Closing Up Closings: Showing the Relevance of the Social and Material Surround to the Completion of Interaction

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The authors analyze naturally occurring communication within a beauty salon. Videotaped data show how two clients suddenly recognize each other and conduct a reunion in the midst of onlookers. Through various vocal and visible forms of communication, the two women negotiate with one another (and others present) the onset, performance, and conclusion of their ritualistic involvement. By examining in detail a single encounter, much longer in duration than the segments of interaction employed in related studies, the authors show that the function of behaviors in a departure sequence may best be understood by analyzing their relationship to the social and physical situation in which they are embedded.

This is a study of videotaped interaction within a beauty salon located in the southern United States. We focus specifically on a chance reunion: In the midst of the busy salon, where hairdressing and conversation are underway, one of the patrons recognizes and initiates a reunion with her former elementary school teacher. Although we examine the entire interaction between the two women, we draw special attention to the way the encounter is concluded. The women move their reunion to a close through a subtle orchestration of vocal and visible behaviors that draw upon their multiple involvements with other people and things within this activity-rich setting. A primary purpose of our study is to demonstrate that previous models designed to show how dyadic departures are achieved through talk may be insufficient to explain closings where an encounter is embedded in a larger social occasion or activity.

In a classic study on "Opening Up Closings," Schegloff and Sacks (1973) identified and explicated mechanisms by which participants accomplished the comple-

tion of their conversations. Using audiotapes of telephone conversations as their sole source of data, these authors depicted departure events as sequences of vocal interaction in which certain kinds of comments interpretable as leading toward the end of the conversation may be accepted or decLined as closings. For example, one person's offering of a proverbial summary of the conversation (e.g., "Things always work out for the best") is a kind of comment that may constitute a possible closing remark. In a subsequent study on "Moving Out of Closings," Button (1987) expanded on Schegloff and Sacks's findings, again using telephone conversations as data, by describing various kinds of vocal techniques people use to decLine potential closings. For example, "topic initial elicitors" suggest a continued availability for conversation when it appears that a closing is imminent (e.g., "Is there anything else of interest that happened to you today?"). Although these qualitative studies are foundational in showing how conversational endings may be interactively achieved through sequences of behavior, they may be inadequate to explain face-to-face departures because they are concerned with only vocal and not visible behaviors (i.e., people's bodily presence, orientation, and spatial maneuvers among people and material things). In addition, they focus only on dyadic exchanges typical of telephone conversations, ignoring the potential relevance of social surroundings and multiple involvements to the enactment of departures.

Several quantitative investigations of departure behaviors have been conducted, mostly for the purpose of examining the frequencies of certain behaviors as they occur in closings. Some research has focused exclusively on either verbal behaviors (e.g., Albert & Kessler, 1978) or nonverbal behaviors (e.g., Lockard, Allen, Schiele, & Wiemer, 1978), whereas other studies have employed film or videotape in an analysis of both (e.g., Knapp, Hart, Friedrich, & Shulman, 1973; O'Leary & Gallois, 1985; Summerfield & Lake, 1977). Knapp and his associates (1973) showed the frequent occurrence in conversational closings of verbal behaviors such as "appreciation" (e.g., "Thanks for your time") and "external legitimizers" (e.g., "I have to meet someone") and nonverbal behaviors such as breaking eye contact and major trunk movements. Although these quantitative investigations may lack the elegance and sequential details of the qualitative studies described above, they provide some information about the existence of certain closing behaviors (Albert & Kessler, 1978; Knapp et al., 1973); the frequency of various nonverbal behaviors during progressive segments of time (Knapp et al., 1973); and the occurrence of certain nonverbal and verbal behaviors in the middle of a conversation as compared to the last 10 turns (O'Leary & Gallois, 1985). Because all of these quantitative studies were conducted on dyadic conversations in experimental laboratory situations, there was no examination of naturally occurring social or material settings as factors in departure processes. The chief contribution of these studies was to document the occurrence of specific types of nonverbal and verbal behaviors during departures.

Most akin to the present study is Heath's (1986) examination of departure processes during consultations between British physicians and patients. Heath explicated the sequential integration of vocal and visible behaviors within a large number of audiovisual recordings. For example, he found that when the doctor appeared to initiate a closing (e.g., handing the patient a prescription and saying,

"You can take it down to the reception"), the patient most often oriented his or her body away from the doctor as if to leave. Sometimes patients' visible behaviors followed the doctor's vocal proposal to conclude or continue, but other times patients' visible behaviors served to decLine closings, instigating continuance. Such subtle dynamics of interaction cannot be captured by verbal/vocal analyses alone. Heath's research differs from ours in that it focused on relatively isolated dyads (see also Robinson's [2001] analysis of vocal forms during medical departures).

Our contention is that when a dyadic encounter emerges in the midst of a focused gathering involving other persons, the closing of that encounter may not be adequately explained simply by reference to the behaviors of the two people just prior to their conversation's end. This assertion may be unpacked in different ways. First, the bodily presence and press of other people may impinge upon the moment-to-moment progression of a dyadic conversation and, ultimately, its conclusion. Second, participants in a dyadic encounter may initiate (or decline) a closing by making relevant the social and material surround as a way to end (or continue) the conversation. Third, the way a dyadic encounter begins, including the way it grows out of the ongoing social and material surround, may project (or at least provide resources for) the manner in which it will conclude, making certain patterns of closing possible, relevant, or even normative. Fourth, when encounters are ritualistic, the endings may be inseparably related to the programmatic whole.

Our study is interestingly between two theoretical perspectives—termed "from above" and "from below" by Sigman (1987)—which are sometimes regarded as conflicting in their explanations of how social interaction occurs. The "from above" approach emphasizes prior existing influences in the form of accepted practices and cultural norms as actualized in everyday social interactions. The more recent "from below" approach focuses instead on processes that arise out of the immediate situation as people find ways to creatively negotiate their mutual involvement in a social encounter. The following brief account of the history of these two orientations is designed to explain the integrated position we assume in our analysis of the beauty salon data.

