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A Qualitative Analysis of ITF Taekwon-Do Pedagogy at International Instructor Courses

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Key words: Musul (martial technique), Muyae (martial artistry), Mudo (martial way), hysteresis, habitus

Abstract

Background. Despite the global popularity of Taekwon-Do, few studies have examined the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) and its pedagogical practices.

Problem and aim. The ITF's International Instructor Courses (IIC) are designed to ensure proper execution and understanding of Taekwon-Do, yet no known study exists on how IIC educate future Taekwon-Do instructors. The *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogy attempts to understand the natural development of students within Taekwon-Do. As such, the aim of this paper is to examine if this pedagogy exists within ITF IIC.

Methods. Three semi-structured interviews were performed with ITF 6^{th} - 9^{th} degree black belts who are internationally recognized Taekwon-Do experts. Thematic analysis was utilized to uncover common codes and themes across the interviews, and data was then synthesized.

Results. *Musul* (martial technique) is achieved during IIC through execution of proper technique. *Muyae* (martial artistry) learning is not encouraged during IIC, but ones' Taekwon-Do experience may affect the impact IIC have on the individual. *Mudo* (martial way) is achieved when grand masters teach ITF moral culture (i.e., mental discipline), how to apply Taekwon-Do lessons to better one's everyday life, and build a peaceful world (i.e., the highest objectives in Taekwon-Do).

Conclusions. A small number of ITF practitioners are aware of the *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogy. Yet, if it was taught at IIC, instructors would better understand how to guide their students toward the *mudo* strata using the ITF curriculum, thus fulling the ITF's mission to build a peaceful world.

Introduction

Taekwon-Do is a Korean martial art to which some practitioners have dedicated their lives to practicing and disseminating globally. The culture taught, practices encouraged, and terminology spoken not only make Taekwon-Do a microcosm of Korean culture but help distinguish it from similar physical pursuits. It is thus a singularity as a physical activity and often misunderstood.

South Korean General Choi, Hong Hi coined the name *Taekwon-Do* to separate his vision for a new Korean martial art from Japanese Karate-Do [Gillis 2016]. His Taekwon-Do fused Korean culture, Korean military cul-

ture, and martial practices with roots throughout Asia [Johnson 2018; Yang 1999]. Today, Taekwon-Do is now bifurcated into two distinct practices: General Choi's martial art and the ROK-promoted and supported Olympic combat sport [Johnson 2018]. Often, Taekwon-Do academic literature considers these two practices synonymous, but martial arts and combat sports have different pedagogies and therefore practice methodologies and goals [Johnson, Ha 2015]. (To avoid confusion and to be in accordance with other literature, the Korean word 태권도 [t'aegwŏndo] has been transliterated into Taekwon-Do to reference General Choi's military-inspired martial art and Taekwondo to reference the ROK's com-

bat sport.) Due to its overwhelming global popularity, the majority of research focuses on the Olympic sport of Taekwondo, but this creates a misconception that there is only one Korean martial art with this name. Furthermore, it ignores the contributions made by General Choi and those loyal to his Taekwon-Do vision to disseminate Korean culture, which ultimately benefited the ROK's combat sport [Johnson 2018]. To help rectify this imbalance, the current research focuses on the current status of General Choi's ITF and its educational goals.

Johnson's [2017a] musul-muyae-mudo process uniquely correlates with other cross-disciplinary and intercultural skill acquisition process and provides a scaffolding for martial arts instructors in which they can guide students toward their individual practice goals [Johnson 2017a]. Although Johnson investigated the Taekwon-Do pedagogy from different pedagogical perspectives [2017a], only one empirical study has been performed on his pedagogy to date [Johnson et al. 2020]. This is most likely because the majority of researchers focus on Olympic Taekwondo. In addition, the vast majority of Taekwondo research either ignores the ITF altogether and/or fails to understand the differences between it and Olympic Taekwondo. Furthermore, no research has been conducted on ITF international instructor courses (IIC), which General Choi intended to standardize ITF Taekwon-Do techniques and instructional goals globally. Otherwise, Taekwon-Do instructors receive little to no training on how to teach a unified and consistent Taekwon-Do pedagogy [Johnson 2016].

One potential purpose for conducting IIC is to retain the ITF's habitus. Habitus is "acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings via the internalization of external constraints and possibilities" [Cushion, Jones 2014: 278-279]. General Choi established the ITF's habitus as the founder of ITF Taekwon-Do. Furthermore, he was a founding member of the South Korean armed forces and headed the 29th infantry division where he first taught Taekwon-Do [Gillis 2016]. Furthermore, General Choi named the patterns after important Korean historic figures and events so that Korea's history could not be erased [Choi 2000a], a concept not found outside of the ITF. Given this as well as 1) the fact that General Choi guided the ITF for the organization's first few decades, which resulted in his long-term influence over the direction and purposes of the ITF, and 2) Cushion and Jones [2014] definition, the ITF's habitus is concerned with Korean culture, military protocol, and General Choi's personal philosophy. Although Moenig et al. [2021] cast a dark cloud over General Choi's life, philosophy, and accomplishments, his ITF and style of Taekwon-Do are a positive force for personal development and international peacebuilding [Johnson 2018]. Consequently, IIC may perpetuate General Choi's Taekwon-Do techniques as well as how and why he intended it to be practiced (i.e., the ITF habitus).

Our study aimed to identify if ITF IIC utilize Johnson's [2017a] Taekwon-Do pedagogy to improve practitioners' Taekwon-Do ability and knowledge. Our objectives were to 1) identify the purposes of IIC and 2) determine if and how *musul*, *muyae*, and *mudo* are taught during IIC.

Textual Notes

Asian names are presented herein using the individual's preferred English spelling. Following the Asian tradition, Koreans' surnames are presented first and are separated from their given names with a comma. All Korean terms are rendered into English using the McCune-Reischauer romanization system.

