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How Geek Therapy Plays Into Expressive Arts Therapy: A Literature Review

Lesley University

May 6, 2022

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Expressive Arts Therapy

Dr. E Kellogg

Abstract

Within this paper, I explore how geek therapy plays well with the methods of expressive arts therapy. The combination of geek therapy and expressive arts therapy can assist clinicians in immediately connecting with their clients and identifying strength-oriented narratives that honor the client's preferences, modes of expression, and pop culture affinities. This engagement with expressive approaches utilizing affinity-based interventions can lead to a deeper sense of understanding of the client's intra-, inter-, and extra-personal relationships. Through this literature review of expressive arts therapy and geek therapy, primarily focusing on video games in therapy, clinicians from all walks of life can explore these techniques with clients in multiple settings and within a variety of age groups.

Video games are immersive, multimodal, and interactive digital experiences that can promote wellness through engaging a spectrum of cognitive processes, regulating emotion and physical states, exploring meaning, identity, and expression, and building interpersonal tools through in-person and/or virtual means. This paper explores how video games can impact bio-psycho-sociocultural-spiritual domains as well as other potentially therapeutic characteristics of video gaming, whether through in-direct/direct or active/passive experiences. Through understanding gamer motivations, this paper explores player taxonomy models and profilers that can assist in gathering assessment information. Lastly, ethical considerations and the potential for maladaptive behaviors are explored.

How Geek Therapy Plays into Expressive Arts Therapy: A Literature Review

“Geek therapy” is an affinity-based approach that invites clients to explore their fandoms, passions, and interests within a therapeutic space (Geek Therapy, 2022a). These affinities can include video games, comic books/manga, movies, tv shows, tabletops and board games, magic, and/or anime (Leyline Education, 2020). Through this triadic relationship between the client, therapist, and the client’s affinity of choice, the therapist can assist the client in gaining a deeper sense of understanding through expanding upon the client’s affinities and connecting why these passions resonate with them (Geek Therapy, 2022b). The many avenues of expressive interests that clients might identify with also resonates with how I practice expressive arts therapy.

Expressive arts therapy is a multimodal and integrative approach of using the arts whether that be visual art, music, dance/movement, drama, narrative, imagination, play, and so forth (Malchiodi, 2005). This approach, alongside my music therapy background, fit my complex arts-based experiences as I came to music through dance and the inspiration to move to the rhythms and melodies that created imaginary narratives that I could explore through visual art or play. The practice of expressive arts therapy focuses on facilitating a brave, safe space for clients to explore themselves utilizing multiple creative methods to safely contain and/or release various parts of their narratives. This process can empower clients to become authors of their story, redefining what brings them a sense of wholeness. Both geek therapy and expressive arts therapy are immersive, multimodal, and interactive. By truly accepting a person’s whole experience and being curious about their affinities, clinicians can assist clients in exploring how their interests can bring a sense of understanding and wholeness within sessions.

For some clinicians, parents, and even clients, the discussions of video games in therapy might immediately close minds. There is a lot of evaluation and need for de-stigmatization

around the proposed diagnosis of “online gaming addiction” found within the *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.; *DSM-V*; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) and the sensationalized, yet unfounded evidence of violent video games causing violent behaviors (American Psychological Association, 2020). Regardless of if the reader is a gamer or not, video games and the subcultures connected are not going anywhere. The president and chief executive officer of the Entertainment Software Association (ESA, 2021) stated that the United States of America is “a nation of video game players” as he acknowledged that during the COVID-19 pandemic, data presented clearly showcasing that “people from all walks of life reached for video games to find joy, connection, and a sense of belonging when it was needed most” (p. 3). The ESA’s (2021) report stated that “nearly 227 million Americans play video games” (p. 3). Data also suggested that gamers are “increasingly playing together” as “more than three quarters of players play video games with others online or in person at least weekly” (ESA, 2021, p. 3). Understanding and respecting the motivations of why people turn to video games could assist clinicians in how to attune to their client’s interests and needs. When it comes to identity, there might be rituals or routines in place that build upon a sense of self, whether intentional or not. This paper expands on the importance of honoring affinities within the therapeutic space and how affinities can connect with expressive arts therapy techniques.

My search began with “video games in therapy” as my original focus was on this interactive and immersive form of media rather than the various expressive forms of popular media culture and content. Within this original exploration, I searched topics related to “commercial games” and “serious games” in therapy as well as “psychology of video games,” “electronic games in therapy,” “online games in therapy,” “digital games,” “virtual reality (VR) in therapy,” “augmented reality (AR),” “interactive media,” “geek therapy,” “nerd therapy,” and

“geek therapeutics.” My search broadened into “affinities,” “fandoms,” and “parasocial relationships.” While exploring “video games in therapy” and related searches, I looked for quantitative, qualitative, and arts-based research articles and texts. I searched “gamer types,” “gamer profiles,” and “motivations for gaming” when looking into material related to gaming identities. “Game genres” were also explored. Due to the nature of these topics, I also searched YouTube content, blogs, podcasts, and forums to better understand motivations and short-term and long-term impacts on those that consume such meaningful and engaging content.

I spoke with professionals who utilize video games and geek therapy methods within their own practices. In 2021, I was able to attend a geek therapy presentation that was hosted, virtually, at the Expressive Therapies Summit and was presented by Josue Cardona, the founder of Geek Therapy, a non-profit organization. Their mission is to provide a space for helping professionals (not just limited to mental health practitioners) who are interested in applying geek culture to their practices (Geek Therapy, 2022a). I also talked with game developers who shared their experiences with a variety of video games as well as the process of creating a game. Through visiting the National Video Games Museum in Frisco, Texas, I learned more about the history of this interactive media.

As my search within geek therapy broadened to other modalities within the field, I searched “role-playing games (RPGs) in therapy,” “table-top role-playing games (TTRPGs) in therapy,” “dungeons and dragons, D&D, DnD,” “comics,” “anime,” and “manga” separately to explore the uses of these differing in interaction, yet individually compelling artistic expressions within the therapy space. Finally, I searched “violence and video games,” “tilting”, “gamergate,” “parent concerns, video games,” “online gaming addiction” and “video game informed consents” to better understand potential considerations. My thesis statement is to integrate geek therapy and

expressive arts therapy methods as these approaches can complement one another through their connecting characteristics, immediate building of therapeutic rapport, and use of digital and/or popular culture media to honor a client's multifaceted identities.