One notable from-above researcher is Erving Goffman, who used fragments of human behavior from various sources (e.g., excerpts from field notes, snippets of overheard conversation, lines from novels) to illustrate his theory about the fundamental order of social life. Goffman especially drew attention to ritualistic forms— that is, the small verbal and nonverbal behaviors that individuals use to show appropriate respect for one another in daily encounters. Rather than conceptualizing ritual events in a macrosense as occasions that serve societal or institutional functions, as did Durkheim (Cheal, 1988), Goffman (1967) sought to document the ritual procedures that influence or inform people's orderly conduct. As he stated the objective in his introduction to *Interaction Ritual*:

> What minimal model of the actor is needed if we are to wind him up, stick him amongst his fellows, and have an orderly traffic of behavior emerge? . . . Not, then, men and their moments. Rather moments and their men. (p. 3)

Two other versions of the from-above orientation are context analysis, devel-

oped originally by Ray Birdwhistell (1970) and Albert Scheflen (1964, 1965, 1973) and the contextualization cues approach originated by John Gumperz (cf. Auer & Di Luzio, 1992; Gumperz, 1982). The research growing out of these conceptualizations has been more data-driven than Goffman's theory-building work and has employed microanalytic methodologies; nevertheless, these approaches share with Goffman the assumption that culture is an overarching influence on social interaction. The context analysis approach, as exemplified in Kendon and Ferber's (1973) study of a videotaped "greeting ritual," seeks to establish the existence of "programs" through which participants coordinate their communicative behaviors. Gumperz (1992), on the other hand, has analyzed verbal and paralinguistic cues (in audio and video recordings), focusing especially on intercultural exchanges to demonstrate that "evaluations or assessments of what an utterance or an interaction means is always socio-culturally conditioned" (p. 51).

Especially prominent among from-below approaches is the conversation analysis (CA) perspective originated by Harvey Sacks (Sacks, 1992) and developed in collaboration with Emanuel Schegloff and David Sudnow (see Pomerantz & Fehr, 1997). Sacks envisioned his method as a critique of and a challenge to cultural-deterministic approaches such as Goffman's (see Schegloff, 1988). Sacks argued that an understanding of how conversation is structured could be achieved only by close examination of the sequential progression of conversations, rather than making assumptions based on abstract notions such as power, gender, or cultural rituals. Although Sacks used mainly transcripts of verbal interaction as data in his research, other scholars, such as Charles Goodwin (1979), have expanded the scope of CA methods to include analyses of interplay between vocal and visible forms.

In theory, CA methods can reveal the influence of cultural factors if they are evident in conversational behavior itself (cf. Heritage, 1990/1991; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). In practice, however, this sort of evidence has seldom surfaced in CA work because cultural influence may be largely invisible to those immersed in conversation, and analysts would need to select examples, as has Gumperz, that clearly evidence the relevance of culture to the process of interaction.

Our study employs both from-above and from-below approaches to show the relevance of a social and material surround to the closing of interaction between two women at the beauty salon. By first looking at the videotaped data "from above," we demonstrate how interaction may bear the stamp of cultural influence. We provide evidence that the former student and teacher engage in a type of ritual called a reunion, and hence we align with Rothenbuhler's (1998) argument that ritual should be a viable concept in communication studies. Then we look at the data "from below" to show that the women do not enact their reunion in an automatic fashion, but rather localize their practice in conformity with cultural norms. We point to a pattern of differential ritual enactment, in which the schoolteacher orients toward other people and things, making other involvements and activities (e.g., hairdressers and hairdressing) relevant, thereby moving to close the reunion before the former student seems ready. Our integrated approach is unusual, but we think warranted by the nature of our data and recent advances in social communication theory (e.g., Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989; Leeds-Hurwitz & Sigman, with Sullivan, 1995).

Ritualistic Enactment of a Chance Reunion

Among the many rituals that people may enact as part of their everyday lives, some have been identified and explicated, including the reunion. Seltzer (1988) considered a variety of social events (from high school homecomings to family gatherings) before defining reunions as "patterned rituals commemorating the intersections of groups, historical events, and individual time" (p. 644). This definition agrees with other studies of reunions, which vary in scope and emphasis but have a certain family resemblance. For example, Troll (1988) identified four common functions of formal reunions: (a) to mark time (sometimes space) in ways that put individuals in touch with their past; (b) to reevaluate past events in light of present understanding; (c) to accomplish a sense of continuation into the future; and (d) to inaugurate new social statuses for participating individuals. Although a wide variety of social behaviors may accomplish a particular function, Troll found these functions to be consistently filled across events that people regard as reunions. In an earlier study, Moss and Moss (1988) considered both formal and informal events, then reported three questions that people consistently ask themselves before a reunion and presumably answer through the process: (a) Who is the other person, as compared to the person he or she used to be? (b) who am I now, as compared to who I used to be? and (c) how will we relate to each other, as compared to how we used to relate? Although Moss and Moss focused on process rather than function, their three questions have a kinship with Troll's four-part list. Both lists relate to the interaction of people in the present, whereby they orient toward their interaction in the past—or, as Seltzer (1988) eloquently stated, reunions are "an occasion to revisit a recreated past in the present" (p. 645).

Within the beauty salon examined here, the former student and elementary schoolteacher meet by chance—not as part of a formal reunion that they could anticipate and plan—but they nevertheless interact in ways that constitute a reunion (albeit impromptu) as scholars have defined and described it. Their encounter may not be a formal ritual, but it is unmistakably ritualistic.[1] The chance reunion unfolds in three recognizable phases or stages: Phase 1, greeting and acknowledgment of the prior relationship; Phase 2, revisiting the relational history; and Phase 3, closing the reunion by updating the relationship and projecting future possibilities for social interaction. As our analysis shows, these phases overlap with the functions and processes of more formal reunions. Each phase is accomplished through a host of visible and vocal behaviors, with one phase orchestrated to occasion the next until "ritual requirements" (Goffman, 1981) for the chance reunion are fulfilled.

