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ATHLETE DYNAMIC?

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MILLENNIALS IN SPORTS: IS GENERATION Y CHANGING THE COACH-  
ATHLETE DYNAMIC?

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
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To Mom, Dad, and Marilisa...Who knew?! You all always did, and never let me forget it. Without the support of the three of you, my life would not be possible. A “thank you” could never begin to cover it, but it is a start. I love you.

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	iv
List of Figures.....	vii
Abstract.....	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	6
Generations.....	7
Generation X versus Millennials .....	10
Generation X .....	11
The Millennials.....	13
Communication Accommodation Theory and Power .....	18
Millennials and CAT .....	26
Leadership Styles.....	29
Trends in Coaching.....	34
Chapter 3: Methods .....	40
Participants .....	40
Design and Procedure.....	44
Recordings and Transcriptions .....	46
Chapter 4: Results.....	49
Analysis and Verification .....	49
Millennials and Leadership.....	51
Generation X and Leadership.....	68

Millennials and Transformational/Transactional Leaders.....	72
Millennials and Power .....	73
Coaching Adaptations .....	76
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	80
Limitations and Future Research.....	87
Conclusion .....	89
References .....	90
Appendix A: Athlete Interview Questions .....	97
Appendix B: Coach Interview Questions.....	99



## List of Figures

Figure 1. Leadership Styles .....	31
Figure 2. Participant List .....	41
Figure 3. Flag of South Korea .....	54

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to compare the Millennial generation, born between 1982 and 2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2007, Huntley, 2006) to the generation immediately before them, Generation X, born between 1961 and 1981 (Howe & Strauss, 1993; Strauss & Howe, 1991), and seeks to find out if there are any differences between how coaches worked with Generation X and how they need to work with the Millennial generation. The current study was a qualitative look at members of two different tae kwon do dojangs as well as the instructors of each school. Interviews and observations were conducted to find out what similarities and/or differences existed between the coaching preference of Generation X and Millennial athletes using power, leadership styles, and communication accommodation theory as contexts. Interview questions were based on the factors used to build both the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) (Chelladuari & Saleh, 1980) which looks at five different leader behaviors of coaches: Training and instruction, democratic or autocratic behavior, social support of the coach, and positive feedback from the coach to the athlete the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) which suggests that the performance outcome of a team is based on how congruent leader behavior is compared to athlete preferred leader behaviors (Chelladurai, 1980; Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998; Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978). The analysis of the interaction between the Millennial athletes and their coaches in the study were used to find out if communication accommodation theory needs to be adapted when focusing on the millennial generation.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

When the coach speaks, the athlete listens. When the coach says “jump,” the athlete asks “how high?” For many years, this type of relationship has been the norm for coach-athlete relationships. In the past, this style of autocratic leadership by coaches with submissive behavior expected from athletes was often seen as a rite of passage for athletes. Coaches justified their use of this style saying they were trying to build character in their athletes (Rocca, Martin, & Toale, 1998). Coaches often believed that if an athlete was able to learn to work under these intense conditions, and take from the experience the lessons the coach intended, the athlete would be a better person for it (Rocca, et al., 1998). However, times have changed, and the wants and needs of athletes have changed along with it. Though athletes of the past have accepted the more autocratic coach and the top-down leadership style, more recently athletes have been wanting a different type of leader (Beam, Serwatka, & Wilson, 2004; Sherman, Fuller, & Speed, 2000). Coaches are still meant to play the same role of instructor and mentor, but how a coach can best execute that role is now different. For reasons that will be discussed in this dissertation, no longer do athletes or their parents consider the “run until I say stop” attitude acceptable. It appears that today’s athletes no longer accept the traditional hierarchical power structure of coach-to-athlete dynamics. Instead, athletes seek more of an equal power relationship in which coach and athlete work together.

Some coaches have realized the changes in their athletes’ wants, needs, and behaviors and have adapted their coaching style successfully. Coaching adaptation is nothing new, and many coaches have been able to successfully change to fit athlete needs in the past. Examples include coaches such as Phil Jackson transitioning from

building the Chicago Bulls into a championship franchise to taking over the Los Angeles Lakers and learning to coach the high profile players already assembled. Another example is Urban Meyer who traveled for years from football program to football program using different styles with his different teams usually with the same winning results (Martin, 2009). An example of an autocratic coach is former track coach at the University of Oregon and co-founder of Nike, Bill Bowerman, whose style included exerting control over his athletes' sports and personal lives, seeing both as interdependent (Moore, 2006). Even though he used the autocratic style, Bowerman understood that not all athletes can be coached in the same manner and used this knowledge to determine how he would approach the training of each of his athletes (Moore, 2006). Though there are coaches who have been able to make changes to their leadership styles to create success with Millennial athletes, not all coaches have been able to do so.

For many coaches, lack of modification to his or her coaching style may not be based on his or her lack of interest in change, but it might be more a lack of ability or knowledge as to how to make the changes being sought. Due to the nature of sports, and the constant changes that go along with coaching teams and individuals, adaptation is a regular part of a coaches' life (Martin, 2008). Adjusting regularly for player injury, ineligibility due to grades, players leaving school for a multitude of reasons, or even a player leaving games for issues such as foul trouble, most of the changes have been small compared to the changes coaches are facing now in learning how to best serve the millennial athlete. As the newest wave of athletes and their shifting needs flood amateur and professional sports, questions abound that are yet to be answered. Though

these questions have been surfacing for a while, no clear answer for how to adapt to this current cohort of athletes has emerged in either scholarly research or the popular press. Because this change in athlete needs and behaviors is relatively new, the questions cover many different aspects of the coach-athlete relationship. These questions often asked by coaches include; how to best convince athletes to buy into a coach or program's philosophy? Why can I not just coach these kids the way I was coached? How to handle the use of social media among these athletes? How to best work with the pronounced influence of parents in the lives of these athletes? Why are these athletes not as loyal as those of the past? Why do I need to repeat myself so much with this group? The list can go on and on. The most consistent response to those questions is the fact that the Millennial Generation is changing the face of athletics, as we know it.

Millennials represent those individuals born between 1982-2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Huntley, 2006). They are the hardworking, praise seeking, trophy kids of the Baby Boom Generation who seem to have everyone, from parents to teachers and school administrators, to industry executives eager to meet this generation's needs (Alsop, 2008). What specific change Millennials are causing and how others are handling the differences is much more complex. This generation is known for their inquisitive nature, a trait that many coaches are not used to (Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006). Coaches must accommodate to Millennial athletes by answering their questions and this creates a new power dynamic within the coach-athlete relationship. This new dynamic essentially erases the traditional top-down hierarchical power structure in exchange for a more equal coach-athlete power dynamic. This research seeks to help answer many of these questions that are plaguing the coaching

profession in order to help find the best way for coaches to communicate with their Millennial athletes thereby helping both get the most out of their experience in sport

The research for this dissertation will be one of the first in-depth comparisons between the Millennial Generation of athletes (also known as Generation Y) and their predecessors, Generation X, representing individuals born between 1961 and 1981 (Howe & Strauss, 1993; Strauss & Howe, 1991). In order to best compare athletes from both generations in the same setting, it is necessary to find a sport in which members from both generations are currently competing. For this purpose, interviews and observations will be conducted with members of two martial arts schools. In most sports environments, there is a lack of Generation X athletes still participating in competitive sports, due to the age of the members of this generation, but this is not the case in sports such as martial arts. The greater age variation in this sport, with both coaches and athletes, creates an ideal setting for this research. Interviews and observations will be conducted to help identify exactly what each athlete wants from their coaches in terms of the coaching philosophy and instruction technique. From the athletes' perspective, the interviews will be used to find out their experiences with the instructors at the school, how they prefer to be instructed and why, as well as why they started to study martial arts training.

For the instructors, the interviews will focus on three aspects of the instructors and will be based on their generational cohort. Those aspects include coaching style, attention to varying needs of athletes and if or how they adapt to a combined general cohort class. Secondary questions will be posed on any observed stratification between members of differing generations so that instructors' adaption strategies may be

identified. Finally, within the coach and athlete interviews, questions will also address the leadership style of the coaches, asking athletes what they preferred as a coaching leadership style, and asking coaches what type of leadership style they prefer to use.

The observations will examine interactions between the martial arts instructors and students who represent both Generations X and Y. This will allow for a general understanding of martial arts as a sport and philosophy, but also to see if the wants, needs, and behaviors that athletes state are important to their experience in their interviews are the same as displayed in the studios, essentially attempting to answer the question of coach or instructor adaptation. This adaptation could take the form of both communicated instruction, as well as the expectations of student performance.

Because there is little research on coaching accommodations or adaptations made specifically for Millennial athletes, the goal of this research is to help establish the groundwork for future studies that will attempt to examine coaching leadership styles and athlete preferences of those leadership styles. As we know, any style of instruction will suffer if understanding is not able to take place, and effective communication is the key to understanding. By finding out what Millennials want compared to Generation X in terms of coaching behavior, athletic coaches will be in a better position to make changes, if necessary, to their coaching style to help facilitate more effective communication with their new athletes.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

“Coaching effectiveness is largely dependent on the quality of the decisions made and the degree to which these decisions are accepted by the athletes” (Chelladurai, Hagerty, and Baxter, 1989, p. 201). This one sentence encompasses the current trend in athletics but Millennials are changing the relationship between coaches and athletes. Because a coaching decision is required to be accepted to be executed, if coaches are not able to send the messages in the manner in which an athlete is willing to accept, the coach is not able to bring leadership or success to his or her team. Having seen how Millennials are changing the manner in which communication is delivered, the question of what and how a coach needs to change to be successful with this generation needs to be investigated. This dissertation is an attempt to identify what specific leadership behaviors Millennial generation athletes prefer from their coaches by way of a comparison of Millennial athletes to their Generation X predecessors. This section will provide a background of who Generation X and Millennials are as well as the similarities and differences between the members of each cohort. Theoretical frameworks of communication accommodation theory, power, and leadership styles will be established as a basis for identifying how coaches and athletes can better communicate with each other to meet the needs of their communication partner. Finally, an example of former University of Oregon track and field coach, Bill Bowerman, will be used to illustrate the behaviors of past coaches as a juxtaposition of what coaches need to be in the future.



## **Generations**

Theoretical research on generations starts with the work of Karl Mannheim (1952). In *The Problem of Generations*, Mannheim begins to establish his theory, the basis of which is the use of both a positivist and post positivist/phenomenological approach to studying generational connections. Because of the collective nature of grouping members of a generation together by both time and experiences, taking only time or experience as sole factors will not allow for a complete understanding of what differentiates one generation from another (Mannheim, 1952). Because the experiential factors include events such as war or economic booms and/or crisis, time is a very important indicator of generational differences. When these experiential factors are the same from one generation to another, the time frame in which the events took place becomes as important as the event itself. As Mannheim (1952) explains, when the event takes place, as well as the age of those experiencing it, will determine how it is experienced. So a sixty year old individual experiencing a war will not have the same perspective as someone who is twenty years old. These different perspectives have been developed based on the individual's life experiences, or lack thereof, including factors such as the location in which they live, their personal experiences, education and employment, and relationships with others (Mannheim, 1952).

According to Mannheim (1952), the positivist approach to generations focuses on breaking cohorts down only by specific dates that would constitute a beginning and an end to the generation. As stated above, dates alone would not work as a descriptor of a generation because they leave out all of the other factors that bring a generation together. However, completely discounting them from a generational description is

faulty as well as they are just as important as the common experiences members of generations encounter. Mannheim looked to Comte and Hume to help offer a span of time that would be acceptable as a cohort block.

Mannheim (1952) used Hume's ideas on social continuum to explain how cohorts, or groupings of generations, should be assembled. The core of the argument is that during the life of an individual there is a learning process that takes place through personal experience, as well as the experiences of those around the individual. Some of the most important lessons come from those that are older than the individual. The comparison Hume made to explain how life lessons are passed on was that of how political systems can exist and undergo an ever-changing shift in leadership, and yet still stay the same at the core of the system. Mannheim used this example to relate to how the flow of knowledge existed from one generation to the next, but also used this to help show how generations differed from each other yet could all still work together in one society (1952).

Mannheim (1952) also used Comte's arguments about the progression of the different stages in life to establish a thirty-year span in his generational theory. According to Comte, the thirty-year span for a cohort is explained as the time that it takes an individual to progress from each of the stages of life indicated as youth, adulthood, and retirement years. By breaking an individual's life down into three segments of thirty years each, Comte made the argument that it took thirty years for an individual to learn what was necessary to be a contributing member of his/her society from his/her elders and his/her personal experiences. Beginning when an individual reaches thirty, they take on positions of power and are essentially helping run his/her

segments of society and helping move his/her society forward. At this age, individuals are able to use the information that they have learned to help keep the society they live in functioning and moving forward. The final 30 years of life are meant to be, as stated above, retirement years. This represents a time in which the individual's most productive years are over, but a time in which they are still able to pass on wisdom to those in the public life stage (Mannheim, 1952).

Once the time frame for the cohort was established, Mannheim (1952) moved on to the more qualitative aspect of his generational theory. As stated before, the dates are just part of what makes a cohort cohesive. Common experiences and how cohort members, collectively, respond to events in their lives are what defines a generation (Mannheim, 1952). An event will have a different impact on an individual depending on factors such as social class, age, physical location of the individual, as well as mental perceptions of all of these factors (Bourdieu, 1977; Mannheim, 1952). By seeing how individuals reacted to the event based on these factors and by analyzing the cohort's similar and/or different responses to the event, one can start to identify what Mannheim described as a cohort. By taking a look at the different interpretations, Mannheim was also able to identify how, even in the same cohort, not all members are exactly the same. Because members of a generation are from such diverse locations and will experience life based on such different perspectives, it is impossible for each one to interpret one event in the exact same way, but Mannheim states that this is not necessary. The important factor is a common trend that is seen in some of the events that will make it clear that the concept of generational cohort does actually exist (Bourdieu, 1977; Mannheim, 1952).

## **Generation X versus Millennials**

In order to understand what factors are used to identify one generation from another, it is important to first view the larger generational blocks, cohorts, and cohort member behaviors. Generations are usually broken down into groups of individuals, or cohorts, born between certain dates that usually span twenty-year intervals (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Though the time frame for generations has been shortened by Strauss and Howe (1991), these authors keep their time frame closest to that of Mannheim (1952) by analyzing generations in the twenty-year intervals. Some authors have set the time frame anywhere from ten to fifteen year spans, but Strauss & Howe (1991) argue that the longer intervals encompass the events that generally shape the outlook of the particular generation. Though these experiences are often similar in each generation, such as war, economic or political turmoil, or world events, the time frame in which the events take place, as well as the cultural outlook on these events, are what make them unique and influential to each cohort (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Because trends and culture do not shift exactly within the twenty years that mark generational cohorts, Howe and Strauss (1991) also investigate generations through the lens of generation blocks. These blocks encompass a sixty-year span and the three cohorts that fall within these years, as a way to further explain the evolution of one cohort to another. By looking at sixty years versus just twenty, researchers are better able to analyze those cohort members that are born in the beginning and end of each generation, allowing them to see how the individuals may differ from those born more towards the middle of the generational span.

