



Beyond Binary Choices:

How Players Engage with Morality

Amanda Lange

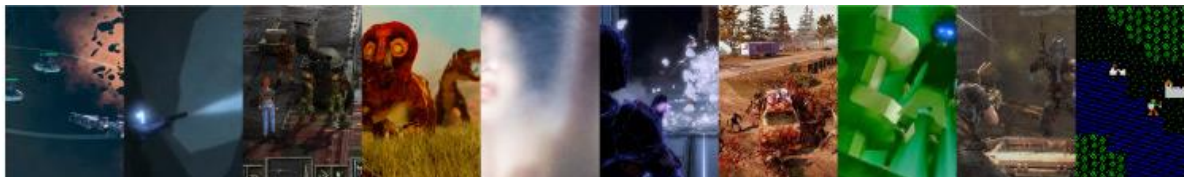
Technical Evangelist, Microsoft



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FABLE™

BLACK
&
WHITE™





*"My prediction is: all you guys, you're just gonna be nice. Sickeningly, sycophantically nice to each other. And it makes me sick, because you know, in a game like Fable, we spent hours; we spent months, months and years crafting the evil side of Fable, and only ten percent of people actually did the evil side. Come on. You're supposed to be **gamers**."*





Totally Me



We know



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SurveyMonkey™



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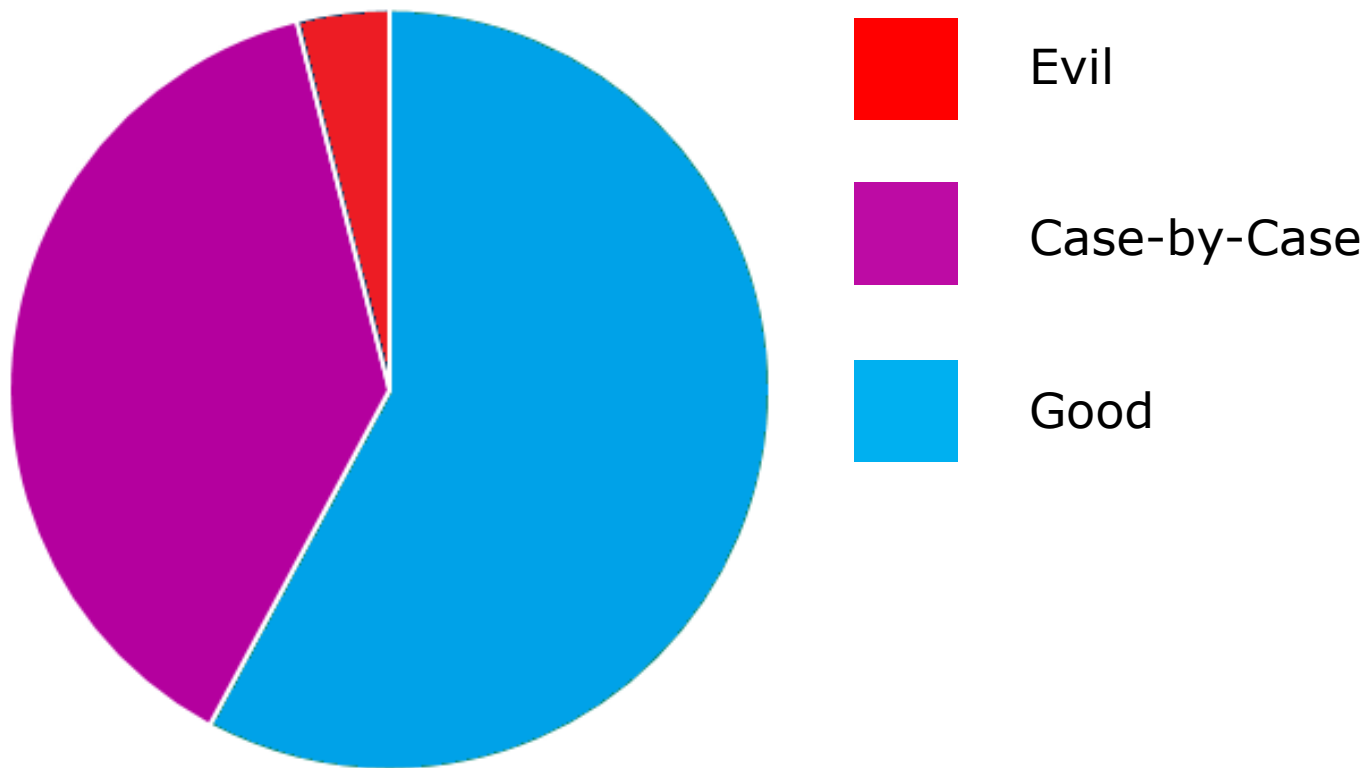




