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The Big Five and Beyond: Which Personality Traits Do Predict Movie and Reading
Preferences?

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Abstract

Preferences for various genres of movies or books have long been considered to express unique aspects of personality. The question, however, remains: Do the “darker” aspects of personality manifest in such preferences? This study, therefore, examined the relative contribution of personality, as measured by the Mini International Personality Item Pool and the Dirty Dozen, to movie and reading preferences in a sample of 386 participants. Hierarchical regressions showed that the Big Five personality traits differentially contributed to predicting media preferences. Results further revealed that even after controlling for the Big Five traits, Machiavellianism predicted preferences for genres of movies and books characterized by intensity, whereas a preference for Light books was predicted by narcissism. It follows, then, that both movie and reading preferences can represent a means through which people do express aspects of their own personalities, which may partly explain the importance of entertainment media in our everyday lives.

Keywords: Big Five; Dark Triad; movie preferences; reading preferences; personality

The Big Five and Beyond: Which Personality Traits Do Predict Movie and Reading Preferences?

The media, particularly entertainment ones, are central to many aspects of everyday life, as attested to by the fair amount of time people spend listening to music, watching movies, and reading books. Given the broad availability of a plethora of media offerings, and given that entertainment media can satisfy a number of needs beyond mere pleasure or simply time spent (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017), understanding *how* and *why* people use them is of critical interest to both personality and communication research. One of the most influential theoretical frameworks through which this topic has been investigated is the uses and gratifications approach (e.g., Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 2009). A central assumption underlying this approach is that people are not passive recipients of media messages but rather are active agents who seek out or avoid particular media content (Katz et al., 1974).

A considerable number of studies within the uses and gratifications approach have highlighted the importance of personality in explaining media preferences,¹ even when it is conceptualized from a variety of theoretical perspectives (e.g., Bowes, Watts, Costello, Murphy, & Lilienfeld, 2018; Hall, 2005; Rentfrow, Goldberg, & Zilca, 2011). For example, Rentfrow and colleagues (2011) examined the Big Five personality trait correlates of preferences for a range of genres across media in three independent samples. Results from all three studies revealed that people prefer genres that share similar content, and that these preferences are associated with personality. In a study among a sample of predominantly young adults, Hall (2005) documented the impact of the Big Three personality traits (psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism; Eysenck, 1997) on preferences for several genres of music, movies, and television, even when demographics were held constant. It appears, then, that people actively choose to be

exposed to media environments that provide opportunities for them to reflect their self-conceptions, and this is hardly a novel supposition.

Indeed, many personality theorists and communication researchers have considered media preferences as a manifestation of more explicit personality traits, possibly in conjunction with particular social and psychological needs (e.g., Rentfrow et al., 2011; Tu, Dilley, & Kaufman, 2015). Remarkably, however, there still remains a dearth of research considering the effects of a wider range of personality traits beyond the Big Five or the Big Three on such preferences. This argument is also supported by Bowes and colleagues (2018), who further noted that the impact of the socially aversive personality traits on everyday interests is scarcely understood. In fact, it is only recently that attempts have been made to understand how people with “darker” personalities respond to media narratives (e.g., Allen, Ash, & Anderson, 2021; Appel, Slater, & Oliver, 2019), and whether they deliberately select media to match their personal dispositions (e.g. Blagov, Von Handorf, Pugh, & Walker, 2019). Still others have argued that the study of the associations between personality and preferences within media has tended to be dominated by research in the area of music (Rentfrow et al., 2011). In other words, with the exception of violent movies, research on the personality correlates of movie and reading preferences is far from complete. Toward that end, the present study aims to build on and extend prior research in personality and media psychology by investigating whether movie and reading preferences are correlated with the Big Five personality traits, and whether the Dark Triad personality traits are associated with such preferences above and beyond the Big Five. Understanding the extent to which people choose media content in response to their personal dispositions not only provides a better understanding of how these dispositions manifest in everyday

interests but also helps explain how people interact with their social environments, an area of research that is in need of further exploration (Rentfrow et al., 2011).

