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Audience Personality and the Selection of Media and Media Genres

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Abstract

The impact of personality characteristics (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism) on audiences' use of movies, television, and radio, and on genre preferences within these media was explored. Extraversion was associated positively with in-home movie viewing and with listening to urban, jazz/classical, and pop/rock music. Neuroticism was associated positively with pop/rock music listening. Psychoticism was associated negatively with watching romance and comedy films, but this relationship was moderated by an interaction in that the impact of psychoticism was most powerful among those who were also high in neuroticism. Follow-up analyses evaluating the impact of personality within groups defined by gender and race were also carried out. The results point to the potential of incorporating audiences' perceptions of the gratifications offered by particular media into further research. These perceptions, which are likely to vary across audience groups, may contribute to how personality factors are expressed in media behavior.

Audience Personality and the Selection of Media and Media Genres

Media audiences may select what they see, hear, or read from an array of content that is diverse across many attributes. These attributes include pace and stimulation level, theme, and the type of characters featured. The ways in which individual audience members navigate this environment has been of ongoing interest to media researchers.

One of the primary means through which this topic has been investigated is the uses and gratifications approach. This approach assumes that audience members have unique sets of psychological and social needs as well as a specific set of expectations concerning how the mass media may gratify those needs. These needs and expectations contribute to differing patterns of media use (e.g., Rubin, 1983; 1993; Katz, Blumer, & Gurevitch, 1974). This approach has guided the investigation of many different variables as antecedents of audiences' use of the mass media, including loneliness (Finn & Gorr, 1988), psychological variables such as locus of control (Conway & Rubin, 1991) and need for cognition (Henning & Vorderer, 2001), and personality or temperament factors including need for activation (Donohew, Palmgreen, & Rayburn, 1987), shyness (Finn & Gorr, 1988) sensation seeking (Conway & Rubin, 1991; Perse, 1996), task orientation (Sherry, 2001), and tendency to approach or withdraw from new stimuli (Sherry & Desouza, 2003). One of the reasons for pursuing this line of research is that the type of media materials individuals select is likely to shape the influence that media may have on their attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. Investigating the factors associated with exposure to certain types of media texts contributes to understandings of the roles media play in society. The current analysis sought to contribute to the ongoing investigation of the ways personality may affect individuals' media use patterns.

Several models have been advanced as universal and comprehensive accounts of the

basic structure of human personality. Those used recently in communication research include H. J. Eysenck's "Big Three" model (for examples of research using this model see Weaver, 1991; 2000) and the five-factor model (see Finn, 1997). Each model presents a typology of personality traits that are argued to comprehensively represent the most fundamental elements of human personality. Although they were developed using different methods and for different purposes, the models overlap in meaningful ways. In developing his three-factor model, Eysenck sought to identify fundamental “superfactors” of personality and focused on biological processes that may contribute to these factors (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Eysenck, 1985). The five-factor model, in contrast, was derived, in part, from analyses of natural language trait terms with the goal of establishing a comprehensive list of the contributors to individual personality differences (Saucier & Goldberg, 1996). Although these two models are often presented as each other’s primary competitor (e.g., Eysenck, 1991; 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1985), each includes extraversion, or degree of sociability, and neuroticism, or tendency toward anxiousness. The three-factor model is completed with the addition of psychoticism, which is conceptualized as a coherent cluster of traits that includes egocentricity, a lack of concern about social norms, and impulsivity. The five-factor model, in contrast, incorporates three other basic factors - openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness – to account for human personality.[1]

The current study focused on the more parsimonious of these models, Eysenk's "Big Three" personality factors. This model has been proven to be replicable across a large number of diverse samples (Eysenck, 1991), to be largely consistent within individuals over time (Eysenck, 1991, Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985), and to predict a wide range of social behaviors (Eysenck, 1991, Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). Eysenck has also argued that meta-analyses and multi-inventory studies have established that other personality traits collapse into factors that more

closely resemble the three-factor model than the five-factor model or any other proposed system (1991, pp. 782-783; 1992, pp. 668-670).

Another strength attributed to the three-factor model is that individual differences in these factors can be explained by reference to a specific biological systems (Eysenck, 1991). Eysenck's factors have been theorized to be associated with neurological systems such as the fight or flight system and the behavioral approach system. Individual differences are thought to be the result of variation in the sensitivity or reactivity of these physiological systems (Beatty & McCroskey, 2001; Gray, 1991). The behavioral inhibition system, for example, responds to stimuli associated with a threat and to novel stimuli by directing attention toward the stimuli, pausing other behaviors, and increasing arousal – generating anxiety – so that the potential threat can be addressed. This system may be activated more readily among those high in neuroticism than among those low in this trait. These personality attributes and their physiological correlates provide a theory-based explanation for individual differences that has been found to be associated with behavior across a wide variety of contexts.

These factors are also related conceptually to communication behaviors and have been considered extensively in communication research. Eysenck (1985) has argued that extraversion, neuroticism and psychoticism "really embody the three ways in which individuals can interact" (p. 14). Extraversion captures sociability. Neuroticism captures fearful avoidance, and psychoticism captures hostility and aggression. Researchers have found these factors to predict interpersonal communication behaviors such as verbal aggressiveness (Heisel, La France, & Beatty, 2003; McCroskey, Heisel, & Richmond, 2001; Valencic, Beatty, Rudd, Dobos, & Heisel, 1998), affinity-seeking competence, (Heisel et al., 2003), communication apprehension (McCroskey et al., 2001), and immediacy (McCroskey et al., 2001). They have also been found

to be associated with media preferences (e.g., Weaver, 2000; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986), as will be discussed in more detail below, and with the effect of specific media texts. For example, Zillmann and Weaver (1997) found that the influence of violent films varied according to the gender and psychoticism level of the participants so that males who were high in psychoticism were the most likely to be affected.