Literature Review

The Musul-muyae-mudo pedagogy

By adopting Johnson and Ha's [2015] definition of martial art (i.e., the purpose of practice is to follow a means of self-cultivation) and refining previous research on martial art pedagogy [Yang 1999; Funakoshi, Nakasone 2004; Kano 2005; Draeger 2007; Kodokan 2009], Johnson [2017a] identified a Taekwon-Do pedagogical process he defined using the Korean terms musul (martial technique), muyae (martial artistry), and mudo (marital way) [Figure 1]. While Yang [1999] also examined musul, muyae and mudo, he did so from a philosophical perspective. Johnson [2014] counterargued Yang's concepts are too philosophically abstract to be useful to the average Taekwon-Do practitioner. By viewing the terms epistemologically, the terms become practical and avoid erroneous philosophical and religious connotations proposed by lay and potentially nationalistic researchers [Johnson 2014].

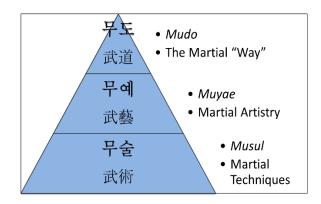


Fig. 1. Pedagogical Strata of Taekwondo Education

Johnson [2017a] translated *musul* into English as "martial technique," and considered it the first strata of Taekwon-Do's pedagogy. In *musul*, the *mu*- (早, 武) syllable is a combination of two *Hanja* (Chinese ideograms used in written Korean), 之 and 上, which mean *spear* and *stopping*, respectfully. The *mu*- syllable also denotes

other meanings such as *military*, *martial*, or *warlike* in modern Korean. However, the second syllable of -sul (全, 何) refers to a skill or technique. A more precise definition of *musul* can therefore be *to stop violence*. *Musul* is consequently a defensive concept, rather than an offensive one. Considering this, Johnson [2017a] used the term *musul* to denote the phase of skill acquisition that focuses on Taekwon-Do skills, and its placement at the bottom of his Taekwon-Do pedagogy emphasizes the notion that all Taekwondo knowledge stems from its unique fundamental movements [Figure 1].

After learning Taekwondo's physical skills, students can proceed to muyae (무예, 武藝), the second strata [Figure 1] of the Taekwon-Do pedagogical process [Johnson 2017a]. The syllable mu- (□) here preserves the militaristic meanings above, while -yae (예) refers to an art, skill, or ability. According to Johnson [2017a], muyae is achieved when students execute Taekwon-Do techniques in manners unique to them. Muyae, then, describes the phase of skill acquisition when a Taekwon-Do practitioner achieves their individual style, or "art" (-yae, 예) of Taekwon-Do. As Taekwon-Do students continue to practice, their physical capabilities improve and evolve with the advancement of their Taekwon-Do knowledge and understanding. Their performance of Taekwon-Do techniques is additionally influenced by the inevitable disabilities incurred by injuries and the effects of time over the course of decades of practice. In short, Taekwon-Do students' physical abilities and understanding of how to use them evolve as their knowledge and experience grow, and this is muyae. We can also see muyae in other combat sports with boxing being the easiest comparison. Mike Tyson and Muhammad Ali, for instance, both learned boxing fundamentals, such how to jab, throw a right cross, and various types of footwork. However, their fighting styles inside the ring were nothing alike. Similarly, Taekwon-Do students' practice will change over time in manners unique to their own bodies, personalities, injuries incurred, and a host of other factors. Therefore, we can now discern how Taekwondo students may express themselves artistically (i.e., -yae) with enough practice.

In the third and highest strata [Figure 1] of Taekwon-Do's pedagogical process, the syllable mu- (早) in mudo (早至, 武道) has the same militaristic denotations as musul and muyae. The -do suffix (玉), however, possesses a more esoteric meaning and is often defined as a Way [Kim, Back 2020]. Unlike other combat sports like wrestling, fencing, and boxing, the -do suffix denotes the idea that Taekwondo offers more than mere fighting skills; it provides a way to lead one's life. Multiple definitions of the -do suffix further complicate defining mudo. For instance, there have been two historical perceptions of the -do suffix in the martial arts: 1) a means of spirituality, and 2) a means for societal improvement a la Confucianism. It is the latter that General Choi

[1985, 1999] claims is the purpose of Taekwon-Do. To be succinct, General Choi Hong Hi believed the highest aspiration a Taekwon-Do student was to become societal leaders with the physical strength and moral fortitude to make and carry out the difficult work of making a more peaceful world [Choi 1985, 1999]. Johnson [2017a] supported this idea by claiming *mudo* was the phase of skill acquisition where students applied Taekwon-Do lessons to their everyday lives.

Although the stages precede each other in the above Taekwon-Do pedagogy model, a student can be at different stages within the model in different aspects of their training. For example, a student who has recently been promoted to 1st dan can be at the *muyae* stage in most color belt patterns because she has worked diligently to perform them and can execute them with some expertise and competence. However, the same student may struggle with executing new techniques taught at the 1st dan level since those are new skills.

ITF Instructor Courses

The purpose for holding IIC has evolved over time. IIC were originally conducted to train students to become instructors who would then spread the knowledge of Taekwon-Do around the world [Vitale 2020b] and were intended for Taekwon-Do students ranked 4th dan and above. IIC were thusly held to train and dispatch International Instructors globally. Since the first IIC, Taekwon-Do has been spread around the world by many pioneers and through mass media (e.g., videos collections and various multilingual printed media). It is accordingly no longer necessary to train ITF members and dispatch them to disseminate Taekwon-Do globally. Now, IIC are held to maintain consistency in execution of technique. They thus act as a form of quality control for the ITF, a concept area this study will later explore more fully.

Materials and Methods

Research design

The absence of printed material, both lay and academic, on ITF IIC and their functions necessitated a literature review and interviews with elite ITF experts. To obtain data of this sort, we determined that semi-structured interviews with experts in Taekwon-Do education were optimal. We consequently acquired participants' knowledge and interpreted the meaning of their experiences. Since the current study investigated Taekwon-Do practitioners' lived experiences with and within Taekwon-Do pedagogy, the results are subjective in nature.

This study was conducted originally as part of the first author's undergraduate degree at Cardiff Metropolitan University. In that study, the second author was a participant. After the first author's graduation and sharing her undergraduate thesis with the second author, she

inquired about the possibility of including and eventually received permission from her university to include the second author's academic expertise in preparing her research for publication. The second author's participation in the present research was conditional on him signing an ethics agreement, which adhered to the Cardiff Met Research Integrity & Governance Framework [CMU 2021]. The second author signed the Cardiff Metropolitan University's ethics agreement that stipulated, in part, the order of authorship, that the second author would not have access to the data collected outside of what was printed in the published dissertation, and he (the second author) could not change the first author's conclusions. After the second author signed the ethics agreement, this study received approval from Cardiff Metropolitan University research committee. It was only then that the second author worked on this study to ensure it adhered to the highest academic standards.