The Big Five Personality Trait Correlates of Media Preferences

The personality correlates of media preferences have been examined over the years with a variety of methods, samples, and instruments. Early research, for example, identified a number of personality traits, such as sensation seeking, Machiavellianism, and so forth (e.g., Hirschman, 1987; Tamborini, Stiff, & Zillman, 1987), that influence preferences for specific media content. More recent research, however, has suggested that the Five-Factor Model (McCrae & Costa, 1997), also known as the Big Five, may provide a particularly functional framework for examining the impact of personality on media preferences (e.g., Rentfrow et al., 2011; Tu et al., 2015). According to this model, variations in personality among people can be conceptualized in terms of five main traits that are openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism (McCrae & Costa, 1997, 2008).

Openness to experience, defined as a desire for intellectual stimulation, is the trait among the Big Five that best correlates with a preference for complex and unconventional genres, particularly documentaries, literary novels, and surrealism books (e.g., Bowes et al., 2018; Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2005; Swami, Pietschnig, Stieger, Nader, & Voracek, 2012). This harmonizes with previous research in empirical aesthetics that has consistently found openness to experience to predict a preference for aesthetic stimuli that are challenging either cognitively or structurally (Swami & Furnham, 2019). Other studies have also pointed to extraversion as an important predictor of media preferences, namely those for westerns, horror movies, and popular magazines (e.g., Bowes et al., 2018; Krcmar & Kean, 2005; Schutte & Malouff, 2004). In fact, the more people tend to be sociable and active, the more they tend to prefer

content that has social utility or that may increase their arousal level (e.g. Krcmar & Kean, 2005). In a study involving participants of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds, for example, Krcmar and Kean (2005) found extraversion to be negatively associated with television viewing, especially alone, but positively with media violence exposure. Neuroticism, in contrast, has been found to be associated with a disinclination for westerns, action movies, and comics (e.g. Bowes et al., 2018) and, besides that, those who tend to be vulnerable to stress are particularly inclined to perceive violent television programming as more threatening in relation to those who tend to be more stable emotionally (Gunter, 1985, as cited in Hall, 2005). In addition, both conscientiousness (a tendency to be achievement oriented) and agreeableness (a tendency to be sympathetic towards others) have been shown to correlate with a preference for romantic novels (e.g. Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2005) and a disinclination for genres emphasizing intensity, such as horror movies, erotica books, late-night talk shows, and so forth (e.g. Rentfrow et al., 2011). Such findings, however, are often either not replicated or inconsistent across studies (e.g. Tu et al., 2015).

The Dark Triad Personality Trait Correlates of Media Preferences

The Five-Factor Model is one of the most popular and widely used models of personality, yet it may be less adequate to capture the less socially desirable aspects of personality, such as the tendency to be manipulative and exploitive of others (Lee & Ashton, 2014). Unlike the established Big Five personality traits, the Dark Triad incorporates three overlapping but separable traits, namely narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, which pertain to socially malevolent behavior (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Although limited, the available evidence suggests that people who score high on Machiavellianism, a personality trait that includes manipulative behavior alongside

deceitfulness and callousness, indicate a preference for movie genres that emphasize intensity, violence, and hedonism, such as action, horror, and erotic movies (e.g., Blagov et al., 2019; Williams, McAndrew, Learn, Harms, & Paulhus, 2001). Similar patterns of preferences have also been found in those who score high on psychopathy; the more people tend to lack empathy, the more they tend to prefer horror and adventure movies (e.g. Blagov et al., 2019). Beyond violent movies, both Machiavellianism and psychopathy have been found to be associated with a preference for “problem music,” particularly when the lyrics contain references to violence (e.g., Bodner & Bensimon, 2015; Hansen & Hansen, 1991), as well as with a greater exposure to violent video games (e.g. Williams et al., 2001). A recent study among young adults also reported evidence indicating that those who score high on narcissism, a personality trait referring to a sense of grandiosity and self-centeredness, prefer reality and horror shows (Lull & Dickinson, 2016). Since a lack of empathy is a common element among the Dark Triad personality traits (Jones & Figueredo, 2013), such findings are not surprising at all. However, as far as is known, no study to date has examined the Dark Triad personality trait correlates of reading preferences, which may be regarded as an important limitation of the previous research concerned with media preferences.

