



Karl Frost

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Department of Human Behavior, Ecology, and Culture: Ethnographic Film-maker

Body Research Physical Theater: Artistic Director

culturalvariant@gmail.com

PhD Ecology, September 2016, UC Davis

Dissertation focus: cultural evolution of prosocial ritual, investigated through formal behavioral experiments, mathematical modeling of cultural evolution dynamics, and qualitative field research in the context of environmental activism and First Nations sovereignty struggles in northern British Columbia and the fight against tar sands oil, fracked gas, and mining.

MS - Ecology, June 2012, UC Davis (area of emphasis: Environmental Policy

and Human Ecology)

MFA - Dramatic Arts, June 2011, UC Davis

MFA thesis - **"Body of Knowledge"**. An interactive performance work, exploring the channels in which we process information and make decisions: intellectual, emotional, visceral, moral ... the private, interpersonal, social, political. 'pioneered an approach to arts/science fusion, integrating scientific behavioral experiments with intuitive/experiential explorations and feedback. Audience is both investigated and investigator. Included high levels of community participation and integration with the research and performance, including both UC Davis undergrads and local non-student community.

BA - Physics, May 1992, UC Berkeley, graduated with honors

Areas of Specialization in Ecology/Anthropology: Cultural Evolution, Human Ecology, Political Ecology, Religion, Cooperation and Prosociality, Bayesian Statistical Methods, Behavioral Experiments, Evolutionary Modeling, Participatory and Qualitative Field Research Methods, Visual Anthropology

Areas of Specialization in Performance: Participatory/Interactive performance, Somatic psychology applied to body-based performance, Paratheatrical work, Postdramatic theater

Current employment

Ethnographic Film and Research: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology Department of Human Behavior, Ecology, and Culture (October 2017 – present): Department head Richard McElreath

Artistic Director of Body Research Physical Theater (2000 – present) – www.bodyresearch.org

Organizational Note: *Because I have significant experience in both the sciences and the arts, I will list my experiences in the two separately, even though they sometimes overlap.*

Last Update: September 2019

Science-Relevant Experience

Research Experience

- **Ethnographic Film and Cultural Evolution Modeling:** Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology Department of Human Behavior, Ecology, and Culture (October 2017 – present): Department head Richard McElreath
 - Primary work: visual documentation of cultures around the world in the network of field sites associated with the department, quotidian details and special topics. Includes northwest BC, Canada First Nations (Haida, Tsimshian, Wet'suet'en, Tahltan, Gitksan, Helitsuk), Mayangna (Nicaragua), Moseten (Bolivia), Hadza (Tanzania), Afro-Colombian and Embera populations displaced by violence (Choco, Colombia)
 - Cultural Evolution models (analytic and Agent-Based Models), topics including online echo chambers, rituals and prosociality
- **Erasmus Mundus Postdoctoral Research Fellowship:** Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Political Ecology Lab Giorgos Kallis) Institut de Ciència i Tecnologia Ambientals, Barcelona, Spain (Dec 2016 – July 2017)
 - Analytic modeling and agent based simulations analyzing
 - “degrowth” - strategies for materially and politically sustainable downsizing economies in ways that benefit equity and general enjoyment of resources
 - Emotional feedback effects of social media echo chambers and processes of political polarization
 - Analysis of qualitative field research in northern British Columbia in the context of degrowth strategies
- **PhD dissertation research** on the relation of ritual, religion, and physical practices on prosociality, parochialism and sustainable environmental values and practices, (advisor, Richard McElreath) UC Davis: 2011 to 2016
 - Analytic models and computer simulation of coevolution of bonding rituals and prosocial instincts hijacked by the rituals
 - Analytic models of cultural evolution of ritual facilitated altruism within cognitive constraints
 - Designed and directed experiments on the effects of meditation on cooperation and trust, both within identity groups and with unknown others. Analyzed data using Bayesian model comparison methods.
 - Field Research working with First Nations, activist, and commercial fishing communities in northern and central coastal BC communities in relationship to food gathering, and issues of tar sands oil, fracked gas, and mining, using participatory action research and visual anthropology methods, leading to a documentary short and ongoing web series.
- **Public Policy Analyst: the Natural Resource Defense Council.** Analyzed the potential energy and economic impacts of different building choices during a \$5billion renovation program for the New York Public Schools, 1995-1996: Ashok Gupta, New York, New York
- **Public Policy Analyst: the Department of Energy** via Lawrence Berkeley Labs' Windows and Daylighting Group. Produced multiple studies of effects of building codes and economic incentives vis a vi energy efficient windows on regional and national energy use levels using a self-designed GIS system, 1992-1995: Dariush Arasteh, Berkeley, California
- NMR spectrometer technician: UC Berkeley, 1990-1992

