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Playing out loud: Videogame references as resources in friend interaction for managing frames, epistemics, and group identity

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how friends in their mid-twenties appropriate texts from videogames they have played to serve particular functions in their everyday face-to-face conversations. Speakers use references to the videogames Papers, Please and The Oregon Trail to shift the epistemic territories of conversations when they encounter interactional dilemmas. These epistemic shifts simultaneously rekey formerly problematic talk (on topics like rent, money, and injuries) to lighter, humorous talk, reframing these issues as being part of a lived videogame experience. Overlapping game frames are laminated upon real-life frames, and are strengthened by embedded frames containing constructed dialogue. This study contributes to understanding how epistemic shifts relying on intertextual ties can shift frames during interactional dilemmas in everyday conversation, which is ultimately conducive to group identity construction. (Intertextuality, framing, epistemics, identity, interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, humor, videogames)*

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have shown how speakers can use references to media texts as resources to manage relationships and identity in interaction (e.g. Tovares 2006, 2012; Beers Fägersten 2012; Spreckels 2012). Building on this work, this study examines how American friends in their mid-twenties use what Becker (1994) calls a 'shared repertoire of prior texts' from videogames to 'play out loud' in their everyday conversations (cf. Tovares 2012 on 'watching out loud'), balancing their differing knowledge, or 'epistemic territories' (Heritage 2012), while simultaneously changing the frame, or their understanding of what is happening in talk. Heeding van Dijk's (2013) call for an 'epistemic discourse analysis', I draw on Tannen's (2006) analysis of reframing and rekeying, Gordon's (2009) analysis of overlapping and embedded frames, and Raymond & Heritage's (2006) analysis of epistemics in identity construction in order to contribute to our understanding of how epistemic resources are used to shift frames.

I demonstrate how speakers use shared videogame references for epistemic management while simultaneously rekeying serious talk about 'real-life' issues (such as injuries, money, and work) to lighter, humorous talk that reframes such issues as being part of a lived videogame experience. Looking specifically at how the reframing occurs, I elaborate on Gordon's (2009) descriptions of overlapping and embedded frames. I argue that when speakers shift talk from restricted epistemic territories about individual life experiences to shared epistemic territories relating to videogames, they simultaneously create overlapping play frames, which are strengthened by embedded frames containing constructed dialogue. This allows different group members to be involved in conversation as well as active in constructing their identities as individuals, friends, and members of a specific 'epistemic ecology' (C. Goodwin 2013).

In this article, I review the concepts of dialogicality (Bakhtin 1981, 1984, 1986) and intertextuality (Kristeva 1986) reviewing how they have been applied to examine media texts in everyday interaction. I then give an overview of the concept of framing (Bateson 1972), as well as an essential part of framing, keying (Goffman 1974), describing how these notions have been applied to studies that also treat intertextuality as central. I also provide an overview of epistemics and how it relates to intertextuality. Next, I describe the methods of data collection and the participants in the study. Then I provide background information on the videogame Papers, Please (Pope 2013) with analysis of conversations where speakers draw upon texts from this videogame. This is followed by background on the videogame The Oregon Trail (Rawitsch, Heinemann, & Dillenberger 1985) and analysis of a conversation where speakers appropriate texts from this game as intertextual resources to manage frames, epistemics, and group identity. I lastly discuss the main contributions of this study: showing how epistemic shifts relying on intertextual ties can facilitate frame shifts in interactional dilemmas, which is ultimately conducive to group identity construction.

DIALOGICALITY, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND PRIOR TEXTS

Many scholars have described the interplay between old and new texts. Bakhtin's influential notion of dialogicality focuses on how every word spoken is 'half ours and half someone else's' (1981:345) bringing previous usages, experiences, and connotations along with it. Kristeva writes that this process creates intertextuality, where each text is 'a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another' (Kristeva 1986:37).

With his focus on repetition of shared prior texts, Becker (1994) uses the word 'languaging' to describe the active, repetitive process of language use, which is 'context shaping… Languaging can be understood as taking old texts from memory and reshaping them into present texts' (Becker 1994:166).

Agha (2004, 2005) theorizes how distinct forms of language become socially recognized, defining a 'linguistic register' as 'a linguistic repertoire that is associated, culture-internally, with particular social practices and with persons who engage in such practices' (2004:24). Agha notes, 'switching to the register may itself reconfigure the sense of occasion, indexically entailing or creating the perception that the social practice is now under way' (2004:25). In other words, speakers can use registers, consisting of prior languaging experiences, to switch frames. Frames are described in more detail below.

Tannen (1989/2007) highlights how repetition is prominent both within and across individual conversations and in literary works, also arguing that repetition creates connection between interlocutors in immediate interaction. This is related to Becker's observation that 'social groups seem to be bound primarily by a shared repertoire of prior texts' (1994:165). In sum, shared access to previous language experiences helps create a social group, or more specifically, an epistemic ecology. This observation has implications for group involvement dynamics as well as group identity construction.

PRIOR MEDIA TEXTS IN EVERYDAY INTERACTION

Becker posited, 'apparently free conversation is a replay of remembered texts—from TV news, radio talk, *The New York Times*…' (cited in Tannen 1989/2007:55). Indeed, many investigations suggest that television texts are part of the cultural repertoire (e.g. Bryce & Leichter 1983; Lull 1990; Spiegel 1992, 2001; Bryant & Bryant 2001). Tovares (2006, 2012) has analyzed how television texts function in everyday conversations. She writes, 'family and friends creatively recycle television texts to create, test, and negotiate alignments, discuss private issues without getting personal, entertain one another, and reaffirm their relationships, values, and beliefs' (Tovares 2006:8). Tovares (2012) analyzes how adult members of two families draw on the show *Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire* to create family involvement, construct certain identities (as knowledgeable), create alignments, socialize their children, and provide entertainment.

Linguistic research on videogames has so far focused on issues such as the gendered cultural discourses of videogames (e.g. Thornborrow 1997), how children talk about videogames in classroom settings (e.g. Lacasa, Martinez, & Mendez 2008) and whether videogame play contributes to literacy (e.g. Apperley 2010; Berger & McDougall 2013), especially in a second language-learning environment (e.g. Lim & Holt 2011; Hitosugi, Schmidt, & Hayasi 2014). A few studies examine the actual game form and how players interact with the games and each other while playing (e.g. Mondada 2012; Piirainen-Marsh 2012; Varenne, Andrews, Hung, & Wessler 2013). A notable gap exists in the literature pertaining to everyday conversations where speakers are not playing videogames, but where the talk is nonetheless infused with videogame references.

FRAMING AND INTERTEXTUALITY

As participants in everyday conversations reshape various prior texts, they also create new frames. Bateson (1972) originally introduced the concept of frame to describe what people think is going on in interaction (joking, arguing, commiserating, etc.). Goffman (1974) discussed the occurrence of *laminated* or *layered* frames to describe multiple activities being enacted at once, such as joking while commiserating. He also introduced the term *keying* to describe the tone of the interaction, which he saw as 'a central concept in frame analysis' (1974:43), describing how keying could also be subject to rekeying—a change in tone.

