University of Alberta

Master & Student:
An investigation of the methods of negotiating teacher-student relationships in the martial arts

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic comparison of two martial arts training systems, with the goal of discovering what methods martial arts teachers employ to define and negotiate relationships with their students. Informed by the approaches employed by previous martial arts scholars, this study uses participant observation alongside semi-structured and informal interviews to identify important themes of training and teaching in the arts of Hung Gar Kung Fu and Amateur Olympic Boxing. This thesis showed that teacher-student relationships are formed through the activities of student selection, systematized training, and anecdotal guidance, and that these activities are applied in the context of four training structures: the training environment, class organization, the role of teachers in the school, and the formal bow or handshake. Analysis of this data also indicated that this application is influenced by the beliefs and values of the instructor as well as the philosophies of the system being taught.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PLATES

Image Page

INTRODUCTION

"Knowledge shared is immortal." This proverb, of likely ancient but unknown origin, stands as an explanation of the deepest motivations of all martial arts systems. That is, to pass on the knowledge of the art itself. For, whether a given system is based on a meditative philosophy, the mimicry of animal movements, or a scientific formula for athletic success, the art soon becomes meaningless if it lacks two essential components; a teacher and a student. No matter which system or systems you choose to study, whether it was selected due to its brutal reputation, its championship fame, or your own unique interest in what the art has to offer, the relationship you build with your teacher – and, perhaps, some day in the future, your own students – will determine your success in training.

I suggest that it is the methods employed by the instructor that create, define, and facilitate the teacher-student relationship in martial arts training, and that the activities and structures used to negotiate this relationship allow for the instructor to pass on his or her own values and philosophies to the student alongside those of the style being trained. This is accomplished through the application of three central activities – student selection, systematized training, and anecdotal guidance – and the use of four structures – the training environment, class organization, the role of teachers in the school, and the formal bow or handshake.

By means of ethnographic research involving a comparison study of kung fu and amateur boxing, I gathered data from participant observation, informal interviews at martial arts school and while training, and one-on-one semi-structured interviews with head instructors. I analysed this data for themes relating to training methods, dominant values, and favourable attitudes related to each system, and indications as to the means by

which instructors interact with their students, pass on their knowledge, and run their schools. I further contextualized the experiences, statements, and observations recorded in the field within literary research regarding the background of combative activities, their role and acceptability in society, their histories, and the personal and communal aspects of martial arts practice as a whole.

I chose boxing and kung fu for comparison in order to observe similarities and differences among the training practices and values of two disparate martial arts. As contemporary boxing was developed in Great Britain, and kung fu came to being in a Chinese context, these two systems provided an excellent juxtaposition to establish which elements of modern martial arts training are shared across systems and which are unique. The research sites associated with each system are the South Side Amateur Boxing Club, which teaches Olympic style boxing, and the Green Dragon Kung Fu Association, which teaches Hung Gar style kung fu.[1] Both schools are located in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Field work at both sites was conducted for a total of three months during the summer of 2009, with follow up interviews in the winter and spring of 2010.

Three major activities were identified as central in both groups throughout training and interviews: student selection, systematised training, and anecdotal guidance. At both research sites, these activities are under the direct control of the highest ranking instructor, allowing them unfettered freedom to adjust the manner in which each activity is carried out – perhaps tempered by advice from their fellows. Student selection involves the management of and decision making related to the acceptance and longevity of new students, for example, the turning away of students who behave inappropriately.

[1] There are also other styles of kung fu and several weapon systems taught here, they are noted in later discussions.

Systematized training incorporates the establishment of the methods that are used to pass knowledge from teacher to student, the environment in which training occurs, and the expectations of students. Finally, anecdotal guidance is the oral expression of lessons and values that may be difficult to demonstrate in a practical manner. This takes the form of additional insights that clarify or justify a technique or point of view, including the mythology applied to the central ideals of a martial style or the notions of masculinity that are promoted by a given fighting system. This practice also allows for the transmission of knowledge too dangerous to learn first-hand, such as the expected movement of an opponent after their limb is broken.

The results of this endeavour revealed that the values and goals expressed in the training of kung fu and boxing and the structures used to pass them from teacher to student are not altogether different. I will use data collected from my observations and readings to demonstrate that the application of the aforementioned three central activities by the head instructors leads to their ability to impart values of hard work, dedication, respect, and humility within the context of the four aforementioned training structures.

CHAPTER 1

Concepts and Methods

For the purpose of providing a more detailed understanding of my approach to this project, this chapter contains an elaboration upon my personal background and motivations, as well as the formative thoughts that led to the development of questions which became the basis for this thesis. Herein I will also describe the location of my research sites, the selection of the sites themselves, the methods I applied to collect data, and the manner in which I settled upon an operational definition for so broad a topic as the martial arts.

About the Author

Through the Anthropology department of the University of Alberta, I earned a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree. My Honours thesis was entitled "My Body is a Temple: Modification of the body as a marker for religious identity", and was completed in 2007. This work addressed the use of body modification and dress as a means of expressing religious membership and devotion.

Not only does this project tackle its own questions, it also addresses my overall interest in discovering similarities between institutions, cultures, and peoples that are thought to be vastly different. This personal interest was academically engaged, on a large scale, for the first time by way of the aforementioned honours thesis. That work investigated the "degree of importance to which modifications of one's body and dress are used to express identity in religious contexts" (Owens 2007: 2), and compared the views of clergy from the Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish, Catholic, and Hare Krishna faiths.[2]

[2] All of whom turned out to be concerned with the same themes; modesty in hairstyle and dress, displays of group membership, and body or clothing modifications as a mnemonic device for their vows or roles.

Regarding my own martial arts experiences, I have trained with three different *sifus* (kung fu teachers, *shifu* in Mandarin) off and on over a period of eleven years. Two of these men taught me Wing Chun Kung Fu – one of whom combined it with components of Praying Mantis Kung Fu and one with Monkey Kung Fu– with the most recent teaching me Hung Gar Kung Fu (the context of this study).[3] All three *sifus* possessed very different demeanours and strikingly dissimilar ideas about how a martial art should be taught. The schools they maintained, and the people with whom they trained were, again, very different.

These instructors all had a hand in moulding my view of the martial arts; how, what, and why I train, as well as how I apply what I have learned to everyday life. Having been raised in a Royal Canadian Air Force household of Irish, farming descent, kung fu was my first real world exposure to a fighting system outside the realm of boxing, Greco-Roman wrestling, and the Close Quarter Combat (CQC) training provided to my parents by the Canadian Armed Forces.

It is these diverse experiences that led me to ask questions about how varied the practice of the martial arts can be. If three kung fu instructors – two of whom were teaching the same style – see their art in contrasting ways, how, then, do other systems vary? Is there some inherent philosophy or method of practice inescapably attached to each system, or are all martial arts basically the same, separated only by culturally defined trimmings? Does one martial art create only stalwart strikers while another generates only lithe acrobats? In due course, this avenue of questioning resulted in my desire to compare the martial systems of boxing and kung fu – often assumed to be polar

[3] Hung Gar differs from Wing Chun in many ways and was a completely new style to me at the outset of this study. The choice of a new style allowed me to start this research project with a fresh perspective and gave boxing and kung fu a more equal footing for my experiences as a novice student.

opposites – in order discover whether or not there was a similar training structure or method across differing martial arts.

Regional Context

The location of the bulk of this research is the city of Edmonton, in the province of Alberta, Canada. The population of Edmonton (Census Metropolitan Area) was 1,034,945 persons in the year 2006 (Statistics Canada 2007). The Census of Population reported that in 2006, there were approximately 53,670 respondents who identified themselves to be of Chinese ethnic origin, compared to the 512,730 who identified themselves as English, Scottish, or Irish (Statistics Canada 2007).

Within the Edmonton area there are approximately seventy-two different martial arts clubs which represent fifteen different fighting systems; this number reflects overall styles present and not variations of a single parent style (i.e. Shotokan karate and Uechi-Ryu karate are both counted as karate). This count is an approximation as it does not include the numerous martial arts schools that are run out of the instructor's basement or an open gym, as these are often less well advertised, tending to enlist new students by word of mouth only, and are therefore difficult to enumerate.[4]

The long list of clubs offer a wide range of training schemes; some require participation in weight and cardiovascular training while others simply teach the techniques of the system and leave the rest up to the student, some have classes for children while others are for adults only. The services provided by and atmospheres of

[4] In my martial arts experience, I have trained in residential basements, under churches, in empty ballet schools, community halls, school gymnasiums, university classrooms, leaf strewn backyards, and the occasional public park. I can attest to the fact that the location of practice does not have any substantial bearing on the quality of instruction or the efficacy of the styles being trained there.

the schools throughout the city are also quite different. Many advertise the development of confidence and personal strength, some appeal to the desire to defend yourself if threatened, others boast "fun and fitness for the whole family" and "martial arts, not just for kids anymore." One taekwondo school in Edmonton even steps further from the norm by offering martial arts training as a form of after-school care. The students, all elementary school aged, are picked up by the instructors after school and are taken to the martial arts club where they train in taekwondo. The children are finished class and ready to be picked up by the time their parents are off work and able to collect them in the evening (Tien Lung Taekwon-Do Schools 2002).

Beyond formal martial arts programs, non-profit groups such as Rape Aggression Defence (R.A.D.) Systems Edmonton, conduct on seminars in basic self-defence and aggressive crime awareness that are aimed at women who may not have the time, knowledge, or social freedom to attend a fulltime martial arts club (R.A.D. Edmonton 2010). In addition to programs that are strictly "street" or "reality" themed self-defence, several martial arts clubs offer courses in "non-abusive restraint" or "non-abusive psychological and physical intervention" (Neil Dunnigan's School of Karate 2010b). This specialized training is aimed at professionals in nursing, childcare, assisted living, corrections, and similar occupations who may occasionally be confronted with physical resistance or assault by persons who are minors or are deemed not fully in control of their actions.[5] The goal of techniques taught in "non-abusive restraint" is, first and foremost, to defuse volatile situations. If defusing is unsuccessful, then the goal becomes

[5] Certificates earned through approved instructors count as certification for most Alberta Children's Services staff.

controlling an opponent who is posing a threat to themselves or others, without bringing harm to the individual being restrained (Neil Dunnigan's School of Karate 2010a).

Research Sites and Methods

As this project was undertaken ethnographically, the bulk of the field research involved my participation in training at a kung fu school and an amateur boxing club in the Edmonton area for three months during the summer of 2009. I trained two or three days a week at each site, depending on class schedules, for approximately two hours per training session. I also ran two evenings a week as part of the boxing club training and attended weapons workshops and lion dancing sessions at the kung fu school. Both arts were physically and mentally demanding, with the boxing club testing the extent of my cardiovascular fitness specifically and the kung fu kwoon tasking me with the memorization of long, manifold forms.

The research sites were chosen based on the styles they taught, their cultural roots, their training space, their training focus, and the goals of their respective activities. To avoid a bias on account of my past martial arts training I specifically sought schools that focused on styles I was unfamiliar with. Secondary and tertiary criteria were then added; I desired sites that used permanent and private institutions, and sites at which the instructors favoured quality over quantity in their students. These latter two criteria ensured that variables such as frequently moving the training location or a profit oriented training model would not introduce biases on either side of the participant observation. With these conditions established I visited a number of schools in Edmonton to observe the demeanour of the students and instructors, to ask about their training methods, and get

a sense of their recruitment desires (more students versus committed students, membership fees, payment policies, etc.).

The first site chosen was the South Side Amateur Boxing Club, training under Head Coach Bill Brennan.[6] The initial appeal of this club was its historical link to the Strathcona Legion Branch No.150 of the Royal Canadian Legion (referred to colloquially as "the Legion"). This group practices, teaches, and competes in Olympic style amateur boxing – although individual members may choose not to compete. Head Coach Brennan is of Irish extraction, he was born in New Brunswick, and has been in charge of the gym since 1995 (after the 1992 passing of the previous head coach, John Anderson).

The South Side Amateur Boxing Club has existed in Edmonton, originally as a Legion Boxing Program, since 1946 (South Side Amateur Boxing Club 2010a). The club maintains a partnership with four Alberta schools in which students are able to sign up for boxing as a course and come to the gym five times a year to learn the sport and its history. The two main foci of the training program at South Side Amateur are building stamina and learning how to box effectively. Effective boxing, according to the coaches I trained with, is made up of speed, skill, and mindset primarily, but also the development of safe and clean (i.e. fair and legal) technique.

The goals that come out of this club's approach to the art of boxing are, first and foremost, the development of a positive and respectful attitude toward yourself and others, and the ability to handle yourself in the ring against any opponent. Head Coach

[6] Pseudonyms were declined by all participants as they felt that they had nothing to hide in regard to their schools, values, and training methods.

Brennan teaches the values of *class* and *heart* right alongside the need for solid footwork and delivering straight punches.[7]

The second research site selected was the Green Dragon Kung Fu Association, training under Grandmaster (Mark) Chan Wah and Head Instructor Jostein Haugland. As the club draws its martial lineage from a family style in rural China, this location provided an excellent contrast to the boxing club. This school teaches multiple kung fu styles, including *Hung Gar* (Hung Family Style), *Sil Lum* (Shaolin), *Choy Li Fut* (Buddha style of Choy Fook and Li Ysu-San), *Leung Ying* (Dragon), *Bak Mei* (White Eyebrow), and *Wing Chun* (Always Spring or Spring Chant depending on Chinese characters used).

Grandmaster Chan, the founder of the *kwoon*,[8] comes from a rural village of Chil Chung, in the Taishan region in Guangdong, a province of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The school has, in the past, had a close affiliation with the Chinese Freemasons of Edmonton,[9] a local chapter of *Chinese Freemasons* national headquarters in British Columbia (Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon 2010), through Grandmaster Chan's membership. The majority of the training at Green Dragon is centered on learning and practicing the techniques associated with the multiple styles, and applying these techniques to gain a practical understanding of their function and their place in the Green Dragon philosophy as a larger whole.[10] Ultimately, when learning from the instructors or Grandmaster at Green Dragon, the outcome is twofold: Firstly, you are trying to develop a disciplined skill in order to grow internally through the

[7] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.
[8] Kung fu training hall, equivalent to the Japanese term *dojo* in karate.
[9] Also known as the *Hung Mun* (vast family or sect).
[10] From interview conducted February 4th, 2010.

focussed practice of traditional system of movement, and secondly, you are learning to apply proper techniques to defend yourself in a threatening situation, without hesitation.

Ethics approval, in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement for Research Involving Humans, and the "University of Alberta's Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants" (GFC Policy Manual, Section 66), was required for this research project. In order to meet the standards of the ASL REB and receive approval, I submitted sample consent forms and an ethics statement detailing the project, my goals, the methods I intended to employ, and the manner in which I intended to address issues of human dignity, consent, inclusiveness, and possible harms. I chose to exclude minors from my study as many youths involved in the martial arts are participating on their parents' insistence rather than a genuine interest; therefore skewing the subject's expressions of commitment or personal experience. Approval was granted by the Arts, Science & Law Research Ethics Board (ASL REB) on April 9th, 2009.

The participant observation component was supported by one on one semi-structured interviews and informal interviews in a variety of settings. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in an open manner, with broad questions aimed at eliciting the thoughts of the research participants instead of a simple series of answers to narrow questions. For example, change in the martial arts community was not a focus of this research project when the questions were originally formulated. However, after initial discussions with the gatekeepers and research participants at each site, and the numerous casual interchanges between members of the martial arts community at large, the importance of change became apparent, and it was added to the topics of discussion for later interviews.

I asked the interview participants to describe the background, training methods, and philosophies of their specific style; they were then asked to discuss the values and beliefs that have defined or supported these practices. To elicit a more introspective and personal point of view, I asked the participants to report on what elements caused them to gravitate toward the style(s) they currently practiced, what abilities or attitudes make a good practitioner of their respective styles, and what common characteristics did they feel were obvious among their students, past and present (if any). I used open ended questions such as "how do the training methods and beliefs come together to create effective practitioners" to discover how each research participant applied his or her own knowledge alongside the fundamentals of the activity they were teaching. I then analysed the data collected during the one and a half hour long sessions to determine the most important themes throughout the description of the activities; training focus, mental or social values, and desirable or undesirable personality traits. After the main themes were established, I cross-referenced them with the themes that came out of other interviews in order discover similarities, differences, and shared values, opinions, or methods.

The themes were determined by an examination of terms, phrases, and references that occurred most often, or in significant places throughout the interviews. During the course of the thematic analysis, I noted mentions of acceptable variations, alternatives, and exceptions. I then used these findings as a basis for drawing conclusions regarding methods and preferred attitudes related to establishing a relationship with students, and how the instructor's activities influence this relationship.

Two formal, semi-structured interviews were conducted, one with Head Coach Brennan and one with Head Instructor Haugland, both approximately an hour and a half

in length. The interview process involved me asking questions and allowing the interviewee to respond at length, with subsequent questions or requests for clarification often being interjected in the fashion of a conversation rather than as distinct pauses in the dialogue. I chose not to interview Grandmaster Chan as a representative of the Green Dragon School, as he no longer takes as active a role in teaching as he once did. However, when he was present in the *kwoon*, he was always approachable and made himself available for questions and conversation during or after class.

I engaged in informal interviews in four settings: discussion while training at the club; discussion before or after class in the club setting; conversations at social gatherings; and casual conversation with instructors at schools that were not participant observation sites. In all settings, including regular training with other students, I identified myself as a graduate student from the University of Alberta and explained the project and its goals.[11] All participants reacted to the project with great interest and curiosity, and the majority of interactions took the form of exchanging stories or philosophies regarding martial arts training and the martial arts community (both local and international).

While training, I asked for elaboration on specific topics or statements in a manner that allowed the instructors to provide me with insight on their beliefs regarding techniques and underlying philosophies behind them. By way of these exchanges, I was able to draw out candid expressions of philosophies that would not necessarily be offered to the average student. For example, Grandmaster Chan once showed a fellow student

[11] Explanations varied in length and amount of detail depending on the timing of the interaction (during drills versus a three hour chat), as well as the degree of interest on the part of the participants.

and me a technique for building muscular tension, and I took the opportunity to pry deeper:

> Owens: [Resting briefly after a punching drill] *Sifu*, did you always train like this?
> Grandmaster Chan: Before, we do like this. [He steps between us to demonstrate three standing stretch positions, each one transitioning into the next, which exhaust specific muscle groups in turn] You try. Push hard, no relaxing!
> Owens: [After a few exhausting minutes of practicing the new exercise] Wow, this is good training! How long did you do that sequence for?
> Grandmaster Chan: Heh, if you want to train at Green Dragon, you can't stop . . . You must be powerful, train hard, be serious in training . . . You train for years, you be pretty good. Not six months, no good, know nothing. Keep coming for many years, and practice, that how you learn kung fu. [He then directs us back to our previous drills][12]

Informal interviews that occurred before and after class mainly took the form of hanging out with fellow students while changing or waiting for our instructors to arrive. In these cases the conversation trends leaned toward day jobs, non-martial arts interests, past martial arts experiences, advice about training progress, and self-deprecating humour regarding physical condition and the grasp of techniques. In this setting, the individual attitudes of the students became apparent through jovial talk, camaraderie, and boasting. For example, I was present during a locker room conversation between two boxers – one an ambitious pre-teen and the other a highly skilled young adult – in which the younger boxer was complaining about not being able to get inside the guard of his most recent sparring partner. He was advised by the young-adult that he should "be like a Roman soldier, put your shield up and charge in. You're a warrior, man." An older boxer interjected that the younger man would be "better off developing your footwork so you can use the angles and move around him. Box him, don't fight him."[13]

[12] From field notes May 21st, 2009.
[13] From field notes June 18th, 2009.

The social gatherings that I attended allowed for informal interviewing in the form of listening to others talk about their past experiences, the old days of the martial arts community, and the way the world of martial arts have changed. This setting, more removed from the space of the combative activity, comes across as more relaxed and sincere; remembering instead of boasting or speaking in ideals. For example, Grandmaster Chan tells stories about festival traditions and how schools interacted with each other in China:

> Owens: [Over tea at Tim Horton's] So, what do the different lion head colours mean?
> Grandmaster Chan: White is the old man, he is wise and peaceful. Red is General Kwan. Black lion, they want to fight.
> Head Instructor Haugland: Black is the most aggressive, the "evil" lion.
> Grandmaster Chan: Get 'em! That guy bring a black one he want to fight you, you hit him hard!
> Owens: They'd just interrupt a performance like that?
> Head Instructor Haugland: They would come to steal the money in the envelope.
> Grandmaster Chan: But hey, that guy want to fight, you fight him. We used to fight all the time.[14]

These fascinating, but somewhat less instructive, stories are less common while training in the *kwoon*; thus, this setting brings out a side of the instructors that may be kept at bay while "working," allowing for deeper aspects of anecdotal guidance.