Phase 1

Initially, the former student (Katie) is sitting in a swivel chair (see Figure 1). When her chair is turned in a new direction (Figure 2), she notices, orients toward, and

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[1] We agree with Rothenbuhler (1998), who defined ritual as the "performance of appropriately patterned behavior" (p. 27) and made a distinction between the noun *ritual* (i.e., rites and ceremonies as distinct events or social objects) and the adjective *ritualistic* (i.e., ceremonial aspects of otherwise ordinary or mundane interaction).

Figure 1. **Figure 2.** **Figure 3.**

points a hand in the direction of another client (Wilcox) located on the other side of the room (and temporarily off camera).

After Katie gets Wilcox's attention, the two inquire about each other's identity, which begins an extended conversation and reunion. This initial exchange has been transcribed[2] as follows:

28	Katie:	Your name Ms ⌐Bridges?
29	Wilcox:	└No no no Wilcox.
30		(0.3)
31	Katie:	Wilcox?
32	Wilcox:	Um hm
	…	
40	Wilcox:	What's your name
41		(0.2)
42	Katie:	It used to be Katie Crumby
43		(0.4)
44	Wilcox:	↑Katie?
45	Katie:	Yes ma'am.

In a very literal way, the identification sequence between Katie and Wilcox pertains to the question, "Who is the other person?" (Moss & Moss, 1988). During reunions—especially chance reunions, not anticipated—the literal identities of people may be first in the order of things to be ascertained, followed by more abstract considerations about who the other person is.

Notice the structural symmetry of the initial interaction between Katie and Wilcox, which marks their behavior as ritualistic. Identities are ascertained through a series of question-answer adjacency pairs. Katie asks the other's name (Line 28), which Wilcox provides (Line 29). Katie repeats the name (Line 31), showing that she has heard, giving Wilcox an opportunity to correct or confirm, which she does (Line 32). This pattern is then repeated with roles reversed: Wilcox inquires (Line

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[2] We use the transcription conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). A full transcript of the interaction between the former student and schoolteacher, and a key of transcription conventions, can be found on the CD that accompanies this special issue. Participants' names and other identifiers have been altered.

Figure 4.   Figure 5.   Figure 6.

40) and Katie provides (Line 42); Wilcox repeats (Line 44) and Katie confirms (Line 45). The various utterances fill recognizable "slots" (i.e., inquisition, identification, repetition, confirmation), each slot housing a distinct illocutionary act, each slot making the next relevant. Although spontaneously performed, the sequence unfolds with the symmetry of butterfly wings, immediately contrasting with—and thereby setting itself apart from—more chaotic conversations within the salon. The sequence resembles other ritualistic routines of everyday life, such as the canonical telephone opening (Schegloff, 1986) that is "not quite [formal] ritual, but *routine* to the extent that its appearance approaches ritual" (Hopper, 1992, p. 53; italics in original).

Following mutual identification, the two women greet and acknowledge their prior relationship. Katie stands at the same time that Wilcox moves toward her and they meet halfway, embracing in the middle of the salon (Figure 3), making a prior relationship visibly evident. Their hug obviously relates to the functions of reunions. Through physical contact, the women are literally "put in touch with their past" (Troll, 1988) as they come literally to grips with the person they knew before. Moreover, Katie has undoubtedly grown since her elementary school days, now stands taller than Wilcox, so the hug provides an embodied and tactile answer to the question, "Who is Katie (as compared to how she used to be)?"

Repeatedly, Katie and Wilcox vocalize answers to the (unspoken) questions about reunions that Moss and Moss (1988) identified. For example, after their embrace (Figure 3), the women step apart approximately 18 inches and hold each other's arms (Figure 4) while assessing each other's appearance. Their assessments articulate an answer (albeit partial) to the question, "Who is the other person (as compared to the person she used to be)?"

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57    Katie:      You look ↑goo:d.
58    Wilcox:     You look good ↑too
59                         ((Group laughter (1.2) ))
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Katie's assessment "you look good" (Line 57) is more than a compliment—it acknowledges a prior relationship to the extent that it relies upon a recollection of how Wilcox looked before. By recycling the same assessment (Line 58), Wilcox perpetuates symmetry of vocal interaction, which is a hallmark of ritualistic involvement, and she likewise acknowledges a prior relationship with Katie. Fur-

thermore, the symmetry of their vocal behavior speaks to issues of relational parity: The women sound like social equals in that they presume to assess and compliment each other in like manner. Thus, in the process of greeting and acknowledging, Katie and Wilcox perform an answer to the third question posed by Moss and Moss (1988): "How will we relate to each other, as compared to how we used to relate?"

The ritualistic interaction between Katie and Wilcox is immediately recognizable to others. Onlookers not only show appreciation for what is happening in their beauty salon (e.g., through group laughter at Line 59), they specifically label the two women's behavior as a "reunion":

61   Jane: We even have family reunions.
      …
65   Ms X: We even have family reu(h) heh heh
      …
103   Ms Y: Well let her have her reunion

Three different people (Jane, Ms X, and Ms Y) use the word "reunion" to describe what is happening between Katie and Wilcox. By using this word, participants do more than provide a label for what has already occurred—they *project* a program of behavior that has only just begun. On this point, Line 103 is especially telling. Almost 1 minute after the identification sequence between Katie and Wilcox, Ms Y says, "Well let her have her reunion," which asserts that the social program begun (i.e., reunion) has not yet been completed. Thus, at the same time that onlookers recognize the onset of ritualistic activity as constituting a reunion, they are able to project (in Ms Y's case, explicitly) some sort of appropriate completion.

Phase 2
After greeting and acknowledging a prior relationship, Katie and Wilcox move into the next Phase of their chance reunion: revisiting their relational history, which directly pertains to Troll's (1988) second function, "to reevaluate past events in light of present understanding." The transition from the first to the second phase is marked by subtle bodily maneuvers that, as Scheflen (1964) has shown, indicate movement from one stage of a programmatic encounter to the next. That is, the two women hug again briefly (Figure 5), thereby concluding a strip of interaction that began with a hug (Figure 3). Then they let go of each other, step apart, and shift their bodily orientations slightly away from one another (Figure 6), showing readiness and setting the stage for what comes next.