Tannen & Wallat's (1993) analysis of a videotaped pediatric examination expanded on framing, outlining how participants manage frames in interaction moment-by-moment. They define frame as 'a definition of what is going on in interaction, without which no utterance (or movement or gesture) could be interpreted' (Tannen & Wallat 1993:59). They describe how a pediatrician continually shifts and balances multiple frames: the social encounter frame (where the pediatrician interacts with a mother and child), the examination frame (where she examines the child and communicates her findings to pediatric residents who will later watch the videotaped examination), and the consultation frame (where she addresses the mother's concerns). She signals the shifting frames through pitch, lexical items, repetition, pacing, pausing, and tone—features that Gumperz (1982) calls *contextualization cues*. Such cues form the contextual ground for situated interpretation and affect how messages are understood (Gumperz 1982).

Addressing the details of reframing, Gordon (2002, 2008, 2009) argues that intertextuality and frames are fundamentally linked. Her (2009) analysis builds on Tannen's (1989/2007) work on repetition in discourse, and shows how intertextually reshaping a family member's words enables speakers to laminate frames in two different ways, which she refers to as overlapping and embedded (2009:116). By overlapping frames, Gordon means 'an utterance is situated in (at least) two frames at once' or that 'the utterance refers simultaneously to two contexts of enunciation: that of the present enunciation and that of a previous one' (2009:116). For example, when a wife teases her husband about being a 'superior subject' in Gordon's study, this single utterance refers to a present moment as well as a previous one where the husband had jokingly referred to himself as a 'superior' for Gordon's data. Whereas overlapping frames work along a time scale, embedded frames 'refer to a situation in which a frame with a more specific metamessage is completely embedded in a frame with a more general metamessage' (Gordon 2009:141). For example, when a three-year-old child engaged in pretend play with her mother uses words that her mother used several days before, the pretend play frame becomes specified as a role-reversal reenactment. Gordon mentions the possibility of embedded frames within overlapping frames (2009:154–55), but her emphasis is on how intertextuality accomplishes framing in family discourse, while also constructing the family as a social group with a shared repertoire.

Her 2008 work describes how parents blend work and play frames with their children. Hoyle (1993) also examines play frames in two boys' play talk, where they reference real sports figures and arenas to construct play frames to give their ping-pong playing its character as a sportscasting event.

Tannen (2006) examines intertextuality in family discourse, analyzing how a couple's arguments about domestic responsibilities are recycled, reframed, and rekeyed over the course of one day. She uses 'recycling' to refer to bits of previous conversational topics being re-introduced in later conversations. She defines reframing as 'a change in what the discussion is about' and builds on Goffman's (1974) work on key to define rekeying as 'a change in the tone or tenor of an interaction' (Tannen 2006:601). Tannen found that 'restoring harmony was accomplished in part by reframing in a humorous key, and in ways that reinforced the speakers' shared family identities' (2006:597).

The use of humorous reframing and rekeying to restore harmony in conversation can be linked to M. Goodwin's (1996) finding that shifting frames worked to solve interactional dilemmas. Examining the function of framing in recorded everyday interactions, she uses the term 'shifting frames' in her analysis 'to demonstrate some of the methodical procedures listeners in conversational interaction make use of in recasting a prior speaker's talk to reshape meaning' (M. Goodwin 1996:72). Goodwin writes that shifting frames frequently involve a change in stance or footing, and that 'shifting frame[s] is not done capriciously, rupturing ongoing discourse; it occurs in orderly ways as practical solutions to interactional dilemmas, reshaping the speech event, or constructing distance from the tone of the activity in progress' (1996:71).

IDENTITY, FRAMING, AND INTERTEXTUALITY

Trester (2012) examines how intertextual play functions in the creation of new performance frames in an improv comedy group behind stage to serve community reaffirmation. She finds that *entextualization*—'the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a text—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting' (Bauman & Briggs 1990:73)—serves as a framing device in her data, which enacts a shift into a performance frame, where speakers engage in various intertextual, linguistic 'games' (2012:256). Trester applies Goffman's (1961) work on 'game moves' as footing shifts that frame the emergence of a particular kind of play frame—a 'game world'. Game worlds must exist in the real world since they are constructed in conversation, but they are surrounded by a barrier that allows for some properties of the real world to be included, if they are relevant to the game (Trester 2012:241).

Sclafani (2015) also builds on intertextuality, framing, and identity research to show how candidates in the 2011–2012 US Republican presidential primary debates use references to family members and roles to frame their political identities

as family men/women. She reaffirms Gordon's (2009) finding that intertextuality and framing are inextricably intertwined, and demonstrates that, like frames, identity can also be overlapping and embedded.

EPISTEMICS, IDENTITY, AND INTERTEXTUALITY

Many of the aforementioned studies on intertextuality recognize the role of knowledge in their data in creating meanings and identities in interaction. Gordon (2009) suggests that for frames to be successfully laminated in discourse, the speaker and the hearer both must recognize that some bit of language is being repeated. Tovares (2012) mentions how speakers used a TV show in their conversations to construct their identities as knowledgeable. Trester (2012) observed that part of the collaborative emergence of game worlds in the improv comedy group's talk behind stage relates to 'negotiating shared knowledge about comedy and other comedians [as] an important practice, central to this improv group's identity' (2012:255). Sclafani (2015) notes that Republican candidates construct their presidential identities as being knowledgeable about the economy and national security.

In his work on constructing group identity via humor, Norrick (1989) describes the exact mechanism that makes intertextual jokes conducive to creating involvement and solidarity. He writes, 'complementary exhibition of shared knowledge, particularly when it involves some specialized or arcane source, attests to common interests and encourages mutual involvement' (Norrick 1989:120). Knowledge management—or epistemics—is important in intertextuality. While the importance of knowledge itself has been recognized in studies of intertextuality and identity in interaction, none draw explicitly on contemporary theorizing on epistemics in discourse.

The fact that epistemics is frequently involved in identity construction has been gaining more attention. Raymond & Heritage (2006) show how two friends on the phone, Vera and Jenny, balance epistemic stances in assessments of Vera's grandchildren. For example, at one point Vera's friend Jenny makes an epistemic assessment: "They're a lovely family now aren't they". This assessment is marked as downgraded with the tag question "aren't they", which invites Vera to give a response and evaluate her own family and grandchildren independently from Jenny. Vera responds, "Mm: They are: yes", acknowledging her primary epistemic right to assess the family. Through negotiating epistemic stances, these women manage interactional identities regarding their rights to assess the epistemic territory of the grandchildren. Sierra & Botti (2014) also showed how two new acquaintances constructed their identities as knowledgeable New York City residents through epistemic stances towards places in the city.

Following Raymond & Heritage's (2006) fine-grained analysis of the epistemics of social relations, and heeding van Dijk's (2013) call for epistemic discourse analysis, I expand on what previous studies have mentioned regarding the importance of

knowledge in intertextual processes. I show how intertextuality not only creates overlapping and embedded frames, but also works to manage group epistemics, allowing for group involvement and identity construction.

THE STUDY

Data for this study are excerpts from digital recordings of everyday conversations that I recorded over a three-month period amongst my partner, Dave, our friends, and me.[1] My participation in these conversations had distinct advantages, such as allowing me to know as much as possible about the conversational setting and the participants' relationships with each other. If I had questions about the participants or some stretch of talk, I could ask Dave or our friends for their insights, in a process of 'playback' (e.g. as conducted by Labov & Fanshel 1977 and Tannen 1984/2005).

Using an unobtrusive digital recorder ensured that I could easily record long stretches of conversations in various settings. I recorded primarily on the weekends, most often at Dave's shared group house, where he lived with three friends: Todd, a roommate from college; Fred, Todd's co-worker; and Lana, Todd's partner and a graduate student in the same program as Dave and me. In addition to these housemates, I also recorded conversations with other friends, both at the shared house and at restaurants. The participants were mostly white, working young professionals in their mid to late twenties living in Northern Virginia or Washington, DC.

At the beginning of data collection, I did not have an objective in collecting a particular kind of talk. However, Tovares' (2012) work on how a TV show served as an intertextual resource in family conversations inspired my noticing how the housemates frequently used videogames as intertextual resources in their conversations. The housemates were all avid videogame players. Fred, Todd, and Lana frequently played games with each other on their phones, while Todd and Lana also played games on the PlayStation and Wii in the basement. Fred, Todd, and Dave also played videogames at their personal computers in their respective bedrooms. In the front sitting room, Lana had painted a mural on the wall facing the entrance to the house depicting all the housemates, as well as Lana and Todd's two kittens, as videogame characters (see Figure 1). Arguably then, these housemates can be characterized, in part, by their love for playing videogames, which contributes to a shared 'nerd' identity (see Bucholtz 1999), also constructed via their discourse with one another as members of this unique epistemic ecology.

One recorded conversation amongst the housemates and me stood out for its rich use of videogame references; that conversation is the first one analyzed here. I then began to notice when the housemates used videogame references when I was not recording, so I started to supplement my recorded data with notes about conversations where videogame texts seemed to function the same way as the initial instance I had recorded, checking with Dave to maintain accuracy in recalling the details. Eventually, I recorded another conversation between Dave and his close friend

FIGURE 1. Mural of the housemates (and Todd and Lana's cats) depicted as videogame characters, painted by Lana.

from high school, Allen (not a housemate), and me with videogame references, which is the second excerpt I analyze here. The videogame references are analyzed as they appear sequentially in speakers' intonation units (as described by Chafe 1994) across turns of talk.

Papers, Please

Papers, Please is a videogame released in 2013. It focuses on the psychological toll of working as an immigration officer in the fictional dystopian country of Arstotzka. The player is assigned the job of immigration officer through a job lottery, and the main task is to inspect arrivals' documents at a checkpoint booth, similar to the checkpoints separating East and West Berlin during the Cold War. If the player discovers discrepancies in the documents, the applicant must be interrogated, and may be arrested when the player hits the 'detain' button, which triggers the automatic closure of a shutter at the checkpoint booth. If this happens, *Prostet* is heard and a speech bubble on the screen from the guards' mouths translates this to 'Out'. A second speech bubble coming from the player's mouth says, "You should not have come". At times, applicants, like the character Jorji, notorious for forging false documents (see Figure 2), may attempt to bribe the player. If the player makes few mistakes, they may receive a plaque for 'sufficience', which they can hang on their wall. Mistakes made and number of people processed in a given amount of real time representing a single day in the game affect the player's pay in 'credits'. The player has to make decisions about how to cover basic expenses like rent, heat, and food for the family, as well as medical bills and birthday presents. The player is often faced with moral dilemmas about who to let in the country, whether or not to accept bribes, and how to spend their credits. The

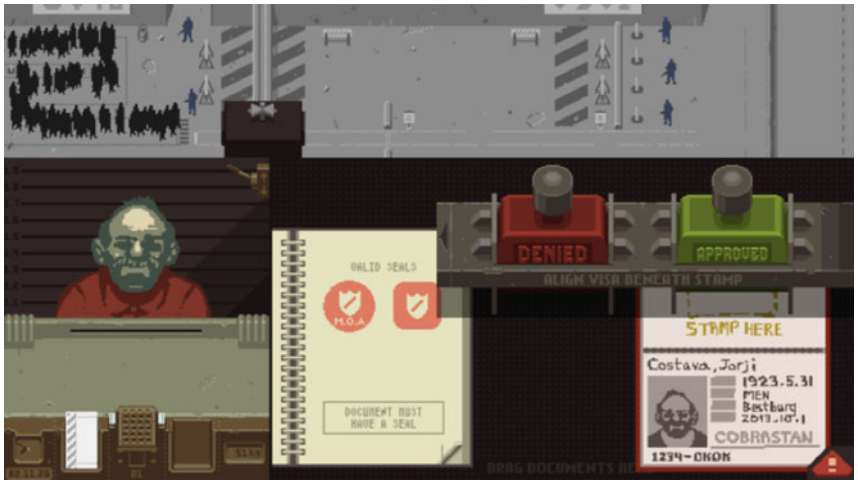

FIGURE 2. Screenshot of Papers, Please game; here the player must deny or approve Jorji Costava's fake passport.

workdays become more stressful as relations between Arstotzka and nearby countries deteriorate, and increasingly complicated guidelines are given for document inspections. The game has become popular since its release and has won many awards, being praised for its sense of immersion and the intense emotional reaction it creates. The game's immersive emotional experience may lend itself to use as a resource drawn upon for managing social relations in the conversations I have collected, especially considering the shared experience that Dave, Todd, Fred, another friend, Todd's brother, and I had playing the game together in the basement of the shared house a few weeks before I began recording.

Papers, Please references in audio-recorded conversation

In this section, I describe instances of talk where speakers reference the videogame Papers, Please in their everyday conversations. The first excerpt I analyze is from a lively conversation on a Saturday night at the shared group house, in the dining room. The participants were Dave, Lana, and Fred (housemates); I was over for a usual visit. I argue that speakers make references to Papers, Please here to rekey serious talk about money to a humorous key by adding an overlapping frame of a real-life videogame experience. This rekeying and reframing relies on shifting the talk from a restricted epistemic territory with which only the Ph.D. students can relate (all present except Fred), to the shared epistemic territory of the videogame experience, allowing Fred to be involved in the conversation as well. This equalizing of epistemic status is conducive to group identity construction.

Setting up the need for an epistemic frame shift

Previous to this excerpt, we had been joking about the word *intertextuality*, since Lana and I had both been reading up on it (she for a paper, I for a seminar in the topic). I had commented that in my seminar, my professor had proposed an activity called 'Intertextuality in the wild' where students could discuss events related to intertextuality outside of the classroom, but that I didn't think she saw it "going this far" (meaning that we would be joking about the word itself to such an extent). The excerpt starts with me saying "Intertextuality '*gone* wi:ld'", making a reference to the adult entertainment commercials for Girls Gone Wild. Soon the conversation (in line 3) turns to the Ph.D. students' receipt of their payment stipends.