So Question for You



Good Vs. Evil – Just One Playthrough

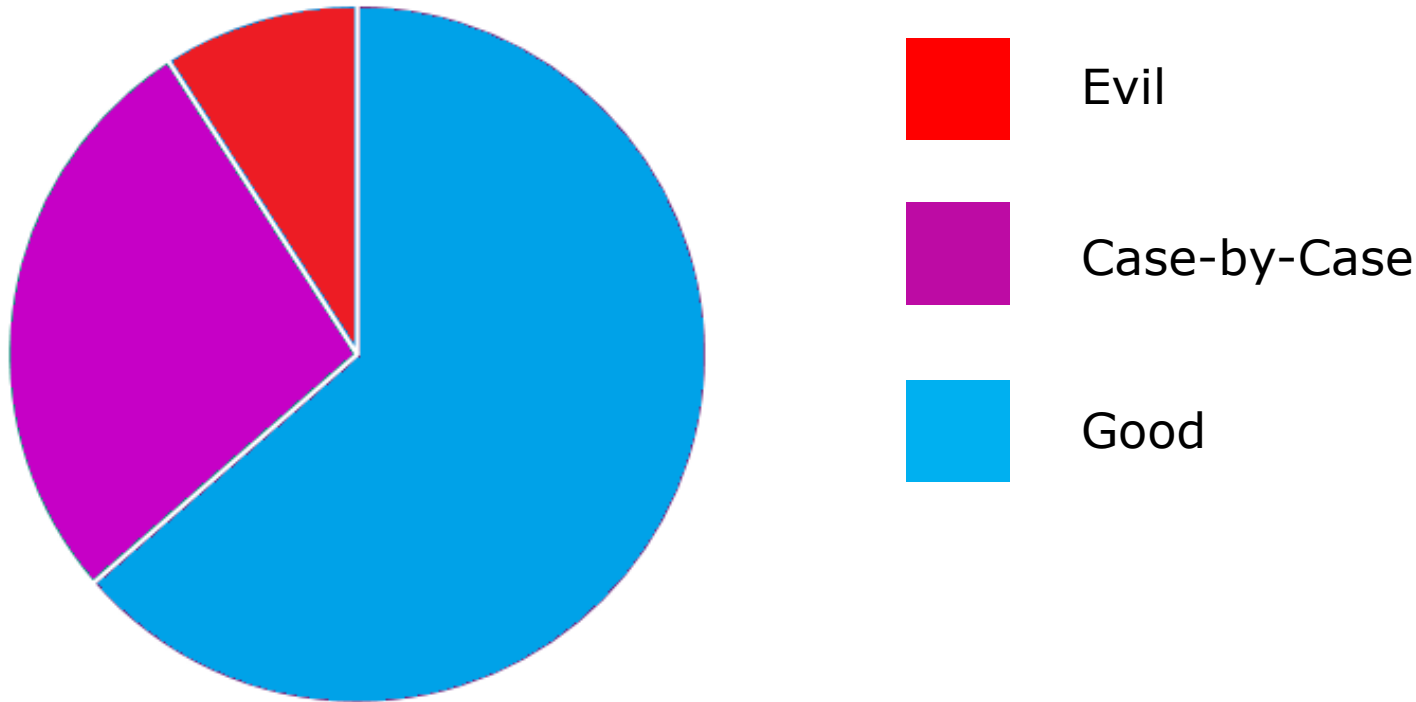




Play Twice?

