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A TAIWANESE PERSPECTIVE: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
CONFUCIAN BODY PHILOSOPHY AND DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY

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Submitted in partial completion of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Dance/Movement Therapy at Sarah Lawrence College

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**Abstract**

This thesis explores the correspondence between dance/movement therapy and Confucian body philosophy. It is inspired by the author's embodied experiences during her study in the field of dance/movement therapy in America while holding the identity as an international student who came from Taiwan. Because of the cultural differences, the author experienced a learning curve in understanding theories that are mostly developed in Western society. Through embodying foreign principles, the author pursues various perspectives in implementing American ideology while having a greater sense of her Taiwanese self. In these embodied experiences, three significant themes arise when paralleling Confucian body philosophy and dance/movement therapy theories. The body-heart/body-mind connection, the understanding of qi/energy, and the heart-qi-shape's connection are highlighted in this thesis. Cultural differences can have the possibility to enrich the dance/movement therapy field, and discovering diverse cultural practices should be explored.

*Keywords:* dance/movement therapy, Taiwan, Confucian body philosophy, Taiwanese culture, international student

治身養性，務謹其細，不可以小益為不平而不修，不可以小損為無傷而不防。——葛洪

To nurse one's body while cultivating the constitution of the mind, one must start with something small. We cannot stop practicing these principles because the gains are too little. We cannot be ignorant of the body because it is not as harmful (Ge Hong, 1565).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Movement is My Lifelong Partner.....5

Taiwan.....8

Confucianism.....11

Dance/Movement Therapy.....13

Culture’s Influence on the Body.....15

A Taiwanese Student in the United States.....17

    Body-Mind Connection and Body-Heart Connection.....18

    Qi.....24

    Heart-Qi-Shape.....27

Conclusion.....29

References.....31

**Movement is My Lifelong Partner**

There is no consciousness without the body and no body without the consciousness (Yang, 1996). Ever since I was young, I have loved expressing myself through movement, and this has accompanied me for most of my life. There is a story that I often share with people to explain my passion for movement more than words. When I was five years old, my mother would play music in the living room and I would automatically start dancing. As the music changed, I would switch my dance style to fit the musical interpretation without any instruction. This freeform expression in movement, combined with the rhythm, created a limitless space for me to be fully present. At that moment, I felt complete as myself, where I could comprehend the integration of all emotions and my presence in the universe. This embodied experience was so powerful that I knew dance would always be a part of my life development, and this is the path I would pursue.

Movement became the language that connected me to other people and my passion. At seven years old I began my training to become a professional dancer. I trained in various principles of dance such as ballet, modern dance, martial arts, Chinese opera, and Tai Chi to expand my horizon. The training allowed me to root myself in my Taiwanese identity and explore what cultural traditions meant to my development. Meanwhile, it deepened my curiosity about different cultures and how the histories of societies mold the understanding of the body. My professional dance training taught my body multiple principles of movement, and it also gave me the direct embodiment of various cultures. Through experiencing a piece of culture in movement and learning the background history of dance, I started to find connections within different cultures' embodiment. To this day, it continues to inspire my exploration of cultures through bodily experiences.

Dance has carried me through multiple emotional times, especially when I did not have another outlet to express myself. As the older sibling in my family living in a Taiwanese society, I had to present myself as someone who had it all. Someone who knows what they want for their future career, consistently achieving their goals and is excellent in everything they do. Although my parents did not set these standards for me, I carried the typical pressures coming from Taiwanese society. When I was overwhelmed with emotions, I would turn to my body for guidance, and each time, it supported me in every aspect.

When I am experiencing strong emotions caused by something out of my control, I would go to a dance class. During the class, I would set an intention to let go. Indulging myself in movements that assist in releasing tension and deep breathing, I found a sense of balance and calmness through movement, which became my pathway for emotional integration—utilizing embodied experiences to figure out possible solutions or various perspectives to comprehending situations.

### **Discovery of Dance/Movement Therapy**

I have always perceived dance with remarkable healing power; however, I did not have the knowledge or language to express my experiences, all I had was the embodiment. Employing movement practices into my daily routine I found a sense of emotional balance in myself that made it easier to navigate stressful situations. After graduating from university with a bachelor's degree in Dance, I started to teach dance classes for students from three to 18 years old. Being a teacher showed me that the emotional time I had gone through being trained as a professional dancer was a shared experience. My students also were confronting the high-pressure environment in the competitive dance world and the cultural stigma of needing to follow their

parents' decisions while making them proud. I decided to introduce the toolsets I had developed through my experiences to assist them in releasing stress and integrating themselves.

Surprisingly, my students began to express the positive effect they felt during classes and told me they were able to enjoy dance again. This moment was when I realized that my embodied experiences could be universal. Meanwhile, these toolsets could potentially help others who are also struggling with emotional regulation and the stress from society.

