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Birds of a feather: Students' preferences for lecturers' personalities as predicted by their own personality and learning approaches

Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic [a], Adrian Furnham [b,*], Andrew N. Christopher [c], Jeanette Garwood [d], G. Neil Martin [e]

[a] *Department of Psychology, Goldsmiths University of London, United Kingdom*
[b] *Department of Psychology, University College London, 26 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AP, United Kingdom*
[c] *Department of Psychology, Albion College, Albion, MI, USA*
[d] *Applied Criminology Group, Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom*
[e] *Department of Psychology, University of Middlesex, United Kingdom*

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Abstract

Four-hundred and twenty-four students completed the Big Five (NEO-FFI: Costa & McCrae, 1992) and approaches to learning (Study Process Questionnaire: Biggs, 1987) scales, and rated the personality facets they desired in a good lecturer/professor. In general, students tended most to prefer lecturers who were emotionally stable (low in Neuroticism) and conscientious. However, correlations between students' and their preferred lecturers' personality characteristics revealed that students tended to prefer lecturers similar to themselves in all personality traits except Neuroticism, and particularly for Openness and Conscientiousness. Personality variables showed consistent incremental validity over age and gender in predicting students' preferences, whereas learning approaches provided very modest additional information. Implications and recommendations for future studies are discussed.

Keywords: Personality; Lecturers; Learning approaches; Academic; University; Preferences

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +44 0 207 679 5395.
E-mail address: a.furnham@ucl.ac.uk (A. Furnham).

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1. Introduction

Whilst there is an extensive literature on students' evaluations of their teachers (Greenwald, 1997; Marsh, 1987; Olivares, 2001) there are few studies on students' preferences for the specific personalities of their lecturers or professors (for a rare exception see Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2005). Thus the present study set out to examine students' preferences for the personality of their lecturers as defined by the ''Big Five'' personality taxonomy. According to the Big Five, individual differences in normal behaviour can be classified according to five major traits: Neuroticism or the tendency to experience anxiety, negative affect, and lack confidence; Extraversion or the tendency to be dominant, assertive, and comfortable in social situations; Openness or the tendency to prefer novel, artistic, and intellectual experiences; Agreeableness or the tendency to be altruistic, warm, and non-competitive; and Conscientiousness or the tendency to strive for achievement, be organised, dutiful and methodical (see Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007; Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Within both differential and educational psychology there is a vast literature on preferences for specific educational institutions (Furnham, 2005), courses (Ackerman & Heggestad, 1997), and teaching styles (Zhang, 2004), and a great deal of vocational psychology focuses on the premise that students and scholars select particular educational environments (Furnham, 2001; Holland, 1997). Hence, there have been numerous attempts to devise measures of both, so that indices of *fit* may be determined. There is a longstanding belief that matching preferences and styles lead to particularly desirable educational and work outcomes (Doyle & Rutherford, 1984), though evidence is inconclusive (Furnham, 1995).

Various studies in medical university programmes have shown that students take into consideration the personal attributes of their lecturers when choosing specific courses (Haghdoost & Shakibir, 2006; Paukert & Richards, 2000). These studies show that students have a general preference for lecturers who are good communicators, eager to answer questions carefully and enthusiastic about their teaching subjects. There is also evidence that preference for specific attributes in lecturers is linked to individual differences in academic performance. For instance, Rothman, Basson, and Rothman (2000) examined the personality of students and lecturers of pharmacy using a Jungian framework; they found students with a strong preference for perceiving and extraverted lecturers tended to obtain lower grades and showed slower advancement throughout their course.

On the other hand, the literature on fit and style preference may indicate that preference for lecturers' personalities may be largely a function of students' own personality characteristics, leading to the prediction that there will be significant positive correlations between the Big Five personality dimensions of students and those of preferred lecturers. This hypothesis motivated Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2005) to test the relationship between students' ($N = 136$) personality and intelligence and the personality characteristics of their favourite lecturers. In general, students tended to prefer lecturers who were high on Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience. More specific associations indicated that open students tended to prefer open lecturers, whilst agreeable students tended to prefer agreeable lecturers. When the students' Big Five personality trait and IQ scores were regressed onto the rated lecturer scores, only Agreeableness was significantly predicted: Less intelligent, agreeable, and introverted students all had strong preferences for agreeable lecturers. Thus, results partly supported the hypothesis that students tend to prefer lecturers with personality characteristics like themselves.

The current study was a replication and extension of the study by Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2005). Thus it sought to replicate the hypothesis that congruency between students' and lecturers' personality characteristics would explain what types of lecturers students prefer. Aside from replicating the above reviewed findings (in a larger and more representative sample), the present study used a more comprehensive measure of the Big Five, namely the NEO-PI-R, which enabled us to examine the relationship between students' and preferred lecturers' personality at the primary-facet level. Furthermore, we set out to determine whether students' learning approaches may have any impact on their preferences for lecturers' personalities.

