

How Insecure Narcissists Becomes Cultural Omnivores: Consuming Highbrow Culture for Status Seeking and Lowbrow Culture for Integrity Signaling

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Abstract

Prior research on cultural omnivorousness has focused on examining how socioeconomic mechanisms influence preferences for highbrow versus lowbrow culture. Considering the recent prevalence of cultural omnivorousness and growing criticism of class-based perspectives on cultural tastes, this research instead investigates how two personality traits—namely, narcissism and psychological insecurity—affect cultural consumption. We predicted that when individuals high in narcissism had a sense of insecurity—specifically, low self-esteem or low self-perceived authenticity—they would show preferences for both highbrow culture, which signals status, and lowbrow culture, which signals self-integrity. Two experiments provide support for that hypothesis, showing that the interactive effect of narcissism and psychological insecurity on preference for highbrow culture is associated with status seeking, whereas the interactive effect on preference for lowbrow culture is associated with self-integrity signaling.

Keywords: *Cultural omnivore; Narcissism; Self-esteem*

Track: Consumer Behaviour