

Video Games and Virtual Reality

J.L.H. BIRKLAND, J.A. BROWN. *Integrating theoretical perspectives: The life course theory of digital gaming and the ICT user typology*. *Gerontechnology* 2018;17(Suppl):147s; <https://doi.org/10.4017/gt.2018.17.s.143.00>

Purpose Most of the current literature on aging and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use examines how older adults use ICTs at a single point in their lives. Although useful for their respective purposes, we posit that a temporal perspective of individual ICT engagement offers a broader scope for understanding the user. This paper explores how two closely related theories in the Gerontechnology research realm, Brown's (2014) Life Course Theory of Senior Digital Gaming¹ and Birkland's (2013) ICT User Typology² can be integrated to more fully understand and predict changes in ICT use over the life course. Brown's theory highlights the interaction and fluctuation of three domains (functional ability, motivation, and technology engagement) over the life of an older adult digital gamer. Birkland's typology categorizes ICT users into five types: the Enthusiast, the Practicalist, the Socializer, the Traditionalist, and the Guardian; each of which differs in their use and the meanings they apply to ICTs. **Method** Data was assessed and integrated from two separate studies to analyze the fit of the two theories. First, qualitative findings from Birkland's study were compared to Brown's theory to assess the extent to which a technology-specific theory could be applied to non-gaming technologies. Next, Brown's three theoretical domains were assessed within the construct of each typology proposed by Birkland. Lastly, findings from each study were compared to postulate how the strength of each domain fluctuates over time within each typology. **Results & Discussion** The integration of these two theories allows researchers to better understand the trajectory of ICT use across the life course. When compared to Birkland's findings, there was evidence to suggest that Brown's theory could be applied to ICTs. By integrating Brown's perspective with the ICT User Typology, each user type was explored in terms of the level of motivations, experience, and functional ability. Furthermore, it created a context for predicting how ICT use may be influenced by and inform each domain. For example, Socializers are motivated to use devices that connect them to others and have high exposure to many ICTs due to large inter-generational networks. If a Socializer's functional ability decreased, they would still have a high motivation for using such devices, and likely would continue to do so with accommodations. Guardians are fearful and cautious of using ICTs, despite moderate exposure levels. When faced with a functional decline, Guardians are unlikely to continue use of ICTs due to low levels of motivation and moderate levels of exposure.

References

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