 Darkness and light: the role of dark triad traits and empathy in understanding preferences for visual artworks

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The Role of Dark Triad Traits in Understanding Preferences for Visual Artworks

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Background
Personality and preferences for visual artworks

- Previous studies have suggested a link between personality and preferences for visual artworks.

- Most research has focused on different styles of paintings (abstract, representational, etc.).

- And most have examined the ‘Big Five’ personality dimensions:
  - Openness to Experience
  - Extraversion
  - Neuroticism
  - Agreeableness
  - Conscientiousness
Big Five personality dimensions and preferences

- Openness and Neuroticism correlate positively with a preference for abstract paintings and pop art (Furnham & Walker, 2000)

- Agreeableness and Conscientiousness correlate positively with a preference for representational paintings and a dislike of pop art (Furnham & Walker, 2000)
Sensation Seeking and preferences

- Prior research has also found links between Sensation Seeking (SS) and preferences for paintings

- SS = a desire for novel, varied, complex and intense experiences and the willingness to take risks

- SS correlates positively with a preference for complexity, asymmetry and violent abstract paintings (Rawlings et al., 1998; Rawlings et al., 2000; Zuckerman, Neary & Brustman, 1970)
Limitations of the Big Five and Sensation Seeking

- These studies have advanced our understanding of aesthetic preference.

- But the Big Five model is too broad to lead to powerful predictions of behaviour (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001).

- And Sensation Seeking is a multifaceted construct, the subscales of which relate differentially to aesthetic preferences (Furnham & Avison, 1997; Zuckerman, Ulrich, & McLaughlin, 1993).
The Big Five/SS and Dark Triad traits

- The Big Five and SS relate in different ways to ‘Dark Triad’ traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002) which have not yet been examined in relation to aesthetic preference.

- Machiavellianism – Cynical worldview, plan ahead, build alliances, try to maintain a positive reputation.

- Narcissism – Grandiose identity, underlying insecurity, dominant.

- Psychopathy – Selfish, impulsive, aggressive, abandon friends, lacks empathy, pay little attention to their reputation.
Links between the Big Five/SS and Dark Triad traits

- Low Agreeableness and high Openness to Experience associated with Machiavellianism and Narcissism (Paulhus & Williams, 2002)

- Low Agreeableness and low Conscientiousness associated with Psychopathy (Miller, Lynam, Widger, & Leukefeld, 2001)

- High Sensation Seeking associated with Psychopathy (Hare, 2002)

- Given these links it is plausible that Dark Triad traits may relate to preferences for visual artworks
Aims

- To investigate associations between Dark Triad traits and preferences for visual artworks
- To also examine the potential role of demographic variables and previous experience of art
Method
Participants

- A stratified sample will be recruited from South Yorkshire to reflect:
  - Males & females
  - Different age groups
  - Different ethnic groups
  - Different educational levels

- Power analysis to determine appropriate sample size
Materials: Demographic Questionnaire

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Occupation
- Nationality
Materials:
Experience of Art Questionnaire

- Based on that used by Furnham and Walker (2001)

- How much the participant has studied art/history of art
  - Never/GCSE/A-level/Degree level

- How often they visited art galleries in the previous year and how often they intend to go
  - Never, 1-2 times, Once a month, Once a fortnight, Once a week

- A ‘test’ of art
  - For five relatively well-known paintings, attempt to name artist, the painting and the year in which it was painted
  - Each correct response scores one point (min 0 max 15)
Materials: Slides of paintings

40 paintings across 4 distinct styles identified by Furnham and Walker (2001):

- Representational – realistic images depicting reality
- Abstract – geometric lines and patterns/generally ambiguous
- Pop Art - an intermediate position between representational and abstract art with a distinctive style
- Japanese traditional – 18th/19th Century
Materials:
Slides of Paintings (2)

- Digital versions of paintings to be shown on Powerpoint slides
  - 10 paintings from each of the 4 styles

- To be shown in random order
  - Not sequentially in order of style

- To be shown for 30 seconds each
Materials:
Rating of Paintings Questionnaire

- Rate each painting on these scales:
  - How much would you like the painting in a gallery (0=Dislike extremely to 10=Like extremely)
  - How much would you like the painting in your home (0= Dislike extremely to 10=Like extremely)
  - How talented do you consider the artist to be (0=Not at all to 10=Very talented)
  - How much would you pay for the painting, assuming you had unlimited funds (Nothing/£1 to £50/£51 to £100/£101 to 500/£501 to £2000/£2001 to £10000/£10000+)
  - How familiar are you with the painting (0=not at all to 10=very familiar)
Materials: Dark Triad Questionnaire

- The Short Dark Triad (SD3; Jones & Paulhus, 2013)

- 27 items
  - 9 Machiavellianism, 9 Narcissism, 9 Psychopathy

- Items scored 1 = Disagree Strongly to 5 = Agree Strongly

- Good psychometric properties
  - e.g. Cronbach alpha coefficients .76, .78, .73
Proposed Data Analysis
Descriptives

- Means for each of the 4 styles of painting:
  - Like in an art gallery
  - Like in living room
  - Talent of artist
  - Value
  - Familiarity
Independent t-tests
Comparison of males/females on:

- Like in art gallery
  - Rep, Pop, Abs, Jap

- Like in living room
  - Rep, Pop, Abs, Jap

- Talent of artist
  - Rep, Pop, Abs, Jap

- Value
  - Rep, Pop, Abs, Jap

- Familiarity
  - Rep, Pop, Abs, Jap
Pearson Correlations

- Like Representational in Gallery + Like Abstract in Gallery
- Like Representational in Gallery + Like Japanese in Gallery
- Like Pop in Gallery + Like Abstract in Gallery
- Like Pop in Gallery + Like Japanese in Gallery
- Like Abstract in Gallery + Like Japanese in Gallery

And so on for:
- Like in living room
- Talent of artist
- Value
- Familiarity
Pearson Correlations (2)

- Like Representational art in gallery + Studied Art
- Like Representational art in gallery + Visited Gallery in Past
- Like Representational art in gallery + Will Visit Gallery
- Like Representational art in gallery + Art Test Score

And so on for:
- Abstract art
- Pop art
- Japanese art
Pearson Correlations (3)

- Like Representational art in gallery + Machiavellianism
- Like Representational art in gallery + Narcissism
- Like Representational art in gallery + Psychopathy
- Like Abstract art in gallery + Machiavellianism
- Like Abstract art in gallery + Narcissism
- Like Abstract art in gallery + Psychopathy
- Like Pop art in gallery + Machiavellianism
- Like Pop art in gallery + Narcissism
- Like Pop art in gallery + Psychopathy
- Like Japanese art in gallery + Machiavellianism
- Like Japanese art in gallery + Narcissism
- Like Japanese art in gallery + Psychopathy

And so on for like in living room, talent of artist, value and familiarity
Pearson Correlations (4)

- Studied art + Machiavellianism
- Studied art + Narcissism
- Studied art + Psychopathy
- Visited gallery in past + Machiavellianism
- Visited gallery in past + Narcissism
- Visited gallery in past + Psychopathy
- Will visit gallery + Machiavellianism
- Will visit gallery + Narcissism
- Will visit gallery + Psychopathy
- Art test score + Machiavellianism
- Art test score + Narcissism
- Art test score + Psychopathy
Hierarchical Multiple Regression

- Gender
  - Machiavellianism
  - Narcissism
  - Psychopathy
    - Art Studied
    - Visited Gallery
      - Familiarity
      - Will Visit Gallery
        - Preference
Implications

- To advance theoretical understanding of how personality relates to preferences for art
Thank you

- Any questions?

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