The background of the slide is a blurred image of a role-playing game board. On the left, there are several dice in various colors (green, purple, blue). In the center, a red circular overlay contains the main text. To the right, a white map with black line art is visible. The overall scene is a tabletop gaming environment.


Leveling up:

In-person role-playing
games as assets for
positive psychosocial
development

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Outline

- ❖ Intro to Table-Top Role-Playing Games (TTRPGs)
 - ❖ History of TTRPG research
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What are Table-Top Role-Playing Games?

- **Role-playing games (RPGs)** are a genre of games in which participants assume a character's role and determine that character's actions within scenarios. Scenarios are played out using agreed rules, played through individually or in a group, with or without a mediator, and where the outcomes are without definite limits or durations (Curran, 2010).
- **Table-top RPGs (TTRPGs)** are a category of RPG in which the game is carried out by individuals either in person or via a voice or video chat service without the use of computer aided graphics or interfaces (i.e., video games). They are also commonly called pen-and-paper RPGs or in-person RPGs.

History of TTRPG Research

- Since Gygax and Arneson's *Dungeons and Dragons* (1974) became the first mainstream TTRPG to be mass produced and rapidly gain popularity, TTRPGs continue to grow in popularity. Since their creation, TTRPGs have drawn attention from researchers, not all of it positive.
- TTRPG research can be easily divided into two waves:
 - Wave 1 (1974 – late 1990's): Focused on player demographics and personality traits. The goal was to investigate the validity of player stereotypes and investigate the beliefs that participation in RPGs could lead to negative and even anti-social behavior.
 - Wave 2 (Late 1990's – present): Focused on examining various aspects of player behavior, social interaction, and motivations for play; As well as potential impacts of games on psychosocial development in several areas including social skills, personality, and identity.

Study Background:

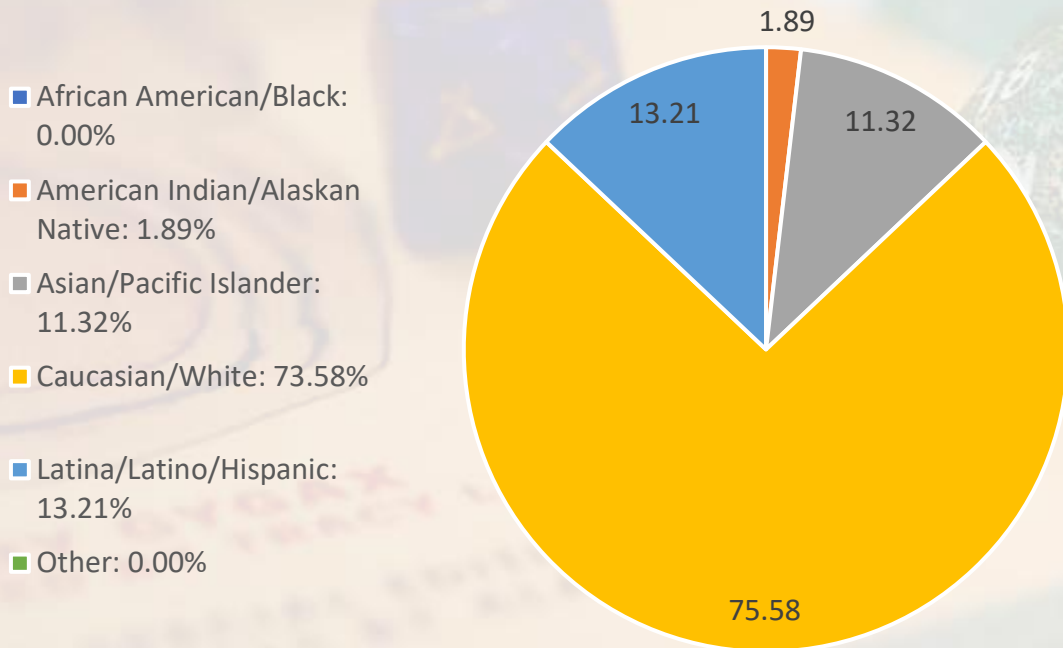
- Emerging adults can experience difficulties associated with transitions in roles and social networks, as well as significant identity development.
- These transitions can be the source of turbulence within families and peer groups and there are few methods for individuals to effectively prepare or practice skills in order to successfully navigate transitions.
- However, research on TTRPGs has shown that they may be able to help individuals facilitate positive psychosocial development, provide resources (i.e., communication skills) to individuals who may be having difficulty navigating transitions, and serve as environments for the fulfilment of basic psychological needs.
- Few studies have been conducted to verify the effectiveness of these hypotheses so in order to determine if TTRPGs can be effective tools for navigating transitions we developed a survey to examine the associations between playing TTRPGs and individuals psychosocial health and development.