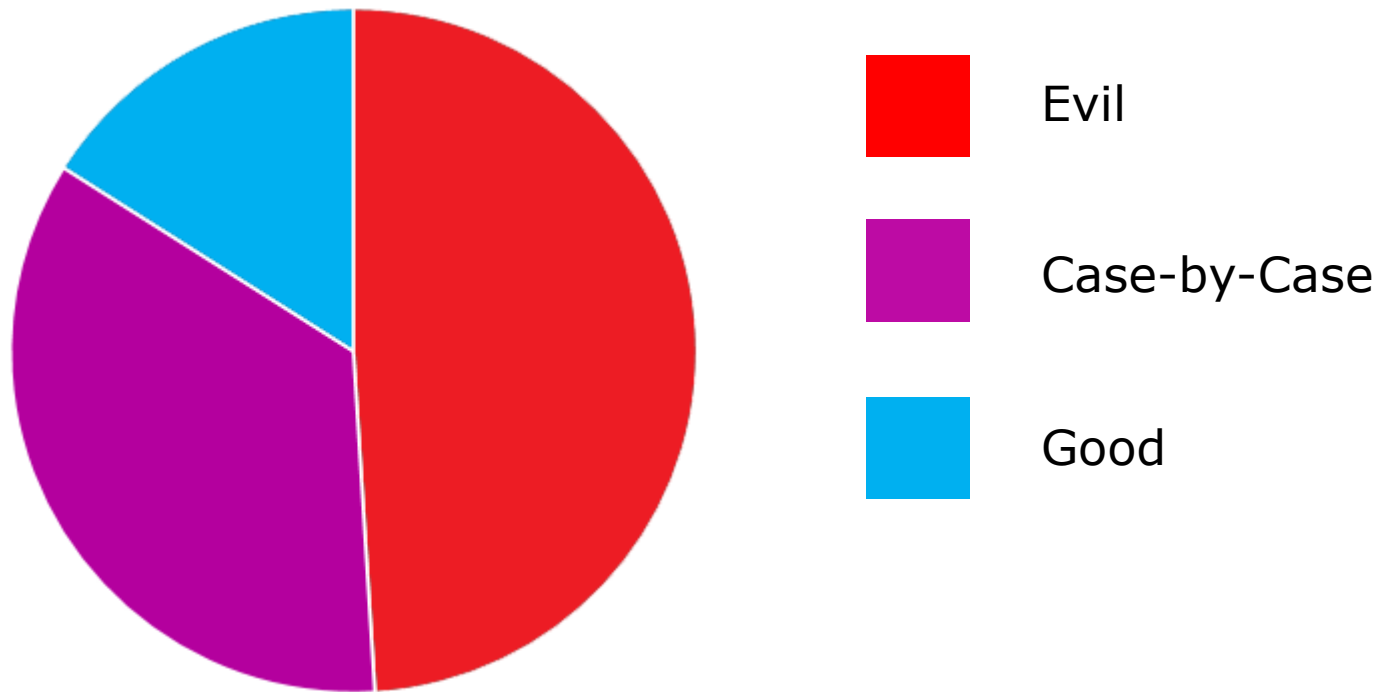


Good Vs. Evil – First of Two Playthroughs





Good Vs Evil – Second of Two Playthroughs



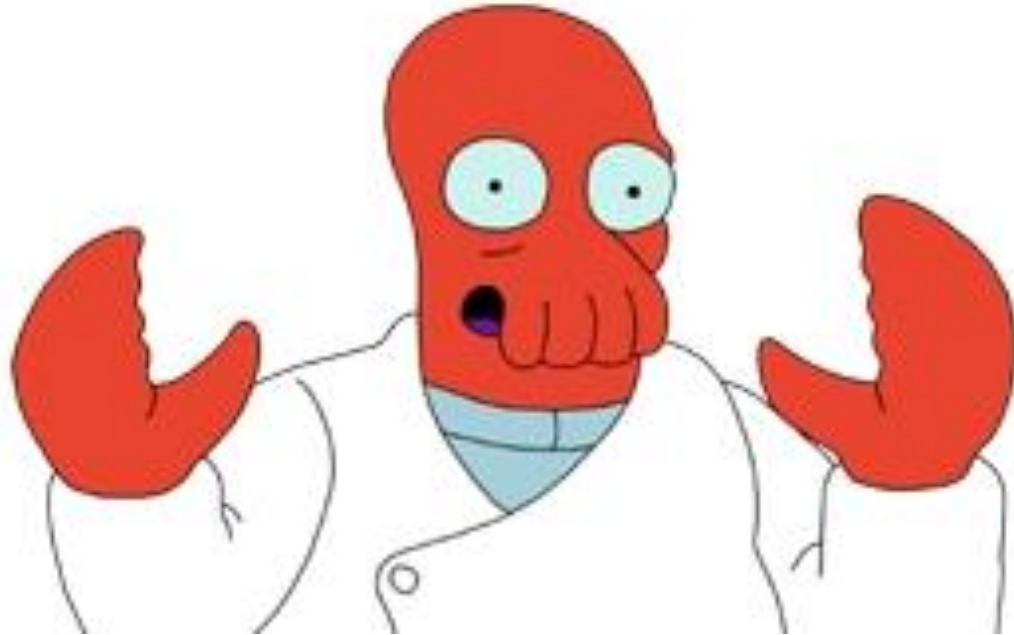


Hooray!





