



EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT CENTER, INC.

Evaluation of Breakthrough's *America 2049* game



Submitted to Breakthrough
Prepared by James Diamond and Cornelia Brunner
Education Development Center, Inc.

CCT Reports | October 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Breakthrough, a global human rights organization, produced *America 2049*, an alternate-reality game set in a dystopian future in which the United States is on the verge of breaking apart because of an inability to tolerate diversity and promote human rights. During the 12-week game launch, players uncovered artifacts related to the persistent struggle for human rights in American history, while also watching an unfolding narrative about oppression and the loss of human rights in the future. Players could decide whether to support the activities of “Divided We Fall,” a group dedicated to preserving national unity, or the “Council on American Heritage,” an organization pushing for dissolution.

By using a narrative-driven, episodic game (the narrative was released in weekly installments during the 12-week launch), Breakthrough engaged game players on human rights issues and instances of social injustice in a different way. Rather than simply telegraphing positions on issues, game play in *America 2049* permits some level of individual agency by enabling players to decide whether and how to align their in-game personas with opposing factions in the context of an unfolding drama. Based on personal or game-related goals, players can choose to support either side (pro- or anti-human rights) in the conflict without affecting their score. The goal was not to promote “good” or pro-human rights behavior during game play, but rather to encourage players to play with possibilities within a human rights-focused narrative and consider how societal choices about human rights could influence the future.

PROJECT GOALS

Breakthrough sought to achieve three goals in the *America 2049* campaign:

1. Using a serious game on a social networking platform, motivate players to take action on human rights-related issues in the real world by connecting them with others who share similar interests.
2. Educate players about the enduring struggle for civil rights and cultural pluralism in American history. The game encourages them to connect past, present, and a possible future by considering the meanings of relevant cultural artifacts in the context of a fictional universe where diversity is seen as a threat and human rights are largely ignored.
3. Enable players to “play out,” in limited fashion, a virtual alter ego’s participation in (either for or against) a future struggle for human rights.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

To investigate the game's effectiveness as a tool to mobilize real-world action around the issues confronted in the game, Breakthrough engaged the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) as an independent evaluator to evaluate the game. Two research questions framed the evaluation:

1. Do players indicate a willingness to reconsider issues or become active around them following game play? (And when they do indicate willingness, which aspects of the game do they say are influential?)
2. Is there a relationship between the categories of "moral reasoning" players use in the game and their willingness to reconsider issues?

METHODS

To answer the research questions, we used two instruments:

1. *Post-game survey.* At the conclusion of Week 12 of the game launch, we asked players to complete a follow-up survey to gather demographic data, information about their "play style," and whether they had reconsidered any of the issues they encountered in the game.
2. *"Player choice-point rationale."* The instrument was presented to players as part of an in-game "agent psychological evaluation," asking them to explain their decisions about which faction to support at certain points during game play. The language for the rationales (see Appendix A) is grouped into three categories: instrumental, interpersonal, and principle, based loosely on Lawrence Kohlberg's moral reasoning framework.

PARTICIPANTS

- ◆ 14,929 users logged on to the *America 2049* Facebook site during the game's 12-week launch in April–June 2011.
- ◆ 5,487 users provided a geographic location: Players represented 115 countries (66% of all players were from the United States).
- ◆ Matched survey and game play data are available for 104 players.

FINDINGS

- ◆ 93% (97/104) of survey respondents described their political leanings toward the issues in the game as either "Very liberal," "Liberal," or "Moderate." Survey responses suggest that many players were already aware of at least some of the issues addressed in the game, but that the game enabled them to

experience them in a new way. Further, 69% (72/104) were already active on at least one of the issues addressed in the game. In open-ended comments, several players wrote that the game narrative aligned closely with views they already held, but that they enjoyed thinking about them in this context. For example, two players wrote:

—Just to make it clear, I didn't reconsider any of the issues because I was already aware and had thought a lot about most of these problems before playing the game. I am a lawyer in administrative law and therefore very aware of human rights, labour rights etc. I really liked the game, though, and I hope it will make some other people think. In addition to having a serious ideological content, the story was quite interesting and the mechanics of the game well thought out...

—This game was an amazing experience for me. I had tons of fun playing it, loved figuring out the puzzles, and was interested in the story. My views on human rights and such didn't change based on what I saw in this game because I agreed with the message that the game represents.

- ◆ 89% (48/54 comments) of the post-game survey comments about the game were positive. Many players commented specifically on the high quality of the game play and the way in which Breakthrough integrated the alternate-reality game genre with a compelling narrative about human rights. Several representative quotes follow:

—This game was the most exciting and interesting game I have ever played online. I have also told everyone I know about it and they seem to be excited just by hearing about it. I hope they do more games like this.

—As a working artist and cultural worker, I /loved/ playing this game - I'm always looking at the ways art and theater and storytelling can be mashed-up to make learning landscapes. I particularly thought that the use of historical documents to provide context to the 2049 issues was brilliant.

—Fantastic game! Nice to see a Facebook app with some actual content and social commentary.

- ◆ 86% (89/104) of players who completed the follow-up survey indicated at least some willingness to become active at some point in the future on an issue they encountered in the game. Additionally, for each of 15 human rights issues represented in the game, at least 25% of the survey respondents reported that they had spent time reconsidering their views on the issue in real life after game play.
- ◆ 58% (60/104) of respondents reported that they played serious games “Never” or “A few times a year.” Conversely, 52% (54/104) indicated that they play

commercial games “Every day of the week” or “4–6 days/week.” The data suggest that players who might not ordinarily play serious games were motivated to persist over the 12-week launch.

- ◆ *47% (49/104) of the survey respondents cited one of two game features as most influential in prompting them to reconsider the issues: the game’s overarching narrative and the specific experiences of the non-player characters.*
- ◆ *There is no discernible relationship between the specific choices a player makes during game play and her or his willingness to consider becoming active on issues (as indicated on the survey), nor is there a relationship between choices and a player’s reported “play style.”*

RECOMMENDATIONS

To continue to capitalize on players’ positive experiences during the game launch, Breakthrough may wish to consider the following recommendations for future game development:

- ◆ *Consider introducing other game elements that might bring more players “into the fold” earlier. If the puzzle-solving aspects of game play are not appealing to some players, other game conventions might allow for a greater number of players to persist over the duration of game play.*
- ◆ *Consider following up with players who did not persist. To learn more about why players did not complete the game, contacting those players (when possible) and asking them to complete a brief survey would be helpful in learning more about why they did not complete it.*
 - *And consider interviewing those who visited the sites of conscience. For those players who did visit real-world sites, follow-up interviews would be helpful to learn more about how the game compelled those visits and whether the site visits contributed to game play in any way.*
- ◆ *Structure dialogues about human rights. Player-driven dialogue in the game forums about human rights issues was limited. If one goal of game play is to improve dialogue about these issues, more structured formats (perhaps at real-world sites) would likely be more successful at generating that discussion.*
- ◆ *Allow players to experience the consequences of game play choices. Several respondents commented that they would have liked to be able to play out the consequences of their choices. A more “simulation-like” game would enable players to see, within the boundaries of the game space, the consequences of choices they made, which might also generate more extensive dialogue about the issues.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION	1
Evaluation plan and research questions	2
SECTION II. METHODS, PARTICIPANTS, AND FINDINGS	3
Methods	3
Game narrative and game play	3
Instrument 1. Tracking player “choice-point rationale”	4
Instrument 2. Follow-up survey.....	6
Participants.....	7
Findings.....	9
Player experiences.....	9
Question 1. Do players indicate a willingness to reconsider issues or become active around them after game play? (Sub-question: When players do indicate willingness, what aspects of the game do they reference as being influential?).....	11
Question 2. Is there a relationship between the categories of “moral reasoning” players use in the game and their willingness to reconsider issues?.....	14
Forum posts.....	17
SECTION III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	24
Serious game play and thinking about human rights issues.....	24
Recommendations.....	26
SECTION IV. APPENDICES	28
Appendix A: Choice-point rationales	28
Appendix B: Follow-up survey text (originally online at surveymonkey.com)	31
Appendix C: List of levels and themes/issues addressed in the game narrative.....	35
Appendix D: Main characters, groups, and plot points in <i>America 2049</i>	36

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

America 2049 is a Facebook-based social networking game produced by Breakthrough, a global human rights organization. Breakthrough creates innovative multi- and transmedia campaigns to motivate individuals and communities to learn about and mobilize toward issues related to social justice and the achievement of universal human rights. The game is set in a dystopian future in which the former United States of America is on the threshold of fragmenting into smaller, “culturally homogenous” confederations. The powers of the federal government to promote general welfare, national unity, and civil rights have been eroded over decades, and human rights abuse is common in many areas of the country. In the fictional *America 2049* universe, powerful vested interests argue—with force—that cultural diversity and pluralism are divisive and the strength of a future America lies in likeness, rather than difference.

Players enter *America 2049* as agents of an organization called the “Council on American Heritage” (CAH), ostensibly founded to aid the emerging confederations in abandoning the old federal government as ordained by the U.S. Constitution. Initially, players learn that a domestic terrorist group called “Divided We Fall” (DWF) is attempting to thwart those efforts. In fact (though unbeknownst to players), CAH is in league with foreign powers to ensure the United States is eradicated as a single entity, while DWF fights to preserve unity among the states and restore the human rights that have disappeared over time. During 12 levels of game play, the game’s narrative confronts players with challenges and abuses that arise in areas such as censorship, immigration policy and immigrant experiences, reproductive rights, and gay marriage, as human rights disappear and diversity is viewed as antithetical to social cohesion.

Breakthrough sought to achieve three goals in the *America 2049* campaign:

1. Using a serious game on a social networking platform, motivate players to take action on human rights-related issues in the real world by connecting them with others who share similar interests.
2. Educate players about the enduring struggle for human rights and cultural pluralism in American history. The game encourages them to connect past, present, and a possible future by considering the meanings of relevant cultural artifacts in the context of a fictional universe where diversity is seen as a threat and human rights are largely ignored.

3. Enable players to “play out,” in limited fashion, a virtual alter ego’s participation in (either for or against) a future struggle for human rights.

Evaluation plan and research questions

To evaluate the game’s effectiveness as a tool for mobilizing real-world action, Breakthrough engaged the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) as an independent evaluator to analyze two products related to participation in the *America 2049* game launch in April–June, 2011: (1) players’ responses to a follow-up survey inquiring about whether the game led them to reconsider their views on any of the issues and whether they might become active (i.e., volunteer, organize, campaign, demonstrate, or participate in some other way) on an issue in the future, and (2) the relationship, if any, that exists between the choices a player made during the game and his or her willingness to reconsider issues. The first product pertains directly to the campaign objectives, while the second relates to using “game play rationale” as a variable in exploring whether player choices might correlate in any way to a willingness to reconsider issues. Thus, the following questions guided the evaluation:

1. Do players indicate a willingness to reconsider issues or become active around them after game play?

As a sub-question: When players do indicate willingness, what aspects of the game do they reference as being influential?
2. Is there a relationship between the categories of “moral reasoning” players use in the game and their willingness to reconsider issues?

The remaining sections of this report address the methods EDC employed to answer these questions, the instruments we used (included in the appendices), our findings, and recommendations for additional data analysis and future game development.

SECTION II. METHODS, PARTICIPANTS, AND FINDINGS

Methods

In this section we provide a summary of the game narrative and game play and describe the two data collection methods used for the evaluation: player “choice-point rationale” options, and the post-game survey.

