

THE AGORŌ GAME

Designing A Values Edutainment Tool for Ghanaian Children



The AgorŌ Game is a product of the African Theological Advance initiative's funded project "Being African in a contemporary world: exploring spirituality and psychological values in Ghana". It was created as a part of the 2020 Honors Summer Undergraduate Research Program at Virginia Commonwealth University

RESEARCH TEAM



Pictured from left to right, top row: Rev Prof Asamoah Gyadu: Project Lead, Dr. Vivian Dzokoto: Design Supervisor, Amanda Stahl: Design Lead. Bottom row: Abraham Kenin: Game Piloter, Dr. Annabella Osei-Tutu: Pilot Supervisor

INTRODUCTION

The Agorǎ Game is part of a larger study, funded by the Nagel Institute, that examined what constitutes values, in terms of virtues and vices and their relationship to the African public sphere. During the summer of 2019, a dataset comprised of focus group discussions with Ghanaian adults was analyzed for societal values in Ghana. From this analysis, 32 value and 24 vice-related themes were found. Those values included: religiosity, unity, marriage, family, money, politics, aesthetics, patience, hard work, occupation, celebrations, education, discipline, humility, regard for foreigners, superstition, respect, help, national pride, love, hospitality, friendliness, gratitude, trust, obedience, food, peace, health generosity, gender roles and technology. The vice-related themes found included: greed & jealousy, deceit, bad leadership, conflict, disrespect, sexual immorality, negative foreign influence, theft, selfishness, drugs, lack of discipline, alcohol, immodesty, disobedience, laziness, superstition, money (religion), bribery, evil, rejection of tradition, gossip, false witness, kidnapping, and a miscellaneous category.

This data provides an contemporary understanding of current values held in mainstream Ghanaian society. However, this dataset only captures the opinions and perspectives of Ghanaian adults, leaving out Ghanaian youth. One predominant theme that emerged during these interviews was an intergenerational tension, in which the older generations critique the practices and changing values of Ghanaian youth. With that sentiment being popular throughout the interviews, there exists a gap in the data: the youth. What values do Ghanaian youth have? How do the younger generations in Ghana perceive and understand societal values and vices? To answer these questions, a new study was proposed: a board game, based on the value and vice-related themes found in the focus group discussions, geared towards children. This game, now called the Agorǎ Game, has the potential to be used as both a research and educational tool.

RESEARCH QUESTION

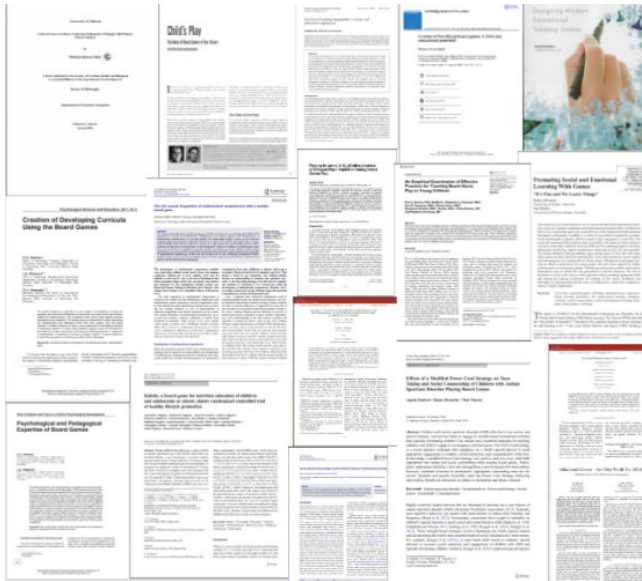
Can a values-based board game be used as a tool to investigate how children perceive and think about cultural values?

THE PROCESS

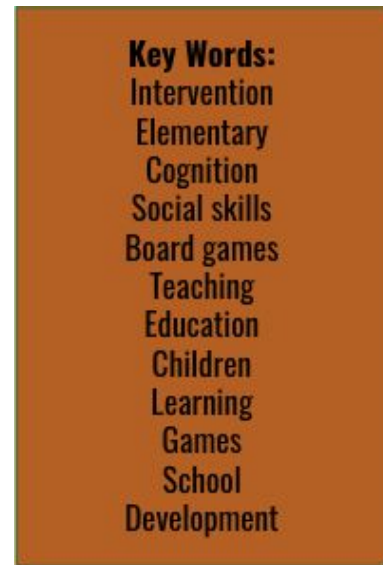
The game design process occurred in several steps: a literature search, an existing

board game search, an initial pilot phase, a game modification phase, and a second pilot phase. Each of these is discussed below.