(1) 1 Sylvia: Intertextuality :'*gone* wi:ld':..
2 Dave: **Wo[oo**! **References**! Woo!
3 Lana: [hahaha speaking of gone wild, we got ***pai:d***!
4 Sylvia: [Oh yeah, *finally:*!
5 Dave: [Yeah, I know, right?

After my reference to the commercials (line 1), Dave imitates them, yelling "**Wooo**! **References**! Woo!" (line 2) (the commercials often featured girls yelling "Wooo!"). Then, Lana, after laughing and perhaps relating 'going wild' with money, says "speaking of gone wild, we got ***pai:d***!" (line 3), referring to the fact that our first stipend checks of the academic year had been deposited earlier that day. Here, Lana shifts the frame from joking about the word *intertextuality* to the frame of talking about being recently paid. Her loudness on "***pai:d***" and her elongation of the tonal nucleus effectively elicit the other two students' responses to this topic. I respond "Oh yeah, *finally:*!" (line 4), showing a change of mental state with "oh" (Schiffrin 1988), orienting myself to this new topic, aligning with Lana's excitement, and implying that this payment was overdue with "*finally:*". Dave overlaps with me, saying, "Yeah, I know, right?" (line 5). Both Dave's and my "yeah"s align with Lana and show evidence of our equal epistemic statuses relating to this topic. Dave's downgraded epistemic stance, marked with a tag (Raymond & Heritage 2006) "I know, right?" demonstrates alignment and solidarity with Lana.

Having received these responses from Dave and me, Lana takes another turn, continuing the frame shift and also rekeying the conversation to be more serious.

(2) 6 Lana: God, I can pay my fucking rent.
7 Sylvia: That [first check always seems so delayed.
8 Lana: [The- our (stipends came late?)

Lana's "God, I can pay my fucking rent" (line 6) stood out to me at the time of recording, as it does now, as relatively marked; its serious and tense tone, as well

as notable lack of overlap contrasts with what had been a very light-hearted conversation filled with laughter. In playback, Lana told me that at the time, she was running out of her summer job money and was hoping to avoid asking her parents for money. Lana's utterance here abruptly rekeys the previously playful frame (making fun of the term *intertextuality*) and furthers the serious frame of talking about money. She accomplishes this through various contextualization cues: the tone of voice, the exasperated oath "God", the expletive "fucking", and the semantic content of the statement itself, which relays that the reason Lana was so enthusiastic about being paid was because she needed to pay rent. I take up this serious key, aligning with Lana by commenting that the first check "always seems so delayed" (line 7). Then, Lana explains to Fred that our stipends came late (line 8).

Creating an overlapping videogame frame with an epistemic shift

Next, Fred responds to Laura's explanation (line 8) with 'Borat' voicing, perhaps attempting to rekey the serious conversation back to its original playful tone (Fred confirmed in playback that he was referencing Sacha Baron Cohen's character, Borat Sagdiyev, a fictitious Kazakh journalist, in the 2006 mockumentary comedy film *Borat*).

(3) 9 Fred: Ye:s. Ye:s. (Borat voice)
10 Lana: Yes. Yes. (Borat voice) hahaha.
11 Fred: Ye:s. It's nice. (Borat voice)

The rekeying arguably begins with the Borat voice used by Fred "Ye:s. Ye:s" (line 9), and Lana "Yes. Yes. hahaha." (line 10), and then Fred again "Ye:s. It's nice." (line 11). The Borat voice leads into references to the videogame Papers, Please, simultaneously initiating an epistemic shift and an overlapping videogame frame.

(4) 12 Sylvia: → We have been paid by 'Ars**to**:tzka'..
13 Fred: → [hahaha You [received some '**cre**:dits' for processing [the [language.
14 Lana: [haha [haha [hahahahaha
15 Sylvia: [hahaha [hahaha
16 Fred: → You're lucky you drew this [**jo:b** in the 'la:bor lottery'.

'Triggered' (Jefferson 1978) by the Borat voice Lana and Fred had just been using, I was reminded of the videogame Papers, Please, which draws heavily from life in the Soviet Union and East Germany. Perhaps responding to the 'interactional dilemma' (M. Goodwin 1996) of the key and frame becoming so serious around money, I say, "We have been paid by 'Ars**to**:tzka'" (line 12), referring to the fictional country's government in Papers, Please and making an implicit comparison between our academic department and Arstotzka's bureaucratic

government. This game move introduces a game world (Goffman 1961), and the hypothetical narrative develops an overlapping frame of 'we are living a videogame that we have all played' over the frame of 'we are talking about real life'. Following Gordon (2009), I suggest that the intertextual ties to the videogame create overlapping frames—two simultaneous definitions of the situation: the participants are engaged in talking about getting paid in real life, but in using intertextual references to discuss this, they are also simultaneously playing that they are living a videogame they have played in the past.

After a short but perceptible silence, perhaps trying to get the connection, both Fred and Lana laugh (lines 13, 14). Whereas Fred had been silent while the three students discussed stipend checks (only participating with his Borat voice after Lana's explanation of the topic), now Fred becomes much more involved in the conversation, presumably since the epistemic territory has been shifted to discourse about Papers, Please, to which Fred has epistemic access. Fred makes a game move and begins a 'role play' (Gordon 2002, 2009), saying "You received some 'credits' for processing the language" (line 13), elaborating on the overlapping play frame by referring to our payment as 'credits', the monetary unit used in Papers, Please, and jokingly describing our work as linguists as "processing the language", an overly formal, 'newspeak' way of describing our work, reminiscent of how jobs are described in the videogame (for example, the border control agent's job is 'processing people'), causing both Lana and me to laugh (lines 14, 15).

The laughter in these lines signals that the conversation has been rekeyed, 'indicat[ing] a change of emotional stance' (Tannen 2006:601). As Chafe (2001:42) writes, laughter conveys 'nonseriousness', which is triggered by 'either imagining or actually encountering a world that is judged to be inappropriate to act on… a world that has some kind of pseudo-plausibility'. Here reference to this game world contributes to 'shared hilarity', where all participants find the game world funny. With the overlapping game frame, the conversation has been rekeyed from serious, even frustrated, to light-hearted and funny. Fred continues this overlapping and rekeyed game frame with the game move "You're lucky you drew this **jo:b** in the 'la:bor lottery'" (line 16), referring to how, in Papers Please, the player is assigned their job as a border control agent via a labor lottery. Notice how words like *credits* (line 13), ***jo:b*** (line 16), and *la:bor* (line 16) still contain remnants of the real-life frame about being paid, and these contribute to both the overlapping game frame while still anchoring the talk in the real-life frame about money and work.

