A Social Identity Perspective of Personality Differences between

Fan and Non-Fan Identities

Stephen Reysen[1*], Courtney N. Plante[2], Sharon E. Roberts[2] & Kathleen C. Gerbasi[3]

[1] Department of Psychology, Texas A & M University-Commerce, TX, USA

[2] Social Development Studies, Renison University College, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

[3] Humanities and Social Sciences, Niagara County Community College, NY, USA

[*] Stephen Reysen, E-mail: Stephen.Reysen@tamuc.edu

Abstract

In three studies of fan communities we examined differences in the Big Five personality traits between fans' personal and fan identities. In all three studies, self-identified furries completed a measure of the Big Five personality traits for both their personal and furry identity. In Study 1, furries were found to rate all five dimensions higher when referring to their furry (vs. personal) identity. In Study 2 we replicated these results and further found that the effect was not limited to furries: sport fans also reported different personality ratings when referring to their fan or personal identity. In Study 3, we again replicated the results while testing predictors of personality differences between salient identities. A path model showed that felt connection to one's fandom identity predicted greater frequency of fandom identity salience, which, in turn, predicted greater personality disparity between identities. Taken together, the results suggest the role of the social identity perspective in explaining inconsistencies in personality.

Keywords

personality, big five, social identity, salience, furry, sport, fan

1. Introduction

For millennia, laypersons and experts alike have systematically studied individual differences in behavioral tendencies (Pervin, 1990). Today, the most widely-recognized and empirically-supported approach to personality is the five-factor model, known as the Big Five personality dimensions (Funder & Fast, 2010). In this model, personality is organized around five global factors: extraversion (e.g., enthusiastic, sociable), agreeableness (e.g., warm, sympathetic), conscientiousness (e.g., dependable, self-disciplined), emotional stability (e.g., calm, even-temperedness), and openness (e.g., complex, creative). Despite decades of research supporting the presence of the Big Five personality traits, there remains a long-standing debate among researchers about whether behavior is best understood in terms situational factors (Mischel, 1968) or in terms of inherent individual differences (e.g., Costa, Herbst, McCrae, & Siegler, 2000; Funder, 1997; McCrae & Costa, 1999). While the decades-long dispute has,

more recently, come to include an interactionist perspective, where personality and context interact to predict behavior, many personality researchers maintain that personality is relatively stable across the lifespan (see Reynolds et al., 2010). Other research (e.g., Jenkins, Reysen, & Katzarska-Miller, 2012; Reynolds et al., 2012), however, contends that a social identity perspective is key to understanding how and when personality may change between contexts and over time (Reynolds et al., 2010).

Self-categorization theory builds upon social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and posits that one's context influences the relative salience of his or her different identities, which, in turn, underlies his or her behavior (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). According to self-categorization theory, a person can, in any situation, self-categorize at a personal level (a unique individual compared to other individuals), at an intermediate level (a member of an ingroup compared to members of an out-group), or at a human level (as a human compared to plants or animals). The relative salience of different identity levels depends on the interaction of the person and their situation, but once an identity is cognitively activated, individuals depersonalize and adopt the norms, values, behaviors, and emotions stereotypical of the activated identity. People are more likely to adopt these stereotype-consistent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors when they strongly identify with the group (i.e., feel a psychological connection; for more extensive reviews of social identity perspective see Hogg & Smith, 2007; Hogg & Williams, 2000; Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010; Reynolds, 2011). For example, women highly identified (vs. low identified) with their gender identity indicate a greater intention to wear sunscreen to follow the perceived in-group norm of skin protection (Terry & Hogg, 1999). As such, from a social identity perspective, personality can change from situation to situation as different identities become salient, especially when it comes to group identities with which people strongly identify (see Reynolds et al., 2010; Turner & Onorato, 1999).

Jenkins and her colleagues (2012) suggest that, from a social identity perspective, personality traits can be construed as one component, among many, of group prototypes. For example, students, as a group, are prototypically conscientious, while therapists, as a group, are prototypically emotionally stable. Because each identity carries with it prototypical traits, changing which identity is most salient in a situation may change individuals' expressed traits. By extension, consistency in personality across a lifespan may not be due to the consistency of personality traits themselves, but rather be the result of an identity that is regularly salient across situations (Turner & Onorato, 1999). In support of this interpretation, Reynolds and colleagues (2010) note that personality measures often imply an identity in their instructions (e.g., think about others the same age and sex as you). As such, participants completing the same personality inventory across situations would have the same personal identity made salient each time, which would lead to similar scores across measurements and the conclusion that personality was stable and consistent across contexts.

