

PALE AND GEEKY: PREVAILING STEREOTYPES OF ANIME FANS

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Abstract

We examined the content of anime fan stereotypes in a sample of non-fans ($N = 146$). Self-identified non-fans of anime wrote about a prototypical anime fan and rated the prototype's personality their desired social distance from the prototype. Participants also rated their endorsement of specific stereotypes of anime fans, their perceptions of anime fan motivation, and their estimates of anime fan demographics. Anime fans were perceived to be introverted, creative, socially awkward nerds who are detached from reality and escape life through the consumption of anime, manga, and computer games. Perceived introversion predicted greater desired distance from a prototypical anime fan while perceived creativity predicted less desired distance. Perceived social awkwardness, interest in Japanese products, and detachment from reality predicted prejudice against anime fans. These findings support theories suggesting that anime fans experience ambivalent prejudice from outside the fandom.

Keywords: anime, manga, stereotype, fandom, fan, stigma

Pale and Geeky: Stereotypes of Anime Fans

When typing “why are anime fans” into Google, autocomplete finishes the sentence with “so weird,” “so ugly,” and “losers.” These suggested searches reflect what people are searching with respect to anime fans and, more importantly, illustrate the content and prevalence of anime fan stereotypes. We categorize people into groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and ascribe stereotypic traits to those groups to make sense of our social world (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Stereotypes are beliefs about group characteristics (Schneider, 2005). These beliefs are embedded ubiquitously in our sociocultural settings and influence us regardless of whether or not we agree with the stereotype’s content (see Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008). Stereotypes reduce the complexity of our social world (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Schneider, 2005) by guiding how we act toward others and how we expect others to act toward us (Hamilton & Sherman, 1994; Turner et al., 1987).

When stereotypes about another group are activated, consciously or unconsciously, they impact thoughts, attitudes, and behavior toward that group (e.g., memory: Ybarra, Stephan, & Schaberg, 2000; interpretation: Stone, Perry, Darley, 1997; evaluation and interaction: Spencer, Fein, Wolfe, Fong, & Dunn, 1998). But stereotypes influence more than just the person who activates them. In fact, stereotypes frequently influence stereotyped group members (Steele, 1997). For example, racial stereotypes influence how viewers interpret a basketball player’s performance (Stone et al., 1997), and also influence the player’s performance itself (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999). Stereotypes, when they are made salient, can impair performance of the threatened group’s members (e.g., stereotype threat: Steele & Aronson, 1995).

A vast body of research has shown the ubiquity of stereotypes and their influence when it comes to race, gender, and sexual orientation (Steele, 2010). Of growing interest, however, is research testing the presence and content of stereotypes in groups seen as trivial or meaningless, such as individuals’ recreational fan groups.

Fan Stereotypes

Fans are enthusiastic, ardent, and loyal admirers of an interest (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). For most people, sport fans are the default category of fan because of the prevalence of sport in everyday life. For example, numerous television networks, a separate section in newspapers, and a separate segment on television news are dedicated to covering sport. This bias toward sport fans as the “typical” fan is even reflected in the psychological literature, which focuses primarily on sport fan attitudes and behaviors (Schimmel, Harrington, & Bielby, 2007). For example, one line of research suggests that being a sport fan is associated with popularity: when undergraduate students were asked what makes a person popular, being a sport fan was rated second only to being physically attractive (End, Kretschmar, & Dietz-Uhler, 2003). Because people see sport fans as the norm, fans of other, non-sport interests (e.g., anime/manga) are seen as non-normative and, by definition, deviant. This perceived deviance has led to non-sport fans being stereotyped as obsessed and largely dysfunctional (e.g., Star Trek fans: Jenkins, 1988; Jones, 2012). Although negative stereotypes do exist of sport fans (e.g., aggressive, dishonest: Bernache-Assollant & Chantal, 2009), and despite the growth in size and variety of non-sport fandoms such as pigeon racing, ice fishing, Barbie collecting, (Caudron, 2006), some non-sport fandoms, such as fans of television shows, remain stigmatized in popular culture (Hills, 2005).