Methods: Participants

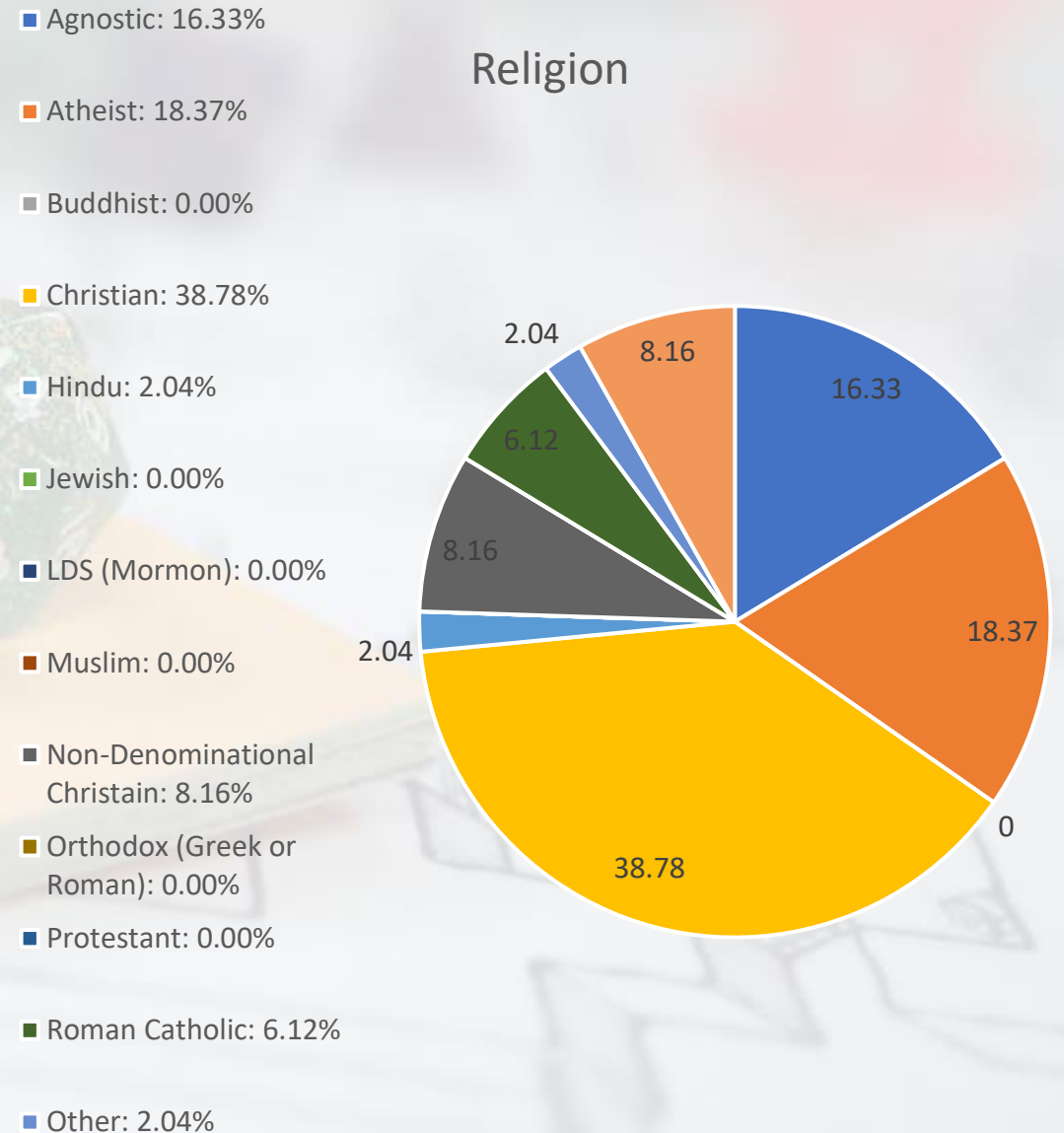
- For this study our target sample size is 70 participants, age 18 – 30 who have played or are currently playing TTRPGs. For the current study there are no exclusions for race, ethnicity, or religion.
- Currently we have 49 responses (44 complete, 5 partial).
 - Mean age = 21.90 years (Range = 18 – 30)
 - Race/Ethnicity (Caucasian/white = 75.58%)
 - Religion (Christian = 38.78%, Atheist = 18.37%, Agnostic = 16.33%)
- Current Race/Ethnicity and Religion distributions on next slide.