One day, a friend of mine came back to Taiwan from Germany. She had been studying dance/movement therapy in Germany for a year. We had a long conversation about her study and I shared my stories about teaching. That is how I discovered the field of dance/movement therapy. There are very limited dance/movement therapy resources in Asia; most of the education programs are located in either Europe or America. At first, the thought of attending school abroad, with the language barrier and drastic cultural differences brought back genuinely terrifying concerns from my experiences living in Australia for a year. However, my curiosity for understanding the healing power of dance and my passion for wanting to help people with psychological disorders live a balanced life overcame my fear. I decided to move forward with my decision and started to apply for school. In order to pursue a degree, I relocated to America as an international student.

Studying dance/movement therapy gave me the language to express the therapeutic process I experienced in dance classes and the theories to understand the integration of body and mind. My embodiment can be explained through science, history, cultural ritual, psychology, and dance/movement therapy. Through my academic journey, I discovered the importance of recognizing which of my embodied experiences were informed by my Taiwanese culture, encouraging me to explore the embedded movement practices within my culture.



## **Taiwan**

Taiwan is a country with twenty-four million people living on a semi-tropical island in East Asia. With a large number of people living on a 35,808 square kilometers island, Taiwan is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. It is geographically located between Japan and the Philippines, off the southeast coast of China (Law, 2004). Taiwan's two main populations are the Han ethnic group, which makes up ninety-five percent of the population, and indigenous people, who make up three percent. For the purpose of this paper we will be focusing on the Han ethnic group's influence on Taiwanese culture.

The Han ethnic group mainly emigrated from China's eastern regions, such as Fujian Province and Guangdong Province (Copper, 2014). Before 1895, Taiwan was governed as part of Fujian Province, ruled under China's government. However, in 1894, China and Japan started a war over their conflict of interests in Korea, which Japan eventually won. The terms of the treaty included that China had to recognize the independence of Korea, which it has traditionally held ownership of, while ceding Taiwan, the Pescadores Islands, and the Liaodong Peninsula over to Japan. To this day, China still views the treaty as not legally binding and argues that the agreement was imposed under pressure (Charney & Prescott, 2000).

Taiwan's culture has multiple influences from the immigration of nearby countries and a long history of colonization. With a history of being ruled by the Dutch, Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese, the duration of colonization directly correlated to the amount of cultural influence on Taiwan. While the Dutch and Spanish have less influence on Taiwanese culture, the Chinese and Japanese governments have built Taiwan's systems and significantly instilled their own cultural values.

Beginning in 1895, Japan ruled Taiwan for over fifty years. Japan improved Taiwan's agriculture development, educational systems, overall infrastructures, and police system (Chou & Ho, 2007). However, Japan constantly suppressed Taiwan's culture by implementing the removal of local languages, fighting against indigenous peoples, and enforcing submission to the emperor of Japan. This often provoked Taiwanese people to rebel in order to keep their traditions and cultures alive (Ballantine, 1952). Due to endless conflicts between the people and the government, Japan had to implement a system of democracy for Taiwanese people to elect city authorities through civilian votes, which rooted the beginning of democracy in Taiwan.

In 1945, after Japan was defeated in World War II, leading to the negotiation of the sovereignty of Taiwan (Ballantine, 1952). Meanwhile, two major political parties in China, the Chinese Communist Party and Kuomintang, started a war to determine China's political system. The war left the Kuomintang defeated and forced them to evacuate to Taiwan. The Communist Party that stayed in China established itself as the People's Republic of China, while Kuomintang established itself as the Republic of China in Taiwan. Due to the separation of two major political parties there were disagreements over which government should be invited to sign the treaty of who governed Taiwan. This lack of clarity led to Japan not specifying whom they were surrendering Taiwan to (Togo, 2010). Taiwan was left without a sovereign government while Kuomintang began to build a Taiwanese government without consideration for the decision.

China's government was dominated by a one-party political system while Taiwan began to develop various political parties and established a democratic government in 1945. After Taiwan identified itself as a country separated from China, multiple countries worldwide began to disassociate their relationships with Taiwan. In 1971, United Nations officials declared the Chinese Communist Party as the only legal representative of China. After this announcement,

international organizations have consistently rejected Taiwan, limiting the development of the national sense of self in Taiwan (O'Riordan & Voisey, 2001).

### **Taiwan's Core Culture**

Taiwan's culture is a cocktail of Chinese core values and Japanese governmental systems. It is deeply influenced by religious customs, Chinese philosophy, colonial history, immigrants, and the democratic system. With its short history of being independent, Taiwan has built a remarkable democratic government, universal healthcare system, and it is rated as one of the safest countries in the world. These successes can be viewed as the outcome of having a long history of colonization and Chinese influence viewing the society as a collective.

