

Development and Validation of a Measure of Popular Media Fan Identity and Its Relationship to Well-Being

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The purpose of this research was to develop a measure that systematically assesses the various components of film and TV fan identity and to test its connection to well-being. Across 2 studies, the multidimensional Fan Identity Scale was developed and validated. The resulting 9-item survey yielded 3 factors that encompassed both personal and social dimensions of fan identity. In Study 2, the relationship between these dimensions and 3 facets of well-being was also explored. Results indicated that overall fan identity predicted overall well-being. In addition, social fan identity predicted relational well-being and marginally predicted physical well-being. Avenues for future research involving the Fan Identity Scale are discussed.

Public Policy Relevance Statement

The Fan Identity Scale developed in the present research is used to classify fans of stories (like film and TV fans) by their enthusiasm, social behavior, and meaningful interactions with the story. The questionnaire was used to assess the way psychologically healthy fans incorporate popular media into their lives. Fan identity was related to overall well-being, and social fan identity was related to relational well-being.

Keywords: film, TV, fans, well-being, scale development

Research has increasingly focused on deep descriptions of the audience experience of a narrative text, with an emphasis on meaning-making and emotional responses to media (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). These studies have examined participants' reactions to narratives by having them read literary texts in the lab (Djikic, Oatley, Zoeterman, & Peterson, 2009), asking them to name particular films (e.g., ones they felt were fun or meaningful; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010), or recruiting people who were about to see a movie (Bartsch, Appel, & Storch, 2010). However, such studies have rarely recruited participants who self-identify as fans of popular culture narratives. Meanwhile, humanities scholars have written much about popular culture fans, with a particular focus on the social aspects of the film and TV fan experience (e.g.,

Jenkins, 2011). The current investigation unites these important literatures to explore the cognitive, emotional, and relational worlds of popular culture fans using a new scale that measures the nuances of fans' identification with their fan object.

One commonality of the different perspectives on fan research is that they take a generally positive view of the gratifications that fictional narratives can afford audiences. Furthermore, evidence suggests that identification with a particular piece of media may enhance personal well-being (Vinney, 2016). Such positive approaches to popular media fans are important given both the tendency for social scientists to focus on the negative outcomes of media consumption (e.g., media violence; Anderson et al., 2010) and for public discourse about fans and celebrity/fan relationships to perpetuate negative fan stereotypes (see Dill-Shackleford, Vinney, & Hopper-Losenicky, 2016, for a review).

The current investigation explores the various ways film and TV fans identify with their favorite stories and how this relates to their well-being. To those ends, we developed a brief new scale, called the Fan Identity Scale, across two studies. The scale was created to examine the multifaceted ways people exercise and experience their identity as popular media fans, from internal (affective and cognitive) to external (social and participatory). After validating the measure, the association between the scale and well-being was tested to assess the ways film and TV fan identity is related to well-being.

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Multidimensional Fan Identity

Fan studies in the humanities have traditionally viewed fan experiences as a normal part of people's interest in and interaction with popular culture. In contrast, psychology has often focused on the problematic and pathological aspects of people's interest in popular media (Stever, 2011). This orientation is exemplified by the concept of celebrity worship, which is perhaps the most robust contribution to social science research on popular media fans in the last 20 years (Giles & Maltby, 2006; Maltby, Day, McCutcheon, Houran, & Ashe, 2006; McCutcheon, Lange, & Houran, 2002). McCutcheon et al. (2002) developed the Celebrity Attitude Scale to measure celebrity worship. The scale suggested three progressive levels of interest in celebrities, and two out of three of these levels suggest unhealthy interest. In more recent work, Maltby and Day (2017), two of the contributors to the research on celebrity worship, note that many scholars are critical of the Celebrity Attitude Scale because "the current theoretical suggestions proposed around celebrity interest leave little room for empirical assessment, particularly in terms of nonclinical contexts" (p. 104). As this statement indicates, new measures are needed to assess and understand fans' involvement with popular media as a healthy activity they engage in as part of their everyday lives.

Further, Stever (2011) points out that although celebrity worship researchers use the terms celebrity worshipper and fan interchangeably, celebrity worship has never been properly defined. In a study with a sample of serious fans, Stever (2011) found that many fans did not meet any of the criteria to be considered celebrity worshippers, and in a follow-up essay, Stever (2017) states that approximately 80% of fans do not worship celebrities, indicating that fans and celebrity worshippers should be considered conceptually distinct. In addition, the Celebrity Attitude Scale construes celebrity worship as a unitary construct, but many people likely have multiple reasons for becoming and staying fans (Stever, 2011).

To address these gaps in the literature, the Fan Identity Scale approaches fan identity as a multidimensional construct that many fans incorporate into their lives in healthy and unproblematic ways. Moreover, although many people are interested in media characters and figures, like celebrities, fan interest often begins with narrative worlds that involve multiple characters, for example, a movie, TV show, or other piece of media. Thus, our focus is on fan experiences with media narratives rather than media figures. Based on previous literature on fans and research on narratives, the multiple motivations for and impacts of involvement with popular media include social and personal aspects, as well as fun and meaning.

Social and Personal Identities

Studies have shown that popular media fans develop both individual and social fan identities (Groene & Hettinger, 2016; Taylor, 2015). This distinction between personal identification with a fan object and social identification with other fans is not trivial given research shows the two are related but distinct constructs with differing relations to motivation and other psychological variables (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010).