The Baby Boomer Generation (1940-1960), Generation X (1961-1981), and the Millennial Generation (1982-2002) comprise what Strauss and Howe (1991) call the Millennial block. As time evolves, so do cohorts, and part of helping determine exactly why similar events can influence generations differently is to find out what influence each generation has on each other. Essentially, each generation is influenced by the behavior of the cohort before them as much as they are influenced by the time span they call their own. Generation X and the Millennials are no different in this situation.

### **Generation X**

Born in the middle of the Millennial Generation block, Generation X found themselves dealing with the repercussion of many of the choices of their Baby Boomer predecessors, and the special treatment of the Millennial Generation. Despite their best efforts, it always seemed as if Generation X could never get the respect they deserved (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Born between 1961 and 1981 (Howe & Strauss, 1993; Strauss & Howe, 1991), Gen X found itself trying to grow up in a rather turbulent time in American history, shaping the outlook of this cohort. The first wave of this generation were children during the hippy movement, eight years old when Woodstock happened, and teens when the Watergate scandal ruined President Richard Nixon (Strauss & Howe, 1991). They saw the end of the Summer of Love in 1967, followed by the steady increase in the American divorce rate, which in turn created a surge in the number of latchkey kids (Howe & Strauss, 1993; Strauss & Howe, 1991). Xers were teenagers shaping their worldview as the country was shifting into the selfishness that marked much of the 1980's, creating a sense that Xers had to do a lot for themselves (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Throughout their lives, Generation X has always been a very reactionary generation. Their education system was revamped as an attempt to shift away from the grade inflation of the Baby Boom era (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Though low performers in the Boomer generation were given sympathy and help, Gen X school children who could not make the grades were constantly told that they were not as intelligent as students before them and they deserved to fail (Howe & Strauss, 1993). A telltale sign of how this generation would start to fix the problems of the past, is the distinct difference between the Boomer generation and Gen X as collegians. Boomers were described as immature and arrogant, where Gen Xers were noted to be hard workers with a “get-it-done mentality” (Howe & Strauss, 1993, p. 13). Though Generation X met with success in academics, and later in the workforce, elders still saw Xers as a misguided generation full of lost kids “whose low test scores and high rates of crime, suicide, and substance abuse marked a post-Vietnam War extreme for American youth” (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 317). Overall, Gen Xers were seen as a disappointment by most of their elders (Strauss & Howe, 1991). However, in the case of disappointment, this feeling was mutual. Generation X was equally as distrusting and disheartened by their elders’ inability to help solve many of the problems that the cohort was facing, such as the higher rate of substance abuse and increased rates of suicide as stated above, which were a direct result of the situations created by the Baby Boomers before them (Howe & Strauss, 1993).

Generation X started to see themselves as, according to Howe and Strauss (1993), a “clean-up crew” for the Baby Boom generation and the problems that the generation created (p.12). They started to notice that they could easily be the sacrificial

generation, essentially just seeing themselves as the generation that would just fix problems rather than one that could bring about drastic change. Though this did not paint the picture that they wanted for their lives, they accepted the role. Generation X figured out ways to do as much as they could with the little guidance and support given to them. In the process, this cohort learned to follow the rules and deal with traditional power structures, even if they did not always agree with them (Howe & Strauss, 1993). And what did they get for all of their hard work? They saw the next generation, the Millennials, come up reaping all the benefits that they worked hard to provide.

### **The Millennials**

So often in popular magazines, on television, and in books, people are talking about how the Millennial Generation, or Generation Y, is changing the face of society. Many of these stories tell about how this overly praised, ultra-protected generation is causing an uproar in how schools, and recently organizations, conduct business (Alsop, 2008). But often, some of the details as to who and what a Millennial is are missing. So, what is a Millennial? For starters, they are mainly the children of Baby Boomers, born between 1982-2002 (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2007, Huntley, 2006). Millennials are the generation born immediately after Generation X and seen, because of their more outgoing and motivated attitude, as the juxtaposition of the dark slacker image that had been wrongfully imposed upon Generation Xers (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Twenge, 2006).

With Generation X being seen as a disappointment to their elders, it seemed as if society was eager to start over and do things “right” for the Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 1993). From the time they were born, Millennials have been catered to by

everyone from parents to marketers (Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006). These kids were born while a shift in childrearing philosophies built on protection was taking place, the likes of which society had never really seen before (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Twenge, 2006). It was in 1982, the year the first Millennials were being born, that the first “Baby on Board” signs were hung in cars (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Strauss, 1993; Twenge, 2006). This was the generation where child safety locks could be found everywhere, from kitchen cabinets to bathroom toilet covers. Child safety seats in cars have evolved from use only during infancy to a federally regulated law requiring use through most of elementary school (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Strauss, 1993; Twenge, 2006). Parents and educators have always been eager to praise and support Millennials, often giving rewards, such as trophies or certificates, for simply participating in events and activities where before, one had to win an event to receive an award (Alsop, 2008; Twenge, 2006). Perhaps in an attempt to break the negative attitude that persisted throughout the Generation X era, Millennial parents worked hard to make sure their children were happy, felt loved, and felt special (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Twenge, 2006). This protection of Millennial parents from the cradle to college, and beyond, has earned them the title of *helicopter parents* as they tend to constantly hovering around their children, ready to swoop in and fix every problem that may come the child’s way (Twenge, 2006).

When analyzing the events that have taken place during the lives of these individuals to help shape them into who they are today, it is almost surprising that they are such optimists. Though they have been catered to in many areas of their lives, this generation has also seen its share of negative events. Just as every generation before



them, there are many national and world events that have influenced just how the Millennial Generation sees the world (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Huntley, 2006; Strauss & Howe, 1991). For Millennials these events included school shootings at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech, the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, deepening economic chaos, and wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan (Johnson, 2008; Twenge, 2006). This is not to say that nothing has ever been good or fun in these individuals' lives. This generation saw the election of the first African-American President in Barack Obama. They also saw technological advances that even Generation X could only dream about. Smart phones, high speed internet instead of dial-up, DVRs and social networking were all standard issue as Millennials were growing up (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Twenge, 2006). These advancements have made it so this generation can get what they want, as quickly as they want, and whenever they want it (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Twenge, 2006).

Seeing much of what Millennials have had to deal with growing up, it is no surprise that adults have wanted to praise and protect them. This constant praise and attention has also served to boost the ego of this "Generation Me" leading to problems when they encounter criticism (Twenge, 2006). An active avoidance of criticism is one of the reasons Millennials enjoy working in groups; if something goes wrong, they do not have to take all of the blame themselves (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Huntley, 2006). In another attempt to help avoid criticism, Millennials outwardly seek information that will help guide them in the right direction and away from criticism. Unlike those before them, Millennials are not afraid to challenge the typical hierarchical power structure that is recognized by society by asking any questions they feel necessary of whoever

they believe can answer the question (Twenge, 2006). Similar to researchers investigating business cultures, Twenge (2006) describes how her colleagues at San Diego State University have stated that increasingly the students in their college classrooms are less aware of hierarchy and more willing to question their professors than students in the past. The students do not see a problem telling professors that they are wrong, or claiming that they made a mistake in grading, essentially not having a sense of hierarchy or power in a class structure (Alsop, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). The most common complaint on behalf of Millennial students is that they were not told specific details by their instructors as to how to complete tasks. (Twenge, 2006). Again, if it is neither in the description nor the rules, it is not a step towards the reward and therefore could be seen as a step away, so they opt not do anything beyond what is specifically stated by the instructors (Twenge, 2006). The common response by instructors to these student complaints is that they figured some of the details to be common sense and therefore did not state them, most not realizing that this generation needed so much detail in their task instructions (Alsop, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). This is not to say instructors or, in business settings, bosses think Millennials do not have common sense. These individuals would not be so accommodating to the needs of Millennials if they did not believe it was worth doing so. They simply never had to deal with a group of individuals who need such specific details or instructions as Millennials ask for (Twenge, 2006).

Another trait of the Millennial generation is the speed at which they are used to receiving information. Millennials are the first generation to have always had the internet available at their disposal (Savage, Collins-Mayo, Mayo, & Cray, 2006;

Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Waiting for something is not what this generation is used to (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Twenge, 2006). If they want information they just Google it, if they want music they just iTunes it, if they want a meal they can run to McDonalds or just microwave it. Why wait when you do not have to? Millennials are used to having things handed to them without too much work or worry, and if they do not like what they have, they will just change it for something that they do like (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Twenge, 2006). This generation is used to the world around them accommodating to their wants and needs, mainly because it has in the past.

Millennials are often presented as the anti-Generation X cohort (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006); however this is not necessarily the case. These two generations actually have a lot more in common than most would realize. Members of both generations work hard, even though Generation X is usually not seen as hard workers (Howe & Strauss, 1993). Be it in the classroom or the workplace (Alsop, 2006; Twenge, 2006), both have found success despite the constant changes going on around them (Howe & Strauss, 1993; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Twenge, 2006). The main difference between these cohorts seems to be the mentality that each has when attempting to work towards their goals (Twenge, 2006). As stated earlier, members of Generation X were seen as slackers before they even had a chance to prove otherwise (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Even after proving that the slacker label did not fit most of the members of Generation X, it was not enough to change the opinions of their critics, nor shed the negative title given by those critics (Howe & Strauss, 1993; Strauss & Howe, 1991). So members of Generation X started to accept their lack of support

and just follow the rules without too much question (Howe & Strauss, 1993). This behavior seems to be the most notable difference between Generations X and Y. Where Generation X learned to get things done mostly on their own, Millennials seem to ask questions every opportunity they get (Twenge, 2006).

Often referred to as Generation “Why” (Twenge, 2006), Millennials’ constant questioning is not necessarily done out of a lack of respect for authority, which usually was the case for Xers (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Millennials’ questions are based on a need to know. Be it teachers, coaches, or employers, Millennials do not seem to see questioning as out of the ordinary as answers have always been available to them instantly (Huntley, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2007; Twenge, 2006). The technique usually works; however, in some superior and subordinate dynamics, the questioning seems out of place and leads to power shift between the communicators. These power shifts can be dealt with if one speaker is willing to, or change their behaviors and accommodate to the shift in power. However, when a speaker, such as a coach, is not used to a subordinate, such as an athlete, challenging his or her power, problems can arise in the communication dynamic.

### **Communication Accommodation Theory & Power**

When interacting with others, two outcomes that speakers may seek to achieve are association or disassociation with the individual he or she is speaking to (Beebe & Giles, 1984). Association would be sought when the speaker seeks to continue current, or provide for future, communication with his or her partner (Beebe & Giles, 1984). Disassociation would, therefore, take place when the speaker is attempting to appear different from their partner. Disassociation would serve to end the current

communication due to the appearance, or existence, of a lack of common topics to relate to between the two speakers (Beebe & Giles, 1984). Association is achieved through accommodating behaviors where disassociation is achieved through nonaccommodating behaviors (Beebe & Giles, 1984). Though the reasons for seeking either outcome may vary based on the speakers' needs, and may not always be congruent, there is one thing that both conversational results will have in common and that is a behavioral change, however subtle, from one of the speech partners (Beebe & Giles, 1984).

Accommodation is the convergence of verbal or nonverbal communication between communication partners and is an attempt to seem similar to one's communication partner (Giles, 1973; Giles et al., 1987; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Giles' (1973) speech accommodation theory (SAT) investigated how the intent to continue interactions influenced how speech accommodation will take place. Giles (1973) focused his research on how and why people displayed specific communication behaviors based on factors including the speaker's accent changes used to converge or diverge their behavior, and speaker perception of his or her environments, as well as the social norms associated with those environments, essentially dictating how they should act versus how they may want to act. Giles (1973) sought to clarify exactly what motivated individuals to change how they communicated with others based on their satisfaction or need to continue further interactions. Beyond the "social cognitive process mediating individuals' perceptions of the environment and their speech roles" (Giles, 1973, p.6) which helps individuals to determine how they interact with others to achieve their goals, SAT was used to explain the benefits or consequences of these convergent, or divergent, behaviors. According to the theory, when individuals seek to

accommodate their speech to accentuate similarities with their communication partners, they are displaying convergence (Giles, 1973). Convergence describes the situation that takes place when one partner accommodates to the other through associative behaviors. If individuals want to seem as if they are similar to their communication partner, they will change their accent, and word choice to do so (Giles, 1973). The purpose is to show the speaker is interested in the person they are talking to as well as interested in future interactions with the individual (Giles, 1973). In contrast to convergence, divergence occurs when individuals display behavior that is different from that of their communication partner(s). Divergent individuals can alter their speech patterns to make sure they appear different from their partners (Giles, 1973). The intention is to either end the current conversation, to seek, hold, or to ensure that no further conversations have to take place. Convergence and divergence both are achieved through specific behaviors aiming to show similarities or dissimilarities between communication partners; however, these behaviors do not have to be executed consciously. An individual can converge or diverge from his or her communication partner without realizing he or she is doing so. The purpose of divergence is to accentuate differences between the speaker and his or her partners (Giles, 1973). SAT eventually evolved into communication accommodation theory (CAT), which also includes nonverbal communication (Giles et al., 1987).

CAT allowed for a new approach to convergence and divergence by including behaviors that covered the nonverbal aspects of accommodation rather than just speech-related variables (Giles, 2008; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). For convergence behavior, CAT uses features such as speech rate, utterance length, gaze, pause

phenomena, smiling, and phonological variants, to name a few (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). With the additional forces on nonverbal communication, the theory is better equipped to answer questions of not only why, but also how convergence or divergence occurred. The introduction of uni- and multimodal convergence rates, defined as the number of behavioral changes that are taking place, was used to explain how and why individuals converge and/or diverge (Giles, 1973). Basically, these convergence styles accentuated the fact that individuals made decisions of how to accommodate based on the behavior and context of their partners.

Accommodation works to reduce differences “by enhancing interpersonal similarities and, thereby reducing uncertainty about the other” (Giles, 2008, p.163). The level of accommodation is important because too much or too little accommodation will be detrimental to the convergence goals of the speaker (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Giles, 1973). For example, if one individual seems like they are trying too hard to be similar to his or her communication partner, the partner may read the convergence as artificial and causing divergence towards their partner. The opposite is also true. If one speaker’s similarities do not seem to be plentiful enough, their partner will see them as dissimilar and therefore end further communication.

As previously stated, not all people want to continue to communicate with their partners, so they seek to make it known that they are not satisfied with the interaction through divergence (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). This behavior can also be observed in both verbal and nonverbal communication. An example of nonverbal divergence is disaccommodation, where one individual partner deliberately changes their behavior when restating something their partner previously stated. An example of

this behavior would be mocking their partner, or even stating an idea their partner stated as if it is an original idea of their own rather than agreeing with their partner's idea. Mocking is one style of divergence that is more generally defined as the verbal or nonverbal behaviors that are meant to differentiate themselves for social or personal concerns (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Divergence or nonaccommodation can be achieved through "speech maintenance" (p.164), which is enacted by the speaker not altering their behavior as to not accommodate to their partner (Giles, 2008). One way in which this is done is through underaccommodation where they ignore the needs of their communication partner and continue with their own communication style (Giles, 2008).

