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Personality, media preferences, and cultural participation

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Abstract

In this paper, the impact of the Big Five personality factors (extraversion, friendliness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness) on media preferences (TV programs) and cultural participation (book reading and attending museums and concerts) was examined. The analyses were carried out using the Family Surveys of the Dutch Population from 1998 and 2000 ($n = 3156$), which allowed us to control for relevant background variables. It was found that openness to experience has a positive effect on 9 of our 12 indicators of TV preferences, book reading, and outdoor arts attendance; openness clearly encourages an interest in complex and exciting recreational practices. Conscientiousness and friendliness tended to have negative effects on activities that were either difficult or unconventional, whereas emotional stability negatively influences more predictable means of escape from everyday life. Overall, the Big Five personality factors contribute substantially to our understanding of people's cultural tastes and practices.

Keywords: Personality; Big five; Differentiation; Culture; Media; Cultural participation

1. Introduction

People's cultural and media preferences have been studied from a broad range of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. Psychologists, communication researchers, and leisure scientists

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all have their own approach in studying the determinants of media preferences and cultural participation. In this paper, we will build upon both sociological and psychological research in order to answer our central research question: To what extent do personality factors affect media preferences and cultural participation?

Regarding media consumption, a focus on personality characteristics can easily be combined with the "uses-and-gratifications" paradigm commonly applied in mass communication research (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Personality is likely to affect the selection and use of media (Rosengren, 1974), and the motives underlying media preferences (Weaver, 2003). Although mass communication theorists have focused considerable conceptual attention on the potential mediating role of personality, little contemporary research has examined this issue (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985; Weaver, 1991, 2003). Since personality characteristics are the nexus of attitudes, beliefs, and values guiding our cognitive and affective interactions with the social environment (Weaver, Brosius, & Mundorf, 1993), this area of research is in need of further exploration.

In addition to TV preferences, we will also study book reading and outdoor cultural participation. Being more of one's own volition than e.g. vocational interests, reading interests are likely to reflect a person's psychological needs rather than structural socio-economic constraints (Tirre & Dixit, 1995). For similar reasons, personality can also be expected to affect outdoor cultural behavior (e.g. visiting museums, attending concerts). Such behavior may be considered as unmediated participation in culture, where individuals will be looking for specific uses and gratifications as well. According to information processing theory (e.g. Berlyne, 1971; Ganzeboom, 1982; Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999), the satisfaction people derive from reading books, visiting museums, or attending concerts, depends on their optimal, or preferred, arousal levels. Such cultural products differ in their complexity. The level of complexity one prefers is thought to be affected by an individual's information processing capacity or extraversion (Ganzeboom, 1982). But it is not only directly linked to our cognitive or affective orientations toward the mass media, as it can also reflect individuals' preferences for and responses to physiological stimulation (Zuckerman, 1991). Personality is therefore relevant for understanding individuals' appreciation of the arts. For example, individuals with high scores on the neuroticism dimension of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ-R: Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985) prefer downbeat music (Weaver, 1991). Personality has also been demonstrated to affect the appreciation of paintings that exhibited different qualities of tension and complexity (Zuckerman, Ulrich, & McLaughlin, 1993), while Weaver et al. (1993) found that extraverts prefer movies focusing on social activities (e.g. parties).

Cultural and media preferences will be measured here by looking at reading books, watching television, and participation in cultural events (museums and performing arts). Following the uses and gratifications approach (e.g. Blumler & Katz, 1974; Kraaykamp, 2001), differentiation is not only expected to occur *between* these three broad areas. We expect personality to affect choices made *within* these areas as well. Each of these three categories will therefore be divided further into types of books (e.g. literary versus romantic), types of television programs (e.g. soap series versus cultural and information programs), and 'highbrow' versus 'lowbrow' culture (e.g. art museums versus pop concerts).

Most studies on personality effects make use of rather limited, and often quite specific, samples. Such samples limit both the generalizability and the opportunity for adding sufficient control variables. Our study takes care of these drawbacks by using two representative large-scale population

surveys that include information on personality. The availability of controls, allowing us to study the net effects of personality on cultural practices at large, is a rare quality of studies on the effects of personality traits.

2. Personality and preferences

Based on many different studies using various items to describe a person's character, it was concluded that five dimensions suffice to broadly grasp someone's personality (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Hendriks, Hofstee, & De Raad, 1999). These dimensions are extraversion, openness, emotional stability, friendliness, and conscientiousness. Earlier research has demonstrated that the Big Five personality model offers a valuable framework for the examination of the effects of personality on media use and cultural behavior. We will account for our expectations regarding the impact of each trait below.

