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Script proposals: a device for empowering clients in counselling*

Michael Emmison[1]

Carly Butler[2]

Susan Danby[3]

[1]School of Social Science, University of Queensland, St Lucia 4072, Australia*

[2] Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough, LE11 3TU,

England

[3] School of Early Childhood, Queensland University of Technology, Kelvin Grove Campus

4001, Australia

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*** *Corresponding author:* **Michael Emmison, School of Social Science, University of

Queensland, St Lucia, 4072, Australia. *Email* m.emmison@uq.edu.au.

Abstract

Much of the research on the delivery of advice by professionals such as physicians, health workers and counsellors, both on the telephone and in face to face interaction more generally, has focused on the theme of client resistance and the consequent need for professionals to adopt particular formats to assist in the uptake of the advice. In this paper we consider one setting, Kid's Helpline, the national Australian counselling service for children and young people, where there is an institutional mandate not to give explicit advice in accordance with the values of self-direction and empowerment. The paper examines one practice, the use of script proposals by counsellors, which appears to offer a way of providing support which is consistent with these values. Script proposals entail the counsellors packaging their advice as something that the caller might say – at some future time – to a third party such as a friend, teacher, parent, or partner, and involve the counsellor adopting the speaking position of the caller in what appears as a rehearsal of a forthcoming strip of interaction. Although the core feature of a script proposal is the counsellor's use of direct reported speech they appear to be delivered, not so much as exact words to be followed, but as the type of conversation that the client needs to have with the 3rd party. Script proposals, in short, provide models of what to say as well as alluding to how these could be emulated by the client. In their design script proposals invariably incorporate one or more of the most common rhetorical formats for maximising the persuasive force of an utterance such as a three part list or a contrastive pair. Script proposals, moreover, stand in a complex relation to the prior talk and one of their functions appears to be to summarise, respecify or expand upon the client's own ideas or suggestions for problem solving that have emerged in these preceding sequences.

Script proposals: a device for empowering clients in counselling

Introduction

The provision of advice is central to the work of many contemporary social service

professionals, particularly those working in fields such as healthcare, education and

counselling. The study of how advice is requested, delivered and received has, not

surprisingly, received a good deal of attention from researchers in the fields of language and

interaction employing the methodological approach of conversation analysis (e.g. Heritage

and Sefi, 1992; Kinnell and Maynard, 1996; Pilnick, 1999; Pudlinski, 2002; Vehviläinen,

2001). [1] It has been widely noted that advice delivery and receipt can be interactionally

difficult (Jefferson and Lee, 1981; Pudlinski, 2005; Silverman, 1997; Waring, 2007). Problems

can arise where advice is offered when it is not sought or welcomed by the recipient.

However the organisation of advice delivery can also be complicated in certain institutional

contexts in which there are guidelines around whether advice, or specific types of advice,

can be given to clients (see for example, Butler et. al, 2009; Vehviläinen, 2003). In such

contexts, participants face a practical dilemma in the sense that while the client presents

with a problem (and may seek suggestions as to how to manage it), the professionals do not

have the institutional mandate to straightforwardly deliver advice.

One of the most obvious settings in which the delivery of advice is constrained by the

presence of particular professional codes or practices is counselling (Couture and Sutherland

2006; Emmison and Danby 2007a; Vehviläinen 2003). Counselling is typically based upon a

philosophy of empowerment and the promotion of self-directedness so that the client can

identify their abilities to come up with a solution to a problem, rather than having the

counsellor propose what they might do, or should do.   In this paper we look at how this

constraint shapes interaction in one particular institutional context - Kids Helpline, the

national Australian telephone and web-based counselling service for children and young people. Elsewhere (Butler et. al., 2010) we have shown that one way in which the Kids Helpline counsellors manage the constraint of providing support – but not advice [2] - is through the use of questions. By asking clients about the relevance or applicability of possible courses of action they might undertake, counsellors allude to the desirability of these courses of action and thereby display their epistemic authority as professionals with relevant expertise for dealing with clients' problems. However the interrogative format works to mitigate the normative and asymmetric dimensions characteristic of overt advice sequences as it displays an orientation to the clients' epistemic authority as agents with ultimate knowledge of their own lives, capacities and understandings.

The present paper builds on this research program (see also Danby, Baker and Emmison, 2005; Emmison and Danby, 2007b; Danby, Butler and Emmison, 2009; Danby and Emmison in press, 2011) and aims to extend our knowledge of the specific interactional practices which constitute the work of telephone counselling. At times in the calls we have collected we observed that the counsellors departed from the use of interrogatives and appeared to offer clients direct advice about how they might address the problems which had led them to contact the help line. Moreover the counsellors' advice was delivered in a format which looked remarkably prescriptive in that they would provide callers with suggestions of what to say to a third person such as a friend, parent or teacher who was, in some way, implicated in the problem or trouble and, importantly, in how it might be resolved.

Extract 1 provides an example of this device.

```
Extract 1 PC050608_1414


Coun: Don't enter into it .hhhh when she comes

      along and dumps it on you: you say Mum

      (1.2) um (0.5) ah: I'm not your counsellor,

      (.) and I'm not your mother, (0.6)
Call: °Mm[:°
Coun:    [I'm so:rry tah hear that, (0.4) but it's

      not my business.
```

Extract 1 is taken from a call in which a 24 year old woman, who is a regular client of the helpline, has rung to talk more about her family dynamics in general, and aspects of her mother's behaviour in particular. Prior to the data extract she has reported that she feels her mother is lacking assertion as she allows herself to be brow-beaten by her current partner. In addition the caller reports that she is also tired of being the recipient of her mother's troubles-tellings. At the point in the call where the extract commences, the counsellor tells the caller not to 'enter into' her mother's problems and, in framing this advice, speaks as if she is the caller in interaction with her mother: 'you say Mum I'm not your counsellor and I'm not your mother I'm sorry to hear that but it's not my business'.