At present, there is little research directly testing whether changing the salient social identity of a person completing a measure of the Big Five personality traits would affect their scores on the measure. In one study, Reynolds and colleagues (2012) found a change in self-rated neuroticism, specifically, by

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manipulating which group identity was salient. This single study alone, however, is insufficient to conclude that traits beyond neuroticism can be influenced by identity salience, and there remain questions about the replicability and generalizability of these findings. The present study aims to expand this scant literature in the context of fans, looking at whether the salience of one's personal and fan identity will affect their self-reported personality scores.

The present study focuses on one fan group in particular: furry fans. Also known as furries, they are individuals with an interest in anthropomorphism (ascription of human traits to animals) and zoomorphism (ascription of animal traits to humans; Gerbasi et al., 2008; Plante et al., 2015; for greater description of the fandom see Roberts, Plante, Gerbasi, & Reysen, 2015). The furry community is diverse and includes artists, writers, costumers, musicians, and fans (Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2014a), many of whom express their interests through anthropomorphic artwork, writing, roleplaying, and the construction of mascot-like costumes called fursuits (Mock, Plante, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2013; Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2014b). One of the most popular ways furries express their interest is through the development of anthropomorphized animal avatars (i.e., fursonas), characters they use to represent themselves to other members of the fandom and with whom they often identify (Roberts et al., 2015). Fursonas are usually highly meaningful to furries and represent a distinct, often-idealized version of the self that reflects characteristics the person is striving to achieve (e.g., outgoingness, confidence; Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2013). Given that more than 95% of furries has a fursona (Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2013), and given the fact that many furries consider their fursonas to be a similar, but distinct self, we felt that furries represented an excellent, real-world group in which to test the effects of identity salience on personality. In this context, we hypothesized that furries' personality ratings will differ, depending on whether they are thinking about their personal identity or their furry identity.

2. Overview of Present Research

The purpose of the present series of studies is to examine personality inconsistency between furries' personal identity and furry identity. Although personality researchers would argue that personality is relatively stable across situations and is consistent across the lifespan (e.g., Costa, Herbst, McCrae, & Siegler, 2000; McCrae & Costa, 1999), social identity researchers suggest that personality can change depending on which identity is salient (Jenkins et al., 2012; Reynolds et al., 2010; Reynolds et al., 2012; Turner & Onorato, 1999). In Study 1, we first examine whether personality scores differ between furries' personal identity and their furry identity. In Study 2, we attempt to replicate Study 1 in a different sample of furries and test the generalizability of the findings to members of a different fandom (i.e., sport fans). Finally, in Study 3 we examine possible predictors of personality differences between personal and furry fan identities. Across all three studies, we predict that self-reported ratings of Big Five personality traits for personal and fan identities will differ.

3. Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 is to examine differences in personality traits depending on the salience of different identities. Based on a social identity perspective of personality, we predict that ratings of the Big Five personality dimensions will differ when furries rate their personal identity compared to their furry identity.

4. Method

4.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants (N=282, 75.2% male, 21.6% female, 1.4% transgender male to female, 1.1% transgender female to male, 0.7% other; M_{age}=24.81, SD=7.91) included self-identified furries recruited at Furry Fiesta (a furry convention in Dallas, TX) and from online furry forums. Participants completed demographic items and rated both their non-fan personality and their furry identity personality. The measures were part of a larger study, allowing us to separate the personality measures so that measures of non-furry-self personality were asked at the beginning of the large survey and measures of furry personality were asked at the end.

4.2 Materials

Participants completed Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann's (2003) ten-item personality inventory (TIPI), adapted to refer to their non-furry identity ("When I am in my non-furry identity, I see myself as…") and their furry identity ("When I am in my furry identity (e.g., fursona), I see myself as…"). All responses were made on a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1=*disagree strongly* to 7=*agree strongly*. The measure assesses the Big Five personality dimensions, each with a positive and a negative item (the latter of which was reverse-scored): extraversion ($α_{self}$=.71; $α_{furry}$=.68), agreeableness ($α_{self}$=.44; $α_{furry}$=.49), conscientiousness ($α_{self}$=.56; $α_{furry}$=.38), emotional stability ($α_{self}$=.71; $α_{furry}$=.58), openness to experience ($α_{self}$=.47; $α_{furry}$=.33). As noted by Gosling (2015), low alphas are typically found for this measure.

