

# Bridging the Intergenerational Gap with a Virtual Platform

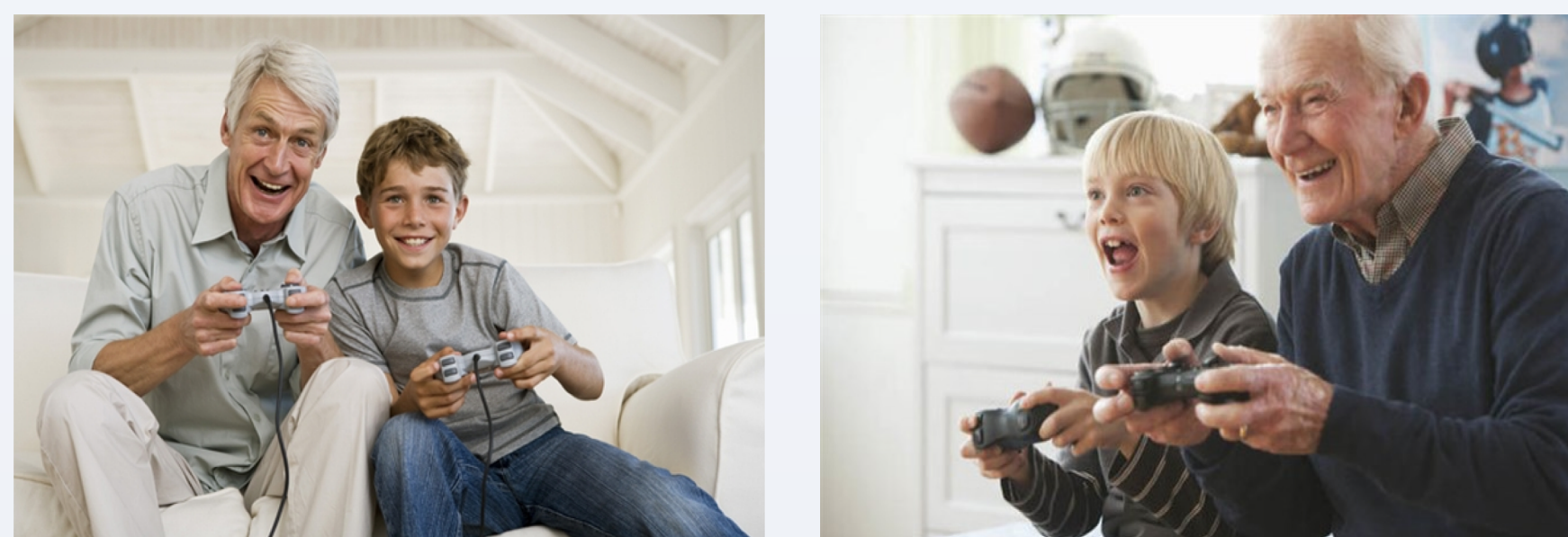


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## Introduction

In today's world, there is an obvious gap between the young and old. The young can't get enough of technology, while the old can't take anymore! With video games gaining more and more popularity with children, the elderly are being left behind, often wondering if what is happening to the youth is a good thing or not. Elderly often see video games to be the blame for the issues of aggression and violence in younger generations. However, what everyone has failed to look are the positive effects of video games. In this poster, I will look at how these stereotypes against gaming came to be and why, how we can fix this issue, and most importantly, use video games to help mend the intergenerational divide between the young and the old.



## Elderly's Stereotypes & Attitudes Toward Video Games & Youth

### Overview:

Older adults hold strong feelings about video games and the youth. Usually, these feelings are not positive and come from stereotypes and misinformation they have heard over time.

### What are older adults' stereotypes?

- Older Americans were much more likely (4-6 times) to believe that electronic games contributed to human aggression compared to younger adults (Ferguson, Nielson & Maguire, 2017).
- Older adults feel that the youth today are more violent and aggressive than ever due to violent video games.

### Why do these stereotypes exist?

- Older adults' prior negative attitudes towards the young and of new media have led to their beliefs in the links between video games and real world violence (Ferguson, 2015).
- Older adults also fear that the concerns aren't limited to violence
  - Potential for addiction
  - Influences in academics
  - Potential mental health effects
- Negative attitudes toward video games are, in part, generational, meaning that older adults are more likely to endorse negative beliefs about video games (Ferguson, et al., 2017).
- Lack of familiarity and experience
  - Those who do not play or barely play video games were twice as likely to think the games are violent and endorse violence (Pryzybylski, 2014).
  - Only 12% of adults over 67 were familiar with Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) and they lack of understanding on regulation of video games
- Older adults much less likely to have experience playing or watching video games. (Ferguson, et al., 2017).

### What can we do about this?

While evidence shows that older adults shape their negative beliefs on video games and youth from loose understandings and fear mongering, studies presented later will show that these stereotypes significantly decrease with the playing of video games, even the violent ones.