Teaching Experience

- **Lecturer:** UC Davis, *Environmental Science and Policy*, 2015 - 2016. Davis, CA
- **Teaching Assistant:** UC Davis, Departments of *Anthropology* and *Environmental Science and Policy*. 2011 to 2013. Davis, California
- Wilderness Guide: the *Dancing Wilderness Project* - 1997 to present
- Environmental Educator: UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, 1991-1992

Publications & Presentations

Published

Frost, K. (2019) Parallels amongst Environmental Justice, Degrowth, and First Nations sovereignty fights in British Columbia, Canada. *Ecological Economics*

Frost, K. (2018). Cultural evolution in adaptive management of grassroots activism in BC, Canada. *Sustainability Science*, 13(1), 81–92. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-017-0512-7>

Richerson, P. J., Baldini, R., Beheim, B., Bell, A., Demps, K., Frost, K., ... Zimmerman, M. (2014). The Evidence for Selection on Inter-Group Cultural Variation in Humans. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*.

Frost, K. and P. Richerson, (2014), Cultural Evolution as Postmodern Social Science, *book chapter in Naturalistic Approaches to Culture*, editor Csaba Pleh. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B824TeI8X4jgVkZPaDE5bDFBQ0k/view?usp=sharing>

Frost, K., (2009), Gender, Intimacy, and Contact: an Empirical Study, *Contact Quarterly*

Frost K., J. Eto, D. Arasteh, and M. Yazdanian, (1996), "The National Energy Requirements of Residential Windows in the U.S.: Today and Tomorrow." ACEEE 1996 Summer Study on Energy Efficiency in Buildings

Frost K. et al (1993), Savings from Energy Efficient Windows: Current and Future Savings from New Fenestration Technologies in the Residential Market. Berkeley, CA: Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory Report 33956.

In Review

Frost, K. (2018). Parallels amongst Environmental Justice, Degrowth, and First Nations sovereignty fights in British Columbia

Frost, K., Calming Meditation Increases Universal Altruism and Reduces Parochialism. doi:10.1101/060616, <http://biorxiv.org/content/early/2016/06/24/060616>

blog

www.weeatfish.org, *We Eat Fish* (film and web-based article series on First Nations sovereignty and resistance to oil, gas, and mining in British Columbia). Canada.

Unpublished

Frost, K., *Coevolutionary Dynamics of Bonding Rituals*. doi:10.1101/060624, <http://biorxiv.org/content/early/2016/06/24/060624>

Frost, K., *Gene-Culture Coevolution of Prosocial Rituals*. doi:10.1101/060632, <http://biorxiv.org/content/early/2016/06/24/060632>

Frost, K., *Costly-to-Fake Rituals: the dynamics of sacrifice as signal of solidarity*. doi:10.1101/060640, <http://biorxiv.org/content/early/2016/06/24/060640>