Informal interviews in the final setting were akin to spontaneous conversations that evolved into valuable data. Most often, these interactions started when I entered a martial arts school to ask about their style or to request information about their membership and ancestry. Once I explained my project and the goals I hoped to achieve, enthusiasm on the part of the instructor with whom I spoke quickly led to a conversation

[14] From field notes May 28th, 2009.

regarding what they felt was important about the martial arts, how the martial arts should be taught, and problems in the martial arts community.

Many of these exchanges involved the interviewee sharing anecdotes about their experiences or philosophies, without any request or encouragement from me. This is an extension of anecdotal guidance to someone who is not their own student; perhaps due to my position as a researcher I am considered a student of the martial arts as a whole? For example, at a local karate *dojo*, I entered into a three hour conversation that began one night and was concluded on a second meeting a week later: – We met a second time out of mutual interest and the *Sensei*[15] had offered to provide me with a documentary about a Japanese historical site.

> *Sensei*: I find many people are simply impatient; karate is relegated to a hobby and they treat it with that level of commitment.
> Owens: The hardest thing to make a martial art student do is practice.
> *Sensei*: I agree. We once had the honour of attending a conference with a renowned Master. He was at a table with some associates and there was a microphone set up in the crowd so people could walk up and ask him questions. So, this guy walks up, talks about his black belt and his students and all that, then he asks: "*Sensei*, what is the secret of good karate?" The master gets a quizzical look on his face, he leans forward into the microphone on his table and says "Train hard." I don't know what this guy expected; some magic or ancient wisdom or something? You just have to practice your art.[16]

Defining the Martial Arts

As discussed earlier, there are many factors, including society, the media, and personal experience, that combine to create an ever evolving image of the martial arts in the public eye. Though some styles may be of ancient origins, the martial arts themselves

[15] Karate teacher in Japanese, equivalent to *sifu* in kung fu.
[16] From field notes November 5th, 2009.

are not immutable. They change over time, especially given the nature of how information tends to change when passed between individuals and places.

In addition to contextual adaptations, such as removing lethal techniques for tournaments, experienced martial artists with whom I have discussed martial art development indicate that there innumerable off-shoot styles and regional variations that have been developed by wayward students who deceptively refer to their past masters' name in order to gain legitimacy when they start their own school. In these cases, the self-made master's martial technique may not be wrong in the strictest sense, but it may not have been developed to the most accurate or precise form before being passed on to new students. Change of this type may simply come as a result of the loss of subtleties and deeper applications associated with technique. Such subtleties can add a degree of detail to a technique that will impact its efficacy; detail that shows the difference between training under someone for three years versus thirty years.[17]

Furthermore, a newly made master may change his style's teachings in an attempt to create a unique or novel style of his or her own. A seventeenth century rebuke of this behaviour can be seen in Meir Shahar's observations of Cheng Zongyou's (1621) *Shaolin Gunfa Chan Zang* (*Exposition of the Original Shaolin Staff Method*), wherein Cheng comments on the multitude of "original" Shaolin staff techniques:

> "The teachings all derive from the same source. However, with the passage of time people turn their backs on it . . . Some take the opening section of *this* practice sequence (*lu*) and mix it with the closing section of *that* sequence. Others take the closing section of *that* sequence and mingle it with the middle section of *this* sequence. So much so, that what was originally one sequence is transformed

[17] A phenomenon noted by several different martial arts instructors during informal conversations at their respective schools and while training.

into two. Thus teachers confuse the world, and lead the practitioners astray, all for the sake of fame and profit." (Shahar 2008: 62).

This leads to the necessity of addressing the terms *style* and *system*, which are often used interchangeably in both scholarly and lay martial arts discourse. Herein, *style* refers to a particular type of combative training that is derived from a broader parent category. For example, "Praying Mantis, White Crane, Tiger are all styles of kung fu." Meanwhile, *system* will be used in reference to parent categories, as in, "karate and kung fu are different systems that incorporate a multitude of distinct styles within each."

Furthermore, there is also a need to clarify the use of the terms *kata*, *form*, and *set*. All three are used in reference to the same martial art training component, that of the pre-arranged series of movements and techniques that one practices alone, or with a partner depending on the particular form, which mimics combat.[18] *Kata* is the term used in Japanese martial systems – as well as in other arts, such as kabuki theatre and tea ceremonies – but is also quite commonly used in martial arts from other nations. Each system (or style) tends to have its own term for this practice, typically based in the language native to its region of origin. For example, in Chinese kung fu the associated term is usually *daolu* (road, path, or way).

In general, many of these terms translate roughly to set, pattern, or form. Therefore, many martial arts in North America have adopted the terms *set* or *form* in place of the specific, native tongue word associated with the style, likely in order to ease conversations between styles. For the sake of clarity I will use the term *form* exclusively, though other terms may appear in external quotations or references. Also, unless

[18] Possibly an ancient practice in Greece as well, considering the use of military training dances called "pyrrhichia" (how to cope with the enemy) (Dreager & Smith 1969: 7).

otherwise noted, all translations come from higher level practitioners who are either fluent in the language of their style or have had terms explained to them by their original instructors who were. As a final note, the spelling of transliterated Chinese words may differ between sources depending on the dialect of the author, the date of the publication, and whether the author employs the Wade-Giles or Pinyin Romanization system.

Returning to the larger subject, I have encountered two major obstacles in offering a single definition that would address all martial arts. First is the variety and lack of commonality between the activities inherent in different styles and systems, the second is the notion of whether or not a style or system is being practiced in its traditional form or not.

Addressing commonality, Webster's dictionary defines martial arts as "any of several arts of combat and self-defence (as karate and judo) that are widely practiced as sport" (Merriam-Webster Online 2009). It is worth noting that the examples given in this definition are both East Asian styles – Japanese specifically – and the term 'art' is used in defining the arts, shedding no light on where the distinctions can be made between a martial art and any other combative activity. In addition, according to the phrasing used, if one is to include weapon arts such as *kyudo*, the ancient Japanese archery system, then one must also include modern marksmanship and sport shooting which are far less "classical" and "artistic" by most assessments.

Considering the common elements through the multitude of fighting systems across the world, I will employ an inclusive definition of the martial arts as: any activity derived from a combative origin that is taught or learned in a systematic fashion. This

will allow for comparison between styles regardless of their place of origin, inclusion of weapons, or central methods.

The solutions provided when addressing the second difficulty – that of a style's traditional status – vary greatly between practitioners. There is a joke in the martial arts community that goes: "How many martial artists does it take to screw in a light bulb?" The punch-line being: "Ten, one to change the bulb and nine others to say, 'We do it differently at our school.'" Not only does the consensus of what or who is traditional change depending on who is being asked, consideration must be given to a tendency that was described to me in conversations with a number of martial arts instructors; the tendency to label one's school or style as traditional in order to claim legitimacy, authority, or fame. As several instructors noted, this behaviour often goes hand-in-hand with the act of name-dropping famous masters whom you may have only trained under for a few weeks.[19]

In his work on the differences in aggression between practitioners of traditional and non-traditional martial arts, Geoffrey Wingard (2002) offers a distinction between the two statuses based on whether or not the style's historical or ideal practice incorporates the use of forms (predetermined sets of movements, mimicking combat, that are used to memorize and practice techniques), meditative activities (or exercises that are similar in experience to meditation), and religious or cosmological beliefs that inform the application of techniques. However, he notes that "these distinctions are . . . essentially subjective since there exist no strict definitions for traditional and non-traditional martial arts" (Wingard 2002: 55).

[19] From field notes November. 5th and 8th, 2009, and interview conducted February 4th, 2010.

For the purposes of this research project, I will, therefore, be using Wingard's criteria for distinguishing between traditional and non-traditional martial arts – where the distinction is deemed necessary – in conjunction with my proposed definition of the martial arts as a subject group ("any activity derived from a combative origin that is taught or learned in a systematic fashion"), in order to ethnographically compare the chosen systems.

My approach to this project has been defined by my past interests, my education, and my desire to remove biases in observations and reflexivity. The development of this thesis required careful selection of the research locations, the methods of data collection, and the operational definition from which to base further exploration. Due to its ethnographic nature this project relies heavily on participant observation and interviews with central research participants in order to draw conclusions based on an emic point of view. This data is supported by an extensive review of the existing martial arts literature which is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

In order to approach the ethnographic portion of this project from a well-informed position, I engaged in a review of the current body of literature regarding the martial arts in general – as well as kung fu and boxing specifically. During this process I noted that all of the researchers I have encountered, appear, at the core of their investigation, to be addressing different forms of a similar question: how are the components of martial training and application significant and how should they be studied or interpreted? Articles, books, and reports – both lay and scholarly – have been published independently and in a seemingly endless array of journals, magazines, and collected volumes with every entry striving to expose or develop an answer, in whole or in part, to the many variations of the aforementioned questions. These writings deal with all manner of research questions concerning almost every conceivable interpretation of martial arts practice, including ritual symbolism (see Donohue 2000, 1999; Hershey 1989; Zarrilli 1984), history of individual styles and schools (see Henning 2001, 1999; Ming 2005; Shahar 2008; Sugden 1996; Zarrilli 1979), student-instructor relationships (see Czanecka 2001; Learning 2007), proper punching techniques, and so on.

For the purposes of this project, one of the more relevant topics in the literature was the discourse on the perceived connection between the martial arts and aggression (see Anderson 2007; Czarnecka 2001; Dykhuizen 2000; Lamarre & Nosanchuk 1999; Nosanchuk 1981; Seig 2004; Skelton, et al. 1991; Trulson 1986; Wingard 2002). Overall, research indicates that much of the aggression associated with combative training comes from the manner in which one is trained – therefore placing the methods of the instructor in the spotlight – and that traditional martial art instruction is generally less likely to produce undisciplined and aggressive practitioners (Lamarre & Nosanchuk

1999; Nosanchuk 1981; Seig 2004; Trulson 1986; Twemlow & Sacco 1998). "While traditional training, with its emphasis on respect and philosophy, is associated with positive personality gains, 'modern' training that prioritizes sparring and self-defence techniques seems to reinforce aggressive or negative behaviour" (Seig 2004: 18).

This discourse indicates, then, that the methods employed by instructors, how they choose their students, the manner in which they teach techniques and philosophy, and the additional lessons regarding respect and personal deportment all influence the degree of aggression in the next generation of martial artists. Therefore different activities and structures applied by instructors will influence whether a student grows to be respectful or reckless.

I identified certain lacunas in the body of literature throughout the course of my investigation. In particular, gender seems to be referenced only in the singular context of discussing the gendered nature of martial arts cinema, women's empowerment (see De Welde 2003; McCaughey 1997) or liberation through generic "self-defence training" – often biased in favour of "weekend retreat" based programs – and claims that a given style's techniques are so superior or efficient that gender and size do not have a bearing on the success of their acquisition or application. An example of this is sociologist Kristine De Welde's work with women in which "[she] participated as a teaching assistant in nineteen four-day, intensive self-defence courses designed specifically for women" (2003: 251).

In this type of presentation, the combative activity is more about women working to remove themselves from the role of victims in traditionally male defined spaces than it is about women experiencing the martial arts (see Atkinson 1983; De Welde 2003; Wiley

1992). In relation to both kung fu and boxing, it appears that the issue of gender is more frequently addressed within the context of women in sport overall, often through the gaze of feminism and the sociology of gender.

Though not covered in this research project, many authors explore the promotion and negotiation of masculinity through boxing (see McDevitt 2004; Kath 2007), as well as how boxing often becomes a rallying point for power struggles between disparate groups in one society. The latter is seen in the work regarding the use of boxing by oppressed peoples – frequently Irish, Latin, or African-Americans – to express values such as social worth and political power (see Conley 1999; Early 1994a, 1994b; Fitzpatrick 1996; Sugden 1996; Wacquant 2004).

As for the publications that collect and present martial arts research, the *Journal of Asian Martial Arts* is a prime example. This periodical contains both scholarly and lay submissions – the status of each is indicated in the table of contents – and prints in-depth anthropological research juxtaposed with stories of personal experiences of private instructors. The value attributed to first-hand experience is evident in the presentation of this lay work alongside the scholarly articles, as well as the frequency to which the scholarly writers themselves are or were trained martial artists while following the path of their research.[20] The availability of primary source descriptions of martial training is essential to this project as these descriptions provide insight into a variety of personal experiences from the point of view of instructors and students.

Although no scholarly journals were available that focused solely on boxing, there are a plethora of popular magazines on the subject – particularly dealing with

[20] While this may result in a bias toward the emic viewpoint, researchers will often still investigate a style, application, or school other than their own and use their martial knowledge as a basis for comparison (see De Welde 2003; Learning 2007; Tan 2008).

professional boxing. A large number of publications investigate the history of boxing as a sport, its champions, and its politics (see Anderson 2007; Ashe 2005; Cronin 2003; Early 1994a; Fitzpatrick 1996; Oates 2006; Sugden 1996; Wacquant 2004; Woodward 2007). In sports medicine journals and journals that publish papers on combative sport in general, many scholars have investigated injuries and deaths related to both professional and amateur boxing, with these topics emerging as a recurring subject in the debate over the morality of combative sport (see Clausen, et al. 2005; Landa 2004; Leclerc & Herrera 1999; Svinth 2003b).

The significance of lay writing in the context of combative research touches upon another common thread within martial arts discourse, that of personal, visceral experience. Participant observation is greatly favoured in martial arts research, as the activities take on a different meaning when their consequences are real and painful. Sociologist Loïc Wacquant strongly promotes this point of view in his work, while favouring Marcel Mauss's notion of the "sensing and acting body" through which a researcher is able to "enter into the lived world whose logic she is trying to grasp" (Wacquant 2009: 511).

Wacquant calls boxing and its surrounding culture the "theatre of bruising," noting that his approach was "observant participation" rather than participant observation, making sense of the combative sport and martial artists in their own context, with his own body and wellbeing at risk (2004: 4-6). This approach not only attempts to recreate the subject's experience, but also earns trust by allowing the researcher an opportunity to take on the hardships that contribute to their identity (2005: 175).

These methods are a portion of Wacquant's larger concept of performing research by means of becoming an initiate in an activity or social group. The benefits of this approach are supported by anthropologist Greg Downey's experiences learning *capoeira,* during which he describes this research method as "ethnographic apprenticeship" (Downey 2005: x). However, regarding the duality of the apprentice position, Downey comments that:

> At times, my roles as ethnographic observer and practicing participant conflicted. When they did, I usually set down my notebook, opting instead for a good game [*capoeira* sparring match] or to join the orchestra. I trusted that what I learned by practicing actively was more important and elusive than anything that could be recorded passively. (Downey 2005: 52)

According to sociologists Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler, achieving the status of "complete member researcher" allows a scholar the opportunity to experience the shared ideologies or goals of their subjects by way of "self immersion", moving beyond the peripheral activities of the group (1987: 67-68). Referring to the benefits of this role, De Welde states that; "As a 'complete member researcher,' I was able to highlight retrospective accounts of my own strategies, emotion conflicts, identity, and body work. An analysis of emotional experiences (my own and the research participants') enhanced the interactionist perspective that frames the study" (De Welde 2003: 253).

Due to the privileging of personal experiences gathered during fieldwork, research on the martial arts also makes use of material from popular sources. While material such as autobiographies and the wide variety of "how to" books on the martial arts are not necessarily peer reviewed, they do contain valuable information when used as a primary source. Though it is important to recognize how marketing factors into the

knowledge presented in the manuals of renowned instructors and fighters, especially considering the impact that economic forces have had on the availability and promotion of the martial arts. In these cases, the myth and the practitioner sometimes intertwine in order to make for good reading or to sell "unbeatable" techniques, showing the instructor in a "dramatized and highly codified (re)presentation that he likes to give himself in public, and that journalistic reports and novels retranslate and magnify according to their specific cannons" (Wacquant 2004: 6).[21]

All things considered, the martial arts are not a personal experience solely on account of the physical nature of putting oneself in danger, they are also a lived experience in which philosophies are internalized and deep personal beliefs forged – something that cannot necessarily be gleaned in an interview or long term research relationship. A barrier in both combative training and research, due to, in Downey's words, "the apparent difficulty of apprehending and describing another's experience" (2002: 487). Therefore, articles and books written by martial arts instructors and fighters that exist in the popular media or in lay sections of scholarly journals provide insight that may not be replicable.

Such a barrier can exist mentally and emotionally as well as physically, even if the researcher successfully put his or her self in harm's way. An example of this continued separation can be seen in Wacquant's work with black American boxers in a Chicago ghetto. Even after becoming a full member of their community, gaining an in-

[21] This practice is not exclusive to modern attempts at authority and legitimization, as the Taoist immortal (saint) Zhang Sanfeng is credited with the founding of the internal school of martial arts (those associated with *qi* cultivation and manipulation) due to his association with military gods and the Ming royal family. The relationship accomplished two goals: first, the martial styles he is credited with creating have the backing of a legendary figure; second, his Ming connections meant that "his miracles were inextricably linked to the glory of the dynasty's early days" (Shahar 2008: 177). This is an indication that namedropping a past master or founder when starting or promoting a new school is not a modern notion. See also the discussion of claiming lineage on pg 18, 110-111.

depth appreciation for their reduced socio-economic status, his personal experience fighting (and losing) in a Golden Glove tournament, and adopting the African-American "fade" hair style, Wacquant expresses reservations toward his attempts to recreate their situation. He writes; "I am ashamed of myself for being among them and wanting to box out of scholarly curiosity and a sense of fun" (2004: 244).

It must be said, though, that, while these sources can be very important in the body of knowledge concerning the martial arts and combative sport, non-peer reviewed writing does lend itself to the pitfalls of mythmaking and conjecture. While I would not suggest that the experiences presented in these works are intentionally malicious or deceptive, the accounts of great battles and undefeated fighters must be read with a critical eye due to the nature of storytelling.[22]

In specific regard to classical Chinese writers, Shahar notes that significant errors, often in the form of anachronisms or inconsistent information, are often due to a "reliance on popular lore" (2008: 170). In his work on the military and political history of the Shaolin temple, Shahar points out that it was not uncommon for authors in the past to draw upon contemporary works of fiction as factual sources, resulting in records of journeys or events that incorporate noble heroes, romantic settings, and miraculous abilities, which go on to become part of a community's collective history. For example, in the *Sinews Transformation Classic*, believed to contain fitness lessons given to the Shaolin monks by Bodhidharma, the author "treated a fictional protagonist of a famous Tang story as if he had really existed" (Shahar 2008: 168).

[22] That nature being the tendency to portray heroes as more heroic and enemies more craven, while at the same time exaggerating or perpetuating pre-existing assumptions about participants, particularly when identity and sales are at stake (King 2003).

Mythmaking and lore also come up in the tendency to analyze the martial arts by way of religion and art theory, in the sense that researchers from disciplines dealing with human movement, creativity, performance, and spirituality often address the phenomenon of the martial traditions as either a form of ritual or a style of performance (Conley 1999; Donohue 1993, 1991; Downey 2002; Farrer 2008, 2006; Klens-Bigman 1999; Lewis 1995; Palmer 2007; Zarrilli 1979).

For example, in his opening description of his work with a martial arts community in Salvador, Brazil, Downey refers to *capoeira* generally as a "performance genre," and more specifically as an "Afro-Brazilian martial dance" (2002: 487). Indeed, he argues that, as part of acquiring the art, *capoeiristas* (*capoeira* practitioners) must learn how to properly hear and produce the style's associated music. Essentially, the structures of the training system results in an "apprenticeship in hearing . . . with a trained and responsive body, through habits copied from others and socially reinforced, and by means of their own musical skills, arduously acquired and actively engaged in listening" (2002: 489-490). Therefore, as a performance skill, traits such as speed, grace, accuracy, and intent are still important, but the motivations and end goals are shifted to accommodate musical artistry.[23]

As many of the more popular martial styles have a historical connection to the philosophies and activities associated with the dominant religion and culture of their country of origin, it can be the case that changes to the style are seen as a loss of ownership over the knowledge and, perhaps more importantly, a departure from the core morality of the culture. Downey explored this notion during his encounters with

[23] The training used to develop a *capoeirista's* ear includes playing the instruments associated with *capoeira* – the *berimbau* in particular – and learning traditional *capoeira* songs (which include both repeated lyrics and "call and answer" singing).

mestres[24] and *capoeiristas* debating the authenticity of the two major styles of the system; *Capoeira Regional* and *Capoeira Angola*.

Opponents of the more self-defense oriented Regional expressed feelings that "the innovations of Capoeira Regional fundamentally undermined the nature of the art, diluting its essential character with alien elements . . . a form of capoeira essentially 'polluted' or 'adulterated,' or even no longer fundamentally 'capoeira'" (Downey 2005:174). Some even go so far as to claim that African features of *capoeira* were deliberately removed as a political and social tactic, in order to make the art more appealing to the lighter skinned, educated, middle-class students, leading to the use of this martial art as venue for social or ethnic identity struggles (Downey 2005:174).

