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### Social engagement for aging well: Theoretical and practical perspectives

Older adults are prominent digital game players with the number of older adults who play digital games increasing from 9% in 1990 to 34% in 2014 and continuing to increase since then. With the increased popularity of digital games among older adults, it is useful to investigate how this form of leisure activity may be benefiting the older generation through enhanced cognitive skills and social connectedness. These aspects have been identified by older adults as main concerns about aging. This study employed a closed-ended cross-sectional survey developed by the author and his team aimed at understanding older adults' (aged 55 years and older) experiences of playing digital games and their opinions regarding these. The questionnaire included questions about older adult respondents' characteristics, experiences of playing digital games, patterns of playing, and opinions about digital games. It was administered to older adults in shopping malls, local community centers, nursing homes and seniors' centers. Participants' chose mental exercise, followed by enjoyment, as the most commonly selected benefits of digital game playing. The majority of respondents also reported an increase in all five specific cognitive benefits listed in the questionnaire: focusing attention, memory, reaction speed, problem-solving, and reasoning. Many reported that digital games also increased the socio-emotional benefits of developing self-confidence, dealing with loneliness, and connecting with family. In conclusion, digital games appear to hold great promise for enhancing older adults' cognitive skills and social lives, but more targeted interventions are needed to understand how to unlock these benefits.

### Biography

David Kaufman is a Professor in the Faculty of Education and Associate Member of the Gerontology Department and Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University. He has presented more than 200 lectures and/or workshops worldwide and has published more than 120 peer-reviewed articles and three books. He serves as a reviewer for many journals, granting agencies and professional associations, and has received more than \$4 million in funding. He currently is funded through an AGE-WELL Canadian National Centres of Excellence grant to study digital games and digital storytelling for older adults.

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