

## GOAL

To research the effects that role-playing gaming has on participants, and where indicated to be most effective, develop programs using role-playing gaming of all types (tabletop, live-action, and computer based), for the educational and therapeutic benefit of general and special populations.

## OVERVIEW

The RPG Research Project is the title for ongoing research by RPG Therapeutics LLC, from multiple disciplines using various approaches including multi-stage, multi-variable, multi-blind, short & long-term, observational, controlled, & uncontrolled studies, following scientific principles, conducted over a span of years.

Since 1979, 80+ studies have been published related to participation in role-playing games (RPGs) & their effects on participants. Most of these studies were initially focused on responding to the much-hyped accusations of a few individuals & groups, and the popular-culture media claiming risks of suicide, homicide, or anti-social behavior, and the stereotypes about gamers being dysfunctional. Though the research clearly disproves such claims<sup>1</sup>, the continued repetition of misinformation by the media has led to an inculcated stigma in some countries against role-playing games and gamers (RPGers).

Previous research strongly indicates that people known to regularly participate in tabletop RPGs have significant advantages over those that do not, including: much lower suicide risks, much lower feelings of meaninglessness, stronger communication, math, reading, writing, problem solving, social, team building, research, leadership, empathy, creative skills, and many other areas<sup>1</sup>.

## CORRELATION VS. CAUSALITY

While the existing research clearly disproves the stereotypes, the majority of the studies relied mostly on comparison of existing data from multiple sources (meta-analysis), correlative data analysis, individual case studies, small sample sizes, and/or short time periods, so they do not significantly establish causality.

Did the gamers scoring so much better than the general population already have these traits, & thus were drawn to RPGs because it allowed them to exercise these abilities further? Or were they drawn to the game for other reasons, and RPGs helped them develop these beneficial traits and skills?

Research *does* indicate role-playing gaming has a strong causal relationship for **educational benefits<sup>1</sup>**, leading to many schools throughout the world now using RPGs in various forms for education from K through 12+. Research also indicates there may be **significant therapeutic benefits<sup>1</sup>** for participants as well, but this needs to be clarified through additional scientific testing.

## HISTORY

W.A. Hawkes-Robinson, founder of RPG Research & RPG Therapeutics LLC, retired from a successful career as an executive in computer science, I.T., and information security in 2003. He is now a student at Eastern Washington University (EWU) nearing completion of an interdisciplinary degree that includes recreation therapy, music therapy, neuroscience, & experimental psychology.

RPGs were popular in the 1980's with an estimated 12-20+ million participants in the U.S. Hawkes-Robinson first began informally researching the educational and social impact of role-playing games in 1985 as a response to the barrage of negative press and public misinformation commonly disseminated regarding role-playing games & gamers, especially the unsubstantiated negative claims regarding the most popular tabletop form of RPG, Dungeons & Dragons (D&D).

The formal development of RPG Research began in 2004, first considering the broader psychosocial impact of tabletop role-playing games, presented as essays written as student for the Recreation Therapy department at EWU, followed by a series of research documents and publications that continue to contribute increasingly detailed information, including all forms of RPG (tabletop, live-action (LARP), Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) books, & computer-based online-and-offline).

## VISION

Through the efforts of RPG Research, over time it should become possible to clearly define the **specific causal therapeutic and educational effects from participation in role-playing gaming**. This may lead to developing effective therapeutic intervention programs using various forms of role-playing games for different client needs.

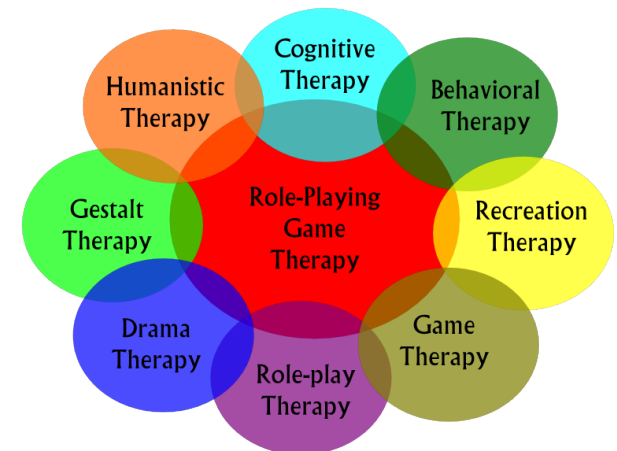
## INTERDISCIPLINARY

Due to the complex aspects of RPGs, these studies are approached from multiple disciplines and theoretical backgrounds, including recreation therapy, cognitive neuropsychology, bio-feedback, neuro-feedback, experimental psychology, behavioral, cognitive, humanist, sociological, and others.

## PROJECTS

Early stages of the project include purely observational (non-experimental) studies, questionnaires, standards-based testing, demographics gathering, detailed case studies, short & long term research projects, building towards a larger body of data aggregation planned over years of research efforts.

Based on the analysis of the data gathered, therapeutic interventions may become apparent. By applying Therapeutic Recreation methodologies combined with RPG, programs may be developed to promote the goals of self-actualization or facilitation of the fullest possible recovery, growth, and development of clients.



## OBJECTIVES

- Determine any repeatable, statistically significant, correlative or causal beneficial or detrimental effects upon those who participate in RPGs.
- If data indicates potential causality, clarify the *independent* variables and their impact on various *dependent* variables.
- Determine whether any response differentiation exists between participants of various role-playing gaming formats such as tabletop, live-action (LARP), Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA), or computer-based.
- Determine whether there are positive or negative correlative demographic idiosyncrasies in variables found between regular role-playing gamers compared to the general population.
- Attempt to determine whether there are any differentiations between those participating in "heroic" versus "evil" campaigns.
- Determine the differences between various participant demographic groups.
- If beneficial effects proven, develop programs to use role-playing gaming as a modality for therapeutic intervention.

The RPG Research website has a far more comprehensive list of goals and milestones.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

These projects involve contributions and participation from individuals and organizations spanning the globe. The RPG Research website is intended as a central repository where scientists, therapists, researchers, and other professionals, as well as media and laypeople, will be able to find all the information they need regarding this expansive topic. The website provides a blog, news, web-based forum, email discussion lists, chat room, books, videos, links, downloads, and other resources freely available to the public.

## MISSION

1) To clearly establish, through rigorous scientific testing, the therapeutic and educational effects of all forms of role-playing gaming (tabletop, live-action (LARP), and computer-based) on participants, while including consideration of potentially relevant correlations, whenever possible, contribute to the body of **causal** research information.

2) Based on established research, using relevant evidence-based and theory-based approaches to design, and applying Therapeutic Recreation methodologies, develop and implement programs utilizing various forms of adapted role-playing games (tabletop, live-action (LARP), and computer-based) as the modality to achieve therapeutic and/or educational intervention goals meeting the specific needs of clients.



## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

If you are interested in participating in, or helping with, upcoming RPG Research projects, simply register via the website by completing the online form listed on the front page of the website under the title:

### **SIGN UP TO PARTICIPATE IN FUTURE STUDIES**

*RPG Research is accepting applications for as many participants and volunteer staff as possible, both gamers and non-gamers alike. Even if you have never participated in a role-playing game, your participation is critical to establishing causality.*

1. See [www.rpgresearch.com](http://www.rpgresearch.com) for reference information

# RPG Research Research studies investigating the effects of role-playing gaming.

**Register today to participate  
in upcoming studies.**

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