

Entitled to Attention? Cooperativity, Context, and Standing

A.K. Flowerree

Amy.flowerree@ttu.edu

Abstract: Attention is a finite, morally significant good. Attention is a precondition for healthy human relationships, and its absence can wrong others by cutting them off from vital human goods. At the same time, human persons have limited powers of attention. And so the question arises, *when does someone legitimately command my attention?* In *Conversational Pressure* (2020), Sanford Goldberg argues that the competent speaker has a default entitlement to normatively expect the addressee to attend, even if only for a short while. If the addressee fails to attend, the speaker is wronged. I argue that the conditions under which attention is owed to another are more restricted than Goldberg allows, and are sensitive to context and standing.

As a working parent with a young child during a global pandemic, one thing I find myself short on is attention. Despite my best attempts at multitasking, I can only attend to one thing at a time. Attention is a finite good. And yet, attention is a prerequisite to human connection. In order to recognize the humanity in another, I must attend to her. Persons can legitimately demand my attention because I owe them recognition. Attention is a morally significant good. But as anyone who has attempted to teach a zoom class with a four year old in the background will know, persons make more demands than one person could possibly accommodate. And so the question arises, *when does someone legitimately command my attention?*

In *Conversational Pressure* (2020), Sanford Goldberg argues that we have reason to attend to those who address us. More than that, he argues, the competent speaker has a default entitlement to normatively expect the addressee to attend, even if only for a short while. If the addressee fails to attend, the speaker is wronged. Goldberg's account attempts to capture the tension between attention as a finite good, and attention as a morally significant good. I am broadly sympathetic to Goldberg's view, but I think there are significant ways in which the account must be refined. In this essay, I will focus on the normative underpinnings of Goldberg's account. In particular, I explore the notion of

cooperativity that Goldberg takes to underpin these normative expectations. I argue that the conditions under which attention is owed to another are more restricted than Goldberg allows.

Here is the plan. First, I will lay out the basic account Goldberg proposes for the normativity of the act of address. Then I will critically examine the loadbearing concept for Goldberg's account, cooperativity. I argue that Goldberg makes use of three distinguishable notions of cooperativity: "generic" cooperativity, Gricean conversational cooperativity, and morally robust cooperativity. These three notions of cooperativity pull against each other in interesting ways, and I argue that the notion Goldberg needs isn't the one he officially endorses. Furthermore, I argue that Goldberg implicitly makes use of a different condition, cooperativity-in-context. While this condition captures the intuitive cases, it runs the danger of becoming trivial. I propose an alternative formulation. Finally, I argue that there is another condition where the normative expectation of attention fails, one not identified by Goldberg. We may lack *standing* to initiate a cooperative endeavor with someone, either because we have forfeited that right, or because such a cooperative endeavor requires special standing we do not have. Finally, I pull together these elements to present a refined version of the Goldberg account, one that addresses these challenges.

When a speaker competently addresses another person, Goldberg argues, the addressee *wrongs* the speaker if she does not attend. The speaker is *entitled* to assume that the addressee will attend. Goldberg presents two distinct grounds for the normativity of address, our shared sociality and our shared rationality (Goldberg, 2020: 14ff). We are social creatures who engage in cooperative endeavors. If we could not capture another's attention in order to initiate cooperative endeavors, then cooperative endeavors would be difficult, if not impossible. Similarly, we are rational creatures who communicate and reason. By attending to someone, we are recognizing their status as a rational agent. And so, by way of a kind of transcendental argument from our existing practices, it must be the case that we can call on each other in an act of address and be entitled to another's attention (however

brief). How exactly sociality and rationality relate to each other is not a question Goldberg addresses. They serve to jointly motivate the centrality and importance of cooperative activity. Cooperative activity is an essential good; the act of address is the means by which we can entreat others to join with us.

The mechanism by which we are entitled to the attention of others is the act of address. An act of address must manifest three properties in order to generate its normative implications. It must be apparent who the speaker is addressing, it must be apparent that the speaker is intending to capture the attention of the addressee, and it must be apparent that the speaker is attempting to initiate a cooperative action. Goldberg calls these features *apparent targeting*, *apparent attention-capture*, and *apparent attempt to initiate cooperative action*, respectively (Goldberg, 2020: 30). When a call for attention manifests these three appearance features, it is then reasonable for the speaker to (predictively) expect that her call will be successful. Goldberg calls this package of features *Cognitive Mutuality*. When an act of address expresses cognitive mutuality, the speaker is entitled to assume that her intentions are common knowledge, and also entitled to expect her address to be attended to.