In suggesting a 'script' for the caller here, and other examples we examine shortly, the counsellors were, it seemed to us, offering callers direct advice. However rather than simply providing the caller with suggestions about the sort of things that they might do or say they would go further and, taking the speaking position of the caller, enact a possible conversation that the caller might later have. We have called these future-oriented utterances 'script proposals' and this paper investigates the way they accomplish advice giving on a help line which is committed to the value of client empowerment. Our aim is to

show that this apparent paradox can be resolved through a detailed examination of their design and sequential placement within the calls.

Script proposals in context

There are a number of themes and research foci in the talk-in-interaction literature which, *prima facie*, might shed light on the business that script proposals carry out in a counselling setting. One of these is the concept of 'script formulations' which has been discussed in the discursive psychology (DP) literature as a corrective to the perceived problems with the cognitive psychological notion of scripts (e.g. Edwards, 1994; 1995). Script formulations refer to the way in which descriptions in conversation are frequently built to as to emphasise the regularity or typicality of the circumstances which they depict, as opposed to being departures from the routine (i.e. 'breach formulations'). Script formulations describe events or actions as standardized or expected, as possessing some universal significance, features which provide them with rhetorical value. For example, in a discussion of the way UK Child Protection Officers manage advice resistance from callers on a child protection helpline Hepburn and Potter (in press) suggest that the use of a script formulation 'may be a useful device in advice giving … as it avoids a stark *ad hominem* suggestion, and presents the advice as generic'. Although script formulations and script proposals may have a common interactional goal of seeking to persuade a recipient of the value, relevance or appropriateness of a course of action there are important differences. First, a script proposal does incorporate a literal script whereas the idea contained by a script formulation may be conveyed without recourse to any actual speech. Second, and perhaps more crucial, script proposals are explicitly designed to so as *not to* appear generic. Indeed we would argue that it is precisely the 'stark *ad hominem*', personalised feature of script proposals which is their most characteristic feature. The advice they contain is not so much 'what anyone would do' but rather something that *this* client is specifically enjoined to carry out

on *this* specific occasion.   The principal way in which script proposals achieve this personalisation is by the counsellor's voicing of the speaking position of the client. In analysing this particular feature of their design we have turned to the concept of direct reported speech [DRS] although this needs to be qualified for script proposals are, of course, indexing interaction which has *not yet* occurred. In other respects, however, many of the observations about the interactional significance of DRS appear to hold for script proposals and so for ease and clarity of exposition we will retain the use of this term in our discussion.

The use of direct reported speech in ordinary conversation has been shown to be an economical and effective way for a speaker to provide evidence to bolster an account or story to the extent that recipients can access the previous episode of interaction under discussion effectively allowing the reported speaker to speak for him or herself (e.g. Holt 1996, 2000; Holt and Clift 2007).   However the allusion to the future – to speech which has not yet taken place – in a script proposal adds more complexity and here it is helpful to return to Goffman's (1981) earlier decomposition of the single concept of 'speaker' into the three production roles of animator, author, and principal. For Goffman the animator of an utterance was 'the sounding box', the one from whose mouth the words come. However a different person – the author – may have been responsible for the utterance's design. Finally there could be a separate principal – the one 'whose position is established by the words that are spoken' (Goffman, 1981: 144).   A given speaker may embody all three of these production roles but there are numerous occasions – for example when direct reported speech is a component part of an utterance – when they must be analytically distinguished.   We argue that the counsellor's adoption of the speaking position of the client in a future-oriented script proposal can be seen as an effective way of positioning the client as the principal behind the advice contained in the utterances making up the proposal. Through this device the ownership of the advice can be neatly attributed to the client and

their agency in its eventual delivery can be underscored. Here, then, are two important ways in which the helpline's institutional mandate of client-empowerment is locally realised in specific interactional sequences . However we note that there is debate within the DRS literature over the question of the accuracy of the quoted or reported locutions with suggestions that verbatim recall is not possible (see Lehrer, 1989). This has served to highlight that it is the interactional significance of a purported reporting – in for example providing an air of objectivity to an account - rather than its literal veracity which is most important feature of DRS. Similar considerations apply to the counsellor's use of the script proposal device. That is rather than a display of verisimilitude – as the exact words that a client should later say – we suggest it may be more appropriate to see script proposals as hypothetical examples of the sort of conversation that may be necessary for the client to have.

A number of studies in the reported speech literature have addressed the use of speech which is framed as hypothetical or how speakers can talk about future events and 'quote' material which has never been said and most likely never will be (e.g. Anderson, 2005; Myers, 1999; Sams 2007). For example in his research on focus group discussions Myers examined the ways in which his respondents created and used what he termed 'hypothetical represented discourse'. His specific analytical interest was on the ways in which the speakers indicated when they had adopted hypothetical discourse and the rhetorical functions of this speech within the context of the focus group discussion, such as alluding to possible tensions in their thinking or opinions. Anderson (2005) analysed meetings of a project team concerned with likely or proposed changes to the organization. He suggests that by employing quotations or represented voices from hypothetical future occasions members of the project team are able to articulate how proposed organizational changes

might work out. By 'trying on' the new language which the change would imply the project

team members can consider and evaluate the logical implications of the proposed changes.

Similar observations about the function and significance of future-oriented talk have been

put forward by Ratliff and Morris but in a different context, the supervision of trainee

therapists. In their research on postgraduate programs in marriage and family therapy,

Ratliff and Morris (1995) documented a practice by which the qualified supervisors would

make suggestions to the students during their review of the trainees' video-taped

supervisory sessions. On the majority of occasions the supervisors would simply offer

suggestions to the trainees of things they should do to improve the quality of their

therapeutic strategies in forthcoming sessions with their clients leaving the student to

formulate the best way to implement these suggestions. However Ratliff and Morris also

observed occasions when not only did supervisors suggest what to do in the next session

'they often specified precisely how to say it' (Ratliff and Morris, 1995: 134). The following

passage provides an example of this supervisory practice:

[extract 2 from Ratliff and Morris, 1995 p135]