As mentioned earlier, humanities scholars have traditionally focused on the social aspects of fan experience. For example, in defining fans, Tulloch and Jenkins (1995) distinguished between

fans who they describe as "active participants within fandom as a social, cultural, and interpretive institution, and followers, audience members who regularly watch and enjoy . . . programs but who claim no larger social identity on the basis of this consumption" (p. 23). This definition of fan relies on social identification but not the personal identification that may lead a fan to become attached to a given piece of media, even if they do not interact with other fans.

Other definitions of fans from both humanities and psychology leave more room for consideration of a fan's personal identification with a fan object. For example, Sandvoss (2005) describes fandom as "the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text" (p. 8), and Reysen and Branscombe (2010) define a fan as "an enthusiastic, ardent, and loyal admirer of an interest" (p. 177). Yet, Hills (2002) observes that one must claim the identity of "fan" for him or herself. Further, sports fan researchers Hunt, Bristol, and Bashaw (1999) state,

. . . an important aspect of understanding . . . fans comes from their own determination that being a fan is a necessary part of defining themselves and of presenting to others their self-identity. So, the activities in which fans engage . . . are a result of the fans' acting out their own identity—which they have given themselves. (p. 442)

Thus, whether one identifies personally or socially (or both) with a piece of media, one must personally claim that identification as part of their sense of self in order to be considered a fan.

People may experience an individual and social fan identity to varying degrees. For example, fan involvement with a media property can be motivated by an intrinsic interest in the content (Taylor, 2015). Such fans often find deep personal meaning in their fan object (Vinney, 2016). On the other hand, fans often perceive themselves as members of a fanbase, deriving social support from the fan community (Mock, Plante, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2013; Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2017). Moreover, perceptions of membership in a fanbase can enhance both the entertainment value and the meaning of media content (Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2017). Stever (2009) distinguishes between the isolated and interactive fan. Isolated fans engage with their fan object in social isolation, whereas interactive fans are part of a fan community. Affluence, social facility, technological expertise, and motivation to meet and interact with those responsible for the creation of their fan object are all characteristic of interactive fans, although levels of involvement are likely constrained by fans' varying levels of these attributes. Although interactive fans may develop a stronger social fan identity, isolated fans may develop a stronger personal fan identity. However, that does not preclude either kind of fan from developing both a personal identification with the fan object and a social identification with other fans. Thus, a complete picture of fan identity must include both personal and social dimensions.

Fun and Meaning

In addition to having personal and social components, it is also useful to note that a fan identity can be based on both pleasurable and meaningful experiences with a fan object. Much prior media research focused on the former (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011), conceptualizing media consumption as the hedonistic pursuit of enjoyment or diversion from undesirable states (Li, Liao, & Khoo, 2011;

Tamborini et al., 2011). However, an emerging line of research shows that media can also satisfy higher order needs, such as gaining insight and feeling moved. In particular, Oliver and Bartsch (2011) note that eudaimonic entertainment experiences cause audiences to experience deeper insights and to consider what makes life meaningful and valuable, a response they call “eudaimonic appreciation.” Appreciation is characterized by cognitive and affective factors, including reflective thoughts and feeling moved, touched, and inspired (Bartsch, Kalch, & Oliver, 2014; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver, Hartmann, & Woolley, 2012). Recent research demonstrated a positive association between the strength of one’s personal fan identity and appreciation for a fan object (Vinney, 2016), suggesting that the cognitive and affective components of appreciation may be especially pertinent to the development of a personal fan identity.

Taken together, existing research suggests that fan identity is a construct that is created through a combination of cognitive, affective, social, and behavioral experiences with media. Thus, the measure developed in this study does not just include the individual and social connections people make with and through media that contribute to their fan identity, but it is also the first we are aware of that incorporates the meaning-making specified by appreciation as an important element of fan identity.

Entertainment and Well-Being

A growing body of literature has demonstrated that entertainment consumption can lead to a variety of positive outcomes that can enhance well-being. For example, Rieger, Reinecke, Frischlich, and Bente (2014) found that both hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment experiences enhance psychological well-being by providing opportunities for recovery from resource-draining activities. Hedonic entertainment experiences do so by enabling relaxation and psychological detachment, whereas eudaimonic entertainment experiences provide audiences with a sense of mastery over challenges. Similarly, Bartsch and Hartmann (2017) found that affectively and cognitively challenging entertainment led to higher levels of appreciation.

Although, to our knowledge, the relationship between popular media fans and well-being has not yet been investigated, researchers have found a link between identification with other fan groups and well-being. For instance, studies of furies—a group focused on creating anthropomorphic animal identities—found a relationship between group identification and well-being (Mock et al., 2013; Plante, Reysen, Roberts, & Gerbasi, 2016). Similarly, Wann and his colleagues (Wann, 2006; Wann, Waddill, Polk, & Weaver, 2011) showed that identification with a favorite sport team enhanced fans’ psychological and social well-being. Thus, there is indirect evidence from several lines of research that not only questions the view that popular media fans are unhealthy but also suggests possible positive effects on well-being. The present study aims to further elucidate the relationship between film and TV fans and well-being in an effort to better understand the innocuous or even beneficial aspects of popular media fan identification.

