



Narrative, opinion and situated argument in talk show discourse

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Abstract

In this paper I take a broadly conversation analytic approach to examining the function of narrative discourse in the development of arguments in television talk shows. Basing my analysis on an episode of the former UK TV talk show ‘Kilroy’, I show how arguments are sequentially emergent from lay participants’ narratives, and how these narratives function to structure the production of opposing opinions and stances. The discussion focuses on the way stories are elicited, as well as on the problematising and evaluation of narrative actions by the host and other participants. I argue that this articulation between narrative discourse and argument is one of the most salient organisational features of talk show interaction as a form of public participation broadcasting.

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1. Introduction

Television talk shows have become a major arena for the discussion of lay public opinion on a range of issues, from individual, personal dilemmas and family relationships, to broader social problems and concerns. Whatever the topic, it has been claimed that the voice of lay participants in these shows is generally prioritised over the voice of experts and professionals (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994) and more specifically, that the primary discourse of TV talk shows is the narrativisation of lay experience (Tolson, 2001). But whether on the British talk show, *Kilroy*, or on the American show, *Jerry Springer*, programmes which in many ways can be considered to represent opposing ends of the talk show genre spectrum from ‘audience discussion’ to ‘trash TV’ (Haarman, 2001), the stories that people tell are not simply narratives of personal experience. Within the context of these shows, narrative discourse functions to structure and

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organise opposing opinions and stances. By focussing on data taken from the talk show *Kilroy*, my aim here is to explore empirically the inter-relationship between narrative discourse and situated argument in this particular mediated context.

I approach these data from a broadly conversation analytic perspective, taking it that both stories and arguments are locally situated and contextually sensitive phenomena; that is, they emerge in sequences of on-going talk, and they are specifically designed for the contextual environment in which they are produced (Sacks, 1995). Both stories and arguments are also discursively distinctive, that is, they are built out of analytically identifiable features both in terms of the design of individual turns within a sequence, and jointly across turns in a sequence (Labov, 1972; Jefferson, 1978; Maynard, 1985; Coulter, 1990; Hutchby, 1996). What I will show in the context of this TV talk show data is that arguments on *Kilroy* are directly and sequentially emergent from narratives, and in particular, I will argue that this articulation between argument and narrative is a significant organisational feature of talk show discourse.

This episode of *Kilroy* is entitled ‘*Could you spot a conman?*’ Participants include people who have been victims of conmen, people who are conmen, a representative from the Trading Standards Authority (the token ‘expert’ on the show), and as usual, other participating members of the audience. I examine three stories told by people who have been selected as key storytellers by virtue of the fact that they have all been victims of a financial scam of some sort. My focus is how these stories are received both by the host, and by the participating audience.

2. The significance of narrative

It is now well established that within the discourse of TV talk shows, narratives are a key interactional resource (cf. Livingstone and Lunt, 1994; Tolson, 2001; Thornborrow, 2000, 2001). This is particularly the case for lay participants who are frequently invited to tell stories of their personal experiences – stories that are often elicited by the host – for comment and discussion by the studio audience and invited experts. Such stories are, however, contextually produced as public discourse, that is, they are made into issues, and made dramatic, through the situated interaction of tellers, hosts and studio audience. In the three stories I examine here, the receipt work of the audience produces oppositional stances as well as alignments with the tellers. I have argued elsewhere (Thornborrow, 1997) that the function of narrative discourse is multi-dimensional in talk shows. For example, stories can be personal accounts elicited by a host, to which other audience members (as well as the host) respond, or they can be ‘positional’, told by a participant to construct a stance or opinion in relation to the issue at hand. In this paper, I focus on the relationship between narrative discourse and the sequential development of particular opinions or evaluative stances. I will look at how these emerge in the talk, how different alignments are taken up in response to the narratives told, and how this relationship constitutes the characteristic form of argumentative discourse which is found in the TV talk show ‘*Kilroy*’. Before moving on to the data, I briefly review some of the relevant work on argument as a background to the analysis.

3. Arguments and opinions in talk shows

There has been a considerable amount of work undertaken within the field of CA on argument and interaction which focuses on the way that arguments start, proceed and end. The focus of this

work is very different from traditional models of argumentation theory, which are based on reason, logic and persuasion (cf. van Eemeren et al., 1987) rather than on the dynamics of situated interaction. TV talk shows are by nature argument-saturated; mediated disagreement and discussion are the staples of the talk show diet, whether in the spectacle of confrontation offered on US talk shows, like *Ricki Lake* and *Jerry Springer* (Hutchby, 2001; Myers, 2001), or in the discussion of the more debate-oriented shows such as *Oprah* (US) and *Kilroy*. But essentially what we see and hear on talk shows is a form of argument that is grounded in lay experience.

It has been pointed out that there is an inherent difficulty in identifying a structure of argumentation in lay narratives, given “the haphazard, often chaotic way in which they are offered (some are repetitious, some not quite to the point, some interrupted, some at cross purposes)” (Haarman, 1997:79). Haarman suggests that Schiffrin’s (1987) definition of argument, with its analysable components of ‘position, dispute and support’, is a more useful approach to the analysis of arguments in the context of TV talk show discourse than more logic-based accounts of argumentation. However, although Schiffrin’s components broadly map out some of the discursive stages in arguments, my aim here is to shed more detailed analytic light on this perceived argumentative chaos. To do this, I explore the underlying order in the practical accomplishment of lay argument on *Kilroy*, and how this functions as a resource for the production of public, mediated, discussion talk.