Much of the work that is available on the anthropology of the martial arts could be considered not only a contribution to the knowledge of the martial arts as a multi-level and multi-faceted human activity, but also as a supportive body of reference for the "growing recognition of the role of the body in the analysis of social-cultural phenomena" (Tan 2008: 34). This is not only due to the health benefits derived from martial training, but also the framing of martial art systems in the light of traditional body technologies (see Palmer 2007).

There is also wealth of martial arts literature that is dedicated to the systematic detailing of programs which incorporate the most advantageous training practices. In general, the description of these training programs offers everything from diet and proper technique, to scheduling and protein supplement usage, but the most common focus are the descriptions of unique or "legendary" training techniques which may not normally be accessible to all readers. For example, the November 2001 issue of the *Journal of Asian*

[24] *Capoeira* teachers.

Martial Arts, martial artist Mark Jensen interviews renowned Iron Palm specialist Kwong Wing Lam on the proper technique and application of Iron Palm training.[25]

I also found that for every ongoing debate in the martial arts world that became clear in the readings – and there are many, pertaining to a variety of subjects – there was a researcher or practitioner who addressed an aspect of the potential resolutions. This leads to a large amount of practical research, such as a focus on the effect of martial art training on aggression or achievement among teens (see Nosanchuk 1981; Trulson 1986; Twemlow & Sacco 1998), as well as a great many practitioners and teachers sharing their views on how the martial arts have changed their lives.

My research will contribute to this body of work by addressing the themes, methods, and training structures employed in the negotiation of the teacher-student relationship by means of examining two unrelated systems. While many articles and books have been written extolling the benefits of a single style in isolation,[26] this project will use a comparison to illustrate the similarities and differences across activities that have developed their philosophies and practices within separate cultural backgrounds. This approach will allow for a concentration on the themes, methods, and training structures used to transfer knowledge to students – or to dissuade incorrigible students – as a subject in and of itself, within the context of martial practice on a wider scale.

This review informs my knowledge of the previous topics, methods, and goals of past researchers. With insight into the importance of first-hand experience in the martial arts and the effective fieldwork tactics employed by other anthropologists I am able to

[25] Iron Palm being one of many "iron training" systems that describe methods of hardening parts of the body to efficiently give and receive blows.
[26] Likely due to the fact that there are too many styles to directly compare to, and speaking ill of other styles is commonly considered to be inappropriate.

properly analyse my data so that it will contribute to the larger body of work in a meaningful way. This analysis will begin with an examination of the initial barriers that the teacher-student relationship faces and a discussion of the teaching styles used to pass on combative knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

Analysis of the Teacher-Student Relationship

"I consider it both an honour and a responsibility to teach kung fu. One is bound to present the traditional forms and techniques passed down through the years, but is also governed by the individual needs of dedicated students" (Ruskin 1995: 36). As this statement by martial arts instructor Steven Ruskin indicates, the training process, like the art itself, is mutable and changes over time and according to the needs of both instructor and student. The context and scope of the activity may change, but the need for the teacher-student relationship does not. Therefore, in discussing the nature of this social contract, two important considerations must be made in regard to the development and context of modern martial arts practice; the barriers to teaching, most notably in my field work the concept of attitudes in students, and the means by which these men and women are actually taught.

Instructors vs. Attitudes

The theme of "attitudes" as a barrier to the formation and promotion of the teacher-student relationship came up frequently in both research sites. An "attitude" refers to the positive or negative behaviours and personality traits of a given student, although it is sometimes used as a pejorative in and of itself (as in "that student has an attitude"). Attitudes are interpreted as "good" or "bad" based on the values of the instructor, often based on the student's demeanour and approach to training, often manifesting from a conflict of goals between the instructor and the student.[27] A "bad attitude," for example, would be associated with a student who seeks training in order to

[27] From interviews conducted September 3rd, 2009 and February 4th, 2010.

establish a reputation or to achieve combative superiority over others,[28] feels her or she is better than the training offered, or is too headstrong to take instruction. This stands in opposition to the "good attitude" that comes with desires such as learning a new skill, developing mental discipline, or listens sincerely to directions.

"Good" attitudes are conducive to effective training and success; however, when a "bad" attitude is encountered the methods of correcting or dismissing the problem student vary according to the values of a given instructor or training system. The three activities of student selection, systematized training, and anecdotal guidance become mechanisms through which instructors are able to establish, challenge, and mould (or exclude) the attitudes of their students. A single set of methods may be applied to all students, or tailored to each student according to that student's aspirations; creating a unique teacher-student relationship compared to other students at the same school.

According to Head Coach Brennan the desires of a club must be immediately clear to avoid students whose attitudes are detrimental to the atmosphere the instructors are striving to create:

> Owens: What's the difference between a good or bad attitude, and what makes a good or bad attitude?
>
> Head Coach Brennan: Well, first of all I tell them . . . I say first of all, when you come in here, you leave your problems outside the door. We're not interested in 'em . . . I tell them we don't want attitudes, we're not interested . . . if you have an attitude, you don't want to be here, don't come here . . . you come here because you want to be here . . . you want to learn, you want to be respectful . . . I don't let my kids talk to me in a disruptive . . . or disrespectful manner, so I won't let you do it for sure . . . If you get caught boxing – fighting – on the street you're out. Automatic. Gone. You're not coming here to learn how to box to beat somebody up in the street, it doesn't work that way . . . And I don't care if you've been here, some of these fighters have been here longer than I

[28] However, at a school where competition and success are highly valued, the desire to be the best may align with an instructor's goal of training students for exceptional performance at tournaments.

have . . . doesn't matter. You don't listen to what I say, and the other coaches, then go, go to another club . . ."

Owens: Have you ever had an experience where someone came in that wasn't a right fit, like he wasn't going to last, but then changed his attitude?

Head Coach Brennan: I follow through on what I say, and over the last fifteen years we've had a few of 'em who actually come in here and said, well "you know I'm gonna go in there [the sparring ring] and I'm gonna fight" and what used to happen is they used to throw them in the ring.

Owens: Oh . . . to straighten them out?

Head Coach Brennan: Yeah, the first night. But they'd never come back. But we don't do that anymore.[29]

In this example it is clear that when someone with negative attitude or a malicious agenda comes to the club, student selection combined with systematized training practices can quickly change their tune. Unfortunately, in the case of South Side Amateur, older methods led to too many potential students never returning due to humiliation, so the current head coach adapted the student selection activities to his belief in giving potential boxers a chance to change their attitudes by interacting with the positive leadership of the club. It is often the case that new students come into a training space expecting to learn how to beat people up. This affords the second opportunity for an instructor to engage in the activity of student selection, the first being the outward face or advertising campaign of the school.

Through the lens of attitude conflicts we can see the primacy of the teacher-student relationship in the training process, as it is the instructor who decides, from the very start, how or if you will be trained and what needs to change in you to make you a talented martial artist. These initial judgements are largely governed by the criteria

[29] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

involved in the activity of student selection, as it is through this activity that the instructor has the means to create or dissolve the teacher-student relationship.

The activity of systematized training in particular allows the instructor to influence the goals of new or existing students directly, by way of favouring drills that promote the attitude desired by the instructor and oust students with attitudes that are contrary. For example, an instructor who seeks to inspire tenacity in his or her students will employs drills that test the limits of a student's stamina and dedication, challenging the student to keep going and not quit before the drill is complete. Similarly an instructor who values patience and self-focus may insist his or her students sit in relaxed meditation for 45 minutes straight – also a test of mental stamina and a student's acceptance of extreme training methods.

Whatever a given student plans to draw from his martial arts training, an instructor will be available, somewhere, to provide the activities and structures conducive to that desire; and the student will be channelled to an end that is supported by the instructor's methods. This change will be affected by either the student's adaptation to the training philosophy, or the student's eventual alienation from it; which would result in the student being asked to leave or leaving of his or her own accord. To pass your art on to someone not of your mindset is to invite dangerous applications of your techniques (DeMarco 2000). To use Grandmaster Chan's words:

> We be respectful and use only as self-defence, we don't hit anybody without good reason. We are not aggressive, we defend ourselves. That's why you don't teach assholes. Being aggressive is not the kung fu theory. You train assholes and somebody gets killed![30]

[30] From field notes June 4th, 2009.

Martial Arts Teaching Methods

How best to teach the martial arts and how to adapt them to the modern, North American context most effectively, is a frequent point of contention among instructors. Many questions arise when the daily habits of potential students are not suited to the activities of martial training: Should traditions be altered or removed, should fitness activities be added, etc.? For example, Harvey Kurland, a recreation instructor at University of California Riverside, notes the difference between *taijiquan* instruction methods in the past and at present.

> Most martial arts instructors teach the way they have been taught, which may be inappropriate for many students. What was considered optimum training for rice farmers in the 1800s, who were fit from their work, is not ideal today. The key is a balanced program, proper progression, overload, and learning proper body posture and mechanics. The modern teacher should train students with the intent to minimize injuries while still maximizing competence. (Kurland 1995: 98)

To this end, Kurland feels that physical conditioning is an essential part of martial arts training in the modern setting; as fitness, proper rest, stretching, and nutrition are not necessarily part of the average person's daily routine.

However, the thought of adding an exercise or conditioning routine to martial training is seen as inappropriate in the eyes of some instructors. There is a belief that experienced and learned instructors, of any martial style, are "living treasures"[31] who are gifting the student with specialized knowledge. Therefore, to "waste their time" doing cardio or push ups would be disrespectful of the knowledge shared.[32] According to this

[31] A sentiment echoed by passionate instructors and dedicated students at many schools.
[32] A belief expressed in several conversations with martial arts instructors and students.

stance, fitness training should be done on your own time – additional practice of techniques learned in class would not hurt either.

On the other hand, in a boxing club physical training is a central activity, one by which the dedication of participants is measured by instructors and fellow students. At South Side Amateur this systematized training activity is used to test the mettle of potential boxers while at the same time imparting values of *heart* and exceptional physical fitness. The importance of this training element is seen in the fact that students are not only expected to perform rigorous cardiovascular exercise during training sessions, but also to engage in "road work" – running and other stamina training outside of the club on one's own time.

It is worth mentioning that most traditional martial arts systems have conditioning built into the art's structure already. The less glamorous parts of training, such as sitting in a low horse stance for prolonged periods or delivering several hundred punches in a row to a heavy bag, are building stamina and strength as a side effect of working on your technique. These elements of the systematized training activity test your will and commitment as well as your knowledge of the techniques.

This means of testing the mettle of students also acts as a method of student selection, as the students who make it through the intense or monotonous aspects of training are likely more amenable to the lessons associated with such hardships. Interestingly, at the Green Dragon school, it is often the case that when a "bad attitude walks through the door," the classes become more rigid and very repetitive for several days; usually becoming more varied again once the "bad attitude" has retreated out of

disinterest.[33] Therefore, the clear connection between the choice of drills or class structure and the longevity of undesirable students demonstrates a supportive interaction between the activities of student selection and systematized training; poor students are warned off by the training, and those who outlast the training are likely to be keen students.

Furthermore, there are many cases of instructors who impose restrictions on his or her students in regard to what other styles they train, in order to protect the purity of their teaching and preventing the knowledge and values they are passing on from being confused by the techniques and habits of other systems or training halls. Most often these restrictions manifest in the banning or ejection of any students who train at another school while enrolled at that instructor's school. Policies such as these become a method of student selection which the instructor is able to apply in order to exert control over the students he or she takes on; hopefully minimizing the potential for misrepresentation or modification of the techniques and philosophies they are taught. The use of this "one master" rule can be seen in Downey's expulsion from one of his research sites during his original attempt to train at several schools at once, here the instructors warned that "conflicting instructions would lead [him] to develop an incoherent style" (2005: 51).[34]

An extreme case of change and the departure from traditional teaching methods can be seen in the observations of Learning, during his time in a karate *dojo* in St. John's, Newfoundland. He writes that "it felt strange at first, even wrong, to see people enter the *dojo* without bowing, or to hear the exercise counts and technique names in English" (Learning 2007: 53). He goes on to describe the lack of *gis* (a two-piece uniform used in

[33] From field notes June 6th, 2009.
[34] This was also mentioned as a training policy by a local instructor who invoked the old Chinese saying "There is only room for one tiger on a mountain." From field notes November 6th, 2009.

Japanese martial arts as well as many others), and the use of "Miss" or "Mister" when addressing the instructor, instead of *Sensei*. Overall, these changes appear to have "decreased the social distance between those inside the martial arts community and the rest of St. John's" (Learning 2007: 56).

Modifications such as those described by Learning are part of a trend toward the "Westernization" of the martial arts in order to make them more accessible to new audiences. I adapt this term to be used here in the same sense as Yoshimoto Toshiaki's "Japanization" in reference to sport (1996). That being "the process by which sports that originate outside of Japan are transformed and moulded into a particularly Japanese form. This includes cases where sports introduced into Japan are influenced by traditional Japanese methods or ways of thinking, and are thus practiced with a Japanese sensibility" (Toshiaki 1996: 3). In this case, "Westernization" indicates a move toward practicality and encapsulation. Meaning that the traditional elements – the purpose of which are misunderstood or unappreciated – are removed and all aspects of the activity are represented in a single class (fitness, technique, application, etc.) with no need to do anything once you step out of the training hall. Here, convenience and instant gratification being the applied Western sensibilities.

A similar trend can be seen in the "seminar" format that is offered by many world renowned Masters and Grandmasters. In addition to maintaining a regular class schedule for long term students, these men and women will offer one time training sessions to the public – normally focussing on a specialized topic or set of techniques. Often, a famous instructor will host an intensive seminar, usually one or two days in duration, at his or her school, but equally as likely is the case that the instructor will travel to conduct seminars

at the request of other schools or training facilities for the police and military. While many of these events are confined to members of the host school, others may be truly "open to the public" in the sense that anyone who is able to furnish the entrance fee will be taught the techniques.

This format leads back to the issue of student selection and the use of the systematized training and anecdotal guidance activities to pass along martial knowledge. The short and intensive period of training allows for the transmission and honing of a large number of techniques, but does not allow for the formation of a meaningful relationship between teacher and student. Lacking the appropriate time to engage in student selection activities and the structural limitations – such as teaching in an impersonal setting or to a large, anonymous group – on systematized training and anecdotal guidance, the instructor leading the seminar cannot properly influence the students learning his techniques.

One karate instructor in Edmonton was concerned about the anonymity of seminars that are open to the public:

> *Sensei*: There is a reason we don't do weapons on the first day.
> Owens: You want to get to know who you are training first?
> *Sensei*: Exactly. Some guys will open their school and teach anything to anyone. If you open these things to just anybody, and you teach advanced knife techniques to strangers for quick money, you could be training gang members how to kill each other. You can't do that![35]

Shifts in the approach to teaching the martial arts can also be witnessed in the changes made to techniques, namely a move toward the tournament applications of techniques (i.e. those that are less lethal and more flashy). This is largely due to the fact that winning at tournaments is good marketing. It follows that training as many of your

[35] From field notes November 10th, 2009.

students to take as great a number of awards at one tournament as possible, therefore, is an investment. In modern tournaments, "students need to demonstrate flashy techniques such as high multiple kicks, gymnastic capabilities including cartwheels and back flips, and more recently the ability to perform with musical accompaniment. If such techniques are not present in the *kata* of a karate style, students and instructors often will modify the *kata* to include them" (Friman 1996: 106).

The importance of a winning *kata* (forms) is also influencing a training style which focuses on rote memory and performance in place of actual understanding of how each movement is applied and where these movements fit in the context of the style and its underlying philosophies. As traditional training systems are broken down, eventually, "the lesson of tournament sparring is that scoring points is the key to winning. Respect, discipline, true competence, and self-enlightenment are not. The result is that tournaments often bring out the worst in karate practitioners, instructors and students alike, rather than the best" (Friman 1996: 107). Martial artist and political scientist Richard Friman goes on to describe the increased occurrence of dishonourable behaviour at tournaments, which according to him is no longer an uncommon sight. He notes, in particular, behaviours such as sideline fights between schools, instructors interfering with matches, pairing opponents for political reasons as opposed to fair draws, and heated arguments between parents in the stands (1996). According to Head Instructor Haugland, "it goes against what the martial arts are supposed to be teaching."[36]

However, this decline in mental focus and respectful comportment in training is not simply an effect of the martial arts being acted upon by the less formal North American culture. Friman has had an opportunity to train in the United States and Japan,

[36] From interview conducted February 4th, 2010.

and he recognizes that the changes in methods and morals are rooted in the changing values of the instructors. He states that, "In both countries, I have seen students differ in their sense of loyalty, personal integrity, commitment to the arts and their instructors, and willingness to let go of ego for the sake of learning." Friman continues, to assert that "The problem instead lies with the way in which the arts are taught and especially in the examples set for students by their instructors . . . in their actions and words both inside and outside of the *dojo*" (Friman 1996: 107).

While the training process may change as it is acted upon by the pressures of students' and instructors' needs, the importance of the relationship itself remains. The barriers to the initial formation of this relationship often come in the form of negative attitudes possessed by the student, and it is the teaching methods of the instructor that will combat these attitudes in order to move forward to a place in which true learning can commence. The next chapter examines how similar change has acted upon the social and professional environment in which these negotiations occur in the art of boxing.

CHAPTER 4

Historical Development of Boxing

When discussing an activity with a rich and storied evolution as the art of boxing, it is necessary to place the rules, behaviours, institutions, equipment, and practitioners in a larger historical and social context. To that end, the first section of this chapter details the history and development of boxing throughout the centuries, followed by a discussion of the norms and regulations that surround the modern sport of boxing.

History of Boxing

According to the philosophies upheld by South Side Amateur Boxing Club and the definition offered by Head Coach Brennan, boxing is "the art of hitting your opponent at the furthest distance away exposing the least part of your body while setting up the next punch with speed and velocity and not getting hit."[37] This definition is applicable from the modern day, all the way back to when a pre-modern hominid made a fist to attack another, what has changed is the manner in which this feat is accomplished. It is entirely likely that the relative uniformity of modern boxing traditions, under regulatory bodies at the federal, provincial, and municipal level, is a direct result of sport pugilism's spread alongside the imperialistic endeavours of the Greeks and Romans in antiquity and European nations since the sixteenth century.

Perhaps the most distinct change in technique that occurred in the evolution of boxing in antiquity was the development of a systematic fighting theory. After the skilled and efficient victory of Pythagoras of Samo, at the 48th Olympiad in 588 B.C.E., finesse and tactics became a focus of Greek boxing competitions. Pythagoras's methods introduced the concept of sidestepping and jockeying for position in the arena so that the sun was at your back and in your opponent's eyes – as the events of athletic festivals

[37] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

were open to the sky (Poliakoff 1987). It is a safe assumption that as Greek influence expanded both the new and old traditions of boxing were carried with it. Continuing outward on the backs of the Romans as they encountered, conquered, and, in many cases, acculturated other peoples, the knowledge of early European boxing dispersed even further across the globe.

The sport of boxing is thought to have died out with the fall of the Roman Empire (Anderson 2007; Olympic.org 2009c). The disappearance of almost all forms of sporting activity may have been, in large part, due to the sudden economic shift associated with the onset of the Middle Ages, and the religious animosity toward sport which is thought to have accompanied it. During this period sport was largely relegated to an enjoyable means of preparing for war, as opposed to a past-time; this included wrestling, boxing, jousting, and archery (Anderson 2007).

Jack Anderson, a senior lecturer in law at Queen's University Belfast, writes that boxing merely blended into the martial arts that were popular throughout the long period in which it was absent as a form of show or spectacle (2007). However, it "benefitted from Henry VIII's ascent to the throne and the general relaxation of popular morality that subsequently accompanied the demise of Puritanism" (Anderson 2007: 10).

Boxing's return to public fame, as it is recorded in historical sources, was in the context of "prizefighting." The term "prizefighting" comes from the popular fencing contests which were common in England between the late sixteenth century and the mid-eighteenth century.[38] Toward the end of fencing's popularity, matches between bare-knuckled fighters were added to the exhibitions; many of whom were, themselves,

[38] The winner of one of these public contests would, literally, receive a prize. This prize varied in nature depending on who held the contest.

accomplished sword and cudgel fighters. "Within a few years these 'knuckle fights' became so popular they eventually replaced the fencing contests and the term 'prizefight' became synonymous with boxing" (Silver 2008: 13).

The first recorded prizefighting champion was James Figg in 1719, he challenged all comers to contests of skill with bare knuckles (boxing) or with the quarterstaff (cudgelling). During his career he opened an amphitheatre to host challengers and to house his academy for teaching "the Noble Science of Defence" with swords, staves, and fists. Figg was undefeated when he retired in 1730 (Anderson 2007; Gorman 2002; Greig 1996).