Game narrative and game play

Game narrative. Appendix D contains a list of major characters and groups, as well as the narrative plot points for each game level. Briefly, however, players begin *America 2049* as agents of an extra-governmental organization called the Council on American Heritage (CAH), controlled by character Jefferson Williams II. Initially, Williams II tells players that Divide We Fall (DWF) is a terrorist organization committed to disrupting CAH’s attempts to help the various confederations form new governments and that they must apprehend DWF “subversives.” As the narrative proceeds, however, players learn that DWF—led by characters Ken Asaba, Jefferson Williams III (“Jeff,” the son of the CAH leader), and Lin Xue (“M,” the leader of DWF)—is attempting to preserve national unity, while CAH is in fact trying to ensure the dissolution of the federal government for self-seeking purposes. At various levels, players make decisions about which faction to support as the narrative progresses toward the climax, in which the country will either dissolve or remain intact.

Game play. Figure 1 illustrates the game interface as it appears on the player’s Facebook page. Each week, the interface provides an overhead view of one American city or region, divided into clickable grid cells as pictured. “Movement” proceeds by clicking on one cell at a time to search for puzzle clues so as to advance to the next level. The players’ energy source (pictured in the top left-hand corner) is depleted by one bar for each click.

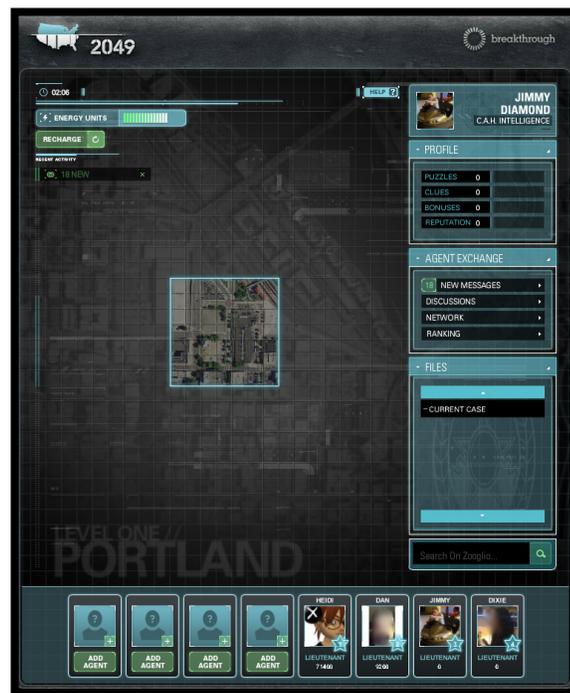


Figure 1: Screenshot of America 2049 game interface (<http://apps.facebook.com/twentyfortynine/>)

In addition to finding puzzle clues and new energy sources, the player's ground team uncovers artifacts that relate to the issues addressed in that week's narrative (see Appendix C). Players also uncover video and written communications among the story's protagonists, most of who are affiliated with DWF and are suffering from CAH oppression. At the end of five of the twelve levels—Chicago, San Francisco, Phoenix, Pueblo Nation (NM), and Dallas—players make decisions to support the Divided We Fall characters (thus being subversive in the eyes of their employer, CAH) or to carry out their orders from CAH and chase down DWF members. Because the faction with whom they are siding does not limit players' choices, they can choose to act as double agents.

Instrument 1. Tracking player "choice-point rationale"

In keeping with the game's alternate-reality motif and given the campaign's emphasis on blurring the distinction between game play and real life, Breakthrough sought to ensure that in-game evaluation instruments would not break the illusion of game play. Accordingly, EDC drafted "in-character" language for player "choice-point rationales" at each of five game play moments when players could direct their "ground team" (that is, the player's virtual representative who carries out missions) to move for or against the opposing factions depending on the player's choice. In general, these choices allow players to support DWF (pro-human rights and pluralism) or CAH (pro-separation and "monoculturalism"). Appendix A includes the language for all choice points, but following is one example to contextualize the data in the Findings section below.

Tracking player rationale at the choice points. Table 1 on the following page contains the player rationale options for Level 8: Dallas, TX. As part of an "agent psychological evaluation," players are asked to explain their decision about how to direct the ground team. In the example, players decide whether to share the location of Ken Asaba, the story's protagonist and one of the chief "insurgents" against CAH. They can make a pro-DWF choice by giving the information to DWF operatives who can rescue Asaba, or they can make a pro-CAH choice by keeping the information to themselves, possibly leaving him to be captured by CAH agents. Because players might choose to operate as double agents, with no effect on the game outcomes, some rationales also permit players to characterize their choices as pro-CAH or pro-DWF after their initial choice.^{††}

^{††} In the game narrative, Asaba escapes regardless of the player's choice.

Table 1: Player choice point language for Dallas (Level 8)—*Player chooses one rationale option from Track A or Track B, depending on her/his decision about how to act.*

<i>All new CAH Agents must periodically complete a brief survey as part of their ongoing psychological evaluation. Your prompt response is appreciated!</i>		
	<i>Track A: If the player revealed Asaba's location to DWF, s/he sees: "Please explain your decision in Dallas about revealing Asaba's location, Agent:"</i>	<i>Track B: If the player kept the location to her/himself, s/he sees: "Please explain your decision in Dallas not to reveal Asaba's location, Agent:"</i>
Instrumental	(Pro-CAH): "By telling Jeff and Cynthia, they won't have any more questions about my loyalty to DWF now. And that gets me closer to M." (Pro-DWF): "There's a chance we might need Asaba one of these days, so let's have a favor to call in."	"And give up the opportunity for Asaba to tell CAH where M. is? My job is to do just that."
Interpersonal	"I agree that Asaba broke the law and has to do his time, but this treatment doesn't fit the crimes he has committed. This goes beyond fair punishment."	"Look, Asaba has to pay his debt. He broke the law, was caught, and now he's got to receive his punishment. That's the way things work."
Principle	"Nobody, regardless of the crime, deserves to be treated that way. It isn't justice when human rights are violated."	"We can put a stop to the damage DWF is doing. If we get M's location, we can bring an end to a lot of suffering—the life of one for many isn't a bad exchange."

For each of the five choice points, players see only the language that relates to the decision they made. Thus, if players chose to share Asaba's location with DWF, they would see only the Track A options in Table 1. Had they chosen to keep the information to themselves, they would see only Track B options.

Rationale descriptions. Following the "All new CAH Agents..." prompt, players must choose an option from one of the three rows (they do not see the row titles, only the rationale language). Each row—instrumental, interpersonal, and principle—corresponds approximately to Kohlberg's (1981) three stages of moral reasoning: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional.^{##} Roughly, Kohlberg's cognitive developmental stages of descriptive ethics proceed along a spectrum from concrete, instrumental egoism, to a social systems perspective, to abstract reasoning about universal principles. The language for the options is meant to capture the "essence" of each of the stages and is similar at all five

^{##} Kohlberg, L. (1981). *Essays on Moral Development, Vol. I: The Philosophy of Moral Development*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row. For an important critique of Kohlberg's theory arguing that it privileged impersonal *justice* over interpersonal *caring*, see Gilligan, C. (1993). *In a different voice: psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

choice points: rule-based and self-concerned (instrumental); behaving according to acceptable social conventions (interpersonal); and acting according to one's principles, regardless of circumstances (principle). After choosing one of the options (which are randomized for each game level), players have the option to write an additional explanation if they choose.

We did not adopt this framework to make claims about the morality of player's game choices or their ability to make moral judgments in general, but rather to devise a uniform method with which to determine how they made their choices. We could not interrupt game play to ask them, so we created a normative "checklist" that players could use to describe their rationale as part of game play. Because it is a game, there is no way to know—without asking them directly—whether the rationales are chosen "in-character," "out-of-character," or based on some other justification. Games are spaces that allow for transgression and rule breaking (provided the design permits it)—the goal is not necessarily to promote the "best" behavior, but rather to encourage players to consider possible outcomes associated with any behavior in a simulated environment. But to determine whether a player's rationales might be related to his or her willingness to become active on an issue later, we did ask them to describe how they made decisions about game play in a question in the after-game survey.

Instrument 2. Follow-up survey

At the conclusion of the final level (week 12 of the game launch), a pop-up box appeared with a link to an external survey asking players to describe certain aspects of their game play and to rate how effective the game was in leading them to reconsider their perspectives on certain issues. The survey is included in Appendix B and we discuss the game play-related results in the Findings section, but briefly, the survey collected information on the following:

- ◆ Player demographics (player age, location, education level, etc.)
- ◆ Game play frequency
- ◆ "Play style" (what generally determined how players made choices)
- ◆ The game's effectiveness at prompting players to reconsider issues
- ◆ The game's effectiveness at leading players to become active on an issue
- ◆ Aspects of the game that influenced player's thinking about issues

Participants

General population of game players. A total of 14,929 users logged on to the *America 2049* Facebook site during the game's twelve-week launch period. Of those, 5,487 provided a geographic location (city and country) through their Facebook information (an additional 358 players provided city only). Table 2 lists the countries from which one percent or a greater number of players currently reside. In total, players represented 115 countries. No additional demographic data is available for these players given limitations on the ability to collect personal data through the Facebook interface.

Table 2: Percentage of game players by country*

Country in which player currently resides	# Of players	% Of total players
United States	3,863	66.1%
Canada	265	4.5%
India	183	3.1%
United Kingdom	124	2.1%
France	80	1.4%
Australia	73	1.2%
Indonesia	67	1.1%
Pakistan	67	1.1%

* Figures are for those countries that represent 1% or greater of the total number of players who identified country of residence (N = 5,487)

Survey respondents. 127 players completed the post-game survey: 70 females, 54 males, 1 intersex, and 3 players who preferred not to indicate their sex. Game play data is available for 104 respondents. (Incomplete data were available for an additional five players, who are not included in this analysis.) Table 3 lists the number of survey respondents from each country by age range. The majority of players were from the United States (83% / 106) and fell in the 19–29 years-of-age range (54% / 68). For all respondents, 53 (42%) reported living in suburban areas, 51 (40%) in urban areas, and 23 (18%) in rural areas.

Table 3: Number of post-game survey respondents by country and age range (years of age)

	18 or younger	19–29	30–39	40–49	50–59	60–69	Total
Australia	1						1
Brazil		1					1
Canada		4	3		1		8
Estonia		1					1
Germany		1					1
India		1		1			2
Romania		1					1
Singapore		2	1				3
UAE			1				1
UK		2					2
USA	7	55	23	17	3	1	106
Total	8	68	28	18	4	1	127

Eighty-four (66%) of all survey respondents reported having completed a college-level education or higher. In general, respondents were “gamers”: 34 (27%) indicated they played video games “Every day of the week”; 28 (22%) reported they played “4–6 days/week”; and 34 (27%) reported they played “1–3 days a week.” Though we also asked players how often they played serious games, the majority (59%) reported playing “A few times a year” or “Never.” Finally, we asked respondents about their general political leanings toward the social, political, and economic issues they encountered in the game. Of the 127 respondents, 118 (92%) characterized themselves as “Moderate” to left leaning: 51 (40%) as “Very liberal”; 42 (33%) as “Liberal”; and 25 (20%) as “Moderate.” Five respondents (4%) indicated they were “Conservative” and 1 (~1%) reported s/he was “Very conservative.” The data suggest that respondents were a demographically homogenous group and it is likely that the larger population of game players (i.e., all individuals who interacted with the game) represent a wider variety of political leanings and experiences with human rights issues.

Respondents’ engagement with human rights issues (for the 104 players for whom there is matching game play data). In general, respondents were engaged with issues before playing *America 2049*. We asked them to note the issues addressed in the game’s narrative on which they had previously been active (that is, engaged in organizing or actively working to support). Fifty-three of the 104 (51%) indicated they had worked on gay marriage, 42 (40%) had worked on women’s rights and reproductive rights, 39 (38%) worked on civil rights, and 37 (36%) had worked on human rights. In total, 71 respondents (68%) had been active on at least one issue before playing the game, while 33 (32%) were not active on any of the issues. Figure 2 graphs the responses for all issues.