According to Confucianism, for a system to run well, everyone must play their role. Confucian ideology on social roles and social expectations is still the norm for people in Taiwan today (Chen & Chung, 1994). Taiwan's collectivist ideology came from Confucianism's perspective of personal morality, its connections to the interdependent relationship between the individual and the society, and the belief that one cannot exist without the other. These core cultural values are deeply rooted in our society and widely accepted by Taiwanese people. Despite the impact of globalization, and the passage of time, these values are still stronger than individualistic values (Lu & Yang, 2005; Lu et al., 2008).

Taiwan's politics, culture, and body attitude are profoundly influenced by Confucianism due to the implementation of its core values as the center of education. Moreover, Confucianism's core concepts of duty, honor, respect for the elderly, and seniority influenced the mindset of Taiwanese people and the building of interpersonal relationships. Its core concepts of respecting the hierarchy are one of the most observable phenomena. As subjects, we respect the

rulers. As children, we respect our parents. As wives, we respect husbands. As sisters, we respect brothers. A harmonious society is more important than personal gain, which leads individuals to place the interest of others before their own, even in social interactions. Triandis (2018) also confirmed that people in collectivist cultures tend to think more holistically. They often focus on the connections with others and consider the context of overall situations. Meanwhile, people in individualistic cultures tend to view situations by separating different elements, and the result matters in their own hands (Gorodnichenko and Roland, 2012).

### **Confucianism**

儒家 (rujia) is the Mandarin symbol for Confucianism, composed of two words. Dissecting the meaning of both words provides a basic understanding of Confucian core values. 儒 (ru) is a word combined with “人” (ren), which refers to humans, and the word “需” (xu), indicates need. A core ideology of Confucianism is human’s need to uphold their righteousness while following and honoring morals. This school of thought originated in China and became a mainstream East Asian philosophy through colonization. This formed a significant pillar of culture because it put civilians first.

Confucius is said to have always abided by the four core virtues of Confucianism (Littlejohn, 2010). These virtues are moral compass (ren 仁), empathy in morality (shu dao 恕道), honesty (cheng shi 誠實), and respect while following the virtues of one’s parents or ancestors (xiao 孝). Confucius was an educator, philosopher, and politician. Having multiple roles in government made his influence far-reaching in various aspects of Chinese culture. Confucius described himself as the transmitter of past wisdom but not the creator of these virtues. He claimed his core ideology was not original, and these virtues were developed long

before his time. He regarded himself as someone who was sincerely fond of his ancestors and keen to talk about the “good old days”. (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009). His humble characteristics and consideration for civilians are significant reasons Confucianism is popular in East Asian cultures, and its core collectivist values heavily impacted Asian cultures.

Confucius was able to fight despotism, rebuild social rituals, bring change in morality, and enrich humanism during his lifetime, while his students expanded Confucianism to a bigger scale of cultures to service people. After he passed away, his students continued his work while broadening his core virtues to more in-depth cultural norms (Littlejohn, 2010). Today, countries preserve his values and carry on his legacy, viewing him as a standard for society’s morals. In Taiwan, there are temples dedicated to Confucius for people to worship and give gratitude to his contributions. Traditional rituals are celebrated on his memorial day, intending to honor and prolong his values. Additionally, in order to honor Confucius’s work, his students began to establish a Confucian school of thought, expanding his core values to all aspects of philosophy and passing on his legacy to the future generations.

Confucianism’s ideology of order and harmony has formed the basic structure for collectivist cultures in some East Asian countries, especially Taiwan. Confucius believed in the idea of people living in harmony, both with each other and the natural environment (Hoobler & Hoobler, 2009). By following the hierarchical system while respecting seniors, society will have order, and putting oneself in other’s shoes (tui ji ji ren 推己及人) allows harmony between people to develop. Within a collectivist society, everyone’s interpersonal relationships and roles are all tightly connected, which is also emphasized in the Confucian system structures.

One of the reasons Taiwan’s democratic system can thrive is having Confucianism as the base of society’s values. When societal issues arise, Taiwan seeks to find solutions within

changing leadership by searching for people with high moral values who can be role models for the public to set higher standards for themselves. In contrast, predominantly individualistic societies tend to change their laws or systems and aim for people to calculate the benefit of their own actions. Although collectivism is not emphasized in the Confucian school of thought, its focus on relationships and the development of its system structures are deeply rooted in the association of self and others.

### **Dance/Movement Therapy**

The early development of modern psychology was deeply influenced by the Western cultures' discovery of human bodily function. According to Descartes (2013), the body and mind are two separate substances; the mind or soul is defined as thinking while the body is defined as matter. Descartes claimed that he could cast out his body but not his mind. This idea of substance dualism influenced various fields' perspectives of the body-mind connection to this day.

Dance/movement therapy is a unique field in psychotherapy because it operates from the perspective that body and mind are connected as one, differentiating it from many psychological modalities. Dance/movement therapy theories emphasize that human functions are related to the interweaving relationship of body and mind, while movement is a form of communication that fulfills basic human needs (Chace, Sandel, Chaiklin, & Lohn, 1993).

