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Social Interaction

Video-Based Studies of Human Sociality

Self-Touch as Sociality¹

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Abstract

Self-touch is often understood as a form of interactional disengagement and withdrawal, of self-involvement, and co-participants are said to disattend 'self-grooming' actions. In this paper, I present interactional sequences during which the parties touch themselves at the same time, or in succession. These data thus suggest that self-touch can also be an engagement display. Approaching self-touch from the 'point of view' of idle hands in need of something to do, and of interaction as in need of ongoing mutual coordination, I present cooperative self-touch as a display of the deeply social nature of the human body.

Keywords: interaction, touch, self-touch, sociality, intercorporeality

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1. Introduction

We humans tend to be proud of our brains, which we consider to be the body part that most distinguishes us from other animals. But this is actually not true. The human brain is less different from other primate brains than the human hands are from other primate hands, and this difference, such as there is, is usually attributed to the increasing complexities of social life and the demands it makes on social cognition. But more different, compared to our companions on the hominin lineage, are the position and degrees of freedom of our thumbs, and their ability to oppose and exert pressure on all other fingers (Marzke 1996). This position and this freedom of movement have given our hands the ability to hold, rotate, and manipulate objects, and ultimately to *make* things. The world of artifacts was not built by brains, but hands.

Thus, we should not be fooled by the position of the brain (and eyes) at the top of our body and by the helmsmen's perspective on our body that this circumstance affords, our mind looking down on it and dictating its course. There are many reasons why the hand should occupy center stage, and the brain treated as its appendage, in our conception of the living human body. For one, the brain (and, more generally, the central nervous system) is an organ that has evolved in the service of the control of body motion (including anticipation of the consequences of each next step or act) and organizes perception in pursuit of physical movement and action. All 'higher' (or more abstract) cognitive functions, for example thinking (reflection), have evolved from this function (Llinas 2001). The movements of our hands are the most complex that we are capable of, and at the same time the hand is also, often but not always in cooperation with the eye, the organ that gathers a great deal of the sensory knowledge about the properties of the material world that we possess. Whenever the hands do something, they also feel and learn something, and we humans have evolved various dedicated practices to systematically acquire haptic and tactile 'insights' into the world of things. Henri Foçillon wrote in *In praise of hands* (in Foçillon 1934):

Knowledge of the world demands a kind of tactile flair. Sight slips over the surface of the universe. The hand knows that an object has a physical bulk, that it is smooth or rough, that it is not soldered to heaven or earth from which it appears to be inseparable. The hand's action defines the cavity of space and the fullness of the objects that occupy it. Surface, volume, density, and weight are not optical phenomena. Man first learned about them between his fingers and in the hollows of his palm. He does not measure space with his eyes but with his hands and feet (Foçillon 1998: 162-3).

Our hands also have a great deal of autonomy, they are self-possessed. They often do their own thing, unsupervised, not controlled by, and unbeknownst to their so-called 'owner'; 'the hand is not the mind's docile slave' (Focillon 1934: 180). Even when at the service of their owner, enlisted in deliberate pursuit of a task such as getting the martini shaker out from the back of the kitchen cabinet or shaking a stranger's hand, they perform much of these tasks unsupervised, in autonomic action-perception loops, constantly adjusting the position and pressure and motion of the fingers in response to continuous sensory feedback. Conscious control disrupts these loops and delays or even thwarts the desired action (Jeannerod 2006). In other words, the 'mind' depends upon the autonomy of the hands.

When not enlisted in a task, human hands fidget, scratch, wiggle, play with one another, or find some thing to do something with, a pen, a cookie, a napkin, or a lock of hair. Hands find it hard to lay idle. "They have a life of their own that leads them into explorations" (McCullough, 1998: 8). Darian Leader, a psychoanalyst, in his book *Hands. What We Do with Them and Why* (2016) notes how frequently psychoanalysts, against Freud's advice, keep their hands occupied with note-taking when they listen to their patients. However, "the single most common recorded practice for the listening psychoanalyst is not note-taking but knitting" (Leader 2016: 97), followed by doodling. In other words, it is not the verbal record that matters (and which most therapists rarely read), but keeping the hands busy is, and this "is no doubt closely linked to the experience of listening, ... as if the experience of speech needs to be somehow embodied" (98).