Extraverts seemingly favor sensory stimulation because they prefer relatively high arousal levels (Costa & McCrae, 1988). In this respect, Finn (1997) found that extraverts score low on TV watching, radio listening, and reading for pleasure. Although it has been argued that extraverts favor serious, or complex, media content over popular content, this could not be confirmed by Kraaykamp (2001). In a similar vein, it was found that sensation seekers prefer paintings that display a high degree of tension, but not necessarily complexity (Zuckerman et al., 1993). Extraverts also enjoy surreal paintings more than representational ones (Furnham & Avison, 1997). We therefore expect that *extraversion will have a negative effect on book reading and watching popular, predictable television programs, and a positive effect on outdoor cultural participation and watching serious or exciting* (*e.g. action movies or erotic programs*) *television programs* (*Hypothesis 1*).

Openness refers to a desire for intellectual stimulation and aesthetic experiences (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Conway & Rubin, 1991). Hence, the needs related to openness are probably best met by cultural participation and reading, and to a lesser extent by TV watching, with its low level of involvement and interactivity (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Finn (1997) reported negative effects of openness on television viewing and positive effects on pleasure reading, movie attendance, and conversing with others. Open persons are thought to prefer original and serious media content and cultural activities to more popular or lowbrow forms. For example, reading literature will be favored over romantic books (Kraaykamp, 2001). In addition, openness is positively related to creative ability (King, Walker, & Broyles, 1996), which provides further ground for the previous assertion. Open individuals are also expected to enjoy outdoor cultural participation, assuming that it is likely to satisfy their search for new experiences. Therefore, we presume that *openness to experience will have a positive effect on all serious, exciting, or unconventional types of media use and a negative effect on the use of popular, predictable books or television programs. It will also have a positive effect on all types of outdoor cultural participation* (*Hypothesis 2*).

People with low scores on emotional stability are characterized as anxious and nervous (Finn, 1997), and experiencing feelings of loneliness and depression (Conway & Rubin, 1991). We therefore expect them to look for means of escape from tension and stress that are easy to obtain. Television seems to be the most obvious provider of these means of escape. Television is less stimulating than reading and requires little involvement. Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990,

pp. 81–87) report low levels of concentration, challenge and skill for TV watching, which turns out to be the most relaxing of all leisure activities. But, as argued above, it matters *what* people are watching on television. It may be assumed that people with low emotional stability are most likely to turn on their TV set for popular programs offering little complexity or excitement. Weaver (2003) found that individuals scoring high on Eysenck's neuroticism dimension were likely to watch TV just to pass time and for companionship and relaxation. To a lesser extent, popular or romantic reading may provide escape as well, but people with low emotional stability will not engage in highbrow cultural participation frequently. We thus expect that *emotional stability will negatively affect popular television viewing and popular reading. It will have a positive effect on outdoor cultural consumption* (*Hypothesis 3*).

Asendorpf and Wilpers (1998) demonstrate that friendliness positively affects the number and quality of people's social interactions. Finn (1997) showed that friendliness is positively associated with frequent conversation and not with media consumption. Kraaykamp (2001), on the other hand, found that friendliness positively affects popular television watching. In addition, earlier results do not imply that outdoor cultural participation will be a popular activity among friendly people. The items tapping friendliness (sometimes labeled 'agreeableness') also seem to indicate a relatively high degree of compliance and conformity that might diminish the propensity to attend unconventional or confronting cultural performances. Friendliness will therefore only encourage types of cultural participation that are unlikely to confront the audience with upsetting images or texts. Thus, we expect that *friendliness will have a negative effect on book reading and, to a lesser extent, watching television. Popular outdoor cultural participation will be affected positively by friendliness, while no effect is expected for serious or unconventional outdoor cultural participation* (*Hypothesis 4*).

Finally, conscientious individuals are characterized as organized, efficient and practical. Conscientiousness is the most important non-intellectual individual determinant of school success (De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996) and significantly enhances job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). From the literature, we cannot find any clear argument to predict a relation with media use or cultural participation (Finn, 1997). Yet, there are some common notions that lead us to expect that conscientious persons will prefer predictability and structured formats. We thus expect that *conscientiousness will positively affect popular reading and watching popular television. It will have a negative effect on complex or unconventional types of reading, television programs, or cultural participation* (*Hypothesis 5*).

