



Human sociality in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic: A systematic examination of change in greetings

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Abstract

Using multimodal conversation analysis this article examines embodied and tactile greetings in social interaction, documenting their change during the Covid-19 pandemic. Recognizing social interaction as foundational for human sociality, we consider greetings as a crucial normative, organizational, and ritual practice for mutually engaging in intersubjective action. Analyses use video recordings made in Switzerland (featuring (Swiss-)German and English as a lingua-franca), focusing on embodied greetings of acquainted people in public spaces at the age of Covid19—a historical moment in which physical proximity and contact are targeted by official measures restricting social interactions. Studying a range of tactile embodied greetings, the paper shows how they change from routine greetings to hesitated, suspended yet still completed ones, and to projected but resisted and refused ones. Furthermore, it reveals some ‘new’ practices of greeting (elbow/feetbumps, hugs-in-the-air) and their non-straightforward and accountable character, as well as how they sediment and normalize during the pandemic.

KEYWORDS

change, conversation analysis, Covid-19, embodiment, ethnomethodology, greetings, human sociality, pandemic, tactility, video

Résumé

Dans le cadre de l'analyse conversationnelle multimodale, cet article se penche sur les salutations incarnées et tactiles dans l'interaction sociale, pour en documenter les changements observables durant la pandémie de Covid-19. En reconnaissant que l'interaction sociale a un rôle fondateur pour la socialité humaine, nous considérons les salutations comme des pratiques normatives, organisationnelles, et rituelles cruciales pour s'engager mutuellement dans l'action intersubjective. Les analyses proposées reposent sur des enregistrements vidéo effectués en Suisse (langues impliquées: Allemand, Suisse-Allemand, Anglais lingua franca), documentant des salutations incarnées entre interconnaissances dans les espaces publics à l'ère de la Covid-19—un moment historique durant lequel la proximité physique et le contact corporel sont la cible de mesures officielles restreignant les interactions sociales. En étudiant une variété de salutations incarnées tactiles, cette étude montre comment elles changent, passant de salutations routinières à des salutations hésitantes, suspendues, tout en continuant à être complétées, aboutissant à des salutations projetées, mais faisant l'objet de résistance et de refus. Enfin, l'étude montre l'émergence de quelques "nouvelles" pratiques de salutations (avec les pieds, les coudes, et des embrassades en l'air), leur caractère initialement non-évident, puis progressivement sédimenté et normalisé au fil de la pandémie.

1 | INTRODUCTION

1.1 | Bodies in interaction in a context of pandemic

The Covid-19 constitutes a bio-social crisis in the sense that it does not only affect our health but also the fundamentals of our sociality. It impacts *physiological bodies*, more or less permeable to the virus, and raises epidemiological issues. It also, more radically, hits *bio-social bodies* (one could better say *socio-holobionts*, Margulis, 1991). This concept invites to consider that, by moving, interacting, and entering in contact, bodies constitute not just an environment for the virus, but the very *habitat* in which life *with* the virus is socially (re)organized – thus calling for a new *politics of life agents* (Latour, 2018). Pandemics work as a revelator of the multiple interfaces between bodies and sociality and the epidemiological, cultural, social consequences of how bodies behave, are treated, controlled, and disciplined within *dispositifs* of biopower (Foucault, 2008, p. 242ff; Latour, 1984). Our analysis considers that biopower mechanisms are observably achieved in situated activities, and that bodies'

discipline is visible in the details in which they act and interact: *dispositifs* are incarnated in ordinary responses to pandemics as they are accountably assembled – and seen as such – by people.

In this context, approaching social embodied interactions is key to understanding how the social and the biological are articulated together and how pandemics affect them. Considering that social interaction constitutes the foundation of human sociality, a multimodal conversation analytic approach can cast some light on the consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak for human sociality. This is the objective of the project *Human Sociality in the Age of Covid-19* launched at the University of Basel at the beginning of March 2020 in response to the emergent pandemic, aiming at video documenting its manifestations in social interaction and providing a systematic analysis of the changes it involves. This article presents some first results of the project. It focuses on a particular practice, greetings, and the way they quickly and radically changed at the very beginning of the Covid-19 crisis.

1.2 | Social interaction at the foundations of human sociality

Social interaction constitutes the natural habitat of human sociality, its condition of emergence, its fundamental ‘engine’ (Levinson, 2006). Social interaction is ‘the infrastructure for social institutions, the natural ecological niche for language, and the arena in which culture is enacted’ (Schegloff, 2006, p. 70). Interaction relies on and provides for the principles of turn-taking, sequencing, recipient-design, and trouble repairs that are the conditions for the intersubjective organization of social action.

Social interaction can be instantiated in different ways, but it is primordially co-present (vs. technologically mediated or virtual). However, sheer co-presence is not enough: co-present persons need to engage with each other to get into interaction, transiting from ‘unfocused’ to ‘focused interaction’ (Goffman, 1963). Goffman showed the crucial importance of how would-be-interactants engage together through the coordinated entry into a joint activity, establishing themselves as ratified co-participants. This is achieved through the methodic organization of openings.

1.3 | Openings and greetings

While Goffman (1963, 1971) explored different regimes of co-presence among which focused interaction is only one configuration, research in conversation analysis has been crucial in showing the systematic way in which openings are organized and consequential for the entire subsequent interaction (Schegloff, 1968, 1986). In particular, openings achieve mutual availability, reciprocal identification of the interlocutors, the (re)establishment of their social relationship, a common understanding of the context, mutual commitment and trust, enabling a coordinated entry into a common activity. Thus, openings secure intersubjectivity while launching the concerted unfolding of a common engagement (for a review, see Pillet-Shore, 2018). For this reason, the methodic organization of openings is crucial. Schegloff (1968, 1986) details how the successive sequences of summons, identifications, greetings and how-are-you-inquiries are deployed, how possible troubles affecting them (e.g. for the identification of the participants, 1979) are repaired, before the participants actually engage in the reason for the encounter and the first topic.

Greetings are part of this systematic organization of openings. Although seamlessly mundane, banal, and minimal, they manifest that the approach of/to the other projects a more sustained common engagement and that the other is recognized and categorized as a possible partner for future interaction (vs. a hostile person, an aggressor) – that the other is trusted as an imminent co-participant (Duranti, 1997). Thus, greetings are fundamental for organizational reasons (coordinated, well-tuned,

reciprocal engagement), social reasons (recognition, display of the type of relationship the participants entertain), and normative reasons (mutual trust).

Greetings have attracted attention from different fields – such as ethnography of communication, linguistic anthropology, and conversation analysis. The linguistic form of greetings and their variations have been described extensively, pointing at issues of formality versus informality across cultures (Irvine, 1974). Embodied greetings have been much less studied and in a less detailed way – despite early work on the spatiality of social interaction (Birdwhistell, 1970; Kendon & Ferber, 1973; Scheflen & Scheflen, 1972). The sequentiality of greetings has been recognized as fundamental for the accomplishment of their reciprocity. They are organized in one or more sequences, with first parts projecting second parts, making the second normatively expectable. Consequently, the absence of responsive greetings can be observably noticed and treated as such (Schegloff, 1986).