Divergence can be used to end the current interaction or ensure that there will not be another one (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). It can also be used to help make social identity salient and therefore ensure differences are acknowledged. Essentially, if one partner does not see any similarities between themselves and the other, they will view the other as different and usually as having nothing in common with themselves. Without common ground, they may in turn believe there is no reason to continue to communicate and conversation would cease. Divergence, and even convergence, can be used to influence the power differentials in a conversation (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991).

Power is usually defined based on an individual's ability to produce specific outcomes by influencing the behavior of another person (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2006; Dunbar, 2004; Dunbar & Abra, 2010). Power is an important factor in determining how and why either convergence or divergence will take place. When considering power



and an individual's choice to converge versus diverge, there are several factors that investigators can point to as explanations for speaker behavior (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). Convergence, according to Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991), is usually gauged by "the greater the speakers' need to gain another's social approval, the greater the degree of convergence there will be" (p. 19). Power in interpersonal relationships can be seen as "the product of interactions between people and not the result of individuals' desires to wield influence over others" (Berger, 1994, p. 458-459). This relation is due to the interdependence that individuals generally have with their communication partners in achieving their goals (Berger, 1994; Dunbar & Abra, 2010). Despite this dependence and the possibility of back and forth power shifts, power displays are often difficult to identify because not all power shifts are a result of one individual overtly seeking to give or take power to or from another individual (Dunbar, 2004; Dunbar & Abra, 2010).

The relationship at the center of this dissertation is a good example of this situation. When an athlete asks his or her coach a question about a task the coach has requested to be performed, a power shift occurs when the coach decides to answer the question, though the athlete may not be aware of the new power dynamic he or she created. The unintentional, or unseen, power shift can be attributed to the dual levels of understanding that can come from a single message (Berger, 1994). When a single message is sent by an individual, there are two levels of understanding that influence the power that exists between communication partners, the first is the content level and the second is the relationship level. The content level is based on the actual content in the message, essentially the literal meaning that the words in the message express. The

second level, or the relationship level, is based on what the message “implies about the relationship” that the communication partners have (Berger, 1994, p. 461). So when the athlete questions the coach, the content may just be a simple request for information, however, the power in the relationship could still be challenged.

Power also can be displayed in interactions where an individual wants to appear different from those with whom they are speaking and therefore also appear more powerful than the other individual. When differences are accentuated, nonaccommodation can be used to gain power by forcing the speaker’s communication partner or partners to converge to them, or else lose the opportunity for continued communication. This is a prime example of manifest power. Manifest power is an outward attempt by one speaker to gain power in the situation (Dunbar, 2004; Komter, 1989). The purposeful disregard of opportunities to accommodate and intentional nonaccommodation show clear attempts to acquire the power position in the conversation and to potentially show dominance in the situation. Other types of power that can be used in conversation are latent power and invisible power (Komter, 1989). According to Komter (1989), invisible power stems from the “implicit values, beliefs, or preconceptions that precede behavior” (p. 207). This style of power is not achieved through the behavior of one of the individuals in the interaction, but rather happens due to the values, beliefs, and preconceptions that are part of the individual’s expectations formed prior to the interaction. These factors are enacted subconsciously as the context of the conversation unfolds; therefore, the behavior is not as apparent as overt verbal or nonverbal behavior, hence the title of invisible power. Latent power describes the conflict avoidance techniques that a less powerful individual will engage in to avoid

challenging the power of their more powerful partner (Dunbar, 2004; Komter, 1989).

Latent power, like manifest power, is more overt behaviorally and more dependent upon the partner's power, instead of pre-existing perceptions by the partner's (Dunbar & Abra, 2010). An example of latent power would be that which is present in the power position a coach has over an athlete because of the dynamic of the team structure.

Because challenging a coach's authority could be seen as a lack of respect and possibility have negative consequences, depending on the personality of the coach, conflict avoidance on behalf of the athletes would seem like a logical end result.

These power types and techniques are all present, though not all at one time, in the accommodation behaviors analyzed in communication accommodation theory due to the constant behavioral shifts that can take place during accommodation in individual interactions. Invisible, manifest, and latent power types can all be present in either convergent or divergent behaviors previously described in the CAT section above, as the constant behavioral shifts that take place during convergence or divergence usually result in power shifts. In contrast, invisible power is based on the beliefs or values of one individual rather than the situation in which communication takes place. For example, where latent power is given to a coach because the coach is known as the head of the team, an athlete who does not see his or her coach as deserving the power may not observe this dynamic from an invisible power standpoint. Because of his or her view of the coach and the behaviors and/or techniques of the coach, the athlete will behave differently with one coach versus other coaches. Invisible power displays in this relationship would cause the athlete to attempt to take the coach's power from the

beginning of the interaction because they may not see the coach as having earned their power over the group.

### **Millennials and CAT**

When looking at the millennial generation, and how the individuals in their lives, such as parents, teachers, and even employers, often cater them to them, we are seeing a shift in the traditional power top-down power structure. Under the traditional power structure, high power individuals, such as teachers, parents, or coaches, do not accommodate to the communication styles or needs of the lower power individual, represented here by Millennials (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). According to CAT research, the individual in the higher power position generally will be the individual to be accommodated to by others (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). What we should be seeing are Millennials, depending on their ages or situations, accommodating to higher power individuals in their lives rather than these individuals accommodating to them. What is actually happening is many individuals and organizations are making big changes in how they act or do business to accommodate to Millennials (Alsop, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2003, Huntley; 2006; Twenge, 2006).

The first sign of this trend was seen in the changes Millennials' parents were willing to make for their children (Alsop, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Twenge, 2006). These parents partook in activities such as baby proofing their homes, spending extra money and time on sports and other extracurricular activities for their children as adolescents, and are now attending college tours and speaking with admissions officers as their children are entering adulthood. When it comes to their children, Millennial

parents made sure they did as much as they could do to ensure that their children had the very best (Alsop, 2008; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006).

Next, schools were changing their instruction styles to accommodate the needs of the Millennials, altering everything from grading systems to testing systems (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Howe & Struass, 2003). Once Millennials were heading to college, admissions and student affairs offices were hard at work trying to figure out how to attract and keep Millennials and their helicopter parents interested in a university (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Twenge, 2006). Then it was the turn of the work force, trying to get and keep the Millennials in their organizations (Alsop, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). Companies have started to work on providing more feedback to their employees, working more vacation time into yearly schedules, allowing parent visit days for employees, and providing more opportunities for working abroad (Alsop, 2008; Sujansky & Ferri-Reed, 2009). This higher power to lower power accommodation is not unheard of, but rarely has it happened on such a grand scale. Though some in athletics have already figured out how to follow this trend and make changes to their communication and work style to fit the needs of Millennials, the question for those who are still trying to make the change is what exactly needs to be adjusted to best suit the needs of these individuals? Because successful coaching requires understanding athletes, so as to be able to know how to get the best results from that individual, coaches need to learn what behaviors, if any need to be adapted to meet the needs of the Millennial generation.

As we can see, Millennials are changing the face of communication and, in the process, CAT with what seems to be a different concept of power. Though they are

definitely rule-followers (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006), Millennials are also questioners (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006). As stated earlier in this chapter, Millennials have a need to know everything, from how things work, to where people are, to how to do what is being asked of them and most importantly how to succeed. When it comes to task completion, which is usually the goal of coach-athlete interactions, the questions they ask are based more on wanting information to help them be successful than challenging authority (Howe & Strauss, 2003; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006). Though this does require the higher power individual, in this situation the coach, to accommodate to the lower power individual, the athlete, it is not based on the want or need of the athlete to gain power. According to CAT, the intent would not matter as much as the behavior therefore, a challenge to the power of the coach by the athlete would cause a power shift to take place, if he responds to the question or behavior expressed by the athlete. Or would it? This dissertation seeks to analyze this dynamic and through an investigation of the end result of interactions as a determinate of when and how accommodation takes place.

According to CAT, the questions asked by Millennial athletes about the instructions given by their coaches would be considered disassociation. Because the lower-powered athlete is not simply complying with the demands of the higher-powered coach, the question would be viewed as a power gaining technique and therefore would be disassociation (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). The problem with this assessment of the interaction would be the intent of the question. If the lower power athlete would in fact be using the question as an exhibition of manifest power, the assessment would be correct. However, if the purpose of the athlete's question is to

gain information to ensure full compliance with the request of the higher power individual, then this assumed disassociation would actually be accommodation. A brief power shift from the high to the low power individual has occurred, but it would be argued that disassociation is not taking place. The reason for this claim is again the intent of the questions being asked. Because the questions being asked are purely for informational purposes and compliance upon understanding of the task at hand, power shift back to the higher power individual coach and athlete accommodation is the end result.

### **Leadership Styles**

One aspect of being a good leader is using power properly and allowing power to shift, as needed, to reach the completion on the task. Leadership, be it good or bad, is one of the main factors in determining whether a group or organization will succeed or fail in their task. Two of the traditional types of leadership styles that are often used to determine what type of leader an individual is are the autocratic and democratic leadership styles (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). The differences between an autocratic and democratic leader were first identified by Lewin and Lippitt (1938) in a study carried out to find how social group interaction trends are created amongst elementary school students. In the study, students were given a task, mask making, and the authors observed how the students worked together to complete the task. What they found were two juxtaposing leadership styles that they identified as autocratic and democratic (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). The groups with autocratic leaders were very leader-focused and geared more toward task completion (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Autocratic leaders used their power in order to dictate tasks to their group members, did so only once, and

did not offer to help the members after initial instructions were given (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Autocratic leaders relied more on latent power, but did use manifest power to regain their status when a power shift had taken place. This style has been seen as discouraging to group members, is not motivational, and discredits the input of subordinates (Eagly, Johanneson-Schmidt, & VanEngen, 2003).

As autocratic leaders can be seen as a dictator, democratic leaders allow more autonomy in dealing with their groups (Eagly, et al., 2003; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Democratic leaders create outlines for group plans and share power with group members, allowing the members to have input on the task completion process (Eagly, et al., 2003; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). The democratic leader is a more effective leader as they are able to better facilitate the group process while working to make sure the needs of each individual member are addressed to the fullest extent possible (Eagly, et al., 2003; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). Democratic leaders rely on latent power and allow for power shifts to take place to help work towards task completion.

Further research investigating leadership styles found that two more styles of leadership were emerging that essentially shared traits from both the democratic and autocratic styles described above, as well as the more hands-off approach of a Laissez-Faire type of leader. These two types of leaders were labeled transformational and transactional leaders (Bass, 1985; Bass, Avolio & Atwater, 1996; Eagly, et al., 2003; Kruger, Rowold, Borgmann, Stanfenbiel, & Heinitz, 2011). The outcomes of these studies was a clear description of the similarities of the different leader styles and how each evolved over time from Lewin and Lippitt's (1938) original findings, as well as those that came in between. Transformational leaders were described as motivational,



charismatic, considerate of the needs of their group members, inspirational, and intellectually stimulating (Bass, 1995; Bass et al., 1996; Kruger et al., 2011). According to Bass et al. (1996) this leader was a more visionary leader who offered power to their group members, but still had control over most aspects of the group task (see Figure 1).

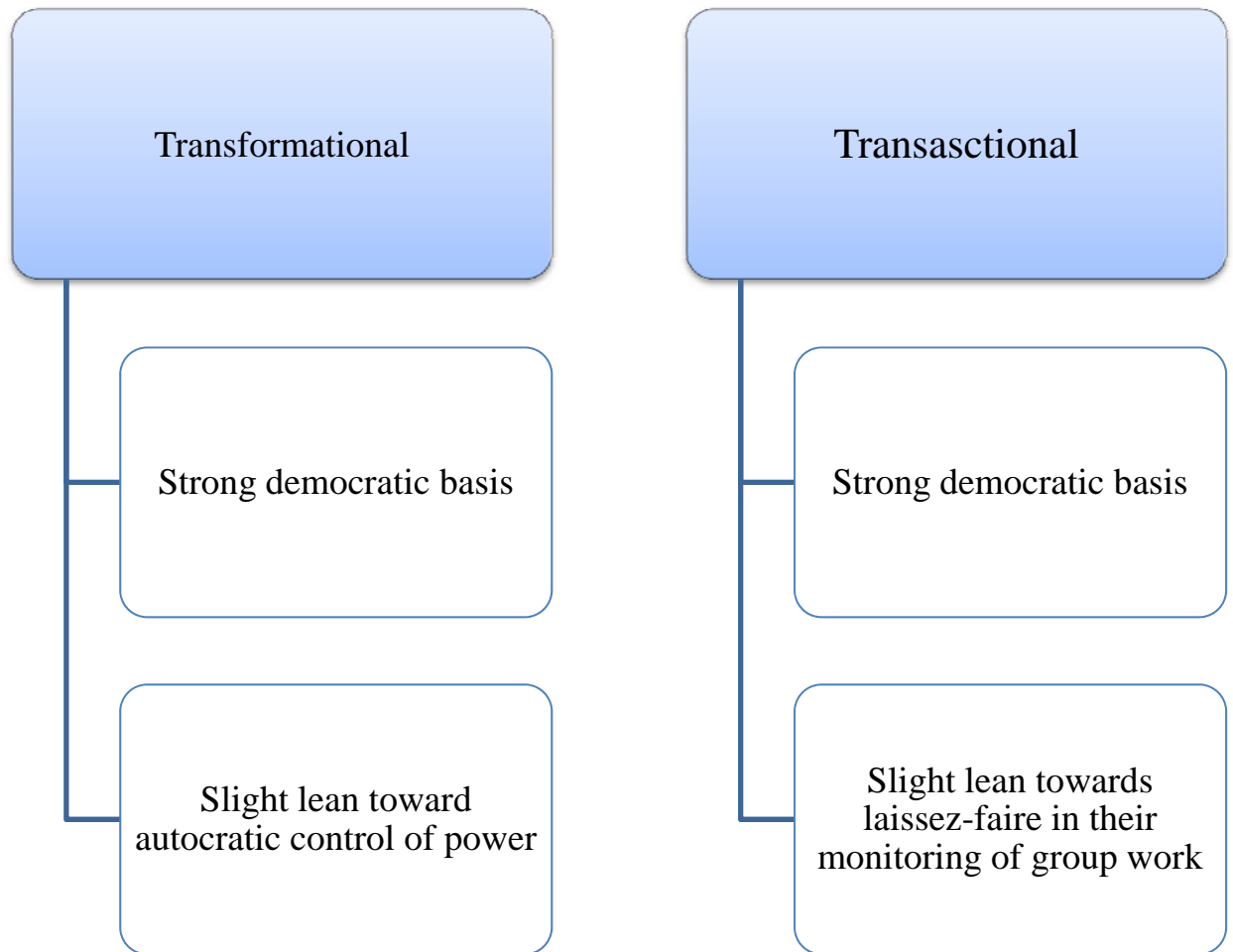


Figure 1. Leadership Styles

Transactional leaders were seen as enforcing the quid-pro-quo method of motivation, rewarding their group members at the end of the task based on how successful they were at task completion (Bass, 1996; Kruger et al., 2011). These leaders varied between active and passive monitoring of their groups, influencing the

group's overall success based on how much attention the leader paid to member work. Active management sought out group members to make sure that they were always on task, resembling an autocratic leader at times. Passive management style was more laissez-faire in nature, looking to make corrections after problems had already surfaced. This style was seen as counterproductive and bad for the overall morale of the group (Bass, 1997; Kruger et al., 2011). Though these studies helped identify more leadership styles than just the basic autocratic and democratic styles outlined by Lewin and Lippitt (1938), how each related to the other was still unclear. Eagly, et al. (2003) helped to clarify this issue.