1   S: Do you <u>feel</u> like you need to take her asi:de . . .

2   F: And do <u>what</u>?

3   S: →   And sa:y um (.) sometimes it feels real unbalanced to be

4   the second person to come into therapy (.) and (.) I'm

5   wondering if-if you would like to see (.) me by myself

6   F: Uh huh

7   S: for one session (.) and just <u>offer</u> it that way without a

8   you know, we don't need to do it right now, we don't

9   (need) to keep equal balance, but uh

In response to the trainee's open ended inquiry at line 2 'And do <u>what</u>?', the supervisor at

lines 3 – 7 tells the student how to speak to the client.   In essence, Ratliff and Morris

suggest supervisors 'rehearse or model how to say something'. In this way they provide the

trainees with the benefit of their professional expertise but in a way which does not

undervalue the trainee's developing skills and capabilities.   Ratliff and Morris's work on

'telling how to say it' is important and would seem to have a wider relevance than the family

therapy settings they describe.   In this paper we propose to expand on the understanding of

the practice of offering clients advice by 'telling how to say it' through an examination of the

sequential environments in which script proposals occur – something they do not address.

Our work also extends theirs by looking at the actions that script proposals accomplish and

how this in turn advances our understanding of advice requesting and delivery in

institutional contexts. In the following section we provide some brief details on the research

setting and the data collection before commencing our analysis of the calls.

Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline is a national Australian helpline catering specifically for children and young

people from 5 up to the age of 25. It has been in existence since 1991 and currently offers

counselling services over the telephone, by email and via web-based chat, but 95 percent of

contact is still made via the telephone. In 2008, there were 492, 327 attempts to contact the

service, with 60 percent of these contacts responded to by Kids Helpline counsellors (Kids

Helpline 2008). All counsellors are paid and tertiary educated and receive further training in

house.   The topics covered in the calls are varied but the majority involve problems in

relationships with parents, siblings and friends, bullying and teasing, homelessness, drugs

and alcohol, self image and mental health. The data we examine are from a corpus of 50

calls collected in 2008 as part of a broader study which is examining the impact of the

different technological modalities of contact (phone, email and web counseling) on the help

line's operations and which involved six different counsellors. We also draw to a limited

extent on a larger corpus of calls which was obtained in an earlier phase of the research

carried out between 2000 and 2003. The calls were recorded by the helpline as part of its

quality control and in-house training and were made available to the authors as digital files

once they had been de-identified. The calls were transcribed employing the standard

Jeffersonian notation system (Jefferson, 2004).

Analysis

Script proposals do not appear in the calls 'out of the blue' in the sense that there is no prior

evidence in the call of the advice they contain. Rather they appear in environments which

are already 'advice-implicative' (Butler et. al., 2010). Consequently a core part of our

analytic strategy has been to examine the broader sequences in which the proposals are

located. What we find is that much of the counselling work which precedes the actual

proposal is taken up with an exploration of the details of the caller's problem and the

canvassing of possible ways in which it might be resolved, activities in which the caller's own

thoughts and sentiments are sought and displayed. Moreover the caller's stance towards

the problem which the prior counselling work has elicited becomes the raw material for the

proposal so that in an important sense they are built out of information the caller has

already provided. Script proposals contain ingredients from the preceding talk but these

appear in an embellished form. The proposals take aspects of the prior talk but work with

them, sometimes paraphrasing, sometimes adding to, or perhaps even challenging what has

been said.[3] These reworkings by the counsellor frequently result in the script proposal

having a special rhetorical force. The conversational exemplars provided by the counsellors

invariably incorporate one or more of the common features that have been shown to characterise talk which is persuasive or which seeks to maximise the alignment of a recipient: idioms, figures of speech, 3 part lists or contrastive pairs.

Finally, in terms of their sequential organization within the call, script proposals can be typically understood as occupying the third position in a series of related turns. In first position there is an initial action by the counsellor which instigates a recommended course of action the caller should follow but which is responded to – in second position – by the caller indicating some possible trouble with the implementation of this course of action. The counsellor's script proposal in third position, with its array of rhetorical embellishments, appears to work to resolve these troubles and move the agenda of the counselling session forward.   In the following extracts we look in more detail at the design and sequential placement of the script proposals and evaluate their effectiveness as counselling strategies.

Extract 3 is from a call from a teenage boy who has rung concerned for a friend who he thinks may be being abused by his parents. Prior to the extract he and the counsellor discuss the friend's domestic situation and the caller discloses the additional information that he thinks his friend may in fact 'take pride' from the ill treatment he is receiving. This is reworked by the counsellor that perhaps his friend is putting on a 'brave front' but that underneath he really does want help.

```
Extract 3 PC070608_1943


1   Cou:    .hh ↑So I guess the be:st way to support him
2           IS listening to what he sez, b't maybe you
3           know how you know he's tryina be tough about
```

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 4            it¿

 5            (.)

 6   Call:    °Yeah°

 7   Cou:     .hh ↑How could you let him know withou:t

 8            (.) sort'v ruining his fee:lings .h how

 9            could you let him know that he doesn't

10            have to act tough about it that it's actually

11            wrong and illegal.

12            (2.2)

13   Call:    Um:: maybe say like (1.1) um: this is not

14            how y' parents are s'posed to act.

15            (0.2)

16   Cou:     M:m,

17            (0.4)

18   Cou:     M[h:m,

19   Call:     [And um (0.9) I'm not su:re

20   Cou:     .hh ↑So: .h so that he:'s still feeling- it-

21            it's impo:rtant that he still f- feels

22            comfortable .hh and can talk to you about it

23            so it's important that he doesn't feel judged

24            in any way.=cos ↑kids who are often .h (.)

25            um subjected to this sorta stuff (.) mptch

26            feel a bit ashamed sometimes about it even

27            though it's not their shame?

28            (0.4)

29   Call:    Yip.

30            (0.3)

31   Cou:     ↑Yeah so they .hh the::y (0.3) you know can

32            have really mixed fee:lings about it .hhh and

33            also feel quite protective sometimes of the

34            parents that are actually (.) hu:rting them?
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35          (0.3)

36   Cou:   Does [that make sense?

37   Call:       [(Mm)

38          (.)

