Role for Initiative: Identity, Belonging, and Dungeons & Dragons
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Background and Purpose
- Identity is formed and maintained, in large part, through the participation of preferred occupations.¹
- Social engagement plays a significant role in identity and feelings of belonging.²

Does regular participation in the social occupation of tabletop roleplaying games support identity formation?

Methods
- Qualitative research design
- Targeted recruitment
- Focus group consisting of 5 adult tabletop role-players who have been playing together for more than 1 year
- Thematic coding and analysis
- Member checking

Findings

Belonging

“[Gaming] has given me a group of friends […] that I didn’t always have.”

Identity

“Take a part of your own personality […] and then build a character pretty much out of that.”

Self-reflection

“It’s almost like free therapy.”

Exploration

“This is a really important and exciting creative aspect of my life.”

Discussion

- Regular participation in Dungeons and Dragons promoted feelings of belonging, supported identity formation, encouraged self-reflection, and inspired exploration and creativity.
- Through collaborative story telling, members of the group are able to explore personality traits and interpersonal situations with limited real world consequence.

Implications for Practice

- Occupational therapists may be better equipped to address identity after injury and illness onset by understanding the role participation in social occupation has on identity.
- Role playing games could potentially be used as a tool to help support identity and community formation.

References: