

# Composing an aesthetics of performance pedagogy

Brian L Kelly<sup>1</sup> and Aimee Wodda<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *We present a collaborative audio and video-based performance ethnography and companion essay that expands upon our experiences in a graduate-level performance ethnography seminar. Our performative text explores the potential for audio and video-based performance ethnography as an important pedagogical tool that prioritizes alternative ways of knowing that are deeply related to nondeliberative groupwork practice. Following a review of our process, we propose an aesthetics of performance pedagogy and discuss the importance of liminality in our work. Implications for practice include providing educators with critical opportunities to contribute to students' awareness and understanding without demanding conformity to particular ways of knowing.*

**Keywords:** *liminality; nondeliberative practice; performance pedagogy; social groupwork; wabi-sabi*

1. Assistant Professor, School of Social Work, Loyola University Chicago

2. Doctoral Candidate, Criminology, Law, and Justice, University of Illinois at Chicago

**Address for correspondence:** *bkelly6@luc.edu, awodda2@uic.edu*

**Date of first (online) publication:** *26th May 2017*

**Acknowledgements:** *The authors would like to thank Dr. Geraldine Gorman, Dr. Carrol Ann Marschner Smith, and our performance ethnography seminar colleagues for their feedback and support in the early stages of developing this work.*

I don't for a minute think that we can be teachers who invite students into Radical openness if we're not willing to be radically open ourselves, if we're Not willing to be a witness to our students of how ideas change and shape us, How something affects us so that we think differently than we did before. (bell hooks, as quoted in National Council of Teachers of English, 2004)

The esteemed ethnographer Dwight Conquergood (2002) used performative methods to represent the complex findings of his work. Rather than simply report findings in written academic texts, he developed films and plays that prioritized the voices and words of ethnographic research participants. In doing so, he challenged the false, yet powerful hierarchy between social science researchers, who are often perceived as active gatekeepers and disseminators of knowledge, and research participants, who are often perceived as passive recipients of knowledge. Building upon Conquergood's (2002) important theoretical and empirical work, Denzin (2003) describes performance ethnographies (or performance texts, as he uses the terms somewhat interchangeably) as 'alternative way(s) of interpreting and presenting the results of an ethnographer's work' (p. 13). These ways include poetry, prose, and other written forms as well as theatre, dance, and other performative formats.

In the spring of 2010 the authors enrolled in a graduate level performance ethnography seminar at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Course readings and discussions explored issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and indigenous epistemologies and fueled many original, evocative, emotional, and challenging performative responses. As audio (Brian Kelly) and video (Aimee Wodda) oriented artists and performers, we struggled throughout the course to find space for audio and video-based texts that extended beyond traditional linear narrative formats (for example, audio documentary, songs with lyrics that tell a story, short films that use dialogue to drive the story). In response we developed independent audio (Brian Kelly) and video-based (Aimee Wodda) performances that prioritized non-linear, non-verbal ways of exploring and ultimately knowing a subject/phenomenon. As we processed these performances we began to experiment with the idea of combining our work in order to continue pushing the boundaries of performance ethnography as we

searched for different ways of knowing.

Building on this creative momentum, we present a collaborative audio and video-based performance ethnography and companion essay. This work expands upon our seminar experiences and explores the potential for audio and video-based performance ethnography as a provocative and evocative pedagogical tool that prioritizes alternative ways of knowing that include seeing, doing, and unknowing. In addition, we ground our collaborative audio and video-based performance ethnography in Lang's (2016) theory of nondeliberative groupwork practice and explore the connections among her work and alternative ways of knowing.

## **Audio and video-based texts**

The performance we call *Revision* began as two separate performances layered upon one another. Ameer's initial performance was purely visual and Brian's original work was purely aural. We then created a combined performance that attempted to deconstruct and transform stagnant structures, methodologies, and pedagogies. Emanating from but not limited to the classroom, our performance promotes the inclusion of activism and consciousness as natural offshoots of the teaching and learning experience. In this performance ethnography, we propose ways to imagine even the most rigid academic space as a revolutionary space.