3. Method

3.1. Data

To test our expectations we used two waves of the Family Survey of the Dutch Population (FSDP) performed in 1998 and 2000 (De Graaf, De Graaf, Kraaykamp & Ultee, 1998, 2000). The FSDP investigates various aspects of the life course of respondents between the ages of 18 and 70. Face-to-face interviews were held with the primary respondents and, if married or cohabiting, their partners, followed by a self-administered questionnaire. A total of 3590 persons from 1990 households were interviewed. The FSDP 1998 consists of 2029 respondents in 1140 house-

holds and the FSDP 2000 consists of 1561 respondents in 850 households. For each survey, a sample of primary respondents was drawn randomly from population registers of a stratified sample of Dutch municipalities. In the 1998 survey, a response rate of 47.3% was accomplished, and in 2000 40.6%. The relatively moderate response is mainly due to the fact that both partners had to be interviewed for a successful response. As there is no selective non-response with respect to major stratification aspects, our findings are representative for the Dutch adult population. We applied listwise deletion of cases for which information on a variable was missing (5.0% of the cases). The final data-set, in which both surveys are merged, consists of 3156 respondents of 25 years and over, not living with their parents. This ensures that the social positions and psychological traits of our respondents are relatively stable.

3.2. Measuring personality traits: a condensed version for survey research

Inclusion of measures of personality in survey research is scarce. There are a few reasons for this reluctance. Firstly, most research on the effects of personality stems from a socio-psychological origin in which semi-controlled experimental designs are preferred over survey designs. A major advantage of this approach is that environmental disturbances can be minimized and that the reactions to stimuli can be singled out and observed immediately. However, generalization to the population at large is problematic because, mostly, selective samples are used and few control variables are included. A second reason is that it is hard to validly implement an extensive measurement of personality in a survey. Randomly selected respondents may be overwhelmed with the quantity of questions on their personality.

A possible solution to the above-mentioned drawbacks of the application of extensive measures of personality in survey research is the use of brief self-reports (Hendriks et al., 1999). We here apply a standardized, condensed version of the Big Five (Gerris, 1998). Using this shorter version of the Big Five enabled us to include personality traits in a nationally representative survey, which also encompassed questions on a broad range of other topics. The instrument consists of a list of 30 characteristics of which respondents indicate on a seven-point scale to what extent they believe these apply to them, ranging from (1) 'not at all' to (7) 'completely'. Table 1 lists the 30 items arranged according to the five personality traits they refer to.

Table 1 shows that the reliability of the five personality traits is very good. Even though only six items were used to measure each trait, Cronbach's Alpha's are all over 0.80. Scales for extraversion, friendliness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness are constructed by calculating averages for the six items involved. Means and standard deviations reflect inter-year stability and sufficient variation to expect substantial effects.

3.3. Control variables

In our research, we employ seven controls for which previous research has shown that they matter in explaining differentiation in cultural participation and television preferences (e.g. Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999; Van Eijck & Van Rees, 2000).

Birth cohort is measured in five categories, ranging from 0 (born before 1935) to 4 (born after 1965). Gender (*women*) is classified 0 = male and 1 = female. *Educational attainment* is constructed, collapsing the original 10-point scale into four categories (0 = primary education;

Table 1
A representation of the measurements of the Big Five personality traits in survey research

Extraversion	Conscientiousness	Friendliness	Emotional stability	Openness to experience
Talkative	Organized	Kind	Anxious (–)	Creative
Introvert (–)	Systematic	Cooperative	Irritable (–)	Complex
Quiet (–)	Thorough	Sympathetic	Touchy (–)	Imaginative
Reserved (–)	Neat	Pleasant	Nervous (–)	Artistic
Withdrawn (–)	Careful	Agreeable	Fearful (–)	Deep
Bashful (–)	Sloppy (–)	Helpful	High-strung (–)	Innovative
1998: ∞ = .86	1998: ∞ = .88	1998: ∞ = .84	1998: ∞ = .83	1998: ∞ = .81
2000: ∞ = .85	2000: ∞ = .86	2000: ∞ = .83	2000: ∞ = .81	2000: ∞ = .81
1998: Mean = 4.76	1998: Mean = 5.04	1998: Mean = 5.45	1998: Mean = 4.68	1998: Mean = 4.48
2000: Mean = 4.66	2000: Mean = 5.11	2000: Mean = 5.58	2000: Mean = 4.41	2000: Mean = 4.59
1998: S.D. = 1.08	1998: S.D. = 1.05	1998: S.D. = 0.71	1998: S.D. = 0.98	1998: S.D. = 1.01
2000: S.D. = 1.10	2000: S.D. = 1.04	2000: S.D. = 0.69	2000: S.D. = 1.07	2000: S.D. = 1.07

Source. Family-Survey Dutch Population 1998 and 2000 (N = 3156); (–) item is inverted to create scale.