I do not believe that fidgeting and doodling are primarily connected to the experience of speech. Fidgeting is like dreaming. Just as our brains, which are distinguished by their precortical ability to symbolize, cannot help but continue to symbolize even in our sleep (Freud 1955; Deacon 1997), our hands, which are distinguished and shaped by their motions and actions, cannot help but move and act in ways familiar to them even when there is otherwise no need for these actions. One could even argue that gesturing is like dreaming. Manual excess is part of the human condition: our hands must act even when their actions exceed the communicative and practical needs of the situation at hand. In this paper I look at a particular kind of fidgeting from this perspective, actions directed towards the body of which the hands are parts, or to the clothing covering it.

2. Self-touch

In the following, self-touch sequences are approached from the perspective of the relative autonomy of the hands. Rather than regarding self-touch as responses to some 'inner' (physiological or psychological) need, I simply see it as 'things to do' that hands, in need of action, come upon when they are not engaged in gesture. Self-touch has mystified researchers, and most studies have mystified it further by treating it as a 'psychological' phenomenon, as a variety of behavior which, distinct from communicative gestures, addresses some 'inner' physiological or deep psychic need. Desmond Morris wrote in his illustrated book *Manwatching* (1977) that

the unconscious way we employ self-touchings ... can provide genuine, uncontrived clues concerning our inner moods. The most common form of Auto-contact ... [are self-intimacies]. Apart from cleaning and shielding actions, which respectively groom and protect the body, this category accounts for the majority of all touching actions that we direct towards ourselves. Self-intimacies ... [are] movements that provide comfort because they are unconsciously mimed acts of being touched by someone else. When we perform a Self-intimacy we use part of our body as if it belonged to a comforting companion (Morris 1977: 102).

In their canon of nonverbal behaviors Ekman and Friesen (1969) gave these examples of 'self-adaptors', which they understood to be learned behaviors:

the wiping of the lips with the tongue or, in particular, with the hand. Although chapped lips or a dryness of the mouth may be relevant to the appearance of this movement, if it also includes a clicking or slapping of the tongue against the roof of the mouth it may be a self-adaptor originally learned to clear away debris from the mouth and lips after a satisfying meal. It may appear in adult conversation when ... when the person feels satisfied over something he has just figuratively swallowed or devoured. The hands may wipe around the corners of the eye, a self-adaptor which would remove tears; but it may be shown by the adult with no tears present when grief or sadness is felt or anticipated. A person may squeeze his legs, exerting pressure in the genital region, a self-adaptor originally learned as a covert prelude to masturbation; if this action was originally associated with the sudden termination of parental affection, it may reappear when the adult experiences rejection by authority figures... Generally self-adaptors receive little external feedback; other people don't directly comment on them, and rarely wish to be caught looking at them (Ekman & Friesen 1969:67-9).

The psychologist Norbert Freedman made a number of interesting observations in 'Hands, words, and minds' (1976). Observing patients in therapy he noticed that self-touch often occurred during speaking pauses or before the onset of speech. Freedman called these movements 'auto-focused' movements, in contrast to 'object-focused movements' which are aimed at physical (grasp) or symbolic (gesture) objects. Freedman concluded that during the process of speaking (symbolization), object-focused movements (gestures) support the formation of symbols and their connection to words, while body-focused movements enable speakers to focus 'internally' on emerging content to be symbolized, to plan speech. Body-focused movements create a sensory loop that enables the speaker to close off external stimuli as they are contemplating their next utterance. But most of the things that hands do during interaction they do publicly, and other hands often respond in kind: they find something similar to do. Collaborative self-touch sequences are not rare in human interaction, and they show us how pairs of hands, unbeknownst to their 'owners' (the minds allegedly controlling them), engage in sequential interaction.