A set of outcomes that is likely to be affected by the "Big Three" personality traits is the salience of specific needs or gratifications. Social contact, for example, is likely to be pursued with particular intensity by those high in extraversion. This suggests that exposure to specific types of media materials is likely to be associated with the audience members' personality characteristics.

There are at least two levels at which the gratifications offered by media materials may vary: that of the particular medium (e.g., radio or TV) and that of the specific genre (e.g., action films or hip-hop music). Some of the characteristics that contribute to the gratifications offered by a particular medium relate to the technological or structural attributes of the medium. Theatrical film, for example, features a large screen, surround sound, and a darkened viewing environment, which may make it particularly likely to provide exciting entertainment. Television, in contrast, is a home-based technology, which means that it is accessible for viewing to pass time or out of habit. Media also differ in their social functions. Theater-going is often a social activity that takes place in the context of a date or a peer-group outing, whereas book reading tends to be an individual experience. Dimmick and Albarran (1994) describe some of these medium characteristics as gratification opportunities. They suggest that cable TV, broadcast TV, and VCRs differ in time-use flexibility and in the range of content they offer. They found that when evaluated with measures of traditional gratifications, respondents'

perceptions of these features functioned as a unique factor that contributed to preferences for the different media.

The content of a media text is also likely to contribute to the audience that it draws. Television news, for example, is likely to be particularly useful for those who have high surveillance needs, whereas situation comedies may be more useful for those who seek entertainment. Both media and specific media genres may differ in the gratification opportunities they offer audiences. Therefore, both use of particular media and preferences for specific genres within media may be sensitive to audience members' personality attributes.

The conceptualization of extraversion suggests that those high in this trait tend to be outgoing and social, whereas those at the other end of this spectrum tend to be shyer, more introspective, and are less likely to seek external stimulation. The trait may influence media use in that those who are high in extraversion may be less likely than those low in extraversion to use the media as a replacement for interpersonal interaction. This would suggest that extraversion would be associated negatively with exposure to media materials that tend to serve as surrogates for interpersonal interaction, such as television and radio. Weaver's (2000) findings support this suggestion. He transformed his participants' scores on Eysenk's personality scales into discrete personality types and ascertained whether those with different dominant personality characteristics varied in their motives for using specific media. He found that individuals with whom extraversion was the predominant characteristic were less likely to watch television for companionship motives than were those with whom neuroticism or psychoticism predominated. Similarly, Finn (1997), working from the five-factor model, found extraversion to be associated negatively with television viewership and positively with the non-mediated activities of sports spectatorship and party attendance. Not all media, however, are well suited to serve as

surrogates for interpersonal interaction. Some may serve social functions that may make them particularly appealing to those who are high in extraversion. The conceptualization of the personality trait suggests that those high in extraversion will expose themselves to media, such as movies, that are consumed in social settings more frequently than will those low in extraversion.

The conceptualization of extraversion also suggests that it will be associated with preferences for media genres that have social utility. Materials that provide a means through which one can interact with others or that provide information that can be used to develop personal relationships may appeal to those high in extraversion. Support for this supposition is provided by the work of Weaver, Brosius, & Mundorf (1993), who found that those with high levels of extraversion indicated a greater preference for sexual-comedy films than did those in the low or intermediate groups. The film summaries that were used as stimuli materials focused on sexuality, humor, and social situations (e.g., parties) and the authors suggest that the content of the clips contributed to their appeal to this part of the audience. In addition, Zuckerman and Litle (1986) found extraversion to be associated with exposure to horror movies among female viewers. This finding is consistent with the conceptualization of extraversion in that one of the functions of horror films is to allow audiences to enact gender-role expectations. Whereas men get pleasure from displaying mastery over the content by appearing unafraid, women gain a higher proportion of their gratifications from the social pleasure of attending with others (Tamborini, 1991; Zillmann, Weaver, Mundorf, & Aust, 1986). This gratification may be particularly important to female extraverts.

Neuroticism refers to an individual's tendency towards anxiousness. Individuals who are high in neuroticism are thought to be more reactive than those with low levels of this trait, which means that highly neurotic individuals are more likely to be anxious, tense, and guilt prone than

are those who are low on this factor. Therefore, those who are high in this trait may be particularly likely to use the media to provide relief from nervousness and anxiety. This supposition was supported by Weaver (2000), who found that those with whom neuroticism is the predominant personality trait are more likely to watch television for pass time, stimulation, and relaxation motives than are those with whom other traits predominate. These results suggest that individuals who are high in neuroticism would be particularly likely to turn to readily-available media that can be counted on to provide soothing content such as TV and radio.