Ameer's original performance was called *Re-visioning Academic Spaces*. This visual ethnography required that she spend time gathering images that represented the academic spaces she had inhabited for years. Spaces where, as a student, she had been required to sit in fixed seating arrangements, often in chairs bolted to the floor. While she did occasionally experience flexible classrooms and instructors, she continued to sense a static quality in the place where she was expected to expand her mind. Although Ameer's original performance has been reworked and combined with Brian's aural text, the work as a whole continues to challenge the institutional prescription of academic and intellectual space as a self-contained environment that operates according to one-size-fits-all rules delimited by dominant power structures.. Each still image, moving image, light instant, dark minute,

sound, silence, and textual element is meant to suggest ways to create space in the classroom.

Brian Kelly's original performance was called *60 Days: Considering the potential for music-based texts in reshaping the college classroom*. While our seminar instructors attempted to comprehensively cover the myriad possibilities of performance ethnography, Brian noticed that any discussion of music-based performance was missing – not only from the syllabus – but from the academic conversation and practice of performance ethnography. *60 Days* is a step along the path in remedying this lack, working as a sonic exploration of locating a place for music-based performances in the classroom, an often highly regimented space that prioritizes spoken and written knowledge.

Using a variety of sounds, including samples and processed guitar, Brian reconstructed the classroom as a space to explore the building and resolution of sonic tension that ultimately resulted in beauty, tranquility, and inclusiveness. The muted tones and unhurried pace of the piece in the beginning force the listener/experiencer to pay attention, to slow down, and invites immersion. The crisp sounds, like water dripping on marble, invite curiosity, mindfulness, and reflection. A little more than halfway through the piece, a ticking noise, reminiscent of summer insects on a warm evening, along with a welcoming melody bring the participant/listener into a safe space. The pacing of the performance here suggests change, hope, and the promise of joy. The peak of the song is uplifting and brings the listener along on a swell of tranquility and anticipation.

Because music is a language that can be translated by the listener, this is what we feel, hear, and see when we listen to the piece: rain, droplets, huge landscapes, tension, and tranquility. Another listener might perceive the piece in a different fashion, but it seems that this distinctive and personal experience we each have with music might be an element of what is valuable in sonic performance: that while the performer intends a certain narrative and does have a strong voice, the listener, by his or her own participation in the piece has the ability to transform the performance through their active participation in the performance as listener. This last point leads us to consider the potential of sensory performances, including audio and video-based texts, as pedagogical tools that may help students grapple with ways of knowing in the classroom. Although our individual works may have

been experienced solely for pleasure without any consideration of their political and pedagogical implications, the performances comment directly on the passionless and prescribed ways of knowing in the classroom.

## **Revision: A collaborative audio and video-based performance**

We now present *Revision* as a collaborative audio and video-based performance, where our aforementioned individual performances are combined and played simultaneously to complement each other. It is important to note that this was an experimental process, with each of us working in separate spaces and developing our own work, barring an evening of collaborative data collection and fieldwork (for example, Taking photographs and field recordings around the university campus). It was important for us to see how two independently developed texts could be experimentally combined and to wonder about the ensuing results. By creating separate texts that explored various ways of knowing in the classroom and then experimentally merging them, we created a new text and developed a new(er) space to explore and discuss various ways of knowing in the classroom.

We have performed *Revision* for a variety of academic audiences (Kelly & Wodda, 2013; Kelly, Wodda, Bagely, & Fabiyi, 2011; Wodda & Kelly, 2012), and now present it to you, the reader, participant, seer, listener, and interpreter. When performing the piece, we play with various performative elements at every opportunity. For example, we have altered the sound at some performances (Kelly, Wodda, Bagely, & Fabiyi, 2011), while at more recent performances the sound has remained consistent and we experiment with different ways to project the images, using several projectors to display the images on different surfaces in the room, allowing the viewer, for example, to choose where to pay attention, to switch attention to a different surface, (Kelly & Wodda, 2013; Wodda & Kelly, 2012)).