Writing about the ‘trash TV’ talk show *Jerry Springer* Myers (2001:174–175) comments that talk shows “present a genre in which topics that might end conversation, with other participants and in other settings, instead open it up [...] talk shows elaborate on topics to make them something participants – and audiences – can talk about”. This talk is generally characterised by a high level of opinion-giving and argument. Argument in public participation talk shows can take various forms, whether physically embodied or, at the other end of the spectrum, verbally pursued. Myers shows how topics on *Jerry Springer* are made into issues through the development of opposing stances, controversy and the dramatization of conflict, often literally on the physical level. On *Kilroy*, on the other hand, topics are made into issues firstly through lay participants telling their personal stories, which are generally elicited by the host, and secondly, through the various ways in which these stories are received by both the host and the participating audience. Narrative is thus a key discursive device in talk shows. Selected participants tell stories, which are then responded to by the host and other members of the studio audience. What I examine specifically in this paper is how the receipt of stories contributes to the articulation of opinion and argument in this context; in other words, how the local organisation of argumentative discourse is accomplished on *Kilroy*.

One significant finding within conversation analytic approaches to conflict talk is that arguments do not necessarily always get resolved. They may end in various ways depending on the context in which they occur, or they may run and run. For example, Goodwin (1990:143) found in her study of a community of black children in Philadelphia that: “Maple Street children, as well as other children observed in multiparty settings [...] display an orientation toward sustaining and promoting rather than dissipating dispute”. In his study of US first grade children, Maynard (1985) suggests that arguments are defused rather than resolved, while in family conflict, Vuchinich (1990) shows how various strategies (e.g. withdrawal) can be used to terminate a conflict. Dersley and Wootton (2001) examine arguments that end with one of the parties walking out on the other. Returning to the context of media discourse, Hutchby (1996) has shown that arguments on talk radio can be ended in different ways by the host, but that endings do not necessarily constitute agreement or alignment between host and caller. In TV and radio news

interviews, conflicts between speakers are usually ended by the interviewer (Clayman and Heritage, 2002), without a resolution or consensus ever being reached. Arguments on *Kilroy* similarly do not get resolved, but they do have to be made to progress over the course of the programme, and narrative discourse, as well as the receipt work of the host and studio audience is central to this process.

Arguing is an activity type which is interactionally built around ‘assertion/counter’ pairs (Coulter, 1990) or, more broadly, ‘action/opposition’ sequences (Hutchby, 1996). In some contexts, the ‘action’ does not even have to be a verbal one. For example, in his analysis of children’s arguments, Maynard (1985) found that just about anything which gives rise to an opposition by another party to the talk can count as an ‘arguable’ action or utterance, and he shows how disputes are started not at the point of opposition, but at the immediately prior moment as a result of what someone has said or done. On *Kilroy*, this type of disputatious talk does occur, but often as by-play (Goffman, 1981) rather than as the central talk activity, and it differs in specific ways from other types of argumentative discourse in the show. The first extract below is an example of disputatious by-play initiated by the action of one of the participants.

Derek (who has been the victim of several scams) is telling a story about one occasion when he had lost money. He makes a joke in the form of a self-deprecatory remark to the effect that he likes ‘meeting people, especially conmen’. This gets a largely sympathetic reaction in the form of laughter from the audience, but Mike (a ‘conman’—an expert of sorts on the show) responds to this remark with an insult:

Extract 1

159 Der: I like cars, I know a lot about cars (.) and I like
 160 meeting people (.) especially con men obviously
 160 Aud: ((laughter)) yeuh
 161 Der: these people-[x x x
 162 Mike: ▶ [con men like you as well
 163 cos you’re the biggest mug going
 164 Aud: °oh shut up°
 165 Der: these people [(.) always keep the fees
 166 WIN: [d’y- d’you know he’s asking for a such a smack=
 167 Pat: [=yes he is]
 168 Der: [just under] a thousand
 169 Kil: [pardon]=
 170 WIN: =I said he’s asking for such a sm[ack] that one is
 171 Pat: [yes]
 172 Man: he’s gonna get one don’t worry huh huh
 173 Mike: d’you want me to bend over
 174 ??: (give me your microphone)
 175 Pat: [oh (.) don’t be so clever]
 176 ?? [no::: don’t be (crude)]
 177 Der: [these people] uh always keep the fee under a thousand pounds
 178 ?: [x x x x]

Mike’s insult, ‘you’re the biggest mug going’ (lines 162–163) is treated by several other participants as an arguable action which requires opposition. Various members of the audience respond to it in turn, and in overlap with Derek, who is trying to continue with his story (lines 165–168). The alignment against Mike is built up through a series of turns, where he is addressed first as the indirectly targeted recipient (lines 166–167, 170–172) and then as the directly targeted

recipient (lines 175, 176). This dispute sequence, in which a collective alignment is built up against Mike, momentarily disrupts Derek's story until he is able to resume in line 177, by repeating the part of his utterance that has been overlapped.

This short stretch of argumentative talk is embedded within a different kind of discursive activity, narrative. It has a clear beginning, the insult, and it ends with the overlapping rebuke by Pat and another member of the audience, which effectively silences Mike, if only temporarily. But this kind of exchange is by no means representative of argument on *Kilroy* (although it may be more akin to the kind of argumentative discourse found on *Jerry Springer*). Mike's evaluation of Derek as a 'mug' is perceived as a personal attack by the other participants, rather than as a constructive contribution to the debate, and is dealt with as such. *Kilroy* is centrally about audience discussion and debate, and in order for topics to be turned into debatable issues on *Kilroy*, a story has to be told through which *narrated actions* can be treated as arguable matters, which are first opposed, then evaluated.