Eagly, et al. (2003) conducted a meta-analysis meant to determine how gender related to leadership style, including transactional, transformational, autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire styles. The authors described transformational leadership as essentially democratic leadership with an autocratic influence and transactional leadership as a blending of democratic and laissez-faire (Eagly, et al., 2003). Transformational leaders help create a sense of optimism about goal achievement with the group, and seek input from group members about creating a plan to achieve their goals, all practices that also extend to problem solving during task completion (Eagly, et al., 2003). Finally, these leaders work to mentor those group members that are new to their organization (Eagly, et al., 2003). Transformational leaders are clearly still democratic leaders, though their overall approach is clearly more structured, following the techniques of Lewin and Lippitt's (1938) autocratic leaders described above (see fig. 1). These leaders use a democratic approach, with a lean towards autocratic in their

tighter control of group structure (Eagly, et al., 2003). Because of this dynamic, these leaders retain more power than leaders who use a solely democratic approach.

Transactional leaders, according to Eagly, et al. (2003), are also democratic in their general approach, but they tend to have more of a hands-off approach to their style. They help the group get started in their overall work plan, but usually leave the members to their own devices until the task has been completed (Eagly, et al., 2003). Transactional leaders tend to check in on their group intermittently as the work is being done, but usually focus their main assessment of the group on the final product. If there is a problem with the work, these leaders often find out about the problem after it has become a major issue because of their lack of attention during the work process (Eagly, et al., 2003). This means that they are usually fixing problems instead of working to avoid them. This style is beneficial for teams or groups that are well established and understand their tasks clearly, but can create a lot of back-tracking for groups that do not have a lot of experience working together as a team. With a more laissez-faire, or more hands-off approach to leadership, transactional leaders often give up much of their power to their group members, sometimes at the detriment of productivity (Eagly, et al., 2003). Transformation leaders exercise more manifest power than transactional leaders, but both rely on latent power to establish a hierarchy. The reliance on latent power is even more evident with transactional leaders because of the more hands off approach that they use.

In sports, coaches are the leaders of their teams, and just as in any leadership situation, there are coaches that can be categorized as either autocratic or democratic, and it can easily be argued that there are coaches who would fit the transformational

and transactional styles as well. Though autocratic and democratic coaches have both found success in the past, as the Millennial generation makes their way through the amateur and professional ranks in sports, it appears as if a transformational or transactional leader may find more success with these groups. Because both of these leadership styles are able to find ways to adapt from more to less control with greater fluency than strictly autocratic or democratic leaders. What style of leadership would best work for coaching Millennial athletes will also be investigated in this dissertation in order to help the coaches understand how their athletes prefer communication to take place. The overall goal here will be to combine information about the new power structures created in the coach-and-Millennial-athlete dynamic and the preferred leader styles of these athletes in order to start outlining a framework of accommodation behaviors for coaches.

### **Trends in Coaching**

As described earlier, autocratic coaching styles have been the norm in sports for many, if not all, past generations of athletes. Through the years, individuals who decided to participate in athletics learned very early on that if they wanted to play the game, they had to learn to endure the possible wrath that a coach could unleash at any moment. Though not all coaches utilized a strong autocratic style, the stereotype did build from the experiences of athletes whose coaches did act in this manner. As much as the yelling and assertive communication experienced in practice and in competition was considered the norm (Rocca, Martin, & Toale, 1998, Vargas-Tonsing & Bartholomew, 2006), as time has progressed, research started to surface that indicated

that this norm was no longer the way that athletes preferred for their coaches to instruct them (Turman & Schrodt, 2004).

Whether an athlete enjoys their experience in sports usually determines if they keep playing sports and is connected to the athletes' perception of their coach's leadership behavior (Rocca et al., 1998; Turman & Schrodt, 2004). If an athlete perceives the coaches' instruction and expectations are communicated in a positive manner, the athletes reported satisfaction with their coach's leader behavior (Rocca et al., 1998; Turman & Schrodt, 2004). Though the value of positive interaction between coaches and athletes has been proven via the above research, if the less aggressive, more democratic approach to coaching would have been mentioned to coaches of the past, they would have laughed at the idea. One coach in particular who is famous for his success, but who would be questioned by today's generation of athletes, is former University of Oregon (Oregon) track and field coach, Bill Bowerman.

Bill Bowerman was the track and field coach for the University of Oregon from 1949-1972 ([www.goducks.com](http://www.goducks.com)). He was a very autocratic coach who saw a need to dictate every aspect of his athletes' lives (Moore, 2006). His reasoning for establishing such tight control of his runners' behaviors was based on his understanding that everything in these athletes' lives influenced how they ran. Kenny Moore (2006), a former runner at Oregon who was coached by Bowerman, told of how the coach even tried to make sure that his athlete's personal relationships were not causing too much stress. If athletes needed money, he found them jobs (Moore, 2006). He fought with the athletic department for more scholarships for some of the sports that were lacking to help bring more talent to Oregon as well as to help those who were already there pay for

school (Moore, 2006). One story that Moore (2006) tells of his time at Oregon was of how the coach forced him to rest to heal his body so he could be healthy enough to run to his potential. Though Moore fought Bowerman's non-training regimen and was going to run on his own until the coach told him that he had spies all through the town, and if anyone told him that Moore was running, he would be kicked off the team permanently. Knowing of Bowerman's reach in the community, Moore did as he was told. The result was Moore's fastest time and a deeper understanding of just how much Bowerman knew about track and field (Moore, 2006).

Bowerman knew his team inside and out. Though he was autocratic in his style, the men he coached knew he had their best interest at heart and listened to him. They all had individual workout plans instead of team plans (Moore, 2006). Bowerman changed the way they ran, how they thought about running, and even how they dressed to run (Moore, 2006). Bill, as he preferred to be called, revolutionized running with the creation of NIKE shoes which were originally made so he could individualize every piece of equipment that his athletes wore. This special attention to each and every runner was what first won Bowerman over with his athletes, but the one thing that may make him an enemy to athletes today. This closeness with his athletes can be described as immediacy. Immediacy is defined as the verbal or nonverbal show of liking for another (Mehrabian, 1971). Though the immediacy that was built in to Bowerman's autocratic approach allowed him to control nearly every aspect of his athletes lives, and helped his athletes understand his approach, it may not work at the current date. With the stress on group membership and equal treatment that many in the Millennial Generation seek, could they handle being treated differently in so many situations as

Bowerman did with members of his team? Or could members of this generation see past the “unequal” treatment to see the “special” treatment they are receiving and appreciate the work of a Bowerman type coach? Since we are unable to get answers to some of these questions, as a Bowerman type of coach is not as prevalent anymore, at least to the extent of these two coaches, we have to settle for what we do know, these coaches and these styles are no longer the norm. However, the original question still remains of what should the “new” norm be?

According to current research, coaches who favor a more extreme and more autocratic style can be counterproductive to what his or her goals and the goal of the athletes (Kassing & Infante, 1999; Rocca, Martin, & Toale, 1998; Turman, 2005). These autocratic coaches tend to have athletes reporting less motivation to play and less affective learning from their coach, than their more democratic styled counterparts (Kassing & Infante, 1999; Martin, Rocca, Cayanus, & Weber, 2009; Rocca et al., 1998; Turman, 2005). Affective learning in the classroom has been defined as a student’s positive attitude for the class and the context that is taught (Richmond & McCroskey, 1984). In sports it can also include the level of credibility of the coach and interest in continued sport participation (Rocca et al., 1998; Rubin & Martin, 1994; Turman & Schrodt, 2004).

So why are we so concerned with what today’s athletes want and need? Why do coaches need to be so concerned about changing for a bunch of “kids”? Why are these athletes not changing to the needs of the coach as they did in the days of Coach Wooden and Bill Bowerman? To answer these questions, we can look at how these athletes are not the athletes of the past. As a matter of fact, this new generation is like none before

them, and just as parents, teachers, marketers, colleges, and so on, before have adapted to millennial needs, coaches need to change as well. Revisiting Chelladurai, Hagerty, and Baxter's quote (1989), "coaching effectiveness is largely dependent on the quality of the decisions made and the degree to which these decisions are accepted by the athletes" (p. 201), it becomes clear why coaches of Millennials need to fully understand what their athletes want in order to have his or her instructions followed. Though it is understood that many current athletic coaches need to alter their coaching style to help create a more productive environment for his or her athletes and themselves, just what needs to be altered and how is still unknown. This dissertation hopes to start to shed some light on how communication can help lead to a better understanding of how leadership and accommodation can improve relationships between coaches and athletes, leading to increased satisfaction and more positive experiences for both parties. The specific research questions that this dissertation will attempt to answer are as follows:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: Does a Millennial athlete prefer an autocratic or democratic style of coaching from his or her instructor?

RQ<sub>2</sub>: Do Generation X athletes prefer a more autocratic or democratic style of coaching from his or her instructor?

RQ<sub>3</sub>: Do Millennial athletes prefer a more transformational leader over a transactional leader?

RQ<sub>4</sub>: Do Millennial athletes intentionally or unintentionally challenge the instructors' power to gain power for themselves?

RQ<sub>5a</sub>: Do coaches notice differences in the preferred coaching styles of members of different generations?



RQ<sub>5b</sub>: If differences in preferred styles of coaching from athletes are noticed by coaches, do the coaches adjust their coaching style for the different generational members?

## Chapter 3: Methods

### Participants

To answer the questions that have been laid out in the previous chapter, interviews were conducted with members of Generation X and Millennials from two different tae kwon do studios. Each generation was represented in both coach and athlete groups being interviewed. Though there was a difference in the number of Generation X and Millennial coaches and athletes in each participating school, with Millennials making up a majority of the population, an attempt was made to have as even a distribution of participants as possible from each generation while still representing the population make up of both schools participating in the study. There were 12 total participants in the study, eight from the Millennial generation and four from Generation X. Four of the participants were instructors with two of the instructors being Millennials and one from Generation X and one, Master Billy, just outside the Generation X age placing him in the Baby Boom generation. The decision to include Master Billy in the study though he was not in Generation X was because the study focus was on whether or not coach were accommodating to athletes of different generations more so than what generation the coaches themselves belonged to. Six of the participants were Millennials and two were from the Generation X. The average age of the participants was 31.75 years with the ages ranging from 56 years old to 22 years old. Six of the participants were female and six were male. Participants belt ranks ranged from orange to 7<sup>th</sup> dan black belt. Because tae kwon do is a sport that individuals can join at any age, the athletes were not only representative of different generations, but also different belt ranks (see Figure 2).

<b>Name *</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Generation</b>	<b>Belt Rank</b>	<b>Student/ Instructor</b>
<b>Joe</b>	TKD1	28	Millennial	6 <sup>th</sup> Dan	Instructor
<b>Jane</b>	TKD1	38	Generation X	6 <sup>th</sup> Dan	Instructor
<b>Marylin</b>	TKD1	24	Millennial	1 <sup>st</sup> Dan	Student/ Instructor
<b>Maggie</b>	TKD1	41	Generation X	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dan	Student/ Instructor
<b>Elena</b>	TKD1	24	Millennial	1 <sup>st</sup> Dan	Student
<b>Lily</b>	TKD1	42	Generation X	Brown	Student
<b>Jon</b>	TKD1	24	Millennial	Green	Student
<b>Bruce</b>	TKD1	25	Millennial	Red	Student
<b>Billy</b>	TKD2	56	Baby Boomer	7 <sup>th</sup> Dan	Instructor
<b>Travis</b>	TKD2	28	Millennial	4 <sup>th</sup> Dan	Instructor
<b>Dawn</b>	TKD2	22	Millennial	Green	Student

Figure 2 Participant List \*All name are pseudonyms

The philosophy of tae kwon do has roots in both Korea, the country of the art's origin, as well as the spirituality that created the core of how tae kwon do is taught, learned, and used. Tae kwon do is translated to the "way of the hand and the foot" (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). As the art grew to a sport practiced throughout the world, it became more of a competitive endeavor encompassing the coach-athlete dynamic presented in this dissertation. Continued growth of the sport was eventually recognized by the International Olympic Committee with tae kwon do entering the Games in 1998 ([www.wtf.org](http://www.wtf.org)). Though current tae kwon

do schools in the United States seem to be driven towards tournament participation and belt promotions, the philosophy of tae kwon do is still at the core of instruction (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). Though tae kwon do was used as a military training, there was also training in Buddhism and Confucianism (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). The goal was to create “complete and enlightened individuals” (Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999, p.14). Because tae kwon do was created as a military defense technique, soldiers training in this martial arts style learned not only how to fight, but also were expected to excel in literature, music, and dance (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). This fully rounded fighting and arts education was referred to as *hwarangdo*, or “the way of flowering manhood” (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999).

Hwaradgdo consists of five tenets: justice, loyalty, fidelity, courage, and honor (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). These tenets are derived from the teachings of both Confucianism and Buddhism (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). These tenets are used to teach students of tae kwon do how to respect the skills they have learned because of the injury the student is able to inflict upon his or her opponent. This respect is expected in the training center, but especially outside of the school against individuals who are less ready to protect themselves against a trained fighter. As time has progressed and tae kwon do has moved from Korea to become a sport practiced around the world that is governed by multiple different sports federations, the tenets are also evolving (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999).

The current tenets of tae kwon do, as taught by the World Tae Kwon Do Federation (WTF) in licensed schools, or *dojangs*, are those of courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). These tenets are still intended to express a sense of respect for opponents and non-opponents alike. Literature about tae kwon do, including books intended to teach about the history and techniques of the sport, list these tenets and the purpose for learning this code of conduct, which now includes behavior of respect toward family and friends, as well.

Belt rank is an important factor to investigate in this study because it represents not only how long a student has been in martial arts, but also how skilled they are in the sport (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). Though belt ranks were not originally a part of martial arts, they are now used to indicate athlete expertise and responsibility inside and outside the studio (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). As an athlete moves up in the belt ranks, they are given the responsibility of teaching and setting a good example for lower ranked athletes, regardless of age (Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000; Whang, Whang, & Saltz, 1999). This creates an interesting addition to the interviews concerning leadership because each member of the school has a leadership role once they have advanced from the first belt (white) to the second (yellow). Students then advance from white to yellow, then orange, green, blue, purple, brown, red, red/black, and black. The highest belt rank for athletes will be the red/black belt. After one becomes a black belt they continue to test for higher degrees, or ranks, as a black belt. A third degree black belt is considered a tae kwon do master,

and a sixth degree is considered a grand master. Because a black belt is automatically considered an instructor, black belts will be eligible for interviews as an athlete and an instructor in the study, answering questions from both the athlete and the instructor interview guides. To be included in the study, interviewees were members of the taekwon do schools participating in the ethnography, members of either Generations X or Y, and over the age of 18.