When using multiple projectors, we begin each projection at a slightly different time so that only one of the streams remains in sync with the audio in order to add a temporal element to the performance. This allows listeners/viewers to realize that they have control over the way

they take in the performance; one may choose to listen to/view the piece as we had originally intended, or a person may view the piece in the way they wish, not needing to remain committed to one way of experiencing the piece. Lively discussions following our performances reveal that interactants feel various emotions and sensations of delight, confusion, discovery, possibility, grumpiness, chagrin, remembering, bewilderment, empowerment, and the list goes on and on. In fact, the Q&A sessions following our performances tend to be our favorite part of the work, since we consider verbal interaction and the discussion of various modes of experiencing and knowing the piece an important continuation of our work.

Here is a link to *Revision*: <https://performanceethnographycollective.wordpress.com/>. For optimal viewing, we recommend an experimental, layered positioning of two or more projectors. For optimal listening, we recommend a stereo sound system. If viewing and listening on a laptop, we recommend wearing headphones.

## **From performance ethnography to performance pedagogy**

When one is talking or thinking,  
Instead of seeing or listening,  
One is not learning.  
Wren (1999)

In this companion essay, we borrow from aesthetic philosophy (Koren, 2008), indigenous epistemology that promotes a triangulation of meaning (Meyer, 2008), and nondeliberative group work practice (Lang, 2016) in order to extend our understanding of and engagement with performance ethnography into a teaching tool, and explore and communicate our experiences in a way that is methodological and meaningful. As reflexive researchers and performance pedagogists we urge students to use their critical faculties rather than passively receiving knowledges that are deemed important by others. Our performance piece, *Revision*, reflects the Japanese aesthetic concept of *yūgen* in which the realm of ‘true reality’ cannot be expressed in words—it can only be suggested (Wren, 1999). We believe that in

order to transmit our experience, our work must reflect the notion that *everything* is not essential. Further, we believe that challenging our students with material that promotes understanding beyond the multiple choice and true/false paradigm is a useful way to teach critical thinking. As Garoian (1999) argues:

A pedagogy founded on performance art represents the praxis of the postmodern ideals of progressive education, a process through which spectators/students learn to challenge the ideologies of institutionalized learning (schooled culture) in order to facilitate political agency and to develop critical citizenship (p. 39).

We also find that performance pedagogy models risk-taking, creativity, and the beauty of not-knowing for students in a way that is difficult, but not impossible to do using more mainstream pedagogical strategies.

Meyer (2008) describes a ‘triangulation of meaning,’ where the categories of body, mind, and spirit are equally important when it comes to the research processes of gathering knowledge, making an attempt to interpret what has been collected, and understanding the implications of research findings. In social sciences research, the term ‘triangulation’ is commonly used to describe a mixed-methods study for purposes of data checking to increase the validity of the results and is associated with the evidence-based movement (Denzin, 2012). Meyer’s (2008) conceptualization of triangulation is not concerned with validity, reliability, and generalizability. Instead, she encourages scholars to participate in a triangulation of *meaning* that is instead, ‘an authentic leap into new ways of viewing reality that will challenge current research paradigms based on Newtonian assumptions of space, time, and knowing’ (p. 217, Also see the helpful table on p. 227).

Our pedagogical practice brings the concept of Meyer’s (2008) triangulation of meaning to the classroom. For example, using the lens of the body (a synonym for ‘empirical’ or ‘ways of knowing’ in Meyer’s (2008) formulation) might mean accepting the classroom as it is, taking no action and using what we are handed. Mind, a synonym for ‘rational’ or ‘ways of seeing’ in Meyer’s (2008) formulation, could mean discussing the need for reshaping or deconstructing the classroom, dialoging about classroom limitations and seeking to create change.

