



Facebook postings after ECITE about gender study by Karl Frost (8th August 2012)

[Karl Frost](#)

Interesting observation in the ongoing gender study at ECITE 2012!

Hi all! as many of you know, I am doing an ongoing study of gender choice in partners in contact duets at contact improvisation events internationally. Basically i or a collaborator discretely counts the dances by male/female, male/male, female/female, etc. sometimes, i do a follow up survey to see what people remember. this was motivated a few years ago by the odd situation of observing that there is a consistent, strong emphasis on cross gender dancing at CI events, but an oddly frequent denial or lack of recognition of this fact.

I've now got observations from 8 different major events, with over 1000 dances counted and plan to write a new article on it after i get another few events observed. the article will be

a combination of the statistics from observation and surveys with review of some of the more qualitative information from survey responses and conversations.

I first did this at ECITE 2009. Given that it was the teacher's meeting, i expected less of a preference for cross gender dancing and thought i would find something like 1.5 to 1 ratio of cross gender to same gender preference. Instead, I was surprised to find a preference ratio of 4 to 1!

Since then, many conversations have happened. 'also many more counts. the average is about 3 to 1 preference for cross gender dancing, averaged over 8 major CI gatherings.

I had a friend counting this year at ECITE and was intrigued to find that the observations gave a preference ratio of 1.25 to 1, which is the lowest I have yet observed at any event.

I'm intrigued.

If anyone would like to comment on the change, I would love to hear reflections. Here are a number of questions...

Does this represent some kind of shift amongst european contact improvisation teachers? a different sub-population present at Bern vs Omskirk?

How have conversations around gender affected your choices in dance in the last years?

Did something happen at ECITE 2012 specifically? (The numbers for individual days are too small to make strong claims about the event over time, but the first few observed jams give a preference of 2.2 to 1, but after that , there is a small preference for same gender dancing displayed)

Any thoughts or reflections would be great!

regards

Karl Frost

Comments on this posting

[Jonathan Megaw](#) Interesting and a plainly obvious phenomenon to me ever since i started dancing CI ! I wonder how you position your own experience, attitudes and behaviours in relation to this question Karl? I would like to think that the questions that were raised and posed on the Facebook page and elsewhere just prior to this years ECITE might have had something to do with the findings from it! The structuring of ongoing groups as having "philosophical" concerns rather than purely pedagogical concerns especially for me, the willingness of participants mostly to engage actively with those concerns , the age perhaps and the constituency of the participants as being perhaps more inclined towards research more broadly than 'Personal Fulfilment', might have all also had something to do with it. It was a particularly satisfying structure, atmosphere and experience proving to me that CI can retain the apparently research based origins while also providing deep and satisfying experiences!

[Robert Anderson](#) Karl's spies are everywhere engaging in covert sociological research. Be afraid!

[Jonathan Megaw](#) Yes I have to say that is a little odd, come to think of it, Karl...

[Karl Frost](#) Yes, sometimes doing something oddly brings out something new. If you tell people they are being watched, people generally will behave differently, especially around social norms, which is the whole point. Of course, there were no vows of secrecy taken, so no established trust violated, and i explicitly ask people to not give me names... It is an interesting thing though, to recognize that at any moment at a contact jam, someone could be watching, even taking down your name and describing what you do in detail.

[Karl Frost](#) my own attitudes, experiences, actions... well, that would be the subject of a relatively long book, but the main thing i think about is an interest in teasing apart and engaging with dissonance in various forms, in the interest finding what Arnold Mindell might refer to as a greater flow of process.

[Gesine Daniels](#) Teasing apart? Arnold Mindell? And yes, what makes You dance with a woman rather than a man? Or vice versa? What is it that You are looking for in your dance partners and how do You find it? Even though I am definitely very aware of gender based behaviour, decision making and structural realities I am not quite happy with your statistical and binary approach. It doesn't attend to the facts that sometimes/often there is not an equal number of male and female dancers at a jam. It somehow seems to imply that there are heterosexual erotic agendas play a major role in choosing a dance partner and ignores the fact that there are around 10-25 homo- or bisexual oriented people in the world (and thus also potentially present at Ci-events); also your statistic ignores the fact that you can't really tell if someone who appears to be female to the eyes of you or your spies really is/identifies as female(might be trans, male, undecided or a third gender). So my question to you is: what is it actually that you are researching here? What can you actually get out of categorising people into only two genders(which does Not represent the reality), of ignoring absolute numbers of the people you perceives male and female and of not telling us the question you have that makes you do this counting? I suspect that your question had to do with understanding how important sexual attraction/ potential sexual encounter/ erotic feelings is to us?/many?/most? people when choosing their dance partners; and that you look at this from a completely unreflected heteronormative perspective. Correct me please, if I got you wrong.

[Jonathan Megaw](#) Also...! how about the notion that CI is a duet form? Is there a similar disparity between stated opinion and practice, and is there a bias implicit or reinforced in your studying the duet? Topics for further covert operations?

[Jonathan Megaw](#) Are there really only "around 10-25 homo- or bisexual oriented people in the world" Gisine? Gosh what is all the fuss about then! ;) (yes i know you mean %) Teasing apart, if not "teasing apart" im not quite sure what you are questioning Gesine? I do think that examing dissonances of behavior and belief could be most revealing and helpful in CI communities. i personally have been interested, as is becoming known by now, in disonances of behaviour and belief, particularly when they represent themselves as both Normative and Radical at the same time. Especially when both those representations are at odds with observable behaviours! I think that niether should be an ambition in, or of, itself, although this often appears to be the case. i do prefer consensus when it is based upon reflection and a willingness to examine its' (ones') own motivations. To me engendering states, or Communities, of mutual trust and saftety, through foregrounding the notion of service to one

another, seems to me the best hope of achieving this, and is as good an ambition as I've come across. On the other hand, this, as I've said, is not well represented by an often, seemingly self-orientated, appeal to radicalism, as being better than the 'normal' others. This whether it be in relation to accounts of sexual adventuring, and the number of partners one can list, as I seem to recall you have invited participants in your workshops to do in the past Karl, (I'm sure you will correct me if I'm wrong) or in dogmatic protection of one's own patch. It hadn't really disturbed me and I was teasing when I said it was "odd" to think that you Karl had "people" covertly noting at the Jams, but your defense of it, as bringing something new, as if that is good in its self, is somewhat disturbing to me. Especially when the new thought you offer, is that we all may be being observed, and our behaviours filed for future publication. This surely does not encourage mutual trust and I think Gisine is right to question you as to what your interest is and what intend to do with the data. Personally Arnold Mindell and 'process work' have seemed particularly muddied waters to me. How so ever, it could have been quite possible for you to notify or even ask if it was acceptable to conduct some research at ECITE without revealing the detail of the methodology of the research.- We do live in an age of surveillance, as have been most ages, surveillance, spying, is an alienated or alienating gaze that changes 'being seen' from the Embrace of the Eyes of a Community, which should hold and serve us, to remind us of our responsibilities to ourselves as much as to others, into a fear of being seen, or to a recklessness, and leads ultimately to Witch Hunts and Conspiracy theories. Which by turns, often returns us to radicalism or revolutionism, for and of itself. You might ask what has all this got to do with CI, 'Contact' within the container of 'Improvisation', or the other way round. Perhaps the greatest danger is of constantly reinventing the wheel, a fairly harmless 'danger' and one we must all be familiar with in approaching the patterns of our own dancing, Greater awareness greater dialogue, greater transparency, greater willingness to put others before ourselves are always good things, as elements of improvisation and of life, I believe! So what has it got to do with CI well possibly nothing, but possibly absolutely everything!