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**Article:**

Kendrick, Kobin H. [orcid.org/0000-0002-6656-1439](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6656-1439) (2021) The 'Other' side of recruitment: Methods of assistance in social interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*. pp. 68-82. ISSN 0378-2166

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.02.015>

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**The ‘Other’ Side of Recruitment:  
Methods of Assistance in Social Interaction<sup>1</sup>**

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## **1 Introduction**

In our everyday lives, we routinely experience troubles, difficulties, or needs that disrupt or threaten to disrupt the practical courses of action in which we engage – a knife too dull to cut properly, a bag that won’t open, an obstacle in our path. A great many of these we manage on our own: we sharpen the knife, we pry the bag open, we stop what we’re doing to remove the obstacle. However, in the presence of others, who perceive our needs and respond with empathy and altruism, the recognition of our difficulty provides for their recruitment into our course of action. The management of the trouble thus becomes an interactional process, and its resolution an interactional achievement. The social organization of assistance is conceptualized as the co-operation of methods employed by Self, one who experiences a trouble, and those employed by Other(s) that provide assistance (Kendrick & Drew, 2016). Methods employed by Self that expose a trouble to public view and thereby create a systematic opportunity for Other(s) to provide assistance are methods of recruitment. While Kendrick and Drew (2016) identified, described, and compared methods that in effect recruit Other(s) to assist, we did not systematically investigate the methods employed by Other(s)

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<sup>1</sup> Kendrick, K. H. (in press). “The ‘Other’ Side of Recruitment: Methods of Assistance in Social Interaction”. *Journal of Pragmatics*.

that manifest or embody that recruitment. Such methods of assistance are the focus of this enquiry.

Despite the centrality of recruitment to the management of social cohesion and solidarity in social interaction (Kendrick & Drew, 2016), the provision of assistance as such has not been a major focus of research in CA.<sup>2</sup> It has, however, been addressed in studies of social actions such as requesting, offering, and giving advice. These have identified practices through which assistance can be rendered and the sequential environments in which they are employed. While research on requesting has tended to define the action broadly (see Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014), some studies have focused in particular on requests that solicit or enlist assistance as a conditionally relevant response (e.g., Lindström, 2005; Zinken & Ogiermann, 2013). Research on offers of assistance has examined various linguistic forms that such offers can take (e.g., Curl, 2006; Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Keevallik, 2017), the benefactive stance that they display (Clayman & Heritage, 2014), and the visible bodily actions that accompany their production (Kärkkäinen & Keisanen, 2012). As we will see, a relevant alternative to offering assistance is giving advice (see Section 3.3.1). Studies of advice have largely but not exclusively focused on institutional interactions in which professionals provide advice to service users (e.g., Heritage & Sefi, 1992). In addition to the sequential organization and linguistic construction of advice, studies have explored the asymmetrical social relations indexed by advice, including implications of competence and incompetence on the part of the advice giver and receiver, respectively (e.g., Heritage & Sefi,

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<sup>2</sup> While assistance in ordinary interaction has not been a major focus of research in CA, research on assistance provided by professional services — from telephone helplines (see Bloch & Leydon, 2019) and emergency calls (e.g., Whalen & Zimmerman, 1990) to commercial service encounters (e.g., Fox & Heinemann, 2021) — has yielded insights into the management of troubles, difficulties, and needs in various institutional settings.

1992; Shaw & Hepburn, 2013; Heinemann & Steensig, 2017). In none of these studies, however, is assistance per se the central concern.

Rather than beginning with vernacular actions such as offers or requests and examining their implementation, research on the recruitment of assistance begins with a social organizational problem: how do participants in interaction recognize and resolve troubles that emerge in practical courses of action (Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 2)? Studies of recruitment have investigated various ways in which participants in social interaction solicit, elicit, and provide assistance (Floyd et al., 2014; Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Kendrick & Drew, 2016; Drew & Kendrick, 2018; Jansson et al., 2019; Floyd, Rossi, & Enfield, 2020; Kendrick & Drew, in prep.). Kendrick and Drew (2016) identified a continuum of methods employed by one who experiences a trouble, difficulty, or need, Self, that have as a possible outcome or effect the recruitment of assistance by Other(s).<sup>3</sup> The methods span from explicit requests, which establish a normative obligation for the provision of assistance, to embodied displays of trouble that occasion voluntary offers and projectable troubles that elicit anticipatory assistance. The recruitment of assistance is thus conceptualized as a social organizational problem for which participants have practiced solutions (Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 2; see Schegloff, 2006).

Recruitment in the technical sense is an outcome or effect – someone’s having been recruited into another’s course of action – that various methods can achieve. It should not be understood as an action or a class of actions per se. To do so would conflate analytically distinct actions and obscure systematic differences between methods of recruitment (see

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<sup>3</sup> The distinction between Self and Other in research on recruitment locates the origo of an evident trouble, difficulty, or need in the course of action of an individual. It does not, however, necessarily attribute exclusive ownership or responsibility of the trouble to a single participant. Research on the organization of repair has shown that the concept of Self can, on some occasions, be a collective one (Bolden, 2013). Whether and how this figures into the organization of assistance is an open question.

Kendrick & Drew, 2016, pp. 10-11; Kendrick, 2020, pp. 137-139). Recruitment thus provides an alternative to a classificatory conceptualization of social action (e.g., Searle's, 1976, concept of "directives"), not a reinstatement of it in a new guise. To borrow the language of speech act theory, recruitment is more akin to a perlocutionary effect (Austin, 1962) than a class of illocutionary force (Searle, 1976).

