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## ***INSISTO RECTOR: PROVOCATIVE PLAY FOR SERIOUS LEADERSHIP LEARNING***

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### **Abstract**

This article explores how leadership educators can invite provocative play—broadly conceived to include existential struggle—into learning as a provocative resource. Further, this article will explore the pedagogical significance and transformative potential of well-crafted games that surface from the hidden conations and *habitus* frameworks of participants. Once revealed in reflexive action, default patterns of conation and *habitus* can be critically engaged to make room for new learning that goes to the core of identity, disrupts default patterns, and allows leadership reflexes to be reconditioned for more faithful effectiveness. Such an approach will challenge traditional theological education; implications for leadership pedagogy will be suggested.

### **Introduction**

We begin with an episode that is likely familiar. The scene opens with a pastor walking into a church council meeting. It might be called a vestry or a session or a council of elders, but it is a gathering of those authorized to lead a local church. The pastor enters the room, greeting those with whom she feels an alliance and deftly avoiding those who have challenged and opposed her. As she takes her seat at the head of the table, she displays a calculated air of confidence, but within, she is a jumble of conflicting emotions. Calling the meeting to order with a prayer for openness to God's will, the council sets about

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its business predictably, with everyone playing tacitly ascribed roles and reciting lines from invisible scripts.

When the time for “new business” arrives, the pastor shuffles papers in front of her, gathers herself, and launches into a proposal for a new ministry that she believes will revitalize the congregation. She has cultivated support for this presentation by talking individually with supportive members of the council. But right on cue, she is interrupted by her arch nemesis, who has a prescient ability to discern weak links and rend them asunder, shattering every proposal into shards of ill will. All eyes turn slowly toward the pastor, in whom red-hot fury and abject shame vie for expression. Sides are drawn, weapons are chosen; the game morphs into battle. Whatever comes next comes from within.

### **Leadership is an Inside Job**

Leadership is exercised not only at the level of explicit principle and strategy, but also at the deeper levels of consciousness, habit, desire, hope, and fear. In many respects, these deeper levels, the tacit substrata of personhood, determine the exercise of leadership more than we know or want to admit. In the example above, the pastor walked into the council meeting ready to exercise decisive leadership, but along the way her conscious strategies were subverted by her own motivations, habits, and dispositions of which she was little aware. Several instances can be identified: the pastor entered the room in a way that reified persistent divisions. Preparing for the ministry proposal, she talked only to people who would be supportive, and she did not adequately anticipate criticism, even though she knew it would be forthcoming. Not only was the pastor inattentive to determinative traits within herself, but she was also seemingly unaware of the contextual factors—culture, history, relationship patterns, or other structural/systemic constraints—in which the episode took place and gained its meaning. The main determinative factors play out under the surface of

awareness, much like the most consequential part of an iceberg is exactly that which cannot be seen.

In order to teach leadership development, we need to gain access to the tacit substrata of personality and context. But, most of our educational efforts are oriented to the most obvious and superficial levels: the cognitive and volitional. How might we gain access to deeply embedded and hidden attitudes, beliefs, motivations, habits, conventions, and structures? How might we expose them, rendering them explicit, so that persons can become more aware of them and thus have greater choice over them? Because greater awareness yields greater potential for more intentional and effective action, how can leadership education make the implicit explicit? How can we raise the tacit to focal awareness?

Addressing this problem of education directly, such as through pedagogies of didactic instruction, is much like trying to find cockroaches by turning on the light. They want to remain hidden; they like the dark. In the same way, the tacit dimension is repelled by light; it does not like to be confronted directly. It hears our approach from far away and scurries back further into the shadows. In order to “un-conceal” the deepest part of ourselves,<sup>1</sup> we need to resort to a kind of trickery, to expose our truest self through surprise to reveal itself. To get this result, our teaching/learning method needs to be equal to the task: penetrating past cognitive and ego defenses to the heart of the matter.

We propose that leadership learning would be greatly enhanced through pedagogies of play. Why play with something as serious as leadership? Through experimenting with leadership education, we have come to the conclusion that the most effective education is transformational, and transformation is very serious indeed. We are using the word “transformation” in a very specific sense that should be distinguished from the conventional reference to a particularly momentous

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Wrathall, “Unconcealment” in *A Companion to Heidegger*, eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 337-357.

change. Transformational education transforms the primary axioms of consciousness by addressing the tacit substructures of personality and context. The primary objective is greater integration of otherwise disparate and fragmented elements. But that objective is best accomplished playfully, through an indirect method. Thus, we submit that the transformative potential of education is provoked through a playful pedagogy.

Greater integration within consciousness yields the potential for less inner contradiction, less self-subversion, and thereby, much greater effectiveness. For example, in the episode above, we would argue that transformative leadership education would have helped the pastor to unearth and confront self-defeating tendencies, to reinforce relational antagonisms, and to avoid critically examining her proposals. In order to lay bare this view, this essay will explore the main terms—play, provocation, and transformation—and it will describe one particularly successful example of provocative play. Our hope is that this essay will help persons concerned with leadership development (within themselves and others) identify how they might play their way transformatively into a kind of leadership that is congruent with their core values and community leadership opportunity.

### **Leadership Games: First Impressions, Lasting Impressions**

Play is an anthropological universal. Everyone does it. Everyone is formed by it. Dubbing the matter *Homo Ludens*, “Man, The Player,” Johan Huizinga explores those universal impulses from which people *must* play games. Masculine reference to all of humanity notwithstanding, Huizinga’s foundational assumption in *Homo Ludens* is hardly worth debating: anthropologists find the play ethic in some form or other in every culture on earth.<sup>2</sup> In this discussion, however, we extend the assumption into practical territory that might be a bit

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<sup>2</sup> Stephen A. Grunlan and Marvin K. Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979).

more debatable. It is this: leadership can be learned,<sup>3</sup> at least its spiritual seriousness provoked, through play.