Present Studies

The purpose of Study 1 was to develop the Fan Identity Scale and test its factor structure. Study 2 tested whether the same factor

structure found in Study 1 would also be found in an independent sample of different film and TV fans. Furthermore, we validated the scale by correlating it with two related but distinct measures: a scale that measures membership in and contact with a fan community and another that measures eudaimonic motivations or the drive to make meaning from the content of a fan object. In addition, Study 2 tested whether fan identity is associated with well-being. Following Hills’ (2002) and Hunt, Bristol, and Bashaw’s (1999) observations that fans must choose this identity for themselves, participants in both studies self-identified as fans. Our goal in developing the scale was to cover the breadth of prior conceptual work and operationalizations so as to be able to analyze the latent factor structure of fan identity as a multidimensional construct and to identify a parsimonious set of empirically distinct dimensions that can be measured with short and reliable self-report scales.

Study 1

Method

Participants and procedure. A sample of 210 primarily American participants (117 female, $M_{\text{age}} = 38.85$, $SD = 11.69$) were recruited via the first and second author’s personal social media accounts and via Amazon.com’s Mechanical Turk participant recruitment service. After accessing the survey online, participants reported the film or TV show of which they considered themselves the biggest fan, completed the survey in reference to that property, and then provided demographic information. The most popular media properties named were *Game of Thrones* (8.1% of participants), *The Walking Dead* (7.6%), and *Star Wars* (5.2%). However, the fan objects named overall represented a broad range of choices, from popular movies (*The Avengers* and *Deadpool*), to TV procedurals (*NCIS* and *Person of Interest*), to older films (*The Ten Commandments* and *Back to the Future*), to TV shows with avid fan followings (*Supernatural* and *Orphan Black*). All procedures for Studies 1 and 2 were reviewed and approved by the institutional review board of the first two authors’ university.

Measure. We developed an initial pool of items assessing the most important conceptual facets of fan identification that have been discussed in the research literature including the following components that contribute to popular media fan identity: enthusiasm, enjoyment, appreciation, self-definition, and personal, social, and participatory fan experiences (Table 1). The first two authors, both fan scholars—one a media psychologist and the other a social psychologist—developed the item categories based on the literature reviewed in the earlier text. One of the initial strategies was to include, but to also go beyond, the focus on social aspects of fandom. We particularly wanted to account for what we construed as “internal” fan experiences. These internal fan experiences were based on the two authors’ previous work, applying the literature on narrative meaning-making to fans of popular culture, particularly film and TV fans (Vinney & Dill-Shackleford, 2018). Our items fell on two continuums: from personal/self-definition to social/participatory and from enjoyment to appreciation. This reflects a classic social psychological perspective that human social interactions have internal (e.g., cognitive/emotional) and external (e.g., behavioral/social) aspects. We also included

Table 1
Items Created for the Fan Identity Scale^a

Enthusiasm	
Using the scale below, please indicate the following:	
1	Not at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much
1. How much do you love your favorite television show or movie^b?	
2. How excited are you about your favorite television show or movie?	
3. How important to your life is your favorite television show or movie?	
4. How passionate are you about your favorite television show or movie? (adapted from Thorne & Bruner, 2006)	
5. How big a fan of your favorite television show or movie would you say you are?	
Enjoyment	
Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree that your favorite television show or movie	
1	Not at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much
6. Is fun (adapted from Oliver & Bartsch, 2010).	
7. Is entertaining (adapted from Oliver & Bartsch, 2010).	
8. Is a good way to pass the time.	
9. Is enjoyable.	
Appreciation	
Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree that your favorite television show or movie	
1	Not at all 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much
10. Is meaningful (adapted from Oliver & Bartsch, 2010).	
11. Makes me feel like I'm part of something bigger.	
12. Is relevant to my life.	
13. Is thought-provoking (adapted from Oliver & Bartsch, 2010).	
14. Has helped me grow as a person.	
15. Helps me think about the things I value.	
Personal	
Using the scale below, please indicate how often you do each of the following:	
1	Never 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Frequently
16. I think about my favorite television show or movie.	
17. I think about something specific that happened on my favorite television show or movie.	
18. I think about the characters from my favorite television show or movie.	
19. I think about the storyline from my favorite television show or movie.	
20. I imagine myself in situations I saw in the story from my favorite television show or movie.	
21. I imagine "what if" the storyline went another way.	
22. I think about what the characters from my favorite television show or movie would do when I make decisions in my own life (adapted from Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985).	
23. I feel an emotional connection to my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Reysen & Branscombe, 2010).	
24. I identify with the characters from my favorite television show or movie.	
25. I want people to know I am a fan of my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Reysen & Branscombe, 2010).	
26. I see my life reflected in the storylines from my favorite television show or movie.	
Self-Definition	
Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree with the following:	
1	Strongly disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly agree
27. I wouldn't be the person I am today without my favorite television show or movie.	
28. My favorite television show or movie is part of who I am (adapted from Reysen & Branscombe, 2010).	
29. Being a fan of my favorite television show or movie is important to my identity.	
30. My favorite television show or movie helps define who I am as a person.	
Social Interaction	
Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree with the following:	
1	Strongly disagree 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Strongly agree
31. I often talk about my favorite television show or movie with a friend (adapted from Thorne & Bruner, 2006).	
32. I often email/text/private message with another fan about my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Thorne & Bruner, 2006).	
33. I have friends who are also fans of my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Thorne & Bruner, 2006).	
34. Even if I don't know them, I feel a connection with other fans of my favorite television show or movie.	
35. I am an expert on trivia about my favorite television show or movie.	
36. I would like to communicate (via letter, chat, online exchange, etc.) with an actor, director, writer, and/or producer of my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Stever, 2011).	