Spirit, a synonym for ‘mysticism’ or ‘ways of doing’ in Meyer’s (2008) formulation, could mean actually changing the classroom, in our case, developing audio and video performative work that aim to re-shape academic spaces.

When we think about our performance ethnography process as it relates to the triangulation of meaning, we see how the categories come together:

- Body (empirical/ways of knowing): collecting raw audio and video as data
- Mind (rational/ways of seeing): assembling the audio and video work into performances
- Spirit (mysticism/ways of doing): experimenting with our works, blending them together, using multiple projectors, performing for different audiences, tinkering and reinterpreting our work, tying into a larger theoretical dialogue, bringing our work to something larger (audience, space, our own agendas), taking risks in service of authenticity.

We believe that our performance work is strengthened by reflexive attention to the triangulation of meaning = body + mind + spirit (all three occurring simultaneously). By remaining aware of these categories of meaning, we are better able to use performance pedagogy as a teaching strategy.

A great deal of material delivered in the classroom is not up for debate; the research has been done, the theory tested, the evidence proves that we know ‘x’ to be true. Social science scholars and educators are constantly moving toward the evidence-based, where constructs come to be defined as *known*. Further, most social science researchers want to ‘know’ in an empirically-based way, sticking primarily to Meyer’s (2008) ‘body’ category. Some researchers and educators attempt to understand social science constructs in a more interpretive and qualitative way, using other ways of seeing that echo Meyer’s notion of the ‘mind’ category, but these studies and educational practices often retain positivistic tendencies. There is little evidence that social science researchers and educators incorporate the ‘spirit’ angle to triangulate meaning in their scholarly work and in their teaching practices.

While all three categories are meant to occur simultaneously, the

'spirit' category in the triangulation of meaning is the most exciting, yet the least explored. As Meyer (2008) writes:

[Spirit] is data moving towards usefulness, moving toward meaning and beauty. It is the contemplation part of your work that brings you to insight, steadiness, and interconnection. ( p. 229)

It is our opinion that the purposeful inclusion of the spirit category in our teaching and research is almost guaranteed to lead to those 'aha!' moments that often seem so elusive.

Lang's (2016) theory of nondeliberative practice aligns well with Meyer's (2008) 'sprit/ways of doing category and provides additional insight into the pedagogical possibilities of our performative work. Developed from her theoretical and practice informed scholarship on the mainstream group (Lang, 1979a; Lang, 1979b), that was (and some would argue still is) unique to social groupwork, Lang (2016) defines nondeliberative practice as a model of group work that employs 'intuitive, actional processes' (p. 101) Grounded in the lived experiences of participants. It is creative, ingenious, and spontaneous and uses 'artful, actional, and analogic forms of solution seeking' (p. 103). Nondeliberative groupwork practice does not subscribe to particular ways of knowing. Rather, it promotes a way of unknowing, by approaching an activity without a preconceived notion of what the outcome may be. The mantra of the model is 'do, then think' (p. 109), A practice that is deeply grounded in art and music-based activities. (Kelly & Doherty, 2016; Kelly & Doherty, 2017))

Doing, *then* thinking allows for unique pedagogical possibilities. Moving from the empirical, to the rational, to the mystical and leaning into unknowing may create new spaces for students. Our audio and video-based performative work explores possibilities for re-shaping the physical attributes of the classroom (for example, The sights, sounds, smells, and feels). It allows us to imagine the potential for change in classrooms, by creating spaces where knowledge and its meaning are challenged and (re)shaped. We agree with Meyer (2008) and Lang (2016) that we must create a space for the spirit, the unknown, and ourselves in research and pedagogy. As educators and practitioners, we know that activating the five senses in the classroom (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) may lead to improved learning outcomes, however,

there is a sixth sense – awareness – that is often compromised. In the following sections, we propose ways to activate awareness.