Creating an embedded frame in an overlapping frame with a more specific epistemic shift

Lana participates in the overlapping frame by introducing an embedded frame, which strengthens the overlapping game frame as it moves the speakers further

into the game world and further away from the original real-life frame. She constructs an embedded frame by moving into an even more specific epistemic territory of the game, referring to a particular character, Jorji, in Papers, Please, joking that the credits came from him, and then voicing him.

(5)
17	Lana:	→	[**They all came from Jorji. Jorji's like "He:y!**"
18	Sylvia:		[Yeah.
19	Dave:		"He:y."
20	Fred:		[So-
21	Lana:	→	[**"I make a passapo:rt[a:**!"
22	Sylvia:		[hahahaha

Lana contributes a game move, saying "**They** [the credits] **all came from Jorji**" (line 17). Jorji is an elderly disheveled man known for appearing throughout the game at the checkpoint with false documents. With this specification of the epistemic orientation towards the game world, the 'remnants' of the real-life frame about being paid, which were present up to this point in the overlapping frame, start to fall away—the only anchor to the real-life frame is in "they all came from Jorji" (line 17), where *they* refers to the 'credits', but after this no other ties link back to the real-life frame about being paid. Further epistemic orientation towards the game world is facilitated when Lana introduces an embedded frame by constructing a voice for Jorji, with "**He:y**!' (line 17) '**I make a passapo:rta:**!" (line 21). This constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989/2007) evokes Jorji specifically because of the choice of phonetic detail, which contributes to 'depictive delivery' (Clark & Gerrig 1990) of the character. The loudness of "**He:y**!" (line 17), perhaps portraying the overly friendly attitude of Jorji, as well as the inserted and elongated vowels in "**passapo:rta:**" (line 21), adds a sense of 'foreign-ness' to his voice. All of this requires very specific epistemic access to a single character in the game. Also note that making a passport is completely unrelated to the original frame about being paid. Embedded within the overlapping game frame, Lana (and briefly, Dave) enact Jorji's character—so they are living the role of Jorji for that fleeting moment. In sum, this embedded frame, with its very specific epistemic orientation, brings the conversation even further into the overlapping game frame, with very little remnants of the original real-life frame.

Note that while Dave repeats "He:y" (line 19), he is relatively uninvolved throughout the construction of the play frame. In playback he said, "I don't shift into those other frames a lot" and "I'm focused on getting real shit done". This suggests that willingness to participate in play frames may be linked to an individual's conversational style (as described by Tannen 1984/2005), and we see evidence of this again through Dave's behavior in The Oregon Trail excerpt I analyze later.

Metacommentary and another epistemic shift breaks the overlapping game frame

Next, Fred assigns specific character roles to all of us, using his epistemic access to the videogame to metacomment on the overlapping game frame.

(6)
23	Fred:	→	So- Todd is your wi:fe and-
24	Lana:		haha
25	Sylvia:		hahaha
26	Fred:	→	Dave is your mo:ther-in-la:w,
27	Dave:		ha.
28	Sylvia:		hahaha
29	Fred:	→	and Sylvia is your so:n,
30		→	and [I'm your..u:ncle or something.
31	Lana:	→	[haha and you drew me a pictu:re hahaha

Fred assigns Lana's real-life partner, Todd, the role of Lana's 'wife,' saying "Todd is your wi:fe" (line 23); Dave is assigned as Lana's "mo:ther-in-la:w" (line 26), I am Lana's "so:n" (line 29), and Fred is "your..u:ncle or something" (line 30). These character roles are not chosen at random; in the game the player is always assumed to be male, and has a wife, a mother-in-law, and a grandfather. In this portion of the conversation then, Fred assigns us all salient familial roles from the game in relation to Lana, who is assigned to be the male player in this game frame. Dave, Lana, and I laugh throughout this stretch of the conversation, maintaining the 'nonserious' key and participating in the shared hilarity of the game frame. Interestingly, in assigning roles, Fred is not actually in the game frame, but he is commenting from outside of it (see Gordon 2002). Lana then builds on the family roles and acts within the game frame, again drawing on very specific knowledge about the game, when she says "and you drew me a pictu:re" (lines 31, 33), referring to part of the game where if the player makes enough money, they can buy a crayon set for their son, who then draws a picture, which the player can choose to hang up on the wall at the immigration office.

While Lana's turns regarding the picture are voiced from within the game frame, I break the frame when I make a metacomment about our role-playing, drawing on epistemic access to the real world.

(7)
32	Sylvia:		I [love how-
33	Lana:		[You drew me a :picture(h):
34	Sylvia:	→	We- we all have like opposite gender ro(h)les in thi(h)s haha
35	Fred:		Yeah! Ha.
36	Sylvia:		ha[haha.
37	Lana:		[It is-
38	Fred:		I didn't really=
39	Lana:		=It's very *i:nter*te(h)xtual [hahaha

40 Fred: [I didn't really think to-..
41 *Now* we're just using that word for *everything*!

My metacomment on how we all have "opposite gender ro(h)les in thi(h)s" (line 34) redirects our epistemic orientation towards our 'real-life' situation of enacting specific gender roles that do not match the game gender roles Fred has assigned. This turn, in effect, names the play frame (Tannen 1984/2005) and ruptures it. The group returns to the previous frame that was active at the beginning of this excerpt, making fun of the word *intertextual* (lines 39, 41) for two solid minutes.

To sum up this example, all of the speakers had originally participated in a play frame as they joked about the word *intertextuality*, but then abruptly shifted to a serious real-life frame, where the three students complained about their checks and rent. This left Fred out, but the frame was quickly overlapped with a humorous game frame, which defined the situation as "we are living a videogame we have all played". This epistemic frame shift allowed Fred to become actively involved in the conversation. When Lana acted out Jorji's role, the embedded frame that conveyed 'Jorji is present in this world' further strengthened the overlapping game frame and kept the conversation moving in a playful and nonserious direction. The serious (and epistemically isolating) real-life talk of checks and rent was completely dropped, and speakers instead drew on their equal epistemic access to participate in a game frame, which also discursively constructed their shared group identity as friends bound by a shared previous experience and knowledge of shared prior texts.

Papers, please references in other conversations

The same process can be seen in other similar examples of discourse, which I did not have the opportunity to audio record, but which I observed and then reconstructed in my notes. These examples provide evidence that this phenomenon of reframing interactional dilemmas by shifting epistemic territories with videogame texts is prevalent in this group of friends.

The first example occurred at a restaurant one Sunday afternoon with Dave, Fred, Todd, and me. We had been remarking on how nice the restaurant was when Todd and Fred began to talk about a dicey situation at work. Todd is Fred's supervisor, and Fred and Todd recalled that they had conducted Fred's performance review at the restaurant; this led to a rekeying and reframing of the conversation. After the potentially uncomfortable topic of the hierarchical work relationship between Fred and Todd and the recent performance review of Fred was raised, Fred made a game move. He constructed an overlapping play frame, still anchored in the real-life frame, saying "I needed my plaque of sufficience—I'll go hang it on my wall". This is a reference to Papers, Please, where the player receives a 'plaque of sufficience' for their work, and has the option to hang it on their wall. This

recycling of shared prior videogame text functioned to reframe and rekey the conversation from serious work matters between Fred and Todd (the performance review), to a nonserious, fun videogame experience that elicited laughter from Dave and me (outsiders to Fred and Todd's shared work experience), since we had played Papers, Please and had equal epistemic access to it. Recycling, reframing, and rekeying in this instance shifted the conversation to a lighter key through creating an overlapping play frame. The reframing depended on correcting an epistemic imbalance in the conversation, which reinforced the shared group identity of the friends.

