

## Publication

"An odd kind of pleasure": Differentiating emotional challenge in digital games.

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Recent work introduced the notion of emotional challenge as a means to afford more unique and diverse gaming experiences. However, players' experience of emotional challenge has received little empirical attention. It remains unclear whether players enjoy it and what exactly constitutes the challenge thereof. We surveyed 171 players about a challenging or an emotionally challenging experience, and analyzed their responses with regards to what made the experience challenging, their emotional response, and the relation to core player experience constructs. We found that emotional challenge manifested itself in different ways, by confronting players with difficult themes or decisions, as well as having them deal with intense emotions. In contrast to more 'conventional' challenge, emotional challenge evoked a wider range of negative emotions and was appreciated significantly more by players. Our findings showcase the appeal of uncomfortable gaming experiences, and extend current conceptualizations of challenge in games.

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