During Phase 2, Katie and Wilcox revisit their relationship in ways that (re)enact a difference in social status—reminiscent of a teacher-student relationship—which contrasts with the rather equal social status displayed in Phase 1. For instance, consider the following moment in which Katie reports to her former teacher, who then assesses and literally gives a pat on the back.

67   Katie: I came a long way=
68   Wilcox: =You have.

Figure 7. Figure 8.

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69   Katie:     Yes ma'am but
70                  ((W slaps K's back // K overreacts))
71                  ((Laughter (2.7) ))
72   Jane:      She got them heavy ha:nds, baby
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Through her assertion, "I came a long way" (Line 67), Katie revisits a relational history and at the same time treats Wilcox as a person to be reported to—and to that extent, as a social superior. Wilcox reciprocates by acknowledging and assessing (Line 68), as might a teacher, treating Katie as a person to be assessed—and to that extent, as a social inferior. During this exchange, the women's relative bodily posture is also telling. Katie's posture is awkwardly divided (Figure 6). While her arms dangle at her side, only her head is turned toward Wilcox. By contrast, Wilcox stands wholly oriented toward Katie, making her a direct object (or subject) of attention, and Wilcox is reaching out and holding Katie's upper arm. Such relative posture and holding behavior may be endearing (as when a child is praised) or controlling (as when a child is spanked), but either way it embodies unequal social status (Goffman, 1987). Immediately after Wilcox assesses (Line 68), she raises her left hand (Figure 7) and slaps Katie on the back (Line 70) rather forcefully. Katie thrusts her body forward, playfully exaggerating the impact (Figure 8), performing the body of a lightweight girl who has just been hit. Onlookers laugh at the performance (Line 71), and Jane makes a comment that speaks to relative social status. The words "them heavy hands" (Line 72) index a specific type of hands—such as the hands belonging to a social superior, perhaps a parent or, in this case, a (former) elementary schoolteacher.

Consider the following two excerpts, which further illustrate how Katie and Wilcox revisit their relational history in ways that (re)enact a difference in social status.

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82   Wilcox:    You been doing all right
83   Katie:     Yes ma'am, I been doin pretty good, pretty good.
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Wilcox mostly asks questions and Katie mostly answers (e.g., Lines 82 and 83) without asking a question of Wilcox in return. This recurring pattern of interaction has consequences for the relationship being reestablished: Katie is repeatedly

treated as the topic of conversation, the subject of inquiry, the interviewee, whereas Wilcox is interactively cast as a relatively anonymous (albeit interested) interviewer. Thus, the two women "employ modifications of conversational turn-taking practices" (Nofsinger, 1990, p. 107) by behaving in ways that resemble institutional talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992), such as might be located in elementary school. Here's another example:

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88   Katie:     I- I'm hanging, I remember a lot of things
89              ⌜y'all told me when I was growing up.
90   Wilcox:    ⌞Yeah yeah yeah
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As Katie continues to report without asking questions of Wilcox in return, her comments about the present are tied to recollections of the past. She says, "I'm hanging" (Line 88) and then claims to remember things Wilcox said years before (Line 89). By closely sequencing these two utterances, Katie encourages the inference that her present success ("I'm hanging") is a result of Wilcox's past teaching ("I remember")—a clear instance of how people may "reevaluate past events in light of present understanding" (Troll, 1988), in this case through both the content and structure of their vocal interaction.

Thus, Phase 2 involves an orchestration of vocal and visible behaviors, whereby the women revisit their relationship in ways that correspond with the functions (Troll, 1988) and the processes (Moss & Moss, 1988) of reunions. The content of communication between Katie and Wilcox is about both the present and the past, which are intermingled in ways that serve to "reevaluate past events in light of present understanding" (Troll, 1988). Moreover, the vocal and visible structures of their interaction momentarily (re)enact unequal social status, which is another way to revisit the past in light of the present. Onlookers notice and jokingly comment that Katie behaves like a young girl:

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115  Dina:      She looks like she's in
116             elementary school again doesn't she(h)
                …
122  Ms Y:      .hh she sound like a five year old . . .
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By momentarily (re)enacting social disparity in Phase 2, Katie and Wilcox are able to try it on, so to speak, to see if it still fits. It seems noteworthy that unequal social status is not as evident in Phase 1 (when the women greet) and Phase 3 (when the women make future plans, very adultlike). Evidently, then, who each person "is" at a reunion (Moss & Moss, questions 1 and 2) and how they will relate to each other now (Moss & Moss, question 3) may be negotiated in the course of the encounter, with the performance of one person serving to "altercast" (Goffman, 1959) another. An inauguration of new social statuses (Troll's fourth function of a reunion) does not happen automatically in the case of Katie and Wilcox, but is negotiated in Phase 3 of their reunion.

Figure 9.   **Figure 10.**

Phase 3

The final phase of the chance reunion is evidenced by shifts in the participants' bodily orientations, whereby they project a completion of activity. When Katie steps toward the swivel chair, preparing to sit again, Wilcox turns and inspects her handbag (Figure 9). Handbags become relevant when people leave, because hand-bags travel with them, so by orienting toward her handbag, Wilcox projects her own departure. The swivel chair within this setting is used for (hence implies) hairdressing activity, which the chance reunion temporarily suspended. By sitting in the swivel chair (Figure 10), Katie literally goes back to where she was before the reunion began, one way to visibly project that the reunion is coming to an end.