This study therefore differs somewhat from the principal author's undergraduate dissertation in that it now incorporates an autoethnographic perspective, methodology, and design. Autoethnographic studies connect researchers' personal experiences to wider issues through self-reflection [Hillyer 2014]. They connect personal experiences "emotionally, intellectually, morally, and esthetically" to a particular academic topic. By doing so, autoethnographic studies reveal "something meaningful about the world" [Ellis 2004: 55] and new and deeper understandings of what is being studied. Autoethnographic studies are also a viable method to preserve intangible martial art knowledge [Lewis 2020] and have been used in at least one other ITF-focused study [Johnson 2021]. Although the second author did not alter the findings of the first author's undergraduate thesis, some research questions and the correlating data and findings from the first author's thesis were removed to meet the Journal's article length guidelines.

Participants

The selection criteria were set at ITF International Instructors who were 6th-9th *dan*, since these individuals' knowledge and experiences could be labeled as 'expert.' The ITF institutionalized strict guidelines for promoting its members to black belt, instructor, international instructor, master, and grand master levels. Using General Choi's requirements [Choi 1999], Table 1 shows the ranks and number of years required to reach each level. Students must be in continuous practice in order to be eligible for their next promotion.

The ITF necessitates other requirements for promotion, such as various Taekwon-Do skills, knowledge, and contributions to the art or organization. The title $sab\check{o}m$ (Instructor) is conferred to students who have not attended an IIC, but oftentimes students have done so before they test for 4^{th} dan. According to Table 1, a Taekwon-Do student must continuously practice 11

years to earn the title of International Instructor (*kukche sabŏm*), 29 years to earn the title of master (*sahyŏn*), and 46 years to earn the title of grand master (*sasŏng*) using the ITF's rank requirements. An intentional, systematic plan and concrete practice is necessary for expertise [Moon *et al.* 2013]. These time in rank requirements correlate with Ericsson [1996] who stated a minimum of 10 years of practice is needed to achieve excellence. The ITF's time in rank, continuous practice, and IIC attendance requirements guarantee quality and expertise in Taekwon-Do.

Table 1. ITF time in rank instructor levels, requirements, and titles [Choi 1999]

	. ,	
Level	Time in Rank Requirement	Title
I dan	Approximately 2-4 years, since white belt (beginner) level	Pusabŏm (Assistant instructor)
II dan	Minimum 2 years, since I dan level	Pusabŏm (Assistant instructor)
III dan	Minimum 3 years, since II dan level	Pusabŏm (Assistant instructor)
IV dan	Minimum 4 years, since III dan level	Kukche Sabŏm (International Instructor)
V dan	Minimum 5 years, since IV dan level	Kukche Sabŏm (International Instructor)
VI dan	Minimum 6 years, since V dan level	Kukche Sabŏm (International Instructor)
VII dan	Minimum 7 years, since VI dan level	Sahyŏn (Master)
VIII dan	Minimum 8 years, since VII dan level	Sahyŏn (Master)
IX dan	Minimum 9 years, since VIII dan level	Sasŏng (Grand Master)

ITF: International Taekwon-Do Federation; *dan*: black belt degree (Korean)

Purposive and snowball sampling were used to find interview participants with the above selection criteria. Purposive sampling was used to ascertain potential interview participants' Taekwon-Do knowledge. Once these individuals were identified and vetted, snowball sampling was adopted through recommendations of those individuals to determine other potential interview participants [Robinson 2014]. Using these methods, 6 interview candidates were identified to have fit the selection criteria, and 3, including the second author, agreed to participate in this study.

Participants ranged from 46-62 years old, were ITF 6th-9th dan in Taekwon-Do and had 37-47 years of continuous Taekwon-Do experience and practice. Each participant held ITF International Instructor certification. All participants attended a number of IIC taught either by General Choi, Hong Hi; Grand Master Park, Jung-Tae; Grand Master Choi, Jung-Hwa; Grand Master Héctor Marano; Grand Master Rhee, Ki-Ha; and/or Grand Master Park, Jong-Soo. These IIC instructors are globally-renowned instructors ITF Taekwon-Do experts, and many of whom were chosen personally by

General Choi to teach IIC. Some participants have also co-taught and assisted instructing IIC. As a consequence, this study's participants could be considered to meet the selection criteria of being Taekwon-Do education experts.

Interviews

Interviews can neither be a neutral nor objective method that is "a transparent window into experience" [Smith, Sparkes 2016: 103]. Given this, the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee is dependent and shaped by factors such as the participants' motivations, memories, emotions, history, age, gender, (dis)ability, class, and race [Smith, Sparkes 2016]. Furthermore, interviews are influenced by what and how something is said in relation to something else, with changing nonverbal interactions between the researcher and participant in the context of the topic [Smith, Sparkes 2016]. Consequently, it is important to understand how these factors impact the research process, as people's experiences are impacted by societal and cultural influences and thereby can lead to unexpected and contradictory data [Nelson *et al.* 2014].

To overcome these detriments as well as the limited sample population, the first author conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants for between 1.5 and 4 hours. In contrast to structured interviews, interviewers ask a few open-ended questions to engage participants in semi-structured interviews, which affords participants more control over how they address the questions [Smith, Sparkes 2016]. Semi-structured interviews use a prepared interview guide to focus on the research topic but allow for the direction of the interview to influence the order of the questions [Sparkes, Smith 2013].

In the current study, semi-structured interviews were used to explore Johnson's [2017a] Taekwon-Do pedagogy and if it is taught during IIC. Not placing a time limit on the semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to discuss IIC, ITF pedagogy, and other related matters freely and exhaustively. It also gave flexibility for the direction and order of the interview as the researcher deemed necessary.