It is important to recognize that in its technical usage "recruitment" does not attribute intentions or motives to participants. In the vernacular sense, the word denotes a deliberate and intentional act to get someone to join an organization or cause. The technical usage, however, removes the attribution of intention but retains the outcome or effect, though an individual is recruited into a course of action, not a larger social unit. An embodied display of trouble, for example, provides an occasion for an offer of assistance whether the display was incidentally 'given off' as a byproduct of an instrumental action (e.g., searching for an object, see Drew & Kendrick, 2018) or whether it was intentionally 'fishing for' an offer (if indeed one can distinguish between the two empirically; see Haugh, 2017). In either case, a participant who takes the opportunity to offer assistance will have been recruited into the course of action. The intentions of the participants, insofar as they can be known, are beside the point.

Although the concept of recruitment embraces all methods that solicit, elicit, or provide assistance (Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 2), because it emerged out of research on requesting in social interaction (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Kendrick & Drew, 2014), studies of recruitment have thus far focused on methods employed by Self that recruit the assistance of Other. The methods employed by Other – the various ways in which one person comes to help another – have yet to be fully examined. In our analysis of methods of recruitment employed by Self, Kendrick and Drew (2016) identified three methods of assistance. It was shown that Other can (i) provide assistance in response to a request, (ii)

offer it after a report, alert, or embodied display of trouble, or (iii) anticipate and preempt a projectable trouble. The methods employed by Other thus included both self-initiated assistance (via requests) and other-initiated assistance (via offers and preemptions). While the methods of recruitment employed by Self were identified, described, and systematically compared, the methods of assistance employed by Other did not receive the same scrutiny.

In this article, I extend the analysis of recruitment developed by Kendrick and Drew (2016) to include the methods of assistance employed by Other – the linguistic and embodied practices that manifest Other’s recruitment into Self’s course of action upon recognition of a trouble, difficulty, or need. The analysis examines cases of other-initiated assistance, that is, methods of assistance through which Other initiates an action or course of action that has as a possible outcome the management or resolution of Self’s trouble and systematically relevant alternatives to them. I first document the methods of assistance that occur in everyday social interaction, which span from embodied displays of attention and availability to interventions into courses of actions and moves to preempt troubles before they occur. I then argue that the methods of assistance, together with the methods of recruitment, form a coherent social organization of alternative methods employed by Self and Other for the management of troubles, difficulties, and needs in the progressive realization of practical courses of action.

## **2 Data and collection**

The data for the study came from two video corpora: the Language and Social Interaction Archive (Wingard, 2010) and a set of recordings made by Giovanni Rossi in 2011. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The recordings capture mundane interactions in English among friends, family, and colleagues across a range of social settings and do not include service encounters. The study was based on a collection of over 500 cases in which participants encountered evident troubles, difficulties, or needs that disrupted or impeded the

moment-by-moment progressive realization of practical courses of action (on which see Lerner & Raymond, in prep.). The troubles included, for example, the absence of a necessary object, conditions that hindered or obstructed the performance of an action, or the occurrence of an adverse event that required remediation before the course of action could continue. The provision of assistance in such cases consisted in the performance of an action by Other that in effect managed or resolved the trouble and thus facilitated the resumption of Self's course of action or its progression towards completion. The collection also included actions that routinely serve as alternatives or preliminaries to the provision of assistance per se (e.g., monitoring a trouble instead of or before offering assistance).

### **3 Methods of assistance**

#### **3.1 Embodied displays of attention and availability**

To begin, let us consider methods employed by Other that display attention to Self's trouble and indicate an availability to assist. Such methods do not constitute assistance per se in that they do not have as possible outcomes the management or resolution of the trouble; but they are nonetheless integral to the organization of assistance. Embodied displays of attention and availability occupy the same environments as other methods and indeed routinely serve as alternatives and preliminaries to them.

##### **3.1.1 Attending and monitoring**

If a trouble emerges in a practical course of action, the methods employed by Self to resolve it, either through self-remediation or recruitment, systematically draw the attention of co-present Others. Embodied displays of attention, whether solicited or volunteered, demonstrate

Other's solicitousness towards Self and allow the Other to diagnose the trouble, monitor Self's management of it, and determine whether assistance is necessary. Such displays vary in duration and can involve not only movements of the head and eyes but also gestures and reorientations of the body. In the following extract, as Kimmy prepares a barbecue in a park together with friends, she evidently has difficulty lighting the coals under the grill. She reports this trouble to the others ("du:de this thing is totally not diggin' our fuckin' coa:ls", lines 2-5) and thereby creates an opportunity for them to provide assistance, among other alternatives (Curl, 2006; Kendrick & Drew, 2016; Haugh, 2017). The report draws the attention of Alison who turns and directs her gaze to the trouble zone even before Kimmy's turn comes to completion (line 5; see Figure 1).

Extract 1 [LSIA BBQ 13:59]  
 1 DON: ( )  
 2 KIM: [du:de this thing [is totally not=  
 3 DON: [meh h e h h e h [heh  
 4 CAR: [why not.  
 5 KIM: =diggin' our fuck+in' #coa:ls.  
 ali +gaze to BBQ-->  
 fig #fig.1  
 6 (0.6)  
 7 CAR: maybe it's all the dirt.  
 8 (0.6)+(0.3)  
 ali +gaze to table-->  
 9 KIM: dude +it's# not dirt it's called  
 ali +gaze to BBQ-->  
 fig #fig.2



ALI fig.1 KIM fig.2

10 ash:::  
 11 CAR: °yea(h)h that's also dirt.°  
 12 (1.2)  
 13 ALI: good job Ki:mmy.  
 14 (0.7)  
 15 KIM: I'm tryin' over here.  
 16 ALI: yea:[h.  
 17 DON: [I'm just eating all the icing.  
 18 ALI: successful+ly.  
 +gazes away-->>