Dance/movement therapy is a form of psychotherapy that employs movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration with the aim to assist in people's well-being (ADTA, 2015). Enhanced body awareness focuses on developing pathways for self-regulation and utilizing embodying experiences of the body, mind, spirit, and energy. It is beneficial to holistically integrate oneself mentally and physically to achieve a balanced lifestyle.

Rosberg-Gempton and Poole (1993) asserted that humans could have the ability to control emotions through body movement by obtaining awareness of bodily sensations and states. Through utilizing movement to achieve self-regulation while cognitively processing emotions, dance/movement therapy's versatile therapeutic power is informed by different gateways such as neuroscience, dance history, non-verbal communication, psychology, and Asian body philosophy. Moreover, its capability to expand human expression and integrate body-mind connection continues to develop in various fields.

Movement has an ancient history within human development, and its earliest usage can be traced back to tribal communities. Multiple diverse cultures have been employing dance as a pathway to comprehending human, nature, spirit, and the universe as a means to discover one's connection with the whole world while making sense of one's place (Chaiklin, 2015).

Meanwhile, dance and movement have also been utilized to explore the interpersonal relationship with the community, discover the cultural body, and comprehend the identity of the self (Schmais, 1985). Its usage is a healing tool in many countries that existed in human history long before the concept of psychotherapy was developed (El Guindy & Schmais, 1994).

Many of the early dance/movement therapy practitioners were modern dance performers or educators. Through their experiences with modern dance, they identified the potential for therapeutic benefits of the movement (Levy, 1988). Dance/movement psychotherapy's development has been mainly based on a Western European ideology of mental health. (Dokter, 1998; Sue, 1981). According to Chang (2015), it is crucial to examine racial, ethnic, and cultural biases in dance/movement therapy to begin equal communication for socioculturally diverse students, educators, therapists, and clients. As part of this, acknowledging the developmental history of the field is critical.

### **Culture's Influence on the Body**

The word “身體” (shenti) is body in Mandarin. In Taiwanese culture, “身” (shen) contains the meaning of body, life force, status, and sophistication. The word “體” (ti) means body, experience, form, and empathy. The “body” in English expresses the definition of the physical structure of a person, a mass, and gives material form to abstract objects. In English the word “body” tends to be perceived as a physical presentation. In Mandarin the word “body” has a holistic view incorporating the various pieces that constitute a body. Through the explanations of the same word in different languages, we can observe the cultural differences in comprehending the idea of what the body means to each culture. The subtle differences in the words are evidences that core cultural values do influence the development of languages and this phenomenon can provide information on the manner in which people view the physical body within different cultures.

From the beginning of human life, culture is formed and adapted through socialization. Culture is created while constantly evolving as the result of human social interaction. The corresponding and interactive effect can also be seen on the construction of the body-mind connection. The perception of the body and mind is deeply impacted by culture, society, as well as the environment (Lin & Payne, 2019). Moreover, according to Stanton-Jones (1992), body and movement are a reflection of concretized processes of actions in the mind and mirror a person's “personality, culture, psychopathology, intra/interpersonal, and cultural patterns” (p.61). When discussing mental health, culture needs to be a part of the conversation because it heavily influences a person's development. Additionally, symptomatology, progression, and the formation of mental disorders are influenced by culture. Meanwhile, having understanding of



cultural backgrounds assists researchers in clarifying the role culture plays in psychotherapy and treatment (Patel et al., 2013, p.41).

Humans are trained to perform a variety of tasks, such as walking, jumping, driving a car, or performing in an orchestra. This constitutes our embodiment. According to Turner & Zheng, these behaviors are not necessarily natural for humans but socially produced habits (2009). The habits are also specific to different cultures. This can be observed through differences in the Asian body and Western body (Turner & Zheng, 2009). In a Taiwanese society that values collectivism more than individualism, social relationships with each other become more important than personal boundaries (Fei, 1948). Interactions such as feeling comfortable having people in close proximity during conversations, or living in an apartment with less personal space are more acceptable in Taiwan's culture but not necessarily desirable in cultures that value individualism, like the United States (Brown, 2001).

Individuals raised in different cultures still share similar behaviors. People value and bond with actions that connect them to people in a positive way, such as behaviors that promote the quality of vulnerability, empathy, and kindness. However, the specific manifestation of these common behaviors will be shaped by the different community's development of habits (Turner & Zheng, 2009).

The ideology of the body itself is diverse within each culture, while theories about the physical body are constructed with multiple layers of culture. Different cultural traditions, customs, values, and communities produce different types of embodiment which can be essential to the dance/movement therapy field, especially when discussing utilizing movement as self-integration for the well-being of a person. It is important to be aware of the cultural effect of the body philosophy within the Asia region, because of the multiple traditions in different Asian

cultures that are connected to the body. In addition, Asia's relations with the West through war, colonialism, and globalization have had a significant impact on Asian body philosophy as well (Turner & Zheng, 2009). Body culture is an embodied culture, because of the multiple deep integrated layers within the construction of "the body" and "the culture".

