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‘Showing one’s card’: Negotiating disclosure through game play in juvenile probation

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Abstract: Communication between probation officers and juvenile offenders is essential, clarifying the nature and cause of possible disorders and providing insight into the chances of recidivism and/or recovery. Forensic social work, however, is complicated as it is both oriented toward collecting information for the court (forensic aims) and aimed at helping the juvenile’s improvement (social work aims). This paper examines two unique cases of probation officer-juvenile interaction that utilize a board game intended to foster disclosure. As any disclosure may be used against the juvenile in court, the juvenile must be compliant enough without disclosing too much. Using a combination of frame analysis and discourse analyses of delicacy, we describe how the game is used to encourage disclosure as well as how the game allows juveniles to appear compliant ultimately without disclosing much personal information.

Keywords: frame analysis, discourse, social work, forensic linguistics, forensic social work, disclosure, board games

1 Introduction

The tension between coercion and care is at the center of forensic social work, which on the one hand invests in client wellbeing and on the other, serves the justice system. Juvenile probation forensic social work contributes yet another complication to already challenging work. As with adult forensic social work, practitioners who work with juveniles on probation strive to strike a balance between care and coercion, providing counseling on the one hand, and supplying relevant content from worker-juvenile discussions

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in court, on the other. The only study examining discourse practices specifically in juvenile forensic social work reveals that hybridized discourse practices emerge from a field in which workers serve two masters, the therapeutic and the coercive (Nijnatten and Stevens 2011, Nijnatten and Elk 2015). This paper draws on this work, while describing a rather unique twist in forensic social work with juveniles, common in therapeutic and psychotherapeutic settings but unexamined in forensic social work: the use of a board game to foster disclosure.

While the use of games of various sorts is widely acknowledged in psychological and therapeutic literature, when examining the integration of a game in forensic social work, we question its utility and ethical appropriateness. While the use of the game to foster disclosure attends to the caring aspect of forensic social work, disclosure may work against a client in court. Forensic linguistic research has drawn attention to the particular difficulty the youth have in navigating the language and discourse of the legal/criminal justice system. Given that minors have been found to be less able to manage the forensic sphere, asking juveniles to participate in a disclosure “game,” which can obscure the forensic implications of their openness, is ethically concerning.

While forensic social work requires a balance between care and coercion, these juveniles must walk a similar tightrope between disclosure/compliance and nondisclosure/noncompliance, looking to say enough without saying too much, which may be particularly challenging for minors. Using a combination of Frame Analysis and analysis of discursive delicacy we examine how this game functions in juvenile forensic work, ultimately showing how social work and game frames are indexed, as well as how the game provides juvenile clients a rare opportunity to invoke the caring/social work frame themselves, adjusting the traditional power asymmetries we expect in therapeutic social interaction. We argue that while game play does not foster disclosure from the minors, they are able to display compliance through active game play.

We situate the study within the fields of forensic social work, game play in therapeutic and forensic contexts, and forensic linguistics before describing the methodology and the analytical framework for the study. The findings present data on 1) how probation officers integrated and framed the game in relation to therapeutic and forensic frames; and 2) how juvenile game play presents opportunities for reversing traditionally asymmetrical roles. The discussion reflects on the ethical implications of the findings.

1.1 Literature review

1.1.1 Forensic social work

Broadly speaking, juvenile forensic social work refers to policies and practices with juvenile offenders and victims of crimes (Roberts and Brownell 1999), involving correctional systems and mandated care for juvenile offenders. As already indicated, juvenile forensic social work involves a tension between care and coercion, wellbeing and justice (Maschi and Killian 2011). This tension is exemplified by the assessment process for juvenile probation, in which officers must both collect relevant information about juveniles as a basis for court decisions and as a basis for counseling and rehabilitation (Nijnatten and Stevens 2011).

This tension, and juveniles' awareness of it, makes fostering mutual trust a challenge (Drake 1994). Probation officers often present themselves as helpers, trying to convince clients to trust them, supporting clients' self-disclosure (Regehr and Antle 1997). When clients are aware that the professional serves the interests of the court, the client's trust may take a turn and be replaced by cynicism, resistance, and passivity (Dunham and Mauss 1982). Forensic social work is not just directed at monitoring juveniles but at 're-educating' them, helping them to increase their initiative and motivation (Nijnatten and Stevens 2012), which in an indirect way may decrease the chances of recidivism.