From this understanding of the speech act of address, we can fill out the normative picture of what is taking place. The speech act generates a normative expectation in the speaker that she will be attended to. More than that, it generates a *reason* for the addressee to attend. Given the centrality of cooperative activity, Goldberg argues that the reason generated is quite strong. Indeed, Goldberg thinks that an addressee that fails to attend has *wronged* the speaker. I will discuss this more below, but for now I only wish to point out that Goldberg thinks this wrong is incurred in any circumstance under which the addressee fails to attend to competent address, e.g., an address that embodies cognitive mutuality and is in fact cooperative.

Indeed, the only circumstances where a reason is not generated, and where a wrong would not be sustained, is if the proposed activity fails to be cooperative, or if cognitive mutuality is not met.

Goldberg argues that if the proposed activity was not cooperative to begin with, then there can be no demand to attend.¹ Similarly, if a feature of cognitive mutuality is not met, then there can be no demand. This could happen in three ways. First, the speaker fails to target the addressee. Second, the speaker fails to make clear she intends to capture attention. And third, it is manifestly clear that the speaker's proposed activity is not cooperative. The third condition is stronger because Goldberg thinks our default should be to assume that the proposed activity will be cooperative. So to fail to meet cognitive mutuality with respect to the third condition, it would have to be manifest that the activity is not cooperative. If an act of address fails to meet one of these three conditions of cognitive mutuality, it would be unreasonable for the speaker to expect the addressee to attend. So we have, in total, four ways an act of address could fail to generate a reason to attend (though if it failed on all four fronts, it would likely fail to count as an act of address, rather than as a deficient one).

In what follows, I will explore the load-bearing concept at work in Goldberg's account, cooperativity. I am broadly sympathetic to Goldberg's account, so what follows is a refinement of these central ideas, rather than a repudiation. Goldberg begins by telling us that the notion of cooperation he has in mind is a "very generic one" (Goldberg, 2020: 15). He characterizes cooperative activity as follows.

COOPERATIVE

An activity involving more than one subject is *cooperative* in the relevant sense when it is structured around a common interest (often, though not always, a jointly accepted aim), such that having this common interest gives each party reasons to act in certain ways and not others at various points throughout the activity itself (Goldberg, 2020: 15).

Conversations are paradigmatic cooperative activities since they are structured around a common interest in communication. Goldberg also gives a number of other examples: making dinner, helping another person to fix a flat tyre, and playing a competitive game (Goldberg, 2020: 15).

But when discussing various cases, Goldberg makes use of at least three distinct conceptions of cooperativity that might be at play here. While these notions are clearly related, they pull against each other in substantive ways.

The first sense of ‘cooperative’ is the “generic” kind specified by COOPERATIVE. Generically cooperative activities involve more than one party in accomplishing the task. Building a house would be a cooperative task. One person installs the floors, others do the electrical wiring, others paint, etc. But cooperative tasks in this sense can still be exploitative. I could manage the building of the house, and still have unfair expectations of my workers, or fail to pay them properly. I could coerce them into working for me. I could fail to respect their time and effort. Many deeply sexist social practices (for example) will still count as cooperative in this sense. For example, consider the cooperative project of managing a household. At some times and at some places, the following cooperative arrangement is considered a normatively required reality: one party (man) has the higher paying job; the other party (woman), is expected to maintain the household through cooking, cleaning, and childcare. It is cooperative, in that each party has reasons to act in various ways during the collaborative activity. But it can also be an exploitative structure.

The second sense of ‘cooperative’ is the sense in which a conversation can be cooperative, according to Gricean Maxims. Grice identifies four maxims for a conversation to count as cooperative, and these maxims capture when a conversation is going well (Grice, 1975). When we interpret each other within a conversation, we implicitly assume that speakers are following these maxims, and as a result content can be implied that goes beyond that which is explicitly expressed. Goldberg appeals to this notion of cooperativity to explain why catcalling is non-cooperative and so requires no response (Goldberg, 2020: 47). I will discuss this response below.

