

Why do we smile when dying virtually? : insights on player experience from physiological and self-report measures

Citation for published version (APA):

Hoogen, van den, W. M., Poels, K., Kort, de, Y. A. W., & IJsselstein, W. A. (2010). *Why do we smile when dying virtually? : insights on player experience from physiological and self-report measures*. Poster session presented at conference; ICA 2010; 2010-06-22; 2010-06-26.

Document status and date:

Published: 01/01/2010

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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Video games are mainly played as a self-selected activity. Those playing games generally do so to have an enjoyable experience. Nevertheless, in many games, and First Person Shooters (FPS) in particular, the player's character comes to a miserable end. Recent studies seem to suggest that players actually enjoy getting killed in a FPS game (e.g. Ravaja et al., 2008). In the current paper we question whether people really do enjoy getting killed in digital games. Our findings show increased EMG activity of the zygomaticus major upon dying, however, they also indicate that zygomaticus major activity decreased as people died more frequently. Self-report measurements further showed a clear negative effect of player death on pleasure ratings, without a sign of weakening with repeated player deaths. While dying may not be fun in itself, in the face of the game, and catering for a sense of challenge, it may be enjoyable.