Although it clearly contains an evaluation, and a clear oppositional stance, Mike's turn in line 162 is also an interruption. It is violative of the narrative in the sense that it stops Derek from providing orientation detail for his story (line 161), and orientation details are not generally subject to evaluative receipts. It also constitutes a facetious response to Derek's self-deprecating joke about his own naivety which serves as a preface to the upcoming story, and as such, it is opposed and sanctioned by other participants. What they are opposing is not so much Mike's stance, the negative evaluation of Derek as a 'mug', but the manner and timing of its delivery. This kind of disputatious talk does not further the debate; what does move the show forward are certainly evaluations, but they tend to be packaged in a different way, and they do not usually emerge until another kind of story receipt activity has taken place: problematising (cf. Ochs and Taylor, 1992). What usually counts as an 'arguable' in the data I present here is an element within one person's narrative or account, a complicating action (to use Labov's 1972 term) which first gets problematised, and then evaluated, by other audience members and sometimes by the host too.

4. Alignment and evaluation in narrative events

Telling a story in a conversational context provides the possibility for any number of evaluative stances or 'positions' to be taken up by its recipients – indeed if no response is forthcoming, a story will often fall flat – i.e. be an unsuccessful story – with a 'so what?' ending. Appropriate cues for recipient alignment are often built into the preface, or early stages of a story, in so far as the teller gives some kind of information in the story preface about how the story is to be received. The extract below illustrates how these cues work in setting up a preferred evaluative stance for the recipient:

Extract 2 (a)

9 L: Oh: .hh Yi-m- You know I- I- I'm broiling about
 10 something hhhheh[heh .hhhh
 11 J: [Wha::t.
 12 L: Well that sa:le (0.2) at the vicarage.
 13 (0.6)
 14 J: Oh ye[:s
 15 L: ((tells story))

(Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998:87, simplified transcript).

In the preface (line 9), ‘L’ sets up a particular stance in relation to the story she is about to tell. A mutual acquaintance has insulted her and this has made her very angry: ‘I’m broiling about something’. Once the story is told, the story recipient ‘J’ aligns herself with ‘L’ by displaying her shared indignation, as we can see in lines 45 and 48 below:

Extract 2 (b)

43 L: What do you sa:y
44 (0.3)
45 J: Oh isn't he drea:dful.
46 L: e Ye::s.
47 (0.6)
48 J: What'n aw::ful ma::n

(from Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998:87), simplified transcript).

The evaluation produced by ‘J’ is clearly in line with the stance ‘L’ has taken in her story preface. In TV talk shows, however, this kind of stance-cued preface does not generally occur. This is because stories are contextually embedded in a different way; they are elicited by the host rather than initiated by the storyteller. Also in contrast to the above extract, where there are only two parties to the talk, in talk shows there are multiple recipients for stories, including both the host and members of the audience. A range of different responses to the story can thus ensue, and as we will see, this range is often sought by the host as crucial to the development of the argument. Participants produce story receipts which can be either affiliative (aligning with the teller) or oppositional (aligning against them). In a ‘debate’ format talk show like *Kilroy*, where audience members self select as next speakers without necessarily waiting for host mediation, the telling of a story is likely to produce at least one oppositional or evaluative receipt turn on the part of the audience. In the analysis that follows I show how it is in this kind of discursive organisation, i.e. a story telling and its ensuing evaluative receipt, that much of the ‘argumentation’ in *Kilroy* shows is located.

4.1. Elicited narratives: ‘Fish’, ‘Cars’ and ‘Bag full of money’

Telling a story on a talk show like *Kilroy* may be a different kind of activity from other forms of conversational narrative discourse (Norrick, 2000), but it shares some of the routine features of elicited narratives identified by Labov (1972). A specific feature of elicited narratives in talk shows is that they are publicly performed; that is, they are elicited by the host, who is the ‘primary recipient’, but they are also produced for the multiple recipients who make up the studio audience, as well as for the viewing audience. Through their specific mediated, contextual telling, stories become dramatic. In some shows, for example, in the British talk show *Trisha*, it is the host who takes on the role of dramatiser (Thornborrow, 2001) while in others, like *Jerry Springer*, the main protagonists themselves act out the drama (Myers, 2001). Whatever the case, however, the performance of a story to its recipients is a central feature of talk show discourse.

Talk show narratives also contain ‘arguable actions’—points in a participant’s story at which a particular stance or alignment in relation to that action is produced by one or more story recipients. This stance can be packaged discursively either in a problematising receipt turn (Ochs and Taylor, 1992) or in an evaluating receipt turn (Labov, 1972), which constitute the opposition pair part of an action/opposition sequence. Before looking in more detail at how this occurs,

below is a brief synopsis to contextualise the three stories which form the data for this study, called ‘Fish’, ‘Cars’ and ‘Bag full of money’ respectively.

Fish: an elderly woman was conned by a vacuum cleaner salesman into lending him £500 in cash to buy fish for a London dinner party, from which she would receive £200 of the profits. She never saw the man or the money again. The storyteller is Pat.

Cars: an unemployed man was persuaded to part with nearly £1000 to go on an advertised training course to become a prestige car sales ‘agent’. After paying the money, he found that the man advertising the training course had disappeared. The storyteller is Derek.

Bag full of money: three women from the same family (mother, daughter and granddaughter) joined the ‘Women Empowering Women’ pyramid investment scheme. They each contributed £1500 to the scheme but got nothing back. The storytellers are the mother, Eve, and the daughter, Beth.