(table continues)

Table 1 (continued)

-
37. I would like to meet the stars, directors, writers, and/or producers of my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Rubin et al., 1985).
 38. I would like to go to a theme park, exhibit, or other location to experience the world of my favorite television show or movie.
 39. I like to buy objects or memorabilia from my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Stever, 2011).
 40. I like to buy clothing related to my favorite television show or movie.
 41. If I learn that someone doesn't like my favorite television show or movie, I feel less positive about that person.
-

Participatory

Using the scale below, rate the following activities in terms of how much you enjoy doing each of them.

For each item we ask whether or not you have experienced this. If you have, answer about that experience, and if you have not, answer in terms of how much you would like to have that experience.

I enjoy:

1 *Not at all* 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 *Very much*

42. Reading about my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Thorne & Bruner, 2006).
 43. Visiting websites about my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Thorne & Bruner, 2006).
 44. Participating in online discussions about my favorite television show or movie.
 45. Posting items on social media about my favorite television show or movie.
 46. Going to conventions or other gatherings that feature my favorite television show or movie.
 47. Attending an event dressed as a character or entity from my favorite television show or movie.
 48. Being a member of a fan organization/group about my favorite television show or movie (adapted from Stever, 2011).
 49. Keeping up with the latest information about my favorite television show or movie.
 50. Keeping up with the latest information about the actors from my favorite television show or movie.
 51. Writing fan fiction about my favorite television show or movie.
 52. Reading fan fiction about my favorite television show or movie.
 53. Creating fan art, videos, etc. about my favorite television show or movie.
 54. Watching/seeing fan art, videos, etc. about my favorite television show or movie.
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Note. Bolded items are those included in the final nine-item scale.

^aThe original 54-item pool of items is presented here. ^bThe participant's choice of favorite fan text was substituted for the words "my/your favorite television show or movie" in each item in the online-administered survey. For example, if the fan entered *Game of Thrones*, Item 1 read, "How much do you love *Game of Thrones*?"

items related to enthusiasm as a way to establish a baseline measure of how passionate a fan is about a fan object given that levels of passion can differ among fans.

Items were inspired by and adapted from scholarship on fan identity, experiences, and behaviors, including research on sport, celebrity, and science fiction fans (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Stever, 2009; Thorne & Bruner, 2006), on motivations for and gratifications of media use (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, 2011), and on the relationships media consumers form with media personas (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). We developed and adapted items under the identified categories until the categories became saturated, leaving us with 54 items. Participants responded on Likert-type scales, with values ranging from 1 to 9. The endpoint labels used most often were *Not at all* and *Very Much* but were adjusted slightly to fit the wording in each subscale (see Table 1 for specific endpoint labels).

Results

Structural equation modeling. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling to test the relative fit of numerous different models in IBM Amos 22 (Armonk, New York). We began by testing the fit of a one-factor model containing all 54 items, using modification indices to inform decisions to remove items whose inclusion significantly contributed to the model's lack of fit (i.e., beginning with the largest modification indices until all modification indices were below a value of about 4). A similar strategy was used to test the relative fit and parsimony of two- and three-factor models, beginning with 54 items and stripping away nonsignificant pathways

and eliminating items that either contributed to a lack of model fit or that loaded equally well onto more than one factor. The one-, two-, and three-factor models were compared with one another with regard to their fit and parsimony. Although no official, structured set of guidelines dictated these processes, model construction and comparison were guided by balancing the principles of creating a model that fit the data well against the need to maximize model parsimony (i.e., avoiding creating unnecessary atheoretical factors for the sole purpose of improving model fit). The result was a well-fitting model that included nine items (minimum discrepancy divided by its degrees of freedom (CMin/DF) = 1.582; comparative fit index (CFI) = .986; normed fit index = .963; root mean square error of approximation = .053; Figure 1) comprising three factors: degree of enthusiasm for one's fan object ($\alpha = .81$), appreciation of one's fan object ($\alpha = .90$), and social interaction with others sharing an interest in one's fan object ($\alpha = .83$). The factors were moderately positively correlated with one another and formed a reliable overall scale ($\alpha = .85$).

Discussion

In Study 1, structural equation modeling was used to develop a three-factor model based on a subset of nine of the original 54 items assessed. These three factors related to fan enthusiasm and to thoughtful/emotional (internal) and social (external) aspects of fan identity. The three subscales addressed fans' overall passion for their favorite movie or TV show, the ways fans make personal meaning from the text, and their social identification with the text. Thus, these three factors mirror the original design intent of the