Alison raises her right hand and places it on the side of her chin, adopting a pensive “thinking face” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986) as she gazes at the grill (see Figure 2). She maintains this position and the direction of her gaze for approximately 1.5 seconds, glances quickly at the table (line 8), and then returns her gaze to the grill for a further 4.3 seconds. In this way, Alison visibly monitors the trouble to which Kimmy’s report has called attention. As she monitors the scene, Alison produces a positive assessment (“good j<sub>o</sub>b K<sub>i</sub>:mmy”, line 13) and thereby orients to the relevance of her own embodied conduct: monitoring allows her to observe the trouble, assess Kimmy’s management of it, and determine whether her assistance is necessary. Although the positive assessment treats the trouble as one that does not require assistance, and thus accounts for her not offering assistance or intervening, Kimmy’s response (“I’m tryin’ over here”, line 15) rejects the compliment and implies that the difficulty persists. Despite this, Alison adds a ‘subversive’ increment (Bolden, Hepburn, & Potter, 2019) to Kimmy’s response (“successfully”, line 18) that undermines this implication and reasserts her positive assessment. It is at this moment, after Alison has assessed Kimmy’s management of the trouble as successful, that she stops monitoring the trouble and resumes her previous activities (line 18). The increment thus provides an account for withdrawing her involvement in the course of action and further evidences the relevance of monitoring the trouble. In this case, then, although Other does not assist Self, her actions – the positive assessment and subversive increment – account for the absence of assistance and thus orient to its relevance.

Attending and monitoring are systematically the first methods employed by Other upon recognition of Self’s trouble. Indeed it is through these actions that Other visibly displays their recognition of the trouble and their incipient recruitment into Self’s course of action. Attending and monitoring routinely precedes other methods of assistance such as offers (see, e.g., Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 8 and Extracts 5 and 6 below) and thus serve as

preliminaries to them, projecting assistance as a possible next action, contingent upon Other's assessment of the trouble and Self's management of it

### 3.1.2 Approaching and standing by

Once the Other's attention has been drawn to Self's trouble, further methods of assistance become available. Approaching the trouble zone, that is, moving into the interactional space (Mondada, 2009) in which the trouble and its management occur, affords a closer inspection, potentially facilitates a diagnosis, and displays an availability to assist. A participant who enters the trouble zone, or indeed is already there, and who then monitors the scene and displays no other involvement or focus of attention stands by and exhibits a readiness to help insofar as an orientation to Self's trouble becomes Other's primary involvement. In the following extract, as a group of housemates prepare a meal in their kitchen, one of them, Kylie, pours tortilla chips into a large bowl on the counter (lines 1-3). She then suspends all body movement for approximately 2.3 seconds, with her hands held in a non-rest position and her gaze directed to the counter (see Figure 3). The suspension of body movement is recognizable as a disruption to the progressivity of her course of action (e.g., she has not yet set down the bag) and therefore serves as an embodied display of trouble (cf. Floyd et al., 2015; Oloff, 2018).

Extract 2 [LSIA Never 29:00]

1 **TIN:** \*maybe: since the cards were sent to that  
 kyl \*pours chips into bowl-->

2 **address maybe they: (.) called the bank**

3 **and they um: (0.8) \*°(stopped) it.=I**  
 kyl -->\*holds position-->

4 **+don't kno:w.°**  
 tin +turns twds KYL-->

5 **COU: ↑I don't+ kno:w.#**  
 tin -->+walks to counter-->  
 fig #fig.3

6 (1.0)

7 **BRA: or\* they went on a shopping spree.**  
 kyl ->\*

8 (1.1)+ (0.7) +(0.3)  
 tin -->+shifts weight+holds position-->

9 **COU: hey that too.**

10 (0.3)#  
 fig #fig.4

11 **BRA: huh huh heh=**

12 **COU: =bought a round ticket to Europe.**

13 **KYL: I'm gonna put [+these# in the other room.=**

14 **TIN: [+should put-**  
 kyl \*picks up items-->  
 tin -->+picks up items-->  
 fig #fig.5



KYL TIN

fig.3 fig.4 fig.5

15 **KYL: =[so that I stop eating them. mm [hm: hm:**

16 **TIN: [and this one::? [and the**

17 **sa:lisa:?**

18 (0.2)

19 **KYL: mm hm[:.**

20 **TIN: [both of 'em?**

21 **KYL: ↑mm hm.**

22 (1.3)+(0.2)\*(0.1)  
 tin -->+walks into dining room-->>  
 kyl \*walks into dining room-->>

23 **TIN: al:right.**

As Kylie holds this position, Tina, who has been telling her housemates about a missing bank card, turns towards Kylie and appears to gaze in her direction (see Section 3.1.1; line 4, Figure 3). Tina then walks over to the kitchen counter and directs her gaze to the bowls. Approaching the trouble zone affords a closer view of the scene, facilitates a possible diagnosis of the trouble, and displays a greater involvement in Self's course of action.

Moreover, it also allows Other to employ methods of assistance such as physical intervention that cannot be employed at a distance. When Tina then silently stands by for approximately 4.5 seconds (lines 5-14; see Figure 4) and shows herself to have no other involvements, she thereby makes herself available to assist. As soon as Kylie begins to announce her plan of action to Tina (“I’m gonna put these in the other room”, line 13), Tina begins to produce a verbal offer and quickly reaches out and picks up items from the counter (lines 13-14). In this case, then, a subtle yet recognizable embodied display of trouble by Self — the suspension of all body movement in a non-resting position — occasions an approach and an equally subtle yet equally recognizable display of availability to assist by Other.