Cultural models of “leadershiping” —a made-up word to capture the tendency to “en-role”<sup>4</sup> into leadership acts, scripts, and dramas at least in temporary, but conatively imprinting<sup>5</sup> ways—in play are easily found. Reflecting on children’s playground games in different parts of the world,<sup>6</sup> it is easy to see how socialization and cultural values are enacted, mimicked, explored, and reinforced. These kinds of movement games function to provide important social learning information and benefits in societies where they are played.<sup>7</sup> A favorite game of Dinka children in Sudan is played in rivers and lakes. Submersed in the water up to their armpits, they take turns being a “little buffalo” while their friends beat the splashing surface with open palms chanting: *“The diviner of that day, from where did he come? The diviner of the Nyandeeng’s Mother, is that why my mother must die? My little buffalo, rest in peace, mankind is passing on.”* Not only is the game joyous and active, but it includes the functional aspect of bathing and deals with the socio-cultural questions of life and death.

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<sup>3</sup> We will not rehearse here whether leadership can be learned; whether it is merely “caught rather than taught.” See Russell West, “A Reflex Model of Leadership Development: A Concept Paper.” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, Spring and Fall, Vols. 3/1 and 3/2 (2004), 173-220.

<sup>4</sup> Erving Goffman, *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Press, 1959).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 9. Conation refers to the deep substratum of knowledge, affections, and will that together support cognition and give human activity a rational and intentional direction. According to Christian educator and practical theologian, Thomas Groome, conation is “what is realized when the whole ontic being of ‘agent-subjects-in-relationship’ is actively engaged to consciously know, desire, and do what is more humanizing and life-giving (i.e., “true”) for all.”

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.gameskidsplay.com> (accessed on August 25, 2012). Geof Nieboer has indexed a ready-to-use compilation of “kids games” that may be representative of U.S. childhood socialization games. He has done so since May 14, 1995. He attributes the collection of an additional 250 games to Darren Gerson. Gerson’s list is intentionally inclusive of an international spectrum of childhood gaming experiences.

<sup>7</sup> Grunlan and Mayers, *Cultural Anthropology*, 1979.

Self-concept, self-efficacy, emotional competence, inclusion/exclusion, gendering, and power relations<sup>8</sup> may also be implied in such social movement games.<sup>9</sup> While games exist for the sake of the gamer's own intrinsic enjoyment of playing, learning is a socializing by-product.

A set of games can be identified which illustrate the socializing phenomenon in matters of leadership. While no one game has the capacity to project the full array of culturally-endorsed implicit theories of leadership,<sup>10</sup> any few may grant a glimpse into those values, ethics, and biases which are persistent in cultural enactment. One such game involves forming a single file line to "follow the leader," or *insisto rector*. It shows up in other childhood games, too, such as "Simon Says," in which one person gets on a chair in front of peers and gives benign orders that test quick-following abilities. The commands sort people into those who have listened for the nearly-magical "command of execution" in the form of "Simon Says..., touch your nose," and those who just follow any old commands, such as "Touch your nose!" (without Simon's permission-giving command of execution). "Mother May I," "Red Light/Green Light," and "What Time Is It Mr. Wolf?" are all examples of the simple "leader/follower" role-play game. While it is only "a game," it is easy to surmise the absolutizing effect on the little leader's self and social ordering concepts from these mimicking dances: "There are leaders and there are followers; and somehow (by the fates, by God, by my preening brilliance) I have become part of the leader group, the power class. Other people will do as *I* imagine, design, bid, and command!"

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<sup>8</sup> Jennifer Jenson and Suzanne de Castell, "Gender, Simulation, and Gaming: Research Review and Redirections." *Simulation & Gaming* 41 (December 1, 2010): 898-920.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Bandura, *Self-efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Den Hartog, Robert House, Paul Hanges, and Peter Dorfman, "Emics and Etics of Culturally-Endorsed Implicit Leadership Theories: Are Attributes of Charismatic/Transformational Leadership Universally Endorsed?" *Knowledge@Wharton*, (January 01, 1999).

The imprints from these seemingly benign games just might suggest to the little learner a ready-for-life model of leadership: who leads (a solo artist whom fate chose to lead the playground conquests), how to lead (power-absolute command and coercion mechanisms), from where to lead (symbolically out in front, with commanding voice and view), and the resources of leadership (command-able people who submissively comply with the rules of the game into which they find themselves being socialized through a capricious system of rewards or delays).

Everyone, leader and follower alike, is conditioned to respond according to the deeply embedded scripts implied by such dyadic roles. Each and all develop and internalize a tacit framework of identity/agency, and a patterned *habitus*, or “way of life,”<sup>11</sup> based on repetitive and indoctrinating scripts. Reflexive thinking/action (called ‘reflexes’) for role-based, social participation in the leadership process flows from this tacit/implicit framework. It is here, the hidden level of reflexes and the core *habitus*, from which they generate an opportunity for formative, even transformative leadership learning that is considered not only possible, but desirable.<sup>12</sup>

To be sure, the models of leadership implied and advanced by these schoolyard games, and even other more sophisticated gaming modalities,<sup>13</sup> are fraught with

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<sup>11</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1977), 214. *Habitus* is characterized by Pierre Bourdieu as the “set of dispositions (habitual ways of being and behaving, with a repertoire of pre-dispositions, tendencies, propensities and inclinations, all shaped by structures and previous actions) which structure and generate practices and representations.”

<sup>12</sup> Russell W. West, “A Reflex Model of Leadership Development: a concept paper.” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, Vol. 3, No 1 and No. 2, Spring (2004) and Fall (2004).

<sup>13</sup> See: <http://www.seriousgames.org> (accessed on August 25, 2012). Since 2002, SeriousGames.Org has hosted the “Serious Games Initiative.” This group “is focused on uses for games in exploring management and leadership challenges facing the public sector.” Key players in this international clearing house for non-entertainment social uses of gaming practice and technologies include: Serious Gaming Institute, Games and Learning Alliance, SimAULA,

serious socio-spiritual implications. The fact of such game, and the persistence of similar games to it in cultures the world-over, renders no validation to the model of leadership it displays. If anything, the game makes explicit what might have been implicit before the game was enacted. This surfacing of internal social constructs, whether they be worthy of acceptance, refinement, critique or rejection, offers to the watchful leadership educator the raw material for leadership learning and debriefing.<sup>14</sup>

### Playing at Work

Not a few scholarly writers have latched onto *play* as a topic of scholarly inquiry.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, from a play perspective, the scholars seem to require making alterations that make clear it is not mere child's play in which they are interested, with words like "adult play,"<sup>16</sup> or "serious play."<sup>17</sup> The dismissive associations with frivolity and these industrial associations with non-productivity are hard to escape.<sup>18</sup> This scholarly practice with the rhetoric of play illustrates one of its qualities as a problematic construct; play is fundamentally intangible when we begin to *work* with it as a subject of inquiry and constructive application. We cease playing, and begin to work. We find that play itself ceases to play by the rules

Adaptive Learning via Intuitive/Interactive Collaborative and Emotional Systems (ALICE), EduGameLab and Innovative Networks Supporting People Who Investigate Research Environments and Spaces (INSPIRES).