39   Call:  Yeah [(mhm)

40   Cou:       [.hhhhhh ↑So:- maybe:: (.) maybe saying

41          that, ↑maybe also saying (0.3) ↑mate (0.4)

42          you know that doesn't sound (.) really (.)

43          great, (0.4) I- I- don't like to hear that

44          that's happening ↑to you? Like (0.4)

45          .hhhhhh ask him what he: ↑wants?

46          (0.4)

47   Call:  Ye:ah.
```

The extract commences with a suggestion from the counsellor that the best way for the caller to support his friend 'is listening to what he has to say' (line 2). She continues on immediately by returning to the topic of his friend 'trying to be tough'. She asks the caller (lines 7-11) how he thinks he could let his friend know 'without ruining his feelings' that he doesn't have to act tough about what's happening, stressing that this is 'wrong and illegal'. The turn involves an explicit request by the counsellor for ideas the caller might have about how to broach the topic of the abuse. In this way a core counselling strategy for problem solving is raised - talk to your friend - and the caller is positioned as the agent who will undertake the activity.

 After a gap of over 2 seconds the caller replies tentatively with his suggestion (lines 13-14) 'maybe say like um: this is not how y' parents are s'posed to act'. This is receipted by counsellor with a continuer which treats his turn as incomplete. At line 19 the caller embarks on another turn in overlap with a second continuer which appears designed to

elaborate on his initial suggestion but this turn is aborted: 'And um I'm not sure'. The counsellor does not continue to press for a more detailed response from the caller but instead embarks on a different action and offers more generalised information about the recipients of abuse (lines 20-27). After the caller acknowledges this information the counsellor continues with further information delivery about the mixed feelings that abuse recipients may exhibit towards those who doing the abuse. After the counsellor solicits, and receives, confirmation from the client that he has understood this - which he does, both in overlap with her turn and then with a free standing 'Yeah' (line 39) - she returns to the topic of what the caller might say. At this point the counsellor embarks on her script proposal in which she suggests what the caller could say to his friend. In doing so, she authors and animates her advice as possible future speech for the client, who is positioned as the principal.

In their research Ratliff and Morris (1995) observed that one place where 'telling how to say its' was employed by the supervisors was when they felt that trainees were 'somehow at a loss about what to do' (p144). They go on to suggest that 'when some trouble does become apparent, supervisors model or rehearse ways to say something .. they even give feedback on trainees' practice attempts at how to say it, and give additional options' (pp 144-45). Something similar seems to be happening in our call. The counsellor has established that the caller will speak to his friend but the 'script' the caller proposes is delivered tentatively and treated by the client, as possibly incomplete or in some way inadequate. When the script proposal is delivered, it remedies the trouble in the client's own suggestion about what to say.

The counsellor's invitation for the client to propose how he might deal with his situation (lines 7-11) is therefore an initiating action, that is followed by the client's candidate course

of action in a second position (lines 13-14/19). The script proposal then appears in third

position as part of the work of receipting, and evaluating , the suggestion. The way in which

this third position turn is designed demonstrates the enactment of the help line's client-

centred counselling philosophy. The script proposal is first prefaced with an indexical

retrospective reference to the caller's previous utterance – 'maybe saying that' - which

displays a qualified endorsement of his suggestion. The counsellor then re-works what the

caller might say, but does so in a way that builds upon the client's own suggestion (lines 41-

45). There are similarities here with the use of the perspective display sequence described

by Maynard (1989), in that by eliciting the client's own suggestion and 'co-implicating'

(Maynard, 1992) this in building a script proposal, the counsellor delivers advice in an

'inherently cautious way … where such cautiousness is warranted on professional … grounds'

(p. 109).

Elements of the design of the script proposal further co-implicate the position of the client in

this suggestion of what to say, as well as imbuing the proposal with rhetorical power. The

counsellor delivers her advice employing litotes, a figure of speech[4] by which a speaker can

convey a point of view more persuasively not by referring to something directly but by

denying its opposite. So rather than referring to the friend's situation as 'awful' or 'dreadful'

it is presented as something that 'doesn't sound really great'. This, together with the

distinctive Australian address term 'mate' (see Rendle-Short, 2009), works to give the

proposal an informal character, one which models a distinctly plausible conversation

between two teenage males.   As such the script is one that appears to be designed

specifically *for the caller* as the principal actor. In a number of inter-related ways, then, the

counsellor has artfully brought this particular sequence to a conclusion with a suggested

future course of action. While the counsellor is both author and animator of the proposed

script within the call, the agency of the client is highlighted by positioning him as the principal or active agent in the future enactment of this course of action.

In the next segment (Extract 4) we examine the talk which precedes the script proposal first presented in Extract 1. To recap: in this call a young woman in her early 20s who has called the help line on previous occasions, has rung to discuss a number of ongoing relationship problems with her immediate family and aspects of her mother's behaviour in particular. The segment starts just over 11 minutes into the call during which time the caller has documented in some detail her concerns about her mother's lack of assertiveness, her refusal to stand up to her current partner, and finally her annoyance at the way she has become the recipient of her mother's troubles-telling.

Extract 4 PC050608_1414

```
 1   Call:   … and I w'm- I'm jist like saying to

 2           her,- (.) an' she's saying >>I've had

 3           enough arguments can't a:rgue with him<<

 4           But I kno:w she's not gonna go home

 5           [and go to him like I would tih Ro:ger,=

 6   Cou:    [.HH-

 7   Cou:    =Esme:?=

 8   Call:   =Gimme yer wa:llet.

 9           (.)

10   Cou:    Tha[t's:   ] that's her problem.

11   Call:      [heh hih]

12           (0.7)

13   Cou:    You know that's her life, and you need

14           to let her live it.