The following extract provides a first example of how a narrated action gets problematised by a recipient from the studio audience, Win. The extract is taken from ‘Fish’; Pat has reached the moment in her story where she has agreed to hand over £500 of her money to the conman:

Extract 3: Fish

65 Pat: right so he said umm I said alright so I wrote out a cheque
 66 and then >he said I don’t want a cheque I want< cash::
 67 Kil: right so you gave him the five hundred pound
 68 Pat: [(I gave him) yeah]
 69 Win: ► [>but you didn’t] even know the man<
 70 ??: no::
 71 Pat: no no no
 72 Win: ► how can you give (.) somebody [that] you don’t know=
 73 Pat: [well]
 74 Win: =five hundred pounds
 75 Aud: ((laughs))
 76 Pat: he was [working for a reputable firm]
 77 Mike: [(I don’t have to x a job)]
 78 Pat: [as I thought]
 79 Win: ► [>but how did you] know it was a reputable firm< did he have
 80 Pat: now I know (.) well it was an American firm
 81 Win: ► well so what [(doesn’t matter if it’s American or English]
 82 Aud: [(laughs-----
 83 Pat: I know] (..) I know I know I know

Kilroy, in his role of primary story recipient, has just clarified a key action in Pat’s unfolding story in a declarative turn in line 67: ‘right so you gave him the five hundred pound’, which Pat confirms in her next turn. Immediately following this confirmation, Win, in the audience, self-selects as next speaker and problematises this action: ‘but you didn’t even know the man’ (line 69), projecting her next turn in line 72 and her question: ‘how can you give somebody that you don’t know £500?’ Pat’s response to Win is to justify her action: ‘it was a reputable firm’ (line 79). This justification in turn becomes problematised by Win in another oppositional move: ‘but how did you know it was a reputable firm?’ (line 79) and Pat once again produces a justification: ‘well it was an American firm’ (line 80). The sequence ends with Win’s further problematising receipt of this information: ‘well so what?’ and Pat’s concession: ‘I know I know’. What we can see in this extract is how an action in the story gets turned into an ‘arguable’ matter when it is taken up by another participant and problematised. The

argumentative talk then proceeds through a sequence of paired problematising/justifying turns until, in this case, the argument sequence is closed when an alignment is produced between the storyteller and the problematising recipient, in lines 82–83.

The same pattern can be seen in extract 4. Here the outcome is not an alignment between the new problematiser, Mel, and the storyteller, but continued opposition. Pat adds another element to her story, which is her explanation for why she had been taken in by the conman: she had been ill at the time (line 86). A number of members of the audience are talking in overlap at this point, and Pat rephrases her utterance (line 88) to repeat this: ‘I know now I was ill’. The next clearly decipherable turn occurs in line 90, when Mel opposes her account of illness as a plausible justification of her action:

Extract 4

86 Pat: [I was not (.) well]
 87 Aud: = x x x x) my gosh]
 88 Pat: I know now (.) I was ill
 89 (1.0)
 90 Mel: ► but everyone makes excuses (but I mean)
 91 Pat: ► no it's not an [excuse
 92 Mel: [no (.) but it seems [it seems to me
 93 Pat: [if you want to know
 94 you can ask (.) Queen Alexandra's hospital in Poole
 95 Kil: no no (but hang on)

By taking issue with Pat's justification for being so naive, Mel problematises another element of the story: ‘but everyone makes excuses’ (line 90). Pat's response this time is a counter: ‘no it's not an excuse’ and some evidence for this claim in her next turn (line 93). Their disagreement is thus maintained over a four-turn sequence of talk until the host intervenes to close down the argument in line 95. In this instance, the exchange between Mel and Pat is not resolved by an affiliative alignment since Pat does not concede his point as she did with Win in the previous extract.

After Kilroy's intervention, Win joins the talk again in overlap with Mel, and she produces an evaluation (line 97) which Pat again aligns with: ‘I was love’ (line 99). At this point in the argument a clear evaluatory stance has been offered in relation to Pat's actions, and an alignment is achieved between the two women:

Extract 5

96 Mel: [no no no eh I'm sure (x x x x x)]
 97 Win:► [you were very very susceptible] obviously (.)
 98 very susceptible
 99 Pat: I was love
 100 Win:► but to part with money (.) to somebody that you don't know (.)
 101 all he was was just a-
 102 ??: (that you should keep)
 103 Pat: yes (.) I was ill (.)

In extracts 3–5 then, we have seen the way in which a stance is produced as a culmination of the problematising receipt work by Win and Mel. The argument is initiated around elements of Pat's story which become arguable matters when they are opposed by one (or more) recipients. It is

then developed through a series of problematising and justifying turns in an exchange between the storyteller and story recipient(s), where the exchange between Pat and Mel is an example of this action/opposition pairing:

88 Pat: I know now (.) I was ill
 89 (1.0)
 90 Mel: but everyone makes excuses (but I mean)

Although these examples share the same basic structural organisation of argumentative discourse as the dispute between Mike and members of the audience in extract 1, that is, a series of action/opposition sequences, the examples here of problematising and evaluating turns show how this form of articulation between story and story receipt is more productive for the development of stances in the debate than the personal attack in extract 1. And it is precisely the production of such stances that Kilroy uses to move the discussion on.