Open communication and trust are considered to be prerequisites for juvenile resocialization (Minor and Elrod 1994; Matthews and Hubbard 2007). Indeed, according to van Nijnatten and Stevens (2012), helping juveniles disclose is a vital aspect of fostering relationships with family, therapists, and mentors (Finkenauer et al. 2004; Tardy and Smithson 2006; Wanberg, Welsh and Kammeyer-Mueller 2007). Discourse and disclosure are, then, central to forensic social work with juveniles. Discussions with juveniles and their significant others help develop the probation officer's understanding of the nature and cause of the juvenile's possible disorder. These discussions can inform and assist with judicial decisions, as well as foster resocialization, again highlighting the care/coercion tension. The information garnered from these meetings provides insight into the chances of recidivism or recovery, yet this communication is complicated as it functions both to collect information for the court and to help the juvenile to recover.

The tension between coercion and care is reflected in the hybridity of the discourse in practitioner-client communication (Nijnatten and Stevens 2011). Nijnatten and Stevens (2011), who examined juvenile forensic social work in

the Netherlands, found that both practitioners and juveniles considered their social interactions unsatisfactory. Using a combination of stimulated recall and analysis of social interaction, the authors found that probation officers characterized the juveniles as passive, which they attributed to poor motivation and an inability to express oneself linguistically. The juveniles, however, explained their passivity by characterizing their officers as coercive, directive and confrontational. Nijntten and Stevens concluded that

because adolescents disclose less of their experience when they are afraid that the information disclosed will be used to evaluate their conduct (Endler, Flett, Macrodimitris, Corace and Kocovski 2002; Kocovski & Endler 2000), the link of client-centred [sic] practices in juvenile probation to correctional functions may stimulate reticence rather than frankness (3).

It is no surprise, then, that practitioners looked for new ways to encourage friendly, easy disclosure, given these challenges. The present study describes the integration of a disclosure game into the regular meetings between juveniles and their probation officers. This game, originally developed for individuals managing Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorder—Not Otherwise Specified (Koster 1999)—was integrated into several forensic social work meetings with juveniles to facilitate openness and disclosure among a group of individuals less inclined to disclose.

1.1.2 Game play in therapeutic and forensic interactions

A rather extensive body of research exists on the use of board games and computer games in psychotherapy and therapy, some created specifically for therapeutic purposes (Oren 2008) and others adapted from modern games and board games (Berlin 2001). There are imaginative games, more often played with children, and structured games (Oren 2008). Many of them, whether overtly therapeutic or adapted for therapeutic purposes, focus on fostering emotional development (Oren 2008), enhancing the practitioner-client relationship, facilitating disclosure (Berlin 2001), and generating empathetic responses (Mitlin 2001).

While some researchers have examined the utility of games with antisocial high school students, many of whom may be connected with the juvenile court system (Mitlin 2001), or with at-risk youth in a residential care facility, very little research exists on the integration of such games into the juvenile forensic social work therapeutic setting itself. The one study that describes game use with juveniles in a forensic context describes how the UNO card game was adapted in order to foster disclosure (Drew, Bitar, Gee, Graff, and Springer 2007). Like

studies from a purely therapeutic perspective, they suggest that client disclosure is necessary for treatment, but admit that developing an alliance with the juvenile is challenging. They describe how a forthcoming, open therapist may facilitate juvenile disclosure. The authors argue that a game provides a space in which both parties can share, thus forming the necessary alliance between the two. Counselors modeling self-disclosure and vulnerability in that context allowed the juveniles to do the same, and they suggested that the game somewhat balanced pre-existing hierarchical relationships common to that kind of institutional work.

Though Drew et al. (2007) briefly mention the challenge therapists face in managing the often “conflicting goals between the juvenile justice and behavioral health systems,” they do not address the ethical tension that arises from a game intended to more easily facilitate disclosure that may negatively impact the juvenile (p.50).

Huizenga (1944) suggests that when players are invested in a game, they exist within a “magic circle,” a space in which the rules and hierarchies of the game trump the rules and asymmetries of reality. Players become immersed in the play experience. While games have many positive attributes that could foster disclosure in therapeutic settings, the nature of *forensic* social work, i.e. the tension between care and coercion, reveals how the integration of such games (in spite of caring motives) could be potentially damaging to juveniles who, under the pretenses of the game, disclose information that can negatively impact them in court.