Literature Review

This literature review begins by exploring the principles and practices of expressive arts therapy, broad theoretical approaches, developmental processes of expression and play, and the basics of geek therapy. There is a section going in-depth on the expressive therapies framework, the expressive therapy continuum (ETC; Hinz, 2009; Lusebrink, 1992). The next few sections focus on how video games differ as a media, the functional domains and/or goals that can be explored through video games, and the practical applications of video games. Additional sections include gaming motivation and profilers, considerations for video games in therapy, and finally concluding thoughts.

Expressive Arts Therapy

Expressive arts therapy is under the umbrella of creative arts therapies/expressive therapies. This specified arts-based practice is multimodal within its approach as clients and clinicians use multiple mediums of the arts to explore internal and external experiences. Multimodal could mean the use of movement, dance, and art within a session (Halprin, 2003), the use of an initial preferred art process or means of expression to gradually switch to another expressive component (Hinz, 2009), or the use of a variety of intermodal art processes to promote "crystallization" of a subliminal image (Knill et al., 2005). The main idea is to assist a client in "follow[ing] the image" (Estrella, 2008, p. 7) through the process of providing a brave therapeutic space utilizing experiential witnessing, attunement, mindfulness, and curiosity (Kossak, 2009; Rappaport, 2009; Richardson, 2015; Rogers, 1993).

When discussing the creative arts process in expressive arts therapy, one's approach might include active or receptive, verbal, or nonverbal, forms of expression such as the use of music, visual art, dance/movement, drama, poetry narrative, play, imagination, sandtray, and any other additional, standardized creative methods in the expressive therapies field at large (Malchiodi, 2005). All art forms have a connection to one another whether it is consciously noticed or not. The next section dives deeper into the many components of expression as this paper aims to integrate expressive arts therapy with geek therapy, primarily video games in therapy.

Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC)

A deeper look into an expressive therapies theory that could be used as a framework alongside geek therapy could be the ETC (Lusebrink, 1992). Using the ETC, expressive therapists can observe and guide clients to move within the following expressive components: kinesthetic (body/movement) experience to sensory, affective to perception/form, and cognition to symbolism (Lusebrink, 1992). These components are hierarchical and can be used in sequence to increase the complexity and flexibility of emotional and cognitive processing (Lusebrink, 1992, p. 395). Hinz (2009) expanded on the ETC. Hinz (2009) noted that “the kinesthetic sense encompasses the sensations that inform people of and accompany bodily movement, rhythms, and actions” (p. 39). This component includes the pre-verbal expressions that can be found within the old brain’s processes (Hinz, 2009, p. 39). Within the sensory component, internal and external sensations, such as “visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, and tactile channels” are experienced through interaction (Hinz, 2009, p. 59). Hinz (2009) connected these two components as they represent “the simplest form of information gathering and processing” (Hinz, 2009, p. 59).

The perceptual component focuses on the elements within media, structural qualities, and “form potential” within experiences (Hinz, 2009, p. 80). This component explores the process of perspective. The affective component of the ETC includes how emotions become aroused within an individual and how they are explored and expressed through interactions with different media (Hinz, 2009, p. 101). The connection between affective and perceptual is that affective can be motivating towards a perspective while perceptual can assist in “containing” emotional experiences through developing the perspective of what is felt (Hinz, 2009, p. 79).

The cognitive components include “abstract concept formation, analytical and logical thought processes, reality-directed information processing, cognitive maps, and the use of verbal self-instructions in the performance of complex tasks” (Hinz, 2009, p. 123). Hinz (2009) elaborated further by stating “problem solving using art media is an important part of the Cognitive dimension and one way in which this component is used therapeutically” (p. 123). Other activities represented within the cognitive component can “include the ability to classify media along various physical properties, recognition of interrelated objects, and the ability to sequence events in time” (Hinz, 2009, p. 123). Finally, the symbolic component includes connections to meaning, association, metaphor, or symbolism (Hinz, 2009, p. 156). It is within this component that clients might look towards “art and literary works containing symbolic nuances, through exposure to mythology [fantasy], and by reexperiencing folklore” (Hinz, 2009, p. 147). Through increasing a client’s flexibility in exploring all the components within the ETC, expressive connections can assist in processing “affect, sensations, cause and effect, and create ‘layering’ of personal meaning that promotes change and growth in development” (Hinz, 2009, p. 147). Further in, this paper explores how the ETC can connect with video games in therapy.

Developmental Processes of Expression and Play

As this paper explores theoretical approaches to the integration of expressive arts therapy and geek therapy, developmental theories can also be explored. Johnson (1982) proposed that clinicians need to assess a client's developmental abilities in relation to (a) the degree of organization or structure that is presented within the therapy environment; (b) the selected expressive medium that might be introduced to the client (e.g. sounds, movement, verbal, visual arts materials, narratives, symbolic); (c) the range of complexity that the client can articulate with the activities presented; (d) the emotional tolerance that clients can display depending on the given situations and activities; and finally, (e) the degree to which interpersonal demands, or the positive relationships that one can experience during therapeutic interactions (Johnson, 1982, p. 184). With these developmental processes in mind, clinicians can assist clients in exploring geek therapy and expressive arts therapy experientials that are developmentally appropriate.

Drawing on the work of Vygotsky, Erikson, and Piaget, Granic et al. (2014) discussed integrated developmental considerations related to play and the benefits of video games. Through engagement with play and imagination, children can explore “emotionally significant context through which themes of power and dominance, aggression, nurturance, anxiety, pain, loss, growth, and joy can be enacted productively” (Granic et al., 2014, p. 67). Granic et al. (2014) reported that Erikson's theory acknowledged how “play contexts invite children to experiment with social experiences and simulate alternative emotional consequences, which can then bring about feelings of resolution outside the play context” (p. 67). In drawing from Piaget's developmental theory, Granic et al. (2014) noted “that make-believe play provides children opportunities to reproduce real-life conflicts, to work out ideal resolutions for their own pleasure, and to ameliorate negative feelings” (p. 67). Granic et al. (2014) linked both Piaget and

Vygotsky's theories in relation to their acknowledgments of how learning opportunities can build upon the development of social cognitive processes (Granic et al., 2014, p. 67; Gee, 2003).

Vygotsky also noted how children rely on "social referencing" to understand their multilayered worlds and how to respond to ambiguous situations (Broderick & Blewitt, 2020, p. 134). In other words, they are learning through all interactions, especially experiences connected to popular culture media.