Neuroticism may also contribute to the types of media texts that audience members choose. Those who are high in this trait are particularly likely to feel affected by violent or disturbing media content. Viewers with high neuroticism scores have been found to rate specific media texts as more violent and more frightening than those with lower scores (Gunter, 1985). Neuroticism has also been found to be associated positively with recall of non-violent news stories and negatively with recall of violent news stories (Gunter & Furnham, 1986), which suggests that violent images are more disruptive to memory processing among those high in this personality dimension. Because of their heightened reaction to the disturbing content, those high in neuroticism may be more likely to avoid it than those low in this trait. Previous studies have found neuroticism to be associated with a preference for informational TV programs and a disinclination for TV comedy and adventure movies (Weaver, 1991). Action films offer higher amounts of violence and visual stimulation than many other genres, whereas comedy is based on subverting the viewer's expectations. Weaver (2000) also found that individuals with whom neuroticism is the predominant personality trait dislike club music, which includes rap, R&B and dance genres, more than those of the two other personality types. Each of these genres may be particularly disturbing to those high in neuroticism, resulting in a tendency to avoid them.

Psychoticism is a cluster of traits that includes egocentricity, a lack of concern about social norms, and impulsivity. Social relationships and social constraints are thought to be less salient to those who are high in this trait, which suggests that they may be less likely to take part in social media activities like movie going. Conceptualizations of this trait also suggest that individuals who are high in psychoticism may prefer content that is seen as deviant or non-traditional. Previous research has found psychoticism to be associated with enjoyment or exposure to several media genres that are often seen as transgressive including hard-rock music (Robinson, Weaver, & Zillmann, 1996), horror movies (Weaver et al., 1993; Weaver, 1991), action adventure movies (Aluja -Fabregat & Torrubia-Beltri, 1998), violent cartoons (Aluja-Fabregat & Torrubia-Beltri, 1998), and, among men, X-rated films (Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). It has been found to be associated with a disinclination for tragedy films (Weaver et al., 1993) and TV comedy (Weaver, 1991).

Extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism not only are thought to affect individuals' behavior directly, but also to interact to shape behavioral outcomes. The expression of one personality factor may depend upon where an individual stands on another factor (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). This aspect of the model suggests that personality traits may interact to shape media behavior. For example, all those who are high in neuroticism may feel greater levels of anxiety than those who are low in this trait. However, those who also have low levels of extraversion may turn to the media for comfort, whereas those with high levels of extraversion may talk with friends. A second purpose of the analysis was to investigate the possibility that there are interactions among the personality factors in the way they influence audiences' patterns of media use.

Another potential contributor to the way personality attributes are expressed in media-

related behavior are the demographic characteristics of the audience, which are likely to shape the way the audience is socialized in relation to media content. For example, the different ways in which men and women are taught to behave and the contrasts in the type of materials that are marketed towards these two groups may lead highly extraverted women and highly extraverted men to seek social interaction from different media sources. The men may go out to see action movies, whereas the women may go to see romantic comedies. Some of the earlier studies that used these variables encountered different patterns of relationships among males and females (e.g., Aluja-Fabregat & Torrubia-Beltri, 1998; Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). The possibility that expression of personality traits varied across different demographic groups was also taken into consideration in the analyses of the study data.

In summary, this work sought to investigate the impact of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism on exposure to particular media and on the selection of particular types of media content. Previous work investigating personality as an antecedent of media use has tended to evaluate consumption of particular media genres (e.g., Weaver, 1991; 2000; Weaver et al., 1993) or, less frequently, use of particular media (e.g., Finn, 1997). The outcome variables that were considered in the current analysis encompassed both of these elements. Addressing media exposure as well as genre preferences allows one to consider the impact of genre content while factoring out variation in exposure that is due to the medium. This offers the opportunity to begin to distinguish tentatively some of the unique contributions of the characteristics of a mass communication technology or of the social applications of a mass medium from those of particular patterns of media content.

Method

Participants

One hundred and seventy-five volunteers (120 female, 55 male) were recruited in a large, Midwestern city through advertisements in local newspapers and through flyers posted in local university student centers and classroom buildings and in area libraries and coffee shops. A little under half - 47% - of the participants in the final sample were undergraduate or graduate students. As would be expected of a sample that was drawn partially from university populations, the median age of the participants was relatively low. Forty-seven percent of the participants indicated that they were between the ages of 18 and 25 and another fifteen percent indicated that they were between the ages of 26 and 34. Twenty-five percent were between the ages of 35 and 50, and the rest of the participants were 51 or older. A wide range of education levels was also represented. Eleven percent of the participants had completed at least some post-graduate schooling. Twenty-four percent were college graduates and 43% had done some undergraduate work. Nineteen percent had graduated from high school but had yet to complete any other formal education. The rest of the participants had completed some high school but had not graduated.

Forty-nine percent of the participants identified themselves as White, 37% identified themselves as African American, and seven percent identified themselves as Asian. Three percent of the participants identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. The rest of the sample included participants who identified themselves as American Indians, did not specify their race, identified themselves as being of more than one race, or indicated they were of some other race.

Procedures

The study was carried out in a series of 113 sessions that were scheduled over a period of several months. The number of people in the sessions ranged from one to seven, although most of the sessions included only one or two participants. After completing a consent form,

participants completed a questionnaire that included measures of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism along with a series of other personality scales and filler items. These items were presented as a block of questions in an order that had been randomly determined. The participants then completed a series of questions designed to measure their media habits and preferences. After viewing and evaluating a series of video clips as part of a study addressing different research questions, the participants completed a series of demographic questions. Once they completed these questions, the participants were debriefed and given a modest payment for their time. Participation in the study generally took 45 minutes to an hour.