1.1.3 Forensic linguistics and vulnerable populations

Finally, juveniles may be less capable of interpreting legal interaction, according to research in forensic linguistics. Minors are categorized as vulnerable populations, often less able to interpret, for example, Miranda rights (a U.S. law that requires police to inform arrested individuals of their rights to silence and to attorney) and interviewing/interrogation questions posed by a police officer (Aldridge 2010; Ainsworth 2010; Cleary and Warner 2016; Feld 2006a, 2006b; Viljoen, Zapf and Roesch 2007). Forensic approaches to interviewing child witnesses are intended to be different from how adults are treated (Cleary and Warner 2016). Witnesses who are minors are meant to be interrogated with less coercive forms of questioning (Saywitz and Camparo 1998) and individuals with less education generally have been found to be less able to understand and respond to the grammatical complexity of Miranda rights (Ainsworth 2010). Given that minors may be less able to manage the forensic sphere in general,

asking juveniles to participate in a disclosure “game,” which can obscure the forensic implications of their openness, is ethically troublesome.

2 Data and methodology

2.1 Case study participants

We analyzed cases of two male juvenile offenders on probation (the pseudonyms “Tim” and “Colin” are used to protect their identities), in interaction with their female probation officers (we call Tim’s officer PO-T and Colin’s PO-C) in two Dutch middle-sized towns. They were selected from a corpus of nine juvenile probation cases and were selected as the only conversations in which the game was played; the non-game-related cases were not considered for this paper. The practitioner and juvenile met on a weekly basis. The game is usually played during the third session in the assessment phase, which is directed at mapping the juvenile’s psychological and social background.

Given the small sample size, our intention is not to generalize findings in any way but rather to elucidate the discourse practices and frame shifting utilized by the practitioner and the juvenile in the course of playing this game.

The conversations were video-recorded and then transcribed according to the Jefferson (2004) conventions, and then translated into English. Before the start of the study, the juveniles consented to their PO videotaping the encounters in order to study the interactions between POs and juvenile offenders. Parents and probation officers also consented for the authors to use video recordings for scientific analysis, and to present the results in a scientific journal. Student researchers installed a camera on a tripod in the consultation rooms; juveniles and officers were the only people present in the room.

2.2 The game

Players move their piece by turns on a board (depending on the number they throw on the dice) and try to reach the finish first. To complete a turn successfully, each player carries out an assignment which is printed on colored cards that refer to six categories all intended to foster disclosure (event, thought, feeling, behavior, effect and history), prompting a narrative or non-verbal demonstration, for example: “I used to be sad, when ...” or “show me what you do when you are afraid”. Players receive two tokens that allow them to miss

a turn. Some tasks require participants to express themselves via gesture. The intention is that the game should neither bore nor threaten. The juvenile forensic social workers in this study add an additional element to the game: the ability to ask follow up questions or comment on the turn at play. In this study, this is most often demonstrated through engagement of the social work frame through displays of empathy.

2.3 Analytic frameworks

We examine how the game is implemented conversationally. Using Frame Analysis (Goffman 1974; Gordon 2009) and analyses of delicacy (Linell and Bredmar 1996; Nijnatten and Suoninen 2014), we focus not only on the multiple frames employed in this interaction but also how these frames are delicately introduced and negotiated. A frame refers to “a definition of what’s going on in interaction” (Tannen and Wallat 1987: 59), people classifying social events to understand their meaning and communicate those meanings to others (Goffman 1974). Frame is operationalized primarily through the discourses that are indexical to activity-bound membership categories, which involve different participatory rights and obligations (Mäkitalo 2014). Participants in play frames, for example, use metamesages (e.g. “I am only joking”) to explain how to interpret messages (Bateson 1972).

We draw on *dynamic* concepts of framing to explain how participants shift into and between different framings. Gordon (2009) proposes the concept of ‘blending,’ revealing how participants regularly shift from one frame of conversation into another. Blending involves the transformation of “a set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else” (Goffman (1974: 43–44). Sarangi (2011) refers to such hybrid frames when describing the fluid movement between participant role-sets in institutional encounters. Likewise, Linell and Thunqvist (2003) suggest that complex activity types involve hybridity and ambiguity, including activities and utterances which are compatible with two frames.

We draw on these dynamic conceptualizations of frame to examine conversational activities in which participants, within a larger forensic frame, dynamically negotiate between a social work frame and a game frame. Importantly, both the social work frame, enacted through discourses around care and personal/emotional disclosure, and the game frame, enacted through game and play-related discourse, are within the larger forensic frame, which,

while not mentioned in the game, is introduced in prior interactions and presumed to be present.