### 3.2 Methods that index or formulate the trouble

Central to the organization of assistance are methods employed by Self and Other that index or formulate a trouble and thereby establish an opportunity for recruitment and remediation. Such methods include alerts which indicate that a trouble has occurred and reflect aspects of its nature and reports that formulate the trouble in context-specific terms (Kendrick & Drew, 2016). Employed by Self, alerts and reports solicit the attention of Other, furnish resources for trouble recognition, and create an opportunity for Other to volunteer assistance. The same methods can, however, also be employed by Other. In this section, we will consider such “other-alerts” and “other-reports” as well as the environments in which they occur.

#### 3.2.1 Alerting

Generally speaking, it is the one who experiences a trouble, Self, whose actions, in one way or another, first allow Other to recognize that it has occurred. The methods by which Self’s troubles, difficulties, and needs become recognizable to Other are methods of recruitment

(Kendrick & Drew, 2016). On some occasions, however, a trouble may become recognizable to Other in the course of Self's actions without it having been publicly noticed or registered by Self. The methods employed by Self to alert Other that a trouble or difficulty has occurred can also be employed by *Other* to alert *Self* to a trouble in his or her own course of action. In the following extract, as Gabriel holds a small dog on his lap while seated at a dining room table, the dog begins to lick an empty plate set in front of him (line 3; see Figure 6). A few minutes before the extract begins, Gabriel's partner, Camilla, asked him to hold the dog while she went to the kitchen. The holding of the dog constitutes a practical course of action in that it involves the performance of a series of actions that sustain it. These include supporting the weight of the dog with his hands, adjusting its position, and constraining its movements, among others. The course of action also has normative expectations associated with it, as we can see in this extract. The dog's actions – licking the plate in front of it – violate these expectations, disrupt the course of action, and thus constitute a trouble in need of remediation.

Extract 3 [LSIA FDA1 53:46]  
 1 DOL: drinking more, cause they think they're not  
 2 (getting) no calories?  
 3 (0.4)\*(0.5)#+(0.3)  
 dog \*licks GAB's plate-->  
 gab +gazes at dog-->>  
 fig #fig.6  
 4 CAM: ↑.HHhhh [C+\*AREfu:#[:1:..  
 5 DOL: [N+\*Q:..  
 6 GAB: [oop.  
 +lifts dog-->>  
 dog -->\*<br>
 fig #fig.7



DOL CAM

GAB

fig.6

fig.7

7 (0.3)  
 8 CAM: heh heh heh heh heh

Although Gabriel's gaze is initially directed across the table at Dolores and not at the dog, the dog's movements would be felt by Gabriel and would likely be visible in his periphery. Indeed, after the dog licks the plate for approximately 0.5 seconds, Gabriel directs his gaze downward towards the dog but does not otherwise register its actions or move to prevent them (line 3). From his perspective, however, the nature of the dog's actions may not be recognizable. At this moment, Camilla, who is seated to Gabriel's right and has had her gaze held on the dog for several seconds (see Section 3.1.1; see Figure 6), produces a rapid, audible inhalation, a gasp ("↑.HHhhh", line 4). The form of the trouble alert, which is selected from a set of alternatives, both reflects and constructs the nature of the trouble to which it calls attention (Kendrick & Drew, in prep.). A gasp indicates that something sudden and unexpected has happened in a course of action, something which has caught someone off guard, as it were.

The fact that an alert may be produced by Self *or* Other creates a practical problem for participants: if the one who produces the alert is not necessarily the one who has experienced the trouble, how can participants locate the trouble and the course of action in which it has occurred? In this case, Camilla's gaze is directed to the trouble zone as she produces the alert, and she is not herself engaged in a practical course of action to which the alert could draw attention. With his gaze already on the dog, Gabriel would hear Camilla's alert — a form that retroactively indexes and reflexively constitutes a trouble — as he observes the dog's movements before him. Operating as a prospective indexical (Goodwin, 1996), the alert would prompt a search for its source: what has suddenly and unexpectedly occurred and who has been caught off guard? The alert evidently allowed Gabriel to recognize the dog's actions as the source and he himself as the one who has been caught off guard. Immediately after the alert, he quickly lifts the dog away from the plate and produces a trouble alert of his own, "oop" (line 6), indexing a minor loss of control (Goffman, 1978;

Kendrick & Drew, in prep.). At the same time, Camilla formulates a generalized solution to the trouble for Gabriel to perform (“CAREfu::l:”, line 4; see Section 3.3.1) while Delores reprimands the dog (“NO:”, line 5).

### 3.2.2 Reporting

While an alert, selected from a set of alternatives, reflects and constructs the nature of the trouble to which it calls attention, it does not formulate or describe the trouble in context-specific terms. If a trouble would not be evident upon inspection of the scene, Other may elaborate an initial alert with an additional turn component that specifies the trouble and thereby enables trouble recognition. In the following extract, as Steven eats a piece of sugarcane, juice begins to drip from the stalk onto the floor. When Kelly turns and gazes in Steven’s direction, she evidently notices this.

Extract 4 [LSIA Sleepover 3 09:00]  
 1 ((Steven is chewing a piece of sugarcane))  
 2 **KEL:** +that’s like wu-+  
 +turns twds STE-+  
 3 **KEL:** >>.h#hh+hh EY you’re- +you’re<< #like (.)  
 fig #fig.8 #fig.9  
 kel +extends finger+holds-->  
 4 **dripping i:t.+**  
 kel -->+



KEL STE

fig.8 fig.9

5 +± (0.2) ±+  
 +retracts fngr+  
 †gazes twds floor-->>  
 6 **STE:** †heh heh he:h  
 7 (1.0)  
 8 **KEL:** eh HEH HEH he(h)y Lo(h)l(h) li(h)ckin it.