5. Results and Discussion

To examine whether personality differs between furries' rating of their non-furry and furry identities, we conducted series of repeated measures ANOVAs. As shown in Table 1, participants rated their furry identity significantly higher than their personal identity on all of the assessed personality dimensions. The strongest increase was observed for extraversion, a finding consistent with prior qualitative research (Roberts et al., 2015) suggesting that fursonas represent idealized versions of the self that include, among other characteristics, outgoingness and confidence.

Having shown that self-rated personality does differ depending on the referenced identity, we next attempted to replicate the results using a different sample. Moreover, we examined whether personality differences between salient identities generalize to members of other fan groups by recruiting members of a very different fandom: sport fans.

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Table 1. Means (Standard Deviation) of Big Five Dimensions for Non-Furry and Furry Identities, Study 1

Variable	Non-Furry	Furry	$F(1, 281)$	p-Value	η_p^2
Extraversion	3.37 (1.52)	4.67 (1.52)	207.74	< .001	.425
Agreeableness	4.97 (1.23)	5.40 (1.26)	38.07	< .001	.119
Conscientiousness	4.61 (1.33)	4.92 (1.29)	15.97	< .001	.054
Emotional Stability	4.52 (1.54)	5.19 (1.37)	60.13	< .001	.176
Openness to Experience	5.44 (1.23)	5.96 (1.04)	58.61	< .001	.173

Note. 7-point Likert scale, from 1=*disagree strongly* to 7=*agree strongly*.

6. Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 is two-fold: to replicate the results of Study 1 in a different sample of furry fans and to examine whether personality differences due to salient identity generalizes to sport fans. In addition, we sought to rule out a possible confound from Study 1 the results may have been a product of question order, as participants, rating their non-furry selves first and their furry selves second, may have simply experienced fatigue or boredom, which might account for the difference in personality scores between furry and non-furry identity. To address this concern, we randomized the presentation order of the self and fan identity personality measures. We predicted that the results of Study 1 would be replicated for furry fans, and that personality differences between self and fan identity would occur for both furries and for sport fans.

6.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants included furries (*N*=342, 82.7% male, 13.2% female, 2.6% transgender male to female, 1.5% transgender female to male; M_{age}=25.52, *SD*=8.03) recruited online and a sample of self-identified sport fans (*N*=178, 59% female; M_{age}=23.80, *SD*=7.88) recruited from psychology courses at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Participants completed the TIPI for both their self and their fan identity (the order of which was randomized), and completed demographic items.

6.2 Materials

The personality items were identical to Study 1 (with the exception that sport fans rated their fan personality regarding sport fan identity instead of furry identity): extraversion (α_{self}=.70; α_{fan}=.66), agreeableness (α_{self}=.45; α_{fan}=.56), conscientiousness (α_{self}=.56; α_{fan}=.42), emotional stability (α_{self}=.66; α_{fan}=.57), openness to experience (α_{self}=.35; α_{fan}=.34).

7. Results and Discussion

To examine whether furry and sport fans rate their non-fan and fan identity differently we conducted a series of repeated measures ANOVAs with sample (furry vs. sport) as an independent variable and Big Five personality dimensions as dependent variables. As shown in Table 2, significant interactions were found for each dimension of personality. Post hoc analysis of sport fans (paired samples t-tests) showed that sports fans rated their fan identity to be significantly more extraverted (t (177) =-9.45, $p<.001$, d=-.71), and significantly less agreeable (t (177) =8.12, $p<.001$, d=.61), conscientious (t (177) =2.54, $p=.012$, d=.19), and emotionally stable (t (177) =5.72, $p<.001$, d=.43) than their non-fan identity. We found no significant difference in openness to experience (t (177) =0.80, $p=.425$, d=.06) between sports fans' self and fan identity. Similar to Study 1, furries showed significant increases in extraversion (t (341) =-16.92, $p<.001$, d=-.92), agreeableness: (t (341) =-9.79, $p<.001$, d=-.54), conscientiousness (t (341) =-3.85, $p<.001$, d=-.21), emotional stability (t (341) =-8.39, $p<.001$, d=-.47), and openness (t (341)=-8.94, $p<.001$, d=-.48).