Outside of the development of children, Erikson's theory acknowledged continuous needs for learning throughout adulthood stages as they note the importance of "identity formation" and maintenance as adults reflect on accomplishments and relationships (Broderick & Blewitt, 2020, p. 366). Intergenerational opportunities are encouraged for both children and adults. Carras et al. (2018) noted how "playing non-competitive and non-violent video games together is a good way for parents to participate in a child-directed activity in parent-child interaction therapy" (p. 2). Opportunities to play together can also foster social connections for grandchildren and grandparents (Carras et al., 2018, p. 2). Combining geek therapy and expressive arts therapy experiences can provide such opportunities for clients within a variety of age groups.

What is Geek Therapy?

The "geek therapy equation" is the following: "A+R=U" meaning *affinities* (A) plus *resonance* (R) or connection equals a deeper sense of *understanding* (U) (Geek Therapy, 2022b). This equation plays with the cognitive behavioral framework of rational emotive behavior theory (Geek Therapy, 2022b). Whether a geek therapist is self-titled or certified depends on the helping professional (Leyline Education, 2020; Geek Therapy, 2022b) A geek therapist could be a licensed mental health professional, a medical professional in a wide range of fields, an educator,

or supportive member within the community (Geek Therapy, 2022b). A helping professional would have to consider their own scope of practice, then integrate geek therapy techniques within their expertise.

Why Video Games?

When reviewing the ESA (2021) report on gamers in the United States of America, data stated that “the average video game player is 31 years old” while “across all ages, 80% of players are over 18 years old” (p. 4). When it comes to players who are under the age of 18, the ESA (2021) reported that “76% of America kids” are playing video games while “67% of American adults are players” (p. 4). Individuals from all backgrounds can be found utilizing video games “to inspire, provide stress relief and mental stimulation, or simply bring joy through play” (ESA, 2021, p. 1). Granic et al. (2014) also acknowledged the phenomenon that “players are gaming online, with friends, family, and complete strangers, crossing vast geographical distances and blurring not only cultural boundaries but also age and generation gaps, socioeconomic differences, and language barriers” (p. 76). With the data collection on how many people are actively engaging with video games in 2021, the medical field has explored the potential benefits that can come from gamified medical interventions (Granic et al., 2014, p. 73).

Video games differ in many ways to other forms of media. Granic et al. (2014) stated that “players cannot passively surrender to a game’s storyline” as video games are designed for interactivity (p. 67). Players can engage actively with the media while the game responds back to the player’s behaviors (Granic et al., 2014, p. 67). Gee (2003) discussed how video games follow the “multimodal principle” as “meaning and knowledge are built up through various modalities (images, texts, symbols, interactions, abstract design, sound, etc.), not just words.” (p. 111).

Video games are immersive. A player is dropped into a unique world and must learn the laws of the land. Gannon (2018) discussed how parasocial relationships can become more intense when engaging with video games since the player can interact with a favorite character within gameplay (p. 15). Gee (2003) noted that “neither players of games nor children in school can learn by ‘playing’ (i.e., immersion in rich activities) if they are forced to operate in poorly designed spaces” (p.137). For some children and adults, the spaces that video games provide might be considered the least restrictive environment for them to process, learn, and play freely. The use of video games in therapy has also been explored in relation to mental health goals. In the next section, this paper dives deeper into wellness domains and goals that can be explored through video games.

Goals and Domains of Wellness Explored Through Video Games

When considering the variety of domains of wellness that can be explored through video gaming, Granic et al. (2014) named the following four domains “cognitive (e.g., attention), motivational (e.g., resilience in the face of failure), emotional (e.g., mood management), and social (e.g., prosocial behavior) benefits” (p. 66). In McGonigal’s TED (2014) presentation, they discussed “four resiliencies” including cognitive, emotional, social, and physical benefits that can be found through engaging in video gameplay (12:20). When considering the multifaceted and intersecting experiences of a client’s domains of wellness, clinicians should consider biological, psychological, socio-cultural, and spiritual needs. The following paragraphs go through each domain of wellness and how video games can address the differing focused areas.

Cognition Goals. Video games can promote “a wide range of cognitive skills” depending on the video game genre (Granic et al., 2014, p. 68). Granic et al. (2014) cited a study that compares the cognitive processing of control participants to gamers who play shooter genre (p.

68). Data suggested that the gamers showed “faster and more accurate attention allocation, higher spatial resolution in visual processing, and enhanced mental rotation abilities” (Granic et al., 2014, p. 68). Granic et al. (2014) reported on a study that focused on how high spatial skills improvements were shown in participants that played a commercial shooter game than the control condition of traditional interventions that focused on enhancing the same skills (p. 68). The study also suggested that these improvements through gaming could be reported over a “relatively brief period” and “that these training benefits last over an extended period, and crucially, that these skills transfer to other spatial tasks outside the video game context” (Granic et al., 2014, p. 68).

When reviewing cognitive processing that can be found within all gaming genres, Granic et al. (2014) stated that problem-solving seems to be the most central part skill (p. 69). Some genres utilized “complex action sequences based on memorization and analytical skills” (Granic et al., 2014, p. 69). Video games were suggested to enhance creativity (Granic et al., 2014, p. 69). When considering executive function, Ceranoglu (2010) reported that “memory, visuospatial, motor, and planning skills, academic skills, and frustration tolerance” can be goals explored through video games in therapy (p. 145). Games also provide a unique way of assessing cognitive processing and learning as games can repeat the experience utilizing the same course of action, characters, and starting point (Ceranoglu, 2010, p. 145).

Motivational Goals. When it comes to engaging motivations, Granic et al. (2014) reported that “gaming environments may actually cultivate a persistent, optimistic motivational style” and that such motivational skills can be applied to work and educational contexts (Granic et al., 2014, p. 71) Understanding a client’s motivational styles, as well as cognitive processing, can also be assessed through how they approach tasks within a video game. Landrum (personal

communication, April 6, 2022) noted that they observe how a client organizes items during gameplay experiences and in real life scenarios. Depending on the client's needs, Landrum (personal communication, April 6, 2022) reported that they will note these observations of executive functioning and explore differing motivational styles with their clients. Through these observations, Landrum (personal communication, April 6, 2022) stated they can apply game modifications (such as slowing down or speeding up the task in gameplay) or assist the client in exploring new ways of applying motivations and/or organizing tasks.