Aim of the Study and Hypotheses

The media content that people select can provide opportunities for personal dispositions to be manifested and reinforced (e.g., Bowes et al., 2018; Hall, 2005; Rentfrow et al., 2011). Yet in general, the question that remains is whether the socially aversive personality traits manifest in such choices. Equally important, there still remains a need to expand the focus of the current research to explore the associations between a diverse variety of personality traits and media preferences other than those for music. Toward that end, the present study aims to bridge trait theory, the Five-Factor

Model and the Dark Triad in particular, and current research in media psychology. Specifically, the aim of the present study was twofold: First, this study asked whether movie and reading preferences are correlated with the Big Five personality traits, and second, it examined the degree to which the Dark Triad personality traits are associated with those preferences above and beyond the Big Five. For example, would preferences for war movies or science fiction books be correlated with extraversion? Would Machiavellianism be correlated with a preference for horror movies above and beyond the Big Five?

Considering the literature discussed earlier, the following hypotheses are proposed: First, it is hypothesized that those who are creative and imaginative may prefer complex genres of movies (Hypothesis 1) and books characterized by unconventional content (Hypothesis 2). Given that conscientiousness is the most consistent personality predictor of motivation to learn (Major, Turner, & Fletcher, 2006), it is expected that people who score high on conscientiousness will indicate a preference for informational books (Hypothesis 3). Those high in agreeableness tend to be friendly and compliant (McCrae & Costa, 2008), which is why agreeableness will be associated with a preference for conventional movie genres, such as family movies (Hypothesis 4) and entertainment content in books (Hypothesis 5). Because people who score high on extraversion prefer relatively high arousal levels (McCrae & Costa, 2008), extraversion is expected to be associated with a preference for suspenseful movies, namely action and adventure movies (Hypothesis 6). Lastly, it is hypothesized that neuroticism will be associated with a preference for relatively simple genres of movies (Hypothesis 7) and books (Hypothesis 8), such as family movies and romantic books, because such genres may help them to contend with emotional discomfort (e.g. Hall, 2005).

With regard to the Dark Triad personality traits, it is hypothesized that people who tend to manipulate others to promote their own interests will indicate a preference for movie genres that emphasize intensity, or even violence, namely horror and crime thriller movies (Hypothesis 9). Given that people with psychopathic traits are emotionally callous and lack empathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), psychopathy will be associated with a preference for genres of movies characterized by violence (Hypothesis 10). Because the present study is among the first to examine the associations between the Dark Triad personality traits and reading preferences, it aims to address the following research question: would the Dark Triad personality traits explain unique variance in reading preferences beyond that predicted by the Big Five?

Method

Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and guidelines of the Department of Education Sciences in Early Childhood of the Democritus University of Thrace. Formal ethical approval for the type of research reported in this article is not required by these guidelines or by Greek law; therefore, no ethical approval was required for the present study. The present study also used anonymous questionnaires; that is, no identifying information was obtained from participants. All participants were informed about the aim of this study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participants

Three hundred and eighty-six students attending the Democritus University of Thrace (School of Education, $N = 229$; and School of Health Sciences, $N = 157$) volunteered to participate in the present study. The sample was composed of 278 women (72.2%) and 107 men (27.8%); one participant had missing gender data.

Students ranged in age from 18 to 35 years, with a mean age of 21.50 years ($SD = 3.31$); two participants did not indicate their age.

Measures

Movie and Reading Preferences. Given that no previous relevant research exists on the Greek population, movie and reading preferences were assessed with a 48-item questionnaire that was constructed for the purposes of the present study (21 genres of movies; and 27 genres of books). To do so, an initial list of several genres, which was drawn from online Greek stores selling movies and books, as well as from the previous studies on media preferences (e.g., Hall, 2005; Rentfrow et al., 201; Schutte & Malouff, 2004), was tested in a pretest with an independent sample of students (68.2% women; $M_{\text{age}} = 20.81$, $SD = 1.61$). The genres of movies and books that were unknown to most participants were omitted, and therefore the eventual questionnaire included the genres with which people are likely to be most familiar with (see Appendix). Participants were asked to indicate their degree of preference for each genre using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*dislike strongly*) to 5 (*like strongly*).