Three features of vocal behavior during Phase 3 also project (and eventually accomplish) a completion of the reunion. First, the participants update their rela-tionship to the present. Katie tells about her move to California after the ninth grade, then her move back home where she raised her deceased brother's chil-dren, and so forth. The chronological progression of Katie's story presages the reunion's end (i.e., when telling reaches the present, the telling may be finished). Second, the participants begin to offer summaries of prior talk. For instance, when Katie discloses that she does not have children of her own, but is raising her deceased brother's children, Wilcox offers the gist of Katie's narrative:

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167   Wilcox:    Well that's close but ↑you had a good heart.
168   Katie:     Yes ma'am.
169                    (0.7)
170   Katie:     Yes ma'am.
171                    (0.3)
172   Katie:     ↑Had, I still do.
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The words "but you had a good heart" (Line 167) constitute a narrative gist of sorts whereby Wilcox moves to make sense of prior talk and put a positive slant on some rather unfortunate news. At the same time, the gist treats Katie's narrative as complete—that is, as something ready to be summarized—thereby supposing an end to that trajectory of the conversation. By aligning with Wilcox's gist (Lines 168–172), Katie collaborates in the completion of this line of conversation. Notice

that her third move to align is coupled with an update to the present (Line 172), which is also closing relevant. Third, Katie and Wilcox discuss future arrangements, as the following excerpt illustrates:

180   Katie: I te- I would like to get your telephone number
181   Wilcox: Okay
182   Katie: And you address when you have time,
183   cause I gotta get over here with Jane,
184   Wilcox: Okay

Katie announces her need to get Wilcox's telephone number (Line 180) and address (Line 182), which shifts the conversational topic from the past toward the future. By turning their attention toward their next reunion, the participants begin a transition out of the present one. Katie accounts for her request—"cause I gotta get over here with Jane" (Line 183)—which is also an admission that she is concluding the reunion and returning to her haircutting activity. Through a series of "Okay" utterances (Lines 181 and 184), Wilcox aligns with the transition underway. Thus, behaviors whereby the reunion is brought to a close also function "to accomplish a sense of continuation into the future" (Troll, 1988).

In summary, we have examined the videotaped data "from above" and offered three kinds of evidence that Katie and Wilcox engage in ritualistic forms of interaction that constitute a reunion (albeit impromptu). We have reviewed prior research that identified purposes, functions, and processes of reunions as they are generally understood and enacted, and then we located these within our data. When Katie recognizes her former elementary school teacher, they begin an extended conversation about who Katie is now (as compared to who she was) and they negotiate ways of relating in the present and future (as compared to how they related in the past). Their interaction functions to (a) put the women in touch with their past, (b) as they evaluate past events in light of present understanding and (c) then make plans for a future meeting, (d) in the process inaugurating Katie's new social status of adult. Thus, the chance meeting is carried off as a ritualistic enactment of a widely recognized cultural program called reunion. Second, we noted the videotaped comments of onlookers, who specifically label the interaction between Katie and Wilcox as a reunion and make observations about the functions and processes of the two women's behaviors. In our opinion, such sideline commentary strongly corroborates our "from above" findings. Leeds-Hurwitz, Sigman, with Sullivan (1995) demonstrated how a claim that some social encounter is programmatic should be built up through ethnographic interviews of those who participated in the encounter. We suggest that the offhand comments of onlookers, that is, their unsolicited disclosures about a social encounter, unencumbered by an interviewer's framing and probing, provide another resource (perhaps even a better resource) for claiming that some social encounter is programmatic. Third, we brought attention to the symmetrical structure of the communication between Katie and Wilcox, which prior research shows to be a hallmark of ritualistic behavior. In presenting these three forms of evidence, our argument is not that formal and chance reunions are equivalent events. Rather, we

have shown that the functions and processes of formal reunions may be enacted spontaneously, as when people reunite unexpectedly. The chance reunion is informal and ritualistic, not a formal ritual.

Multiple Involvements and Differential Ritual Enactment

At the same time that the interaction between Katie and Wilcox is recognizably programmatic, there are subtle differences in how the women participate in their reunion. Generally, Katie's behaviors focus intently upon Wilcox in ways that privilege and prolong the reunion as an activity (to the exclusion of other involvements). By contrast, Wilcox repeatedly orients to others in the salon, thereby showing the reunion to be embedded within and contingent upon other involvements, which she uses as a resource for concluding the reunion before Katie seems ready. In explicating this differential ritual enactment, we approach the videotaped data "from below" in a careful analysis of vocal and visible details, which provides for conclusions specific to this encounter. We focus on two portions of the data: the beginning (how the reunion emerges within the context of multiple involvements) and the ending (how the reunion is differentially negotiated toward a close).

Multiple Involvements in the Beginning
Immediately prior to the reunion, Katie is involved in at least two other activities simultaneously. One, she is doing beautification, sitting in a large swivel chair, making her head of hair available to Jane, the beautician who stands and works over her (see Figure 1). Two, Katie is participating in a lively group discussion (or argument) about whether animals have souls, minds, and an ability to make choices. Here is a brief transcribed excerpt:

1	Jane:	I say, we got a mi:nd, they ain't got no mind, they
2		ain't got no other choice but to follow
3	Katie:	They have uh- they hav- they have uh mi:nd

Katie's simultaneous involvement in these two activities is sometimes problematic. For example, when Katie disagrees with Jane's opinions about animals' souls (e.g., see Lines 1 to 3), Jane may spray toward Katie's forehead and face, which stifles Katie's involvement in the group discussion. Because beautification and conversation involve some of the same body parts, participation in one activity may have micropolitical consequences for participation in another.

When Katie initiates a reunion with her former schoolteacher, introducing yet another activity within the already busy salon, her behaviors are at first swallowed up by the multiple involvements already underway. Wilcox stands and prepares to leave the room when Katie notices and turns toward her (Figure 11). However, Jane immediately pulls Katie's face back to the haircutting task at hand (Figure 12). For about 30 seconds, Jane repeatedly turns Katie's body (sometimes by turning the chair) and even sprays Katie's face (Figure 13) to preserve the spatial

Figure 11.   **Figure 12.**   **Figure 13.**

integrity of the hairdressing activity. Thus, Katie must work to initiate a reunion, which is bodily at odds with other involvements.