Social Goals. When working with social goals, Granic et al. (2014) reported how prosocial skills can be acquired through gameplay that is “specifically designed to reward effective cooperation, support, and helping behaviors” (p. 73). Gamers who play massively multiplayer online roleplaying games (MMORPGs) have been reported to “develop administrative skills, such as role assignment, task delegation, crisis management, logistical planning, and how to share rewards with others” (Earl, 2018, p. 14). Other leadership skills and responsibilities could include conflict management, promoting group cohesion, and motivating other group members to complete a shared task (Earl, 2018, p. 14). These skills can be identified, translated, and applied to real world situations (Earl, 2018, p. 14). Other goals could even be connected “to increase treatment adherence” in relation to physical therapy, utilizing games as a distraction to decrease pain during medical procedures, or providing social experiences for children who are hospitalized and have limited social opportunities (Ceranoglu, 2010). In relation to community and society goals, Bowman et al. (2020) noted how future research on interactive media violence could be utilized in violence prevention experiences, similarly “to how films such as ‘Schindler’s List’ or ‘Hotel Rwanda’ might be screened” to promote discussions on injustices, human rights violations, and crimes against humanity (Bowman et al.,

2020, p. 11). Finally, another benefit of using video games in therapy includes the immediate building of rapport simply by the therapist inviting or displaying client preferred gaming content in the therapeutic space. This can promote a sense of familiarity, safety, and in turn, encourage casual conversations.

Cultural Goals. In relation to cultural needs, client cultural considerations should always be identified throughout the therapeutic relationship. Gee (2003) defined “cultural models” as “images, story lines, principles, or metaphors that capture what a particular group finds “normal” or “typical” in regard to a given phenomenon” (p. 146). Video games have the unique potential of inviting individuals to explore complex experiences and perspectives from around the world (Gee, 2003, p. 151). Gee (2003) continued by explaining that this is due to this media’s abilities to make one “act as a given character” (p. 151). Clients can be dropped into another role where they must respond quickly, make choices that benefit the character’s story and/or survival, and experience lived celebrations or defeats within the role of that character (Gee, 2003, p. 151). Within the game, clients might even explore unfamiliar cultural environments and differing social contexts (Gee, 2003, p. 151). Through these experiences, a client can reflect on their own cultural models and expand upon their perspectives (Gee, 2003, p. 151).

The audio podcast, *The Psychology of Video Games Podcast*, hosted by Madigan (2015-present) explores gaming through interviews with experts from a wide range of disciplines. Madigan’s (2016) episode on “the qualities of online relationships” discussed how video games can connect individuals all over the globe through their virtual characteristics and online community spaces. Within the episode, guest expert Dr. Rachel Kowert noted how these online relationships might experience more quality time spent due to the act of playing together and connecting over shared interests (Madigan, 2016). Deeper online relationships might also occur

in comparison to surface-level in-person relationships if the gamer is able to find a sense of belongingness online that in-person experiences do not provide (Madigan, 2016).

Psychological Goals. Emotional tolerance can be assessed and explored through the therapeutic use of video games. Granic et al. (2014) asserted that through the powers of video gameplay, children can build on emotional skills within their lives (p. 67). Ceranoglu (2010) reported that clinicians “may observe the affective regulation and the operating defenses when a child accommodates a win or loss” (p. 145). Through these observations, emotional regulation skills can be developed by engaging clients in meaningful collaborative, cooperative and/or competitive play (Shoshani et al., 2021). When it comes to generating positive feelings in youth, Granic et al. (2014) suggested that “gaming may be among the most efficient and effective means” (p. 71).

When exploring goals related to CBT needs, Granic et al. (2014) reported that *SPARX*, a “fantasy role-playing game based on CBT for depression” was developed to increase engagement (p. 75). Granic et al. (2014) expanded by reporting on a randomized controlled study that suggested *SPARX* was “as effective in treating depression as a therapist-administered CBT program” (Granic et al., 2014, p. 75). Carras et al. (2018) provided a table of selected pilot studies that explored the use of video games in relation to seven various health functions. Three of the seven health functions are listed here as Carras et al. (2018) noted how racing, adventure, and skateboarding games can be used to promote health outcomes for clients with attention deficit disorder, internet games can be used to improve positive symptoms in relation to schizophrenia for clients dealing with mental health needs, and choice commercial games can be used for cognitive distraction functions in relation to “anxiety, nausea in chemotherapy, preoperative anxiety, and fibromyalgia pain” (p. 2).

Kowal et al. (2021) also provided a table of selected studies utilizing commercial video games to promote twelve differing positive mental health outcomes (p. 4). Kowal et al. (2021) noted that for COVID-19 anxiety, commercial exercise games can be used to “combat anxiety related to the pandemic, lockdown, and social isolation” (p. 4). For goal achievement aspects that have been examined, *Portal 2*, Role-playing games, and *Team Fortress 2* were games named for data showing improvements in “goal-setting behavior and motivation to attain said goals” (Kowal et al., 2021, p. 4). Finally, for depressive symptoms, *Candy Crush*, *Limbo*, *Angry Birds*, and casual games assisted in “decreased negative affect by promoting enjoyment, flow states, and motivations (Kowal et al., 2021, p.4).

When considering the multifaceted impacts of trauma, Carras et al. (2018) reported how the visuospatial tasks within the game *Tetris* “may disrupt memory consolidation after trauma” (p. 4). Horsch et al. (2017) explored the use of *Tetris* to decrease intrusive traumatic memories for birthing individuals who recently had an emergency cesarean section (ECS). Within this small study, the twenty-nine randomly selected clients reported fewer intrusive traumatic memories than the control group after a week, and even a month post the intervention (Horsch et al., 2017). Bowman et al. (2020) also reported the growing amount of research in relation to the use of video games as a coping skill for combat veterans dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (p. 6). Bowman et al. (2020) reported that the use of violent video games can provide “short-term (mood management and stress reduction) and long-term (well-being and socialization) psychological outcomes” (p. 6). Zeevi (2021) discussed the use of virtual reality (VR) in exposure therapy approaches to treat trauma responses, phobias, eating disorders, body image, and a variety of anxiety disorders (p. 1).