In extract 6 we can see a further illustration of how this works, and more specifically, of how the transition from one storyteller to the next is accomplished by Kilroy's use of participants' evaluations of the narrated events, as well as his own evaluation. The sequence below is the culmination of the 'Fish' story told by Pat:

Extract 6

134 Win: ► [it's it's just] very sad (.) very sad
 135 Kil: ► is that the problem though that people (.) [are greedy
 136 Win: [are very- (.)
 137 ► no I think she was just very very gullible and she wanted
 138 to help somebody (.) she thought she was helping somebody
 139 Pat: yeah
 140 Win: is that right
 141 Kil: why is she going to make two hundred pound profit
 142 Aud?: yeah
 143 Pat: I thought that was fun
 144 Kil: [what
 145 Win: ► [I think she was just very very gullible huh huh huh huh
 146 ve:ry gullible huh huh huh
 147 Kil: Derek
 148 Pat: and [he knew I was on my own too]
 149 Kil: ► Derek [is it greed] is it greed
 150 Der: no (.) it's not greed
 151 Pat: no
 152 Win: no I don't
 153 Der: I got conned
 154 Kil: a second time
 155 Der: uh yes uh we're going into the um
 156 Kil: the cars
 157 Der: the cars (.) ok having been (.) s- providing people like our

In this sequence, a pair of contrasting evaluations emerge, produced in the stretch of talk from line 134 to line 149. The first evaluation (line 134) is produced by Win: 'it's (..) very sad' and aligns her with Pat's position that she was a victim of a con because she was vulnerable. The second is produced in Kilroy's question 'is that the problem though that people are greedy' (line 135). This introduces a new and contrasting assessment of the narrated events, that getting conned is caused by greed rather than gullibility. Win answers this question with a counter 'no I think she was very gullible' (line 137). Kilroy however uses his own evaluation to move away from Win's assessment

of Pat's personal story, and to broaden out the evaluation from this specific case to the more general 'people are greedy'. He continues to problematise Pat's actions: 'why is she going to make two hundred pound profit?' which produces a justifying response from Pat in the next turn: 'I thought that was fun'. Win again repeats and reinforces her evaluation of Pat's action in lines 145–146: 've:ry gullible', and once the host has obtained this clear stance from Win, he turns to a new party, Derek. But rather than use Win's more sympathetic evaluation, he uses his own negative evaluation reframed as a question: 'is it greed?' (line 149) in order to introduce a new angle to the debate.

There is a strong consensus emerging in the discussion at this point, in which at least three participants are in alignment, and the transition between one story and the next takes place once the production of a clear stance has been accomplished. That Kilroy persists with his own evaluation of 'greed' here, rather than topicalising Win's evaluation of 'gullibility', is perhaps due to some programme pre-structuring, since Derek seems to treat it as a cue for his next story (line 155): 'we're going into the um / the cars'. But it seems to be the case that in order to move the discussion forward, Kilroy is very clearly using story evaluations as a resource for accomplishing transitions between one participant's narrative and the next.

In the next extract, we join Derek's story at the point where he is narrating a series of actions that resulted in his losing money through a car sales fraud. He had been offered a training course at a cost of £1000, sent off the money and never heard any more about the course:

Extract 7: Cars

195 Der: he answered it (.) asked him to come back to organise a course
 196 for me (.) he couldn't do that but he would come back,
 197 and now of course he's totally off the picture (.)
 198 having made several times (.) one thousand pounds (.)
 199 my credit card company refunded it to me (.) because it was
 200 fraud(.) and the cheeky so-and-so had the ne:rvе to send
 201 the f:axed copy of my signature to them (.) and reclaimed it
 202 Mel: ► but you're always shifting the blame it seems (.)
 203 [that no one's actually no no]
 204 Der: ► [no I'm not shifting the blame]
 205 Aud: (x x mug)
 206 Mel: [>if you'll just if you'll just hear me out<]=
 207 Der: [no I'm not shifting the blame]
 208 I'm the IDIOT

In this extract, Mel problematises Derek's narrated actions in his turn in line 202: 'but you're always shifting the blame'. This is countered by Derek in line 204: 'no I'm not'. At this point, the problematising turn has itself become the arguable matter, when Derek takes issue with Mel's line that he is 'shifting the blame', forming a new action/opposition sequence. The same thing occurred in extract 4 above, when Mel's problematising move was countered by Pat. Here we have a new argument developing, but no clear evaluative stance has been produced. The dispute between the two men then continues for a considerable stretch of talk, until Kilroy interrupts Mel, who is about to launch into a lengthy discussion of blame and responsibility. He again is looking for an evaluation, and this time he does take up Win's prior evaluation of 'gullibility' as well as his own, 'greed', in order to move the discussion on:

Extract 8

225 Mel: there are some people who (.) um (.) uh are conned and I think
 226 you know (.) there's nothing they could do about it but (.)
 227 if you keep your eyes open there's an awful lot of people here
 228 (.) who would not be in the trouble they're in (.) I mean this
 229 the same goes in America everyone (.)
 230 [blames their blames their(mother fox x x
 231 Kil: ► [is it (.) gullibility
 232 Der: I'm not blaming anyone but myself
 233 Kil: ► or greed now
 234 Mel: well it seems to be (.) a mixture of both (.)
 235 Der: no,
 236 Mel: naivety and chasing [the (quick made) money]
 237 Der: [no,]
 238 [no:.. (.) [no:..