### **A Taiwanese Student in the United States**

As an international student from Taiwan studying dance/movement therapy, it took me a considerable amount of time to understand some aspects of America's culture, language, diversity, and ideology. I am still actively learning the different aspects of American culture. Language barriers, different academic structures, and diverse perspectives seem to be the most front and center subject I bump into during my study.

As a non-native English speaker, I found that comprehending the meanings behind each word is only the surface of having the ability to express and communicate with other English speakers. The cultural context beneath the words or phrases that developed through topics within different generations, trends, and popular culture are not something a foreigner who was not raised in an American environment can easily pick up. Language is often the reflection of cultures, and through this challenge, I understand the importance of learning about American culture through having insight into the historical background while linking that foundation to comprehend my experience from my perspective.

Throughout my study in dance/movement therapy theories, I have been utilizing this method, intending to gain knowledge of the Western perspective of the dance/movement therapeutic principles and understand its body-mind practice. Meanwhile, I learned to value my personal process when comprehending various viewpoints while incorporating my Taiwanese

identity into the exploration. By employing this approach, I found myself developing the ability to consider different aspects of concepts, which enriched my learning experiences and made me aware of being respectful of the cultural context. This process started to emerge not only when thinking about dance/movement therapy theories but also in my embodied experiences.

In movement, groundedness tends to be present in my movement patterns, while it is often my first instinctual tool for self-regulation. Meanwhile, groundedness reflected my ancestors' cultural development in their body practices and philosophy on body, mind, and nature's connection. One of the most significant discoveries in my journey of studying dance/movement therapy is seeing and experiencing the cultural effect on the body and mind. Not having enough representation of Taiwanese culture and ethnicity within the dance/movement theories made me wonder about the possibility of exploring the common grounds between this field and my cultural practice. Through embodying Confucian body philosophy and dance/movement therapy, I found similarities among both fields in finding a balanced body-mind connection in oneself while connecting and valuing interpersonal relationships.

### **Body-Mind Connection and Body-Heart Connection**

In Confucian body philosophy, there are three types of body origin perspectives: the cultural-formed, body-heart formed, and nature-formed. The cultural-formed body perspective is based on the idea that people's natural characteristics and bodies, and society's structure are inseparable in development. The body-heart perspective emphasizes the heart and body's interweaving connection with each other. The nature-formed body perspective views nature and humans as the product of 氣 (qi). Qi is a form of energy that is believed to be a vital force that flows inside of every human's body through arteries and veins (Yang, 1996). The energy travels within the blood systems and is viewed to be a crucial component in achieving unimpeded

health. This provides a relationship that is interweaving and never separated. These three origin body perspectives offer a basic idea of Confucian body philosophy (Yang, 1996). Of note are the layers of formation and structure within its principle when discussing the body and the holistic approach across its beliefs.

Body-mind separation ideology has been embedded in Western society for thousands of years. However, through globalization, and the importation of practices such as yoga, people have started to be more aware of the connection between body and mind. Dance/movement therapists view dance as a naturally therapeutic practice because of the physical, emotional, and spiritual integration that occurs when utilizing movement as expression (Chaiklin, 2015). In Confucian body philosophy, the body-mind concept is also inseparable. According to Chen (2012), Western culture's body description tends to describe the body as a container, while Chinese body philosophy talks about it as a continuous process.

Confucianism believes that the body is formed with three organisms which are shape (xing 形), energy (qi 氣), and heart (xin 心). Shape is considered an unconscious spiritualized body. Qi serves as the connector between consciousness and unconscious while functioning as the medium for all networks of life. Heart is our consciousness and is often regarded as the "great body" (Yang, 1996). Confucianism views the heart as not only a physiological organ, but also as the foundation of one's life values (Huang, 2014). The body and heart are connected as one, and it is viewed not as a physical entity but as a thinking one. In Taiwan, there is an idiom that says 相由心生 (xiang you xin sheng) which translates to a personal perspective of understanding, explanation, and sensation within matters decided by the heart.

Moreover, Taiwanese people seek to strengthen the ability to follow their heart's decision because culturally, people who can do so are considered the greater people whose actions are

pure of heart. Therefore, the body's action and decision-making are prompted by the strong bond between the heart and the body, while integrating both entities becomes the ideal goal.

Additionally, Taiwanese people view the integration of the heart and body as a form of self-improvement practice by finding ways to employ movement actions that can better achieve the goal of having a pure heart and elevate empathetic relationships with society.

In dance/movement therapy, there are similarities to Confucian body philosophy between body-heart connection and body-mind connection. Its theory regards the mind as part of the body, and the body influences the mind (Chaiklin, 2015). Utilizing dance and movement as a therapeutic tool for integrating all human experiences corresponds with the core concept of the heart-body connection within Confucian body philosophy. One employs movement to merge body-mind connection for health benefits, while the other uses movement to engage body-heart connection to achieve philosophy's moral standards. Moreover, one theory believes in the connection between body and mind while another believes in the connection between body and heart. Both principles follow the patterns of viewing the body's connection with an organ as the connection for integrating human awareness and consciousness while viewing the body holistically.