We analyze strategies that communicate discursive delicacy in order to examine the ways in which the coercive aspects of forensic social work are softened and mitigated. Delicacy is relevant for our forensic workers as they attempt to prompt disclosure, and for the juvenile who, knowing that what he/she says can impact their case negatively, must disclose enough to appear compliant, while at the same time not disclosing information that will hurt their case. We draw on Linell and Bredmar (1996) and Nijnatten and Suoninen (2014) to examine how the frames are employed delicately. Expressive caution, which underlines the uncertain status of the speaker's knowledge, pauses, delay of delivery, softening words (Linell and Bredmar 1996), downgrades, justifications (Silverman 1997), and meta-language, are frequently used to mitigate sensitive issues (Bergmann 1992; Silverman 1997). Emphasizing the quality of the relationship through expressions of affiliation (Nijnatten and Suoninen 2014) and laughter and smiling (Haakana 2010) are other strategies. Finally, hypothetical questions create more comfortable contexts for delicate disclosure (Peräkylä 2005; Noordegraaf et al. 2008).

3 Findings

These interactions involved invocations of the game frame, the social work frame, very rarely the forensic frame, and blends therein. On the Probation Officer's side, these shifting frames were most obvious when they modeled the game, performing game play, social work-relevant disclosure, and empathy. For the juveniles, their movement between frames was not demonstrated in game-related disclosure but rather in their performance as social workers-cum-game players.

3.1 Probation officers model interaction

As games are uncommon in juvenile probation meetings, the Probation Officer (PO) prefaces game play with an explanation of the rules. The first excerpt, between Tim and his Parole Officer (PO-T), is a representative example of the PO modeling game play with shifts out of the game frame and into the social work frame to explain disclosure-based nuances of game play.

(1)

- 1 PO: Hmm, (2.0). So it's a red card for me; you can
2 pick up a card for me and ask me a question
3 T: The (worst) thing that happened last week was (.)
4 the worst.
5 PO: The worst, the worst thing to happen to me?
6 T: Last week
7 PO: Last week. Ehm (6.0). The worst thing to happen
8 to me (.) that was yesterday, yesterday I had
9 an appointment in B, a meeting, and there was
10 this one person and actually they're quite
11 often late for meetings and this time they were
12 really late, which completely messed up my
13 planning, that was re:ally annoying! So you're sort of
14 dependent on someone else and they arrive really late
15 and yeah, then it's me and my planning that suffer
16 because of it. That's my answer, remember,
17 if you want to know more about it, you can just
18 ask, ok? Because I'll be doing that with you too, so
19 you know you're allowed to do it for me too,
20 okay? Alright?
21 T: Yeah, okay
22 PO: Let's see, it was an orange card, I'll just go
23 and look for that question in the orange section
24 (1.0) red. orange section (1.0) red. Eh: (.)
25 meeting in B yesterday ((write)). Okay? So
26 you can put that at the bottom of the pile.
27 Your turn now.
28 (5.0)
29 PO: (2.0) A purple one. (1.0) Show what you do
30 when you're happy.
31 T: (2.0)
32 PO: So when you're happy, when you're glad.
33 T: Yeah ((sigh))
34 PO: What do you do? ((gesture with hands)) You know
35 you can play a token if you want. But you can also
36 just try it.
37 T: x I just laugh really.
38 PO: Okay, you're allowed to show it, it's a demonstration
39 card ((smile)). Yes, I'll be getting those as well you

- 40 know, those demonstration cards ((laughs)).
- 41 T: Yeah but still
- 42 PO: So then you're like ((Puts on a smile))?
- 43 T: °Yeah°.
- 44 PO: (8.0) Look. So it says here: colors of the card
- 45 ((points at R's sheet)).
- 46 T: ((writes))
- 47 PO: (6.0) Okay, next question. 1,2,3,4,5. A blue one.
- 48 T: When there are problems I've learnt to say to myself.
- 49 PO: Ehm: (.) When there are problems I've learnt to say
- 50 to myself, ehm: (.) say it out loud x, say it to others.
- 51 When you've got problems, I never used to do that
- 52 really, back then I always just kind of kept it to
- 53 myself, but what I've learnt over the years is, yeah
- 54 you've just got to talk about it, otherwise it
- 55 won't solve anything and you'll just keep it
- 56 all bottled up inside.
- 57 T: ((puts card away)) °Yeah°
- 58 PO: Do you recognize that or not?
- 59 T: ((nods))
- 60 PO: You do? ((writes)) (8.0) A blue one for you, it's my
- 61 turn to ask, isn't it? I used to often get sad when

