Social Interaction

Video-Based Studies of Human Sociality

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Achieving Competitive Hardness: The Preference for Hard Touch as Practical Accomplishment in Professional Handball

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Christian Meyer & Ulrich v. Wedelstaedt, University of Konstanz

Abstract

This paper examines institutional touch in the case of institutionalized professional high-class sports where touch constitutes an intrinsic, required, and desired component of the institutional task. Specifically, it focuses on handball where hard forms of touch are used in the context of a highly bodily competition about dominance on the field. In order to acquire the 'bodily hardness' necessary for this, athletes need to slowly maneuver themselves before the match into a state of body and mind that allows for the required hardness in the competition with opponents. Drawing on ethnographic research and video-recordings of handball matches as well as activities in the locker rooms and during the warm-up, we reconstruct the sequential progression and transformation of touching activities within this institutionalized setting. In the course of the preparation for the match, the role of touching changes its character from avoidance (preference for non-touch) to its active pursuit (preference for touch), ending in a normative standard of hard touch.

Keywords: interaction research, institutional interaction, touch, sports, handball

1. Introduction

Touch is perhaps the most ambiguous modality in social interaction. While it is often used as a resource to shape social relations—proximity and distance, affection and rejection—it is equally employed as a device that secures and organizes the procedural continuity of interaction and as a tool to open communicative channels when others are systematically obstructed. Interaction research has only barely begun to study individual aspects of these dimensions.

Moreover, the transition from one meaning to another is fluid so that touch—even more than gesture—can be recycled easily within a wide range of functions. And touch—even more than other interactional resources—can in many cases easily be disguised retrospectively as unintentional and accidental. Human persons are not only 'embodied minds,' but also 'minded bodies,' and touch is the one modality that fully exploits the materiality and vulnerability of human existence, as phenomenological philosophers and sociologists after Maurice Merleau-Ponty have ubiquitously discussed (cf. Meyer & Streeck forthcoming).

Body contact and touch, as well as postural and proxemic dimensions, thus constitute prominent means to produce the social properties of individual situations. The social ambiguities of touch are maybe best articulated by Erving Goffman's expression that "individuals can be in touch socially without touching" (Goffman 1971: 71).

Thus, touch is a sensorial modality that is capable of permanently producing social ambivalences and ambiguities. In our study we will demonstrate this by showing that the production of an institutionalized preference for touch—typical for many kinds of professional sports—requires laborious preparation. During this preparation, the 'definition of the situation' is gradually shifted away step-by-step from the everyday meaning, where touch possesses the above social ambivalences and ambiguities, towards an extra-everyday meaning, where touch constitutes an intrinsic component of the institutional task. Before we present empirical data to sustain this assumption, we will first report on some general aspects of touch from philosophical and sociological perspectives and then provide an overview of the research produced so

far on touch as interactional modality from video-based perspectives, drawing on the institutional/ordinary divide in interaction research.

2. The multifacetedness of touch

No one has probably described the sensitivities of public touch better than Elias Canetti in his "Crowds and Power" of 1960, where he says:

> "There is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown. He wants to see what is reaching towards him, and to be able to recognize or at least classify it. Man always tends to avoid physical contact with anything strange. (...) The repugnance to being touched remains with us when we go about among people; the way we move in a busy street, in restaurants, trains or buses, is governed by it. Even when we are standing next to them and are able to watch and examine them closely, we avoid actual contact if we can. The promptness with which apology is offered for an unintentional contact, the tension with which it is awaited, our violent and sometimes even physical reaction when it is not forthcoming, the antipathy and hatred we feel for the offender, even when we cannot be certain who it is—the whole knot of shifting and intensely sensitive reactions to an alien touch—proves that we are dealing here with a human propensity as deep-seated as it is alert and insidious; something which never leaves a man when he has once established the boundaries of his personality" (Canetti 1978 [1960]: 15).

It is this putatively innate desire to avoid body contact with strangers and touch that changes when human persons enter crowds of people, says Canetti, who are united by enthusiastic or even fanatic stances and share the experience of unity. Only under these circumstances, human persons are freed of their inborn fears:

> "It is only in a crowd that man can become free of this fear of being touched. That is the only situation in which the fear changes into its opposite. (…) The man pressed against him is the same as himself. He feels him as he feels himself. Suddenly it is as though everything were happening in one and the

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same body. (…) This reversal of the fear of being touched belongs to the nature of crowds" (Canetti 1978 [1960]: 15-16).

Much of what Canetti observed has later been specified by Erving Goffman. For example, as he shows, the opportunity to touch is societally distributed along social status, age, and gender as each party possesses different rights and duties to touch and to be available for touch by others in the public as well as the private sphere (cf. Goffman 1963: 203; Goffman 1971: 16-17). The social sensitivity of touch arises from its power to intrude into the personal "territory of the self" (Goffman 1971: 60-61). While in the public sphere touch can be used as a "tie sign" among intimates, between strangers, however, it is generally avoided, and if institutional constraints lead to its unavoidability, it needs to be framed (Goffman 1963: 132; Goffman 1971: 16).

However, Canetti emphasizes more clearly than Goffman the point that specific social atmospheres are capable of reversing the fear of touch and instead of producing aspirations of, or, as we call it, a preference for, touch. This idea will be important for us when we describe how a specific atmosphere is created in professional sports that encourages, even requires, touching.

