1963, p. 9), "Does man not contain within his psyche a store of unexplored forces, which if rightly understood, would give him a new vision of himself and help safeguard the future for him?" This quotation captures several common properties that are present in Chinese cosmology and tradition. The Chinese believe that, with proper cultivation of oneself from a spiritual foundation of superior humanistic values, a transformation of the ordinary self to a great union with the

cosmos is possible. Thus it began in the first recorded social revolution founded on humanism, when the ancient tribal society Shang (1751-1112 BC) was overthrown by the Chou dynasty, establishing the first meritocracy in ancient China. This new society was founded on the principle of human “virtue” as having social and political merit, which could be used to guide the people of Chou (Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981).

One’s future, whether a blessing or a calamity, was not the consequence of whims of a supreme deity. Rather, destiny depended upon deeds of human virtue. With this transformation in the world view of the people of Chou (1111-249 BC), a personified God figure was replaced with the concept of tien (heaven or sky) and impersonal Natural forces in operation as spiritual realities. A greater importance was given to humans and their activities; humans were equal peers of the spiritual universe, included in the operation of Natural forces. Thus, the correspondence with heaven and the efforts towards unity of man and heaven dominated Chinese thought since ancient times.

Humans, as active participants in the functioning of the cosmos, were encouraged to employ self cultivation in order to reach spiritual heights (Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981). The power of the spiritual universe was recognized as equally available to all; however, the deciding factor was human virtue. Humanity was important in maintaining stability of the universe, together with heaven and earth as part of the architectonic structure. Human activities were complementary and co-creative in their continuous interactions, influencing balance of forces in the cosmos, thus together shaping cosmic patterns and events of the world (Alperson, 2008; Clarke, 2000; Fang, 1981; Wawrytko, 2006).

This strategic and philosophical policy of the Chou dynasty changed the ancient state into a domain of mind and ethical culture which sought a spiritual democracy of

moral excellence. People cultivated themselves diligently under a government that rewarded higher human values. People of Chou, regardless of distinctions in rank, were challenged to develop their talents and expertise. The rein of the Chou dynasty is recorded as a golden era of peace in Chinese antiquity (Chan, 1963).

The characteristic Chinese cosmology, the humanism, the correspondence between man and the cosmos with the status of peer relationship, and the individual transformation to obtain unity with Nature, all led to a furthering belief in the potential of self cultivation and a valuing of human reason. Thus, a humanistic foundation of Chinese philosophy of self cultivation culture was established at the dawn of Chinese history.

Cosmic Correspondence

Chinese philosophy as a whole is one of cosmic correspondence, with the human psyche and the universe interwoven without barriers. The universe and the human are reflective of each other like mirrors of inner and outer world. Thus man is participatory by Nature in all cosmic events. The premise of Chinese philosophy is expressed in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*: “The cosmic principle is the essence of the human nature” (trans. Wilhelm & Jung, 1969 p. xi).

Clarke (2000) explains this concept of correspondence using his term “Chinese homology.” Nature and humans are conceived as multiple levels of symmetry that interlock in correspondence with each other by complex layers of “analogical” correlations. Through this interaction with cosmos, humans find significance in value, position, structure and function in their social, personal, and political dimensions, relating their inner workings with a world of wider cosmic order and principles. Clarke extends a

similar line of thinking to many other influential philosophers in the West, including Herder, Hegel, Coleridge, Alexander, and Whitehead.

Jung, a 20th century psychologist who was deeply influenced by *Yi Jing* and Chinese cosmology, coined the term “synchronicity.” He asserted that synchronicity involved interdependence in space and time among events themselves, as well as with psychic states of the observers. Jung contended that it was a view diametrically opposed to that of causality. Synchronicity is the essence of cosmic correspondence (Jung, as cited in the forward to *The I Ching*, 1972).

Organicism: the All inclusive View and Non-dualism

Supporting the concept of correspondence and homology is the all-world inclusive view of *organicism*. Natural forces in operation in continual correspondence with man and the world as a whole coalesce into one organized self-sustaining system, the *all-in-one view*. Organicism and the idea of correspondence are not unique to the ancient Chinese; one can trace similar cosmologies in the Western history of philosophy in the ancient Greeks, such as Thales and Heraclitus. However, the view of Heraclitus regarding the cosmos was based on conflicts and release, rather than the forces in Nature (Tarnas, 1991).

Other more contemporary Western philosophers, such as Leibniz, had kindred views. This thinker, who was the inventor of Calculus, also offered his theory of the *monad*, which explained the world as a living organism, with each monad mirroring the universe and acting in harmony with all other monads. Similarly, Hohen’s *organicismic monism* emphasized the sharing of the same nature in humans and the universe (Chan, 1963; Clarke, 2000; Fang, 1981; Tarnas, 1991).

This all world inclusive view was a philosophy of integration and balance as reflected in the TC diagram in the *Yi Jing*, and it was continuously refined as the concept of *Dao* was incorporated in Chinese philosophical systems. The concept of *Dao* (also spelled “Tao”) provided a metaphysical and spiritual basis for self cultivation and transformation. Definitions of *Dao* and methodologies to reach the state of *Dao* differed in all three traditions. For example, in Buddhism, achieving *Dao* implied reaching liberation of consciousness, the Enlightenment. In Confucianism, it was geared toward reaching the sagehood of Confucian social role model personality, the *JunZi* (profound person). Regardless of the differences in the methodological frames and ideal concepts about *Dao*, the three Chinese traditions shared a common ground of self development as the ultimate means to find truth and human happiness. *Dao* as a general term was the dynamic principle of the universe, the primordial wholeness, or in TC’s original terminology, “the great undifferentiated oneness” (Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981).

A critical concept that emerged from the philosophy of all-inclusive is *non-dualism*, which applies to the human body and mind for this project. Instead of a dualistic understanding of the world as divided into material and spirit, absolute and non-absolute, hell and heaven, good and evil, body and mind, all parts of human experience are tightly interwoven into one integrated whole. Non-dualism applies to arts, medicine, poetry, ethics, and social science, all of which intersect, interconnect and integrate under Chinese philosophical assumptions. For example, theology and philosophy are not separate; divine life and human life are not distinct. Instead, the concept of the divine is merged and embedded in ordinary everyday life, waiting to be discovered and acknowledged during human endeavor (Fang, 1981; Shibayama, 1974; Wawrytko, 2006).

Transformation and Self Cultivation

Based on this peer relationship of humans with the spiritual universe, early value orientations were incorporated into the traditions of self-cultivation methodologies throughout Chinese philosophical history. The belief in a practical potential for transformation of each individual through self-cultivation is at the core of Chinese philosophical development. Thus, Fang (1981) calls Chinese philosophy a transcendental-immanent, implying its immediate application back to the phenomenal level of human reality.

This philosophical tradition allowed the unique development of self-cultivation to reach spiritual heights from various walks of life. For example, during the Sung and Ming period (960-1644) of China, written records show active debates and competitions among scholars from the three philosophical traditions, with respect to which self cultivation methods were more efficacious in understanding reality. What is different here from philosophical debates that existed throughout Western history is that the philosophers were all meditation practitioners. Thus, this debate took on a phenomenological tone rather than an academic argument. Wang Yangming, one of the debating scholars of the time, was famous for having an experience of actual satori (liberation); it was highly likely that he had tried all different methodologies from other traditions for comparison (Chan, 1963).

Tai Chi is the offspring that represents the integration and evolution of these cosmological assumptions. Cosmic correspondence of yin and yang, the human's corresponding relationship with the Nature, and the non dualistic body-mind unity are all integrated in its philosophy and practice (Cheng, 1985; Huang, 1973).

Three Chinese Traditions

We now change our focus from Chinese cosmology, in order to briefly review the three Chinese traditions that have been intertwined both historically and philosophically with Tai Chi: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.

Confucianism: Social Harmony based on Human Excellence

In contrast to the prevailing chaos of the Warring States period (403-222 BC), Confucianism offered a voice of reason. Its primary principles were resurrected from the earlier humanistic Chou government; they included good government, social harmony, and moral examples of goodness. Confucius established an educational system with a personality model based on JunZi, a model of a profound person. JunZi has aesthetic-moral perfection; he possesses sage-like wisdom, luminous virtue, emotional maturation, artistic refinement, and keen skills for political and social leadership. These qualities were to be encouraged with debate and persuasion, not with punishment, oppression or profit. Their educational curricula included emotional development and aesthetics, in order to foster role-model personalities in society. Emotional maturation and refinement were personal characteristics to be cultivated.

The Confucian inspiration for nobility was the human characteristic of wisdom and virtue which came from self cultivation, not a gift from a supernatural being of infinite power. His sense of humanism in philosophy shares the early sentiment from Chou's time: "Man can make the Way great and not that the Way can make man great.... Human creative impulse is just as great as the cosmic potency in creativity" (Chan, 1963, p.15). When a slave became the prime minister, humanism reached its peak. Confucius was credited for solidifying Chinese metaphysics by adding his commentaries on Chou

dynasty policies to the *Yi Jing* system. Confucian ideals of integrated wisdom and social harmony based on the human virtue rather than political power are visible in the TC community today (Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981; Huang, 1973).

Daoism: the Dao, Nature, and Chi

The Confucian world placed great emphasis on social order, harmony and individual duties. The values and philosophy were inherent in JunZi, and they were set as systematic standards to be cultivated. In contrast, Daoist education minimized conventional forms of knowledge, freeing itself from conformity. In comparison to the Confucian sage of society, the man of Dao was an aesthetic poet who transformed the ways of the world, enjoying inner freedom in the beauty of Nature (Fang, 1981, Wawrytko, 2006). Daoists maintained the role of critic against Confucian “worldliness,” replacing it with individual tranquility, non-conformity and transcendental spirits. Their doctrine, written in poetry and philosophical imagery, was proposed in a small book of 5,250 words called *Dao De Jing*, which has been translated as *The Book of Way and its Virtue* (Lao Tzi, 2003, trans. Ames & Hall). Written around 600 BC, it is the most widely translated Chinese classic in the English language today.

According to Lao Zi, *Dao*, in the form of great vacuity, generates the material world in a finite realm of being. It is produced by an infinite notion, with differences in order, time, power, and in value, just like the differences in shapes and sequences of our DNA manifest different potentials for life. Zhuang Zi, the other ancient Daoist philosopher, also asserted a unity of being and nothing, that is, a combining of the great harmony of the world and its vacuity. Thus, Chinese philosophy as a whole always accommodated the one and the many, the infinite and the finite (Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981).

The concepts and flavors of Dao are different in all three traditions, but for the purpose of this dissertation, we will stay with one version provided by several scholars (Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981, Wawrytko, 2006). Dao is the source of all things, the process of the universe itself. It also is the same essence as human nature. Thus, in *The Classic of Life and Consciousness (Hui Ming Ching)*, “that which exists through itself is called the Way (Dao). Dao has neither name nor shape. It is the one essence (of human nature), the one primal spirit.... The subtlest secret of the Dao is human nature and life” (trans. Wilhelm & Young, 1969, p. 21).

Its premise of *wu-wei* (non-action) is an important concept in the Chinese way of life and culture, and it is present in TC practice. Non-action here does not mean inactivity or withdrawal from society. In the spirit of Daoism, one can still oppose social or governmental oppression, which is against individual Natural wisdom. Rather, *wu-wei* can be thought of as taking no un-natural action; it is the transcendence of relativities of worldly ways by harmonizing with Nature to achieve Dao, to see things “naturally” as they are. By following ways of Nature, man’s nature is fulfilled and the mysterious Dao will appear as *wu-wei-wu*, which can be translated as “action with non-action.”

Everything is done effortlessly, in a spontaneous manner (Chan, 1963, Clarke, 2000; Lao Zi, 2003).

From the ancient scholar Lao Zi to the modern Japanese philosopher Yuasa, it is clear that Dao is not a phenomenon that can be theoretically observed as in science (Girardot, Miller, & Xiaogan, 2001). In Chinese philosophy, Nature is understood as a practical stage to actualize the original human nature latent in each person, rather than something to be conquered for human use. Yuasa (1993) contends that Chinese

philosophy is a practical study of mankind which actualizes the original human nature latent in the mind and body. For this, he argues that Chinese philosophy is closer to psychology within medical science than to physics.

Daoists seek unity with Nature (Ziran). Intuitive wisdom can be found in pervasive Nature; it is a way of reaching the nothingness and the tranquility of the great wholeness of the universe. Dao is pervasive and has a flow; the process has successive stages of formation and growth, decline and destruction, and going in and out of existence. Thus, in Daoism, there are only continuing transformations (Chan, 1963; Lao Zi, 2003; Wawrytko, 2006).

Dao is an invisible operating principle of the world and thought to be a “sacred source of being (Tai Chi)” in each individual (trans. Wilhelm & Young, 1969 p. 188). Natural healing powers from within are activated when an individual harmonizes with Dao. By opening to Nature’s intuitive wisdom, one can harness the power of cosmos, that is, Chi. Through cultivating Chi, one can understand Dao in substantial terms, and the mysterious state of Dao emerges, unleashing original wholeness. While difficulties in explaining what is involved in Dao and Chi are not new to philosophy (Girardot, Miller, & Xiaogan, 2001), the relationship between Dao and Chi is of primary importance for self-cultivation methodologies, including Tai Chi.

Alperson (2008)’s hermeneutical interpretation of Dao in line with Yuasa’s Chi involves an artificial separation into two aspects: on one hand, Dao as the dynamic continuity of the universe, and the other Dao as an energy substance of practical function in everyday life. This invisible functional notion of Dao as subtle energy form is of great

interest in current healthcare and will be examined later in this chapter as a healing vehicle.

Conceptions of Chi.

Chi (also called *qi* in Chinese, *dan* in Korean and *ki* in Japanese) is a critical concept in Chinese philosophy, as pervasive as yin yang theory. Historically, the concept of Chi is as old as Chinese civilization, and it is present in all three philosophical traditions. Written sources describing Chi can be found as early as 300 BC. Mencius, a Confucian sage, thought Chi was moral energy and advised nourishing or “husbanding” one’s “flood like qi”(p. 19) to achieve human excellence and potency. For the Daoist scholar Zhuang Zi, Chi was the material force of the universe that was intimately involved in the cycle of transformation of human life and death (*The I Ching*, trans. Ames & Hall, 2003).

Chi is difficult to understand for many Westerners, who have variously defined it as inner life force, bio-energy, or vital breath. Joseph Needham (1983) reluctantly defined Chi as “matter energy” and advised that it is best to remain un-translated. Some argued Chi was the corresponding link between mind and body and between macrocosmic and microcosmic events of the world (Clarke, 2000; Dunbar, 1991; Fang 1981; Milburn, 2001). Recently, Nagatomo (2002) translated Yuasa’s concept of Chi as an invisible psychophysical energy in a living body. He argued that Chi can be expressed psychologically or physically. A conscious awareness of one’s own body is a form of energy, a form of Chi. By developing awareness of Chi, individuals can increase their body-mind awareness.

To better explain Chi for personal self cultivation, Yuasa compared it to the Indian tradition of *tapas*. When poets produce beautiful poetry, the poetical inspiration was attributed to tapas, literally heat or fire, an inspiration that arises internally to produce something creative as a beautiful poem. Heat here is a thermal energy that transforms to something different, a new function of the human spirit. Thus, the concept of cultivating or strengthening Chi is similar to cultivating tapas. Chi is tied with the balancing of yin and yang (Yuasa, 1993).

Chi is influenced by all human factors, mental, environmental, physical, spiritual, and dietary factors. For example, infants are born with some Chi from their parents when they are conceived; this is “congenital Chi.” Nutritive Chi is received from consuming food. Protective or defensive Chi called “wei” surrounds the body, protecting it from harmful stimuli found in the outer environment, such as hot or cold temperatures, or psychological stressors (Milburn, 2001).

The concept of Chi relates to self-cultivation practices in all three traditions: in Confucianism with “quiet sitting,” in Daoism with *daoin* (a direct Chi guiding meditation), and in Buddhism with sitting and moving meditations. But as imprinted as Chi is in China, Korea and Japan, it is difficult for many Westerners to understand, owing to vastly different cultural paradigms. Nonetheless, Chi has been considered one of the most extraordinary conceptions in Chinese philosophy, and it has been used in Chinese healthcare for thousands of years (Chan, 1963; Dunbar, 1991; Fang 1981; Milburn, 2001; Yuasa, 1993).

Buddhism

Buddhism, the third of the three Chinese traditions that have affected Tai Chi, migrated from India around the first century to China. Over the next 300 years, it went through a merging process with existing Chinese spiritual traditions, particularly with Daoism, which had many compatible or parallel concepts. However, unlike Daoists who focus on attaining inner freedom by harmonizing with Nature, Buddhists sought practical liberation from human suffering within the interior of the human mind. Buddhist training emphasized the notion that the universe is within; looking within will enable us to understand the world and liberate ourselves from bondage to it. Inward contemplation will lead us to gain insight into our *original self nature* or *Buddha nature* that is inherent in all of us (Fleming, 2002; Hahn, 1998; Yu, 1969).

The belief in transformation through self cultivation was already strongly established in Chinese culture when Buddhism arrived from India. While self cultivation through various forms of meditation existed in both the Confucian and Daoist traditions, Buddhists focused on reviving the true meanings of Buddha's teaching on meditation as solutions to human suffering. The Chan Buddhists brought a meticulous system based on the Buddha's original focus on direct observation of the mind itself. A creative hermeneutical revival of Buddhism was brought on by Master Hae Neung (638-713 AD), the 6th century Chinese Chan patriarch. He offered a radical doctrine of "sudden awakening," in order to truly release the mind from its own hold. This is a meditation method that avoids fixating on any and all conceptual frameworks, thus coming back to the Buddha's original teaching of the emptying the doctrine itself, that is "emptying the emptiness." Thus, the most significant contributions of Buddhism to Tai Chi

development involved enriching the meditation aspect of TC and combining it with existing Daoist methods (Huang, 1973; Watts, 1957; Wawrytko, 2006).

Buddhist meditation: Vipassana.

Meditation in general can be divided into two types; insight-oriented meditation and concentrating meditation. The insight-oriented meditation is called mindfulness, which in Sanskrit is “vipassana,” which translates as seeing it as it is. Both types require concentration, but the former requires insight into some principles based on a Buddhist understanding of the world. Both methods are well synthesized and are often used in combination. Nonetheless, the distinction of the methods is worth mentioning, especially since the Buddhist mindfulness meditation is a burgeoning phenomenon in the U.S., paralleling the increase in TC practice. In order to facilitate fuller understanding of what meditation means for TC, we focus on the Buddhist concept of vipassana (Marlatt, 2006).

Marlatt (2006) recalls the initial experience of meditation as a new sense of awareness. He later specifically defined mindfulness as “a detached perspective, an awareness of mental and physical processes as they occur in the here-and-now, in the moment to moment flow of ongoing experience.” (p.158). The mediator closely monitors all mental content, thoughts, physical sensations, and feelings as they occur on a moment-to moment basis during meditation, using non-judgmental acceptance and loving-kindness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Oldmeadow, 2004).

While many definitions of mindfulness are available in the literature, it is worthwhile to note that mindfulness is a completely experiential phenomenon; the very language used to explain and theorize this non-conceptual self- knowing can obscure the true meaning. Kabat-Zinn (2006) warns that normal seeing is not as easy as one might

think. Other Zen masters state that the ability to see things normally is no small thing, and to be really normal is unusual. In the matter of mindfulness discourse, one needs to be aware of epistemological dictates forced upon human cognition; they require broader imagination and intellectual flexibility (Myobong, 1984; Wawrytko, 2006).

Transcendental meditation belongs to category of concentrative type, because it usually involves focusing on a mantra or visual imagery to escape from ordinary thinking activities to a realm of relaxation and peace. On the other hand, mindfulness meditation is oriented to obtain insight into the reality, self, and the world; and relaxation is the precondition, the departing point (Kabat-Zinn, 2006, Marlatt, 2006; Marlatt & Kristeller, 2000; Ott, 2004).

In terms of its clinical application, Marlatt and Kristeller (2000) identify two general purposes of mindfulness meditation that are useful. First, the practitioners start to observe the changing nature of perceived reality and gradually understand the impermanence of phenomena. Second, clients can start self-monitoring their subjective thinking process from the perspective of an objective observer. Steps in the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) are similar, but differ in important ways.

CBT involves discovering one's automatic thinking patterns and changing the relationship with own thought patterns (Marlatt & Kristeller, 2000). Mindfulness meditation coincides naturally with identifying the automatic thinking patterns while learning about self. However, the intervention is the opposite of CBT. In CBT, clients are instructed to replace undesirable patterns with other more rational thought. In mindfulness, one is instructed to observe without judgment, in acceptance.

Currently, there are other general trends of vipassana application in the U.S. One, from a Buddhist psychology perspective, is termed *mindfulness-based cognitive therapy* (MBCT); it is still based on a Cartesian dichotomy of body and mind separation (Teasedale, Segal & Williams, 1995). Other approaches are based on Buddhist spirituality. A whole person approach practicing body-mind unity in body mindfulness meditation is an example. Traditional mindfulness authority figures emphasize liberation of consciousness; Thich Naht Hahn and Dali Lama are prime examples, standing in the front line with their efforts. They both are social activists who focus on issues of human injustice and violence of war, and they both propose peace, love, and compassion and wisdom through mindfulness.

A third trend, Kabat-Zinn's (1979) *mindfulness based stress reduction* (MBSR), is an effort to synthesize meditation method without religious connotations, but with Buddhist traditions of self cultivation intact. Kabat-Zinn brought mindfulness to medicine by establishing Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) at a hospital in Massachusetts. He taught patients, doctors, and nurses mindfulness meditation in a medical hospital clinic for the first time in the U.S. Kabat-Zinn (2005; 2006) reminds us that the words medicine and meditation have the same word root in Latin, "mederi" meaning "cure", implying a healing function of both if they are properly practiced. His MBSR based clinics have spread to over 200 MBSR clinics nationwide, and his efforts have increased clinical research utilizing a MBSR framework.

During the evolution of meditation from TM to mindfulness in the U.S., vipassana was intensely explored by early pioneers like Kornfield and Goldstein (Oldmeadow, 2004). While these two researchers collaborated and influenced shaping of American

vipassana, they disagreed over the intended application of mindfulness. Kornfield wanted to apply it as therapy to alleviate psychological problems of people; he envisioned it to be a humanistic solution for emotional problems, as currently applied in CBT. On the other hand, Goldstein saw mindfulness as a tool only for liberating the mind and insisted it should remain as a pure method for raising human consciousness. He argued that mindfulness would lose its potency as a selfless philosophy towards human liberation from the interference of shallow forms of “I” interests (Oldmeadow, 2004).

In reflection of Buddha’s original intent, Goldstein’s concern was legitimate, in that there is always the danger of misconstruing mindfulness as mindless concentration, lacking the needed insight into its meaning. Anyone can develop a great power of concentration without humanitarian interest. Insight into concepts that promote higher values for human goodness and social harmony is a critical element in the proper understanding of the meditation. His objection is related to the notion that intellect without discipline and power without constructive purpose are of no value and even can be harmful to humanity. Buddha’s mindfulness sutra was provided to the monks, whose aims were liberation from suffering and the confines of narrow views, so that they could move toward a greater world of compassion and joy. They emphasized that without virtue practice, true freedom is not possible; that is, compassion and wisdom are inseparable (Hahn, 1998; Marthur, 2006).

In the West, Huxley similarly saw the value of meditation as tapping into the universal potential of the human mind, transcending its negative preoccupations with life. Meditation moved the mind toward more positive experiences such as compassion, acceptance and forgiveness. His *Ends and means* (1937) is a synthesis of complex human

issues such as politics, war, religion and ethics into a theory of the ultimate nature of reality. In it, he interprets meditation as a discourse that helps a man to surface a special quality based on Buddhist love and compassion. Deconstructed seeing is necessary to attain inner freedom through meditation practice (Huxley, 1937; Myobong, 1984; Yu, 1969).

Emptiness and interdependence.

What is this insight in mindfulness meditation? In the Buddhist view, true wisdom and compassion can begin to rise when one attains insight into the *doctrine of emptiness*, that is, the concept of impermanence of one's own being. The doctrine of emptiness was first articulated by Nargajuna, a known Buddhist scholar and teacher during the second century in India. Buddhism was too abstract to understand and known to confuse the meanings as soon as it was spoken. After witnessing the level of difficulty in many students from the viewpoint of an educator, he articulated this doctrine in order to facilitate the students' insights (Streng, 1967).

To state his argument simply, all phenomena lack independent identities, but they all arise dependent upon one another. The subject and object of our knowledge cannot be separated; a self-sufficient thought process is an illusion empty of real substance and cannot be upheld as self or truth. In a Buddhist sense, the self as "I" is void of real substance; it is nothing more than collected views that are constructed upon the criteria of previously collected ideas. The concept of self is the habitual interpretations of feelings of one's world conditioned by the social material context of that person, and it is a chain of falsely bounded structure in which one is self-imprisoned, yet unaware.

This doctrine of emptiness, also called the theory of dependent origination (Streng, 1967; Suzuki, 1971; Watts, 1957), begets the comprehension of interdependence or interconnectedness of the world. In the Sutras, Buddha teaches how to use breath to meditate more effectively in the Anapanasati Sutra, which was translated around the 3rd century A.D. by a Vietnamese Zen master. “Anapana” means breath and “sati” means mindfulness; the sutra helps meditators experience “guarding the mind” (Hahn, 1987, p. 7). Guarding the mind occurs through observing the mind, and the breath is the bridge to this activity by bringing the focus directly back towards inward gazing. In vipassana training, breath awareness is frequently used as a tool to connect habitual life to a consciousness of mindfulness, becoming the “breath-body” (p. 15) which unites our body to our thought. The breath is a mediator that brings the awareness to the universality of interconnectedness (Hahn, 1987).

It is important to realize this inward observation is different from observation as in science. Mind cannot be objectified because the observed mind is not independent of the observer. It cannot be manipulated like other objects observed in science. “Mind contemplating mind is like an object and its shadow—the object cannot shake the shadow off. The two are one. Wherever the mind goes, it still lies in the harness of the mind” (Hahn, 1987, p. 41). The mind experiences itself within itself, that is, as experienced.

The phenomenological comment Hahn makes here is essentially the same line of argument used by Merleau-Ponty (1962), as he supported his theory of human body as *lived body* or *embodiment*, deconstructing body as an object in Cartesian dichotomy. Merleau-Ponty, in his groundbreaking book *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962), argued that human body has ambiguity; it has subjective and objective character and the

subjective body is a perceptual participant in human experience as lived body. The unshakable fact for him was that conscious experience was happening through his body, not elsewhere in a mind separated from physical body. Body was human reality. His new ontological identity embodiment or lived body reflected a person's mind-body oneness as lived through meanings, emphasizing the non-dualistic nature of human. Therefore, body could not be just an object. Hahn's *breath-body* suggests that body cannot be an object because mind is experienced within the body. These two arguments come from opposite starting points, yet meet at a common junction: body and mind cannot be separated. Hahn's breath-body is mindfulness of a person (body-mind) as experienced. Thus, mindful observation of oneself is different from scientific objectification.

Advanced practitioners suggest that the activity of direct observation of the mind in a non-judgmental way (i.e. vipassana, or mindfulness) is not far from seeing into one's own nature. Accumulated non-conceptual awareness from vipassana releases an inner source of wisdom that can bring authentic living. The benefits can range from a cognitive restructuring of a depressed mind, to being able to truly listen to a patient's complaints, to being able to clearly appreciate a Brahms' cello concerto, and even to taste the peak of true freedom for just being. Thus, mindfulness is means and ends simultaneously (Kabat-Zinn, 2005, 2006), or seeds and fruits at the same time (Hahn, 1987; Myobong, 1984).

Mindfulness meditation leads students to understanding interconnectedness and non-separateness of the world. Take a simple green apple on a dining table. The reality of one apple bite is the result of universal collaboration of interdependence. For it to arrive at the table in one's dining room, there was the farmers' earnest tending of the apples for

their livelihood, the harvesting, the marketing efforts to sell them, and the transportation efforts across states or the country to get them to local grocery stores. Going back further, the apple seed required the proper soil, water, sun, and good nutrients, as well as defense against herbivores and fungi, until it completed its growth to be picked for human ingestion. Then for a human being to take a bite out of a fully ripe Granny-Smith apple to enjoy the sweet pungency of it, it takes myriads of biopsychosocial interdependent collaborations of body and mind. Hahn, in his 1987 book, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, states, for a person who realized this reality in all things “A step on the Earth is a miracle, not walking on the water or thin air.”

Eastern Body-Mind Concept

Before going forward with the Tai Chi as a moving meditation, a brief discussion of Eastern body-mind conceptualization is necessary. Important advances in body conceptualization in the Eastern body-mind theory which supported self-cultivation methodology were made in Japan. At the end of the 8th century, Confucianism had a firm hold in political power in China and Korea. The classics, poetry, the arts, philosophy and literature were emphasized; they were a pre-requisite for becoming a statesman or a respected aristocrat in society (Chan, 1963; Yuasa, 1993).