The Big Five personality traits. Openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism were assessed with the 20-item Mini-International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP; Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006), which consists of four items per subscale. Participants indicated their agreement with statements such as “I have a vivid imagination” (openness to experience), “I like order” (conscientiousness), “I feel others’ emotions” (agreeableness), “I am the life of the party” (extraversion), and “I get upset easily” (neuroticism) using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The Dark Triad personality traits. Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and narcissism were assessed with the 12-item Dirty Dozen (DD; Jonason & Webster,

2010), which consists of four items per subscale. Participants indicated their agreement with statements such as “I have use flattery to get my way” (Machiavellianism), “I tend to lack remorse” (psychopathy), and “I tend to seek prestige or status” (narcissism) using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Procedure

Before completing the survey, all students were provided with an informed consent emphasizing that participation was voluntary and anonymous, and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were also provided with instructions on how to complete the survey. Next, they completed the aforementioned measures in large classes before the beginning of the courses they attended. Both the instructions and measures used in the present study were translated into Greek using the front and back translation method (Prieto, 1992). The survey took approximately 15 min to complete.

Statistical Analysis

Data were initially screened to identify incomplete surveys, outliers, and potential deviations from the assumptions of normality. Only the participants who completed all study measures were included in the analyses, and as such there were no missing data. Using the recommendations of Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), outliers were identified as z scores greater than 3.29 ($p < .001$, two tailed). Therefore, 11 outliers were removed from the dataset and a total of 375 participants were included in subsequent analyses. Skewness and kurtosis values were found to be within normal limits for all scales (greater than ± 2.00 ; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

An exploratory factor analysis with oblique (promax) rotation was conducted to examine the structure of movie and reading preferences. To do so, two separate factor analyses were conducted, one for movie preferences and one for reading preferences.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy ($KMO > .60$) and the Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .05$) were also used to assess the suitability of the sample for factor analysis. Only factors with eigenvalues of one or greater and item loadings above .40 were retained. All scales were constructed by averaging the scores of the items that loaded highly on a given factor.² Internal consistency of all measures was assessed with Cronbach's α coefficient.

Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations were calculated for all study variables. To test specific hypotheses pertaining to the effects of the Big Five and the Dark Triad personality traits on movie and reading preferences, a series of hierarchical regressions were conducted; personality traits functioned as independent predictors of movie and reading preferences. For each regression, demographics were entered in Step 1 to serve as controls. The second step included the Big Five personality traits, whereas the Dark Triad traits were entered in Step 3. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity. All statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 21).

Results

The Structure Underlying Movie and Reading Preferences

To reveal the underlying structure of movie preferences a principal components analysis with promax rotation was employed. The KMO coefficient value was .71 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(210) = 2,172.58, p < .001$. Applying the Kaiser-Guttman rule and the scree test, the analysis yielded four factors that accounted for 49% of the total variance (see Supplemental Table B; Manolika, 2022).³ The first factor, labeled "Action-Oriented," was defined by action, adventure, science fiction, western, and war movies. The second factor, "Light," was defined by family,

romance, comedy, musical, drama, and animation movies. The third factor, “Complex,” was defined by biographical, historical, classics, documentary, and independent movies. The fourth factor was named “Thrilling,” and it was defined by horror, erotic, crime thriller, mystery, and psychological thriller movies.

A principal components analysis with promax rotation was also conducted to examine the structure of reading preferences. The KMO coefficient value was .79 and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was also significant, $\chi^2(351) = 3588.88, p < .001$. Following the Kaiser-Guttman rule and the scree test, the analysis yielded four factors that accounted for 48% of the total variance (see Supplemental Table C; Manolika, 2022).⁴ The first factor was named “Fiction,” and it was defined by thriller, fantasy, mystery, adventure, crime, horror, and science fiction books. The second factor, “Informational,” was defined by computers, sports, business, medical, news/current events, comic, architecture, reference, science and nature, and health books. The third factor, labeled “Nonfiction,” was defined by philosophy, poetry, art, history, academic, and literature books. The fourth factor, “Light,” was defined by romance, cooking, and entertainment/humor books. Because erotica books did not significantly load on any of the factors, this particular genre was omitted from further analyses.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analyses

Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for all study variables are featured in Table 1. From Table 2, it is evident that there were a number of significant associations between personality and media preferences. In terms of the Big Five personality traits, for example, the strongest correlations were found between agreeableness and a preference for Light movies ($r = .31, p < .01$) and between agreeableness and a preference for Light books ($r = .31, p < .01$). With regard to the Dark Triad personality traits, Machiavellianism and psychopathy yielded closely similar

results; both were correlated with a preference for Thrilling movies ($r = .18, p < .01$ and $r = .14, p < .01$, respectively) and a disinclination for Light movies ($r = -.20, p < .01$ and $r = -.23, p < .01$, respectively) and Light books ($r = -.17, p < .01$ and $r = -.24, p < .01$, respectively). It should be noted, however, that the effect sizes of the obtained correlations were mainly small to moderate.