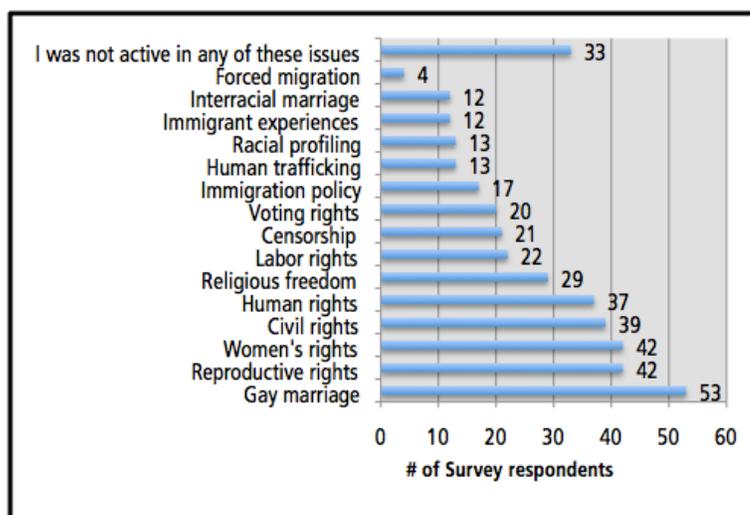


Figure 2: Count of respondents who said they were “active” (i.e., volunteering, organizing, campaigning, demonstrating, or participating) on an issue BEFORE game play (players could select more than one).

Findings

In this section we include the findings for the two research questions, as well as players' comments about their experience playing *America 2049*. We will reserve fuller discussion about the implications of the findings for the Conclusions and Recommendations section.

Player experiences

Many general comments in the forums and the survey about game play were positive. Once the game had achieved its core audience (i.e., those who persisted over the weeks and communicated in the forums), players enjoyed searching for puzzle pieces and decoding ciphers. Further, several respondents felt that they shared the views of the game developers and saw the game as an effective way to present the issues Breakthrough is addressing. For example:

- ◆ *America 2049 was a truly ground breaking game and one which I am glad to have had the opportunity to have experienced. All those involved be they the well known actors or those behind the scenes should be incredibly proud of having been a part of it. You have made me reconsider my own opinions on some issues and helped me identify where I could do more to help create a fairer, more just society and for that you have my utmost thanks.*
- ◆ *I very much enjoyed the game, and thought that it was a great platform to really demonstrate the struggles that minorities have in this country. I already empathized with these groups, but it made their experiences more real to me, and gave me more of a sense of urgency regarding the struggle to retain/expand our civil rights. Thanks!*
- ◆ *A lot of the issues I saw in the game are ones I've worried about—more so in the past few years as I finished high school and moved on. As I progressed through the game each week, felt more and more that some issues we aren't that far from A2049. That in itself is the scariest parts. Terrific job bringing these things to light.*
- ◆ *I very much enjoyed the game, and thought that it was a great platform to really demonstrate the struggles that minorities have in this country. I already empathized with these groups, but it made their experiences more real to me, and gave me more of a sense of urgency regarding the struggle to retain/expand our civil rights. Thanks!*
- ◆ *This game was very thought provoking and led me to research issues that I otherwise would have known only in passing. I loved how topical it was to the climate which we currently live in. It was incredibly well done.*

For most respondents, embedding a dramatic storyline within a puzzle-based game mechanic was an effective way of integrating game play with a narrative intended to provoke consideration of the topics. Including real-world artifacts related to human rights struggles in American history—as well as fictional web sites and futuristic news reports from the dystopian future—in the context of game play enabled players to make connections between past injustices and future outcomes should human rights be ignored. But several respondents were bothered that their decisions at choice points did not influence the narrative. For example, several player comments follow:

- ◆ *It was a good game, however, as a gamer, with this game, I didn't feel as though I could affect the outcome. I'm not conservative, but I didn't feel as though I could have swung the game to play as one if I had wished to, a more indepth version of this game would extremely awesome...*
- ◆ *I did not like having to click through mindlessly and receiving lots of "found nothing/found energy" messages just to find clues/puzzles. Most of the puzzles were very straightforward to the point of being too easy, some had very misleading clues (like the "0" looked very much like a "1", "I" and "l"), and some of the puzzles had almost no clues. ...Story did get rather preachy at times so more subtlety would have been appreciated. Initially it appeared promising that we could choose to help the DWF instead of the CAH, but as the levels progressed, it became clear that the actions we took had little effect on the overall storyline...*
- ◆ *I wish the game had been more game like. It seemed more or less like a mildly interactive story. I would have liked to be able to influence events more.*
- ◆ *It felt that there was no sense of moral ambiguity. DWF was always in the right and CAH was always in the wrong. It would have been nice to see DWF have infighting, conflicting agendas, or do morally questionable acts. By making them the unquestionable good guys, the game felt less 'serious' than it could have been. Siding with DWF should be an actual decision with consequences. Not just automatic, or an easy choice with no moral issues. Other than that, the subject matter was well handled and the story, while cliché, was compelling enough to make me want to see the ending.*

Comments about the “disconnect” between choices during game play and narrative outcomes were in the minority, however. For most, “unlocking” chapters as a reward for puzzle solving and uncovering artifacts related to the narrative was a compelling way of connecting game play and storytelling and encouraging additional interest in real-word correlates of the issues.

Question 1. Do players indicate a willingness to reconsider issues or become active around them after game play? (Sub-question: When players do indicate willingness, what aspects of the game do they reference as being influential?)

Eighty-six percent (89 of the 104 players that completed the survey) of players indicated at least some willingness to become active at some point in the future on an issue they encountered in the game. Additionally, for all 15 issues encountered in the game, at least 25% of the survey respondents reported they had spent time reconsidering their views on the issue in real life.

A. For every issue encountered in the game’s narrative, at least 25% of survey respondents reported they had spent some amount of time reconsidering their views on that issue in real life.

Figure 3 graphs the number of survey responses to the following question: “Of the social, political, or economic issues that you encountered in the game (listed below), to what extent, if any, did you reconsider your views on the issue in real life?” For all issues, the majority of respondents reported that they did not reconsider the issue in real life. Significantly, however, on every issue, at least 25% of respondents reconsidered it. In a follow-up question asking them to expand on a specific issue they had reconsidered, the most significant issues were: *Human trafficking* (12/104, 11%); *Immigrant experiences* (11/104, 10%); and *Racial profiling* (8/104, 8%). Twenty-four players (23%) chose to comment on a second issue they had reconsidered, of which four (17% of the 24) indicated *Immigration policy* and three (13% of the 24) indicated *Human trafficking*.

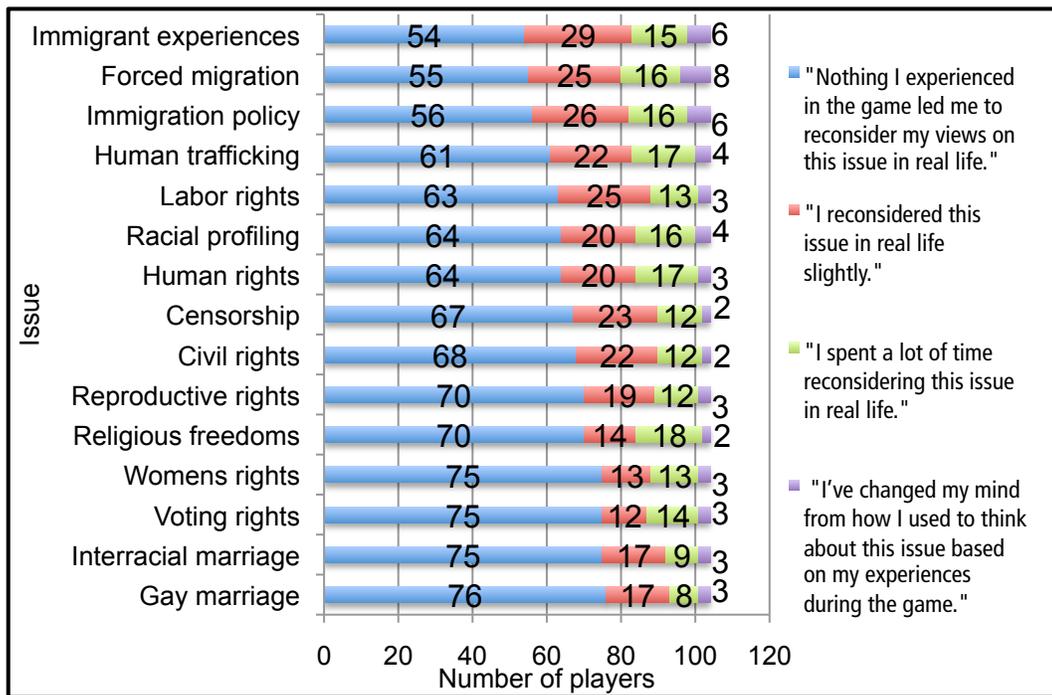


Figure 3: Count of survey responses about reconsidering issues (N=104)

B. The game features most influential in prompting players to reconsider the issues were the game's storyline and the experiences of non-player characters (for the 58/104 players who indicated they reconsidered issues after game play).

Fifty-six percent of respondents (58/104) reported that they had reconsidered at least one issue to some extent following game play. When asked to identify "the aspect of the game that was most influential in leading me to reconsider the issues," 25 of the 58 respondents (43%) indicated "the game characters' experiences or actions" and 24 (41%) said "the game's storyline." An additional four of the 59 respondents (7%) indicated "My decisions about how to lead my ground team in the game" led them to reconsider the issues and five (8%) indicated "An artifact that I encountered during game play," which included:

- ◆ "Video of rescued trafficking victim"
- ◆ "Specifically the women's suffrage materials"
- ◆ "Trail Of Tears Painting and others"
- ◆ "The articles & pictures about the labor rights"
- ◆ "The map of countries with human trafficking"

None of the respondents indicated that "discussions about the issue with other players in the game" were influential in leading him/her to reconsider issues. The majority of players who chose to expand on a second issue they had reconsidered due to game play (13/24, 54%) also referenced "the game characters' experiences or actions" as most influential.

C. 86% of respondents (89/104) indicated some possibility of becoming active on an issue following their experiences with America 2049; 31% (32) indicated a "strong possibility."

When asked, "For any of the issues on which you were NOT already active, how likely are you to become active on an issue after playing the game?" 15 respondents (14%) indicated, "It's completely unlikely that I'll become active on an issue I encountered in the game"; 57 (55%) indicated, "There's a small chance that I'll become active on an issue I encountered in the game"; and 32 (31%) indicated, "There's a strong chance that I'll become active on an issue I encountered in the game." Figure 4 graphs all of the issues on which players indicated there was a possibility they might become active in the future (they could check more than one).