A few weeks after this example, I observed an awkward instance where Dave attempted to recycle the exact same reference in conversation, presumably trying to spark a play frame for me to analyze. In a conversation in the dining room, Dave randomly asked Fred if he ever received his 'plaque of sufficience' at work. Fred seemed caught off guard and gave a minimal response of "yeah". He did not engage in the new game frame as is typical in the other examples. This failed attempt to introduce a play frame provides evidence that these videogame references occur at specific points in conversation where interactional dilemmas exist. They serve particular functions of rekeying and reframing unpleasant conversations and managing group epistemics.

The next example occurred on a Sunday evening in the shared group house, in Dave's room. Dave was sitting at his desk; I was sitting on a couch, while Fred and Todd were standing at the door. Dave had just told Fred that his rent check was rejected at the bank because the date on the check was wrong. To negotiate this awkward interactional dilemma, Fred made a game move to rekey, reframe, and adjust the epistemic territory of the conversation. He suggested that the bank acted as the videogame officer, saying, "I just imagine that you gave them the check and they went into 'inspection mode' and were like 'date discrepancy' and hit the 'detain button'". To rekey and reframe the serious conversation about his rent check, Fred used this game move to initiate an overlapping, imaginary frame that this mistake was dealt with in a game world, where the bank went into 'inspection mode'. He clearly shifted to a play frame, and he then embedded a frame within the overlapping play frame, using choral dialogue (Tannen 1989/2007) to represent the bank, which he voiced saying 'date discrepancy', another shared prior text lifted from the game, and hitting the 'detain button', yet another prior text. In this single utterance, Fred effectively reframed and rekeyed the previously serious conversation to a game frame by making a game move that signaled 'we are living a videogame', which overlapped with the real-life frame, and even created an embedded frame with specific prior texts from the game.

This reframing also facilitated Todd's involvement. Previous to this, Todd had not been involved in the conversation, but had been listening in and playing a game on his phone in the doorway. This is understandable, since the rent check issue involved Dave, who managed household finances, and Fred, who committed the rent check error. With the new reframing, however,

which appealed to the shared prior knowledge that all three share about Papers, Please, Todd was now able to participate. He quoted speech from the inspector in the game, making his own game move, "Maybe you should not have come", to contribute to the overlapping and embedded game frame. Then Dave made a game move—"Wait! I can explain!"—also contributing to the specific embedded frame of character speech, quoting the denied applicant in the game as they are detained. This segment then ended with the three housemates laughing, signaling that the previous serious frame about a problematic rent check has been successfully reframed through game moves consisting of Papers, Please references. These recycled prior texts constructed overlapping and embedded frames, and rekeyed the talk to a light-hearted and fun game frame, which all three speakers could participate in since they had equal epistemic access to it. The friends had transformed this conversation to reinforce their bond as a social group, authenticating their group identity as nerdy housemates with shared experiences.

In sum, I have shown how words, concepts, and characters from Papers, Please were recycled in conversation, rekeying and reframing the conversation towards a nonserious game world. This occurred through game moves, which created overlapping and embedded frames of constructed dialogue. This process ultimately functioned to re-adjust the epistemic territory to one that all speakers have access to, allowing for group involvement and group identity affirmation.

THE OREGON TRAIL

The videogame The Oregon Trail is a computer game originally developed in 1974, designed to teach school children about nineteenth century pioneer life on the Oregon Trail. In the game, the player is a wagon leader guiding their party of settlers from Missouri to Oregon in a covered wagon in 1848. The player 'experiences' various events along the trail, based on actual historical narratives. These experiences range from facing illnesses, such as dysentery, suffering injuries like a broken arm, to making choices relating to the trail, such as whether to attempt to cross a river or not (see Figure 3). The player faces life or death consequences for choices made. In this way The Oregon Trail is similar to Papers, Please because it also provides a somewhat psychologically immersive experience. The Oregon Trail was also extremely successful, selling over sixty-five million copies, and it was popular among North American elementary school students in the mid 1980s to late 1990s, as many students in the US and Canada had access to the game at school. The popularity of this game for school children during the 1990s in the US means that most Americans who attended school then remember playing the game, and this shared childhood experience is why references to this game can be used as a conversational resource in the next excerpt I analyze.

FIGURE 3. Screenshot from The Oregon Trail; here the player enters Y (for yes) or N (for no).

The Oregon Trail references in audio-recorded conversation

The second excerpt I analyze is from a conversation that took place between Dave, Dave's high school friend, Allen, and me on a Friday night at a diner. This was my second time meeting Allen, who speaks English proficiently as a second language. In the analysis, I demonstrate how, similar to the previous excerpt, videogame texts are recycled to rekey and reframe the conversation, as well as to shift the epistemic territory, allowing for group involvement and group identity construction. Again, we see the emergence of an overlapping 'life is a videogame' frame in the construction of a game world, which also includes embedded frames. This conversation, however, is different in many ways from the previous recorded excerpt that I analyzed—most notably, the overlapping and embedded frames do not completely reframe the conversation. Instead, Dave forcefully brings the conversation back to the original, serious 'real-life' frame.

Setting up the need for an epistemic frame shift

Previous to excerpt (8) below, Dave and Allen had been talking about skiing, and I was bored, since I have no experience skiing. After Allen comments about skiing with "if you know what you're doing, it doesn't matter" (line 1) and Dave latches with "Yeah" (line 2), I begin to tell Allen about a calamitous amphibious camping trip that Dave, Todd, Lana, some other friends, and I had recently experienced, which is epistemically advantageous for Dave and me, but leaves Allen little room to participate, which will eventually create the need for an epistemic frame shift.

(8) 1 Allen: But once again, if you know what you're doing, it doesn't matter=
2 Dave: =[Yeah
3 Sylvia: =[Um-
4 We went-
5 I went kayaking and canoeing for the first time like two weeks ago.

I initiate a turn with "Um-" (line 3), and seize this opportunity to change the topic to something still related to outdoor sports, but related to my own experience, with "We went- I went kayaking and canoeing for the first time like two weeks ago" (lines 4–5). Allen demonstrates uptake of my statement and Dave and I begin to tell Allen about our camping trip, which epistemically isolates him and limits his involvement, setting up an opportunity for an epistemic frame shift.