Measures

Personality traits. Extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism were measured through a series of questions adapted from the scales of the short version of the revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985). Versions of this scale have been used extensively by other researchers (e.g., Aluja-Fabregat & Torrubia-Beltri, 1998; Gunter & Furnham, 1986; Valencic et al., 1998; Weaver, 1991; 2000; Weaver et al., 1993). The current study adapted the original items so that the participants indicated their level of agreement with each statement on a series of five-point, Likert-type scales. A similar change was made by Weaver et al. (1993) and by Valencic et al. (1998). The items were reversed for direction where appropriate and subjected to confirmatory factor analysis. The scale items were winnowed to a subset of items that met tests of both internal consistency and of parallelism.

Media exposure. Two items were used to create an index measuring television exposure. Participants were asked how much television they watched yesterday and then asked how many hours of television they usually watched per day on a scale that ranged from "none" (1) to "more than 6 hours" (6). The two items were averaged to create a single index, $r = .58$, $p < .001$.

Similar measures have been used by Haridakis (2002), Perse (1996), and Rubin (1983).

The same format was used to measure movie theater attendance, at-home movie viewing, and radio listening. The index of radio listening was made up of four items. Participants were asked "how long they listened to music-stations on the radio" yesterday and how long they did so on an "average" day on a scale that ranged from "none" (1) to "more than six hours" (6). They were also asked parallel questions concerning how long they listened to talk radio. The reliability of the four items was .64. Each pair of questions was averaged and then the two averages were summed to create the final index. Participants were also asked how many movies they had seen in a theatre and on television, video or DVD in the last month and how often they usually saw films in these ways in a month. The scale for theatre attendance ranged from "none" (1) to "more than 4" (4), whereas as the scale for in-home movie viewing ranged from "none" (1) to "more than 10" (5). The item pairs were averaged to create movie theater attendance, $r = .56$, $p < .001$, and in-home movie viewing indices, $r = .79$, $p < .001$.

Media genre preferences. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of one (never) to five (usually) how often they watched 11 movie genres and 16 television genres and how often they listened to 13 types of music. The lists of media genres were based on previous research (e.g. Perse, 1996) and on feedback from pretests. Genres that were used very infrequently (i.e. the mean was less than two) were dropped. The remaining items were then reduced to factors representing general patterns of genre preferences, which represents an approach similar to that taken by Weaver (2000) in his study of the impact of personality on music preferences. The remaining genres for each medium were subjected to principal components factor analyses with orthogonal rotation. Items were included in the final indices if they had primary loadings of more than .60 with no secondary loadings of more than .40. Indices were calculated by taking

the mean of the component items so that the indices retained the original five-point range.

The factor analysis examining the film genres produced three factors, action-oriented films (action, horror, science fiction, thriller), light films (comedy, romance), and serious films (drama, documentary). The factor analysis examining TV genres produced five factors. The first factor was made up of three unscripted genres: game shows, reality programs, and talk shows. The second factor was serious programs (magazine programs, dramas, documentaries) and the third factor was made up of action-oriented shows (action programs, cartoons, children's shows, science fiction). Only one item met the .60/.40 criterion on the fourth and fifth factors, so they were dropped from further analyses. The factor analysis examining music genres produced three factors, urban (hip-hop, rap, R&B), classical/jazz (jazz, classical, easy listening), and rock (rock, pop).

Analyses

The impact of personality factors on media use and media genre preferences was investigated first through a series of correlation analyses. Then analyses were carried out to investigate variation in use of particular media that were unaccounted for by gender, age, race, and ethnicity. Hierarchical regression analyses were carried out for each outcome variable. In equations investigating exposure to particular media, binomial demographic control variables were entered first. They were followed by the personality variables as a single block. In the analyses of genre preferences, the first step of the analyses consisted of the demographic variables as well as measures of overall exposure to the particular medium.

For each of the outcome variables, another series of regression equations was run that included the same variables in the first two steps of the regression model, with the addition of a third step consisting of the one of the two-way interaction terms between the personality factors.

In order to avoid levels of multicollinararity that would have made the discovery of relationships extremely difficult, separate analyses were run for interactions with each personality factor. As will be discussed in more detail below, follow-up analyses were carried out to assess whether there were differences across groups in the pattern of association between personality attributes and media use.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Correlation analyses indicated that neuroticism was associated negatively with extraversion, $r = -.20$, $p = .01$. There were no other significant associations among the personality indices. These results are consistent with other work with these variables (e.g., Valencic et al., 1998). A *t*-test indicated that the female participants had significantly lower psychoticism scores than the male participants, $t(173) = -2.43$, $p = .02$. There were no gender differences on the other two scales and no significant differences across age groups or across different races/ethnicities.

The mean of the four-point theatre attendance scale was 2.02(*SD* = .72) and the mean on the five-point at-home movie viewing scale was 3.64(*SD* = .98). The mean of the six-point television watching index was 3.40(*SD* =1.14), whereas the mean of the radio listening index, which could range from one to 12, was 4.57(*SD* = 1.44).