2. Approaches to learning

Students' approaches to learning refer to individual differences in the way students study, that is, what motives they have for learning and how they choose to do so (e.g., superficially, focused on the grades or feedback they may get, or with a desire to know as much as possible about a given subject) (Biggs, 1987). The most widely used instrument to assess learning approaches is Biggs' (1987, 1993) Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ), which assesses 'deep', 'surface', and 'achieving' motives and strategies.

Students using a surface approach are goal-oriented rather than intrinsically motivated, meaning they learn in a superficial manner with the aim of achieving the minimum requirements: to them, "less is more". Conversely, a student taking a deep approach is interested in obtaining a meaningful understanding of what is learned through extensive reading and research, thus he/she is intrinsically motivated. On the other hand, students undertaking an achieving approach are highly committed to gaining good grades and would use a systematic approach in their studies. Biggs (1987) maintained that these approaches are more or less mutually exclusive, implying students are likely to use one *or* the other.

Although SPQ factors have been linked to academic performance as well as preference for different teaching methods (Chamorro-Premuzic, Furnham, & Lewis, 2007), they have never been used to predict students' preferences for different types of lecturers or their personality traits. Previous studies have shown that learning approaches are significantly related to personality traits (Zhang, 2000, 2003). Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2007) estimated the correlation between the two sets of constructs to be only modest ($r = .19$), though principal component analysis showed that deep motive, surface strategy, Neuroticism, deep strategy, surface motive, Openness to Experience, and Agreeableness all loaded onto one components, with achieving strategy, achieving motive, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion loading on another. Given the overlap between learning approaches and personality traits (especially at the level of individual factors), one would predict that learning approaches are significantly related to preferences for lecturers' personality traits. However, it is important to examine whether this relationship holds when students' personalities are taken into consideration. Thus the present study hypothesized that:

(H1) Students' personality would be related to their preferred personality in lecturers', such that similarity in all traits but Neuroticism would predict higher ratings. These associations would replicate Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic's (2005) findings and are expected to remain significant even when gender and age are controlled.

(H2) Students' learning approaches would be significantly associated with their preferences for lecturers' personality, such that SPQ factors will have incremental validity over and above personality in predicting students' choices of lecturers' personalities. This would be consistent with the modest degree of overlap between SPQ and the Big Five reported by Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2007).

3. Method

3.1. Participants

In all, 424 students from four universities (i.e., UCL, Albion College, Michigan, Leeds Metropolitan University, and the University of Michigan) participated in this study. All students were enrolled in psychology courses either at the UG or PG level. In total there were 307 females and 117 males. They ranged in age from 17 to 43 years though the majority (84%) were aged between 18 and 20 ($X = 19.60$, SD = 3.45) years.

3.2. Measures

All students completed the following questionnaires:

1. *Lecture Preference Questionnaire (LPQ)* contains 30 items (see Appendix A for a brief description and sample items), where students rated the extent to which they like or dislike lecturers with specific personality characteristics. Personality traits were adapted from the NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) facet sub-scales using exact label descriptions from Table 7 (p. 49) of the NEO manual. Instructions and layout were adapted from Furnham's (2003) earlier version of this inventory.

2. *Approaches to learning* were assessed through an abbreviated version of the Study Process Questionnaire (SPQ) (Biggs, 1987; Fox, McManus, & Winder, 2001). This inventory is used to assess three major approaches to learning, namely *surface*, *deep,* and *achieving*. Each of these approaches can be further broken down into two components, namely learning motive (which refers to *why* students learn), and learning strategy (which refers to *how* they learn). There are thus six factors: (a) deep motive, (b) deep strategy, (c) achieving motive, (d) achieving strategy, (e) surface motive, and (f) surface strategy. In its original form, the SPQ comprises a total of 42 items (7 items per factor). The abbreviated version of the SPQ used in the present study consisted of 18-items (3 for each of the six factors described above) and also assessed three second order shared indicator factors (surface, deep, achieving). Participants' responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Psychometric information on the reliability and validity of the short version of the SPQ has been reported elsewhere (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2007; Fox et al., 2001). In the present data set, all Cronbach's alphas for the SPQ factors were higher than .70, indicating adequate internal consistency.

3. *Personality* was assessed using the NEO-FFI (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This inventory is a short version of the NEO-PI-R and assesses the personality dimensions of Neuroticism (low Emotional Stability), Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.

Items involved questions about typical behaviours or reactions and are answered on a five point Likert-type scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Individuals are asked to describe themselves over a range of 60 items with 12 questions for each factor. A vast number of studies provided evidence for the reliability and validity of this instrument (Costa & McCrae, 1992), which has also been shown to be a satisfactory tool for assessing relationships between personality and a number of academic variables, such as intellectual satisfaction, self-esteem, and teaching effectiveness (Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2005).