The third notion of cooperativity that Goldberg makes use of is morally robust cooperativity. Cooperation is morally robust if it takes into consideration the needs and desires of other parties and

weights them equally with the needs and desires of the initiating party. Additionally, morally robust cooperation respects the humanity of each participant by viewing them as equals. This notion of cooperativity comes out most explicitly when Goldberg is considering particular cases, often in tandem with considerations of respect. Catcalling, he argues, is not cooperative because it is not respectful (Goldberg, 2020: 48). I will discuss this case in more detail below. But at the moment, I just wish to call attention to the way in which the moral notion shifts what counts as cooperative. It makes it much harder for activities to count as cooperative in this sense. Practices that manifest disrespect fail to count as cooperative. Even more mundane cases might fail to count as cooperative. Goldberg gives the example of Jones, who habitually initiates tedious and ill-timed conversations (Goldberg, 2020: 39). Of course, there is a generic sense in which no conversation could fail to be cooperative provided there is an exchange of information. It doesn't have to be *the best* conversation in order to count as cooperative in the generic sense. But in this richer sense that Goldberg outlines, such conversations fail to be cooperative at all. Consider:

Miss Bates is a spinster in Jane Austen's *Emma*. Miss Bates is a tedious personality. She is good natured, but talks quite a lot about topics that other characters do not always find interesting. She is especially keen to share information on the minute details of her niece's correspondence.

A conversation between Miss Bates and her neighbors over the contents of Jane Fairfax's letters is cooperative in the generic sense. It may be a bit uncooperative in the Gricean sense (Miss Bates goes on at great detail, and hogs the conversation). But in country living, conversations are often about little things. It is a matter of common interest to have *something* to talk about. And this, along with social norms of conversation, gives participants reasons to attend, to follow up in various ways. So it satisfies Goldberg's sense of cooperativity, at least as explicitly stated in COOPERATIVE.

But this is not the treatment Goldberg gives the case of Jones, the terrible conversationalist. Goldberg argues that such an interlocutor does not deserve attention because he is non-cooperative. Goldberg writes, "to generate a reason for another to attend to you, and to do so by way of a second-

personal address, you ought to have something it would be reasonable to assume is worth his attending to; if you don't, this is itself a form of disrespect – of not properly valuing his time and attention (as well as the effort it takes to comprehend your address)” (Goldberg, 2020: 40). Goldberg thinks if this disrespect is intentional, then this counts as an abuse of the practice and generates no reason to attend. If he is just clueless (as Miss Bates is surely clueless), then he is misusing the practice, and deserves only enough attention to correct him. In this section, Goldberg argues that cooperativity requires *respect*, and respect involves thinking through the proposed activity from the perspective of the addressee. If the speaker fails to do this, she fails to be respectful, and thereby fails to be cooperative.

To further bolster the idea that the notion of cooperativity at play is morally robust, let's consider the flat tyre case. Goldberg offers this as one of the paradigmatic cases of cooperative activity. Suppose I'm driving to meet my partner for dinner. It is starting to be dusk and I see a car pulled off the side of the road with a flat. I see two child car-seats in the backseat and the driver is waving her hands to flag down help. It is not in my interests to stop and help (after all, I am looking forward to meeting my partner for dinner). But I realize her situation is dire with dark approaching, and I have everything needed to change the tyre in my trunk. I pull over, and the two of us put on the spare and she is on her way.

This is a cooperative endeavor in the sense that it involved the two of us working together, and it could not have happened without the two of us working together. But it is not cooperative in the generic sense of COOPERATIVE. It's not a common interest. It is her need and her interests. I help because I recognize *her* need. I suppose one could understand interests broadly enough to say it's my interests too because I am interested in helping those in need. But this makes my response to her need entirely too self-regarding. I do it *for her*, not because of my interests. Rather than try to construe cooperativity as a matter of interests, I think it would be better for Goldberg to acknowledge that he

has a robustly moral notion of cooperativity in mind, one where the needs and concerns of others make demands on me.