3. Touch in interaction and the institutional/ordinary divide

Touch as a sensorial modality came into the focus of video-based interaction studies relatively late. The early research on interpersonal touch was entirely focused on institutional settings. Touch was especially investigated in the context of medical institutions, since it represents an interactional modality that is experienced as intrusive into the personal space when executed by persons with relative distance and when it is not framed as extraordinary (Frankel 1983; Heath 1986; Nishizaka 2007). Therefore, many of these studies have shown how the proximity and intimacy related to touch is neutralized in these settings. Only much later were educational settings integrated into the scope of research (Cekaite 2016; 2017; 2018; Bergnehr & Cekaite 2018; this special issue). It had also taken until the first decade of the 21st century for touch in everyday interactions to become a topic of multimodal research. Detailed investigations of the role of touch in the realm of activities in everyday life, however, remain scarce (Cekaite 2015; Goodwin 2017; Goodwin & Cekaite 2018; Meyer et al.

2017; Meyer & v. Wedelstaedt 2017; Meyer 2018; Cekaite & Mondada forthcoming). Most of these studies focus on social dimensions, while exclusively procedural dimensions are rarely considered (cf. Meyer 2018 for an exception).

The second component of the focus of this special issue—"institutional"—as a dimension of interaction (or talk) has been investigated in direct comparison to ordinary interaction (talk) in everyday life. The latter was attributed a non-distorted, primordial form, while the former has been viewed as a deviation of the latter (Schegloff 2005). The organization of ordinary interaction is thus treated as foundational for kinds of talk that are conceived of as 'situated adaptation and modification' of basic forms, and the situatedness refers to the institutional setting (Boden & Zimmerman 1991: 15).

Thus, the basic assumption of the research program on institutional talk is that the concepts and methods of conversation analysis can be extended beyond the study of ordinary conversation to the investigation of various forms of 'institutional interaction' or 'institutional talk' in order to show that such interaction differs from ordinary conversation in its impact upon interactional practices in systematic ways that make the institution structurally describable.

Schegloff (1992) suggests two dimensions when investigating institutional talk: *relevance* and *procedural consequentiality*. Regarding relevance, the ways of how the parties embody the relevancies of the interaction for one another and are thereby producing a social structure are studied. Relevance in this sense is, for example, embodied in practices of members to characterize, identify, describe, refer to, and generally conceive of persons when talking to others. This possibly also includes the touching of persons: How does touch produce as well as manifest person categories? How are touchable persons distinguished from non-touchable persons? Just as well as members accomplish the institution by referring to persons in specific ways, they also accomplish the institution by touching or non-touching persons in specific ways.

Procedural consequentiality refers to the mechanism by which the context as understood by the members is consequential for the interaction. More specifically: How does the fact that the interaction—including touch—is being conducted in a specific

setting consequential for the shape, form, trajectory, content, or character of the interaction that the parties conduct?

Heritage (2005) also adds very general dimensions that distinguish institutional from everyday interaction: the *kinds of institutional practices, actions, stances, ideologies, and identities enacted in the institutional interaction*. He thus widens the scope and includes an interest in what is distinctive about institutional talk and touch and how the sequential embeddedness of the individual resources is organized.

However, it must be noted that touch cannot be investigated in the same way as other semiotic resources, since it is only partly comparable to verbal and vocal dimensions of interaction. For one, it is differently organized with regard to its temporality, as it can occur simultaneously with other modes (gaze, vocal resources, etc.). Secondly, it is inescapably reciprocal, different from visual or vocal action: touching someone necessarily implies being touched by them. And thirdly, touch is not available for video-based research in the same way, since the experienced quality of touch remains invisible from the outside (cf. Streeck 2013; Meyer & Streeck, forthcoming).

Similar to the roles and particularities of gesture in everyday and institutional context (cf. Heath & Luff 2007), we scarcely have enough systematic knowledge about everyday touch to be in a position to assess institutional departures, not to mention the disputed nature of the claims regarding primordiality and deviation in relation to multimodal resources. Our text, like the other texts of this special issue, is one contribution to investigating how touch is organized in an institutional context and how it is, at the same time, indicative of these contexts.

4. Touch in high class sports

The data that we will analyze in the subsequent sections of this text stems from a research project on communication and interaction in professional sports, particularly the first German league and champions league handball.[1] In professional, institutionalized sports, touch and body contact are closely related to the involvement of single players into an 'acting team body.' This can be seen to some extent in the following transcripts and stills[2].

Transcript 1: Cheering over an equalizing goal in the final second of a handball game

I   II
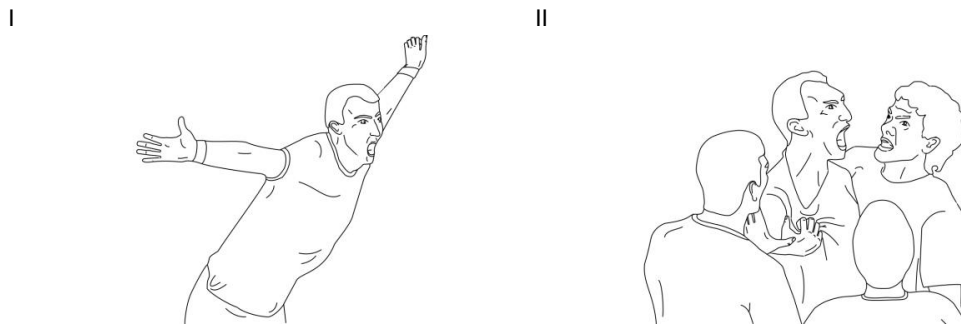
Transcript 2: Cheering over a goal in a handball game climaxing in two players bumping their chests against one another