1 = lower secondary education; 2 = higher secondary education; 3 = tertiary education). In looking at a person's *labor market status* we distinguished three dichotomous categories: paid work, housework, and not working. *Hours working* per week in paid labor is measured using five categories (0 = not working; 1 = 1–16 hours; 2 = 17–32 hours; 3 = 33–40 hours; 4 = more than 40 hours). Living with a *partner* is a dichotomous variable (0 = no; 1 = yes). Finally, we considered if there are *children living at home* (0 = no; 1 = yes).

3.4. Dependent variables: book reading, television preferences, and cultural participation

With regard to reading, we consider four types of books: literary books in Dutch, literary books in a foreign language, suspense novels, and romantic novels. These genres reflect the most prominent content differences in book reading (see Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999). The genres are based on the NUGI-code implemented by the Royal Dutch Library to classify books. *Literary book reading* refers to Dutch literary novels and translated literary novels, both measured on a 3-point scale for reading frequency (1 = never; 2 = sometimes; 3 = often). To construct a scale, we took average scores. For *reading literary books in a foreign language*, we calculated average scores for an individual's reading of literature in English and French. *Suspense novels* refer to the reading of suspense novels, science fiction or war novels, measured in three categories (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often). For the reading of *romantic novels*, we averaged reading romantic novels, and family and regional novels to construct a scale. All scales on a person's reading were standardized between 1 and 3.

Cultural participation was measured by: *classical concerts*, *art museums*, *historical museums* and *pop concerts*. The items we employed are commonly used by the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office in their yearly reports on cultural participation. We aimed at selecting both elitist and popular cultural activities to cover a broad range of cultural events. All aspects are measured by one question on the frequency of visiting each of a list of cultural events, the answering categories

being 'never' (1), '1–3 times a year' (2), '4–6 times a year' (3), and 'more than 6 times a year' (4). Subsequently, all scales on cultural participation were standardized between 1 and 4.

In order to categorize television content, informative and artistic programs were distinguished from entertainment (see Van den Bulck, 1995; Van Eijck & Van Rees, 2000). Here we are using preferences rather than frequency of watching. Also, television preferences are available only in the 2000 version of the FSDP ($N = 1366$). Preferences for *cultural programs*, *informative programs*, *soap series*, and *erotic programs* (with a reference to two genuine examples of such programs) were measured using four categories, ranging from 'does not appeal at all' (1), to 'appeals very much' (4). Subsequently, all scales on TV preferences were standardized between 1 and 4.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive analyses

First, we are interested in a description of taste differences for the five personality traits. We therefore started with an analysis of variance (MCA) to assess differences with respect to personality between the twelve cultural practices. For reasons of presentation, we divided each personality measure into four categories of equal size (so-called quartiles). Without additional control variables, parameters simply reflect the average scores of people in a certain quartile. The association measures in Table 2 (*eta*) indicate whether a personality trait explains a significant part of the differentiation in cultural or media consumption (in gray tone).

In Table 2, scores for book reading, cultural behavior, and television preferences are shown for respondents with different values on each of the five personality traits. It is surprising that extraversion does not distinguish between any of the twelve cultural practices. Extraverts do not differ from introverts in their cultural behavior or preferences when the other four traits are held constant.

For openness, significant distinctions among the quartiles are observed for each of the 12 leisure activities. Openness refers to a personal need for intellectual stimulation, which is highlighted by the liking of complex reading (literature), and visiting cultural events (concerts and museums). With regard to television, open individuals favor artistic and information content in programs the most. The positive association with erotic programs suggests that open individuals are looking for non-intellectual stimulation as well.

Low emotional stability goes with favoring romantic fiction and soap series on TV. These cultural expressions seem to offer emotionally unstable people the opportunity to escape from the tensions of everyday life. As expected, emotionally stable individuals generally favor more complex cultural events (classical concerts, museums, but also pop concerts) and informative TV programs.

