

Dissertation press release**17.11.2020**

Emotional Experience with Digital Games: The Appeal and Downstream Effects

Title of the dissertation	Aesthetic Emotions in Digital Games: The Appeal of Moving, Challenging, and Thought-Provoking Player Experiences
Contents of the dissertation	<p>Paintings, films, music, and literature are acclaimed for their ability to evoke a wide range of emotions. Digital games, in contrast, were argued to afford only shallow emotional experiences. Recently however, several games were awarded for their 'artistic achievements', and players discuss their emotional moments on online platforms. Despite these facts, the main focus of player experience research is limited to fun, and equates positive emotions with good player experience. In contrast, negative emotions are considered as something to be controlled.</p> <p>This dissertation explored players' moving, emotionally challenging, and thought-provoking experiences with digital games. The findings showcase that players experience a palette of emotions, potentially as wide as with other media. Overall, players valued these emotional experiences, in some instances specifically because the game evoked intense negative emotions. Digital games also afforded emotional experiences unique to the medium, for instance, by confronting players with tough decisions that resulted in the loss of a beloved character evoking guilt and regret. Players' memories and personal experiences were found to shape the emotional experiences as well, highlighting games' ability to personally impact players in different ways. Lastly, emotional experiences were associated to reflecting on diverse aspects of the self, the world, and sociocultural issues, as well as to encourage understanding and feelings for both in-game and real-world people.</p> <p>Beyond a more nuanced understanding of good player experiences, these findings inform the appeal of uncomfortable interactions with technology in general. The findings further expand the notion of aesthetic experience with artworks by highlighting digital games' ability to afford emotionally rich experiences.</p>
Field of the dissertation	Player experience research; Human-Computer Interaction Games; Player-Computer Interaction
Doctoral candidate	Julia Ayumi Bopp, M.Sc.
Time of the defence	04.12.2020, at 17:00 (EET)
Place of the defence	Remote via Zoom
Opponent	Professor Regan Mandryk, University of Saskatchewan, Canada
Custos	Professor Elisa Mekler, Aalto University, School of Science, Department of Computer Science
Electronic dissertation	http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-64-0112-6
Doctoral candidate's contact information	Julia Ayumi Bopp, Department of Computer Science, Aalto University, Julia.bopp@aalto.fi , +358408121775