Conference Presentations and Invited Talks

- November 2018. Challenging Divide and Conquer Dynamics in First Nations governance in BC, Canada, American Anthropological Association, San Jose, CA
- November 2018. Complimenting and counterbalancing quantitative fieldwork with visual documentation. Visual Research Conference, San Jose, CA
- July 2018. Gene-culture coevolution dynamics of bonding rituals: analytic models and computer simulations, Human Behavior and Evolution Society. Amsterdam, Holland
- April 2018. Cultural Evolution as framework for analyzing cultural products, Society for Visual Anthropology, Philadelphia, PA, USA
- September 2017. Agent-Based Modeling of social transmission dynamics of online echo chambers and political polarization, Cultural Evolution Society, Jena, Germany
- March 2017. Industry Divides and Raven Sets Things Right: a talk on a Haida Potlach. *Society for Applied Anthropology*. New Mexico
- (January 2017). *Raven Always Sets Things Right: adapting traditions in First Nations governance and corruption strategies of resource extraction industry*. UC Davis E-Wing Anthropology Department
- (November 2016). *Blockades as Rituals of Solidarity Building: The Social Learning Dynamics of Values of Resistance*, Boise State University. Human Environment Systems
- June 2015. Blockades as Prosocial Rituals: Cultural evolution of sustainability in the interlocking politics of resource extraction industries, First Nations sovereignty, and environmental activism in BC, Canada. In *International Association for the Study of the Commons*. Edmonton.

Poster Presentations

- The Role of Ritual in Group Formation and Cooperation in Groups: Empirical Research Methods and Some Experimental Results: at the 3UC Conference on Evolutionary Approaches to the Study of Human Behavior (San Luis Obispo, CA April 2012) and The Summer Institute on Bounded Rationality Theory (Max Plank Institute, Berlin July 2012)
- Using Models of Cultural Evolution to Explore Theories of the Evolution of Religion and Ritual : at the 3UC Conference on Evolutionary Approaches to the Study of Human Behavior (San Luis Obispo, CA May 2013)

Research Grants and Fellowships Awarded

- Erasmus Mundus Postdoctoral Research Fellowship** (Barcelona, Spain): 2017
- CoLED Ethnographic Research Grant: 2016
- Theodora and Angela Foin Fellowship: 2014-2015
- Emily Schwalen Fellowship: 2014-2015
- UC Davis Humanities Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship: 2014-2015
- National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant**: 2013-2016
- Fulbright Fellowship** to Canada: 2013-2014
- UC Davis Humanities Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship: 2013-2014
- UC Davis Graduate Group in Ecology Research Fellowship: 2012-2013
- Successful Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign: 2012
- UC Davis Humanities Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship: 2010-2011

References

- Richard McElreath, (*my PhD advisor*) Director of Human Behavior, Ecology, and Culture at Max Plank Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Deutscher Platz 6 Leipzig 04103 Germany; Associate Professor of Anthropology, UC Davis - +49 (341) 3550 - 0, rmcelreath@gmail.com
- Pete Richerson, Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Environmental Science and Policy, University of California, Davis, 1 Shields Ave, Davis, CA 95616, USA- +1 5307565054 pjricherson@ucdavis.edu
- Bruce Winterhalder, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, University of California, Davis, 1 Shields Ave, Davis, CA 95616, USA, +1 (530) 219-4403, bwinterhalder@lsdo.ucdavis.edu

Performance-relevant Experience

Additional Education

Independent studio-based training: contemporary dance, release technique (Klein and Skinner), martial arts (Capoeira, Lua, Hapkido, Ba Gua, Tai Chi), Alexander Technique, Grotowskian theater, somatic psychology and other somatic practices.

California Bodywork Certification, San Francisco Institute of Massage, Shiatsu and Deep Tissue, May 1988

Teaching and Research Interests

Participatory performance, paratheatrical exploration, somatic psychology, arts-science fusion, embodied knowledge construction, politically relevant activist theater, contact improvisation, contemporary dance theater. I am interested in helping students to develop technically as interdisciplinary performers, to develop intellectually in terms of understanding the cultural web in which their work is embedded, to cultivate entrepreneurial skills in applying and sharing performance and body-based work, and to develop their ability to articulate feelings and thoughts about their and others' work to colleagues and audience.

Teaching Experience

Active internationally as a professional teacher/facilitator for over 25 years. I have taught hundreds of weekend or week long workshops over the years in over 20 countries. Subjects taught include contact improvisation, choreography/directing, creative sourcing, contemporary dance technique, functional movement awareness, somatic psychology and paratheatrical work, participatory performance practice and theory, postdramatic performance approaches and theory, performance art, stage design, theater production, grassroots community arts organizing, pedagogy, martial arts (capoeira and tai chi), history and appreciation of contemporary performance, performance theory, bodywork.