"Boxing" in the bare-knuckled, prizefighting era was a very different beast from that which is practiced today. These contests allowed kicking, biting, wrestling, hip throws, elbows, and even gouging. A round ended when one man was knocked down, at which point the downed man had thirty seconds to meet his opponent at the "scratch" line (a metre long line in the centre of the ring where fighters squared off); this was referred to as "coming up to scratch" or "toeing the line" (Anderson 2007; Greig 1996; Silver 2008). Under variant rules, often observed in "gypsy" and other outsider communities, a boxer was free to hit his opponent as soon as he had taken both of his hands off the ground when getting to his feet from a knock-down. Under either tradition, the end of a match was declared only after one man could not, or would not, continue – indicated verbally by "giving best" or physically by lying unconscious on the ground (Anderson 2007; Gorman 2002).

In 1738, after a rotation of two other champions, John (Jack) Broughton, a student of James Figg, took the title. Broughton is commonly known as the "Father of English

Boxing" (Anderson 2007: 13; Egan 1824: 16). After a brutal fight in which he caused the death of his inexperienced but eager opponent, George Stevenson, on April 24th, 1741, Broughton drafted a set of prizefighting rules to prevent future tragedies (Anderson 2007 and Odd 1983). "Broughton's Rules," as they are called, proposed a uniform regulation of the starting area of the ring – the ring itself being staked out rather than marked by a rope on the ground – the thirty second time limit to get up from a knock-down and stand ready, boxers and seconds being the only persons allowed in the area of the ring during a bout, the division of prize monies (purses), the appointing of judges, and the banning of hitting an opponent while down or grappling below the waist (Anderson 2007).

While the application of Broughton's rules helped mould the sport of boxing into a respectable activity – he even introduced primordial gloves, called "mufflers", to reduce injury while practice sparring – the scandals and money oriented behaviour of later personalities, mainly in the early to mid-nineteenth century, left prizefighting in ruins (Anderson 2007).

In 1838 (revised in later years), the London Prize Ring Rules were written to elaborate upon earlier regulations. This new set of guidelines introduced a thirty second rest period after each knock-down, and required that boxers come to the scratch line, unaided, within a span of eight seconds after the break. The stipulation of *unaided* was introduced to prevent unscrupulous seconds from leading an obviously beaten man – at times semi-conscious – to the scratch line in hopes that he would yet recover. Also, several more behaviours were added to the list of fouls, and kicking, head butting, gouging, biting, and the palming of stones were outlawed (Anderson 2007).

The Marquis of Queensbury Rules, written for boxing in 1865 by John Graham Chambers and sponsored by Sholto Douglas (the eight Marquis of Queensbury), brought the sport closest to its modern standard. This set of twelve rules built upon the rules of the London Prize Ring making the use of padded gloves mandatory, eliminating all wrestling and grappling, formalizing three minute rounds with one minute's rest, introducing the ten count for knock-downs, and moving everyone but the boxers out of the ring (Anderson 2007). These twelve laws of boxing were the most successful means to "socialise and sanitise the sport of boxing . . . the rules were designed to appeal expressly to the middle class, gentleman 'amateur'" (Anderson 2007: 28).

In 1896, the tradition of the Olympic Games was renewed under the governance of the first International Olympic Committee (IOC), in Athens. Boxing was returned to its rightful place in the assemblage of sports in 1904 – a year in which the United States won every medal as they were the only country to enter this event (Olymipic.org 2010c). The sport was, however, absent at the 1912 Games due to Sweden's refusal to allow boxing matches to be conducted in their nation (Olympic.org 2010b).

Background of Modern Boxing

Modern boxing – referred to as the "sweet science" by nineteenth century sportswriter and popular journalist Pierce Egan (1772-1849 C.E.) in 1824 – still struggles to shake off the image of the brutality and aggression. While kung fu tries to evade the images of mysticism, boxing falls victim to the romance of toughness (Early 1994b). This may come from the sensibilities of British pugilism enthusiasts such as Egan, who felt that boxing promoted the "truly British spirit" in common people (1824b: v). In

speaking of boxing clubs, he goes so far as to say that they serve to "keep alive principles of courage and hardihood which distinguish the British character, and to check the progress of that effeminacy which wealth is apt to produce" (Egan 1824b: 26).

Perhaps it is the highly symbolic nature of boxing that led to its use as a yardstick of manliness, as well as its promotion of Western dichotomies ranging from nationality, ethnicity, and class, to religion, politics, and sexuality. As University College London senior lecturer Kasia Boddy argues:

> More than anything, the boxing match has served as a metaphor for opposition – the struggle between two bodies before an audience . . . representing struggles between opposing qualities, ideas and values . . . brawn versus brain; boastfulness versus modesty; youth versus experience. (Boddy 2008: 7)

Luckily, boxing does not fall victim to many stories of fantastic powers and secret knowledge, instead, it is the measure of the participants and the technical details of a contest that are often exaggerated (Gorman 2002; McLean 2003). Unfortunately, while the details of how tall and strong the adversaries were, or how long or short the match lasted, are not overly important in following the evolution of boxing; it is the incomplete nature of official records that hinders progress. Unlike kung fu, Western boxing has not benefited from the meticulous book keeping traditions that have been part of Chinese bureaucracy for centuries.

However, while the actual presence of boxing in different forms and in different nations may be difficult to track, the European tradition does profit from its status as a sport, insofar as the changes in rules, equipment, and regulations are on record with associated governing bodies. Also, since the introduction of the printing press to England in 1476, those lettered persons whom were interested in pugilism would occasionally

present accounts of fights in newsletters and pamphlets. "The earliest known report of a bare-knuckle fight appeared in the *Protestant Mercury* in 1681" (Odd 1983: 157). This may have been part of boxing – in the form of prizefighting – returning to mainstream popularity in the 18th century.

In its modern iteration, and as taught and perfected at South Side Amateur, amateur boxing in Canada follows the rules and regulations of the International Boxing Association (AIBA) version of the sport. This organization was founded in 1946 by the English Amateur Boxing Association and the French Boxing Federation, after the Federation Internatiole de Boxe (FIBA) lost its credibility due to the actions of several officials during World War II (International Boxing Association 2010b). Its original title was the Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur (International Amateur Boxing Association); since October 22nd, 2007, the "amateur" term has been dropped – though the acronym has been kept intact as a combination of the IBA in English and AIB in French (2010a). The AIBA is made up of 196 member countries under five regional confederations, and governs adoption and modification of rules in each member nation as well as the Olympic Games (International Boxing Association 2010b & 2007).

At a local level, the application and enforcement of the sport's parameters is overseen by Boxing Alberta and Boxing Canada. Both of these associations provide training for officials and coaches, while at the same time gathering and training teams of athletes to compete at the provincial and national levels respectively. As the South Side Amateur Boxing Club is a non-profit organization, the collection of registration fees from each member covers the cost of that boxer's membership in aforementioned associations (2010b).

The layperson often misunderstands the separation between amateur and professional boxing. The major differences occur in the manner in which you seek to win a match (i.e. goals and objectives), but also the system of scoring, the rules, and the equipment employed. While professional boxing is geared toward providing a spectacle for the audience – often brutal and bloody matches ending with stellar knock-outs – and by that aim boosting ticket sales to major events, amateur boxing favours an athlete who is able to "outbox his opponent by landing numerous clean, effective blows, rather than going for a knockout that may not happen" (South Side Amateur Boxing Club 2010b). An important linguistic distinction should be made at this time. In the world of amateur boxing, the terms *boxer*, *coach*, and *bout* are considered the norm, whereas professional boxing betrays its more aggressive nature by favouring the terms *fighter*, *trainer*, and *fight* to refer to the same categories.

The different goals and objectives manifest in the way decisions regarding the competitors' success are made. In amateur boxing, rounds are shorter in duration and fewer in number; four rounds of two or three minutes each versus four to twelve rounds of three minutes each in professional (International Boxing Association 2010c). In both cases, a one minute period of rest is given between rounds. The winner of an amateur bout is declared if the opponent cannot continue due to injury, cannot defend himself effectively, is given a standing eight count[39] three times in one round or four times total over multiple rounds, cannot recover within the eight seconds of the standing eight count, or cannot recover within ten seconds after being knocked to the canvas (floor of the ring) (International Boxing Association 2010c).

[39] Granted eight seconds to prove ability to continue after being overwhelmed by an opponent.

Also, as this is a sporting activity, one, or both, of the competitors may be disqualified for committing, and being warned against, three fouls or behaving in an unethical or unsportsmanlike manner. In addition to outright disqualification, points may be added to your opponent's score if you commit a foul. Fouls are outlined and enforced for the safety of all participants, they include:

> Hitting below the belt, holding, tripping, kicking, and butting with foot or knee. Hits or blows with head, shoulder, forearm, elbow, throttling of the opponent, and pressing with arm or elbow in opponent's face, pressing the head of the opponent back over the ropes. Hitting with open glove, the inside of the glove, wrist or side of the hand. Hits landing on the back of the opponent, and especially any blow on the back of the neck or head and kidney punch. Pivot blows. Attack whilst holding the ropes or making any unfair use of the ropes. Lying on, wrestling and throwing in the clinch. An attack on an opponent who is down or who is in the act of rising. Holding. Holding and hitting or pulling and hitting. Holding, or locking, of the opponent's arm or head, or pushing an arm underneath the arm of the opponent. Ducking below the belt of the opponent in a manner dangerous to the opponent. Completely passive defence by means of double cover and intentionally falling, running, or turning the back to avoid a blow. Inappropriate, aggressive, or offensive utterances during the round. Not stepping back when ordered to break. Attempting to strike opponent immediately after the Referee has ordered "break" and before taking a step back. Assaulting or behaving in an aggressive manner towards a Referee at any time. Spitting out gumshield. Keeping the advanced hand straight in order to obstruct the opponent's vision. (International Boxing Association 2010c: 13-14)

In the case of a standing eight win or a situation in which the opponent cannot continue, a result of Referee Stop Contest (RSC) is recorded. If the stoppage was the result of a boxer being rendered unable to continue due to a blow to the head, then it is

recorded as Referee Stop Contest - Head blow (RSCH). A classic "knock-out" win is only declared when a boxer is knocked to the canvas and cannot prove his or her ability to continue the contest before the ten second count is completed – typically a symptom of a concussion (International Boxing Association 2010c). Not all knock-outs involve unconsciousness on the part of the loser, as is the popular belief, the term evolved from the judgement that if a man could not right himself in the allotted time frame, he was "knocked or counted out of time" (Odd 1983: 154).

In order to further ensure the safety of the participants, the referee may also declare a win by RSC or RSCH in the event that one boxer is, in the referee's opinion, outclassed or taking an excessive beating – in some contests this decision is automatic once one boxer has a lead of twenty points after three rounds (Olympic.org 2009c). This authority extends to injuries as well, granting the referee the power to stop a contest if one boxer is bloodied, cut, or has too much swelling around either eye – unlike in professional boxing where being bloodied and battered is the norm (International Boxing Association 2010c).

Amateur boxers are required to wear specially designed ten ounce gloves, singlets (armless top or vest), mouth guards, and protective headgear. A mouth guard, or gumshield, is a piece of moulded material, custom fitted or generic, which is inserted into the mouth, held by the teeth, to allow the boxer to set his or her jaw; reducing potential for knockdown, tooth and gum injury, and mandible injury. The headgear, covering most of the head except for the face and chin, protects the athlete and prevents "cauliflowering" of the ears.[40] The mandatory use of both of these safety devices

[40] Cauliflower Ear (hematoma auris or perichondrial hematoma) is a deformation of the ear, usually swelling or paling, which results from fluid build-up between cartilage and the outer tissue of the ear due to

reinforces the fact that bouts are intended to be won by scoring points instead of causing injury. As Conley puts it, the purpose of the activity is "not to injure or kill but rather to participate in a mutual display of skill and strength" (1999: 59).

Points are awarded by judges at three or four sides of the square ring, a single point being awarded for successful strikes to the target areas (above the belt on the body, or the head), regardless of whether they are jabs, power punches, or result in a knock-down (International Boxing Association 2010c; South Side Amateur Boxing Club 2010b). Therefore, it is in the boxers' best interest to fight cleanly and skilfully, as only punches that land with intent and accuracy, will be counted. Strikes to the arms do not earn points, nor do wild punches that have no direct purpose or that result in a foul; however, in the case of flurries and protracted exchanges between competitors, a point will be awarded to whichever boxer is determined to have had the advantage in that particular engagement (International Boxing Association 2010c).

At a competition, as well as in sparring, pairs are matched by sex, age, weight class; although in less formal non-championship competitions it is also favourable to pair competitors by experience – a 48kg, nineteen year old female with five fights in her past would fight someone approximately the same. As of September, 2010, the AIBA classifies boxers by means of ten weight classes: Light Fly (46-49kg men, 45-48kg women), Fly (49-52kg men, 48-51kg women), Bantam (52-56kg men, 51-54kg women), Light (56-60kg men, 57-60kg women), Light Welter (60-64kg both), Welter (64-69kg both), Middle (69-75kg both), Light Heavy (75-81kg both), Heavy (81-91kg men, 81+kg women), Super Heavy (91+kg, men only) (International Boxing Association 2010c).

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repeated impacts. When the fluid separates the tissue from the cartilage, the cartilage is starved of nutrients and dies, forming lumps of scar tissue

While prizefighting and bare-knuckled matches still persist in the world – largely underground and in the context of sub-cultural traditions such as those of the Irish Travellers – the rules of amateur boxing prevail in their usage, being tweaked at regular intervals when the committees of the AIBA meet to review the sport (International Boxing Association 2010b). Given the long and storied history it can easily be seen why boxing has earned a reputation of thuggery; however, its maturation into a noble sport allows boxers to take pride in their mastery of the sweet science.

As a sport and as a physical art form boxing has developed, and continues to develop, by keeping pace with centuries of social and political change. Whether guided by a desire to protect fighters or uphold the philosophies and ideals of the art, the rules, equipment, and legal statuses have been modified to make the activities in the ring less lethal and allow the trainers and boxers to become more effective sportsmen. This background knowledge acts as a lens through which my observations can be analysed and given context.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis of Boxing Findings

Training Environment

The South Side Amateur Boxing Club is located in the sub-basement of an office building. On the door through which one enters the club, two posters – the first sight to greet you as you come in – proclaim "You are about to enter a learning zone" and "Only positive attitudes allowed beyond this point." Inside, the club is packed with training equipment and by the first glances at people "shadowboxing," running on the spot, and jumping rope, it is obvious that intense physical training is one of the most central components of this activity. The gym itself is a large room with concrete walls and floor, and an open ceiling containing a network of crisscrossing pipes, lighting, and metal rafters.

A regulation boxing ring dominates the centre of the room, indicating that sparing and competition are very important activities. The positioning of the ring in the middle of the room is also done out of the necessity to view sparring matches and other bouts from all angles. Several punching bags of differing design and composition, some heavier or wider than others, line West wall. There is enough space for a student to "stick and move" (throw a punch or combination at the bag and then sidestep around it) all the way around the bag, although you have to be aware of the path of other boxers at bags on either side. Mirrors adorn the far North walls, providing an area in which students can "shadowbox" and observe their own form while practicing.

Almost every other empty wall space is covered in posters, plaques, and pictures. These materials run the gamut from framed sets of old South Side Amateur Boxing Club and Legion patches, to banners advertising tournaments and famous professional fights, to photographs of past legends of the club. While some of these artefacts are on display purely as points of curiosity or interest, others are meant to inspire, showing the glory days of previous generations and bearing slogans about dedicated training. For example, a tournament banner from a Ringside (a famous boxing equipment merchant and sponsor) competition demands: "You train, you win. That's all."

Different types of equipment are set up around the walls of the gym; some are designed for generic exercise while others serve more specific purposes for cardiovascular or strength training. Three major types of boxing skill development tools are present; the punching bag, the speed bag, and the double end bag. The punching bags, padded containers sewn in various sizes and shapes, filled with weighted material and hung from the ceiling, are multipurpose training devices. They are used to build striking power, train body position, and combine punches with movement and footwork. The speed bags, an inflated leather bag suspended below a platform, are used to train hand coordination, combinations and the speed and control of successive punches. The double end bags, an inflated leather ball with an elastic tether on top and bottom, anchored in the floor and ceiling, is used to

train punching accuracy and movement – as it must be dodged or countered when it snaps back toward the user after each hit.

The gym is wired with a sound system which pipes music into every corner of the concrete room. The tracks originate from an MP3 player patched into the auxiliary input of a large stereo system that is part of a shelf-mounted entertainment center on the South wall – Television, DVD player, amplifier, etc.. The tunes of choice are the booming bass and vocals of the latest rap and R&B artists. The adversarial lyrics underscore the activities that take place in the ring and at the heavy bags, punching, ducking, dodging, and counter attacking; preparations for skilled combat in a battle for fame and honour. The music coupled with wall hangings that promote championships and famous title fights steeps the club in an atmosphere of competition and pride; although, admittedly few of the coaches and members still know the names of the past legends hung on the walls.[41]

The music comes together with the fact that the space is below ground, with no windows to the outside world, and then blends further with din of landed punches and sharp exhaling, allowing the boxing club to take on the "timeless world" properties that Donohue attributes to the social space of karate *dojos* (1993: 121). The training sessions move by quickly, and without a coach it would be easy to lose yourself in the chaos of activity, as most of the experienced boxers keep an insurmountable focus on their own activity. Some of the club members use portable MP3 players in order to drown out the existing audio in favour of training to their own soundtrack.

The escape from the mundane is further exaggerated by the overall competitive air of the facility. This is provided by the physical atmosphere, the odour of sweat, and

[41] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

the no "free rides" demeanour espoused by the coaches. The first coach I meet – introduced to me by Head Coach Brennan – an ex-member of the Cuban national boxing team, asks me if I am willing to train and fight with everything I have. He says, "At dis club, we train hard and we fight to de death. You must take it seriously and work hard. Are you ready to fight to the death?"[42] This encounter immediately transforms my view of the club from one of fitness and sport, to one of serious competition and lifestyle.

In light of this, I feel I am not taken seriously in my interactions within the gym; neither as a researcher nor a martial artist. However, after my first sparring session, regardless of how poorly I may have fared, I have definitely moved from the liminal stage of "newcomer" to having the status of "club member." It is obvious by this experience that willingness to spar is an essential component in the student selection process for this martial art. As, during the rest of that night's training session other boxers walk up to me and say "good job" or "well done," and the feel of the environment has changed once again. I had become an "active member" according to Adler & Adler's typology (1987: 50).

Class Organization

The boxing club is a collective space full of individual martial artists. Other than the degree of skill that is demonstrated by an individual boxer, it is difficult to tell who the advanced or beginner students are – not unlike the *kwoon*. "Boxing is an individual sport and each athlete progresses at their own speed and develop step by step" (South Side Amateur Boxing Club 2010b). The unifying element to the training experience is that all activities are moulded and given importance according to the preferred methods

[42] From field notes June 15th, 2009.

and central values of the Head coach. Accordingly, the rules of the gym are based on the unwavering demand that members act in a respectful manner, open their minds to learning the sport, and work hard. The majority of the training activities reflect Head Coach Brennan's belief that footwork is the most crucial skill to be attained by anyone wishing to perform well in the ring – this stands as a key element of his particular brand of systematized training.

The South Side Amateur Boxing Club opens at 6 pm, with boxers arriving as close to that time as possible to start training. Once a new student has been versed in the gym and cardio workout programs adhered to at this club, physical training is in their hands henceforth. The expected gym workout is consistent across all levels of experience; "whether you have been here four years or four months it is the same program" (South Side Boxing Club 2010b). The only exception to this notion of self-guidance is sparring, boxers only spar once they have learned the basic offensive and defensive techniques, and even then it is a closely supervised activity. In addition, the decision of who spars and how sparring matches are conducted is at the discretion of the Head coach, allowing them to apply their personal training philosophies directly to the act of fighting. As Wacquant observes in a footnote regarding his sparring experiences: "The personality of and coaching philosophy of the head trainer is decisive because it determines the main parameters for social management of ring violence" (2004: 81).

When you arrive, it is up to you to quickly change, there is no mandatory uniform, students and coaches simply wear a shirt, shorts or pants – shorts are recommended to avoid overheating – and clean running shoes. When changed and ready to work you put on hand wraps, and then time your own fifteen minutes of non-stop jumping rope.

Cardiovascular fitness, translating to stamina in the ring, is a foundation of boxing – even more so in amateur than in professional as a quick finish is less likely. This is evident in the fact that even the process of adorning oneself with hand wraps incorporates an exercise to build muscular endurance. While performing this task, which can take between one and five minutes depending on the skill of the boxer, you are required to maintain a "wall sit" posture. This posture involves holding a sitting position as if on a non-existent chair; knee joint at ninety degrees or less with your feet flat on the floor and your back braced against a wall. At South Side Amateur, if you are caught wrapping your hands without "wall sitting," or with your legs extended beyond ninety degrees, a coach will immediately assign you ten push-ups as a punishment – to be performed then and there.

