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The Boundary of Recruitment: A Response

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ABSTRACT

In their commentaries, both Heritage (2016/*this issue*) and Zinken and Rossi (2016/*this issue*) provide some context for our concept of and approach to recruitment in terms of previous research into requesting and offering. In doing so, they usefully consider what might be the “boundaries” of recruitment—what might be included and what might not be included or treated as recruitment. We respond here to their suggestions concerning these boundaries.

We appreciate these commentaries by Zinken and Rossi (2016/*this issue*) and Heritage (2016/*this issue*). They help to situate our account of “recruitment” in the broader context of the tradition of work on requesting and offering. Heritage highlights how radically we are departing from a speech act tradition (foreshadowed in Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014), correctly attributing this departure to our focus on face-to-face interaction. Not only does this require us to investigate the embodied character of interaction, but through a consideration of the multimodality of communication (e.g., Mondada, 2014), it also directs us toward the here-and-now nature of requests that inhabit face-to-face interactions. Requests for future assistance, or deferred action requests, are, Heritage reminds us, overwhelmingly verbal and thereby more amenable to a speech act approach. Heritage has helpfully clarified some of the parameters of our proposal to draw together requesting and offering, including volunteering assistance, into a social interactional process of recruitment.

Zinken and Rossi (Z&R; 2016/*this issue*) likewise consider the parameters of our conception of recruitment but regard our account as having omitted “an important part of the management of cooperation, which is the solicitation of contributions to joint courses of action” (p. 24), particularly those deriving from an “already established commitment to a wider and shared course of actions” (p. 20 and elsewhere). It is difficult to see that or how their examples substantiate this putative omission; their first three examples, at least, are paradigmatic examples of recruitments managed, as we propose, through a combination of trouble alerts and embodied displays of trouble. The mother (Aga) may have primary responsibility for looking after the child; nevertheless she recruits Piotr’s assistance (in Z&R’s Extract 1) and is recruited by Piotr (in Extract 2), through exactly the processes we outline. So too is Tamara’s assistance in Extract 3 recruited through Pauline’s formulation of a problem (line 22), which Z&R acknowledge. That Piotr’s offer *Give him here* (Extract 1, line 5) comes in imperative form is orthogonal to our analysis, which concerns recruitment as an organization of action, not of grammar. The methods of recruitment at work in their examples are no different than those we describe in our article.

However, Z&R raise an important issue with their final example, in which a “joint activity made of ordered moves” allows for a specific next action to be highly projectable (p. 25). Preparing a meal, Sofia peels a potato and places it on Paolo’s board; he cuts it. In our terms Sofia’s action recruits Paolo; Z&R present this as an example of recruitment without assistance, a simple “contribution” to

a course of action. While we do not favor this characterization, the example is instructive, demonstrating that an action that facilitates the realization of a practical course of action need not be generated contingently. One way to manage possible troubles that could impede a course of action is to *premanage* them, as the participants here have done through an ad hoc division of labor. Sequences such as this, in which participants arrange their actions in advance and execute a task without a hitch, may well lie at or outside the boundary of recruitment.

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