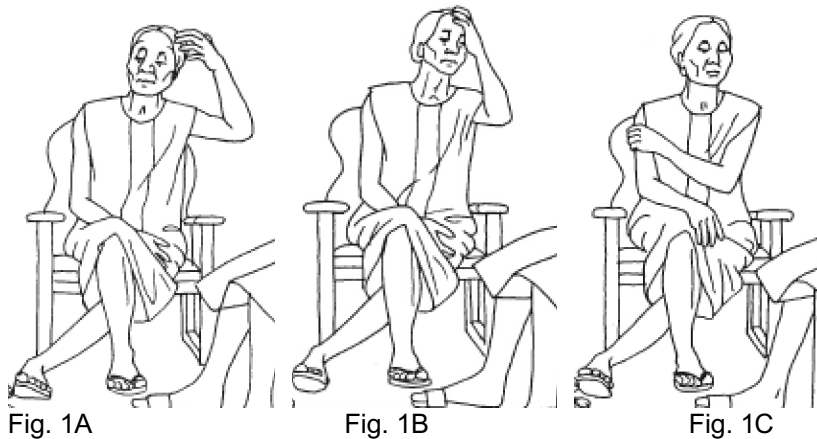
The following sequences are taken from video recordings of conversations in Germany and the Philippines, as well as programs of *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carsons. All data were recorded between 1987 and 1992 on VHS tape. My aim is to show how

seemingly 'private' actions become implicated in the *interaction order* (Goffman 1983) whenever they are conducted in the presence of others.

3. Cooperative Self-Touch Sequences

I begin with two characteristic self-touching actions as performed by an individual person, disregarding for now the interactional context in which these acts occur. These are taken from a conversation among three women in the Philippines, to which I will return at the end. Both are manual actions directed towards a part of one's body or the clothing covering it, seemingly taking care of self-care needs. In 1A, a woman 'combs' herself, in 1B, she strokes her forehead, and in 1C she adjusts her dress.

Extract 1: Actions involving self-touch



Ekman & Friesen noted about 'self-adaptors':

Generally self-adaptors receive little external feedback; other people don't directly comment on them, and rarely wish to be caught looking at them. If we notice someone engaged in a self-adaptor, we will look away, and pretend it is not occurring. Rudeness resides just as much in the person who continues to observe a self-adaptor as in the person who engages in the behavior (Ekman & Friesen 1969: 69).

I will revisit their claims at the end of the paper when I return to extract 1.

It can often be observed that two or more conversation participants engage in such self-adaptors at the same time or in close succession. In extract 2, Johnny Carson's hand reaches for his tie as if to adjust it, and his guest joins him in the action. ('•' marks a point in the interaction when the screenshots were taken that are represented in figures.

Extract 2: Simultaneous self-touch

- [loud laughter]
1 G Yea:h I got a list of the campaign • ribbons
2 C [A high complement indeed.
3 C You better.



It is tempting to attribute such acts of 'motor mimicry' (Bavelas et al.1986) to an autonomic internal mechanism such as 'mirror neurons' that cause one person to imitate the other. But self-touch is of course not copied by interaction partners every time; the occurrence of return self-touch is, as we commonly say, 'context-dependent'. Motor mimicry, such as also occurs when we track the motions of boxers on television with our own bodies or recoil from a monster like the hero on the movie screen, 'has been conceptualized as primitive empathy, ... as an expression of vicarious emotion, and as a manifestation of ... empathic ability' (Bavelas et al. 1986: 322).

The explanation is placed 'inside' the individual, with the social environment secondary at most; ... the overt reaction is seen as an incidental by-product of the primary intrapersonal event (Bavelas et al. 1986: 322).

But Bavelas et al. observed in their studies that the production of motor mimicry is contingent on the visibility of the action to the person whose action or affect are imitated. “The pattern and timing of ... motor mimicry were significantly affected by the visual availability of [the addressee]’ (ibid.).

Thus, *pace* Ekman & Friesen, rather than being disattended, self-adaptors are not only attended but often do indeed ‘receive [a, J.S] little external feedback’, a response action of the same kind (tie-adjustment, facial touch); the interlocutors are not ‘pretending ... it is not occurring’ (ibid.). Goffman (1974) introduced the term *disattend track* ... in which ... there is ‘a stream of signs which is itself excluded from the content of the activity but which serves as a means of regulating it” (Kendon 1988: 24). To the disattend track

are assigned a whole variety of actions that are not counted as playing a part in the interaction at all ... [and includes] various creature-comfort releases - scratching, certain kinds of postural adjustments, and so forth, that are, so to speak allowable deviations from the behavioral discipline which all participants in co-presence follow (Kendon 1988: 24).