Despite the significant stigma experienced by members of non-sport fandoms, few have systematically examined the content of non-sport fandom stereotypes. Research has shown, however, that stereotypes of non-sport fans differ significantly, depending on the group in question (e.g., classical music fans are stereotyped as more intelligent than fans of other music genres, Rentfrow & Gosling, 2007). In a related vein, people attribute more positive characteristics toward others with the same music preferences (Lonsdale & North, 2009), believing they are similar and are more socially attractive (Boer et al., 2011). Despite the prevalence of these non-sport fan stereotypes, the stereotypes are often inaccurate. For example, furies (fans of anthropomorphic art and stories) are frequently stereotyped as bearded, bespectacled, gay, males with personality disorders who wear

fursuits and enjoy children's cartoons. Research surveying furies, however, has shown that these stereotypes are largely inaccurate (Gerbasí et al., 2008).

In the present paper we extend this line of research by exploring the stereotypes attributed to another stigmatized, but infrequently studied, fan group: anime fans.

Anime Fan Stereotypes

Anime fans are enthusiastic devotees of Japanese animation and manga novels whose interests manifest themselves through artwork and costuming (Chen, 2007). Napier (2001), a prominent scholar of the anime fandom, states that anime fans are stereotyped as consumers of violent and pornographic cartoons. Additionally, anime fans are stereotypically associated with science or math, both as university majors and as tech industry employees. Other common stereotypes of anime fans include, but are not limited to, beliefs that: anime fans spend their time indoors watching pornographic anime, are older adults, and are easily overexcited about anime (Dinnie, 2012); anime fans have no life, watch anime to escape, and spend a large amount of time watching anime (Mycella, 2012); anime fans are obsessed, socially awkward, and unhygienic adult males who live with their parents (Dunbar, 2011); anime fans are people participating in a mindless activity (Manion, 2005); anime fans are geeks and nerds (Dunbar, 2011; Fu, 2013).

Stereotypes of anime fans are often reported in interviews, blogs, and online forums created by self-identified anime/manga fans. Despite the common belief among anime fans that their fandom is viewed by non-fans in this stigmatized manner, no research has examined whether non-anime-fans actually attribute the above characteristics to anime fans. Anime fans may be accurate in their perceptions of how outsiders view their fandom. It is also possible, however, that these stereotypical views of the fandom were never endorsed by non-fans, or if they once were, they may no longer be endorsed, given that the anime fandom has grown and become more normalized (Lee, 2009). Further, research has shown that stereotypes can shift or fade away over time (see Schneider, 2005). As another possibility, anime fans may overestimate the prevalence of negative stereotypes by generalizing from interactions with a small number of individuals

that endorse those particular stereotypes, which may lead to beliefs that the majority of non-fans endorse negative stereotypes of anime fans.

In sum, anime fans perceive negative stereotypes and stigma from non-fans. To test the veracity of these perceptions, however, we needed to test the prevalence and content of stereotypes about anime fans in a non-fan population.

Overview of Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine non-anime-fans' stereotypes of anime fans. We assessed stereotypes of anime fans using two methodologies. First, we used a free-response methodology: simply asking participants to write down what they thought of when they imagined a prototypical anime fan. This classic assessment of stereotypes allowed participants to list the stereotypes most strongly associated with the target group without priming or suggestion from the researchers. This methodology is not perfect, however, as participants may not readily list all essential stereotypes (Schneider, 2005). Therefore, as a second method, participants were asked to rate their own endorsement of specific stereotypes to anime fans. As this was an exploratory study, we had no a priori predictions regarding which stereotypes, if any, non-fans would endorse.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants ($N = 146$, 74.7% women; $M_{\text{age}} = 24.35$, $SD = 8.15$) included Texas A&M University-Commerce undergraduate students participating for partial credit in an undergraduate psychology course. Only participants who said they were aware of the anime fandom and who did not self-identify as anime fans were eligible to participate. Thus, all participants knew about the anime fandom but were not anime fans. Participants indicated their racial/ethnic category as European American (65.8%), African American (17.1%), Hispanic (11%), Multiracial (2.7%), Asian/South Pacific Islander (1.4%), Central Asian/Indian/Pakistani (0.7%), and other (1.4%). Participants completed open-

ended responses about their perception of a prototypical/stereotypical anime fan. Participants then rated the personality of this prototypical anime fan and their degree of desired social distance from the fan. Next, participants were asked to rate the stereotypes and motivations of anime fans in general (i.e., not specific to the prototypical fan they imagined). Lastly, participants rated various demographic characteristics of the anime community and provided their own demographic information. In general, participants' sex did not significantly influence responses on the survey. Unless otherwise noted, all measures used a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Materials