Greetings have been discussed as implying perceptual and sensorial dimensions: sighting putative prospective co-participants is fundamental for their identification and recognition, occasioning distant greetings – such as waving hands, head tosses/bows, eyebrow flashes (Kendon & Ferber, 1973) – before the interactants come closer for more proximal, possibly haptic, greetings – such as hugs, handshakes, or kisses (Goodwin, 2017b). This shows the centrality of embodied movements in face-to-face openings (De Stefani & Mondada, 2018), the progressive converging, stepping and coming closer of the participants, emergently designing the interactional space of the encounter (Mondada, 2009).

While universality (Duranti, 1997) and variability of greetings in diverse cultures have been discussed in early studies (Basso, 1970; Duranti, 1992; Irvine, 1974), change of greetings across time is largely under-studied. Exceptions are provided by studies of greetings interested in urban change and migration (Heller, 1978 about changes in multilingual Montréal; Migge, 2005 about the effects of urban displacement in Suriname and French Guiana), in generational change (Ndlovu, 2018 about youth innovations in South Africa); and in historical change (Morgan, 2015 about how historical changes in post-apartheid South-Africa impacted greetings – becoming both a challenge and an occasion to experiment new ways of engaging with others in an evolving social and racial context). These studies point at the relevance of greetings regarding generational and historical change; however, they often rely on ethnographic observations rather than on recordings of ordinarily occurring interactions, and do not offer any systematic analysis of embodied greeting trajectories.

A unique aspect of the present study is that it addresses change amid an ongoing pandemic, by focusing on greetings in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. This historical moment is characterized by authorities imposing measures of physical distancing (misleadingly called ‘social distancing’) to contain the spread of the virus, and by citizens orienting both to epidemiological risks and these instructions, and altering their social embodied conduct. As a consequence, greeting practices are both accompanying, indexing, and accomplishing a historical change that affects social bodies as *socio-holobionts* in interaction.

2 | DATA, METHODOLOGY, AND OBJECTIVES

We present here the initial findings of the project *Human Sociality in the Age of Covid-19: How people (dis)engage in social interaction*, initiated at the University of Basel at the beginning of March 2020 (PI: Mondada, team members: the co-authors of this paper – see <https://www.lorenzamondada.net/humansociality-covid19>). The project aims at providing a systematic study of embodied social interactions across various phases of the Covid-19 crisis, with a special focus on how people adjust and change their embodied conduct, orienting to risks of contagion and precautions in a pandemic context.

For so doing, we draw on ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007), and in particular multimodal analyses of naturalistic video-recorded

data (Goodwin, 2017a; Mondada, 2018a). This approach focuses on the organization of joint action and its public accountability as the building blocks of human sociality, language, and social identity. Its emic view includes how actions are produced and interpreted in situ, as well as how they are accountably made intelligible and legitimate (Garfinkel, 1967; Robinson, 2016; Schegloff, 2007). This is particularly relevant for the study of social change, which we demonstrate in the situated conducts of participants who orient to change as such.

Within the project *Human Sociality*, video recordings of everyday social interactions – at the university, in public spaces, shops, markets, and parks – have been produced since the beginning of March 2020 in Basel, a German-speaking cosmopolitan city in Switzerland. At the end of May 2020, the total amount of collected data was 60 hr and is still being expanded. Recordings have been made with the participants' informed consent, by adapting the procedure of contact and consent with the participants to the pandemic situation (keeping distances, informing verbally and with visible signs, but avoiding exchanging documents and pens). In this paper, we examine data collected at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak in Switzerland, ranging from the beginning of March when the first public measures restricting embodied contacts were issued, to Mid-March when public buildings were closed (from 16.03.2020 on), to the early lockdown phase. These data documenting the *early* Covid-19 outbreak are unique: they vividly show the first prodromes of change in embodied interactional practices.

The Covid-19 pandemic occasions a radical change in greetings, with numerous people orienting to the risks of infection and/or instructions issued by health authorities, injunctioning to maintain distance and avoid physical contact and touch. These have been abundantly evoked during the lockdown phase of the pandemics in informal observations and autobiographical narratives, as well as on the basis of the press, exhibiting variations of greetings among political leaders (Katila, Gan, & Marjorie, 2020). But it has not produced yet any systematic study based on naturalistic research data collected during the initial months of the pandemics.. A systematic study based on video addresses several questions: What happens to routine greetings in this context? What happens to proximal haptic greetings? How is social-affective proximity, and other social relationships, realized in a context in which distance is endogenously or exogenously imposed? How are openings achieved then? What does change say about sociality during a pandemic? Observing how the engagement of participants in greetings was perturbed at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, this paper reveals the central relevance of greetings – as manifesting reciprocity, mutual engagement, a shared definition of the context, trust, etc. – raising several questions when their routine character is not available/possible anymore and new solutions have to be negotiated in situ.

The analyses start with 'routine' tactile greetings, typical of the pre-Covid-19 era, with a particular focus on hugs (§ 3). As the crisis is incipient, people still use hugs, but in a distinctive way, displaying that they are not straightforward anymore and that they have to be renegotiated (§ 4). Finally, hugs are rejected (§ 5). This raises the question of how people find alternatives to routine greetings in situ (§ 6–7). Some alternatives emerge, such as elbow- and feet-bumps, which are not new in themselves (the elbow-bump was frequent during the SARS outbreak in 2006, see McNeil, 2006) but are treated as such. These new forms sediment too, quickly becoming unnoticed (§ 8). The paper shows how Covid-19 penetrates the routines of human sociality, by tracing the trajectories of change-in-the-making of an ordinary practice. It reconstructs these trajectories as they happen moment-by-moment: although the dates at which the recorded occurrences matter, historical change is addressed as it is oriented to by the participants in the choices they make locally in designing their actions. This means that historical change is conceived in relation to the sequential and multimodal options that emerge as possible for the participants, rather than in relation to a linear chronological unfolding of dates.

The analyses treat what happens during the Covid-19 crisis as a *natural breaching experiment* (Garfinkel, 1967). Greeting is a typical example of social routine, which is generally done without being noticed. The Covid-19 pandemic throws the greeters and their practices of greeting into crisis.

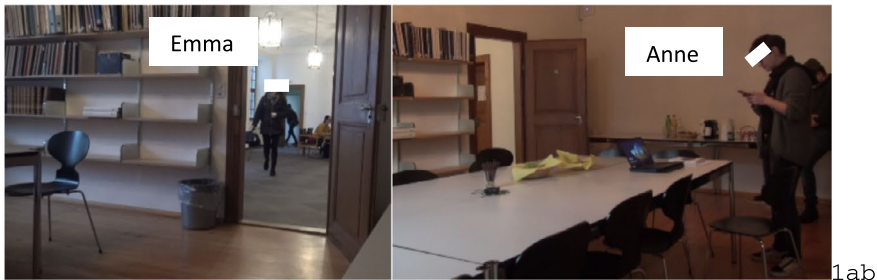
The routine greetings are suspended and abandoned – and participants orient to this as (a) occasioning a negotiation of what to do instead, (b) raising problems of accountability (not engaging in embodied greetings needs to be accounted for), generating explicit accounts, (c) accompanying alternative practices with formulations and/or laughter – as forms of topicalization that revise the taken-for-granted character of background assumptions (Schutz, 1962, p. 74). A breaching experiment is a violation of background expectancies, which, in turn, shows how participants deal with them, for example responding with puzzlement, confusion, or bewilderment; this reveals what these seen-but-unnoticed norms consist of and how they work as grounds for acting and interpreting actions (Garfinkel, 1967, pp. 42–53). The *breaching* is observable at different levels, concerning how people engage in mutual action, how they make sense of what we/others do, and how they display that this is not ordinary. In this sense, the paper contributes to the study of socio-historical change within an ethnomethodological and conversation analytic perspective – contributing to a project that has not yet been really pursued in this field (but see Clayman, Elliott, Heritage, & McDonald, 2006; Lynch & Bogen, 1996; Mondada, 2018b).

