WAYS OF KNOWING: INTEGRATING MIND AND BODY

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ABSTRACT

A regional Japanese butoh dance group serves as a vehicle to explore concepts of how participants create self, relationship and community through verbal and somatic dialogue. Park's (2001) representational, relational, and reflective knowledges, drawing from Habermas' theory of rationality in speech acts, act as a springboard to explain the meaning of participants' ways of understanding through verbal dialogue in their activities, discussions and events. However, the butoh group also demonstrates ways of knowing that are embedded in communication through body movement. Concepts of somatic movement, the self as experienced as a first-person observer, are based in psychology (Hanna, 1998), anthropology (Cscordas, 2002), and Japanese philosophy (Yuasa, 1987; Ichikawa, 1992). Through interactive and recursive ways of knowing, the butoh group presents opportunities for participants to reflect on themselves in relation to others in the group and the larger society.

Keywords: butoh, relational and reflective knowledge, mi, self, somatic dialogue

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I. WHAT IS BUTOH

During the 1960s, butoh dance emerged as a counter culture movement based in street theater and dance activities in Japan. Today butoh practice and performance is analyzed less as a site for opening up forms of social and political inquiry and more as a prescribed butoh method or a global dance genre. However, a regional butoh dance group in Fukuoka, Japan, Butoh Seiryukai (blue dragon group) exhibit in their workshops and group activities alternatives in patterns or techniques for practice, standardized norms for group dynamics, and by implication, fewer fixed assumptions about the nature of Japanese self and identity.

II. WHO IS SEIRYUKAI BUTOH DANCE GROUP

Seiryukai, a non-bounded group, includes many periphery members from college-age students up to men and women in their 70s. Core members participate on a regular basis and function as the organizing team for the twice-monthly butoh dance workshops and post-workshop dinner at the apartment of two of the members which also serves as Seiryukai's office. Many people come to practice butoh while others attend practices or performances participating voluntarily as amateur photographers and videographers. Some contribute expertise and skills for backstage performance preparation, while others cook dinner for the post-workshop or performance get-together. These ways of participating create a highly inclusive community with permeable boundaries for peripheral members who participate at will. The delineation between core and peripheral participants is a choice of the individual participant. No income is produced from Seiryukai activities.

Seiryukai demonstrates group interaction as a community following Greenwood and Levin's (1998) description of community as a group which exhibits tolerance of difference and inclusion of diverse members who collectively influence decisions and direction in the group. Peck (1987) notes that a true community is always reaching out to extend itself and transcends the exclusivity manifested in other groupings such as clubs and corporations. Community arts groups in particular can be used as a vehicle for convening diverse groups of fellow citizens and crossing conventional social barriers by connecting with people unlike themselves. Small group activities, in particular, foster trust-building relationships developed from committed participation (Putnam, 2000). Seiryukai demonstrates establishment of a trust-building

connection through practicing butoh together, and other communal experiences including shared preparation and eating of meals and discussion about their personal lives. In sharing dialogue in a space of trust both through body movement and verbal discussions, participants have an opportunity to re-examine how they think about themselves and the way they interact in society. We can understand the Seiryukai participants' process and awareness of their new ways of understanding through concepts of the ways that people come to know about themselves and their interactions with others.

III. WAYS OF KNOWING

Park (1999, 2001) identified three types of knowledge or ways to represent what people know: representational (instrumental) knowledge, relational knowledge, and reflective (critical) knowledge. He further classified representational knowledge under two subtypes: functional and interpretive. I will look at each one of these in terms of how the Seiryukai participants interact in the group to identify those that are appropriate to help explain the participants' experiences in Seiryukai.

The functional type of representational knowledge describes, explains, or understands a phenomenon as an object, or as objective knowledge. This perspective requires the researcher to be separate from the research participants and view them from a distance from which only the researcher can see and know or judge what the participants are doing. This method traditionally has been applied in the natural sciences but is of limited use in social settings to understand either the meaning for the participants, or the interactions among human beings with the researcher as a participant in the research. Park (1999, p. 5) explained it as follows:

> One of the limitations of representational knowledge in the functional form is that it is incapable of addressing the meaning that humans attach to events and experiences as actors and partners in interactions. It is incapable of answering such lofty questions as "What is the purpose of life?" or "What is the meaning of community?" But it is equally limited in producing understanding between and among human beings in interaction. To produce this kind of understanding we need to bring to the cognitive task our aspirations as historical beings and our shared experiences as members of a community; we must enter into dialogue as partners with those whom we wish to

understand. This is precisely what is prohibited in the canon of science for the functional form of representational knowledge under the injunction of objectivity, which is why it is incapable of generating meanings for human use.