15           (0.2)
```

```
16   Call:   I said that to her I said you choose
17           that mum you're choosing [him tih do:=
18   Cou:                             [Okay-
19   Call:   =that to yo[u.
20   Cou:               [Then- (0.2) then don' even
21           enter into it with her.
22   Call:   °Okay [I won't°
23   Cou:         [↑Don't listen to it,
24           (0.2)
25   Cou:   Don't enter into it .hhhh when she comes
26           along and dumps it on you: you say Mum
27           (1.2) um (0.5) ah: I'm not your counsellor,
28           (.) and I'm not your mother, (0.6)
29   Call:   °Mm[:°
30   Cou:      [I'm so:rry tah hear that, (0.4) but it's
31           not my business.
32   Call:   °Mhm°
```

The extract commences with the caller recounting an encounter with her mother using direct reported speech to refer to what she said and her mother's reply. She then turns to compare her mother's behaviour with what she herself might do in a similar situation. The caller embarks on a complaint sequence telling the counsellor that she knows that her mother won't stand up to her partner. The plausibility of her complaint is built by explicitly contrasting what her mother *won't do* with what she (the caller) *would do*. In lines 4-8 she states that she would have no compunction about confronting her own partner and asking him for some money: 'Ro:ger, gimme yer wa:llet'. However during the delivery of the client's turn the counsellor moves to take the floor by addressing the caller by name 'Esme:?' with a rising intonation (line 7), which functions as a kind of attention solicit (Wootton, 1981). As Butler, Danby & Emmison (under review) have shown, address terms in

this position can be used in the context of delivering a turn that is both non-aligned and non-affiliated with the client's just prior turn. In this case, the counsellor's use of the name disrupts the projected trajectory of the client's talk, and the turn that follows then challenges the stance presented by the client. In presenting a different stance, the counsellor uses idiomatic expressions (lines 10-14): 'That's her problem. You know that's her life and you need to let her live it.' The use of this idiom by the counsellor is consistent with previous accounts of their interactional uses, that show idioms to have a self-sufficient, unchallengeable character (Sacks 1992: 156; Drew and Holt 1988, 1995; Antaki 2007).[5] This property can be exploited by a speaker so as to close down a topic to the extent that additional work needs to be done by the recipient to challenge this terminal feature and keep the topic live. In the call the counsellor's idiom seems designed to close down further complaints from the caller about her mother's lack of assertiveness and to move towards a conclusion of the sequence in progress.

However the invocation of this idiom does not appear to have the desired effect. The caller's response appears to align with the counsellor indicating some agreement with the idiom but at the same time she reopens her complaint sequence. She reports that has 'said that' to her mother and expands upon the indexical 'that' using further direct reported speech: 'I said you choose that mum, you're choosing him to do that to you' (lines 16-19). The counsellor responds in overlap with the caller with 'okay' and pauses briefly as the caller concludes her turn. At line 20 she embarks on an explicit injunction advising the caller 'then don't even enter into it with her' which is completed with terminal intonation. The counsellor's use of 'then' is strategic as it positions her advice as following on from the caller's report and entailed by it. This is softly agreed to by the caller but this is in overlap with the counsellor who has already commenced the utterance which culminates in her script proposal.

There is a rhetorical denseness to the counsellor's turns commencing with line 20. In the first place the counsellor's delivers her advice in the form of three injunctions: 'don't even enter it with her', 'don't listen to it' and a repeat of 'don't enter into it'. Second, the setting for, or timing of, the proposed encounter between the client and her mother are figuratively expressed as 'when she comes along and dumps it on you'. Third, and finally, the direct reported speech of the script proposal is built in the form of a three part list [6]:

['you say mum']

1. 'I'm not your counsellor'

2. 'And I'm not your mother'

3. 'I'm sorry to hear that but it's not my business'

The persuasive rhetorical force of the three part list (Atkinson, 1984) in the proposed script emphasises the force and assertiveness with which the script should be delivered to the mother. As in extract 3, the script proposal comes in third position. In this instance, the initiating action is the delivery of advice by the counsellor (lines 10/13-14). This suggested course of action is then rejected by the caller in the second position on account of her having attempted that course of action, presumably to no effect. The script proposal is then in third position in that it is built out of this advice/rejection pair, as indicated by the connection 'then' that presents what follows as addressing the problem identified by the caller in the course of rejecting the initial advice. Notably, the assertive force with which the script proposal is delivered resonates with the assertion and emphasis used by the client in the delivery of her reported speech to her mother. As such, the proposal appears to mimic the affective stance of the caller. Thus while the counsellor appears to be delivering very direct advice, it is done in a way that co-implicates the client's position by virtue of its

placement in third position, which also highlights the caller as the principal in the counsellor-authored suggested script.

There is an important difference between the interactional goal served by this script proposal and the one examined in extract 3. Whereas the proposal in extract 3 appears designed to help the caller work supportively with *his* abused friend, in extract 4 the counsellor is not providing the caller with suggestions of how to help *her* mother. Rather the target of the proposal is the caller herself and aim of the proposal seems to be to lessen the burden on the caller which has arisen from her mother's persistent troubles reportings. This highlights the way that the same device – a script proposal – can operate effectively in different counselling environments. Clients can be offered advice on how to be supportive to their friends or family members who may be distressed or emotionally distraught and they can also be provided with suggestions for how they can be assertive in the face of interactional challenges – naggings, teasing, bullying, etc – of their own. More precise calibrations are possible. The assertiveness that the counsellor models in the script proposal in extract 4 is very different from that which might be required in the case of a client who presents as less outgoing. This appears to be the case with the caller in the next extract we examine (Extract 5).

In extract 5 the caller is a 12 year old girl who has been excluded from her friendship network at school after another pupil had said things about the caller 'that weren't true'. Prior to the extract shown the counsellor has been exploring her situation and there had been some discussion of the things the caller might try to do. The counsellor continues with this activity in line 1.

Extract 5 PC 160508_1835

```
 1   Cou:    n.hhhh t.hh ↑Have you talked↑ to any

 2           of the people that- (.) that you used

 3           to hang ou:t with:.

 4           (0.9)

 5   Call:   Um: m: no¿

 6           (0.3)

 7   Cou:    No:?

 8           (1.7)

 9   Cou:    D'you think it would be worth try:ing

10           having a talk to: them.