3 | ROUTINE GREETINGS: HAPTIC SOCIALITY

Routine greetings often relate to *haptic sociality* (Goodwin, 2017b), achieved through reciprocal stepping toward each other, spatial proximity, and interpersonal *touch* – in informal settings (hugging) as well as in formal settings (handshaking). This is observable in the extract below, showing the routinized organization of a hug greeting, how it was still common at the very beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak. Two peers (Emma and Anne) greet each other with a hug as they arrive at an academic meeting at the university.

Extract 1 (C19310_uni_writing_00.10.23)

1 % (3.2) ◊ # (2.6)
 emm %walks to the meeting room->
 ann ◊moves towards door->
 fig #fig.1ab



2 ANN çha%Δ:[l1#o emma: oco#mo esta]%;s
 hel[llo emma how are you
 3 EMM [hallo hallo (wie) xx]
 [hello hello (how) xx]
 emm çsmiles->>
 emm ->%slows down-----%
 ann Δopens arms->
 emm oopens arms->
 fig #fig.2ab #fig.3ab
 4 ANN que ta◊Δo#:#:1? (.) [hah hah hah]Δo.hah
 what's up hah hah hah .hah

- 5 **EMM** [good and you]
 ann ->◇
 ann ->Δhugs EMM-----Δloosens hug->>
 emm ->◊hugs ANN-----◊loosens hug->>
 fig #fig.4ab
- 6 **ANN** **muy bien**
very good



2ab



3ab



4ab

Anne, the host of the meeting, is busy with her phone when Emma arrives, but manifestly orients to the sound of steps as projecting someone coming, making relevant greeting, as she moves to the door (1, Figures 1ab from two different camera perspectives). As they display mutual recognition by smiling and exchanging verbal greetings and address terms (2–3), Anne starts lifting her arms, still walking toward Emma, projecting to hug (2, Figures 2ab). Emma aligns with the projection, also lifting her arms while slowing down her pace of walk (3, Figures 3ab) and they eventually engage in hugging during the how-are-you sequence (4–6, Figures 4ab).

While they exchange verbal greetings and manifest mutual recognition, both participants orient to the relevance and imminence of haptic greetings. This relevance is established early on through the initiation of embodied trajectories (walking toward each other and opening the arms), which project a specific form of haptic contact (hugging). This also includes normative expectations – to which they respond by mutually aligning with each other. By hugging and reciprocating hugging as a routine practice, the participants orient to, and reflexively establish, this as part of the normative order of doing greeting. By so doing, they retrospectively and prospectively embody the closeness of their social relation.

Routine greetings – like hugs – were typical of the pre-Covid-19 era, and usual at the very beginning of the outbreak, when people were still engaging in haptic bodily contacts without observably orienting to the epidemic. By contrast, persons orienting to the outbreak observably display increasing difficulties in deciding whether and how to engage in hugging and other haptic contact(s) when greeting each other.

4 | HUGS PROJECTED, SUSPENDED, AND FINALLY COMPLETED

With the beginning of the crisis, hugs become increasingly non-straightforward. This is visible in the participants' hesitations, suspensions, and momentary withdrawals before finally engaging in hugging. This section examines how, unlike routine hugs, the trajectory of an initiated hug may not proceed in a smooth way but rather be momentarily discontinued and suspended.

The next extract was recorded at the university during the last week that classes were held in-person. A student (Eva) walks along a corridor, joining two peers (Rick and Sophie) waiting in front of the lecture room before class.

Extract 2 (C19310_uni-corridor18_00.11.02)

1 EVA ha#llo=
hello
fig #fig.5

2 RIC =salut=
hello

3 SOP =aA:: (eva) hall[o:]
oh (Eva) hell[o

4 EVA? [°ça] va?°=
[what's up

5 SOP =eh haH

6 (0.3)

7 SOP .hah~Δ hah wi[e ma:χst dAu ein]==
ho[w do you do a-

8 EVA [u m a: r# m u n g] [oder ni~Δ#cht=
[hugging] [or not

9 SOP [ah-
eva ~moves twd SOP, opens arms, shakes head~stops->
sop Δsteps fwd, raises armΔretracts arm----Δshrugs, leans fwd->
fig #fig.6ab #fig.7



10 SOP #=[eh-~

11 RIC =[hah hah hah j[ah hah]=
Δ[(sa:lut)]=

12 EVA (hi)
eva -->~hugs SOP->
sop -->Δhugs EVA->
fig #fig.8



13 SOP Δ=sa#li hal~lo Δ ((inaudible)) hah hah
sop ΔAstrokes EVA's backΔlooses hug, steps back, crosses arms->>
eva ~loosens hug->>
fig #fig.9

While approaching Rick and Sophie, Eva engages in verbal greetings at a distance (1, Figure 5), which they reciprocate (2, 3). Both Eva and Sophie verbally question what to do next and how to do it, as they publicly display the relevance of pursuing the greeting sequence. Whereas they formulate the dilemma (7, 8), they also initiate, both at the same time, embodied trajectories projecting hugging in a finely coordinated way, stepping toward each other, and raising their arms (Figures 6ab, same view from two camera perspectives; cf. Extract 1). However, in addition to the verbally formulated dilemma, they manifest an embodied hesitation, as Sophie retracts her arm and produces a cut-off exclamation (9). Eva manifestly understands this as projecting to suspend the hug and aligns with her by suspending her own hugging trajectory (8, Figure 7). It is noticeable that the embodied projection to hug is straightforward in the first place, and its suspension is prompted by the emergent verbal hesitation(s). However, Sophie apparently treats Eva's short delay in suspending her movement as not aligning with her own suspension, and re-engages (Figure 8), projecting to hug by shrugging and leaning forward again. This, in turn, prompts Eva to resume the hug, which eventually results in mutual tactile engagement, co-occurring with additional verbal greetings (12, 13, Figure 9).

The extract shows how the practical problem of establishing mutual recognition, coordination, and the shared relevance of embodied greetings is negotiated moment-by-moment, and achieved through the monitoring of and the alignment with the projectability of the participants' respective initiations, suspensions, and pursues of linguistic and embodied trajectories. The hesitations (7–9) index and establish the emerging issue of maintaining social order when its organization is suddenly called into question, which makes alternative formats relevant and prompts dilemmas concerning how to choose among several options.

A similar trajectory of a hug is observable in the following case. Two friends, Mia and Nelly, meet in a café. Mia has been there for some time, waiting for Nelly.