Sparkes and Smith [2013] suggested using a pilot interview to refine the interview guide. Aligned with this suggestion, a pilot interview with the first researcher's academic supervisor to ensure familiarity with how to conduct interviews. Doing so refined the questions, prepared the researcher to comprehend answers, and thereby respond accordingly. This methodology is supported by previous studies [c.f. Xerri 2018]. A semi-structured interview guide was then created. The guide contained four sections that addressed the following research questions:

- 1. What is the purpose of IIC, and how should the term *International Instructor* be defined?
- 2. Is *musul* taught at IIC and, if so, how?
- 3. Is muyae taught at IIC and, if so, how?
- 4. Is *mudo* is taught at IIC and, if so, how?

Due to the complex nature of Johnson's [2017a] Taekwon-Do pedagogy, a portion of the interviews was allotted to explaining each of the three stages he outlined.

Procedures

Once the original study design gained ethical approval from Cardiff Metropolitan University ethics committee, the participants were contacted by email. The first author introduced the purpose of the study to the participant and made clear their participation was voluntary. Participants were informed they could withdraw at any time. Prior to the interviews, participants read the participant information sheet and signed a voluntary written informed consent form.

The interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams on a one-to-one basis as participants were living on different continents. Interviews were scheduled on the dates and times most convenient to the participants. Conducting interviews online did not restrict the research geographically and enabled the participants to be within the comfort of their homes, an advantage of online interviews [Lo-Iacono *et al.* 2016]. In line with the ethics application, the interviews were recorded using a smartphone (Samsung S20) to capture the audio and then uploaded and stored securely on Microsoft's OneDrive. The recordings were then deleted permanently from the interviewer's smartphone. After the completion of the study, recordings were then deleted permanently from the Microsoft OneDrive.

All participants had access to the internet and Microsoft Teams. The interviews lasted 4 hours 26 minutes, 1 hour 12 minutes, and 1 hour 33 minutes. The first researcher and participants spoke in real time, and the interviews were therefore synchronous. No participant withdrew during the video calls, so rescheduling was unnecessary. Conducting the interviews online did not affect the participants' concentration.

Data analysis

After transcribing the interviews, Braun and Clarke's [2006] Thematic Analysis (TA) steps were used to provide a framework for the analysis process. Braun et al. define TA as "a method for identifying patterns (themes) in a dataset, and for describing and interpreting the meaning and importance of those" [2016: 191]. The present study's research aims focused on the participants' Taekwon-Do IIC experiences, how they understood the roles of International Instructors (and thereby defined that term), and if and how Taekwon-Do pedagogy as defined by Johnson [2017a, 2017b] was taught at IIC. Moreover, TA needs to be used with theoretical knowledge to be able to understand and make decisions around the analysis [Braun, Clarke 2019]. Therefore, being familiar with the data and understanding the concepts will enhance the researchers' ability to analyze the data. TA is therefore an appropriate tool to use for the present

study, since patterns could emerge within the interviews that might exemplify the study's aims.

Researchers bring their "own histories, values and perspectives, into research" [Trainor, Bundon 2020: 3], which increase the researchers' awareness of the decisions they need to make [Braun *et al.* 2016]. Thus, it is critical that the first researcher was active in this process to generate knowledge [Braun, Clarke 2019]. Accordingly, once data was collected, it was then organized into codes and themes that were specific to answering the research objectives [Braun *et al.* 2016]. For instance, the first researcher identified codes, such as "Technical focused," then interpreted the data through Johnson's [2017a] Taekwon-Do pedagogy lens in conjunction with participants' understanding of and experiences with ITF Taekwon-Do.

The first researcher then looked for themes, which are defined as "identifying ways you can cluster your codes together around some (bigger) meaning or concept they all share" [Braun *et al.* 2016: 198]. She then identified the themes within the codes. Finally, she gave the data to her Cardiff Metropolitan University academic supervisor, who asked critical questions about the codes and themes to ensure she had sufficient understanding and rational for the themes generated. This process was therefore deductive in nature.

Academic rigor

The trustworthiness (i.e., reliability) of a qualitative study using semi-structured interviewed could be ascertained by the repetitive content of the participants' statements [Guba 1981]. However, with a sample population of only 3, the discernable patterns revealed during the present study's data analysis are untrustworthy. Research must nevertheless be rigorous for it to be considered high quality. Furthermore, it is problematic to apply a *right* or *wrong* conclusion to socially constructed qualitative research [Smith, McGannon 2018]. Consequently, this study opted for academic rigor rather than trustworthiness in lieu of the small sample population.

However, rigor means different things to different people [Smith, McGannon 2018]. Although no research can be 100% objectively rigorous [Smith, McGannon 2018], the present research process was rigorous in that lengthy amounts of time were spent engaging with the participants, which revealed a high level of consistency across the interviews. As reflectivity is key to ensuring research is rigorous [Cavalleri *et al.* 2020], the current study was reflective and thereby also rigorous by using participants' understandings of Taekwon-Do and the concepts on current Taekwon-Do academic literature.

Furthermore, we mitigated problems with our analysis through one-to-one interviews as recommended by Conway *et al.* [1995]. Unconscious bias is always a possibility when analyzing interview transcripts; nevertheless, it was believed that the semi-structured interviews

allowed for a free-flowing, honest, and open account of IIC, ITF International Instructors, and the *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogical process in their own words. In doing so, trends could emerge without the interviewer guiding the interviewees toward certain expected conclusions that would harm the integrity of this study.

Results

In keeping with the deductive nature of the data analysis process and by utilizing the Taekwon-Do *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogy framework as an academic lens, the research questions identified two themes. The first was the historical functions of IIC, while the second was if and how *musul*, *muyae*, and *mudo* are taught at IIC.

Historical functions of ITF International Instructor Courses (IIC)

Two participants said that the purpose of IIC's was initially to teach abroad, and everyone had to "get on the same page." One mentioned, "the purpose of the International Instructor Courses were to prepare Korean martial artists to go aboard and teach... They teach this to Korean Karate people and...had to learn the new set of patterns." Many original Taekwon-Do practitioners learned Karate while living in Japan during the Japanese occupation of the Korean Peninsula (1905-1945); the martial art they practiced differed somewhat from what is practiced in Japan and is thusly called *Korean Karate* [Choi 2000b].