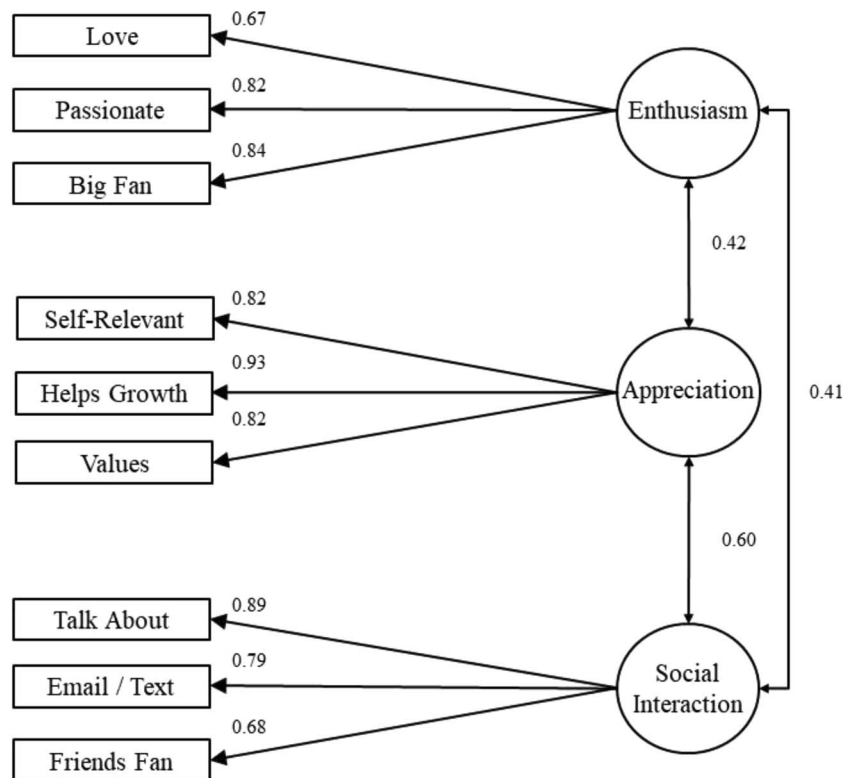


Figure 1. Exploratory factor analysis from Study 1. All relationships are significant at $p < .05$.

survey. By accounting for these things, we have moved beyond merely classifying fans as those who are socially active in a fanbase, we have applied the work on meaningful narratives to fans, and we have provided a way to measure varying levels of enthusiasm for popular culture franchises, all in the same scale. Given that the sample comprised fans of a wide range of popular media movies and TV shows, we can be reasonably confident in the scale's generalizability and relevance to a broad range of popular media fans and that its factor structure is not an idiosyncrasy of any one specific genre, show, or film.

It is interesting to note that although participants self-identified as fans to participate in this research, in Study 1 the four self-definition items included in the 54-item version of the scale did not end up in the nine-item version of the scale. Furthermore, the means on these items (such as, "I wouldn't be the person I am today without my favorite television show or movie") skewed low. Furthermore, enjoyment (8.41) and enthusiasm (7.54) were the highest means these fans reported, whereas self-definition (3.33) was the lowest. In other words, participants identified themselves as fans but did not strongly endorse items that indicated that being a fan is part of who they are.

Although their fan identity may not be important to some fans' self-concept, these findings suggest that fans who do feel their fan identity is an important part of who they are may still be relatively loath to admit it. On the other hand, fans are not shy about admitting their strong enjoyment of and enthusiasm for their favorite film or TV show. Perhaps this implies that some fans fear stigmatization and, therefore, may shy away from admitting a fan object is part of their sense of self.

Study 2

Study 2 was conducted to confirm the factor structure of the nine-item scale and to test its convergent validity with other conceptually related measures. Study 2 also examined how overall fan identity and its different facets contribute to well-being. Because the Fan Identity Scale measures both internal (e.g., cognitive and affective meaning-making) and external (e.g., social and behavioral) aspects of fan identity, measures that related to these internal and external facets of fan identification were utilized in this scale validation study.

Method

Participants. A sample of 201 British participants (74 female; $M_{\text{age}} = 30.31$, $SD = 8.84$) were recruited via Mechanical Turk to complete the study online. Once again, the top media properties chosen were *Game of Thrones* (17.9%), *Star Wars* (4.5%), and *The Walking Dead* (4%), but participants' choices overall varied widely, including popular sitcoms (*Scrubs* and *The Big Bang Theory*), prestigious dramas (*Mad Men* and *The Sopranos*), animated series (*The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*), and classic films (*Dirty Dancing* and *Pulp Fiction*).

Measures. Participants completed the nine-item Fan Identity Scale (see bolded items in Table 1) using the same instructions and two validation measures. Participants first supplied the name of their current favorite film or TV show. Each item in the online questionnaire incorporated the name of the specific movie or TV show participants identified. Measures were presented in random order.

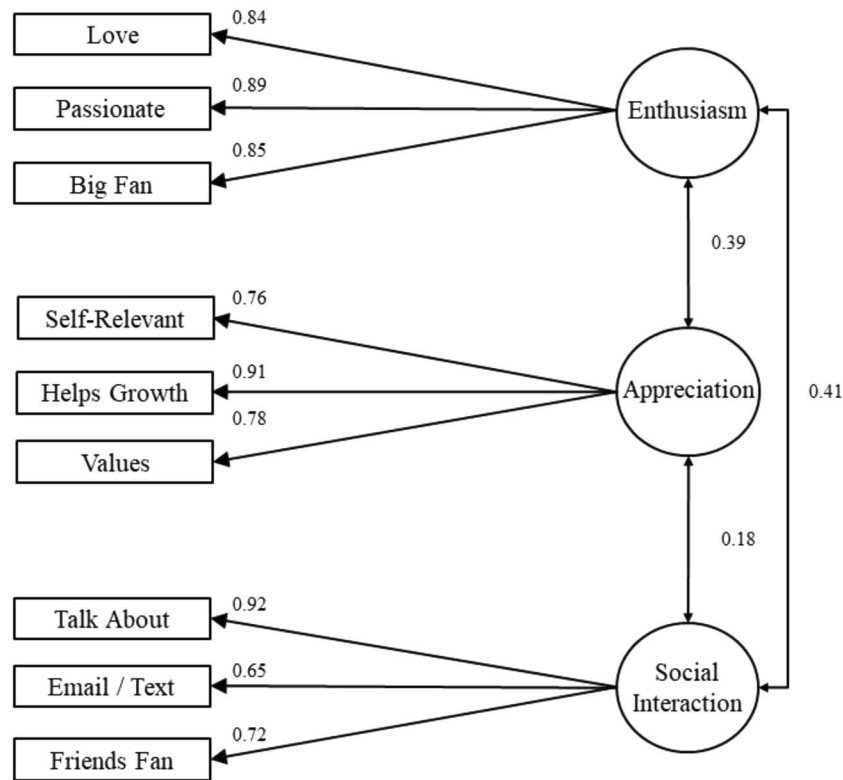


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis from Study 2. All relationships are significant at $p < .05$.