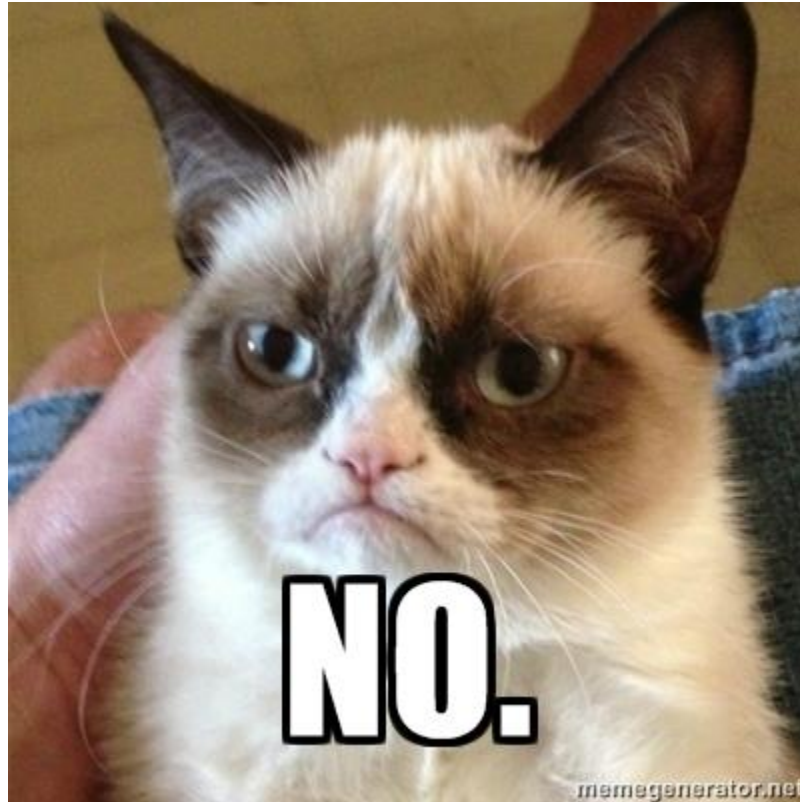
...Hooray?







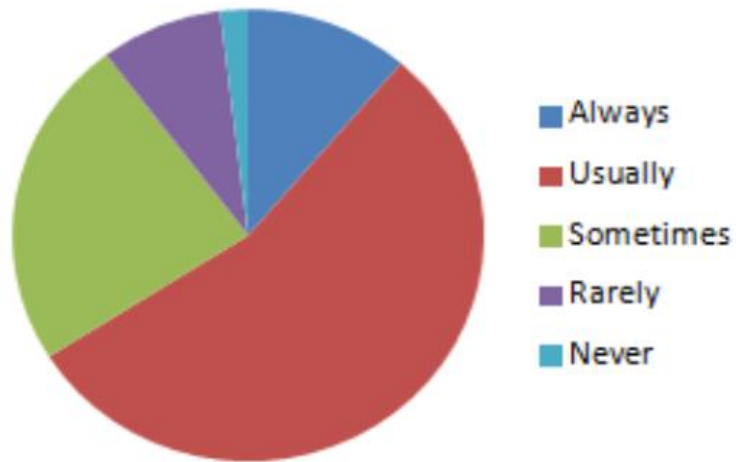
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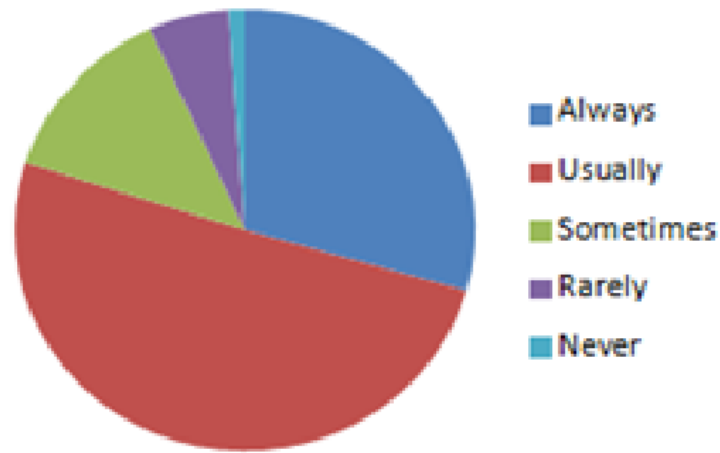
Just Plays Once