11           (1.2)

12   Call:   Um:h (0.3) ye:ah.

13           (0.3)

14   Cou:    Yeah?

15           (0.3)

16   Call:   Yep

17           (0.7)

18   Cou:    °O:ka:hy° .hh ↑what-↑ what could you

19           sa:y to them

20           (1.4)

21   Call:   Um: (0.8) I'm not shure.

22           (1.0)

23   Cou:    °°Okay.°°

24           (1.6)

25   Cou:    g.hhh What wouldju want them to kno:w.

26           (0.7)

27   Cou:    About how you're feeling or what this

28           is li:ke for you.

29           (1.0)
```

```
30   Call:   That- (.) it jist (.) gets lo:nely.

31           (0.5)

32   Cou:    Yea::h yea:h absolu:tely.

33           (1.5)

34   Cou:    Anything else?=Like as far as what you'd

35           li:ke? to happen?

36           (1.0)

37   Call:   Mm Jis:t be frie:nds again with e:veryone.

38   Cou:    M::::m mm .hh D'you think it's worth

39           talking to someone about that?

40           (0.3)

41   Call:   Yep

42           (4.8)

43   Cou:    ↑Yeah?=Okay, .hh so that's a possibility?

44           (2.9)

45   Cou:    That you could have a talk to some of the

46           other people¿,

47           (0.7) / (Call: °°°yep°°°)

48   Call:   Yep

49           (0.2)

50   Cou:    And to: e: - you know explain to them how

51           you ↑feel↑ an say look oh you know (0.9)

52           when this other girl did ↑this↑ it made

53           me feel lo:nely and it made me feel sa:d=

54           and I'd jist really like us all to be

55           frie:nds again.

56           (0.7)

57   Call:   Yeah

58   Cou:    Doesn't mean it will ha:ppen

59           (0.2)

60   Cou:    But it- it's certainly worth try:ing that.
```

```
61          (0.7)

62  Call:   Yeah

63  Cou:    Yeah?
```

At lines 1-3 the counsellor continues her resolution of the caller's trouble by employing what Butler et. al. (2010) have referred to as an advice-implicative interrogative: 'have you talked to the people that you used to hang out with'.   After a gap of nearly a second the caller replies that she hasn't done this using a simple type-conforming 'no' for the counsellor's interrogative. At line 7 the counsellor seeks to confirm the caller's response with a questioning repeat 'No?' which also offers the caller an opportunity to elaborate on her response but there is no confirmation or elaboration forthcoming. The counsellor's next question on lines 9-10: 'do you think it would be worth trying having a talk with them' maintains the focus on the implied advice which the activity of 'talking to your friends' entails but the question now projects this as a possible future course of action on the caller's part. However, by still refraining from making this an explicit suggestion, the counsellor can be heard as attending to her professional commitment to maintain the client's perspective in evaluating what needs to be done. The counsellor's question invites the caller to assess its suitability as she is the one who is in the best position to know if this action would work.

At line 18 the counsellor continues to develop the advice-under-consideration. Her turn starts with a softly spoken 'okay' and then she delivers a question which, unlike her two previous turns, does not take the form of a 'yes-no' interrogative. By asking the caller 'what could you say to them' she presses the caller for information that could move the sequence forward but which still maintains the client-centered counselling practice. By posing the question as hypothetical, as 'could' not 'would', the counsellor leaves the course of action as a possibility still to be finalised by her rather than committing the caller to something concrete which she has been instrumental in shaping. After a further gap the caller replies

'I'm not sure', a response which serves as an answer to the counsellor's question but does not advance the sequence. The gaps, both before and after the counsellor's softly spoken 'okay' on line 23, offer space for the caller to expand on her answer but this does not happen.

As was the case with the caller in extract 3 the call has reached a point where the client appears unable to suggest how the course of action could be implemented and offers an interactional space for a move by the counsellor to implement a 'how to say it'. At line 25 the counsellor asks the caller what she would want her friends to know and after a short gap in which the caller does not respond adds (lines 27-28) 'About how you're feeling or what this is li:ke for you'. This question momentarily refocuses attention away from the activity of 'talking to the friends' and back to the caller's own subjective state. This question does elicit a response from the caller which the counsellor can capitalise upon. The caller's answer 'that it just gets lonely' is seized upon enthusiastically by the counsellor: 'yeah yeah absolutely' which could be heard as marking the response as information already established in the call and that she wants further suggestions from the caller. After a gap of 1.5 seconds she does begins another turn to solicit this additional information with 'Anything else' which is expanded by her with a candidate suggestion: 'like as far as what you'd like to happen'. In response the caller states that she would like 'jist be friends again with everyone'.

The counsellor now begins to move to towards the delivery of her script proposal. At lines 38-39 she first asks the caller if talking to someone 'about that' would be worth doing. This receives a minimal 'yep' from the caller but this turn is not developed. At line 43 the counsellor issues a further invitation to the caller to give the go-ahead for the course of action that they have worked towards which she finally delivers starting on line 50. The

script proposal unpacks and specifies what 'talking to the other people' would entail, but importantly, it is built out of the caller's ideas and sentiments which the counsellor has elicited in her prior questioning. Note also that the proposal is framed as an explanation of how the caller 'feels'. By highlighting her feelings as the principal reason for why the proposal should be made the caller's agency is further underscored. However the counsellor does not just repeat information the caller has provided: once again this information is crucially embellished. Whereas the caller has offered two items – that it gets lonely and that she would just like to friends again with everyone – the counsellor inserts a third item in the middle of her turn:

1. 'when this other girl did this it made me feel lonely'

2. 'it made me feel sad'

3. 'and I'd just like us all to be friends again'

As with the conclusion to extract 4 the third item which is included in the proposal,   in this case 'it made me feel sad', can be directly traced to the topic of the prior talk. It is not obtrusive or 'out of place' in the proposal but it is nevertheless something which the counsellor has added that works to make the proposal more persuasive and to bring the sequence to a conclusion.

Similar to the earlier examples, here the script proposal is delivered in a third position after an initial invitation for the client to provide a possible course of action to address her current situation. The caller then displays difficulty in providing such a response which leads to a series of prompts by the counsellor. This is reminiscent of Maynard's (1989) account of perspective display sequences that involve prompts consisting of secondary queries that 'appear to follow equivocal or minimal responses' (p. 97). In seeking some expansion or

qualification or precision from a recipient, the 'asker' effectively nudges them toward a display of a stance that is more aligned with what they will provide in the third position. Here we see the counsellor prompting the caller (somewhat unsuccessfully) towards a more detailed and assertive account of what she might say to her friends to let her know how she feels and in this sense attempting to close the gap between the caller's response and the eventual delivery of advice. With the script proposal in this third position, the counsellor ensures that the caller's sentiments and perspective that are at the centre of the proposal. Through the future-directed reported speech used to deliver the proposal ,the caller again is assigned agency in the implementation of the course of action and their position as principal is highlighted. Finally the rhetorical embellishment of the proposal into a list of three items serves to draw the whole sequence to a conclusion.

In our final extract (extract 6) we examine a script proposal built this time around a second common persuasive device: a contrast pair. The caller is a young woman who has contacted the helpline concerned that her cousin, with whom she has a very close relationship, is 'wagging school' and 'getting mixed up with the wrong people'. There is a lengthy exploration of the cousin's behaviour and, at approximately fourteen minutes into the call, the counsellor asks the caller if she has spoken with her cousin to voice her concerns directly. The caller replies that she hasn't done this yet but, as it is now the school holidays, she has asked her cousin to go shopping with her and that she is planning on speaking with her then. The caller's suggestion is greeted enthusiastically by the counsellor and he asks the caller if she has thought about how she might bring the topic up. By inviting a suggestion from the caller about further details of how she will talk to her cousin, the counsellor initiates a sequence focusing on this course of action. However in response the caller replies that she had not yet thought about that, which introduces some problem in moving towards the action that may address the caller's situation. Extract 6 picks up from

this point, with an extended sequence that effectively occupies the third position in the

sequence launched with the invitation for a suggestion. This third-position action culminates

in the counsellor's delivery of the script proposal in third position in the sequence which we

now examine.   The counsellor continues as follows:

Extract 6 PC3_1_28