When Buddhism arrived across the sea in Japan, it took a unique hermeneutical turn, bringing dramatic historical and intellectual changes with important implications for the Eastern body concept. The military class known as Samurai was in ascendancy. These warriors already had intrinsic understanding of the inseparability of mind and body through their rigorous physical training, but they needed spiritual guidance that made sense to them to be a better ruling class. When the meditative self-cultivation methods of

Chan Buddhism entered Japan, they were most enthusiastically embraced and incorporated immediately into their training. Since then, the Bushi (the Samurai class that reigned) adopted this milieu of self cultivation through body-mind training with utmost zeal. Scholars of the mid 12th century explored body mind conceptualizations using phrases like “body-mind oneness” in their texts. Especially in the Kamakura period (1185-1333 A.D.), the Samurai devoted themselves in the study of reaching liberation through self cultivation of body-mind training (Yuasa, 1993).

The Japanese development brought a clearer conception and systemization towards achieving great undivided oneness (Tai Chi) through body-mind training. Positive meanings in their experience in training the body gave value to personal transformation. In other words, body was a medium to reach enlightenment. The discourse involved important features of Buddhist and Daoist cultivation in moving meditation basics, including understanding and strengthening of Chi, understanding of exaltation and joy through meditative cultivation, and perfection of physical techniques.

To put it differently, the principle of moving meditation is based on using one's own body as a form of training the mind in a non-dualistic Eastern body-mind context; by correcting the body, cultivation of mind occurs simultaneously. For example, certain TC postures have an emphasis on alignment, and certain qigong movements focus on opening and massaging certain meridians (energy channels in the body) to awaken the practitioner to the present. Training the body has positive implication and value for personal transformation. Martial arts are revered in the East as an important method of self cultivation, as a moving meditation (Yuasa, 1993).

The Eastern body concept contrasts strongly with the Western bifurcation of body and mind. In the West, we can easily find a splitting of matter and spirit in Plato's tripartite model and the Cartesian dichotomy. By the 17th century, Frances Bacon's mechanical man model firmly separated the mechanical body and its organs from the superior mind. Since then, the attitude of modern medicine is a Cartesian bifurcation of the human being, divided into body as flesh and mind as spirit (Fang, 1981; Lawler, 1991; McDonald & McIntyre, 2001). In contrast, Chinese philosophy treats body and emotion as equals of mind and logic. The human body was not a medium for sin or inferiority, as in the philosophies of Plato and Descartes, or as in some Western religions. The body and mind were not dichotomous, but an assumed non-dualistic unity. From this philosophical perspective, a vastly different inclusive body-mind culture developed.

Yuasa (1993), a Japanese phenomenologist and authority on the Eastern body-mind theory, argues that the Eastern body concept can be simply demonstrated in Japanese language. The Japanese word "sheugyo" means body training; it is used as "s/he is in sheugo," which translates as "in body training" but also as "in spirituality training." It is not a conscious combination of the two meanings but is automatically implied. In other words, body and spirituality training is one within the word (Yuasa, 1993, p. 7). This is analogous to the meaning of moving meditation, that is, physical movement combined with spiritual practice. In many far East Asian cultures, there is a word for human body that is separate from other objects and materials. If it were used in the same way as used in the West, to indicate human "body" as an object, it would be upsetting, because it would violate the sense of the Eastern person's identity. This cultural notion is derived from the Chinese characterization of human being as 'non-dichotomous'. The

human body is spiritual because it is not separated from mind (Yuasa, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992).

Some modern Western philosophers and scientists are now adopting a perspective more compatible with Eastern notions of body-mind. For Merleau-Ponty, body is not just an object but a perceptual constituent as embodiment of the lived experience (Merleau-Ponty, 1965). More recently, Gallagher's book (2006) *How Body Shapes the Mind*, takes a scientifically integrative perspective. The central thesis is against traditional Western Cartesian dualistic notions, in that "movement prefigures the lines of intentionality, gesture formulates the contours of social cognition, and, in both the most general and most specific ways, embodiment shapes the mind" (p. 1). His perspective is much more aligned with Eastern body-mind theory.

Within the nursing profession, a strong push toward body-mind integration has emerged. In the traditional separation of reductionism, the value of body has been marginalized as an inferior form, something that causes evil and should be denied (Lawler, 1991). In sharp contrast to this dichotomy, mind and body are inseparable in the Eastern body concept, not a matter of the superior or inferior.

Yuasa's (1993) concept of body is that body exists as an "intermediary being" connecting mind and matter. The human body is distinctly different from objects or material substances, because within it, there is the feeling of life or "alive", which is Yuasa's concept of Chi energy. Thus, he argues that the Eastern theory of the body enables the investigation of structures and patterns of "life" in one's own body. His idea of body is teleological in that all the organs and cellular field operate in the positive

energy tone of natural intentionality toward life. It coincides with biochemical concept of homeostasis, with which healthcare professionals are familiar.

Tai Chi as a Healing Vehicle

The notion of Chi as healing energy is intertwined with TC philosophy and practice. It is speculated that the primitive forms of “qigong” had been practiced in ancient societies as a means to cure illnesses. Qigong (also Chi kung or Chigung) is an umbrella term to indicate all work related to Chi. “Gong” in Chinese means committed effort (Yuasa, 1993, p. 131). In this sense, TC is one kind of qigong, though qigong also has its own system of practice (McCaffrey & Fowler, 2003).

The ancient Daoists sought practical knowledge of natural world, and they were interested in immortality. They wanted this immortality in practical terms; the Chinese did not want to settle with the idea of immortality after death. Thus, they focused on searching for outer and inner alchemy. Efforts in outer alchemy spanning centuries developed into the Chinese herbal system. Internal physiological alchemy focused on internal energy systems developed into traditional Chinese medicine and martial arts systems. Thus, Chinese medicine and martial arts systems are closely bound (Cheng, 1985).

The internal energy system involved circulating and concentrating Chi into intended regions of the body for healing purposes. Contemporary acupuncturists confirm that routes of Chi circulation, the energy centers in the body in the ancient sources, correspond with the current knowledge of physiology and acupuncture practice. Daoists carefully cultivate Chi through diet and meditative exercises. Some remnants of the

ancient exercises called *daoin*, *tuna* and *rantan* remain as forms of qigong (Milburn, 2001; Needham, 1983; Yuasa, 1993).

In terms of transfer of Chi into different energy centers within the body system, written sources are found in the writings of Wang Yangming (1472-1529), an eminent scholar from the Ming period. In a Daoist method of self cultivation dialogue called *sanhe* or “the three rivers”, it is noted that there are three different kinds of Chi corresponding with the energy centers in the body. Meditation is training to control these three powers. Chi is collectively a flowing energy divided into *sei* and *shin*. Wang Yangming pointed out that when it is flowing, they are all the same Chi. But *sei* respectively corresponds to sexual libido, desire and impulse of instinctive energy; *sei* is directed toward the external things and the world, and has the tendency to produce things. In ordinary state, *sei* is more powerful than *shin*, the creative energy, which is latent in one’s psyche. Daoist meditation training often includes transferring *sei* energy into *shin* as a spiritual energy that can be utilized for healing (Milburn, 2001; Yuasa, 1993).

Chi is psychophysical energy in a living body; it is usually unknown since it resides in unconscious realm. But during meditation, this unknown Chi can be released to conscious forms that we can recognize and utilize better (Nagatomo, 2002; Yuasa, 1993). Chi energy is collected in the *dantien*, which is the energy center of the body located 1-2 inches below the umbilicus in the abdomen. The abdominal dantien organizes and collects the physical life force, acting as a reservoir. This location is easily understood from a physics perspective; the abdominal dantien is the center of mass, and any movements emanating from there will have the most momentum and be the most stable. The *wushu* (martial arts) principle involves centering exercises, all focusing on the

dantien to cultivate and strengthen Chi in the body (Cheng, 1985; Kamata & Shimuzu, 1992).

This notion of Chi as a cultivatable and transferable form of energy in a living body is the foundation of Chinese medicine and all moving meditation practices (Milburn, 2001). The concept of Natural wholeness comes from the self-restorative process toward equilibrium of yin yang forces. Homeostasis is the body's natural tendency toward life. Harmonized Chi is the manifestation of balance in the interplay of the forces tied in with universal factor Chi. The overall goal is the balance and optimal flow of Chi to facilitate wellbeing and to treat illness in case of blockage, deficiency or excess of Chi. TC movements and postures are designed to stimulate Chi circulation and enhance the balance (Cheng, 1985; Kamata & Shimizu, 1992; Milburn, 2001). Accordingly, a person's health is a manifestation of yin and yang interactions within a person's interior and outer environment.

From a biochemical standpoint, homeostasis is a restorative physical process in the body. Intricate networking of body organs and systems at cellular levels maintains an optimal balance of functioning that keeps us alive at each moment till death. A similar restoration can occur with Chi. According to the perspective of TC practice as a healing vehicle, Professor Cheng (who is known for self-cure of tuberculosis) stated "When the chi sinks to the tantien [dantien] then it becomes strong. When the chi is strong, then the blood is full. Then the internal organs benefit" (p.61). Chi is cultivated to prevent medical problems and to nourish health. One of the fundamental purposes of TC practice is to maintain a mental physical spiritual optimum (Cheng, 1985).

Approaches to Chi in Tai Chi vary. Some emphasize Chi enhancement, which includes centering on the dantien, opening the meridians (energy channels), balancing yin and yang, and breathing techniques. According to the *Hui Ming Ching (The Book of Life and Consciousness)*, these techniques can revive yang energy and help achieve the purity of Dao (Wilhelm & Jung, 1931). Others emphasize phenomenological approaches of Buddhism, including vipassana, the mindfulness meditation.

Tai Chi as Body Mindfulness Meditation

Buddhist meditation can be divided into two types: one still (non-moving meditation), and the other, meditation in motion (dong-gong). The former observes the interior movement of the mind and the latter learns to observe into the interior of the mind during the continuous motion, which is the case with TC. During slow performance of TC, practitioners can experience the oneness of body, mind and the environment through *breath-body* in the present space. Breath-body is termed when breath fills the body and mind, and nothing else. In case of successful vipassana, whether one is moving or still, the object of observation and the subject reach the oneness of non-conceptual stage of awareness. The most common tool known to West is via the breath (Hahn, 1993).

Kabat-Zinn's *mindfulness based stress reduction* (MBSR) clinical program is useful to explain both sitting (still) meditation and moving meditation. In sitting meditation, one sits cross-legged and observes one's breaths, body, feelings, emotions, and thoughts. Each breath sensation in the body is the object of awareness, leading to the experience of breath-body. The second type of meditation in MBSR is the body scan while sitting or lying. This is a slow scan of entire body, which facilitates body awareness, that is, to be present in loving attentiveness to what is happening in any region of one's

body. The scan usually locates tension; this recognition process itself is already a process of relaxation. The application of body scan techniques to pain management has been reported as helpful. As training deepens, one can lead this focused awareness of specific sensation to produce a paradoxical effect. Since pain is a subjective sensation, by being utterly present to it, the patient can avoid getting caught up with associated psychological effects of pain, such as fear, or expectation of suffering. As a result, patients reported diminished pain sensation (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

The third meditation taught in MBSR is *mindfulness hatha yoga*, which is analogous to TC mindfulness. Mindful yoga utilizes slow movement of yoga postures of stretching in coordination with series of breaths becoming breath-body in place. In comparison, TC is a slow movement series in breath-body but not in place; it is dynamic in the flow of movements. This flow is an important dimension bearing philosophical significance, the Natural flow of cyclic forces from Daoism. TC movements represent the process of Nature and life as a flow, a process from one movement to the next, to be earnestly present for inward and outward contemplation of each movement. It reminds us of life as the nature of experience, as one of constant changes and flux that come and go like clouds in the vast sky (Hahn, 1983; Hwang, 1973; Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Yuasa, 1993). The last meditation in the program is walking meditation, which is essentially the same as TC walk. Slow attentive mindfulness walking is one way of practicing the application of TC into daily activity. All the postures in TC can be transferred to daily life activities such as typing, swimming, eating, or socializing.

In Tai Chi practice, one initially strives to understand the interdependent nature of body's function in the living body, then realizes the body-mind relationship to a wider

dimension with the world. Whether through a body scan to locate tensions in the body to neutralize them, or a flowing Tai Chi movement that involves Chi mobilization of yin and yang, Tai Chi ultimately enhances the practitioner's body-mind awareness. In contrast to the body mind dichotomy assumed in the West, the Tai Chi body is an integrated expression of human reality. Body is no more or no less of an illusion than the mind, yet a reality ingredient present in each person. The unity of body, mind and spirit of the person is the basic assumption and the basis for self development process (Hahn, 1987; Huang, 1989; Milburn, 2001).

Historical Development of Tai Chi

Our discussion so far has been focusing on the philosophical background of Tai Chi and the nature of this moving meditation. We now turn our attention to the historical development of TC. We begin from earliest legends and proceed to its incorporation into Western society.

The literature regarding the origin of Tai Chi is shrouded in the mists of mysteries. It is speculated that it can be traced back to about 4,000 years. Legend has it that Hsia, the mythical ruler of China's first dynasty (2205-1766 BC), was the inventor of the TC diagram and practice. His revelations about the transformation of the universe became the original diagrams in the *Book of Changes* (Huang, 1989). In a recent archeological discovery excavating the site of Han period tomb of Ma-wang-tui (200BC), a silk manuscript was discovered along with oldest written version of the *Dao De Jing* and the *Yi Jing*. In this silk manuscript, 28 exercises named after animals were found. Various dynamic animal movements in Nature were studied and imitated, promoting human strength and health since ancient times (Wawrytko, 2006; Yu, 2007).

The written records of Tai Chi have mostly Daoist roots; these roots contributed greatly to TC philosophy and practice. Daoist monks had a long tradition of breathing and movement called *Daoin* as one of their meditation methods that appeared around 200 BC. All the TC moves bear names that conjure images of Nature, such as “Return tiger to the mountain” and “Hands in clouds.” Several chapters from Lao Zi’s Daoism text *Dao De Jing* are devoted to the softness principle, which is exclusively emphasized in TC movements (Huang, 1973; 1989).

Other significant developments came three centuries after Buddhism entered China, around the first century AD. Bodhi Dharma from India settled in the famous Shaolin temple to become the first patriarch of the Chan Buddhism sect during the fifth century. After witnessing the monks’ weak physical conditions from excessive sitting meditation, he is said to have created 18 forms of geometrically perfect movements for the health of monks in the monastery. There is no written record of this exercise; the temple was attacked and burned repeatedly. Bodhi Dharma is considered to be the father of general martial arts and the originator of the Kung Fu system in the Shaolin temple. Centuries later, in the revival of the temple, a newer path to enlightenment for the Shaolin monks emerged. Their self cultivation system added strengthening of the physical body to a “martial” perfection of invincibility by utilizing the Buddhist method of Chi building and sitting meditation. TC was considered to be an internal martial art and Kung Fu was external. Most of the written sources were destroyed during Mao Tse Tung’s Communist Revolution in 1949 (Dunbar, 1991; Howell, 2003).

The movement system of Five Animal Frolics was also used around 220 AD by Hua Tuo for the purpose of improving health of the people and to cure his patients. Hua

Tuo by profession was a highly skilled surgeon, acupuncturist, and was known as the inventor of anesthesiology. Much of his written work was destroyed, but some scholars credit him as the first person who invented and systemized the earliest form of martial arts. His Five Animal Frolics were combined with a Chi building method into an important device for physical and mental exercise called Wu Chi Kung today. They are an important historical piece in the puzzle of martial art development (Howell, 2003).

Tai Chi history is often traced to a Daoist master named Zhang Sang Feng (618-906AD, or 1247-1279 AD) who lived in seclusion on Wudang mountain. He was said to be inspired to create TC while observing the scene of a fight between a bird and a snake in nature. Through this interplay, he conceived the harmonious nature of hard and soft energy principles that transformed the conflict. The essence of his realization was that harmonized soft yielding could prevail. This was in line with Daoist teachings of the softness principle and the interplay of yin yang in the continuous processes of life in Nature (Dunbar, 1991; Howell, 2003; Huang, 1973, 1989; Yu, 2007). Realizing that transformative harmony invoked the balance in the eternal process of change in Nature, it is said that he had an epiphany, a dream from which he learned TC moves. TC forms were created and then named "TC human," essentially a synthesis of sitting meditation and martial art. This TC had a self defense property that cultivated a peaceful path. It employed a middle way using the softness principle, in place of brute power, which would eventually lead to depletion. Later it is recorded that Zhang Sang Feng was honored by the emperor Ying-tsung with the title of Chen-jen, a spiritual man who has attained the Dao and is no longer ruled by mere external stimuli. His creation of TC

survived and was passed down to the 19th century Qing dynasty, as recorded in Beijing (Cheng, 1985; Howell, 2003; Dunbar, 1991; Huang, 1989; Yu, 2007).

For a few hundred years TC was practiced privately in Chen village and was passed down to family members. The founder of the most known Yang style of TC today, Yang Lu Chan, was a small thin weakly looking male who traveled far and eventually gained fame in the dynasty's court, when he was recognized by the Daoist Buddhist scholar Ong, who saw the essence of the universe in his TC performance. After proving the worth of his art as powerful internal form of martial art, despite its soft and non-distinctly organized appearance, it was accepted in high society. In the capital Beijing, Yang taught TC at the Imperial court. Yang TC is described as mostly a soft internal martial form showing the invincible power of the soft against hard brute force. It was given the nickname of "cotton fist" and became popularized to both public and the royal court (Howell, 2003; Huang, 1989).

Until 1800, TC was considered as a fierce form of martial art known as "Chinese boxing." Then, it went through various revisions to move away from its martial aspect, back to its older Daoist roots. TC evolved toward relaxation, stillness, and gentleness during the 19th century, transforming into an internal martial art focused on the refinement of Chi. Around 1900, the third generation great grandson of the legendary Yang family published several books about TC and completed a radical modification of TC postures for the general public. These TC postures were adaptable to all ages, both sexes, and usable by those small or large. He himself belonged to the "society of the soft fist," which represented soft internal power. Many stories are available which support the mysteriously soft yet invincible strong power of his TC. He is especially known for

stories of understanding moving energy (dong jin) and listening energy (ting jin) to mystical levels (Cheng, 1985; Howell, 2003; Huang, 1973).

In 1956, the National Chinese Sports Association decided a simplified version would be more adaptable for general public usage. Yang TC was selected, and a shortened version was created. TC entered the U.S. around 1960, when Grandmaster Cheng man Cheng, a direct student of the Yang family and a renowned teacher in mainland China and Taiwan, became the first professor to teach non-Chinese students. Today, there are four major styles of TC, all with increasing popularity. TC is especially popular with aging persons (Cheng, 1985; Howell, 2003).

Dunbar (1991) notes that some reject TC origins as a martial art, owing to negative stereotypes from commercial martial arts. Others find it more intriguing to discover the self defense property in this gentle slow exercise.

Evolved from ancient qigong practices for medicinal use and later martial art aspects, today's TC contains the same principles and intent of health and medicine. Its characteristic movement is slow with balanced suppleness and centeredness, so that the practitioners are mindful of each movement in the present moment. The research communities modify TC as needed to fit the health needs of the population. For example, the simplest form has been modified to 10 postural movements from 108 movements, and it is applied to the frail elderly (Li, 2001). While the details of TC practice will not be described in detail here, TC practice guidelines adapted by Tricia Yu (2007) for her students summarize its involved ingredients: mindfulness, postural alignment, breath awareness, active relaxation, slow movement, weight separation (proper weight shifts), integrated movement and mind-body principles of TC (Cheng, 1985). Here, active

relaxation pertains to mindful relaxation with awareness of all parts of body each moment for each TC motion, all the time, promoting a comprehensive flow of Chi.

Huang (1989) notes that the most important point about TC is that it is a universal medium for the cultivation of body, mind and spirit, and a dance of life. It matters not how accurately the history of TC holds, because “you are the potential TC creator; you are the dancer and the dance” (p. 7).

Socio-cultural History of Meditation in the U.S.

The introduction of Eastern ideas to Europe can be traced just prior to 1900, when returning Jesuit missionaries described their encounters with Eastern philosophy and culture. A few decades later, writings about Chinese thought became available in the U.S. For example, Suzuki's 1927 book *Essays in Zen Buddhism* was a landmark publication that opened the door to Zen meditation. In 1931 the Buddhist Society of America was established in Los Angeles, which later became the first Zen Institute. Waley's *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* was introduced in 1939. *Yi Jing* was translated by German philosopher Wilhelm, who introduced Jung to Chinese thought. Jung, in turn, added his concepts of *synchronicity*, *anima* and *animus*, and yin and yang to his theory of psychology. Joseph Needham, an English chemist, publicized Daoism with his 1954 seminal work *Science and Civilization in China*; shortly thereafter, the public also became interested in Buddhism. All these exquisite writers and philosophers helped open Western intellect to a completely different paradigm for viewing the world. (Marlatt, 2006; Needham, 1983; Oldmeadow, 2004; Suzuki, 1971; Waley, 1939; Wilhelm, 1972).

During the sixties, Americans became increasingly engaged with Eastern thought. During the progression of the Vietnam War, many became first incensed and later

saturated with anger from the deaths and violence. Yearning for peace and ready for social justice and clarity, they were searching for vastly different ways of looking at the world and humanity. Counter-culture ingredients in this social background coincided with the baby boom generation to welcome an Eastern philosophy of quiet and peace. Many felt the need for a revolutionary agent for awakening human consciousness, and they learned about transcendental meditation (TM), which was popularized by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the Indian master who wrote *Yogi's Science of Being and Art of Living* (1963). He had enthusiastic support from the Beatles, who were social icons and rebels of the era with countless followers of their simple love songs and pleas for peace. TM proved to be very popular spreading meditation concepts to the American people. In the healthcare research community, brain wave patterns were soon being studied in relation to TM (Marlatt, 2006; Oldmeadow, 2004).

Throughout the eighties a philosophy of self cultivation and self reliance with meditation continued. One significant media event introducing the Eastern influence into the U.S. was the *Kung Fu* television series that aired for several seasons (Pilato, 1993). This show was a philosophical reflection of Daoism and Buddhism, employing the literary device of a priest who was in exile from the elite Buddhist society of Shaolin. He was portrayed as a humble, self-disciplined profoundly-compassionate monk who possessed invincible physical mental power from martial training. A boom in martial arts training coincided with these influential Kung Fu episodes, and it has consistently spread, continuing today as a popular means for mental and physical discipline (Pilato, 1993). The influence of new thoughts in this generation and the entry of martial arts as a somatic

branch of American meditation was a historical event uniting two opposite hemispheres (Oldmeadow 2004).

At this time, meditation received the attention of clinical researchers. Following Chogyam Trungpa's *Meditation in Action* (1969) and the establishment of the first Buddhist university in the U.S., healthcare professionals from many disciplines took a serious look at meditation. Herbert Benson, the Harvard medical school physician, wrote his influential book *The Relaxation Response* (1975), which stimulated more research into medicinal meditation. Based on Benson's work, Marlatt (2006) started his research on using meditation as a treatment for drug and alcohol addiction. Prominent cognitive behaviorists such as Beck (1976) and the transpersonal psychologist Maslow conducted small scale experiments and concluded meditation was psychotherapy (Benson, 1975; Marlatt, 2006; Suzuki, Fromm, & Demartino, 1963) .

Popular teachers of Eastern spirituality appealed to the "flower children" of the peace generation, the *baby boomers*. The foremost teachers were D.T. Suzuki and Alan Watts from the Zen tradition, Chogyam Trungpa from Tibetan Buddhism, and Phil Alpert, a famous scholar and researcher who left a successful academic position at Harvard to become a yogi. Watts and Huang, as an influential pair of Zen and TC teachers of the era, provided joint seminars; Watts lectured on Daoist and Buddhist philosophy, while Huang demonstrated TC movements (Huang, 1973; Oldmeadow, 2004).

Thus, we can see that TC and other meditation methods have evolved with the baby boom generation in the U.S. since their initial contact with Eastern thought and practice. This generation in American history is marked for pushing boundaries against social conformities, for pursuing radical adventures into expanding the human mind, and

for exploring and accepting entirely different ways of viewing the world (Huang, 1973). They were revolutionary, egalitarian, uplifting and irresistible anti-authoritarian students interested in the evolution of human consciousness. Today, meditation and related Eastern concepts are not just casual topics of conversation; they are actively applied in various areas, most particularly in institutionalized healthcare and education, as well as forms of individual practice for health and spirituality (Kabat-Zinn, 2006; Marlatt, 2006).

Tai Chi Research Literature Review

While Tai Chi has been accepted in the East as a valuable tool for human health, it is only recently that it has attracted the attention of Western healthcare scholars. With the publication of Kauz's *Tai Chi Handbook* in 1974, many researchers were introduced to Tai Chi practice and philosophy, and they quickly foresaw possible applications to healthcare. By 1999, studies began to accrue that TC had demonstrable benefits, and literature reviews became available from discipline and focused clinical area perspectives (Klein & Adams, 2004). A branch of National Institute of Health, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, has recently identified the need for mind-body exercises such as Tai Chi and qigong as an area of funding priority for cardiovascular disease prevention.

Research on the effects of TC reveals measurable benefits in multiple areas of healthcare (Klein & Adams, 2004; Kuramoto, 2006). The applications of Tai Chi range from primary prevention to treatments for chronic physical and psychological illnesses. They also include spiritual wellness with integrated holistic benefits. The age span of the population includes teenagers to the aged; however, the bulk of the studies address individuals who are older persons (Klein & Adams, 2004).

The number of quantitative research studies on TC is impressive, with over 60 studies added to the research literature in 2007 alone (see *Figure 1* in chapter I for a graph of the number of publications). The interested reader is referred to Appendix H, which is a table of 37 studies summarizing quantitative research on Tai Chi. These studies were selected because they appeared in peer-reviewed journals, were frequently cited, and illustrated current applications to healthcare. Although the dependent measures in most of these studies span many physical and psychological variables, an effort is made to divide them categorically into body systems based on their primary outcome measures. The first category includes cardiovascular studies, along with studies on heart rate variability, lipids, and aerobic capacity. Skeletal muscular studies are then listed, including research into falls, balance, strength, flexibility and bone density, followed by pain studies. Psychological and wellness studies are mentioned, along with studies addressing the current interests in psychoimmunology. The quantitative summaries conclude with studies on response to various diseases.

Studies on psychological and wellness variables such as quality of life, self-efficacy, mood, anxiety, self esteem and self image are particularly relevant to this study, because they focus on variables directly related to the experiences of the practitioners in their TC practice and their daily lives. Increasing evidence suggests that mind-body exercises such as Tai Chi can contribute to improvements in mental health, emotional well-being, and stress reduction. For example, Li, Harmer, McAuley, Fisher, Duncan, and Duncan (2001) examined the association between self-efficacy and physical function. Healthy, physically inactive older adults ($N = 94$) with mean age 72.8 years were randomly assigned to either a 6-month, twice a week Tai Chi program or a waiting-list

control group. The TC group had significant increases in both self-efficacy and physical function compared to the control group. There was a positive association between self-efficacy and physical function, indicating that improvements in older adults' self-efficacy of movement as a function of Tai Chi were related to increased levels of perceived physical capability.

In 2005, Li, Fisher, Harmer, & McAuley tested the hypothesis of self efficacy regarding the fear of falling. They examined the role of 'falls self-efficacy' as a potential mediator of the exercise and fear-of-falling relationship. A six month Tai Chi intervention improved "falls self-efficacy" over the course of the intervention, with reports of greater reductions in fear of falling, as compared to the control condition. Results suggest that exercise interventions designed to improve falls self-efficacy were likely to reduce fear of falling in older adults, supporting their mediational hypothesis of a close association between self efficacy and one's physical function.

A recent study from Japan by Kin, Toba, and Orimo (2007) supports the conclusions from Kuramoto's review (2006) regarding the effect of TC on quality of life. They conducted a cross sectional study on health-related quality of life in 903 senior TC practitioners recruited from community-dwelling members of the Japan Health Tai Chi Association. They rated significantly higher on the quality of life of multiple areas than the age-matched national standards. Quality of life subscales they examined included physical functioning, physical role, bodily pain, general health, vitality, social functioning, and mental health. Unfortunately, the experimental design of the study did not utilize a TC intervention, complicating the interpretation of the results. It was essentially a correlation survey of two groups, and causal interpretations are not

warranted (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). Nonetheless, the results were both suggestive of and consistent with beneficial effects of TC on quality of life.

Taylor-Piliae (2006) examined the effect of a Tai Chi exercise intervention on psychosocial status among 39 elderly Chinese with cardiovascular disease risk factors who lived in the U.S. This was a quasi-experimental study of one hour of TC 3 times per week for 12 weeks. Data were collected at baseline, 6 and 12 weeks following the intervention. Statistically significant improvements in all measures of psychosocial status were found following the intervention. Improvement in mood state and reduction in perceived stress, increased self-efficacy to overcome barriers to Tai Chi and confidence to perform TC and perceived social support were all statistically significant.