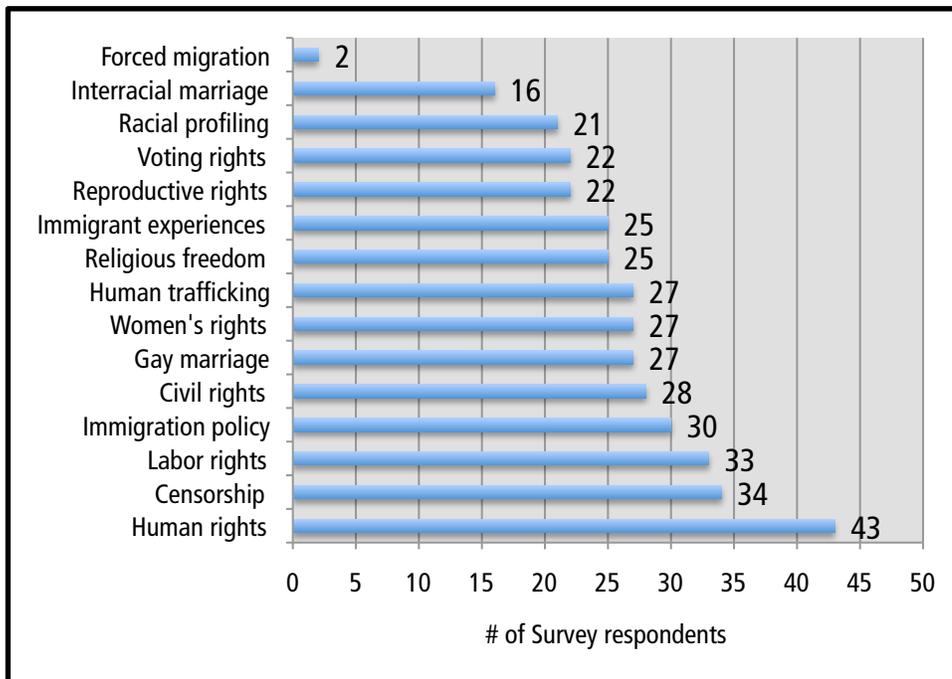


Figure 4: Count of survey respondents who indicated they might become active on an issue

D. 66% (69/104) of respondents indicated that an interest in the story and where it might lead best described how they played the game.

To describe players' general "play styles," we asked respondents to "...check the one that BEST describes, in general, how you played *America 2049*" from a series of statements (Table 4 contains the text of the statements). Sixty-nine players (66%) indicated, "While I played *America 2049*, the most important thing was the story and finding out what would happen next. I wanted to see where the story would go, what might happen to the characters, or how I might influence the narrative." An additional 27 players (26%) reported, "...the most important thing was playing like this was real-life." None of the respondents indicated that the social networking aspect of game play was the most significant factor that contributed to how they played. As a response to a question about *how they played*, however, the wording of the item is problematic and the result does not suggest that communicating was unimportant, but rather that it did not generally determine player decisions at the choice points. As we discuss in the section on "Forum posts" below, players in fact made extensive use of the discussion forums during the game launch.

Table 4: Count of player statements explaining their general motives during game play

Statement	# Of players	%
"While I played America 2049, the most important thing was the story and finding out what would happen next. I wanted to see where the story would go, what might happen to the characters, or how I might influence the narrative."	69	66%
"While I played America 2049, the most important thing was playing like this was real-life. I liked being able to do the things that I think I would do in the real world if this situation really existed."	27	26%
"While I played America 2049, the most important thing was figuring out the best way to win. Most of my play was about strategizing and thinking about how I could score points and figure the puzzles out."	4	4%
"While I played America 2049, the most important thing was "breaking the rules." I liked being able to do things that I probably wouldn't do in the real world if this situation existed."	2	2%
Other (Please describe what generally motivated your choices in the game.)	2	2%
"While I played America 2049, the most important thing was interacting and socializing with others who were also playing. It was more a space for me to connect with others than it was a game to be explored or won."	0	0%

Question 2. Is there a relationship between the categories of "moral reasoning" players use in the game and their willingness to reconsider issues?

There is no discernible relationship between a player's decisions at choice points during game play and her or his willingness to consider becoming active on issues (as indicated on the survey), nor is there a relationship between choices and a player's reported "play style." The majority of players (69/67%) indicated that the game's narrative and the possibility of influencing the storyline were the most influential factors when making game play choices. Additionally, as noted, the majority of respondents (85%) reported that the two game features most influential in prompting players to reconsider the issues were the game's overarching narrative and the specific experiences of the non-player characters.

A. For all players, pro-CAH choices generally dropped off immediately after the first choice point at Level 2, while principle-based, pro-DWF choices gradually increased from Level 5 through the last choice point.

Of the 14,929 users who logged on to the game, choice point data is available for 1,015 players on Levels 2–8. Of those, 302 players completed all five choice points. Because the majority of players did not complete the follow-up survey, we cannot speak to the factors that generally informed how those players made decisions during game play. *But all players scored the same number of points for*

answering choice-point questions: point values for rationale levels are the same. Thus, point value does not determine how players decided to explain their choices.

Figure 5 illustrates the 302 players' reasoning categories at the five choice points. Scanning from left to right across the two graphs, it is apparent that the majority of players made pro-DWF decisions across all levels with the exception of Level 2 (Chicago), which is the first choice point in the game, when players knew only that they worked for CAH and that DWF were described as terrorists. It is also evident that the proportions of reasoning levels changed across the three levels: principle-based, pro-CAH decisions dropped off after Level 2, while principle-based, pro-DWF rationales gradually increased from levels 5–8. At first glance, it appears as if player choices became increasingly pro-DWF as they progressed.

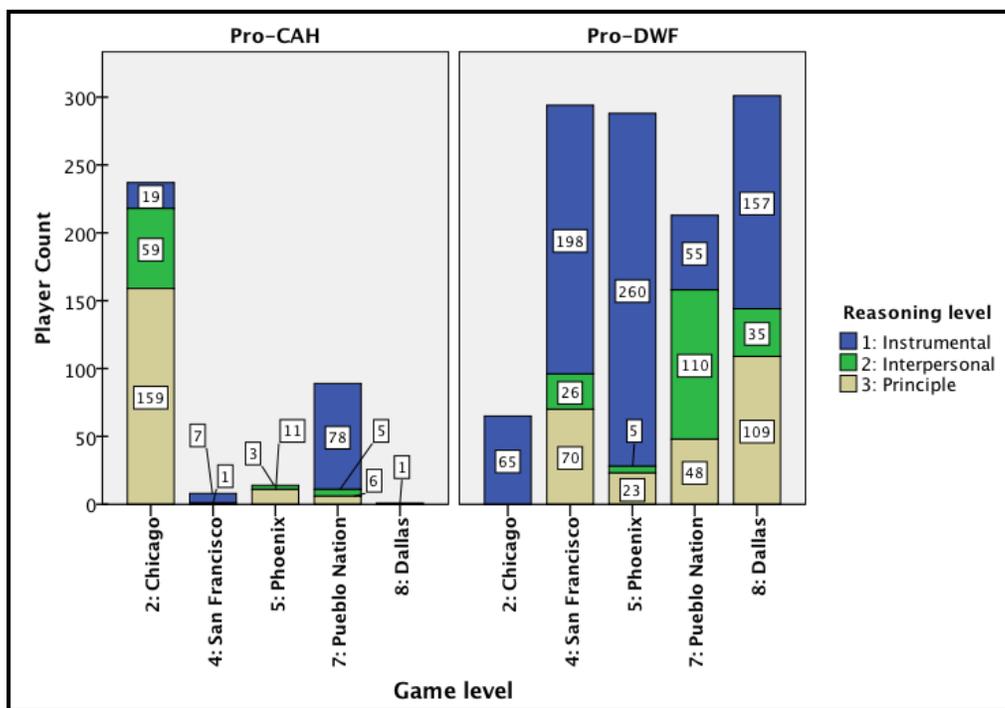


Figure 5: Count of players' rationale for each game level (N=302)

B. But the ability to answer as a double agent ensured that not all instrumental- or interpersonal-based choices were made for the same reasons. On levels with "double agent choices," ~40% of pro-DWF choices were explained with pro-CAH rationale.

Principle-based choices—either pro-DWF or pro-CAH—did not have "double agent options," thus they are unambiguously for one side or the other. But the language of several instrumental and interpersonal rationales allowed players to explain a choice that favored one faction in terms of supporting the other side's goals—in other words, playing as a double agent.

Figure 6 illustrates the rationales that players provided for their “pro-DWF” or “pro-CAH” choices on the three levels that had double agent options. As an example, 301 players made pro-DWF choices on Level 8: Dallas (represented in the bottom box of the second column in Figure 6), while only 1 player made a pro-CAH choice (pictured in the bottom box of the first column). Of those 301, however, 134 players (the blue second blue column in the bottom box) selected a pro-CAH rationale, meaning that their seemingly pro-DWF choice was driven by pro-CAH motives (or at least as they described it afterwards).

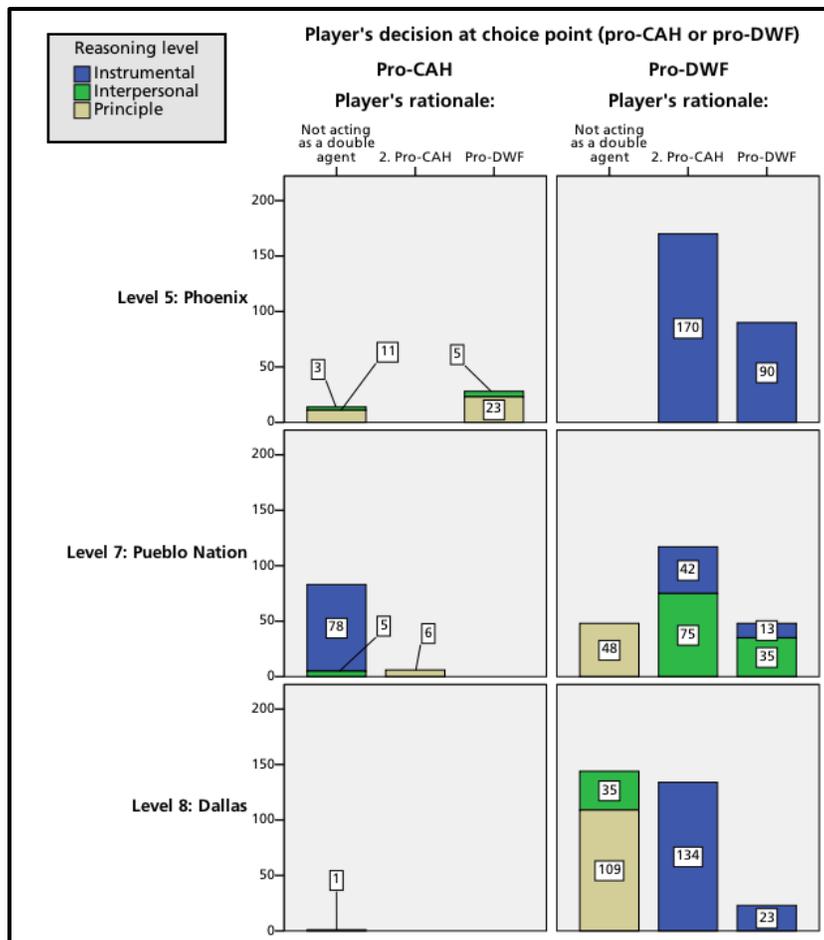


Figure 6: Count of pro-DWF/pro-CAH choices and “double agent” rationales by level (N=302/level)

C. Survey respondents’ choices trended similarly to the larger group of game players.

Figure 7 illustrates the reasoning levels for the 104 survey respondents for whom we have matching choice-point data, and trends similarly to the larger group described above (of which the survey respondents are approximately 35%). As with the larger group of players, survey respondents tended to take pro-DWF choices as the game progressed, but also frequently employed pro-CAH rationale when they had the opportunity.