But, as Kendon emphasizes and

as Goffman himself makes clear, and ... a moment's reflection will remind us, it is, of course, not that the actions treated as being in the ‘disattend track’ are not recognized and are not responded to by participants. On the contrary, they may be shown in many situations to play a major role in the interactive process. It is by way of actions that are mutually treated as being in the ‘disattend track’, for example, that participants in a conversational encounter may negotiate an agreement about when to end it (ibid.)²

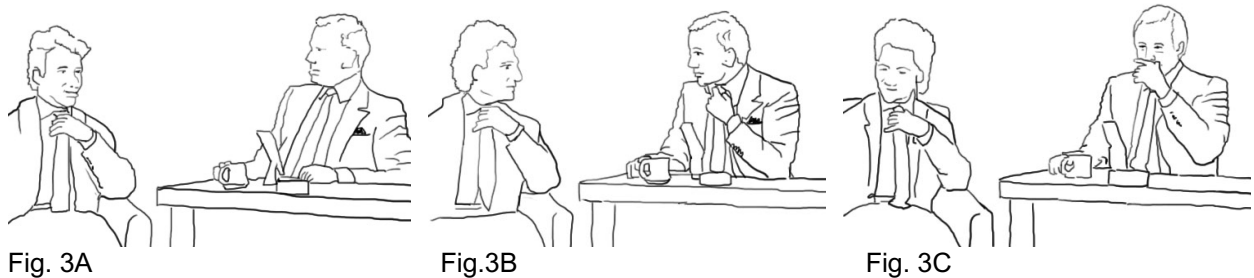
This is exactly what happens in extract 3, from the *Tonight Show*. The guest adjusts his tie as he is looking away from Johnny Carson and then turns his gaze to him. At this moment Carson replicates the action as he leans toward the guest. Then they

² Note that these phenomena are different from *body torque*, as described by Schegloff (1998) during which the separate positioning of the lower and upper body result from the person’s participation in two focused interactions, one of which, sustained by the lower body, is temporarily put on hold.

simultaneously turn away from one another, and Carson's hand moves on to another self-touching action: his index finger wipes across his upper lip, as he appears to focus his gaze on someone. When they next turn to one another, Carson tells the guest that it was good seeing him, and the segment ends.

Extract 3: Collaborative self-touch before a conversation ends

- 1 C What's up next?
- 2 G I'm starting a bowling league.
(3.5 sec laughter)
- 3 C Well, stay out of the Valley
- 4 they're tough out here.
- 5 G I understand that.=
- 6 C =Good to see you



In the following extract, Carson covers his mouth with his left hand as he asks his guest a question and then lowers the hand. The guest (Bill Maher), as he begins his answer turn, responds with a perfectly congruent action, covering his mouth with his left hand as he begins his answer, and then begins a gesture. But Carson interrupts him with a follow-up question and the guest's hand returns to his mouth, this time closed to a fist. In almost perfect synchrony with this movement, Carson's right hand moves to his mouth, the index finger touching it, the other fingers closed in on themselves.

Extract 4: Copied and coordinated facial touch

- 1 C ... it was a pretty stressful situation for you
2 G Oh yeah
3 C Just tuh- ()
4 G There's meetings on this stuff
5 C I know • that uhmm
6 So: uhh how do you know what to do
7 for uhm- ()
8 G We:ll uh- let's • see
9 the show is ()
10 C You don't have any chance to-
11 to try it out, do • you?
12 G (muffled) Well, I'm trying to do what I do here



Fig. 4A



Fig. 4B



Fig. 4C

Returning self-touch can thus be regarded as an *engagement display*: during transitional moments, a series of quasi-practical manual acts, carried out in the 'disattend track' is performed simultaneously or turn by turn by the parties. These moments unfold through sequential interaction. Collaborative self-touch, thus, does not simply happen, it happens when a self-touching action by one party is joined, or replicated in the next turn, by the other party. Mutual attention is thus secured and displayed by actions that are neither within the 'official' focus of the conversation nor contribute to its social organization in the way that, for example, gaze-shifts or pragmatic gestures (Streeck 2013a) do. It is clearly not the case that the parties in these examples experience

certain physiological needs at the same time and respond to them in the same natural manner. Rather, these actions are available at any time and can be recognized at any time, and the performance of a self-touching action by one party simply creates an opportunity for alignment for the other, and when this opportunity is taken, then the taking of the opportunity itself may move the interaction forward in an indefinite, yet consensual manner.