### **Design and Procedure**

Preparing for and conducting an interview is a multistep process starting with selecting the participants, to constructing the questions and creating an interview guide, to conducting the actual interviews, and finally transcribing and analyzing the stories told (Dillon, 1990). The construction of the interview questions focused on the athlete preferred leadership behavior of his or her coaches and the teaching of taekwon do (see Appendix A and Appendix B). The purpose for selecting these two different aspects, preferred and actual leader behavior, was to help identify what the teaching philosophy were for the coaches, as well as the preferred coaching leadership behaviors of the athletes. The leadership questions were based on the factors used to build both the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS) (Chelladuari & Saleh, 1980) and the Multidimensional Model of Leadership (MML) (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998; Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978). Using interviews allowed the opportunity to determine which behaviors students preferred as well as those the instructors preferred to use. The observations were used to help support and provide clarification for the answers given by each coach during the interviews concerning coaching styles to what he or she actually did during training sessions.

The LSS looks at five different leader behaviors of coaches: Training and instruction, democratic or autocratic behavior, social support of the coach, and positive feedback from the coach to the athlete. Training and instruction describe coaching behavior that focuses on performance improvement through physical development and skill development. Democratic leader behavior involve how much a coach allows their athletes to be part of the decision making process. Autocratic behavior on the other hand looks at how distant a coach is from their athletes and how much authority they attempt to keep to themselves. The social support aspect takes the coach away from instruction to look at how they offer help to their athletes off the playing field (Chelladuari & Saleh, 1980; Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998; Riemer & Chelladuari, 1995). Questions from the interview guide based on these factors were be used to determine which behaviors of the five athletes perceive their coaches use as well as which of these behaviors the coaches prefer to use during instruction. Leader behavior preferences in the MML were based on the five aspects of the LSS (Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978). Interview questions that were asked of both coaches and athletes focused on how a coach displays power and how he or she reacted to possible challenges to power.

The MML is used to analyze the synthesis between the leadership of the coach, the preferences and perceptions of the athlete, and the context of the situation the coach and athlete are engaged in. The MML suggests that team performance outcomes are a reflection of how congruent leader behavior is with athlete preferred leader behaviors (Chelladurai, 1980; Chelladurai, 1990). The four components that the model uses to analyze the coach-athlete interactions are leader behavior as well as the antecedents to

these behaviors, the influence of transformation in leader behavior, and what the outcomes are of the leader's behavior (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998; Smith, Smoll, & Curtis, 1978). Because athletes enter situations with these coaching preferences, the MML attempts to show how these preferences place constraints on requirements of how their coaches are expected to behave (Chelladurai & Carron, 1983; Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998). Interview questions that included the four factors of the MML were used to address accommodation behaviors of coaches to athletes' leadership preferences. Because Millennials have certain preferences and expectations of how a coach should lead, it is necessary for coaches to make efforts to determine what these expectations and preferences are. Without this understanding, coaches will be unable to make the accommodations necessary to properly lead Millennial athletes.

### **Recordings and Transcriptions**

There were a total of twelve interviews conducted and transcribed for the study. The shortest interview was 10:31 minutes and the longest running 54:24 minutes. The average interview was just around 23 minutes. Once the interviews were completed a full transcription of the each interview was used to initially find common themes in the interviews from each grouping of interviewees. These grouping are Generation X athletes, Generation X coaches, Generation Y athletes, and Generation Y coaches. The transcriptions were also used to look at common themes between all athletes and all coaches. The themes that surfaced from these analyses helped to identify behaviors that each generation preferred from their coaches as well as the differences that existed between the preferred coaching behaviors of each cohort.



The first step in determining themes within each grouping was to address common experiences of participants in the study. These experiences will be taken as athlete to coach, coach to athlete, or athlete to athlete communication as martial arts does allow higher belt ranks to instruct lower belt ranks. Because not every experience from every participant was expressed in the same manner, contexts as well as specific word use was used to code for these themes. The next step was to determine whether the coaches were identifying any generational differences that existed between Generation X and Millennial coaching preferences stated by the athletes in their interviews. A direct comparison between coach and athlete answer was used to determine if what coaches perceived were athlete preferences in coaching styles were actually what the athlete stated he or she did prefer. Interviews and observations were used to determine how much coach to athlete accommodation took place during instruction. Through the comparison of interviews and observations, it was determined how the coaches accommodated their communication styles and behaviors for each athlete. How each coach adjusts his or her coaching style to each individual athlete's needs, as well as the power shifts that took place during the interaction, were determined through observations of coach-athlete interactions.

Observations took place in both schools just before, during, and after the adult classes in both schools. These observations took place from May 2012 until July 2012. Classes were attended on average 4 times a week. When not participating in the classes, the author utilized the class times to observe and take field notes of the coaches and athletes interacting during class. Only those individuals who gave consent to be observed and interviewed were included in the field notes.

The observations served three main purposes in this study. First was to observe interactions between coaches and athletes to identify leadership and instructional behaviors and view dyadic interactions that were not addressed in the interviews. During the interview process, not every interaction between a coach and an athlete was discussed because time or memory did not allow for details to come up. Observations helped to fill in these gaps. The second purpose of the observations was the benefit of seeing the interaction between the coaches and the members of the two generations. Finally, observations were used to determine the accuracy of the coach's perception of his or her coaching style as to the actual behavior each exhibited during training. As we know, perception is often based partially on an individual's past experiences, so observations helped to determine how accurate an athlete's perception actually was, based on the behavior being displayed by the coach in training sessions.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Analysis and Verification**

The interview transcriptions, as well as participant observations, were analyzed to identify common themes surrounding the preferred coaching and leadership styles of the Millennial Generation and Generation X. Transcriptions were scrutinized multiple times in order for the opportunity for themes to emerge that could be used, along with the participant observation data, to answer the research questions posed in this dissertation. Participant interview transcriptions were grouped by both generation and role, either instructor or student, in the tae kwon do schools. This means members of each school, referred to as TKD1 and TKD2, were grouped for the generation-based questions, but were then grouped as members of each school for the questions of preferred coaching style. This separate grouping allowed for an examination of the preferred coaching behaviors of students to be compared to the style of coaching described by the individual instructors during the interviews.

A total of four instructors were interviewed for this dissertation, two from each school. Each school had one instructor representing Generation X and one representing Generation Y. Master Joe (all names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms) is the head instructor of TKD1 and a member of Generation Y. Master Jane is a member of Generation X and the assistant instructor of TKD1. Master Jane earned her belts, from white to 6<sup>th</sup> degree black belt, from TKD1 when Master Joe's father was an instructor as the Grand Master of the dojang. Two other interview participants from TKD1, Marylin and Maggie, were also instructor rank, and though they participated in the interview process using the student interview protocol, they did add input through the course of the interview from the instructor perspective, as well. Marylin is a member of Generation Y and a first dan black belt. Maggie is a member of Generation X and a

second dan black belt. These particular participants were selected for their ability to help provide a dual perspective of both instructor and student within the same dojang.

From TKD2, Master Billy is the head instructor of the dojang. The assistant instructor at TKD2 is Master Travis, was a member of Generation Y. Having both generations represented in each school allowed for the ability to get student perspectives of the leadership styles of both generations of instructors. It also allowed for instructors, or Masters, from different generations to give their perspectives of the students from the two generations analyzed in the dissertation.

As for the student participants in the study there were, including Marylin and Maggie, six members of Generation Y and two members of Generation X. Though there was a difference between the numbers of individuals represented from each generation, the need for more members from Generation Y in this study was both expected and necessary. The difference in the ratio was also due to the fact that there were more members of Generation Y participating in the tae kwon do dojangs included in the study.

In order for a theme to be identified as a theme, versus a solitary idea specific to one particular student or instructor, it had to be present in multiple interviews in that grouping. A theme is essentially an answer to a question that is consistent through at least a majority of the participants from the same generation. For example, if a student answered that he or she continually questioned the authority of the instructors, this would not be enough to create a theme within the interviews. As stated, the same message would have to be present in the interviews for at least a majority of the other students in the same generational grouping for a theme to be considered as such. Once

a theme was identified it would be compared to the concepts of power or leadership that were set forth in the research questions to find out if they would be considered part of either concept, or a new aspect of the coach-athlete relationship.

Two methods of verification were used to ensure the validity of the findings. The first method was to use interview excerpts to allow the reader to know exactly what the participant stated that led to the theme uncovered by the author. This would also allow the reader to evaluate whether or not the claims made by the author are valid as stated. The second method, as stated earlier, was to compare interview data, specifically statements made about coaching behaviors in classes, in two manners. The first was to compare the comments made by students about the instructors' behaviors to the comments made by instructors about his or her own behaviors to find out if the perceptions coincide. The second was to compare interview data to observational data to identify differences and/or similarities. Comparing the information gathered from the instructor interviews to that of the student interviews and verifying each of those to the observational data collected created a triangulation of information helping to establish validity of the findings (Creswell, 1994).

### **Millennials and Leadership**

The first research question was concerned with determining if Millennial athletes preferred autocratic or democratic leadership styles from his or her coaches. According to the analysis, coaching preferences of the millennial students interviewed did not lean towards either an autocratic or a democratic coaching style alone, but rather a mix of both. Many of the students accepted that their instructor would utilize a top down style of communication, and probably expected this would happen considering

the history of coach-athlete communication dynamics, as explained in the literature review (Moore, 2006; Rocca, Martin, & Toale, 1998, Vargas-Tonsing & Bartholomew, 2006). Autocratic leadership is central in the structure of tae kwon do, and the structure for all of the classes in both TKD1 and TKD2 dojangs. As explained in the interview responses, every class had the same format; students would arrive at the school, line up in belt rank order when told to do so by the instructor leading the class, and the students are called to stand at attention in Korean, the language of the country of the origin of the sport. Once the students are called to attention they are required to face the flags of the United States and South Korea and ordered to bow. Students are required to “bow in” and “bow out” of class at the beginning and the end of each class. The act of bowing is used to show respect to the coaches and the flags of the countries and the federations that are represented as governing bodies of the sport. Bowing to the instructors also shows respect for the individuals that are sharing their knowledge with the students in the class. After bowing to the flags, students are ordered to face and bow to the instructor. This process of the instructor calling for the beginning of class is repeated at the end of the training sessions in the same order, as well.

Lining up in belt rank order and bowing in at the beginning and end of class not only pays respect to the history and hierarchy of tae kwon do, but is also a reminder of a student’s progression through the belt ranks from white belt to ninth dan Grand Master of tae kwon do, if they are able to achieve that level in the sport. Master Jane explains the procedure for lining up, stating:

It goes from highest ranking adults, then to junior higher ranking adults, black belts, and then it goes on from red/black belt all the way to the

white belt being at the very end in the left corner of the back row. (2; numbers indicate interview number)

Moving up in the line is a source of pride for the students because being in the front line is a sign of success. Being asked to demonstrate a skill is also a sign of success, as Master Jane stated, “I have a higher belt do it. It might not be a black belt, I usually pick someone who does it really well because I want to showcase that person” (2).

Elena supports this statement by Master Jane when speaking about the pride that goes into demonstrating skills for the class, “I mean, it’s honestly kind of like a self-esteem boost whenever they use you as an example in class, you get to show off for everyone” (6).

The South Korean flag also holds reminders of the progression through the belt ranks to their first degree black belt (Cook, 2009; Lee & Rieke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000). The flag of South Korea has four symbols, one in each of the corners, representing heaven, fire, water, and earth (see Figure 3) (Cook, 2009; Lee & Rieke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000). These symbols are also integrated into the movements of the tae kwon do forms, or poomse (Cook, 2009; Lee & Rieke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000).



Figure 3: Flag of South Korea

Photo © www.cia.gov

The first form, represented by the symbol in the upper left hand side of the flag represents Taeguk Il Jang (heaven) which is the form used in testing to promote from yellow belt to orange belt (Cook, 2009; Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000). Since the yellow belt is the first earned belt in tae kwon do, this promotion test represents the true beginning of the progression through the belt ranks. The symbol in the lower left hand corner of the flag represents Taeguk Sam Jang (fire), which is the poomse for the promotion test to move from blue belt to purple belt (Cook, 2009; Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000). This is the midway point to a first degree black belt, or first dan rank. Taeguk Yook Jang is the promotion form to move from brown belt to red belt and is represented by the symbol for water located in the upper right hand corner of the flag (Cook, 2009; Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000). The final symbol on the flag is located in the lower right hand corner and represents both



earth and Taeguk Pal Jang. Pal Jang is the last Taeguk form need to be mastered and is used in the promotion from red/black belt to first dan rank.

As the progression through the nine black belt degrees is seen as a new beginning and rebirth in one's study of tae kwon do, the students are required to learn a different set of forms, Koryo, instead of Taeguk (Cook, 2009; Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000). Though there are eight Teaguk forms that are learned in tae kwon do, only four are represented in the symbols of the flag. The full set of symbols, and their poomse representations, are found in the Eight Trigrams found and explained in the text of the *I Ching*, the basis, along with *Tao Te Ching*, of Taoist philosophy and later an important aspect of the Confusion philosophy which was associated with the study of tae kwon do when it was first established as a military battle technique (Cook, 2009; Lee & Ricke, 2005; Park & Gerrard, 2000).

In the first day of training in TKD 2, Master Allen explains to his new students the meanings expressed in the flag and the relation to promotion and poomse. The bowing to the South Korean flag, representing the birth place and practice of tae kwon do, serves to remind the students to respect the sport and those who have successfully completed the process to becoming a black belt, such as the instructors who the students are also bowing to. Again, this is a reinforcement of the hierarchy of the sport.

Both the instructors and the students in the study stated the importance of bowing in and the respect that the behavior was intended to convey. "We bow to the flags and the instructors, it's kind of, as a sign of respect and also traditional, kinda, aspect of martial arts" (1). This was the answer given by Master Joe when asked about

the typical class in his dojang at TKD1. Maggie addressed the student perspective of bowing in to the instructors and flags stating,

Bowing to the instructor is out of respect. Because the instructor is there to teach you and you're respecting them and their knowledge. Bowing to the flag is out of respect for the history of where the sport comes from. And so they come from a very proud country that was, you know, um, well basically was...you know, they were taken over, you know what I mean? Invaded, occupied, exactly...by several other countries, and so they had to make this sport up to, keep their people going. And so, bowing to the flag is, uh, respect. And so it's not a rule. (7)

The instructors did not speak at length on a regular basis about the importance of the flag and the symbolism, but these comments illustrate that the students understood why they bowed in and out of every class, and what it meant to do so. Though bowing in may be considered part of the routine of the start and end of the training sessions, it eventually becomes more of a required "rule" as stated by Maggie, but is more of a show of respect for the art of tae kwon do as the student trains for longer periods of time.