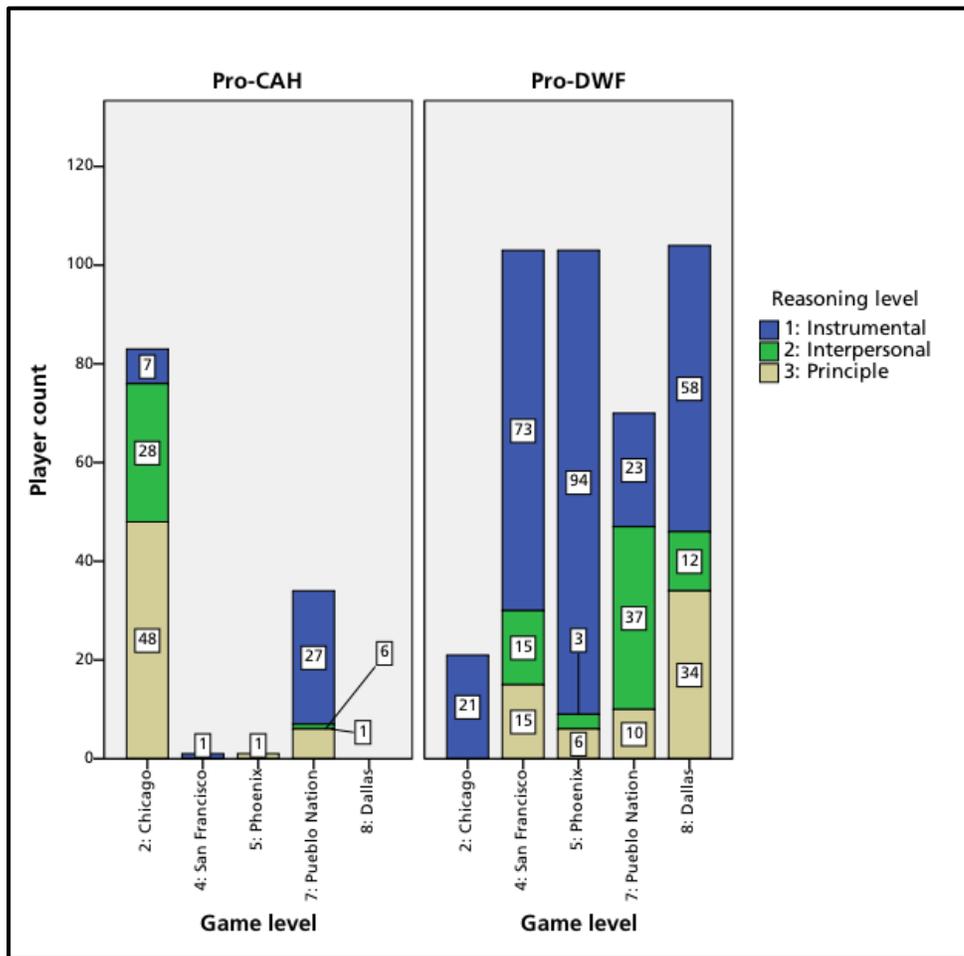


Figure 7: Count of survey respondent choice-point rationale (N=104)

Forum posts

Roughly 96% of all forum posts related strictly to game play and puzzle solving. For the remaining 4% of posts, two broad categories emerged: messages related to the choice points and messages about the issues.

Each game level had a forum in which players could post new messages to one another about game play, game play-related events, or any other topic players chose to address. The forums were not moderated, though Breakthrough did use them to pose questions related to the issues periodically, or to send out messages (in the guise of CAH) about real-world events.

For all game levels, 429 players posted 1,723 messages in 286 threads (i.e., specific topics related to a level), averaging four posts per player. Fifty-four survey respondents (51% of total survey respondents with game play data) posted 429 messages, or 25% of all messages. Survey respondents averaged 8

posts to the forums. The majority (~95%) of those messages related to game play, typical examples of which include:

- ◆ *Are there only 2 maps? 'Cause otherwise I'm stuck. All the fields done, puzzles solved, and I'm stuck on 2...Any help?*
- ◆ *I had found C-23. I tend to use an Excel spreadsheet every time I start a new level. It makes it easier to fill in the blanks. Please star if you like :-D*
- ◆ *You should get his alias in your messages. Look at the boarding pass with that name and it has a section with an IATA code for where he came from.*
- ◆ *Struggling on this answer, I have the client list and cross referenced with phone records because Sara says she hasn't called M, I end up with only 2 female names neither of which they will take as an answer...am I missing a clue? Last I checked it looked like M was a woman.*

The forums generated a large number of views (i.e., players looked at “threads,” or discussions among players inside the forums). Among all game players (N=14,929), there were a total of 50,931 views. As noted, many of the forum messages included requests for help or for hints from other players about puzzles or places to search for information. Thus many of the views probably related to searches for clues. But a number of views were also on threads directly related to discussions about the issues. For example, Breakthrough (staff in the guise of “Agent Loni”) created 11 threads entitled, “Agents: What Do You Think?” Each thread was dedicated to the issues addressed in that week’s game level. In total, these threads generated 44 messages, while they received 844 views. A relatively large number of players viewed these discussions, even if they did not leave comments about them.

Sixty-four comments, however, fell into one of two broad categories: (1) messages about the choice points and their possible meaning in the context of game play or as a means for the developers to learn more about players, and (2) messages about the issues that arose during game play.

Choice-point messages. In earlier levels, several players posted messages wondering about the purpose of the choice-point rationales and whether their responses would influence game outcomes. A few players expected to be “fired” or for CAH to make it clear that they had divined players’ intentions to join with DWF after reading the “psychological evaluations.” Unedited examples of these kinds of messages follow.

- ◆ *So far people who have been answering radically have not had a different experience than those who are toeing the line. I too have been giving the answers*

they want to hear but others in my network have answered differently and have the same experiences.

- ◆ *Actually, I thought that this was going to be the week we got fired. I mean we did just screw up Jeff Williams II family (even more). And you the saying: Don't mess with a man's family. Not to mention that we are 6 out of 12 weeks in. Usually they try throw a surprise half way through (at least on TV). So maybe next week? I am ready for a change.*
- ◆ *well, i am wondering if somehow revealing intentions of going rogue on this CAH secured chat will effect our attempt to dupe them in the end. i seriously doubt it. i mean, THAT sounds crazy. going rogue seems to be the point of this game so far. i think the anomie and cah will end up being connected? these two will be the common enemy as you "secretly" side with dwf- may be. besides creating dialogue about actual issues in the world (which this so far has failed to do) the only interesting or exciting aspect of this game would be to try to trick the cah. im so bored i figured id risk talking about it here.*
- ◆ *I've been answering the CAH surveys in the most radical ways possible (as well as asking in the comments section at the bottom whether or not I'm fired yet) and so far my boss has simply given me his undying trust (which is kind of stupid). I don't mind if I get booted from the CAH as long as I can keep playing; all I really want to do at this point is join DWF. However, the resources I have at CAH allow me to assist the DWF, so I don't mind if I stay on a little while longer.*
- ◆ *Hey, strategy is always good. Let us—hypothetically, of course—assume that we do, in fact, go rogue and attempt to bring down this horrible system. If we—hypothetically—do end up going rogue, we'd be dropped from or job right quick (I'm surprised it hasn't happened sooner...not that it would, I mean) and all of our resources would vanish. Where would we—hypothetically—go from there, I wonder...*

A smaller number of players stepped outside of the game when thinking about the role of the choice points.

- ◆ *I think this game is to get people to "go against the system" in a cyber-situation to see how they act. Like someone else said, this is probably to test the sentiment of the people who use facebook.*
- ◆ *I don't think people do IRL...but that's the allure of a game. For instance in many WW2 games I love to play as the Nazis however I personally do not approve of nor condone mass genocide or racial purity. My point is the context of a fantasy setting allows us to explore that which we would never involve ourselves in consciously. Long story short, being the bad guy (in a game) is a good dose of catharsis.*

- ◆ *I can't be sure however if I had to guess I would think so. I postulate this based on the fact that some of the questions asked in the performance reviews are normally one clearly CAH answer, only clearly DWF answer, and two that are somewhere in the middle. Maybe these questions are just designed to make us think like the Good Day Every Day videos however it could also be to gauge where we split if the game does. I think it wouldn't be a far leap to either side with Asaba or to continue with Williams. I also think the recent development of a "2nd team" could be indicative of that. For instance if you choose DWF then the 2nd team will stay with CAH and be after you and if you choose CAH then the 2nd team will go rogue and you will be on their tail.*
- ◆ *i found my answers to these different questions were more of a clever nature—saying what i thought fit best in context of the game—not actually reflecting my true thoughts. i suppose thats the point of playing the game!*

Issue-related messages. A larger number of the non-game-play messages related to the themes addressed in the game's narrative. These messages related to players' feelings and opinions about the content addressed in that week's narrative and were not strictly related to the choices they made. All messages were posted as part of a thread, but some carried on dialogue, while others were stand-alone posts. The following is an example of a dialogue that occurred after the issue of gay marriage arose in the game.

Loni:	<i>Do you think sexual orientation is an issue that should be government regulated? -Agent Loni [this is a Breakthrough employee posing the question]</i>
Karl:	<i>In & of itself - No.</i>
Gabriella:	<i>Nope!</i>
Samuel:	<i>Never.</i>
Francisco:	<i>Nope.</i>
Scott:	<i>No</i>
Sonny:	<i>Karl: Cryptic answer. If "in and of itself" means simply the fact of one's sexual orientation, are there some other aspects / behaviors related to sexual orientation that you believe should be government regulated?</i>

- Alain:** *I can see where Karl is coming from. I think what a person does in privacy is strictly their own business and beyond reproach. That said though not all aspects of a relationship is publicly appropriate. For instance two people kissing publicly is fine, but if you are making out right in the open for everyone to see that's wrong. I qualify the above statement by saying my view applies to homo and hetero sexual couples. In that aspect I think some things should be private however being "gay" or "straight" is no business of the government.*
- Sonny:** *But that's a matter of personal boundaries and good taste, not something I'd like to see the government regulate with laws. You?*
- Varis:** *not regulated EVER.*
- Kelly:** *Orientation? No. Practice? Only within the strict bounds of consensuality -- IE, only non-consensual acts should be regulated.*
- Alain:** *@ Kelly. I disagree. There are certain boundaries which must be drawn at a basic level. The key to maintaining freedom is keeping it at an "acceptable level". It's entirely possible to be TOO free. If everyone had total freedom there would anarchy. As such there needs to be a social contract upon which people agree to follow. I don't think it's to much to ask for people to keep their PDA in the home, or some other private place. I am a smoker of cigarettes and yet everywhere I go I am being infringed upon. In some places you can't even smoke a cigarette anymore, yet a person with the flu can walk around with their face uncovered without infraction. Now I admit seeing two people kiss is not detrimental to one's help but my point remains there are certain things people need to do to enforce the veneer of society otherwise what's the point?*
- Alain:** *Help was supposed to be health. Stupid laptop.*
- Paula:** *Are "social contacts" the job of the government and our laws?*
- Lauren:** *@ Paula. Yes, a social contract is the agreement between rulers and ruled in a nominally free society to accept certain restrictions in exchange for the benefits of government (army, social welfare programs, code of law etc).*

Serena: *the initial question is misleading - same sex sexual orientation is already influenced by existing regulations, both positively (discrimination and hate crime legislation) and negatively (DOMA for Gov't benefits).*

Heterosexual orientation has regulatory advantages in licensure of partnerships (marriage) with the attendant privileges (immunity from compulsion to testify against a partner, differing taxation, inheritance of deceased partner's estate if partner dies intestate, procedures for distribution of assets in the case of one partner leaving the other, etc)

The "elephant in the room" question is: should same sex partnerships have the same licensure, with the same responsibilities and privileges as heterosexual partnerships?

Yes.