```
 1   Cou:  because (0.2) er: (.) there are many different
 2         wa:ys in er:: (1.0) in starting a conversation like
 3         this °y'know° and (.)it has been my experience that
 4         (.) if you:: (.) start talking about a ye know touchy
 5         subject (0.8) and accu:se people ye know of the >things
 6         they are doing< so- of the things they are doing they
 7         very often get defensive ye know and it's very hard
 8         to get a conversation (0.2) now (.) when you are able
 9         fr'example to sta::rt (.) by showing that you ca:re
10         and showing that you're concerned (.) y'know
11   Call: uh hm
12   Cou:  that is a very different way y'know and people very
13         often feel more (0.2) invited? to start talking? (.)
14         do- do you understand what I say?
15   Call: yeh.
16   Cou:  like there's a different way of- I mean j-just to
17         give you an example I mean (0.2) I mean i-if you
18         would start fr'example with saying Crystal what are
19         you doing? y'know look at these people they're
20         no good look what has become of you y'know (.)
21         chances are she's not going to be very happy with
22         that and she's going to get defensive (.) but if you
23         w- able to start with er ye know Crystal I er (.)I
```

```
24        really care for you and I'm conce::rned,
25  Call: so just say like (.) I'm worried about you
26  Cou:  yeah like if you could more express (.) y'know that
27        you're concerned that you still care for her and that
28        you love her and that you miss her y'know becuz
29        it sounds like you miss her (0.8) from the way she
30        was before,
31  Call: yea:ah
```

The counsellor first offers generalized advice about how such a conversation could be handled (lines 1-10). The topic of the planned conversation is glossed as a 'touchy subject' and he invites the caller to assess – in the abstract – two alternative ways in which this could be done. The counselor's turn is built with multiple uses of 'you know' which serve to frame the advice as 'common knowledge' (Edwards and Mercer, 1987) and thereby minimizing the asymmetry it might otherwise contain. This generalized advice is concluded at line 14 with a request for the caller to register their understanding. The caller's reply at line 15 is affirmative but minimal. At line 16 the counsellor commences a turn in which he recycles the advice about how best to handle this particular topic of conversation but this time he delivers it as a script proposal with the caller addressing her cousin by name. The proposal is built with a clearly recognizable two part structure. The inappropriate accusatory mode is first enacted (lines 18-20): 'Crystal what are you doing? y'know look at these people they're no good look what has become of you'. The transcript is unable to convey the tone of voice he uses which is harsh and condemnatory. The counsellor then repeats the comment first made when delivering the abstract advice that this is likely to make the recipient 'defensive' and unwilling to participate in the conversation. He then provides the alternative way of broaching the topic and in so doing switches to a more supportive voice: 'Crystal I er (.) I really care for you and I'm conce::rned,'.

The delivery of the recycled advice is receipted this time by the caller in line 25 with an utterance which is multi-functional: 'so just say like (.) I'm worried about you'. It serves both as a formulation of the counsellor's prior turn as well as marking (Heritage and Sefi, 1991: 391) his advice as relevant and appropriate. But it also serves to offer a third component to the proposal in addition to the two ('I really care for you and I'm concerned') already suggested by the counsellor. Caller and counsellor thus collaboratively complete the 2nd part of the contrast pair and together endow the proposal with rhetorical force. In his final turn in the extract shown the counsellor offers a more extended version of the best way for the caller to speak to her cousin a turn that manages to incorporate a list with four components:

1. That you're concerned
2. That you still care for her
3. That you love her
4. That you miss her

In addition to this rhetorical work on the part of the counsellor, his final comment that 'it sounds like' marks the overall advice he has provided as epistemically dependent on the caller's account of her cousin's changed behaviour and its impact on their relationship.

Discussion

In this paper we have provided an extended analysis of one counselling practice evident in an organization which has a professional philosophy against the explicit provision of advice to clients, along with a mandate to respect their point of view and to empower them in

working towards their own solutions to problems. For the most part counsellors are able to work within the constraints of this injunction. Our aim in this paper has been to show that counsellor-initiated script proposals, whilst on the surface appearing to contradict the philosophy of the help line, are artfully crafted to deliver advice that builds client-centered support. In short their use is good counselling practice.

Script proposals achieve their effectiveness in a number of inter-related ways which cover both their design and sequential placement. The first is through the incorporation of direct reported speech within the proposal and with the counsellor adopting the speaking position of the caller. Moreover by addressing the proposal to a person from the caller's lifeworld: 'Mum', 'Crystal', 'mate', etc., the course of action which the proposal indexes is rendered realistic and achievable – something clearly within the provenance of the caller. In contrast to more straightforwardly direct advice (e.g. 'you should tell them to do X'), script proposals seem particularly effective in that they allude to a future animation by the client, and highlight the position of the client as the principal of the advice. But we have also suggested that script proposals are not delivered or intended to be heard as literal conversations that clients will come to deliver. Rather they should be understood as examples of possible things that could be said. Through their use of script proposals the counsellors are providing their clients with scenarios that they can emulate, but they are also showing them how to do it. In the terminology of their profession, the counsellors are 'modelling' their clients' behaviour, for example showing them how they can be assertive in the face of recalcitrant or difficult third parties or alternatively how they can be supportive when the third party is distressed or suffering.

