

Identity Is Lost Without A Moral Compass

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Pacific Standard:

What defines a person? Is it their memories? Their hobbies? Look deeper, argue a pair of researchers—into the soul, so to speak. According to a new study, kindness, loyalty, and other traits of morality are what really constitute someone's being.

“Over the past few years my research has gradually been shifting toward personal identity, and specifically the question of what makes you *you*,” Nina Strohminger, lead author of the new paper and a postdoctoral associate at the Yale School of Management, writes in an email. In previous work, she and co-author Shaun Nichols found that moral traits, such as empathy or politeness, seemed to be the most important component of identity. But that research focused on hypothetical situations—if a friend became a jerk, would he or she still be the same person you knew before? The new study “is an expansion of that work that aims to see if this privileging of moral traits extends to a real-world example of radical mental change, neurodegeneration,” Strohminger writes.

Read the whole story: [Pacific Standard](#)