Through embodying both principles, I have found more resemblances within both ideologies of the body than dissimilarity. In my perspective, both theories assist me in balancing my emotions, building empathic relationships with others, and giving me a toolset for self-regulation. However, as someone who was raised in Taiwanese society, there is one noticeable nuance between both principles that stem from the individualistic and collectivistic based cultural values.

American generations young and old tend to want to define themselves as unique from

their social groups and obligations (Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Meanwhile, Taiwanese society holds the opposite belief. My experience of dance/movement therapy has focused more on the integration and well-being of a person's physical and mental health before valuing the interpersonal relationships in the community as a support system. This has been reinforced by my experiences participating in authentic movement groups in America.

Within dance/movement therapy there is a practice called authentic movement which was developed by Mary Whitehouse. In this practice, the participants employ "I" statements to talk about their experiences and take responsibility for their expression (Levy, 1988). As a participant who came from a collective society I often found the idea that the "I" statements were hard to integrate. According to Hofstede's research (1980), people in collective cultures have smaller power distance, while people in individualistic cultures have larger power distance between people's interaction in the societies. Within the power dynamic, collectivistic people tend to have thoughts such as everyone should have equal rights and powerful people should try not to stand out. At the same time, individualistic people tend to think that power-holders are entitled to privilege and they should look as powerful as they can (Hofstede, 1980). This different perspective in power can be informative when wondering about the effect of talking in "I" statements within an authentic movement group. Employing the word "I" could be isolating for people who came from collective culture. Putting oneself in a more powerful position by expressing their individualistic perspective might make them uncomfortable. Through this reflection, we can also question the effect Western values have on the development of authentic movement while having more awareness of different cultural effects.

In Confucian body philosophy, the self is viewed as a part of the social group, and a person's self-improvement practice is for the greater good of the society, which prompts them to

put others first before valuing the individual needs or experiences. Triandis (2018) asserted that people within collectivist cultures are not required to consistently provide internal attributes to one's action within the group, and instead value being flexible and caring for group cohesion. . . . Meanwhile, people within individualistic cultures emphasize internal attributes and measure their real self within the group. The slight difference in motivation has an impact on the purpose of and what people need for regulation.

In Taiwanese society, the concept of a healthy and balanced lifestyle has always been a focal point in people's values due to the influence of Chinese medicine and the wisdom passed on from the ancestors. A healthy lifestyle includes a balanced diet and regular exercise. 鐵不治練不成鋼, 人不運動不健康。(tie bu ye lian bu cheng gang, ren bu yun dong bu jian kang) translates to "There will not be steel if the iron is not smelted, and there will be no health if people do not exercise". Having this common value within society assists people in finding a community to achieve shared goals, while socialization increases mental health. It is normal to see groups of people gathering in a park for physical activities in Taiwan. It can be practicing Tai Chi, social dance, or hip-pop. These groups are often formed by strangers who share common interests in exercising or wanting to explore new activities for a healthy lifestyle. Taiwanese people prefer to join together when it comes to exercising, which leads the embodied experiences to be more externally stimulating and to utilize the strength within the communities as the motivation.

In American society, where individualistic culture is more potent than having a collective experience, the exercise format might look different from Taiwan. In my observation, going to the gym to work out by oneself seems to be a more popular method of achieving a healthy lifestyle. The norm of working on one's own physical health and taking responsibility for oneself

appear to be the values people share. Having a stronger sense of the self than the community might lead the embodied experiences to be more internally stimulated, and the goal-setting would be more related to one's own benefit.

Turner & Zheng (2009) stated that there are more similarities than differences in comparisons of Eastern and Western traditions. Dance/movement therapy and Confucian body philosophy also follow this pattern. Both principles correspond to concepts of viewing the body from a holistic perspective and valuing practice to achieve integration with one's body. Confucian body philosophy has existed in Eastern Asia for thousands of years, but there is limited exposure, research, or data in the field of dance/movement therapy that explores its theories. Meanwhile, I believe it has the potential to contribute another theoretical framework for the field of dance/movement therapy to develop further. Its theory can add another layer of cultural competency and inclusivity to the field while exploring more gateways for holistic integrations.

On the other hand, for countries such as Taiwan that have been implementing embodied practices passed on through generations, dance/movement therapy can integrate into the culture quickly. Moreover, it has the possibility of introducing a Western culturally-based embodied field that has research and data for people to have a better understanding of their embodied experiences, while also assisting the younger Taiwanese generation to value their ancestors' wisdom. Through comprehending the embodiment of both fields, there are infinite possibilities for the expansion of ideas for a more holistic body perspective. I believe in both fields' cooperation because I have been adding both values into my dance/movement therapy practice with clients and my integration method.