The second way in which script proposals are seen to interactionally produce important values in counselling practice is by tying the eventual advice to the caller's own contributions

and stance, through a three-part structure that bears resonance with Maynard's (1989) perspective-display sequence. In extracts 3, 5 and 6, the sequences in which script proposal was used were initiated by an invitation from the counsellor to the client to offer a suggestion as to a possible future action (here, talking). Counsellors thus explore the client's perspective on the problem and it is during this advice-implicative questioning that the client's thoughts and sentiments are elicited in ways that seem to prompt them towards a suggestion as close as possible to the counsellor's eventual advice. In important ways the content of the proposal is built out of the caller's response in second position so that in some sense the caller hears their own suggestions, ideas and words, re-presented to them albeit in a form which is modified, refined or extended. This three part sequence, which is similar to the 'initiation-response-evaluation' structure observed in institutional settings (e.g. Mehan, 1979) is potentially a core component of professional-client interaction in education, health care and training settings more broadly. This paper has pointed to one aspect of the three-part structure in enacting a counselling agenda. The question of whether other third-positioned actions, besides the direct reported speech of a script proposal, could serve to enact a counselling agenda is a possibility but it is not one that we can explore in the present paper.

Third we have shown that counselling skills are evident also in the detailed way the proposals are persuasively assembled with their array of rhetorical features. It is by incorporating such things as figures of speech, lists and contrasts that the counsellor enhances the acceptability of the course of action they are putting forward. The advice contained in the script proposal is heard as something that both parties to the call are in agreement with and that the call is now in a position to move on to new business or bought to a mutually acceptable conclusion.

Finally, script proposals serve as an ideal way in which advice can be put forward which is finely tuned to the requirements of their theoretical professional training (Peräkylä and Vehviläinen, 2003). The paper has shown how the counsellors work within the professional guidelines of the helpline by asking clients about the possibility of taking up possible courses of action, and suggesting the desirability of these courses of action. In this way, they display their epistemic authority as professionals with relevant expertise for dealing with clients' problems and, at the same time, mitigate the normative and asymmetric dimensions of advice giving by orienting to the clients' epistemic authority as agents with knowledge of their own lives, capacities and perspectives.

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APPENDIX A

Kids Helpline values:

Counselling from an empowerment perspective involves:

Assisting clients to develop options for change;

Assisting clients to understand the consequences of particular actions;

Helping the client identify her/his own resources;

Informing the client about resources;

Supporting the client in developing a sense of control in her/his own life;

Working with strengths rather than weaknesses.

Providing a child-centred practice involves:

Listening to and respecting what children have to say;

Focusing on their needs;

Seeing the world from their perspective;

Acknowledging and believing that the child is the primary client;

Seeing the child as an individual person as well as a member of a class or group;

Respecting the child.

Notes

¹ The generally accepted definition of advice giving in the interaction literature is that offered by Heritage and Sefi in their UK study of Health Visitors (HV) and first time mothers. For Heritage and Sefi, advice occurs in sequences of talk in which the HV 'describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a preferred course of action' (1992: 368). Central to advice giving, then, is the normative endorsement of some activity which the advice-giver suggests the advice-recipient should carry out in the future. Advice giving is also seen as characterised by asymmetry in that the advice giver lays claim to greater knowledge or experience.

² As shown in Appendix A, the values that guide Kids Helpline counselling practice are based on child empowerment and child-centered practice. According to Kids Helpline management, 'not giving advice' is one way these values are met (Marlies Puentener, personal communication). When explicitly asked for advice, counselors at times invoke this institutional mandate, for example, "My job as a counsellor isn't to give advice or to give suggestions it's (to) help you facilitate and look for your solutions" (PC160408_1433).

³ Similar observations about the way that therapists' interventions in psychoanalysis sessions are constructed so as to display their grounding in the preceding talk have been noted in the literature on psychotherapy (eg Antaki, 2008, Peräkylä, 2004, Vehviläinen 2003).

⁴ See Drew and Holt (1998) for an analysis of figures of speech, in particular their role in bringing about topic transition. For a discussion of the use of litotes in a psychiatric setting see Bergman (1992).

[5] However this does not mean they cannot be challenged. For an extended discussion of how an idiom can be 'resisted' see Kitzinger (2000).

[6] The interactional significance of three part lists has been investigated by a number of researchers. Lists have been found to operate in both everyday conversation and institutional talk as devices which are not only used to persuade or accomplish affiliation, but are also hearable as topic or sequence concluding. Atkinson (1984) provides a popular introduction to their use by political leaders whilst Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) provide an illustration of the rhetorical power which a number of devices, including three part lists and contrast pairs, have in signalling the conclusion of a speaker's turn and in generating an affiliative audience response. A key general analytical discussion is provided by Jefferson (1991).