Friendliness is the second most discriminating personality trait. Friendly individuals particularly like popular leisure activities, such as watching soap operas, reading romantic fiction, and visiting pop concerts. Moreover, they refrain from elitist activities significantly more than less friendly people, which is in line with our expectations as well.

Finally, conscientiousness is a relevant factor for popular reading and popular outdoor activities. Conscientious people are least likely to be found among the audiences of popular music performances. Conscientious individuals do seem to like the relatively conventional and predictable

Table 2
Description of differences in cultural practices for the Big five personality traits (means for quartiles)

	Book reading				Cultural behavior				Television preferences			
Personality traits	Literary novels	Literature in foreign language	Suspense	Romantic novels	Visiting classical concerts	Visiting art museums	Visiting historical museums	Visiting pop concerts	Preferring cultural programs	Preferring informative programs	Preferring soap programs	Preferring erotic programs
Extraversion												
Low (0–25%)	1.51	1.22	1.61	1.32	1.38	1.50	1.75	1.41	1.96	2.51	1.65	1.75
Mid.low (25–50%)	1.53	1.21	1.59	1.31	1.40	1.46	1.75	1.42	1.99	2.54	1.71	1.76
Mid.high (50–75%)	1.54	1.19	1.63	1.34	1.40	1.45	1.71	1.43	1.97	2.52	1.82	1.75
High (75–100%)	1.54	1.20	1.59	1.35	1.40	1.45	1.66	1.48	1.93	2.50	1.77	1.74
Eta	.02	.02	.03	.03	.02	.02	.05	.04	.02	.01	.06	.01
Openness to experiences												
Low (0–25%)	1.42	1.10	1.51	1.42	1.28	1.25	1.57	1.33	1.68	2.41	1.96	1.58
Mid.low (25–50%)	1.50	1.16	1.62	1.35	1.35	1.38	1.69	1.39	1.93	2.51	1.70	1.77
Mid.high (50–75%)	1.51	1.22	1.57	1.28	1.42	1.46	1.73	1.45	1.94	2.46	1.75	1.84
High (75–100%)	1.69	1.34	1.70	1.27	1.53	1.75	1.86	1.56	2.23	2.65	1.60	1.80
Eta	.16	.20	.09	.12	.13	.25	.16	.13	.22	.10	.13	.11
Emotional stability												
Low (0–25%)	1.53	1.19	1.56	1.44	1.32	1.41	1.65	1.39	1.91	2.39	1.94	1.76
Mid.low (25–50%)	1.52	1.19	1.57	1.35	1.41	1.45	1.72	1.39	1.98	2.48	1.79	1.76
Mid.high (50–75%)	1.56	1.21	1.62	1.31	1.42	1.49	1.74	1.50	2.01	2.64	1.66	1.74
High (75–100%)	1.51	1.23	1.66	1.22	1.44	1.50	1.75	1.44	1.97	2.59	1.52	1.74
Eta	.03	.04	.05	.15	.06	.05	.06	.07	.04	.10	.16	.01
Friendliness												
Low (0–25%)	1.56	1.24	1.61	1.26	1.46	1.56	1.76	1.35	2.00	2.60	1.54	1.71
Mid.low (25–50%)	1.58	1.24	1.65	1.31	1.42	1.53	1.76	1.42	2.07	2.54	1.67	1.82
Mid.high (50–75%)	1.57	1.18	1.59	1.35	1.40	1.48	1.71	1.46	1.98	2.54	1.80	1.78
High (75–100%)	1.45	1.18	1.58	1.38	1.33	1.33	1.66	1.48	1.86	2.43	1.87	1.72
Eta	.09	.07	.04	.10	.08	.13	.07	.08	.09	.07	.13	.05
Conscientiousness												
Low (0–25%)	1.58	1.22	1.70	1.26	1.38	1.48	1.70	1.51	1.98	2.47	1.64	1.80
Mid.low (25–50%)	1.53	1.20	1.59	1.31	1.39	1.43	1.68	1.46	1.97	2.51	1.79	1.77
Mid.high (50–75%)	1.51	1.19	1.56	1.35	1.39	1.47	1.75	1.40	2.00	2.57	1.72	1.78
High (75–100%)	1.51	1.22	1.57	1.40	1.42	1.47	1.74	1.36	1.91	2.51	1.80	1.66
Eta	.05	.04	.07	.10	.02	.02	.05	.09	.04	.04	.07	.06
General mean	1.53	1.21	1.61	1.33	1.40	1.46	1.72	1.43	1.96	2.52	1.74	1.75

Source. Family-Survey Dutch Population 1998 and 200 ($N = 3156$).
Predicted means controlled for the Big Five personality traits (ANOVA-MCA).
Significant differences ($p < .01$) in grey tone.

format of romantic fiction. In contrast, suspense novels are least preferred by people scoring high on conscientiousness.