STEP ONE: LITERATURE SEARCH



Literature Review Cover Results



Literature Review Key Words

Over thirty articles were found in a literature search conducted on educational games that affirmed that games could be used as a tool for both learning content and social skills.

STEP TWO: BOARD GAME SEARCH

Following the literature search, a second search was conducted across the internet on pre-existing values games and children's games. A German values game was discovered, however due to the covid-19 pandemic it was impossible to obtain a copy. Another game, called "Vices & Virtues" was also found, however that game is intended for adults and was thus not applicable for this project. While not a game, a Ghanaian book series called *Everyday Values for Sunday School Children* was found, which affirmed that intentional conversation and education about values was indeed happening in some contexts already.



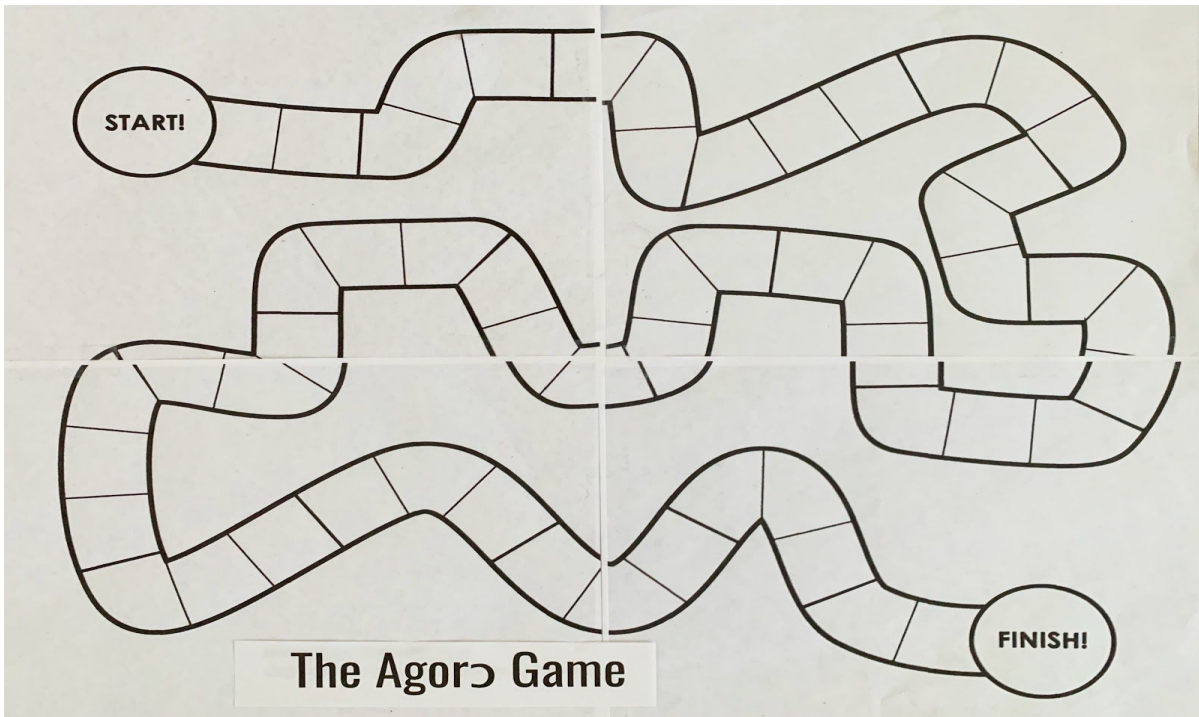
Game Search Cover Results

After confirming that no pre-existing game could be used for this project, popular children’s games were examined to determine what elements would be useful in designing a game for this project. Upon recommendation of a team member, Candy Land was looked into. This board game’s simple rules and design were ideal for the type of game desired for this research.

STEP THREE: GAME DESIGN

The board game needed to be both low-tech and transferable via email for the team in Ghana to be able to print out and use. The board design was based off of templates found online. With 57 spaces, the size of this board was ideal for a short to medium length game of about 20 minutes. Along with the board, game pieces were bottle tops. The choice in pawn was left up to the team in Ghana to make the game as easy to create as possible. The only other material needed to play the game was a die, which was necessary for speeding up gameplay, and incorporating some unpredictability into the game.