Structurally, these 'self-adaptor' sequences share a format with other kinds of practical, non-focal actions that may serve individual needs but are carried out in collaboration with others, for example drinking. Sequence 5 is one example. Two men, L(ef) and R(ight), are immersed in a metaphysical conversation about consciousness and how it changes on mind-altering drugs. The man on the right is coming to the possible end of a very extended turn and reaches for and raises his coffee cup, but stops the movement to the mouth half-way and sets the cup down again, as he adds further components to his turn. Now his interlocutor reaches for his cup and he joins him, and they drink in synchrony before the interlocutor takes the turn.

Extract 5: Collaborative drinking

- 1 R Ah sobald ich irgendwie unruhig werde
Ha, as soon as I get restless somehow
- 2 oft schon nicht mehr schlafen kann eigentlich
and often can't really fall asleep
- 3 aber auch mich nicht mehr konzentriern kann
and can't concentrate anymore either
- 4 L [Mh mhhh
 Mh mhhh
- 5 fang ich an- wird mir mein Körper zu viel
I start- my body get's to be too much
- 6 R also dann dann stolper ich auf meine- über meine eigenen Beine
well then I stumble on- over my own legs
- 7 L [Mhhh
 Mhh
- 8 Ja (- - - - -) das sind so oft so:: Stresssituationen
Yeah those are often like stress situations
- (- - - - - • - - - - -)
- 9 C Ah nich mal unbedingt, ei•gentlich
Ah not necessarily really
- (1.8)
- 10 L Na vielleicht mach in fa•lschen Vergleich
Well maybe I'm making the wrong comparison
- (- - -)
- 11 L Is einer meiner Lieblings•sporte
is one of my favorite 'sporte'
- (- - -)
- 12 L Sports
sports
- (0.8)
- 13 R Und wieso was meinst du mit mit uhh- Stresssituationen.
And why what do you mean by stress situations.

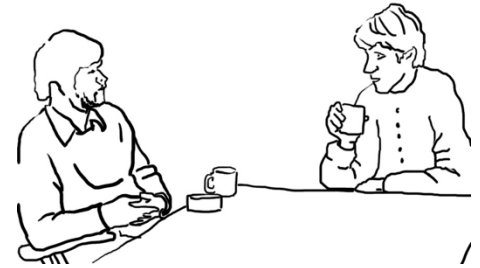


Fig. 5A

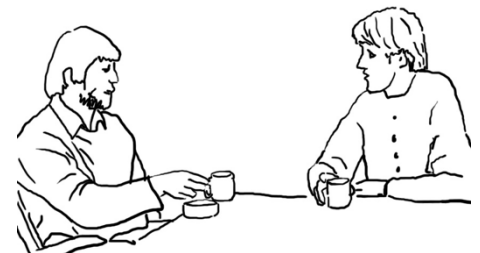


Fig. 5B



Fig. 5C

Similar sequences, consisting of a pre-enactment (a partial or abandoned action; Kendon 1973) followed by a joint enactment, have been described for a variety of other

actions (Streeck 1995). It is worth noting that all of the sequences in this paper occur during moments when some sense of agreement between the parties—about the content of a statement, an attitude, the trajectory of the interaction—is also displayed in other ways, in the first place, of course, talk itself.

In extract 6, Johnny Carson and his guest are laughing together about a funny turn in the conversation, an insider reference to ‘cheese pops’, which appears to also be mildly embarrassing to the guest. But here, only one party performs self-touch, and the contextual effects of the act are quite different. In Figure 6A, Carson’s guest, whose left arm rests on the talk-show host’s desk, is seen pointing his index-finger at Carson and moving into Carson’s territory. Carson responds with a palm-down gesture, but this gesture is aimed directly at the guest’s pointing hand, which is retracted at once (6B). The guest turns away from Carson as his hand moves to his nose and rubs it (6C). Carson says, ‘I’m sorry I had to bring that up’.

Extract 6: Self-adaptor during a corrective interchange

- 1 C Did they serve champagne and caviar?
2 G It wuz- it was a- cheese puffs.
3 C Oh a cheese plate, a cheese plate
4 G [] heh heh
5 Che•ese puffs
6 C I wish • yo- cheese p•uffs
7 I'm sorry I had to bring that up Paul.