I   II
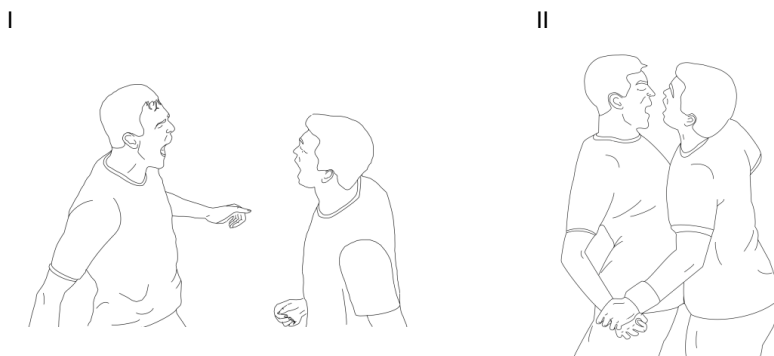
In these first illustrative transcripts, a physical tension is visible in the faces and bodies of the players. Compared to the normative standard of everyday interaction as depicted by Canetti above, this tension is distinguished by being associated with an extraordinarily strong physical and affected involvement: The emotions of joy and satisfaction are shared and the players actively seek body contact and touch instead of avoiding it as is known from everyday interaction. Also, the body parts that are in contact differ from 'everyday' touches where, at least in most cases, hands touch more 'neutral' parts of the body. In order to maneuver themselves into such an extra-everyday condition—a "province of meaning" (Schutz 1962: esp. 230-259) in which touch is actively pursued—the handball game is preceded by a lengthy process of tuning-in that we want to shed light on in this text. In the process of tuning-in, a typical form of extraordinary reality construction occurs that is characteristic of high-performance sport: Its temporal perspective narrows to the time of the game and the perception of the players, as the players have ubiquitously told us is restricted to the

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tunnel vision that blocks out everything outside the game (Meyer & v. Wedelstaedt 2017). The involvement in the physical situation of the game becomes dominant, and the social relationships are characterized by team spirit and antagonism to the opponent's team. Both aspects have consequences for the role of touch: Body contact is a necessary element of the social activity. In the following analysis, we will show how team members prepare for this situation of inescapable body contact through several stages of attunement. Once the transition towards the extraordinary is completed, it is one of the distinguishing characteristics of institutional interaction in professional sports that touch has converted from an avoidable into a desirable interaction – just as is visible in the transcripts above.

4.1 Stages of attunement

A handball team as it stands on the field consists of six field players and a goalkeeper. Including the substitute players, coach, assistant coaches, caretakers, physiotherapists, team physician, kitman, and manager, professional handball teams of the German first league can reach up to 30 people who are directly involved in the performance of a handball game. The preparation of such a large group of people in a setting with multiple foci of attention is difficult to accomplish and—concomitantly— difficult to observe (and even more difficult to describe or illustrate). We have set the starting point of our description at the point that the coach has set after the final training (usually on the day before the match). Coaches often not only decide the time and place of their next meeting, but also the dress code (e.g., tracksuit and jersey color), the equipment (e.g., special footwear), and other preparatory measures (e.g., what to eat and drink before meeting).

The following list of steps gives a prototypical overview of the stages of attunement directly before the match that we observed to be consistent over several teams, coaches, leagues, and genders:

(1) Joint physical activity of the team (walking, very light running, etc.);

(2) Meeting at the stadium and occupation of the locker room with equipment (tactical boards, drinks, personal clothing, etc.);

(3) Adjustment of the body (e.g., via first, easy warm-up, physiotherapy);

(4)   Coach's address to the team that assesses the opponent and the game ahead and motivates the team, including a (very short) recapitulation of the designated tactics;

(5)   Synchronized warm-up (under supervision of the team's captain and mirrored with the opponent team); high fiving and hugging of players who arrive on the scene later;

(6)   Team motivation by cheering and hand clapping with intensified physical involvement;

(7)   Continued warm-up and adjustment of bodies as well as high fiving and hugging of more players arriving late;

(8)   Renewed high fiving, which is now rhythmized;

(9)   Continued adjustment of bodies and accommodation with the material and kinetic properties of balls and other bodies;

(10)   Increased kinesthetic adjustment;

(11)   Renewed collective and individual motivation in the locker room through deployment of shouts, fast movements, cheering, and clapping;

(12)   Joint ritual of collective touching and rhythmical shouting culminating in well-coordinated gestural activities.

In this process of attunement, the team members accomplish auditive, tactile, and material exchanges, and a transition from singular interactions, typical of everyday life, towards joint and rhythmized collective interactions is observable. This becomes apparent in the close coordination of actions by individual players to accomplish joint actions among themselves as players or with other team members (especially the coach). Even the intake of food and liquid does not happen individually but in coordinated ways: It is prepared in a special way on the orders of the coach and put in place by the caretakers (and sometimes checked back). Touch plays a crucial role in the course of this transition, as we will subsequently show.

The following transcripts of video sequences depict crucial elements of this process of attunement in the direction of a joint team body. The sequences are part of recordings of a single first league handball game and encompass all central steps. It illustrates a prototypical process of attunement in consecutive order. The time index provided is consistent over all transcripts.