Open-ended perceptions. Participants were instructed to imagine a prototypical/stereotypical anime fan (“Take a moment and think about the prototypical/stereotypical Anime Fan. In other words, think about the image that comes to mind when thinking about a person who is an Anime Fan.”). Participants were then asked to respond to four questions about the imagined anime fan: (1) “Please describe the person you imagined,” (2) “What does this person look like (e.g., dress, style, mannerisms),” (3) “How does this person act with others (e.g., friends, co-workers, family),” and (4) “What does this person do as an occupation (e.g., IT, business, student).” Two independent raters then coded participants' responses for common themes. The description item yielded themes related to being a nerd/geek ($\kappa = .93$), introversion ($\kappa = .84$), non-normal dress ($\kappa = .67$), and creativity ($\kappa = .93$). The appearance question elicited themes related to wearing glasses ($\kappa = .93$), wearing dark or gothic style clothes ($\kappa = .94$), and wearing non-normal dress ($\kappa = .85$). The style of interaction with others question resulted in themes related to introversion ($\kappa = .79$), extraversion ($\kappa = .59$), friendliness ($\kappa = .84$), and obsession ($\kappa = .60$). The occupation question showed themes related to computers ($\kappa = .99$), student ($\kappa = .95$), and artistic work ($\kappa = .96$). A third coder resolved any discrepancies between the two coders. Responses were coded 0 = *theme absent* or 1 = *theme present*.

Personality. To assess participants' perception of the imagined anime fan's personality, we adopted Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann's (2003) 10-item measure of the Big Five domains of personality. Participants were asked to rate the person they imagined on these ten items. Although Gosling et al. (2003) found adequate reliability for the subscales, the alphas for the present study were low: extraversion ($\alpha = .65$), agreeableness ($\alpha = .33$), conscientious ($\alpha = .55$), emotional stability ($\alpha = .64$), openness to new experiences ($\alpha = .44$).

Prejudice toward anime fans. 12 items (e.g., "I would be happy to have the person I imagined as a neighbor," "I would be happy to have the person I imagined as a close personal friend") were adapted from Biernat and Crandall (1999) to assess desired degree of social distance between the imagined anime fan and the self ($\alpha = .93$, see Table 3 for items). Additionally, one item ("From a typical non-anime fan perspective, how positively or negatively do you rate a typical anime fan on a scale from 0 to 100, with 0 being "extremely negatively" and 100 being "extremely positively") assessed prejudice toward anime fans in general.

Specific stereotypes. A list of 34 specific stereotypes was constructed based on comments in blogs (e.g., Dinnie, 2012; Dunbar, 2011; Mycella, 2012) and in various anime forums (see Tables 4, 5, and 6 for specific items). Participants were asked to rate their degree of agreement with each stereotype regarding anime fans in general.

Motivations. Participants rated the plausibility of 10 potential motivations for anime fans to participate in the anime fandom (e.g., entertainment). The items were based on motivations identified by Wann (1995), with the addition of two items—attention and sexual attraction (see Table 7 for items).

Fandom demographics. To explore the perceived demographics of the anime fandom we asked participants to estimate the biological sex of the fandom ("What percentage of anime fans are male?"), gender of the fandom ("What is the gender of the average or typical anime fan?" with 1 = *completely masculine*, 2 = *mostly masculine*, 3 = *equally masculine and feminine*, 4 = *mostly feminine*, 5 = *completely feminine* as response options), age ("What do you think is the average age of anime fans?"), religiosity of the fandom ("How would you rate typical/average anime fans" on a scale of 0 = *not at all religious* to 7 = *very religious*), and political orientation of the fandom ("I would say the

typical/average anime fan is...” on a scale of 1 = *very conservative* to 7 = *very liberal*). Furthermore, we assessed perceptions of the prevalence of cosplay (“What percentage of anime fans do you believe cosplay (i.e., dress and act like characters in anime/manga)?”) and whether participants believed that anime fans who cosplay actually think that they are the character (“Do you think that the typical/average anime fan who does cosplay believes they are the character they are cosplaying?” with *yes/no* as response options).