Kilroy interrupts Mel's turn in order to push for an evaluation in lines 231–233: 'is it gullibility or greed now'. This brings the talk back from what is developing into an extended argument between Mel and Derek, without producing a clear evaluative stance. The stance is delivered by Mel in his next two turns as an answer to Kilroy's question: 'a mixture of both' (line 234) and 'naivety and chasing the quick made money' (line 236). However, Derek opposes this too, and the exchange continues with Derek strongly contesting the offered evaluation, while Mel goes on with a further series of problematising turns, as shown in extract 9 below:

Extract 9

237 Der: [no,]
 238 [no:.. (.) [no:..
 239 Mel: ► [if you're blaming yourself [what are you sitting there for
 240 ??: [(this was what I was explaining what-
 241 Der: [I (.) was unemployed (.) I was desperate to get employment I
 242 couldn't get it=
 243 Mel: =but that desperation
 244 Der: so therefore I looked for something feasible
 245 (0.9)
 246 Mel: ► [but what do you mean by feasible that's not feasible
 247 Der: [but not-
 248 Mike: (hasn't got) a landline phone
 249 Der: I was acting like an age(board) been acting like an agent (.)
 250 to meet people [like-
 251 Mel: ► [where are you taking responsibility for what's
 252 happened=
 253 Der: =I'm responsible (.) cos I fell for it (0.8)
 254 Mel: well
 255 Der: it seemed a feasible thing (.) it seemed sensible
 256 Mel: ► you're fodder for these people [is what I'm saying
 257 Der: [exactly (.) [I agree:;
 258 Kil: [are you-
 259 Kil: are you [fodder-]
 260 Der: [one hundred] per cent I agree

This sequence shows the extended argument between the two men, which eventually culminates in an alignment between them in lines 251–253. At this point, Derek agrees with Mel that he is responsible for what happened to him, and Mel's 'well' in line 254 marks a shift out of the problematising work into closure: the production of an evaluation in line 256: 'you're fodder for

these people is what I'm saying'. Once Mel has produced this clear evaluation, Kilroy takes it up immediately in his next turn (line 259) repeating it in his question to Derek: 'are you fodder?'. In his answer, Derek strongly aligns with this evaluative stance: 'one hundred per cent, I agree' (line 260).

In terms of the progression from argument to the production of stance, in this exchange we can see how the problematising work drives the argument forward, resulting in an extended stretch of problematising/justifying adjacency pairs between the two men as illustrated in the three short extracts below.

9 (a)

239 Mel: [if you're blaming yourself [what are you sitting there for
240 ??: [(this was what I was explaining what-
241 Der: [I (.) was unemployed (.) I was desperate to get employment I
242 couldn't get it=

9 (b)

246 Mel: [but what do you mean by feasible that's not feasible
247 Der: [but not-
248 Mike: (hasn't got) a landline phone
249 Der: I was acting like an age(board) been acting like an agent (.)
250 to meet people [like-

9 (c)

251 Mel: [where are you taking responsibility for what's
252 happened=
253 Der: =I'm responsible (.) cos I fell for it (0.8)

In these extracts, Mel produces a problematising turn which addresses Derek's gullibility, and in each case, Derek's next turn is a justification (Mike's turn in line 248 is a mocking insertion into the adjacency pair). However, problematising action alone by a story recipient does not function as a resource for the host to move the discussion on; rather, as we have seen here, it generates a series of ongoing, repeated, action/opposition pairs. What Kilroy seems to be looking for in order to move things on, and to bring in a new participant as storyteller, is the clear production of a stance in the form of an evaluation, which he can then use to open up the floor to a new speaker. This is illustrated in the next extract, where Kilroy not only uses the current evaluation just offered, but repeats all the evaluations he has collected from the previous talk in a transitional move to the next storyteller.

Extract 10

256 Mel: you're fodder for these people [is what I'm saying
257 Der: [exactly (.) [I agree::
258 Kil: [are you-
259 Kil: ► are you [fodder-]
260 Der: [one hundred] per cent I agree
261 Kil: are you just talking about now you turn round to me my friend
262 Der: [(x x x x x x x x x x greed x x x x x]
263 Kil: ► [naivety (.) gullibility (.) greed]fodder
264 Eve: yeah (.) being too trusting (.) I went into (.) a scheme called

In line 259 Kilroy repeats Mel's evaluation, in the format of a question addressed to a new speaker, Eve. He then builds on the current set of evaluations which has emerged over the course of the discussion (line 263), in overlap with Derek, to make the transition to the next storyteller. Kilroy's uptake of an evaluation in effect closes down the discursive space of the current storyteller, in this case Derek, and ends the argument sequence which has been ongoing between Derek and his problematiser, Mel. The evaluations thus provide him with a discursive resource for progression to the next story. From the data I have presented so far then, I suggest that paired argumentative utterances, in the form of problematising and justifying turn sequences, do not provide the material to enable the host to make this discursive move. Evaluations, on the other hand, do provide such material and are actively sought for by the host to accomplish the transition.

In extract 11 we can see the same pattern of problematising, justifying and evaluation emerge in the development of responses to the next story. Eve has described how she was persuaded to part with 1500 pounds at a presentation of the financial 'pyramid' scheme called *Women Empowering Women*. Her daughter, Beth, takes up the role of problematiser, followed by Kilroy:

Extract 11: Bag full of money

55 Eve: yeah because you'd put your money in [you (always) take your=
 56 Kil: [hang on
 57 Eve: =turn [at [at um taking the money out
 58 Kil: you take your [turn
 59 Beth: [yes but somebody would lose out in the end=
 60 ??: [in the end]
 61 Beth: =[mum] you know that
 62 Kil: ► well [why did you do it then
 63 Beth: [somebody would
 64 Eve: well why did you [do it then
 65 Beth: [I didn't I didn't get anybody involved in it,
 66 Kil: ► well you put your fifteen hundred in
 67 Eve: huh huh (.) [huh huh huh]
 68 Beth: [I know]
 69 Kil: ((wheezy laugh))HAH HAH HAH HAH

The problematising here is quite a complex, joint accomplishment in which each of the three participants in the talk, Eve, Beth and the host, are involved. Both women have contributed to the scheme, and both women are therefore implicated in the narrated action that constitutes the arguable matter. The current narrated action, where Eve recounts how the scheme is supposed to work (line 55), is first problematised by the daughter Beth in line 59: 'but somebody would lose out in the end'. Beth's problematising move then itself becomes the arguable matter as Kilroy takes the next turn (line 62) to problematise *her* action, since she has also contributed to the scheme: 'well why did you do it then?' This utterance forms the first of another problematising/justifying pair between Eve and Beth (lines 64–65) and after a further problematising move by Kilroy, an alignment is reached with Beth's concession turn in line 68: 'I know'.