4.2 The everyday mode: touch avoidance

The first scene takes place in the locker room, after a light physical activity of the team (a joint walk through the park). Most players have already hung their clothes on the hooks and are now changing or adjusting their equipment. Some players are already on the field warming up, while others are waiting for treatment by the physiotherapist (step no. 3 in the listing above).

Transcript 3

In the confined space of the locker room, there are lots of bags, cases, clothes, and equipment stored on the ground, on the benches, or hung in the wardrobes. In addition, team members constantly walk in and out of the room.

The player at the left side in the gray jersey awaits treatment from the physiotherapist (in the dotted shirt) who is located in front of the left door (behind which the therapy is done). Player 14 (whose back is facing the therapist) stands in front of this door. In still I, another player (no. 1) enters the room through the right door (coming from the hallway). As player 1 comes towards the physiotherapist, player 14 goes into the other door (through the left door, still II). As he passes the two, player 14 moves out of the way into the other room while the therapist steps to the wall (still III). Player 1 walks

further into the room in the direction of the player in the gray jersey. As they pass one another, player 1 also avoids physical contact by laboriously wiggling around while the player in gray moves towards the wall and suspends taking off his jersey until player 1 has passed (visible from how he holds his arms crossed in front of his body, still IV). Only after they are at some distance (still V), he finishes taking off his shirt.

The situation is common and well-known from everyday interaction in public or semi-public spaces: Player 1 maneuvers his way through the confined and packed locker room. In doing so, the team members coordinate themselves and expend considerable effort to avoid physical contact (player 1 wiggling around, player 14 and the therapist going out of the way, the player in gray interrupting taking off his shirt). Noticeably, they also avoid eye contact. Rather, player 1 seems to perform what Goffman has described as a "middle distance look" (1981: 130). In medical interaction, this visual orientation, as Heath (1986: 108) has shown, is used to neutralize the potential association of institutional touch with social intimacy. The same visual and postural orientation has been observed in public settings such as tram riding, queueing, and elevator riding. Hirschauer (1999) has called it the 'minimization of co-presence,' when people maneuver their way through close spaces avoiding physical and eye contact.

4.3 Careful Touch

Thus, the interaction in this early stage of attunement before the handball match is still characterized by body distance and the avoidance of touch and eye contact. This contrasts sharply with later stages. After some minutes of warming up and preparation on the field, all players and team members reassemble in the locker room. Now the coach gives a short address on last minute issues that concern the game and refers to routines established in the final trainings. The longest part of the address, however, relates to motivational aspects (though tactics and motivation are often hardly distinguishable, cf. Meyer & v. Wedelstaedt 2014). Right before the transcript begins, the coach has announced the players who will be in the first lineup.
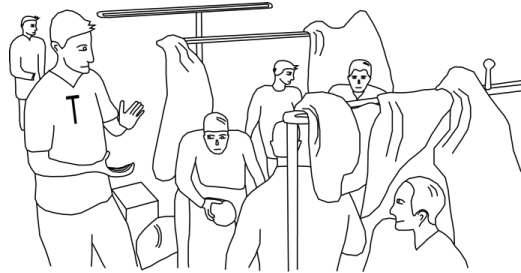
Transcript 4

I - 01:10:01:08
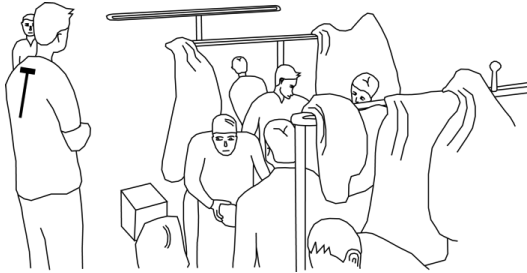

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T: sehr gut (.)        ja,
   very good (.)        yes,
                        ?: =so jungs auf gehts
                           =so guys let's go
                                        ?: hey
                                           hey
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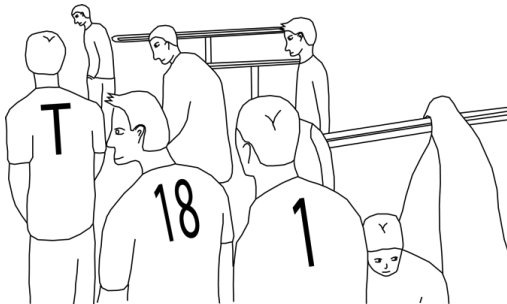
II - 01:10:02:26