Another participant explained this further: "I think that was the way only really to spread Taekwon-Do the way General Choi wanted it." As such, the original primary purpose to conduct IIC was to establish quality instructors that could teach abroad. A secondary purpose of IIC was to allow General Choi and later instructors to globalize Taekwon-Do the way they saw fit. Indeed, IIC were created "initially to certify Korean instructors to go on teaching assignments abroad and over time became the main method of teaching the art of Taekwon-Do ITF to instructors across the world with the aim of standardising and improving fundamental technique and knowledge of ITF instructors" [ITF 2022]. Participants also mentioned the importance of maintaining the ITF's body culture (i.e., the correct way to execute ITF techniques) and how past and present IIC ensure it is maintained globally. ITF body culture is similar in purpose to that of Judo; namely, it is intended to teach a specific method way to move the body through self-defense techniques in order to cultivate the mind and spirit [Kelly, Atsuo 2007]. ITF body culture can be representative of Korean culture due to its emphasis on sine wave motion [Lewis 2020]. This type of motion is characterized by the relaxation of the body's center of mass, the raising of it slightly, and then a sudden dropping of it at the moment a technique strikes a target. Its performance is a signature element of ITF techniques that differentiates them from other marital arts. Thus, sine wave motion constitutes part of the ITF's body culture, and all participants stated it is taught during IIC.

International Instructor Courses and Musul (martial technique)

Two participants agreed that the early IIC taught strictly at the *musul* level. Their earliest IIC instructors were "teaching out of the book," while the other participant mentioned that today's IIC still "focus very much on teaching out of the textbook." In support of this claim, one participant stated their instructors taught "the final position but not the body movement of how to move from one to another." The other participant stated, "you could tell because it looked one dimensional." He continued by stating his instructors taught, "the final position but not the body movement of how to move from one to another."

Another participant explained how *musul* was taught at IIC historically:

...it would cover how you would teach a technique in a stationary position, then in a spot position, then stepping forwards and back. Once you learnt the fundamentals in the different positions then you would put them together in a pattern.

The participant noted this teaching methodology follows "how General Choi wanted the progression of teaching to go" and "mirrors General Choi's books" [see: Choi 1985, 1999]. However, the same participant critiqued that this progression of teaching does not "touch upon the ability to communicate the knowledge to another person."

All participants agreed that *musul* is currently taught at IIC by having "someone...demonstrate the pattern and then take...individual techniques out so...they can explain them in more detail and then they...have the entire group perform the pattern after the instruction." One participant agreed particularly with this statement:

I remember President Choi [Jung Hwa] taking everybody out...separating us into two groups and then us running doing the spilt kick or two-directional kick, and he said don't even worry about landing. He had a big pad, so we were running, jumping, kicking and then falling on the ground without trying to land in diagonal stance [The next stance that students need to land in immediately after performing the two-directional kick in that particular *tul.*] Sometimes we would pair up with a partner and do 100 side kicks, or we would do the escaping motions...that are in some of the patterns with that person so we could feel the technique

and perform it. Once we had that tactile or kinesthetic feeling, then we can replicate the motion when we were doing the patterns.

Furthermore, all participants mentioned ITF body movement with one noting, that *tul* are "codified sets of movements [taught] so that practitioners will learn the particular body culture of the ITF or the particular ways that we are meant to move within the ITF." By this, the participant was underpinning that IIC ensure everyone is performing Taekwon-Do correctly.

International Instructor Courses and Muyae (martial artistry)

All three participants agreed that muyae is not taught at IIC. One participant stated, "I would say me, you and the two PhD's in South Korea are among the few that even know those three characters" (i.e., Johnson's [2018] musul-muyae-mudo Taekwon-Do pedagogy). (It should be stated that in this study, only two of the participants were aware of Johnson's [2017a] musul-muyae-mudo pedagogy prior to the interviews.) One participant said muyae is an "understanding of Taekwon-Do education that could provide a stratified process." He continued by stating that if this understanding was taught at IIC, then IIC would be "providing that scaffolding or the stratified process." The participant then gave an example of how an ITF student could demonstrate muyae through the practice of a tul, the performance of which are highly regulated by the ITF:

So, there is not much room for the *muyae* or the martial artistry of the pattern [i.e., *tul*]. Where the *muyae* might come in is your understanding of that...when I first learned pattern Choong-Moo, I learned it simply as a way to win competitions... Later on, I started dissecting it, understanding the individual movements, after that I came to realize that it was one of the few asymmetrical patterns in our curriculum. After that I learned to hate it because it is that pattern is where I damaged my knee... So, our understanding grows and evolves is I would say the *muyae* of pattern.

Reinforcing this perspective, the two other participants mentioned that time has a great impact on students understanding of Taekwon-Do. One stated, "a red belt [will] learn about techniques and to become a better Taekwon-Do practitioner or technician," but "if you're a fourth degree [black belt] taking [an IIC], then you got at least ten years of practice on top of your red belt. So that's going to create a different understanding."

International Instructor Courses and Mudo (martial way) One participant mentioned that *mudo* is taught at IIC. The participant states that at one time *Do* was taught at IIC in Grand Master Tran's ITF (one of the organiza-

tions that splintered away from each after General Choi passed). The participant stated, "When Grand Master Tran died... [*Do* education] was taken out of that ITF's IIC." Later, that organization initiated a *Do* Program that "is separate from the IIC." The participant then said, President Ri, Yong Son's ITF has another "module that's [focused on] moral culture."

ITF seniors often discuss moral culture, a concept that General Choi stressed was central to Taekwon-Do [Choi 1985, 1999]. However, he translated this term "oddly" from Korean. The original Korean is chongsin suyang, which can be translated into English numerous ways. General Choi, a polyglot with strong English capabilities, chose to translate chŏngsin suyang as 'moral culture,' but he could have just as easily translated it as spiritual discipline where 'character' is synonymous with 'spiritual.' As such, chŏngsin suyang is "a clue into Taekwon-Do's true philosophy" where the "physical practice of Taekwon-Do forges one's 'spirit' or 'mind" [Johnson 2017b: 14]. When speaking of General Choi's moral culture, we are discussing Taekwon-Do's transformative aspects in which ITF students cultivate their character in a manner aligned with Taekwon-Do and that befits their individual personality and particular goals for themselves. This aspect of Taekwon-Do pedagogy is encouraged, but not strictly guided by the ITF. In other words, no set curriculum exists to ensure students grow beyond the physical applications of Taekwon-Do and to apply the lessons learned in Taekwon-Do to daily life, a hole in Taekwon-Do pedagogy that Johnson's musul-muyae-mudo process might fill. Through it, IIC and ITF instructors do not attempt to forge a specific personality out of their students; rather, they could provide a means for the student to determine their own character development. This self-cultivation or self-perfection is what some have called Do, which is precisely the same concept as the -do suffix found in Johnson's [2017a] term mudo [see: Mann 2012; Kim, Back 2020; Kodokan 2009; Stevens 2013], which is a foundation of Confucian thought [Lewis 2016].

