

# Chapter 11

## Game Transfer Phenomena in Video Game Playing: A Qualitative Interview Study

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Video game playing is a popular activity and its enjoyment among frequent players has been associated with absorption and immersion experiences. This paper examines how immersion in the video game environment can influence the player during the game and afterwards (including fantasies, thoughts, and actions). This is what is described as Game Transfer Phenomena (GTP). GTP occurs when video game elements are associated with real life elements triggering subsequent thoughts, sensations and/or player actions. To investigate this further, a total of 42 frequent video game players aged between 15 and 21 years old were interviewed. Thematic analysis showed that many players experienced GTP, where players appeared to integrate elements of video game playing into their real lives. These GTP were then classified as either intentional or automatic experiences. Results also showed that players used video games for interacting with others as a form of amusement, modeling or mimicking video game content, and daydreaming about video games. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate how video games triggered intrusive thoughts, sensations, impulses, reflexes, optical illusions, and dissociations.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Video game playing is a popular leisure activity that has been the subject of an increasing amount of empirical research. This research has highlighted both the positive and potentially negative effects (e.g., Greenfield, DeWinstanley, Kilpatrick, & Kaye, 1994; Feng, Spence, & Pratt, 2007; Dill, 2009). The more positive benefits of video games include the fact that they can be educational (e.g., deFreitas & Griffiths, 2007; Griffiths, 2010), socially stimulating (e.g., Cole & Griffiths, 2007; Hussain & Griffiths, 2007) and/or therapeutic (e.g., Griffiths, 2005). The more negative effects of video games are the claims that they can lead to increased aggression (Anderson, Gentile, & Buckley, 2007) and be addictive (e.g., Griffiths, 2000, 2008), especially online videogame playing where the game never ends and has the potential to be a 24/7 activity (e.g., Ng & Weimer-Hastings, 2005; Chappell, Eatough, Davies, & Griffiths, 2006; Grüsser, Thalemann, & Griffiths, 2007).

Today's video games have evolved due to technological advance, resulting in high levels of realism and emotional design that include diversity, experimentation, and (perhaps in some cases) sensory overload. Furthermore, video games have been considered as fantasy triggers because they offer 'what if' scenarios (Baranowski, Buday, Thompson, & Baranowski, 2008). What if the player could become someone else? What if the player could inhabit an improbable world? What if the player could interact with fantasy characters or situations (Woolley, 1995)? Entertainment media content can be very effective in capturing the minds and eliciting emotions in the individual. Research about novels, films, fairy tales and television programs has shown that entertainment can generate emotions such as joy, awe, compassion, fear and anger (Oatley, 1999; Tan 1996; Valkenburg Cantor & Peeters, 2000, cited in Jansz et al., 2005). Video games also have the capacity to generate such emotions and have the

capacity for players to become both immersed in, and dissociated from, the video game.

## Dissociation and Immersion

It is clear that dissociation is a somewhat "fuzzy" concept as there is no clear accepted definition of what it actually constitutes (Griffiths, Wood, Parke, & Parke, 2006). Most would agree that dissociation is a form of altered state of consciousness. However, dissociative behaviours lie on a continuum and range from individuals losing track of time, feeling like they are someone else, blacking out, not recalling how they got somewhere or what they did, and being in a trance like state (Griffiths et al., 2006). Studies have found that dissociation is related to an extensive involvement in fantasizing, and daydreaming (Giesbrecht, Geraerts, & Merckelbach, 2007). Dissociative phenomena of the non-pathological type include absorption and imaginative involvement (Griffith et al., 2006) and are psychological phenomena that can occur during video game playing. Anyone can, to some degree, experience dissociative states in their daily lives (Giesbrecht et al., 2007). Furthermore, these states can happen episodically and can be situationally triggered (Griffiths et al., 2006).

When people become engaged in games they may experience psychological absorption. More commonly known as 'immersion', this refers to when individual logical integration of thoughts, feelings and experiences is suspended (Funk, Chan, Brouwer, & Curtiss, 2006; Wood, Griffiths, & Parke, 2007). This can incur an altered state of consciousness such as altered time perception and change in degree of control over cognitive functioning (Griffiths et al., 2006). Video game enjoyment has been associated with absorption and immersion experiences (IJsselsteijn, Kort, de Poels, Jurgelionis, & Belotti, 2007). How an individual can get immersed in video games has been explained by the phenomenon of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Flow refers to the optimum experience a person achieves when performing

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