Results

Anime prototype. To examine open-ended responses regarding a prototypical/stereotypical anime fan, we examined the frequency of different themes in participants’ responses. In the description item participants noted that the stereotypical anime fan is introverted (33.6%), a nerd or geek (28.8%), wears non-normal clothing (20.5%), and is creative (11%). Regarding their conjured (imagined) appearance of a stereotypical anime fan, participants indicated the person wears non-normal clothing (32.2%), dark or gothic clothing (20.5%), and wears glasses (17.8%). Writing about how a stereotypical anime fan would interact with others, participants’ responses included themes related to introversion (57.5%), extroversion (30.8%), friendliness (28.8%), and obsession (13%). Participants imagined the anime fan’s occupation would be a student (54.1%), would involve computers (37%), and would revolve around a creative area such as art or graphic design (23.3%).

Personality. As expressed in the open-ended responses, and noted in blogs and online forums, anime fans believe they are perceived as introverted, creative, and smart (i.e., nerd/geek). To test whether non-fans endorse these personality traits we conducted one-sample *t*-tests on participants’ ratings of the a prototypical anime fan on the Big Five personality traits, comparing their mean response to the midpoint of the response scale (i.e., 4). As shown in Table 1, participants viewed anime fans to be introverted (i.e., significantly below the midpoint of the extraversion dimension), agreeable, and open/intellectual. Thus, participants do perceive anime fans to be introverted, but also creative and smart (i.e., openness/intellectualism).

As an alternative comparison, we also conducted one-sample *t*-tests with Gosling et al.'s (2003) normed Big Five factor mean values as test values (rather than using the midpoint of the response scale). These mean values represent a representative student sample ($N = 1,813$) of self-ratings on the Big Five. In other words, this compares how participants view anime fans to how individuals tend to rate themselves on the same measures. As shown in Table 2, participants rated anime fans significantly lower on all five constructs compared to the mean of individuals' self-rating.

Prejudice. To assess prejudice toward participants' imagined prototypical fan, we conducted a one-sample *t*-test (with 4 as the comparison mean) on participants' ratings of preferred social distance from anime fans. The results show that participants desired distance from the prototypical anime fan they imagined ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.31$), $t(145) = -4.92$, $p < .001$, $d = -.817$. However, breaking down the measure and examining specific items shows that participants do not endorse distance uniformly across all possible social roles. For example, participants indicated less preferred distance from an anime fan that was a neighbor, coworker, or owner of a restaurant. However, with the exception of having an anime fan as a friend (which did not differ significantly from the midpoint of the scale), participants expressed a desire to distance the self from an anime fan. Participants especially did not desire an anime fan to be in political power (i.e., President, Governor) or as one's spiritual leader (see Table 3). Next, we conducted a one-sample *t*-test (with 50% as the midpoint comparison mean) on the single item degree of prejudice toward anime fans in general (0% = *extremely negative perspective* to 100% = *extremely positive perspective*). The results show that participants held a slightly positive overall attitude toward anime fans ($M = 56.14\%$, $SD = 23.13\%$), $t(145) = 3.21$, $p = .002$, $d = .533$.

Specific stereotypes. To examine whether non-fans endorse specific stereotypes of anime fans, participants rated their agreement with 34 stereotypes about anime fans that were collated from blogs and online anime fan forums. We conducted one-sample *t*-tests comparing participants' mean response to the midpoint of the response scale (i.e., 4). Thus, scores significantly above the midpoint indicate agreement with the stereotype, scores significantly below the midpoint indicate disagreement with the stereotype, and scores that are non-significantly different from the midpoint indicate a neutral stance on the stereotype. The results show that participants agreed with 15 stereotypes (see Table 4),

disagreed with 11 stereotypes (see Table 5), and remained neutral on eight stereotypes (see Table 6). The strongest endorsement was for the stereotype that anime fans are easily overexcited about anime. Non-fans strongly disagreed with the notion that anime is highly sexual and that anime fans lack a social life. Notably, ratings of the stereotype that anime fans are obsessed did not significantly differ from the midpoint of the scale.

Motivations. To examine the perceived motivation for anime fans to participate in the anime community we conducted a series of one-sample *t*-tests. As shown in Table 7, non-fans perceived anime fans to be motivated by several factors, including entertainment and escape from everyday life. Participants disagreed that anime fans are motivated to participate in the community for family or economic reasons. Similar to the disagreement found when rating specific stereotypes, participants did not significantly endorse sexual attraction as a motivation for anime fans to participate in the fandom.