In this excerpt, the PO uses the movement between and blending of frames to model game play, verbally indexing the game, social work, and hybrid frames. PO-T, through teaching Tim the rules, negotiates between the social work frame and the game frame. There are repeated explanations of game play by PO-T (lines 1–2, 16–19, 22–27, 35–36, 38–40 and 44), referring to tokens, colors of cards, and rules, with reference to both players. PO-T's use of the term 'allowed' situates disclosure within the game frame (lines 19, 38). In pursuing a game-relevant response from Tim, PO-T says, "Okay, you're allowed to show it, it's a demonstration card" (line 38–40). While the disclosure has social work goals and would be within both the social work and game frames, the pursuit of social work disclosure is framed in terms of the game, using "allowed" to index rules of the game and the reference to the card.

PO-T invokes the social work frame when she comments that both players are permitted to ask follow up questions outside of game play, which serves social work purposes and highlights the presence of and enacts the social work frame (line 17–20). The social work frame is likewise invoked when PO-T asks follow up questions that, while allowed by game play, are technically outside it

and on social work topics (line 58, 60). The “writing” observation (line 60) also indexes the social work frame and potentially the forensic frame, as both require written notes.

We also see blending of the game and social work frames. In lines 7–16, PO-T models the game, relaying her thoughts out loud and marking the end of the blended frame with “that’s my answer.” Her disclosure performs both game compliance and performed troubles-telling. Lines 49–56 likewise involve modeling the blended frames of game play and social work talk. PO-T’s final turn highlights these blended frames. Her confirmation check “You do?” serves social work ends outside of game play, as does her note-taking (which may also invoke the forensic frame). She then shifts into game play frame saying, “A blue one for you, it’s my turn to ask, isn’t it?,” and initiates the blended social work/game frame with the question “I used to often get sad when...,” which offers social work disclosure within a game setting.

Non-verbal displays may also index frame-work. Pauses for game play, such as that in line 19, highlight the procedure as well as the implicit participation of the game as an object and mediator of talk (Matarese and Caswell 2017). Likewise, “writes” (line 60) indexes both social work and forensic frames, as does the time taken to write those notes. As Matarese and Caswell (2017) note, drawing on Latour (2005), paperwork often takes up conversational space and treated as a participant in social work interaction.

Finally, this navigation of frames is done using markers of delicacy. PO-T performs disclosure, engaging in the social work frame, while using markers of delicacy including hesitation markers, repetitions and pauses, which may perform discomfort of disclosure and prepare Tim for his own disclosure unease. PO-T uses moments during her own game play to draw attention to rules of the game. Rather than correcting Tim during his turn, which may be face threatening, PO-T gives instructions during her turn, strictly marking the end (“that’s my answer”) and following with instruction. By providing a less threatening context for game rules regarding disclosure, she minimizes potential loss of face for Tim (lines 16–20). Markers of delicacy overall help to soften both the rules of game play and perform discomfort.

The following example shows how PO-C employs a game frame, using humor and an informal register in addition to game-specific language.

(2)

- 1 PO: You can go first. Now you don’t get 6 straight away
- 2 (.). Oh right, of course he gets a six straight away.
- 3 Well I’ve got 1, I’ll start. Alright?

PO-T's turn initially invokes the game frame by referring to a game turn when she says, "go first." Her reference to lucky chance reinforces the reality of the game. In so doing, she emphasizes his winning throw of the dice over the disclosures to come. Her use of a more youthful, playful register also invokes the game frame, including her use of "he," which envisions her appealing comedically to a third-party audience during their cheerful game.

In the next short excerpt, we see the game frame, the social work frame, and a hybridized frame enacted, occasionally through delicate language, which again helps soften the requirement to disclose.

(3)

- 1 PO: (7.0) A purple one. Yes, this really su(h)cks. This
- 2 is a demonstration card. ((puts hand in front of
- 3 mouth))
- 4 C: Oh, do I need to show that?
- 5 PO: Yes. These are all demonstration card and they're all
- 6 questions you can a(h)nsWER.
- 7 C: Okay x
- 8 PO: Don't forget your token.
- 9 C: No
- 9 PO: Show what you do when you're afraid (.) You
- 10 can also just tell me.