Kelly immediately adopts a facial expression of surprise, with raised eyebrows and a lowered jaw (see Figure 8), and produces a trouble alert (“>>.hhhhh EY<<”, line 3). As a practice for the solicitation of attention, the “ey” particle treats the trouble initially as one of Steven’s inattention. Kelly then elaborates the alert with a component that specifies the trouble (“>>you’re<< like (.) dripping i:t”, lines 3-4). Whereas the alert indicates generally that something has slipped Steven’s attention, the report formulates what this is in context-specific terms. Simultaneous with her talk, Kelly takes a step forward (see Section 3.1.2) and moves her right hand, with the index finger extended, directly under the stalk such that the juice lands on her fingertip rather than the floor (lines 3-4; see Figure 9). This action both locates the trouble spatially and mitigates its consequences (see Section 3.4.1). Steven then walks over to the counter, holds the sugarcane over a plate, and shakes it to remove the excess juice. In this case, then, an Other who observes a trouble in the course of Self’s actions employs various methods of assistance, including a trouble report, that occasion a resolution of the trouble by Self.

Alerts and reports by Other share a common environment: both occur when Self has not publicly noticed or registered an evident trouble in the course of their actions. It is more generally the case, however, that the first public indication of a trouble comes from Self’s own conduct, such as subsidiary actions that attend to and expose difficulties to public view (Kendrick & Drew, 2016). It is comparatively rare for the first sign of trouble to come from Other. This suggests an ordering in which methods employed by Self that register a trouble publicly precede those employed by Other that do so (cf. Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977). Alerts and reports by Other are thus best understood as second alternatives to actions by Self that display a recognition of the trouble.

### 3.3 Methods that formulate a possible solution



Whereas the methods described in the previous section orient to a trouble in Self's course of action, indexing it with an alert or formulating it in a report, the methods we will examine in this section — advising and offering — concern possible solutions to the trouble which Other formulates for either Self or Other to implement. A common environment for giving advice and offering assistance is in next position to reports or displays of troubles, difficulties, and needs (Curl, 2006; Kendrick & Drew, 2016).

### 3.3.1 Advising

A method of assistance that formulates a possible solution to a trouble in Self's course of action for Self to implement is giving advice (cf. Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Heinemann & Steensig, 2017). In the following extract, after Kelly begins to cut a sushi roll on the counter in front of her with a knife, she suddenly stops, directs her gaze to her sister, Tina, and reports a trouble: “>oh my god sister< this is the: du:llest blade I've ever had in my life” (lines 3-4).

Extract 5 [LSIA Sleepover 1 34:30]

```

1      +(2.4)+
      kel      +wets knife in water+
2      +(1.1)+(1.9)+
      +.....+begins to cut sushi roll+
3  KEL:   >oh my god sister< this is the:
4      *du:llest blade I've ever had# in
      bri      *turns, gazes at KEL-->>
      fig                                  #fig.10
5      my life.
6  TIN:   then sharpen# it.
      fig                                  #fig.11

```



```

      TIN      KEL
      fig.10          BRI
      fig.11
7      (0.4)+(0.8)
      kel      +sets down knife-->
8  BRI:   want me to sharpen it?+
      kel      -->+
9      (0.2)
10 KEL:  ↑yes please.

```

The trouble report, which is prefaced by the alert “>oh my god<” (Kendrick & Drew, in prep.) and formulated as an extreme case (Pomeranz, 1986), occasions the provision assistance by Other(s) (see Curl, 2006; Kendrick & Drew, 2016). The response that Tina provides (“then sharpen it”, line 6) formulates an action for Kelly to perform that could resolve the trouble and allow her course of action to continue. It is a possible solution constructed as a first pair-part, making the implementation of the solution by Kelly conditionally relevant. Insofar as the solution is one that Kelly can perform on her own, the advice conveys that intervention by Tina is unnecessary. Moreover, the particle “then” designs the solution as an inferentially available consequence of the trouble described in the report. In this way, the advice implies not only that Kelly can resolve the trouble without Tina’s assistance, but also that this should be evident to Kelly. So constructed, the advice treats the trouble report as inapposite insofar as it undermines one possible basis for its relevance: if Kelly can manage the trouble on her own, why report it? Even before her turn

comes to completion, Tina turns from Kelly and begins to walk away (see Figure 11), a move that embodies a unilateral closure of the sequence. Just as Kelly then begins to set the knife on the counter, which indicates that she rejects the advice and will neither continue to use nor sharpen the knife herself, Brian, who has been monitoring the scene (see Section 3.1.1; Figures 11 and 12), offers to sharpen it for her, a method of assistance to which we now turn.

### 3.3.2 Offering

With an offer of assistance, Other formulates a possible solution to Self's trouble or difficulty for Other to implement, contingent upon Self's acceptance (Kendrick & Drew, 2016; see also Curl, 2006; Haugh, 2017). Offers of assistance thus differ from advice with respect to who implements the possible solution: with advice it is Self who should implement the solution formulated by Other whereas with an offer it is Other who should do so. In the following extract, after Dolores returns to the table with a packet of nuts, she offers them to Camilla and Gabriel ("want some nu:ts:?", line 2).<sup>4</sup> As the participants express their affection for each other in various ways (see, e.g., lines 1-5), Dolores begins to open the packet and evidently encounters some difficulty. The actions that Dolores produces to manage the trouble expose it to public view and thereby create an opportunity for the recruitment of assistance (see Kendrick & Drew, 2016; Drew & Kendrick, 2018).