Another participant mentioned if *mudo* is talked about, it is only talked about for a short duration, once or twice during an IIC. Contradictory, one participant explained President Choi, Jung Hwa teaches *mudo* during IIC but has only done so since his father [General Choi] passed away. The participant explained:

President Choi [Jung Hwa], I know he does [teach Do] ... all the times I've ever done an International Instructor Course with him he says... "Come family... sit down with me, I'm not better than you." That is what he portrays... He would talk about what [Do] means, not the technique itself but what does it mean to be a certain person, to have humanity, and... I said courtesy and he would explain what he was trying to say... I'm very moved by what he talks about. [Do is] not about the pattern or whatever. It's about life.

The participant then explained why President Choi, Jung Hwa started to emphasize *mudo*: "I think...President Choi...because what he has seen is that [the ITF has] all these high-ranking people and that the rank in a way can cloud people." A general perception of the participants was, as one participant said, "We're no longer producing martial artists; we're producing martial technicians. There's a big difference."

Two participants mentioned that the IIC do not introduce the Taekwon-Do musul-muyae-mudo education system and that the mudo strata intends "to develop the self, to develop our immediate society, then our greater society." One participant noted, what "General Choi wanted us to adhere to is a Confucian-based art," which is reflected in the Taekwon-Do oath [Fitzgibbon 2018]. Moreover, one participant explained that people get caught up in the esoteric concepts of mudo, so "most people focus on the physical [aspects of Taekwon-Do] because...the instructor does not want to try to influence...students in a theological or cosmological or religious way of any sort...but that only keeps us at the musul level." He continued to suggest the concept of mudo is not fully understood by instructors, which was supported by another participant who stated mudo is "a very problematic concept that IIC would be an ideal place to teach or to overcome."

Discussion

International Instructor Courses (IIC)

In addition to furthering the ITF's longstanding mission, which is "To teach the Martial Art of Taekwon-Do worldwide regardless of race, religion and politics" [ITF 2002], the present-day purpose of IIC is to disseminate the technical aspects of ITF as General Choi intended. Another historical purpose for creating IIC was so General Choi could train and identify instructors he could send for teaching assignments abroad; they could then help him realize his goal of disseminating Taekwon-Do worldwide. Now that Taekwon-Do is globalized, this purpose is not as crucial as it once was. IIC today are nevertheless intended to create knowledgeable and skilled International Instructors by ensuring an international standard of Taekwon-Do performance. Our participants' statements illustrate that most of the original purpose of creating instructors who can teach outside of the boundaries of their home countries remains, but the current purpose for conducting IIC is to ensure Taekwon-Do fundamental techniques are performed correctly.

During the ITF's early days, IIC functioned as a means of teaching General Choi's Taekwon-Do to martial artists unfamiliar with his style of Taekwon-Do [Choi 2000b], something most participants also mentioned. However, the focus of present-day IIC differs as participants are primarily students who have extensive

practice in ITF Taekwon-Do. On the other hand, two of this study's participants claimed their IIC instructors taught Taekwon-Do techniques in a manner that encouraged students to mirror the photographs in General Choi's textbooks instead of the type of movement needed to progress from one movement to the next. This claim emphasizes the need for IIC instructors to teach the correct way of moving, something impossible of being learned from a book and difficult to learn from an instructional video, which are two popular methods of transmitting martial arts technical and philosophical knowledge. Thus, today's IIC are about 'fine tuning' what participants already know.

Musul (martial technique)

As above, this study confirmed the historical and current IIC are very much focused on teaching the ITF curriculum correctly. However, two participants stated most ITF instructors and ITF students are unaware of Johnson's *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogy. Since one of the intended purposes for ITF IIC is to teach and propagate General Choi's techniques and vision for Taekwon-Do globally, IIC function in part at the *musul* strata, or the level of practice where students focus on martial techniques [Johnson 2017a].

The educational practice of having a single student demonstrate Taekwon-Do techniques in front of the entire IIC is important to the transmission and retention of General Choi's martial art. This practice can be considered the deconstruction, what Noble and Watkins defined as "breaking technique down into its key elements so that these can be practiced and mastered" [2003: 528], of Taekwon-Do techniques. Once the kinesthetic feel for the technique is gained through repetitive practice at an IIC, the student can later replicate it at their dojang and in self-defense situations. This replication can be considered reconstructing the technique, which is the "synthesizing [of movements] into a larger movement which is put into operation" [Noble, Watkins 2003: 528]. Furthermore, the feedback from the IIC instructor along with the kinesthetic feel one gains from repeating the movement is essential for turning the analysis of the components of the technique practiced into action itself to improve [Noble, Watkins 2003]. This educational methodology emphasizes the importance the ITF places on proper execution of Taekwon-Do techniques, which again demonstrates that IIC function within the domain of musul.

Additionally, all participants stated past and current IIC instructors teach ITF body culture, or the correct way to execute ITF techniques. General Choi taught, just as his subordinates now teach, ITF body culture to ensure students knew the correct way of moving from one position to another. However, two underlying reasons why ITF body culture is taught during IIC are to further establish Taekwon-Do's habitus and to spread Korean body

movement culture. As above, Lewis [2020] defined ITF body culture as the particular way to move within the ITF. Sine wave motion can be considered part of Korean culture as it exemplifies traditional Korean body movement due to its wave-like quality, a signature aspect of Korean body culture [Lewis 2020]. Therefore, General Choi may have emphasized sine wave to differentiate it from martial arts originating in Japan, China, and elsewhere. Thereby, sine wave can be considered a part of Taekwon-Do's habitus, since that type of movement is unique to the ITF style of Taekwon-Do, and students who practice techniques with sine wave are embodying the ITF's habitus. While sine wave is still taught at IIC in order to teach Taekwon-Do's body culture, its dissemination at IIC could also promote traditional Korean body movement, something that is being lost in Korea due to Western body culture and musical influences [Lewis 2020].