As previously stated, autocratic leaders use their power as a way to dictate orders to their subordinates without the ability to question the leader or attain further assistance once the orders are given. Though the hierarchy of tae kwon do would seem to create a solely dictatorial dynamic between instructors and students, this was not the case with the instructors at these schools in the study. Although instructors in both schools emphasized the use of titles and "yes ma'am/sir" and "no ma'am/sir" on a

regular basis, they saw the value of a democratic approach. All of the instructors welcomed questions from their students as well as suggestions as to what the students would like included in class instruction. The purpose was to tailor their instruction to the needs of the students. When asked if he would allow students to have input as to what they could cover in a particular lesson, Master Joe answered, “I don’t have a problem with that at all. If anybody, um, has anything in particular. We do that a lot with, uh, specific self-defense moves” (1). Master Jane also agreed that if a student wanted to cover a particular skill or form, she would try to work it into the lesson that day or the next day the student was in class. She stated, “we’ll think about what they said and, and you know, we look at the class in its entirety and a majority of what everybody’s lacking. You know, we’ll try to focus on that a little bit” (2). Even though the instructors in TKD1 did not alter the lessons planned they had for the day completely, they give the students the power to make the suggestions, essentially sharing some of the power the instructors held within the coach-athlete relationship.

In observations, the instructors were often seen speaking with students before and after class and answered questions about the class that had just been completed, as well as technique-based questions. These technique based questions were usually about the poomse, or forms, that the students are required to learn for the belt promotions. The questions from the students to the instructors also covered how to perform certain kicks that were also necessary for belt promotion testing. The instructors were usually ready to assist these students and give them the one-on-one instruction he or she sought. If the instructor was not able to assist the student at that particular moment, they usually made sure there was a higher belt, usually a black belt if possible, there to help the

student before the instructor walked away. If it was a black belt that had a question, the instructor usually tried to find a higher ranked black belt to assist if the instructor themselves could not do so.

In TKD1, the observations were always conducted during the adult classes, starting in the fifteen minutes before the start of the class and ending after the class ended before the dojang closed for the evening. As the adult class was always the last class of the evening at this dojang it was rare for students to stay longer than 20 minutes after the class ended. As stated earlier, it was during these before- and after-class break times when most of the students had questions for the instructors. Because these times were also when most dojang business was conducted at TKD1 (i.e. new student registration, purchasing of sparring gear, discipline, etc.), it was a very busy time for both Masters Jane and Joe. When students asked questions and there were business matters to be handled, Jane or Joe often took turns answering questions and had one of the dojang employees handle the business matters so they could address the student questions. Masters Jane and Joe were both very attentive to the needs of the students in their schools.

Though all of the millennial students at TKD1 who participated in the study stated that they knew the instructors were open for suggestions, they did not opt to utilize the option in a class-based setting, but rather just to ask for one-on-one interactions for specific requests. It was not uncommon to see the millennial students staying after the final class (the adult only class) to talk with the instructors about what was covered in class, or for skills they had specific questions about. This was also a common practice in TKD2. The routine to start class in TKD2 was similar to TKD1

with one exception. The instructor would call the students to line up, call the class to attention, have them bow in to the flags and the instructor as was done in TKD1. After bowing in, the instructors would have everyone stand with their arms spread apart and ask if anyone had questions for the day or anything in particular they wanted to practice. If so, the questions or requests would be discussed. If not, the instructor and students would clap their hands and start the warm up for the training. At the end of the class the routine would be to call the students to attention, ask if there were any questions about the class, or last minute requests for skills. If there were, the questions or requests would, again, be addressed. If not, the instructor and students would clap, the instructor would call the athletes to attention, have them bow to the flags and the instructor, and the class would be over.

This method for the start and conclusion of training may seem as if it was just one extra step, but it was an important one. It was not uncommon for the athletes in TKD2 to take advantage of the ability to ask questions where, from the responses provided in the interviews, the ability to ask questions was known to the students in TKD1, but not utilized. Though the TKD1 instructors stated that they were open for input, the fact that not a single instructor ever asked if any of the students had questions or requests before, during, or after training could have been the reason suggestions, or questions, were never posed. Perhaps if the instructors in TKD1 would have prompted their students as the instructors in TKD2 did, the perception on behalf of the athletes would have gone beyond believing their instructors were accepting of input to actually asking the questions or providing the input during training.

From the interviews, it can be concluded that students in TKD1 saw their place in the martial arts hierarchy as the subordinate and the instructor as the superior in the training sessions, one that would be stereotypical of an autocratic leadership relationship. When asked if he or she would ever make suggestions as to what could be covered in class, most Millennials in TKD1 stated that they would not approach their instructor with a suggestion because they either felt it was not their place to do so given that they were lower in belt rank than their instructors, or they did not have the expertise to even know what questions to ask. Bruce, a Millennial generation red belt, stated that he did not ask questions or make suggestions, though he knew his instructors were open for them, stating, “I don’t think I am in the position to asking for a, for new things. I mean, there’s so much I need to learn already, so, maybe later” (11). Marylin, stated that though she knew her instructors would welcome suggestions, her lack of expertise and her role as a student stopped her from asking: “I don’t know if it would be disrespectful, but I definitely wouldn’t put in my two cents on what I think should be done that day, or request” (10). Even though this student was a black belt, because of her rank as a first dan, or first degree, black belt and her instructors were sixth dan black belts, giving them the rank of “master”, her job was still to listen and learn, “There is a master instructor and they are the teacher and as the student you also, you always have to remember that they have more experience than you, and they’re gonna guide you” (10). These statements were significant considering Marylin is one of the student/instructors at the dojang, as well as one of the paid employees. It could have been assumed that because of the working relationship Marylin had with her instructors, there may have been more of a sense of equality, however, her statements clearly state otherwise. She

goes on to state that her personal relationships with the instructors do not influence her coach-athlete relationship with them:

For me I guess it would be a little different because I do work with them, but I will say this, in a sense that, since I do work with them, when it comes time, when it comes time to class, they're my instructor. You know what I mean? I'm their student, I'm their instructor, we're not co-workers. After class, that's where it's different. You know, we can talk about things that I have to work on, or you know what I mean, something that they notice. We will maybe mention that, but after that, it's our time to unwind, you know? It's our, our time to catch up on the day and talk about things that happened throughout our day. (10)

It was clear from the analysis that most of the Millennial students were accepting of the autocratic structure because of the democratic style of leadership the instructors in both TKD1 and TKD2 used during the training sessions. Though the autocratic structure of martial arts was adhered to as part of the tradition of tae kwon do, the instructors did use more supportive behavior leading them more into the realm of democratic leadership. Democratic leaders were described as more autonomous due to their willingness to share power with their subordinates (Eagly, et al., 2003; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). The democratic leadership style is characterized by allowing input from his or her group members as well as continuous support for each member during the task completion (Eagly, et al., 2003; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). All of these behaviors were utilized by the instructors in both tae kwon do schools indicating an overall lean

towards democratic leadership, despite the hierarchical, top-down instruction style of martial arts.

The democratic behaviors observed in TKD1 by Masters Jane and Joe included helping students individually in class to make sure they were able to learn the skill being taught, giving encouragement and recognition of success during the class. This praise and encouragement usually happened in front of the other students giving the student being praised a chance be recognized in front of their peers, but also had a secondary function. The instructors all stated that they used this as a way to demonstrate proper behaviors or skill execution to those in the class who are not doing well without singling out the student needing to make improvements. All the instructors in the study stated that this technique was used to keep students who were not as strong in the sport, and therefore would be corrected more often than their peers, from becoming discouraged.

The Millennial generation athletes in this study seemed to be favoring a leader who is more of an amalgamation of both the autocratic and democratic leader, essentially the transformational leader as described in the literature review (Bass, 1995; Bass et al., 1996; Kruger et al., 2011). None of the students had negative comments during the interviews or during observations about the class structure or the need to adhere to the hierarchy through behaviors such as bowing to the higher belt ranked individuals or needing to refer to the instructors as Master, sir or ma'am. If an individual in this study was not comfortable with this style of instruction, there was no indication that discomfort was an issue. It could be argued that if someone was not willing to be in this type of structure, they would not continue in the sport for long. So



the argument here is that because the participants were still competing in tae kwon do, they were accepting of the hierarchical structure. Many of the participants did give responses in their interviews that indicated an understanding of the history of tae kwon do and therefore an understanding of the purpose of the hierarchy. This could explain the acceptance of the structure because it obviously was not something that was implemented by the instructors but rather part of martial arts as a whole. Because the coaches were supportive of the students and seemed open for help and additional training, as seen in observations and stated in student interviews, the autocratic structure of tae kwon do seemed balanced by instructor behavior. This again would lead indicate a more transformational leadership style within the dojangs represented in the study. This type of leader and how the instructors in this study either exemplify this style of leader or do not will be discussed in more detail later in the findings of research question three.

When asked what were the most important behaviors for an instructor to have to be successful, Master Joe immediately indicated that working with and for the students was crucial, stating that instructors, “have to be able to look at, at a situation as a whole,” and for him personally, “I want to do something for their specific goal” (1). A democratic leader is one who helps his or her group members work to achieve outlined tasks (Eagly, et al., 2003; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938). The manner in which Master Joe used in order to help each of his students work towards their goals in both the tae kwon do and the mixed martial arts (MMA) classes, he displayed a more democratic leadership style. Often he could be seen sparring with his tae kwon do and MMA students and taking the time to show them how to most effectively use techniques in the

process. He would make sure to focus on each student during training and work to help them fix any problems they were having in order to perfect kicks or punches that were being learned. Often he would have the students kick or punch him so he could test their strength in the technique. These behaviors are characteristic of a democratic leader.

When talking about how she tries to make sure everyone in the class is involved and working hard, Master Jane stated, that when you to find something that will motivate most of the kids in the class, “then you know you're, you're, you're doing your job,” and for the rest of the students, “you just gotta find a different way to maybe encourage the others” (2). Her point was to not be satisfied with only reaching half the class with her instructions; she needed to make sure everyone was learning the lesson, learning the sport. Each of these instructors focused on the individual students as much as possible during instruction, again, moving around the room to help students who needed help and acknowledging those students who were doing well. This was a behavior both Millennials and Generation X students alike appreciated, indicating a similarity between the generations in this study.

As stated earlier, this continued support by the instructors seemed crucial for the Millennial acceptance of their autocratic structure inherent in martial arts. An interesting opinion was given by a student of TKD2 about her experiences with Master Billy of her perspective of him as an instructor indicating a need for support from Billy as the top instructor. This student mentioned she felt that he was a little too giving of his power, a little too *lassiez-faire* in his approach to coaching. Dawn, a Millennial generation green belt stated that she would have preferred a more autocratic top-down

structure to Master Billy's leadership style during training sessions. She would have preferred that he lead, as the instructor, more of the classes as he was the highest ranked black belt in the school. "Um, I do sometimes think that Billy gets bombarded by the...responsibilities, responsibilities in his life and the hardships, and sometimes we come, if not second, third or fourth" (9). Though black belt instructors were teaching classes, when they were not taught by Master Billy, Dawn clearly sought more direction from the top. She did not state her preference was for a solely autocratic leader who tried to control every aspect of training, but merely more instruction from the leader was sought. Though this was only one student's opinion of Master Billy and the manner in which he handled instruction at TKD2, another statement by this same student also seemed to indicate that her perception of hierarchy in tae kwon do might have been a reason for her preference for instruction from the school's master versus another high ranking student. She stated that she liked bowing in, "because when you're doing that, you're not a green belt, you're not a black belt, or whatever belt, you guys are all the same. You're there for the same purpose" (9). Dawn saw those who were in the student position in the lineup, meaning lined up in the rows facing the instructor, as all equal to each other, even though they represented different belt ranks. She stated, "No one's above anyone else, it just so happens that you're standing behind other people in line" (9). Because the black belt instructors were lined up as students prior to leading the classes for Master Billy, it is possible that Dawn did not perceive them as instructors as much as a student like her, despite their belt rank. It seemed as if the title of "Master" was what mattered most to Dawn when considering who should be leading the class.

Again, Master Jane's focus on the individual student falls into the category of democratic leadership. These instructors mix the use of the hierarchy of tae kwon do with a student-needs-centered approach to coaching creating a transformational leadership style that it appears these Millennials prefer. Because the instructors work to help each athlete along as the individual needs, but keep most of the power in the coach-athlete relationship for themselves, a transformational style of leadership would best categorize the TKD1 instructional approach.

Though too little perceived leadership as in the case of Master Billy can be a problem, too much instruction without the required support is also a problem. One instructor, Master Joe, did have some complaints from students about his lack of support of his students when they needed help to learn new skills. All of the TKD1 students stated that they liked Master Joe and that they enjoyed the classes that he taught, however, many also stated that they did not like how he got easily frustrated with students when did not master a skill as quickly as he would expect them to. This was a trait that both Millennial and Generation X students spoke about. When asked what was a least favorite trait from her instructors, this factor was what Marilyn answered when speaking about Master Joe, "it came so natural to him, I think sometimes it's hard for him to know why the average Joe maybe might not get it" (10). Lily, a brown belt at TKD1 and a Generation X member, also mentioned Master Joe's high expectations of his students stating, "he expects you to get it right every time, yeah, and that's kinda hard sometimes" (5). She followed up when discussing a kick she was trying to learn from Master Joe, stating that when she could not get the kick right, "he's kinda lookin' at you like...what's going on there?" (5). Each student stated

that they did enjoy classes with Master Joe because he makes class exciting, they learn a lot from him, and he is very skilled in tae kwon do, indicating some style of autocratic leadership did not hurt the coach-athlete relationship.

In contrast, many noted that they appreciated how Master Jane supported her students in a patient manner. Master Jane, though she was a very technique-based instructor, focusing on the very small details in each skill taught and instructed from a more technical standpoint, she did so in a more encouraging manner than Master Joe. Marilyn stated that Master Jane used her personal experiences in learning tae kwon do as motivation for Marilyn while she was working towards her black belt. This helped her as a student to understand that even as an upper ranked belt, there is still a lot to learn. She stated:

The spin hook kick, it's the hardest kick to me. And I remember I was getting frustrated because even lower belts are doing it better than me, and you know, she goes, "you know, Marilyn, it wasn't until I was a second degree black belt did I feel my spin hook kicks were where they maybe should be." You know? She goes, 'it takes time.' (5)

Elena, a black belt at TKD1 stated that Master Jane was a mother figure to her and that she often goes to her for advice about situations outside of tae kwon do. Maggie, a 2<sup>nd</sup> dan black belt from the same school, stated that she and Master Jane were friends and that Jane often consulted with Maggie about her opinion of the content and flow of the classes each evening. She also sought to find out how the students thought the instruction was for the day. Maggie could provide a different student perspective because of her training as an instructor. Master Jane utilized a firm tone when

instructing and was quick to acknowledge the hierarchy in class, but she did not show the same frustration with students that Master Joe did when they took longer to learn a skill.