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<sup>4</sup> The offer of food by Dolores in Extract 6 is different in kind than the subsequent offer of assistance by Gabriel. Offers of food, drink, and other sharable goods occur in different environments (e.g., upon one's entering a room or sitting down at a table), are associated with different entitlements and obligations, and impose different constraints on response (see, e.g., Mandelbaum & Lerner, 2018).

Extract 6 [LSIA FDA1 46:21]

1 CAM: [I'll give you a kiss too[:.

2 DOL: [+want some- [want some nu:ts:?  
+shakes packet-->

3 + (3.3) ((Camilla kisses Dolores on cheek))  
dol +holds packet in hands-->

4 CAM: I love you too.

5 DOL: +(I love [you too )  
+pulls sides of packet-->

6 GAB: [I like how when you dish 'em out  
7 I never ((enacts dodging a kiss))  
8 (1.7)  
dol +continues to pull on packet-->

9 GAB: turn my fa:ce.

10 +(0.5)\*#(0.6)  
dol +continues to pull-->  
gab \*gazes at Dolores-->  
fig #fig.12

11 CAM: I love eve[rybo[:dy. ((as if from the dog))

12 GAB: [ca- [want me to do it?

13 + (1.6) # (0.1) ++(1.2)  
dol +hands it to Gab +  
fig #fig.13  
gab \*takes packet-->



DOL GAB

fig.12 fig.13

14 CAM: **cashew\* crunch.**  
gab -->\*pulls on its sides-->

15 (4.0)\* (1.8) \*  
gab \*opens it\*

Dolores's difficulty becomes recognizable through embodied actions designed in the first instance to resolve the trouble independently, without assistance. She pulls on the packet repeatedly over the course of several seconds (lines 3-10) and adopts a body position, with her right elbow raised, indicative of the application of force (see Figure 12). After Gabriel addresses Camilla (line 9), he turns his attention to Dolores and monitors her management of the trouble (lines 10-12; see Section 3.1.1). When Dolores stops pulling on the packet and begins to lower her arms, ceasing self-remediation (cf. Extract 5, line 7), Gabriel offers assistance: the offer begins with “ca-”, which is hearable as heading towards “can I”, but is then repaired to “want me to do it?” (line 12). The offer thus employs a morphosyntactically

minimal format (cf. “do you want me to”) that is fitted to a sequential environment in which Dolores’s conduct has in effect displayed a disposition towards acceptance (Raymond et al., 2020; see also Extract 5). It formulates a possible solution to the trouble through the pro-verb “do” and pronoun “it” which refer indexically to the actions Dolores had just performed. The indexical formulation implies that the actions Gabriel will perform are the same as those Dolores has just performed and thus that the trouble lies not in the nature of the solution but rather its implementation. This observation accounts for the selection in this case of an offer of assistance over advice. As we have seen, advice formulates a possible solution for Self to perform to resolve the difficulty; but insofar as Self has already performed the advisable action without success, telling her to do so again would not facilitate a resolution of the trouble. In response to the offer of assistance, Dolores hands the packet to Gabriel (see Figure 13) who opens it, allowing the course of action initiated by Dolores to continue (lines 13-15).

Whereas advice displays a stance that Self is able resolve a trouble independently, without intervention by Other, offers of assistance may occur in environments in which Self evidently cannot implement a solution (e.g., being visibly unable to open the bag in Extract 6) or apparently will not implement one (e.g., setting the knife down on the counter in Extract 5). In either case, Self’s conduct displays to Other that a resolution to the trouble will not be implemented by Self (i.e., self-remediation cannot or will not be performed), which ‘rules out’ advice as an effective method, creates an opportunity for an offer of assistance, and orients to self-remediation as a first alternative (see Kendrick, 2017).

### 3.4 Methods that implement a possible solution

With the methods described in the previous section, Other formulates a possible solution to the trouble for Self or Other to implement. However, the implementation of the solution — bringing it into effect through action — is a contingent outcome, one that depends on Self’s

response to a first pair-part. An alternative is for Other to implement a possible solution directly, without formulating a possible solution or employing an adjacency pair. In this section, we will examine methods of assistance that forego linguistic action and sequential contingency to intervene directly into Self's course of action to manage a trouble or to preempt its occurrence.

### 3.4.1 Intervening

Offers of assistance are generally regarded as initiating a "base pair" of an adjacency pair sequence (Schegloff, 2007). In co-present interaction, however, offers of assistance are perhaps best understood as preliminaries to interventions. Intervening is a method of assisting in which Other performs an action that implements a possible solution to Self's trouble. Interventions do not formulate or describe a possible solution; they bring it into effect. In Extract 6, for example, the offer by Gabriel to open the packet of nuts projected the relevance of an intervention (i.e., opening it for her) and provided an opportunity for Dolores to promote or forestall the progression of the sequence by accepting or rejecting the offer. The observation that offers of assistance serve as preliminaries to interventions highlights the special status of interventions that are not preceded by offers. In the following extract, as a group of friends play cards and eat pizza, one of them, Norman, pours himself a glass of soda. He holds a large plastic bottle in both hands, tips it over so that the soda pours into the glass (see Figure 14), and then begins to return it to an upright position. As he does so, foam from the soda expands in the glass, quickly rising up and over the brim (lines 1-2).