As a researcher and as a full participant in the activities of Seiryukai, I used an inductive approach including methods such as participating in group activities, events and discussions, observing participants' interactions, recording discussions and interviews listening for topics which would come from the participants themselves to answer the question "How do participants perceive Seiryukai in their understanding and their lives?" Instead of a functional knowledge representation, I was seeking an interpretive knowledge representation. Park (2001, p. 3) described this as a way of knowing that:

> manifests itself as understanding of meaning and requires that the knower come as close to the to-be-known as possible. This means taking into account the backgrounds, intentions, and feelings involved both in understanding human affairs and textual and other kinds of artifacts that are human creations.

In contrast to the positivist functional way of doing research, the interpretive approach stems from hermeneutics that is a philosophy and science of interpretation historically used for texts, and in current research the concepts are applied to research with people, and events and social settings. In the interpretive approach, there is an expectation that the researcher comes to the research setting as a whole, living person with a past and a future, personal likes and dislikes, and seeks to understand what the people in the setting are thinking about themselves. In my fieldnotes, I considered my own biases as a researcher who is a long-term American resident of Japan studying a Japanese butoh group in Japan. I also considered my reflexivity as a person with a multicultural perspective who can understand people and situations from their perspectives, and these became my biases and reflexive practices as a researcher. As I, the reflexive knower, represented Seiryukai participants' experiences, I went back over the data I collected and regenerated representations as I considered the participants' words over and over again. Participants' themes generated from the data were a *Ba* of relational interaction, and new ways of experiencing a sense of self in their lives. Park's relational and reflective ways of knowing explain how participants interact in

Seiryukai which changes the way participants experience their life outside Seiryukai toward a confident, positive way of thinking and living.

IV. RELATIONAL AND REFLECTIVE WAYS OF KNOWING

Extending Habermas' theory of rationality in speech acts, Park (2001, p. 4) included people's relational interactions as a social element necessary for rational communication:

> Rationality in this sense has to do with questions not only of fact but also of norms and feelings. It is a social accomplishment which derives from interpersonal relations revolving around the illocutionary claims embedded in the speech act. Rationality entails relationship.

Relational knowing is nurtured from trust, caring, and respect, and engaging in interaction through such means as expression, both verbal and physical, communal activities, and sharing beliefs and values. Once relationship is developed, the participants engage in dialogue to clarify their situation and choose a direction or action to improve their situation. Relational knowledge is important for reflective knowledge in two essentially recursive ways. That is, its establishment is necessary to carry out community building, and it is reciprocal in that it is the product or outgrowth of a community context, therefore it is itself relational. It is an essential type of knowledge for building and maintaining community and human relationships as well as for reflective knowledge development (Lynd, 1992; Park, 1999, 2001; Richards, 1998).

Seiryukai exhibits relational knowing in its group function through the many activities in which members participate communally. They shop for food and cook, participate in butoh workshops, eat dinner and share stories and problems about their lives. Interaction through emotions and the exchange of beliefs and values about their lives results in trust among Seiryukai participants both in the butoh workshop and in other activities. Trust is an important element of the relational knowing which is developed because it works on one level to bond the group as a community. From this trusting relationship a safe and nurturing space emerges in which participants reflect on their experiences and discussions sharing their life stories

with others who listen to them and share their own life experiences and suggestions, that is, an exchange of values and beliefs about ways of living and society. This is an ongoing process as they return to Seiryukai workshops and activities to further understand their various self-identities that emerge both in the group and in their lives in the society. Relational knowing, therefore, is not the only goal of the Seiryukai group but it helps to create reflective knowledge as well. This kind of knowledge helps the participants raise awareness of themselves as social beings who interact not only in the group but in the society as individual persons as well.