Fandom demographics. Participants viewed the anime fandom as containing more men than women ($M = 60.75\%$ male, $SD = 16.34$), $t(145) = 7.95$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.32$. The gender of the average fan was also skewed in the masculine direction with ratings of mostly masculine (41.1%), equally masculine and feminine (44.5%), and mostly feminine (14.4%). The perceived average age of anime fans was 20.43 years ($SD = 3.75$). A one-sample *t*-test (with 3.5 as the comparison mean on the 0-7 scale) showed that anime fans were viewed as not very religious ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.33$), $t(145) = -9.92$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.65$. A one-sample *t*-test (with 4 as the comparison mean on the 1-7 scale) showed that anime fans were viewed as holding a liberal political orientation ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.43$), $t(145) = 5.72$, $p < .001$, $d = .950$. Participants estimated that 60.32% ($SD = 26.89$) of anime fans cosplay. Participants also indicated that of those anime fans that do cosplay, 53.4% believe that they are the character that they are cosplaying (which may indicate a belief that anime cosplayers are detached from reality).

Stereotypes and prejudice. We examined the relationship between stereotypes and prejudice in two ways. First, we entered the themes found in the open-ended responses regarding a stereotypical or prototypical anime fan in a step-wise regression predicting participants' desired social distance from the imagined anime fan. The final regression model was significant, $F(3, 142) = 7.81$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .142$. The initial description of an anime fan as introverted ($\beta = -.23$, $p = .004$) and perceiving the

interaction style with others as introverted ($\beta = -.22, p = .005$) predicted greater social distance, while perceiving the stereotypical anime fan as creative in the initial description ($\beta = .17, p = .035$) predicted less distance.

Next, to explore whether specific stereotypes predict general prejudice against anime fans, we conducted another step-wise regression with the 34 stereotypes predicting participants' attitude toward anime fans in general (0% = *negative* to 100% = *positive*). The final regression model was significant, $F(3, 142) = 16.47, p < .001, R^2 = .258$. Viewing anime fans as detached from real life ($\beta = -.23, p = .016$), as socially awkward ($\beta = -.24, p = .008$), and believing that anime fans only like things from Japan ($\beta = -.19, p = .016$) predicted a more negative general attitude toward anime fans.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether non-anime-fans do indeed hold negative stereotypes of anime fans, as many anime fans have suggested. Stereotypes were explored through open-ended responses regarding an imagined prototypical anime fan and ratings of specific stereotypes collected from various sources (e.g., blogs, online forums, interviews). Furthermore, prejudice toward anime fans was examined through desired social distance from a prototypical anime fan and an assessment of a general attitude toward anime fans. Together, the results show that while not all of the proposed stereotypes of anime fans were endorsed by non-fans, as a whole, anime fans can be considered a stigmatized fan group.

Prototypical Anime Fan

The open-ended responses about prototypical anime fan were expected to reflect stereotypes that are strongly associated with non-fans' perceptions of anime fans. When non-fan participants were asked to describe the prototypical anime fan and how the imagined anime fan would interact with others, they revealed a tendency to perceive anime fans as introverted. The prototypical anime fan was described as socially awkward, weird, distant, and generally avoidant of social interactions except with a small group of

friends. Although anime fans were also described as extraverted, this extraversion was limited to particular contexts, such as at conventions or with a small group of friends. Anime fans were said to be nerds or geeks, were likely to be students or in an occupation related to computers, and were seen as likely to wear glasses. In both the general description item and in the appearance question, anime fans were described as dressing in a non-normal manner (e.g., colorful or crazy hair, bright clothes, cosplay). However, some participants also imagined an emo-style anime fan (e.g., dark gothic clothes). On a positive note, in both the general description item and the occupation question, anime fans were seen as creative and working in art-related jobs.

Taken together, the open-ended prototype descriptions are largely consistent with participants' ratings of the specific stereotypes of anime fans.

Stereotypes of Anime Fans

Contrary to prior suggestions that anime fans enjoy pornographic cartoons (Dinnie, 2012; Napier, 2001), the results show that non-fans do not view anime fans as sexual perverts or obsessed with pornography. Furthermore, suggestions that anime fans have no life (Mycella, 2012), are obsessed, are unhygienic, and live with their parents (Dunbar, 2011) were not supported by the data. Participants did not endorse stereotypes that anime fans are childish and immature. As noted in the introduction, stereotypes can change (Schneider, 2005), and it is possible that these stereotypes, if they once existed, may have disappeared from the collective social representation of anime fans as anime has grown in popularity and reached a mainstream audience.