Biological Goals. When exploring goals related to biological or physical wellness, Carras et al. (2018) noted how “augmented reality games such as *Pokémon GO* could be useful to promote physical activity among those who are normally reluctant to engage” (p. 2). Annema et al. (2010) reported on case studies that have used the physical aspects of the Nintendo Wii console, the Wii Balance board controller, and Wii Sports games to promote physical and occupational therapy rehabilitative goals for a range of clients working on physical goals (p. 1). Annema et al. (2010) briefly reported on a study using such gaming equipment with an adolescent who has cerebral palsy (p. 1). Annema et al. (2010) mentioned another case study that included the use of these controllers “as an input device for music and sound generation system in music therapy for children with behavioral disorders, and for people with Parkinson’s disease and children with autism or Asperger’s syndrome (p. 1). Annema et al. (2010) also noted how some studies modified the Wii controllers to promote “wrist flexion and extension” goals (p. 1). Finally, Annema et al. (2010) reported on the use of Sony’s PlayStation 3 and Microsoft’s XBOX to promote physical goals for “stroke patients and children with hemiplegia” (p. 1).

Goals for Spirituality and/or Meaning. Video games can invite clients to explore a deeper sense of meaning whether that may be linked to themes on spirituality, ethics, and/or morals. When it comes to holding on to the motivations of why people play games, Bowman et al. (2016) focused their research on the difference between “fun” versus “meaningful” games. Within their study, they found that players named “meaningfulness” as having elements of “interactivity, immersion with characters, challenge and competition, and multiplayer interaction” (p. 4). Bowman et al. (2016) reported the characteristics of “fun games” as players having direct interaction with game designing details such as avatar creations, customizations, and unique gameplay mechanics. Through data analysis utilizing user experiences and word

counts to identify themes, players reported meaningful games as having the experience of exploring “agency over difficult moral decisions” (Bowman et al., 2016). Participants described how meaningful gameplay explored ethical and moral dilemmas (Bowman et al., 2016). Additional elements within meaningful gaming include players finding connection among characters and/or other players, resonating themes within the gaming narratives, and various forms of character identification (Bowman et al., 2016).

Practical Applications of Video Games

This section explores several types of video game software that are available for use within the therapy space. The unique characteristics of video games make this media a well-rounded experience that can benefit therapeutic goals and objectives. In the first few paragraphs, differing roles of gaming software, game equipment, and genres are discussed. In the following paragraphs, connections to characters and avatar creations, how games utilize perspectives, and direct and indirect interactions with gaming content are discussed.

Game Software. In this paper, gaming software includes commercial, educational (learning games), and serious games. Commercial games are stated by Carras et al. (2018) as “off-the-shelf video games that are designed for entertainment, with no consideration of their therapeutic potential. Educational or “learning games” are interactive digital media with the main goals focusing on school-related material. Serious games are defined as “entertaining games with nonentertainment goals” (Ceranoglu, 2010, p. 142).

The Entertainment Software Association (ESA, 2021) reported that “math was the most popular genre of learning games” in 2021 while also reporting that 63% of parents stated that education-based games were “very or extremely effective” (p. 6) An example of a serious game might be *Re-Mission*, a game which invites children with cancer to explore psychoeducation and

barriers to treatment adherence through controlling “a nanobot who shoots cancer cells, overcomes bacterial infections, and manages signs of nausea and constipation” (Granic et al., 2014, p. 73). When it comes to exploring person-centered techniques with clients, one could consider how the use of commercial games could provide additional benefits compared to nonentertainment “serious games” as clients might already have attachments to such media content.

Park et al. (2021) stated that “gamification is gaining attention as a way to assist Generation Z learners in receiving sustainable education” (p. 1). Gamification is used to motivate learners through immersing them in “gameful experiences” (Park et al., 2021, p. 2). The writers defined the applications of gamification as the use of gaming mechanics and elements such as leaderboards, points, badges, and virtual items in non-gaming environments and contexts like education, healthcare, and business endeavors (Park et al., 2010, pp. 1-2). Geek therapy differs to gamification as geek therapy focuses on following the client’s lead on what interests truly bring resonance and meaning to their lives, exploring those motivations and connections within the therapy space. Granic et al. (2014) stated a potential shortcoming of “gamification” in educational and health spaces as “medical practitioners, teachers, and researchers are not game designers, and as a result, they often develop products that miss the most essential mechanism of engagement in games—the fun” (p. 74). These gamified endeavors might present more like “chocolate-covered broccoli” (Granic et al., 2021, p. 74). This paper focuses primarily on the use of commercial video games in therapy.

Gaming Equipment and Devices. The availability of accessing a wide range of games also depends on the gaming devices available to the client. When it comes to gaming software, the equipment, and accessibility, Kowal et al. (2021) reported that commercial games are more

likely to be found within homes worldwide as they are easily accessible, range in price from free to "games worth US \$71", and these games can hold less stigma and promote a normalized environment when providing services related to mental health needs. (Kowal et al., 2021, p. 3). Kowal et al. (2021) reported on a variety of gaming equipment that is available with some being affordable and/or multifaceted in their use (p. 3). Video game equipment can include a computer (PC or laptop), mobile phone, or gaming console (Kowal et al., 2021, p. 3). Some gaming consoles might be handheld devices, devices that can be connected to a television screen, or virtual reality (VR) headsets. Per the Entertainment Software Association's (ESA, 2021) report, the most used device for video gameplay was the smartphone (p. 9). Game consoles were noted to be in second place while the use of a personal computer was in third, though statistical data differs depending on the age group of the players (Entertainment Software Association [ESA], 2021, p. 9). The accessibility to a variety of gaming devices also increases the expansiveness of game genres available to the player.

Game Genres. The list of gaming genres is quite overwhelming in size and is in continuous development as games have the potential to mix and match genre qualities and game developers have the artistic opportunities to completely create a new genre. The most popular gaming genres, listed respectively per the Entertainment Software Association's (ESA, 2021) report, included

causal games (e.g., *Tetris*, *Solitaire*), action games (*Grand Theft Auto*, *Super Mario Odyssey*), shooter games (e.g., *Call of Duty*, *Fortnite*), racing games (e.g., *Need for Speed*, *Forza*), family games (e.g., *Super Mario Party*, *Just Dance*), and adventure games (e.g., *Uncharted*, *Resident Evil*). (p. 9)

Wirtz (2021) reported these following genres: action, platformers, shooters, fighting, survival, rhythm, battle royale, adventure, action-adventure, horror, puzzles, roleplaying (RPGs), action-RPGs, massively multi-player Online (MMOs), dating, simulation, strategy, multi-player online battles arenas (MOBAs) sports, racing, roguelikes, party, social deduction, art, casual, competitive, educational, sandbox, open-world, and creative games. As one can imagine, with so many genres, many different goals and objectives can be explored, depending on a client's preferences and motivations for playing a game.