(9) 6 Allen: How'd you like that?
7 Dave: We [went- *camp*ing and kayaking.
8 Sylvia: [u:h, (I didn't-)
9 Dave: So we packed all our shit into a canoe,
10 and we hopped into kayaks,
11 she hopped into a canoe.
12 [And with-
13 Sylvia: [I hopped into a kayak first.
14 Dave: Bumped your head on it.
15 Sylvia: Then I hit my head,
16 → felt kind of dizz(h)y.
17 Allen: Oh(h)(h)(h)(h)!

Dave and I launch into a shared couple's story (Mandelbaum 1987) to which we have primary epistemic access. We explain that I "hit my head" (line 15) on the kayak and I confess that I "felt kind of dizz(h)y" (line 16). The laughter token in "dizz(h)y" is interesting—so far this conversation has been in a frame of telling a real-life story, and here we are talking about an injury that could have been serious, yet I laugh. This self-conscious laughter could signal to Allen that laughing about this incident is acceptable, and indeed he responds with "Oh(h)(h)(h)(h)" (line 17), demonstrating uptake of news (Schiffrin 1988) as well as indicating non-seriousness. So here we see a contrast with the talk that had been serious up to this point—now the key has already been slightly changed with our laughter, and as Chafe (2001) has remarked, laughter is 'slow fading' so we see it carry into the following lines.

Creating an overlapping videogame frame with an epistemic shift

With the key already shifting to be more light-hearted, Allen makes his first game move by recycling a videogame text, which initiates an epistemic shift and an overlapping videogame frame that allows him to participate.

(10) 18 Sylvia: Decided to go in the cano(h)e.
19 Allen: → Sounds like a **ba:d** Oregon Trail trip. [Hahaha
20 Sylvia: [And then-
21 Dave: Something [li(h)ke tha(h)t.

I continue the narrative, "Decided to go in the cano(h)e" (line 18), again with a laughter token in my statement, but I omit the fact that I took Todd's spot in the canoe (this will become relevant later). Allen participates by making a game move, "Sounds like a **ba:d** Oregon Trail trip", and laughing (line 19), reframing the event as part of The Oregon Trail game. I initiate another narrative clause, "And then-" (line 20), but cut myself off, either due to being overlapped by Allen's laughter or perhaps because I just got the joke. Dave laughingly says "Something li(h)ke tha(h)t" (line 21), showing recognition of Allen's reference to The Oregon Trail. In playback, I asked Allen why he brought up the videogame here, and he told me that our story 'reminded' him of the game, which he had spent so much time in childhood playing. In other words, our camping trip story involving my injury and crossing a river 'triggered' his semi-active conscious (Chafe 1994) in recalling this childhood game, where river crossings and random injuries were common. His game move facilitated his participation in the conversation by using an intertextual videogame reference that he has knowledge about, which shifted the epistemic territory of the conversation and simultaneously created an overlapping game frame.

Creating an embedded frame in an overlapping frame with a more specific epistemic shift

Next, the speakers swiftly move into the overlapping game frame, talking about real life as a videogame, where everyone can participate with equal epistemic access and reinforce their shared group identity as friends with experience playing *The Oregon Trail.* The overlapping frame is propelled by constructed dialogue in an embedded frame, with more specific epistemic orientation towards intertextual ties to the videogame.

(11) 22 Allen: [S-
23 → '**Sy**:lvia knocked [her head-'
24 Dave: → ['**Sy:lvia**:..has a con**cu**:ssion.'
25 Sylvia: (*laughing*)
26 Allen: 'She will be-
27 → She will be unable to collect food [for the rest of the trip,
28 >so you can only carry 100 pounds less'<
29 Sylvia: [hahaha
30 Dave: [yeah
31 (*everyone laughs*)

FIGURE 4. 'ASHLEY has a broken arm' on the screen of The Oregon Trail.

Here Allen and Dave recycle texts from The Oregon Trail, where the computer screen tells the player that someone in the game is injured or sick (see Figure 4 for an example), when Allen says "**Sy**:lvia knocked her head-" (line 23) and Dave repeats this structure with "**Sy:lvia**:..has a con**cu**:ssion" (line 24). These game moves of constructed dialogue involve a slightly louder voice quality, which serves as a contextualization cue. It is also evident that the text of the game is being referenced since the speakers are talking about me in third person, even though I am present. I laugh (line 25), showing that I also 'get' the jokes being made, and that I am going along with this new rekeyed play frame. Allen further recycles text from the game in the embedded frame, saying "She will be- She will be unable to collect food for the rest of the trip, >so you can only carry 100 pounds less<" (lines 27–28). Carrying 'pounds' of food is always an issue in The Oregon Trail (see Figure 5) and when someone is injured or sick in the game this affects how much food the player is able to carry. Everyone laughs (line 31) at this, showing the nonseriousness that imagining this game world has triggered.

The constructed dialogue in this conversation, similar to the constructed dialogue of Jorji in the Papers, Please excerpt, again shows that an embedded frame, referring to specific texts of the videogame, strengthens the overlapping frame and allows speakers to participate in a fun and equally epistemically accessible play frame that discursively constructs their group identity as nerdy friends with enjoyable childhood memories of playing The Oregon Trail. Note that again, the embedded frame propels the overlapping play frame further away from the original topic of talk. Now instead of talking about bumping my head in a kayak in the real-life frame, we are talking about carrying pounds of food in the overlapping play frame.

FIGURE 5. 'You shot 2922 pounds of meat but will be able to carry back only 200 pounds…'.

Metacommentary and another epistemic shift breaks the overlapping game frame

As the conversation continues, the speakers make some metacomments on the game frame, and as we saw in the Papers, Please example, 'naming the frame' breaks it.

(12)	32	Dave:		That's absolutely correct…
	33	Allen:	→	Real life was an Oregon Trail ga(h)me..
	34	Sylvia:		[Yea:h and then-
	35	Allen:	→	['Oh you broke your leg, you only made fifty dollars less today.'
	36	Sylvia:		Haha
	37	Dave:		Well I was pissed because I realized the reason Todd didn't wanna-
	38			you know, instead of like,
	39			volunteering to kayak 'cause it sucks?
	40	Sylvia:		Mhm?
	41	Allen:		It takes more energy too, right?

Dave's metacomment "That's absolutely correct…" (line 32) is reminiscent of his earlier metacomment, "Something li(h)ke tha(h)t" (line 21), where he is affirming Allen's contributions to the conversation, but is not as involved as he could be in maintaining the overlapping game frame. As I mentioned in the discussion of the previous conversation analyzed, Dave told me that he feels he is not good at participating in game frames—that he is more serious in conversation. This is extremely relevant for how this overlapping game frame will abruptly come to an end, instead of continuing and reframing the talk, as was the case in the first conversation analyzed. Note that I also do not participate in the

overlapping game frame, but I am laughing throughout this excerpt. I was the butt of the joke in this instance and was simply enjoying the playful teasing, but also I had become aware during this talk that this was precisely what I was looking for in my data, and it is possible that my awareness of it prevented me from becoming more involved.