After the compulsory exercise and hand wrapping is completed, you are expected to "shadowbox" or work on a heavy bag until you are called upon to join a group of other boxers and engage in drills lead by an assigned coach. "Shadowboxing" is a one person training technique that involves a boxer moving as though he or she is fighting an imaginary opponent.[43] Combinations of punches, blocks, and evasions are employed in succession to develop speed and footwork.

Given that the purpose of "shadowboxing" is to develop muscle memory, perfect form, and practice smooth transitions from one technique to another, this activity could be seen as an unscripted form. Similar to traditional martial arts, the coach teaches the boxer a range of techniques which the boxer repeats in a practice sequence; the difference

[43] A training method used since ancient Greece, referred to by Plato as "*skiamachia*" (fighting without an opponent) (Dreager & Smith 1969: 7).

here is that the sequence is authored on the fly, creating a unique and spontaneous form every time.

It should be noted that the gathering of students together for training is not a universal method in boxing. I have visited boxing clubs in which the focus on individual goals takes priority, coaches and boxers almost seeming to borrow the space for private training, and "drill groups" (as I refer to them) are not the norm. It is also quite common, even at South Side Amateur, for a coach to choose a boxer that he or she wants to work with – perhaps due to a similarity in style or strength between the coach and the student – and then their training takes the form of one-on-one mentorship. In this case there is a heavier application of training methods that mimic fighting in the ring, such as sparring with target pads (pads worn over the coach's hands to give the boxer a movable point to aim punches at while at the same time reacting to these pads striking back at him or her).

From my observations, it appears that the freedom to decide what you work on while awaiting an assignment is greater for older and more experienced members of the club than it is for others. The younger and newer boxers crowd around the limited mirrors, looking for space to practice their form, while the athletes with the obviously more polished techniques throw combinations at the numerous punching bags. This is likely due to the greater level of knowledge possessed by the experienced members, giving them the ability to know what techniques they are lacking in and, therefore, need to train more, which earns them the authority to use the duration of the waiting period more effectively.

During this time, as well as later throughout a given training session, laziness or "cheating" (giving little effort) during a workout on the part of individual boxers –

especially newer and young students who have yet to develop discipline – is rather common. This phenomenon, while punished if caught openly, does not appear to be actively pursued as a subversive behaviour to be stamped out. The coaches instead choose to lead by example, this is accomplished by mentioning the hard work of the more proficient students – who are looked up to by many of the younger boxers – and telling cautionary tales of how "doing something half-hearted gets you nowhere" (conversation with author June 15th, 2009). Again, the notion of individuality dominates here, and the value of self-discipline is reiterated in the belief that if athletes do not skip for the full time or are slack in their "shadowboxing," they are only robbing themselves of their full potential – values that are enforced by the activity of anecdotal guidance.

The chosen training activities vary from day to day and between coaches. The students run stairs, run on the spot, jump rope, or struggle through an elaborate circuit of drills that build technique and stamina – creatively designed to wear out every part of the boxer's body. The timing of each burst of activity is determined by an automated timing device with lights and a buzzer. On the green light, everyone in the gym trains hard at their assigned task, going non-stop for three minutes. Then, the buzzer sounds and the red light comes on, signalling everyone to stop and rest for one minute – usually seeking out a water bottle, as hydration is essential in this activity cycle. After the one minute respite, the buzzer sounds again and the green light is once again lit in place of the red; essentially, we are being conditioned to engage in intense exertion on the same time rotation as the rounds of a bout.

In addition, if the buzzer sounds and the green light activates before you are back to the drill you are involved in, then you are commanded to do ten push-ups before

continuing. Depending on the coach, the cost of being late may also be levied upon all members of your training group. This form of mass punishment is also applied if one or more students are lax in their performance of an assigned drill; similar to tactics used within a military unit. On occasion, however, coaches will override the authority of the timer; they may start sparring rounds earlier or later, or keeping students at drill – at full pace – for longer periods.

In general, all age ranges and experience levels work together in one drill group. Although there are some occasions when students are divided up by relative skill level and weight class, most commonly this occurs during sparring or training methods that involve more contact. Also, when it is determined that you are ready to spar, you will be asked if you want to do so, then you will be pulled from your drill group to prepare. Preparation involves the locating of proper sized gloves and headgear from the equipment room, and fetching your mouth guard from your bag. Sparring begins with facing off against an opponent who only blocks. This stage of training takes place in a half-size ring, created by securing a rope through the middle of the regulation ring, allowing two pairs of boxers practice on either side. Being that this space is much narrower, it forces you to face your opponent directly and use good technique to control the space. As you demonstrate more experience and control, you will be put in a full ring with another boxer who is instructed to throw only jabs, then a certain combination, and, eventually, full on sparring.

On the whole, more experienced boxers are called upon to spar more frequently, as this is a more effective means of perfecting their practical applications of the art. This fact leads to my assessment that the central nature of the ring, being situated in the

middle of the club and visible from every part of it, is both a blessing and a curse. It is a positive feature of the space, in that the actions of more experienced boxers can be observed by all – as watching them spar is highly instructive. However, it becomes a negative feature when the less committed use the spectacle of a sparring match as an excuse to stop training and gawk at other boxers – as watching them spar is highly instructive. However, the benefit easily outweighs the harm as, once again, it is up to the individual student to develop the mental focus to stay on task.

Multiple coaches work with the students at the club at any given time. They are volunteers and come to instruct other boxers out of a love for the sport and a desire to see that young people have a positive focus for their energy and free time.[44] This, unfortunately, means that they are not necessarily available every night that the club is open. Also, many coaches are themselves experienced boxers, and, therefore, they must dedicate a portion of their time to maintaining their own skills and abilities. Group drilling assignments are given based on who is available and what level of techniques they are best at teaching. For example, in my time at South Side Amateur, I witnessed every new student, myself included, being taught and drilled on the basic exercises and punches by the same coach. This elderly man was at the club every night, and as such he is readily available – not to mention more than sufficiently experienced and knowledgeable – to provide a consistent introduction to the sport for every new member.

Other than youth boxing camps, fundraisers, and boxing nights (referred to as "club cards") hosted by other gyms, most coaches are far too busy to engage in social activities after training.[45] This is not overly surprising given the volunteer status of the

[44] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.
[45] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

coaches. That being said, there is a stated expectation that everyone will be engaging in "road work," the counter point to "floor work" done in the gym. This term refers to the act of running and other such cardiovascular training that is done outside of the gym, on your own time, on a regular and consistent basis – another individual task, policed only by your own mental and physical discipline.

Role of Coaches

"A boxer, like a writer, must stand alone" (Liebling 1956: 3). That is not to say that friendship and amity do not exist here, only that your success or failure is in your own hands. You are shown something once, and then left to train alone – with little or no correction depending on the night. As stated earlier, the gym is a collective space full of individuals. When not in a drill group, students work unaccompanied and strive to perfect techniques and improve their speed without much interference. As Head Coach Brennan explained during an interview:

> Owens: In the boxing club, versus other martial arts schools I've been at, there's definitely, like, more of an air of competition, and it's very individualistic . . . dominating opponents and things like that. Can you speak to that?
>
> Head Coach Brennan: Boxing is a oneness sport I find. You are the person that decides whether you want to win or lose. I can't . . . I can teach you how to win, but I can't motivate you to win, like I can't be in the ring and tell you how to do it. I can be on the outside, but I'm not allowed to talk on the outside of the ring now. You know, you're not allowed to yell back and forth anymore? That's a rule. But it's a oneness sport I find; if you want to work hard, and dedicated, and be motivated, and listen, and learn, you will win. As a team sport the only thing the team can do, like, the rest of the boxers, is be there for you when you're fighting and lead you on; but they can't be in the ring with you. It's almost like dying, you know? You die alone. When you step into that ring it's you! You have to figure out your opponent, and you have to figure out what you have to do to win. And you have to be fierce enough . . . you need 80% no fear, and 20% fear; if it's the other way around, if you have

> 80% fear, 20% no fear . . . you might as well not be in there. Cause your head's down all the time, you're not gonna win. But you have to decide on your own . . . these guys that win, they do a lot of work on their own, at home . . . then they come here and we modify it.[46]

In this application of systematized training, hard work and self-discipline are heavily favoured. The coaches will teach the student, but only the student has control over his or her personal success.

Again, this brings to light the phenomenon of "cheating," as many of the younger boxers stop intermittently and rest, then they go for a drink anyway when the timer buzzes. In kung fu students train as a group, with the instructor watching all participants, and walking between them to correct our technique as we perform it. There are some instances of this while working in drill groups, but generally the sense of personal activity is primary.

Intervention on the part of coaches generally occurs when a student is lax on one of the core philosophies of the club. For example, push-ups may be assigned for swearing or "trash talk" (disparaging remarks made towards others, often in jest), or if a student exhibits poor footwork or is seen not to be giving his or her full attention to the activity. "Trash talk" in particular is unacceptable in the South Side Amateur gym, while it is sometimes done at ringside as playful banter with boxers sparring;[47] Head Coach Brennan takes a zero tolerance approach to any form of bullying.

The act of coach intervention in your practice can take many forms, it can be private and direct, it can be open commentary on your technique or behaviour, or it can

[46] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.
[47] In these situations the dominant boxer is mocked the worst, perhaps as a means of encouraging humility in the winner or cushioning the confidence of the weaker boxer.

be the shouting of commands such as “Hands always up!”, “Watch those feet!”, or “Nobody told you to stop!”. While the correction that is being offered is always positive and constructive, the manner in which it is issued can have a variety of effects on the confidence and self-esteem of the boxer on the receiving end. This interaction creates a situation in which the student must be able to handle criticism and intensity or they are not going to be successful as a boxer. Thus, the connection between student selection activities and systematized training is confirmed once again.

The nature of these correction activities encourages – if not outright demands – the development of self-discipline, as undisciplined behaviour invites the possibility of ridicule. At the same time, a side effect of varied coach intervention methods is that student selection is directly policed; if a student cannot or will not take the correction in one or more forms, he or she is likely to quit if his or her attitude does not change. Once a student has survived this baptism of fire, the bond with the coaches can be formed, allowing more relaxed interactions. This is evident in the fact that the more experienced students seem to be more familiar in tone and action, engaging in a joking relationship with the coaches. This relationship is sometimes emulated by younger students who have not earned this bond, resulting in their jokes or comments falling flat before an audience of older boxers and coaches.

The constant theme of individuality, endorsed through words and actions of coaches, pushes students to face – and hopefully correct – their own bad habits and negative attitudes; a core value of South Side Amateur. This process encourages you to show respect for others through proper behaviour, and respect for yourself through honest, dedicated training. Not only is this a personal value, it is also applicable

externally, as achievements on the part of others should be seen as earned through the same honest dedication.

While the description of the activities I have observed and participated in may come across as stoic and harsh on occasion, it must be noted that all of the coaches interact with the club's members in a very personal and concerned manner. They are not yelling at young boxers out of anger or disappointment, they are trying to inspire energy, excitement, intensity, and self-reliance in their students. The coaches want you to work hard and not cheat yourself out of reaching your full potential. They are here to help you if you have the confidence and courage to take a bit of a beating once in a while without quitting; a notion commonly referred to as *heart*.

This is ultimately preparing you mentally and physically for what you will face in the ring, the place in which a boxer's *heart* will be tested. At its core, *heart*, then, is the willingness to go the distance and to give everything you have to stand up for yourself even when facing a vastly superior opponent:

> Head Coach Brennan: Heart is the fact that you get in there, and you keep going and you keep fighting; even though you're not doing as good as you should. You don't stop or you don't say I'm not fighting anymore . . . even though you're not winning you're still in there and you're still moving around, and you're still doing okay, but the other guy is far superior. Cause it's a lot easier to stop . . . and just say I don't want to go back in, then to continue the third round, or second round, or whatever . . . But if the guy starts getting beat up, or the guy doesn't have a chance after the first round, or if he's getting hurt, I'm throwing the towel in. There's no way I'm going to let the guy stay in and get beat up just to save face, or the fact that he thinks he might win or that I took him out too soon.
>
> Owens: So, he doesn't want to quit?
>
> Head Coach Brennan: Yes, and that's *heart*.[48]

[48] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

Heart is closely associated to the themes of individuality and masculinity that are expressed in the activity and culture of boxing. So much so that, as seen in Head Coach Brennan's description, *heart* drives many a boxer to stay in a fight far longer than they should, in order to prove themselves.

This desire, putting yourself in harm's way largely out of pride, is what led to the tradition of the cornermen or seconds of a boxer "throwing in the towel" if their boxer was outmatched and would not admit it. This tradition involves literally throwing a towel, kept in the corner to wipe sweat and blood from a boxer while he rests between rounds, into the ring in order to signal the referee and opponent that your boxer has had enough. This tradition allows the coach to control what traits the boxer should be focusing on in a fight, if the boxer values a display of fortitude over a display of skill, the coach can, and will if he disagrees with the boxer's performance, end the bout. As head coach Brenna warned: "We've got a lot of guys here that don't mind getting hit, but that's not the point . . . I'm not willing to let anybody get hurt just because they think that they're doing okay when they're not."[49]

At the same time, the softer side of coaching can also be seen in the club. Students are congratulated on well-developed techniques, and a win at a tournament on the weekend never goes without mention. The same is seen in the face of defeat, boxers are not assaulted with a barrage of after the fact corrections, they are left to figure out what they did wrong and then, at the next raining session, the coaches tell them how to work on that problem. Furthermore, it is not beyond the role of the coaches to aid students in dealing with life outside of the club; this is part of the club's "emphasis on life skills" (South Side Amateur Boxing Club 2010b).

[49] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

While it is expected that you leave your problems at the door, entering the facility to focus on learning, Head Coach Brennan notes occasions in which he addresses outside matters through boxing's life lessons and the promotion of "getting along with people," self-esteem, and self-confidence. He states, "This is a *club* . . . if you have a problem, talk to me, we'll solve it, done."[50] Also, as the club aspires to be a positive place for youth and youth at risk, if someone cannot afford to pay membership fees, the fees are waived.

Head Coach Brennan shared with me an example of a more direct intervention concerning boxing as an outlet for youth with hot tempers:

> Owens: Is there something particular about boxing that seems to work well for people with too much energy of aggression. Like, you said Youth Justice would bring people here for rehab . . .
>
> Head Coach Brennan: Well, it's a good outlet for aggression, and, um, tempers. We have a young guy here, he'd not been here for long, he played hockey for years, and his dad was having some problems with him. So [the father] brings him here . . . something had happened with hockey he didn't want to play hockey anymore; but he's in really good shape. So, he gets pissed off and hits a wall with his fist. And he came a couple weeks ago and says, you know, I can't use my hand, it's limp. I said "did you go to the hospital?", he says "No." His father looks at me and he says "I tried to take him but he wouldn't go!" He's fifteen years old, what do you mean he didn't go? You know? Kick his butt down there and get him into the . . . get an x-ray on it! So I said "I don't want you to come back until you get an x-ray on that, cause you can't be here with a swollen hand that you can't fight with!" And I said "The next time, if you want to hit a wall you come in and hit me. We'll go in the ring, and we'll spar, and you can hit me as hard as you want for as long as you want; and I'm gonna crack you back. And if I don't do it I'll get someone else to go in there with you. But don't be hitting walls, cause it's not working. If you want to hit something or somebody come in here, we've got lots of 'em."[51]

[50] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.
[51] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

In addition to direct interaction with students, coaches – especially the Head coach – exercise the informal right to apply nicknames to students and other coaches. This is meant to be a positive experience – and somewhat utilitarian due to the Head coach's admitted difficulty with remembering everyone's name. Each nickname is applied based on one or more characteristics of the recipient, for example, a boxer currently in the Edmonton Police Service training program was called "Constable."

Some of the titles are a more derisive, used to remind the boxer of why he or she is training; this is in no way meant to be hurtful, it becomes a means of inspiration or motivation. An example of this is a chubby youth whose parents brought him to South Side Amateur in order to provide him with an activity other than videogames. He was immediately branded as "Xbox," in order to remind him that dedicated training will improve his health, athleticism, and social skills. Overall, this practice of assigning of status again promotes the individuality, but in this case not as a means of separation, instead as a means of making a club member's identity more distinct and unique.

The training methods and philosophies applied to by the coaches at South Side Amateur, as at any club, create a distinctive boxing style expressed by their students. It is Head Coach Brennan's belief that "boxing starts from the feet, up,"[52] colours the focus of activities in the club, as is a feature of every drill and sparring match. The details of the philosophies and methods designated as central to the skill set are what determine how the South Side Amateur members are identified abroad. For example, "A boxer from our club . . . went to the training camp in Lodgepole, and he sparred. And in the first round they knew exactly where he was from, because they knew the footwork."[53]

[52] From field notes July 14th, 2009.
[53] From interview conducted September. 3rd, 2009.

The importance of the methods and underlying philosophies of the club influences the selection of not only students, but also new coaches. A coach who tries to teach conflicting values, or simply does not teach the values held in high regard by the club, is not welcome to teach at South Side Amateur.

Handshake/Salute

The most obvious salute performed in boxing is the touching of gloves before a fight begins. This act is an essential component of the boxing ritual that begins each bout; the referee checks the state of each boxer's equipment, explains his expectations, demands a clean fight, then instructs the boxers shake hands before confirming the readiness of the judges and starting the bout. This gesture is performed in a similar fashion whether sparring in your home club or battling for a medal in at the Olympic Games.

Typically, the boxers extend both of their gloved hands forward to their opponent, who has done the same. The competitors then push their gloves forward, coming together so that the front of each boxers' gloves touch lightly. All forms of the boxing handshake are intended as a sign of respect for the other boxer, and an agreement to box cleanly; a notion commonly referred to as *class*. However, in matches between two boxers with a bad rivalry or built up tension – more commonly witnessed in professional boxing – it is more of a formality to indicate an agreement to fight within the rules of the activity. It is, therefore, the case that boxers who do not fight cleanly – are known for taking liberties, or fouling regularly – are said to "have no *class.*"[54]

[54] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009, and observations in the field.

A common variant of this activity involves one boxer initiating a handshake by knocking lightly, but firmly, downward on the top of his opponent's extended gloves with the bottom of his or her own; the other boxer then does the same in return. It is theorized that this version may have developed as a method of checking the weight and content of your opponent's gloves to ensure he was not cheating by modifying the weight of his or her gloves – a fear more applicable in professional boxing where money is at risk.

Depending on the traditions of a given club, additional handshakes may be performed during sparring sessions. In these situations only one hand is extended, left or right, at the beginning of new rounds, as the boxers meet in the middle of the ring – coming out of their respective corners – to continue the match. Here, the offer of a light handshake each round confirms that the two sparring partners are not out to kill each other, only to practice their skills.

It must also be noted that the desire for boxers to maintain sportsmanship – and possibly to counterbalance the combative nature of the activity – a handshake before and after a bout is required in the AIBA rules (International Boxing Association 2010c: 14). Often, the handshake after the bout takes the form of a regular handshake – as defined by the culture of the two competitors – as their gloves are usually removed by their cornermen or seconds while the score is tallied, leaving hand free save for the, less bulky, fabric wrappings that are worn under the glove.

Interestingly, under the same rule demanding a start and end interaction, any additional shaking of hands during a bout is prohibited. This may be due to the danger of an extended glove being seen as a strike, leading to the boxer extending the offer of a

handshake being attacked before he is expecting it in that round. Alternatively, the prohibition may be in place to avoid any handshake attempts being confused with an attempt at "keeping the advanced hand straight in order to obstruct the opponent's vision," which is a foul.

In addition to being an agreement regarding the rules of conduct, the handshake also acts as an understanding forged between two boxers that this physical confrontation is about the contest itself, and not a personal matter. When observing professional fights, it is often the case that, when the build up to a match has become personal, the handshake is suitably brief and empty in its execution. In the light of the possibility of building tension the Olympic and AIBA rules requiring competitors to shake hands at the beginning and end of every match can been seen as the final agreement between two opponents to accept the result of the bout and leave the ring as peers, regardless of the winner.

In this interpretation of the gesture, the initial handshake is a form of greeting or deal making interaction, while the parting handshake acts as a means of reconciliation and farewell after the contest (Hall & Hall 1983). According to Head Coach Brennan, "You have to be very aggressive in the ring when you're fighting, and when you're out of the ring you can be the friend of that guy."[55] A notion illustrated in the final lines of a poem about boxing from 1824, "the battle's o'er – all made amends, by shaking hands, becoming friends" (Egan 1824a: 1). This can also be generalized to the training staff of the opponent, as many amateur boxers will shake the hands of their opponent's coach and

[55] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009.

cornerman after a bout (at which time the others coaches offer congratulations or words of encouragement as appropriate to the outcome).[56]

Another form of salute performed by boxers is the raising of one's hands on the way to the ring or after entering the ring. This is a salute to the crowd, with one or both arms raised in a show of triumph or, perhaps, expected victory. Often this action is reserved for when a boxer is introduced to the crowd by the announcer – calling attention to his or her identity beyond trunk and corner colour – or after the boxer has emerged victorious from the bout. It is likely that this gesture came about in mimicry of the boxer's arm being raised by the referee when he or she is declared the winner of a given contest.