Here, I wish to discuss one of his more complicated examples, the catcall. As Goldberg envisions the case, a woman walks by and a man (or group of men) call out lewd demands or descriptions. It seems wrong to say that the woman *owes* the man acknowledgment. Goldberg argues that this is consistent with his theory, for two reasons. First, the catcall is not cooperative in the Grician sense. It is not cooperative because the speaker cannot assume that it would be of interest to the addressee. Since the speaker cannot assume this, it fails to meet the condition of appearance of cooperativity (it is manifestly not a cooperative exchange), and so mutuality is undermined and no normative expectation can be generated. Second, Goldberg adds to the Grician point by arguing that the catcall involves a manifest lack of respect. The lack of respect it manifests is another way of defeating the presumption of cooperativity. It's unclear that Goldberg conceives of the Grician point as distinct from the respect point. But it is worth pulling them apart here.

What counts as cooperative in a Grician sense is going to be heavily influenced by what counts as common knowledge within the conversation. One could imagine 1980s catcalling, where feminists have not yet done sufficient consciousness raising about the ways catcalling is unwanted and demeaning. In this context, we can imagine there is a general acceptance (generated and maintained by men) that catcalling is a way of acknowledging the presence of a woman. We can imagine no voices have ever successfully communicated anything to the contrary.ⁱⁱ Here, it is not a presumption of the context that catcalling is unwanted. In fact, it's a presumption of the context that it is *appropriate*. And, for example, the call to "give us a smile, love" is a reasonable call, one that the woman *owes* the man. And so while the Grician sense may rule out catcalling as non-cooperative in some contexts, it cannot rule it out in *all* contexts. It will be a contingent feature of the context whether catcalling is non-cooperative in the Grician sense.

The morally robust notion of cooperativity, on the other hand, is not as dependent on the social expectations of the context. Catcalling is performed against a background assumption that women *owe* men their attention, their smiles, their support (Manne, 2018). As Kate Manne argues, there is a deeply entrenched social understanding that cooperative activity between men and women involves women owing others certain goods. The owing-relationship is asymmetrical. Thus, a morally robust understanding of cooperativity could rule these activities out as non-cooperative because they fail to treat all parties as equals. The current social practice views women as owing men certain goods, but not men owing women those same goods. While there are details to be worked out, I think there is a promising case to make that catcalling is not cooperative in the morally robust sense.

Goldberg acknowledges that there might be sexist social expectations that seemingly require giving attention to bad behavior. His response is that the existence of sexism is a good reason to suspect non-cooperativity. This is one of the clearest examples, I think, of the robust moral conception of cooperativity that Goldberg is using. If we were merely making use of the generic conception of cooperativity, it would be clear that catcalling *is* cooperative. There is a social expectation that men can ask women to give them a smile. This is a cooperative exchange of asking for a behavior. And the woman has a strong interest in complying with this request. As any woman who has ignored these demands knows, the following rage and insults make it strongly in her interests to comply, unless she has a strong stomach for verbal abuse. Conditions can be generically cooperative without being morally acceptable.

But here is where the requirement of cognitive mutuality and the requirement of robust cooperativity can be in tension with each other. Cognitive mutuality rests on the notion of what can be reasonably expected to meet with success; but a culture can normalize certain practices so what is *reasonable* to expect can come apart from what is normatively required. Cognitive mutuality is the mutual awareness that the speaker is addressing the addressee, that the speaker intends to get the

addressee's attention, and that the speaker is seeking to initiate a cooperative endeavor with the addressee. But social conditions can make it so that it is not reasonable to think the speaker will succeed. Consider Shawna:

Shawna is a member of a disadvantaged group who is historically not listened to. There is a long track record of her speech individually (and her group collectively) being ignored. One day, Shawna is in a meeting where the company is discussing covid-related work from home procedures. Shawna realizes the work at home policies have completely untenable implications for parents (employees are not permitted to have children in the room while they are on camera, and are not permitted to leave their desks during work hours except for specific timed bathroom breaks). In fact, none of the decision makers have children. Shawna tries to address the group, but is ignored and talked over for several minutes. At last, she begins shouting, talking over other members of the group, and imputing evil motives to her employer.

According to cognitive mutuality, Shawna doesn't have any reasonable expectation that she will be heard. This is because the social conditions are such that she cannot effectively target and capture attention by normal means. Furthermore, when she ultimately does capture attention (by shouting), her actions are viewed as manifestly uncooperative. The upshot is that it is not reasonable for Shawna to expect to be attended to. Nor, on Goldberg's view, does her outburst generate a reason to attend. This is because the social context has made it that the conditions under which she can successfully capture attention will be the conditions under which she is viewed as manifestly uncooperative. For Shawna, nothing she does will generate the expectation that she ought to be attended to. This isn't necessarily a shortcoming of the account. Unjust social conditions often compound injustices.