Ray: *@alain- i see what youre saying, but at the same time i completely disagree. making out isnt that big of an offense. especially when i see hetero sexual couples snogging all the time in line at Starbucks. this also includes that they usually have their hands all over each other. when i met my ex on a first date, we went to see a movie, watched and enjoyed it, held each others hands half way through. when we got up to leave, we were the second to last couple to leave and he grabbed, me turned me around and planted one on my lips. we got the rest of a drink spilled on us. so we went to the bathroom, cleaned up and walked out to our cars. and we kissed again, and even though we were cold and wet, there was still magic there. its an expression of love. not lust! and if i were a woman, do you think me and david would have had a drink spilled on us? absolutely not!*

Other messages were posted "stand-alone," either because they went without a response in the forum or because a player simply wanted to make a statement. For example:

- ◆ *This is something that has been bugging me for a little bit, but I think this level really put it into focus. DWF is against the Abolition Amendment that would allow the various regional governments to secede from the U.S. But DWF is also FOR the sovereignty of the Pueblo Nation, which was gotten by... secession.*
- It seems to me like the main logic behind supporting PN is that this was a chance for American Indians to be free of the "White Man" (in Zia Tewa's words). What's the difference between this and, say, the desire of New Afrika (Chicago Level) to create an independent state more responsive to its citizenry?*
- I'm not coming down on this one way or another, but it seems that there's some internal conflict to DWF's positions. Or is the lesson of PN that without a*

strong U.S. central government, anarchy and violence caused by belligerent regional governments ensues?

- ◆ *Everyone has at some point in history. People are judgmental. There is religious persecution going on in the world because of racial biases. I have been judged for my beliefs on a daily basis because I speak my mind to whomever will listen. Everyone is being profiled in America now. The Patriot Act has ensured that no American citizen is safe from being considered a terrorist. We are treated like terrorists in our own country to make us feel safe from terrorists, does that make any sense? It's a false sense of security. They didn't protect us from 9/11, no amount of phone tapping, body scanning, body cavity searches is going to stop terrorists if they plan on attacking. Several times in history, the government has had intelligence that an impending attack is imminent, they failed to take any action to prevent it.*
- ◆ *I think we have a lot of freedom and privilege that we take for granted.*

SECTION III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Serious game play and thinking about human rights issues

Players who completed the post-game survey and posted messages in the game forums expressed satisfaction with both the game play mechanics and the multimedia components that drove the game's storyline. They enjoyed the combination of game play and compelling material about human rights. Though many of these players characterized themselves as frequent game players, a roughly equal number indicated that they played serious games only infrequently. For these players, the game managed to satisfy their need for compelling game play while helping them think about issues differently. Several survey comments reflect the enthusiasm about the integration of game play with human rights issues:

- ◆ *Very thought provoking. It was a game that made me think about more than solving puzzles*
- ◆ *This was an awesome game, different than any other game I've played or even heard of. I enjoyed reading the different articles, poems, etc. that I found while searching for clues.*
- ◆ *I think that this game provides good insight and awareness to the issues that this country faces day in, day out.*

As we noted above, the survey responses revealed that the narrative was likely the most compelling aspect of the game. Though we cannot generalize to the all players for whom we have choice-point data, the survey results from that 104 players indicate that 66% of them (69 players) felt that the story, and the opportunity to influence its outcomes, generally motivated how they made choices about game play. Additionally, 26% (27 players) answered that having the opportunity to "act as I might in real life" was the factor that best described their game play choices. The opportunity to influence narrative outcomes via role-play was compelling for many of the players who responded to the survey.

We found no evidence of a relationship between players' self-reported "styles" (that is, why they made the choices they did during game play) and the rationales they provided at the choice points. Indeed, as the game play data and several forum posts suggest, players had many reasons for justifying their choices: Some acted as they thought they might if this dystopia actually existed, some supplied answers they thought their in-game supervisors (i.e., CAH) might want to hear, some thought it cathartic to be a "bad guy," and some "played one side off the other" in pursuit of their own game objectives. Players were free to choose which side they would support and they did so for a variety of reasons.

But as the survey findings indicate, many players indicated some possibility of taking action in the real world based on their game play experiences. The data suggest that decisions made while playing do not somehow lead to similar decisions in the real world. Nor do players' decisions preclude them from taking any action in the real world. Rather, as comments suggest, players can "be bad" and still consider "being good" outside the game.

Using Kohlberg's moral reasoning schema as a framework was not a means to judge the moral rectitude of players' choices, but rather to look for relationships between how they actually played and post-hoc information they provided about why they played that way. While there is a pattern of principle-based, pro-DWF choices over time, there is also a pattern of subterfuge-based Instrumental and Interpersonal play. None of these align clearly to players' interest in reconsidering issues, or whether they might be willing to become active around them in the future.

While none of the respondents reported that the opportunity to discuss the issues with other players was influential in their thinking about these topics, some did use the forums to discuss the issues and many viewed those discussions, even if they did not comment. Though the majority of comments in the forums related to specific game play matters and general comments about the game, a small percentage (~5%) did focus on the issues. But the large number of discussion threads and the much larger number of views suggest that game play-related discussion and issues-related discussion (and sometimes a combination of the two) can co-exist inside a game and that forums can serve multiple purposes.

In a variety of ways, several players reported that the game was an educative experience. Four of the 59 players who reported they had reconsidered issues to some degree attributed this directly to artifacts they encountered in the game, including a painting about the Trail of Tears, newspaper articles about the women's suffrage movement, and photographs that depicted labor strife. Other respondents commented specifically on what they learned:

- ◆ *I did not have any knowledge about the hardships immigrants could face, and in gaining that knowledge I felt they should have an easier time.*
- ◆ *I had thought that the labor rights issue was over, and it was more of a matter of balancing it between who gets the power. But labor rights, I found, was more than just unionizing, it was about protecting the workers.*
- ◆ *I know being an immigrant is hard NOW, but I hadn't realized how much harder it was back in the early days.*
- ◆ *I never really realized what challenges women faced in gaining the right to vote.*

- ◆ *you identify with the characters that you are helping and so their problems become yours. also, the placement of historical artifacts taps into the cultural heritage of many white americans and shows how our immigrant ancestors were once discriminated against the way some immigrants (esp mexican/middle eastern) now are*

Recommendations

As the survey responses suggest, serious game players are willing to engage with human rights-related issues in a game space. The *America 2049* game launch suggests that people who might not ordinarily be interested in serious games, but who are very interested in thinking about human rights issues, are willing to play these types of games when they feel that the game play and the treatment of the issues are integrated effectively. Should Breakthrough continue to develop serious games as a means to engage a wider audience around these issues and to build upon the successful launch, they might consider the following recommendations.

1. Consider introducing other game elements earlier that might bring more players “into the fold.”

Introducing game play elements that appeal to many types of players might increase player retention over time. The puzzle-solving elements in *America 2049* appeal to certain players, just as other types of game mechanics will appeal to other players. Mechanics that allow for quicker feedback and rewards, in addition to puzzles, might draw in a broader audience of game players and ensure that they are exposed to the unfolding narrative.

2. Consider polling those players who did not persist.

Feedback from the players who did not persist would be valuable for several reasons. Feedback from players about their interest in the issues addressed in the game and how they are presented would be useful to learn more about whether certain players might be put off by the presentation. If Breakthrough is considering “expanding the dialogue” about these issues among people with different perspectives, knowing whether certain players felt that their perspectives were not represented could provide information about how to structure issues such that they seem more approachable.

A. And consider polling those who visited the sites of conscience.

Given the game’s status as an alternate-reality game, it would be valuable to learn more about how many players visited the sites of conscience after hearing about them through game play and how they incorporated those visits into their thinking about the issues and their willingness to become more active around them.

3. Structure dialogues about human rights.

While there were forum posts about the issues, they were a small minority of the overall communications among players. Breakthrough did periodically introduce questions into the forums as a means to generate discussion about the issues, but those threads tended to be limited when compared to the game play threads. Assigning points for those kinds of posts might be one option, but it introduces external motivation that might not promote “genuine dialogue.” Another means might be to introduce the dialogue into game play.

4. Allow players to experiences the consequences of game play choices.

Several players were disappointed that their decisions did not actually change the game outcomes. While it raises questions about development resources, enabling players to change game endings based on their decisions might be a way to encourage more structured dialogue about human rights issues. For the population of players who persisted to the survey, the narrative was compelling and corresponded to feelings they already had about these issues. For others, however, having the opportunity to play scenarios out might encourage new thinking about the reality of depriving others of rights, or the complexity of maintaining societies that allow for competing visions of “the right.”

SECTION IV. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Choice-point rationales

Choice-point rationale, Level 2: Chicago

	Track A: Player breaks up the trafficking scheme	Track B: Player goes after Asaba
Instrumental	"People in the community are more likely to give us the information we need now that they've seen us do a good deed."	"Williams wanted us to go after Asaba, so that's what we did. I'm just doing my job."
Interpersonal	"Human trafficking is illegal and they need to be punished. We've got to have order, otherwise everything falls apart."	"Asaba broke the law by breaking quarantine. We can't have people doing whatever they want."
Principle	"Human trafficking is wrong—it takes away people's freedom and we have to stop it."	"If Asaba is infected we need to bring him in, for him and for the community. Maybe they can treat him, but we can be sure he doesn't infect others."

Choice-point rationale, Level 4: San Francisco

	Track A: Player lets the SerennAide raid go ahead	Track B: Player stops the raid
Instrumental	"I wanted to earn Asaba's trust. By letting the raid go ahead, I've got a better chance of winning him over in the future."	"Williams and CAH ordered me to prevent the strike on the plant and that's what I did. DWF are lawbreakers and need to be stopped."
Interpersonal	"SerennAide might keep people calmer than they would be otherwise, but I think most wouldn't like to have their ability to think taken away."	"SerennAide is a part of what's keeping people calm nowadays and allowing us to have some order. The raid had to be stopped."
Principle	"This stuff has taken away people's right to think for themselves. Everybody has got the right to think their own thoughts and feel their own feelings."	"People were unhappy before SerennAide. It doesn't take anything away from them and nobody has to suffer needlessly from anxiety."

Choice-point rationale, Level 5: Phoenix

	Track A: Player keeps Cynthia in prison	Track B: Player lets Cynthia go
Instrumental	"Espinoza needs to stay in prison and that festival can't happen. I'm not risking my neck for something like 'the need for diversity.' "	A: (pro-CAH): "With Espinoza free, I've got a much better chance of Asaba trusting me and getting us more access to information about DWF." B: (pro-DWF): "I really don't see the harm in that festival. Besides, if we scratch her back, she might scratch ours."
Interpersonal	"That festival was too divisive. If we want a society that promotes equality, what we need is more like-mindedness and less diversity."	"Let her go and have the festival—there will probably be less resentment. People can celebrate as they want—it keeps the peace and there's no harm done."
Principle	"Celebrating diversity at the expense of unity hurts individuals—it makes them focus on what's different, instead of the same, and chips away at what keeps us together."	"People should have the right to be who they want to be and decide their own identities. Diversity doesn't mean people can't be unified."

Choice-point rationale, Level 7: Pueblo Nation

	Track A: Player tells William, Sr. where Asaba is	Track B: Player tells Williams, Jr. where Asaba is
Instrumental	"The order was to locate Asaba and that's what we've done. What happens to the Pueblo Nation is up to Williams."	A (pro-CAH): "Trust—by giving Junior Williams Asaba's location, we're guaranteed to get access to Mnemosyne's whereabouts and identity. My job is to bring her in." B: (pro-DWF) "I'm just covering my bases. We don't know if we might need Asaba to help us out some day."
Interpersonal	"Asaba is breaking the law and he's got to be brought in. How could I justify letting him go to all the people who respect the law?"	A: (pro-CAH): "I don't see how their relationship is important to bringing DWF down. There are other ways for us to track down M." B: (pro-Asaba) "Regardless of what else they might have done, I don't see how we can justify splitting these two apart."