**Qi (氣)**

The word 氣 (qi) in Mandarin has multiple meanings. It represents gasification, breath, emotion, and the energy that flows through the blood stem while supporting organs' function. These values are used interchangeably in Confucian body philosophy, but this discussion will be focusing on the energy form of qi.

Qi (氣) in Confucian body philosophy is a form of energy that exists in the human body and nature while having flood like energy and a constant exchange within the cosmos (Huang, 2014). The energy's qualities are believed to be shared within the human body and nature which allow humans to access qi through the gateway of breathing. Having the same essence allows nature and the human body to correspond to each other (Yang, 1996). Qi can be exchanged in two ways, one begins from the heart and extends out to the body, while one begins from nature and permeates into the human body. In Taiwanese culture, there is a phrase 天人合一 (tian ren he yi), which is translated to the individuals reaching the state of being one with the universe. By embodying moral standards people can actualize a self that acts with a pure heart and unwavering from human desire. This continuous process allows us to deepen the connection with the heart through bodily actions and transcend the qi to link with the cosmos. Kieft (2018) stated that in shamanic rituals, people employ dancing with the natural world to connect with the acknowledgment of various layers of reality. Through movement, humans access the larger rational and universal mind. In different cultures, there are similar practices that engage in movement or dance customs intending to connect with nature or a higher power within the universe. This phenomenon can also be observed in dance/movement therapy.

One of the dance/movement therapy practitioners, Trudi Schoop, explored the idea of "Ur Experience". She described the Ur principle as an "ongoing process of cosmic order and

harmony” (Schoop, 2000). It is a form of energy that keeps the complex universe balanced with continuing motion. Some people might consider this force as god, nature, or a higher power, but its ideological belief is not bound by human limitation, nor in human’s control. Schoop believes through dance and movement humans can connect with the Ur experience to join something bigger than human existence (Schoop, 2000). This concept parallels Confucian body philosophy idea of qi; I have experienced the Ur experience through my practice in Tai Chi.

In Tai Chi principle, there is a basic stationary standing position that all learners start with, and everyone needs to master before moving on to the more complex movement. This stationary position serves as a guide of the whole principle. In the stand, both feet are needed to root into the earth and stand upright with the upper body to reach the sky while centering into the body. At the same time, the individual looks internally into the body and connects with the present, while still being aware of the surroundings and the relationship with other people in the space. These processes are continuously practiced and occur within seconds during a Tai Chi session. Through practicing these principles, qi can be nourished and expanded for the learner to feel and embody transcendence from oneself to the whole universe. I often felt at peace, balanced, and fully alive when I reached this point of embodiment which I believe is related to the experiences that were described by Schoop when she talked about the Ur experience.

Tai chi classes tend to be hosted in the early morning and in an outdoor space because the belief in nature and the environment play a part in influencing a person’s well-being. In Taiwanese culture, we believe the outdoor environment in the early morning provides the strongest qi field for people to absorb. Doing exercises during this time allows people to align with nature’s energy in order to connect with the universe to achieve the Ur experience while breathing in fresh air for emotional and physical integration. In dance/movement therapy and

other embodied practices, there is growing interdisciplinary research that support the impact that natural environments have on the human nervous system (Nilsson et al, 2011). The embodied natural environment has proven to reduce people's anxiety and allow connection while being aware of the larger environment (Linden & Grut, 2002 ; Corazon, Schilhab & Stigsdotter, 2011). As Kieft (2018) stated, our personal experiences are not isolated or alone but include and transcend all interaction with all life on earth, including human and non-human communities.

Confucian body philosophy strives to find balance in everything in life, and in its principle, the topic of different gateways to increase the flow of qi is often highlighted in various conversations. An unbalanced body and emotions are perceived as a blockage of flow in qi which interferes with a person's life source. That is why utilizing exercises for integrating the whole self and securing qi's circulation to exchange from one's body into the universe continuously is crucial in its principle. A balanced body 靜心 (jing xin) which translates to a quiet heart, is what we aspire to achieve. Through the fully integrated body-heart connection, humans can reach equilibrium within themselves while having peace and calm to deal with matters around us.

The principle of nursing qi can also be observed in the diet that Confucian body philosophy promotes. 以酸養骨, 以辛養筋, 以咸養脈, 以苦養氣, 以甘養肉。(yi suan yang gu, yi xin yang jin, yixian yang mai, yi ku yang qi, yi gan yang rou) "We nourish the bones through sour food, spicy food to nourish the tendons, salty food to nourish the pulse, bitter food to nourish qi, and sweet to nourish flesh." By following these dietary principles, to nurture qi until it produces and does not disrupt the body-heart connection within humans, our qi can join the flow of the cosmos while achieving being one with all matters (Huang, 2014). This concept also connects with Schoop's ideology of the Ur experience, but through an external pathway.