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Predicting Movie and Reading Preferences

A series of hierarchical regressions were performed to examine the relative importance of the Big Five and the Dark Triad personality traits in predicting movie and reading preferences, after controlling for demographics. As can be seen in Table 3, the analyses showed that openness to experience significantly predicted a preference for Complex movies ($\beta = .17, p = .001$) and Nonfiction books ($\beta = .22, p < .001$), providing support for H1 and H2. Openness to experience also predicted a preference for Action-Oriented movies ($\beta = .17, p = .001$) and Fiction books ($\beta = .20, p < .001$). Supporting H3, the analyses revealed that conscientiousness significantly predicted a preference for Informational books ($\beta = .17, p = .001$). Conscientiousness also predicted a disinclination for Thrilling movies ($\beta = -.10, p < .05$) and a preference for Light books ($\beta = .15, p = .001$). Hierarchical regression analyses further revealed that agreeableness significantly predicted a preference for Light movies ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) and Light books ($\beta = .15, p < .01$), supporting H4 and H5. A preference for Light books was significantly predicted by neuroticism ($\beta = .10, p < .05$), although this particular trait did not predict any of the movie preferences; these results support H8, but not H7. It should be noted, however, that extraversion was not a significant predictor of any of the movie and reading preferences, and thus H6 was not supported.

In terms of the Dark Triad personality traits, hierarchical regressions showed that Machiavellianism significantly predicted a preference for Thrilling movies ($\beta = .13,$

$p < .05$) and Fiction books ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), providing support for H9. Nevertheless, psychopathy did not significantly predict any of the movie and reading preferences, which leads to the rejection of H10. Although narcissism was not a significant predictor of any of the movie preferences, it significantly predicted a preference for Light books ($\beta = .11, p < .05$).

Discussion

There is already clear evidence that the movies people watch or the books they read can reflect, among other things, aspects of their own personalities (e.g., Hall, 2005; Schutte & Malouff, 2004; Swami et al., 2012). However, there is an absence of studies examining whether and, if so, to what extent the “darker” aspects of personality manifest in media preferences. The present study sought to replicate previous research on the Big Five personality trait correlates of media preferences and extend that to include the Dark Triad personality traits. Overall, the obtained findings point to the importance of personality in predicting both movie and reading preferences in divergent ways and further suggest that people do select media content to match their own personalities. In other words, just as people choose those environments that best fit their personal dispositions (Ickes, Snyder, & Garcia, 1997), the media content they choose can serve a similar function.

Specifically, and as expected, openness to experience predicted preferences for Complex movies and Nonfiction books (H1 and H2), which provides additional support for previous studies showing that creative people are more likely to prefer cognitively engaging and challenging genres (e.g., Rentfrow et al., 2011; Swami et al., 2012; Tu et al., 2015). Moreover, it also predicted a preference for Action-Oriented movies and Nonfiction books. Openness to experience, in general, refers to a desire for aesthetic experiences, intellectual stimulation, and variety (McCrae & Costa, 2008); these needs

are probably best satisfied by exposure to a variety of different media contents. Similarly, both Rentfrow and colleagues (2011) and Tu and colleagues (2015) found openness to experience to be associated with a preference for various genres across media. The analyses further revealed that people high in conscientiousness prefer Informational books (H3), in addition to their preference for Light books, while being averse to Thrilling movies. Other studies have also shown that conscientiousness is associated with a preference for science-related books and romantic novels and a disinclination for literary and suspense novels (e.g., Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2005; Schutte & Malouf, 2004). One might therefore argue that those who tend to be practical also tend to be conservative in their preferences. Preferences for Light movies and Light books were predicted by agreeableness (H4 and H5); the more people show concern for the welfare of others, the more they tend to prefer relatively simple genres. Positive social relations and social constraints are thought to be salient to people high in agreeableness (McCrae & Costa, 2008), which may lead to a preference for media content that conforms to the consensual norms or that promotes group cohesion. Interestingly, and in contrast to expectations, neuroticism did not significantly predict a preference for Light movies (H7), although it did predict a preference for Light books (H8). It seems, thus, that those who score high on neuroticism may be particularly likely to turn to more demanding media, possibly because they can distract them from their negative thoughts. Movie watching, generally, requires little cognitive involvement and, probably, does not offer enough distraction for those high in neuroticism; however, book reading likely does.

