

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Wednesday 23 September 2015

How do games play with our emotions?

Video games are an increasingly ubiquitous pastime across the world, with people spending more than three billion hours per week playing video games, and with approximately two thirds of all Australians playing some form of video games on a daily basis.

As well as playing games for entertainment, we are also seeing a surge in the use of video games for serious purposes like education and training, health and fitness, communication, scientific discovery, marketing, and more.

The problem is, we don't actually understand the influence that video game play has upon players. Evidence in areas such as emotional impacts of video game play is in its early stages and is often contradictory.

Research being conducted by the Games Research Group at the University of Tasmania aims to rectify this, and shed some light onto the emotional influences that varying aspects of video game play can have upon players.

Dr Kristy de Salas, from the discipline of Information and Communication Technology at the University, said the team was focusing particularly on how differing video game events can elicit specific emotional responses.

These emotional responses vary significantly depending upon a range of factors, but generally include almost any emotion you can think of, including joy, frustration, anger, anticipation, surprise, and so forth. It is known that video games elicit varying responses throughout the game play experience, but the factors responsible for specific responses is not understood.

"By developing better understanding in this area, we will be able to better understand the varying impacts that specific elements of game play can have upon not only the individual, but also broader society and culture," Dr de Salas said.

The study involves participants playing video games while instruments measure how their body is responding to the game play physiologically and if those responses indicate emotions like excitement, tension or elation.

"These physiological responses are the key to objectively understanding emotions and their responses, particularly in relation to discrete video game events and how they relate to one another," Dr de Salas said.

“This research will lead to new insights into the design and development of both new entertainment and serious video games, as well as assisting us to understand the potential individual, cultural, and societal impacts of rapidly expanding video game usage around the world.”

How to take part: The Games Research Group is seeking volunteers to participate in this study, which will take between 1 – 1.5 hours, and requires that they sign up and attend with a friend. Anyone who would like further information on this study, or who would like to volunteer to participate, can contact the Games Research Group via email at Games.Research@utas.edu.au

Information released by:

University of Tasmania, Communications and Media Office

Phone: 61 3 6226 2691 or 0447 537 375

Email: Media.Office@utas.edu.au