The drama/public affairs index had the highest average among the three TV program genre indices (*M* = 3.46, *SD* = .98), followed by the unscripted genre index (*M* = 2.89, *SD* = 1.04). The mean for the action-oriented programs was 2.67(*SD* = .96). Among the film genres, romance/comedies movies had the highest viewing average (*M* = 3.86, *SD* = .88), followed by dramas/documentaries (*M* =3.67, *SD* = .95), and action-oriented films (*M* = 3.31, *SD* = .99).

Rock/pop was the music genre cluster that was most popular (M = 3.20, SD = 1.25), followed by urban (M = 3.03, SD = 1.31), and jazz/classical (M = 2.51, SD = .97).

Personality and Media Exposure

Correlation analyses found that extraversion was correlated significantly with home-viewership of movies, $r = .31$, $p < .001$. Extraversion was not associated significantly with any of the other outcome measures, nor were neuroticism or psychoticism associated with any of the outcome variables. The results of the regression analyses describing media exposure are presented in Table 1. Contrary to expectation, extraversion was not associated with movie theater attendance, television viewing or radio listening. However, there was a significant positive association between extraversion and home viewing of movies. Neither neuroticism nor psychoticism was associated with any of the media use variables. There was no evidence of any significant interactions among the personality variables in relation to media exposure.

Personality and Media Genre Preferences

Extraversion was correlated positively with exposure to action-oriented television programs, $r = .19$, $p = .01$. Regression analyses, however, found no evidence that any of the personality variables were significantly associated with exposure to any of the television program genres.

Extraversion was also correlated positively with watching action-oriented movies, $r = .17$, $p = .02$, whereas psychoticism was associated negatively with watching comedy/romance films, $r = -.23$, $p = .002$. When the personality variables were incorporated into the regression analyses, extraversion was not associated with any of the film genre variables. Contrary to expectation, neither neuroticism nor psychoticism was associated significantly with exposure to action-oriented films. Psychoticism, however, was associated negatively with viewing

comedy/romance films. This relationship was moderated by an interaction, as will be discussed below. These results are presented in Table 2.

Although not associated with radio listening, extraversion was correlated significantly and positively with each of the music genres (urban, r = .23, p = .002; jazz/classical, r =.18, p = .02; rock/pop, r = .19, p = .01). Neuroticism was correlated negatively with listening to jazz/classical music, r = -.19, p = .02, and correlated positively with listening to rock/pop, r = .17, p = .03. When incorporated into the regression analyses, extraversion was associated positively with exposure to each of the three music genres. Neuroticism was associated positively with exposure to rock/pop. Psychoticism was not associated with exposure to any of the music genre measures. The results of the analyses investigating the impact of the personality variables on both film and music genre preferences are also reported in Table 2.

Analyses of potential interaction effects revealed only one significant relationship. The incorporation of the psychoticism/neuroticism interaction term significantly increased the R^2 of the model predicting use of light (romance/comedy) films, ΔR^2 = .02, p = .04. The correlation coefficient of the interaction term was significant (b = -.25, SE = .12, p = .04), as was the main effect for neuroticism (b=.70, SE = .33, p = .03). The main effect for psychoticism was not significant (b = .40, SE = .35, p = .26). The adjusted R^2 of the complete model was .14. In order to explore the implications of this finding, the respondents were divided into those who were high and low on the two variables based on a median split. Examination of the means suggests that psychoticism had a greater effect on exposure to these film genres among those who were also high in neuroticism. Among those who were high in neuroticism, the mean for those low in psychoticism was 4.19(SD = .81), whereas the mean for those high psychoticism was 3.49(SD = .86). Among those low in neuroticism, the mean for those who were also low

psychoticism was 3.99(*SD* = .85), whereas the mean for those high in psychoticism was 3.71(*SD* = .85).

Follow-up Analyses

The initial analyses found that personality had a relatively limited relationship to media use. A potential explanation of the modesty of the results is that the impact of personality factors varies across audience members. In seeking associations that hold across different audiences, the analyses may have missed situations in which the impact of personality attributes are moderated by demographic variables. Follow-up analyses were carried out to investigate this possibility. The impact of the personality factors was considered separately for subgroups of the sample delineated in turn by two sets of demographic variables that tend to contribute to self identity and socialization patterns in modern U.S. society: gender and race.

Regression analyses were used to evaluate the potential impact of the three personality variables on media use patterns among women (n = 120) and men (n = 55). A dummy variable controlling for age was included in these equations because preliminary analyses found gender and age to be associated within this volunteer sample (χ^2 (1, N = 175) = 4.31, p = .04). Fifty-eight percent of the men were 25 or younger, compared to 48% of the women. Without the control variable, this relationship would have complicated the interpretation of the results of the analyses in that it would have been difficult to determine whether any differences across the groups were due to gender or to age. Overall exposure to the medium was controlled for in all analyses of genre preferences. A separate series of regression analyses were carried out to evaluate the potential impact of the three personality variables on media use patterns among non-Hispanic Whites (n = 85) and non-Hispanic African Americans (n = 61). There were not enough participants who were of other racial or ethnic groups to carry out comparable analyses with

these groups. Race was not associated with gender (χ^2 (1, n = 146) = .03, p = .87) or with age (χ^2(1, n = 146) = 1.68, p = .20), so no demographic control variables were incorporated into these analyses. Investigating three-way interactions between race, gender, and the personality variables may eventually yield insights. However, in this case it would have reduced the power of the analysis to the point where any relationships would have been extremely difficult to detect. The investigation of three-way interaction between demographic variables and pairs of personality variables was forgone for the same reason.