Sense of fan community. The first validation measure used was Tsay-Vogel and Sanders' (2017) 21-item Fandom Scale ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.34$, $\alpha = .96$), which assesses perceptions of membership in and contact with a fanbase. The Fandom Scale has two subscales: Membership in Fanbase ($\alpha = .97$) and Contact with Fanbase ($\alpha = .95$). The Fandom Scale was adapted from McMillan and Chavis' (1986) Sense of Community Scale (SCS); the Membership subscale measures identification with a fan community and the Contact subscale measures contact with members of that community. An example item from the membership subscale is "I plan to remain a member of my favorite television show's or movie's fanbase for a number of years." An example item from the contact subscale is, "I contact fellow fans often." It is important to note that although the sense of community with a fanbase measured by Tsay-Vogel and Sanders (2017) is highly relevant to the present investigation and therefore is predicted to correlate with the Fan Identity Scale, the two scales do have a different orientation toward fan identity. Although Tsay-Vogel and Sanders (2017) were interested in the sense of community derived from being part of a fanbase, our scale includes three distinct aspects of fan identity: How enthusiastic one is toward the fan object, how likely one is to derive meaning from the story world itself, and how likely one is to engage in social activities with other fans (e.g., texting other fans about one's favorite show).

Scores on the Fandom Scale have been associated with both fun and meaningful experiences with a fan object. It was used to validate the Fan Identity Scale as a whole.

Eudaimonic motivations. Three items selected from Oliver and Raney's (2011) measure of eudaimonic motivations for enter-

tainment consumption ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.65$, $\alpha = .83$) were used to validate the survey's appreciation subscale. The three items all began with "I like to watch . . ." followed by the name of the fan object identified by the participant. The three endings to the question stem were, "because it challenges my way of seeing the world" (Oliver & Raney, 2011 (factor loading of .82 for this item), "because it makes me more reflective" (factor loading of .72), and "because it focuses on meaningful human conditions" (factor loading of .69).

Well-being. To extend the usefulness of the Fan Identity Scale, we correlated Fan Identity scores with Kinderman, Schwannauer, Pontin, and Tai's (2011) BBC Well-Being Scale. The BBC Well-Being Scale measures overall well-being ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .72$, $\alpha = .95$), with subscales that measure physical ("Are you satisfied with your physical health?"), psychological ("Do you feel optimistic about the future?"), and relational ("Are you satisfied with your personal and family life?") components of well-being.

Results

Factor structure confirmation. A confirmatory factor analysis via structural equation modeling was performed on the Fan Identity Scale. Results support the three-factor structure for the scale found in Study 1, as indicated by the fairly good fit of the model (CMin/DF = 1.876; CFI = .977; normed fit index = .953; root mean square error of approximation = .066; Figure 2). The reliability of the overall scale and its subscales was comparable to Study 1 ($\alpha = .80$; subscales: Enthusiasm, $\alpha = .89$; Appreciation, $\alpha = .86$; and Social Interaction, $\alpha = .79$).