## **Method: performance ethnography as teaching tool**

Don't know?  
Don't know.  
Don't know!  
(A Koan)

The hypnotic effect of *Revision* urges the mind away from the mundane world. The stimulus is presented with enough simplicity to allow the spectator to move beyond an aesthetic enjoyment of the form itself, however, we deliberately imbued this work with an intensity designed to sustain a sense of slow-moving drama. We struggle against pushing a fixed message on any audience and so *Revision* is often seen as confusing or abstract, however the piece itself explores a particular way of knowing (our way) and it invites the audience to participate in creating an immersive, deep, transcendent reality of their own. In the *spirit* of Meyer's (2008) triangulation of meaning (pun intended!), We invite students to engage with their bodies, minds, and spirits through individual and collective observation, interpretation, and the co-creation of knowledge and meaning.

Since we do not feel compelled to explain ourselves in bare terms, and since such an explanation would be at odds with the ethos of our philosophy, *Revision* might, in the first moment, appear to convey a purely aesthetic message. Diving into the piece, below a purely aesthetic exterior, is where meaning-making happens—in the liminal space between performance and audience. Each listener/viewer reaches understanding (or begins to interpret the piece) at their own pace.

We have designed *Revision* as an experimental text that acts on one level as ethnography of our specific experience; an autoethnography in which we lay bare the elements of our process (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Denzin, 2006; Denzin, 2009a). On another level, our work functions as a mirror in which others might see their own preferences and prejudices reflected. We repeatedly perform the piece, refining each iteration, and

we see the revised piece, not *only* as a work in its own right, but as an interactive and living text that relies upon the audience as a crucial part of the performance. As Garoian (1999) observes:

Performance art pedagogy fosters a delight in process rather than object-oriented culture. In art and educational contexts, what is revealed in the process of discussion, production, or reflection is believed to be more significant than a work that exists in a finished state isolated on a pedestal, a stage, or a wall (p. 49).

In essence, one *sees* and *hears* the ‘doing’ of ethnography (in this case, an ethnography of place and space) in our performance. We reveal, in images and through sound, the elements of our process. Our work is fieldnote, memo, and coding expressed through visual and aural means.

Although we do not eschew the page as communicative medium, we believe the de-prioritization of images and sound in a learning environment is lacking. We agree with Smith and Gallo’s (2007) vision of performance work as a unique form of communicative ethnography where, ‘ultimately, the text brings the listeners to new understanding or knowledge, or moves them to action based on their own interpretation of the text’ (p. 522). Therefore, we prefer to create audio-visually based, process-oriented performance texts that thrive on interaction with an audience, rather than pieces which are self-explanatory, closed-ended, and which might result in tepid, if interested, reactions from the viewer/listeners.

The following practice example demonstrates the use of our performance ethnography as a nondeliberative groupwork pedagogical tool. In setting up the performance, we invite instructors to follow our suggested guidelines, most importantly an experimental, layered positioning of two or more projectors and a stereo sound system. In introducing the performance, we suggest instructors inform students they will be viewing an audio and video-based performance and discussing it afterward. We suggest avoiding providing prompts prior to the performance so as to avoid shaping students’ experiences and perceptions of the work. In doing so, students are able to ‘do, then think’ (Lang, 2016, p. 109), By independently observing and interpreting the work and creating their own ways of knowing it.

Following the viewing, we suggest instructors use students' interpretations and ways of knowing the work as a jumping off point for group discussions that explore the process of engaging with the performative work *in this space with this group*. Here, we imagine students' independent interpretations, perceptions, and ways of knowing the work moving toward a collective understanding of it. To be clear; collective understanding does not equate consensus of meaning. Rather, we suggest instructors use differences and discrepancies in students' ways of knowing the work as a way to exploit the potential of unknowing, as an invitation to move into a constructivist space where meaning is made in the moment and multiple meanings may coexist, ultimately creating a space for unknowing. Prompting students to consider other experiences in their lives where the tension between knowing and unknowing is present builds on the analogic and nondeliberative nature of the group process. We also suggest exploring whether and how the environment/space changed as a result of the work and the ensuing group dialogue. Finally, we recommend the instructor attend to group-centered facilitation skills and group dynamics, particularly communication and interaction patterns, in an effort to avoid shaping students' perceptions of the work (for more information see Toseland & Rivas, 2012).