Marylin compared Master Joe to the coaches she had playing basketball, “Master Joe reminds me of how it was playing in college, yelling at you. You know, he’s gonna yell at you, and he’s gonna criticize you, but you don’t take how he says it, you take what he says” (10). Though this behavior by Master Joe could have caused students to dislike him as an instructor, his enthusiasm for the sport, his ability as an instructor to help students to achieve, and his skill level in tae kwon do are all reasons students gave for why they enjoyed his classes and believed he was a good instructor. Marylin followed up the last quote with the statement, “he wants to bring out the best in you” (10). She stated that he would push his students to make sure they reached their potential. Elena described Master Joe as “outspoken” but also “personable”. She also stated:

He is very friendly. He is outgoing. Um, he’s very willing to teach, um, and help and is very, I don’t know, he’s very, he has a lot of energy, he brings a lot of energy to everything he does. (6)

These attributes compensated for his tendency towards frustration and his more autocratic behavior.

### **Generation X and Leadership**

Research question two asked if Generation X athletes preferred a more autocratic or a more democratic coaching leadership style from their instructors.

Generation X seems to mirror the preferences of Millennials in the overall preference of

a coach with both autocratic and democratic styles of coaching. The main difference noticed between Millennials and Generation X was the willingness of Generation X to approach the instructors to make suggestions. Though this could have been a behavior that was more based on age than on a generational cohort difference, the behavior was not mirrored by older members of the Millennial generation, leading the researcher to believe that it could have been more of a cohort based behavior. When asked if they have ever approached their instructors to request specific instruction, the Generation X students answered that they had done so on multiple occasions. Maggie stated that she has made suggestions as to how to change certain movements to help if someone is injured, and Lily stated that she had requested techniques to be taught. In both instances the instructors always complied with the request. This indicated that though Generation X students in this study did indicate respect for their instructors, they also saw the instructors as more accessible than their Millennial counterparts.

The students in Generation X were more cognizant of the hierarchy, referring back to it when asked about the rules of tae kwon do. When these participants were asked to describe the typical day at the tae kwon do studio, members of this group referred first to the practice of bowing in to the flags in the studio and the instructor. The members of the Millennial generation showed respect for the belt rank system, however it was usually to acknowledge the ability of their instructors to be effective and acknowledge their power as instructors. An example of this was shown in the responses of Elena and Lily. When asked how her instructors display leadership, Elena stated, “they have a certain aura around them when they walk into a room, like they know, like you know that they’re the ones who are gonna teach ya something” (6). When asked

how they displayed power, her response was, “everybody knows like, like, the belt ranks...So, I mean, even if you don’t know them and you see the number of stripes on their belt you can know that they are up there” (6). By “up there”, Elena was referring to the belt rank system. When asked the same question about the display of power, Lily responded, “Uh, uh, just the way they walk around, you know? Way they wear their belt, how other people look at them, how other people react to them” (5).

Generation X showed respect for the belt rank system to acknowledge the traditions and respect for practice of tae kwon do. The statement from Maggie about how bowing in to the flags and instructors was not just a “rule” but a show of respect is the perfect example of this. Maggie saw the behavior as something that an individual practicing tae kwon do should want to do out of respect for the art, its history, and country of origin versus a meaningless behavior enacted because it was routine. The reference to the respect factors of Generation X was reinforced by Master Jane’s statement that the adults, generally the Generation X students in TKD1, were more respectful for the tradition of tae kwon do. Because of this understanding and respect for the tradition of tae kwon do instead of just focusing on belt ranks to create hierarchy could be why they viewed their instructors as more accessible than the Millennial students. The hierarchy created just enough of a barrier to communication in the coach-athlete relationship to allow for the Millennials to feel that they would be showing disrespect if they suggested a change to the class structure making it more comfortable for them to ask for help on a one-on-one basis. For example, Bruce stated that he did not have the expertise to know what to suggest or ask of his instructors, so he would never try to dictate what was covered in class. Though he had 12 ½ years of martial arts



training, was a high ranking red belt, and had recently qualified for the WTF Nationals tournament, he saw the rank of Master held by his instructors as an indication of superior skill and knowledge. Of all of the participants in the observed in the study, Bruce was one of the most talented in the school, and often was also one of the few individuals at TKD1 who seemed to enjoy showing off his talent before or after class. His observed behavior and personality before and after class would seem to indicate that he would be the most likely of Millennial participants to ask questions or make requests of the his instructors during the training sessions, but this was not the case. He did state during the interview that he perceived his instructors as open for questions and requests, and he was one of the students observed staying after his class to work one-on-one with the instructors, however during the classes he fully respected the authority of the higher ranked students and of the instructors leading the classes.

The Generation X students did not see this communication barrier the hierarchy seemed to create and, it could be argued that they did not see their instructors as part of an autocratic structure in tae kwon do that was previously discussed. Often, in the interviews, these participants referred to their instructors by name and not “Master” and were more open for discussion during class with both Master Joe and Master Jane, showing through their behavior that they felt more of a sense of ownership and equality in their training. The Generation X members of TKD2 also used “Billy” and “Travis” when referring to the instructors in and out of class, where the Millennials were more likely to use the title of “Master” for the instructors. As stated before, the Millennials and Generation X referred to their instructors as Master, ma’am, and sir in class. Outside of class, when speaking to the instructors, Millennials still referred to their

instructors in this manner, where Generation X members often used the instructors' names instead of Master. This was usually the case in TKD1, whereas in TKD2, generation membership was not a factor in the use of first names to refer to the instructors outside of class. Every adult student called Master Billy and Master Travis by their first names once they bowed out of class. This could be attributed to the more transactional nature of Master Billy's leadership. Even though Master Travis was more authoritative in nature, resembling the behaviors of the TKD1 instructors than those of Master Billy, he was relatively new as an instructor to TKD2, which could be why most students treated him in the same manner as Master Billy when it came to addressing him by name instead of title.

### **Millennials and Transformational/Transactional Leaders**

Research question three was used to investigate whether the Millennial athletes preferred a more transformational leader over a transactional leader. A transformational leader is essentially a blend between the control of the autocratic leader and the continued support of the democratic leader (Eagly, et al., 2003). Though the previous research on members of the Millennial Generation would support a claim stating that these individuals would prefer a strictly democratic leader so every member of a group, class, organization, or team would have equal input and opportunities for success (Eagly, et al., 2003), the athletes in this study seem to stray away from this leadership trend. A transformational leader tends to keep control over the individuals they lead, however not so much as to be considered an autocratic leader (Eagly, et al., 2003). These leaders retain more power and control than democratic leaders would, but guide their subordinates more than an autocratic leader does. A transactional leader, on the

other hand, shares most of the leadership decision with their subordinates, much like a democratic leader, however a general lack of guidance through task completion, in a more laissez-faire fashion. Where an autocratic leader lacks guidance in the support of others' ideas, laissez-faire leaders give all the power over to the group and essentially waits for problems to arise (Eagly, et al., 2003).

The Millennial and Generation X students in this study seemed to prefer a more transformational approach from their instructors. As stated earlier, these millennial students all accepted a top down style of communication from their instructors as a factor of tae kwon do. The bowing to the instructors, the hierarchy of the belt ranks, the commands being given by the instructors were never mentioned in the interviews as something that the students did not like as part of being in martial arts. Many of the students stated that they understood why these aspects of tae kwon do were part of the classes and the history behind the behaviors often using the word respect when describing the acts. The fact that not a single student indicated negative attributes to the top-down structure seems to indicate acceptance of the autocratic nature of the classes. This acceptance seems to be attributed to the hierarchy of tae kwon do as well as the expertise of their instructors. As long as the instructors were available for help and guidance, the students were acquiescent of the more autocratic structure that is inherent in martial arts instruction.

### **Millennials and Power**

Research question four looked at whether or not Millennials challenged, intentionally or unintentionally, the power of instructors in order to gain power for themselves. When analyzing the question of whether or not Millennials challenge a

coach's power, the question really needs to be looked at as whether or not power is recognized by the students, and if so, how? In order to assess if the students at either of the schools were cognizant of the power their instructors had, students were asked to describe how their instructors displayed power. Most of the students stated that their instructors' power was connected to either their belt rank or to a display of skill. When discussing her first impression of Master Joe even, Maggie a Generation X participant, mentioned that when she first saw him her first thought was "that's too much of a pretty boy to be an instructor. Honestly, that was my first opinion when I saw Master Joe. But then, like I said, I saw him kick and I was like, no he's good" (7). The perception of power being linked to skill and belt rank was the same for participants across generations. Of the three power types defined in the literature review, manifest, latent, or invisible power, the power within the coach-Millennial athlete dynamic would be described as latent power. Though invisible power could be a possibility, the power the instructors in this study have is not only based on the preconceptions of what it means to be a Master in tae kwon do. The instructor power is also based on purposeful actions of the lower belt ranking students to not challenge the authority of their Master, therefore it falls under latent power. As stated before, Millennial students did not believe it was their place to request specific skills or drills to be covered in class or question their instructors as to why these skills were being covered. They only saw it as their place to participate in class and only asked questions if they needed help with the techniques that were being covered in the classes.

The latent power is most evident in the complaints that many of the students had about the negative behavior of Master Joe. Even though he did get easily frustrated

with them when they were not able to master a skill in the time frame he felt they should have done so, the students did not complain. The students continued to work to master the skill and sought to impress Master Joe despite his behavior. Many felt he was a great instructor and had remarkable skill in tae kwon do giving him respect and power based on his skill and belt rank. Jon, a Millennial member and a green belt, when asked about power displays by instructors, stated that power is on display “when they demonstrate the kicks they, they’re, you know masters, and everything, so they can do everything very well, so I think that’s a good display of their ability” (8). Another factor that contributed to the latent power of Master Joe was the motivational behavior that he generally demonstrated which countered the frustration he showed on occasion. The students at TKD1 seemed to be linking the authority to lead with visible skill level and belt rank. This could be a result of the need to learn and properly execute a particular skill set at a high level in order to promote through the belt ranks. In this sport, leadership authority is granted by belt rank, belt rank is earned through a demonstration of skill and power, so authority is based largely on skill and power.

In TKD2, Dawn also indicated latent power, specifically for Master Billy, “he’s got a very powerful voice and he knows how to use it. He’s been in a position of authority for a long time, he’s a 7<sup>th</sup> dan for God’s sake” (9). Because he did often turn teaching responsibilities over to others, the existence of latent power in TKD2 for Master Billy is more evident. It seems as if, for this student at least, Master Billy earned his power from his position as a 7<sup>th</sup> dan, or degree, black belt more so than through his experiences as an instructor. However, Dawn often felt that Master Billy put too much teaching responsibility on the black belts in the class. She did say that she

would prefer if he would have taught more classes on his own because she wanted to learn from a master versus a lower ranking black belt. Though she felt this way, she did not indicate that she did or would have told him how she felt about the situation. The reason the black belts would teach classes in either TKD1 or TKD2 was because instruction hours are required for promotion from one degree to the next. Having been present for meetings between Master Billy and the black belts in his school about these testing requirements, being taught by a black belt in TKD2 was not of concern for this author. However, Dawn did not seem to have knowledge of this situation. This situation does show how latent power was also present for black belts, at least for Dawn, in TKD2 because she did not stop taking tae kwon do because she was receiving instruction from someone other than the school's masters.

Overall, the answer to research question four would have to be that members of the Millennial generation did not intentionally challenge instructor power, but rather worked to avoid power challenges establishing a latent power dynamic with the instructors. Millennial students in this study seem to be different from other members of the generation because of this behavior. Where most in the generation are eager to establish their power in their particular settings even through overt challenges to superiors (Alsop, 2008; Twenge, 2006), the students in these tae kwon do dojangs did not fit this stereotype of their generation.

### **Coaching Adaptations**

Research question five had two parts. The first part of the question was intended to find out if the coaches in the study noticed a difference in the preferred coaching styles of members of the Millennial generation or Generation X. The second

asked if the coaches made adjustments to their coaching styles based on these differences, if any were noticed. All of the instructors in the study stated that there was a difference in the preferred coaching style of the Millennial generation versus the students from Generation X. Though research has indicated that members of the Millennial generation tend to need a more democratic approach from their superiors (Twenge, 2006), as discussed earlier, this was not the case for the students in the study. Previous research indicated that Millennials needed to feel a sense of ownership for the activities they were participating in as a reason for their need for democratic leadership (Alsop, 2008; Twenge, 2006), however, as stated earlier these students did not seek a fully democratic leader. Millennials were satisfied with the top-down communication dynamic as long as the instructors are available for questions about the instructions given.

The difference between Millennials and Generation X students, as perceived by the instructors in this study, came in the way messages were communicated nonverbally. Each instructor made reference to two items specifically when it came to the needs of the Millennial student: they had a shorter attention span and a need for motivation. Masters Joe and Jane each stated that the youth classes needed to move at a much faster pace than the adult classes. These issues seemed to decrease as the Millennials got older, from youth to teenagers. According to Master Joe, though the teenagers had a longer attention span, they needed to be motivated more than the adults in the classes. Master Jane likened her approach to the younger students to that of a cheerleader trying to pep up her students.

The main difference that Master Joe and Master Travis both noted about the Generation X adults in the classes was that, though they had more motivation to attend the classes, they also had more outside distractors in their lives. Both of these instructors mentioned that they made it a point to pay attention to the nonverbal communication of the adults to help find out how to best coach each as an individual. If the student seemed tired, Master Joe knew not to push him or her too much on that particular day. Master Travis stated that if they saw someone was a little frustrated before class, he would suggest a sparring day. These instructors also noted that they took into consideration the age of the Generation X students when deciding how hard to make them work in one class. Master Jane usually separated the students into age groups when drills that required groups were taking place in class. Her intent was to make sure that the people in the group could motivate each other without pushing one student too hard or another not hard enough. This effect of a change in the instructional needs based on age could be more of a chronological effect and less of a generational effect, however more data would be needed to make that determination. Because generations are based on years, and characteristics of generational members are influenced by the age of the individuals within the generation itself, the chronological effect could still be argued to be a generational effect. Again, more research with members of each generation would be necessary to determine either of these arguments.

All of the instructors stated that they noticed a difference with the students from different age groups and generations. Each instructor stated that they adjusted their coaching style to best lead, not only the class he or she was teaching, but also each individual. Generally, TKD1 classes averaged between 10-15 students and TKD 2



averaged around 5 students per class. In TKD1 if the classes were more than the average 10-15, both Master Jane and Master Joe would instruct the class. This usually happened on sparring days. If it was not a sparring day, and it was a day the school offered the MMA classes, Master Joe would split the classes into tae kwon do and MMA having each class be held in a different room in the dojang. The focus on the individual allowed each student to compete in a class, but to get what they wanted to out of the class, as well. Every instructor in the study was very aware of the needs of the students he or she worked with. They all mentioned helping each individual achieve his or her individual goals, especially with the younger students.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

There has been a lot of discussion in both scholarly research and popular culture about how Millennials have changed the landscape of every area they have entered (Alsop, 2008; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006). First came parenting changes that created “helicopter parents”, titled so because of the hovering overprotective nature that has become so common with this generation (Twenge, 2006). Researchers have stated that the helicopter parents started a trend with the Millennial children expecting higher power individuals to accommodate to the needs of the lower power Millennial, essentially creating a shift in power dynamic between these individuals (Huntley, 2006; Twenge, 2006). The trend of accommodation continued as Millennials entered elementary school and youth sports programs, continued through high school, college, and into their professional lives. The question posed by this dissertation is whether or not coaches, who traditionally have an autocratic leadership style (Moore, 2006; Rocca, Martin, & Toale, 1998, Vargas-Tonsing & Bartholomew, 2006), need to follow the trend of accommodating to Millennials, and if so, how to go about doing so? The answer, at least for tae kwon do, is yes, accommodation is necessary, but not in the manner in which others have done for this generation in the past.