Media exposure within sub-samples. Extraversion was a relatively consistent predictor of viewing movies at home. It was significantly associated with this type of media use for both men (β = .32, p = .03) and women (β = .34, p = .001), and for African Americans (β = .55, p < .001). The relationship approached significance for Whites (β = .22, p = .07).

There was modest evidence of a relationship that held only within subgroups of the sample. Neuroticism was associated negatively with television viewing for men (β = -.34, p = .02). Among women, this relationship was non-significant (β = -.01, p = .91). There were no discernable relationships with this outcome variable within subgroups delineated by race. None of the personality variables were associated with movie theater attendance or with radio listening among any of the subgroups.

Genre preferences within sub-samples. One new relationship emerged in the analysis of TV genre preferences within the subgroups. Extraversion was associated with exposure to action-oriented programs among White respondents (β = .23, p = .05), but not among African Americans (β = .14, p = .29). Neither psychoticism nor neuroticism was associated with any of the other TV genre variables.

Psychoticism was associated negatively with reported exposure to light films for both

Whites (β = -.33, p = .002) and African Americans (β = -.24, p = .002), and for women (β = - .24, p = .01), as it was for the main sample. The relationship was not significant for men (β = - .15, p = .26). None of the personality variables were associated with exposure to action-oriented films or to heavy films within any of the subgroups.

The most complex pattern of relationships was found in relation to music genre preferences. A summary of these results is presented in Table 3. The relationship between extraversion and exposure to urban music, which was found for the general sample, was relatively consistent across the subgroups. Extraversion was a significant predictor of exposure to urban music for Whites and for women. Among men (β = .25, p = .08) and African Americans (β = .24, p = .07), the relationship approached significance. Extraversion's relationship with the other media genres showed more variation across audience groups. It was associated with exposure to jazz/classical music for both African Americans and for women. There was no discernable relationship for Whites or for men.

Again, there was modest evidence of relationships that held only within subgroups of the sample. The relationship between neuroticism and preferences for rock/pop held among women, but not men. Psychoticism was associated negatively with classical/jazz music for Whites but not for African Americans. In contrast, psychoticism was associated positively with urban music for African Americans but not for Whites.

Discussion

This analysis sought to contribute to existing research about how the personality characteristics of audiences may shape patterns of media use. The initial analyses found personality to have a very modest direct impact on some elements of media use. The follow-up analyses suggest that, in some cases, personality factors may interact with each other and with

socialization patterns to create complex patterns of influence.

The contrast in findings across media in the initial analyses suggests that the technological characteristics of a medium and the way a medium is used can contribute to the relationship between personality characteristics and media use. Extraversion, for example, did not explain exposure to films shown in a theatre, which is consistent with Finn's (1997) previous work. However, extraversion predicted exposure to films at home. This outcome does not seem to have been evaluated previously. In-home movie viewing may be less constrained in terms of time, cost, and pre-planning than theater attendance, which would make personality influences easier to discern. At-home movie viewing may also serve more specific social functions than either theatre attendance, which is a social outing that allows one to avoid talking with one's companion, or general television watching. Home movie viewing may function as an informal communal activity that allows for greater interaction with co-viewers. Watching films from personal video libraries may also contribute to the development of parasocial relationships with film characters. Audience members can watch the same films over and over again, furthering a sense of connection with favored characters. Undoubtedly, further research is needed to explore this finding. However, the result suggests that this area of investigation may benefit from combining personality factors with audiences' perceptions of the functions or gratifications that particular media fulfill. The impact of personality may depend upon the audiences' perception of the gratifications offered by the material.

In contrast to Finn's (1997) work, this study did not find evidence of an association between TV viewing and extraversion. One explanation of the difference in the results is the contrast in the two samples. Finn's participants were undergraduates on a residential campus, whereas the participants in the current study included a more diverse range of community

members. The trade-off between interpersonal activities and television viewing may be more direct in the relatively structured setting of a traditional campus than in other settings, where work schedules, family responsibilities, and other constraints may limit individuals' ability to fulfill desires for interpersonal interaction. Therefore, extraversion may be more directly related to media use among residential college students than it is among other audiences.

There was also evidence that personality affected media genre preferences. The association in the current study between extraversion and preferences for the three different music genre clusters also speaks to the potential importance of audiences' perceptions of the gratifications offered by particular media texts. This finding was surprising in that it was not predicted by previous research and that extraversion was not associated with one of the media with which music is most closely associated, radio. One interpretation of this result is that discussing, consuming, and sharing music, whether in recorded, broadcast, or live formats, may be important to extraverts because it contributes to their interactions with others. This tendency may be increasing as music storage formats switch to digital, allowing audiences to share music over the Internet or through personalized mixed tapes or CDs.

The negative association between psychoticism and exposure to romance/comedy films is consistent with Weaver's (1991) findings and with conceptualizations of this personality dimension as indicating a lack of interest in relationships and a lack of concern for social constraints. These elements are fundamental to these two genres. Romances are about relationships and humor is defined largely by the violation of social norms. The interaction of psychoticism and neuroticism in predicting this variable complicates this picture. A possible explanation is that the increased level of reactivity that is associated with neuroticism intensifies the dislike that those high in psychoticism are likely to feel and makes them more likely to avoid

this material. One of the limitations of the analyses of the interactions is that they represent a large number of significance tests, which means that the results of any single significance test should be viewed as tentative. However, this finding suggests that taking the potential for interactions between personality factors into account in future research would be worthwhile.