Extract 3. (C19314_cafe_mi_00.13.08)

```

1          *(4.2) Ω (3.1) Ω (0.1)
  nel      >>>approaches->
  mia      *looks up, smiles->>
  mia      Ω . . . . Ω stands up->
2  MIA     .h ha(h)llø#o
          .h hello
  mia      ølifts arms->
          #fig.10

```



10

```

3          (0.5)
4  MIA     h†huΔ h[m]

```

- 5 **NEL** [**>ich weiss nit** Ωö#bb mir uns< d†örøfe umΩarme#
[i don't know if we are allowed to hug
 nel >†abruptly slows down-----†stands still->
 nel Δopens arms, hold->
 mia ->Ωsteps fwd-----Ω
 mia ->ø...->
 fig #fig.11 fig.12#
- 6 **MIA** Δ=nø d(h)ø#ch:
 =n- yes
 nel Δleans into hug->
 mia ->øputs arms around nel, pulling her closer->
 fig #fig.13
- 7 (0.1)ø(0.1)
 mia ->øhugs nel->
- 8 **NEL** huh heh hhh (.)Δ .H
 nel ->Δhugs mia->
- 9 **MIA** (h)a(h)llo#
 hello
 fig #fig.14
- 10 **NEL** hhuhΔ (0.2)ø(0.1) .HH[H
 [
 [†hh
- 11 **MIA** ->Δloosens hug->>
 nel ->†walks to chair->>
 nel ->øloosens hug->>
 mia
- 12 **NEL** sött me nit im öffentliche ruum
we aren't supposed to in public space



When Nelly enters the café and walks toward Mia's table, Mia looks up and smiles, doing pre-greeting at a distance (1), before the verbal greeting 'hello', before standing up and opening her arms, projecting to hug (2, Figure 10). Instead of reciprocating the greeting, Nelly abruptly slows down her pace (4) while opening her arms and, like in the previous extract, formulates a doubt, whether it is permitted to hug, displaying hesitation whether to align with the projected hug or not (5, Figures 11, 12). The prospective account for not hugging, formulated through the modal verb 'dürfen'/'to be allowed', explicitly refers to external and morally laden restrictions.

The ambiguous (non)alignment with the projected hug prompts Mia to adjust her trajectory: rather than engaging in a straightforward hug, she steps closer to Nelly and puts her arms around her, pulling her closer, while countering Nelly's hesitation with the assertive particle 'doch' (6). It is only as Mia observably pursues the projection of hugging that Nelly eventually aligns (6, Figure 13) and they both engage in mutual hugging (7–11, Figure 14). Whereas Mia produces another verbal greeting (9, cf. Extracts 1, 2), Nelly produces some laughter (8) and an additional comment explicitly referring to imposed restrictions about social behavior in public space (12).

The sequential organization of the eventually accomplished hug demonstrates the situated negotiations the participants engage in when suddenly facing the issue of how to greet during the Covid-19 outbreak. Their practical dilemma is not only observable in the verbalizations and Nelly's stopping

and suspending movements but also in the fine adjustments Mia undertakes to accomplish her projected hug.

The hugging sequences examined in this section illustrate the emerging practical problem the participants face as they engage in a greeting sequence that makes haptic contact relevant. The hesitations and references to external contingencies and normativities in form of morally laden restrictions and the fine-tuned embodied negotiations of whether to hug or not all display the accountability of calling a routine practice into question and diverging from the normative order. This also points at the problem participants have of limiting routine haptic greetings while ensuring the stability of their social relations. Moreover, this shows the problem of living with the virus and the issue of dealing with change as it happens, in a context in which restrictions, injunctions, and instructions are oriented to as imposing a change of conducts. The observable dilemma of the interactants, displayed in their formulations and step-by-step negotiations, exhibits the non-ordinary aspect of rendering how-to-greet noticeable.

5 | HUGS/TOUCH PRE-EMPTED AND REFUSED

While the projected hugs in the previous section were eventually completed, we now turn to early projections and anticipations of haptic greetings that are refused or plainly avoided. In the next extract, five members of an association for elderly care in a local community are attending a regular meeting. Two days earlier, the Swiss federal authorities decreed tougher prevention measures, mandating the closure of restaurants, shops, and schools. We join the action as Martina and Bernadette exchange initial verbal greetings from a distance. As Bernadette enters the room, both sight each other (Figure 15) – while the others (Rebekka and Therese) stay in the back of the room.

Extract 4. (C19318_meeting_association_00.13.49)

```

1          *(1.8) #
  ber      >>disinfects her hands---->(line 12)
  mar      *looks to BER, smiles----->(line 13)
  fig      #fig.15

```



15

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2  MAR      hallo [hallo
          hello hello
3  BER      [hallo:Δ< mitenand
          [hello: everybody
          ber      Δenters room->
          ber      <looks to MAR->
4  MAR      %hall%o hall[o:#
          hello hell[o:
          mar      %...%waves hands->
          fig      #fig.16
5  REB      [ho:i <%berna%detto=
          [hi: bernadette
          ber      -><looks to REB and THE->
          mar      ->%,,,,%clasps hands->>

```



```

6 BER =wi Δgahts ⟨euch⟩
      how are you guys
      ber ->Δstops, stands still->>
      ber ->⟨...⟨looks to MAR->

7 (.)
8 MAR jaja
      yesyes
9 (0.3)
10 BER guät
      good
11 (0.3)
12 REB ǫguä#tǫ
      good
      ber ǫ.....ǫopens hands->
      fig #fig.17
13 ǫ*(0.6)ǫ*
      ǫ,,,,,ǫclasps hands, continues to rub hand sanitizer->>
      mar >*-nods-*
14 THE ʰhe|heʰ=
15 BER [abstanǫd hä=
      [distance right
      ->⟨...->

16 MAR =wieǫs muess-. abstand. genau.=
      =as it should-. distance exactly=
      ber ->⟨looks to REB and THE->>
17 BER =ja
      yes
  
```

Staying in front of the open door, Martina visibly monitors Bernadette arriving and smiling at her (1, Figure 15). As Bernadette enters, Martina produces a verbal greeting (2), which Bernadette reciprocates while including also Rebekka and Therese (who stand in the back of the room, not visible on the camera frame), establishing a common interactional space between all of them (3) (Mondada, 2009). Compared to the previous extracts, Martina, keeping her arms close to her body, does not initiate any movement toward Bernadette. Instead, she utters a second greeting and waves both hands as Bernadette steps in (4, Figure 16). This gesture not only bodily greets at a distance but also pre-empts and prospectively stops/replaces a possible tactile greeting. As Rebekka produces a verbal greeting (5), Martina clasps her hands again (5) and Bernadette proceeds with a ‘how-are-you’, using the plural form of the pronoun (‘euch’) addressing all the participants while stopping her trajectory (6). She stands still, keeping physical distance to the other participants. As Rebekka responds to the ‘how-are-you’, Bernadette opens her hands, palms facing upwards, and – shortly thereafter – clasps them again (12–13, Figure 17). The gesture is followed by Bernadette’s account ‘abstand hä’/‘distance huh’ (15). This constitutes an explicit expression recurrent in prevention discourses, retrospectively indexing the tactile greetings as noticeably absent. Interestingly, Therese treats Bernadette’s hand gesture as a laughable even *before* the verbal noticing (14), and Martina confirms in latching as she repeats the term ‘abstand’ (16; the expression ‘wies muess’/‘as it should’ does specifically not refer to a normative obligation, but is a routine response in Swiss German to a ‘how-are-you’, indicating that things are as the situation requires them to be).

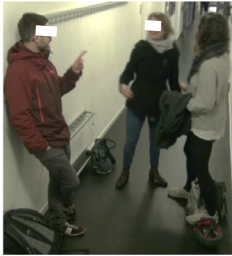
At the very beginning of the pandemic, we find persons hugging and persons refusing to be hugged in the same context. The next extract shows that projected haptic greetings are not just pre-empted by gestures rendering the participant(s) unavailable for them but also plainly rejected. The extract occurs

just after Eva and Sophie have hugged while accounting for the slight hesitation (Extract 2 above). Now, Sophie turns to Rick, projecting to greet him, but he pre-empts the hug, tutting (14).

Extract 5. (C19310_uni-corridor18_00.11.02) (continuation of Extract 2)