I am particularly well-known for teaching contact improvisation.

The Passive Sequencing Work – Over the past 20 years, I have developed a unique somatic work based in part in practices from Alexander technique, Klein release technique, the trauma work of Peter Levine, and the internal martial arts (Tai Chi and Bagua). Subtle self study is used to recognize triggered micro-reactions in which we lose awareness of movement options. In inhibiting these micro-reactions, we are able to move with more moment to moment awareness, speed, efficiency, and soft power and maintain a safer and more pleasurable relationship to dynamic movement. see www.bodyresearch.org/passivesequencing

Selected Major teaching projects and labs through *Body Research*

Lasqueti Island Winter Improvisation Intensive (2000-2003, Lasqueti, BC, Canada): director and primary instructor for an annual 3 month interdisciplinary dance-based performance intensive integrating creative work, technique, performance touring, and pedagogy

Dancing Wilderness Project (1997 – present, wilderness areas in the US and Canada): laboratories of dance creation, paratheatrical exploration, and ecology in the context of backcountry backpacking trips of 3 days to a month. *"An ongoing exploration of wilderness experience, body-based creative process, and how we choose to live our lives."* www.bodyresearch.org/dancingwilderness

Northwest Contact Improvisation Exchange (2004 and 2005, Centrum, Port Townsend, WA) – an international practice exchange amongst professional dancers working with contact improvisation, focusing mainly on the Vancouver and Seattle communities

Poetics of Human Contact (2008 -2015, N America, Europe): exploring the integration of technical contact improvisational skills with psychotherapeutic exploration and paratheatrical creative process.

Sierra Contact Festival (2008 – present, Sierraville, CA): a week-long international conference on current explorations, research, and development of contact improvisation

UC Davis Dramatic Arts teaching (2009-2011)

Instructor for contemporary dance technique, contact improvisation, dance history and appreciation, trends in contemporary West Coast dance-theater, Activist Theater, paratheatrical exploration and somatic psychology, choreography

Publications

Published

Frost, K., (2009). Gender, Intimacy, and Contact: an Empirical Study, *Contact Quarterly*

Frost, K. (1998). Short Stories about Sex and Contact. *Contact Quarterly*.

Frost, K. (1995). East Coast vs West Coast Contact. *Contact Quarterly*.

Unpublished (from MFA Thesis)

Frost, K., Interactive Theater as Participatory Anthropology Research

Frost, K., A Taxonomy of Participatory Performance: Spectra of Agency

Research Grants and Fellowships Awarded

CoLED Ethnographic Research Grant: 2016

Emily Schwalen Fellowship: 2014-2015

UC Davis Humanities Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship: 2014-2015

National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant: 2013-2016

Fulbright Fellowship to Canada: 2013-2014

UC Davis Humanities Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship: 2013-2014

Successful Kickstarter crowdfunding campaign: 2012

UC Davis Humanities Institute Graduate Student Research Fellowship: 2010-2011

Numerous artistic residencies, including...

- El Palau, Cardona, Spain: 2011
- UC Davis Humanities Institute, Cache Creek Restore Restory Project (Davis, CA): 2010
- Synapsis (Eureka, CA): 2006
- Centrum Center for the Arts (Port Townsend, WA): 2004, 2005
- Lasqueti Island Community Center (Lasqueti Island, BC): 2000- 2003
- 848 Community Space (San Francisco, CA): 1999

(see also Science Grants and Fellowships)

Performance Works and Films -- I have been creating both proscenium and participatory performance works continuously since 1987, collaboratively and through my company, Body Research. I focus on meaning as experienced through the body, and my work aims towards real personal change. I've shared my work over the years in dozens of cities on 4 continents. This list only includes more significant productions and excludes countless informal and lab productions.