Extract 7 [LSIA Pizza 03:43]

```

1      +(1.9)+(2.7)+(0.4)#(0.4)+
    nor  +.....+pours+,,,,,#,,,,,+holds-->>
    fig  #fig.14
2      ((soda foam quickly expands in glass))
3  AMY:  *↑waa*[: : :* : : # : : :]
4  NOR:  [↓no : * : : # : : :] : :
    set  *point*reach*picks up glass-->>
    fig  #fig.15

```



```

          AMY          NOR    SET
          fig.14          fig.15
5      (0.6)
6  AMY:  hehhh heh

```

As the foam reaches the top of the glass, Amy begins to extend her left hand out towards it and adopts a facial expression of surprise, with her eyebrows raised and her jaw lowered. She then produces a high-pitch alert (“↑waa:::”, line 3), which she stretches for 1.8 seconds (until after Seth picks up the glass). At the moment the alert is produced, neither Norman nor Seth have yet registered or reacted to the trouble (see Section 3.2.1). While Norman raises the bottle to an upright position, with both hands occupied, Seth begins to extend his left hand towards the glass. The intervention is thus initiated when Norman could not lift the glass himself and before he has displayed an awareness of the trouble. As Seth reaches for the glass, Norman then also produces an alert (“↓no:::”, line 4) and begins to reach for the glass himself. Although all three participants reach for the glass, and despite Amy’s head start, Seth’s hand arrives first. He grasps the glass (see Figure 15), lifts it up and away from the table, and holds his right hand under it, presumably to catch the spilling soda.

In this case, then, a trouble emerges in a course of action by Self — foam begins to overflow the glass; and a possible solution — picking it up and removing it — is implemented through immediate action by an Other. In this way, the Other intervenes directly

in Self's course of action to manage or resolve the trouble. The selection of intervention over other methods of assistance displays an orientation to the 'urgency' of the trouble (see Mondada, 2017). The opportunity for Self or Other to manage the trouble is temporally constrained by its rapid development. Such constraints 'rule out' other methods of assistance such as reporting which occasions self-remediation or offering which employs an adjacency pair to secure Self's acceptance of assistance prior to its provision.

### 3.4.2 Preempting

As we have seen, if a trouble manifests in Self's course of action, Other may intervene to manage or resolve it. It is not necessary, however, for a trouble to manifest explicitly for it to become recognizable. Projectable courses of action can allow Other to anticipate a difficulty or need and act to preempt it before it occurs, a method of assistance previously described by Kendrick and Drew (2016, pp. 9-10). In the following extract, as a group of co-workers organize the backroom of a clothing store, Amy requests that Ethan pull a rack of clothes from a hallway into the backroom (line 1).



Extract 8 [LSIA CTS02 12:18]

1 AMY: here pull this in there.  
 2 >we don't need [it out.<  
 3 TIM: [cuz seriously-  
 4 AMY: \*it's just th+rowing me #off.  
 eth \*grabs rack, pulls it into room-->>  
 tim +gazes at bin on the floor-->  
 fig #fig.16

5 (0.4)+#(2.6)  
 tim +moves bin out of the way-->  
 fig #fig.17



ETH TIM

fig.16

fig.17

6 AMY: (what)+ is ↑this.  
 tim -->+

As Ethan reaches out to grab the rack in preparation to pull it into the room, Tim gazes down at a plastic bin on the floor which lies in the path the rack would necessarily travel (see Figure 16). The request to pull the rack into the room and Ethan's preparation to comply both project a course of action in which Ethan will pull the rack into the room along the only available path. The presence of an object on that path constitutes a trouble insofar as it would disrupt the progressivity of the course of action. Tim bends down and slides the bin along the floor (see Figure 17), moving it out of the rack's way, as Ethan begins to pull the rack into the room. Because Ethan's course of action and the imminent trouble are projectable, Tim is able to anticipate the disruption and preempt it before it occurs.

Interventions (not preceded by offers) and preemptions generally occur when the implementation of a possible solution by Self would be relatively difficult or infeasible. Although in Extract 8 Ethan displays an awareness of the bin (see Figure 16) and would be able to move it himself, doing so would require the suspension or disruption of his current course of action. However, for Tim, who is not engaged in a practical course of action at the time, no suspension or disruption is involved. Similarly, in Extract 7, Norman is publicly

unaware of the trouble and visibly unable to address it himself when Seth intervenes; at that moment, self-remediation is not possible for all practical purposes. The direct implementation of a possible solution to Self's trouble, whether overtly manifested or projected to occur, thus displays a stance that remediation by Self would be comparatively difficult or infeasible under the local circumstances.

#### **4. Discussion**

If a co-present Other recognizes a trouble, difficulty, or need in the realization of Self's course of action, they can select from a set of alternative methods to provide assistance. The application of such methods embodies Other's recruitment into Self's course of action as the management of Self's trouble becomes an interactional process in which Self and Other cooperate to achieve a resolution. The methods of assistance identified in this article orient to and manage a basic set of elemental issues: (i) recognizing the trouble, (ii) generating a possible solution, and (iii) implementing it (see Schegloff, 1986, on the analysis of "organizational issues" in another domain). Embodied displays of attention and availability demonstrate Other's recognition of Self's trouble and routinely serve as preliminaries to other methods. Methods that index or formulate Self's trouble, alerts and reports, not only embody Other's recognition of the difficulty but also manage *Self's* recognition or lack thereof. Once the trouble has become recognizable, the generation of a possible solution becomes relevant. Advising and offering assistance are methods that articulate possible solutions for either Self or Other to implement, respectively. With these methods, the implementation of a possible solution is a contingent outcome that depends on Self's response to a first pair-part. Interventions and preemptions, in contrast, forgo sequential contingency to implement possible solutions to Self's trouble directly. It is through the identification and description of

the methods of assistance that these elemental organizational issues are revealed and made available for analysis.

The methods of assistance identified in this article, together with the methods of recruitment (Kendrick & Drew, 2016), form a coherent social interactional organization of alternative methods employed by Self and Other for the management of troubles, difficulties, and needs in the realization of practical courses of action. The methods of recruitment and assistance – offers, requests, and their respective alternatives – should be conceptualized and investigated as integrated parts of a single interactional system. Four arguments can be put forward to support this thesis.