Overall, the strengths of the current body of quantitative literature are the number of peer-reviewed articles (see *Figure 1*), the range of outcome variables showing improvement, the construct validity and reliability of many dependent variables, the quality of the statistical designs, and the range and size of the samples. The majority of these studies show improvements on a wide variety of dependent variables (see Appendix H). Constructs such as balance and falls show substantial agreement when each is measured with different methods as defined in the respective studies. Studies frequently have statistics demonstrating reliability of the measures. The statistical designs employed in many studies include both preliminary power analyses to establish appropriate sample size, and proper choice of empirical tests to lessen chances of type II errors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

TC has been shown to be beneficial on several variables in older adult populations ranging from those that are inactive (N = 256, Li, Fisher, Harmer &

McAuley, 2005), to those with cardio-vascular risk factors (N = 39; Taylor-Piliae, Haskell, Stotts, & Froelicher, 2006), to those that are well (N = 702; Voukelatos, Cumming, Lord, & Rissel, 2007; N = 200; Wolf, Kutner, Green & McNeely, 1993). However, little research has been conducted on Tai Chi with younger age groups.

One controversial area in quantitative TC research involves the adequacy of the experimental designs employed. This limitation has been highlighted in some recent systematic reviews (Lee, Pittler, & Ernst, 2007; Lee, Pittler, Taylor-Piliae, & Ernst, 2007) though not in others (Fascko & Grueninger, 2001; Mansky, 2006; Wayne, Kiel, Krebs, Davis, Savetsky-German, & Connelly, 2007). Tai Chi is an intervention that cannot be conducted blindly; the participants and the researcher will know whether they receive an “active treatment.” This knowledge can affect outcomes (Campbell & Stanley, 1966). The outcome variables are frequently assessed by individuals who are aware of which group the subject was placed. Furthermore, the designs of some studies, (*e.g.*, Taylor-Piliae, Haskell, Stotts, & Froelicher, 2006; Yeh, Chuang, Lin, Hsiao & Eng, 2006) are pre-post designs without adequate controls, or comparisons of different subject populations. With these designs, interpretation becomes complicated due to the plausibility of alternative explanations of changes, such as Hawthorne demand effects (Adair, 1984) or pre-existing subject differences (Campbell & Stanley, 1966).

In contrast with the large quantitative literature, qualitative studies are in their infancy. There are only two small scale qualitative studies and one integrative (mixed research) study. While the quantitative studies discussed above provided verification of TC's benefit over a wide range of dependent variables, these qualitative studies focused

on the practitioners' perspectives. Their experiences cannot be adequately addressed in a group quantitative paradigm (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005).

Among the two explorative studies with both conducted in the United Kingdom, Scourfield (2006) discovered that Tai Chi as a type of symbol was more important than the physical benefits that the elderly expected. In this small-scale community elderly study ($N = 7$), the researcher reported that the members did not necessarily believe that Tai Chi would reduce falling; however, Tai Chi did have a symbolic value that gave a positive self-image. The investigator concluded that TC was "an age-resisting strategy that operated on both a physical and symbolic level" (p. 4).

A second qualitative pilot study by Docker (2006) aimed to identify factors that attracted elderly English Tai Chi practitioners to their practice. Seven elderly practitioners reported a variety of health benefits that were immediate and had lasting physical and intellectual gains. The researcher reported that awareness of the spiritual nature of Tai Chi and the social aspect of cooperative learning were important aspects for these elderly individuals. The researcher hypothesized that elderly people who continued to practice Tai Chi have a unique view on aging, health, and well-being, a view which is continuously expressed through their TC experience.

Charmaz (2006) contends that the criteria for grounded theory research must include credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. As the first examples of qualitative inquiry into Tai Chi, these research studies offered valuable insights that are different from measurable physical or psychological benefits from quantitative research. They opened the door for better understanding of TC experience in small groups of practitioners, perhaps leading to better utilization for healthcare.

While Docker's and Scourfield's studies deserve recognition for employing qualitative inquiry and grounded theory methodology in their TC research, their sampling technique needs more careful scrutiny. For theoretical sampling, data needs to be collected till the saturation occurs (Morse & Richards, 2002); neither study mentioned it explicitly, which seems prudent given the small sample sizes (seven participants). Both studies were carried out on English subjects; and it is unclear whether different findings would have occurred with other cultural groups. Details regarding the way the classes were taught, including the frequency of the TC classes and the percentage of attendance were lacking. Nonetheless, both studies meet the Charmaz (2006) criterion for originality and usefulness. Clearly, the value as initial qualitative inquiries should not be minimized.

A third study employing an integrated model research design was conducted by Galantino, Shepard, Krafft, Laperriere, Ducette, and Sorbello (2005). This study, which compared Tai Chi, aerobic exercise, and a control group is noteworthy on a number of grounds. It was conducted on a sample of 38 patients with advanced HIV. It employed multiple outcome measures, including Quality of Life, Spirituality Well-Being, Profile of Moods, and physical functional measures. The themes that emerged from qualitative data included positive physical change, enhanced coping, and improved social interactions; these gains were confirmed in the quantitative analyses.

This study raises an exciting prospect for future research into Tai Chi. The combination of quantitative and qualitative inquiry provides a fuller picture of findings, by allowing group as well as individual data methodologies. As Creswell and Clark note (2007), the two methods let researchers investigate "subtleties and cross-validate"

interpretations of the data, so that better implementation of evaluation of interventions can occur in future research (p. 33).

In summary, the current body of TC literature lacks understanding of its philosophical significance, an adequate explanation of its mechanism for the published benefit and its characteristic appeal to the practitioners. Considering TC's increasing popularity and claimed benefits, a broader exploration into TC practitioners' experience is needed for a better understanding of the mechanism of TC, its symbolic meanings and their function in the practitioners' lives. This study sought to fill the existing gap in the current literature by an in-depth exploration of the overall experiences of TC practitioners in the community.

Chapter III: Method

Qualitative explorative research with grounded theory method and dimensional analysis was selected to explore TC practitioners' experience and discover the meaning of Tai Chi in their lives. The eventual goal of this study was to develop a grounded theory based on their shared life stories. This chapter will present the research methodology employed in the study, including an overview of the theoretical foundation of grounded theory method with dimensional analysis. It will describe the methods of data collection, sampling, data analysis and the grounded theory development process.

The grounded theory method included data collection through audio-taped semi-structured interviews of TC practitioners, field notes and analytical, methodological and personal memos, data analysis with constant comparison, and open, axial and selective coding. The qualitative method computer program Nvivo 7.0 was used throughout the data analysis phase. The explanatory matrix of dimensional analysis (DA) was utilized to structure the data to derive the theory. The grounded theory method and DA both have their philosophical foundations in symbolic interactionism and they overlap and intersect as qualitative study methodologies.

The epistemology of symbolic interactionism (SI) is constructionism, that is, that experience consists of relativistic constructions of reality through interactions. Blumer's (1969) key assumption for SI notes that people act towards things that have a basis of meaning for them. Their own beliefs, principles and the basis of the meanings are negotiated through interactions. These negotiations occur through symbols representing

the basis of meanings in each person. Grounded theory methodology contends that these visible and invisible sets of principles and beliefs that guide human actions and patterns of ideas can be empirically studied in social scenes. If common themes are found in the constructed reality of a group of people in relation to certain phenomena, this can yield a verifiable piece of knowledge that can help understand the phenomena that are being studied.

Symbolic interactionism and the grounded theory method together guide development of this new piece of knowledge, a theory that is grounded in raw data, provided the researcher proceeds with a theoretical sensitivity in the detailed exploration of the informants' realities (Blumer, 1969; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse & Richards, 2002). This study attempted to understand how TC practitioners in the community constructed their realities through the experiences of TC.

Data Collection

Sampling Criteria

Sample size was determined by data saturation and a theoretical emergence. A convenience sample of 23 informants was recruited. Initial criteria included TC practice longer than one year and self identification as committed TC practitioners. Participants were all volunteers from TC programs that were community college extension courses. The study informants spoke English and were free of cognitive impairments, with intact short and long term memories to recall their experiences. They all lived independently. The range of experience was extended to include beginning students with less than a month experience. These last variants on the durations of practice were added to reduce possibility of premature theorization of emerging themes, by allowing the researcher to

explore various situations using theoretical sampling (Lofland, D., Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, L., 2006).

Recruitment Strategies

Entry was gained through the researcher's community networking. The recruitment process took a few steps. The first step was, with the TC teacher's permission, to put up flyers with the researcher's contact information on the class bulletin boards (see Appendix E). At a second meeting and third meeting, an introduction speech announcing the study was given by the researcher with the TC teacher's collaboration, and any questions were addressed. The researcher was allowed to further explain the study and pass around more flyers as needed. Most of the participants' telephone numbers were obtained on site, and some filled out screening demographic sheets. The remaining interested individuals contacted the researcher afterward either by phone or email.

Other recruitment sites at alternative TC programs were prepared, in case more practitioners were needed. These sites included classes at other college extension centers, adult schools, and fitness centers. However, this study did not need to go beyond the first two TC sites. Following the interviews, the participants were paid \$10 for their time and assistance.

Settings

The study was conducted at two TC settings, which had been established as community college extension non-credit cost-free courses from the same school district in different locations in Southern California. The first class setting was held in a community center located in a large community park; the second class setting was at a senior center. Most of the TC practitioners at both setting were seniors, including the TC

teachers. The demographic data are summarized in appendix I. Interviews were conducted on site outside of the classrooms in a park, in informants' homes, or at local coffee shops where private conversations could be assured.

Screening and Interview Process

The researcher and each candidate met at a mutually acceptable location and time. Initial screening for inclusion in part was mostly done following completion of the Demographic Information Sheet (appendix A), or during a brief phone assessment on the length of their TC experience. If the inclusion criteria were met, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, the steps involved in the study, and how the information that was gathered would be confidential. The participant's informed consent was obtained, and an explanation of their rights as a participant was given. Then, an in-depth, semi-structured interview ensued or was scheduled. The Interview guide (appendix B) was utilized to solicit particular areas of inquiry.

Approximately one hour of interview time was spent. All participants were informed prior to the interviews that the interview could be suspended and rescheduled if participants got tired; they were assured that they could withdraw at any time. Each participant was interviewed at least once, and additional data was obtained if necessary. Permission and arrangement for a brief follow up call or meeting was obtained for clarification of the researcher's interpretations during data analysis. None of the interviews was terminated due to tiredness; and there were no withdrawals.

Instruments used for data collection were digital audio recordings of interviews, field notes, and various memos. All audio recordings were made with simultaneous operation of 2 digital recorders, to ensure backup of the spoken data. Recorded interviews

were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber and the researcher. Privacy was insured through choosing a proper location of interviews, mainly by the choice of the participants. A signed pledge of confidentiality (appendix C, Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality) was obtained from the employed transcriptionist prior to transcribing the taped interviews. The interviewees were informed of the audio-recording through the consent forms and verbally reminded of the consent process by the researcher at the start of each interview.

Human Subject Considerations

Approval for this research was obtained from the University of San Diego Institutional Review Board (see appendix E). Since informants were volunteers from ongoing community TC programs, no additional approval forms were needed. Two letters of support were obtained from the TC teachers (appendix F). Participants signed informed consent forms prior to interviews, and copies were provided (appendix D). The completely voluntary nature of participation was emphasized for the participants' understanding. The signed consent forms and codified identification of participants were maintained separately from other data, to preserve anonymity of the participants.

Potential Risks, Benefits, and Ethical Considerations

Potential breaches of confidentiality and privacy are always risks for any research. Prior to participants' signing the consent, a full disclosure of the nature of the study was provided by the researcher. The voluntary nature of the interview and the practitioners' rights to withdraw at any time were reiterated.

The benefits of this study for the participants included adding to the body of knowledge by sharing their experience. They also had the opportunity to express their

personal feelings, views about TC experience. In addition, they felt excited about the research and felt validated about their commitment to TC practice. Further, through the interview process, they clarified their own meanings by thinking through some vague feelings they might have experienced about TC. The process helped them to synthesize new constructed meanings about their practice.

Data Analysis

Dimensional Analysis

Dimensional analysis (DA) overlaps and intersects with grounded theory method; but DA provides a specific overarching structure that guides theory development in an integrated manner which was beneficial for this study. Schatzman (1991) proposed DA as an alternative methodology of grounding data that changed the traditional focus of social process in the grounded theory of Glasser and Strauss (1967) to include an emphasis on the meaning of individual process. Schatzman's major assumption, "natural analysis" states that analysis is a universal act of all humans, not restricted to the scholars. Natural analysis is the ongoing thinking skill learned since early socialization of the individual; along with language, people practice it naturally in life's processes as they need it. To Schatzman, science is a deliberate expansion and extension of this natural analysis of individuals. His dimensional analysis is a structural linkage between research analysis and common interpretive acts of the research participants.

According to the DA principle, in order to understand the "whole" picture of a phenomenon, analysis of any data should begin with understanding the natural analysis of the informants (participants), before assigning any value or meaning to the data. This approach enables the researcher to understand the context of the person, which he termed

considerations (Schatzman, 1991). The values and meanings ascribed to data must depend on these considerations, including physical, social, psychological, historical, philosophical, and environmental background factors. This was an important notion for this study. For example, as we reviewed in the chapter II, TC is an imported, highly culturally charged phenomenon with a specific social timeframe of its entrance into the U.S. Consideration of the individual's appeal toward TC alone was an interest in itself.

Each consideration is an internally constructed reality relating to the self about something. Together, these considerations are the angle from which the informant asserts knowledge; as a whole, they form an analytic lens for natural analysis. Each person as “constructor” and “definer” of a confronted situation is involved in a calculus of multiple negotiations that consists of personal and “objective” observations. Schatzman's term “dimensionality” refers to this human cognitive ability that can perceive the complexity of a situation and apply natural analysis, based on past experiences and knowledge, to interpret and attach meanings to it. A *dimension* is an abstract facet of each person that is founded on these specific personal background considerations (Schatzman, 1991; Kools, McCarthy, Durham & Robrecht, 1996). Thus, each person is an integrated synthesis of numerous dimensions and sub-dimensions.

For example, the informant's gender, female is a dimension; this dimension has properties such as role, attribute, characteristic, issues, and self concept as a female. Further, the role property has sub-divisions; social role of female gender, family roles as wife, daughter, and mother, and a professional role. Multiple layers of dimensions or components of complex social phenomena of human group are constructed and reconstructed to allow emergence of explainable theory from the data. While the analytic

process is simultaneous with data collection, it proceeds in an iterative, non-linear cyclic manner.

This study can be explained as including three major phases: dimensionalization and designation, differentiation and integration/reintegration (Kools et al., 1996). The early analysis, dimensionalization of the data involves discovery of how the participants see themselves in relation to the phenomenon and naming (or coding) of data bits. The analyst seeks density of data for the methodological question: “what All is involved here?” This question added Schatzman’s individual emphasis, as compared to the classic grounded theory question by Glasser and Strauss, “what is the basic social process?”

The first analysis involved the researcher identifying and assembling the lists of dimensions before patterning them. Dimensions, sub-dimensions, and the range of properties were generated, and some common provisional concepts were revealed. This is the process of line by line microscopic coding of interview transcriptions, seeking common themes in vivo or naming a concept close to it. The computer program NVivo was extensively utilized during this phase, in order to track and code the transcribed interviews.

The dimensionalization process involved applying the principle of constant comparison technique, which started from the second informant’s data in this study. Concept clustering and clumping via constant comparison of informants’ words descriptions continued throughout the study. All the memos of theoretical, methodological and personal nature and field notes of observation were utilized to understand how the informants viewed their TC practice.

Designation involves putting dimensions, sub-dimensions and properties into DA's explanatory "matrix." This meant beginning to organize their story in terms of DA's general structural organization: context, condition, process, and consequence. For example, descriptions about experience of doing of TC belonged to the process section, whereas how they started TC could belong to condition or context. Initially, the matrix contained lists of all the analytically useful dimensions, which later were selectively designated into each position within the explanatory matrix under four terms as contexts, conditions, processes, or consequences.

The DA explanatory matrix is a helpful means for the analyst to view and analyze the data context in an integrated whole. The researcher can see the attributes, the interconnections, and the boundaries among the data contents together, revealing implications and their ultimate integration into an overarching structure of a theory. Thus, the explanatory matrix of DA contains the building blocks that transform analytical forms of organized data into an explanation, leading to the emergence of a theory grounded in the data matrix. The analyst must reach a *critical mass* of the data to be able to assign the importance or meaning to certain dimensions. Critical mass represents a point of conceptual emergence that signals the researcher about a theoretical path of the study; data analysis begins to reveal a verifiable explanation of the phenomenon under study (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991).

The next stage of analysis was *differentiation*. This stage involved organizing data to allow the focus of the emerging theoretical path. A dimension of a primary concept with a significant generality becomes a perspective (a core dimension). Any dimension or sub-dimension may be revealed as a perspective in the process. Schatzman (1991)

emphasized that when selecting a perspective from the critical mass of dimensions, the researcher must give each dimension and sub-dimension momentarily a theoretical chance to become a perspective, in order to ensure its salience, while simultaneously being extremely watchful against epistemologically received conceptions, such as predetermined views of the analyst (Kools et al., 1996).

This was a difficult stage for the study. The nature of data was multifaceted, encompassing all aspects of human activity, and it included practical, philosophical, and abstract issues simultaneously. At times it was illusive and phenomenological. Every aspect was important, and it was extremely difficult to limit data to allow focusing into just one theoretical path. For example, when asked about the impact of Tai Chi in their lives, the practitioners said that physical symptom reduction was very important; feeling good and confident in performing TC was important; a sense of wellbeing and the pleasure and satisfaction from TC class was important; feeling the oneness of the flow and sensing the energy was important; changing their lifestyle and keeping it because of TC was important; the healing aspect, peacefulness and the spirituality was important. The data was layered with multiple common themes overlapping within individuals and across the informants.

Therefore, the first theoretical direction was an integration of multiple facets that had been described. TC functioned as a device that impacted multiple areas of the informants' lives giving a sense of wellbeing. It was theory related to integration of different facets of oneself. However, for the nature of this data, this theory seemed not far from just descriptive summary of interpretation of what informants said in the interviews. Everybody talked about the integrative benefit of multiple aspects of TC. This theory of

integration was a natural extension of data and quite obviously descriptive, but it was missing something, something deeper that was going on in these peoples' lives. This unsettling discontent continued even in the face of seeming descriptive data saturation. Further analysis and more rumination of the data then revealed a deeper theme: everyone changed and was changing in one way or another to varying degrees. All of their initial expectations with TC changed over time. They changed not just outside in tangible levels but on intangible levels, internally through TC experience. This theme was consistent with interviews with two people who had been practicing once a week for a year and 6 month and even with another two individuals who had just begun TC less than a month ago. This last insight opened the final theoretical direction. This meant going back to the very beginning to re-evaluate and re-analyze, being true to the methodology of grounded theory as a cyclical and iterative process. Charmaz (2006) nicely summarizes the process:

Grounded theory involves taking comparisons from data and reaching up to construct abstractions and simultaneously reaching down to tie these abstractions to data. It means learning about the specific and the general-seeing what is new in them-then exploring their links to larger issues or creating larger unrecognized issues in entirety. An imaginative interpretation sparks new views and leads other scholars to new vistas. Grounded theory methods can provide a route to see beyond the obvious and a path to reach imaginative interpretations. (p. 181)

Finally, the last stage of analysis involved integration and reintegration, verifying the validity of the emerging theory. The process consists of challenging the emerging theory, continued analysis, peer reviews and discussions to help reconstitute the identified pieces in the explanatory matrix. When the conceptual linkage of the abstraction to the data was congruent and tied with the key dimensions (saturated categories), the theory of "transformations with TC" was generated. The process of

integration and reintegration of the new theory of transformation included challenges of the emerging theory for its validity.

Recirculation and reevaluation of data and pattern checking of queries were constantly employed using the Nvivo 7.0 computer program, the coding, field notes, memoing, and the interview transcriptions. The process involved checking for internal consistency as well as consistency with the emerging dimensions and theory. Charmaz (2006) writes that often times “grounded theory methods can provide a route to see beyond the obvious.” In this study, “the obvious” was TC as a relaxing exercise. As we will see in chapter IV, “beyond the obvious” was the real reason for their persistent long term commitment: that TC functioned as a transformational device facilitating multiple favorable changes within themselves.

Thus, utilizing dimensional analysis for deriving a grounded theory based on the data, an ultimate integration as the analysis of the “whole” of it was required; and this “whole” of the phenomenon continued to change throughout the process of data collection and analysis. Dimensions shifted until true data saturation occurred. Each shifted dimension influenced the whole in the explanatory matrix in putting the puzzle pieces together. DA provided the forefront of thinking as a structure for analysis for both the analyst and the informants in the process of developing this grounded theory of transformation.

Summary Narrative of Analysis Procedures

A qualitative method computer program NVivo was extensively utilized in organizing, sorting, tracking the data. The digitally recorded audio interviews were transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriber and the researcher. Transcriptions and

field notes were coded line by line using grounded theory method and dimensional analysis (Schatzman, 1991). While continuing interviews and data collection, the coding process and analysis occurred simultaneously.

First, line by line coding of transcription was inserted into Nvivo. In this initial phase of open coding, efforts were made to keep the informant's words in vivo or to a very close expression. The next phase involved clustering open codes of similar meanings into concepts, themes, categories and into broader concepts again. Thus, in-vivo, or line by line coding continued with a conceptual clustering and categorizing process while new interview data were added, until saturation of concepts occurred.

As important dimensions emerged, their salience was closely examined. The field notes and analytical, methodological and personal memo contents were synthesized in the data analysis. The Current Interview Guide (appendix B) was used only as a reference; as new themes emerged, the interview was modified to explore deeper levels of experience. For example, informants were asked directly to describe the experience of the meditation in motion during their TC. This changed focus allowed the researcher to explore the whole process at broader and deeper levels of the informants' experience of TC, which revealed links between the detailed mechanism of moving meditation and their daily lives.

As analytically worthy dimensions that had theoretical implications were found, they were put into Schatzman's explanatory matrix to be analyzed further. Soon, powerful dimensions identified themselves, which resisted further combinations with other dimensions. The explanatory matrix in dimensional analysis provided a super-arching structure for an organization of four key dimensions: the context of the initial appeal of TC to the informants, the condition under which they got started with TC

practice, then the process of TC practice, and finally the consequence of TC experience in life. Thus, the data revealed the pattern of personal and social processes of what “all” was involved in TC practitioners’ world, that is, how the practitioners constructed their inner realities in relationship with TC phenomenon, as will be seen in detail in chapter IV.

Validity, Rigor, and Reflexivity

Above all, Morse and Richards (2002) argue that the most important instrument of all to keep the rigor of the study are the researchers themselves: “any study (qualitative or quantitative) is only as good as the researcher”(p. 168). Especially in qualitative study, the quality, the scope, interpretation and the theoretical explanation of the data all depend upon the researcher’s skill and ability. All qualitative researchers must sensitively inquire how participants think, feel, and experience the world. In order to explore the inner world of humans, the grounded theory researchers need to challenge assumptions, inquire about the obvious, and reveal the hidden and the unheard voices of society.

Exploring the participants’ inner worlds via language and socially constructed gestures exchanged, observed, and analyzed opens a complex level of realities. Throughout the research process of a qualitative study, the researcher is present interpreting, analyzing and synthesizing the obtained data to a final formulation into a theory. The researcher is a part of the research data, that is, the researcher is in the very situation that is being studied. This brings the necessary question; how can the researcher be present in the research and not have personal bias, so that the study findings remain valid?

Clarke (2005) asserts that most grounded theory work lacks reflexivity.

Reflexivity is continuous mindful engagement of critical self-reflection about potential

personal bias, and it is a significant issue affecting postmodern qualitative research. As grounded theory evolves, some earlier notions such as “researcher purity” have been recognized as a limiting aspect of qualitative research. As Clarke (2005) puts it, the world is not *tabula rasa* as the researcher enters the new study site; the researchers “cannot help but” come to research project already “knowing” in some ways, already “affected” in some ways (p. 16). The pretense of researcher invisibility from the initial positivistic influence in qualitative research is clearly rejected in the postmodern perspective of grounded theory. As the participant and researcher interact, the social scene becomes a raw multiplicity of complex, irregular and often ambiguous constructions of realities. Searching for the one structural purity in research is not just unrealistic but highly inaccurate. The choice of research subject, methodology, and the decision about what is important in the data are all inseparable from the social, political and cultural ideologies that the researcher brings to the study. Researchers draw upon their own life experiences as well as those of participants to understand the data (Morse & Richards, 2002).

This researcher’s philosophy and cultural upbringing in health belief are undoubtedly involved in the study. My experiences as a nurse practitioner in the community working with geriatric population for a few years led me to see a serious need for illness prevention and health promotion in the aging population. Further, as a Tai Chi practitioner in the past, I have witnessed some elderly persons in TC classes who were well into their nineties and seemed to not be affected by their advancing ages; they were flexible, engaged in life and appeared to be ideal models of wellness and healthy aging. From these experiences, this research was seeded to explore the role of TC in the aging process.

Many grounded theorists believe that actual experience and well prepared knowledge of the phenomenon will give opportunity for more inductive means of creative analytic inquiry, broadening the scope of investigation to a deeper level (Clarke, 2005; Morse & Richards, 2002). At this time, the researcher's experience with TC overall remains an ongoing genuine curiosity. This study helped to clarify a major question as to why the practitioners commit to this slow moving exercise so seriously.

TC always has been enigmatic to me, especially the slow movements. My curiosity was more intense because of my past involvement in martial arts, leading me to some personal assumptions relevant to this study. My attitude is one of the affection toward TC; I value it greatly as an art and philosophy to be refined. I was aware that my personal positive enthusiasm could influence accurate data collection and needed to be carefully watched. An additional potential researcher bias to consider is my cultural upbringing; I was brought up in South Korea, where historical, cultural and philosophical influence of China is present. Though I was not interested or engaged in martial art aspects of Chinese philosophy, some cultural notions may be present without my explicit knowledge.

Throughout the study, efforts were employed to fairly explore the role of TC in these participants. The researcher made explicit personal observational notes for each interview for reflection and reflexivity. The researcher spent extra field time making observations of the class milieu and the teaching orientations at both sites. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) state there is no other method can provide the depth of understanding that comes from direct observation at the scene.

At a personal level, preparation and maintenance were integrated in meditations, to prepare a blank slate possible for each interview and data analysis. This meditation practice was intended to free the researcher's mind of any assumptions and preconceived determinations, so that the researcher would maintain fresh awareness of research bias and sound detachment from any biased thoughts for the integrity of the research. The researcher had genuine curiosity to find answers for herself about the commitment of TC practitioners, because it proved to be difficult for her. Having reminders close was also a good strategy; for example, carrying around a favorite methodology book such as Charmaz's *Constructing grounded theory; a practical guide through qualitative analysis* (2006) was always inspirational and helped to frame my mind for fair "objectivity."

In summary, symbolic interactionism maintains the perspective that all meanings are constructed by people as they interact in life situations. Thus, deep reflexivity "opens up" the data and brings a new realm of understanding. As Morse and Richard state (2002), the researcher's experience and advanced knowledge in the area of the study can serve positively, raising the quality and the scope of the study with explicitly intact reflexivity. In the case of this study, the researcher's readiness to explore the TC practitioners' lives was affected in various ways by her experience as a geriatric nurse practitioner caring for the elderly and her past contacts with martial arts. This researcher contends that her personal knowledge and experience in the field interacted favorably with the informants' insights about their experiences.

To reach a higher level of abstraction leading to a theory, Morse and Richards (2002) assert that the analyst must ask theoretical questions that conjure up new dimensions. As a result, vaguely recognized dimensions within participants became

important or got clearer through the interactions with the researcher, altering the final dimensional configurations and leading to a better understanding of the inner world of participants. It resulted in “opened up” data that otherwise would have been difficult to investigate. Thus, ultimately the phenomenon under study, the symbolic meanings and the deeper role of TC in the practitioners’ lives have been brought to the surface in order to further explore, expand, and contribute to a new knowledge base.

Chapter IV: Findings

This chapter reports the results of the study on the experience of 23 TC practitioners in the community. Following Schatzman's dimensional analysis explanatory matrix, the chapter describes and reflects a journey from the initial moment of their attraction to TC, through their learning process, to the continuing impact of TC on their lives as a consequence of the experience. First, the core dimension of these interviews, *transformation with moving meditation*, will be presented. This dimension explains unexpected internal and external changes from TC practice; it captures the common theme of their experience. Next, the context of initial attraction to TC, the condition under which they started TC, the process of learning and practicing TC, and the consequence of their experience will be presented. Finally, the grounded theory model of *transformations with TC* was developed based on these data, and it will be presented at the end of chapter.

The context dimension *seeking wellness and meaning* reflects the initial appeal or interest of TC to these informants. Depending on their backgrounds, temperaments, and the situations they were in, the reasons why and under what circumstances they were interested in TC varied widely. The appealing aspects of TC included its gentleness, its beauty and peacefulness, the current social trends and connections, TC's applicability to health and wellness, and Eastern philosophy and history.