<sup>14</sup> David Crookall, "Serious Games, Debriefing, and Simulation/Gaming as a Discipline." *Simulation Gaming*, vol. 41 no. 6 (December 2010), 898-92.

<sup>15</sup> Anthony D. Pellegrini, ed. *The Future of Play Theory: A Multidisciplinary Inquiry into the Contributions of Brian Sutton-Smith* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995)

<sup>16</sup> John H. Kerr and Michael J. Apter, eds., *Adult Play: A Reversal Theory Approach* (Rockland, MA: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> Lloyd Rieber, "Designing Learning Environments that Excite Serious Play" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education, Melbourne, Australia. December 2001); B. Sutton-Smith (1995).

<sup>18</sup> Anthony D. Pellegrini, "Conclusion: The Persuasive Rhetorics of Play," in *Future of Play Theory*, 1995.



of cognitive control. In his foundational study of play, *The Ambiguity of Play*, Brian Sutton-Smith makes this very observation fundamental to his treatment of the subject: “We all play occasionally, and we all know what playing feels like. But when it comes to making theoretical statements about what play is, we fall into silliness. There is little agreement among us, and much ambiguity.”<sup>19</sup>

Experiences that are deeply imprinting—that form the conative core of *habitus*, such as military field preparation, public safety training, flight procedure and communication training, and even driver education—are characterized by several tendencies. These tendencies have their analogues in a wide array of theoretical interdisciplinary inquiries in fields such as philosophy, anthropology, sociology, education, communication, cognitive psychological development, organizational development, and most notably, game construct design. Some of play’s tendencies, from the perspectives of interdisciplinary studies, are offered here:

- Play tends to feature “time out of time” liminality, episodic discontinuities, anti-structure, and an emergent *communitas*, which anthropologists refer to as *ritual process*, observable in “rite of passage” traditional practices.<sup>20</sup>
- Play tends to feature forms of “generative dissonance,” an essential suspension with what is known, conventional, technically predictable, and commensurate with former steady states.<sup>21</sup> It anticipates an alternative and thought-to-be more satisfying (subjective) reality. The tension between (objective) “reality” and a hoped-for future generates a sense of urgency and drama.<sup>22</sup> It intensifies passion,

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<sup>19</sup> Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine, 1969).

<sup>21</sup> Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991).

<sup>22</sup> J.B. Black, T.J. Turner, and G.H. Bower, “Point of View in Narrative Comprehension, Memory, and Production.” *Journal of Verbal Learning and*

focuses attention, and orients behavior to resolve the tension.<sup>23</sup>

- Play tends to imply a profile of the ideal traits and techniques of performance. These may be standards of mastery, standards of mediocrity, and standards of marginality. These standards may imply winners/losers, insiders/outsideers, novices/experts, competition/collaboration, and comparison/cooperation.<sup>24</sup> Play creates its own games, establishes the field of operations with its accompanying conventions, rules, and goals.
- Play tends to expect behavior-based demonstrations of ingenuity, situational awareness,<sup>25</sup> and competence (often after temporary or skilled incompetence or after a period of despair).<sup>26</sup>

*Verbal Behavior* 18, (1979) 187-198; J.B. Black, "Imaginary Worlds," in M.A. Gluck, J.R. Anderson and S.M. Kosslyn, eds., *Memory and Mind* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2007); Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Freed Bales, *Personality and Interpersonal Behavior* (NY: Holt, 1980); E.G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 58 (1972): 396-407; Barrett, L.F. & Lindquist, K.A., "The Embodiment of Emotion" in Gun R. Semin and Eliot R. Smith, eds., *Embodied Grounding: Social, Cognitive, Affective, and Neuroscientific Approaches* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Gallese V., "Embodied Simulation: From Neurons to Phenomenal Experience." *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 4 (2005): 23-48; C.L. Fadjjo, M.P. Lu, J. B. Black., "Instructional Embodiment and Video Game Programming in an after School Program" (Presented at Ed-Media: World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia & Telecommunications in Honolulu, Hawaii, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Russell W. West, "A Reflex Model of Leadership Development," (2004), 214; Sharon Johnson and Galen Smith, "Perspectives on Competition - Christian and Otherwise" (unpublished, Cedarville University, 2005); Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: A Case Against Competition* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> Mica R. Endsley and Daniel J. Garland, eds., *Situation Awareness Analysis and Measurement* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000)

<sup>26</sup> Chris Argyris, "Skilled Incompetence." *Harvard Business Review of Effective Communication* (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press, 1986); A. Williams, L. Hughes and B. Simon, "Propinquity: Exploring Embodied Gameplay" (Presented at *UbiComp'10*, September 26-29, 2010, Copenhagen, Denmark).

- Play tends to rely on technical layers of tasks; it is performance-driven with measurable and quantifiable results. But it also relies on a reconfiguration of technical scripts in novel and adaptive ways.<sup>27</sup>
- Play tends to generate new and imaginative maze-way solutions to recurrent challenges, threats, situations, or problems that when applied incrementally, allow a new and revitalizing order to emerge from chaos, discontinuity, and perceived powerlessness.<sup>28</sup>
- Play tends toward community. Challenging games increase pressure on the cognitive capacity of a single individual, but distribute pressure when additional human capability is added to the standard-seeking process and outcome.<sup>29</sup>

In short, human play operates by means of its own intrinsic motivation, which is greater than any material interest or extrinsic motivation. Play is existentially constructive and creative: it creates a sense of freedom by suspending space and time to create its own artificial play times and playgrounds. Within that constructed environment, play operates then, by its own principles

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<sup>27</sup> Lloyd Rieber, "Designing Learning Environments that Excite Serious Play" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education, Melbourne, Australia, December, 2001); Greta Fein, "Pretend Play: Creativity and Consciousness," in Deitmar Görlitz, and Joachim Wohlwill, eds., *Curiosity, Imagination and Play* (Hillsdale, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements." *American Anthropologist* 58(2) (1956): 264-281; James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard Publishers, 1989) 32, 68. In the transformational theory of Loder, imagination is necessary for transformation. Within his five stage transformational process, the third stage has to do with a "constructive act of the imagination"; "At the center of transformational knowing in science, esthetics, or therapy, the imaginative, constructive insight or vision is an undoing of nothingness; it is a proximate form of the ultimate manifestation of 'the Holy' in revelation."