#### *4.1. The methods of recruitment and assistance inhabit the same interactional environments*

Whenever and wherever troubles, difficulties, and needs manifest and become recognizable in practical courses of action, we observe methods of recruitment – methods that expose the troubles and consequently mobilize co-present others to participate in their remediation. It is in precisely this environment that we find methods of assistance – methods that attend and respond to Self's trouble, enact Other's involvement in its resolution, and embody their recruitment into Self's course of action. Consider, for example, a mundane trouble that commonly besets practical courses of action: difficulty opening a container (e.g., the packet of cashews in Extract 6). In this environment, we can observe the full continuum of methods identified by Kendrick and Drew (2016): embodied displays of difficulty (e.g., Dolores's body position in Extract 6), alerts and reports that index or formulate the trouble, and requests for assistance that articulate possible solutions. So, too, do we find the methods of assistance: an onlooker may monitor the effort to open the container, articulate the nature of the trouble, formulate a possible solution (e.g., as Gabriel does in Extract 6), or intervene directly to open

it. While not all methods of recruitment and assistance are equally relevant or useful on all occasions, it is nonetheless evident that they inhabit the same interactional environments.

#### *4.2. The methods of recruitment and assistance achieve the same outcomes*

The methods of recruitment and assistance not only inhabit the same interactional environments, they also co-operate to achieve the same outcomes. The methods constitute different ways in which troubles can become recognizable and can be managed interactionally. Take, for example, the most familiar of the methods: requesting and offering assistance. In a request for assistance, Self formulates a possible solution for Other to implement; in response Other should intervene to implement the solution (Kendrick & Drew, 2016; but see Fox & Heinemann, 2021, on service encounters). A resolution of the trouble is thus a contingent outcome of the application of these methods. Offers of assistance arrive at the same outcome by a different mechanism. If Self employs a method that indexes, formulates, or displays a trouble, Other may voluntarily offer assistance, that is, formulate a possible solution for Other to implement contingent upon Self's acceptance (see, e.g., Extracts 5 and 6). If Self accepts the offer, Other should then intervene to implement the possible solution. As with a request, the outcome of the sequence is a possible resolution of Self's trouble, albeit through different means. The same holds for the alternatives to offers identified in this article. The alternative methods of recruitment and assistance expose and manage troubles in different ways and embody different social relations between Self and Other (cf., Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 10-11), but they are united by the common outcome of their application.

#### *4.3. The methods of recruitment and assistance exhibit systematic symmetries and complementarities*

An examination of the methods themselves, their composition or design, reveals evidence of their integration within an interactional system. For those that involve linguistic resources, we observe the same practices employed by Self and Other. The set of linguistic forms from which Self selects to alert Other(s) that a trouble has occurred is also available to Other to alert Self to a trouble (e.g., Extracts 3). Similarly, just as Self may report a difficulty in their own course of action, so too can Other report one to Self (e.g., Extract 4). This symmetry is also evident in the design of offers and requests, both of which formulate possible solutions to Self's trouble for Other to implement, though with the aforementioned differences in sequential organization. Methods that involve visible bodily resources are not symmetrical in this sense, but they do exhibit complementarities that suggest an organizational symbiosis. Embodied displays of trouble by Self (e.g., Kylie's bodily suspension in Extract 2) routinely attract the attention of co-present Others, even in the absence of other methods that might elicit or solicit their involvement. In many cases, such displays include visible signs of escalation and exaggeration (e.g., Dolores's arm movements in Extract 6) which progressively expose the trouble and increase conspicuousness of the display (see also Kendrick & Drew, 2016, p. 16). This suggests a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship between displays of trouble by Self and displays of attention by Other.

#### *4.4. The methods of recruitment and assistance embody distinct divisions of labor between Self and Other*

As we have seen, the recruitment of assistance constitutes a generic social organizational problem that minimally involves three elemental issues: (i) recognizing the trouble, (ii) generating a possible solution, and (iii) implementing it. These elements can be managed by Self or Other through various methods of recruitment and assistance, each of which embodies a distinct division of labor between the two parties (see also Couper-Kuhlen & Etelämäki, 2014). The recognizability of a trouble may arise from methods employed by Self or Other, just as Self or Other may articulate a possible solution or put it into practice. Management of the elements is necessarily ordered: recognition of a trouble must precede the generation of a possible solution which in turn must precede its implementation. Because of this, a method that manages one element in the series presupposes prior elements and projects the relevance of subsequent ones. Methods that index or formulate a trouble, whether employed by Self or Other, project the relevance of generating and implementing a possible solution. Thus we observe, for example, that trouble alerts by Self occasion offers of assistance by Other (Kendrick & Drew, 2016) whereas alerts by Other occasion the implementation of a possible solution by Self (e.g., Extract 3). Furthermore, methods that articulate possible solutions establish the relevance of their implementation, which is true both for requests in which Self formulates the solution as well as offers and advice in which it is Other who does so. Within an interactional system, if Self or Other manages one element, it is left to the other party to manage the others.

In sum, were one to conceptualize the methods of recruitment and assistance as separate domains, or investigate the methods individually as separable practices and actions rather than as parts of an interactional system, the organizational relationships between them – their common environments and outcomes, their symmetries and complementarities, and their distinct divisions of labor – would prove difficult to explain or would simply go unnoticed. Research on recruitment marks a shift of analytic focus away from singular

actions and theoretical categories of action and towards the investigation of social organizational problems and their various solutions. This mode of analysis, which has its roots in classic conversation analytic research on the organization of interaction (Schegloff, 2006), is generic and widely applicable to the study of social action.

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