It can be seen, then, that the four structures allow for negotiation of the teacher-student relationship in a direct manner in the case of boxing. The training environment encourages the values of the club and leads students to follow the established training system. The organization of classes promotes self-discipline and applies pressures that support student selection – via the coach or the student removing of his or her own accord. The role of coaches is to establish and maintain the training system, and impose the rules of the club, while at the same time encouraging respect and self-discipline in their students – ultimately teaching self-respect as well. Handshaking becomes a means of expressing the respect that the students are learning, a way of showing that the value their art and the hard work it requires of them and their opponents. Students who are dismissive of this activity are not likely to be welcomed as club members unless their associated attitude changes. These findings are compared to an analysis of kung fu once the background of the Chinese art is explored.

[56] From field notes April 17th, 2010.

CHAPTER 6

Historical Development of Kung Fu

"The Chinese martial arts entered the twentieth century cloaked in their mantle of myth" (Henning 1981: 176). The same could easily be said of martial arts traditions from all corners of the globe, each with their own culturally situated origin stories and symbolic meanings. Innumerable contributors have influenced what kung fu has become in the present day. Along the way this art has been layered with religious metaphors and folk tales which have been combined to create an elaborate origin story.

The intensity with which many martial artists pursue the perfection of their technique is reflected in the definition of the Chinese word *gong fu* – often written as *kung fu* – as being a skill or aptitude achieved through labour (Kong & Ho 1973; Palmer 2007). "Literally, it can be applied to anyone who is talented and proficient in a particular field" (Kong & Ho 1973: 9-10), which would mean it could also refer to an accomplished boxer. In its popular usage, *kung fu* (sometimes called "Chinese boxing") refers to any of the hundreds of different martial arts styles that originated in China. In modern China, the Mandarin term *wushu* (lit. martial technique or martial method) is more commonly used, as it describes the activity in question with less ambiguity. However, *wushu* also refers to a specific style of martial art that includes both *sanshou* (sparring, also *sanda*) and *daolu* (forms) competition, which has become a popular national sport in China (Henning 1981; National Wushu Federation 2010a; Wushu Canada 2010).

In order to create a foundation from which to analyse my research, the first section of this chapter describes the creation and development of kung fu through its long history. This is followed by an examination of the nature of modern kung fu as a whole, as well as Hung Gar in particular.

History of Kung Fu

"There is no known record of when and who originated Kung-Fu. The Book of Rites, which was written during the Chou Dynasty (1066-403 B.C.), mentions martial arts, but does not furnish details" (Kong & Ho 1973: 9). Unfortunately, due to this lack of concrete evidence in regard to the centuries long development of kung fu, factual accounts concerning the evolution of Chinese martial arts are adrift on a sea of heroic legends and fantastic tales. A multitude of sources, ranging from folklore to classical literature to ancient records, have contributed to the constructed past of kung fu, and debate continues over the accuracy of even the most minute details (Shahar 2008).

The practice of mythmaking, whether intentional or as a side effect of storytelling, comes about due to the lack of concrete knowledge regarding a person or place, and as decades pass truth and myth grow increasingly inseparable (Faure 1986 and 1993). An example offered by religious historian Bernard Faure concerns the life of the Indian monk Bodhidharma, Faure states that "Bodhidharma's biography is very obscure, yet his life is relatively well known . . . Thus, we have many biographical notices concerning Bodhidharma and several works attributes to him" (1986: 188). The pitfalls of the publicised side of boxing were something that Wacquant hoped his "observant participation" would help him avoid, as he put it: "one must not step into the ring by proxy with the extra-ordinary figure of the 'champ' but 'hit the bags' alongside anonymous boxers in the habitual setting of the gym" (2004: 6).

Meir Shahar, professor of East Asian studies at Harvard University, points out that this association with religion and mysticism coated Chinese martial traditions in an

even deeper "ornate mythology that ascribed them to Buddhist saints and to Doaist immortals" (2008: 4). Therefore, the debate over the origin of kung fu, as a system, extends outward to an equally prevalent debate as to whether or not the modern kung fu theory is derived in larger part from Shaolin Buddhism or Taoism.

However, the notion of "truth" in regard to the historical events influencing or involving kung fu is somewhat irrelevant to my investigation, as it is the consensual reality of the system – and each individual style therein – that informs its philosophy and related methods. As with many institutions, it is the commonly held beliefs that rule day to day interactions and the interpretation of symbols in the worldview of the participants; becoming a frame of reference for disparate understandings. For example, whether or not certain modern styles of kung fu are actually linked to the Shaolin temple, many of the connections being awash in mythmaking and heroic tales, contemporary practitioners call them Shaolin styles and they use the allegories of the animal mimicking techniques to understand the art. If their Shaolin origins were proven to be misunderstood or outright fabricated, a "crane wing" block would still be a "crane wing" block, and a "monk's shovel" a "monk's shovel," functioning and explained in the same manner.

Therefore, when reading the following account of kung fu's development, keep in mind that the references to significant persons and events are sometimes rife with mysticism and folklore. As many stories were either filled in with details which either sounded good at the time or were sure to inspire the target audience.

To begin, Shaolin (*Sil Lum* or *Siu Lum* in Cantonese) is a sect of Ch'an Buddhism. The Shaolin path is a variant characterized by the belief that "through meditative discipline, human beings are capable of intuitively seeing reality in such a way

that abolishes suffering . . . its incorporation of Taoist ideas . . . and eschewal of ceremonial religious trappings" (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004: 11). This sect differs from other Ch'an schools in that it draws more heavily on the teachings and methods of Tibetan Buddhism (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004).

Historical records indicate that construction of the first Shaolin monastery was ordered by Emperor Wu-ti (502-549 C.E.) during the Liang Dynasty (502-557 C.E.). This temple was located on the side of Song Mountain, amongst a grove of saplings from which it earned its name (*Shao* "young" and *Lin* "forest") (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004: 25). At this time, the purpose of the temple was to translate the Sanskrit texts of Theravada Buddhism into Chinese, under the guidance of the first abbot, Batuo (or Bhadra). Sometime during the Liang Dynasty, an Indian scholar, Bodhidharma, travelled to China to share his wisdom with the imperial court. Upon his first visit to the Shaolin temple, he was turned away by Batuo on the grounds of conflicting values – an ancient example of student selection (Faure 1983; Kong & Ho 1973; Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004; Palmer 2007).

Over several years, Bodhidhama eventually impressed upon the Shaolin scribes the "liberating power of meditation" (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004: 25). He was invited into the temple, given the Chinese name Tamo (a transcription of his truncated name, Dharma) (Faure 1983), and began teaching the monks a system of meditative exercises that would become the Ch'an Buddhist path. However, the monks residing within the temple did not possess the stamina to engage in prolonged periods of meditation, requiring Tamo to introduce a curriculum of breath and stance training.[57] This new physical training regimen, known as the *Eighteen Movements* (or *Hands*) *of Lohan*, was

[57] An ancient example of the importance of chosen methods in establishing the teacher-student relationship.

based on the "vital energy" principles (*prana* in Sanskrit or *qi* in Chinese) and postures of yoga (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004, and Kong & Ho 1973).

Over time, other exercises, more combative in their applications, were added to the daily routines of the Shaolin monks, these became necessary on account of the remote temple being surrounded by a landscape full of bandits and animals (Shahar 2008). Under the temple's third abbot, weapon training was added; a move not looked upon favourably by other Buddhists. Weapons training was justified by the abbot: "How, he posed, can a person learn to defend against a weapon if he does not understand that weapon?" (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004: 27-28). However, monks were not allowed to carry weapons outside of the temple grounds, with the exception of the staff. Thus, the image of the Shaolin monk as a skilled staff fighter was born (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004; Shahar 2008).

It is unknown whether this early weapon and empty hand system was the direct predecessor of all modern kung fu, or if martial arts practice in the temple pre-dated Tamo's arrival (Kong & Ho 1973; Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004). Looking back to the quote from kung fu instructor Bucksam Kong and author Eugene Ho which opens this section,[58] the ancient *Book of Rites* indicates that martial arts were part of the Confucian worldview at least nine hundred years before Tamo teaches at Shaolin (1973: 9). Inconsistencies such as this lead to conclusions that, outside of myths and popular stories, the Shaolin temple was not the cradle of kung fu. Meir Shahar argues that:

> The monastery made important contributions to the development of late imperial fighting, armed and unarmed alike, and its military history mirrored trends that have transformed the martial arts in general, Nevertheless, the history of the

[58] Pg 84

> martial arts is larger than the temple's. The fighting with which we are familiar today . . . emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by a combination of economic, religious, and political factors that far exceeded the monastery's reach. (Shahar 2008: 197).

In reality, the activities at Shaolin were not the first time that exercises similar to martial art forms training were used to promote health (Shahar 2008). Evidence of primordial kung fu predating Shaolin is found in association with Taoism rather than Buddhism. Using nature as a model for achieving balance and harmony in the human body and rejuvenating it's vital energy (*qi*), a Chinese physician, Hua Tuo (141-203 C.E.), devised an health cultivation system (Fan 2004; Hawthorne 2000; Shahar 2008). This workout was based on ancient Taoist breathing exercises and movements mimicking the actions and demeanour of the bear, crane, deer, monkey, and tiger, "called *daoyin* (guiding and pulling)" (Shahar 2008: 140).[59] Hua Tuo's system was called the *Sport of the Five Animals* (or *Five Animals Frolic*) and, though not combative in its design, was the basis for what is considered, by some, to be the first martial art in China, *Hua's Five Animal Games* (Hawthorne 2000; Palmer 2007; Shahar 2008); however, it is more likely that Hua's exercises were combined with the martial training that was already being practiced in rural China at that time in the form of military exercises.

The existence of kung fu styles outside of the Shaolin walls is further supported by the legends of proficient monks travelling to find rural fighters who can help them develop the efficiency of the Shaolin techniques. As the story goes, a man named Kwok

[59] It may or may not be coincidental that Tiger and Crane are the two animal styles that make up the foundation of the five animal forms of Hung Gar, as "one feature *daoyin* gymnastics shared with late imperial hand combat was the naming of individual training routines after animals they purportedly imitated" (Shahar 2008: 140).

Yuen joined the temple in the sixteenth century and expanded the *Eighteen Movements of Lohan* to seventy-two. He felt the Shaolin system was incomplete and left the temple in disguise to learn more (Kong & Ho 1973).

The legend states that Yuen gathered new knowledge of fighting techniques while travelling. He met two martial artists of unsurpassed skill, Pak Yook Fong and an old man known only as Li; both used formidable open-hand claw techniques for striking and ripping. Upon his return to the Shaolin temple, Kwok Yuen added a further ninety-eight movements to the monks' exercise system, now totalling one hundred and seventy, which were divided up into five distinct categories: Tiger, Crane, Leopard, Snake, and Dragon. These five styles were later distilled into the efficient and streamlined *Five-Formed Fist* style of Shaolin, which is believed to have eventually led to the development of both Hung Gar and Choy Lee Fut (two of the styles taught at Green Dragon) (Kong & Ho 1973).

> Although there is no way of knowing how many systems of Kung-Fu exist today, it is generally acknowledged that a great many styles can be traced back to the teachings of the Five-Formed Fist developed by Yuen, Fong and Li. The Southern Chinese methods of the art were eventually systemised into five major styles named after their originators, Hung, Lau, Mok, Choy and Li. Since then, most of the styles have gone through many changes, but the one that has managed to remain relatively unchanged is the Hung style. (Kong & Ho 1973: 12).

During their long evolution, kung fu theory and practice have been heavily influenced by the prevailing philosophies and religious beliefs of the Chinese culture, most notably, the religions of Buddhism and Taoism, and the cosmological views of Confucianism. The main source of Buddhist teachings as they apply to kung fu, is the

direct influence of the Shaolin temple. Although Shahar cautions against crediting the knowledge of a later generation monks to the earlier Shaolin adherents, stating that "attributing their descendant's martial arts to Tang Shaolin monks would be anachronistic (2008: 52).

A multitude of other Buddhist sects across China also impacted the art, by guiding the transformation of the Chinese worldview and, therefore, the values of many kung fu practitioners. Taoism, as incorporated into Ch'an Buddhism as well as in its own right, contributed to kung fu's theory of internal alchemy (*qi* cultivation and manipulation) (Hawthorne 2000; Palmer 2007). Popularly held beliefs state that the art of *taijiquan* itself was formalized by a Taoist monk, Zhang Sanfeng, – possibly a mythical figure – "synthesizing the philosophical principles of Taosim with a martial art" (Hawthorne 2000: 71).

Meanwhile, the teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.), in regard to filial piety, social relationships, and gentlemanly behaviour, left their mark on the social and hierarchical aspects of kung fu in their own way (discussed later in the context of the class structure). In fact, Shahar theorizes that the Ming government's promotion of the open exchange of religious thought and practice between Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, led to the syncretic nature of Chinese martial arts (2008: 174).[60]

Various styles of kung fu were introduced to other countries as their practitioners and masters migrated outward from China – as well as regional styles being traded between villages and provinces. Though there are no records to indicate where or when kung fu came to Canada, it can be assumed that the knowledge was first established in

[60] This "atmosphere of spiritual inclusiveness" was present elsewhere in Chinese history, but reached a new height during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Shahar 2008: 174).

North America with the beginning of Chinese settlement in 1858. Although Chinese migrants had been arriving on the shores of North America much earlier, "the Chinese Canadian community can trace a continuous community back to 1858" (Chinese Canadian National Council 2009). It is logical to assume a second influx of martial artists occurred in the latter half of the 20th century as Chinese families came to Canada in order to escape harsh treatment during the Cultural Revolution.

Opinions differ on whether martial arts skills came to Canada purely as a side effect of population movement, or if skilled fighters were specifically enlisted to aid the efforts of parties involved in organized crime and inter-clan feuding. Regardless of which motivation had greater influence, it is generally agreed upon that the first kung fu masters had an understanding that no one was to teach their martial secrets to non-Chinese; what Bruce Lee called the "veil of utmost secrecy" (Lee 2008: 6). This moratorium on accepting students from other cultural groups continued into the 1960's, a decade in which the "exploitation" and "genre" films gained mainstream popularity (Heffernan 2002).[61]

The sudden availability of countless martial arts films from Hong Kong studios led to a widespread fascination with Asian martial arts and a substantially larger number of non-Chinese people seeking training in the Eastern styles. This coincided with the Cultural Revolution which saw the persecution or eradication of so-called "feudal" beliefs, institutions, and activities in Chinese culture; forcing priest, monks, and masters of arts perceived as mystical (e.g. kung fu, *feng shui*, and *qigong*) to flee China in order to protect their craft and avoid persecution (Hawthorne 2000; Henning 1981; Order of

[61] A branch of cinema characterised by middle to low budgets and the overuse of gore, social stereotypes, and explicit scenes. Hong Kong action and Kung Fu or "Chop-Socky" movies are considered to be such films.

Shaolin Ch'an 2004; Palmer 2007; Yang 1991). The activities of those masters who did not leave China were under the strict control and scrutiny of the Communist Party.

It was also during this time that many schools began to relax their "Chinese only" membership policies. This was not done solely out of a desire for profit, many teachers saw expanding the audience of the martial arts as means of perpetuating their art and sharing Chinese culture with Westerners. The notion of using martial arts training as a means of culture transmission was not a novel idea, in 1887 Professor Yamashita Yoshiaki asked his contemporaries: "What if we made our judo known abroad? Wouldn't it be a great thing which would allow us to get people to know Japan better?" (Svinth 2003a: 47).

Background of Modern Kung Fu

Unfortunately for most observers outside of China, the first exposure we have to kung fu is through the filter of the media, which, more often than not, distorts the purpose and practice of the martial arts.

> Knowledge (however stereotypical) of the martial arts is imparted to pre-schoolers viewing Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles cartoons and to parents who must purchase the toys . . . at least partially inspired by scores of B-grade kung-fu movies . . . Novels about ninja make the best-seller list. Businessmen comb ancient manuals on swordsmanship for guidance, and it is a rare action movie that has not been in some way affected by the psychology and technique of the martial arts. (Donohue 1993: 106)

The result of this distortion is a romanticised version of the activity that promotes ideas of ancient wisdom, secret knowledge, and magical abilities that afford the

practitioner physical prowess regardless of age or state of fitness: a misleading mental image associated with a desire for instant gratification.

The systematized training of kung fu incorporates the use of *forms*. As mentioned earlier, *forms* are a set of movements – choreography? – often mimicking stages of a fight with multiple, imaginary opponents, which a practitioner repeats over and over again in order to perfect the subtle motions involved in each technique. This traditional method of training functions to build mental focus, endurance, accuracy, muscle memory, and the ability to transition between techniques (Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004).

The main style taught at Green Dragon is Hung Gar, although Wing Chun receives almost equal attention having its own, dedicated classes on alternating nights. The name *Hung Gar* simply means Hung family style (sometimes spelt *Hung Ga*), it is also called *Hung Kuen*, the *Five-Formed Fist* – due to the incorporation of five animal principles – or simply *Tiger-Crane* – as those two animal forms are central (Kong & Ho 1973; Order of Shaolin Ch'an 2004).

At the heart of this kung fu style are combative and technical principles based on animals from the Chinese countryside and mythology. These five animals are the tiger, the crane, the snake, the dragon, and the leopard. In the curriculum of Hung Gar kung fu, the tiger promotes courage, bone density and brutal ripping attacks, the crane adds awareness, flexibility and balance, the snake develops speed, accuracy, and the flow of movements, the leopard also develops speed but introduces strength and agility as well. The dragon aspect is set apart somewhat, in that, while promoting the development of courage and strength, it also represents the spiritual power of Hung Gar; the ferocity and the accumulation of energy (Field notes May 7th, 2009; Kong & Ho 1973).

The particular variation of Hung Gar that was developed and taught by Grandmaster Wong Cheun Yip – often called a "village" style – goes beyond the central five animals and incorporates the five classical Chinese elements: earth, fire, water, wood, and metal (gold). Each of these elements corresponds to a manner of fighting and technique application. This not only teaches how to attack an opponent, but also how best to respond to certain types of attacks and what movements would be most advantageous in certain situations during a fight. For example, if someone (perhaps a boxer) is throwing rapid punches, that series of attacks is characterised by the element fire. According to the five elemental principles, the wider, sweeping blocks and attacks of the water forms would be the best reaction to this assault.[62,63]

Kung Fu in general was greatly influenced by the expanded membership of the 1960s, which resulted in the adaptation of techniques and the development of new styles. A multitude of combative systems from across the globe have grown, migrated, and changed in a similar manner, indicating how different cultures view and use martial art styles and how those styles affect interactions with other groups and styles. Thomas Green explains that "some of the arts described flourished in new physical, social, and psychological environments; others did not. Some remained martial in nature; others metamorphosed into sport, performance art, or discipline for self-fulfillment" (2003: xi).

Though heavily steeped in mysticism and heroic legend the story of numerous religions, governments, and both rural and urban localities has been woven throughout

[62] From field notes August 6th, 2009.
[63] Lam Sai Wing, a famous Hung Gar master and student of the folk hero Wong Fei Hung – whose father, Wong Kei Ying is present in the lineage of Green Dragon's Hung Gar – is said to have added the Five Elements principles to Hung Gar, and has written at least three books on the subject of Hung Gar kung fu. Whether Grandmaster Lam's Ten-Formed Fist branch of the style influenced Grandmaster Wong's "village" Hung Gar is unknown.

the tapestry of kung fu. The truth of the art's development may never be sorted from the myth, but it is clear that the changes in religious belief, social order, and political power have shaped the techniques and traditions of kung fu through successive layers of new movements and philosophies. Whether carried by wandering monks or men and women seeking new lives in other nations, kung fu has spread across the globe with the migrations of the Chinese people. In the following chapter this rich history is used to contextualise my observations and interviews as they are analysed for insight into the teacher-student relationship in the modern form of the art.

CHAPTER 7

Analysis of Kung Fu Findings

Training Environment

The *kwoon* of the Green Dragon Kung Fu Association is located in the basement level of a block of shops along a busy urban street, directly below a hair salon. There are a variety of pictures on the south wall of the room, featuring past groups of students, the instructors training with weapons, past celebrations and demonstrations, the school in Grandmaster Chan's home village, and Grandmaster Chan practicing kung fu in his youth.

Flags, pennants, and trophies from different tournaments and martial arts associations can be found here and there on the walls. Many of the plaques are more than mere decorations, they are awards won by Green Dragon members who have placed at high ranks in competitions. Others are tokens of gratitude from local groups that the Green Dragon school has supported in the past, either through performances or donations collected from members.