Aside from the Big Five personality traits, Machiavellianism was found to predict a preference for Thrilling movies (H9) and Fiction books; the more people tend to exploit others for personal gain, the more they tend to prefer genres emphasizing

intensity, or even violence. This is also in line with findings that low empathy, a common characteristic of people high in Machiavellianism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), is associated with the appeal of graphic horror (Martin, 2019). Because those high in Machiavellianism tend to exhibit antisocial behavior (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), such genres may reinforce, or even validate, their prevailing strategies of interpersonal relations. McCauley (1998, as cited in King & Hourani, 2007) suggested that images in horror movies can violate social norms, and that it is these violations that viewers find particularly appealing. In fact, Machiavellianism stood out as the only significant predictor of a preference for Thrilling movies after controlling for the other variables, which makes Machiavellianism a decisive trait to consider when evaluating preferences for genres characterized by intensity. Hierarchical regressions also showed that a preference for Light books was significantly predicted by narcissism, although this association was not expected. One reason may be that people with narcissistic traits often oscillate between feelings of superiority and inferiority, which, in turn, results in anger (e.g. Maciantowicz & Zajenkowski, 2018). That is, they may seek out entertainment content in books to avoid emotional discomfort.

It should be noted, however, that personality accounted for a relatively small proportion of the variance in both movie and reading preferences, indicating that other variables may also contribute to predicting them. For example, it was hypothesized that extraversion would be associated with a preference for suspenseful movies (H6), but it did not predict any of the movie preferences. Relevant studies have suggested that for those high in extraversion, movie watching is motivated by a social need rather than an attraction for the content itself (Krcmar & Kean, 2005), and that people who are sociable spend less time watching television (e.g. Hall, 2005). Also noteworthy is that psychopathy was significantly correlated with a preference for Thrilling movies (H10),

but it did not emerge as a significant predictor in the hierarchical regression analysis. One possible explanation is that psychopathy and Machiavellianism overlap, that is, the former does not predict such preferences when both are included in the analysis together. Although further research is needed to explore this finding, it underlines the need to control for the overlap between psychopathy and Machiavellianism in predicting media preferences.

Limitations and Future Research

Whereas the findings from the present study can deepen the understanding of the effects of personality, defined by the Big Five and the Dark Triad personality traits, on movie and reading preferences, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged. One such limitation is that the sample included young adults of similar education, which means that the results reported here may be limited by the homogeneity of the participants. Given that media preferences vary over the life cycle (Mares, Bartsch, & Bonus, 2016), the results should be replicated with participants of different ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. Another limitation of the study is that movie and reading preferences were assessed with a self-report questionnaire, which may explain, in part, the low predictive strength of personality on media preferences. That is, future research could extend the present study using more objective measures of media preferences, namely television and movie viewing habits regarding streaming services, purchase of DVDs or books, patterns of cinema attendance, visits to libraries, and so forth. Since there is still a large amount of variance that remains unexplained when examining the effects of personality on media preferences, a plausible avenue of further research would be to consider the contribution of a number of different personal dispositions to media preferences, as well as the process through which specific personality traits are related to those preferences. Recent research in music psychology,

for example, has revealed new insights into the effects of need for cognition on music preferences (e.g. Schmaltz, Watson, & Johnson, 2020); however, its association with movie and reading preferences still remains relatively unexplored.

Conclusion

The present study, despite its limitations, provided a further understanding of how media preferences reflect different aspects of personality, particularly the darker ones. Overall, the findings revealed that the Dark Triad personality traits do manifest in media preferences, and that these manifestations are distinct from those of the Big Five traits; indeed, both Machiavellianism and narcissism were associated with movie and reading preferences above and beyond the Big Five personality traits. It is possible, thus, to assume that just as the social environments that people select reflect their own personalities (Ickes et al., 1997), so do their media preferences. Such an interpretation clearly suggests the necessity to include a variety of personality traits beyond the Big Five in future media research. In fact, adequate, let alone full, understanding of how people interact with the media will not be reached without understanding how the media serve to satisfy the social and psychological needs of those who use them.