```

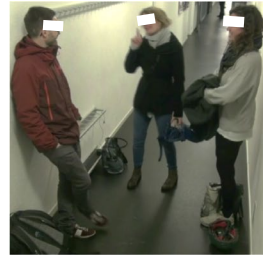
13 SOP      =sali hal~lo,ΔΩ((inau[dible))Ω] [hah hah ]
14 RIC      [tti [tti] [tti~# tti #tti] Ωtti]
15 EVA      [.hah ha]h he]~h
eva        ~looses hug, turns to RIC---~raises arm-----~
sop        Δlooses hug, steps back, crosses arms-->
ric        Ω.....Ω'no' gest w stretched indexΩ,,,->
fig        #fig.18#fig.19
    
```



18



19



20

```

16 RIC      ~hah hahΩ# hah [hah hah~ hah] °hah°~
17 EVA      [hah hah hah]
eva        ~steps to side,raises index~lowers arm, shrugs~
ric        ->Ω
fig        #fig.20
    
```

As Sophie and Eva loosen their hug, Eva turns to Rick (13). He manifestly understands this as projecting a hug and resists through a multimodal refusal, formatted with repeated click sounds and *no*-gestures made with his index (14, Figures 18, 19). Whereas Eva in the first place pursues her initiated projection to hug by raising her arm (Figure 19), Rick's prospective refusal prompts her to step to the side and align with him by repeating his *no*-gesture and joining his laughter (16, 17, Figure 20), before ultimately abandoning the projected hug (she lowers her arm and shrugs, 17). In this way, she displays her understanding of Rick's refusal as serious in spite of being constructed as a laughable.

In fact, Rick's anticipation and refusal to hug reflexively constitute the routine practice of hugging as a moral issue, possibly related to health risks. By formatting his refusal to hug as verbal and gestural tutting, Rick invokes external moral restrictions in line with 'not being allowed to' (cf. Extract 3). In this way, he warrants his blocking of Eva's projected next action while imputing the responsibility to contingencies independent of their social relationship. This reveals the extensive interactional work the participants engage in to change their routine practices while preserving the stability of their relationships.

This section has examined instances where the participants reflexively establish the observable-and-reportable change in routine haptic practices for greeting by pre-empting or refusing projected touch. As the format of routine practices is questioned, co-participants manifestly adjust to these contingencies by mobilizing other resources and experimenting with alternative formats, which we shall discuss next.

6 | NON-STRAIGHTFORWARD ALTERNATIVES: TOPICALIZED OPTIONS

What are the consequences of hugs and other routine tactile greetings being resisted to and refused, thus not available anymore? In this section, we show that (a) participants engage in other forms of embodied greetings, including tactile ones, that are new for them; (b) they do not do so in a straightforward



9 **ELI** **h•hhøy(h•)eah**
 eli ->øbump with LF->>
 ari •.....•presents RF->>!

Elise approaches Ariane, greets verbally at a distance, and waves both arms (Figure 21) as she comes closer (2). Ariane does not reciprocate but formulates a yes/no-question (4–5) mentioning two greeting options. The first is referred to as ‘the elbow thing’ (Ariane slightly moves her elbow at the beginning of this formulation, although not continuing its possible trajectory, 4). The second option is mentioned in an unfinished construction (5). Elise responds in overlap, also with an unfinished turn (6), while initiating a movement of her right foot (RF) toward Ariane’s feet (Figure 22). Ariane seems to align with the reference of Elise’s turn (8) – and this is then confirmed by Elise (9). As she presents her right foot (RF), Ariane also bodily aligns, and Elise responds by bumping her right foot (Figures 23ab). Elise immediately presents her left foot too, thus formatting her feet-bumping as organized in two parts, mobilizing both the right and the left foot. Moreover, she treats the first presentation (6) as a quote, or a demonstration, but not as a first pair part. Ariane, however, responds late; she uses the same (right) foot again, thus not adopting the same feet distribution (bumping with the same foot, 9, could be seen as repeating the first part of the greeting rather than doing the second symmetric part). These details show how Elise displays having her own ‘style’, and how Ariane aligns with it, but with some hitches. This dis-alignment displays Elise as more experienced and Ariane as more novice in that practice. It also reveals the complex coordination that greetings rely on, and the possible hitches this generates when new formats are adopted.

The next extract, taken from the same workshop, also shows the coexistence of various formats and highlights the interactants’ in situ exploration and negotiation of alternative greeting options. Four possible forms of greetings are explored. Not all are reciprocated; some are referred to and even *quoted*.

Extract 7. (C19312_colloquium_00.16.05)

1 †(0.5)†(0.1)◊(0.1)#†(0.4)◊#(0.2) ◊(0.3)
 ren >>walks, smiles->
 ren †.....†hands up----†,,,->
 eli ◊.....◊hands up◊,,,->
 fig fig.24ab# #fig.25



2 **REN** wir †werden #◊je◊†tzt
 we will now
 ren ->†clasps hands†
 ren ->◊stops and bows->
 eli ->◊bows->
 fig #fig.26ab
 3 (0.3)#(0.5)◊◊(0.2)
 ren ->◊
 eli ->◊
 fig #fig.27ab



4 **ELI** ◊oder so◊
 or like this
 eli ◊.....◊
 5 ◊(0.3)# ◊(0.2)
 eli ◊extends Rleg twd ren◊,,,->
 fig #fig.28
 6 **CYR** (>ausser ◊dass ihr-<)
 (except that you-)
 eli ->◊

As René approaches Elise and Cyril, he smiles and lifts both hands as a salutation at a distance (1, Figures 24ab, cf. Extract 4). In this way, he publicly displays that he will not initiate haptic contact. Elise aligns, reciprocating the same distant greeting (1, Figure 25). In contrast to the previous extracts, René does not initiate routine verbal greetings, but introduces instead a prospective formulation of another embodied greeting ('wir werden jetzt'/'we will now', 2): the verbal turn is left unfinished, but the completion, projected by him coming to a halt and clasping his hands, is achieved as he starts bowing (2–3, Figures 26ab). Elise first aligns with the projection and bows too (2–3, Figures 27ab), manifesting the relevance of reciprocating the same greeting (cf. Extract 6). Subsequently, Elise proffers yet another candidate, projected by 'oder so'/'or like this': she completes her turn by extending her right leg toward René, projecting a foot-bump (4–5, Figure 28). Elise's foot presentation is not treated as a first pair part that makes a second conditionally relevant. Instead, another participant, Cyril, who was watching them, self-selects and topicalizes another distant option, the curtsy (8–9). Elise treats this as building on her just enacted alternative and as expanding the comments about possible greetings; she elaborates on the description of how 'elderly men' do, illustrated by extending her right foot again and wagging it back and forth (10, Figures 29, 30). Greeting options are here not only adopted (like Elise reciprocating the bow) but also mentioned as a possibility (within embodied mentions) and associated with membership categories. René, on the other hand, sustains his mutual gaze with Cyril and produces a verbal agreement (12, Figure 31), subsequent to which Cyril projects to curtsy by extending his leg backward. René aligns with the projection, treating it as making conditionally relevant a reciprocal and convergent move, and curtsies (12, Figure 32). Concomitantly, he elaborates on his agreement with the modal verb 'müssn'/'ought to', which recognizably orients to greetings as morally laden practices – treating bows and curtsies as relevant but imposed options. René's initial emphasis on 'we' is subsequently followed by the disjunctive construction 'aber ja'/'but well', which, while pointing to Cyril's reduced mobility, orients to practical problems he might encounter with his crutches for engaging in some greetings (12, Figure 33). This is then treated as a laughable (14, 15).

The extracts examined in this section demonstrate how several greeting options, tactile (foot-bump) and distant (bow, curtsy), are explored, referred to as possible and associated with diverse identities and degrees of formality. Some are reciprocated, some are not – the latter being treated not as actual greetings but as quotes of possible greetings. Thus, formulations and topicalizations are not only deployed for negotiating and solving the practical problem of how to greet but also constitute a way of commenting on the plurality of new choices available and further possibilities to greet at a distance. This, in turn, exhibits and reflexively establishes the ongoing change of greeting practices as an emerging 'new' order. In what follows, we focus on how new tactile greetings develop.

7 | NEW GREETINGS, ACCOMPANIED WITH LAUGHTER AND COMMENTS

As shown in the previous sections, co-participants may engage in situated negotiations problematizing how to greet. In this section, we show that 'new' formats can also be initiated and adopted in more straightforward ways – indexing a process of appropriation. However, even though new greeting practices are progressively adopted over the course of the pandemic, and even though they may be projected and completed without discontinuities, their accountability is still problematized, as shown by the laughter and formulations it generates. This shows an ongoing but not firmly established process of sedimentation.

While elbow-bumps or foot-bumps are not new greeting forms per se (elbow-bumps were popular during the SARS epidemics in 2006), they were treated as new by people engaging in them as the Covid-19 outbreak emerged, and with it, official measures restricting social behavior in public space. The non-routine aspect of their use is manifested by their co-occurrence with laughter and

formulations. In the next extract, recorded at the beginning of the lockdown, two friends taking a walk, Elvira and Lavinia, meet an acquaintance, Bastien, and greet him with foot-bumps.

Extract 8. (C19320_river_walking_B_00.08.52)