General Choi believed teaching Taekwon-Do was a way to prevent the further loss of Korean culture [Choi 2000b]. An example of this is General Choi naming and representing the patterns after famous Korean people and events [Choi 2000b]. Consequently, the teaching of sine wave to continuate Korean body culture may be an underlying reason why it is taught at IIC. Unless these aspects of traditional Korean movement are made explicit, people may not understand the differences between Korean body culture and those of other Asian countries. If this understanding is made explicit at IIC, students on the IIC could not only better understand Taekwon-Do techniques and Taekwon-Do culture, but also have unique insight into the Korean culture that created it.

Muyae (martial artistry)

Muyae is achieved when a student can express their personality through Taekwon-Do [Johnson 2017a]. During IIC, ITF instructors go into very specific detail about how individual Taekwon-Do techniques should be executed. These techniques are taught in the ITF's choreographed patterns, called tul in the ITF curriculum. The ITF's tul are akin to Karate's kata, which are a "set of bodily movements that have been developed and preserved by precedent artist" which is believed to be the most "efficient" and "authentic" way of achieving mastery [Matsunobu 2011: 48). Kata training can be considered as an embodied pedagogy where social behaviors, moral, and ethical values are learned through embodying the patterns [Matsunobu 2011; Dodd, Brown 2016]. Tul are one of the core components of Taekwon-Do rank examinations, and without proper knowledge and execution of tul, an ITF student will not be permitted to advance in rank.

Tul act as the Taekwon-Do lexicon from which ITF students obtain their primary knowledge of fundamental techniques and their applications. *Tul* were devised by General Choi and his most trusted senior instructors

[Gillis 2016], and a student must know and perform them properly in order to practice ITF Taekwon-Do. Therefore, one reason why *tul* could be the focal point during IIC is that they may teach Korean social behaviors and traditions. They contain General Choi's and therefore the ITF's core Taekwon-Do knowledge that are intended to be passed down to succeeding generations. If so, the focus on proper *tul* execution also embodies the ITF's habitus, because students would be practicing a Korean artform according to Korean body culture.

On the other hand, Johnson [2017a] discusses muyae in terms of sparring. During IIC, individual techniques are often taken from tul and other parts of the ITF curriculum and applied to sparring or self-defense scenarios. In actual sparring, which epitomizes a nonscripted situation, a plethora of factors affect students' decision in what techniques to utilize to defend themselves, including the students' height and personality [Johnson 2017a]. However, the emphasis on correct movement in tul instruction implies that ITF students are not encouraged to express their personal understanding of Taekwon-Do during IIC; indeed, IIC students must perform tul and individual techniques precisely as the instructors say to ensure they learn proper execution of Taekwon-Do techniques during an IIC. Principles of movement are therefore taught at IIC rather than how students could adapt them to their own needs. This then explains why all three participants stated muyae is not something that is encouraged or taught during IIC, since students are taught to not deviate from how instructors teach individual techniques.

The participant who discussed the difference between a red belt's experience and a high-ranking black belt's experience at IIC is significant to this study. With this statement, the participant indicated the amount of Taekwon-Do experience a student has will affect how they experience IIC. It is only with age and experience that one starts to understand the deeper meanings of martial arts [Johnson 2014]. While the lesser experienced student seeks technical knowledge, which lies within the musul level of learning, a 4th dan will experience the same lesson in a very different way due to their deeper experience and longer exposure to the ITF habitus even though the two are performing the same movements in a tul or other Taekwon-Do practice. Taekwon-Do students may be able to recite the technical elements of a Taekwon-Do technique verbatim but experiencing them from a grand master whose perspective or instruction style differs from her normal instructor could spark deeper insights into Taekwon-Do. Extending upon Johnson's [2017a] boxing example, learning the jab from Mohammed Ali at the end of his career would be a different experience than learning it from Ali as an amateur boxer. Ali would be able to convey lessons he learned from using that technique from a learned perspective that would provide expertise and insights unavailable to the lesser experienced boxer.

Mudo (martial way)

The participants agreed that mudo is taught in IIC to some extent. How it is done so is evident through the lens of habitus. Participants stated IIC instructors teach the ITF's moral culture, which is how General Choi wished Taekwon-Do students to live outside of class. General Choi summarized his concept of moral culture as "the endeavor process of becoming an exemplary person such as Confucius" [Choi 1985: 45]. He also stated the characteristics a proper ITF practitioner should build in order to follow ITF moral culture: "humanity," "righteousness," "proprietary," and "wisdom" [Choi 1985: 47-51]. The participants discussed how their various IIC instructors talk about life and how one could use Taekwon-Do to build a better one for themselves. Johnson defined mudo as a way of doing just that: taking lessons from Taekwon-Do and using them to improve their individual lives and societies [2017a]. Since Korean culture is largely based on Confucianism [Johnson 2014], we expected that the results of this study would support Johnson's [2017a] that the concept of *Do* within Taekwon-Do is Confucian in nature. Thus, the fact that IIC instructors encourage students to apply Taekwon-Do lessons to their personal lives suggests that mudo is taught at these courses.

It also stands to reason that *mudo* embodies the ITF's habitus, since students are encouraged to personify not only General Choi's Taekwon-Do physical skills inside of the *dojang* but his moral culture outside of it as well. The current study's three participants all indicated that ITF moral culture was imperative to practice if one wants to learn Taekwon-Do fully and, as such, they enter into a unique habitus. If a student fails to adopt ITF moral culture, they exist outside of the Taekwon-Do's habitus, which then creates hysteresis. Hysteresis happens when ones' habitus is different than the field's habitus [Paradis 2012]. Consequently, one must follow the ITF moral culture to enter the *mudo* strata of Taekwon-Do as well as be a member of its habitus.