<sup>29</sup> Linda Moerschell, "The Intersection of Punctuated Equilibrium and Leadership Emergence within the Framework of Naturalistic Decision Making" (Ph.D. Dissertation Manuscript. Applied Management and Decision Sciences, Walden University, November, 2008).

and rules, thereby challenging assumed conventions. The deeper into the tacit substructure a challenge penetrates, the greater the transformative potential for learners. As the tacit axioms of ideology and behavior surface in consciousness, the more available they are to self-conscious acceptance, interrogation, revision, and rejection.

These principles can be identified within education and learning's most thorough taxonomical explorations: Jack Mezirow's, "Transformational Learning," Martin Fishbein's "Theory of Reasoned Action" (or alternatively named "Theory of Behavioral Intention"), Icek Ajzen's "Theory of Planned Behavior," Lev Vgotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development," or James Loder's "Transformational Moment." These tendencies accord well with experiential practices in learning, which are seldom associated with a particular theorist, but rather arise from an amalgamation of face validity theories and best practices, such as "Situated Learning," "Problem-Based Learning," and "Action-Reflection Learning" (or "Action Learning"). These tendencies map well on a theory-building project in which co-author Russell West is engaged and has dubbed "Leadership Reflex Theory."<sup>30</sup> These tendencies can be observed routinely in the ordinary acts of play. It is here that *provocative play* may offer an assist to theological leadership formation processes, whether the formation is hosted in a church, in the community, or at the seminary.

### **Provocative Play for Leadership Learning**

What is "provocative play?" Without a doubt, the concept of "provocation" can be problematic. The semantic range of this word extends from the coercive use of power and reward on one end of a continuum, to a socially benign or even sacred use of the concept, derived from its Latin roots, *pro vocation*, "to call forth, call out." As designers of learning, we cannot afford to be naïve

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<sup>30</sup> Russell W. West, "A Reflex Model of Leadership Development: A Concept Paper," *Journal of Religious Leadership* (2004): 173-220.

about the power dynamics involved in the teaching-learning relationship. It is far too easy to inadvertently sponsor person-denying, even psychologically violent, learning contexts in the name of teacher privilege and responsibility. Merely calling learning “play” is not enough. Designers must be self-consciously and intentionally serious about preserving and recognizing the intrinsic power of play participants before, during, and after play.<sup>31</sup> The players must be truly free to play, not become playthings. Play must not devolve into work in disguise. Teacher-designers are at their best when they are exerting their power to design conditions that emancipate players to be themselves, let delight rise, promote spaces safe enough for appropriate self-unconsciousness/self-forgetfulness to emerge.<sup>32</sup> Often, however, the classroom, by its very nature, has ceased long ago to be a playground for many participants. Through no fault of their own, participants stopped playing at school when they could no longer exert control, figure out the scoring system, stop the threats, or combat the “fouls.” The boundary-keeping rules were ignored. In this respect, play is an ethically serious business in and beyond the educational context.

On the other end of the provocation spectrum, we have the imagery of calling forth. It is here that the spiritual seriousness of play becomes our focus. With a theologically cultivated vision of the person’s *habitus* (which is not merely cognitive resource development), as

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<sup>31</sup> A literature is coalescing around “debriefing” as the critical ingredient that separates trivial play from “serious play.” Although scholars require the element of video technology as an essential of their view of “serious play,” given the guild’s particular focus on the legitimization on the social value of video gaming, David Cockrall insists the critical ingredient that qualifies gaming as “serious” is the presence of debriefing that facilitates the generalizing of knowledge and learning beyond the immediate experience of the game itself. This insistence finds broad support in the mounting literature among experiential educators around the under-utilized use of debriefing in learning contexts.

<sup>32</sup> Matthew Galliot and Brandon Schmeichel, “Is Implicit Self-esteem Really Unconscious?” *Journal of the Null Hypothesis*. JASNH. Vol 3, No. 3 (2006).

the locus of educational and spiritual formation, we can imagine a very different use of the classroom opportunity. Most subjects are pursued with a cognitive resource development vision. Under this modality, the learning of information—facts, concepts, dates, names, lists, propositions, procedures, for example—or cognitive recall is the locus of the educational strategy. This strategy assumes that cognition is uniformly productive in the context of occupational and situational performance. It assumes, for example, that the mastery of propositional theological schemes disposes a learner to producing apt and theologically congruent ethical behavior when a social situation demands. And for some learners this may be the case. However, it is not necessarily so.

A reliable principle of design that asserts: ‘people will retain the habits that have served them in the past until something more satisfying displaces these,’ is so broadly experienced as to be axiomatic. Anaïs Nin is attributed with the observation: “And the day came when the pain it took to remain a tight bud became greater than the pain it took to blossom.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, when persons are confronted with the workability of their present perceptions, propositions, and practices, and are offered a more effectual way of being true to—or realizing themselves—conditions for learning are made possible. In this way, something from deep within a person's *habitus* may be revealed and the person is thus able to become aware of and more intentional about developing healthy, life-giving habits. This is what it means to provoke in a way that is worthy of both the educational enterprise and the latent power for self-transcendence that serious leadership learning can provide. We are proposing that the intentional sponsoring of those play conditions, in the leadership learning context, is a legitimate and even responsible use of a leadership

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<sup>33</sup> Although the reference's source is obscured by translation, and at times the attribution is debated, Nin observed poetically in *Cities of the Interior*, p. 180, in *Children of the albatross* (1947), the phenomenon of the right time for blossoming.

educator's power and opportunity. This is provocative play for serious leadership learning.