III - 01:10:08:18


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div: Klatschen        ((
     clapping         ((
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IV - 01:10:09:03


```
unverständlich                              ))
incomprehensible                            ))
         T: los=raus jetzt
            go=out now
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The coach completes his address with the words 'very good' and a tag question that signals the end of his monologue. Directly after, one of the players throws in a motivational phrase ('so guys'), another player joins in ('hey'), and a rhythmic clapping arises in which the coach takes part as well, but which is not yet consistent throughout the whole team (cf. still II). Right after, the players go off to leave the room, which causes a line to form. The coach accompanies the leaving verbally and calls on the players to make their way out. In the foreground of stills III and IV, players 18 and 1 are visibly lining up. As player 18 walks around something laying on the ground, player 1 closes up to him. Being only centimeters apart from one another, player 1 raises his right arm and touches player 18 slightly on the back (still IV, recognizable from his arm posture), thus moving away from the avoidance towards a careful employment of touch. This is only one example of how by now touch has started to change its characteristic in the course of the joint attunement.

4.4 Introducing the preference for touch

The joint and increasingly rhythmical clapping of the team after the coach's address marks a point of transition towards an intensified synchrony and symmetry of the team (for the same process in boxing, cf. Meyer & v. Wedelstaedt 2015). In this context, touch starts to become common rather than being avoided, which is a first indication of the changing physical attunement of the team members that is continued in the further course of the warm-up.

Transcript 5
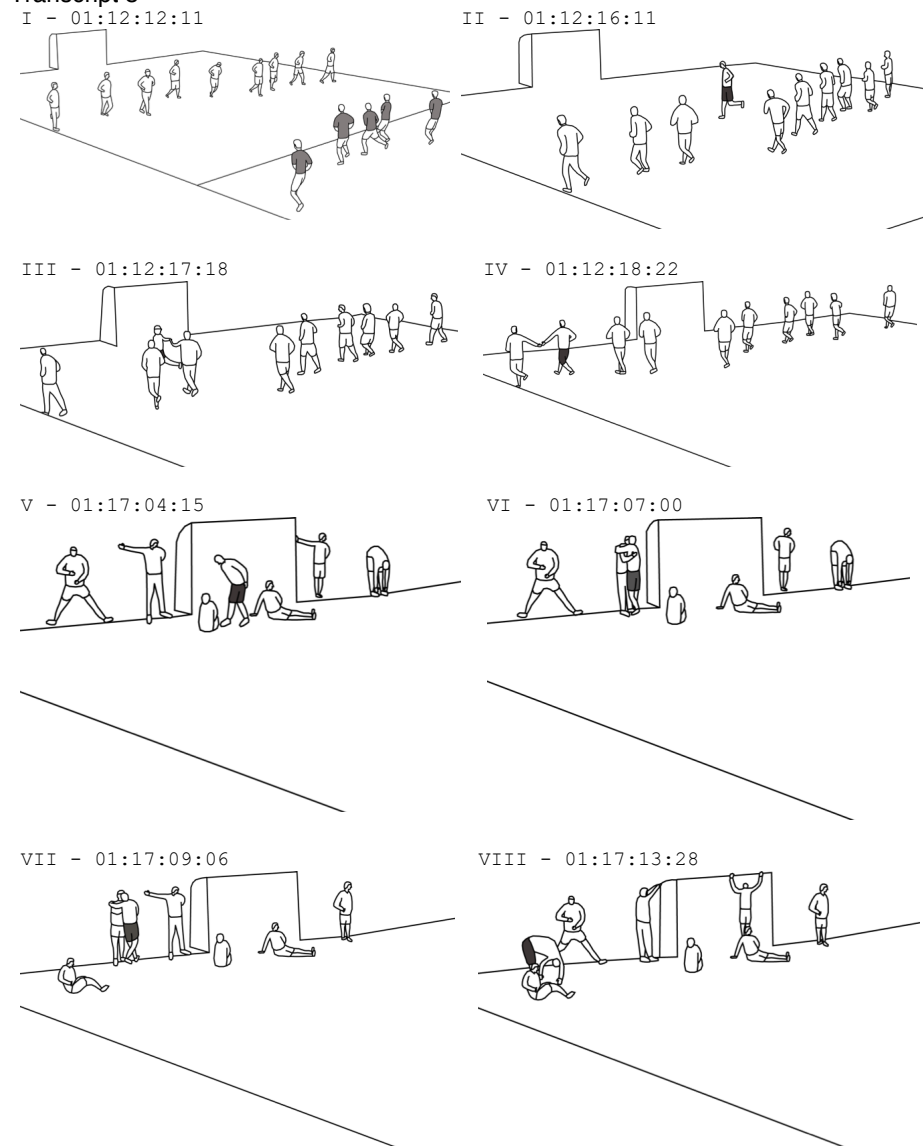
Upon entering the field, the players start to jointly warm-up, following a prearranged procedure which is also used in training sessions. This procedure is led by the team captain (still I, the player in white on the very right) who shouts commands at the start and end of joint exercises. While team white is warming up on their side of the field, the opponents (team gray) do the same on their half of the field, which often leads to mirrored actions on both sides, with teams sometimes accelerating towards one another. In the course of the warm-up, the speed and intensity of the exercises are constantly increased. The warm-up—along with its physiological functions—serves to align the individual bodies, allowing the players to remember and re-actualize their embodied knowledge acquired in training sessions and prior games, and to achieve the kinesthetic appresentation and anticipation of the team members while moving individually.

Again, touch plays a crucial role in this process of attunement and makes visible the altered physical orientations within the team. In still II, a player, who was treated by the physiotherapist earlier, arrives late in the joint warm up (marked with dark trousers). He enters the line of the players from the right. As soon as the players come below a certain distance, they start high fiving one another (still III), thus actively pursuing body contact rather than avoiding it as before in the locker room. After having joined the row, the newly arrived player turns left to high five his fellow player (still IV).
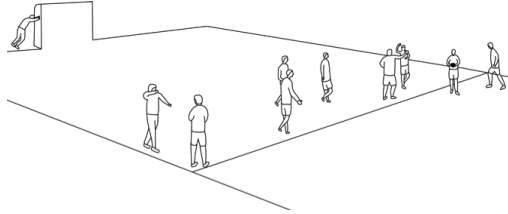
At this stage, the increasing attunement of the team members has already led to a situation in which much more frequent physical contact occurs among them. A few minutes after the joint warm-up is over and the players do their individual stretching, another player arrives late on the field due to physiotherapy (again marked with gray shorts). He comes close and bends down to some of his team members to high five (still V & VIII) and to hug them (VI & VII) before starting his own warming-up and stretching.

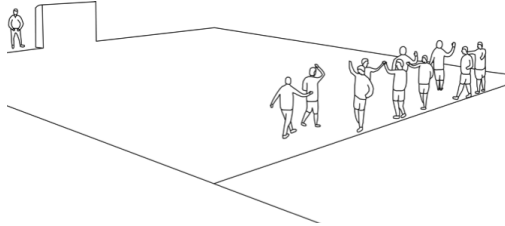4.5 Reducing and expanding the territory of the self

The importance of close physical contact by *each* player with *all* of his team members becomes particularly apparent in the following transcript.
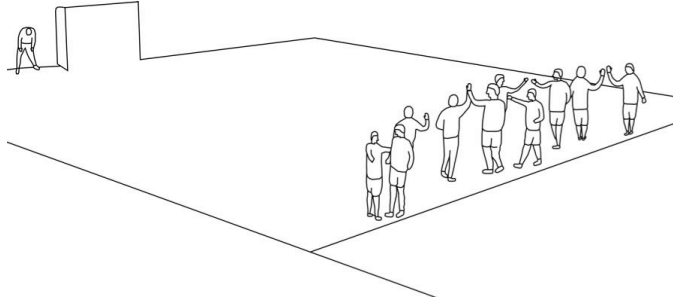
Transcript 6
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I - 01:20:35:22                                II - 01:20:39:12
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III - 01:20:40:06
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After finishing the final exercises, the field players engage in rhythmic clapping (from this point onwards, the goalkeeper in the back next to the goal is separated from the field players). They form small groups (still I) and high five and hug one another. After a few seconds, two lines are formed that file past each other while high fiving (still II, III). Once this formation is accomplished, every single player can be sure to have touched every other player. Physical-kinetic contact between all field players of the team has again been strengthened.