It is possible, at least from the perspectives and experiences of Johnson [2016] and this study's participants, to get caught up in the esoteric concepts associated, or at least perceived to be associated, with Taekwon-Do. The ITF mission statement states Taekwon-Do should be taught apolitically and without regards to gender, religion, or other background status. Indeed, Taekwon-Do's mudo and Do are secular due to their Confucian roots [Johnson 2018]. To avoid demotivating students' interest in Taekwon-Do by discussing concepts that can be misinterpreted as religious [Johnson 2016] or confusing them over the ultimate learning objectives of their practice, some IIC instructors may wish to only teach the physical aspects of the martial art (e.g., musul, the art's strikes, blocks, kicks, and stances). By doing so, instructors would prevent their students from reaching the mudo level. This is problematic since instructors would then be unable to guide their students to their fullest potential within Taekwon-Do. IIC instructors should consequently teach how to apply Taekwon-Do lessons to everyday life (as well as in normal practice). Doing so would assuredly provide deeper meaning to students regardless of their level, because the instructors would be working toward the ITF's ultimate goal of building a better world [Johnson 2018].

Conclusions

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first research to examine ITF's IIC and Johnson's [2017a] *musul-muy-ae-mudo* pedagogy qualitatively. Through interviewing three expert Taekwon-Do practitioners and educators, we better defined the purpose of IIC and the responsibilities and rights of today's International Instructors. While the purpose of IIC to produce International Instructors to disseminate Taekwon-Do has changed somewhat over the years, the definition of these educators and the rights provided to them by the ITF have not. However, IIC are now used to finetune students' knowledge and skills for global quality control purposes.

We also found that Taekwon-Do is taught at the *musul* level at IIC and the *muyae* strata is not achieved during IIC due to the need to teach techniques precisely as General Choi outlined them. This study also found that the *mudo* level of Johnson's [2017a] Taekwon-Do pedagogy is achieved when the grand masters encourage IIC students to use Taekwon-Do knowledge and skills to improve themselves and their societies (i.e., when ITF moral culture is taught). While *muyae* is not achieved, a student's amount of Taekwon-Do experience influences how an IIC instructor's technical instruction is received. Additionally, we were able to define ITF habitus and explore how it is established through the *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogy for the first time.

The existence of musul and mudo indicates that Johnson's [2017a] musul-muyae-mudo pedagogy may exist in Taekwon-Do IIC. His pedagogy states that one learns mudo by first passing through the musul and muyae strata. This does not, however, negate the possibility of muyae being present in IIC nor does it invalidate the possibility of the *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogy being hierarchical. For instance, a 65-year-old 5th dan may not be physically capable of performing the same techniques exactly as a 22-year-old 1st dan would, and thus the older student may need to modify their execution of a technique or tul because of their limited mobility. Similarly, a student with a physical disability or learning disorder may not learn the same lessons as someone without those limitations. The important concept to understand here is this: all students are capable of learning Taekwon-Do in their own manner and eventually applying the same lesson taught to the IIC in a manner that best befits their Taekwon-Do goals. The absence of muyae could just be a result of the instruction methods and purposes of IIC not facilitating

personal expression of Taekwon-Do through sparring and other Taekwon-Do practices that encourage self-expression. Considering that these courses are now intended to finetune one's technical abilities, the presence of *muyae* in IIC could cast doubt on the effectiveness of IIC instructors to educate students toward the course objectives.

The participants of the present study claimed that few, if any, ITF students and IIC instructors are familiar with the *musul-muyae-mudo* pedagogy. They will accordingly not teach according to its scaffolded methodology. However, if this Taekwon-Do pedagogy was more widely known, ITF instructors may better understand what *Do* is and how to assist their students to achieve a state of *mudo* in their Taekwon-Do practice.

The primary limitation of the current study is its small sample size. Nevertheless, this study's research design (i.e., semi-structured interviews) permitted the researchers to gain rich data from the expert participants. Another limitation is this study's use of retrospective interviews, since participants could have provided biased data, or they may have had inaccurate recall [Nelson, Strachan 2017]. However, this methodology allowed data collection from expert participants who otherwise could not have participated. Future research should therefore concentrate on larger data pools of IIC participants and to explore how the *musul*, *muyae*, and *mudo* are taught in IIC. Similarly, historical researchers may use the present study to explore if IIC participants were achieving *musul*, *muyae*, and/or *mudo* during the first IICs.

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Conflict of Interest

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Analiza jakościowa pedagogiki ITF Taekwon-Do na międzynarodowych kursach instruktorskich

Słowa kluczowe: Musul (technika walki), Muyae (artyzm walki), Mudo (sposób walki), histereza

Streszczenie

Tło. Pomimo światowej popularności Taekwon-Do, niewiele badań dotyczy Międzynarodowej Federacji Taekwon-Do (ITF) i jej praktyk pedagogicznych.

Problem i cel. Międzynarodowe Kursy Instruktorskie ITF (IIC) mają na celu zapewnienie właściwego wykonania i zrozumienia Taekwon-Do, jednak nie ma żadnych znanych badań dotyczących tego, jak IIC kształci przyszłych instruktorów Taekwon-Do. Pedagogika *musul-muyae-mudo* próbuje zrozumieć naturalny rozwój uczniów w Taekwon-Do. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zbadanie, czy taka pedagogika istnieje w ITF IIC. Metody. W trakcie badania przeprowadzono trzy wywiady półstrukturalne z posiadaczami czarnych pasów ITF 6-9 stopnia, którzy są uznanymi międzynarodowymi ekspertami Taekwon-Do. Analiza tematyczna została wykorzystana do odkrycia wspólnych kodów i tematów w wywiadach, a następnie dane zostały zsyntetyzowane.

Wyniki. *Musul* (technika walki) jest osiągana podczas IIC poprzez wykonywanie prawidłowej techniki. Nauka *Muyae* (kunsztu walki) nie jest propagowana podczas IIC, ale doświadczenie w Taekwon-Do może mieć wpływ na daną osobę. *Mudo* (droga walki) jest osiągana, gdy wielcy mistrzowie uczą ITF kultury moralnej (tj. dyscypliny umysłowej), jak zastosować lekcje Taekwon-Do do poprawy codziennego życia i budowania pokojowego świata (tj. najwyższych celów w Taekwon-Do). Wnioski. Niewielka liczba adeptów ITF jest świadoma pedagogiki *musul-muyae-mudo*. Gdyby jednak była ona nauczana w IIC, instruktorzy lepiej rozumieliby, jak prowadzić swoich uczniów w kierunku warstw *mudo* z wykorzystaniem programu ITF, wypełniając w ten sposób misję ITF budowania pokojowego świata.