	Track A: Player tells William, Sr. where Asaba is	Track B: Player tells Williams, Jr. where Asaba is
Principle	<p>A: "By bringing Asaba in, there's a chance that we can prevent DWF from tearing everything apart. We might save lives and keep society together."</p> <p>B: "Homosexuality is wrong. People of the same sex are not meant to be together."</p>	<p>"These two people are in love and I can't split them apart. Nothing is worth pulling two people apart like that."</p>

Choice-point rationale, Level 8: Dallas

	Track A: Player gives Jeff & Cynthia Asaba's location	Track B: Player keeps the location to her/himself
Instrumental	<p>A: (pro-CAH): "By telling Jeff and Cynthia, they won't have any more questions about my loyalty to DWF now. And that gets me closer to M."</p> <p>B: (pro-DWF): "There's a chance we might need Asaba one of these days, so let's have a favor to call in."</p>	<p>"And give up the opportunity for Asaba to tell CAH where M. is? My job is to do just that."</p>
Interpersonal	<p>"I agree that Asaba broke the law and has to do his time, but this treatment doesn't fit the crimes he has committed. This goes beyond fair punishment."</p>	<p>"Look, Asaba has to pay his debt. He broke the law, was caught, and now he's got to receive his punishment. That's the way things work."</p>
Principle	<p>"Nobody, regardless of the crime, deserves to be treated that way. It isn't justice when human rights are violated."</p>	<p>"We can put a stop to the damage DWF is doing. If we get M's location, we can bring an end to a lot of suffering—the life of one for many isn't a bad exchange."</p>

Appendix B: Follow-up survey text (originally online at surveymonkey.com)

Thank you for clicking through to the survey!

We would like to learn more about *America 2049* players and how they played the game. Your responses will help us understand more about the relationship between “serious game” play and players’ perceptions of the kinds of issues you encountered while playing *America 2049*.

There are between 17–24 questions (depending on your responses). Please answer them all! This shouldn’t take more than 10 minutes. Your responses are confidential, strictly for research purposes, and not for marketing.

Thank you very much!

—Breakthrough (<http://www.breakthrough.tv/>)

About You

1. What e-mail address do you use for your Facebook account?
(This lets us link your survey responses to game play. It’s for research only and we won’t share this with anyone!)
2. What sex are you? [Male; Female; Intersex; I prefer not to say]
3. How old are you? [18 or younger; 19–29; 30–39; 40–49; 50–59; 60–69; 70 or older]
4. What country do you currently live in?
5. If you live in the United States, what state or territory do you currently live in?
6. Which of the following best describes the area you live in? [Rural; Urban; Suburban]
7. What is the highest level of school you’ve completed? [Elementary school; Middle school; High school or equivalent; College; Master’s degree; Ph.D.; Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)]
8. How do you identify yourself? [Arab; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black; Caucasian/White; Hispanic; Indigenous or Aboriginal; Latino; Multiracial; I prefer not to say/I do not identify by race; Other (please specify)]
9. In general, which label BEST describes your political leanings toward the social, political, and economic issues that you encountered in the game? [Very liberal; Liberal; Moderate; Conservative; Very conservative; I prefer not to say]

10. About how often do you play commercial video games? (This includes computer games, games on social networking sites like Facebook, consoles like the PS3, Wii, or Xbox 360, and handhelds like mobile phones or the Nintendo DS) [Never; A few times a year; A few times a month; 1–3 days a week; 4–6 days a week; Every day of the week]
11. About how often do you play “serious games”? (This includes games on any platform that address social justice issues, educational games, or games to promote social change.) [Never; A few times a year; A few times a month; 1–3 days a week; 4–6 days a week; Every day of the week]
12. From the statements below, check the one that BEST describes, in general, how you played:
 - While I played America 2049, the most important thing was figuring out the best way to win. Most of my play was about strategizing and thinking about how I could score points and figure the puzzles out.*
 - While I played America 2049, the most important thing was the story and finding out what would happen next. I wanted to see where the story would go, what might happen to the characters, or how I might influence the narrative.*
 - While I played America 2049, the most important thing was playing like this was real-life. I liked being able to do the things that I think I would do in the real world if this situation really existed.*
 - While I played America 2049, the most important thing was “breaking the rules.” I liked being able to do things that I probably wouldn’t do in the real world if this situation existed.*
 - While I played America 2049, the most important thing was interacting and socializing with others who were also playing. It was more a space for me to connect with others than it was a game to be explored or won.*
 - Other (Please describe what generally motivated your choices in the game.)
13. Of the social, political, or economic issues that you encountered in the game (listed below), to what extent, if any, did you reconsider your views on the issue in real life?

	"Nothing I experienced in the game led me to reconsider my views on this issue in real life."	"I reconsidered this issue in real life slightly."	"I spent a lot of time reconsidering this issue in real life."	"I've changed my mind from how I used to think about this issue based on my experiences during the game."
Censorship	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Civil rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forced migration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gay marriage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Immigrant experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Immigration policy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Labor rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Human trafficking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interracial marriage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Racial profiling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious freedom	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reproductive rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voting rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women's rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. If you DID reconsider any of the issues from above, please select the issue below and then check which aspect of the game was MOST effective in influencing you: [Repeat from list of issues above]

15. Complete the sentence: "The aspect of the game that was most influential in leading me to reconsider [Issue 1] was..." {Discussions about the issue with other players in the game; The game characters' experiences or actions; The game's storyline; My decisions about how to lead my ground team in the game; An artifact that I encountered during game play (Please specify)}

16. Briefly, please explain why you reconsidered the issue, to whatever extent you did.
17. If you reconsidered a SECOND issue, please select the issue below and then check which aspect of the game was MOST effective in influencing you: [Repeat from list of issues above]
18. Complete the sentence: "The aspect of the game that was most influential in leading me to reconsider [Issue 2] was..." {Discussions about the issue with other players in the game; The game characters' experiences or actions; The game's storyline; My decisions about how to lead my ground team in the game; An artifact that I encountered during game play (Please specify)}
19. Briefly, please explain why you reconsidered the issue, to whatever extent you did.

Out-of-Game Activities

20. BEFORE you played the game, what social, political, or economic issues that you encountered in the game were you active in (i.e., volunteering, organizing, campaigning, demonstrating, or participating in some other way)? Please check all that apply: [Same as list above]
21. For any of the issues on which you were NOT already active, how likely are you to become active on an issue after playing the game? [It's completely unlikely that I'll become active on an issue I encountered in the game; There's a small chance that I'll become active on an issue I encountered in the game; There's a strong chance that I'll become active on an issue I encountered in the game.]
22. For which issues is it possible that you could become active? Please check all that apply: [Same as list above]
23. If you have already become active on an issue BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH THE GAME, please describe what you are doing:
24. Is there anything you would like to share with us about your experiences playing the game or any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix C: List of levels and themes/issues addressed in the game narrative

Game level	Themes/Issues
Level 1: Portland, OR	Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), internment camps, forced quarantine, racial profiling
Level 2: Chicago, IL	Women's rights, human trafficking, forced prostitution, vulnerable status of new immigrants
Level 3: New York, NY	Involuntary servitude, labor rights and protections
Level 4: San Francisco, CA	Forced experimentation, history of exclusion acts in America, censorship
Level 5: Phoenix, AZ	Latino experiences, marriage equality, heritage, diversity
Level 6: Birmingham, AL	Interracial marriage, reproductive rights, segregation, racism, civil rights
Level 7: Pueblo Nation, NM	Native rights, forced migration
Level 8: Dallas, TX	Native rights, forced migration, GBLTQ (gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, queer) rights
Level 9: Pigeon Forge, TN	Underground Railroad, intolerant groups (religious or otherwise), political discourse incorporating threats of violence, marriage equality, GBLTQ rights
Level 10: Minneapolis, MN	Immigrant labor building, European migration, Jewish history
Level 11: Detroit, MI	Democracy, voting rights, women's suffrage
Level 12: Washington, D.C.	Constitutional rights, marginalized community protections, celebrations of multiculturalism and diversity, divided we fall

Appendix D: Main characters, groups, and plot points in *America 2049*

Characters

Jefferson Williams II. The players' initial "boss," the leader and founder of the Council on American Heritage. He is actively working to complete the dismantling of the American government. He's trying to do the work of "true democracy," and believes that a heterogeneous group of states means that nobody gets true freedom. He is a dangerous extremist.

Ken Asaba. A Ugandan national who fled from intolerance in his native country. Asaba is hunted by CAH throughout the game, as he is wanted for escaping quarantine for a "dangerous and contagious disease" that he never had. He is in a relationship with Jefferson Williams III ("Jeff").

Jefferson Williams III ("Jeff"). The son of Jefferson Williams II, who works for Divided We Fall. Ken Asaba's partner, and Bonnie Williams's sister.

Lin Xue ("Mnemosyne," "M," "DWF leader"). A media-savvy and widely-known dissident, she is a founder and leader of the subversive group Divided We Fall. She releases a weekly video rallying people to the DWF cause.

Groups

Council on American Heritage ("CAH"). The Council on American Heritage is a collaborative effort among private and regional government agencies. CAH conducts research, gathers intelligence, and is deputized to participate in certain law-enforcement activities. CAH pays lip service to the sovereign will of the people, but in reality they protect the will of certain people. They're actively working to defeat the DWF and eliminate the federal government. The military coup that occurs midway through the game is led by a core of CAH extremists; while the group publicly disavows the coup, in reality, the orders came from CAH's top man.

Divided We Fall ("DWF"). A group working to wrench the United States back to a time when being gay wasn't a crime, social security and equal employment legislation still existed, and the FDA and EPA could do more than issue "helpful guidelines." They think that information can set people free, and send out news bulletins and action requests seeking support for their cause. CAH considers DWF to be a dangerous subversive group, pointing to their efforts to destroy SerennAide production lines, create and distribute fake RFID chips, and assist people in circumventing travel restrictions. Led by M, Ken Asaba, Jeff Williams, Cynthia Espinoza.

Definitions

SerennAide. SerennAide is a fifth-generation self-altering mood stabilizer. The drug is propagated through municipal water supplies. Studies suggest that SerennAide may have minor side effects, such as suggestibility, reduced initiative, and a reduction in critical thinking skills. The wide distribution of SerennAide through the water supply has been credited with significant reduction in crime. The drug is made by SerennCo, a biopharmaceutical company.

SerennCo. SerennCo is a biopharmaceutical company in San Francisco. Their primary product is SerennAide, a widely used mood stabilizer. Their other products include other self-altering psychoactive drugs intended to regulate and eliminate problematic behavior. SerennCo does very little private commerce; their primary clientele are governmental bodies around the world. SerennCo is a major contributor to CAH's operational funds, and CAH places a high priority on the company's continued success.

Game summary

Level 1: Portland, Oregon

Story: The Council on American Heritage (“CAH”) has recruited the players to conduct a campaign fighting domestic crime and unrest. The players’ first mission is to locate a person (Ken Asaba) who has allegedly escaped quarantine for a dangerous and contagious disease. (It is later made clear that he did not have this disease, and was incarcerated during domestic travel due to racial profiling.)

This week introduces the character of Jefferson Williams II, CAH’s leader. At first, players learn about the world only through CAH’s highly biased filters: for example, the nation is troubled by disease brought in by immigrants, and Divided We Fall (“DWF”) is a subversive group is trying to undermine their way of life.

Player Actions: Learn to use the Facebook interface. Learn about the world of the game through Facebook content and our in-game search portal. Search for Ken Asaba, and get clues indicating that he might have fled to Chicago.

Themes: Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), internment camps, forced quarantine, racial profiling.