Player Connections to Avatars and Characters. Other writers explore the experiences of avatar creation and how players might identify with their characters. Liao (2017) stated that “digital games, virtual worlds, and online social media have become part of daily life, and many such media offer avatars to represent users” (p. 36). Liao (2017) continued by stating “it is important to theorize about avatar-making activity and understand the connections between avatar-making, identity, and learning” (p. 36). Some players might find that the opportunity to create their own avatars during gameplay experiences can provide a safe space for gender expression and exploration of identity.

Erb et al. (2021) discussed how individuals might identify with their avatar or even view their “Avatar as Other”, experiencing a sense of responsibility over their character (Erb et al., 2021, p. 8). Earl (2018) encouraged family therapists to use gaming avatar development and player characters as a way of opening discussions on “identity formation and accommodation” as therapists can ask about character aspects and traits that are meaningful to the clients while noticing how clients might wish to be perceived within their family systems (pp. 13-14). Earl (2018) shared an example by noting during gameplay “perhaps [clients] like sitting back and

aiding in the success of others (healing) rather than leading the charge (attacking) or bearing the brunt of responsibility (absorbing damage)” (p. 14).

Expansion of Perspectives. Another unique characteristic that games can provide is a variety of perceptual views. Madigan’s (2019b) episode, “The Psychology of *The Legend of Zelda*” discussed with guest experts Bean et al. on how the main character’s limited personality and lack of dialogue can encourage players to project onto the character. In other research exploring perspectives, Drakopoulos et al. (2020) discussed how the role of non-playable characters (NPCs) and artificial intelligence (AI) invites players to become immersed in the game world, learning how the gaming world functions, and might provide other “fun” and/or “meaningful” outlets through these virtual, fictional, yet real-time gaming experiences (p. 5).

Within the game, *The Walking Dead*, players have the opportunity of making choices that impact the main character’s relationships with other NPCs (Games As Literature, 2016). Depending on how the player responds to different scenarios within the game, opportunities for introspection of morals and differing perspectives may arise. In Naughty Dog’s (2020) game, *The Last of Us II*, the player must follow the narratives of the characters without the player having any control over the characters’ stories. This experience enables players to explore different perspectives of multiple playable characters in order to complete the game. For some players, this opportunity of playing an alternate perspective might bring empathy for characters that they previously hated. Erb et al. (2021) explored thematic analysis in relation to player-character relationships within *The Last of Us II*, “tolerance of forced character switch,” “malleability of character image,” and “flexibility of character attachment” were observed (p. 1). Finally, when it comes to actions experiences during in-game play, Bowman et al. (2020) named that “research on both violent and non-violent games [have] found that players can (a) express

guilt after committing violent acts, (b) report reflective and introspective emotional reactions during gameplay, and (c) debate the morality of their actions with others” (p. 1).

Multiple Ways of Interacting. When it comes to video gaming, therapists and clients might find themselves exploring indirect or direct, active and/or passive ways to engage with such content. Whether discussing the media content in session, watching playthroughs of games via YouTube, Twitch, or other streaming platforms, the clinician and client can observe gameplay together, the clinician can observe the client only, they can play together (such as playing cooperatively or collaboratively), play competitively, or even explore the process of designing a game. Clients and clinicians can utilize games in multiple ways that invite the client to truly tune in to what is meaningful for them and what promotes wholeness. A clinician can be curious about what motifs within the game speak to the client. With games being multimodal, clients might find that the visuals, narrative/lore, movement of characters or movement demands of the game on the player, character qualities, emotional meaning, or even the music and world sounds might be what connects them to these immersive and interactive experiences. Within the following sections, this paper explores the motivations of why people play games and how these motivations can guide clinicians in better understanding client preferences and needs.

Understanding Why People Play Video Games

Understanding the motivations of why people are connected to coping skills, hobbies, or even affinities is an important aspect of the initial therapy interview. In expressive arts therapy, a clinician might ask a client what artistic mediums or expressive “doors” they might find themselves interested in exploring during a session. Earl (2018) encouraged clinicians to ask clients “what kind of video games they play” as being curious about a client’s interests could not only benefit therapeutic rapport building but can assist the therapist in knowing what genres or

specific game titles the client typically engages with (p. 18). Carras et al. (2018) also mentioned that “the individual and social context of users may drive video gameplay, which offers specific benefits such as purposeful engagement and social interactions that could also form the basis of interventions” (p. 3). When getting to know clients, clinicians can get an idea of a client’s routines, rituals, and the communities that they might be involved in.

Earl (2018) continued by imploring therapists to be open-minded and curious as they stated, “if a family therapist knows what to ask, video games provide an opportunity to peek into a client gamer’s inner-world in a way that family members have not, and that might not have been possible otherwise” (p. 13). By understanding the characteristics of gaming, clinicians can research further on differing genres, themes, narratives, and characters that might resonate with clients and provide a deeper sense of meaning (Earl, 2018, p. 18). Earl (2018) suggested additional questions that clinicians should be curious about, including the following: “what time commitment do the games require,” “how might that affect their role in their respective system(s),” and “ask clients about the characters they create or prefer to play as” (p. 18). Gannon (2018) suggested asking “what is your relationship with your favorite fictional character?” as clients may have deep connections to characters within favorite mediums that might consciously or unconsciously guide identities, values, and morals (p. 30). Clinicians should remain curious, ask appropriate questions, and not assume maladaptive behaviors based solely on the content of the game.

Game-Based Motivation Profilers

Within the following paragraphs, this paper explores gamer motivations, player types, and behaviors. When exploring why individuals play video games, YouTube content creator, The Game Theorists (2013), named three gaming motivations: “competency” (achievement

and/or mastery), “autonomy” (control of adventure, other players/characters, or the game world), and “relatedness” (connections and community with fictional or real-life players). Potard et al. (2020) named “four distinct clusters of video game players” include those who play casually, hardcore players, those interested in the challenge, and those that receive sensorimotor arousal from specific gameplay genres (p. 508). These clusters of video game players were named alongside the following measured behaviors: “time spent, frequency, use of various videogame genres, sensorimotor interactions, emotional–narrative interactions” (Potard et al., 2020, p. 500). Researchers explored the “five big personality types” (extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness) alongside the mentioned measured behaviors (Potard et al., 2020, p. 501). This data could aid clinicians in understanding more about adaptive and maladaptive coping in video gaming. Potard et al.’s (2020) acknowledgment of sensorimotor and emotional-narrative interactions could also aid expressive therapy clinicians in relation to utilizing the expressive therapies continuum (ETC) as an assessment tool.