In the first turn, PO-C anticipates Colin having difficulty reacting to the assignment and performs friendly compassion for him using a register less common in institutional interaction ("this really suhcks") and more aligned with the game frame. Her gesture (line 2–3) dramatically expresses despair over Colin's unfortunate roll. Register, gesture and her laughter (lines 1, 6) establish a bid for affiliation (Glenn 2003). The overall show of solidarity emphasizes the game frame, potentially obscuring the underlying social work and probation frames. The directive (line 8) could be interpreted as confrontational or direct *outside* the game frame.

In contrast, in lines 9–10 we see a shift in frame to a more hybrid one. "Show me what you do when you're afraid" is a task that is *part* of the game but ultimately for social work ends. However, in saying "you can also just tell me" PO-C shifts away from the game frame by deviating from the rules of the card. Her statement highlights the importance of sharing information (part of the social work frame) over the rules of the game.

3.2 Reversing roles, clients “doing” social work

Juveniles may avoid disclosures about offense-related issues by denying emotions, thereby refusing to play the role of player; by describing physical reactions rather than emotional ones; and/or by providing trivial examples within game play. In the latter cases, juveniles used their role in the game to appear compliant in their client task. In the next three excerpts, we examine how juveniles reverse roles as they elicit disclosure from the Probation Officer, engaging in both game and social work frames.

(4)

- 1 PO: Have often been sad.
 2 C: °When something happened or something°.
 3 PO: (2.0) Ehm: yes when I was put in my room or
 4 sent up to the hallway.
 5 C: ((laughter))
 6 PO: I was really kind of a (1.0) girl, you know, I'd do
 7 anything people didn't want me to do. And
 8 the worst thing they could do to me was to send me
 9 out to the hallway or up to my room away from all
 10 the other kids, because I was quite a sociable kid.
 11 And whenever=
 12 C: =Did you mind that a lot?
 13 PO: (1.0) You know, and then they'd take me out
 14 of my group, away from my
 15 [friends]
 16 C: [°that wasn't very] nice°.
 17 PO: And that would really make me sad. I really minded
 18 that. I didn't understand.
 19 C: But now you do. ((laugh))
 20 PO-C: Yes, now I do, funny isn't it?
 21 Both: ((both laugh))
 22 PO: Funny that, how you really just don't understand
 23 these things at the time.
 24 C: Yeah some things are kind of (.) random.
 25 PO: (2.0) Aren't they? As you get older some things really
 26 kind of fall into place a bit better.
 27 C: Yeah, xxxx or you can just think better
 28 PO: Yes, that's also possible. ((write))

In this excerpt, Colin, through game play, imitates the counseling role. Colin initiates the question (line 2); contextualizes the PO's description of her emotions (line 16); asks about the intensity of emotion (line 12); shows compassion and active listening (line 16); points out progress of the 'client' and showing empathy (line 19); reinforces a 'client's' retrospective evaluation (line 19); and highlights the 'client's' capability by not lapsing into old habits (line 27). Through this counseling performance, Colin shows he understands how to "do social work" vis-à-vis the game frame.

Gordon (2002), in her analysis of role-play and role reversal games between mother and child, states "the second play frame is the frame of role-reversal, where the metamessage is 'I'm playing you'" (708). As there are no meta-messages of that kind here, we argue that the client is enacting the social work frame himself through the game frame, asking follow up questions and making empathetic, evaluative statements. He is not playing the social worker; he is doing social work as game play. The role-reversal here is further marked in Colin's use of initiation-response-evaluation or initiation-response-post-expansion sequences (Mehan 1979), which may highlight the balancing of asymmetries or client-centeredness (Jacknick 2011). This is further supported by Colin's interruptions of PO's story (lines 12, 16), which may be unorthodox for a client, and his skillful job of "being doing" a social worker, which culminates in an offer of a resolution to PO's story.

Delicacy helps shape both PO's story and Colin's empathetic response. In line 16, Colin uses a soft voice, indexing the social working here as delicate. This response mirrors PO's response to one of Colin's earlier narratives (not in the excerpt). Colin's laugh (line 19) is a bid for affiliation paired with an encouragement for PO to evaluate her own progress, which she acknowledges in her turn with a laugh that solidifies their affiliative stance. They continue to display alignment across the rest of the excerpt. All of these follow up questions and responses invoke the social work frame, as they are outside of game play.

Importantly, the forensic frame is briefly acknowledged within the social work frame when PO takes notes after their interaction (line 28). Taking the opportunity to psycho-educate Colin, PO shows how aging helps one understand their inner world (lines 25–26). Colin, in his next turn, attributes aging and time to richer, deeper thinking, verbalizing the social work ideal of self-reflection. It is worthwhile to note that Colin achieves this while "doing being" the social worker and discussing a topic initiated by PO.