Table 2. Repeated Measures Means (Standard Deviation) of Big Five Dimensions for Non-Fan and Fan Identities, Study 2

Variable	Non-Furry	Furry	Non-Sport	Sport	$F(1, 518)$	p-Value	η_p^2
Extraversion	3.43 (1.55)	4.83 (1.40)	4.37 (1.40)	5.39 (1.28)	7.60	.006	.014
Agreeableness	4.88 (1.23)	5.49 (1.08)	4.75 (1.26)	3.89 (1.31)	162.83	< .001	.239
Conscientiousness	4.67 (1.36)	4.93 (1.25)	5.46 (1.13)	5.23 (1.10)	18.43	< .001	.034
Emotional Stability	4.81 (1.47)	5.41 (1.18)	4.85 (1.29)	4.14 (1.35)	96.20	< .001	.157
Openness to Experience	5.14 (1.28)	5.76 (1.09)	5.06 (1.11)	4.99 (1.00)	36.57	< .001	.066

Note. 7-point Likert scale, from 1=*disagree strongly* to 7=*agree strongly*.

The results for furry participants replicated those of Study 1, in that all five personality traits were found to be stronger in furries' furry identity than in their non-furry identity. These effects were found even after randomizing the presentation order of the personality measures, ruling out this possible confound from Study 1. Furthermore, personality differences were also found for sport fans, whose ratings of personal and fan identity differed for all of the studied traits except for openness to experience. This result suggests that the difference in personality scores caused by identity salience was not unique to furries and does occur in members of other fan groups. The different direction of personality change for sport fans relative to furries can be explained by social identity theory (e.g., Jenkins et al., 2012; Reynolds et al., 2010), which states that when an identity is salient, individuals self-stereotype to the group's content. These findings may be a product of furries and sport fans having different group norms, with the different results reflecting a shift in self to be in line with these norms. Having replicated the results of Study 1 and shown the generalizability of these findings, in Study 3 we

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examined the predictors of personality differences between salient identities in another sample of furries.

8. Study 3

The purpose of Study 3 is to examine possible predictors of personality differences between salient identities found in Study 1 and 2. Social identity theory suggests that greater psychological connection to a group identity predicts greater adherence to the group's content (Hogg & Smith, 2007), in part because one's connection and experience with an identity increases their readiness to view themselves as that identity (Turner & Onorato, 1999). As such, greater psychological connection with a group should predict greater differences in personality traits between instances when the group's identity is salient and when it is not salient, particularly when the traits in question represent a normative aspect of that identity (Jenkins et al., 2012; Reynolds et al., 2012; Reynolds et al., 2010). Applying these principles to furries, one's connection to their fursona should predict the frequency with which they think about their fursona, which, in turn, should predict more significant differences in personality ratings between their personal identity and furry identity.

8.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants were furries (N=185, 89.2% male, 9.7% female, 1.1% transgender male to female; M_{age}=25.47, SD=7.48) recruited at the subsequent Furry Fiesta (a furry convention in Dallas, TX). As in Studies 1 and 2, participants rated their self and fan personality and completed demographic measures. In addition, however, they also completed a measure of the strength of their felt connection to their fursona and a measure of the frequency with which their fursona was salient to them.

8.2 Materials

The TIPI scale used in Study 1 and 2 was also used in the present study: extraversion (α_{self}=.71; α_{furry}=.64), agreeableness (α_{self}=.31; α_{furry}=.31), conscientiousness (α_{self}=.59; α_{furry}=.51), emotional stability (α_{self}=.61; α_{furry}=.58), openness to experience (α_{self}=.47; α_{furry}=.15). Participants also completed a 10-item measure of psychological connection to their fursona (e.g., "I was born with this connection to my non-human species", "I have fantasies about being my species") measure of psychological connection to a fursona/species using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree* (Roberts, Plante, Gerbasi, & Reysen, 2013; α=.87; M=3.86, SD=1.41). Additionally, participants completed a 5-item ("I imagine what it would be like to be my favorite non-human animal species", "In my head I represent myself as my favorite non-human animal species", "My thoughts about my favorite non-human animal species involve me", "When interacting with others, I think of myself as a non-human animal species", and "I imagine what I would look like as my favorite non-human animal species") measure assessing the frequency with which their fursona was salient to them on a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1=*never* to 7=*all the time* (α=.89; M=4.53, SD=1.26).