The condition dimension *beginning a Tai Chi path* describes the conditions that facilitated their direct involvement with the TC experience. Whereas context reflects the broader scope of the appeal of TC to the informants, condition presents the necessary

immediate conditions that enabled the action to occur, that is, to take up TC classes at the community centers. The conditions included easy community access such as class time, proximity to the practitioners' homes, and inexpensive cost. Sufficient time for the practitioners' schedules was necessary for classes and the practice of TC. Social support from family, TC teachers, friends, and the class milieu were all important conditions that facilitated this new found adventure.

The key dimension in the process section is *cultivating new perspectives*. This section describes how the transformations take place through the informants' experience of learning TC. Cultivating new perspectives of TC has four systematic dimensions; the first dimension is learning the mechanism of *centering with TC*, which includes four sub-dimensions: slowing down, looking within, meditation in motion, and integration of self. The second dimension in the process is *exploring TC multiplicity*. This involves becoming familiarized with TC as a coping strategy, Chi, harmony with nature, TC as a health and healing device, social aspects, and TC as art or dance. The next step in cultivating new perspectives is *letting go*, which includes sub-dimensions of opening to new changes and synthesizing East and West philosophies. And finally, the last step in the process is *changing*, which includes changes in lifestyles, self and world views, and attitude or intention toward TC.

The consequence section describes the informants' insights and understanding regarding the changes, their ways of viewing life as the result of the transformation process via TC experience. This section focuses on the changes they obtained as the consequence of the TC process. The key dimension as a consequence of transformation is *finding Natural wholeness now*. Four related dimensions are described to capture this

changed experience: stillness in motion; living in the present; sense of wellbeing, which includes sub-dimensions of inner peace, acceptance, health, and connectedness, both spiritual and social; and finally continuity of life as a process. One of the common insights the informants revealed is the understanding that life is a process itself, just like a TC flow. Thus, the consequence is not a static state, but iterative and fluid with the process section. For example, centering with TC is an ongoing progress, a reminder to their understanding of life as a journey of continuous now.

The structure of chapter IV is summarized in the explanatory matrix of dimensional analysis in Table 1 on the next page. This structure is best viewed as the sequence of the topics of this chapter; it is not intended to imply a linear model of Tai Chi experience for these informants. The theoretical model of this study *transformations with Tai Chi* is shown at the end of this chapter, with additional discussion following.

Table 1. Dimensional Matrix: Experience of Tai Chi Practitioners

Core Dimension: Transformation with Moving Meditation

Context: <i>Seeking wellness and meaning</i>	Conditions: <i>Beginning a Tai Chi path</i>	Processes: <i>Cultivating new perspectives</i>	Consequences: <i>Finding Natural Wholeness Now</i>
Gentle safe exercise	Easy community access	Centering with TC	Stillness in motion
Beauty and peacefulness	Sufficient time	Slowing down Looking inward Meditation in motion Integration of self	Living in the present
Current social trends and connections	Social support	Exploring Tai Chi multiplicity	Sense of wellbeing
Health issues and wellness	TC teacher	Coping strategies, Chi and Harmony with Nature Health and healing Art/dance, social aspects	Inner Peace Acceptance Health
Eastern philosophy and history	Class milieu	Letting go	Connectedness: spiritual and social
		Synthesizing TC philosophy and spirituality Opening to new changes	Continuity: life as a process
		Changing	Life as a journey Life as a TC flow
		Lifestyles, self, and world view Intention with TC	

Core Dimension: Transformation with Moving Meditation

The core dimension “transformation with moving meditation” reflects the overall theme of TC experience for these informants. These participants experienced a wide variety of unexpected changes through their TC practice. Some changes were visible and tangible as manifested in their lifestyle changes, such as dietary changes and exercise habits, but others were not visible as they were internal. Such changes included views and attitude towards self and the world, enhanced coping mechanism, better relationships with self and others, and a shift to a different philosophy of life all together.

These changes were continuous and highly interactive among different aspects of the informants’ lives from the beginning of the experience. Starting with physical level of changes, such as improving balance and strength, the multiple changes proceeded toward internal levels paralleling the multiple properties revealed in the TC phenomenon itself. For each phase of changes they experienced, another aspect of TC emerged, facilitating further changes. As they experienced various changes in themselves and their lives, the relationship and intention with TC dramatically shifted from their relatively simple initial expectations. It became more than a mere physical health or psychological coping device. It was a change agent, a vehicle that led the practitioners to transform themselves.

Consider the following comment of an informant about her experience:

In taking Tai Chi in the beginning, I had no clue what I was taking.... But as I progressed during the years, it became much different. To the point to now I understand more and more TC, why it was developed, what it’s all about, what it really is, and it isn’t anything like I thought it was when I first started. It’s much deeper, it’s much more, and it’s —Tai Chi is really symbolic of life itself. Truth of reality, of this world is what TC is. It represents the infinite all-ness. TC is symbolic of life.

This unexpected discovery of changes in the ways of viewing self and the world is the most common theme of these practitioners' experience. TC was a meditation practice in motion. The experience was about the process of continuous self exploration and development and its impact on their lives. By engaging in TC moving meditation, the informants were able to integrate themselves in the ways they never have experienced before. Everyone changed, not just in their perspectives but in relational and behavioral dimensions. They related to themselves and the world differently, albeit with varying intensities and breadths.

Regardless of duration of practice or age of the practitioners, TC gradually became a central phenomenon in the lives of a majority of these informants. Tai Chi meditation in motion brought different insights of self and the world, changing their outlook on life. As this informant indicates, the majority viewed TC as something symbolic of life. Their direction of life changed to focus on experiencing the present moment to the fullest; that is, the process became the most important element of life. The core dimension "transformation with moving meditation" reflects the ongoing changes they were experiencing throughout the experience within themselves and the impact manifested on their lives. The mechanism of TC as a moving meditation was responsible for these changes. We will further explore the experience of these TC practitioners in their unique change process from the beginning of the journey to the consequence of the experience.

Context: Seeking Wellness and Meaning

Informants traced their initial attraction to TC to several factors. First, they saw TC as a gentle and safe exercise, beautiful and peaceful. It was popular amongst the general public, and they thought it might help them make friends. They were attracted because they believed it would provide health and wellness benefits. A few found the Eastern approach intriguing. The varying contexts in which people were initially interested in TC involved their social philosophical background and their personal inclinations. For example, for artists, the aesthetic side of TC was their initial impression. For philosophically oriented informants, especially those who had exposure to oriental philosophy or history, their initial attraction included potential philosophical, historical, and spiritual exploration. For informants who desired social support, the appeal was socialization. Among the variety of initial appeals, the context of common pursuit and expectation from TC was for health, wellness, and meaning, which may be summarized as *seeking wellness and meaning*.

Gentle Safe Exercise

TC appealed to the informants as a gentle and safe exercise. These factors were of interest to all of the informants, from the youngest informant, who was 46 years old, to the oldest, who was 82 (see Appendix I for demographic data). Gentleness and safety were particularly salient to informants 70 and older; they viewed TC as a safe alternative to more strenuous forms of exercises beyond their capacity, yet with enough challenge to occupy their attention.

The goal is to be able to just take your body and move it gently and carefully and regularly and feel good.... Well, because you feel so-what attracts you, of course, is the idea of movement that is so gentle.

The individuals in their seventies and eighties acknowledged their physical aging more seriously than their younger classmates, even though the majority was very active and denied any major physical problems. They frequently made comments regarding their physical needs being different. Safety was paramount for these informants. Consider the statement of this 78 year old woman:

Well, I found myself not being as, as steady on my feet, because I've always been very active and I played tennis and I haven't played tennis, I gave that up because I didn't want to get injured, you know... I didn't want to get injured. So I was trying to think of something that would be a good stretching exercise, and yet not like the younger people do.

Regardless of age, gentleness and safety were still important. One 46 year old woman wanted to prepare early with an exercise that would remain "doable" throughout her life:

That was the appeal, too, that I knew you could do this forever, you could do it in your 90s. That's what I thought: well, if I learn it now, and I keep doing it, say if you're playing tennis or something you might not be able to play when you're older because it's too strenuous or what have you. This is something that I realized no matter how I age, it's very doable.

There were a few informants who had their first encounter when they were in their 20s, and the major appeal then was beauty, philosophy, mysteriousness, or just a "cool thing." But when they came back after two or three decades, the notions of gentleness and safety were important additional factors. For the informants who were exposed to TC for the first time when they were older than 60, gentleness and safety were among the most cited reasons for their initial interest in TC.

Beauty and Peacefulness

Many cited the visual beauty of TC as well as the apparent peacefulness as points of initial attraction. Peacefulness was especially attractive for some informants who were under stress from work:

I had a lot of stress in my life. So I realized I need this as a coping mechanism with stress.

I was interested in trying it for myself.... It just looked peaceful.... and it just seemed so peaceful.... so graceful and peaceful.... It's beautiful.

The slow pace of TC appeared relaxing and peaceful, and it was a part of the important initial appeal to informants who were leading "fast" lifestyles. "I'm teaching myself to relax and smell the roses or some such thing."

The beauty of TC was expressed in a variety of ways. It was most commonly described as a beautiful dance, "dance-like" or a "spiritual dance." When one informant who had been a professional dancer first saw TC, he viewed it as a beautiful exotic modern dance that could be synthesized with Martha Graham's dance movements. Another informant saw TC as a "slow motion ballet." An artist recalled that when she saw TC, she felt like she was looking at a piece of artwork, and she planned to paint "TC people" sometime soon in her future. Another practitioner, a musician, saw TC as resonating with beautiful rhythmic movements. For informants who were not trained in any specific forms of art, associating the beauty with apparent peacefulness of TC was enough. "The thing that comes to my mind is just peace and beauty. I don't know how to explain it really." Beauty and peacefulness were significant initial appeals for

these informants. That impression deepened as their experience with TC increased, as will be seen in later sections.

Current Social Trends and Connections

TC has been increasing in its popularity. One of the two TC classes these participants attended was established nearly 20 years ago as a community college extension course. Since then, many classes were added to different regions of the community. These two classes seemed firmly established as community TC programs; one is taught in community park classroom, with the other in a community senior center. The informants routinely gathered outside of the classrooms to practice during the semester breaks. Some informants reminisced about the first class they attended and commented on how it grew in size. Some of the original students have attended for almost 20 years. From having just a few students at the beginning, now the roster overflows with new enrollees; they affectionately commented on having to watch for their neighbors when they are moving in the limited space. Many also talked about TC in the media, teachers, workshops, other programs in comparison, and how enjoyable their annual TC festivals are. Nowadays, it is not hard to find people who are practicing TC in public places or see it televised. People are quite used to seeing newly displayed TC publications in local book stores. A recently retired woman related her first impression when she saw TC 2-3 years ago in a park of a large U.S. city:

I was visiting my daughter in San Francisco, and we were visiting a restaurant that was facing a park. Hundreds of people in little groups were doing these beautiful movements. I saw these people doing these movements in little groups, and it looked so beautiful.

Some informants were aware of other Eastern types of exercises such as qigong (also spelled “Chigung”) or yoga in colleges, adult schools, community centers and

commercial fitness centers. There were three informants who already had some exposure to yoga with one still actively practicing. One 71 year old woman said that she had qigong lessons from another community class, and wanted to follow it up with TC.

“Well, when I lived in (location), I took a different class; it also involved qigong, so I did a little bit of qigong. .. That’s probably why I took the TC.”

Some informants combined qigong, TC, and yoga as a grouping of similar types of Eastern exercises that are currently popular. Two other informants also related to their short term previous experiences with martial arts lessons in the past. Another informant reports that she was introduced to TC at a spa.

I first experienced TC at a spa, where they had a TC instructor and during the week I was in the spa, I went to his classes. And it was intriguing. There wasn’t any place in my life for it right then, but I put it away.

She came back and has been practicing TC for the last 10 years.

TC community is also popular social venues especially for the retired well elderly, for those who are independently minded, want to take care of themselves, and enjoy meeting like-minded people in the TC community. These informants are not only appreciative and proud of the TC programs they attend, but they also feel friendship and a family circle in their TC community. For two informants, establishing social connections was the primary interest; they were seeking new friends and support system. One woman was grieving for the loss of her husband for 2 years and was extremely withdrawn from society; she came to TC wanting to start anew:

I moved here and I wanted to make new friends.... It was something that I was interested in doing... I just joined for social reasons. I was getting to know people and I thought it was a cool thing to do.

For another woman who takes care of her ill spouse, the initial appeal of TC was dual: first as a social support system for her situation, and second, as a regular exercise to keep herself strong for her family. For some, it became a family activity. One woman described bringing her sisters and meeting others in the class. She was doing Jazzercise, but she was more intrigued with TC; she eventually changed her exercise routine from Jazzercise to TC. She liked the low impact TC exercise, which, unlike other jumping types of exercise, made her feel safe from injuring her knees. This was important for her because she worried about developing arthritis. In addition, the potential socialization with the TC group, which included former colleagues, was another strong pull toward TC. Further socialization came later, when she brought her sisters into TC and felt improved family bonding.

Actually, I brought my sisters into the class. One of my sisters is a Jazzercise person, and she got me into Jazzercise. I didn't like it. I found this class, and told her she's gotta come to this one. She just started in December, and she loves it. And she brought my other sister... There are 2 people in there that I really knew. (Name) is one of them; she used to work for the (location) school district, where I worked.

The increasing popularity of TC was very apparent to these practitioners as a current exercise trend. Some informants addressed themselves as "Tai Chi people." The TC teacher of this community center complained that she was adding another section to handle the escalating enrollments.

Health Issues and Wellness

Many practitioners were initially interested in TC for health reasons. They all agreed that physical health was important to assign reasonable sense of wellness. Prevention of loss of mobility, preserving independence and autonomy as they get older were important issues for many informants. Some explicitly explained the interest and

purpose of their TC as graceful healthy aging. One informant candidly admitted her initial motivation was because she was afraid of losing mobility and autonomy as she became older. She confided, "No, I think it was fear. I don't want to grow old and not be able to move and not be able to take care of myself."

One male informant in his 50s with chronic pain issues from wrist arthritis was looking for something that would improve his balance and prevent him from falling:

Because I had a wrist problem, and I knew if I tripped I would put my hands out automatically and I would snap all the bones they had just stitched back together.

In addition to physical health, most of the informants mentioned that they were attracted to TC because they felt it could help them relax, alluding to the meaning of wellness as phenomenon beyond a simple physical health. One woman summed up the meaning of wellness for her in terms of appeal to TC this way:

What attracts you, of course, is the idea of movement that is so gentle, and you synchronize. It seems so rhythmical, it's something that you enjoy and you feel good afterwards. You know, you feel very good afterwards. So you say, "Hey, I want to maintain that feeling."

For this woman, emotional satisfaction with the movement was important. Others wanted to learn how to relax with TC so that they could decompress and better control their stress and get peaceful. While everyone had a different focus of appeal about TC, the physical expectation of health benefits was commonly assumed, and some participants had vague expectations of other psychological or emotional benefits.

Eastern Philosophy and History

Some informants who were introduced to Eastern philosophies during the sixties and seventies were interested in rekindling Eastern practice. These few expected spiritual benefits from the beginning. A few informants were familiar with some meditation

techniques from past exposure. One 59 year old male informant who had been a long term smoker came to TC because of his breathing difficulty. He needed to build up his strength after being hospitalized, but he was sedentary and never liked exercising.

However, he was interested in learning TC because of his interest in Eastern philosophy.

For this informant, TC served a dual purpose. It brought back his meditation practice and helped him to recover physically:

It was like we had just found the right place. We had been doing meditation exercises for many years.... I didn't have oxygen at home. I was treated for emphysema.... My stamina was pretty reduced, and I had to gradually start building up my stamina.

This retired psychotherapist emphasized that TC was the first physical exercise he ever wanted to do, because it combined meditation with health issues all in one, which he called "the whole package." It had been over two years since he started TC with his wife; they both did not hesitate to state that TC became the "number one activity" in their life, because it was the foundation and fuel for all other activities. They changed their lifestyle dramatically, adding other aerobic exercises and even becoming vegetarians six months after starting TC.

The informants who experienced some affinity towards oriental philosophy seemed to merge easily and quickly into TC. Another 68 year old retired female academic who started less than a month ago also seemed to have expectations beyond the physical side of TC. She found that her physical balance was unsure; she was disturbed by this, because she always considered herself fit. She also was familiar with Eastern paradigm of spirituality practice from past exposure. She was excited by the prospect of finding an activity that was a "physical way of meditating." TC could simultaneously

address her desire to become steadier on her feet as well as her need for a meditative practice:

Yeah, it fits in, another piece on a physical level, a sort of physical way of meditating. It will be real natural for me; it will be good. Yes, I am doing this for balance, but I think that is what attracts me to it: it is very meditative. I am sure there are a lot of things to improve your balance, but this seems like a really nice way.

One elderly male on his early seventies was attracted to TC from a historical angle, including its martial arts heritage. He always had a deep interest in historical evolution of other cultures, and he knew from history readings that TC was an ancient cultural exercise. He and his wife saw Chinese people practicing it a few years back in the parks during their travels. This was very fascinating to him and he immediately wanted to get involved. Since starting TC five years ago, he had been performing the TC form at various historical sites:

I have done it in South America on top of Inca Pyramids, all over in China and Afghanistan We went along the old Silk Road. You are living history, you know, when you do something like that. Yeah! That's what I enjoy. It's, you know, it's psychological, you know, you think, "Whoa, I am really into it now, it's fun."

TC had a very natural appeal to him philosophically because he was a man of nature, a lifetime farmer. His love for nature was readily apparent during the interview. His life as a farmer gave him the chance to develop a deeper understanding about nature, an increased awareness of its intimate relationship with human existence.

Being part of nature means you don't try to dominate things.... Go with nature, harmonize with nature.... You'd better accept the fact that it's raining because there's really nothing you can really do about that.... Slow down and live with it, sit back, at least go with it.

This informant easily identified his love of nature with TC movements, its flow and its imagery. Not surprisingly, he was a fervent environmentalist. He found the two

elements he cared about the most in TC: its relation to nature and history. For this informant, nature included spirituality as in Nature. Through learning the ancient exercise that embodied Nature, he saw himself as “living history.” This imaginary participation in the flow of history and Nature was very satisfying for this informant. With his broad appreciation of Nature akin to Daoism and its relationship with humans and the history all in one, he felt much joy doing TC. TC immediately validated and reinforced the passions of his life:

That’s been very rewarding to learn that whole thing. And then getting Chinese Taoist medals from our instructor (laughs)... Yeah, it is nice, And I get a – it makes me feel good. So, if you feel good, that’s part of being healthy. Because it is, you know, it’s body, mind soul.

In summary, Tai Chi was appealing for variety of reasons for these informants. They viewed TC as a gentle, beautiful, peaceful, safe, and social exercise with historical philosophical background. Informants were vaguely aware that TC had more to offer than purely a simple physical exercise for relaxation, with a few mentioning their attraction to its psychological qualities and to its Eastern philosophy. All were searching for health, wellness and a better quality of life, but their knowledge of TC was very limited, and their expectations of TC were initially minimalist.

Condition: Beginning a Tai Chi Path

After the initial attraction and interest in TC, how did these informants actually get involved in learning TC? This section describes the conditions that influenced their taking the TC class. For beginning a TC path, some conditions promoted their engagement with it. The factors included easy community access, sufficient time for class and practice of TC, social support, TC teachers, and the class milieu.

Easy Community Access

Easy community access such as a free class, a short distance from home, and convenient class time were important factors for committing to the class. All these conditions played major roles getting practitioners started. The convenience and affordability of cost free classes were important factors for several informants for trying out TC. One recent transplant to the area stated, “I want[ed] to find something over there, but it was very expensive in Boulder...It was \$160. It is a real gift here, where I get it for free.”

Distance and class schedule were important for busy working professionals. One 60 year old male who had started TC 12 years earlier had been under much stress with his work and wanted to try TC. Finally he was able to start:

I found out that TC was being taught – not only being taught at ... College [near home of participant] – but it was being taught on Saturday morning, which I had free [time], and it was [cost] free.

One 71 year old woman who stopped driving had moved to location near senior center to keep her active lifestyle:

I [just] moved here.... I’m so close to the Senior Center. I looked at their schedule and they had TC offered and it was something that I was interested in doing just because it sounded neat.

This easy access enabled her to walk to class, so that she could commit to attending TC, which she had done for three years.

Sufficient Time

Time was another significant factor that facilitated involvement with learning TC. For many of the informants for this study, this meant retirement. Nearly half of the

informants were retired or semi-retired at the time they started TC. One retired researcher who is now teaching TC said:

Yeah! When I retired, I had all this time on my hands, and I didn't know what to do with myself. ... So that's what I did. So from there, then I semi-retired. I was still working part-time at [a local university], so then I could go to class. I could take classes during the day. So I went and took some other classes with different TC teachers, just to expose myself to different teachers.

Another informant, a 70 year old male informant, had been a professional modern dancer during his twenties. After three months of TC, he went off to law school. Upon retirement from his law career half a century later, he returned to TC by enrolling in the class and diligently performing the form at home. He acknowledged the time requirements of the practice:

The thing about [TC is] that you have to practice. I mean, you have to have time to do it. And you can have time if you make time, you know. And I just didn't make time.... Why would I stop? Why would I stop? I had the interruptions of life.... Now that I'm making time, it's like anything else.

After having served 50 years as a judge, returning to pick up TC where he left off is "very fulfilling." For this artistically inclined informant, TC not only rekindled his dancer sensitivity but also inspired other artistic creativities in him; he was a featured artist in a local artist association. The combination of intellectual, artistic and philosophical challenges of TC matched him well. He appreciated movement aesthetics of TC as well as its spirituality and the social venue it brought. Being a professional dancer in his earlier days, this informant had an understanding of movement in connection with a sense of spirituality. Movement always had some kind of significance to him, but during his busy law career, he could not explore much else. Retirement gave him time to commit to TC for over a year when the interview was conducted. He was

animated and enthusiastic about his retired life with TC, because he felt that TC allowed him to reintegrate his artist and dancer sides back into his life, synthesizing with his spirituality of movements. He summarized what TC offered him as a “spiritual physical communion.”

Social Support, TC Teacher, and Class Milieu

For some, TC was a joint activity of family members together. A couple of women indicated that, while they were very interested in TC, the main reason for their actual involvement was companionship of their partners or friends. A 58 year old woman was semi-retired when she started TC to support and coordinate exercise for her husband's rehabilitation effort. After a few classes, she felt connected with the TC form. She fully retired so that they could attend classes more often. She confided, “I don't think I would have gone if he wasn't interested. It's like I need somebody to take me by the hand and go.” Another female informant required some prompting from her partner to get started. As soon as she started TC, she knew it was something that she would want to continue.

A few participants wanted to find a qualified TC teacher. One participant was attracted to learn from a TC master, and he had support from friends in TC.

Then I met [name]; she is a TC master and I said, “Oh, my! I know her, and this would be easy to connect.” And she chatted with me about it and talked me to go in, and I have a mutual friend who's in it... [Name] and [name] talked me into it.

In case of a 57 year old male, the class milieu was the important condition when he started TC. Luckily for him, a few students who were doing TC were in his age group; they were also baby boomers. If it were not the case, he would have hesitated.

Thus, the informants were trying to find a venue for learning more about TC.

When they started, the majority of the informants were totally new to TC; they did not have specific goals other than vague expectations of improvement of physical health with some mental involvement. Very few expected spiritual involvement. To meet their needs, they decided to devote their time. They then found a resource, a class that was conveniently available and inexpensive where they could have support from family and friends. Also, the classroom environment with its knowledgeable TC teacher and supportive students was enticing.

Process: Cultivating new Perspectives

The process of *cultivating new perspectives* describes how these individuals' experienced their TC practice. First, the experience began with *centering with TC*. As they practiced centering meditation, the informants recognized continuous positive changes in their lives. This led to a deeper level of interest in further *exploring Tai Chi multiplicity*. Exploring multiplicity involved becoming more familiarized with TC properties beyond the physical means. This engagement occurred naturally as they progressed in their learning process of the TC form. For example, the informants became acquainted with philosophical and spiritual aspects through peers and teachers, and they became identified as the members of the TC community. A majority emphasized that the changes they experienced were seamless and were not a consequence of a conscious willful process. The informants were simply surprised by unexpected outcomes. In the words of one practitioner, "I'm trying to describe it [the process of TC] for you, but it just happens and takes over. I have no control of that, if I let myself go."

The critical phase of the individual's transformational process occurred when the informants started *letting go* of their *old self* and *changing* to the new ways of being. The old patterns of viewing self and the world were replaced with the new ways of viewing life as the TC experience furthered. Some informants synthesized TC principles into their own belief systems, and others went through a complete paradigmatic shift as will be seen. Changes involved not only their lifestyles in their health habits, but also their outlook toward life. Attitude toward their TC practice, the relationship and intention with TC also changed.

Thus, they changed their patterns of relating behaviors with self and the world and sustained the changes through TC practice. For the majority of these informants, TC became a way of life; meditation in motion with TC became an essential means for caring for their mind and body. This section will review how the simple physical phenomenon of TC unexpectedly became the cultivating principle of self development, bringing inner transformational process for these informants. Their entire process of changing perspectives in life and the resulting behaviors via TC moving meditation is captured into a term "exploring new perspectives" and is summarized in Figure 3.

Figure3. Process: Cultivating New Perspectives

Centering with TC

The centering process included deliberate *slowing down* of movements and *looking inward*. When these two activities were in conjunction, *meditation in motion* began, which led to the process of *integration of self*, often expressed as “body, mind, and spirit” by these informants. Centering itself had dual meanings. First, centering was a mechanism of finding an imaginary center in the body and letting each TC movement flow out of the center of mass of the body. For a sports example, a refined baseball pitcher throws a ball from the center involving his or her entire body, not just from the shoulder. Some informants called the imaginary center *dantien*, a Chinese term for the center point of body mass located one to two inches below the umbilicus. This involved physical alignment, posture, breathing, weight shift, and the learning of proper techniques. The informants referred to the dantien as the “energy center,” where mind and body are “connected” as one.

Second, after the physical correction of posture and alignment is in place, centering involved turning one’s focus inward. One contemplated awareness of body-mind oneness, while directing focus toward the dantien. Proper centering was the simultaneous occurrence of these two activities, and it was described by participants as an essential process in TC advancement. One male informant described the centering as a process involving a brain mechanism of being aware in the feeling of the physical movements of TC:

I’m feeling a physicalness of the movement in doing this, a physical...
Well, not only the movement, but the process is in effect; my brain is centering me.

This centering practice in TC class was transferred to life outside of the classrooms. TC was a tool that helped informants return to their center when a life event temporarily threw them off-balance:

It gives me a tool, and the tool allows me to decompress. If something happens, if I do TC I can get back to being centered because we can all get thrown off-center, and I certainly can get thrown off-center, and when I'm thrown off-center-we all need something. Some people pray, you know everybody's got their thing. And TC and qigong is just so beneficial for me.

Slowing Down and Looking Inward.

Since the process of centering required learning to find one's center, the slow tempo of TC had a critical significance for the practitioners. When they were learning the new movements, they were occupied with learning the proper sequence. As they became more familiar with the movements, they began to experience the meditative property of TC. For TC to be an effective centering device as a moving meditation, participants had to learn to meditate while moving. Slowing down in movements was also a metaphor for slowing down one's thinking activity. One woman who had been practicing TC less than one month emphasized the enjoyable nature of slowing down her thoughts and described her attendance at her TC class this way:

You realized then in that 10 minutes how your mind has just been going like 90 miles an hour, you know? Because she's telling you, "Calm your mind." And the thing is, I don't think many of us calm our minds very often. We're always on high. So I think that's one of the reasons why I came out of that class I felt so, so good and so elated I just seemed to, "Ahhhh!"

TC teaching involved coordinating these slow movements with breaths.

Breathing symbolized a connecting bridge between body and mind. In order to perform a proper TC movement, breathing awareness was critical; it connected the interior and

exterior of the practitioner's body. Awareness of one's breath acted as a signal of turning inwards for centering practice. A 61 year old woman explained that the overall effect of meditation involved slowing down, breathing, and connecting with the earth in her practice:

I think the meditation has a lot to do with that. Because it teaches you how to slow down and breathe, and they teach you about being, how does she put it, one with the Earth. You start thinking about all these things. Maybe it comes with age. You get a little more wise.

In terms of looking inward in centering, one woman described meditation aspect of TC as going inward and emptying thoughts:

Well, I empty my thoughts of every problem, well, not necessarily problems, things that you have to think of during the course of the day. I don't have to think about groceries or what I'm going to do, it just sort of lets me go within and think about my inner self.

The centering practice brought an increased *body awareness* (also termed *body mindfulness*). They were focusing on posture, alignment, breaths, weight shift, and other movement dynamics involved. This integration of one's body and mind via TC forms was body mindfulness, reported as a direct byproduct of the centering practice. It brought a sense of well-being and feelings of wholeness to these practitioners. For instance, a 75 year old female who had been in TC practice once a week for a year and half, described body awareness this way:

I am very aware of which parts are working well... And again, where you concentrate on your body parts, do your waist versus your hip: Ah! It's hard to know which-not hard to know, but-to move just that part....And it's interesting: I can go like this, but it's hard to go like that. Reverse it, yeah. So yes, I'm very aware of which parts are working well.