In supporting of prior suggestions from anime fans (Napier, 2001), non-fans *did* view anime fans as computer geeks. Indeed, the stereotype that anime fans are geeks or nerds (Dunbar, 2011; Fu, 2013) was a common theme in the open-ended responses, suggesting that this stereotype is strongly associated with the fandom. Furthermore, participants strongly endorsed the notion that anime fans are open to new experiences, a personality trait related to intellectualism and creativity. Stereotypes that anime fans spend all their time indoors, are easily overexcited about anime (Dinnie, 2012), watch anime to escape reality (Mycella, 2012), are male, and are socially awkward (Dunbar,

2011) were all supported by the non-fan participants. Stereotypes associated with staying indoors were also found: anime fans were perceived by non-fans as pale (presumably from staying inside watching anime), as not athletic, and as introverted, all of which revolve around a lifestyle of staying indoors.

Participants' endorsement of stereotypes regarding anime fans' interactions with others was mixed. Anime fans were viewed as introverted, socially awkward, lacking social skills, detached from real life, and seen as using anime as an escape from reality. Despite these beliefs, however, participants also rejected the notion that anime fans have no life or friends. Rather, they endorsed the notion that anime fans have a small group of friends who also enjoy anime. Together, these findings suggest that anime fans are viewed not as anti-social deviants, but rather as socially normal individuals who prefer small friend groups organized around a mutual interest (i.e., introverted).

Prejudice, Stigma, and Well-Being

The social distance items suggest that anime fans are indeed stigmatized. For example, non-fans indicated a willingness to interact with anime fans at a distance (e.g., neighbor, coworker), but did not wish for an anime fan to hold political power (e.g., governor) or be allowed into one's personal life (e.g., relationship partner, roommate). The present findings are in line with prior research showing that minority fan groups experience stigma from the broader culture (Hills, 2005).

The perceived experience of stigma and discrimination has consistently been linked to poor mental health (e.g., depression, anxiety, well-being, self-esteem) (Mak, Poon, Pun, & Cheung, 2007; Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Given the number of negative stereotypes attributed to the anime fandom and the stigma expressed by participants in the present study, anime fans may be correctly accurately perceiving stigma and discrimination from the world around them, and experience this stigma in their everyday lives. Alternatively, anime fans may choose to hide their fan identity from others (e.g., family, coworkers) to avoid stigma. Concealment of one's stigmatized fan identity may exacerbate the negative outcomes of stigmatization and lead to lower psychological well-being (Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2014). Counterintuitively, participation in and

connection to a fandom of like-minded others may buffer anime fans against the negative outcomes of encountered stigma (Mock, Plante, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2013; Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Further research is needed to examine how anime fans cope with these societal prejudices.

Stereotype Content Model and Ambivalent Prejudice

As a final note, those who saw anime fans as introverted preferred greater social distance from anime fans, while those who saw anime fans as creative preferred less social distance. Similarly, non-fans' perception that anime fans are detached from reality, are socially awkward, and only like things from Japan predicted greater prejudice toward anime fans in general. These results may be explained by the stereotype content model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), and an extension of the theory—the behavior from intergroup affect and stereotypes map (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007, 2008).

In general, these theories posit that a group's perceived warmth or coldness and competence or incompetence is related to emotional responses felt toward the group and different forms of discrimination directed toward the group. The results of the present study suggest that anime fans are stereotyped as being low on warmth (e.g., detached from reality, socially awkward, introverted, lack social skills) but moderate to high on competence (e.g., geeks/nerds, creative, intellectual, smart). Interestingly, empirical research on various groups (e.g., ethnic, professional, national) reveals another group stereotyped in this manner: Asians (Cuddy et al., 2007). According to the theories, groups low in warmth and high in competence elicit behavioral responses reflecting passive facilitation: people will not seek out interaction with target group members, but rather accept the association or interaction when circumstances arise when such interaction is needed to meet one's goals (e.g., having to interact with an outgroup member in commercial or professional settings). Indeed, the ratings on the social distance items point to such behavioral intentions. Non-fans indicated acceptance of interactions that were obligatory (e.g., anime fan is neighbor, coworker, owner of restaurant), but did not seek out or indicate a desire to interact with a prototypical anime fan in any other setting. Together, the results point to an ambivalent style of prejudice faced by anime fans, and it

may prove fruitful for future research to investigate the implications of this specific form of prejudice to anime fans.