## **An aesthetics of performance pedagogy**

In this section we present *an*, not *the*, aesthetics of performance pedagogy. In doing so we wish to leave room for others' interpretations of what an aesthetics of performance pedagogy might look like and we invite others to create their own conception of the practice. Our proposal is grounded in Koren's (2008) meditation on the aesthetics of beauty that embraces the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*, which is the art of finding beauty in imperfection (Powell, 2004). Koren (2008) further describes *wabi-sabi*:

Beauty can be coaxed out of ugliness. *wabi-sabi* is ambivalent about separating beauty from non-beauty or ugliness. The beauty of *wabi-sabi* is in one respect, the condition of coming to terms with what you consider ugly. *Wabi-sabi* suggests that beauty is a dynamic event that occurs

between you and something else. Beauty can spontaneously occur at any moment given the proper circumstances, context, or point of view. Beauty is thus an altered state of consciousness, an extraordinary moment of poetry and grace. (P. 51)

We, in turn, borrow from his notion of the ‘aesthetics of beauty’ in order to imagine an aesthetics of performance pedagogy that supports our turn to experimental (that is, imperfect) performance as a pedagogical method for exploring various ways of (un)knowing. In allowing space for ambiguity and imperfection, performative works create opportunities for nondeliberative practice, where students may enter a process without pre-determined meanings and outcomes. Below, we propose some ideas for developing such works and for opening up nondeliberative groupwork spaces in the classroom:

1. Understanding can be coaxed from unawareness.
2. Performance pedagogy is ambivalent about disconnecting understanding from non-knowledge or unawareness.
3. The epistemology of performance pedagogy is, in one respect, the condition of coming to terms with what you consider knowledge.
4. Understanding is a dynamic event that occurs between you and something else.
5. Formalism and adherence to rules are not antithetical to spontaneous performance.
6. The aesthetic of performance pedagogy urges appreciation, rather than knowledge.
7. Eloquent silence.
8. It is not passive; performance pedagogy urges growing into understanding without the angst of one way of understanding.
8. Performance pedagogy brings authority without domination.
10. Comprehension can spontaneously occur at any moment given the proper circumstances, context, or point of view. Understanding is thus an altered state of consciousness, an extraordinary moment of poetry and grace.

## The importance of liminality in our work

As performance pedagogists, it has become necessary for us to pay close attention to the notion of liminality. For many people, the limen is a barely perceptible space; it exists at the edge of consciousness. Most individuals experience the limen as a threshold that is crossed as part of a rite of passage. For example, a young person about to enter adolescence might understand the limen as an in-between-space pressing upon them. The limen is most often a space of emotion, insecurity, and paradox. In liminal space things are not concrete and knowable, instead, we can rightly regard the limen as a gray zone, a limbo, or a demilitarized zone (Garoian, 1999; Turner, 1969).

For students, the limen can be a scary space. Additionally, the 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1969) quality of the limen can make performance pedagogy unnerving as we negotiate boundaries between ourselves and our students (How much 'humanity' can or should we reveal?), And as we resist the well trodden path of lecture and discussion—of professor as sole authority in the classroom and student as passive receptacle of knowledge. Garoian (1999) explains:

[P]eople anxiously want to negotiate the limen quickly, to take sides. Its condition is unstable, indeterminate, and prone to complexity and contradiction. For the anxious, the limen serves no purposes other than demarcating absolute value between conflicting opinions. For the artist, the limen is desirable (p. 40).