```

1      (1.7)
2  BAS  what's up
3      (0.4)#
      fig      #fig.34
4  ELV  what's up
5      (0.4)
6  BAS  g'tood†
      elv      †...textends LF->
7      (0.6)#(0.2)Δ(0.3)†Δ(0.1)†Δ(0.2)†Δ
      elv      ->†bumpsLF†,,,,,†
      bas      Δ.....ΔbumpsRFΔ,,,,,Δ
      fig      #fig.35      #fig.36

```



```

8  ELV  ΔaHΔ°a.ha.ha.ha [Δ.ha.°ha.#[ha.ha.ha.ha]°
9  BAS  [hello
10 LAV  [salutΔ°(0.1)Δ°# (0.2)] hAha°ha°=
      [hello
      bas  Δ..Δsteps twd LAVΔ.....Δbumps-Δ,,,-->>
      lav  °.....°bump--°,,,-->>
      fig  #fig.37      #fig.38
11 ELV  =.H.ha.ha

```

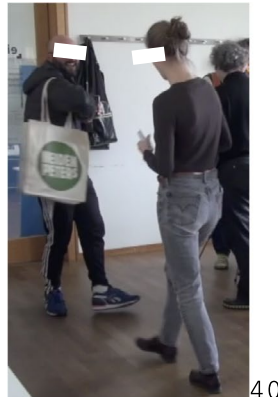


As Bastien approaches the group (Figure 34), he produces a verbal inquiry-based greeting (2), which Elvira reciprocates with a repetition of the same (4). While Bastien proceeds by treating Elvira's greeting as the first pair part of a how-are-you sequence, verbalizing a second pair part (6), Elvira extends her left foot (6, Figure 35). Bastien looks at it and, treating it as making a foot-bump conditionally relevant, extends his own right foot, thus achieving the foot-bump with Elvira (7, Figure 36). Although the greeting is not topicalized as in the previous section, the non-routine character of the practice is still made accountable by Elvira closing the greeting by chuckling (8). Next, Bastien steps toward Lavinia with a verbal greeting (9), which she reciprocates (10), as they both extend their feet (Figure 37) and coordinate a joint foot-bump (Figure 38). Here too, subsequent laugh particles by Elvira and Lavinia (10, 11) are a post-hoc treatment of the greetings, revealing the still uncustomary dimension of the practice.

The next two instances of elbow-bumps not only prompt laughter but also more elaborated comments. Moreover, the participants explicitly orient to the new practice in terms of learning and change. In the next extract, from the workshop already mentioned above, Denise walks toward Chuck as he enters the room.

Extract 9. (C19312_colloquium_00.04.20)

- 1 **DEN** oh he:y chuck
 chu >>enters the room and walks twd DEN->
 ari >>watches CHU and DEN->>
 2 (0.3)#
 fig #fig.39



- 3 **DEN** +hi:
 den +steps twd CHU->
 4 **CHU** †HI†:::#
 chu †..†presents R elbow->
 fig #fig.40
 5 (0.4)+#(0.2)+† (0.2) ++
 den +.....+bumps elb+,,,->
 chu ->†bumps elb†,,,->
 fig #fig.41
 6 **ARI** hhh+ [HUH HUH .h
 den ->+
 7 **CHU** [heh†+ heh .hhh
 8 **DEN** [()
 chu ->†
 den ->+

Chuck walks toward Denise (Figure 39): she sees him and does a first noticing, identifying him, and displaying some surprise to see him there (1). While they exchange verbal greetings (3–4) at a relative distance, they mutually step toward each other. In initiating and maintaining this trajectory, they mutually project some other, embodied, more proximal, and possibly haptic, greetings. Chuck does not only walk toward Denise but also turns his torso laterally and presents his right elbow (4, Figure 40). This projects, relatively early on, a specific type of embodied greeting: an elbow-bump. Denise, continuing to step toward him, responds a bit later: she also turns her torso and presents her right elbow (5, Figure 41). The way Chuck initiates his action provides for an early visible projection of a type of greeting. This enables Denise to reciprocate this specific greeting: she changes her trajectory from a frontal (Figure 40) to a lateral one (Figure 41), adjusting to the imminent proximity and tactility that the greeting projects. The elbow-bump is completed as a collective, delicately timed and coordinated achievement (5).

This encounter is witnessed by Ariane, who was previously talking with Denise: she watches Chuck arriving and Denise and Chuck greeting. They laugh (6–8) and comment on what just happened:

Extract 10. (C19312_colloquium_00.04.20) (continuation of Extract 9)

9 ARI is this the new uh: (.) [this is the new style?
 10 CHU [HEH HEH
 11 (1.0)
 12 ARI it [happens very fast. >we all [need to< progre:ss
 13 DEN [() [yeah
 14 (0.3)
 15 ARI so i was talking with joan ear Δ lier (.) we were this Δ
 Δ extends R arm----- Δ
 16 Δ (act-) Δ (.) do we hhhug or do we not Δ [hug? Δ
 17 DEN [hhh [heh .hhh hah
 18 CHU [I DON'T KNO::W
 ari Δ ,,,,,, Δ 'hugging' gesture, both arms- Δ ,,,,,, Δ
 19 ARI [yeah you have to ask,
 20 CHU [i don't \dagger [kno:w
 21 DEN [HHH hah hah (0.2) .HHH
 \dagger moves both elbows->>

Ariane formulates the elbow-bump she just witnessed as constituting change, referring to a 'new style' (9) and to the particular historicity of the moment (12). Ariane also reports an earlier conversation that refers to the dilemma of hugging (15–16). The dilemma remains unresolved for Chuck (18, 20), and partially resolved for Ariane as a matter of negotiation (19). This extract shows how change and its historicity are oriented to by the participants: instead of initiating a routine way of engaging and progressing in the encounter, greetings are now treated as noticeable, as objects of negotiation, and targets of comments before and after they happen.

A few seconds later, Ariane, who witnessed the 'new style' in the previous extract, greets a participant entering the room (Beate) using that same embodied practice while commenting on her use of it:

Extract 11. (C19312_colloquium_00.05.33)

1 (0.7)
 2 ARI (guten t[ag,)
 3 BEA [hello
 4 ARI Δ i just Δ l+earned that Δ + [we're suppo Δ sed to \pm do \pm that Δ + \pm
 ari Δ Δ presents L elb Δ bumps elb---- Δ ,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,, Δ
 bea +.....+bumps elb----+,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,+
 bea \pm nods \pm nods \pm
 5 (0.4)
 6 ARI .h HEH huh [huh huh
 7 BEA [yeah

As Beate approaches the group, Ariane turns to her and greets her verbally (2). Beate reciprocates (3). Then, Ariane turns and moves her arm and elbow toward Beate, engaging in an elbow-bump (4). Her movement makes projectable the greeting she is initiating, and indeed Beate responds by moving her elbow forward too. During this sequence of embodied greetings, Ariane utters ‘I just learned that we’re supposed to do that’ (4). When she presents her elbow, the turn is not yet recognizable as a comment about elbow-bumping: its specific reference is only reached at turn-completion (with the indexical ‘that’). Hence, what enables Beate to respond is the embodied initiation and projection of the greeting, rather than the verbal formulation. The turn is produced simultaneously but acquires its intelligibility only later on – as observable in Beate’s late response (7).

Ariane’s online commentary refers to the ongoing change in two very different ways, showing the multiple issues at stake. First, ‘I just learned’ refers to a process of recent socialization; second, ‘we’re supposed to do that’ refers to an external norm, from which she possibly distances herself. Retrospectively, this constitutes her witnessing the new greeting practice as ‘learning’ and her elbow-bump as the first instantiation of that learning. But this also points at the practice as related to normative impositions (vs. for example as a fashionable or creative trend). So, the extracts document the emergence not only of a new practice but also of a new normativity.

8 | TOWARD THE SEDIMENTATION OF NEW GREETINGS

In the previous sections, we observed how greeting formats, like elbow-bumps or feet-bumps, were used by the participants in conjunction with laughter (finding them not just funny but strange) and comments (treating their accountability as needing explicit accounts). In this section, we observe how these ‘new greetings’ are further stabilized and conventionalized. Contrary to the previous extracts, they are used in increasingly smooth ways, without any comments, showing that they begin to be part of a conventionalized repertoire.

In the following extract, recorded a week after the beginning of the lockdown, Hugo arrives by bicycle and meets Adi, on the sidewalk, waiting in line at a pizza takeaway.

Extract 12. (C19323_queueing_ki_00.05.45)