Allen next makes a metacomment "Real life was an Oregon Trail ga(h)me.." (line 33). Here Allen explicitly names the frame, commenting from outside the game frame about the frame itself. Perhaps interpreting his turn here as breaking the play frame, I again initiate a narrative clause with "Yeah and then-" (line 34), but cut myself short when Allen makes yet another game move with "Oh you broke your leg, you only made fifty dollars less today" (line 35). Here Allen attempts to continue the overlapping game frame with another embedded frame of constructed dialogue recycled from The Oregon Trail.

Yet while I laugh (line 36), Dave abruptly breaks out of the overlapping game frame, moving back to the serious, real-life frame of talking about our camping experience, saying "Well I was pissed because I realized the reason Todd didn't wanna- you know, instead of like, volunteering to kayak 'cause it sucks?" (lines 37–39). Dave's statement starts with "well" which marks a departure from expectations in the discourse that is about to come (Schiffrin 1988). Both Allen and I re-orient to Dave's epistemic shift and serious rekeying (marked by his shift in emotional stance—"I was pissed") and reframing, with "Mhm?" (line 40) and "It takes more energy too, right?" (line 41). The conversation continues in this serious key and frame as we discuss how Dave sensed that Todd did not originally want to kayak, and was possibly annoyed when he had to kayak after I hit my head and took his spot in the canoe.

In sum, I have shown how intertextual ties from The Oregon Trail are recycled in this conversation, rekeying epistemically isolating and serious talk by creating an equally epistemically accessible, nonserious overlapping game frame containing embedded frames of constructed dialogue. Different from the first conversation I analyzed, however, the overlapping game frame in this conversation does not result in ultimately reframing the conversation. Instead, two of the speakers, Dave and I, did not fully engage in the overlapping game frame. We made several attempts, finally succeeding, in returning to the serious key and epistemically isolating frame of conversation that Allen was attempting to shift away from. Even so, the recycling of the videogame texts, and the use of overlapping and embedded frames to create a game world in this excerpt still functioned to temporarily re-adjust the epistemic territory of the conversation, rekeying and reframing it to allow Allen to participate more. Overall then, this moment of overlapping and embedded game frames relying on shared videogame texts allowed for more epistemically equal group identity construction as people with shared experience playing The Oregon Trail as children.

DISCUSSION

This analysis has shown how a group of 'nerd' friends use videogame texts as intertextual resources in their everyday conversations, for two main functions that are interrelated: (i) negotiating interactional dilemmas by rekeying serious talk about real-life issues to humorous play frames that construct such events as part of a lived videogame experience, and (ii) shifting the epistemic access required to participate in the conversation, so that different speakers can talk and demonstrate solidarity and shared group identity.

Reframing has been analyzed to show how game moves, made by recycling various bits of videogame texts, construct game frames that overlap with the real-life frames, allowing the participants to engage with talk about relatively serious issues in a more playful way. This analysis adds to what we know about overlapping and embedded frames in conversation. The overlapping game frames are accelerated and strengthened by embedded frames that contain constructed dialogue of characters or computer text from the videogames. Embedded frames within overlapping frames launch the speakers even further into the overlapping game frame and further away from the original real-life frame, using even more specific epistemic orientations. This process resulted in the complete reframing of the conversation in the Papers, Please example, but in The Oregon Trail example, unwilling speakers cut off the videogame reframing process to return to a more serious real-life frame. The two different outcomes show how speakers demonstrate varying levels of active participation in either going along with reframing, or in resisting it.

This study, then, has further developed how speakers are agentive in using intertextuality to manage frames. The analysis underscores the agency in speakers and the cognitive abilities they balance as they use intertextual resources to construct, overlap, embed, maintain, and switch frames. The study also contributes more broadly to our understanding of the complexity of framing in discourse as demonstrated by scholars such as Tannen & Wallat (1993), M. Goodwin (1996), and Gordon (2009).

Furthermore, I have shown how epistemics plays a crucial role in intertextuality, framing, and identity construction. Prior experiences of playing videogames were drawn upon as epistemic resources, as videogame texts were infused into conversation as an equalizing epistemic force. The epistemic shift allowed different group members to frame shift, showing off their knowledge and participating in conversation, since they shared epistemic access to videogames. In turn, this discursive work constructed their group identity as nerds in this epistemic ecology. While framing and intertextuality have been argued to be fundamentally interconnected (Gordon 2009), I have shown that epistemics plays an understudied but important role in these processes.

Following Raymond & Heritage (2006), this study highlights the role of epistemic management in group identity construction, further developing the field of epistemic discourse analysis. It is apparent in the examples that a shared group

identity, based on shared previous experience and knowledge of shared prior texts, is being constructed—that of videogame fans that value linking videogames to real-life experiences. In addition, individuals are simultaneously negotiating their own identities within the group. For example, Dave does not participate as actively or as frequently as some other members of his friend group in the development of game worlds, and this constructs his identity as someone more focused on 'the real world'. By contrast, friends like Fred and Lana show particular skill in constructing game worlds, and I have observed throughout my data collection that Fred is the most active of all the friends in initiating game moves to resolve interactional dilemmas, and Lana participates actively in such game worlds. So individual differences are involved, which may relate to aspects of conversational style (Tannen 1984/2005) and should be explored further.

Future research should also examine other kinds of media references. Dave told me about a conversation he participated in where speakers made references to the board game Monopoly, to manage the same kind of conversational work I have described here. This shows that what I have analyzed here can happen with games in general, not just videogames. References in conversation to other forms of new media, such as online memes and Vines (currently popular six-second-long looping video clips), are other possible avenues for further research.

In this article, I have added to the field of work that draws on the concept of intertextuality to examine interaction of a social group, with a particular focus on shared media texts. A videogame played by a group of friends in a basement resurfaces in conversations that take place in their dining room upstairs, and a videogame played by children in elementary school can years later be recycled as an interactional resource in a diner. The connections between real life and these videogames may be feasible precisely because the social realities that occur in real life, such as making long-term decisions that have lasting and undoable consequences, are reflected and reproduced in the games, and in turn this makes the games readily available resources to draw upon when interactional dilemmas arise. In sum, while playing videogames is a pastime often disregarded as being a 'waste of time', this study has shown how a group of friends use shared experiences of playing videogames to achieve remarkable cognitive flexibility and creativity in their conversations when confronted with interactional dilemmas. It brings together previous work on intertextuality, framing, epistemics, and identity, and contributes to our understanding of how epistemic resources are used to shift frames.

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

Punctuation reflects intonation, not grammar.

?	rising intonation at the end of a unit
.	falling intonation
..	a noticeable pause
…	a significant pause
=	latching (second voice begins without perceptible pause)
[	verlap (two voices heard at the same time)
(h)	laughter during a word
(words)	uncertain transcription
(*sound*)	details about speech or nonspeech sounds
[*detail*]	details for clarification
italics	emphatic stress
>fast<	speaker is accelerating
bold	speech spoken loudly
:	elongated vowel sound following a vowel
:word:	creaky voice
-	abrupt stop in speech; truncated word or syllable
→	significant line of transcript

NOTE

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[1]All participant names except my own are pseudonyms; participants gave consent to be recorded.

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