Do you feel that you try to do
in the game what you would
do in reality?



First of Two Playthroughs

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in the game what you would
do in reality?







The “Evil” Problem



2 POSTED: 3 February 2014 0:57 am

To be fair, few games offer moral choices where evil is something other than 'murder puppies for fun'.

4 POSTED: 3 February 2014 1:04 am

I almost always choose the "good" option, because, to steal a phrase, it generally comes down to "Mother Theresa or Baby Eating", and I've no interest in the latter. Pointless cruelty is stupid and fundamentally aggravating for me to witness, so I never choose it. The evil option should be the 'cruel yet practical' solution, while the good one should be the 'virtuous but harder' solution.

Designers for games with a morality bar rarely understand that concept.

8 POSTED: 3 February 2014 1:19 am

I can't say I'm surprised to see virtually the same response so much. Devs don't get it, and when a person has no reason to choose evil, they won't choose evil. It's not human nature, and it's harder to immerse yourself and become the character when you're acting out of character for yourself.

This is why I enjoyed The Walking Dead so much. So many choices were between "Evil, but safe" and "Good, but dangerous", and the game was simply too unpredictable to aim for a white knight playthrough.



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The Next *Infamous* Wants To See Just How Evil You'll Get



Phil Owen

Filed to: IMPRESSIONS 2/12/14 10:00am

59,835



13



EXPAND





Punishment

- “To punish the player for doing evil things is the purpose of a moral system”
- “I don't think it's unfair to punish you for an evil decision. Our entire society is built on that principle....”
- “... if it's evil, you get what you deserve.”



Stuff Players Won't Do/ Hated Doing











Choices Players Liked



SPEC OPS[®]
THE LINE





Very rarely are moral choices black/white morality yet are tempting. Gonna talk about one of my favourite games again, Spec Ops The Line. No explicit spoilers.

Most of the "choice moments" were rather ambiguous and arguable, but there was one towards the end of the game that was very, very black and white. On steam, the global achievement rate for one of them is 20% higher than the other (for those who have gotten that far into the game that is), and thats the *evil* choice. There's no real quantifiable benefit to committing the evil act or the good act, so its decided solely by emotion. The emotions got the better of most of the players, about 60% of the ones who reached that point, and it did so with proper context. It made the player like they wanted to commit this evil act, and it worked because they set it up well, and it wasn't cartoonishly evil - its something that people actually have done, and continue to do all the time in war when, surprise surprise, soldiers let their feelings trump their ethics and reason.

**A Line, Crossed**

Choose vengeance.

29.7%

**A Line, Held**

Choose restraint.

20.5%





PULLED HIM UP

62%

LET HIM DROP

33%

LET CRAWFORD TAKE CARE OF HIM

5%

THREATENED VERNON

33%

REASONED WITH HIM

67%



ABANDONED LILLY

45%

BROUGHT HER ALONG

55%

FOUGHT HIM

55%

TALKED HIM DOWN

45%



Takeaways

- This isn't the whole picture
 - But neither is data-mining
- Players do see our content
 - But maybe not the way we'd hoped/thought
- Players don't generally find pure evil tempting
 - So adding *more* friction there is the wrong approach
- Players will do bad if they're caught up in an emotional situation
 - And they'll love it and come back for more



Thank you!

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