4.2. Multivariate analyses: book reading

We performed a multivariate OLS regression-analysis to test our hypotheses on the effects of personality on media preferences and cultural participation. We present unstandardised regression-effects that must be interpreted in terms of the measurement scales of the dependent and independent variables. Furthermore, we control for seven features that have proven to be important in explaining cultural practices. The reason for doing so is that the differentiation found in the descriptive analyses might be partially caused by the fact that personality traits differ systematically between people with different social characteristics. By controlling for these features, we apply a rigorous test of our hypotheses. Table 3 shows the results for book reading.

Controlling for background characteristics, it becomes obvious that personality traits are relevant in predicting book reading. For all genres considered, openness plays a decisive role. Individuals who score high on openness clearly favor complex and stimulating genres (literature and suspense novels), while they dislike romantic fiction. These results are particularly meaningful

Table 3
Regression of book reading preferences on personality traits and control variables, unstandardized coefficients the standard errors (between brackets) are not outlined

	Unstandardized regression coefficients			
	Literary novels	Literature in a foreign language	Suspense novels	Romantic novels
Control variables				
Birth Cohort (0–4)	$-.066^{***}$ (.010)	$-.022^{**}$ (.008)	−.017 (.013)	$-.017^{*}$ (.008)
Women (0–1)	$.424^{***}$ (.025)	$.069^{***}$ (.020)	.009 (.034)	$.353^{***}$ (.021)
Educational Attainment (0–3)	$.259^{***}$ (.010)	$.131^{***}$ (.008)	$.167^{***}$ (.013)	$-.027^{***}$ (.008)
Labor Market Status				
Paid work (0–1)	*ref.*	*ref.*	*ref.*	*ref.*
Homework (0–1)	$-\ 202^{***}$ (.043)	.034 (.034)	−.060 (.059)	$.077^{*}$ (.037)
Not working (0–1)	−.049 (.052)	$.091^{*}$ (.041)	−.043 (.070)	−.054 (.044)
Hours Working (0–4)	−.018 (.015)	$.030^{**}$ (.012)	.000 (.020)	$-.031^{*}$ (.013)
Partner (0–1)	.009 (.038)	−.042 (.030)	$.109^{*}$ (.051)	.060 (.032)
Children at Home (0–1)	$-.059^{**}$ (.021)	$-.049^{**}$ (.016)	−.034 (.028)	.011 (.018)
Personality traits				
Extraversion (1–7)	−.007 (.010)	−.004 (.008)	.003 (.013)	−.014 (.008)
Openness to Experiences (1–7)	$.086^{***}$ (.010)	$.073^{***}$ (.008)	$.032^{*}$ (.014)	$-.023^{**}$ (.008)
Emotional Stability (1–7)	.001 (.010)	−.003 (.008)	.012 (.014)	$-.017^{*}$ (.009)
Friendliness (1–7)	$-.048^{**}$ (.015)	$-.026^{*}$ (.012)	−.001 (.021)	$.052^{***}$ (.013)
Conscientiousness (1–7)	$-.034^{***}$ (.009)	−.001 (.007)	$-.036^{**}$ (.013)	$.029^{***}$ (.008)
Constant	1.208^{***} (.109)	$.844^{***}$ (.085)	1.265^{***} (.148)	1.041^{***} (.092)
R-square adjusted	27.9%	13.0%	6.2%	22.1%

Source. Family-Survey Dutch Population 1998 and 2000 ($N = 3156$); $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

since we control for educational attainment, which has often been found to be a relevant indicator of reading preferences (Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999).

Conscientiousness and friendliness are significantly and negatively related to reading literature, probably because of the often complex and unconventional content of literature. In our descriptive analyses (Table 2) these effects were less pronounced. It appears that the effects were somewhat suppressed in a design without controls for social background. Suspense novels are read less often by conscientious people as well. Romantic fiction was read most by emotionally unstable, friendly, and conscientious persons.

