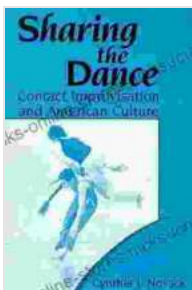


Contact Improvisation and American Culture: New Directions in Anthropological Inquiry

Contact improvisation (CI) is a form of postmodern dance that emerged in the United States in the 1970s. It is characterized by its focus on physical contact, improvisation, and the exploration of movement possibilities. CI has been influential in the development of contemporary dance and has also been used as a tool for personal growth and social change.

In recent years, anthropologists have begun to study CI, exploring its cultural significance and its impact on individual and community life. This article provides an overview of the anthropological research on CI, highlighting new directions in inquiry.



Sharing the Dance: Contact Improvisation and American Culture (New Directions in Anthropological Writing) by Cynthia J. Novack

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
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Print length	: 280 pages

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CI and the Body

One of the most striking features of CI is its focus on physical contact. Dancers in CI are constantly touching, supporting, and moving each other. This emphasis on touch has led anthropologists to explore the ways in which CI shapes our understanding of the body.

In her book *Moving Together: Contact Improvisation and the Ecstasy of Self-Loss*, anthropologist Susan Foster argues that CI offers a new way of thinking about the body. She suggests that CI's focus on touch and improvisation allows dancers to experience their bodies as fluid and interconnected, rather than as fixed and separate entities. This experience, she argues, can lead to a greater sense of self-awareness and a more positive body image.

Other anthropologists have explored the ways in which CI can be used to heal trauma and promote physical and mental well-being. For example, anthropologist Nancy Stark Smith has studied the use of CI in a therapeutic setting with people who have experienced sexual abuse. She found that CI can help survivors to reclaim their bodies and to develop a more positive sense of self.

CI and Community

CI is not only a form of dance; it is also a social practice. Dancers in CI often form close bonds with each other, and the dance community provides a sense of belonging and support. Anthropologists have explored the ways in which CI fosters community and social change.

In her book *Contact Improvisation: An Ethnography of a Dance Community*, anthropologist Hilary Bradbury argues that CI creates a unique space for social interaction. She suggests that CI's focus on touch and improvisation

allows dancers to develop a deep sense of trust and empathy for each other. This trust, she argues, can extend beyond the dance floor and into other areas of life.

Other anthropologists have explored the ways in which CI can be used to promote social change. For example, anthropologist Joanna Haigron has studied the use of CI in community development work in Brazil. She found that CI can help to build bridges between different social groups and to promote dialogue and understanding.

CI and Identity

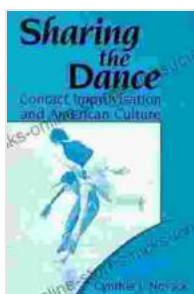
CI has also been shown to have a significant impact on individual identity. Dancers in CI often report feeling more confident, creative, and connected to others after participating in the dance. Anthropologists have explored the ways in which CI can help people to develop a more positive sense of self and to explore their own creativity.

In her book *Contact Improvisation: A Dance of Self-Discovery*, anthropologist Linda H. Connor argues that CI can help people to develop a stronger sense of self-awareness and self-acceptance. She suggests that CI's focus on improvisation and self-expression allows dancers to explore their own unique movement styles and to develop a deeper understanding of their own bodies and minds.

Other anthropologists have explored the ways in which CI can be used to challenge traditional gender roles and sexual identities. For example, anthropologist Susan Leigh Foster has studied the use of CI in queer dance communities. She found that CI provides a space for queer people

to explore their own identities and to challenge heteronormative assumptions about gender and sexuality.

CI is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has had a significant impact on American culture. Anthropological research on CI has explored the ways in which CI shapes our understanding of the body, community, identity, and social change. This research has provided valuable insights into the nature of human movement and the ways in which dance can be used to promote personal growth and social transformation.



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