Park (2001, p. 7) defines reflective knowledge as follows:

> This kind of knowledge provides practical moral criteria for comprehending the social nature of the problems that affect classes of people and points to what people themselves can do in order to improve their situations.

The understanding gained is not simply one of a critical understanding of society but it includes a moral component which may best be described by Freire's term *conscientization*, which includes both consciousness and conscience (1970). Reflective knowledge is a form of understanding which brings confidence as a human being, and courage to live through the new state of awareness. In order for people to gain this reflective knowledge and commit to it with confidence and courage, they must be connected to one another through relational knowledge. That creates an interdependence between the two forms of knowledge.

Park (2001) noted that dialogue is central to make it possible for participants to "create a social space in which they can share experiences and information, create common meanings, and forge concerted actions together" (p. 1). In Park's rationale for development of relational and reflective knowledge, dialogue refers to verbal dialogue, that is, speaking and discussions. However, he also pointed out the gap in Habermas' rationality based on cognitivist concepts which value mental processes as rational. This view does not include our knowledge of others through affective ways of knowing as rational. Park (2001) captured perfectly the way in which Seiryukai establishes relationship when he says, "We establish relationships with our bodies and feelings, in pleasure and pain, in laughter and tears, and with shared experiences and stories" (p. 5). The following section offers conceptual support for somatic dialogue as a form of interaction to create relationship and reflective ways of knowing not only through verbal dialogue but also through body movement interaction engaged in by Seiryukai participants.

V. SOMATIC DIALOGUE

In addition to opportunity for verbal interaction in many activities such as dinner discussions and overnight retreats, Seiryukai activities include butoh workshops in which participants communicate non-verbally through body movement. Entering the practice room people begin to reconnect, first, to their own physical bodies. Then through a series of movement explorations the participant has an opportunity to interact with her inner self and other participants moving in a group. The three-hour butoh workshop is carried out without exchanging words among participants. Friere (1970) said that dialogue is not only what I say and not only what you say. It is not about the words alone which are spoken. Dialogue is about getting into the same space. The space that Seiryukai participants share in butoh workshops is a space where they move individually, and in a group with others with no explicit instructions as to what to say with their bodies. The dialogue that emerges is a somatic dialogue, that is, interactive words with the body.

Exploration of the somatic self through self-discovery and internal transformation of one's images is one activity in butoh workshops. The soma is the body as perceived from within by first-person perception (Hanna, 1988, 2003, 2003-4, 2004-5). Our own experience of our own body, that is, first-person observation provides us with factual information that the third-person observer does not have access to. Our bodies communicate information to us about our intersubjective relationships with the world around us and with others. Therefore, instead of considering the body as simply "an object of study, or a text on which social reality is inscribed" (Csordas, 2002, p. 241), it also becomes a process of "somatic modes of attention" particular to certain cultural practices (Csordas, 1993, p. 138). Participants in Seiryukai, for example, do not practice choreographed steps in butoh workshops nor are their dinner discussions guided or controlled. Instead they focus on their first-person experience of how they see themselves and engage with others, and not on how others see them. In this way they create further relationship and reflection through two forums of dialogue: verbal and somatic.

VI. *MI* AS SOMATIC SELF

Japanese philosophers help us to understand that consciousness and movement can be transformed by extending the body's vocabulary and that theory for extending the body should shift the concept of bodymind from a dichotomy to a unity so that the focus will not be limited to the mind. There has been a long tradition in the West to dichotomize intellect and emotion and to see the body as a site for options thus suggesting the ability to control the body, while Japanese approaches see bodily practice as cultivation of the mind-body integration. Yuasa (1987) and Nagatomo and Leisman (1996) used the word body in English, while Ichikawa (1992, 1993) used the indigenous Japanese word *Mi* in their discussion of body-mind unity.