The smell of sandalwood incense fills the air, as it is regularly burned – in the form of joss sticks – at an altar that is dedicated to Grandmaster Chan's grandfather, Grandmaster Wong Cheun Yip, the progenitor of this particular family style of Southern Shaolin Hung Gar. The altar, a small shrine set up in the manner of those used for ancestor veneration by those who practice the Chinese popular religion, is the central feature of the front wall of the *kwoon*. The shrine is made up of a small table with a

decorative cloth covering. A bowl of oranges sits atop the table as a food offering for the ancestor being honoured, oranges symbolize a prayer for good fortune and wealth (Newman 1996: 16). There are also several small statues of the Chinese gods associated with martial arts and prosperity, namely *Kwan Kung* (General Kwan) with his long black beard and *guan dao* (a large bladed polearm weapon, also called a *Kwan dao*, *yanyue dao* or *chun qiu da dao*). In the middle of the table, set toward the back, is a painting of Grandmaster Wong Cheun Yip – Grandmaster Chan's grandfather and, as mentioned earlier, the source of this school's Hung Gar. In front of this image is an incense holder and three small cups (for offering beverages). Another incense holder rests below the table, with only one cup, in front of a framed prayer for the school's good fortune.

Above Grandmaster Wong's portrait is a large, rectangular board, painted red, bearing a column of black calligraphy that declares this to be "the altar of the previous Grandmaster Wong Cheun Yip." Four more columns of characters (two on each side of the larger, central declaration) describe several philosophies of the kung fu taught here: "Rely on quick hands, feet, and eyes"; "acknowledge that you must continually learn"; "stepping back is not weakness, use movement to your advantage"; "retreat and use the positions of the style to create movement and achieve explosiveness in order to attack and defend in the best way."

The entire shrine is closed in by red boards on either side, these boards bear Chinese characters that spell out "the leg kicks like the water dragon from the northern seas" and "the fist strikes like the fierce tiger from the southern mountains" in golden strokes of paint. Above is a painting that depicts a scene from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, a classic of Chinese literature. It shows the three sworn brothers, Liu Bei, Zhang Fei, and Guan Yu, war heroes of the Han Empire in the epic. Black calligraphy on either side of the painting reads: "The Liu Dynasty contains honourable and brave men, the first hero of the Hans."

Fresh incense sticks are lit, raised to the forehead and lowered three times, and then placed in the incense holders by each instructor before they open their class. Grandmaster Chan lights and places two sticks every time he arrives at the *kwoon*, even if a class is already in session. All classes are run facing toward the altar, defining this area as the front of the training space. As described earlier, all instructors direct attention to the shrine when bowing in or out, and then conduct the class at the front of the room with their backs to the altar.

Chinese music and singing, including a ballad about being a good Chinese person by bettering yourself ,[64] plays – at varying volumes depending on the instructor leading the class – on an old portable CD player set on repeat, causing the three different tracks to loop over and over again; eventually blurring the passage of time and making the hours of training contract.[65]

A large kettle drum dominates the farthest corner from the door. This instrument, used to set a rhythm to the performance of martial forms, surrounded by multiple racks of

[64] George Lam's Cantonese version of "A Man of Determination" (sometimes translated as "A Man Should Better Himself").
[65] See Donohue's "timeless world" discussed earlier on pg 63.

traditional Chinese weaponry. Sabres, spears, *guan dao* (horse cutter), tiger forks, butterfly swords, *jin* (double edged straight swords), hook swords, fighting benches, monk's hoes, monk's shovels, and staves of various qualities and constructions fill the corner. According to Head Instructor Haugland, these are specifically located at the corner furthest from the door so that strangers cannot wander in off the streets and pick them up out of curiosity or foolishness – which was a problem in previous years.

When students are asked to individually demonstrate the forms, either forms associated with a particular style or those used to train the weapon systems, the kettle drum is pounded to a driving beat – usually played by the Head instructor as he is the most experienced – occasionally the drummer is joined by student or another instructor playing a pair of cymbals. The rhythm starts as a tight drum roll and then the side is struck and the drummer explodes into the full beat when the first offensive movement of the form is executed. In the case of these demonstrative practice sessions, the aim is to develop the flow of the form as opposed to the power of the individual techniques; each individual determining where to pause and how to accelerate into the next step. Head Instructor Haugland comments that you want to discover a feel for the fluidity of the form, an even pacing, he states: "We are going for performance, not perfection."[66]

The instruments are also used as accompaniment for the Lion dancing activities, in which a system of rhythm and pitch changes are used to signal the dancers to repeat movement sequences, initiate the next sequence, or end the dance. As part of the overall culture and tradition of kung fu – and the Green Dragon school itself – the students are introduced to the use of the kettle drum and the cymbals as they contribute to the atmosphere of the *kwoon* and the experience of training activities. As Donohue observes;

[66] From field notes May 7th, 2009.

"Chanting, drumming, dancing, and a variety of similar actions seem related to the generation of proper 'fighting spirit' world wide" (2000: 11). A notion confirmed by Grandmaster Chan's insistence that "hearing the drum is good for you," as it prepares your mind and spirit for a fight. He once mentioned that, in the past, you could tell which kung fu schools were performing ceremonies across a city, simply by listening to the distinctive sound of their drumming. [67,68]

The tone and feel of the class is one of respect and open-minded learning. Grandmaster Chan and the instructors teach these skills with the hope that an individual's training will not stop when they leave the class. Repetition and dedication to frequent practice is the key to success (see the literal meaning of *kung fu* mentioned earlier). For example, during a weapons class – which had deviated from the Head Instructor Haugland's plan to the movements Grandmaster Chan interrupted to share with a student – Grandmaster Chan taught the class a series of movements for flipping the butterfly swords upside down, by means of hooking the guard with your thumbs, and then using them to do reverse strikes and forearm, spinning strikes. This action was quite difficult for some of us, as these blades are heavy, the skin between the thumb and index finger is soft, and the fear of dropping the weapon on your foot prevented a smooth motion.

Grandmaster Chan continued to show the students the hand movements and the logic of the strike, encouraging us in experiential learning, telling us how we will get better by simply doing it frequently; in his words "fool around" with the weapons.[69] Grandmaster Chan then mentioned the *qi* and strength building exercises associated with

[67] From field notes May 28th, 2009.
[68] Differences in how a "fighting spirit" is culturally defined can be seen by contrasting this with Downey's observations that music in capoeira prepares practitioner for the fight by guiding and relaxing them, instead of making them driven and anxious
[69] From field notes May 9th, 2009.

kung fu, he talks about how the training system of the old days incorporated drills that developed spiritual and mental health alongside physical prowess.

Class Organization

The classes at Green Dragon Kung Fu Association are arranged into six different categories: Children's classes, in which the regular training is altered to fit the learning patterns of children; Adult introductory, which teaches the basics of the Hung Gar and Wing Chun styles and prepares students with work on stances, flexibility, and some minor fitness training; Adult advanced, which brings together students of both junior and senior ranks to train a variety of techniques together, offering either Hung Gar or Wing Chun depending on the schedule; Lion Dancing, which teaches the history, folklore and choreography of traditional Chinese lion dances (as well as gathering a team to perform at tournaments, local celebrations, and traditional festivals); Weapons training, for the purpose of focusing on the theory and forms of a vast array of martial arts weaponry which builds upon the techniques present in other aspects of training; and an Instructor's Class, a closed session, for black belts only, with no spectators, at which the instructors learn the most advanced techniques from Head Instructor Haugland and Grandmaster Chan.

While attending the Lion Dancing, adult advanced, and weapons classes, you can expect to be training alongside fellow students of different ranks, as they are open to anyone who has completed the adult introductory class. All participants are expected to wear a black t-shirt bearing the Green Dragon logo, black, unrestrictive pants, and a red sash wrapped around the waist and tied at the right side. The different belt systems that

are commonly used to show ranking in North American versions of martial arts are not used here. Advanced achievement is represented by a crest added to the end of your sash, but the colour does not change until you have learned enough to be honoured with a black sash, at which point Grandmaster Chan will also give you a Chinese name.[70]

Which classes are taught by which instructors, and at what times they are taught, is decided in a more or less democratic fashion at semi-regular meetings. These teaching assignments are arranged according to the availability of individual instructors as well as the skill sets possessed by each, as some have a stronger familiarity with Wing Chun or Hung Gar, or certain weapons and forms. As the instructors are volunteers, the schedule, although posted and generally adhered to, often adapts to the pressures of the instructors' daily lives.

Changes often result in one instructor covering for another and altering the techniques being practiced if need be – not that a degree of fluidity does not already exist in the curriculum of each class. Also, depending on the number of students who attend a given class, the curriculum may change to suite the situation at hand. For example, there have been nights when I was the only student at an introductory class, in which case, having already completed the intro curriculum by that time, we worked on a broad sword form that I had learned at the last weapons class.

In fact, Head Instructor Haugland once stated that he prefers small, informal classes; as they tend to involve more theory and philosophy to round out the techniques.[71] In the relatively short time I have spent training under him, it has become obvious that Head Instructor Haugland values a very personal teaching environment in which he is

[70] It is possible that this is a remnant of the Bai Si ceremony in which the student forms a kinship bond with the master and is given a "kung fu name" (discussed later on pg 105-106).
[71] From field notes May 18th, 2009.

afforded a greater control over systematized training and anecdotal guidance, allowing him to gift his students with a true understanding of what kung fu really is as an art and philosophy, and how it works beyond the simple mechanics of striking an opponent. In the formal interview, he explained the separation between the perception of kung fu and the philosophies of Green Dragon:

> Head Instructor Haugland: "People . . . ah . . . when they see us swinging our hardware and that around, they have . . . ah . . . there's kind of an implied violence to it, and really there isn't. It's like . . . in the discussion we had the other night . . . the guy's name escapes me, but he's the founder of Shotokan karate, it's like "there is only technique". I could have a broomstick in my hand, you know? I could have, I don't know, I could have a knife, fork, I could have a newspaper in my hand for all that matters. It's just . . . we're only focused on manipulation and other good body mechanics . . . the way I see it. There's certain liability issues; if you go to tackle somebody and something goes a little haywire, you could be standing in front of a judge, you know? And there's this thing about reasonable force. If the guy looks like a raccoon when I'm done, was that reasonable? You know? Busted arms and legs, was that reasonable? I don't know, but I don't think so . . .
>
> Owens: "So, then, what draws people into an art like Hung Gar . . . what do you feel makes them stick around, as opposed to the guys who show up for a week and take off?
>
> Head Instructor Haugland: "Some guys are looking for magic. There is no magic. It's a lifestyle, you know? And you get out of it what you put into it, like . . . I've had people come up to me and say "I know three ways to kill someone, can you teach me three more?" and I'm like "Buy a gun." [laughter]
>
> Owens: That's incredible.
>
> Head Instructor Haugland: It's like, the longer I study this the more docile I become.
>
> Owens: So are these core philosophies at Green Dragon that you try to pass on to people who train there?
>
> Head Instructor Haugland: It's just . . . just sort of good, you know, anything you can sort of take into daily life, and be fair. You know? And, same thing when you're training and stuff like that, it's like . . . uhm . . . everybody's different and that. I've always tried to . . . you see these things "we're building confidence". Okay? And our first motto was "health, confidence, and self-defence." Self-defence is last, if you have health and you have confidence, I

think the self-defence aspect will come with that.[72]

The honorific title of *Sifu* (also *Si-fu*, or *Shifu* in Mandarin) is employed at Green Dragon as a show of respect toward Grandmaster Chan, this term is part of a larger martial arts philosophy which expresses a symbolic familial tie between the members of a school. This is expressed socially as well as structurally, as Head Instructor Haugland stated when mentioning the importance of social activities outside of class (such as going for *dim sum* after weekend classes); "This is not just about training, it's family and things."[73]

This feeling is reinforced by the fact that the title of *Sifu*, written with the characters 師父, translates as *teacher-father*. According to the terminology of this kinship structure the *kwoon*'s members are interrelated, with specific terms of relation used according to how the person you are addressing relates to you in status and duration of membership. This system is not used in a formal manner in all *kwoons*, some may employ only the terms *sifu* and *si-gung*, in the sense of the master and his master respectively, dispensing with the other titles.

In the past – and still today in some formal *kwoons* – a new student had to be ritually adopted into the kung fu family line by a master, by means of a ceremony called *Bai Si*. This formal procedure involves the offering of tea from the student candidate to his master,[74] then back from the master to the student, an offering of money from the candidate, the recitation of pledges that show the candidate's commitment to the master,

[72] From interview conducted February 4th, 2010.
[73] From field notes May 9th, 2009.
[74] The acceptance of the tea indicating the acceptance of the person offering it.

the *kwoon*, and the style, and the granting of a "kung fu name" to the candidate. (Crescione 2007; Kong 2005).

The ritualised adoption of students and the use of kinship terminology in kung fu is largely due to the influence that Confucianism has exerted upon Chinese culture, and therefore, on kung fu as a Chinese institution. The teachings of Confucius promoted the moral value of filial piety – which acted as an allegory for all other relationships in society – and held that people could be moulded and lifted by education (Yang 1961). Thus, once a student entered into the symbolic family network of the *kwoon*, it would be expected – and morally obligatory – that they would show respect, loyalty, obedience, and trust to these strangers as they would their blood kin.

Role of Instructor and Master

Many times I have heard references to an old kung fu saying, the original of which is unknown; "you may watch my form a thousand times and not steal the secrets of my art." What is meant by this is that the movements contained in the forms of a style represent the style's blocks and attacks, making them the primary method of traditional instruction, but to properly use the body dynamics and combinations within them a proficient master must provide additional insight. Encapsulated in this ancient proverb is the importance of the instructor's application of systemized training and – perhaps more importantly – anecdotal guidance. Observation and mimicry are not enough; the teacher-student relationship must be formed.

For example, in one conversation after class, Grandmaster Chan advised myself and another student on the notion of realistic and sensible fitness, as opposed to training with reckless abandon:

> Grandmaster Chan: You train with us, you build up to be better, look at the arms on us. [He gestures to the higher belts around the room] We train to be like this. You see a guy on a diet, no good. You on a diet, take out the 'T', that's what you get.
> Owens: Take out the 'tea'?
> Grandmaster Chan: Take out the 'T', at the end.
> Owens: Oh, you die! [laughter]
> Grandmaster Chan: That's right. Your body need a little fat. You be healthy by being outside, doing many things, eat many things, get a variety. But not overdo it. You drink too much you die, you eat too much you die. You over train you die. Look at Bruce Lee, heh, you can't train twenty-four hours a day, no good. You need to have balance, relax, you have life out of order it's no good. You have family problems in your head, your kung fu not going to be good . . . You have to have balance, train good, sleep good, eat good, no stress. Then you are free to do kung fu[75]

Thus, through these brief comments Grandmaster Chan impressed upon me that a kung fu student must be committed to learning the art but balance this with care for his or her overall well-being in order to excel; you cannot focus on striking skills alone.

The frank demeanour of instructors at Green Dragon – although light-hearted in their interactions and teaching methods – ensures that students are aware that they are engaging in a serious activity. Every technique that is demonstrated comes with a warning of the brutal affect it is intended to have on the target's tissue, nervous system, or joints. When this issue must be pressed, the tone of the room becomes serious as long as is necessary. For example, I was once chastised by Grandmaster Chan for paying too much attention to my hand and foot placement instead of looking forward – where my

[75] From field notes May 21st, 2009.

opponent would be. "You have to look at that guy," He insisted, "show him he going to die if he fight you." Grandmaster Chan then stepped in front of me and demonstrated his fighting stare, "You see? You not messing around, you look at him and he afraid. In your eyes, like a tiger."[76]

Even in the context of this display of the principle that the dragon symbolises in Hung Gar, that of the ferocity of the style, Grandmaster Chan takes this opportunity to reiterate that kung fu should only be used when needed. "We not start the fights, but we defend ourself. We win. Out there [he gestures to the door] you not lose, or you get killed."[77] These examples demonstrate that the roles of instructor and master are central to the process of knowledge transmission, not only due to the need to show technique, but also the need to interpret and explain the art.

The ability to accept explanations which are deeper than simply being directed to place your body in a series of positions is part of the *kwoon*'s mental and social environment; ego and attitude must be left at the door. "No matter that sensei might be a construction worker, and the beginner a medical student who will eventually acquire greater social and financial status in the outside world, in the dojo, the hierarchy goes by a different set of criteria" (Klens-Gigman, 1999: 11). Though the forms themselves serve as a conduit of knowledge and training, it is the additional guidance of the instructor that unlocks the true art – often communicated through shared stories of successes or failures, encouragement or warning.

These intimate moments of insight can be lost when an instructor moves away from traditional instruction, adapting the training system and anecdotes to be used for

[76] From field notes May 21st, 2009.
[77] From field notes May 21st, 2009.

other purposes such as sport, fitness or easier marketing. Head Instructor Haugland made his opinion of such changes clear when a student asked why Green Dragon maintains a traditional curriculum:

> Student: Why are you guys so traditional, with the altar and bowing?
> Head Instructor Haugland: We refuse to go the way of kickboxing. We keep our style intact. Styles have lost something along the way. They become diluted, they are no longer used in the way they were intended. These [Wing Chun and others] used to be savage, fierce styles . . . very destructive. Now the way they are being trained they are just a bit of a work out. If you take the sparring out of the system, or train in a way that does not reflect what you are doing, it loses its centre. These guys are practicing for tag sparing and tournaments . . . moves to score points, not to fight on the street. You have to recognise that that's jogging [motions 'over there'], this is kung fu [motions 'here'].[78]

In light of this connection the Hung Gar I learn at Green dragon will be different than the Hung Gar of other schools because of Grandmaster Wong's opinion of what worked best and his insistence that technique must be "Fast, cruel, and real." A motto upon which Head Instructor Haugland elaborates, "there is nothing flowery about it. [Techniques] must cause intense pain in order to work."[79] If the instructors at Green Dragon did not share these values – serious training, respect, and personal growth – then this school would not be the right environment for them to share knowledge in. If a conflict arose between a particular instructor and the principles deemed important by Grandmaster Chan, that instructor would have to either move on or keep his or her opinions hidden.[80]

[78] From field notes July 9th, 2009.
[79] From interview conducted February 4th, 2010.
[80] Previous black sash instructors in charge of Green Dragon branches elsewhere have left to start their own *kwoon*, due to value clashes after years of cooperation.

Bow/Salute

When entering or exiting a *kwoon* – or any Asian martial art school for that matter – you are expected to perform a bow. Bowing is also common practice before and after performing a martial art form or when joining with a partner to practice techniques or spar, although adherence to this etiquette varies among schools. The bow is a type of salute or obeisance, a gesture which incorporates the expression of both respect and submission. This action is much more than a mere formality, it is a deliberate act which serves to honour several aspects of the martial art you are training in. There is the explicit expression of respect for the school – as a place of learning and tradition – as well as the master and instructors therein – who are possessed of a superior knowledge and skill to your own – and your fellow students – many of whom are senior or junior to yourself – who will be training with you and allowing you to practice techniques using their bodies.

On a symbolic level, you are also paying respect to the succession of past masters whose knowledge and sacrifice has contributed to the development of the style and eventually led to the establishing of this particular school in this particular location. Often this respect is shown in a more overt manner by the act of performing the bow toward an image of the style's founder or the grand master who taught the school's resident master – in some cases both are venerated. Usually, this martial family tree can be traced in a direct line of teachers and pupils, from the first master(s) to the *sifu* by whom you are currently being taught.

This martial heredity is referred to as the *kwoon*'s lineage – as well as the practitioner's lineage in their present time and place of training – which has invested the

resident master with the achieved status and title he currently holds. Thus, the lineage is important in defining the legitimacy of the school or style and – as it is specialized knowledge that past individuals have selflessly passed on – it deserves respect from anyone who learns from this ancestry of masters. Claiming a lineage in the, sometimes fuzzy, multi-branched martial families has been an important aspect of forming the identity of a school throughout martial arts history, often leading to disputes over which school or teacher has the right to assert direct membership in a prestigious master-student heritage. Reflecting upon the Cheng's (1621) *Exposition of the Original Shaolin Staff Method* once again, Shahar notes that this martial manual "reveals a landscape familiar in today's world of martial arts: one of competing schools, each professing to be the sole inheritor of the same original teaching" (2008: 60-61).

Similar salutation and bowing behaviour can be seen in almost all traditional martial arts with reference to their individual training spaces. Often the entering and exiting bow is quite simple; you face the school's interior, put your feet together, place your hands at your sides, bend forward at the waist to an approximately forty-five degree angle, hold the lower position for two or three seconds, then return to standing and step forward to enter or backward to exit. The bow that is expected when joining with a partner for practice is the same, only without the stepping, and is expected before and after partnering for a drill. Depending on the rules and formalities of the school at which you train, the bow at the beginning of partnership is coupled with an introduction if you have not met this fellow student or instructor before. Similarly, after the drill is complete partners will often say "thank you" when they bow to end their training interaction.