At the same time that Katie orients toward Wilcox, Katie calls for a suspension of current activity, but Jane (and others) respond as though Katie's calls are merely another form of argument:

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 9    Jane:    =In his o::wn life it's ┌his o:wn (    )
10    Katie:                          └But- but but but wait uh minute wait
11             uh minute wait uh minute wait uh minute wait uh minute
12             ┌waita minute wait uh minute now y'all
13    Jane:    └A:::nd I always ca:ll (it)
```

While Jane continues the conversation about animals' souls (Line 9), Katie speaks in overlap, competing for the floor (Line 10). Literally, the words "wait uh minute" ask others (e.g., Jane) to temporarily stop what they are doing (i.e., hairdressing and/or conversing), which would enable a reunion to occur. Pragmatically, however, the words "wait uh minute" may be a bid for a turn at talk, perhaps a preface to a counterpoint within the ongoing argument, and Katie's bid for the floor is initially ignored. Jane continues her utterance to completion (Line 9) and then begins another with a conjunction (Line 13), thereby sequentially deleting Katie's interjections as though to avoid Katie's counterpoint.

Katie eventually succeeds in suspending both the hairdressing and the conversing. Abandoning the "wait uh minute" idiom, she talks explicitly outside the frame of the debate about animals' souls.

```
18    Ms X:    You aint no animal then
19    Katie:   ┌I really don- I really don't care
20    Ms Y:    └Why Edna start back up church again
21    Ms X:    Yeah I ain no animal, man
22    Ms Y:    Revival goin in here I don't know how much more-
23    Katie:   Okay, I'm not disputin anyone
```

Again speaking in overlap (Line 19), Katie vies for attention through an utterance-initial restart (Goodwin, 1980), and at the same time asserts, "I really don't care."

Figure 14.   **Figure 15.**

Her assertion is reunion-initiating, to the extent that not caring locates her outside the current argument, making relevant some other activity. Speaking even more loudly, Katie insists, "Okay, I'm not disputin <u>any</u>one" (Line 23). The word "Okay" is relevant to topic transition, a sort of vocal orientation to next position matters (Beach, 1993), and the words, "I'm not disputing," make it even more obvious that Katie is pursuing a new activity, not an argument about animals' souls.

Although Katie's persistence pays off—i.e., she eventually initiates a reunion—Jane strongly resists displacement of the hairdressing activity. When Katie begins to stand as to hug Wilcox, Jane continues to operate her comb and scissors, moving to keep Katie's head in place through work upon it. Kate becomes more explicit:

```
47    Katie:     Wait a minute Jane!
48                     ((Laughter (4.0) ))
49    Jane:      I gonna whip ya'll.
```

After calling upon Jane to suspend her work (Line 47), Katie reaches up and forcefully removes Jane's hands (Figure 14). Jane allows Katie to stand, but she also complains by (jokingly) threatening to whip Katie (Line 49). When Katie and Wilcox greet each other, Jane stands in the background with her comb raised and ready (Figure 15), marking the suspension of hairdressing (and hence the reunion as only temporary).

Thus, the reunion emerges from other involvements. Katie's reunion-initiating behaviors (visible and vocal) are initially absorbed by other activities. The reunion begins only after other activity is suspended, which depends upon the cooperation (e.g., silence) of others. Katie must negotiate a license to have a reunion, because it has consequences for the multiple involvements already underway. As we shall see, license to have a reunion is not permission to continue it indefinitely.

Differential Ritual Enactment, Toward the Ending
Although Katie and Wilcox jointly enact each phase of the chance reunion, methodically coordinating their vocal and visible behaviors to fill ritual requirements, there are notable differences in their performances. Wilcox talks with and about Katie in ways that perform for peripheral participants. To illustrate, here is a brief excerpt:
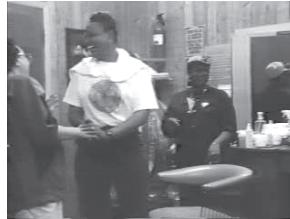
Figure 16.   **Figure 17.**   **Figure 18.**