Films

Rainforest (in progress) - Dance-in-nature film, developing the work of Accidental

Tourists and the Dancing Wilderness Project, set in places potentially impacted by tar sands oil

pipelines, fracked gas, and mining, in the Great Bear Rainforest and the Sacred Headwaters, BC, Canada

We Eat Fish (2015) - short film and ongoing web series - a documentary about community solidarity and personal engagement with issues around Tar Sands Oil transportation, fracked gas, food security, and First Nations sovereignty in northern British Columbia, Canada. www.weeatfish.oorg

Accidental Tourists (2013) - A non-linear sensory oriented dance-in-nature film, exploring the potential psychological shifts of quiet time in wilderness: Filmed at Mt Baker (WA), Oregon Dunes (OR), and Prairie Creek, Moonstone Beach, Yuba River (CA), Premier Berkeley, CA

Performance Works – More Interactive

Toca Me! (2014) – further developing the performance structure of *Streams* (2009): Berkeley, CA

Body of Knowledge (2011) - A deconstruction of how we process information, intellectually vs physically in contexts ranging from the private to the political: a mix of installation performance and interactive event. Karl's MFA thesis project: Davis and Berkeley, CA

Corpo Illicito (2009) – collaboration in performance installation directed by Guillermo Gomez Pena exploring boundary and transgression: 2009, Davis, CA

Streams (2009)- A mix of interactive performance and theater in the round exploring psychological and kinaesthetic modes of touch: Kharkiv, Ukraine

Proximity (2007) - A piece in which the audience wanders through a physically broken up space and watches as performers explore distance, proximity, and touch – intellectually, immediately, animalistically, verbally, non-verbally. An hour in, the performer/audience roles blur and dissolve: San Francisco and Santa Cruz, CA

United Kingdom (2006) – (*Directed by Felix Ruckert*) ... a collaborative temporary society and performance ritual exploring power and sexuality: Berlin, Germany

Axolotl (2004 – 2011) - The audience is blindfolded for 2 hours and invited to interact with each other and a group of performers exploring the nature of meaningful experience: over 70 performances in Seattle, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Oakland, Berkeley, Vancouver, Port Townsend, Portland, Eugene, Arcata, Santa Barbara, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Helsinki, Black Rock Desert, etc

Place (1993-1995)- A participatory group piece exploring relationship to place in text, sound, and movement: San Francisco, New York

In the Living Room (1989) - Performance in the round where the audience and performers trade places in a slow structured manner: Berkeley

Cards (1988) - Interactive performance where audience members are given physical instructions which interact with each other to create the piece: Berkeley

Performance Works – Stage/Installation

Who Are You? (2010) – work with Davis area students and non-student community exploring modes of touch, framed as a non-verbal salon or dinner party.

Close Quarters (2007) - Audience wanders through an installation in a tea house as performers explore distance, proximity, touch, and intimacy: Charlottesville, VA

Shaken (2006) - Duet with Jennifer McLeish Lewis exploring somatic psych accessing of issues around image, sexuality, intimacy, and power: Berlin, Germany

Ashes (2004) - A post-dramatic proscenium piece exploring how emotion lives in the body: Seattle, WA

Onion Oak Improvisations - Open improvisation (2000 – 2003), Rural island communities in Washington and BC

Dancing Wilderness Project: Ocean Studies (1999 and 2004) - Exploration of experience of extensive time in contact with the shore and ocean on choice making in improvised performance: 1999 San Francisco/Pt Reyes Seashore, 2004 Seattle/Olympic National Park

Ulysses (1996-1999) – Audience wanders through an installation-based evening length solo improvisation working off of the myth of Ulysses and Joyce's Ulysses: New York, San Francisco, Vienna, Melbourne, Wellington

Losers (1997- 1998) - A duet with Rosy Simas exploring the effects of alcohol on physical coordination in a ballistic contact duet: Santa Cruz, CA, Minneapolis, MN

Goat Boy (1997) - 15 minute solo improv of dance and theater exploring off-balance, disorientation, and having a goat bell around the neck: Santa Cruz, CA

Fire (1996) - A 30 minute piece exploring collaborative physical interactions based in release technique and conflicting interactions ranging from pushing games to sparring: New York

Fight (1993) - A duet with Brenton Cheng trading back and forth between collaborative physical interactions from contact improv and full-contact sparring: Los Gatos, CA

