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In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, many are left with a sense of loneliness and isolation, due to being detached from family and friends. The proposed website for the final project will explore the thoughts and circumstances of an isolated person during a crisis. This idea will be explored through the representation of a Lovecraftian monster, the use of video games as a means of escapism and a look into the psyche of the protagonist.

The website's narrative will feature a Lovecraftian monster as a personification of pandemics. A common theme of writer H.P. Lovecraft's works is the insignificance of mankind in the universe (Montague 2015, 41). His stories would reject human characteristics and occasionally involve mankind's extinction (41, 161). As such, his body of work carries an atmosphere of doom and hopelessness (7). The inclusion of a monster that represents these ideas as a stand-in for pandemics feels appropriate, as the latter is known to wipe out populations suddenly and without rhyme or reason. In addition, humans are at the mercy of these catastrophes: despite advancements in technology and medicine, there can still be severe diseases that manage to spread onto

every corner of the world. It is during these difficult times that fear and paranoia take hold: going outside is risky as one never knows if they will come into contact with an infected person. An air of disbelief and despair hangs over the heads of many, as their lives have suddenly changed for the worse. To sum up, the inclusion of a Lovecraftian monster is to represent the circumstances that can lead people into isolation and fear. It is in these troubled times that people look to entertainment as a means of escape.

The protagonist of the story uses videogames as a coping mechanism. *Passive escapism* is a form of immersion that one uses in order to escape a harsh reality (Chen and Chang 2019). This method can arise due to a lack of coping resources or psychiatric distress (Chen and Chang 2019). While escapism can be used as a method to manage stress and relax (Chen and Chang 2019), it can also become difficult to control. Loneliness, depression, anxiety and stress are some of the major factors for online game addiction and problematic internet usage (Chen and Chang 2019). In the narrative, video games are the protagonist's respite from the troubles of their current life. This aspect of the story represents how people can get distracted by internet usage or games to temporarily avert their problems. However, during gameplay, NPCs slowly start to disappear as the user touches them. This is to depict the creeping feeling of isolation one can have when performing *passive escapism* as a means to replace social interaction. In summary, the feeling of loneliness that the main character experiences creeps into the games they play. This weak emotional support brings further mental health problems down the line.

The protagonist undergoes a decline in their mental condition as their isolation and hopelessness escalate. Loneliness is an external cause for depression, which can lead to a person feeling unmotivated and cause them to fall into further distress (Hemmings 2018, 38). In addition, a depressed person suffers from low self-esteem and a perceived negative change in the quality of their life (Hwang et al. 2020). During the story, the main character will undergo a period of depression where it feels like they are sinking deeper into pessimism: at that point, they feel like everything is hopeless and that nothing matters. However, after obtaining a message from a loved one, the protagonist gets the urge to meet with the former and better their mental state, despite the outside danger. This event represents the urge to seek help when the opportunity presents itself and overcoming fears and uncertainty through bonds. Overall, while isolation during a crisis can bring about severe depression, there is always hope when one is willing to reach out to others that want to help.

In conclusion, the troubles of an isolated person during a crisis are represented by a Lovecraftian monster, the need for escapism via videogames and overcoming a period of depression. The proposed website will depict a tale of personal struggle and the desire to seek comfort in others during difficult times.

Works Cited

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