With the above tendencies serving as a concept cloud for inquiry, and learning theories as a warrant for scholarly sense-making, we theorize that *play*, particularly *provocative* play, is a fitting context, process, and practice within durable leadership education which aims for transformation within participants. Rather than offer a conclusive treatment of provocative play as a transformative leadership education strategy, we propose another way. In the following section, we recount one of the many games developed by a member of the authoring team for teaching leadership. This is not the only game, nor the best of its type. A burgeoning industry and sub-culture of pervasive, location-based, augmented reality, technology-assisted, simulated, serious gaming is emerging and remains quite accessible through simple web searching.<sup>34</sup> Rather, it is offered so readers' imaginations will be stimulated to see through the model, and hopefully be inspired for their own provocative play-making.

### Case Study in Provocative Play - Get the King

"Get the King" is a technology-assisted,<sup>35</sup> location-based,<sup>36</sup> augmented-reality game.<sup>37</sup> While each of these terms requires technical definitions to be useful, in short,

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<sup>34</sup> Examples include: Ronald Azuma, "A Survey of Augmented Reality." *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments* 6, 4 (August, 1997): 355-385; Markus Montola, Jaakko Stenros, and Annika Waern, *Pervasive Games: Theory and Design: Experiences on the Boundary Between Life and Play*. (Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufman Press, 2009); Paul Baron, "Location-based Mobile Phone Games." *Aka.me* (blog) <http://blog.aka.me/location-based-mobile-phone-games> (accessed on August 25, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Nikolaos Avouris, Nikoleta Yiannoutsou, "A Review of Mobile Location-Based Games for Learning Across Physical and Virtual Spaces." *Journal of Universal Computer Science* 18 (2012).

<sup>36</sup> Sonke Bullerdiek, "Design and Evaluation of Pervasive Games" (Thesis, University of Lubek, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Adriana de Souza e Silva and Girlie Delacruz, "Hybrid Reality Games Reframed Potential Uses in Educational Contexts." *Games and Culture* 1 (3), (July 2006): 231-251.

it is a scavenger hunt game. The game has been played experimentally as a learning resource more than ten times in various settings.<sup>38</sup> Using a card deck scoring system—for example Aces, Kings, Queens, and Jacks are all royals and are equal to ten points each—participants explore a location with instructions to complete a series of point-based interviews. Teams are formed, no more than four, according to the four card suits, e.g., clubs, diamonds, hearts, and spades. Each team is tasked with achieving as many interviews as possible, in four prescribed point-gaining levels. The four levels are *Tops* (Aces, Kings, Queens, Jacks cards), *Middles* (10-8 cards), *Bottoms* (7-5 cards), and *Clients* (5-2 cards).<sup>39</sup> After participants have been gathered, given instructions, and then sent to their respective “playgrounds” to begin interviews, a series of sequenced broadcast messages are sent to them via texting. Cell numbers, with texting capability, are collected prior to game play. Game play is based around the team-based effort of collecting as many video interviews from as many of the four category levels as possible in the time allotted for game play. Game play may last an hour, for the period of a class session, or it

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<sup>38</sup> The game has been “played” with mid-career executive doctoral students in Colorado Springs (August 2010), twice in Southern California (October 2010; October 2011), as a city-wide experiment (March 2012, Nicholasville, Kentucky), as a four-team experiment spread across the four time zones of the United States (*Academy of Religious Leadership*, April 2012), and as a campus-wide experiment using the Arisgame.com iPhone application as a technology-assisted version of the game (Asbury Seminary, Wilmore, KY, May 2012). In the last iteration, game participants formed a legacy team to stabilize the web/iPhone application for usability by leadership education adopters on campuses beyond their own. Feedback has been enthusiastic.

<sup>39</sup> The four-level vocabulary is derived from Barry Oshry’s work on power within organizational systems. For leadership education purposes, Oshry’s system’s thinking model carries a face validity that is immediately useful in offering a mental model for rapid introduction of complex social constructs pertaining to leadership, power, community, and social orders as well as ethical attributions of human value and worth. When time is limited, participants are invited to pre-read “Total System Power,” an article by Oshry. In a semester-length course, consider: Barry Oshry, *Seeing Systems: Unlocking the Systems of Organizational Life* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1996).



may be designed to last over several days, throughout a retreat or field trip.

It is possible to fold into the gameplay “wildcards,” e.g., the jokers. Use of the joker allows the game master to challenge each team to additional team-building/team-testing feats, to force a reckoning with unforeseeable ambiguities, or to challenge the cognitive load of participants already burdened with a complex array of team-based tasks. These interjections are introduced through use of text instructions to designated team members, making use of cell phones. In the “Joker’s Round,” participants are given opportunity to score additional points, or to have existing points multiplied. In most cases, these feats are timed and require the group that finishes first to post the evidence of their completion to the game master’s text number, to call a supplied phone number, or to arrive at a specific designation in a point-scoring timed fashion. In all cases, the tasks have a timed and embodied quality requiring participants to divide their attention from the primary task as a team and to deliver a coordinated achievement with embodied demonstration. Some tasks include recruiting strangers to sing a chorus of the national anthem or happy birthday song or to provide food or services to an observed and underserved person they might (be caused to) encounter through their location-based gaming enterprise.

When the declared time for the game elapses, all teams are notified. Usually they are instructed to converge at a pre-arranged rallying point before leaving for their various locations or a broadcast text message notifies them of a near and convenient meeting place. A winner is declared at the point that the game play is concluded, and all scores are tallied. In one variation of the game, the group must produce a video of the interviews and present their efforts to peers, who then are offered an opportunity to vote on which team best achieved the interview-based learning objectives of the game.

This is the game. Its rules are clear. Its point-scoring process is transparent. The path to progress is objective

and measurable: get enough of the right kind of interviews on video to lead the scoreboard. The playmates, playground, and playtime are all supplied to remove enough ambiguity so that a shared structural game construct coheres. But this *game* is not *the* game, or at least it is not the only game in play.

This game “Get the King” is actually designed to surface observable leadership reflexes from team members immersed in the task group. Within these observables, one can detect the inner workings of the tacit dimension. Tacit motivations, reasonings, proclivities, and other elements are always already at work within our behavior. The conative dimension of *habitus* always operates just under the surface of ego operations.

The primary aim is to create a context in which leadership capacities of participants surface and are available for conversational group learning. Since the leadership behaviors occurred in response to triggers within the game construct, then these behaviors may become the subject of observation, evaluation, assessment, and learning (or unlearning).