But this case pushes us, I think, to see how cognitive mutuality may be a very poor guide to identifying cooperative activities. The social understanding of what counts as cooperative is often skewed towards what counts as cooperating with those in power. In this case, it is the decision makers who are uncooperative (in the morally robust sense), by failing to inhabit the perspective of employees with children. And yet the social understanding of the situation will see Shawna as uncooperative. Cognitive mutuality may generate predictive and normative expectations of when someone is owed

attention. But whether the normative expectation embodies a *genuine* normative expectation will depend on how well social understandings of cooperativity track morally robust cooperativity.

So far, I have discussed Goldberg's notion of cooperativity, and I've argued that he appeals to three distinct conceptions. To my mind, the one he appeals to is not the one he officially endorses. He appeals to a notion of cooperativity that is morally robust, it requires that the needs and desires of all parties are considered, and that all parties are treated as equals. This is at odds with the generic sense of what counts as cooperative (and the Grician notion of conversational cooperation). But this is not the only wrinkle in Goldberg's notion of cooperativity. Before I move on, I want to highlight a different aspect of Goldberg's account of cooperativity.

Goldberg's account of the normativity of address relies on the importance of cooperativity. But when discussing specific examples, he appeals to a more nuanced notion, one that relies on what is reasonable *within the context*. In discussing highly regulated contexts (court rooms, wedding ceremonies), he writes,

What such regulated contexts do, I submit, is to raise the bar for counting as being cooperative: in such a context, one's addressing another in ways that contravene the regulations on speech exchanges require one's reason being sufficiently important that it justifies the violation. Anything less than this is will count as uncooperative, and hence as an abuse (if intentional) and a misuse (if not) (Goldberg, 2020: 44).

In this passage, Goldberg is suggesting that what it takes for something to count as cooperative is relative to the context. What would normally be a cooperative activity (asking someone how their day is going) can fail to count as cooperative (if it is in the middle of their wedding ceremony, for example). Goldberg allows that this idea can be extended to the normal circumstances (Goldberg, 2020: 44). In the normal context, one might address another by interrupting or speaking over someone. Goldberg allows,

This *can* be a cooperative act, but it is cooperative *only if* the reason for the interrupting address is sufficiently weighty that it captures something that it is reasonable to think would be valued by the other participants, and especially by the speaker, more than they value the

conversational contribution(s) they are currently making/observing. If this condition is not met, the interrupting address is either a misuse of the practice (if one's lack of cooperativity is not intentional), or it is an abuse if it is intentional (Goldberg, 2020: 44-45).

If this is correct, then it is not true that a reason is generated any time the speaker is proposing a cooperative activity (whether it is understood as cooperative in the generic sense or the morally robust sense). COOPERATIVE picks out a range of activities and is not sensitive to whether there is sufficient reason to replace the current activity with the proposed cooperative activity. Instead, here it seems that the context is key to whether a reason is generated. I will call this notion cooperativity-in-context. We can see this condition at play by looking at Goldberg's example of Madonna. Goldberg considers the case of Madonna leaving her apartment and being greeted by a large group of fans while she's on the way to her car (Goldberg, 2020: 37). When recounting what is common knowledge to Madonna and her fans, Goldberg writes, "given what Madonna knows, she knows that it would not be reasonable for any of her fans to intend to initiate a cooperative action that is more demanding than [a wave or a hello] – that insofar as a fan would propose anything more than this, it would no longer have the sort of mutuality characteristic of cooperation" (Goldberg, 2020: 38).

But here we might wonder why it does not meet mutuality? Why can't they ask more of Madonna? Goldberg continues, "Madonna's knowledge ensures that anything more demanding on their part would be manifestly uncooperative, and so would cancel the presumption of cooperativity, and so would generate no claim at all" (Goldberg, 2020: 28).