Drakopoulos et al. (2020) reported on the Bartle player taxonomy by describing that it is based on “four fundamental player types according to their objectives and how they accomplish them, the interactions with other players, and their relationship with the in-game world” (p. 3). Drakopoulos et al. (2020) reported the four fundamental Bartle Taxonomy player types as the following: “explorers”- players that enjoy exploring the world and discovering loot boxes, new items, memes (internet culture references), and easter eggs (hidden multimodal symbols connected to other media motifs); “socializers”- players who enjoy gaming specifically for the interactions with other players; “achievers”- players who game to fulfill a sense of accomplishment through meeting in-game goals and objectives while potentially also being motivated by leaderboards, badges, and points; and “killers”- players who enjoy eliminating or

defeating other players (p. 3). Another way of viewing Bartle's taxonomy is through understanding the relationships between interaction versus action and players versus environment (Drakopoulos et al., 2020, p. 3).

Madigan's (2015-present) *Psychology of Video Games* audio podcast provides discussions on resources that can aid clinicians in exploring tools such as survey profilers, interview questions, psychometrics for user experiences, and how gaming can be used for testing. Madigan's (2019a) episode on "gamification and video games as employment tests" explored in-depth the difference between the two topics. The quest expert of this episode, Dr. Richard Landers, reported how gamification might focus on game themes in work or school environments to motivate individuals (Madigan, 2019a). Game-based assessments differ as they focus on video game design and other meaningful qualities and motivations within video gameplay to assess how a participant might react to challenges via the game's context (Madigan, 2019a). Areas that may be assessed using game-based assessments can include cognition, executive functioning, and/or social skills (Madigan, 2019a). In Madigan's (2017a) episode, "Using Video Games for Therapy", guest experts Messer et al. from the private practice Electronic Gaming Therapy, discussed how they utilized Quantic Foundry's (2021a) "Game Motivations Profiler" with their clients to have a better understanding their motivations, potential character traits, and games they might enjoy. In the following paragraphs, this paper explores further into Quantic Foundry's (2021a) psychometric survey profiler for video game players.

Yee (2015) reported that Quantic Foundry uses an online survey to rate how important gameplay activities and elements are to players. This survey employs a five-point scale within its rating system (Yee, 2015). The nine "Quantic Gamer Types" were identified via segment analysis of the 500,000+ gamers" (Quantic Foundry, 2021b, para. 1) Yee (2015) noted the

importance of scoring each motivation so that players do not fall within one player type but can see their “constellation” profile related to their percentiles within all player types and motivations. Eighty-one combinations of unique gamer types can be provided as some participants might receive results for a primary and secondary gamer type (Quantic Foundry, 2021b). The six motivations with their twelve associated subgroups are the following: “action” (destruction and excitement), “mastery” (strategy and challenge), “achievement” (completion and power), “social” (competition and community), “creativity” (design and discovery), and “immersion” (fantasy and story) (Quantic foundry, 2021b).

The nine Quantic gamer types are the following: “acrobat,” “gardener,” “slayer,” “skirmisher,” “gladiator,” “ninja,” “bounty hunter,” “architect,” and the “bard” (Quantic Foundry, 2021b). “Acrobat” gamers prefer solo experiences that provide challenging play that they can work to master and develop in-game skills (para. 6). “Gardener” gamers enjoy relaxing, consistent task-oriented gameplay (para. 7). “Slayers” enjoy engaging in strong creative, mostly solo, narrative experiences (para. 8). “Skirmishers” are looking for fast-paced action with a social element of engaging with a team (para. 9). “Gladiators,” who “are much more likely to identify as hardcore gamers,” are individuals who like well-grounded, epic gaming experiences that might involve teams, strategic planning of power up mechanics, fast-paced gameplay, and in-depth world building that can be explored (para. 10). “Ninjas” enjoy the challenge of fast-paced “strategic decision making” and competition (para. 11). “Bounty Hunters” are gamers that want to explore the digital, interactive worlds and make customizations (para. 12). “Architects” use decision-making and planning to progress within the game narratives and complete gameplay tasks (para. 13). Finally, “Bards” are “social players who want to chat and interact with other players in game worlds that are rich with lore, stories, discovery, and customization” (para. 14).

Once the survey is completed, the profiler also provides a list of games based on the participant's motivations. Within Quantic Foundry's (2019) reference sheets and details, they noted spectrums of motivations alongside specified game titles and gaming preferences. Quantic Foundry (2021a) also produces psychometric data to explore the motivations of board gamers. An expressive therapies clinician could use the data found from gaming profilers to explore many creative avenues whether in relation to a player's motivations or in developing identity formation through artistic means.

Discussion

This literature review explores how geek therapy, primarily video games in therapy, and expressive arts therapy can be integrated and deepen a client's exploration of self and understanding. Expressive arts therapy and geek therapy are connected in that they both are person-centered approaches that utilize immersive, multimodal, and interactive experiences to promote resonance, creative flexibility, and meaning. The components of the ETC can be explored in relation to the variety of game genres and gameplay experiences offered. The use of a client's affinity, particularly video games, can provide a natural expressive tool that can be used to build, restore, or maintain a variety of wellness goals and domains. Regardless of the device that the game is presented on, clients are presented with an opportunity to interact and express themselves within a novel or familiar space. The following section explores considerations of video games in therapy.

Considerations of Video Games in Therapy

When it comes to the use of video games in therapy, clinicians need to discuss potential considerations. Within the American Counseling Association's (ACA, 2014) Code of Ethics, section A.4.b. on "personal values" states that "counselors are aware of—and avoid imposing—

their own values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors” (p. 4). Whether a clinician would name themselves a gamer or not, all clinicians should make sure to consider their own contexts and biases and avoid imposing their interests or values on clients. It is here that clinicians are reminded to invite their clients to guide the session when it comes to whichever expressive materials and/or mediums that are introduced in the session. This is crucial when meeting a client where they are at, utilizing an integrated trauma-informed and person-centered approach, to decrease the risk of harm that could arise if a therapist introduces materials that a client is not yet ready to explore.