No less importantly, the findings reported here can help elucidate a potential motive for media use, that of self-expression, which, in turn, may contribute to media consumption patterns. Understanding why people seek out certain media content and what they expect to derive from particular media is potentially important to both media managers and health professionals, because it provides media managers the potential to design messages that will be more appealing to their audiences, while allowing the latter to better understand who is likely to be attracted to what media content and with what potential impact. Keeping in mind that preferences for specific genres, particularly those emphasizing violence, can have a direct impact on mental health (Bodner & Bensimon,

2015), the study of the personal dispositions that can moderate the potential harmful effects of exposure to such genres would be a promising avenue of research and potential early intervention.

Notes

1. In the context of the current manuscript “media preferences” is used predominantly to refer to entertainment media preferences.
2. Following an approach similar to that used in the previous research (e.g., Hall, 2005; Rentfrow et al., 2011; Schutte & Malouff, 2004), the preference structures were named after considering the genres included in them.
3. The first factor accounted for 17.72% of the variance, the second for 13.14% of the variance, the third for 10.20% of the variance, and the last for 8.04% of the variance.
4. The first factor accounted for 21.00% of the variance, the second for 12.43% of the variance, the third for 8.36% of the variance, and the last for 6.49% of the variance.

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Table 1*Descriptive Statistics and Reliabilities of Study Variables*

	Cronbach's α	M	Mdn	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
The Big Five traits						
Openness to experience	.65	3.67	3.75	.70	-.31	-.33
Conscientiousness	.62	3.50	3.50	.76	-.42	-.23
Agreeableness	.73	4.28	4.25	.53	-.80	.60
Extraversion	.71	3.52	3.50	.80	-.29	-.52
Neuroticism	.60	3.38	3.25	.74	-.12	-.33
The Dark Triad traits						
Machiavellianism	.83	2.08	2.00	.90	.59	-.34
Psychopathy	.70	1.84	1.75	.71	.78	.19
Narcissism	.84	2.74	2.75	.96	.01	-.63
Movie preferences						
Action-Oriented	.73	3.45	3.40	.78	-.30	-.21
Light	.68	3.75	3.83	.68	-.95	1.06
Complex	.68	3.21	3.20	.76	-.14	-.39
Thrilling	.69	3.58	3.60	.81	-.42	-.04
Reading preferences						
Fiction	.83	3.67	3.85	.82	-.88	.83
Informational	.80	2.72	2.80	.71	-.05	-.31
Nonfiction	.75	3.19	3.33	.81	-.34	-.23
Light	.84	3.48	3.66	.84	-.39	-.33

Note. M = mean; Mdn = median; SD = standard deviation.

Table 2*Zero-Order Correlations among Study Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
The Big Five traits																
1. Openness to experience	–	–.02	.17**	.16**	.04	–.02	.08	.09	.17**	.05	.18**	.10*	.19**	–.00	.22**	–.03
2. Conscientiousness		–	.11*	.01	–.10	–.22**	–.21**	–.05	–.00	.08	.03	–.12*	–.01	.16**	.06	.16**
3. Agreeableness			–	.17**	.06	–.36**	–.35**	–.15**	–.14**	.31**	.00	–.02	.05	–.03	.08	.31**
4. Extraversion				–	–.12*	–.01	.08	.07	–.00	.06	.00	.01	–.05	.03	.06	.01
5. Neuroticism					–	.02	–.08	.03	–.08	.10*	.01	.00	.08	–.03	.08	.15**
The Dark Triad traits																
6. Machiavellianism						–	.47**	.46**	.12*	–.20**	–.01	.18**	.09	.03	.00	–.17**
7. Psychopathy							–	.31**	.06	–.23**	.04	.14**	.01	–.02	–.02	–.24**
8. Narcissism								–	.05	–.07	–.01	.09	–.02	.00	.06	–.01
Movie preferences																
9. Action-Oriented									–	–.07	.21**	.38**	.51**	.35**	.08	–.05
10. Light										–	.09	–.09	–.00	.09	.22**	.66**
11. Complex											–	.13**	.09	.30**	.54**	–.06
12. Thrilling												–	.56**	.15**	.07	–.02
Reading preferences																
13. Fiction													–	.31**	.14**	.16**
14. Informational														–	.41**	.23**
15. Nonfiction															–	.21**
16. Light																–