```
96   Wilcox:   Katie was something else.
97                        ((Group laughter))
98   Jane:     ┌I-
99   Katie:    └No- no wait- wait uh minute
100  Katie:    ┌Wait uh minute
101  Jane:     └Look here, I'm trying to get her to sit down right here
102  Katie:    Okay, but it wasn't like see…
```

While Katie and Wilcox are reviewing the history of their relationship (i.e., Phase 2 of the reunion), Wilcox addresses other people in the room. The words "Katie was" (Line 96) treat Katie as the topic of discussion. Wilcox acknowledges others by addressing them, treating them as participants in the activity underway. Moreover, Wilcox's talk is coordinated with visible behaviors that show others to be the primary audience of her utterance. While holding Katie's hand, showing a connection with her, Wilcox turns her head to the right and toward others in the room (Figure 16); then she turns her head to the left and leans to the left, looking past Katie and toward Jane (Figure 17). By talking and moving in this way, Wilcox reviews the history of her relationship with Katie, thereby satisfying ritual requirements for the interaction, but she also casts others as participants in the activity, making the reunion another sort of group discussion. By laughing on cue (Line 97), the group collaborates in the inclusion that Wilcox invites. Notice that Jane continues to hold her comb high (Figures 16 and 17), a visible reminder that she (and hence Katie) have more hairdressing to do. Jane also touches and pats the chair with her other hand, index finger extended to form a point (Figures 16 and 17), potentially directing the attention of whoever looks her way (e.g., Wilcox in Figure 17) toward the chair, which implies hairdressing.

By contrast, Katie avoids interaction with anyone but Wilcox. When Wilcox turns and leans (Figure 17), Katie holds Wilcox's arm with both hands and orients her gaze and head toward Wilcox. Katie's focus in this moment is typical of her posture throughout the reunion: Katie does not align with Wilcox's moves to involve others. Although Katie does not look or turn toward others, they nevertheless orient toward her, and this has consequences for how the chance reunion is enacted and concluded.

Jane's behavior helps to move the reunion toward completion. When Wilcox talks (Line 96) and orients (Figure 17) toward Jane, Wilcox gives Jane a license

(Scheflen, 1976) to participate. Immediately after group laughter (Line 97), Jane elects to speak (Line 98). Holding the comb in midair and pointing with her index finger toward the swivel chair, Jane says "Look here" (Line 101), which directs others' attention toward her specific location and the haircutting activity that her behaviors imply. Jane continues, "I'm trying to get her to sit down right here" (Line 101). By referring to Katie as "her," Jane aligns with and at the same time addresses Wilcox, whose prior utterance also referred to Katie in third person (Line 96). With the words, "Sit down right here," Jane unmistakably calls for Katie to resume the haircutting activity. Meanwhile, Katie resists the multiple involvements that others are suggesting. She repeatedly says, "Wait uh minute" (Lines 99 and 100), speaking in overlap with Jane, contending for the conversational floor whereby Jane displays her participant status and moves to negotiate an end to the reunion. The words, "Wait uh minute," were used by Katie minutes earlier, when she was first working to initiate the reunion, and now Katie uses those same words to sustain the reunion that Jane is pushing toward a close. Having given Jane a license for participation, Wilcox now gives Jane's participation legitimacy. Immediately after Jane speaks (Line 101), Wilcox releases Katie's hands, then lifts her bag and looks down at it as if to inspect it (Figure 18). Thus, through subtle behaviors, Wilcox takes Jane's side in the negotiation of multiple involvements. By dropping Katie's hand and inspecting her bag, Wilcox withdraws from the sort of dyadic interaction that might have enabled Katie to sustain a privileged and prolonged reunion. Katie then turns her body to sit down (Figure 18), but her behavior is only a compromise because she sits oriented toward Wilcox and she immediately continues to review her relational history with Wilcox (Line 102).

After Katie sits, Wilcox repeatedly performs potential closing behaviors. For example, she repeatedly touches lightly upon Katie's arm or hand (Figures 19, 20, and 21), which is one way to signal and at the same time accomplish the conclusion of a social encounter (Jones & Yarbrough, 1985). Moreover, notice that with each touch, Wilcox is holding her handbag and orienting most of her body toward the exit, thereby projecting her departure. Nevertheless, each time, Katie fails to align with Wilcox's potential closings, and so the reunion continues, but only until the hairdressing is completed.

When Jane stops her hairdressing, she announces her completion and walks from the room.

160 Katie: an- and every year they took a square off.
161 Jane: Alright now (0.3) and you see she's a round filly, come on out
162   ((Jane exits))
163 Wilcox: Mm I'm so glad to see you.
164 Katie: Yes ma'am. I'm glad to see you too.

Talking at length about her youth, Katie tells of how schoolmates transformed her from a "Southern Belle" by regularly taking "squares" off of her (Line 160). When Jane announces that her hairdressing is finished (Line 161), she tailors her utterance as a sort of participation in the reunion. The words "alright now" (Line 161)

Figure 19.   Figure 20.   Figure 21.

mark the moment as transitional by shifting the conversation from past (i.e., Katie's youth) to the present (i.e., "now"). Jane makes a comment about Katie's beauty through the words, "You see she's a round filly" (Line 161), which simultaneously orients toward the reunion topic at hand and the beauty activity now completed. Jane's word "round" (Line 161) contrasts with Katie's word "square" (Line 160), and the word "filly" (Line 161) relates to the girlish experiences that Katie has been describing. In this way, Jane straddles multiple involvements and pushes both activities toward an end. With the words "come on out" (Line 161), Jane instructs Katie that her appointment is over, that the next step involves the cash register in the next room, and hence her reunion is also at an end. Providing a visible model for behavior, Jane exits the room (Line 162). When Wilcox speaks (Line 163), she does not pursue the topic of Katie's youth, but makes a comment about the present (Line 163) and at the same time lifts her handbag, locating it between her and Katie (Figure 22), again showing its present relevance. The two women produce a pair of symmetrical utterances (Lines 163 and 164) and within seconds they exit (Figure 23).

In sum, Kate and Wilcox both fill ritual requirements for the chance reunion, but in slightly different ways. Katie's behaviors privilege and prolong the reunion, while Wilcox promotes its advancement from one phase to the next and its conclusion. Specifically, the former teacher uses multiple involvements as an interactive resource. Because Wilcox oriented toward others while reviewing her relationship with Katie, the reunion becomes one of multiple activities that altogether move the reunion toward its conclusion. Wilcox gives others a license to participate, and Jane participates actively in bringing the reunion to an end.

Discussion and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study is to augment research on departure behavior. We began this essay by pointing out that past studies of departure behavior have been limited to the examination of dyadic exchanges and have treated verbal and nonverbal behaviors as separable phenomena. Even in the exceptional case where the integrative coordination of vocal and visible behaviors have been described (e.g., Heath, 1986), the possible influence of an encompassing social and material context on the closing of an interaction has not been explored empirically. The present analysis of a chance reunion within a beauty salon shows how (a) the

Figure 22.

Figure 23.