4.6 Expanding the reach of touch

Compared to the early situation in the locker room, it becomes apparent that a redefinition of the personal spaces and boundaries of the individual team players has occurred. The "territories of the self" (Goffman 1971: 28) of the players were not only reduced to be closer to the individual bodies of the team members, but the 'self' possessing the territory now appears to relate to the whole team rather than to the individuals. Not only has the avoidance of physical contact been eliminated, but touch and body contact are now actively pursued, and the equal participation in interkinesthetic formations that include touch is organized. Only on this basis can the highly complex movement patterns that characterize a handball game be
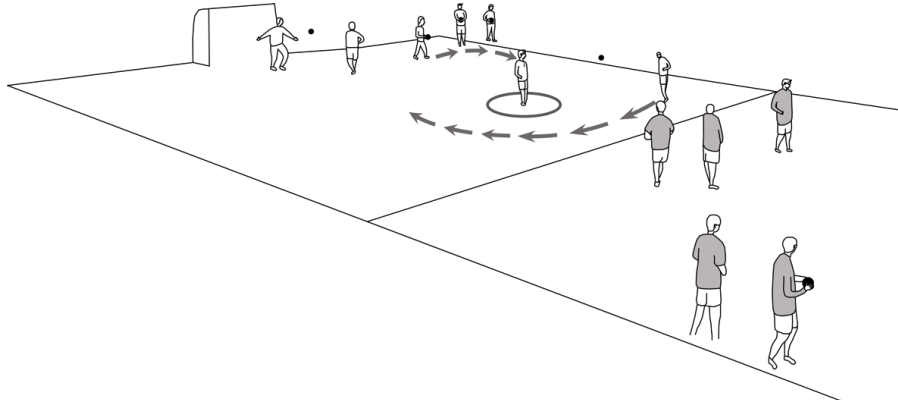
accomplished. Particularly for the performance of moves that are based on coordinated kinetic anticipation, however, further attunement is necessary, as will be seen in the following transcript.

Transcript 7
`I - 01:22:57:05`
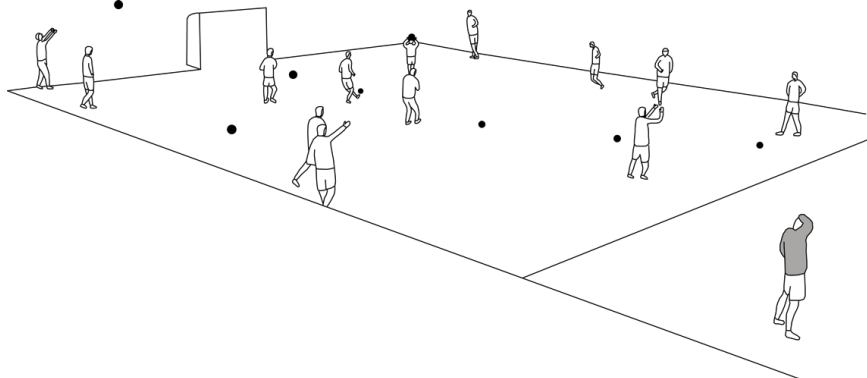
`II - 01:32:04:16`

The field players continue their preparation for several more minutes. Within the next thirteen minutes, they first form pairs and pass balls over the field (still I). Their throwing becomes harder and harder and their activities more game-like (e.g., 'running – stopping – throwing,' 'catching while running,' 'throwing/catching behind the back,' etc.). After that, the players form an even more complex pattern (still II). When the co-trainer arrives on the field, the players line up in the right corner, run towards the co-trainer, pass him the ball, run around him, get the ball back from him into their path, go for the goal, and try to score against their own goalkeeper.

A continuously increasing intensity of the exercises and interactions becomes apparent. While at the beginning, the field players played soft passes and throws, now

hard balls are thrown onto the goal or as passes in a game-like manner. They increasingly use and apply their embodied knowledge about the procedures and movements that they have acquired during training sessions and prior competitions. Also, there is a gradual adaption to the field and its specific texture as well as to their fellow players' form on the day.

4.7 Vocalizing touch

In the scenes above, the players established a joint team body mostly through intercorporeal and interkinesthetic activities, the latter being mediated by the kinetic energy of the ball or of their movements. This changes in the final phases of the warm-up and preparation phase.

Transcript 8


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I - 01:33:29:01                  II - 01:33:31:20                  III - 01:33:37:18


P: <<ff>kommt stimmung jungs>
   <<ff>come on keep the spirit guys>
              5: <<dim>männer mit geduld (.) mit geduld> ((…))
                 <<dim> be patient men (.) be patient> ((…))
                                            C: <<ff>kommt männer>
                                               <<ff>come on men>
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The game is about to start in a few minutes. One by one, the field players and other team members walk back into the locker room. When the physiotherapist (dotted shirt, still I) enters the locker room he loudly shouts a motivational phrase. Seconds later, player 5 enters (still II) and also yells a loud slogan. Right after, the co-trainer (marked C, still III) arrives and again shouts a motivational phrase. This is continued: After the warm-up, upon entering the locker room nearly all players and team members shout cheers, motivational formulae, or clap their hands rhythmically. Their utterances are often accompanied by further physical contact, high fiving, slapping, patting, or hugging when team members come close to one another. The initial avoidance of touch has now transformed into its active pursuit.

4.8 Being a team body

Sound is an important tool for the coordination of the game, since complex tactical patterns or instructions are 'encoded' in short wordings (e.g., 'be patient') or even in para-verbal utterances like hand clapping (for boxing, see Meyer & v. Wedelstaedt 2015). In the next step, individual voices are aggregated into a tuned-in team body. The increasing vocalization completes the kinesthetic attunement and continues for a while in the locker room.

Transcript 9


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I - 01:35:16:10                          II - 01:35:16:28



?: <<ff>so männer (.) harte deckung>
   <<ff>so men (.) hard cover>
                              div: ((Klatschen))
                                   ((clapping))
                           ?: <<ff>kommt jungs=kommt jungs=kommt jungs>
                              <<ff>come on guys=come on guys=come on guys>
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III - 01:35:16:33



25: <<ff>hey>
    <<ff>hey>
   all: <<ff>ho:> (( rhythmisches klatschen ))
        <<ff>ho:> ((rhythmical clapping))
```