Because students have become used to receiving good grades for knowing the 'right' answer, performance pedagogy that supports movement towards awareness instead of 'rightness' may make students uncomfortable. As Garoian (1999) indicates above, students may become impatient with materials that challenge them to (at least temporarily) let go of notions of right and wrong answers. As educators, we understand why students cling to these notions, as their grades often depend on this mindset.

In our classrooms, however, we try to make space for exploration, creativity, and for a development of awareness and understanding that is not solely reliant on notions of right and wrong answers. We urge our students to enter into the realm of academic discomfort along with

us because it is only in this context that group-based radical pedagogy can emerge (Garoian, 1999, p. 40; Denzin, 2009b). Further, we believe that continuing to immerse students into spaces and contexts where they are encouraged to let go of being 'right' and risk being 'wrong' promotes, as Garoian (1999) believes, 'thinking and production where interpretations are in continual flux like dream imagery' (p. 49). We are excited when students begin to understand that contemplation and awareness might ultimately be more meaningful and stimulating than finding any single 'right' answer. We position and promote *Revision* as an opportunity for students to experience this important phenomenon and experience it as an analogic process for their lives.

## **Practice implications and conclusion(s)**

As educators, we actively work on incorporating opportunities for different types of knowing. Performance pedagogy is a major element of our strategy in reshaping the classroom for our students and for ourselves by playing with all six senses, but perhaps most importantly awareness. Teaching that attends to students' various learning styles is a move we support, however, almost all students, no matter their style or (dis)ability can be reached through awareness (Meyer, 2003).

Earlier in this paper, we proposed an aesthetics of performance pedagogy modeled on Koren's (2008) 'aesthetics of beauty.' The pivotal element when thinking about performance pedagogy is the concept of coming to terms with the idea of knowledge itself. As researchers, we conceptualize understanding as a dynamic event that occurs between ourselves and something else, and we have challenged ourselves to teach the idea that understanding is an action, not a passive event. Further, the spirit category in Meyer's (2008) triangulation of meaning formulation posits that comprehension may spontaneously occur at any moment given the proper circumstances, context, or point of view. In pedagogical terms, this means that we try to give our students the tools to comprehend the materials we are teaching by providing enough context and a variety of points of view. Rather than spoon-feed students the information, we intend for them to arrive at understanding in their own way. This seems a full embodiment of Lang's (2016) theory of nondeliberative groupwork practice: members arriving at their own

meanings and outcomes.

As qualitative researchers trained to respect and prioritize member's meanings (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995), we believe in an aesthetic of performance pedagogy that urges appreciation *and* knowledge. Further, we understand the importance and power of making space for silence while conducting research and also when working with students. We are not afraid of lulls in the conversation because they often indicate that students are actively engaged and thinking.

Educators are active architects and performers in classrooms. We understand that students often require a familiar format with strict rules and norms. In order to ease students' anxieties and meet their needs, educators often develop well-regulated and organized spaces for students, not to confine them, but to allow them to work and think more creatively (Kern, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). In addition, educators are generally required to perform the role of the expert in the room. While authoritative performances and roles may be imperative for many educators in the classroom, it is important, perhaps essential, to refrain from turning that authority into domination. Although there are indeed times when correct answers are indicated, we advocate that educators recognize and make space for those times when understanding and awareness are most needed. *Revision*, our collaborative audio and video-based performance ethnography, provides an opportunity for educators to explore different ways of (un)knowing in the classroom and invites educators to contribute to students' awareness and understanding without demanding conformity to particular ways of knowing.