Yuasa (1987) emphasized bodily recognition or realization through personal cultivation (*shugyo*) as the path through self-knowledge to true knowledge. Indigenous terms for knowledge in Japanese include *chishiki* (cognitive knowledge), *taitoku* (understanding through the body), and *etoku* (to acquire/master through the body). The last two terms, *taitoku* and *etoku*, emphasize total bodymind knowing. When we understand Yuasa's self-cultivation, Ichikawa's *Mi*, and Nagatomo and Leisman's somatic knowledge (Ozawa-De Silva, 2002), the meaning of the concept of the body is expanded beyond the limits of the skin as the boundary of the body. Kasai Akira, a butoh dancer, talks about the consciousness changing when the senses change, and the physical body follows that change. Kasai said, "the sensations of your body must reach out" (Fraleigh, 1999, p. 247). Ichikawa (1992, 1993) called this the body expanding beyond the limits of the skin, and for Yuasa it is cultivation of the mindbody unity. Personal self-cultivation is an awareness of somatic self.

A closer look at Ichikawa's (1992, pp. 78-9) definitions of *Mi* helps us to understand a somatic self and an interactive self as a non-dichotomous way of being:

> The word *Mi* (身) not only expresses the dynamics of our living body, it also has a potentiality for a different way of categorization than the mind-object or the mind-body dichotomy. I am not suggesting *Mi* as a specific category connected with Japanese language but the word *Mi* expresses the concept better than the word *body* and *Mi* can be used as a universal concept. I would like to propose the word *Mi* as another possibility of systematization besides the dichotomy of body and mind.

Ichikawa (1993, p. 83) identified 14 ways in which *Mi* is used in the Japanese language. Three of his definitions support the concepts of an interactive, recursive self through the meaning of different selves and as a reference between self and others.

> *Mi ni shimiru* - to feel both at the conscious as well as unconscious level. *Mi o motte shiru* - to know with your whole body and whole mind, that is, your whole self.
> *Mi o motte shimesu* - you try to show or explain yourself with your whole mind and whole body (whole self). In some cases, you even do that at the expense of your life.

Mi then is a somatic self, which is a relational, interactive experience of self, observed from the first-person perspective.

VII. INTERACTIVE, RECURSIVE SELF

The discourse on self in Japan has long been held in the stereotype of self in collective groupism (Nakane, 1970). Recent studies operate more at the recursive level of the interaction of the self and society. Kondo said "collective identities like 'the Japanese' or 'Japanese concepts of self' no longer seem to be fixed essences but rather strategic assertions which inevitably suppress differences, tensions and contradictions within" (1990, p. 10). This suggests people's need and desire to find ways to live differently than social norms dictate perhaps being more true to one's self. These concepts of self in Japan suggest that there is not a single Japanese selfhood. Kuwayama (1992) asserted that knowledge of self is created through a dynamic interaction with other individuals. This self is an interactive identity in a situational setting.

> For knowledge (especially tacit knowledge) to be shared and for the self-transcending process of knowledge creation to occur there should be strong love, caring and trust among an organization's members. (Nonaka & Teece, 2001, p.37)

Seiryukai functions in an interactional space and depends on the care and trust of the participants which is relational knowledge (Park, 1999, 2001; Richards, 1998). It is reciprocal and grows from interaction leading to trust, respect, caring, and authenticity and is experienced in varying degrees in different interactional settings. It comes from connecting and leads to

further connecting. The following practices describe relationship creation through somatic dialogue demonstrating the essence of Ichikawa's *Mi*.

Connecting With Our Inner Selves – Focus and Concentration

We begin by standing up and holding the lost feeling of not knowing how to move. Seiryukai's improvisational exercises in dance class typically begin with painstakingly slow, careful steps as if petrified in a tight corner. We imagine carrying a delicate, precious object across the room to give to an imaginary person. We slowly cross the stage, a mountain, a river, the sea, calmly, alone, and together. We then discover a way to move alone and together. Momentary discoveries of reality occur through a connection of the inner force with bodily form.

Group Exploration and Interaction

Start with two people standing on each side of the room, then move in minute increments toward the tree sensing everyone's energy and focusing it toward the center – toward the tree. As you reach her, move near her and surround her, standing and squatting, sending in your energy and gathering back the energy. Do this for about 5 minutes. Stop, be still and hold your position for a while longer gathering in everyone's energy. See yourself, see another self, and see yourself in the other. Continue moving toward the center.

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