There is an allowance for individual variation in this practice, as some people will bow with their hands straight down at their sides while others will make two fists and hold them at the waist with the elbows pointing backward – a position that echoes a common training stance – or the hands will be pressed together before the chest as though praying – called "prayer hand" or "Buddha palm" – or the hands will be arranged out in front of the individual in a gesture often referred to as the "shaolin fist" (Tinsman 1994: 74).

The shaolin fist method is ubiquitous in Chinese martial arts traditions. It is also present in other martial arts systems which have taken inspiration from Chinese philosophy or have modelled themselves after popular Chinese martial traditions – most commonly the Shaolin school. According to folk memory and popular belief the shaolin fist gesture originated in feudal China after the Manchus overthrew the Ming dynasty in 1644.[81] Many loyal citizens of the Ming fled to Henan Province, seeking refuge in the famed Shaolin Temple (Tinsman 1994: 74-75). "The temple eventually became a center for a secret anti-Manchu organization. The group developed a secret hand sign to recognise members of the society. The sign later became a salute used during the secret society's martial arts training sessions" (Tinsman 1994: 74-75).

The shaolin fist hand formation involves making a fist with the right hand and keeping the left hand open flat or with a slight inward curve. The right fist is then placed against the palm of the left hand, as though punching your own hand. The two hands are brought together in front of you with the formation coming together at chest height, positioned at an outward distance created by the elbows being at a ninety degree angle (approximately). The meeting of the hands is often followed by a short bow.

[81] This gesture is also used to show thanks or wish someone good luck (Slovenz 1987: 75 and 86-87).

There exist a multitude of interpretations of what the bows/salutes mean. One of many explanations holds that the Shaolin hand formation was developed based on the Chinese characters for 'sun' and 'moon', which are put together – 'sun' on the left and 'moon' on the right – to form the character for the word Ming, which means 'brightness'. Thus the shape of the hands, the right fist as the sun and the curved left hand as the moon, forms the Ming character when observed by others (Bolton & Hutton 1995; He 2008; Tinsman 1994). This notion of using secret hand signs was – and still is – common among secret societies throughout Chinese history (Di 2008). "The use of internal jargon and signs can be documented for the earliest Triad networks apprehended in 1787" (Haar 1998: 440).

The traditional justification of the salute is sometimes abandoned in favour of a more modern or more practical explanation. A system or school may provide students with a philosophical interpretation of the shaolin fist in order to emphasize the beliefs that are being instilled in the practitioners.

> For example, in one wushu system, the right hand in the shaolin fist salute represents five people. The thumb is the 'self,' and the four fingers are 'friends.' When formed into a fist, they unite to stand against adversity. The left hand of the salute is open and empty, indicating the student has no weapons to fight with, only what is within him . . . A shorin-ryu karate version of the salute is called the 'life hand and death hand.' The 'death hand' is the right fist, representing the ability to kill. The 'life hand' is the open left hand, representing benevolence. The fact that the 'life hand' covers the 'death hand' reminds the student to seek solutions to problems before fighting . . . (Tinsman 1994: 75).

The meanings held in the act of bowing, as a greeting or the entry/exit bow, extend to the more formal bowing practices that are employed when opening and closing every class, as well as most informal training sessions.

This ritualised activity is referred to as "bowing in" at the start of a class and "bowing out" at the end of a class. Normally the most senior instructor is invited to lead the class when bowing in or out, this honour is sometimes declined and left to the instructor who was leading the particular class which is being opened or closed. If the school's master is present, he is invited to lead the class in the formal bows. In some schools the master may choose to stand to the side of the class while the bow is performed, at the end of which the class will bow to him or her – and in some cases the senior students – in the same manner as they would the altar or picture which venerates the founder of the school's lineage (Jones 2008: 12).

In the case of my research site I have yet to see Grandmaster Chan decline the invitation to lead the bow, in fact, he often invites all present instructors and his senior students to stand beside or behind him out in front of the rank and file of the class. These adjustments to the ritualised activity of bowing demonstrate how something so central and important may still undergo changes based on the local interpretations of tradition as well as the context in which the ritual is performed.

As discussed by Tinsman (1994), the construction of the formal bow expresses the ideals and intentions of the martial art style from which it comes. Therefore, while some bows convey respect and adaptability, others will communicate humility and mental balance; the variations are as numerous as the schools and styles that perform them. It is also common to see elements of religious obligation or observance. In the

case of kung fu, the religious obligation in question often takes the form of Chinese popular religion, a Confucian informed belief system which requires ancestor veneration by means of a family altar (Yang 1991). Hence, the opening or closing salute at the Green Dragon School is performed while facing Grandmaster Wong Cheun Yip's shrine.[82]

The importance of the formalized bow at Green Dragon is illustrated by the fact that it was first thing I was taught when I arrived at the school for my initial, proper class – following the free class in which I was to assess my desire to participate. Schools at which I have trained in the past have made use of a very no-frills bow, whereas the salute performed at Green Dragon is far more complex; containing several layers of meaning which, I am told, were developed over many years. It is worth mentioning that this particular salute is unique to the Edmonton *kwoon* of Green Dragon, other elements having been added or removed when it is performed at the other six schools according to their local flavour. This results in an informed observer's ability to identify the home school of any practitioner with no other information.

The movements that make up the salute are performed in a specific sequence and they are expected to be executed with a combative energy and intent; as you would any other techniques that you will be practicing in the *kwoon*. There are six movements in the sequence, each drawn from a different aspect of the overall philosophy of the Hung Gar style, making the salute a signature of the Green Dragon Edmonton *kwoon*, its kung fu style, and its associated training methods.

[82] Chinese religious and folk metaphors are also regularly present in the names used for special techniques. Some very colourful terms are used, ranging from simple explanatory titles such as "the dragon's jaws" for a gripping move or "cloud hands" for a series of rapid hand blocks, to more complex euphemisms like "monkey stealing the peach" for a brazen and vicious strike to the male genitalia (Halpin 2003; Field notes May 28th, 2009).

The practitioner starts with his or her feet together and hands at their sides, facing the direction of Grandmaster Wong's shrine. The instructor gives a verbal signal to start the salute, usually "Ready!" or "Feet together!", followed by the utterance "Hup!" and a slapping of his or her hands to the side of the legs. The students then perform the salute in relative unison starting with a forward cross-step, twisting to the right and executing a prayer hand technique. The hands are then extended out to the sides (now perpendicular due to the twist) in a double crane wing pose, transitioning into a low front tiger claw stance. From there the student slides his or her left leg forward into a cat stance with hands arranged in the shaolin fist formation – in this case the sign is made with a tiger claw instead of a flat palm in the left hand. This stance is immediately followed by pulling the body back and up to standing, and rolling the fists in, up and back out for a double back-fist. Finally the clenched fists are pulled to the student's waist and he or she bows forward with the traditional shaolin fist directed toward *Si-gung's* shrine. The salute is finished and the entire bowing process is completed with one last shaolin fist bow, directed at the instructor leading the class.

In addition to the enter/exit bow and the opening/closing of class, whenever Grandmaster Chan enters the *kwoon* all who are present are expected to stop what they are doing, stand up if necessary, and perform the informal bow to him. This action is typically initiated by an instructor saying "Hello, *Sifu*" or "Good evening, *Sifu*" – as the instructor leading the class is normally the only person facing the doorway at the time.

The act of showing respect or submission serves as a mechanism of identifying students who are unwilling to either participate in the non-combative aspects of training or show respect to the training space, instructors, and fellow students. The components

of the formal salute teach techniques and application, as well as the place of the animal categories in the wider system. The beliefs and meanings surrounding the bow's gestures and movements provide information about the history, philosophy, and values of the martial art. Together or individually, these themes can be interpreted by instructors in order to further develop the relationship with students, or to create opportunities for more detailed explanations through analogies or demonstration.

The analysis herein has shown that negotiation of the teacher-student relationship is facilitated by the four structures in kung fu as they are in the boxing case. Again, the training environment promotes the values of the school and prepares students to follow the training system that they will be engaging in. The organization of classes creates a hierarchy of students that echoes Confucian relationships; those with more skill teaching or guiding those who are newer. This also allows for the addition of specialized activities such as lion dancing and weapons training that will round out the traditions of the system and encourage systematised training. In their role, the instructors maintain the training system, apply anecdotal guidance and teach the mindset of kung fu alongside the physical techniques. Finally, the stylized bow prepares students for the training method of forms and begins to explain the philosophical underpinnings of the style. As in the boxing case, those students who are reluctant to learn the bow, or are dismissive toward what it represents, are less likely to be committed to the traditions and values of the school. The final chapter addresses the direct comparison of the two sets of finding, drawing conclusions about how the masters of these martial arts establish and mould relationships with their students.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion and Future Considerations

There are hundreds of different fighting systems trained and perfected in societies all across the world. Whether they are considered traditional or modern, sporting or practical, they will all grow and change through the teacher-student relationship. It is clear, by the findings of this research project, that this relationship is created and negotiated by way of three activities: student selection, systematised instruction, and anecdotal guidance. These activities being tempered and expressed through the structures of the training environment, the manner in which the classes are organised, the role of instructors in the training process, and encapsulation of core values in the bow/handshake.

The initial encounter between those who may potentially fill the two roles evokes the first activity, that of student selection, which is performed at the outset of the relationship and determines whether the teacher-student relationship will be formed, as well as how solidly. At this time, the instructor is in full control and may choose whether or not to take on the student, based on an assessment of the student's willingness to learn and adhere to the school's philosophies. This liminal period could be draw out as long as the instructor wishes, as a student may be given time to demonstrate their personal traits, or they may be dismissed due to inappropriate behaviour long after a relationship has been entered into.

The system of training chosen for a student is the mechanism by which the teacher-student relationship will then be structured, and creates a backdrop for anecdotal guidance and student selection. The chosen system may incorporate traditional practices of the style or it may involve specific, novel activities employed by an instructor that focus on the promotion of his or her unique understanding of the techniques.

Finally, anecdotal guidance, occurring throughout the course of the relationship and eventually moulding the student into a knowledgeable member of the school, is applied throughout the life of the relationship; in both formal and informal settings, while training and while simply talking – the so called "doling out wisdom" or "philosophy lesson". The stories chosen by the instructor, consciously or subconsciously, are a means of illustrating a point relating to the application of technique or philosophy, as well as setting an example for the behaviour, mindset, and attitude of their students. These stories need neither be accurate nor firsthand accounts. They can come in any form, from recounting successful or unsuccessful championship fights, to reciting ancient proverbs from the *Tao Te Ching*. This activity serves to exemplify the values that the instructor wishes to see forming in his students, and will often involve cautionary tales of martial arts goals or methods that are in opposition to those of the school.

I must make the point very clear that the practice of anecdotal guidance is essential, as once you train someone to use a technique it is very difficult for you to police their activities outside of the training space. If systematized training could be thought of as teaching values of the body (though it imparts mental and social values as well), then anecdotal guidance could be thought of as teaching values of the mind. In any martial art, the latter without the former leads to poor students and a reckless or ineffectual application of technique.

Also, anecdotal guidance provides additional context in the mind's eye of the student; although "the best way to learn how to swim is to actually get into the water" (Caldwell 1997: 25), in many cases trial and error or experiential learning of a technique or philosophy may be difficult – or even dangerous – to properly replicate in the training

space. Therefore, this extra layer of knowledge, via a story that features the technique or philosophy, partially replaces the need to actually face a street thug with a knife to learn the lesson– a setting in which a mistake could result in death. An exception that should be noted here is the abundant focus on sparring as an essential component of training for boxers. In this sport setting, the practice is realistically matched to an actual bout as is possible, and it is often the case that sparring in your home gym is harder than fighting at tournaments or club cards.[83] With that being said, boxing as self-defence education would still suffer from the lack of street severity.

While there exist a cavernous divide between the cultural background, methods, and underlying philosophies of boxing and kung fu, the function of their teachings are quite similar. A Head coach and a Grandmaster expect the same from their students: hard work, discipline, and respect (directed both inward and outward). However, they differ on how best to instil these values in those who train under them. While a Head coach will teach you to fight clean, train hard, have respect, and "leave everything in the ring" (i.e. try your hardest), a Grandmaster is more likely to instruct you on how to avoid conflict, memorize forms, be humble, and let the techniques flow out of you.

If we look back to the earlier statements of Head Coach Brennan and Grandmaster Chan, regarding their policies on teaching aggressive students,[84] it becomes clear that potential students who arrive at the door of a club wanting to become a mystical kung fu master or a street fighting thug will be sorely disappointed.

The four structures of training that were focused upon for the analysis of field observations demonstrate the application of the three major activities used by martial arts

[83] From interview conducted September 3rd, 2009, and observations in the field.
[84] Pg 37-38 and 39 respectively.

teachers. First, the training environment fosters the central values and philosophies of a given style by creating a separate space that is biased toward those values and philosophies. In both kung fu and boxing, the decoration and atmosphere of the training space serves to remind students why they are training and what the purpose of this effort is. Furthermore, this constructed space allows the instructors or coaches to identify ill-fitting attitudes in new or existing students, define the methods and means of training, and inspire emotions of competition or relaxation in members of the school.

In the kung fu *kwoon*, the space is focused and meditative, promoting repetition of forms to perfection. The decoration at the Green Dragon school promotes history and group connections. Overall, that which is promoted here, tradition, respect, and disciplined training, is reinforced by the manner in which the space is used and defined.

In the South Side Amateur Boxing Club, the atmosphere of intensity, relentless pacing, and individuality, fosters a sense of hard work, self-respect (through honest discipline), and respect for others (through rules of conduct and appropriate behaviour). The sense of history and tradition which pictures on the wall and in the office suggest was once dominant, has lapsed in favour of a more youth oriented focus on athletic prowess and personal responsibility for one's success. Although the space has changed, the values of respect, discipline, and working for victory remain.

Second, the organization of the classes themselves are a means of student selection, systematic training, and anecdotal guidance in that how a student is taught or made to practice will reinforce not only the skills of the art, but so too the values of the teacher. Self-discipline and respect come through in lessons that require a student to pay close attention and repeat that which was demonstrated. In addition, drilling basic skills

serve to teach while at the same to challenging students to push themselves to their limits – separating the wheat from the chaff if someone quits after thirty minutes of horse stance or bag work.

In the kung fu setting, certain skill sets are taught on certain days and some classes are set apart by the skill level required to participate. Yet, within this schedule, individual instructors reserve the authority to change that curriculum or adapt the content of the drills according to the needs of students. Throughout, the use of a uniform, the title of Sifu, extra-curricular activity, and the rituals practiced at some *kwoons*, reinforces the philosophies of respect, humility, and community (as a kung fu family).

At South Side Amateur the hectic pace promotes the valuation and development of stamina, relentlessness in training, and individual responsibility of achievement. This is further supported by the lack of a uniform, the unsupervised nature of roadwork, and the central position of sparring as a training method (itself teaching, stamina, mental fortitude, and respect).

Third, the role of coaches and instructors is a structure by means of which the teacher-student relationship is constantly negotiated. The coach or instructor is able to observe the student throughout the training process and will be able to judge the attitude and goals of even the best student, by interacting with that student during training activities and in social settings. The methods through which the instructor or coach intervenes within or exerts influence upon a student – accepting or rejecting, designing specific training regimes, offering tailored advice, etc. – provides ample opportunity for the communication of values and technical knowledge at all stages of the training process (as well as after the student has departed).

In the boxing observations, it becomes clear that the coaches teach a skill and then adopt a relatively hands-off approach to the student's progression; instead leading drills and offering correction when distinct mistakes are made. The belief that you cannot force someone toward greatness is prevalent here, the skills are taught, and the rest is up to the student to decide how far he or she wants to go. "Shadowboxing" is a prime example of leaving a student to self-correcting practice, as they move and combine punches according to what seems fast and natural given their body type and boxing style. Although favouring experiential learning via failure of success during sparring and competition, the coach is always there as a mentor who offers encouragement or advice, and to throws in the towel if a student is in over his or her head.

At the Green Dragon *kwoon*, instructors teach by demonstration, repeating a form multiple times alongside (or literally in front of) their students. While students are expected to progress and grow through practice, the instructors are not above taking hold of a student's arm or leg to correct position and demand repetition. The use of forms as a means of training through demonstration and repetition, often trained in unison with the group, favours growth as a member of the *kwoon* as well as a skilled martial artist. This unity also increases the opportunity and impact of anecdotal guidance, as these tales – often meant to replace first-hand experience – comes across as advice from an elder relative.

Finally, the bow, salute, or handshake, as a single element of training and practice, is a structure that embodies and reinforces the values and philosophies of the teacher, while at the same time allowing the student an opportunity to demonstrate his or her willingness to train and sincerity toward the core philosophy. This demonstration

comes in two forms: showing respect for teachers and tradition by means of a formal bow or sporting handshake; and showing respect for fellow students by bowing or shaking hands before engaging in drills, sparring, or competing (participants are here to compete or practice, not to intentionally injure).

In the boxing case in particular, the act of shaking hands – be it literal or metaphorically through the touching of gloves – encourages *class* and mutual respect in boxers, reminding them to keep calm and comport themselves in a sporting manner. These bouts and sparring sessions are meant for fun, developing skill, and competing for titles, this activity is not the place for prideful battles and grudges; the handshake is a contract agreeing that both boxers will obey the rules of the sport and maintain respect for their opponent. A coach who does not value *class* and sportsmanship would not emphasize the importance of the handshake and associated behaviour.

Bowing in kung fu represents not only the respect between participants, but also the humble gratitude directed at the *sifu*, the instructors, and their lineage. In addition, a stylize bow can be used as a mnemonic tool for learning the history and core philosophies of the instructor who designed it. Also, as the bow is the act that opens and closes every class, it serves to delineate between the space and time of the lesson; setting it apart from other spaces and times in the participants' life. Similarly, this act defines the beginning and end of a sparring match or competition, in the same way a handshake defines the beginning and end of a boxing bout.

"The figure of the master looms in the imagination. Portrayals of him as taciturn guru, as all-knowing sage, as eccentric ascetic – all these miss the mark . . . the master is more likely to be garrulous and to be the first to admit there are gaps in his knowledge"

(Lowry 1995: 32). This appraisal of the martial arts master, in the sense of the most experienced instructors of an art, is exemplified by both the coaches at South Side Amateur Boxing Club and the instructors at Green Dragon. Each is an expert who knows the subtleties of his or her style and uses it to pass on positive values to those who want to learn. They easily disprove the romantic notions of becoming a successful martial artist based on a few tricks and little effort, showing instead that hard work, dedication, respect, and humility are what make a fighter into an artist.

Building upon the research presented here, I would take the ethnographic investigation of the martial arts a step further in future studies. By this I mean that the comparison of two arts, while sufficient for this initial set of observations and conclusions, does not necessarily lend itself to the formation of a larger scale set of theories regarding the martial arts as a whole. I would also focus the lens of analysis a step further to examine the construction and transfer of values between teacher and student.

Given future opportunities and resources, I would include several arts in a cross-comparison; with a much longer period of participant observation. This would allow me to establish the presence of the three central activities in a broader sampling of martial practice in order to test their consistency as categories of activity. Once these elements are identified, the specific structures that are used to apply these goals could be studied, including the place of value systems in the structures that impact the teacher-student relationship.

Furthermore, this future endeavour would benefit from several preliminary studies among schools teaching the same arts (either in the same region or multiple regions); this

would serve to define which activities and values are common practice and which are unique to a particular training space. Overall, the expansion of scale would not only make the central activities and structures more distinct, it would allow the data to indicate if the negotiation of the teacher-student relationship is uniform across multiple groups.

Based on the results of this project, I expect that many a hot-headed youth has joined a boxing club hoping to perfect his street fighting abilities, only to have his attitude tempered by a philosophy of respect and inner strength (class and heart) by means of systematized instruction and anecdotal guidance. At the same time, people seeking to learn the secret wisdom of the "mysterious East" are thwarted by the discover that there is no magical mantra that will suddenly make them a master – a revelation precipitated by participation in systematized training and being receptive to anecdotal guidance.

There will, of course, always be students who manage to slip through the filters of even the most diligent teachers. These are the students who only pay lip service to the words of their *sifu*, or think they have outgrown their coach. In such cases, the relationship may still break down, even after several decades of training, and the rigors of the student selection method will still apply. It may also be the case that an exemplary student becomes a disrespectful braggart after he or she wins great acclaim (via a "black belt" or championship), or the student's life conditions result in a dramatic change of behaviour. In the end, people are people and they will do as they wish with whatever skills they collect in life. After all, as Bruce Lee himself said: "A little learning is a dangerous thing" (Caldwell 1997: 22).

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