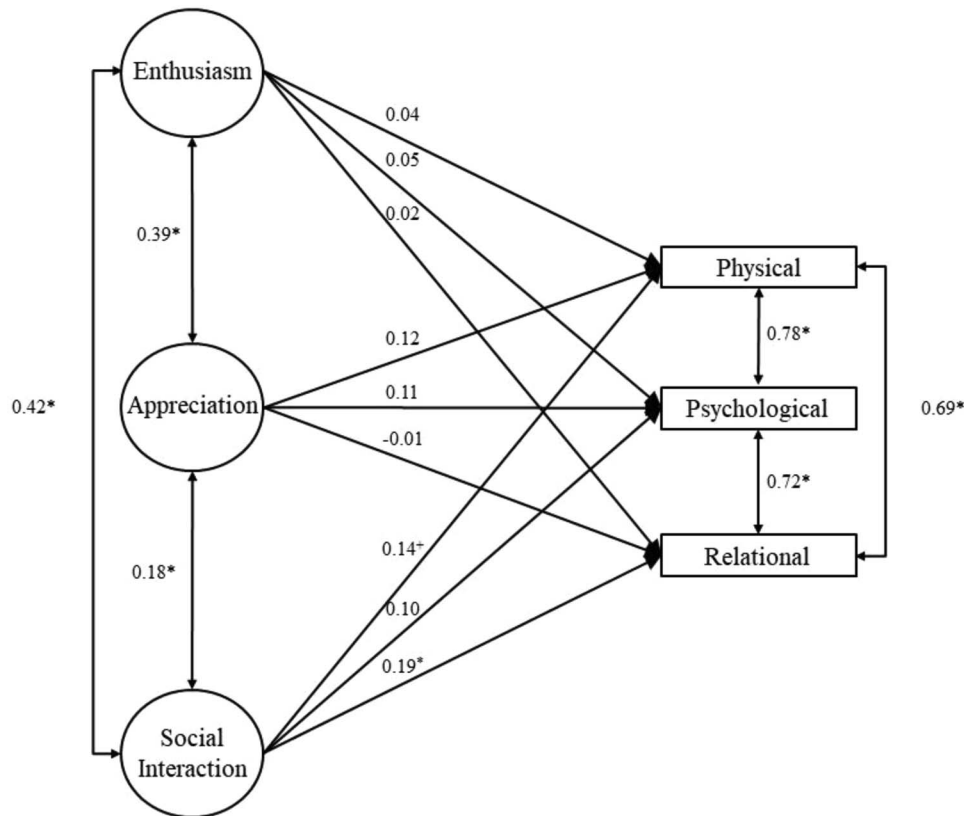


Figure 3. Structural equation model allowing Fan Identity subscales to predict well-being facets. Measurement models for Fan Identity subscales not shown in figure. Single-headed arrows represent standardized regression coefficients. * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$.

Validation. Scores on the Fan Identity Scale were significantly correlated ($r = .589, p < .001, n = 201$) with Tsay-Vogel and Sanders' (2017) Fandom Scale, and the Appreciation subscale was positively correlated with the eudaimonic motivation measure ($r = .454, p < .001, n = 201$), providing evidence of convergent validity.

Well-being. Overall well-being was related to overall fan identity ($\beta = .185, p = .009$), as measured by the Fan Identity Scale. To test the nuances of this relationship, a structural equation model allowed the three Fan Identity subscales to simultaneously predict the three facets of well-being assessed by the BBC Well-Being Scale (Figure 3). The social interaction subscale of the Fan Identity Scale significantly predicted relational well-being, and marginally predicted physical well-being, but did not predict psychological well-being. Conversely, the Enthusiasm and Appreciation subscales were not significantly associated with any of the individual well-being dimensions. See Table 2 for zero-order correlations.

Discussion

In Study 2, structural equation modelling suggested a reliable and valid scale. The scale consisted of nine items, three each from the dimensions of Enthusiasm, Appreciation (internal/thoughtful/emotional), and Social Interaction (external/behavioral), respectively.

General Discussion

The Fan Identity Scale was developed and validated across two studies. From an initial set of seven factors and 54 items, we used structural equation modeling to reduce the scale to three factors and nine items. This does not mean the other factors are not a part of popular media fan identity but simply that we found the most parsimonious statistical model had a three-factor structure. This structure remained consistent across a diverse sample of media fans representing a number of films and TV shows and different nationalities. We also demonstrated a positive relationship between scores on the Fan Identity Scale and the BBC Well-Being Scale, providing evidence that being a fan of a popular culture narrative is positively related to well-being.

Table 2
Study 2 Correlations

Measures	Fan identity	Well-being	Fandom
Fan identity			
Well-being	.185 ^{**}		
Fandom	.589 ^{**}	.152 [*]	
Eudaimonic	.454 ^{**}	.105	.252 ^{**}

Note. Fandom is Tsay-Vogel and Sanders' (2017) fandom scale. Eudaimonic is Oliver and Raney's (2011) eudaimonic motivation items. * $p < 0.05$ level (one-tailed). ** $p < 0.01$ level (one-tailed).

Prior research suggests that identification with a popular media text is complex and multifaceted; it includes personal and social components and is based on affective and cognitive gratifications ranging from hedonic satisfaction to meaning-making. Although some studies have assessed these dimensions individually, to date, few studies have systematically assessed this spectrum of fan identification for a broad group of popular media fans. There are scales that focus on external (i.e., social and behavioral) aspects of fan identity, such as being part of a fan community (e.g., Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2017). There is also research that explores the internal (i.e., cognitive and affective) aspects of relating to a narrative and characters (e.g., Bartsch, 2012; Bartsch & Oliver, 2011; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011). Finally, there are measures that explore the clinical and problematic nature of interest in celebrities (McCutcheon et al., 2002). However, this work does not directly investigate the multiple healthy ways that most fans incorporate their interest in favorite media narratives into their everyday lives.

We specifically set out to build a scale that combined three aspects of fan identification that could be experienced in a positive, unproblematic way by the average individual and that are not usually measured in one scale: the enthusiasm a fan feels for their fan object, social (behavioral/external) identification with other fans of a fan object, and the thoughtful and emotional (internal) experience of fan identity. The scale development was based on a social psychological approach to fans. We began with a large, comprehensive pool of items and used a statistical approach (structural equation modeling) to model a shorter nine-item, three-subscale (three items each) measure that would be a parsimonious, empirically distinct representation of key aspects of healthy fan identification.

The present investigation accomplishes a number of goals: (a) it applies research on meaning-making and narrative (Bartsch, 2012; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, 2011; Oliver & Raney, 2011) to popular media fan identity, something that has rarely been done; (b) it comprises, in one scale, the internal (cognitive and emotional), external (social and behavioral), and enthusiasm (intensity) aspects of fan identity; and (c) it focuses on healthy, nonpathological ways of experiencing fan identification and thus, can be utilized in nonclinical settings. Furthermore, the reliability and validity of the scale is demonstrated here. The robustness of the scale, its brevity, its social psychological underpinnings, and its positive psychology orientation are factors that may recommend it to researchers.