## References

- Bochner, A. P. & Ellis, C. (2002) *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature, and aesthetics* (Vol. 9). Lanham, MD: Rowman Altamira
- Conquergood, D. (2002) Performance studies: Interventions and radical research. *Drama Review: A Journal of Performance Studies*, 46, 2, 145-156
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1999) Sixteen implications of a systems perspective for the study of creativity. in R. J. Sternberg (Ed.) *Handbook of creativity*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press (pp. 313-335)

- Denzin, N. K. (2012) Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6, 2, 80-88
- Denzin, N. K. (2009a) The elephant in the living room: Or extending the conversation about the politics of evidence. *Qualitative research*, 9, 2, 139-160
- Denzin, N. K. (2009b) Critical pedagogy and democratic life or a radical democratic pedagogy. *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies*, 9, 3, 379-397
- Denzin, N. K. (2006) Analytic autoethnography, or déjà vu all over again. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35, 4, 419-428
- Denzin, N. K. (2003) *Performance ethnography: Critical pedagogy and the politics of culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I. & Shaw, L. L. (2011) *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Garoian, C. R. (1999) *Performing pedagogy: Toward an art of politics*. Ithaca, NY: State University of New York Press
- Kelly, B. L., & Doherty, L. (2016) Exploring nondeliberative practice through recreational, art, and music-based activities in social work with groups. *Social Work with Groups*, 39(2/3), 221-233. doi: 10.1080/01609513.2015.1057681
- Kelly, B. L., & Doherty, L. (2017) A historical overview of art and music-based activities in social work with groups: Nondeliberative practice and engaging young people's strengths. *Social Work with Groups*, 40(3) doi: 10.1080/01609513.2015.1091700
- Kelly, B. L. & Wodda, A. (2013) *REVISION: Composing an aesthetics of performance pedagogy*. Audio and video-based performance ethnography presented at the Ethnography Workshop at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.
- Kelly, B. L., Wodda, A., Bagely, J., & Fabiyi, C. (2011) *From the concrete confines (redux): Genesis of performance texts across disciplines*. Panel presented at the University of Illinois at Chicago Jane Addams College of Social Work Doctoral Student Association Brown Bag Series, Chicago, IL
- Kern, A. (2006) Exploring the relation between creativity and rules: the case of the performing arts. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 36, 1, 63-80
- Koren, L. (2008) *Wabi-sabi for artists, designers, poets & philosophers*. Point Reyes: CA: Imperfect Publishing
- Lang, N. C. (1979a) A comparative examination of therapeutic uses of groups in social work and in adjacent human service professions: Part I - The literature from 1955–1968. *Social Work with Groups*, 2, 2, 101–115
- Lang, N. C. (1979b) A comparative examination of therapeutic uses of groups in social work and in adjacent human service professions: Part II - The literature from 1969–1978. *Social Work with Groups*, 2, 3, 197–220

- Lang, N. C. (2016) Nondeliberative forms of practice in social work: Artful, actional, analogic. *Social Work with Groups*, 39, 2/3, 97–117
- Meyer, M. (2008) Indigenous and authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the triangulation of meaning. in N.K. Denzin, Y.S. Lincoln & L.T. Smith (Eds.) *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* Los Angeles, CA: Sage (pp. 217-232)
- Meyer, M. A. (2003) Our own liberation: Reflections on Hawaiian epistemology. *Amerasia Journal*, 29, 2, 139-164
- National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2004) bell hooks urges 'radical openness' in teaching, learning. *The Council Chronicle*. [accessed 21 April 2017 at <http://www.ncte.org/magazine/archives/117638>]
- Powell, R. R. (2004) *Wabi sabi simple: Create beauty. Value imperfection. Live deeply*. New York: Adams Media
- Smith, C. S. & Gallo, A. M. (2007) Applications of performance ethnography in nursing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17,4, 521-528
- Toseland, R. W. & Rivas, R. F. (2012) *An introduction to group work practice* (7th ed.) Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon
- Turner, V. (1969) *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
- Wodda, A., & Kelly, B. L. (2012, April) *Revision: Music and video-based performance texts in reshaping academic spaces*. Audio and video-based performance ethnography presented at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Chicago Ethnography Conference, Chicago, IL
- Wren, B. L. (1999) *Zen among the magnolias*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America