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**Subject:** PopCap Games: National Survey: Playing Video Games Helps Older Adults Feel Sharper

### **National Survey: Playing Video Games Helps Older Adults Feel Sharper**

*Bejeweled® Blitz a Hopeful Candidate for Cognitive Training in Adults Aged 50+; Perceived Benefits Include Improved Mental Acuity and Pattern Recognition*

SEATTLE, Sept. 13, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- PopCap Games and University of Massachusetts Amherst psychology researcher Susan K. Whitbourne, Ph.D., presented the results of a survey that compared the videogame playing habits of older and younger adults at this year's American Psychological Association's (APA) annual convention in Washington D.C. The survey of more than 10,000 U.S. adults investigated the feasibility of Bejeweled® Blitz as a cognitive training tool for older adults. According to Whitbourne, of those who play Bejeweled Blitz regularly, 47% of adults over 50 reported feeling sharper while performing other tasks and 23.9% of adults over 65 felt their ability to see patterns improved. Bejeweled Blitz is a highly popular social game developed by survey underwriter PopCap Games, a leading developer and publisher of casual video games.

The survey is the first in a series to examine the cognitive value of videogame play on an older audience; most research has focused on studying the benefits of video games on children and young adults. Cognitive tasks involved in the game play of Bejeweled Blitz require rapid decision-making, conjunctive visual search skills and reaction time. Whitbourne believes that Bejeweled Blitz is a plausible platform for improving cognitive skills because it requires several of the skills that have been shown to be improved in action video games. If certain cognitive skills can be improved through action training, then perhaps those skills can also be improved through Bejeweled Blitz training.

The results were well received by fellow researchers attending the APA convention. Says Dr. Walter Boot, director of the Attention and Training Lab of the Department of Psychology at Florida State University, "I believe the work Dr. Whitbourne and her colleagues are doing, using Bejeweled Blitz, is both critical and exciting, and that more research like this needs to be done exploring not only the types of games that bring about cognitive benefits, but also the types of games older adults are willing to play and why. The best cognitive aging intervention in the world is useless if older adults aren't willing and able to engage in it. By investigating attitudes and perceived benefits of video game interventions, this research has the potential to discover game interventions that are both effective and enjoyable."

#### Perceived Cognitive Benefits for Adults Over 50

Only respondents 50 and older were included in analyses examining the perceived impact of Bejeweled Blitz on cognition. Of adults 50 and older 47.2% perceived feeling sharper in performing other tasks – the most frequent benefit. Adults 65 and older were most likely to feel an improvement in their ability to see patterns (22.4%); they were also slightly more likely to state that they could perform timed tasks more quickly (23.9%).

#### Cognition, Game play Preferences & Age Differences

Questions concerning sound effects, multipliers (special gems that increase the score for each match), and countdown timers were intended to establish whether there were age differences in these preferences that may relate to cognitive and motivational processes involved in game play. Nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) stated that they paid no attention to the countdown timer; adults 65 and older (52.9%) were most likely to report this reaction and less likely than younger adults, particularly those 18-24, to feel that the timer made them anxious. There were no age differences in responses to seeing multiplier gems; nearly two-thirds of the sample (66.4%) stated that they were positively motivating.

## Survey Methodology

The survey consisted of 10,331 adults (83% females), ages 18 to 80. 4,234 (41%) participants were ages 50 and over. The majority of all adults (78.6%) had at least a college education. The first question of the survey asked participants to indicate whether they played Bejeweled Blitz. Those who did were directed to the next survey of questions. Participants were recruited via a blog posting on the Psychology Today website that contained a link to the online survey.

## **About PopCap**

PopCap Games is the leading global developer, publisher and operator of casual video games: fun, easy-to-learn, captivating games that appeal to all ages across PC, mobile, social and other platforms. Based in Seattle, Washington, PopCap was founded in 2000, was acquired by Electronic Arts in 2011, and has a worldwide staff of more than 500 people in Seattle, San Francisco, Vancouver, B.C., Dublin, Seoul, Shanghai and Tokyo. PopCap's games have been downloaded over 1.5 billion times by consumers worldwide, and its flagship franchise, Bejeweled®, has sold more than 50 million units.

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