4.3. Multivariate analyses: outdoor cultural participation

Table 4 displays the effects of personality traits on cultural participation. Table 4 shows that the Big Five seems somewhat less important for outdoor cultural participation than for book reading. Apart from the effects of openness, only three significant effects occur. Open individuals especially favor visiting art museums and historical museums, but also attending classical and pop concerts. Friendly people are not likely to visit arts museums. The other friendliness effects shown in Table 2 disappear after controlling for social background characteristics. This result can be explained by

Table 4
Regression of cultural outgoing behavior on personality traits and control variables, unstandardized coefficients the standard errors (between brackets) are not outlined

	Unstandardized regression coefficients			
	Visiting classical concerts	Visiting art museums	Visiting historical Museums	Visiting pop concerts
Control variables				
Birth Cohort (0–4)	−.124*** (.011)	−.132*** (.012)	−.087*** (.011)	.176*** (.011)
Women (0–1)	.182*** (.030)	.187*** (.030)	.038 (.030)	−.047 (.028)
Educational Attainment (0–3)	.219*** (.012)	.272*** (.012)	.166*** (.012)	.042*** (.011)
Labor Market Status				
Paid work (0–1)	*ref.*	*ref.*	*ref.*	*ref.*
Home work (0–1)	−.056 (.051)	−.183*** (.052)	−.071 (.051)	−.008 (.048)
Not working (0–1)	−.064 (.061)	−.129* (.062)	−.057 (.060)	−.027 (.057)
Hours Working (0–4)	−.013 (.017)	−.030 (.018)	−.032 (.017)	.014 (.016)
Partner (0–1)	−.052 (.044)	−.123** (.045)	−.013 (.044)	−.157*** (.041)
Children at Home (0–1)	−.136*** (.024)	−.123*** (.025)	.028 (.024)	−.086*** (.023)
Personality traits				
Extraversion (1–7)	.006 (.011)	−.018 (.012)	−.029* (.011)	.018 (.011)
Openness to Experiences (1–7)	.083*** (.012)	.165*** (.012)	.089*** (.012)	.053*** (.011)
Emotional Stability (1–7)	.018 (.012)	.008 (.012)	.022 (.012)	.016 (.011)
Friendliness (1–7)	−.034 (.018)	−.087*** (.018)	−.033 (.018)	.031 (.017)
Conscientiousness (1–7)	−.004 (.011)	−.019 (.011)	.019 (.011)	−.026* (.010)
Constant	1.110*** (.128)	1.373*** (.131)	1.410*** (.127)	.708*** (.119)
R-square adjusted	16.6%	24.0%	9.8%	16.6%

Source. Family-Survey Dutch Population 1998 and 2000 ($N = 3156$); $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.

the fact that friendly qualities are relatively often reported by younger people, women, and the lower educated (Van Eijck & De Graaf, 2001). The resulting effects of friendliness, however, confirm our expectation that friendly people prefer popular and conventional cultural activities over complex and serious ones. Conscientiousness negatively affects the chance of a person visiting pop music concerts, while visiting historical museums is negatively affected by extraversion.

4.4. Multivariate analyses: television preferences

With respect to a person's preference for television content, in Table 5 we look at four program types: cultural programs, information programs, soap series, and erotic programs. Once more, openness to experience is the most important personality trait. Open individuals prefer cultural TV programs and programs focusing on information and news. As expected, soap series are least preferred by open people. A second trait that is relevant in predicting television preferences is friendliness. Our results confirm the expectation that friendly persons would react negatively to programs with disturbing or sensational elements. Soap series are highly favored by friendly personalities, while cultural programs, which often highlight unconventional topics, are least preferred by friendly individuals. Emotional stability is negatively related to a preference for soap

Table 5
Regression of television program preferences on personality traits and control variables, unstandardized coefficients the standard errors (between brackets) are not outlined