The light of reflection in this respect is retrospective, illumining the stage after the scene’s action has transpired, as it were. Guiding students through reflective debriefing during and after the game proceeds by way of giving them mental flashlights to illumine and detect hidden aspects within their own leadership. They are led through reflective observation, affirmation, description, evaluation, critique, and reconstruction within the leadership-needy episodes that have surfaced during the gaming sequence. Reflection best occurs with a clear profile of leadership traits, techniques, talents, and timing features in mind. The game lets the participants experience their leadership acts in the framework of affirmative evaluation, with an eye toward helping participants engage adaptive learning in view of the leadership profile.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Russell W. West, “A Reflex Theory of Leadership Development” (2004).

The debrief, not the perfect execution of the game, the rewarding of winners, or reproaching of whiners, is the game's primary objective. Guided reflection on the shared experience of participants lifts up leadership learning elements made obvious by the game-invited action. Leadership educators may raise inquiries about the aptness of a leadership script that emerged within a particular episode of the game. Team decisions can become the subject of "rewind" debriefing sessions in which the assumptive systems that informed the collection is made explicit, and alternative courses of action can be imagined and invited by participants (who might not have expressed their best ideas at a particular course of group decision-making). The process and values that fostered the leadership configuration that emerged can be made discernible at the level of pattern and mental model. Depending on the learning objectives of the course experience, the structured engagement of the game's design honors the experiential learning axiom: "Everything is an excuse to debrief."

### **The Transformative Potential of Leadership Games**

The ultimate purpose of leadership education is to develop leadership. But as we have said, the exercise of leadership occurs on multiple levels of consciousness, and the deeper the level, the more invisible and profound its influence upon the other levels and upon the whole. Developing leadership involves, therefore, a process by which contradictory dynamics between levels can be addressed, and that process has to be largely indirect. Playful games are precisely an indirect means by which to catch reflexes as they emerge within the operations of the game. It remains for us to make the case why the indirection of play is transformational. First, we need to lay out a theory of transformation in human development.

James E. Loder describes the process of

transformation in developmental psychology,<sup>41</sup> and it is very useful to our purposes here. “Transformation,” in his model, refers to a process of structural change that alters its axioms and reorders its elements accordingly. It is primarily oriented to axiomatic change, or the reconstitution of something in terms of its foundational structures. Transformation is a universal and generic process of structural change that occurs in every context of nature and human life.<sup>42</sup> Transformational change should be distinguished from incremental change whereby things are added to or subtracted from a system without the system itself being structurally reordered.

Loder’s description of the process of transformation comprises five interrelated stages that are for all intents and purposes sequentially ordered. In the fittingly dubbed work, *The Knight’s Move*, Loder frames the stages succinctly:

- (1) Incoherence or Conflict (temporary puzzlement brought on by the situation);
- (2) Resolution-Seeking (trying and searching for codes, keys and solutions);
- (3) Constructive Imagination (emergence of insight from the psyche’s reservoir of tacit knowing);
- (4) Energy Release (deep and immediate satisfaction from experiencing resolution);
- (5) Verification (generalizing value of the present

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<sup>41</sup> James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, (1989); James E. Loder and W. Jim Neidhardt, *The Knight’s Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992).

<sup>42</sup> Loder, *The Knight’s Move*, 1992. According to Loder, transformation occurs whenever “within a given frame of reference or experience, hidden orders of coherence and meaning emerge to replace or alter the axioms of the given frame and reorder its elements accordingly.” *The Knight’s Move*, 316. From Loder’s many examples of transformation, we offer here only two to demonstrate the fact that transformation is indeed transposed across the entire range of natural and human existence: the change in form as a caterpillar changes into a butterfly; the redirection of entropy in open systems. Cf., James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 42; and James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 248.

solution for its future implications).<sup>43</sup> The process is explained and illustrated to make clear how provocative play invites conditions for “transformative moments” to emerge.

If the apex of transformation seems to be the resolution of a problem, the “aha!” moment of insight in which a new vision breaks through conventional order, then it makes sense to locate the first stage of the process in the initial sense of disequilibrium when the status quo has been disrupted. Granted, for most students, such a game as we have illustrated above will itself thrust them into a sense of disequilibrium because the regular conventions of the educational environment have been radically altered. The rules of the classroom game, the one in which they know the rules, the players, their position and how to score, have been usurped by a new game, one which they cannot control. An immersive system is initiated which is unfamiliar. The rules are new. The scoring apparatus is beyond manipulation. Their status and role is now ambiguous, even vulnerable to new labels. No longer is the comfort and control of individual performance readily available to them; they are thrust into social and political relations not necessarily of their own choosing. Their individual performance is observable, contributory, and measured by a small scale society. They—their enacted behavior in real time—become objective to themselves, and to (and through) others. Here, not what they say they value, believe, or think, matters; their doing matters. However, as we have offered, gaming pedagogy operates on two levels simultaneously: the game’s activities and reflection on it. Both of these levels begin to constitute the new classroom, teacher, lesson, test, and grades.

When students play the game, they are put through any number of difficult scenarios to solve. They need to work together. They are competing against others in a scavenger hunt of sorts. They have to derive clues from ambiguous circumstances. They must reckon with multi-

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<sup>43</sup> Loder and Neidhardt, *The Knight’s Move*, 230-232.

layered technical and adaptive problems in order to make headway. In those activities, students' default internal categories emerge. Their habitual conventions—those derived from sources such as temperamental, familial, spiritual, cultural, economic, and social—surface. Shadows embedded within their personalities are illumined. Play provides the diversion that allows the implicit to become explicit. What would otherwise remain tacit is exposed while their attention is diverted and trained on the activities. As the hidden slips out, then attention can be focused on it, and reflection engaged. Often reflection reveals contradictions between the implicit and explicit aspects of personality, or between an idealized sense of self and the reality, or between the situation and one's ability to deal with it. When these kinds of contradictions or puzzles or questions emerge, they can disrupt the status quo of one's worldview, one's identity, and one's relations with others, etc. The more significant the disequilibrium, the more existentially weighty the contradictions, the more transformative potential abounds.