## Changed Attitudes on Video Games

### Overview:

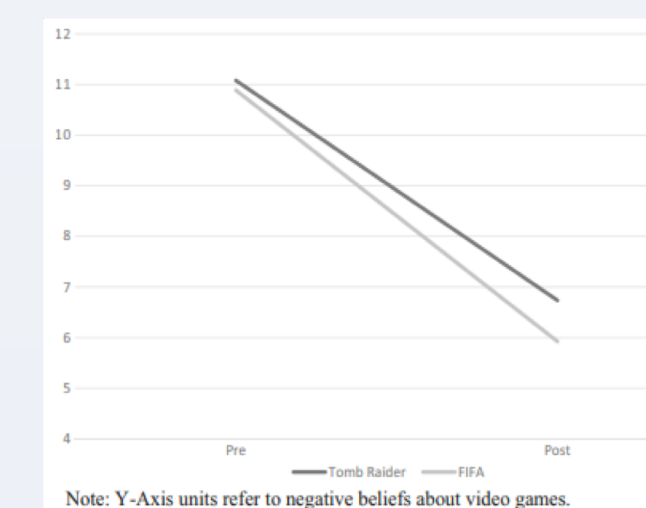
While older adults do carry negative stereotypes and attitudes toward video games and the youth, the following study has demonstrated that these stereotypes can be replaced with positive attitudes and feelings (Ferguson, Nielson & Maguire, 2017).

### The Ferguson et al. (2017) study:

- N=34, Age > 52 years old
- They measured:
  - Personality: Big-Five (Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, Extraversion, & Openness).
  - Attitudes toward video games: before and after playing the games together with young adults.
- Participants played either M-rated violent games or non-violent games for 45 minutes while an undergraduate student sat near them to help with controller-related issues.

### Ferguson et al. (2017) found:

- Negative perceptions on video games, specifically M-rated violent video games, was reduced after participants played them.
- Although opinions on video games varied across individuals, the study shows playing video game has a positive impact and post-play perceptions.



## Video Games and their Effects on Intergenerational Relations

### Overview:

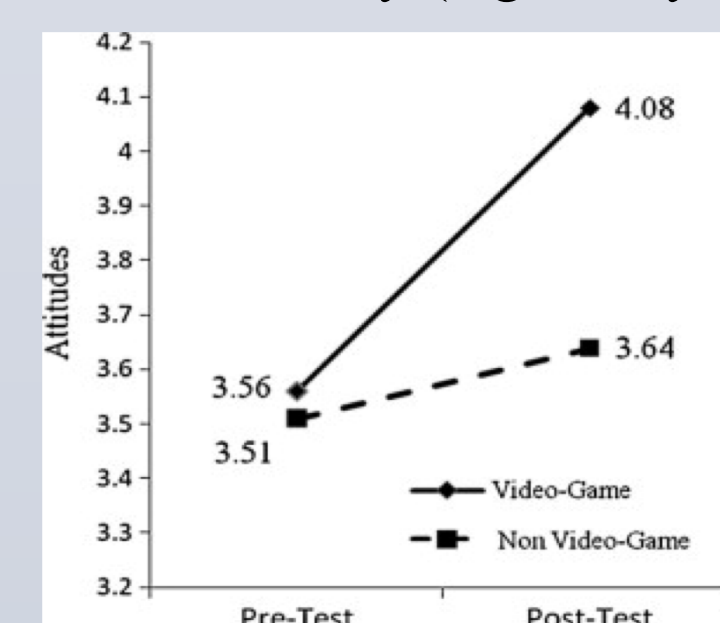
A study has shown that having older adults and children play video games together significantly increases their attitudes/feelings toward both video games and the youth (Chua, Theng, Lwin & Jung, 2013).

### The Chua et al. (2013) study:

- Children are paired with elderly volunteers to do activities.
- Pairs either played video games or did non-video-game related activities (Chitchatting, Watching TV together, or Playing card games).

	Demographic Information			
	Video game		Nonvideo game	
	The youth	The elderly	The youth	The elderly
Male	7	1	5	3
Female	12	18	13	15
Age range	16-18	60-86	16-19	60-89
Mean	$M = 16.74$	$M = 75.42$	$M = 17.67$	$M = 76.50$
SD	$SD = 0.65$	$SD = 8.15$	$SD = 0.84$	$SD = 7.33$
Total number	19	19	18	18

- Researchers administered pre-test and post-test, both measuring feelings such as inter-age-group attraction, attitudes, and anxieties.
  - Attitudes measured by 10 pairs of adjectives such as "foolish-wise"
  - Attitudes include general feelings about study and the other age group in the study (e.g., the young towards the elderly).

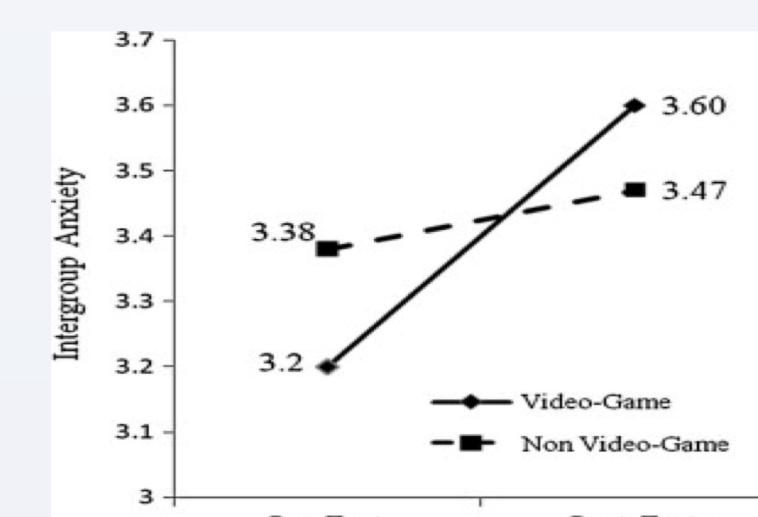


- The video group older adults showed significant improvement in attitudes towards the young adults group and towards the video game.

Attitudes measured pre-test & post-test on scale of 1-5, an increase meaning they indicated better attitudes toward other age group

## Video Games and their Effects on Intergenerational Relations (Cont.)

- Attractions measured on a 1-5 scale, from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5), respectively, for questions such as "I think they could be a friend of mine".
- Intergroup anxiety measured by asking participants how they would feel if they were in a room filled with members of the other age group while only they represented their own age group by responding to adjectives such as awkward, confident, self-conscious, relaxed, and happy on a 5-point scale.



- The video group older adults showed significant less anxiety towards the young adults

Overall higher scores indicating less intergroup anxiety

### What has been learned from Chua et al. (2013):

- Gaming together, the young and the old, had large positive effects on intergenerational perceptions.
- Elderly participants' perception and attitudes toward the young adults showed significant increases after playing video games together.
- Youthful participants' perceptions toward the older adults had minimal change. However, gaming with older adults had no negative effects on perception of older adults.



## Effects of Video Games

### Overview:

Researchers found that older adults who use physically simulated sports games, such as Wii Sports, when compared to those who do not show greater increase in physical function and cognitive measures of executive control and processing speed (Maillot, Perrot & Hartly, 2012).

### The Maillot et al., (2012) study:

- Video game training program was developed for the study
- N = 32, Age > 65 years old
- Training sessions length > 14 week period
- Training sessions increased in difficulty as sessions went on and varied in training task.
- Results found exercise games increased cognitive measures of executive control and processing speed.

## References

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## The Proposed Program

### Overview:

Computer classes are a good way of integrating the elderly into the world of technology. In addition, computers are a great platform to play video games on. Through volunteer work done by Grand Valley students, we could foster social growth and help lead to the elderly and the youth interact and bridge the intergenerational gap, all while helping them learn computers and have fun playing video games.

### What is the Program?

- Computer classes offered at a local retirement home
- Volunteers teach the class, helping the elderly learn basic computer skills, along with an easy-to-learn video game, Minecraft.
- Class meets once a week over a two month period for an hour and a half at a time, preferably between 2-4.

### How can we Create this Program?

- Figure out how much the program will cost and apply for local, state, or federal funding to support the program.
- Recruit volunteers by posting flyers around Grand Valley Allendale Campus, also from emailing heads of gaming and computer clubs, asking them to endorse program. Social media will also be used to recruit GVSU student volunteers.
- Volunteers expected to be able to transport themselves to retirement home.
- Volunteers expected to have prior and moderately extensive knowledge of computers and computer games.
- Contact local retirement home and discuss the intention to offer free computer gaming classes to their residents by volunteer as part of their enrichment program.
- Check the retirement home facilities to make sure they have Internet access and space for computers.
- Advertise the program at the retirement home and have signup sheet for the computer and video game classes.

### How are the Classes Conducted?

- Volunteer teaches the participants basic computer knowledge such as Skype, Microsoft, and the Internet.
- Classes become more specialized and increase in intricacy each class over the two month period.
- At the fourth meeting, the computer game Minecraft is introduced.
- End goal is to have participants capable of playing Minecraft alone and become more technologically proficient.

## Implications and Future Studies

Every day we see new and exciting forms of technology that leave us in awe. It is important to be able to know how to harness this technology to make lives easier. These studies have shown that, contrary to prior beliefs and stereotypes, older adults have the ability to use and enjoy using technology. With these skills, it will become all the easier for the elderly and the youth to intermingle and connect. Perhaps in the future a longitudinal study done examining the effects of intergenerational cooperative gaming over a one year period. From these studies, it is safe to hypothesize that results shown in the Chua et al., (2013) study would be magnified, showing that technology, specifically video games, is a viable long-term option to improve intergenerational relationships.

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