4. Results

Table 1 shows the mean ratings and standard deviations for each of the 30 facets of the NEO-PI-R as used by students to rate the preferred personality characteristics of their lecturers. Overall, the Conscientiousness facets all received positive evaluations (particularly C1 and C2), while all the Neuroticism facets received strong negative evaluations. Two Extraversion (E1, E6), three Openness (O3, O4, O5), and one Agreeableness (A3) facet, received positive ratings, but participants seemed reasonably indifferent to many other facets from these three traits (e.g. E4, O1, O6, A4, A5). Thus, students wanted their lecturers to be stable, conscientious, extraverted, agreeable, and open (in that order).

Table 2 shows the rotated (varimax) solution for the Principal Component Analysis conducted on the 30 facets used to rate lecturers' personalities. As can be seen, aside from two Extraversion facets (E4 and E3), most facets tended to load on the original Big Five super-traits. The conventional scoring system was retained for further analysis for the sake of theoretical parsimony.

Table 3 reports the bivariate correlations for the target variables. As seen, female students tended to prefer emotionally stable and conscientious lecturers, whilst younger students were more likely to prefer agreeable lecturers.

Students' Neuroticism was significantly positively correlated with preference for agreeable lecturers, whilst students' Extraversion correlated negatively with preference for neurotic, and positively with preference for extraverted lecturers. On the other hand, open students tended to dislike both neurotic and agreeable lecturers, preferring those high on Openness. Agreeableness in students correlated positively with preference for open, agreeable, and conscientious lecturers, whereas conscientious students disliked neurotic, but liked extraverted and conscientious lecturers. Thus, with the exception of Neuroticism, each of the Big Five traits reflected congruency between students' own and lecturers' preferred personality, supporting our first hypothesis.

Regarding learning approaches, students' surface motive was significantly and positively correlated with preference for agreeable and conscientious lecturers, whilst their deep motive correlated positively with preference for open lecturers. On the other hand, students high on achieving motive tended to like conscientious lecturers. Students' surface strategy correlated positively with preferences for both agreeable and conscientious lecturers, whilst students' deep strategy correlated positively with preference for open lecturers. Last, but not least, students' achieving strategy correlated positively with preference for open, as well as agreeable lecturers. Thus, learning approaches were significantly associated with openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, but not with neuroticism or extraversion.

Table 1
Students' mean preference ratings and standard deviations for lecturers' personality super- and primary-traits

	X	SD
Neuroticism	−21.68	9.14
N1: Anxiety	−3.24	2.05
N2: Angry Hostility	−3.82	1.76
N3: Depression	−3.89	1.77
N4: Self-Consciousness	−3.34	1.94
N5: Impulsiveness	−3.36	2.14
N6: Vulnerability	−3.89	1.65
Extraversion	12.95	6.95
E1: Warmth	3.56	1.32
E2: Gregariousness	2.65	1.71
E3: Assertiveness	1.71	2.08
E4: Activity	.53	2.27
E5: Excitement-Seeking	1.93	1.97
E6: Positive Emotions	3.46	1.30
Openness	8.76	8.08
O1: Fantasy	.91	2.33
O2: Aesthetics	1.50	2.06
O3: Feelings	2.22	1.73
O4: Actions	2.23	1.67
O5: Ideas	2.37	1.68
O6: Values	−.44	2.49
Agreeableness	8.89	9.57
A1: Trust	1.77	2.11
A2: Straightforwardness	1.51	2.44
A3: Altruism	2.41	1.95
A4: Compliance	.89	2.54
A5: Modesty	.40	2.58
A6: Tender-Mindedness	1.88	1.85
Conscientiousness	16.20	7.71
C1: Competence	3.59	1.41
C2: Order	3.45	1.73
C3: Dutifulness	2.13	2.19
C4: Achievement Striving	2.56	1.74
C5: Self-Discipline	2.99	1.63
C6: Deliberation	1.55	2.12

Scale −5 to +5.

A series of hierarchical regressions were next performed to test the degree to which age, gender, student personality, and approaches to learning could predict preferences for lecturers' personality traits. These results are summarized in Table 4.