In the following two excerpts the roles remain reversed, but in these cases both participants seem to hint at the strangeness of the situation.

(5)

- 1 C: Oh hang on, I still need to write it down.
- 2 PO: Oh yeah.
- 3 C: ° Yeah you can go ahead already though, you know°.
- 4 PO: Really, am I?
- 5 C: Sure ((laugh). (1.0) Green, isn't it?

Colin marks equality by first halting game play (line 1) and then giving PO-C permission to continue the game, whilst he makes a note (line 3). His note-taking engages the game frame as does his informal register. However, his quiet voice in line 3 highlights the delicacy either of making an ironic comment or in doing-being a social worker. Colin's ironic statement gives PO-C permission to continue game play, which is permissible in the game frame but far less common in the social work frame. The PO's reaction (line 4) highlights her orientation to Colin's invitation as ironic given their roles in the forensic and social work frames, and Colin's laugh (line 5) may indicate, following Gordon (2002), an awareness of the role reversal as established by the game frame, that when viewed from the social work frame is atypical and ironic. This kind of humor was likewise found in communication simulation, in which participants compared the artificial and 'real' situations (Stokoe 2013).

The final excerpt suggests that the juvenile is fully aware of the dynamics of playing the game in this context.

(6)

- 1 PO: Will I have a go?
- 2 C: If you're done asking questions, sure ((smile))
- 3 PO: ((laugh)) You're cheeky enough, aren't you.

PO-C indicates a topic change using the word "go" which indexes a turn in the game frame. Colin gives an ironic comment on PO's behavior, which refers to her function in the social work frame. His smile and utterance here may be a meta-comment on playing the game as a strategy for getting disclosures, but it may also function to soften a potentially face-threatening comment and affiliate with PO (Haakana 2010). His smile is also an invitation to laugh, which PO-C takes up in line 3 along with an evaluation of her own, softened by their mutual affiliation. Using irony, Colin showed his awareness of the social work/probation character of the game conversations, noting that he can see through the façade of the game frame.

4 Discussion and conclusion

How do these interactions function? The game enables the POs to provide a model for disclosure, while the disclosure from the clients is not as forthcoming as desired; the clients ultimately do demonstrate compliance in game participation, while showing emotional competence through “doing being” the social worker.

The game ‘showing one’s card’ leads to a specific kind of communication. While intended for eliciting players’ disclosures, the game is a type of fishing, a ‘formalized’ return of questions and eliciting remarks about the inner world of the players in order to get more information about that (Pomerantz 1980). By playing the game the professionals avoid getting directly involved in asking hard-to-answer questions, displacing the difficulty of the posing pointed questions to the impartial game cards.

For the PO’s perspective, social work disclosure is part of game play, and the game allows for modeling of both friendly game play and social work (e.g. disclosure, displays of empathy and compassion, social learning, etc.), often using delicacy to accomplish these ends. From the juvenile’s perspective, the game appears to balance traditional, goal-oriented, interactional asymmetries that are common in social work. Beyond flipping pre-allocated turns, the juveniles may also comment on the PO’s personal stories, make jokes, tease, and display empathy. The latter half of our analysis highlights juveniles’ acknowledgement of that role shift. We argue that the game enables participants to, at times, accomplish a façade of role reversal and conversational symmetry. We acknowledge, however, that the roles were not actually reversed nor were the asymmetries really made symmetrical. Roles appeared to be reversed such that flouting that reversal was marked as humorous or was otherwise commented by a meta-remark identifying awareness of the social work frame.

The game frame allowed the clients to appear cooperative, while resisting disclosure during their turn. The role reversal may also be seen as a way of being uncooperative in a cooperative way (Nijnatten 2013). As Atkins et al. (2016: 7) suggest:

[T]alk is always a performance in context and in simulations, the role-playing client, the candidate and the examiner all have to work hard to maintain the illusion. Candidates who can handle the social and linguistic complexity of this somewhat artificial, standardized situation score highly – yet what is being assessed is not real communication but the ability to voice a credible appearance of such communication.

The card game introduces an artificial context to influence the performance of the social work/probation frame. In this unique social work context and more

generic ones, the need to look compliant, to appear credible in performing and “doing” clienting, is essential to the juvenile’s success. As the juvenile is able to perform communicatively in this game performance, while also disclosing just enough, he successfully performs his role in the game without introducing damaging information that may condemn him in court.