Following the creation of the board, scenario cards were made. Similar to Candy Land, these cards are what dictate player’s moves. All of the scenario cards were based off of the vice and value themes found during the previous summer’s research. The cards followed a color code which helped the game administrator distinguish the category of each card (vice, value, religion, freebie) during gameplay.



Preliminary Board Design

Today is your birthday!

Advance 3 spaces.

You are a good helper when your family has guests over.

Advance 2 spaces

You don't listen to your teacher.

Advance 1 space, then roll the die & move back that number of spaces

After your parents told you not to play with the soccer ball inside, you kept playing with it and broke the TV with it. When your parents see the TV, you lie and tell them you didn't break it, but they know you did.

Go back to the beginning.

The power is out.

Stay put.

You trust in God & He rewards you.

Advance 3 spaces.

You get good grades at the end of the term.

Advance 3 spaces

You go to church on Sunday.

Advance 2 spaces.

You hit your sister, and your mother catches you.

Advance 2 spaces, then roll the die & move back that number of spaces

Color coded card designs



Vice and value themes

The word cloud pictured above shows all of the vice and value themes used in the 59 scenario cards.

PILOT ONE

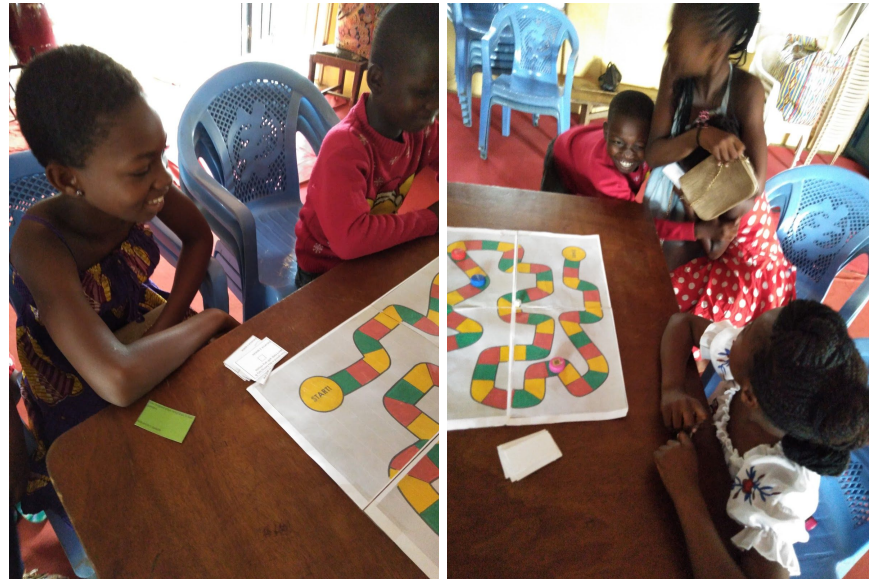


Images from first pilot of Agoro game

The first pilot took place in late June of 2020. There were five participants, all children from the same community. During this pilot, game play lasted approximately 1 hour and 35 minutes. Upon completion of the game, the game piloter conducted a short post-play

debrief and asked the participants questions about the design of the game and what they would change. From those answers, some design changes were made to speed up gameplay time.

PILOT TWO



Images from second pilot of Agoro game

During the second pilot, four game play sessions of approximately 20 minutes each were facilitated. The second pilot was necessary in order to determine the efficacy of design changes made after the first pilot. In this pilot, the incorporation of a dice into the scenario cards, along with the more vibrant colors included in the edited board made for a more engaging and quick-paced gameplay for the children. In the post-play debrief, the children commented on what they had learned in the game:

“It teaches lessons that will make you advance in life.”

“I learnt that we have to be obedient, respectful, and honest.”

From these responses, one can see that the game did elicit thought about learning and values, proving to the team that there is in fact potential for the Agoro Game to be used

as an edutainment tool.

FUTURE RESEARCH: CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT

Upon completion of the two game pilots, the team has begun the process of developing a proposal for a follow-up study using an randomized intervention model to determine the potential impacts of the Agoro Game.

THE AGORO GAME		
Target Users	Late elementary age students (7 - 12 years old)	
Sample Size	480 Children from four prominent denominations in Ghana	
	Control: Play popular game (Ludu)	Experiment: Play Agoro Game
Measures	Picture Based Values Survey, The Universal Cultural Values Scale, Material Values Scale for children, Prosocial Tendencies Measure Revised, Vignettes	

Preliminary Research Design for Agoro Game Study

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