Contrasts in analytic approaches and in the way media genre preferences are measured make cross-study comparisons of findings in regards to genre preferences particularly difficult. However, there were some instances in which the current findings contrast with those of previous work. For example, in their work with Spanish teenagers, Aluja-Fabregat and Torrubia-Beltri (1998) found that psychoticism was correlated with exposure to a set of specific action movies, most of which were violent and would have been classified as "R" in the U.S. The current study did not find evidence of a relationship between action-oriented movies and psychoticism. Again, the contrast in these findings may be attributable to the characteristics of the samples, which may have affected the degree to which the materials were seen as transgressive or rebellious. Aluja-Fabregat and Torriubia-Beltri's participants were minors. This means that the films were likely to be seen as particularly inappropriate for their age group, possibly heightening their appeal for those who delight in the violation of social norms. Similar materials may not have been seen as particularly transgressive among adults in the U.S., and thus not have had a disproportionate appeal to those high in psychoticism.

It should be stressed, however, that the personality variables never explained more than 10% of the variance in the measured outcomes after demographic differences were taken into account, and usually explained considerably less. A potential explanation for the results is that the study measured the wrong personality traits or measured the right traits at the wrong level of specificity. Zuckerman et al. (1988) pointed out that the level at which one should evaluate

personality characteristics depends on the purposes for which these characteristics are being assessed. They suggest that when one seeks to predict specific behaviors, measuring specific traits related to the behavior may be more useful than measuring general, basic traits such as those described by the three-factor model (pp. 105-106). Even if the "Big Three" model accurately captures the "superfactors" of human personality, these measures may be less useful in identifying personality's potential contributions to media behavior than measures of more specific characteristics.

A plausible avenue of further research would be to consider the way in which more specific traits are related to media use and then consider how they may be associated with broader personality factors. For example, although there was some evidence that psychoticism was influential, investigating the five-factor model's concepts conscientiousness and agreeableness, which some researchers consider to measure low values of sub-factors of this trait, may allow for the detection of relationships that were not apparent with the more general measure. Each of these components may affect media consumption differently. Previous work has found some of these factors to be associated with use of specific types of media (Finn, 1997) and it would worthwhile to consider these attributes further. Characteristics identified by Zuckerman et al. (1988) as lower-order personality factors include activity, impulsivity, and conformity. These characteristics, although less well established than those of conscientiousness and agreeableness, may also be worth further investigation.

Another potential explanation of the modesty of the initial results is that the impact of personality factors on media use varies across audience members. The initial analysis of this study, like that by Finn (1997), Gunter and Furnham (1986), and Weaver et al. (1993), sought associations that hold across different types of audience members. Although this method takes

advantage of the power offered by larger sample sizes, it cannot detect situations where the impact of personality varies across demographic groups. The follow-up analyses were an exploratory attempt take advantage of the relatively diverse sample to begin to identify these situations. These analyses, of course, represent a large number of significance tests carried out in order to identify patterns that may contribute to theory building. In these situations, the balance between recognizing real relationships and claiming results that are made significant more by chance than fact is particularly delicate. Abelson (1995) argues that a principled statistical argument should take into account a variety of factors in addition to the formal *p* value of a null hypothesis test. In accordance with these principles, several other factors, including the direction and magnitude of the regression coefficients, the power of the analysis, and the consistency of the results with established theory were considered when interpreting the patterns of results.

The analyses suggest that the relationship between extraversion and at-home movie viewing and the relationship between extraversion and urban music preferences were fairly consistent. However, there were indications of across-group variation in the strength and significance of the other associations that were found within the general sample. In the case of the relationship between psychoticism and light movie viewing, the evidence of a relationship was strongest among those to whom these genres were most specifically targeted - women. It was music genres, however, that showed the most evidence of variation across audience groups. If one accepts the argument that music is particularly significant to extraverts because it facilitates social interaction, it would follow that the variation in the pattern of these relationships across subgroups may represent variation in the importance of these genre clusters in the social interaction of different audience groups. Consumption of jazz/classical may contribute to social interaction more for African American listeners than for White ones, and more for female

listeners than for male ones.

These analyses also identified situations in which relationships that were not significant in analyses of the larger sample were significant within subgroups. For example, the predicted positive association between neuroticism and television viewing held among men, although it was not significant for women. Men are generally expected refrain from expressing or acknowledging the anxiety that is associated with neuroticism, suggesting that some means of allaying tension and anxiety, such as interpersonal contact, may be closed to them. The lack of other alternatives may make TV a particularly important coping resource among this group.

The results of the follow-up analysis suggest that audience and media factors that contribute to the impact of personality traits vary across traits. Psychoticism, which implies an indifference to social norms and constraints, may be associated with the rejection of group-specific expectations in terms of media use. Rejecting film romances is more significant for women than men, for example, perhaps making it particularly appealing for females who are high in psychoticism. The influence of psychoticism in shaping media behavior may be dependent upon whether a particular type of media is targeted to an audience member. Extraversion, in contrast, implies that those high in this trait are more likely to seek social contact. This attribute may be associated with tendencies to consume materials targeted at the people with whom one interacts. The finding that extraversion is associated with women's, but not men's, use of jazz/classical music in the current study as well as previous findings that it is associated with exposure to horror movies among women, but not men (Zuckerman & Litle, 1986), are consistent with the supposition. They can be interpreted as indicating that women are exposed to these materials in the company of male companions. As described above, the impact of neuroticism may depend upon the alternative avenues an individual has available to relieve

anxiety.