From an ethical perspective, we were concerned that the hybridized frames (Sarangi and Roberts 1999; Sarangi 2011) might obscure the forensic and social work aims of the game. Through the game, a “third object” (Winnicott 1964/1977) is introduced, attracting the participants’ attention. The game frame functions as a “magic circle” (Huizenga 1944) in which the participants have different interactional rules (e.g. the juveniles can comment on the social worker’s experiences and tease her). Blended frames were created by participants, particularly when reformulating social work questions into game-specific expressions, but also when participants commented on the strategies of the game for social work aims. This supports Gordon’s (2009) conclusion that intertextuality plays an important role in reframing.

However, importantly, from a social work perspective, the game was not successful in achieving its aims of encouraging client disclosure of personal background—including sensitive issues relating to the clients’ offense history—and emotions. This, fortunately, means that clients were not duped into disclosing by the friendly playfulness of the game. Moreover, while the juveniles do not divulge many personal details about their offenses, they do engage in cooperative talk, in which they show something of their inner world. Self-disclosure may be seen by the POs as openness about (private) information, but equally important is that speakers demonstrate some openness about themselves. The fact that they are able to be so friendly and conversational with the POs suggests some achievement of the game frame.

Given ethical considerations, what may be required is a prefacing of the game, by the PO, that explains how the game may impact the juvenile in court, encouraging the juvenile not to incriminate himself/herself but instead to use the game to become comfortable having conversations, more generally, without the aim of disclosing personal details about the juvenile’s offense.

The client is made aware in prior meetings that his/her disclosures can be used against them in court. Given the overall lack of disclosure, even with the game, we suspect that the forensic frame is ever-present. It is perhaps awareness of the forensic frame that constrains client disclosure in the social work frame (and in spite of the game frame) though we cannot be sure. We consider the discursive delicacy utilized in negotiating social work and game frames, with the

understanding that given the probationary context, a larger frame – a forensic frame – most likely contextualizes overall disclosure.

Finally, the game often achieves a kind of symmetry between professionals and clients. Asymmetry in institutional interactions may be a problematic feature if the interactions are intended to be client-centered (Butler et al. 2010). The shift in roles for the initiation-response-evaluation sequence has been attributed in the literature to a reversal or equality of power relations in the interaction (Jacknick 2011; Mehan 1979). Any real reversal in power is what Bakhtin (1929, 1941) might call *carnivalesque*, a temporary reversal or displacement of norms, allowing for momentary freedom and frivolity. However, the fact that space is created for this kind of expression in a juvenile probation context at all is useful though, as we suggested before, juveniles should be made aware of what kinds of disclosure can be incriminated or negatively assessed. The reversal of power, albeit temporary, is an achievement of the game notwithstanding, making it perhaps worth playing despite the shallowness of juvenile disclosure. Given the game's original audience (e.g. children with autism and other psychiatric disorders), the assumption that the game would lead to rich disclosure in a criminal context is perhaps both too optimistic and unethical. Nevertheless, the game offers a new paradigm for achieving a kind of productive social work through interaction, albeit not the expected one.

Appendix

Transcription Conventions (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008)

(1.8)	Pause. The number represents duration of the pause in seconds, to one decimal place. A pause of less than 0.2 seconds is marked by (.)
[]	Overlap with a portion of another speaker's utterance.
=	Latch: no time lapse between two utterances, used when a second speaker begins their utterance just at the moment when the first speaker finishes
::	Extended sound
(hm, hh)	Onomatopoeic representations of the audible exhalation of air
.hh	Audible inhalation of ai. The more h's, the longer the in-breath.
?	Rising intonation.
.	Falling intonation.
,	Continuation of tone.
-	Arupt cut off, speaker stops speaking suddenly.
↕	Sharply rising or falling intonation. The arrow is placed just before the syllable in which the change in intonation occurs.

<u>Under</u>	Speaker emphasis on the underlined portion of the word.
CAPS	Higher volume than the speaker's normal volume.
°	Utterance is much softer than the normal speech of the speaker. This symbol will appear at the beginning and at the end of the utterance in question.
> <, < >	Noticeably faster (>faster talk<), or slower (<slower talk>) than the surrounding talk.
(would)	Transcriber has guessed as to what was said, because it was indecipherable on the tape. If the transcriber was unable to guess what was said, nothing appears within the parentheses.
(XXXX)	Indistinguishable speech

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