This enhanced body awareness played an important role in the TC meditation process, functioning as a red flag in life situations, an assessment tool for themselves. As they

practiced more, body mindfulness played a more sensitive and immediate role. A deeper understanding of body-mind connection and its influence was manifested in their lives; they responded quicker and intervened effectively as needed either to themselves or to pertaining situations. Informants described their utilization of this awareness to help their life processes:

I noticed it in my neck because I carry a lot of tension in my neck and shoulders, so I know it helps with that. Makes me more aware that I — sometimes we're not even aware of how tense we even are, so it makes me more aware of that and, "Whoa, calm down, I need to pull aside, get some quiet time to myself to calm down."

A 75 year old female expressed the connection of her body and mind. In particular, she emphasized the emotional satisfaction comes from the body mindfulness with TC practice.

My body spoke to me... it's all connected.... It makes you feel good. Afterward you say, Ah! The aliveness, more energy is coming up. You can feel the energy getting a charge, you get a charge, you get more energy.... Well, I feel like every part of my body is working, and gently and carefully. I'm not being rushed and pushed, like say you go to a chiropractor and he does a lot of things very harshly on your back. (laughs).... But keeping up with TC has — it keeps the body flexible, it keeps the body alive, it keeps the body happy.

A TC teacher elaborated on body awareness and body mindfulness as a filter, a lens receiving data from the world. By cultivating better attunement through body, he could strive for a better understanding of his world:

If we allow ourselves to engage our body as a way of receiving information, now we have a greater ability to understand what's going on.... So if I don't use my body, yes, I'll be able to come to certain conclusions, gather a lot of information, but there's this whole spectrum of information that comes into me, there's a whole spectrum of expression which leads me that I don't get a chance to get involved in unless I also include the body experience.... [Our body is] our lens, it's our filter. We are forced to understand the world through the limitations of our body.

This informant, who had been practicing TC for over 25 years, understood body as a given ingredient, limited, yet a form of lens to see the world through, an access to the society. Body is our “limited filter” to the bigger world and it contains the “whole spectrum” of its own expression that can help human understanding. The spectrum of information or dialogue is projected out from each individual through body, and it interacts with other spectrum projections. For this informant, it was a natural notion that better body mindfulness would help him better understand the world and himself. TC gave him access to cultivate the quality of this spectrum of his own body mindfulness and with the spectrum of others, the interactions. Thus, these informants believed, through their experience with Tai Chi, enhanced body awareness would enrich their lives by helping to expand their limited human understanding of the world as well as themselves.

Meditation in Motion.

In TC practice, the body’s role is critical, but so also is the meditation itself. In the beginning of TC, learning the physical movement techniques and meditation were separate activities, but soon they became one, a combination that was termed *meditation in motion*. The result of this integration is the state of meditation in TC. It started with the centering practice with the form, and later involved *automatic movement* and *flow*. In order to learn to meditate while in motion, they first learned the step by step movements of the form. Performing the TC form was reported as an essential part of moving meditation. The particular TC form they practiced was “Guang Ping” a branch of the Yang form described in the history section of chapter II. It consists of 64 movements, combinations of intricate steps, postures, kicks and arm movements. The duration reported to master the entire sequence of this form varied, with one or two years the

minimum. The significance of the TC form for these practitioners was that this set of movements offered a reference point of centering practice. For instance, one 51 year old informant defined the function of the form:

The TC form gives you something to give your attention to... "What is meditation?" I would say, "Meditation is simply paying exquisite attention to simple things." That's what TC is: you're given a set of movements, and if you allow yourself to look at it there are a lot of things to give your attention to. And when you give your attention to it what happens over the course of time is you develop a stability to hold that attention in the things above you and the things that might be going on.

With each TC posture, the practitioner finds the center point of the body and aligns with the rest of the body to coordinate with breath. The body-mind meditation is to contemplate and feel the center moving through each posture of the form. A 63 year old female practitioner shared her views on how the form should be practiced as a meditation; in addition to being centered in the body with proper movements and breathing, spiritual integration is important in meditation:

What matters is that you're moving in a certain way, that you're breathing, and that your head is where you are. In other words, that you're physically in the body, that you are spiritually connected: all these things are what's really important and that's what gives you the most benefit.

These TC practitioners had been performing the same movements repeatedly, for some beginners only one month, but for others over 25 years. The repeatability of body movements seemed to be the key for the process of looking within to occur. Once the movements became familiar, the form took on its own existence as "muscle memory" and it led to *flow*; the ideal state was "being in the moment" in oneness. Many informants reported that they could feel this flow far before they learned the whole form, which, considering the difficulty of learning 64 complex movements, usually took a long time.

This flow experience was the common among all the informants throughout the interviews, though experienced in varying degrees.

As they became more familiar with the steps and movements in the form, the informants experienced the meditative property of TC. Through the repeated centering through practice of the form, the movements became a series of “automatic movements,” or, as some reported, it became internalized as “muscle memory.” Though centering and meditation are treated separately for the purpose of describing the sequential development of moving meditation in TC, in the informants’ TC experience, these distinctions quickly disappeared. For some more experienced practitioners, the centering was meditation instantly. For example, any movement could be meditation in motion; one long term practitioner had to think hard to distinguish between a centering practice and his daily life events. For the majority of the informants, the TC form (the sequences of movements) had to become incorporated into their muscle memory to enable them to experience the state of meditation in motion. Two practitioners with more than 10 years of experience described the same phenomenon:

There’s lots of muscle memory. You can do TC and when it’s — you know how when you meditate, you’re kind of there but not there?

After you get the muscle memory, after you can do this in your sleep, you can picture yourself doing it, your body goes almost on auto-pilot. I can do the form without thinking about it, which leaves my mind kind of floating away, which is unbelievable for somebody who grew up in New York City, to ever admit that.

Flow in moving mediation had a unique meaning for these practitioners. It was a phenomenon that “happens” once they got the “automatic movements.” They went from learning simple steps to being in the flow of the moment. They indicated difficulty describing flow properly, implying certain illusive notions about it. An 82 year old

female who had been practicing for five years shared her process of learning the form to feeling the flow:

I call it discovery and growth. Both of these... Well, I need to back up just a little bit, because when I first started, the actual learning of the form engaged all of my attention. There was nothing happening except trying to master the form itself, you know. The techniques. And when I'm doing that, I'm tense and holding my breath... That's where the emphasis is. Once I've learned and I'm very confident with the part that I know, I can then sort of feel the flow, or the shifting, or even the-how do you say it, I don't know. I don't now. It's not something I can put into words. But then I'm there, I'm in the moment.

Another 75 year old described a similar phenomenon:

Well, when you're doing your movements, I mean, it's just like a rhythmic type of slow and there's a part of me that wants to be able to just get the movement down so I don't keep going up to my head, "What next?" you know. And that's the hardest part. Sort of get it so it's automatic, then it just happens. I mean, there are two different operations I think in our brain. So the more automatic we become with it and the more ease we can begin the flow, the easier it gets. In when we start to get into the head and intellectualize, "What next," or I worry that I can't do as well as the next guy and that sort of thing. You have to stop it.

More experienced informants who knew the form could get to the flow quicker, because they could "surrender" into its flow:

Although I found that once I learned the whole form and I felt confident that I did know the whole form, you don't think about it anymore. In fact if I would think about it, it would be harder to do, I felt. (laughs) Almost, you just had to surrender-that's it, surrendering to the form itself and just-effortless, effortless.

Meditation Types: Escaping versus Emptying.

As the participants practiced the form and the movements became more automatic, two different methods of meditation emerged among the practitioners. While the interpretations and descriptions of meditation did not present clear divisions, the informants usually named these two types of meditation *escaping* and *emptying*. The

escaping type facilitated an escape from “daily realities.” Escaping represented a concentrating type of meditation in which they focused attention on a single stimulus, such as a word (e.g., a mantra), sound, color, object or sensation. No attention was paid to any distractions or surroundings; any wandering thoughts were dealt with by restricting attention back to the particular stimulus only.

For example, one informant described his state when doing TC; he escaped his surroundings by visualizing a beam of white light. This “physical spiritual communion” which he enjoyed was a method to escape to a spiritual dimension where he wanted to reside. And it could be reached very quickly:

Yeah, it's meaningful... I get there and I start with the exercises and I relax and I get into it And it takes just a moment, just a couple minutes to get into this state that happens. It's a very relaxed state. And I'm not terribly aware of my arms and my feet and my movement. It's like a beam of light, and you get into this state, this meditative thing. ...I mean, it's not a long process, but it's just a little something that comes in and it's like, “Oh, I'm still, I have a very peaceful, satisfied, wonderful feeling.” And I know that I'm going to be out of it fairly soon. ...I want to place myself outside of my body where the white light is. I want to go beyond.

The other method was described by the practitioners as “empty” or “dissolving” or just watching themselves doing TC movements or emptying into a basket. The mechanism and function of this meditation is described in various terms by many informants depending on their backgrounds. One person said it is “paying exquisite attention to what you are doing.” Another informant described it as his mind doing nothing; his body is doing the form but he is just observing from “the other side of the glass.”

My body is doing the form and it frees my mind to do nothing. Which is probably what it's doing, because it's taking a 15 minute break... it becomes an automatic function. It's like breathing. [When I move my hands], for all intents and purposes, I'm on the other side of the glass, watching my hands moving.

Informants explained that emptying meant to be free of thoughts, not fighting but just observing:

Just put it aside. Rather than fighting it, just put it aside.....I can deal with it later. I was able to do that successfully.... just let the thoughts come, let them go. Then I could just be quiet to where there was no thoughts. I was just totally quiet and still... and peaceful.

Both types of meditation were expressed as the mind taking a break, cleansing or relaxing; the characteristic theme was to get to “being in the moment.” It stood in strong contrast with the daily thought processes. One practitioner addressed her ordinary internal dialogues as “mostly unrefined noise,” as opposed to “a level of awareness, that’s what it is.” All the informants were aware that TC involved some type of meditation, but their level of understanding about it differed. Some even approached the TC class as a meditation practice in a social scene. For some, their goal was to get the feel of flow, a sign that they were in the meditation practice; and they knew they would feel better afterward. And in the midst of TC flow, they experienced occasions of what some informants called “aware but not there,” or “just being in that moment,” or “timeless,” or just “in flow.”

Some informants also focused on the aspect of experiencing emptying of self concept as the profound discussion point of TC as meditation. “I” was “disappearing” gradually:

And that’s not trying to direct how that’s going to happen necessarily through your own intellect. Let it [your true self] find you. There’s something to that experiencing this present moment.

I'm starting to have faith that this is reality.— this is not just something that you talk about. You can find peace, you can find peace, but that peace is not going to be if you are worrying about the future or fretting about the past...which are basically illusions...as real as they can seem to be.

These informants explained that the ultimate success of meditation is to be “fully present” to the “true self,” and this meant emptying of the “constructed concept of I.” They found peace through the TC mechanism of moving meditation.

Integration of self.

In addition to slowing down, looking inward, and moving meditation, centering in Tai Chi finally involved emotional and spiritual integration of self. Informants highly valued the self-cultivation aspect of TC. Several informants were attracted to the martial arts aspects of TC, and appreciated the discipline and time for themselves. Some mentioned that if they did not practice, they got “edgy” and could “feel it.” Regardless of their initial intentions, these informants became engaged in an Eastern method of self cultivation through moving meditation. Integration meant awareness of self beyond body or mind, rather as a whole person, as a unity of feelings and spirituality through moving meditation. One practitioner emphasized how the body and the form could dictate the feeling and the integration. Using a biological model, he explained:

The mind has an effect on just the basic tonality of our body.... The motor cortex is tied into other aspects of our brain, much less consciousness, so that when you strike a certain posture, you get this feeling...

Another informant saw the TC form dovetailing with all aspects of life, including spirit:

Tai chi is so – it's everything. It's just a dovetailing to life... It is life itself! It really is! It evokes these non-physical, mental strains and it evokes the body and how do you do this, how do you physically do this? But it goes beyond that... It becomes spiritual, evoking, finding that spring inside you.

The repeatability of the TC form, the reproducibility of the flow, and its accompanying mental states played a central part in integrating the body, mind and spirit of a person.

For many informants, the TC form became a mirror of consciousness, helping to contemplate and reflect. One informant experienced this as a challenge, the mystery of finding his true self with Tai Chi:

It's like you're introduced to yourself. You don't know you have this, but here this practice is that tells you that this mystery or this thing is within you. It's reflective; it has a mirror quality that teaches you who you are. There's such a sincerity connected to it. It's a truth. Truth. And you want to connect with that, you want to know that, you want to experience that.

Through TC experience, this informant found himself, his true self within. This was a significant notion, in that he connected his true self. He pointed to his dantien, the center of his body, and he recognized the energy from the unity of body-mind-spirit. He explained that he meant Chi. Thus, Chi had multiple meanings, including truth and his true self; it also reflected the TC principle of "all is oneness." Thus, integration of self meant connecting to Chi, the spirituality of TC.

Exploring Tai Chi Multiplicity

While these positive experiences with TC learning continued, the informants were getting more interested in exploring TC properties at a deeper and broader level. It was clearly more than a simple health device for them. Tai Chi had multiple aspects, which was described by two informants as "layers of an onion." This section briefly covers each aspect of TC from the perspective of the practitioners. It describes their views of TC as a coping tool, as Chi, as harmony with Nature, as a device for health and healing, as a form of art or dance, and its social aspect. Each aspect can be the primary orientation in a particular phase of TC experience, offering the opportunities and challenges they needed

for their transformational process. The multiple properties of TC were a significant contribution to their long term commitment to the practice.

Tai Chi as a Coping Tool.

Many informants spoke of the benefit in terms of better coping strategies, better ways of dealing with stress and anger. They viewed TC as a tool that served them to push away negative thoughts and feelings and find the positive in their lives. Some used the physical TC movement of “push hands” as a symbolic gesture of pushing away negatives. Ultimately, these practitioners found that these TC coping strategies would also help them avoid injury and feel whole enough to have control over stress and negative emotions as they would arise.

[How does TC] serve me? Help me deal with stress, feel more balanced and centered, to be physically more flexible, you know, so I don't hurt my back again.

One informant was particularly grateful. When she worked with mentally ill clients, she needed balance between emotional sensitivity to the patient and staying grounded to be effective. She felt TC gave her that balance.

TC helps me [in] doing my very best to do the will of the universe; do the will of the Lord, or do the will, you know, God's will, or universal love and universal will, versus keeping a handle on negative emotions that will rise up and not allowing them to dominate, you know, the situation.

Chi.

Chi was an important concept to all TC practitioners for coping as well as a healing tool. While interpretations vary and most admitted they “don't know what it is,” they all agreed that it is a mysterious form of helpful energy. One male informant who had visited China still viewed Chi as something hard for Westerners to understand:

I think it's energy, you know, if you see someone who has it all together, you obviously think, "Well, he or she probably has Chi." Being a Caucasian, I'm not used to using Chinese words like that as far as feelings go. This is always... abstract

Some informants were embarrassed about not being able to explain it scientifically. Yet, one retired urban intellectual shared that he "would not want to deny it," because he had frequent personal experiences with Chi during his practice over the last 10 years.

Another male in his late 40s who held two graduate degrees in Western biological sciences also said that Chi was something that he felt, but did not need to understand it:

Well, I'm just saying you can feel something like energy or something like that, some kind of waves of energy... [I have experienced it] a little bit.... I don't necessarily need to understand [it].

Most practitioners, whether they actively experienced Chi or not, agreed that Chi energy was something that could be cultivated to achieve health and strength: One woman who has been practicing TC for over 10 years said:

Well, I think of it as energy. I think of it when we're moving energy through our bodies in TC. Not that we don't always have energy, but sometimes having it move is better. We don't have stagnation. We don't want to be stagnant ... It's hard to define, but it doesn't really matter. You can say, "energy," you can say all kinds of things about it.... It is present and I think it's easy to acknowledge that it's present when you do TC.... I think it's very good for our health. I've always been interested in things that lead to a healthier lifestyle.

Chi was seen as intimately involved with life; and for one practitioner, it became almost synonymous with and intertwined with intention:

Especially when you can find that right feeling.... because the metaphor is the Chi. You know, the Chi is that which gives life. A lack of Chi points to not having great health... Chi will help us have a better sense of health, and the TC philosophy is that the "yi leads the Chi: the intention of mind leads the flow of energy." And the Chi that is used for martial intents is also the same Chi that is used for healing intents... It is pretty darn close [to intention].

Harmony with Nature.

Chi was described as the universal energy that can be in tune with human “intention” to return to Natural original wholeness, where one completely harmonizes with Nature. Harmony with Nature implied being in the flow as “all is one.” These concepts were expressed in various ways and terms by all the practitioners. Most saw Natural wholeness connecting to Chi, the universal energy, which in turn related to the notion of cultivation of the healing property in TC practice. Some called it “infinite wholeness” or “infinite oneness.” Thus, the notion of health was always connected with the bigger concept of Nature and energy for these informants. TC was the phenomenon that represented these broad symbol or concepts within the “container,” the TC form as one informant put it. The practice of TC meant engagement in the cultivation of the Natural wholeness in themselves. One informant used the term “connecting to my core where there is a synchrony,” where synchrony reflected the harmony with nature:

The pace of TC reconnects you to your spirit, and in moving with that, you just feel confident that the body is moving in a way where it's not going to hurt you. ... to connect with my core... somehow there's a synchrony with the TC that I like. We all live a terribly rushed type of existence, and it doesn't help our equilibrium, our sense of aliveness and looking at the world and why we're here. It takes us, slows us down to be able to appreciate ... meaning.”

A practitioner who had retired from agricultural work easily connected TC with Nature:

It's tied into all my firm, environmental philosophy that I've developed over a long, long time ... It is part of a conduit of self-awareness, health, sense of well-being. Even a sense of maybe spirituality, because when you're connected with nature and the Tao out there. It's all part of it.

Health and Healing.

All the informants believed TC was a form of a healing tool. Some reported experiences more intense than others. While most informants practiced TC to keep fit and

flexible for prevention and preservation purposes, one 60 year old male reported that he had survived cancer twice because of TC. He firmly believed that TC saved his life. His TC healing practice consisted of an intense regimen of Chi Gung added to his TC practice on daily basis. Many of his family members have died from cancer, and he emphasized how TC helped him beat the odds. He believed that the balancing and strengthening of Chi from TC and Chi Gung practice would prevent him from getting ill again:

There's been about 15 people in my family that I have known had cancer. There's one little thing about cancer in my family: when you get it, you DIE, it's just that simple. But, but what I do tell people about Tai Chi is that I don't care who you are, um, it will benefit you - in spite of you it will benefit you. If you do it, it's going to benefit you in one way or another.... And I tell people well, it may not happen for several months. Yes, I think the reason that I said all of that is that I believe that Tai Chi and qigong gave me whatever the little tiny edge was in there that made me alive instead of dead right now.

Other participants also mentioned healing from TC. One woman had used TC for many years and stated

I have used meditation when there's something wrong with me. I've used qigong, meditation, TC ... (for minor illnesses). I am very healthy... It makes me feel better, certainly.

Other participants shared how they had previously used medications to control pain or blood pressure, and they were able to reduce or eliminate the drugs with regular TC practice. One participant who suffered from chronic pain due to traumatic arthritis found great pain relief in Tai Chi:

Pain is less, I feel more centered, my eyes are wider, my senses are — I'm not quite sure they're heightened, but they're more in tune. I'm not telling you the colors are brighter, but I am telling you that I'm more centered. There's something in TC for me, my mind is clear, you know? Anything that I'm worrying about is pushed away. The pain that I feel is kind of

pushed aside. It's my TC moment...it's the shot of brandy — the snifter of brandy at the end of the day.

In other examples, two participants reported dramatic reductions in blood pressure and elimination of drug management regimens. Another male stated that he had been on blood pressure medications for 15 years. Following a brief exposure to TC, he experienced a remarkable event: his blood pressure became so low that he felt dizzy:

After about 6 weeks... (my doctor) pulled me off the medicine and we monitored it medically for a week, and then 2 weeks, and then a month, and then 6 months and I'm still off of it and my pressure's doing really good. I attribute that to TC and the exertion of TC in conjunction with whatever else.

When asked about the issue of healing in TC, the idea of healing was described as cultivatable phenomenon. For an 82 year old female informant, the healing capacity evolved within herself, and the body-mind connection was responsible for it. She alluded to Chi, the energy from the connection, as the basis for her healing force. She also stated that she could feel Chi more prominently during the group practice of TC:

"I don't' know if I can sit down and say okay, I am going to heal my knee. Some people can, I suppose. But I think it just evolves over the practice, you know. I keep referring to the mind-body connection...because you have to think about it. You can't just do TC and think about what you are going to cook for dinner. Then, you won't be doing TC.

Tai Chi as Art or Dance.

The multiplicity of Tai Chi was experienced also as a pleasurable event, something beautiful to see. The participants enjoyed watching both themselves and others perform the graceful movements, and they felt a connection with Nature and an aesthetic pleasure. Perhaps the most frequent comments about Tai Chi were how wonderful they felt while engaged in Tai Chi, and how the calm relaxing experience would last after the practice of the form had finished in the class or home. There was the predictable

peacefulness, a serenity that contrasted markedly from the bustle they had experienced before in their lives.

One informant, an active artist who worked in oil or watercolors, said that she sometimes just sat and watched fellow practitioners just for the sake of the scene, as though she was viewing artwork. Another informant, who had been a professional modern dancer in his youth and later became an artist, saw TC movements with the eyes of both dancer and artist. He concluded that TC performance was a “physical spiritual communion.” He found the same creative process in his TC and in the act of creating his artwork:

The process, in the spatial, this feeling of spatial-ness. The art that I do, the process of creating it is that same energy force that I get out of the process. When it's finished, it doesn't matter what it looks like, I don't care about it as an entity. But the process of experiencing, I care about.... It's kind of like [my] artwork.

Another TC practitioner, a talented pianist, also saw the parallel between performing TC and the creative act. His understanding and experience of TC was synonymous with his musicianship. TC was beauty, an art form like a piece of music. Each movement of TC was analogous to each note of music. TC was energy and rhythm expressed in motion instead of notes and sound.

Social Aspects of Tai Chi.

While the aesthetic quality was particularly important to these individuals, other informants were exploring social aspects of Tai Chi. They viewed Tai Chi as a way to connect with other like-minded people. It was a way to form and grow friendships based on common interests and values, in an environment fostering personal growth. It was also a way to gain access to a social world apart from home. For one 75 year old woman

who was the primary caregiver for her ill husband and son, the TC community was critical social support. TC was a foundation to keep the physical and psychological strength to cope with her home situation, a way to take some time for herself away from her duties. Having a TC class once a week helped her to cope emotionally:

I think some of it has to do with giving you a better attitude. You know, and you have something to look forward to. And, you know, just the fact that you don't want to give up.

Thus, exploring the multiplicity of Tai Chi involved many sub-dimensions for these informants. On a philosophical level, informants were connecting with the pursuit of peace, acceptance, and aesthetics. In combination, TC functioned as a conduit to newer realms for exploration.

Letting Go

The experience of *letting go* was a critical juncture in the transformational process. Letting go activities were recognized from multiple angles in these practitioners. Since meditation is a letting go of control of thoughts, many informants had a rich understanding of this concept. For one male participant, letting go was a necessary preliminary activity before the meditation process begins:

When we're doing the breathing exercises before the thing, it's like, "Okay, get rid of all these conflicting things that are going on, let it go." The idea is to do that before you start TC, but it's the idea to do before you start anything: to let everything go and to bring in again just what you need to bring in, not all the stuff that was there.... Just letting go.... of the mundane or all the stuff that you're dragging through life. "Oh, it's such a burden! Atlas shrugged, I'm carrying the world!" kind of thing. Just kind of let it go.

Similarly, letting go is similar to emptying in meditation. It was expressed as "washing" or "cleansing" by this woman:

It was cleansing. It was almost like taking a shower, too. If I had worries and annoyances, things bothering me, it's almost like taking a shower and washing them off. Doing the TC, I could just let everything go.

Some informants described letting go as getting rid of psychological baggage by actively adapting and performing applicable TC postures and movements; "push hands" was one of these postures that was used as a symbolic gesture of letting go by these informants. This move was performed by gently pushing away with both palms from the individual's center to outward. Scanning for tension and releasing it was another common activity of letting go as the practice deepened for these individuals.

Oh, what are my shoulders doing up here? Drop them down. The TC makes me more aware of the tension and to let it go.

One informant who had experienced problems and anxiety earlier in his life in getting professionally established in an extremely competitive field. He shared how he had to learn the meaning of suffering and how to deal with it. He felt strongly about the issue of human suffering from his own intense experience. With TC practice he learned to reduce or let go of his anxiety and suffering:

But I mean, I'm so connected with suffering that it's like-if I could suffer sometimes I feel good just because it's what I do! Just absolutely trapped, it's a little trap... it's just something that I'm working on, you know?

Yes, don't try to escape from it, don't try to put any storyline to it, any judgment to it at all, just let it be what it is. And then that being practically experiencing this present moment. Because my anxiety comes from anticipating what someone else thinks of me or what my own-what I think is going to happen in the future... Pain and suffering. We suffer, we suffer. We suffer as people and we have to figure out how not to suffer. We're not here to suffer. But I don't have the anxiety that I used to. I don't have the anxiety.

Another concept of letting go was letting go of old behavioral patterns of self and opening to new changes against the resistance that naturally arose. This informant

explained it in terms of TC learning process which was the reflection of his behavioral patterns in life.

So for me, the physical practice—we're putting our mind through this blender; we're doing moves we've never done before, we don't have any reference point, emotional or historical reference point to it, and we're creating new things to it. And as we create these new attachment points, sometimes some of the old points have to be given up. And there are going to be points of resistance where, no, the brain doesn't want anything to do with that... I'm ready to give up. .. And I recognize this is a pattern. This is a pattern that I've repeated over and over and over again.

As the internal process changed, letting go of old patterns of self continued in the recognition of one's own thinking or behaviors. Some informants expressed this concept of letting go of self as "disappearing I" or "dissolving myself", indicating an ultimate notion of letting go as an emptying notion of self concept.

Basically you just disappear, and I remember doing that where basically you disappear, but you are aware of what's going on—it's more of a heightened awareness. But you kind of disappear from your body.

When asked the impact of "disappearing" of self through TC, one informant who was a musician responded that he had less to fear, less to prove:

Well, I am trying to disappear from being the performer. It is part of the agenda. But it's only part of the agenda from it happening from life.... Now it's starting to—it's like I don't need to prove anything. There's nothing to prove, there's just something to share.

Opening to new changes.

Letting go of the old patterns of viewing and behaviors naturally opened a way to new possibilities. A recent retiree, a devout Catholic Hispanic woman, wanted to learn more about meditation after learning to look inward in her TC classes. She became open to new spiritual approaches after two or three years of doing TC:

After this, I wanted to learn more about the self-realization in Encinitas. To breathe, it is so relaxing, so calming. Tai Chi has opened more doors. It really has helped me a lot. This is better than therapy.

Synthesizing Eastern and Western Philosophy and Spirituality.

Considering that Tai Chi is an Eastern system of thought and that all the informants were from the U.S., immersion in the practice of Tai Chi necessarily involved new behaviors, ideas, and philosophies. TC spirituality was merged into their own belief systems in various ways for these informants. The practitioners used a variety of terms to refer to this integration, such as merging “body, mind and spirit”, “body, mind and soul,” “body, mind and my philosophy” or “a physical spiritual communion.” Most mentioned that the TC practice helped them integrate with their existing spirituality. For instance, one informant mentioned the spiritual aspect:

But I think there is a spiritual aspect of TC and a mental aspect of TC that kind of connects the physical and the mental together when you’re doing it. And you concentrate on moving your arms and your body and your feet and it’s all prescribed exactly, you know.

Most of the informants felt that Tai Chi was compatible with their personal philosophy and religion, and that merging presented no problem. Many aspects of Tai Chi proved to be easy to synthesize; for instance, most of informants found the TC “all is one” concept reflected in the TC symbol compatible with their religious practices. Some commented that their existing spiritual practice was consistent with TC, or was actually strengthened by it:

And it has nothing to do with religion. You know, you can-if you- no matter what religion you are, you can just equate your religion with it. Combine it with this.

If anything, I am reading the Bible more; I think it [the Bible] integrates with it [TC].... Every morning I do a meditation, I read it and go back to

the Bible. Right after that I do my Tai Chi. It is all one big ... It does not conflict with anything. It enriches my life more.

However, one informant had raised some questions regarding acceptance of TC, especially from other members of her church. She struggled with whether to tell them that she practiced TC:

So there was a spiritual aspect. That's why I had to evaluate it, because it's like, "Well, is this contrary to my faith? And I don't think it is. That I'm still communicating with the same God, just while I'm doing the form. It's just making me more conscious of the whole; my mind/body is more conscious, rather than separate, they're all more cohesive... So I knew it wouldn't be a problem. I didn't personally have a problem with it, I felt very much at peace that this was a thing I was supposed to be doing. But I realized, maybe I shouldn't tell certain people I was doing it because they would say this was a wrong thing to do.