### **Heart-Qi-Shape**

Any embodied expression is more than the meaning of movement and any activity related to the awareness of consciousness is more than just the psyche (Yang, 1996). The connection between heart, qi, and shape are tightly related to each other in the principle of Confucian body philosophy. Heart can be viewed as the consciousness which leads and guides the action of a person while the spiralized shape serves as an unconscious entity. Through the function of qi, humans can find gateways to integrate all layers of the holistic body. The ideology of heart, qi, and shape are interdependent while this interweaving relationship is affected by a disconnection between any components. There is a common belief that detachment can be seen through the observation of the physical body. Moreover, illness is not simply a disease, but also a question of morality, because ethical standards come from the heart (Yang, 1996). This concept is present in both dance/movement therapy theory and Confucian body philosophy.

Chance articulated a theory called body action. She observed that bodily movement changes with the increase or decrease of patients' psychosis. When the maladaptive response to conflict changes, the body's alignment or posture will be modified to fit the disconnection people feel from the internal or the external world (Chace, Sandel, Chaiklin, & Lohn, 1993). This notion of how bodily movement is affected by the mental state can be observed through working with patients with psychological disorders. I have often encountered this during my internship at a psychiatric hospital.

In my experiences, patients diagnosed with schizophrenia often present more visible effects in movement and body postures, especially in their alignment. Through witnessing a patient's body design, it reflects the affirmation of being (Schoop, 1986). Some of the patients I

work closely with Schizophrenia moved their body by shuffling their feet in small steps, with their upper torso hunched in an enclosed shape, eyes gazing on the floor while having little awareness of their body and the surrounding environment. The ideology of body action can also be seen in Schoop's theory in working with her clients. Schoop's theory on a person's alignment as a way to analyze the severity of different mental disorders and their state of mind is a reflection on how close the body-mind connection is. As Schoop stated, "Through the body, man experiences reality" (Schoop, 1986).

In Western culture, people tend to wonder about the difference between body and mind; however, in Taiwanese culture, this is a foreign concept. The question of what will body-heart connection look like if people live life through collecting bodily experiences is the most valuable inquiry (Yang, 1996). Moreover, in Confucian body philosophy, body-heart connection is a life-long practice which follows the structure of cultural traditions because of the collected embodiment that was passed down from generation to generation. Our cultural identity, the function of sensation, language, emotional expression and movement expression all came from the social structures that were built by our ancestors (Yang, 1996; Huang, 2014).

If we erase the interweaving aspects of the heart and the socio-cosmic dimension from Confucian body philosophy's "thinking-body", it will be recreating an ideology that is non-Chinese (Huang, 2014). In Taiwanese culture, the core ideology of the socio-cosmic dimension developed into an acknowledgement to motivate people in pursuing balance in life as a goal, in a society that dictates people have limitations both physically and mentally. In addition, the body philosophy also calls for balance between our body, heart, and nature. We need to be enough and complete as a whole while appreciating our limitations (Yang, 1996). People tend to be more aware that a balanced body is an everlasting journey which requires practice and

Taiwanese believe that immortality comes from having the harmonious heart-body connection.

Coming from a Taiwanese culture that values integration through the body, dance/movement therapy principles parallel many of my personal perspectives. These two concepts started to intermingle and provide layers of viewpoints with my belief in the healing power of movement and dance. Moreover, they transformed my personal practices for self-integration and assisted me in understanding myself holistically. Through having these toolsets I can serve the patients I work with in finding themselves and creating pathways to aid self-integration.

### **Conclusion**

Through my journey in studying dance/movement therapy in America, I have developed a tremendous amount of gratitude for the embodied experiences and the learning processes I went through, because I have grown considerably as a dance/movement therapist and as a human being. There are multiple similarities within the ideology and perspective of the body in Confucian body philosophy and dance/movement therapy. Meanwhile, both principles emphasize the importance of employing the holistic principles for self-integration through movement and the significance of the effects body, heart and mind have on each other.

As someone whose body ideology's foundation was based on Taiwanese Confucian body philosophy, learning dance/movement therapy became easier to integrate because of the similarities within the principles. Having both embodied experiences, I believe both fields can have the ability to support each other in promoting the utilization of the body and movement for the holistic well-being of a person. Moreover, this collaboration can bridge the connection of Western and Eastern cultures to enhance inclusivity in the field of therapy.

Taiwan is a country full of possibilities but often not recognized internationally, due to its complex history with China. By not having my culture and ethnicity represented within the therapeutic field, I wondered about the experiences other Taiwanese people are going through while studying in the field of therapy or being in a therapeutic relationship, especially in a time when psychotherapy plays an extensive part in the balance of modern human's mental health and is being utilized around the world. Meanwhile, cultural competency and the inclusivity on the field of therapy that is predominantly developed in Western society has gained new urgency. I believe dance/movement therapy has the potential to lead this conversation forward because all humans have one thing in common, the body.

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