Fig. 6A



Fig. 6B



Fig. 6C

It is not uncommon that manual acts that begin as gestures but are stopped mid-course (for example, when the speaker is being interrupted), are then converted into a different kind of action, often an act of self-touch (Lerner & Raymond 2017). These conversions are corrective acts: an action that loses its context—such as a gesture for which there is no longer a turn—is transformed into a contextually appropriate one. Contexts in which no disattended self-grooming actions can be done are rare. According to Albert Scheflen (1972), self-adaptors can also correct contextually inappropriate or otherwise disturbing actions by others. He called these behaviors *monitors* and regarded them as ‘countermeasures’ against ‘nonprogrammable or nonallowable behaviors’ (Scheflen 1972: 104). ‘They serve ... to regulate or extinguish a deviancy and thus maintain the usual course of events’ (105). Examples he gave included mouth-covering, wiping of index fingers across the nostrils, self-grooming such as flicking away imaginary lint, and scratching one’s head (107-113). The contextual function of self-touching action should

accordingly transpire from the self-corrective actions that the targeted party takes. Seen from this perspective, the nose-rub performed by the guest could be responsive to, and corrective of, not only Carson's intrusion upon his turn and gesture (Fig.6B), but also what Carson is saying at the moment. Indeed, Carson apologizes: 'I'm sorry to bring that up'.

There is much evidence, then, that self-touching actions are not always disattended, but rather attended to, though not focused on, by others and in fact responded to in rather methodical fashion. Self-touch sequences can become part of the very fabric of the organization of the interaction and its progression from turn to turn. But while they may be tacitly (and subliminally) attended by others, they are very much disattended by their performers. In other words. Here We come here upon a basic problem in the description of embodied action: When we write 'the guest rubs his nose' and believe that we have established that the responds to, and corrects, Carson's act, we seem to imply that the act was also *meant* (by the doer) to do that. This in turn implies that the doer 'intends' to do it, it is a willful act, after all. When instead we try to align our description of the moment with the fact that the doer seems entirely unaware of what he is doing and write 'the guest's hand move to his nose and rubs it', we seem to attribute an independent intentionality to the hand. But this is a problem of the limits of our (English, Indo-European) language, which has no readily available construction to refer to the actions of a complex or *distributed* agent such as an embodied human being. Other languages such as ancient Greek have the 'middle voice' or similar categories applicable in this context (Kemmer 1993). The difficulty is to allow for the relative autonomy of the hands (the most 'agentive' body part), while recognizing that their actions are nevertheless implicated in communication and social organization. This is one version of body-mind unity: when its owner is inattentive, a human hand does not automatically lose its mind.

4. Self-touch relays

The last and more extended episode demonstrates this social organization of and by self-grooming actions with particular clarity, especially when we describe it as the product of independently acting and interacting (mutually responsive) hands. This episode occurred during the one-hour conversation between three Ilokano-speaking women in the Philippines and contains extract 1. The parties' names are (from left to right) Bato, Esmin, and Gallit. This sequence unfolds during a thematic transition in their conversation and begins with Bato, on the left, raising her left hand to her mouth, covering it, and coughing (7A). As she lowers her hand, Gallit's left hand rises (7B) and then moves to her blouse and adjusts it by the shoulder (7C). As she removes her hand, Esmin's left goes to her head and begins to vigorously comb her hair (7D). Simultaneously, Bato, seated to the left, raises her right hand in which she holds a leave, and begins to shake it, matching the rhythm of Esmin's combing motions (7E).

Extract 7.1: Self-touch relays



Fig. 7A

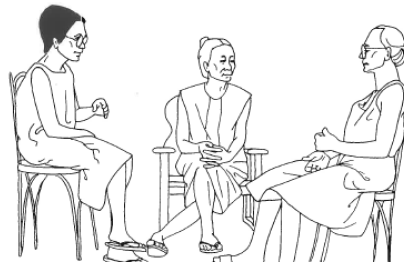


Fig. 7B



Fig. 7C



Fig. 7D



Fig. 7E

Esmin then shifts hands and combs herself with the right as Bato begins to raise her hand (with the leave in it, 7F) to her nose, a motion whose trajectory is almost matched by Esmin's left: having lowered her right, the left travels to her right shoulder and scratches it (7G). Thus, the relais ends in 'disattended' movements, performed in synchrony.