In extract 12 there is a shift in tone, as the host uses a 'replay' strategy to describe how the prior argument has emerged, taking the opportunity to make fun of the storytellers (lines 69–73). This is a joint story; both Eve and Beth have joined the scheme, so both are protagonists and potential subjects of problematising work by other participants. The inappropriateness of Beth positioning herself as a problematiser is thus exposed and exploited by the host as an entertaining moment for the audience, before the discussion resumes with a new participant entering the talk as problematiser:

Extract 12

69 Kil: ((wheezy laugh))HAH HAH HAH HAH
 70 I mean- she says I TOLD YOU MUM (.) and then she SA- †SHE-DID
 71 and then who- whose daughter was it? (.) was it your daughter
 72 Eve: her daughter
 73 Kil: her daughter's (.) HAH know all so why -
 74 ??: (x x x x x) as well
 75 Beth: (it's not funny)
 76 Kil: what it's not (x) I know it's (not funny)
 77 Lyn: ► surely I mean you were [out to try and make money so (x x x)
 78 Kil: [(x x)
 79 Lyn: out of somebody else
 80 Eve: [well if you] look at it like that [I didn't see it like that
 81 Kil: [go on] [she's talking to you
 82 she's talking t'hah to you (.) you (.) oh look she doesn't
 83 WANNA KNOW NOW (.) to you
 84 Lyn: ► (what d'you put it) in for then (.) to get m- more money surely
 85 Mike: yeah she's the mug
 86 Kil: let her answer shush
 87 Beth: no not really (.) it was just- [
 88 Aud: [(noise))
 89 Lyn: ► come on you must have gone in for some reason
 90 Beth: no no I (ham) (.) right (.) to clear a few debts an'that
 91 Aud: ((laugh))
 92 Beth: the friends she had around her this woman, (1.6) made it look
 93 like um (.) [it was-
 94 Kil: [easy money=
 95 Beth: =I've got- easy money
 96 Kil: [x x x x
 97 Lyn: ► [easy money [so it's gree::d]
 98 Beth: [(I'll admit,-)]
 99 Lyn: ► it's a form of greed
 100 Beth: yeah but I'm not a greedy person
 101 Aud: [(laughter-----)]

Lyn joins the talk with her first problematising turn in line 77: 'surely (...) you were out to (...) make money', which Eve responds to with a justification: 'I didn't see it like that'. This triggers a new sequence of argumentative talk, where the problematising work is done by Lyn (lines 84 and 89) and Beth takes up the justifying turns: she needed to clear debts and she was convinced by the women who presented the pyramid scheme. Again, once the arguable narrated action is opposed by a problematiser, the argument develops with a new set of action/opposition sequences in the form of problematising/justifying pairs. An alignment is reached between the participants (lines 94 through to 97) as they successfully resolve Beth's search for a descriptive term in line 92-93. The collaborative completion of Beth's utterance: 'she made it look like it was um' is produced by Kilroy, who offers 'easy money'. Beth accepts this as an appropriate completion by repeating it (line 95), then Lyn takes it up as evidence for her evaluative stance in line 97: 'so it's greed' and again in line 99. Beth counters this stance by saying 'I'm not a greedy person' (line 100), at which point the audience laugh.

Lyn's evaluation of 'greed' is taken up by Kilroy, who uses her stance as the basis for an evaluative, humorous summary of the story. In lines 103-109 he first reproblematises the action: 'what did you put your fifteen hundred in for?', then retells it from the perspective that the two women were motivated by greed. The host's talk here constitutes an evaluative receipt of the story because, to use Goffman's (1981) concept of footing, he indicates his alignment with Lyn's stance through his animation of Beth's thoughts and Eve's words: 'I'll have one of them'.

Extract 13

101 Aud: [(laughter-----)]
 102 Beth: (..) you know
 103 Kil: ► (x x x) come on >look at her< you went there (>what did you up
 104 to<) what did you put your fifteen hundred in for (.)
 105 you weren't giving it mother Theresa were you
 106 Beth: no
 107 Kil: ► no you were there you thought .h oh like your mum said
 108 she saw a b-h-rown paper bag full o'money she said
 109 I'll have one o'them hah [hah hah hah hah
 110 Aud: [(laughs)] (x x x x)
 111 Kil: ► you know about this do you
 112 Mike yeah (.)
 113 Kil: hang on Mi- hang on no the other Mike sorry Mike the other Mike
 114 the standing officer [Mike] trading [standards
 115 officer

Once this tongue-in-cheek evaluation is complete, and the audience have finished laughing (line 110), the host then turns to the show's designated expert from the Trading Standards Authority. Kilroy is not looking for a transition to the next storyteller here, but nevertheless uses the production of an evaluative stance to close down the current argumentative exchange and move the talk on. He shifts immediately into a question about 'knowledge'; the expert is not being asked for his opinion, but for information, and the argument between Lyn, Beth and Eve is suspended at this point.