Limitations

Several limitations limit the generalizability of this study's findings. First, the sample consisted of undergraduate students at a single university in the United States. The results may vary in other cultural contexts (e.g., Japan) or with more diverse populations (e.g., adolescents). Second, the personality measure used in the study showed low reliability scores. This may be due to participants rating an imagined individual (i.e., a prototypical anime fan) rather than an actual person (e.g., acquaintance). As such, one should be cautious when interpreting the results of this measure. Additionally, we compared participants' responses to both the measure midpoint and Gosling et al.'s (2003) normed means. The comparison to Gosling and colleagues' means is provided simply as a reference for comparison. We are unsure whether participants in the present study would have rated the average person or themselves similarly. In other words, we are unable to know whether participants would say anime fans are lower on the Big Five constructs compared to non-anime fans.

Third, because the present study is correlational, our proposed explanations about passive facilitative behaviors toward anime fans needs to be experimentally tested in order to test this hypothesis. Fourth, participants may have responded in a socially desirable manner such that they did not report extremely negative stereotypes. Finally, the present study only reports perceived stereotypes of anime fans in a non-fan sample. The present data say nothing about the veracity of the stereotype content itself. A study utilizing an anime fan sample is needed to explore the accuracy of the stereotypes, as was done, for example, by Gerbasi and colleagues (2008) when they tested the veracity of stereotypes about the furry fandom.

Conclusion

The present study explored non-anime-fans' stereotypes of anime fans to test whether anime fans were accurate in their perception of being negatively stereotyped by the world around them. Across measures, anime fans were stereotyped as introverted and creative. Despite a slightly positive attitude toward anime fans in general, non-fans expressed a desire to only interact with anime fans when the situation was such that the interaction was obligatory. Overall, the stereotypes endorsed suggested that non-fans view anime fans as low on warmth and high on competence. Although unfavorable stereotypes were endorsed, commonly cited stereotypes of anime fans as obsessed and sexual deviants were rejected by non-fans. Together, the results suggest that the perception of the anime fandom may not be as negative as once thought, though the fandom nonetheless remains a stigmatized minority fan group.

Table 1
Perceived Personality of Anime Fans Compared to Scale Midpoint

Variable	Mean (SD)	<i>t</i> (145)	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Extraversion	3.41 (1.55)	-4.57	< .001	-.759
Agreeableness	4.46 (1.23)	4.51	< .001	.749
Conscientious	4.08 (1.35)	0.71	.481	.117
Emotional Stability	3.97 (1.34)	-0.28	.782	-.046
Openness	4.92 (1.39)	7.99	< .001	1.33

Note. One-sample *t*-test (using the midpoint of the scale as the test value). 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Table 2
Perceived Personality of Anime Fans Compared to Non-Anime Normed Means

Variable	Participants	Normed Sample	<i>t</i> (145)	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Extraversion	3.41	4.44	-8.01	< .001	-1.33
Agreeableness	4.46	5.23	-7.59	< .001	-1.26
Conscientious	4.08	5.40	-11.85	< .001	-1.97
Emotional Stability	3.97	4.83	-7.74	< .001	-1.29
Openness	4.92	5.38	-4.02	< .001	-.817

Note. One-sample *t*-test (using Gosling et al., 2001, normed means as the test values). 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Table 3
Social Distance From Typical/Average Anime Fan Imagined

Variable	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i> (145)	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Someone I would personally date	2.36 (1.68)	-11.77	< .001	-1.95
President of the U.S.	2.45 (1.57)	-11.90	< .001	-1.98
Governor of my state	2.51 (1.56)	-11.55	< .001	-1.92
My spiritual advisor	2.57 (1.68)	-10.31	< .001	-1.71
My personal physician	3.23 (1.74)	-5.38	< .001	-.537
A roommate	3.51 (1.92)	-3.10	.002	-.515
The teacher of my children	3.66 (1.80)	-2.30	.023	-.382
To marry into my family	3.68 (1.84)	-2.07	.040	-.344
A close personal friend	4.09 (1.82)	0.59	.556	.098
The owner of a store or restaurant I frequent	4.36 (1.65)	2.61	.010	.433
To come and work at the same place I do	4.49 (1.70)	3.51	.001	.583
A neighbor	4.68 (1.67)	4.91	< .001	.816

Note. One-sample *t*-test (using the midpoint of the scale as the test value). 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Lower scores indicate a desire to distance one's self from the imagined typical anime fan, while higher scores indicate participants are happy to have the person they imagined as [*insert role*].