Synthesizing TC philosophy and spirituality into their belief systems and personal spirituality had a major role in continuing TC practice, and it was manifested in the continuum of transformation process. Some synthesized it into their religious practices, such as Catholicism, Kabbalism, or Protestantism; others went through paradigmatic shifts in their inner process. For example, a paradigm shift occurred for an 82 year old African American who had a southern Baptist upbringing. She stated that she had been always active, and her life philosophy and TC philosophy worked well together:

I don't mind couching it in terms of religion, but that is what it is: religious science which is called the science of mind where everything is more far away from my roots. It's about Southern Baptist!

Although most of the informants found TC compatible with their belief systems, a few experienced paradigmatic struggles and negotiations, particularly with their Western science training. A couple of the practitioners specifically mentioned Chi as difficult to synthesize. While the inconsistencies were an enjoyable and fascinating mystery from this new Eastern approach for some practitioners, these individuals felt dissonance and

hungered for a reassuring scientific mechanistic explanation, such as an endorphin surge and consequent euphoria from running. This discontent was described as “embarrassing” by one practitioner; the spiritual tradition and the metaphysics incorporated in TC differed from both Western science and Western Christianity. In order to comfortably embrace TC practice with the informants’ own education and spiritualities, a synthesis had to be worked out. A couple of individuals simply overlooked the incompatibilities; one individual thought that more scientific explanations would ultimately be found.

Changing

As their TC practice continued, the informants noticed that their lives were profoundly affected, with changes spanning many aspects of their lives. As one informant mentioned, “In spite of you, it [TC] will change you.” These changes may be summarized as lifestyle, self and world view, and intention changes regarding TC.

Lifestyle, Self and World View.

Many changed their overall lifestyles, especially in caring for themselves, such as seeking and adding aerobic exercises, changing their diet, and in some extreme cases, becoming vegetarians. For many informants, TC not only facilitated lifestyle changes but sustained their changes. This increased motivation was very important for these informants, whether they needed the change for health or social reasons. For example, one informant needed pulmonary rehabilitation but did not want to exercise. TC became foundational for his needed lifestyle changes:

I can’t tell you exactly how or exactly why. The practice of Tai Chi helped me to make other lifestyle changes that [were] really important to my overall health. That somehow has to do with the underlying philosophy of Tai Chi, that has to do with learning how to live in a way that is in harmony with Nature, in a way that honors the great Mother. I don’t know how it did it, but it seems to have been a great help in making the additional changes. So wanting to become healthier,

including radically changing my diet and engaging in a good amount of physical health.

These lifestyle changes filtered down to daily changes. A 55 year old educator described how it affected her attitudes and behaviors at work:

[TC affected me] in the breathing and in recognizing my movement and enjoying my movement during the day, and slowing me down. I work with special education kids, so I can breathe when they're going out of hand and I can be with-I enjoy being with them every minute. I think it's very beneficial for me.

Another woman explained that Tai Chi helped her to see things differently. She shared that she approached everyday events differently:

In situations like traffic, heavy traffic, in situations of family stress, you know, kids having trouble, or money or whatever, all of those things of course you're just wound up really tight, and the TC itself starts with the breathing, the meditation. Then you see things differently.

A female informant described how the practice of TC changed her overall awareness and value systems, in terms of recognizing her old views and habits. She was able to apply TC principles or seek other similar means to change her attitude and behaviors in caring for self:

I am more aware. I'll be rushing somewhere and I'll say why am I rushing? I calm down, you just deal with what is going on now.... I have also bought some meditation tapes and those have helped. Sometimes I can't sleep. I listen to these tapes right before I go to bed, so that I can relax.... It is like a lifestyle change. I am more aware of what my brain is doing. Taking your time with certain things; you are not stressed. No headaches; I don't have headaches anymore... You are more aware of the lifestyle. You pay more attention to yourself. Before it was about everybody else; now you take care of yourself. You are more aware.

Others mentioned that their attitudes toward their family improved, a change that they attributed to Tai Chi.

Perhaps the most dramatic attitudinal and lifestyle change occurred with one participant, a self-described “truth seeker.” Solely based on her contact with TC more than 25 years ago, she renounced her self identity and her livelihood as a successful business owner. She gave up her home and her marriage in order to seek her spiritual truth, devoting her life to Tai Chi and meditation, ultimately teaching it as her full-time profession.

Intention Changes regarding Tai Chi.

What initially appeared to be a slow relaxing exercise turned into much more than just a physical phenomenon for these practitioners. With more exposure, they began to see other possibilities, and they understood that TC had applicability far beyond the actual time spent performing the exercise. Soon, it became intertwined and enmeshed into the fabric of their lives. One woman who had been practicing for 5 years summed up her changes over time this way:

I think it begins at the beginning. And you have certain feelings and it grows as you grow. It changes. But then you're changing all the time, too. And I think it gets deeper the more you do it, it gets-you start to understand it or recognize it a little bit more in your regular life, in things you do daily. And so, to me it's something that I would love to do always.

One practitioner said that his intention about TC changed, that he experienced it differently after many years of practice. Like other practitioners, he found that the changes happened naturally and somewhat unknowingly, and that he already had what he was searching for:

It took me a full 10 years to feel comfortable with the form, but somewhere in those years, the well-being part of TC, the, you know, what we might call the spirituality or the meditation quality of TC, took me quite unawares. It snuck in, it seduced-as I said, seduction. It happened without my actually being aware of it. But somewhere in there I discovered that what I had come there for, I already possessed.

The shift in intention with TC occurred as the participants integrated TC into their daily lives; it became a tool of daily life to view self, a “mirror.” One participant shared a story of his turning point after one extremely angry moment; TC helped him effectively deal with violent emotion.

I first started Tai Chi because it’s good for your physical fitness... So I start off like a lot of people who do come to a TC class without any kind of philosophical or spiritual interest... But what I wasn’t realizing what other things might happen as a result of TC practice. And it wasn’t until I got into this really miserable argument at work. I could kill this guy... The TC philosophy is about going with the flow, being peaceful and all that kind of stuff.... And then the mirror was put in front of me...

After he had peacefully resolved this event, he found that his TC form was much more gentle and relaxed, reflecting a new consciousness. Since this event several years ago, TC became a mirror of his consciousness. This mirror functioned both ways, with his TC performance reflected in his life, and his life reflected in his TC performance.

In summary, TC had become a tool to cultivate better self in multiple ways. Even the beginners who had been in TC less than one month saw its potential applicability to many aspects of their lives. For these practitioners, TC served as a mirror on themselves, reflecting their cultivation, their newfound consciousness, and their lives.

Consequence: Finding Natural Wholeness Now

The consequence *finding Natural wholeness now* reflects the meanings and function of TC in these informants’ lives. TC brought not only physical health and psychological coping strategies but also a different philosophy and spirituality. *Natural wholeness* was the symbolic reality that TC practitioners upheld and experienced. The experience of TC for these people, with varying degrees and intensity, was a journey of finding the world of wholeness that was already present within. Thus, TC practice was a

type of self-restorative or replenishing activity, a symbolic gesture of returning to the pre-existing reality of Natural wholeness.

As they practiced more, this symbolic reality exerted more influence over their daily lives. Practitioners described this state with a number of overlapping terms, mentioning their “original wholeness,” their “inner most self,” their “core,” their “inner rhythm,” or their “eternal essence.” One informant tied natural wholeness to the meaning of the Tai Chi mandala, which she explained as literally “supreme ultimate,” “infinite all-ness” and “within-ness” of “non-duality:”

It's-TC is really symbolic of life itself. Of the truth. Truth of reality, of this world is what TC is. The word “TC: supreme ultimate,” tells it right there. It represents the infinite all-ness, the face behind the yin-yang. The nothingness of everything, and it's very deep. TC is a way to bring that within-ness manifested outward, the great stillness is non-duality. So that's what TC really is about...

For this informant, TC put her individual in touch with the real truth: her non-dualistic self, which was beyond good and evil. For her, TC was the device to experience this non-duality.

The participants developed a capacity to return to Natural wholeness by turning inward with their centering practice of TC; the keyword being *now*. Now was the method that these individuals used to reach this reality through meditation. Thus, *Natural wholeness now* (NWhN) indicated immediate access to this symbolic reality through the meditation that they practiced. TC performance acted as a reminder of everyone's pre-existing state of well-being here and now. Through moving meditation, returning to this state was immediately possible.

While the spirituality of TC informants was rich and varied, it all pointed to the notion of pre-existing Natural wholeness that is always present. Since it is always

available now, meditation is the device to tune into this reality in the present moment. This implied mindful observation of inner Natural wholeness now. Acknowledging this reality in this moment was seeing the truth of everyone's nature as perfect, with no place for judgment to be exercised. For many informants, TC provided the means to understand and feel this truth about themselves and others. Through meditation, they experienced the presence of the non-dualistic self or non-constructed self of original perspective, which was a non-lacking perfect inner self in the midst of a life of relativity. NWWhN was a source of stillness that they repeatedly drew upon with frequent visits to the absolute innate source:

But TC, it's symbolic of life. Dance of life, it's called the "dance of life." The infinite harmony, the infinite oneness. With every step you take, there's a yin and yang aspect. So you're dancing with yin and yang constantly, with no special yin, with no special yang. This all goes into one. Individual [TC] steps representing going into one, one infinite wholeness which is the set or the form. So it's all symbolic.... Being in dualism, but functioning differently. TC represents the truth of everyone's nature, and it's through the stillness and through the meditative part that brings one to greater understanding.

Some informants frequently lived this symbolic reality in their real lives. They believed that perfect original wholeness state became real with practice, not just remaining as an imaginary world. They tried to bring the state to their daily reality which they could experience during TC practice; thus, it became a practical program, not just a theoretical doctrine or philosophy they could live by. Many informants confirmed its increasing application as they practiced more. One informant explained how NWWhN was more than a symbolic reality; she wanted to make it real. She lived TC, often performing daily activities as mindful TC movements.

I do believe it's not symbolic, it's real. Well, I hope to actually take that movement into my life, so it's not really reflecting my life, I want it to be a part of every moment of my life.

TC had dual functions: one as a dualistic dance as symbolic of life with ebbs and flows of events that persons live through, and the other as the absolute of non-duality, beyond the relative reality we live in. TC contains rhythmic movements representing different energy patterns in life, the yin-yang dance. At the same time, the “within-ness” of each individual is addressed as “one infinite all-ness” and “non-duality,” which is synonymous with NWhN. TC as meditation is a means to bring out this symbolic non-dualistic reality.

Another informant who was fluent in Zen practice further clarified that two realities of TC practitioners were involved in the practice of TC and living:

I think that's why in Zen practice you talk about the *relative* and the *absolute*. These are concurrent and coherent points of view. They have to operate at the same time. But usually we're operating over here, on the relative side. We have no cognizance of the absolute. And then there are people who are so airy, they're so out there, they're so into that absolute thing, the relevant thing, it's like how do I cross the street safely without getting run over by a car? That's a view which is just as important. As practice ripens this absolute and relative gap becomes narrower in each moment.

Several informants explained that TC taught them that there is this state of wellness within if we just let it be. Because they discovered that they already had what they were looking for, it was matter of letting it emerge outwardly. They experienced it often and stated that the hope of returning to that state always exists. This experience was ineffable and symbolized as beauty, which was related to the “moment of TC” for another informant.

A beautiful place to be! Well, that's why I started saying that because this moment of TC, that I was trying to explain to you, when I said that I don't have the words, it's the same way. You're moving, and you just don't want it to end.

One informant expressed this as a “spirit pool,” returning to the oneness of the spirit pool meant getting recharged from NWhN. She indicated a need for regular practice of returning, that is, a need for meditation. Getting in touch with this resource was the most important occurrence among these practitioners through TC practice of body-mind oneness:

The mind-body connection, it's exemplified by TC.... I think that anybody who meditates, when you go inside and seek whatever it is you're seeking, that it's difficult not to come out of that with a love for all other spirits because we're all the same... And we lose it, that's why we have to go back in. That's why we have to do it on a regular basis.... We're all in the spirit pool together.

The symbolic reality of NWhN has many dimensions within it. These include stillness in motion, living in the present, a sense of well-being and connectedness, and continuity of life as a process, as a TC flow.

Stillness in Motion

“Stillness in motion” is a principle that emerged from the practice, as well as an attitude of equanimity towards life. Each informant sought an inner stillness that comes from centering an integrated person in the motion of daily life. Thus, the stillness principle emerged both in TC practice and as a reflection of life's ongoing process. The second notion that supports inner state or concept of stillness in motion is based on experiential understanding of the flow of here and now. This informant described the stillness in motion and its application to his life:

For me it is a practice of increasing the focus, the attention on the subtlety of motion, maintaining that balance, that stillness while moving. It is practicing doing that... When I'm doing that I am in a state of relaxation, a state of calm. In dealing with stresses of living, of various activities, of things that happen, being able to reach for that state of mind, it is very helpful in maintaining relaxation, not reacting to things like being cut off while driving on the freeway.

Another participant simply stated, “I could calm down and be still inside, and it would help me in the world.”

Living in the present

Many practitioners valued “living in the present.” Some described this as “being in the now” or “being here.” It involved several components, including reduced worry about the past or future, an appreciation of the richness and beauty of now, and a capacity for spontaneity. Regarding reduced anxiety, one informant was buoyed by how his focus on now increased his confidence and reduced his fear of the future:

And it’s been for years, “live in the now,” but it’s all been on an intellectual level. It hasn’t gone down into a cellular level, my real being. And it’s starting to happen. I’m starting to have faith in it... You can find peace, but that peace is not going to be if you’re worrying about the future or fretting about the past. Which are basically illusions, as real as they can seem to be. And I wrestle with those all the time. But they’re—they don’t have the force that they used to. And the TC that is part of that practice, is part of that.... The fear of the future doesn’t have the impact that it used to. It’s like it’s getting—it’s not fed as much as it used to be.... I worry less, absolutely.

Along with reduced fear of the future and fretting about the past, there was a purer enjoyment of the present moment, an elevation of its experience. Several informants reported “living in the present” was related to “not thinking:”

I’m not thinking - you know, once I’m mastered the form, if I had been doing it consistently - I’m not thinking about anything. I’m just-like if a bird goes by, I’m enjoying the bird. Or even say a noisy car goes by which would be annoying, you know, like, “Oh, gonna mess up the tranquility,” it’s okay, let it go. It doesn’t bother me, things don’t bother me. I just enjoy what I’m doing while I’m doing it.

Being in the moment was defying the dimension of time for these practitioners; it was living TC in life, a lovely way to live:

I think, well, I feel in TC like I'm stepping out of time, so I'm defying that dimension, which is really lovely. I love that, because my life, you know, I tend to look a little bit ahead, and it races on and I'm in the moment then, and it's just beautiful. I'm really in the moment then. And I try to be in my life, and that would be the transference of TC into my life.

A capacity for spontaneity arose from living in the present. Spontaneous living was the ultimate product and the goal of TC practice for one informant. While most informants appreciated the goal of stillness in motion and transferred the concept into life, this informant stated that living in the present involved keeping stillness in motion intact. It meant one became spontaneous and creative with the moments of life, provided one understood one's resources. He gave an analogy of surfer who handled particular waves that emerged every moment, with the ocean being the world. Here the resources included surfing techniques, which corresponded to the craft of what one does in life, and the different waves were analogous to daily lives. The spontaneous riding of waves meant spontaneous living. The fearless spontaneous living was elevated to beauty and quality when one acknowledged one's innate resource, so he explained:

So that no matter what they do, even if they've never done it before, it's perfect. Again, it's like the surfer: they've never surfed that wave before, but they've surfed waves like this, they've felt energies like this and they have an intention of knowing what they want to do with that wave. So between all these things that are going on spontaneously in that moment, they can make that turn or they can kick out, do whatever they need to do, and it will be just right.

Sense of Wellbeing

A sense of wellbeing is a complex of feelings, attitudes, and philosophies that the informants reported emerging from their TC practice. Included here are inner peace and acceptance, love, health, social and spiritual connectedness. One informant described TC

as a means to look for inner peace by transferring the calm TC movements into her chaotic world:

Peace. Stillness. I think of a body of water, just peaceful, watery, see the reflection in the water. Just calm. Tranquil. Content....It was (sighs) the one hour I could kind of be myself. And it wasn't instantaneous at all, but that was how I learned to be calm inside. Like I could be calm on the outside like you would think I was calm, I could sit still and be quiet, but I wasn't quiet in my own head. So it really taught me how to be inside the way the movements were on the outside. That calm, slow, peaceful.

Many informants spoke about the acceptance as one of the main TC concept derived from the "all is one" of the "TC flow." Some informants used the term "surrender", one informant in particular expressed it as "surrendering into TC form." This was a significant statement, considering what TC form represented to these practitioners. TC is the natural movements emulating nature, or "inner rhythm" as identified by several informants. Surrender into the TC form (body-mind integration) is the symbolic gesture of acceptance of the Nature and the flow of oneness, being with one's true self, and getting in touch with natural rhythm of Chi, the universal energy. In other words, the form was the bridge that brought the two realities of the informants together, their daily relative life and the non-relative life of symbolic reality of NWbN. TC meditation provided the access to go inward to this reality. TC was a means and ends to cultivate this surrendering or acceptance through the mechanism of meditation in motion via body-mind integration. For advanced practitioners, TC philosophy and spirituality seemed to be deeply engrained in their lives. A few informants emphasized that TC had to do with total acceptance of life, and that practicing TC was a journey of acceptance. One informant implied that the longer you practice, perhaps the more you will be able to accept:

I don't know if you ever saw something as a child, and then saw the same thing as an adult and suddenly experienced it in a different way and went, "I didn't see part of it." Those things didn't mean---because you are only able to accept so much. So at this level I can accept more and perhaps in 10 years, I can accept even more. So just is my journey.... That is what's important.

Another individual, a retired academic, described his acceptance and peace of comfort level in the face of his specific reality of living with chronic pain.

I was a very driven person... Here I am, heading into my late 50s: I'm fairly calm, I'm fairly contemplative. I never expected to be like this, and a lot of things went into making me this surprising person that I actually turned out to be. You know, in my 40s I never thought I'd have low blood pressure, never thought I'd be particularly happier, especially if you'd told me I was going to go through a lifetime of chronic pain. Yet I've reached a level of comfort in myself, and I think the TC is a piece of that.

One informant with an advanced degree in martial arts studies saw herself as a healer. She had sought answers for existential truth all her life, sacrificing other pleasures of life for nearly 30 years. She described TC as an all-encompassing philosophy of acceptance and surrendering to the oneness. Her philosophy included that inner stillness is all we need, because everything is already perfect as it is here and now, that is, with NWWhN. She stated that once this state was recognized and practiced, there was nothing that could harm our true self nature that we already possessed. She felt strongly that if this truth were to be lived by people, the world would become a much better place to live. To various degrees, this insight was the underlying reflection that had been brought through TC practice to most of these informants.

And nothing more... of the world [phases] an individual at all. It's a surrender, it's accepting the acceptable and the unacceptable... Tai Chi just is. It just represents the truth of everyone's nature and it's through the stillness and through the meditative part of TC that brings one to a greater understanding of one's self. Certainly, it is also a martial art. You can use it for self-defense, but in the truth of reality, there's nothing to defend

yourself from, because there's only one, and TC represents that oneness, it represents the one infinite, invisible, supreme ultimate.

Health: prevention and protection.

All the informants described health benefits and emotional wellbeing. The most frequent comment by all TC informants was that TC made them "feel good," that they felt "relaxed" and "natural." However, the consequence of health and wellbeing extended beyond emotional satisfaction. It included concepts of prevention and protection, as variously construed by the informants. Some specific health benefits as reported by the informants, such as reductions in blood pressure, pain, and medications, increases in stamina, and recovery from cancer have been mentioned above. Individuals, many in their seventies, showed strong health interest for preservation, prevention and protection. They believed that TC would prevent illnesses and preserve mobility, but the broader philosophical changes and spiritual attitudes about caring for their body gave them more emotional satisfaction:

Well, the big thing is "Gee, I feel so much better. I feel less stiff, I feel real good. ...But in TC, now you are having fun too but it's rhythmic, like I say almost a spiritual type of thing that you are doing with your body. I mean, I tended to come to the understanding that the body is where, you know, we must preserve, and the body is sacred and needs to have its movement. Gently and carefully...."

The martial origin of self protection aspect of TC had a psychological impact; it was empowering for some informants. For instance, a recently widowed 71 year old woman was concerned about her personal safety. She saw TC as an important tool in protecting herself from physical attacks. During the interview, she excitedly stood up and demonstrated kicks from parts of the TC form:

Yes! I mean, she (the teacher) doesn't refer to it all the time, but when she's explaining that we go like this, she doesn't want us to be wimpy.

Yeah, this one is to go for the throat, and this one is to knock 'em somewhere else, which is lovely!

Thus, a sense of confidence to protect oneself or to prevent from illness was an important factor for informants' sense of wellness.

Connectedness: social and spiritual

Another important factor contributing to sense of wellness is the sense of social and spiritual connectedness. Informants described a new spiritual and social connectedness that arose from their practice. Most found that their connection to their own spirituality was fostered by the group practice. Some tied it to the support they received from their TC friends, who shared their interest in the practice; others felt and lived TC philosophy of oneness as a consequence of the practice itself. "Group energy" "group Chi" were frequently-used expressions to describe the interwoven values of dual bonding in their TC community; they felt socially and spiritually connected.

Yeah, it's a social thing. And I find that they [his TC friends] are of the same mindset and it's usually wonderfully questioning minds, which I love, ones that want to expand and have a sincerity about themselves, an honesty. This is such an honest practice. So there are a lot of elements in people that are drawn to this that are very appealing to me. We're all—we're one and there's a oneness when you talk to people like this. There's a oneness with us right now.

Several informants mentioned about the sense of camaraderie among the practitioners. Some labeled themselves as "we" or the "TC people." Others had an ongoing weekly breakfast club to discuss and share their lives:

I really feel like when you are in the TC class, even if you just attend the class, I feel there's a lot of calm and, you know, sharing the energy and a feeling of camaraderie, and sharing. Even if you don't talk, there is, on a certain level, you share.

A few informants mentioned that their family relationships had changed as a consequence of their practice. Spiritual and social connectedness revolved around the notion of “group Chi,” where TC was the access to connect with others internally with Chi. It represented a natural resource. As one woman explained, she needed to “revisit” the reality of oneness on regular basis since she kept forgetting that truth by herself. The group Chi helped her stay connected.

Continuity: Life as a Process

As a result of their practice, one of the major descriptions from these informants was a feeling of life as “continuity.” Life was a flow, analogous to the flow in the continuous movements of their TC form. This realization partly came from the experience of learning and practicing the form. TC form involved infinite layers of new learning each time. For example, a woman who thought she mastered the form after two years of practice discovered she was just beginning at a new level. In fact, a beginner’s mind was preferred, she was told. In addition, what this informant realized long before two years, what she was seeking in TC refinement was the same as what she wanted in life, such as finding stillness, peace, meaning and truth. The informants were continuously changing along with their TC advancement. They became more comfortable with the idea of life as just a flow and not having to control is okay.

Individuals described this continuity in a variety of ways such as life as a journey, life as finding truth or true self, life as a dance, and life as TC flow. One informant stated that life was already in a flow; self journey and a cultivation process mattered in order to absorb the experience better and to live cooperatively. One informant defined the meaning of health tied with stillness, inner peace, and truth that come with TC practice.

Everyone is learning. We're all on a path to learn about the truth. And TC is certainly the way of a diligent practice, it will lead you more into a deeper sense, it'll lead you more into meditation, and being still, it will lead one into the truth, into that inner peace, and that's what brings the health.

For the informants who were in their seventies and older, a question was casually directed whether TC had any function regarding death. Many did not seem concerned about the end of life issue. Several informants said they were either not or less afraid of an unknown future; rather, they had a mechanism to be able to live the present moment without worrying about the future. They felt they had enough to cultivate here and now with TC practice and were busy living the present. Some expressed the present moment as "enjoying being in my life." These practitioners saw the end of life as the continuation of next experience when it comes, paralleling one of the TC movements within the flow of the form. When directly asked if TC offered any specific belief about death, one informant answered it this way:

It [TC] is a reliable source of inner peace, and strength for the rest of my life, most importantly, it is not destination but the journey.... When I say the rest of my life, I mean the rest of my life to the end and whatever happens after that I don't know yet.

Summary of the results

The result of exploring this group of 23 TC practitioners' experience revealed that many informants felt that they significantly changed their lifestyles in the course of TC experience. More importantly, they changed internally, transforming themselves with different perspectives of the world, with different belief systems. These changes became something intrinsic, progressive and of lasting character. They believed in "oneness" and the concept of "Chi," and they believed that we had original Natural wholeness which we could return to through meditation in the present moment. It was something radically

different from what they initially expected, but they experienced it and it became their reality. Though it took years for some informants to recognize the change which “snuck in,” TC remained a worthwhile continuing challenge for inner self-discovery of wholeness. It gave a sense of accomplishment, a focus, an emotional satisfaction of an integrated well-being. Tai Chi, as a mirror of their consciousness, offered them a device for self-cultivation which generated a sense of peace, acceptance, and inner stillness. It provided the access to the symbolic reality of the original perspective of well-being. TC was a symbolic gesture and physical reminder of returning to the Natural wholeness now. For these informants, to varying degrees and intensity, Tai Chi was a self-transformative life-changing experience.

Theoretical Model: Transformation with Moving Meditation

Webster’s dictionary defines transformation as a change in form, appearance, condition, function or character. Here, transformation is defined broadly to imply the entire changes that have affected their lives from the visible to invisible, including self and world views, and the way the practitioners relate to themselves and life. In addition, the theory of transformations with TC also recognizes and honors the multiple meanings and layers of continuous transformations which occur in these TC informants’ lives at this very moment.

Figure 4 presents a theoretical model of transformations summarizing the common experience of this group of community TC practitioners. It consists of five ellipses, corresponding to Schatzman’s dimensional explanatory matrix. The largest ellipse, context, is “Seeking wellness and meaning” indicates continuing baseline activity throughout the life of the individuals. The condition that followed was “Beginning a TC

path,” usually finding a class for studying TC with available access, time and support.

The process involved the experience of Tai Chi, including centering, exploring, letting go and changing; this process all together was captured as “Cultivating new perspectives.”

Finally, the consequence was “Finding Natural wholeness Now;” this included stillness in motion, living in the present, sense of wellbeing with a sub-dimensions of inner peace, expanded acceptance, social and spiritual connectedness, and continuity of life as a process analogous to TC flow. Unlike the dimensional matrix, which has an appearance of linearity, this theoretical model symbolizes a non-linear continuing process of transformations with moving meditation that individual practitioners experienced as they deepened their study and understanding of Tai Chi. The consequence of their TC experience, after all, was that the process itself of each moment of life mattered.

Figure 4. Theoretical Model: Transformations with Moving Meditation

Chapter V: Discussion of Findings

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study in relation to existing literature. First, the findings are addressed as a process of transformation consistent with body-mind oneness and Buddhist self-cultivation methods, particularly centering. Second, the TC meditation process is reviewed from the perspective of its original concept, the doctrine of *anatta* (selflessness, no-self). Third, the symbolic reality of “Natural wholeness now” and its role in the transformation process are discussed. Finally, the symbolic meaning of TC is viewed through a sociological lens of how the practitioners defined themselves as a different social group, the *third age*.

Process of Transformation: Contributing Factors

Body-mind oneness

While the term “body mind oneness” is used quite casually in healthcare and the popular media, the mind body problem, that is, the search for unity and connection between body and mind, has been a long difficult quest for philosophers and scientists for centuries. To fathom the magnitude of this basic question, consider this quotation:

Am I my soul and body? Or can it be said that I am a soul and have a body?
Or have I a soul and a body whilst myself being ‘spirit’? Or is the I-
concept perhaps an optical illusion? (Milburn, 2001, p. 226)

What is body-mind oneness according to a Buddhist perspective? Compared to the Cartesian dualism with its two separate realities, as in “mind intelligence” versus “body appearance”, the Buddhist concept of body-mind is “there is a lived unity or a oneness between subject and the object or between the interior and the exterior of human

mind and body” (Nagatomo, 1992, p74). Nagatomo’s book, *The Theory of Attunement through the Body* contains the complex body-mind theories of Japanese scholars, including medieval Zen master Dogen’s thesis on the mind-body issue, “Negotiating the Way.” After a long deliberation on these rare historical treatises, he eloquently summarized that the Buddhist theme of body-mind oneness can be stated as “an integrated whole of a person” (p.126).

Technically, “body-mind oneness” is a revered state of transparent awareness bearing notions of existential freedom and liberation of consciousness. It is described as a complete illumination of oneness of body-mind, in that there is no separation between body and mind, nor subject or object. Thus, Nagatomo’s “integrated whole of a person” and the “oneness of body-mind” is a reflective description of a heightened state, that is, an enlightenment. However, this state is known to be rarely achieved by ordinary people. In general, it only happens when one reaches the deep state of meditation, and then only rarely. Nagatomo (1992) suggests that this must be understood as a matter of degree for its realistic application. Following his lead, the definition of terms in this discussion, such as body-mind oneness, centering and integration will be assumed as processual, that is, viewed as processes that occurred in varying degrees as experienced and described by these informants.