Another consideration is the proposed “online gaming disorder” found within the *DSM-V* (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2014). Granic et al. (2014) reiterated that “one can no more say what the effects of video games are, than one can say what the effects of food are” (p. 68). Of course, in all things, there should be a balance. Shi et al. (2019) mentioned the importance of acknowledging problematic gaming that causes impairment or harm within a client’s life and may need intervention to address maladaptive lifestyle behaviors related to video game use (p. 299). Motivational interviewing alongside expressive arts therapy techniques could be explored when working with clients in need of making difficult and habitual lifestyle changes (Corey, 2011, p. 191). Additionally, Shi et al. (2019) reported that “interventions that address problem gaming should consider placing more of an emphasis on interpersonal and environmental issues in conjunction with individual issues as a more holistic approach to care” (p. 299).

Clinicians will need to consider specified informed consent forms and HIPPA compliant tools if they are interested in exploring in-person or virtual gameplay experiences utilizing video games in therapy. Informed consent forms might also invite parents to discuss their thoughts,

questions, and/or concerns related to utilizing video games in the therapy space. In Madigan's (2017b) episode "A Parent's Guide to The Psychology of Video Games", their guest expert, Dr. Rachel Kowert discussed hot topics that parents are curious about when it comes to their children and video gaming. Some considerations for parents include understanding parental controls, rating systems, appropriate levels of screen time, privacy settings, potential risks of online bullying, and the importance of engaging in the youths' interests and prompting playful, collaborative experiences (Madigan, 2017b). The Entertainment Software Association (ESA, 2021) provided further data on statistics related to household rules, ratings, and parental control familiarity as well as top reasons for guardians to engage children in multiplayer video game experiences (pp. 10-11). Regardless, clinicians need to be prepared in assisting parents/guardians in lowering potential guards towards video game content as some narratives can be a lot more complex than what might be observed in passing (i.e., "shoot 'em up games" might have more story content and meaning that can be compared to or even surpass narratives found in movies and television shows). Parents/guardians could be encouraged to watch YouTube videos that show playthroughs of gaming content or videos that discuss the intensive narratives behind the game's passing façade (Games As Literature, 2022).

A highly researched topic that has been concluded is the misunderstood and unfounded subject of violent games causing violent behaviors. Within the American Psychological Association's (APA, 2020) resolution statement on violent video games, they stated that "attributing violence to violent video gaming is not scientifically sound and draws attention away from other factors (p. 1). Halbrook et al. (2019) discussed a three-year longitudinal study that demonstrated how "other factors, including levels of depression, exposure to family violence, antisocial personality traits, and peer influences" increased levels of aggression rather than

violent gaming content (p. 1099). In turn, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2020) acknowledged that aggressive behaviors can be associated with video gameplay alongside other additional factors though aggressive behaviors (such as “insults, threats, hitting, pushing, hair pulling, biting and other forms of verbal and physical aggression”) are defined differently than what would be considered as “violent” and/or lethal behaviors (pp. 1-2).

Shoshani et al.’s (2021) explored this topic further as they discussed how attachment styles, levels of empathy, competitiveness, and previous history with aggressive behaviors can impact whether a client is more likely to display aggressive behaviors and have decreased prosocial behaviors within video gameplay as well as in other areas of daily functioning. They also reported on several studies that suggested how players who engage in violent video games that include cooperative, social experiences are more likely to have an increase in prosocial behaviors, gain social needs satisfaction through a sense of peer support, and potentially a decrease in aggressive and/or hostile thoughts and behaviors (Shoshani et al., 2021, p. 3). Shoshani and Krauskopf (2021) researched “The *Fortnite* social paradox: The effects of violent-cooperative multi-player video games on children's basic psychological needs and prosocial behavior”, how cooperative violent gameplay might increase prosocial skills such as willingness to help others (p. 7).

Another disruptive behavior that could be explored within therapy includes “tilting” which is recognized as losing focus and control while in gameplay due to negative emotions that cause the player to make choices (Sharma et al., 2022, p. 699). If a client who demonstrates aggressive behaviors is interested in video games, clinicians should consider how this door of expression could be used when working on therapeutic goals that decrease disruptive behaviors. Video games can provide unique spaces to practice and learn social skills. Utilizing expressive

arts therapy techniques, such as understanding emotions and perceptual components within the ETC as well as kinesthetic and sensory experiences in relation to emotions, could aid clients in building on emotional regulation tools as well as connecting the body's response to beneficial thoughts and behaviors.

Another player type that should be considered includes the “griever types” (Achterbosch et al., 2017). “Griefing, in simple terms, refers to the act of one player intentionally causing another player grief for personal gain” (Achterbosch et al., 2017, p. 847). Exploring the motivations behind why a player might be intentionally seeking to “grief” another player could assist clinicians in assessing if this behavior impacts other areas of the client's inter- and intra-personal relationships and/or causes dysfunction. Achterbosch et al. (2017) stated the ranging griever type motivations as follows: seeking power, the challenge, control, or pleasure from griefing others (pp. 855-856). The writer also went in-depth to name the different griever types in relation to their motivations (p. 859) Grievers might select their targets randomly, to show or gain power, select intentionally due to the victim's attitude or emotional response towards the game, discrimination, provocation, or vigilantism (Achterbosch et al., 2017, pp. 851-852).

Finally, understanding the many facets of the video gaming and internet communities at large can assist clinicians in identifying vulnerable clients who might be at risk of engaging with and/or becoming victims of predatory hate groups and/or toxic subgroups within fandoms (Danskin, 2015, 2021; Gannon, 2018, p. 29). Gannon (2018) encouraged further research to explore “how cyberbullying impacts a client with an online presence (p. 29). By being curious and open-minded about a client's virtual identities and fandom communities, clinicians can aid clients in exploring such unique, yet complex topics.

Conclusion

This paper includes a literature review of how geek therapy, primarily video games can be integrated with expressive arts therapy techniques. The writer encourages further research on these connected topics and for more collaborations to be found within the many fields and industries involved. Of course, the use of traditional media such as board games, cards, and books will always hold their place within the therapy space- if the client brings such interests to the table. If there is any takeaway from this paper, clinicians should remember the importance of following what inspires and motivates their clients while having an open mind to explore such affinities with care. Open-minded clinicians may even pick up some new interests for themselves!

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