This study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. One these limitations is the volunteer sample. Although the participants' diversity allows for the consideration of the questions relating to the role of demographic factors that would be difficult to pursue with a more homogenous sample, it also limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts. In addition, this paper includes an exploratory series of analyses that were designed to contribute to theory development. The relatively small size of the sub-samples, the large number of significance tests, and the post-hoc nature of the analysis means that results of individual significance tests should be viewed with caution. The conclusions should be viewed as indicators of promising avenues for additional research rather than definitive conclusions. Given lack of a widely accepted theory of how personality may shape media behavior, however, these indicators represent an advance of previous work.

Overall, the pattern of findings of the current study suggests that the roles that audience members' personalities play in shaping media use patterns may be played out in the context of specific gratifications that media texts are perceived to offer. Home movie-viewing, for example, may be particularly appealing to extraverts because it is a means of social interaction, either with friends or with favorite movie characters. The gratifications offered by particular media texts may also vary across audience members, creating interactions between audience groups and personality attributes. For example, television may be a particularly important means of reducing anxiety among men, creating a situation in which neuroticism is associated with use of this type of media among this group. Violent action movies may be particularly titillating to young people, creating a situation in which psychoticism is associated with use of this genre among this group. The next step is to evaluate audiences' understandings of what particular

types of media may offer along with personality and with media behavior patterns to see whether these perceptions shape personality's influence. Investigating how audiences' personality attributes interact with the gratifications that are thought to be offered by particular media texts may be a way forward in developing a coherent theory of personality's impact on media use.

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Footnotes

[1] There is ongoing debate about whether the three factor or the five factor model best describes human personality (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992; Eysenck, 1991; 1992). The debate tends to revolve around the questions of whether consciousness and agreeableness are sub-factors of psychoticism and of whether openness is a personality trait or a synonym of intelligence. Although the details of this controversy are beyond the scope of this paper, a sense of the way in which the divergent factors of the models relate to each other can facilitate interpretation of the current research. On the basis of factor analyses incorporating multiple personality scales, McCrae and Costa (1985) found that that agreeableness and conscientiousness were associated negatively with psychoticism and argue that Eysenck's psychoticism scale measures particularly low values of a combination of these two factors. Zuckerman, Kuhlman, and Camac (1988) came to a similar conclusion. The five-factor model's concept of openness does not seem to be accounted for by Eysenck's model (McCrae & Costa, 1985).

Table 1

Summary of Standardized Coefficients of a Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Media Exposure

	Home Movie Viewing	Movie Theatre Attendance	TV Watching	Radio Listening
Step 1[1]				
ΔR^2	.05†	.08**	.07*	.05†
Step 2				
ΔR^2	.09**	.02	.02	.03
Extraversion	.30***	.11	.00	.06
Neuroticism	.06	-.05	-.07	.10
Psychoticism	-.06	-.05	-.10	.14†
N	171	171	171	168

Note. Step 1 of each regression equation used dummy variables to control for the participants' gender, race/ethnicity, and age.
$^{\dagger}p \leq .1$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 2

Summary of Standardized Coefficients of a Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Film and Music Genre Preferences

	Film			Music		
	Action-oriented	Light	Serious	Urban	Jazz/ Classical	Rock/Pop
Step 1						
ΔR^2	.34***	.13***	.12**	.41***	.19***	.14***
Step 2						
ΔR^2	.01	.04†	.01	.02†	.04*	.08**
Extraversion	.07	.08	-.05	.16*	.16*	.26***
Neuroticism	-.01	.04	.01	.03	-.09	.16*
Psychoticism	-.07	-.20**	.07	-.01	-.07	.01
N	170	171	171	168	167	168

Note. Step 1 of each regression equation used dummy variables to control for the participants' gender, race/ethnicity, and age.
† $p < .1$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 3

Summary of Standardized Coefficients of Extraversion's Relationship to Music Genre Preferences within Gender and within Race

	Men			Women			Whites			African Americans		
	Urban	Jazz/ Class.	Rock/ Pop	Urban	Jazz/ Class.	Rock/ Pop	Urban	Jazz/ Class.	Rock/ Pop	Urban	Jazz/ Class.	Rock/ Pop
Extraversion	.25†	.05	.20	.20*	.22*	.22*	.26*	.15	.17	.24†	.34*	.54***
Neuroticism	-.09	-.01	.18	.07	-.17†	.21*	.06	-.10	.01	.20	-.12	.20†
Psychoticism	-.07	-.20	-.09	-.01	-.03	-.05	.12	-.26*	-.11	.29*	-.19	.11
R^2	.23	.07	.16	.28	.23	.11	.13	.12	.12	.21	.17	.32
n	54			116			81			60		

Note: Analyses of gender subgroups include a dummy variable controlling for age and a variable controlling for overall radio music exposure. Analyses of race subgroups include a variable controlling for overall radio music exposure.
$^{\dagger}p \leq .1$, * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$