Moving meditation such as employed in Tai Chi has long been established as a Buddhist self cultivation method to bring about individual transformation through body-mind oneness (Yuasa, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992). Within this framework of Eastern body-mind oneness, the Tai Chi informants centering and integrating is discussed.

Centering as Body-mind Oneness

Centering was explored in detail for the purpose of better understanding of its mechanism and function with TC informants. Centering was a deliberative mechanism of moving meditation which the informants had to learn from the very beginning of their instruction. How did TC as a moving meditation change these informants' viewing of self and the world, let alone their overall quality of life? This can be explained in terms of centering and consequent self integration from a Eastern body-mind theory of oneness. The process of transformation started with the centering. Centering was the combined mechanism of correcting body movement while learning TC meditation. According to Yuasa's (1993) Eastern body-mind theory, body training is already mind training because they are not separate; in fact, they cannot be separated. From the assumption of this unity that is also the concept of spirituality in martial arts, moving meditation established the point of self cultivation as praxis, leading to the state of "an integrated whole of a person" (Yuasa, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992).

With meditation defined as the "intentional self-regulation of attention" from moment to moment (Baer, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 1990), the deliberate slow pace of attention in movement soon enabled the practitioners to turn inward and examine their internal world of racing thoughts, thus enabling TC as a meditation in motion. While the problem of body and mind has been argued for centuries, the real issue for this study is not whether the Eastern body-mind theory is dualistic or not. More importantly, was body-mind oneness approached with Tai Chi by the practitioners, and was it an achievable position for them in their practice and in their daily living? On a broader lever, can TC bring a higher unity of goodness to human society?

Data revealed that these informants were experiencing states of body-mind oneness, of integration, to varying degrees. Yuasa's (1993) analysis of Buddhist self-cultivation methods of the moving meditation as praxis, a reflective living practice, seems directly relevant, because moving meditation is body-mind oneness training, that is, one's own body correction is simultaneously a form of mind training. These practitioners often reported that they not only felt better but they experienced a different type of energy, clarity and peaceful sense of wellbeing and stability. They frequently described the experience of "feeling whole," the "sense of oneness," and the "body-mind spirit" during the class, an experience that lasted after the practice. One informant expressed the experience of these clear moments as having "an expanded reference point." Over time, they were able to reproduce the effect of "oneness" state via centering meditation as needed, in life situations as well as in the class.

The centering concept based on Buddhist thoughts was exclusively reinforced and refined through moving meditation during the Japanese Kumakura era. Then, a monotonous walking meditation in the Bushi system called "samadhi through continual walking" brought the same psychological effect as non-moving meditation, but it was accomplished by movement (Yuasa, 1993). The goal of meditation here was to reach the state of *no mind* or *samadhi*, which was to occur in the midst of movement when there was a complete transparency without any wandering thoughts. Terms such as no mind or samadhi indicated a non-dualistic state of mind. The martial arts literature described these experiences in the states of mind of the Japanese Bushi, the "samurai," during their sword matches. The centering practice involved a different dimension of intensity and focus for the maximum awareness of the dynamics of their intense situations. If one was distracted

by an external stimulus such as an opponent's pretense or tactics, or an internal formulation such as one's own fear, the results were frequently detrimental, even fatal. Centering was the optimal process, because when the "center is immovable, captivated by nothing, the mind can in turn move freely without stagnation" (p31).

Here, the center was synonymous with the imaginary centering point of TC, which TC informants expressed as *dantien*. The Bushi warrior group viewed the center as a "mountain of strength." A term in Zen training, "kensho," is an experience of a transformed state of consciousness when one first "sees one's nature," and this generally corresponds to the states of "no-self" or "no mind" reflecting the body-mind oneness experience of non-dualistic nature in moving meditation. The Buddhist self cultivation literature asserts that once this first moment of extra-ordinary clarity is experienced, the individual dramatically alters his or her view of the world (Yuasa, 1993).

According to the self-cultivation theory of transformation, the characteristic and movements of all the habits or patterns of one's own mind (which translates as "habits of the mind and heart" in Korean, Japanese and Chinese) are transparent to the person, one can transform them (Hahn, 1987). Yuasa (1993) argues this is because stopping the dualistic thinking process opens the door to the inner psyche of an unconscious region, releasing the mind's hold of the individual. In general, meditation in motion attempts to release this region of consciousness through lived body-mind oneness. By incorporating a transformative dimension to reach the state of body-mind oneness, it is possible to get a glimpse of this higher region of awareness, a luminous moment of clarity (Yuasa, 1993 p. 14; Nagatomo, 1992).

What is this higher region of awareness? From a Tibetan Buddhist perspective, Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama XIV, comments on the emotional component that comes with this experience (1995). The Tibetan system called “vajrayana” incorporates body movements in line with the body’s energy points in their meditation practice. He depicts the higher region of experience as a “union of bliss and emptiness” (p. 132); this comes when the body trained in sophisticated yogic practices is combined with an understanding of emptiness. The understanding of emptiness brings the sense of bliss within, arising from accumulated wisdom. But the bliss also occurs from the body itself, in what he calls the “conventional truth of illusory body” (p. 132). The bliss and emptiness are experienced simultaneously in moments of consciousness. He maintains, through this refined union of mind and body, the practitioner is able to accelerate the personal transformation process by getting to the root of ignorance quicker and overcoming the confines of the habitual self.

These body-mind-oneness states described here are profound states of awakening, a result of rigorous training of strict regimens of self-cultivation practice involving Buddhist virtue practices, advanced levels of inward concentration, and substantial understanding of the emptiness doctrine. However, these TC informants in this study seem to be experiencing glimpses of similar notions, with varying subtleties. The principles of Buddhist self cultivation theory of body-mind unity through centering is reinforced with TC. Regardless of their minimalist expectation and initial intentions with TC, these informants are engaged in an Eastern method of self cultivation through moving meditation. With differing intensities and subtleties, the experiences that these practitioners revealed are consistent with personal development in the Eastern theory of

self cultivation based on body-mind unity; they experienced states similar to the “integrated whole of a person” in body mind oneness (Cheng, 1985; Yuasa, 1993; Gyatso, 1995).

Meditation and the Doctrine of Anatta

All informants used TC as a self improvement device, and they had different orientations towards TC practice for their development. As their centering practice advanced, some informants were more interested in deeper philosophy; centering worked for learning a mechanism of meditation and exposed them to the experience of TC spirituality, but it did not satisfy them with the deeper meanings behind meditation. Some sought answers through meditation to existential issues such as suffering, getting old, and dying. They reported experiencing notions of “disappearing I” and the “dissolving” self; they endeavored to understand meanings in terms of the meditation discourse itself. The relevant Buddhist doctrine *annatta*, “no-self” is discussed in the context of their TC experience.

The Buddhist discourse on anatta or *anatman* (*no-self, non-self, selfless*) for liberation from suffering is a systemic method of deconstructing the claim of *self* identity. When Buddha had denounced his princely life in order to find a way to end human suffering, he was convinced that suffering was the disease that he must find cure. He viewed himself as a physician who was desperate to find a cure to save his patients in suffering. He set himself as a case study project and devoted the remainder of his life looking for an answer. He was an independent truth seeker; if any system or ritual did not directly contribute to the ending of human suffering in practical sense, he rejected it as irrelevant. It is written that after he was enlightened, i.e., liberated from all human

sufferings, he was silent for 49 days before he imparted his teaching only to his colleagues. He expounded that the only true way to end the condition of suffering was through selfless discourse (Fleming, 2002).

According to Armstrong's (2001) research into Pali texts, when the ancient people finally heard of anatta as a solution for human suffering, they were immediately exalted and lived happier lives. People stopped violence and cooperated harmoniously; they diligently practiced anatta in peace. Their undesirable human emotions such as anger, jealousy and lingering depression became rare; with anatta, the Pali villagers were relieved and cried out of joy from the complete release of their own minds.

The main principle of anatta is that true selflessness is the emptiness of self-existence. Acknowledging all things including self identity as impermanent and selfless in nature is the core here. Also called the theory of dependent origination, it is the foundation of the emptiness doctrine. The origin of suffering was identified as ignorance of this selfless reality, leading one to cling to identities of phenomena as truth (Coomaraswamy, 1964; Gyatso, 1995; Hahn, 1987; Kusan Sunim, 1985; Streng, 1967).

A quick reading of this doctrine may give a misconception, that anatta is nihilistic and denies the existence of self and other phenomena in the world. It is important to understand that selfless doctrine does not deny conventional reality. On the contrary, it embraces conventional reality in a transformative dimension; the entire discourse is eventually about cultivating pure perception of phenomenal world we live everyday. The general purpose of the meditation method is to develop perceptual patterns of purity i.e., *seeing things as they are* (*vipassana* in Sanscrit). Thus, Wawrytko (2006) contends

that meditation practice is about redefining normal reality in our world, when she quotes a Zen master:

The secret of seeing things as they are is to take off our colored spectacles. That being-as-it-is, with nothing extraordinary about it, nothing wonderful, is the great wonder. The ability to see things normally is no small thing; to be really normal is unusual. In that normality begins to bubble up inspiration. (p. 135)

Within the context of this study, transformation can be considered as re-defining normality. These practitioners believed they could redefine normalcy.

When the door of perception is pure, this phenomenal world becomes transformed to nirvana itself (Gyatso, 1995; Hahn, 1987; Kusan Sunim, 1985; Myobong, 1984). The doctrine imparts that this state will appear as soon as the delusions in the minds are removed. Subtle differences exist in the interpretation of the doctrine amongst scholars and masters, especially in terms of emotional tones and orientations of teaching, but this notion of original (natural) perfection of the world and true individual's nature as the part of it is the common assumption, as stated by the Zen master Kusan Sunim:

The way (Tao) refers to the fact that truth permeates everything from the great truth of the universe to each and every one of its numerous forms. Thus, when delusive thinking ceases, the truth appears, the Way brightens, and the original nature becomes clear. (p. 146)

The notion of Dao (Tao) directly relates to the symbolic meanings embedded in TC, that is, the Natural wholeness and the pre-existing state of well-being in all of us. This system of thought and practice was re-named since Buddha era in various terms; "seeing into one's original self nature" or seeing Buddha nature is often used in Zen literature. This hermeneutical interpretation emphasized the accessibility to the pre-existing state of wholeness in "one's original nature", which is only "obscured by illusions and delusions, like moon is obstructed by clouds" (Wawrytko, 2006, p. 296).

Thus, according to this interpretation, one can conclude the purpose of meditation is to clear or clean the door of one's path of perception. How does one clean such an automatic process as perception when it is not even a discernable thinking process?

Kusan Sunim's interpretation (1985) cuts across the doctrine of selflessness; seeing original-nature is contemplating non-duality. What is meant by non-duality? He explains: "it means that fundamentally there is no coming or going, no birth or death, this very world is Buddha's world [as it is]" (p. 92) According to Kusan Sunim's interpretation, selfless discourse is the practice of non-duality. Traditionally, selfless discourse requires life-long endeavors in the training environment such as Zen academy to understand emptiness and codependent origination of self, virtue training, and mindfulness focus, and countless hours of reading and expert guidance through very abstract sutras (Buddha's teachings). Anatta is a system of thought and practice, not mere theorizing. Thus, there is general consensus that Zen cannot be done without practice. Only through meditation practice can a Zen student experience non-duality.

However, TC practitioners' experience during their "flow" and the sense of "oneness," "being in the moment," and particularly "disappearing I" and "dissolving self" seemed to be significant experiences of non-duality, leading some informants into a deeper practice of selflessness. Kusan Sunim (1985) also implies that the state of awakening or experiencing the non-duality is not a clear magical single event with one solution but a fluid one. One becomes more accustomed to the state as the focus of practice sustains itself, perhaps until one's cognitive restructuring occurs. Consider the following comments pointing to the different states within the same person: "upon awakening to your true self, you are called a Buddha; upon forgetting your true self, you

are called a sentient being” (p. 94). This also relates to Coomaraswamy’s (1964) notion “if the truth is not to be found in our everyday experience, it will not be found by searching elsewhere” (p. 245). Meditation in everyday life is strongly encouraged by Kusan Sunim: “Nirvanic mind will only be found within the everyday functioning of the mind and nowhere else”. Finally, the ultimate point of daily application is made through comments relating to body: “the true wisdom of the one mind is my body” (p.94).

According to these comments from these masters, if we can see the underlying reality of Natural wholeness, we can truly relish the existing world to the maximum by simply “waking up” to our original reality. This can happen with pure perception from moment to moment. Since we are already perfect and whole, we do not have anything to lose. One informant expressed this understanding as “we are already in a flow.” Kusan Sunim seems to clarify the meditation as the method of total acceptance and refining the way of true relaxation. He said “All buddhas teach the true dharma of non-doing. How marvelous is it when there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose” (p. 96).

This interpretation of the anatman discourse relates to “Natural wholeness now” from this study. TC practitioners’ symbolic reality of NWWhN is the practice of total acceptance of oneself at the present moment by experiencing non-duality with moving meditation. This is not an intellectual or willful determination; it comes with the experience of seeing non-dualistic self through centering and integration of body-mind oneness. While various subtleties exist in intellectual understanding of the moments of the non-duality in the informants’ experience, all informants readily embraced the changes within themselves and the positive impacts on their lives.

The current state of explaining the anatta discourse has reached beyond the religious connotations from the original Buddhist environment, as contemporary scholars explain meditation in more cognitive terms. Mindfulness meditation is defined as “bringing one’s complete attention to the present experience in a particular way: on purpose, on a moment-to-moment basis, observing non-judgmentally” (Marlatt & Kristeller, 1999, p. 68). The anatta (no-self) state can be achieved by the activity of mind contemplating upon itself by mindfulness meditation (Hahn, 1987; Baer, 2003). “Observing non-judgmentally” is a process given as an instructional guide for meditation. But when the judgments stop, a pure contemplation occurs as one sees it as it is; thus the methodology seamlessly becomes transformed to the state of mind itself.

This state was described in various terms by these informants: “being in the moment,” “being there but not there” and “being in the flow.” One informant explicitly stated that he became free from his “constructed I.” This is the experience of the non-conceptual self, or non-dualistic self of anatta in a subtler sense, albeit minus the formal required rigorous training of virtue practice and sutra reading. Freedom from constructed identifications beyond the calculating intellect brings release from suffering (Kabat-Zinn, 2006; Hahn, 1987). When one informant said that TC is like “being re-introduced to yourself,” he used mindfulness meditation and experienced a different self, a non-dualistic self, a selfless self, a “no-self.” The impact was that he was less afraid of his unknown future; he reduced his anxiety, which reduced his suffering.

Anatta discourse is at its root experiential, thus, it is important to remember it is a program, not merely a theory. Leaders in the field specifically warn against the danger of misconstruing the no-self notion as nihilism. Only a limited portion of selfless doctrine

can be approached linguistically. While many scholars have offered conceptual explanations to increase the understanding and access to the experience, the consensus is that it cannot be explained fully without doing. Thich Naht Hahn, Gaytso (the Dalai Lama XIV), and others who were trained in the academic discipline of philosophy and were practicing masters of the field, carefully articulated the Buddhist literature on anatman and effectively explained the methodology of practice.

Psychological explanations can be seen in Hahn's endeavor to reach general public; one observes without self-criticism, experiencing events to the fullest without defense, or "internal formations" (Hahn, 1987; Baer, 2003). Freedom from these internal formations or habitual conceptualizations enables complete release of the mind; this can be called the state of anatta. From stopping their automatic internal dialogues or "internal formulations", at least momentarily, the TC practitioners became free from the ruling of the ordinary patterns of their thinking process. They described this accomplishment as "TC moments," "cleansing," or "emptying." Recalling that the purpose of meditation is the development of pure perception, the experience of selflessness became the TC practice for these practitioners.

Symbolic Reality of Natural Wholeness Now

The influence of TC philosophy on the lives of the informants was profound. The significance of the TC experience was that the TC metaphors or symbols became directly applicable to their lives. For example, the TC form they practiced has 64 different and complex movements to be performed in one continuous flow. The deliberate yet fluid progression of each TC movement to the next was analogous to day-to-day life events;

both needed exquisite attention to each moment. Thus, TC flow was the same as the life process, and the symbolic realities of TC were often fused with their daily reality.

In the course of seeking wellness and meaning in TC experience, they realized that what they were searching was already present: "Somewhere in there I discovered that what I had come there for, I already possessed." This comment from an informant is central to understanding the informants' symbolic reality of pre-existing natural wholeness. Natural wholeness was a state they upheld, and they frequently experienced it through their practice. It was a still state of well-being, complete in itself without any condition or deficiency as experienced now. Within this symbolic reality of Natural wholeness, a plethora of other positive symbolic meanings were interlaced representing harmony, health, chi, oneness, love, beauty, connection and so on (Chan, 1963; Fang, 1981). Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama XIV, contends that symbols evoking positive emotions are more productive in life's process because they generate support and inspiration from others around (1995). For example, "Stillness in motion" was a symbolic reminder of Natural wholeness; being here now is perfect as it is (Huang, 1973). Stillness is reflected as the concept of self regulation (i.e. something that we can "gather") through meditation effort in relation to a broader notion of Chi and Nature. Consider this comment by Cheng (1985), the first professor who taught TC in the U.S., when he explained the concept of stillness in relation to Chi:

Gathering internally is stillness and stimulating the chi is motion. They are mutually responsive and joined together. To excite the chi means not only to stimulate one's own chi but to join one's chi to the chi of Nature so as to reinforce each other. Then it is excellent. (p. 209)

In the same vein, other philosophers argue that Chi presents the most primordial form of healing agent from the beginning of ancient Chinese history, and has practical

applicability to daily life (Milburn, 2001; Chan, 1963; Huang, 1973; Fang, 1981). Chi acted as a mysterious symbolic bridge which could connect these individuals to an immediate state of Natural wholeness through moving meditation. In fact, they used the terms “Chi,” “oneness,” “Natural wholeness,” and “infinite wholeness” interchangeably. Chi, whether felt in group or individually during the “flow”, the meditative experience of “stillness in motion” provided an experiential dimension of Natural wholeness now, which sustained the symbolic reality as a potential daily reality. TC was the gesture that enabled contact with this reality within these practitioners.

The term “now” in “Natural wholeness now” deserves special mention. “Now” can be misconstrued, owing to the epistemology of time as a linear concept. As soon as we hear the word “now” or “present,” we place time in the context of before and after, the past or future. The meaning of “now” in TC is non-linear, because when one is truly in the moment, one gets beyond the linear dimension of given timeline, because inner peace is beyond time and stillness is beyond time (Hahn, 1987; Highland, 2008). “Now” is added to indicate that TC practice as meditation can be viewed as “self regulation” (Baer, 2003). TC practitioners developed a capacity to tap into the state of wholeness in the present moment. This self-cultivation activity with TC practice meant they could return to a never depleting resource, because they could always access it through centering and meditation. Moving meditation was a vehicle for personal transformation, with Natural wholeness providing the symbolic reality. “Now” was the mindful reminder of the present moment; with it, practitioners centered on the concept of Natural wholeness of self via bringing their attention to body-mind oneness now.

While Natural wholeness and Original wholeness are used interchangeably in Chinese philosophical traditions, Original wholeness seems more favored in Zen settings. Natural wholeness was chosen to honor the Daoist origin of TC, including nature images in the names of the movements in its form. In addition, “now” is added to reflect ongoing experience of non-duality with these informants and its functional mechanism in their transformational process. “Now”, in addition to bringing conceptual immediacy of the present moment to the term, it is meant to be a meditative term of non-duality; one observes oneself as natural wholeness in the present moment and seeing emptiness of it at the same time.

In Natural wholeness now (NWhN), an alternative visualization component was added to reflect the experience of these informants. While some focused on the imaginary energy center, dantien, others reported they visualized doing their forms with their eyes closed. The symbolic meanings and emotions related to TC practice were visualized; they chose any image that was meaningfully related to the concept of Natural wholeness, such as peaceful calm water or the greenness of nature. This visualization was centered with one’s “breath-body” in a body-mind oneness model of TC. Then, the non-judgmental contemplation was placed in the present moment of NWhN.

Natural wholeness was a symbolic reality that brought the informants closer to a broader concept of selfhood. They had begun to experience self beyond their daily dualistic self through TC experience long before they were aware of that possibility. They adapted to the symbolic reality of Natural wholeness representing their self identity, getting to it as needed through centering in the present moment. In turn, they remained curious, challenged, committed to the TC practice for more experience and exploration,

while enjoying the positive changes. As a consequence, many experienced continuous changes within themselves, changes that were manifested in various ways in their lives over time.

In summary, several scholars have pointed out that Eastern praxis of personal self-cultivation contributes to personal transformations (Yuasa, 1993; Nagatomo, 1992; Cheng, 1985; Gyatso, 1995). The experience of these TC informants supports the notion that moving and non-moving meditation, as self-cultivation methods, are positive processual phenomena toward personal transformation. Their symbolic reality of NWhN is an achievable state through their TC practice, with its symbols and imageries brought to the mindfulness of now in TC practice. It allowed the informants to experience the notion of a non-dualistic, selfless state of being in body-mind oneness with moving meditation. The majority of informants came to TC with minimal understanding of the purpose of meditation; and they did not know that they were getting introduced to a path of experiencing non-duality, which would contribute to their transformation. Experience with TC flows and the positive changes in their lives led them to explore unique processes of self development. Thus, many informants lived NWhN in their everyday experience and practiced it symbolically through TC.

Symbolic Meanings of Tai Chi: Socio-cultural Phenomenon for Aging

The significance of the symbolic meanings included in Natural wholeness now is that they contributed to the practitioners' ongoing transformation. Considering the fact that the majority of participants were older than 60, the informants' views on aging and death emerged as research interests. A couple of the older informants initially refused to give ages, stating "TC people don't tell age because we don't worry about that stuff any

more.” Others proudly identified themselves as “TC folks” or “TC people,” distinct from others of their generation.

With the increasing numbers of aging persons in the U.S., Minichiello, Browne, and Kendig (2000) contend that young retirees from their 50s onwards are now creating a new social phenomenon. People are fighting negative social notions of getting old by separating themselves into a separate generation; they place others into “fourth age,” with old and dependent individuals who are getting close to their final decay. One 71 year old informant openly admitted that her initial reason for starting TC was the fear of getting old and losing autonomy. In contrast, the “third age” group is the independent, fit, affordable, active, and healthy aging population who thrive in the enjoyment of life after retirement. These people refuse to identify themselves with the fourth age group.

Gilleard and Higgs (2005) view this “third ageism” as a strategy to resist the “old” age by constructing a “post work identity.” Some trends or strategies identified by these people included staying active and young, thinking positive, not acting old, taking on mental challenges, and staying fit and healthy (Minichiello, Browne, & Kendig, 2000). With their “given symbolic meanings through social discourse and lifestyle practices,” it is considered a cultural phenomenon (Gilleard & Higgs, 2005, p. 17). It seems apparent that the TC practitioners have identified as a different social or cultural group.

Both Scourfield (2006) and Docker (2006) noted their elderly TC practitioners had some symbolic entities that motivated them to keep practicing TC. Scourfield discovered “surprisingly” in his community fall prevention project that the compelling motivation for TC practice for these elderly practitioners was that TC provided symbolic significance resisting against aging; he termed this an “age resisting mechanism” (p. 4).

The relevant symbol of TC for the elderly practitioners was youthfulness, anti-aging, and preservation. Similarly, Docker's (2006) preliminary study on elderly TC practitioners also suggested that her group of elderly informants had different ideas and views about aging.

The present study also found numerous symbolic meanings that were built into a large reality; TC philosophy and principle played a large role in the development of symbolic reality for these community-dwelling experienced practitioners. The sustaining power was reinforced by their experience that the symbolic reality became real as they practiced more. Some informants in this study fit in the third age identity of aging persons. Especially for the informants in their seventies and eighties, they employed the strategies of the third age. For example, they dissociated themselves by adopting a positive attitude. In the present study, many informants expressed that TC was a means to stay positive and get a handle on "negative emotions," a way to not look old or act old, and that they felt emotional satisfaction from the practice. Further, some portrayed themselves as intellectually intact; this was clearly more present in the informants in their seventies. One informant showed her computer skills by uploading videos of her performing TC single-leg stances onto YouTube, the video-sharing website. She wanted to inform her young grandchildren of both her mental as well as physical prowess. Another practitioner kept mentally fit by reading history and cultural books, which was in addition to his abdominal workouts and weight lifting. TC was a critical venue for constructing and maintaining a self image against the timeline inevitability that they all faced.

The informants also viewed TC as a continuous challenge, a challenge that gave them a sense of confidence and accomplishment in their practice. While informants spoke of the difficulty level of TC, they showed pride and confidence in being able to perform these moves. One informant showed his medal his instructor had given him; another stood up and showed off her kicking techniques in the middle of the interview. These confident behaviors of the informants dissociated them from the prospect of getting old. For these informants, “TC people” were different from others in the society of the aging. TC was a symbolic gesture representing their symbolic reality of natural health, beauty, not getting old, staying fit and challenged. TC multiplicity seemed to support their strategy of staying young and healthy in dimensions that spanned physical, mental, social, and spiritual considerations.

The important symbolic meanings of TC went beyond the desire to stay young; it also had meaning as a process of life without anxiety or worries. Tai Chi symbolized deeper existential meanings with its emphasis on the flow of experience; that is, TC symbolized life’s process, which included a flow into an inevitable end. Death was viewed as the next experience, just like the next movement they experienced in TC flow. It was another matter that they would pay exquisite attention, in order to absorb the presenting experience when it came. For them, the symbolic reality of TC was infinity and continuity of Natural wholeness now. Tai Chi was their device, a symbolic gesture to that infinite symbolic power. They developed intrinsic confidence that “everything will be okay” as long as they reminded themselves of TC.

For example, even in the middle of intense worries and extreme tension, TC breathing immediately brought them to a different world of calm and stillness. NWhN

was a symbolic reality of never depleting abundance of universal energy Chi, a facilitator of peace, beauty and total acceptance and pre-existing wellness, which connected them to the ultimate reality of anatta. TC's symbolic reality acted as a form of transcendence of fear by owning the continuing present moments as a meditation process. Some informants shared the notion of being less afraid of the future. This is also consistent with Yuasa's (1993) view that the body-mind oneness is a type of achievement one can experience as a fruit of self cultivation through moving meditation.

From a philosophical and sociological vantage point, TC's symbolic reality of NWWhN contributed to personal transformations in this group of practitioners. In fact, the Scourfield (2006) finding of symbolic meaning of TC as an age resisting mechanism, rather than a serendipitous coincidence, is one part of a larger picture of TC phenomena. The common understanding of TC's symbolic meanings was a significant identification; they distinguished themselves as a different cultural social group, the "TC people."

In summary, the theory of transformations with moving meditation through TC experience is about the journey of 23 TC practitioners into discovering wholeness within themselves. It was a process of seeing beauty, centering, learning to live in peace and harmony while accepting oneself and others. Through the moving meditation experience of TC flow, these informants let go of old internal formations and changed to new ways of viewing and being; they discovered a way to be truly present in their lives now. Though they came into contact with TC in relative innocence, they incorporated the TC philosophy of oneness through a cultivation of self via moving meditation. As a result, the majority of the informants viewed TC as a guiding philosophy for experiencing their lives, and, in that process, experienced profound transformations.

Chapter VI: Critique and Implications

This study has been about TC practitioners' experience of discovering their inner source through a self integrating process with TC. It provides some plausible explanations as to why these informants have continued to commit their time and energy into TC practice. This chapter addresses strengths and limitations of the study as well as its implications for research, theory development, healthcare and health policy, nursing, and the nature of health.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

The strength of this study is the development of a grounded theory that was directly based on the overall experience and viewpoints of the practitioners. It unfolded the internal mechanism of TC and its impact on their lives from the perspective of the practitioners. While numerous quantitative TC benefit studies spanning many body systems and illnesses have been conducted (see chapter II), only two small scale explorative studies are available. The overall experience of TC practitioners are not adequately explored in the current literature. Conceptual understanding of TC and the mechanism for the claimed benefits in the literature are not yet known. Thus, the study may address a literature gap by contributing to the initial understanding of TC phenomena and serving as a point of departure for further knowledge development.

Scourfield (2006) suggested that TC had symbolic value as an age-resisting strategy for his informants. The present study extended his findings, discovering a large

symbolic reality reservoir which held numerous symbolic meanings for these informants. This reservoir of symbolic meanings was a major contributing factor to their long term commitment and their ongoing self-transformation process. The multiple properties of TC as a moving meditation were critically important in the phases of changes in these informants' inner journey, providing various symbolic entities that facilitated their physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being. Furthermore, the informants' symbolic worlds were tightly interwoven with their meditation practice, often allowing them to fuse conventional reality and their symbolic world together. This TC experience brought positive results in their daily lives and further validated their practice. The informants' goal was to increasingly actualize symbolic meanings of TC in their daily lives. For example, "stillness in motion" was a powerful symbolic entity for them, and the informants had strong confidence that they could generate this experience every moment if they practiced more TC. These numerous symbolic functions in their experience of TC and their tie to their sense of well-being are important areas for future research.