```

1          *(1.2)
  hug      >>*on bike->
2 ADI    he:j*
  hug      ->*steps off bike
3          (1.6)*+          *(0.9)*
  hug      *kickstand*stabilizes bike*
  adi      +steps twd HUG->
4 ADI    dä hugo*#
           the hugo
  hug      *big step twd ADI->
  fig      #fig.42
5          Δ(1.6)%#(0.5) Δ%(0.1) Δ%#(0.3)
  hug      ΔR arm fwd-----Δbumps elbΔ,,,
  adi      %R arm fwd%bumps elb%,,,
  fig      #fig.43                      #fig.44
6 HUG    ich ha das- #buech nid gfundä
           I haven't found the book
  fig      #fig.45

```



Hugo arrives by bicycle, greeted by Adi while stepping off the bike (2). While Hugo is parking it (3), Adi identifies him by name (4), thus displaying his recognition of the incoming participant. As soon as the bike is stabilized, Hugo takes a big step toward Adi (Figure 42). At the same time, he swings his right arm slowly forward to finally extend his right elbow toward Adi (5, Figure 43). As Hugo posture recognizably projects elbow-greeting, Adi responds by also pulling his right hand out of his pocket and touching Hugo's elbow with his own elbow (Figure 44). Both subsequently retract from their position in a reciprocal manner. Hugo treats the opening sequence as closed and initiates the first topic (6).

Here, the elbow-bump is initiated and projected early on by Hugo, enabling Adi to recognize the type of ongoing greeting and to respond in a reciprocal and adequate way. This happens without any hitches and the participants move immediately to topical business. Here, the elbow-bump is treated as a routine.

Most of the greetings studied in this article orient to tactile sociality. Even when abandoning hugging, participants find alternatives that preserve touching the other while avoiding touching critical body parts – such as with elbow-bumps and feet-bumps. This is typically observable at the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis. However, later, as measures are intensified during the lockdown, other forms enable the participants to greet at a distance, without touching each other anymore, although still orienting to tactility. This is the case of hugs done in the air, which we call *air hugs*.

The last extract shows how this latter format is sedimented in a group of friends, regularly meeting for physical exercises in a public park during the lockdown (this activity was possible during the entire lockdown period in Switzerland). Sandra joins the group last while the others are already engaged in a yoga pose. Sandra greets everybody with an *air hug*, reciprocated by all:

Extract 13. (C19503_park_qi)