9. Results and Discussion

To examine whether personality differed depending on which identity was salient, we conducted a series of repeated measures ANOVAs. Similar to the previous studies, participants scored significantly higher on all five personality dimensions when referencing their furry identity than when referencing their non-furry identity (see Table 3).

Table 3. Means (Standard Deviation) of Big Five Dimensions for Non-Furry and Furry Identities, Study 3

Variable	Non-Furry	Furry	$F(1, 184)$	p-Value	η_p^2
Extraversion	3.70 (1.61)	5.07 (1.39)	144.92	< .001	.441
Agreeableness	5.00 (1.22)	5.49 (1.17)	27.02	< .001	.128
Conscientiousness	4.62 (1.39)	4.98 (1.37)	16.90	< .001	.084
Emotional Stability	4.78 (1.40)	5.39 (1.27)	34.58	< .001	.158
Openness to Experience	5.29 (1.30)	5.95 (0.99)	62.45	< .001	.253

Note. 7-point Likert scale, from 1=*disagree strongly* to 7=*agree strongly*.

Next, we examined the predicted model that the connection to one's fursona would significantly predict frequency of fursona salience, which, in turn, would predict larger differences in personality traits between participants' furry identity and non-furry identities. We constructed difference scores by subtracting non-furry identity scores from ratings of one's furry identity for each of the five traits assessed. As such, higher scores indicated higher personality ratings of participants' furry (vs. non-furry) identity. A path model was tested using Amos 19 modeling software, employing bias-corrected bootstrapping with 5,000 iterations to generate 95% confidence interval estimates of each of the pathways. Within the model, connection to species was allowed to predict frequency of fursona salience, which, in turn, was allowed to predict change in personality ratings. Due to the similarity in personality ratings we allowed the disturbance terms for the change scores to covary. The model adequately fit the data, $\chi^2 (5) =4.52$, p=.477, RMSEA=.000 [.000, .097], NFI=.984, CFI=1.00.

As shown in Figure 1, the connection to one's fursona predicted frequency of salience of fursona (β=.69, p=.001, CI=.616 to .756). Frequency of salience of fursona, in turn, significantly predicted greater difference between furry identity and non-furry identity personality scores: extraversion (β=.21, p=.006, CI=.063 to .336), agreeableness (β=.16, p=.010, CI=.040 to .278), conscientiousness (β=.16, p=.025, CI=.022 to .296), emotional stability (β=.22, p=.002, CI=.081 to .335), openness to experience (β=.30, p<.001, CI=.157 to .417). The indirect pathways between connection to fursona and the differences in personality traits were also found to be significant, providing statistical evidence of mediation: extraversion (β=.14, p=.005, CI=.043 to .241), agreeableness (β=.11, p=.009, CI=.028 to .197), conscientiousness (β=.11, p=.026, CI=.015 to .209), emotional stability (β=.15, p=.002,