This study also has several limitations. Though grounded theory is intended to explore and describe the experience of specific populations and phenomena, and generalizability is not a priority concern (Charmaz, 2006), it is important to avoid overgeneralization of the conclusions from this study. One potential limitation of the study involved the scope of theoretical sampling; it was limited to two school classes, both of which involved the same form of Tai Chi (64 move Guang Ping Yang). It is possible that different data might have emerged with other forms of Tai Chi or at different settings. However, all the forms of Tai Chi emphasize slow movement and moving meditation, so one could argue that the results should be comparable.

Another point to consider is the effect of teacher and setting on the practitioners' data. Stead, Wimbush, and Teer (1997) suggest that the instructor can mold the students' attitude, particularly in elderly populations. This study used two different groups located in different settings, though the branches were under the same college administration. One can argue that these two teachers had different teaching strategies, a difference that was supported by some of the researcher's field observations. For example, at the senior center, the instructor started the class with a sitting meditation. At the other class site, located in a community park right next to a large multi-purpose room for sporting events, the instructor started the class with active stretching or a Qigong exercise. One can argue these instructor and setting differences might have effected what the participants said. However, the data did not reveal any systematic differences in student attitude between the two classes.

While gender, age, and the duration of practice were objects of theoretical sampling during the data collection phase of this study, sampling was conducted within the confines of the study. No specific attempt was made to include informants who had different cultural upbringing; for instance, there were no practitioners who emigrated to the U.S. from Asia. This limitation was a consequence of the researcher's interest in informants from the U.S. culture and the mix of practitioners who volunteered. Future studies could and should address all ages and cultural sub-groups. The transformational theory that emerged from this study needs to be replicated.

Implications for Research and Theory Development

The grounded theory that emerged from this study has many implications for future research and theory development. Because this grounded theory states that

multiple properties inherent in TC were foundational for the transformational process, any specific TC property can be further researched. The grounded transformation theory can be expanded as a study framework for other types of moving meditation such as martial arts and yoga.

Since one of the research questions was to explore why people stay committed for long term practice, the exploration into those who dropped out, whether after a few months or after years of practice, should be addressed in future research. Their experiences can be understood and used to improve the knowledge base and application.

Retesting the study with a defined sample of TC beginners would contribute to the generalizability of the results. Considering the relatively high educational level of these informants, expanding the study to include lower educational groups would be another strategy for wider generalization. A cross-discipline study examining relationships between this transformation theory and other similar conceptual models would further knowledge development. For example, Seligman's (1990) "learned optimism model" presents many similar variables to those discovered in these informants' transformation processes. Further comparison and analysis of dimensions between the two may present new directions for cross-disciplinary research and instrument development.

Research should be conducted in which Tai Chi and the theoretical model of transformation are applied to new populations. For instance, TC can be tested with target populations such as U.S. veterans from Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, who frequently experience depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. A change of perspective regarding self, the world, and a consequent transformation process may benefit these

people, who often suffer in multiple ways from their war trauma (Zivin, Kim, McCarthy, Austin, Hoggatt, Walters et al., 2007).

Healthcare Implications

The informants repeatedly revealed that TC became the “foundational activity” for their lifestyle changes, that is, TC motivated them to change their lifestyles and provided the strength to maintain the changes. The emotional satisfaction of “feeling better” about these changes contributed to their perpetuation through a positive feedback cycle. TC as a foundational activity could be an indication that TC has value for public health for health promotion and illness prevention. Given the demographics of this sample, it is especially applicable to the upcoming large cohort of aging adults.

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that by 2011, when baby boomers will reach 65, the extent of chronic illness and lack of public resources will be a huge problem affecting public health. Worldwide, the population of persons greater than 65 years old is estimated to double between 2000 and 2030 from 35 million to an estimated 71 million. The number of persons greater than 80 years of age is predicted to increase from 9.3 million in 2000 to 19.5 million in 2030. Eighty percent of all persons over 65 years will have at least one chronic condition, 50 percent will have at least two, and these percentages are likely to increase with the graying of the population (Goulding, Rogers, & Smith, 2003).

Regular physical activity has been shown to have health benefits for aging populations. Several researchers established that motivation to participate in physical activity was influenced by multiple factors such as lifestyle, health beliefs, perceived rewards, and situational factors. Healthy aging was the result of synergistic effects from

multiple factors on the integrative processes of a whole person (Brach, Simonsick, Kritchevsky, Yaffe, & Newman, 2004; Stead, Wimbush, & Teer, 1997).

Valliant's (2001) landmark *successful aging* study identified some of the controllable "protective factors" (p.845) of healthy aging that could be predicted for ages 70 to 90 from variables assessed before age 50. Hartman-Stein and Potkanowicz (2003) endorsed integrative development; physical behaviors, cognitive patterns, as well as emotional, social and spiritual lifestyles in middle age have much more impact on health and satisfaction in individuals in their sixties, seventies, and eighties than previously understood. A recent meta-analysis of studies on the elderly shows that intellectual pursuits and exercise appear to influence cognitive ability in later life (Colcombe & Kramer, 2003). In other words, the meaning of wellbeing in the aging process is best approached through merging multiple faculties of a person, not working on individual variables separately. According to these researchers, fostering integrative protective factors puts the goal of successful healthy aging within reach. Given these healthy aging studies, it becomes incumbent for health policy makers to identify and support interventions that are based on multiplicity (Valliant, 2001). Clearly, Tai Chi could be an appropriate candidate.

Many informants spoke about protecting and preserving their health and mobility against aging. The majority of the practitioners in this study were over 55, attesting to the appeal of this activity to the aging population, as does the general popularity of these classes, with the number of students enrolled frequently exceeding the capacity of the assigned room. TC's multiple properties were important to changing and maintaining their new health behaviors; they could be utilized for healthcare strategies.

Health Policy Implications of Tai Chi

Given the statistics of a large cohort and a projected lack of healthcare resource, and the data from healthy aging studies, it is necessary to find appropriate preventive interventions. Goulding, Rogers, and Smith state (2003) that the future of healthcare depends on optimizing the healthcare system for the aging and aged populations. Both illness prevention and health promotion strategies need to be enumerated, evaluated, and implemented. It seems both feasible and prudent to consider including Tai Chi as a promotion, prevention, and healthcare treatment modality. Almost all of the 37 quantitative research studies summarized in Appendix H support the notion that Tai Chi benefits could be inexpensively and safely disseminated to both middle-aged and elderly participants. This study of 23 community based practitioners' experience also supports policy changes to enable further exploration and dissemination of TC.

For example, prescriptive authority for TC as a care modality for physical and mental health should be considered, in a manner analogous to that already used by physicians, nurse practitioners, or physician assistants who write prescriptions for physical therapy. Prescriptive authority has advantages to the patients; it makes expenses potentially reimbursable by insurance companies. Prescriptive authority also lends legitimacy to the activity, which would encourage more of the target population to participate (Radzynski, 2007).

To establish and sustain TC activities in the community, federal and state support for inexpensive or free Tai Chi classes needs to be insured, in a manner similar to the federal Head Start program (Novak, 1999). At a minimum, pilot programs should be established quickly. While some communities offer individual classes, many do not, so

that current benefits are limited to defined areas. Successful dissemination of Tai Chi would require classes in all areas of the U.S., including rural as well as city locations. Given the economic and functional difficulties facing older adults for transportation, easily accessible classes need to be offered nationwide. In addition to offering tangible benefits to the participants, these programs will enable the collection of large datasets, so that the programs can continue to be refined.

Tai Chi can offer benefits to the frail elderly population. While this study addressed well elders who could attend classes, there was a pronounced interest among the participants in their seventies and eighties in finding an exercise that was simultaneously gentle, safe, and effective. The informants also revealed feelings of self efficacy, confidence, and a decreased fear of the unknown future with TC practice. Some studies on quality of life for frail elderly resulted in positive primary or secondary outcomes in the current literature. Some data on feasibility and follow-up intervention studies in skilled care facilities have shown that Tai Chi can be effectively used in nursing homes (Chen, 2006). These applications to the frail elderly included modifying TC forms to much simpler and fewer movements (Li, 2001; Wolf, Barnhart, Kutner, McNeely, Coogler, & Xu, 1996).

One important area of further research for aging population is gaining a peaceful perspective on dying. Some informants shared their views on dying; they were less afraid of the unknown future. TC philosophy as a beneficial device for end of life issues deserves further exploration.

Nursing Implications

The theory of transformation has numerous nursing implications for professional development as well as clinical practice. The professional characteristic of nursing is philosophical and holistic, that is, nursing strives to embrace all aspects of caring for the wellness of humanity. Historically, nursing profession has been a discipline that continuously strives to integrate its practice and philosophy, bridging gaps between the two (Alperson, 2008; Chin & Kramer, 2004). In this study, the informants demonstrated that TC practice itself was an act of praxis and integration; training that seemed to be focused on the physical body was already cultivating the mind, as discussed in chapter V. Thus, the transformational changes the informants experienced with moving meditation involved the process of praxis, the reflective practice in life.

Praxis in nursing is the ceaseless effort to protect and preserve the humanistic core of the profession, avoiding simplistic task orientations and mechanistic reductionism (Connor, 2004; Chinn & Kramer, 2004). Praxis of body-mind-spirit oneness comes through developing self integration in moving meditation, and it resonates with the holistic nature of nursing profession. It can be applied to both personal and professional development. Nursing needs a universal language that unites our professional aspirations and efforts together; praxis and integration captures that nursing essence. In order for the reflective practice to be nursing reality, we need a seamless device that combines both the practice and philosophy. In a comparison review of TC philosophy and Carper's patterns of nurses' knowing (Carper, 1978), Alperson (2008) noted that the building blocks of Carper's nursing epistemology were integration and praxis, and that Tai Chi was an embodiment of these two concepts. With further exploration and expansion, the theory

of transformation with moving meditation can be a pragmatic source of principles for nursing knowledge development by providing a structure for reflective practice.

The findings of this study clearly manifested praxis and integration as the basis for transformations with these community-dwelling practitioners. It seems apparent that praxis and integration are a common vocabulary between nursing professionals' efforts and the experience of TC practitioners. This collective philosophical match has broad implications for nursing practice and for all other healthcare professionals to understand the meanings of wellness and care intervention strategies. For example, one natural application for prevention is to incorporate a TC health model for self care. One of the dimensions in transformational process included changes in the informant's view of self. As the informants changed the views of themselves, self care became a noble concept bearing a sense of beauty and meaning, rather than a mundane physical chore. This new concept of self care contributed not just to initiating changes in their lifestyles, but also to maintaining their changes.

This transformational process can inspire a new genre of self-care model for nursing, one that is based on natural and pre-existing wholeness. The model would not be a self-care model focused on a medical orientation of deficit, but a collaborative model mobilizing the original source of wellness within the patients and the clients. TC's multiplicity and the integrative self model should evoke a map of positive motivations, getting in touch with their inner source and power. As Aldridge (2003) noted, the current role of healthcare professionals is changing and the public is more tuned into their own healthcare. Considering the current demographical shift in the aging population, the nursing professionals' leading role as educators for health promotion and illness

prevention becomes paramount. Nurses can be the facilitators of praxis and integration, increasing awareness and mindfulness of the public; they can play active roles as change agents for a healthier society by promoting self-care strategies based on Natural wholeness now.

Qualitative or integrative TC intervention studies with nursing professionals can evaluate the effects of TC on their nursing practice. This could begin to bring essential nursing concepts of praxis to the daily life of nurses and nursing students. By adapting a course of philosophy and practice that promotes body-mind integration in nursing curricula, early conceptual education for integration and praxis becomes possible. The grounded theory of transformation through meditation in movement can reinforce a direction of knowledge development bearing a fruitful universal language for nursing that embraces a healthier society for human flourishing (Alperson, 2008; Chin & Kramer, 2004; Conner, 2004).

Concluding Reflections on Tai Chi and the Nature of Health

David Aldridge (2004) argues that health and disease are not fixed entities but a process of adaptation and a form of negotiation between self, culture, and society; health or illness is a complex set of ideas based on the social cultural norm and the individual context. He states "Health is part of daily living, as praxis" (p. 35). This statement seems to capture the spirit of a TC health model based on transformation with moving meditation. It directly resonates with TC philosophy of self cultivation: TC is praxis of life.

Based on experiences of these practitioners, TC philosophy is acknowledging life as a flow and as experience of continuous transformation. Their praxis is about

contemplating on this process of transformation. Ames and Halls (2003) often emphasize that the processual philosophy is to make this life significant, to live as authentically as possible. Its continuity of movements represents the process of life as a flow, with movements corresponding to different experiences, including those on a health to illness continuum.

Aldridge (2004) contends that health should be approached as a “functional aesthetic.” In the typical Western healthcare dialogues, health is judged too moralistically and lacks pluralistic understanding. It ignores profound human factors in existence, such as the simple appreciation of pleasure. He shares the story of a large Greek family that celebrates gathering with good tasting food from their own culture. In this family gathering, the nutrition analysis is of little value compared to the overwhelming social emotional satisfaction from the family union. Healthcare professionals must integrate their clinical knowledge with the practice of everyday life of people. Positive emotions, a sense of enjoyment and pleasure in daily activities combined with a zest for life are all known to be contributing factors in subjective health assessment, valuable for promoting personal health (Aldridge, 2004).

These informants reported that they always felt uplifted after the practice. They appreciated communication between body and mind linked by Chi, and they were able to dwell in the quiet comforts and pleasure of health. As expressed by Lin Yutang (1965), in truly happy moments of human life, the joy could be felt through the whole system, because the spirit is intricately tied up with senses in human form. Health as functional aesthetics supports the notion that body is a given reality and that health is not beyond a substantial plane. Healthcare practitioners should refrain from viewing disease as a

failure of health. Aldridge argues that we should not provide a prescribed framework suggestive of health as a test for good self care; rather, we should enjoy the lived experience of body and the cultivation of health. He argues that the prescriptive health view that is prevalent among healthcare practitioners is harmful to the well-being of the public (Aldridge, 2004). Quite different from this perspective, in a TC health approach, while cultivating the Natural wholeness now, illness and health are not attached with blame; it is just a process to attend.

The recent conception of health is not a mere absence of illness. Individuals in this study were not only seeking for their health promotion and illness prevention but they were also seeking pleasure, peace, challenge and beauty. Increasingly, the role of healthcare practitioners is to become the facilitators rather than the experts in a traditional role of providing privileged service. Health is becoming a form of identity as a way to define and present the self in social scenes. In this changing health culture, postmodern identification of healthy individual needs to be understood with added component of pleasure, not as merely medically healthy. Aldridge (2004) maintains that this pleasure, which implies beauty and passion, is the critical element for a healthier society in a continuum of health and functional aesthetics. A daily walk in a park is simultaneously more aesthetic and appealing to the patient than a medical directive to climb stairs within one's office building. Healthcare professionals as facilitators for the public health need to be aware of these psychological issues and apply them in healthcare interactions with patients (Aldridge, 2004).

Comparable aspects of TC philosophy and practice with Aldridge's notions were revealed by the informants. An elevated form of contemplation as a self cultivation

practice was an activity intricately connected to their bodies. This practice provided relaxation and was perceived as highly pleasurable. Metaphysics and biology were suffused together in this slow moving exercise, in which its artistic forms highlight its beauty. Human multiplicity was earnestly embraced, enabling practitioners to get the most out of the given ingredients. Ultimately, they experienced a different way of appreciating their daily life, a way that was transformed to be calmer, more pleasurable, and more connected.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic Information Sheet

Code_____

Name_____

Age_____

Sex_____

Date of Birth_____

Marital Status: single__ married__ separated__ widowed__

Total Years/months of Tai Chi practice _____

Education_____

Ethnicity_____

Work_____ # of Years retired_____

of family members _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview guide

1. Tell me about what brought you to TC, can you describe the first time you heard about it?
(probes- social context of initial exposure-direct or indirect : what attracted?)
2. Can you describe typical Saturday morning when you have TC class
(probe-the expectation of the practice, attitude and view toward practice, what happens prior, during and after the practice? Is there difference?)
3. What made you become a regular practitioner? How did it happen?
(probe- the data the decision was based on... external or internal influences? events? Illness? Perspective of TC? What attracts?)
4. How has it been for you?
(probe-function,symbols, beliefs, expectations, perceived benefit)
5. What does TC mean to you? (How do you want it to serve you in the future?)
(probe-symbols, meanings, expectations, hopes)
6. Do you have friends at TC? (Are they different from other friends? Do you socialize with them outside of the class?)
(Probe-socialization pattern and process of TC community)
7. Do you practice at home? (What happens when you don't practice?)
(probe-social and private function of TC perceived effect of the practice, relationship with TC?)
8. How has your TC practice changed over time? If so, how do you mean?
(probe-process of understanding and feelings and the effect of the change)
9. What is most important thing about TC for you?

Appendix C: Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality

Transcriber's Pledge of Confidentiality

I will be participating in the dissertation research project entitled:

Transformations with Tai Chi:

Experience of Community-dwelling Tai Chi Practitioners

I will be transcribing audio-recorded interviews into text. I will not know the names of the informants, but if I should recognize information that enables me to identify any of the participants I agree to maintain their confidentiality. By signing this agreement I pledge to keep all information strictly confidential. I will not discuss the information I transcribe with any person for any reason. I understand that to violate this agreement would constitute a serious and unethical infringement on the informant's right to privacy.

Name of Transcriptionist

Date

Signature of Transcriptionist

Name of Principle Investigator

Signature of Principle Investigator

Date

Appendix D: Research Participant Informed Consent Form

Research Participant Informed Consent Form

University of San Diego

Research Participant Consent Form

Transformations with Tai Chi:

The Experience of Community-dwelling Practitioners

Sunny Yim Alperson is a doctoral student in nursing at the Hahn School of Nursing and Health Science at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research project for the purpose of exploring perspectives of Tai Chi practitioners in the community.

The project will involve one interview that asks questions about thoughts and feelings associated with your Tai Chi practice. The interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes and will include a demographic questionnaire. The interview will be at the time and place of your choice and convenience. A brief follow up interview or a phone call may be necessary to clarify the interview

information or ask additional information. Participation is entirely voluntary and even after the interview begins, you can refuse to answer any question and/or quit at any time. Should you choose to quit, your interview information will be destroyed right away.

If you tell me during the interview that someone is hurting you, I am legally required to report this. There may be a risk that you will become tired during the interview. If this occurs, we can resume the interview at a later date that is convenient for you.

The interview will be audio-recorded, written, coded and studied in a manner which will protect your identity. Any information that you provide will remain confidential. A transcriptionist who has signed a pledge of confidentiality will type the interviews. The information will remain confidential and kept in a locked fireproof file. The results of the research project may be made public for learning purposes and information quoted, but all individual data will remain anonymous and confidential.

The benefit to participating in the research will be in knowing that you have shared your experience about Tai Chi

practice and have the satisfaction of contributing to nursing knowledge development.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Sunny Yim Alperson at (760)-743-1816 or Sunny Alperson's research advisor, Dr. Patricia Roth at (619)-260-4572 .

I have read and understood this form, and consent to my voluntary participation in this research project. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Participant

Signature of Principle Investigator

Date

Appendix E: Example of Recruitment Flyer

Example of Recruitment Flyer

Attention Tai Chi Practitioners

Would you like to participate in a research that explores the experience of Tai Chi practice?

I am a doctoral student in nursing at University of San Diego who is interested in hearing about your thoughts and feelings about Tai Chi.

I would like to hear about your stories, views and beliefs about your Tai Chi practice, if you qualify the following conditions:

- 1) Consider yourself committed to Tai Chi practice, and
- 2) You have been practicing Tai Chi longer than a year.

If you are interested in sharing your experience, please contact me to learn more about it. Thank you.

Sunny Yim Alperson, RN, NP, PhD student
(760)-743-1816

Appendix F: Support Letters

December 6, 2007

Institutional Review Board
University of San Diego
5998 Alcala Park
San Diego, CA 92110

Dear Institutional Review Board Members:

I am writing this letter of support for Mrs. Sunny Yim Alperson RN, NP, PhD candidate in her Tai Ji research. I have spoken with Sunny re: explorative research on "The Lived Experience of Tai Ji Practitioners" in context of health and aging process. I am pleased and excited that Sunny has chosen our program to conduct her PhD research to explore this important topic.

Considering the burgeoning Tai Chi practice worldwide, her topic is not only of great interest to Tai Chi communities but also a needed study for the general public to better understand its multiple properties that can be proven beneficial.

As the teacher of this ongoing Tai Chi Program in the local community of Carlsbad and Vista, I support this worthwhile research and welcome the opportunity to contribute to knowledge development of Tai Chi, as the findings would be most helpful for health promotion in general and for better utilization of Tai Chi in the medical and nursing community.

Please use this as an acceptance letter to support Mrs. Sunny Alperson's research efforts.

Sincerely,

Jo Presbury-Smith
Teacher of Tai Chi program
Mira Costa Community College Education

December 6, 2007

Institutional Review Board
University of San Diego
5998 Alcala Park
San Diego, CA 92110

Richard Aquino
1807 Manzanita Court
Vista, CA 92083

Dear Institutional Review Board Members:

I am very pleased to submit this letter of support for Sunny Alperson, PhDc. and her research project, "The Lived Experience of Tai Chi Practitioners." As a practitioner and teacher of over 20 years in our Tai Chi community, I welcome this opportunity to investigate the benefits of Tai Chi Chuan.

Mrs. Alperson has proposed a voluntary interview approach to gather information regarding Tai Chi practitioners' experience. I appreciate her "least invasive" method, recognizing the need for confidentiality and the preservation of privacy for the study participants. The focus of her study is timely and will add to the body of knowledge regarding health applications of Tai Chi.

I consider it an honor to be involved with this important research effort. If there is any other information you need or you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Richard Aquino
Tai Chi Instructor
MiraCosta College Community Education

Appendix H: Quantitative Studies on Tai Chi

Appendix H: Quantitative Studies on Tai Chi

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Study Design</u>	<u>Dependent Variables</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<u>Cardiovascular</u>					
Young et al.	1999	62 Sedentary Older Adults	RCT TC vs Aerobic Dance	Sys/Dias BP	Comparable improvements in both groups 10/8 mm reduction 19/9 mm reduction
Thornton	2004	34 Older women	Post-pre	Sys/Dias BP	
Taylor-Piliae et al.	2006		Post-pre	Sys/Dias BP	
<u>Heart Rate Variability</u>					
Lu	2003	40 TC and non TC Ss	Ind Groups	HRV	Increase in HR Var in TC group; decrease in BP HRV increase after exercise
Vaananen et al.	2002	29 TC, 15 elderly & 14 Young	Post-pre	HRV	
<u>Lipids</u>					
Tsai	2004	76 middle-aged	RCT TC and Sedentary	Lipids, BP	Improved lipids, lower BP

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Study Design</u>	<u>Dependent Variables</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<u>Coronary Heart Disease</u>					
Channer	1996	126 post MI	TC, Music exercise, Support	Dias BP, HR	TC lower BP, HR
Jong et al.	2004	40 post lobectomy	RCT mild TC vs usual care	Pulmonary, walking distance, QOL	TC better pulmonary walking , QOL
Yeh et al.	2004	30 heart failure	RCT TC + usual care vs usual care	B nat peptide; catecholamines, walking, QOL	TC better on all DVs
<u>Aerobic Capacity</u>					
Sierpina	2007	Experienced TC vs Post-pre weight/age controls		Age related decline in VO2	Decreased loss in TC
Audette et al.	2006	19 elderly women	RCT TC vs brisk walking	VO2, HRV, balance, strength, flexibility, QOL, Mood	TC better in most DVs
Li et al.	2002	94 inactive elderly	RCT TC vs waiting list control	Perceived physical function	TC improved function

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Study Design</u>	<u>Dependent Variables</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<u>Falls, Balance, Strength, & Flexibility</u>					
Wolf et al.	1993-1997	200 healthy elderly	RCT vs Balance training vs Education	Risk of falls, strength, balance, self-esteem	TC most improvement on DVs
Li et al.	2005	256 inactive elderly	RCT TC vs Stretching Alone	Number of falls, balance, walking speed	55% lower risk of falls with TC; reduced fear of falls
Voukelatos et al.	2007	702 well elders	RCT TC vs waiting list control	Falls, balance	TC had fewer falls, better balance
Taylor-Piliae et al.	2006	39 elders with > 1 CV risk factor	Post-pre	Balance, strength, endurance, flexibility	Improvement in all DVs
Ramachandran et al.	2007	15 Experienced TC vs controls	Ind Groups	Gait differences	Longer 1 leg stance; slower gait in TC
Gatts et al.	2007	22 Elders post op for knees, hips	RCT TC vs Waiting list control	Gait differences	TC had fewer falls, better balance

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Study Design</u>	<u>Dependent Variables</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<u>Bone Density</u>					
Shen et al.	2007	28 sedentary elders	RCT TC vs Resistance Training	Calcium, Bone-specific biomarkers	Improved biomarkers in TC
Qin et al.	2005	48 Experience TC vs 51 sedentary controls	Ind Groups	BMD, Neuromuscular function and strength	Improved DVs in TC
<u>Pain</u>					
Fansen et al.	2007	152 Chronic hip/knee osteoarthritis	RCT TC, hydrotherapy, waiting list control	Pain and physical function	Improved DVs in TC
Brismee et al.	2007	41 Elderly with knee osteoarthritis	Reversal design TC to no TC	Range of motion, pain, stiffness, function	Improved DVs in TC

<u>Year</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Study Design</u>	<u>Dependent Variables</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<u>Self efficacy, Self Image, Wellness and Quality of Life</u>				
Li et al.	2001 94 inactive elderly	RCT TC vs waiting list control	Self-efficacy, physical function, fear of falling	Improved DVs in TC
Kin et al.	2007 804 TC vs Age Matched Controls	Ind Groups	QOL including physical, pain, health, social	Improvement in most DVs in TC
<u>Stress and Mood</u>				
Jin	1992 96 Experienced TC	RCT to TC, walking, meditation or reading	Cortisol, Moods after viewing stressful film and cog. problems	TC and walking comparable reductions
Taylor-Piliae et al.	2006 39 elders with > 1 CV risk factor	Post pre	Mood, perceived stress, self-efficacy	Improved DVs in TC
Greenspan	2007 269 frail elders	RCT TC to Wellness Education	Ambulation, body care and health	TC improved ambulation and body care; no diff for health

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Study Design</u>	<u>Dependent Variables</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
<u>Psychoimmunology</u>					
Yeh et al.	2006	37 normal adults	Post-pre	Functional mobility, personal health, T cell	Improved DVs in TC
Irwin et al.	2007	112 healthy elderly	RCT TC vs. Health Education	Immunity markers	Improved DVs in TC
<u>Response to Disease</u>					
Galantino	2005	38 HIV adults	TC vs Aerobic Exercise vs Control	QOL, Spirituality, Moods, Physical Function	Improved DVs in TC
Mustian et al.	2006	21 women with Breast Cancer	RCT TC vs control therapy	Aerobic capacity, strength, flexibility	Improved all DVs in TC; imp. in flexibility in control
Galantino	2003	11 women with Cancer	RCT TC vs walking	BMI, BP, Fatigue	BP and Fatigue improved in both; BMI lower in TC

	<u>Year</u>	<u>Subjects</u>	<u>Study Design</u>	<u>Dependent Variables</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Klein et al.	2006	8 adults with Parkinson's Disease	TC for Patient and partner	Balance, psych and soc variables	Improved balance and other DVs
Li et al.	2007	17 adults with Parkinson's Disease	TC for all patients	Speed walk, functional reach	Improved post - pre scores in DVs
Mills et al.	2000	8 Multiple Sclerosis	TC for all patients	Depression, balance	Improved post - pre scores in DVs
Hart et al.	2004	18 Stroke survivors	RCT TC vs Physiotherapy	Physical functioning, Social Functioning, balance, ambulation	Improvement in some DVs

Appendix I: Demographic Summary of Tai Chi Practitioners

Appendix I: Demographic Summary of Tai Chi Practitioners

Age	Gender	Years of Tai Chi Experience	Educational Level	Retired
68	F	1 month	College > 4 yrs	Y
82	F	5	College < 4 yrs	Y
46	F	12	College < 4 yrs	N
77	F	2	College > 4 yrs	N
63	F	10	College < 4 yrs	N
68	F	19	College < 4 yrs	Y
78	F	1 month	College < 4 yrs	Y
58	F	2.75	College < 4 yrs	Y
75	F	1.5	College < 4 yrs	Y
75	F	3	High School	Y
67	F	26	College > 4 yrs	N
71	F	2	High School	Y
61	F	3	College < 4 yrs	Y
55	F	4	College < 4 yrs	N
66	M	5	College < 4 yrs	N
60	M	11	College < 4 yrs	Y
72	M	5	College < 4 yrs	Y
49	M	10	College > 4 yrs	N
70	M	1.25	College > 4 yrs	Y
58	M	2.75	College > 4 yrs	Y
51	M	21	College < 4 yrs	N
79	M	1.5	College > 4 yrs	Y
57	M	12.5	College > 4 yrs	Y