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3*Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Movie and Reading Preferences*

	Movie Preferences				Reading Preferences			
	Action-Oriented	Light	Complex	Thrilling	Fiction	Informational	Nonfiction	Light
Step 1: Control variables								
Gender	-.36***	.41***	-.10*	-.19***	-.02	-.13*	.10	.41***
Age	-.11*	-.04	.12*	-.04	-.11*	.03	.09	-.12**
R^2	.12	.18	.03	.03	.01	.02	.02	.21
F	25.75***	41.73***	6.16**	6.48**	2.30	3.96**	2.69	50.44***
Step 2: The Big Five traits								
Gender	-.32***	.35***	-.11*	-.19***	-.03	-.15**	.09	.33***
Age	-.11*	-.04	.12*	-.02	-.10*	.00	.09	-.13**
Openness to experience	.17***	.04	.17***	.08	.20***	-.01	.22***	-.04
Conscientiousness	.04	.06	.02	-.10*	.00	.17***	.05	.15***
Agreeableness	-.07	.15**	.04	.03	.02	-.00	.01	.15**
Extraversion	-.04	.05	-.04	-.01	-.08	.02	.03	.02
Neuroticism	-.02	.04	.01	.02	.07	.02	.05	.10*
ΔR^2	.03	.04	.03	.03	.05	.03	.06	.05
ΔF	9.40***	14.98***	3.80***	3.09**	3.58***	2.86**	4.33***	19.14***
Step 3: The Dark Triad traits								
Gender	-.32***	.34***	-.11*	-.16**	-.01	-.15**	.10	.32***
Age	-.12*	-.05	.13**	-.03	-.11*	.00	.08	-.15***
Openness to experience	.18***	.04	.17***	.08	.21***	-.00	.22***	-.04
Conscientiousness	.04	.04	.02	-.07	.03	.18***	.06	.14**

	Movie Preferences				Reading Preferences			
	Action-Oriented	Light	Complex	Thrilling	Fiction	Informational	Nonfiction	Light
Agreeableness	-.08	.12*	.03	.08	.05	-.00	.02	.13**
Extraversion	-.03	.06	-.04	-.02	-.08	.03	.02	.02
Neuroticism	-.03	.04	.02	.02	.06	.01	.05	.09*
Machiavellianism	.08	-.02	-.04	.13*	.19**	.07	.04	.00
Psychopathy	-.09	-.09	.05	.04	-.03	-.06	-.02	-.09
Narcissism	-.01	.04	-.06	.00	-.01	-.03	.04	.11*
Total explained R^2	.16	.23	.07	.07	.08	.05	.08	.28
ΔR^2	.01	.01	.01	.01	.02	.00	.00	.02
ΔF	6.91***	10.89***	2.90**	2.98***	3.46***	2.19*	3.15***	14.36***

Note. R^2 = the proportion of variance explained by the independent variable(s); ΔR^2 = the proportion of explained variance in dependent variable by the model.

Standardized regression coefficients are reported.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

Appendix

Genres of Movies and Books Included in the Present Study

Movie genres

1. Romance	8. Independent	15. Western
2. Family	9. Biographical	16. Documentary
3. Drama	10. Musical	17. War
4. Horror	11. Science fiction	18. Psychological thriller
5. Historical	12. Action	19. Classics
6. Erotic	13. Comedy	20. Animation
7. Crime thriller	14. Adventure	21. Mystery

Book genres

1. Romance	10. Poetry	19. Cooking
2. Horror	11. Entertainment/humor	20. Literature
3. Erotica	12. Comic	21. Thriller
4. Art	13. Architecture	22. Adventure
5. Academic	14. Computers	23. Science and nature
6. Mystery	15. Sports	24. Health
7. Crime	16. News/current events	25. Science fiction
8. History	17. Reference	26. Fantasy
9. Philosophy	18. Business	27. Medical