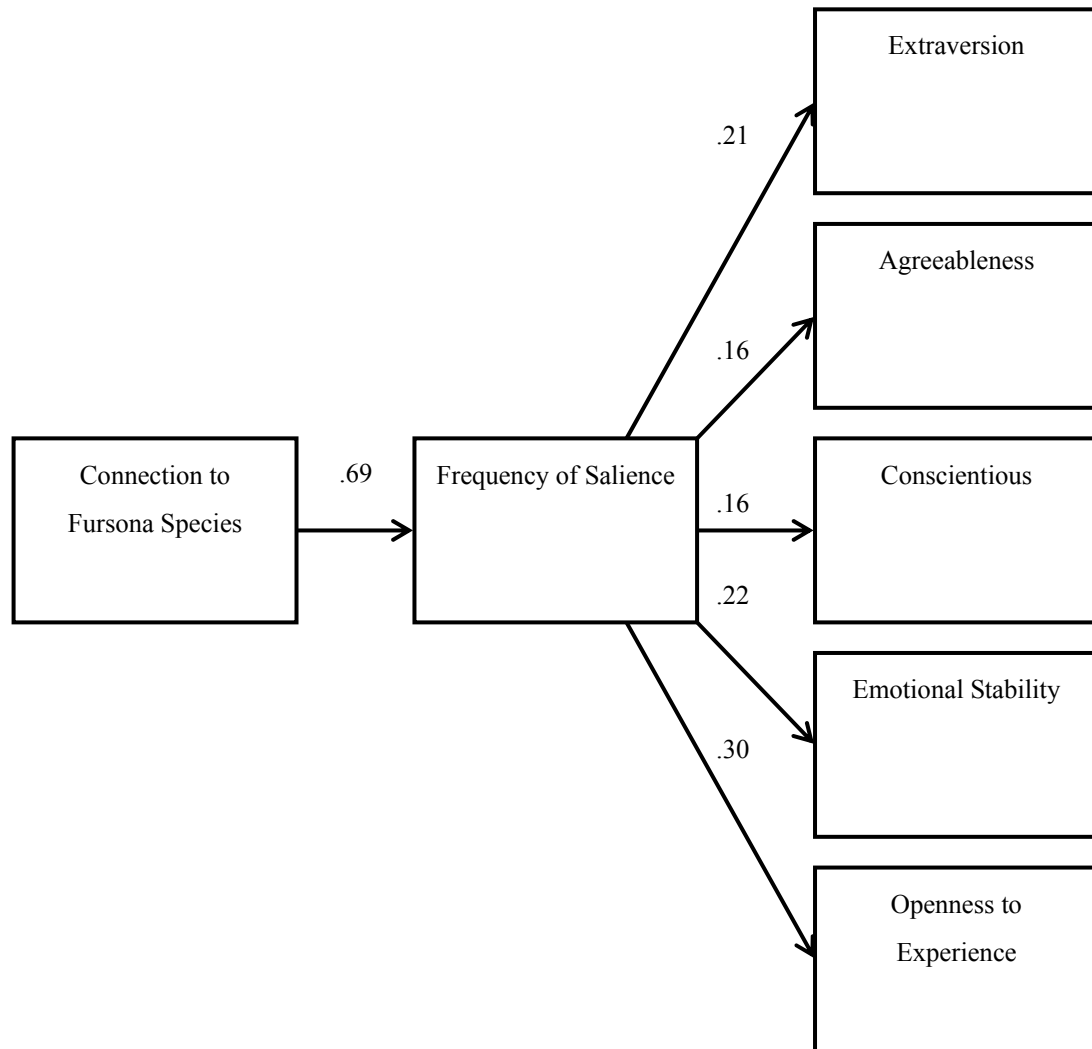CI=.055 to .238), openness to experience (β=.20, *p*<.001, CI=.108 to .293).

Figure 1. Predicted Model of Connection to Fursona Species Predicting Salience, and Salience Predicting Change in Personality (Furry Identity Rated Higher Than Non-Furry Identity). All Standardized Betas Are Significant at *p*<.05

The results of Study 3 replicated the increased personality scores for participants' furry identity as compared to their non-furry identity found in Studies 1 and 2. In addition, the degree of connection with one's fursona was found to predict larger personality differences between the two identities, providing evidence for our hypothesis that the strength of one's psychological connection to their furry identity is associated with a change in the normative content of the group. Path analysis showed that felt connection to one's fursona influenced personality ratings through the frequency of salience of one's furry identity. Taken together, the results provide evidence that personality ratings are affected by the identity made salient to the participant, with the strength of one's connection to the identity and the frequency with which the identity is salient suggested as possible predictors of these effects.

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10. General Discussion

The purpose of the present series of studies was to examine personality differences between personal and group identities in the context of a group of fans. As predicted, across three studies furries' scores on the Big Five personality traits were significantly different for their furry identity and their personal, non-furry, identities. The magnitude and direction of this shift in personality was relatively consistent across the three samples, suggesting the differences are unlikely to be idiosyncratic to any one sample or due simply to chance. Illustrating that these effects generalized to other fan groups, in Study 2, sport fans' fan and non-fan personality scores were also found to differ, albeit not in the same direction or magnitude as furries. In Study 3, we found furries' degree of psychological connection with their fursona predicted greater salience of fursona identity, which, in turn, predicted greater differences in all five dimensions of personality. Together, the results support a social identity perspective of personality, which states that personality is more fluid and situationally-influenced than is typically argued by personality theorists.