Here, it seems that what Goldberg has in mind is that the apparent cooperativity must be cooperativity in context. It would be unreasonable to ask Madonna out to coffee given what you can see are her other demands. So in order to appear cooperative, you must only be requesting that which would – in context – be a reasonable cooperative request.ⁱⁱⁱ It is not yet quite clear what the reasonableness requirement amounts to. Is it reasonable to *ask*, or reasonable to *expect them to actually do something*? Goldberg fleshes this out later in the chapter. He writes,

To generate a reason for another to attend to you, and to do so by way of a second-personal address, you ought to have something it would be reasonable to assume is worth his attending to; if you don't, this is itself a form of disrespect – of not properly valuing his time and attention (as well as the effort it takes to comprehend your address)... if you don't have a proper reason for doing so – if you don't have a proper reason for exerting normative pressure on him to attend to you – then you have disrespected him as an autonomous subject. If your doing so was intentional, you have no claim on his attention; if your doing so was the result of obliviousness, then while you have a claim on his attention, he is entitled to redirect how you participate in the practice of address in the future. (Goldberg, 2020: 40, 41).

Cooperativity-in-context requires that the proposed cooperative activity be viewed as valuable and appropriate by the addressee within the context it is being proposed. This involves sensitivity to existing activities in progress, and also the availability of the relevant parties. Whether there is a reason for the addressee to attend tracks whether the proposed activity would be cooperative in context.

But now there is a worry about whether cooperativity-in-context is doing any explanatory work. Here is the problem. If the test for whether a reason to attend is generated is found in whether the proposed activity is “cooperative-in-context” then the condition runs the risk of being trivial. This is because “cooperative-in-context” takes into account the reasons to engage in the proposed activity, whether they outweigh the reasons to continue in the current activity, and whether the proposed activity is sufficiently interesting to the participants. What are the conditions that make a proposed activity cooperative-in-context? Here, it just seems like the answer is “whether the weight of the reasons supports doing it.” But the result is that “cooperative-in-context” will capture every case in which a reason is generated because “cooperative-in-context” captures *all* the reasons of the context. But then cooperativity-in-context is not a sister notion to cooperative (Goldberg 2020: 15), it is itself a substantive notion whose content is “whatever captures all the reasons at work here.” And then, I think, cooperativity-in-context is a trivial condition, incapable explaining why a reason is generated for the addressee.

This problem arises because Goldberg's explanation views cooperative activity as necessary and sufficient for generating a reason to attend. And yet there are cases where there is not a reason to attend (asking someone how they are doing during their wedding ceremony). And, so, Goldberg must nuance the notion of cooperative activity so that such activities are non-cooperative. This gives us cooperativity-in-context. But cooperativity-in-context is then augmented to include far more than just considerations of cooperativity. It runs the danger of being gerrymandered to capture all the right cases.

Here is a way around this problem. Rather than saying a cooperative activity always generates a reason to attend, and that cooperativity is dependent on context, one could say that cooperative activity (characterized independently of context) always generates a reason to attend, but in certain contexts this reason is defeated or outweighed by other considerations. This would give the same extension of cases, but allow that cooperation is a necessary (though not always sufficient) reason for the addressee to attend.

The final case I want to explore is one where the speaker is not entitled to attention, even though their proposal is for a cooperative activity. Consider BROCK:

Brock and Mia went on a couple of dates, then Mia made clear she no longer wanted any romantic attention from Brock. He responded by stalking her and sending her creepy messages on a daily basis. Assume he sexually assaults her. The behavior was extreme and persistent enough that Mia was granted a restraining order. One day, Brock wanders up to Mia in a public park and asks her for the time, in violation of the restraining order.

Usually, asking someone for the time is a small time cooperative endeavor. But in this case, legally and morally, Mia is not required to attend to Brock. I think it's quite clear that she is not even required to acknowledge his presence, much less acknowledge his address.

One could treat BROCK as non-cooperative in context. But I think something goes missing if it is described as a feature of the *context* rather than a feature of the *person*. *Every* context where Brock attempts to initiate a cooperative endeavor with Mia is non-cooperative. And that is because of Brock.

Brock has – by his behavior – made it so no attempt to cooperate with Mia is truly cooperative. I think a better way to flesh this out would be to say that Brock has lost standing to initiate cooperative endeavors with Mia. Because of his past abuse, she does not owe him her attention. It is not so much that it isn't cooperative, but that he doesn't have the right to address her. This is true even if Brock has been to extensive therapy and only wants to apologize for his behavior. Victims of abuse do not owe their abusers a hearing.

So I think that there are things a person can do that remove him from human relationship with others. But there are also certain cooperative activities that can only be initiated if there is a special relationship. Suppose I know you well enough to ask you to go to coffee with me. This is a cooperative endeavor that I have standing to propose. But I might not have standing to ask you to marry me. That is a cooperative endeavor (if ever there was one), but it would be inappropriate for me to propose it. You likely would think I was joking. So it may be that one has standing to propose a wide array of cooperative endeavors. But some cooperative endeavors, in order for it to be appropriate for you to propose them, you might need a special relationship with the person, one that goes beyond merely mutual recognition as rational and social creatures.

If I am right, then there are additional ways in which a call for attention can fail to generate a reason to attend. Initially, I outlined four possibilities that follow from Goldberg's account. Then I proposed that an action could be strictly speaking cooperative, but fail to be cooperative in context (either because there are probative reasons against it or because there are strong reasons to carry out our current endeavor). The final idea that I propose here is that a person may lack *standing* to propose some cooperative endeavors. It isn't that the context makes the activity non-cooperative, but rather that it would be inappropriate for the person to propose such an activity. This could be folded into the notion of failure to be cooperative in context. But it is not a feature of the *context* that makes it inappropriate; it's a feature of the *person*. This could be because the person is not a member of good

standing in the community, or because they lack the special relationship required to propose the activity.

Drawing these considerations together, we can give an account of when someone is owed attention. My proposal is in the spirit of Goldberg's view, though it is more restrictive. I think cooperativity places normative demands on us. But these normative demands are within the context of substantive moral commitments. And while in general I agree with Goldberg, I think there are more ways one might fail to make a normative demand on another person.

A speaker (S) is owed attention by addressee (A) just in case I-IV are satisfied.

I. Cognitive Mutuality S initiates a call that has the three appearance properties, (i) it is apparent that

S is targeting A, (ii) it is apparent that S is seeking to capture A's attention, and (iii) it is apparent that A is seeking to initiate a cooperative action.

II. Cooperative_{RM} An activity is cooperative if it is structured around a common interest (often a jointly accepted aim), such that having this common interest gives each party reasons to act in certain ways and not others at various points throughout the activity itself, and the activity embodies respect for persons (it is not coercive or exploitative).

III. Standing S has standing to address A with respect to cooperative activity, C.

IV. No Defeat There are no overriding reasons not to attend within the context.

This account builds on Goldberg's account, but captures the way in which additional considerations can limit when someone demands our attention.

I began by thinking about the balance between attention as a finite resource, and also as a morally significant good. Return with me to teach a zoom class with a four year old in the background. The cooperative endeavor of teaching the class over zoom demands your attention. It is your job, for one. But, also, it is a morally significant endeavor, and your students' questions lay legitimate claim to

your attention. But the four year old also demands your attention. Parenting is also your job. And how you attend to your child's needs is significant to their development as a person. Your child lays legitimate demand to your attention. Both activities are cooperative in the morally significant sense, and the fact that they happen to make the demand *at the exact same time* doesn't diminish the legitimacy of either. But you cannot do the impossible. You cannot attend to both. You do your best. You ignore the child, but at some point, you mute the class to address the child. It seems to me that while both have legitimate claims on your attention, and you do your best to balance the two, when you fail at some point – which you will – you have not *wronged* the other. There is space between having a reason to attend, and the other having a normative expectation to be attended to, and having *wronged* them when you are clearly doing your best.

In sum, I've argued that one is not entitled to attention simply because the proposed activity is mutually recognized to be cooperative. My chief complaint against Goldberg's account is that he attempts to stretch the notion of cooperativity to cover every case. Cooperativity cannot do this. Attention is a finite good. It can be in vanishingly limited supply, and so what is owed can be limited as well. But despite this, we do owe others our attention.

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i A responsible addressee may still feel pressure to attend, since she will often be unaware that one of these conditions is not met.

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- ii Not from lack of trying, presumably. See Manne (2017) for an account of why it is so difficult for women to challenge default male entitlements to women's attention.
- iii There are complexities to this case, and Goldberg doesn't commit himself to only one possible answer. Here, I only wish to bring out the way in which he relies on *reasonableness* and *context* to fix what counts as cooperative, not commit him to a particular way of handling the example.