Dice (1993) - 15 minute piece involving 15 one-minute physical scores chosen randomly by an audience member's roll of the dice: San Francisco

Berkeley Improvisations (1989-1992) - Structured improvisations with the Berkeley Improvisational Dance Group: Berkeley, California

Drug of the Nation (1989) – amplification of the somatic effects of advertising images done with a backdrop of an accelerating montage of video excerpts from TV commercials: Berkeley, California

Events Organized and Produced

Sierra Contact Festival (2008-present), A contact Improvisation Festival oriented towards experienced dancers and focusing on laboratory and presentation of current work/research. Sierra Hot Springs, CA

Yuba Life Art Project (2007) a month long temporary society camping in the wilderness of the South Fork Yuba River, Nevada County, California. Organized around a Body Research rehearsal process for *Proximity* and *Axolotl*, other artists were invited to come live with us by the river and share in our training and lab times, two hours of forest hiking away from the nearest dirt road.

Contact Camp at Burning Man (2005-2008) A 100 person theme camp at Burning Man offering performances, classes, and jams based in contact improvisation, serving over 1000 people each year: Black Rock City, NV

Winter Solstice Improvisation Jam (1995- 2007) Sundown to sunrise open improvisation for the longest night of the year... music, dance, theater: New York, SF, Vienna, Seattle, Lasqueti Island, and Nevada City, CA

Body Research Contact Lab (2005-2007) - A working laboratory exploring contact improvisation: San Francisco, CA

Pacific Northwest Contact Lab (2004, 2005) A working exchange and lab between Canadian and US dancers in the Northwest Spring 2004, 2005, Port Townsend, WA

Lasqueti Winter Improvisation Intensive (2000-2003) - A 3 month full time training program in contemporary interdisciplinary performing arts (director and primary instructor), Guest Instructors included Keith Hennessy (Performance Art), Amii LeGendre and Michelle Miller (contemporary technique), Joey Blake and David Hatfield (voice) Irene Franco and Jeff Mooney (percussion). Integrated local rural community in weekend workshops and jams. Culminated in performance tour of the gulf islands and in a workshop taught by the participants in the intensive: Lasqueti Island, BC, Canada

Movement Haiku (1996-1997) - Monthly performance series for dance works under 2 minutes: New York, various venues

Thanksgiving Contact Jam (1994, 1995) - 5 day contact improv lab and retreat: Los Gatos, CA

Press

... fascinating; awkward, tender, and violent movement combined with snippets of dialog and swiftly built-up characters and relationships, creating social and sexual conflicts with an almost unnerving intimacy... utterly compelling.

BRETT FETZER, **TheStranger** (Seattle April 2004) {about [Ashes](#)}

I left the theater shell-shocked. It was easily the oddest, most surprising performance experience I've ever had. And, against all expectations, one of the most rewarding.

BRENDAN KILEY, **The Stranger** (Seattle October 2005) {about [Axolotl](#)}

...something startling and strangely beautiful to behold.

MOLLY RHODES, **SF Weekly** (August 2007) {about [Proximity](#)}

... absolutely beautiful ... incredibly powerful ... I felt I was truly able to connect with the performance and become swept up in what I was watching.

Annetta Konstantinides, **THE AGGIE** (Davis 2011) {about [Body of Knowledge](#)}

Performance documentation available at www.bodyresearch.org or by request

References

Joe Dumit, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Science and Technology Studies, UC Davis - joe.dumit@gmail.com

Peter Lichtenfels, Professor of Theater and Dance, UC Davis - plichtenfels@ucdavis.edu

Amii LeGendre, Lecturer for Dance and Dramatic Arts, BARD College - alegendr@bard.edu

Keith Hennessey, director of Circo Zero, PhD candidate and lecturer in Performance Studies at UC Davis - keith@circozero.org

(unfortunately, my MFA advisor, Della Davidson, passed away shortly after I graduated. Joe Dumit and Peter Lichtenfels would be the best references from my MFA time, while Amii Legendre or Keith Hennessey could comment well on the rest of my professional dance theater work.)