To illustrate, let us consider a hypothetical. In one iteration of "Get the King," Hector, a fictional class participant, finds himself getting more and more anxious and frustrated with his group. They are not making as much progress in the game as he wants, so unwittingly he exercises greater directive leadership, trying to force his ideas and strategies upon the group. Others in the group resist his efforts, and their movement grinds to a halt. Another group surges ahead and "wins." Hector's group comes in dead last. His frustrations and disappointment erupt. He replays the game, point-by-point, reproachfully hinting how the outcome might have been different if only they had taken his lead. He says things he later wishes he could take back. Now, he is ashamed of himself. In the debriefing session after the game, he identifies these dynamics within himself, and he is shocked how his behaviors contradict his self-image. What is that all about, he wonders.

For Hector, reflection on his behavior disrupted the mental image he has of himself. Unveiling a contradiction within fosters a sense of disequilibrium. Is he really who he thinks he is? Disequilibrium marks the transition from the initial stage of sameness and continuity to the second stage in which persons seek to resolve disturbing questions or problems. Thus, the second stage is one of scanning for ways to work out a resolution. It is a stage of “waiting, wondering, following hunches, and exhausting possibilities.”<sup>44</sup> The human ego tries its best to scan among readily available options that fit within its existing framework. When Hector reflects on these matters in and beyond his class, it occurs to him that his anxiety and frustrations seem to be rooted in a competitive drive. On further reflection, it seems that when he is in a situation of stress, he resorts to a default mode of exercising a rather commanding style of leadership over people who are equally capable. When he talked about this with his group, he heard from them that his leadership seemed to put them down; they felt he was acting superior to them, and so they reacted negatively (which is fodder for their own reflection). But Hector seemed to be stuck at a conceptual impasse: his understanding of leadership is indeed that of a command and control style, but he really did not want to act that way with his friends and colleagues. And theologically, his utilitarian command and control leadership style appears to contradict his deeply held convictions about equality and dignity of all persons. This incongruence bothered him intensely, but the only other alternative he knew was a leaderless and “unproductive” egalitarianism, against which he recoiled passionately.

When no resolution can be found, the possibility opens for answers to emerge from beyond the existing

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<sup>44</sup> Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 38. Michael Polanyi calls this a period of “Incubation that curious persistence of heuristic tension through long periods of time, during which the problem is not consciously entertained.” Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, 1962), 121-122.

framework. One begins to think “outside the box,” allowing insight to come from beyond the known constructions of self and world. But the ego cannot search beyond what it knows; it wants to stay in the light of its own making. It is afraid of the dark, as it were. In fact, the ego’s defensive, repressive strategies are precisely employed to keep the darkness of consciousness—the tacit and implicit and repressed—at bay. So how does a new framework emerge? Ego constructions are only the tip of the iceberg of consciousness. In the scanning phase, not all of the mind’s effort to resolve the problem is intentional or explicit. In fact, much of the exploratory process is tacit, happening in the back of one’s mind while one’s attention is focused elsewhere. For example, when we are late for work and frantically searching for a lost set of keys, we are often diverted by a phone call or a child’s request. During the diversion, the location of the keys suddenly pops into our mind. The tacit dimension’s role in the scanning phase is all the more important when faced with existentially significant problems, and its work is performed in the shadows, behind the scene. All acts of discovery, when new order emerges and displaces an older order, are founded upon and arise within the tacit workings of the imagination.<sup>45</sup> Distraction, therefore, is an essential component in the transformational process, for it allows the ego to focus on something manageable while the subconscious does its work in the background.

Hector’s breakthrough discovery came during another reflective exercise when the other teams were presenting their interviews for the game. The winning team seemed to be having a great time in their presentation; it was creative and impassioned. The team members played off one another, lifting up the gifts and expertise of each. Their collegiality contrasted sharply with Hector’s team, who were competitively pitted against each other. It was in the closing recitation of the winning team, that Hector had a flash of insight. He had a clarifying vision of a

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<sup>45</sup> Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 24.



communal leadership that reframed his view of leadership and its function spiritually.

The transformational pattern moves into the third stage with a “constructive act of the imagination” in which an insight or vision conveys the essence of a resolution. When the new insight is felt deeply with conviction (we are convicted by it), the conflict or disequilibrium we once felt is replaced by a feeling of congruence, of fit, of integration, of resolution. Loder summarizes, “It is this third step, the construction of insight sensed with convincing force, that constitutes the turning point of the knowing event. It is by this central act that the elements of the ruptured situation are *transformed*, and a new perception, perspective, or world view is bestowed on the knower.”<sup>46</sup>

Hector raised his hand. One of the winning team members called on him, and Hector groped for the language with which to pose his question. He knew the answer intuitively, but he needed to hear it from the team themselves. In fact, while he was posing the question, he realized he was trying out the very style of leadership about which he was asking. He finally asked, “From your presentation, it seems that you all were equally involved, and that your individual skills and best ideas were utilized. That’s great. But where was leadership in your group? Was there a leader?” The winning team smiled sheepishly and looking to one another, they answered in turn, saying in summary: early in the process, they struggled with each other. But then after getting to know each other, they gradually morphed from telling each other what to do, to asking each other about their best ideas. They organized themselves around their strengths. Leadership? The best leader, they said, was the one who asked the best questions that evoked the best answers. Smiling broadly, with tears brimming and his vision confirmed, Hector remembered suddenly when he had experienced exactly this type of evocative leadership. His pastoral mentor asked spiritually discerning questions

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<sup>46</sup> Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 39.

that helped Hector hear and commit to his call to ministry.

One might be tempted to associate transformation primarily with stage three, but that would cut the process short, and thus abort the transformation that requires all five stages for the transformative resolution to stick. Because of the generative insight, the psychic energy that was dedicated to repressing and solving the problem is released with a sense of liberation and relief. All of the work that was dedicated to holding contradictions together is translated in stage four into positive energy focused on working out the solution in other aspects of one's life and context.

This brings us to the fifth stage: interpretation and congruence. One needs to make sense of one's new insight and one's discovery, as one seeks to harmonize other aspects of one's self and world in light of the newly emergent order. Typically, people seek out other people who see the world in the same way in order to work out implications for months and years to come. In transformational education, gaming pedagogy is fundamentally heuristic, thrusting us further and more deeply into the great mystery of our life in God. The heuristic trajectory should not be an afterthought, but our classrooms should provide opportunities and tools for students to make the kinds of integrative connections for even more profound discoveries.