Methods: Participants

Race/Ethnicity



Religion



Methods: Measures

- After determining which variables were most salient based on a literature review of TTRPGs, an online study was developed using Qualtrics.
 - The study includes:
 - Respondent demographics (i.e., age, race/ethnicity, education, etc.)
 - Individual and group gaming experiences (i.e., time played, group demographics, play styles, etc.)
 - Scales on individual self-esteem and emotional regulation.
 - Individual social reward (including the Social Reward Questionnaire)
 - Closeness to others (including parent, sibling, and peer closeness)
- Study flyers were then disseminated around TTU campus, local game/hobby shops, local bookstores, and gaming groups via social media.

Preliminary Findings:

- Age:
 - Mean age that participants started playing = 17.136 years (range = 5-26)
 - A majority (N=28, 63.64%) began playing between the ages of 14 & 22 (high school or college age)
- Introduction to TTRPGs:
 - A majority of respondents (N=24, 53.33%) were introduced to TTRPGs by friends.
 - The next largest groups (N=8, 17.78%) were introduced by a member of their family.
 - Respondents who were introduced by their families tended to report younger ages of introduction (by several years) than those who were introduced by friends.
- Impact of TTRPGs:
 - No respondents reported that TTRPGs had any overall negative impact on their lives.
 - A majority (N=33, 71.74%) stated that they had impacted their lives very positively overall.

Implications:

While full analysis of the data will be required after completion of data collection, initial findings indicate that many individuals are introduced to TTRPGs by friends which reinforces the social nature of these games and aligns with previous research findings.

Additionally, participants self-reported feelings about TTRPGs and their impacts on various areas of life (including leadership & communication skills, teamwork, etc.) tend to be positive. Aligning with our hypothesis that TTRPGs can serve as tools for developing and/or practicing a variety of skills useful to navigating challenging developmental periods and transitions.

Future Directions:

We plan to continue research on TTRPGs as the focus of my masters' and doctoral work. The following are primary contenders for future studies:

1. A cross sectional study to examine age differences in the potential benefits of TTRPGs, as well as the role that families play at different developmental periods.
2. A longitudinal study following adolescents that engage in TTRPGs through the transition from high school into emerging adulthood to examine links to well-being across development.

Conclusion:

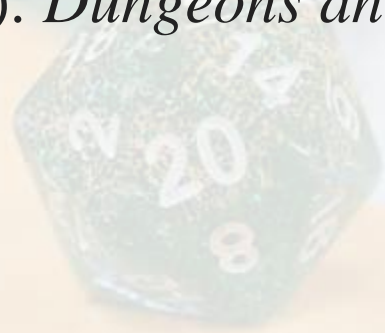
Preliminary analysis of the data shows that our respondents do align closely with those of previous studies aimed at examining the social and motivational aspects of player involvement in TTRPGs.

Preliminary findings support that TTRPGs may act as environments for social interaction for players, and participation may benefit players by providing a safe space to practice skills important to individual psychosocial development and overall well-being.

We look forward to a full analysis of the data once response goals have been met so that we can fully examine the possible links between TTRPG play, individual experiences, and psychosocial outcomes.

References

- Curran, N. (2010). Stereotypes and Individual Differences in Role-Playing Games. *International Journal of Role-Playing*, 2, 44-58.
- Gygax, G., & Arneson, D. (1974). *Dungeons and Dragons*. TSR, Lake Geneva, WI: Wizards of the Coast.



Thank You!

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