Extract 7.2: Movement synchrony



Fig. 7F

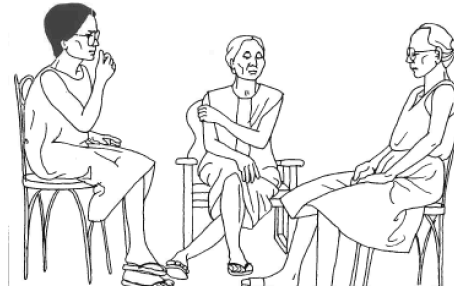


Fig. 7G

Thus, like a baton at a relays, self-touch travels around the circle, counterclockwise from Bato to Gallit to Esmin and back to Bato, after which the conversation resumes and a new topic is launched.

5. Conclusion

These snippets of social interaction show quite vividly that, if we want to fully explain embodied interaction and communication, we must be clear how the motions and actions of hands are coordinated, but also how they may to some extent do their work independently from one another. In order to participate in communication and interaction, the actions of our bodies do not all need to unfold under some mind's watch and control. Of course, our extremities do not have minds of their own to the extent that an octopus' tentacles do (Godfrey-Smith 2017), but as everyone knows, feet can tap, knees shake, and hands fidget without anyone making them do so. This relative

independence is simply part of the make-up of the human life-form. Similarly, once we have learned, each on our own, how to walk, we no longer need to tend to our feet to get from one place to another (and even while we are learning to walk, to keep our balance we must not attend to them, but focus on our destination).

To put it differently, these examples of 'cooperative self-touch', in which hands tend to self while face and mind attend to other, contradict the implicit or explicit guiding assumption of much work on embodied communication: that it is not the single body part, but the whole body that is implicated in a communicative action, the ongoing result of subtle processes of intra-organismic coordination. Yes, this is largely true and describes a great deal of focused face-to-face and side-by-side interaction, but there are occurrences of bodily action and interaction that this model does not capture and that are equally indicative of the make-up of the living and communicating human body. During such moments, our feet and more spectacularly our hands do 'their own thing', engage in actions that do not contribute anything to the focal interaction. These are what we often refer to as 'tacit' or 'background activities'. Human bodies can resonate with one another in multiple tacit ways, according to different rhythms, at different 'levels', and this is possible *because* of the relative autonomy of some of our body parts.

The scenes show, secondly, that the implicit model of the human body from which most researchers of social interaction continue to work and which I have elsewhere referred to as 'instrumentalism' (Streeck 2013b) is untenable. It is predicated on the unspoken supposition of a *homunculus* governing the motions of the body, its instrument. We need a model, methods, and descriptions that more accurately capture both the fullness of the living body, the *flesh*, and the many ways in which it is socialized.

This socialized nature even of actions that our hands carry out more or less unbeknownst to us, outside our own conscious awareness, also, finally, transpires in these scenes. For the self-touching actions that occur in them are all 'functional', 'instrumental' acts: a nose is rubbed, a tie adjusted, hair combed by fingers. In other

words, they are familiar to everyone as habitual, meaningful actions in the shared world. We also saw examples of return self-touch that were not replicas of the original action, as words such as 'mimicry' and 'imitation' suggest. Often, the return act is an act of the same *type*: (own-) cheek touch rather than nose touch; adjustment of hair rather than blouse; mouth covered by a fist rather than an open hand. In other words, an item from a class of familiar, habitualized cultural actions is responded to by another. This is, incidentally, also how the neural resonance mechanism operates that is known under the misnomer 'mirror neurons'. For, in rhesus monkeys (the subjects of the studies), mirror neurons 'fire' (the monkey's motor control system is activated) only when the monkey perceives an action with which it is familiar and which makes sense in its life-world. Unknown actions that the monkey sees leave mirror neurons cold. Mirror neurons are more like a lexicon of cultural actions than a mechanism by which one organism mirrors the movements of another (Jeannerod 2006). In other words, human hands understand one another tacitly and 'on their own', to the extent to which we inhabit the same world.

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