## Conclusion

Provocative play is promoted here with an interest in realizing the highest ideals in adult experiential learning, especially for leadership formation. Leadership educators, whose classroom management capacities can match the orchestrative demands of the model may foster rich experiences for the learners entrusted to them, as well as themselves. This article seeks to commend the model for exploration to such educators. However, provocative play as we have described it must also be commended with some caveats and critiques. We raise here a few questions educators might engage before tossing their lecture notes

in the rubbish bin. Only a learning model that has been deeply appropriated by its hosts is likely to have the desired and lasting effects intended. Before provocative play is seriously engaged, educators might ask:

- **Why would you sponsor a gaming approach to achieve your learning objectives?** Not every lesson can, nor should, be taught through a gaming modality. Consideration of learning goals precedes selection of a provocative construct. When learning content is informational, fact-based, normative for a discipline, monological models of communication are most suitable. Behavioral awareness, habit change, values and ethics-related themes might be most suitable for immersive communication experiences implied by provocative gaming models.
- **What is necessary to manage the concentric realities that make up the provocative gaming construct?** At once, facilitators must be observant of distinct persons, their performance, and safety; how gameplay is progressing, the after-action management of the debriefing, evaluation and closure; the inculcation into master learning objectives of the course or program or institution. Intentional alignment with learning objective, advance planning, and thorough training of assistants (if required) is likely to precede the successful implementation of the model. Facilitators are encouraged to pilot the game on a small scale. Inviting feedback from participants about the game's design and execution should be included during each use of the gaming construct.
- **What is the tolerance for ambiguity, democratic control, co-construction of learning, and unpredictability for you, your learners, and institution?** When people play, they usually don't enjoy being told "how to play." They have known themselves as players their entire lives, and tend to presume their relative ability to embody the rules, the aim and the gameplay. The game must be designed to

engage attention deeply, with relative non-interruption of the playground space.

- **What is your capacity for fostering, supporting (or even restoring) emotional and ethical safety for all participants?** No game, with its easily connoted imagery of “frivolous,” is an excuse for an inattentive use of the facilitator’s power to preserve a safe emotional and ethical space for participants (including themselves). Facilitators must keep the proverbial “referee’s yellow flag” that is tossed on to the field to call a “foul!” out into the open. Gameplay can be stopped to preserve safety. Facilitators must have deliberated beforehand and communicated the boundaries of the game and the ethical/emotional safety values. Offering participants a “challenge by choice” or right to take a “time out” may be sufficient to make emotions, safety, and self-care mentionable.
- **What theory of competition, control, power, disclosure, politics, and justice are implied by the games design, selection, and facilitation?** By association, games are often about winning and losing, comparison between individuals and teams, striving for scarce resources, inclusion and reward, endurance and performance. These constructs are fundamental to how “the real world” functions, and need not be framed out of gameplay merely because they create discomfort or uneven outcomes. The disequilibrium and dissonance, generated in the would-be safe relationship of play, can generate real world analogies for organizational, community and leadership life. However, facilitators are encouraged to give forethought to theology and philosophy of power before instituting gaming-structured learning. Activating explicit power relations in educational systems that may have a tendency toward naiveté, without a clear assumptive system to manage the debriefing conversations that follow in these matters, invites a kind of unproductivity in learning that detracts from gains.

- **How will you manage observation, evaluation, measurement, feedback, and debriefing? How are these accountably linked to teaching and learning aims?** Since all aspects of observable gameplay provide an excuse for debriefing, facilitators must give advance thought to behaviors and development that advance the learning objectives to which the game is in service. Gaming in a learning context that is merely provocative, but not constructive in service to learning aims, undercuts learning that might be achieved through other means.
- **What institutional priorities, policies, and resources most serve and constrain your ability to execute a provocative play model?** When words like “play” and “provocative” are thrown around in some institutions, (without the benefit of context, or conversation about the scholarly underpinnings of such terms), facilitators may invite needless scrutiny, resistance, or disruption. In addition, failing to include relevant institutional members may result in needlessly gaining access to institutional resources that might have otherwise accelerated the learning experience. The introduction of play ethic in learning, as a teaching and learning philosophy, can stimulate critical collegial engagement about the nature of teaching and learning, constructivism in education, and other adult learning priorities. Colleagues might benefit from hearing updates, being invited as observers, and collaborating on interdisciplinary dimension of extended learning strategies that these methods tend to foster.
- **What costs to your learners, your institution, and yourself are already being incurred educationally if you do *not* appropriate a provocative play model of teaching and learning strategy?** All of the caveats are not on the restraint side of the implementation concerns: failing to adopt such a model might already be costing learning gains. Co-constructed learning models such as provocative play

for serious leadership learning may serve as correctives to learning experiences that are so conventionally predictable, conceptual, scholastic, and abstract as to be in the wrong direction for contemporary learners, especially for those who are socialized in media-saturated societies, experience economy values, and democratic social communities. A gaming ethic may bring balance and variety to the educational experience at precisely those intersections that most generatively advance and achieve learning objectives of the individual participant, facilitator, and institution.

Provocative play for serious leadership learning, while proving to be as deeply imprinting as it is satisfying to facilitators and learners, requires deliberate design. The opportunity for theological and spiritual reflection on the model, by all involved, constitutes one of its lasting and generative features. Its adoption as an unconventional pedagogical method is not without initial difficulty. But for those who patiently wade into this playground, adapting the principles to their own contexts and constraints, the rewards become self-evident within a short span of time.

This article explores how leadership educators can invite play—broadly conceived to include existential struggle—into learning as a provocative resource. It explores the pedagogical significance and transformative potential of well-crafted games that surface hidden conation and *habitus* frameworks of participants. It raises positive possibilities and asks important implementation questions with which adopters must concern themselves.

We suggest that education and leadership pedagogy, in particular, should address with all seriousness the hidden, tacit aspects of human personhood as foundational to cognition and volition. The classroom can be redesigned as a site in which default patterns of conation and *habitus* expression can emerge. Once revealed in reflexive action, they can be critically engaged through self-reflection by practitioners, but also in learning conversations with community members. The

debriefing of such serious play refers to the core of one's identity, disrupts default patterns, and allows leadership reflexes to be reconditioned for a more intended realization, a "next faithful step"<sup>47</sup> of leadership fidelity and effectiveness.

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<sup>47</sup> Scott Cormode, "The Next Faithful Step: Forming Christian Leaders for the Future" (Inaugural Lecture, Fuller Theological Seminary. April 7, 2010).