	Unstandardized regression coefficients			
	Preferring cultural programs	Preferring informative programs	Preferring soap programs	Preferring erotic programs
Control variables				
Birth Cohort (0–4)	−.149*** (.023)	−.239*** (.025)	.134*** (.025)	.213*** (.021)
Women (0–1)	.268*** (.059)	−.014 (.063)	.473*** (.064)	−.722*** (.054)
Educational Attainment (0–3)	.223*** (.024)	.200*** (.026)	−.167*** (.026)	−.086*** (.022)
Labor Market Status				
Paid work (0–1)	*ref.*	*ref.*	*ref.*	*ref.*
Home work (0–1)	.094 (.108)	−.056 (.116)	−.054 (.117)	−.008 (.099)
Not working (0–1)	.083 (.124)	−.020 (.133)	.199 (.135)	.031 (.113)
Hours Working (0–4)	.046 (.034)	.005 (.037)	−.010 (.037)	.002 (.031)
Partner (0–1)	−.116 (.095)	.059 (.102)	−.028 (.103)	−.191* (.087)
Children at Home (0–1)	−.128* (.052)	−.099 (.056)	−.003 (.057)	.012 (.048)
Personality traits				
Extraversion (1–7)	−.028 (.023)	.004 (.025)	.010 (.026)	.034 (.021)
Openness to Experiences (1–7)	.201*** (.023)	.093*** (.025)	−.099*** (.025)	.014 (.021)
Emotional Stability (1–7)	.010 (.023)	.049 (.026)	−.079** (.026)	−.067** (.021)
Friendliness (1–7)	−.113** (.037)	−.056 (.040)	.126** (.040)	.025 (.034)
Conscientiousness (1–7)	−.021 (.023)	.011 (.024)	.022 (.025)	.010 (.021)
Constant	1.179*** (.264)	2.349*** (.283)	1.434*** (.287)	1.803*** (.241)
R-square adjusted	14.4%	12.6%	14.8%	22.6%

Source. Family-Survey Dutch Population 1998 and 2000 ($N = 3156$); * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

series and erotic programs, which probably provide an escape from everyday life without involving too much tension and stress.

5. Discussion

Our results support the notion that personality affects media preferences and cultural participation. Unlike most other studies into the impact of personality, we were able to add a number of control variables to our model. This allowed us to evaluate the impact of personality net of the effects of socio-demographic variables using multiple regression analysis. A drawback of our study is the use of rather broad, and thus non-exclusive, categories of the cultural and media preferences.

Apart from extraversion, each of the Big Five personality traits has substantial effects on reading, cultural participation, and TV preferences. Openness turned out to be the most important personality determinant of media preferences and cultural participation. Its effect was negative only for reading romantic novels and preferring soap series. These are arguably the two least challenging items in our set, in which the open person cannot find any challenge or excitement whatsoever. This makes openness a highly relevant trait for understanding people's cultural practices and preferences.

Of the remaining Big Five traits, friendliness ranks second in importance. It has a positive effect on the items affected negatively by openness (romantic novels and soap series) and negative effects on reading literary novels or books in a foreign language, visiting art museums, and preferring cultural programs. Friendly people thus seem to appreciate relatively simple, non-challenging activities, while being averse to more elitist, or complex, activities. It seems that, to friendly people, sociability thrives best while engaging in pure and simple activities. Conscientiousness negatively affects reading literary- and suspense novels and visiting pop concerts. Its expected positive effect on popular reading and TV is only corroborated for romantic novels. Overall, the impact of this trait is not very large, but the effects that did appear were in the expected direction.

Finally, the finding that emotional stability negatively affects the reading of romantic novels and the preference for soap series and erotic programs, confirmed our expectation that emotionally unstable people would find comfort in popular TV programs and ditto books. However, positive effects of emotional stability on outdoor cultural participation were not found. Emotionally unstable people do seem to look for easy escape through popular reading or TV, but they do not seem to avoid going out.

In sum, personality affects media preferences and cultural participation, also after socio-demographics have been controlled for. The results are quite consistent with our hypotheses and they suggest an interesting psychological dimensionality underlying cultural preferences and practices. Looking at the signs of the personality effects, the activities involving the least cognitive or emotional challenge (reading romantic fiction, soap operas) tend to be positively affected by friendliness, conscientiousness, and emotional *un*stability. Openness to experience affects these activities negatively. Positive effects of openness are found for virtually everything else; not only highbrow activities, but also the reading of detective novels or the visiting of pop concerts. The latter two activities are negatively affected by conscientiousness, which further stresses that they belong to the more challenging, intellectual, or unconventional side of the activities-continuum. Therefore,

personality does not, as is typically the case with socioeconomic status, differentiate mainly between highbrow and lowbrow, but rather between a preference for more predictable, simple, recreational activities on the one hand versus more complex or unconventional activities, on the other. Of course, this study in itself does not yet warrant such a conclusion, but hopefully it gives rise to further research into this direction using similar, but preferably even more specific, dependent variables.

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