As soon as all team members are gathered in the locker room, they huddle around a center point and hold their hands together in the middle. Team members who are further away from the center look for a gap to reach it. Player 18 in still I, for example, positions himself sideways (still II) to reach into the center (still III). However, since not all team members are able to reach the center to touch the cluster of hands, some of them instead touch the backs or shoulders of fellow team members who stand in front

of them. For example, the substitute player marked with dark trousers (still I) is unable to reach to the center due to benches standing in his way. Thus, he touches the shoulder of player 18 and walks together with him towards the center while constantly touching his back (still II). Once arrived, he places his hand higher up on the shoulder of player 18 (still III).

Out of the babble of voices during the joint touching, shouts of 'hard cover' stand out. There is constant rhythmic clapping that surges up at different ends of the huddle. In the very center of the huddle, player 25 (marked with a gray jersey, still I) moves further towards the center (still II) and cowers down (obscured by player 4, still III). Once down, he shouts the first part of a dialogical adjacency pair ('hey') upon which all others in the room shout the second part of the pair ('ho'). Parallel to the shouting, a pushing movement is performed by the hands in the middle. It is a sort of joint high fiving that moves wave-like through the whole team body. The players in the rear push against the team members in front of them. Once accomplished, collective hand clapping occurs. This clapping is different from before, synchronized throughout the whole team, which indicates the completion of the attunement of the team.

4.9 The preference for hardness

The ritual ending shows the high level of the physical, kinesthetic, temporal, and probably also cognitive alignment of the team body, which has partly been achieved through touch. However, especially in the encounter with the opponents on the field, tactile, haptic, and kinetic *hardness* is a key characteristic of handball. This orientation towards extraordinary hardness becomes apparent in the following transcript, which shows a scene after most of the team members have left the locker room for the corridor towards the field.