Despite the argument that personality is relatively stable across situations and consistent across the lifespan (e.g., Costa et al., 2000; McCrae & Costa, 1999), social identity researchers have suggested that personality is largely contingent upon which identity is salient (Jenkins et al., 2012; Reynolds et al., 2010; Reynolds et al., 2012; Turner & Onorato, 1999). In the present studies, furries and sport fans were both found to report different Big Five personality dimension scores when referring to their personal identity as compared to their fan identity. The effect was not limited to increases in personality scores for fan-based identities, as sport fans showed significantly lower agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability scores in reference to their fan identities. Indeed, these dimensions relate to possible stereotypical characteristics of sport fans as confrontational and experiencing emotional swings (e.g., cheering when team wins and anger when team loses). This finding supports the notion that personality traits (e.g., sympathetic, warm, self-disciplined) represent aspects of a group's prototypical content which are more likely to be applied to the self when thinking about one's group identity.

Social identity theory predicts that greater psychological connection to a group leads to greater adherence to the group's content (Hogg & Smith, 2007), while more experience with an identity predicts greater readiness to apply an identity to oneself (Turner & Onorato, 1999). Support for these claims were found in Study 3, which showed that psychological connection with one's fursona predicted the frequency with which the fursona was salient which, in turn, predicted greater personality change. These results also provide evidence that fursonas represent idealized notions of the self (Roberts et al., 2015), given that the largest change in personality was found for extraversion, a trait that is associated with characteristics such as outgoingness and confidence, which may be seen as desirable to furries who, on average, feel shy, somewhat ostracized, and socially awkward Roberts and colleagues (2015).

Although the present results bolster the scant literature on personality from a social identity perspective,

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there are significant limitations in the present studies. First, the study design is limited in its ability to make causal claims regarding identity and personality change. Future research may utilize an experimental design, such as that used by Reynolds and colleagues (2012), to manipulate the salient identity and/or comparison group prior to rating personality. Second, it is possible that participants' responses were driven in part by demand characteristics: participants may have felt compelled to change their answers on the personality inventory when asked to complete it a second time. That said, in Study 1 personal identity was placed at the beginning of the survey and furry identity was placed at the end of the study, which itself consisted of more than 150 questions. Given the considerable distance between the two measures, the repetition of the personality measures and felt demand to respond differently to them may not have been problematic. Additionally, it is worth noting that we randomized the presentation of personal and furry identity ratings in Study 2, where the results replicated our findings from Study 1 and Study 3. While this does not rule out the possibility of demand characteristics in our study, it does significantly reduce our concern about them. Future research aiming to more thoroughly rule out demand characteristics may want to replicate our study with a greater period of time between ratings of personal and fan identity. A third limitation of the present studies is their exclusive use of fan groups. While we believe that the findings of the present research should, in theory, apply to all identities, we have no way to know this definitively until a study has been conducted using a non-fan group. Future research wanting to determine the generalizability of these findings should explore such possibilities using a more diverse set of groups. A fourth limitation is that we conducted Studies 1 and 3 at the same regional convention (although a year apart). There is a possibility that some individuals participated in both studies. However, given the growing size of this convention and that we conducted the studies a year apart we suspect that only a small number of individuals participated in both studies. Lastly, given that the furry fandom is largely male, our furry samples reflected this disproportionate gender sample. However, the results of sport fans in Study 2 (majority female participants) suggest that the shift in personality from fan to personal identity is not due to gender.

To conclude, the results present a social identity perspective of personality as more fluid than is commonly presented by many personality psychologists. Furry and sport fans differed in the degree of reported Big Five personality dimensions when referencing their personal identity as opposed to their fan identity. The change in personality was consistent with the perceived normative prototypical group content for each group. Path analyses revealed that connection to one's furry identity predicted frequency of salience of the identity, which, in turn, predicted greater differences in perceived personality between personal and fan identity. Together, the results provide further evidence to support the notion that personality is tied to one's salient identity and can be changed as a person's salient identity is manipulated.

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