

Intergenerational gaming helps families connect

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

Nintendo with Nana? Zelda with Zia? How about Gods of War with Grandpa?

Grandchildren might once have bonded with the older generation over a plate of cookies and milk, but these days, they're more likely to be

clustered around an electronic screen. A new research project by U of T Mississauga student Amrita Maharaj and assistant professor Cosmin Munteanu, aims to develop a new ratings system that will help gamers at opposite ends of the age spectrum find appropriate games that they can play together.

Maharaj, who is a fourth-year student with UTM's Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology and concurrently enrolled in her first year with the Faculty of Information Studies program, says that gaming is a great way for generations to come together, but adds that it can be tough to find games that are appropriate for co-players at opposite ends of the age spectrum. "Intergenerational games facilitate play between grandparents and grandchildren, but not all seniors can get outside to kick a soccer ball," she says. "Video games can be a great way to promote socialization and bonding—the play process facilitates knowledge transfer."

A quarter of American seniors over 50 say they like to spend time playing video games and many say they use video games as a way to connect with grandchildren. "Seniors are excited to play and they want to engage," Munteanu says. "Gaming is a great way for those who are reluctant to adopt technology to explore it in a fun way."

Despite the numbers, gaming companies haven't yet figured out how to connect with the senior gaming market. "Seniors have a lot of disposable income," he adds. "In the United States alone, the 50-plus demographic spends trillions of dollars. By 2020, some estimates put that amount at \$15-trillion spent by consumers over the age of 60." Munteanu says that targeting seniors and their grandchildren together is a lucrative opportunity for gaming companies

But how to sell to such a widespread age demographic? That's where Maharaj's project comes in. Her research through Technologies for

Aging Gracefully Lab, where Munteanu is co-director, will develop a rating that will help consumers discover games that are suitable for intergenerational play.

One of the challenges with current research into seniors and gaming is that games used in research are typically not generally available. "We'll be looking at commercially available video games that anyone can buy," Maharaj says.

Maharaj will monitor [Twitch](#), a website that streams live play of video games, assessing the games' ease of use, level of challenge, and other criteria, including age-related visual or mobility considerations. "Once we have the scale, we would rate available games according to the scale and test them with seniors to see if our ratings reflects their experience," she says.

Maharaj says she was inspired, in part, by watching her in-laws bond with their [grandchildren](#) over tablet games like [Super Sync Sports](#) and [Glow Hockey](#). "My mother-in-law was playing games with her 11-year-old grandson and they were trash talking and high-fiving each other and having so much fun," Maharaj says. "She wanted to train to get better at the games so she could beat her grandson. They've bought more games and are excited to play more together."

"In the same way a parent looks at [video game](#) or movie ratings for children, we hope to provide a system that helps consumers figure out what games will work for everyone," Munteanu says. The scale would help manufacturers market to intergenerational gamers, and also to places like [seniors'](#) centres where high school students volunteer.

Provided by University of Toronto

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