conclusion of an encounter may be vocally or visibly influenced by others present; (b) participants in an encounter may use the social and material surround as a resource for concluding their interaction; (c) the way an encounter begins may have consequences for how it may be appropriately concluded; and (d) the endings of ritualistic encounters necessarily relate to the programmatic whole and may be projected by their beginnings. We do not claim that all departures will unfold in the way we have described here, although we do conjecture that two-person encounters often begin and end under an umbrella of larger social circumstances that may be influential. Generalizability is not our goal. Rather, we have selected this chance reunion as a "virtuoso moment," an episode that "strikes the observer as being carried out in a particularly felicitous manner" (ten Have, 1999, p. 40), the analysis of which may thus reveal potential resources for interaction. We contend, further, as Sacks (1984) has said, that "detailed study of small phenomena may give an enormous understanding of the way humans do things and the kinds of objects they use to construct and order their affairs" (p. 24).

As the prior paragraph suggests, we have danced with a few closely related themes in the course of pursuing our primary purpose. Themes include ritualistic enactment (e.g., a chance reunion), management of multiple involvements, and differential ritualistic performance.

Ritualistic Enactment

Our videotaped data could not be adequately explicated without recognition that participants engage in ritualistic forms of interaction. Hence, we suggest that the older and currently neglected concept of cultural rituals in interpersonal communication remains viable (Rothenbuhler, 1998). Through study of our videotaped data "from above," we have shown how the chance reunion between Katie and Wilcox generally conforms to the culturally ordained functions and process of reunions that researchers have identified. Standing in the middle of the beauty salon, the two women discuss who Katie is (as compared to the person she used to be), continually moving, hugging, touching, and speaking in ways that constitute new ways of relating to each other as adults (cf. Moss & Moss, 1988). Consistent with Troll (1988), the interaction between Katie and Wilcox functions to (a) put the women in touch with their past as they talk about mutual experiences in elementary school; (b) reevaluate past events from a present-day and adult perspective; (c) exchange phone numbers and establish plans for a future meeting; and (d) inaugurate a new social status for Katie as an adult. Spontaneously and in

full view of onlookers (and analysts), Katie and Wilcox attend to ritual requirements, coordinating their behaviors in recognizable ways—a few onlookers specifically talk about the interaction as a reunion, suggesting that a certain pattern of interaction is unfolding.

Once the reunion begins, certain social expectations may be met. The participants organize their encounter into three rather clear phases. In Phase 1, the opening, the participants acknowledge the existence of a prior and significant relationship. In Phase 2, they review their relational history and reenact differential social status. Phase 3, the closing, involves updating of life events and moving toward departure, including summarizing their encounter and referencing a future relationship. Perhaps these phases would be evident in virtually any chance reunion, although this can be determined only by further research. However, it is worth noting that the present analysis is consistent with the previous findings of other researchers. For example, some of Katie's and Wilcox's behaviors closely resemble the greeting ritual described by Kendon and Ferber (1973), although only the first phase, "sighting, orientation and initiation of approach," and the last phase, "close salutation," are relevant to this incident. Likewise, Phase 3 involves all three functions of good-byes identified by Goffman (1971) and Knapp et al. (1973)—that is, "signaling inaccessibility," "signaling support," and "summarization." These parallel findings suggest that the events depicted in the present study are not entirely unique to this time, place, and participants.

Multiple Involvements

Beauty salon participants are busy with hairdressing activities and an intense group discussion about animals' souls, until these activities are (temporarily) displaced by the chance reunion. Goffman (1963) made distinctions that are relevant to this process:

> A dominant involvement is one whose claims upon an individual the social occasion obliges him to be ready to recognize; a subordinate involvement is one he is allowed to sustain only to the degree, and during the time, that his attention is patently not required by the involvement that dominates him. (p. 44)

In addition, Goffman says that a "main" involvement, that which occupies most of the attention of individuals, may be either dominant over or subordinate to other activities. Within the salon, hairdressing is initially the dominant involvement, while the group discussion is the main (and subordinate) involvement. Through carefully orchestrated vocal and visible behaviors, participants bring about a shift in what constitutes the dominant involvement. Katie calls for a suspension of current activity, pulls away from Jane's controlling touch and hair-spraying activity, and orients toward Wilcox. With Wilcox's full participation in greeting, these acts function to set aside the dominant activity (hairdressing) and halt the group's discussion. Jane's actions tend to counteract this shift as she holds up her comb in midair, motions toward the chair, and verbalizes her objection ("I gonna whip ya'll"). Eventually, Wilcox helps the hairdressing activity to be reinstated—for

example, when she glances toward Jane and others in the room as if to invite participation. Despite Katie's efforts to maintain her reunion as the dominant activity, she cannot escape her social and material surround; she eventually returns to the swivel chair, yielding to the persistence of a hairdresser with comb held high, which supports hairdressing as a dominant activity.

The management of multiple involvements has been explored in previous microanalytic and conversation analytic studies. For example, Erickson (1992) showed how members of a family combined eating and talking in a cohesive rhythm. Goodwin and Goodwin (1992) also analyzed conversation during a meal, while also illustrating how a side involvement that challenged the performance of one interactant could be acknowledged but also suppressed. Streeck (1983) examined how schoolchildren engaged in leave-taking and returning to a group in a way that did not detract from the central learning activity, and Egbert (1997) put forward the concept of "schisming" to show how participants in a group discussion used conversational devices to divide into subgroup interactions. However, none of these previous studies examined encounters in which a primary activity is challenged and temporarily superseded by a new conversational involvement, and it is this process that the present study opens up.

Differential Ritualistic Performance

Katie and Wilcox fill ritual requirements for their chance reunion, albeit differently. Although the management of multiple involvements is important to the onset of the reunion, it becomes key to how the reunion is concluded: Wilcox regularly orients to others in the salon, showing the reunion to be embedded within and contingent upon other involvements, which she uses as a resource for concluding the reunion before Katie seems ready. For instance, during the second phase of the reunion, Wilcox jokes while looking at others (e.g., Jane) and then toward her handbag, visibly signaling her imminent departure. At the very least, Wilcox's behaviors are instrumental in returning Katie to the chair, where hairdressing continues. In the end, Jane finishes her hairdressing and at the same time announces an end to the reunion.

Thus, at the same time that our study promotes the notion of ritual in communication research, we recognize that how rituals are enacted is subject to negotiation as conversational participants mutually influence one another. We suggest that these two kinds of phenomena are linked functionally. That is, as persons find new ways of coordinating their communicative behaviors, ways not codified in cultural programs or rituals ("differentiation" in the present example), these innovative patterns may be adopted by others as useful ways of relating and thus may ultimately come to be disseminated widely, so that what was once novel becomes absorbed into the culture as interaction ritual. Finally, we submit that the theoretical framework demonstrated here may have broader applicability and may be useful as a means of approaching holistic analysis of verbal and nonverbal interaction. We have shown how videotaped data may be approached both from above and from below (Sigman, 1987) in consideration of the interplay of cultural rituals and coactively created processes.

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