Transcript 10

I – 01:35:36:18


```
P: (hey kollege) (.) rICHtig          (---)
    (hey colleague) (.) right          (---)
```

II – 01:35:37:26

III – 01:35:40:00


```
<<f>NA=u=hAU=drAUF>
<<f>ne=u=punch=it>
```

IV – 01:35:41:12


```
P: <<f>rICHtig>
    <<f>right>
```
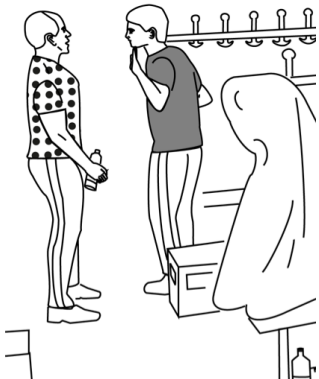
V – 01:35:41:27

VI – 01:35:42:26

VII – 01:35:43:13

VIII – 01:35:43:17


```
A: ((Schlag))
    ((punches))
```

IX – 01:35:44:04


```
P: AR=nA: geht doch
    ar=ya: here we go
```

The physiotherapist (dotted shirt) and the team doctor (dark shirt) stand in the locker room. As the physician passes the physiotherapist, he also touches his chest (still I), upon which the therapist tells the doctor to slap it the 'right' way. The doctor then delivers one very fast punch and another light one to the therapist's head (still II). The therapist sticks his chest out towards the physician and calls on him to slap once more (still III). In reply, the doctor presses and pushes (but does not slap) with his hand against the chest (still IV), so that the therapist himself is slightly pushed backwards (still V). Right after, the therapist strongly slaps the physician's chest (still VI). This is visible in the video footage through the approach, momentum, and speed of the movement and audible through the loudness of the slap. The doctor now hesitates for a moment (still VII) and then slaps the physiotherapist with considerable force (still VIII). The therapist swings back slightly and acknowledges the hardness of the punch to finally be right ('here we go').

This episode not only illustrates how—instead of being avoided—touch has become a pursued social activity among team members, but that its hardness is now a desired quality. Hardness is normatively expected by the members ('do it right') after they have maneuvered themselves into the mood of competition. In handball, physical contact is necessary for being successful, and even injuries are inevitable. The tolerance for its intensity is actively and laboriously built up within the team. This becomes apparent in the gradually shifting patterns of touch occurring in the course of the warm-up. The team members have started as individuals who avoid touch in a manner similar to everyday interactions with strangers in the public and have ended by actively pursuing touch and even hard body contact as the preferred interactional mode, thus achieving hardness, which becomes apparent through constant hard slaps and pats on the hands, chests, or shoulders of fellow team members.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, touch plays an important role in institutionalized, professional handball as a bodily resource for the establishment of a joint 'team body' and the enabling of interkinesthetic team movements. However, the creation of an interkinesthetic team body is not a cognitive decision of the individual team members, but rather an achievement accomplished through laborious practices before the match

for where tactility plays an outstanding role. The outcome of these practices is a 'preference for (hard) touch' typical of professional handball, which departs from both the everyday avoidance of touching ('preference for non-touch') in the public and from a (putative) 'preference for soft touch' in family life – as well as soft "directional touch" serving for social control (Cekaite 2015).

As we have seen, its accomplishment requires several consecutive steps by which the team maneuvers itself into this extra-everyday definition of situation and mood (or, as we called it with Schutz, "province of meaning"; cf. Meyer & v. Wedelstaedt 2017). The stages performed reach from the tentative introduction of careful touch to systematic touching on the field. Concomitantly, the 'territories of the self' of the team members are reduced to the boundaries of the individual body, while at the same time the territory is expanded to encompass a 'territory of the team' rather than the individuals who form it. We have also seen that touch is partly medialized by materials such as, prominently, the ball that is thrown with increasing hardness towards one another as well as by auditive and vocal techniques. These practices of joint attunement end with the creation of a 'team body' that internally as well as externally possesses a preference for hard touching and body contact. It is a slow process to maneuver the team into these institutional touch standards that are characteristic of handball which takes up to several hours. Unlike institutions in which the departure from the everyday standard of touch conduct is less radical, the change in the definition of situation in handball cannot be achieved as abruptly through singular practices such as 'middle-distance look.' Rather, it must be accomplished in a highly embodied step-by-step manner.

In the course of the attunement, *institutional relevancies* are established: For example, the team members distinguish reference in their person between touchables (team members, members of the opposing team) and non-touchables (e.g., referees or officials, audience, manager, physician, caretakers, and coaches to varying degrees). The *procedural consequentiality* of the institutional departure from the everyday standard is extremely high: Hard touch as it occurs in handball among opponents and even among fellow players would count as violence in normal everyday life and end the ongoing interaction, leading instead to complaints or even prosecution. In handball,

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however, these forms of touch are a 'natural desired component' of the institutional activity that serves to carry out the institutional activity and to preserve the social structure. The institutional activity as well as the social structure that counts as its context-as-understood-by-the-members is thus revealed to be constituted by laborious practices of the members slowly shifting the relevancies and consequentialities away from their everyday definition towards an extraordinary institutional reality.

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Addendum: Transcription signs used

(.)	Micro pause
(-); (--)	Pauses of 0,25; 0,5 sec. (estimated)
((...))	Omissions in the transcript
((Hit))	Transcription of paraverbal elements
(word)	Uncertain transcription
word=word	Direct latching of verbal
wo:rd	Prolonged of prior sound
exAMple	Emphasis on the capital written part
beispiel	German original
example	English translation
T	Trainer/Coach
C	Co-trainer
P	Physiotherapist
A	Team doctor
25	Player no. 25 (other no. accordingly)
Div	Diverse speakers
?	Unclear speaker
all	All persons speaking/participating

[2] The drawn stills are shown instead of actual video stills for reasons of enhanced visibility and anonymization.