Fan Identity and Well-Being

This investigation demonstrated that social interactions between fans are associated with increased relational and physical well-being, suggesting that film and TV fans may benefit from the opportunities for socialization and in-group membership offered by their involvement with their favorite entertainment. Group identification has been associated with well-being in a variety of groups including ethnic minorities (Molix & Bettencourt, 2010) and sports fans (Wann, 2006). Prior research indicates that empowerment mediates this relationship.

The lack of connection between the Appreciation subscale and psychological well-being is surprising because these factors were associated in prior research (Rieger et al., 2014). Our findings may reflect shared variance between the Appreciation and Social Inter-

action subscales. In other words, we found the same relationship as others have found between social identity and well-being, but not between appreciation and well-being, but this may be because these two factors are interrelated in a way this research has not fully disentangled. More data are needed to clarify these relationships.

In addition, the three items in the Appreciation subscale are especially noteworthy because they explicitly relate to personal growth to varying degrees. Scholars have proposed that media experiences of appreciation lead to personal growth (Bartsch, 2012; Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017), and these items indicate that fans believe their interactions with their favorite media are indeed resulting in personal growth. Future research should further probe the association between fan identity and media experiences resulting in personal growth.

Limitations and Future Research

The present studies have several limitations. First, participants self-selected as fans of film or TV. Therefore, fan identity may have been stronger in this sample than in the general population. Perhaps our recruitment approach differentially favored participants whose experience emphasized social/external aspects of fan identification, and the results reflected this emphasis.

On the other hand, the Social Interaction subscale that was part of the final nine-item Fan Identity Scale did not assess fan participation in widely studied fan activities such as attendance at fan conventions, writing fan fiction, or participation in online fan communities. Although a participatory subscale was included in the original 54-item pool, items from that subscale did not load highly enough for further inclusion in our studies. This was not surprising as prior research on fan behaviors found that such participatory activities were relatively rare among fans (Taylor, 2015). But it also means that the Fan Identity Scale cannot be used to capture the frequency of such activities. Instead, the Social Interaction subscale of the survey indicates the ways a film or TV show can function as a source of social identification in a fan's everyday social world.

In addition, our participants were limited to English-speaking, Western media fans. As a result, our findings may not generalize to non-Western samples or fans of other nonmedia interests, such as sports, hobby, or furry fans. Future research might address this issue by adapting the scale for use by non-Western cultures and/or by nonmedia fan groups.

Furthermore, the present studies are cross-sectional in nature, which limits their ability to provide information about causal direction. As such, it is just as likely that one's fan identity can increase well-being, as it is that the opposite is true. Further research utilizing other methods such as longitudinal or experimental approaches would better enable investigators to determine the direction of causality between fan identity and well-being.

Finally, although our participants were limited to movie and TV fans, because participants selected a wide range of films and TV shows as their favorite, the scale is likely to generalize and be relevant to additional media fans. Evidence suggests that the Fan Identity Scale could successfully be used in research in the context of other media narratives. For example, Oliver et al. (2016) asked gamers to name a video game they thought was either fun or meaningful and then to describe their experience with the game.

Results indicated that games with stronger narratives and those that were more appreciated tended to evoke the experience of greater relatedness and insight. Though Oliver and colleagues (2016) did not refer to their participants as fans, gamers are fans of games. Thus, future studies should adapt and test the scale with other forms of media, including video games, music, or books.

For example, video gaming has been measured as time spent playing games, sometimes multiplied by gaming genre to create a measure of exposure (e.g., Anderson & Dill, 2000). This is a reasonable definition but a theoretically distinct one from the current approach. Applying the Fan Identity Scale to gaming would allow researchers to measure the gamer's enthusiasm for narrative gaming, the degree to which the games are thought provoking and meaningful, and the social aspects of gaming. Future research could relate and differentiate the time spent playing games from the social and psychological reactions to games as measured by the Fan Identity Scale. Thus, the constructs measured with the Fan Identity Scale construe a pass-time like gaming from a more positive perspective. It follows, then, that the Fan Identity Scale may be able to differentiate pathological from nonpathological gaming and other popular media consumption.

Conclusions

As media becomes increasingly ubiquitous and media options proliferate, fans of popular entertainment are increasingly recognized and accepted as part of the media landscape. Consequently, future research investigating the psychological and social benefits of interactions with narratives and fan identity is important. Ultimately, further work should explore the different ways popular media fan identities might be utilized to maximize positive outcomes for people, to improve the likelihood that this increasingly common part of the human experience is beneficial to those who engage in it.

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Appendix

Means and Standard Deviations for Fan Identity Scale Items in Studies 1 and 2

Item	Study 1	Study 2
Enthusiasm items		
1. How much do you love your favorite television show or movie?	8.41 (1.05)	7.97 (1.32)
2. How passionate are you about your favorite television show or movie?	6.09 (2.14)	7.39 (1.53)
3. How big a fan of your favorite television show or movie would you say you are?	7.11 (1.72)	7.63 (1.51)
Appreciation items		
4. My favorite television show or movie is relevant to my life.	5.30 (2.57)	4.45 (2.27)
5. My favorite television show or movie has helped me grow as a person.	4.90 (2.64)	4.73 (2.52)
6. My favorite television show or movie helps me think about the things I value.	5.70 (2.58)	5.58 (2.42)
Social Interaction items		
7. I often talk about my favorite television show or movie with a friend.	5.69 (2.47)	6.27 (2.38)
8. I often email/text/private message with another fan about my favorite television show or movie.	4.07 (2.80)	4.26 (2.86)
9. I have friends who are also fans of my favorite television show or movie.	6.65 (2.57)	7.05 (2.21)

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