As explained in the research presented in the literature review, coaches and athletes have traditionally had a communication style that was very autocratic in nature (Moore, 2006; Rocca, Martin, & Toale, 1998, Vargas-Tonsing & Bartholomew, 2006). Though the relationship has progressed to become less top-down in nature, coaching in general has not fully evolved to utilize the democratic style of leadership Millennials are accustomed to. Though it seems as if the coaches in this study have made the

appropriate changes to their instruction style for the different generations that are participating in their classes, this is not the case across all sports. Stories of coaches still implanting autocratic behavior, and worse are still evident in all levels of sports. For example, Urban Meyer who was mentioned early in this dissertation would determine which players ate first, second, third, and so on in team dinners based on field performance during the football practices that week (Martin, 2009). Meyer did not run every aspect of his team as autocratically as this, which is probably why he has still meet with success, however some coaches have still yet to strike a balance between autocratic and democratic leadership styles when dealing with Millennials.

The question is whether or not this coach-athlete relationship could prosper with coaches continuing to be more autocratic while most of the other “leaders” in a Millennial’s life would utilize a democratic leadership style? As this dissertation has shown, Millennials prefer transformational leaders. This acceptance of a more autocratic leader appeared to be due to a sense of respect that the millennial athletes in the skill of their instructors as well as the experience that the instructors had in the sport.

In this study, Masters Joe and Jane would be considered transformational leaders. The coaching style they used, reinforcing the tae kwon do hierarchy and demanding specific behaviors while doing so (such as the use of “yes/no ma’am/sir” after every command) would have them trending towards the autocratic style of leadership. However, their focus on the students as individuals and the time they take to make sure each student is meeting his or her goals would have them trending back to the democratic style of leadership, essentially landing them in the realm of

transformational leaders. Master Travis could also be seen as transformational however, though he did adapt to more of a democratic class structure than Masters Joe or Jane typically did. As stated before, Master Billy utilized transactional leadership in his instructional style. He did tend to give his black belts more authority in time spent instructing as well as in the decision making process of what should be covered in class. Though black belts are required to have instruction time in order to be allowed to test for promotions, it is usually under the supervision of the Master, which was not always the case in TKD2.

Master Billy was often observed bowing in his students to start class and then turning to a black belt to tell them to warm up and instruct the class. When this occurred the black belts usually seemed to be unprepared to teach, usually stating that they did not know what to cover, and needing to ask Master Billy what to cover. Sometimes he would give instruction as to some techniques but often they were not detailed beyond telling them to do a certain drill or a specific number of kicks. As was stated by both Masters Billy and Travis, neither planned lessons for the classes they instructed, so there was not a routine for the school as to what was covered on certain days. Though this did not pose a problem for Billy or Travis, the black belts did not have as much experience in teaching and therefore often seemed to struggle with the decision of what to teach and how. This lack of guidance for his students that occurred on these occasions was indicative of a transactional leader.

Tae kwon do, as with all martial arts, has a strict adherence to tradition and hierarchy. Bowing to country and federation flags, bowing to the instructors and opponents, wearing the uniform properly, and tying the belt correctly are all part of the

tradition of the sport. With the belt rank system that is used to signify where an athlete ranks in the hierarchy, an individual's experience and expertise is evident in every class. Because the requirements for belt promotion are the same for every student, it is understood what higher belts have endured to achieve their rank. The uniformity of the promotion through the belt ranks helps reinforce the respect that lower belts have for higher belts, especially for those who have reached the level of black belt. The respect that athletes have for higher belt ranks also contributes to the latent power that was found to exist in the coach-athlete relationships in this study.

Most students indicated that the Master status, as well as the skill level, was how the instructors at both schools display power. This situation is unique to martial arts, as most sports do not have an outlet for a coach to essentially wear his or her resume around his or her waist. Most sports do not have as much uniformity in the promotion process, so not every coach had the same experience as their athletes, again a unique aspect of tae kwon do, and possibly a limitation of the study. However, coaches who have met with continuous success, such as those mentioned in the beginning of the dissertation, could possibly establish their power through extended meetings with teams. Because success seems to be a driving force for Millennials, including those in this study, examples of success seems as if it could be a technique that could be used to easily establish latent power for the coach. It could also be argued that, for those coaches who are physically able to do so, displays of skill in the sport will help build respect, which could translate to power, on behalf of the athletes. This acknowledgement of coaching power showed a direct connection to the acceptance of

the more autocratic style of instruction that is present in the transformational leadership style.

Millennials in athletics seek leaders who can help them achieve their goals. In general, Millennials are not used to failure, or even something that appears to be failure. Another name for this generation is “trophy kids”, they are used to awards for just participating in sports, so they want a coach that can help them earn their next trophy. Or in this situation, the next belt rank. When asked what they describe as success in taekwon do, Marilyn, Maggie, Elena, Jon, and Dawn all stated promotion through the belt rank as the indicator of success. That is more than half of the student participants in the study.

Though each student, Millennial and Generation X, indicated that their coaches were firm in their instructional approach and that the coaches were a quick to point out mistakes as they were to compliment students, they all also said that each coach was a very good instructor. This behavioral balance is not only indicative of the transformational leader style, but the reason it was successful with these athletes. Essentially, if a coach is able to prove they are able to help the athlete learn and achieve their next goal, this is exactly what a Millennial is looking for. These athletes in this study do not seem to mind if their coach is more assertive in their communication as long as the relationship stays open for athlete questions and coaching assistance when requested. This is not to say these Millennials wanted an autocratic leader, it is just a matter of balance. The students knew the instructors were open for questions, because when they asked questions before or after class, the instructors would answer them. It was not uncommon to see the instructors staying late to help students with the forms for

promotion or to help them with a technique that was giving the student trouble. The behavior on behalf of the instructor can be seen as striking the balance between autocratic structure and democratic behaviors to create the transformation style of leadership that seems to be the key for the Millennial generation.

In addressing the question of accommodation by coaches from the communication accommodation theoretical perspective, the answer would have to be that accommodation does take place, but CAT would not be able to properly explain the relationship between Millennial athletes and their coaches. As stated before, according to CAT, the questions that a Millennial athlete may ask of their coach would constitute a challenge to the coach's power, and equate to a power shift if the coach would accommodate the athlete by answering the question the coaches do not seem to believe that the Millennials in the study were challenging their power. The argument in this dissertation is that there is no power shift in this relationship because of the content and intent of the athlete questions, which are two aspects that CAT does not utilize when deciding on whether or not accommodation has taken place. From both the coach and athlete interviews, it is clear that the Millennial athletes were not interested in challenging the power or authority of the coach. If these athletes did question the coaches it was to ask for further instruction and it was done so in a private manner. It could also be argued that these coaches did not see the questions from the athletes as a challenge to their own authority. Not one of the coaches in the study indicated that any of their Millennial athletes asked questions concerning instruction that covered anything except for guidance in how to complete the task.

According to the coaches, athletes never asked why they had to do a drill or questioned the authority of their coach. The questions always centered on technique. Though challenges to power do not need to be overt or intentional in order for a power shift to take place (Berger, 1994; Dunbar & Abra, 2010), the argument here is that there is not a power shift based on the understanding of the interaction as a whole. The athletes in this study were questioning to find out more about how the instructors wanted them to execute the command they were given. Since the questions were based on how to better execute the techniques the athletes were learning in the classes, this behavior would be seen as accommodating. There was not a power challenge or exchange inherent in the question and answer exchange, therefore with the athletes following up with compliant behavior, the athletes should be seen as accommodating. With the purpose of the athlete questions being to better meet the command given by the coach, and the execution of the command after the questions had been answered, would indicate that in the interaction as a whole, there was little, if any, coach to athlete power shifting.

Where accommodation did take place was in how the coaches addressed the overall teaching of the classes, from youth to adult classes. The instructors in study all addressed the fact that the different age groups need to be taught in a different manner, as stated earlier in the results section. The accommodation within this dynamic was one of coaching technique, that included how communication of the initial commands were given, but not in how the one-on-one communication of the coach-athlete dyad was executed. When addressing accommodation through the lens of CAT, the theory would need to be grown to include assessment of overall outcome of communication, paying



specific attention to the content and purpose of the messages that are taking place. With the changes being created by the Millennial generation in how society addresses members of this generation as a whole, it would seem natural that a theory that looks at how society communicates with members of this generation as individuals changes as well.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Though the findings from this research have produced a basis for how to examine the coach-Millennial athlete relationship, there is still research to be conducted to be able to identify exactly how this relationship will best function. There are limitations of this study including the number of participants, the singular style of sport competition in that tae kwon do that was used for the study, and the lack of generalizability to other sports because of both of these factors. Because the research in this area of sport communication is still relatively new, it is important to create an understanding of what elements of the coach-athlete relationship has changed due to the influence of the Millennial athletes in sports and which factors have not yet changed. Because most of the research conducted on Millennials exists in family relationship, teacher-student, and employer-employee relations studies, the need to establish a framework for how coaches and Millennials relate to each other is where research now needs to focus. Though the coach-athlete relationship is one of superior and subordinate relations, much like the teacher-student and employer-employee relationships, the dynamic between coaches and athletes is very different from these other dynamics mentioned. The setting in which the players and coaches meet, the competitive world in which the relationship is housed, the team dynamics that surround

the individuals, and the discipline styles coaches use with their athletes are just a few of the factors that can influence how the relationship between coaches and athletes develop and grow. Because of these factors, Millennial research in family, educational, and/or business settings is not able to be easily adaptable to the coach-athlete relationship, causing the need for studies such as this one to be conducted as the start of a foundation for future sports studies.

The goal of research is always to gather data from as many participants as possible; however the ability to do so is sometimes hindered by circumstances that arise outside of the control of the researcher. This study was no different. However, an argument can be made that during the research process it was clear that the responses to the interview questions and the data collected through observation was similar enough to each other to determine that the data that was collected was indicative of the coach and athlete perspective for each school. Future research would seek more participants from each grouping of participants however, the current study is instrumental in guiding the question that future research in this area can and should focus on. Questions need to be asked concerning what specific behaviors Millennials seek from their coaches in order to find out what individuals coaches can do to best meet the needs of their athletes. The need for more participants would be to allow for more analysis and generalization.

Another limitation in the study was the focus solely on tae kwon do. The purpose of using this setting for this research was the ability to compare athletes from both Generation X and Millennials who are still actively competing in sports. Though the use of this setting was ideal for the comparison, the power structure inherent in

martial arts did pose more of a hierarchical structure than exists in most sports. To avoid this type of situation in future studies, more mainstream sports such as basketball or football could be researched. Because team sports have a different coach-athlete dynamic than exists in individual sports, and because they are devoid of the same power structure that is utilized in martial arts, the findings could show different preferences and perspectives from athletes for their coaches. As these sports are more mainstream, depending on the participant numbers, the study could also be more generalizable to other sport settings.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, this study shows how the Millennial generation is still as unique as research and society has claimed them to be all along. The athletes in this study show how Millennials communicate in the sports world is not only different from how other generations did in the past, but also how their own generation communicates in other arenas, as well. For coaches to be successful with this generation, it is not necessary for them to revamp their whole organizational approach, as it has been for schools and businesses dealing with Millennials. But they do need to be willing to show why the athletes should give them the trust that a coach needs in this relationship, as well as be open for more assistance than some coaches may be used to. Head coaches need to make sure that they are seen as open for help and communication, and not be so eager to give all of their responsibility for instruction to the assistant coaches, if they have them on staff. All coaches need to make athletes aware of their ability to lead, through acknowledgement of their success and the ability to help their athletes meet goals. Though this is not a call for coaches to brag endlessly to their athletes, but letting them

understand why they are qualified to be the coach will help establish power on behalf of the coach, and trust on behalf of the athlete. Though these seem like little changes in the overall coaching style for some, it could mean a big change for others, however in the end, it will be the key to a successful coach-Millennial athlete relationship.

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## Appendix A: Athlete Interview Questions

### Athlete Interview Questions:

1. Describe the typical practice day at your school?
  - a. What are the skills that are practiced most often in class?
  - b. Do you enjoy the structure of the class?
  - c. Do your instructors seem open to suggestions to about what will be covered in class on any given day?
  - d. Do your instructors seem open to you asking for specific help on skills?
2. What are the rules of the class, and how are they taught?
  - a. Why are these rules integrated into tae kwon do?
  - b. Which do you think are most important to be followed?
    - i. Why?
3. How would you describe your instructors' teaching style?
  - a. What are some of the techniques that your coach uses when teaching class?
  - b. Are your coaches encouraging? How do they encourage students during instruction?
  - c. How does your instructor display leadership in class?
    - i. How do they display power?
4. What are your favorite activities to do during class?
  - a. Least favorite?
5. What do you enjoy most about each of your coaches?
  - a. Enjoy the least?

6. What is your definition of success as a student of tae kwon do?
  - a. What is your definition of a successful coach of tae kwon do?
7. Do your instructors ever talk to you before or after class?
  - a. Do these conversations ever cover anything that is not tae kwon do based?

## Appendix B: Coach Interview Questions

### Coach Interview Questions:

1. Describe the typical practice day at your school?
  - a. What are the skills that are practiced most often in class?
  - b. How do you decide on what will be covered day to day?
    - i. Class to class?
    - ii. Do you ever allow students to have input on what is covered in class?
2. What are the rules of the class, and how are they taught?
  - a. Why are these rules integrated into tae kwon do?
  - b. Which do you think are most important to be followed?
    - i. Why?
  - c. What are rule following behaviors that students are expected to exhibit in class to show that they are doing as the instructor requests?
3. Describe the hierarchy in tae kwon do...
  - a. How is this hierarchy acknowledged or enforced in the class?
    - i. How have you seen the hierarchy not being recognized or followed?
    - ii. What, as an instructor, do you do to correct this situation?
      1. How is power an influence in this structure?
4. With the instruction/classes being broken down into afterschool, family class, and adult class, how do you approach each class when focusing on instruction style?

- a. What are some differences you notice with the different age groups and students enrolled in the school?
  - b. What are some similarities?
  - c. How do you approach encouragement and discipline based on the class groupings?
5. How would you describe your teaching style?
  - a. What are some of the techniques that you use when teaching class?
  - b. Are you encouraging? How do you encourage students during instruction?
6. What are your favorite activities to do during class?
  - a. Least favorite?
7. What would you say are the most important behaviors a coach should exhibit to be effective in taekwon do instruction?
  - a. Is it necessary for coaches to know their students as individuals rather than just athletes?
8. What is your definition of success as a coach?
  - a. What was your definition of success as a student of taekwon do?
  - b. What would you define as success of one of your students?
9. What is most important for deciding on promotion through the belt ranks in taekwon do?
10. How would you think your athlete would describe you as an instructor?