To conclude the analysis, and provide one last illustration of the discursive resource that evaluations provide for the host, we come to the end of the story, 'Bag full of money'. Mel re-enters the talk as problematiser, at the point where Beth is doing more justifying work to explain her actions. Just as Pat did in the 'Fish' story, and Derek did in 'Cars', she provides an account for why she was taken in by the scam:

Extract 14

180 Beth: I'd just lost my dat (.) um my dad (.) ok an' I was all-
 181 well (.) I was in a big mess at that period of my life
 182 Mel: I'm not trying to belittle it but (.) you know your father died
 183 >an all that<
 184 Beth: mmm
 185 Mel: but at the end of the day the responsibility lies with you
 186 you've made the decision (.) you an' I am sorry for you but
 187 ► (.) you know (.) it is your responsibility
 188 Kil: ► it is your responsibility Elaine isn't it

In line 187 Mel produces an evaluation: 'it is your responsibility' and in the next turn Kilroy takes up this stance, repeating it in the form of a declarative tag question addressed to a new participant, Elaine, who he has selected as next storyteller.

5. Discussion

In working through these three narratives and their receipt by the host and the studio audience, I have looked closely at the development of argumentative talk which emerges around the telling of a story. I have described how the articulation between narrative, argument and opinion, in the

form of story actions which are problematised and then evaluated by the recipients, is a key feature of situated argument in the talk show *Kilroy*. There is a clearly identifiable structure and progression to this talk, and I will now attempt to schematise the pattern which has emerged in the analysis, how the argument emerges through different types of actions, and how these are formatted by speakers.

Firstly, I have argued that it is narrated actions which provide the primary arguable matters in this form of talk show. All three stories in the data sample here involve actions which resulted in the protagonists losing considerable sums of money. The issue up for discussion is whether they are victims of scams through their own naivety, which makes them easy prey for conmen, or whether it is their own fault for being greedy and gullible. But the discussion itself is built around the selection of specific actions which are problematised by story recipients. The problematising turns in this data share a similar design, and fall into two categories; they are either formatted as questions, or as declarative observations. Both types of problematising turns take issue with or challenge a narrated action in the story, or a subsequent justification of that action offered by the storyteller. In the data, the following utterances were all identified as problematising turns on the part of either the host or a member of the audience:

Problematising questions:

how can you give money to someone you don't even know
 but how did you know it was a reputable firm?
 well so what, it doesn't matter if it's American or English
 what did you put your fifteen hundred in for
 what d'you put it in for then
 well why did you do it then
 if you're blaming yourself what are you sitting there for
 but what do you mean by feasible that's not feasible
 where are you taking responsibility for what's happened

Problematising observations:

surely I mean you were out to make money
 come on you must have gone in for some reason
 but you didn't even know the man
 but everyone makes excuses
 but to part with money to someone you don't know
 but you're always shifting the blame it seems
 well you put your fifteen hundred in
 you weren't giving it to mother Theresa were you

These utterances constitute the oppositional moves in the argument, which develops as subsequent story recipients challenge the storyteller through their problematising actions. Many of these receipt turns are fronted by a disjunctive marker which preface upcoming opposition to a prior utterance, e.g. 'but', 'surely', 'come on' and 'well'. Problematising in itself however is not enough to bring the ongoing argument to some form of resolution, indeed, resolution is not really the goal here, but progression. Alignments are produced when the storyteller concedes the problematic nature of their actions, as we have seen in all three stories here. But the closure of a stretch of argumentative talk is not simply a matter of producing alignments between participants. What the host uses to close a particular line of talk, and to move the discussion

forward is not alignment, but the production of an evaluative stance. Evaluations therefore serve as a transitional resource for Kilroy since they open up the talk to new participants once the problematising activity is done. Problematising involves two or more speakers addressing their talk directly to the storyteller as primary recipient; all of the problematising questions listed above, and all but one of the observations, contain direct address to ‘you’: the storyteller.

Evaluations are framed differently. The evaluations contain a clear assessment of the narrated actions. Some are in the third person, and as such addressed to the host and/or the audience rather than the storyteller.

it’s very sad
 she was very gullible
 well it seems to be a mixture of both . . . naivety and chasing the quick made money
 so it’s greed
 it’s a form of greed

The others are still addressed to the storyteller, but nevertheless contain a clearly stated opinion about the narrated action, rather than a challenge to the teller which requires a justification in response:

you’re fodder for these people is what I’m saying
 you know it is your responsibility
 you were very susceptible

What Kilroy then does with each of these evaluative utterances is reframe them as a question, which he directs at a new speaker:

are you fodder
 is it gullibility or greed now
 Derek is it greed
 is that the problem though that people are greedy
 it is your responsibility Elaine isn’t it

So while the argument sequences are the outcome of problematising narrative actions, evaluations provide the resource for eliciting the next story. Problematising produces justification or alignment, but evaluation produces stance. Opposition alone is therefore not enough to produce a bounded unit which will bring the particular stretch of argumentative talk to a close (although it can produce laughter and audience alignment). There is a need for evaluation to make a transition to the next story in the sequence and once an evaluation has been produced, or in some cases elicited by the host, then the link can be made to the next storyteller. This is a very different progression and form of closure, than those which are found in other mediated contexts, for example in talk radio or news interviews. In talk radio, arguments can be closed abruptly by the host with no alignment or consensus achieved (Hutchby, 1996) and in news interviews, the role of the interviewer is often to elicit different opinions from interviewees then close the interview once these have been obtained (Clayman and Heritage, 2002). The pattern of eliciting a narrative containing arguable actions, which are then problematised and evaluated, seems to be a recurrent feature of talk show discourse; and as such, forms an analysable progression of sequential steps in the talk. I would therefore argue that despite the apparent ‘chaotic’ nature of argument on talk shows such as Kilroy, there is nevertheless an identifiable structure to the argumentative sequences. This structure is built around the articulation between the production of narrative

discourse, and its receipt by the host and studio audience, where problematising and evaluation are key discursive resources for the progression of the talk.

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