```

1      # (4.5) + (0.5) * (0.8) #
san    >>walks twd group->
lei    >>engaged in a yoga pose->
jen    >>engaged in a yoga pose->
pia    >>engaged in a yoga pose->
lei    +turns head twd SAN->
san    *opens arms->>
fig    #fig.46                                #fig.47

```





47

2 LEI .heh,± hE+LLO:#:[:.h
 3 SAN [hi hi• hi hi hi
 lei ->±stands up->>
 lei ->+opens up arms in front of SAN->>
 san ->•stops in front of LEI->
 fig #fig.48



48

4 (0.4)\$
 pia ->\$abandons posture and stands up->>
 5 PIA fUH•::: (.) HELLO:::#
 san ->•steps twd PIA->
 pia fopens arms->>
 fig #fig.49



49

6 PIA NI::•(CE)
 san ->•stops->
7 SAN he he •eh
 san ->•turns to JEN->
8 JEN XX%X?
 jen ->%abandons pose and stands up->
9 SAN x%x::
 jen ->%opens arms->>
10 JEN hej:•:: #
 san ->•turns to LEI/PIA->>
 fig #fig.50



50

11 (0.4)
12 LEI you're la::te, he h
13 SAN I know: eh h

Sandra approaches the group, who is engaged in a yoga pose (Figure 46, Sandra's shadow is visible on the left). Leila, holding her posture in silence, turns her head toward Sandra, who, orienting to this gaze, immediately initiates the greetings by opening her arms (Figure 47, visible in the shadow). Leila responds with verbal greetings first (2) while standing up, and then opens her arms too (Figure 48). At this point, Pia and Jenny are still holding their yoga pose. Next, Pia stands up and opens her arms too, producing a positive assessment (6), as Sandra makes a further step in her direction (Figure 49) and then responds to the assessment with some laughter (7). Sandra subsequently turns to Jenny, who is the last to abandon her pose. Jenny greets first in an inaudible turn (8) and then by opening both arms too (Figure 50). So, successively three participants greet the newcomer, using the same gesture, and extending it during the entire sequence consisting of multiple greetings. This hold of the greeting is achieved by moving the arms laterally up and down (see Figures 49, 50) and waving the hands, enabling the participants to continuously greet as Sandra successively turns to different greeters. Initiated individually, the greetings become collective.

Air hugs represent a possible response to the unavailability of tactile hugs that was described in the first part of this article. At the same time, they refer to them, enacting tactility at a distance. This shows how participants creatively find practical embodied solutions to secure the principles of human sociality – incorporated in elementary practices like greetings – while respecting imperatives of health and safety. Contrary to the misleading expression ‘social distancing’, we see how keeping physical distance, or doing things at some distance, is achieved socially (and not against sociality), in a way

that continues to engage with the body toward the other(s). This not only secures intersubjectivity and coordination but also displays an affective and emotional engagement as a crucial expression of the type of sociable relationship people are in.

9 | CONCLUSIONS

The paper discussed a diversity of tactile greetings and their organization during the early times of the Covid-19 outbreak. Paying attention to the multimodal details in which greetings are actually achieved in this particular context, this study shows how it is possible to reflect on the ways in which these historical epidemic circumstances affect elementary forms of human sociality and how participants respond to the challenges this generates. Across the world, public health authorities have decreed recommendations concerning 'social distancing', within mitigation measures to stop contagion centrally targeting greetings (no hugs, no handshake). These measures, conceived in epidemiological terms, treat the body primarily as a vector of contagion. Reflecting on how this affects the foundations of sociality invites to rethink the articulation of the biological body and the social body. The pandemic affects socio-holobionts, that is, bodies in their physical and physiological dimension, including bacteria, viruses, and other living organisms; they are socially assembled in intelligible and normatively laden and morally laden ways, disciplined and disciplining themselves, exploring solutions to the organization of social interactions, constraining and re-shaping embodied practices for interacting in meaningful ways.

Focusing on how acquaintances greet in public and institutional settings, we have demonstrated that participants respond to these challenges in different ways. These variations are not freely distributed, but *sequentially ordered* – within an order that is sensitive to the historical evolving evolution of the crisis. Hugs are a form of haptic sociality routinely available in the pre-Covid-19 era. When the crisis emerges, routine embodied projections are suspended (§ 3), occasioning explicit negotiations, which can end up in accepting (§ 4), or rather refusing hugs (§ 5), as participants increasingly orient to the imperatives of keeping distance. This generates not only dilemmas ('do we hug or do we not hug', as in Extract 10) but also, more radically, the impossibility to use 'old' practices, and the necessity to explore 'new' ones. Alternatives are elaborated in ways that strongly consider the 'social' aspect of keeping distance – contrary to the tacit assumptions of the expression 'social distancing' used in prevention discourses (often glossed as 'avoiding social contact'). The creative exploration of new ways of doing tactile and distant embodied greetings (§ 6: tactile elbow- and feet-bumps; the distant bow and curtsy), orients to the relevance of intimacy versus formality, finding solutions that preserve haptic sociality even at some distance. However, in a first moment, these innovations are not straightforward: they are repeatedly topicalized, glossed, accounted for, and accompanied by laughter (§ 6–7). Later, some new greetings conventionalize and sediment, which is shown by them proceeding smoothly, without hitches, and without topicalizations anymore (§ 8). This trajectory of change shows that participants engage in elaborating the *sociality of distant interaction*, adjusting to the circumstances but never abandoning the fundamental principles of human sociality that make greetings indispensable.

What are the implications of greeting differently for sociality? The challenges encountered by participants reveal what is at stake in this crisis of the pre-Covid-19 routine assumptions. This can be formulated in terms of *accountability* of actions (Garfinkel, 1967), which concerns two distinct but intertwined dimensions: (a) the *intelligibility* of mutual engagements, necessary for coordination and intersubjectivity, (b) the *normativity* of action, the moral expectancies, the mutual trust between participants. The Covid-19 outbreak is a natural breaching experiment: it puts into question the

intelligibility of the action for and of other(s) – as shown by the fact that participants engage in explicit formulations about what they are doing, rather than simply rely on the projectability of incipient actions. Moreover, the crisis challenges the normative accountability of actions. A first greeting projects and expects a reciprocated greeting: the organization of sequences relies on this normative expectation (Schegloff, 1968, 2007). These expectations are fundamental in achieving mutual recognition and engagement, establishing or confirming reciprocal social and interpersonal relations, as well as shared understanding of the context. In the Covid-19 context, troubles in projecting and fulfilling projections are also related to another sense of normativity, having moral implications: pre-greeting negotiations and post-greeting accounts orient to external norms using modal verbs like *müssen/dürfen/sollen* (Extract 3), modal expressions like *we are supposed to* (Extract 11), and negations (Extracts 2, 5, and 10), all referring to (the conformity to) official instructions. Expressions such as *Abstand* ('distance', Extract 4) are directly quoted from prevention discourse. The formats used point at various normative and moral instances, such as personal responsibility, health precautions, and authority impositions.

The routine, transformed, and stabilized forms of greetings we analyzed enable us to document in a unique way *change-in-the-making*, which does not only contribute to understanding how the pandemic affects human sociality but also how it constitutes a rare occasion to address issues of change of embodied conducts. How to document change is a relatively new question in conversation analysis, which has been mainly discussed relative to longitudinal processes in acquisition (Pekarek Doehler, Wagner, & González-Martínez, 2018), rather than to historical change (Clayman et al., 2006; Lynch & Bogen, 1996; Mondada, 2006, 2018b) – but it has also been discussed in neighboring disciplines (f.i. in sociolinguistics, where variation and change are key topics, cf. Eckert, 2018; Labov, 1966). The Covid-19 crisis enables us to observe change *in-the-making* as it happens – articulating historical change with the moment-by-moment temporality of social interaction – and as it is addressed by members themselves (labeling what they are doing as 'new', 'learnable', 'quick' progress, Extracts 10 and 11), articulating personal experience and historical change.

10 | CONVENTIONS

Talk was transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) conventions; multimodal annotations follow Mondada's (2018a) conventions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Using multimodal conversation analysis, this article examines embodied and tactile greetings in social interaction, documenting their change during the Covid-19 pandemic. Recognizing social interaction as foundational for human sociality, we consider greetings as a crucial normative, organizational, and ritual practice for mutually engaging in intersubjective action. Analyses use video recordings made in Switzerland (featuring (Swiss-)German and English as a lingua-franca), focusing on embodied greetings of acquainted people in public spaces at the age of Covid19 – a historical moment in which physical proximity and contact are targeted by official measures restricting social interactions. Studying a range of tactile embodied greetings, the paper shows how they change from routine greetings to hesitated, suspended yet still completed ones, and to projected but resisted and refused ones. Furthermore, it reveals some 'new' practices of greeting (elbow/feet-bumps, *air hugs*) and their non-straightforward and accountable character, as well as how they sediment and normalize during the pandemic.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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How to cite this article: Mondada L, Bänninger J, Bouaouina SA, et al. Human sociality in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic: A systematic examination of change in greetings. *J Sociolinguistics*. 2020;00:1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12433>