Table 4
Specific Stereotypes Endorsed by Non-fans

Variable	Mean (SD)	<i>t</i> (145)	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Are easily overexcited about anime	5.87 (1.27)	17.84	< .001	2.96
Are computer geeks	5.03 (1.42)	8.79	< .001	1.46
Are geeks	4.90 (1.60)	6.85	< .001	1.14
Wear glasses	4.78 (1.55)	6.08	< .001	1.01
Watch kids cartoons	4.77 (1.56)	5.95	< .001	.988
Are not athletic	4.77 (1.73)	5.36	< .001	.890
Do not play sports	4.74 (1.69)	5.29	< .001	.879
Spend all their time indoors watching anime	4.71 (1.57)	5.42	< .001	.900
Play too many video games	4.59 (1.66)	4.29	< .001	.713
Are socially awkward	4.58 (1.66)	4.24	< .001	.704
Are pale	4.58 (1.65)	4.22	< .001	.701
Are detached from real life	4.51 (1.72)	3.61	< .001	.600
Only hang out with other anime fans	4.42 (1.70)	2.97	.004	.493
Lack social skills	4.38 (1.48)	3.14	.002	.522
Are escaping from reality by indulging in anime	4.34 (1.82)	2.28	.024	.379

Note. One-sample *t*-test (using the midpoint of the scale as the test value). 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Table 5
Specific Stereotypes Not Endorsed by Non-fans

Variable	Mean (SD)	<i>t</i> (145)	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Have no friends	2.45 (1.47)	-12.71	< .001	-2.11
Are only looking at pornography	2.46 (1.55)	-12.05	< .001	-2.00
Are sexually perverted	2.73 (1.60)	-9.60	< .001	-1.59
Only like things from Japan	2.79 (1.59)	-9.17	< .001	-1.52
Listen to heavy metal music	2.88 (1.57)	-8.62	< .001	-1.43
Know how to speak Japanese	3.01 (1.73)	-6.93	< .001	-1.15
Have bad hygiene	3.06 (1.55)	-7.34	< .001	-1.22
Are overweight	3.15 (1.70)	-6.03	< .001	-1.00
Have no life	3.26 (1.73)	-5.18	< .001	-.860
Are immature	3.48 (1.72)	-3.66	< .001	-.608
Are childish	3.53 (1.60)	-3.51	.001	-.583

Note. One-sample *t*-test (using the midpoint of the scale as the test value). 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Table 6
Non-Significant Specific Stereotypes

Variable	Mean (SD)	<i>t</i> (145)	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Are social outcasts	3.72 (1.72)	-1.97	.051	-.327
Are Asian	3.76 (1.84)	-1.58	.117	-.262
Love hello kitty	3.79 (1.78)	-1.40	.164	-.233
Live with their parents	3.90 (1.65)	-0.75	.452	-.125
Own life-size pillows of their favorite anime characters	3.95 (1.80)	-0.32	.748	-.053
Are anti-social	4.12 (1.59)	0.94	.350	.156
Spend all their money buying DVDs and comics	4.16 (1.64)	1.16	.249	.193
Are obsessed	4.25 (1.78)	1.72	.088	.286

Note. One-sample *t*-test (using the midpoint of the scale as the test value). 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Table 7
Motivation to Participate in Anime Community

Variable	Mean (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i> (145)	<i>p</i> -value	<i>d</i>
Economic reasons	2.79 (1.42)	-10.35	< .001	-1.72
Family	3.66 (1.65)	-2.46	.015	-.409
Sexual attraction	4.16 (1.55)	1.28	.202	.213
Aesthetic (beauty)	4.21 (1.72)	1.49	.138	.247
Attention	4.47 (1.52)	3.71	< .001	.616
Self-esteem	5.03 (1.44)	8.63	< .001	1.43
Eustress (positive stress)	5.06 (1.45)	8.85	< .001	1.47
Belongingness	5.53 (1.38)	13.37	< .001	2.22
Escape from everyday life	5.74 (1.26)	16.69	< .001	2.77
Entertainment	6.18 (0.98)	26.87	< .001	4.46

Note. One-sample *t*-test (using the midpoint of the scale as the test value). 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

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