Level 2: Chicago, Illinois

Story: CAH requires players to track Ken Asaba. He has gone to Chicago, which has emerged as a new center for black American power. Asaba contacts players directly via a video telling them to question whether they know who they're working for and what their motivations are. He links them to DWF's own web site, but they can't access it—they don't yet have a pass code that would give them the security clearance to view it. Instead, they get a CAH warning against consorting with such a dangerous dissident organization.

While players are searching for Asaba, CAH also has them investigating a human trafficking ring that is kidnapping vulnerable, newly immigrated women and children and forcing them into brothels in other regions. The ring is run by an organized crime group known as Associated Service Professionals ("ASP"). This ring is in no way associated with CAH or with DWF, but CAH may intentionally blur the lines to make players think the trafficking ring and Asaba are related.

Player Action: Pinpoint the headquarters of the human trafficking ring. Crack codes related to routes and movement of its victims. Search for clues to Asaba's whereabouts. Speculate on the truth behind CAH/DWF.

Themes: Women's rights, human trafficking, forced prostitution, vulnerable status of new immigrants.

Level 3: New York, New York

Story: Asaba has gone to New York. CAH informs players that Asaba has ties to an operation manufacturing counterfeit RFID (Radio-frequency identification) chips—that must be how he is traveling so freely and why he is so difficult to track. Asaba contacts the players again by hacking into their interface and sending a message: He's keeping tabs and thinks they might be good allies, but he doesn't know if he can trust them yet. He'll be keeping a close eye on them to get a feeling for their character.

DWF turns out to be behind the RFID counterfeiting ring, using them to help indentured servants—primarily immigrants, though also citizens who have succumbed to crushing credit debt—to escape their forced labor contracts with their employers and start new lives elsewhere. Players are also introduced to Ziyad Youssef, a Syrian man who was lured into a technical job as a biochemist with promises of good pay and a good life, but has found himself in slavery-like conditions, which are endangering his family.

At the end of this week, the masked and anonymous leader of Divided We Fall releases a video ultimatum to the makers of SerennAide: Cease production, or suffer the consequences. The players will be trying to piece together the leader's identity, but there will be insufficient information to do so.

Player Action: The players help to intercept DWF communication among its agents and analyze it to disrupt the RFID counterfeiting and distribution process. Players learn how labor conditions deteriorate when legal protections are not enforced or non-existent. Players can choose whether to blow the whistle on the RFID counterfeiting ring, or let it continue.

Themes: Involuntary servitude, forced labor, labor rights and protections.

Level 4: San Francisco, CA

Story: Divided We Fall is planning a strike on a key SerennAide manufacturing facility to halt production entirely; operatives plan to disrupt the plant's security and destroy the machinery that runs the line. To achieve this goal, Asaba reaches out to the players and tries to recruit them as double agents working within CAH on behalf of DWF.

Meanwhile, CAH has the players working hard to try to prevent the strike against the California SerennAide plant—if the players can get key information to CAH on the strike, they can ensure that it fails.

At the same time, however, CAH believes identifying the masked leader of DWF may prove to be a better strategy than stopping the raid. Ultimately, CAH is willing to sacrifice SerennAide production if it means taking out the DWF leader, so they begin to encourage players to infiltrate DWF.

To further this goal, CAH gives the players a higher level of security clearance. This means players can now access the true DWF site and information criticizing CAH and its leadership. Players also gain access to information gathered by biochemist Ziyad Youssef, who is now using his skills to help DWF.

Players also learn about the coming ballot initiative, in which each state will choose whether or not to dissolve the Constitution and return to being 52 sovereign states (or, in some cases, clusters of states as new sovereign nations.) CAH is for this dissolution; DWF is against it.

(Note: throughout the game both CAH and DWF encourage players to perform the same missions, leaving the player free to decide where their loyalties lie without disrupting or changing the underlying game play.)

Player Action: Players collect information leading to the time, methodology, and location of the strike. They can choose whether or not to prevent it. Players begin to learn more about the game's recent history, including about the ongoing presidential crisis. Players locate personal information about the DWF leader.

Themes: Forced medical experimentation, history of exclusion acts in America, censorship.

Level 5: Phoenix, Arizona

Story: CAH has the players still seeking the location of Asaba and DWF's leader. Asaba introduces the players to a few new team members, including Jefferson Williams III ("Jeff"). Players may at first be suspicious of Jeff, but it soon becomes clear that he and Asaba are in a serious romantic relationship.

DWF gives the players a test mission to fulfill using their CAH resources. The DWF needs to help their agent Cynthia Espinoza, a third-generation American whose family is originally from Mexico City. Cynthia fights ethnic division laws, and is the main organizer of the subversive Latino cultural festival.

The players will also find clues that lead to deeper information about the unity / dissolution conflict, and culture and diversity.

Player Action: Earn DWF's trust by completing the mission. Choose whether to pass Cynthia Espinoza's information on to CAH or not.

Themes: Latino experiences, marriage equality, heritage, diversity.

Level 6: Birmingham, Alabama

Story: Jefferson Williams III ("Jeff") learns that his sister is pregnant as the result of an interracial relationship, which is strictly forbidden in the New Southern Confederacy. He asks the players to help Bonnie (the sister) and Thomas (her love interest) escape to Chicago (without letting their father know), so Bonnie and Thomas can live a happy life together. Just one catch—their father has Bonnie locked up.

Through a video testimonial, Jeff reveals more about his own history as a gay man growing up in the New Southern Confederacy, and describes how he came to join up with DWF.

M also sends out a new video. It's a public statement on the coming ballot initiative for dissolving the Constitution. She speaks eloquently in favor of standing together as one nation, and protecting the freedoms of all people.

Player Action: Players help Jeff's sister get out of Birmingham. Players learn that reproductive rights in 2049 are very limited, perhaps non-existent.

Themes: Interracial marriage, reproductive rights, segregation, racism, civil rights

Level 7: Pueblo Nation, New Mexico

Story: The players have a solid lead on Asaba's whereabouts, and he's within their reach, in New Mexico. CAH is now calling on them to track down his exact location before he can slip away, yet again.

Meanwhile, Jeff contacts the players, asking them to find Asaba to warn him that Jefferson Williams II has become more dangerous than ever, and is now after Asaba, personally.

As players determine Asaba's location, he suddenly flees to a nearby reservation and enlists the aid of a local leader in turning away New South law enforcement officials, who are trying to take him into custody. He is effectively under asylum protection.

Meanwhile, Jefferson Williams II issues a public statement saying that DWF has kidnapped his pregnant daughter. The statement is an effort to rally public sympathy to his side. "These monsters don't care about freedom," he says. "They only care about blinding your God-given sense of what is right and wrong."

Player Action: Players track down Asaba's location, and choose whom to tell—Jeff or CAH.

Themes: Native rights, forced migration

Level 8: Dallas, Texas

Story: Tanks roll into the reservation to capture Asaba and immobilize his allies, leading to the galvanizing of various rights groups and interests that had been

too disparate to agree on anything previously. Asaba is captured. While he is imprisoned, he is the victim of abusive treatment. He also tells players about his personal life as a gay man from Uganda.

On our external sites, news media explode with outrage, on behalf of Asaba and the Pueblo Nation, but also on behalf of Williams II and his "kidnapped" daughter, Bonnie.

CAH speaks out defending the decision to keep Asaba incarcerated as a defensive move aimed at preventing the spread of disease and dissent at home. The DWF leader speaks out, too, calling for the immediate release of Asaba.

At the end of the week, Asaba is freed by a strike of agents from DWF and other groups.

Player Action: Through the week, they must help track down information on where Asaba is being held, and under what conditions. The players may choose to help Asaba escape or not.

Themes: Native rights, forced migration, GBLTQ (Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, Transgender, and Queer) issues.

Level 9: Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

Story: The DWF leader turns players' attention back to the events of level 3—her people have discovered that the routes that ASP (Associated Service Professionals) are using relate to the movement of black market nuclear weapons, and not just people. (During the course of this week, players will be given records showing that many of these weapons disappeared from the U.S. arsenal during upheaval in the 2030s.)

This week, the DWF asks the players to search for new data from ASP in order to discover where the nukes are now, and if possible, who put them there. Players search for and find some of them... but not all of them.

Meanwhile, Asaba and Jeff are troubled by Asaba's brush with death, and quickly travel to Vermont, the one state upholding the Universal Human Rights Declaration, to get married.

Player Action: Players try to track the current locations of several nuclear weapons. They are unable to account for some.

Themes: Underground railroad, intolerant groups (religious or otherwise), political discourse incorporating threats of violence, marriage equality, GBLTQ issues.

Level 10: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Story: CAH embarks on another push to find DWF's leader and render it powerless by way of eliminating its leader. Asaba tells the players to play along and not worry—DWF has a plan.

With the help of information collected by the players, Jefferson Williams II successfully identifies "M" (Lin Xue) as the leader of DWF. He thanks the players for their good work. Shortly thereafter, an unsuccessful attempt is made on Lin Xue's life. She is saved only thanks to the help of Sara Moscovici, her friend and confidante, who has helped her to get her messages out to the public this whole time. In the turmoil, Xue has the opportunity to escape house arrest, but she refuses.

Since her anonymity is no longer protecting her, Lin Xue decides to go public at the end of the week and lobbies for votes to keep the nation united. She explains her family history and drives home some of the central messages of the game: Diversity builds strength; we must remain vigilant against the evils of the past if we hope to avoid them in the future.

She announces a plan to build a new memorial to diversity. The memorial would be an attempt at a fresh start, replacing some of the cultural artifacts that have been lost.

Player Action: Search for clues to the DWF's leader's identity and locate her HQ. (Asaba encourages players to go along—Lin Xue was on the verge of revealing her identity anyway.)

Themes: Immigrant labor building, European migration, Jewish history.

Level 11: Detroit, Michigan

Story: Players are faced with the impending balloting initiative, which will decide whether the Constitution is dissolved. But the various interests involved aren't content to leave the initiative up to chance—Jefferson Williams II is working with ASP to rig the result. Players must work to uncover their plans and stymie them to protect the integrity of the balloting.

DWF and CAH both speak out after the polls close with their opinion of the result. DWF also announces details for contributing material to their memorial.

Shortly after the ballot, CAH's top leadership meets with the leadership of the ASP—and kills them (though this is not revealed until next week). Williams II doesn't want to risk leaving behind incriminating witnesses, win or lose.

Player Action: Search for the plans of ASP to destroy the election. Defend the balloting process from those forces rigging the result. Vote in the balloting initiative. Send in a physical piece of artwork or narrative of their own experiences related to the game and its story, and their own personal or family histories.

Themes: Democracy, voting rights, women's suffrage.

Level 12: Washington, DC.

Story: There will be a national gathering to define the final agreement to keep the United States united, led by a single executive office once again; leaders from every region will come together to ratify the final agreement. However, there is one exception: the regions in support of CAH are boycotting the conference.

Soon, players find out why. The ASP leader that Williams II had killed last week had a trigger set to go off in the event of his death—it sends a message out to the public that spills the beans on Williams II's plans. Working with ASP, he has planted nuclear bombs in key positions around the nation, intended to completely shatter any remaining federal infrastructure and destroy any hope that the nation can stand united again, ballot initiative or no. Players must find the locations of the bombs and disarm them in time.

Thanks to the crime syndicate's action, the CAH leadership are rounded up by other members of the group, who had no part in the plot; Williams II and his close aides will be tried for their crimes against the state. Asaba and Jeff announce they are re-committing to each other—and to working together to build a better future.

Player Action: Find the locations of the missing nukes and disarm them before they destroy the country.

Themes: Constitutional rights, marginalized community protections, celebrations of multiculturalism and diversity, "divided we fall."