Age and gender accounted for 2% of the variance in preference for neurotic lecturers; being young, as well as female, significantly predicted preference for more stable lecturers. In block 2, the Big Five significantly explained an additional 3% of the variance, with both higher Openness and Conscientiousness significantly predicting preference for more stable lecturers. Notewor-

Table 2
Results from the VARIMAX Rotated Factor Analysis on Lecturers' personality

N3: Depressive	.89				
N2: Angry-H	.86				
N4: Self-C	.79				
N1: Anxiety	.76				
N6: Vulnerable	.76				
N5: Impulsive	.70				
O3: Feelings		.77			
O4: Actions		.71			
E5: Excitement		.69			
O2: Aesthetics		.67			
O1: Fantasy		.59			
O5: Ideas		.59			
E2: Gregarious		.57			
E6: Positive E		.57			
E1: Warmth		.51			
O6: Values		.34			
C6: Discipline			.81		
C2: Orderly			.76		
C4: Achievement S			.75		
C1: Competent			.67		
C3: Dutifulness			.60		
C6: Deliberation			.59		
A3: Altruistic				.74	
A6: Tender-M				.74	
A5: Modesty				.73	
A4: Compliant				.72	
A2: Straightforward				.63	
A1: Trusting				.62	
E4: Activity					.72
E3: Assertive					.70
Eigenvalue:	5.43	4.71	3.27	2.16	1.38
Variance	17.8%	15.6%	10.9%	7.2%	4.6%

thy is that gender was no longer a significant predictor in the model, suggesting that the reason why women preferred more stable lecturers is that they (women) are both more open and conscientious than their male counterparts. In block 3 learning approaches significantly increased the percentage of variance explained by 2%, and both deep motive and surface strategy were significant predictors. Whilst Openness and Conscientiousness remained significant, age was no longer a significant predictor, suggesting that differences in learning approaches may explain why younger students are more likely to prefer stable lecturers.

In a second hierarchical regression, only personality traits (block 2) accounted for a significant amount of variance (5%) in preference for extraverted lecturers, with students' Extraversion level as the only significant predictor. Likewise, preferences for open lecturers were only predicted by the Big Five (4%), specifically students' Agreeableness and, particularly, Openness scores.

Table 3
Correlations of Students' Personality, Learning Approaches and Demographics with LPQ Super-traits

		Lecturer				
		N	E	O	A	C
Student	N	.00	−.08	−.02	.10*	.00
	E	−.10*	.15*	.07	.00	−.01
	O	−.10*	.04	.20**	−.17**	.03
	A	−.02	.05	.11**	.16**	.20**
	C	−.14**	.10*	.03	.13	.22**
Student	SM	−.01	.03	.04	.24**	.10*
	DM	.08	−.06	.13**	−.05	.07
	AM	.00	.11	.07	.08	.20**
	SS	.09	.04	−.05	.22**	.15**
	DS	.03	−.06	.15**	−.09	.05
	AS	−.03	−.02	.10*	.17**	.12
Student	Age	.08	.01	−.02	−.17**	.07
	Gender	.16*	.06	.01	−.04	−.14**

Note: N = 387; N = Neuroticism, E = Extraversion, O = Openness, A = Agreeableness, C = Conscientiousness; SM = Surface motive; DM = deep motive; AM = achieving motive; SS = surface strategy; DS = deep strategy; AS = achieving strategy; ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$; all β coefficients are standardized.

In regards to lecturers' Agreeableness, there were many significant predictors. First, younger students showed a tendency to prefer more agreeable lecturers (even when gender, personality and learning approaches were controlled for). Second, students' Neuroticism, Openness (negatively), and Agreeableness all predicted preferences for agreeable lecturers, accounting for 9% of the variance. Third, learning approaches significantly explained an additional 4% of the variance with surface and achieving (negative) motives, as well as deep (negative) and achieving strategies being significant predictors in the model. It can also be seen that, in block 3, Openness was no longer a significant predictor in preferences for agreeable lecturers.

The final regression showed that women tended to prefer conscientious lecturers, and personality significantly explained preferences for conscientious lecturers over and above gender and age. Learning approaches did not account for any significant additional variance, though surface strategy was a significant predictor. In sum, our second hypothesis was supported with respect to neurotic and agreeable lecturers.

5. Discussion

This study investigated whether students' own personality and learning approaches explained their preferences for lecturers with specific personality characteristics. As such, it followed up on a recent study by Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic (2005), which had suggested that students are more likely to prefer lecturers with personalities like themselves.

In all, results tended to replicate previous findings, as four of the Big Five personality dimensions (all except Neuroticism) showed significant correlations between students' own and lecturers' desired personality characteristics. It is noteworthy that, unlike Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic's

Table 4
Regressions of students' gender, age, big five, and learning style as predictors of LPQ ratings

		Preference for lecturers'									
		N		E		O		A		C	
		β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
Students'											
1	Age	.11	2.13*	.02	.34	−.01	.19	−.17	3.43**	.05	1.08
	Gender	.11	2.30*	.07	1.15	.01	.23	−.03	.62	−.12	2.48*
F	(2365)	*5.10***		*.75*		*.04*		*6.19***		*3.55**	
Adj. R^2		*.02*		*.01*		*.00*		*.03*		*.01*	
R^2		*.02*		*.06*		*.00*		*.03*		*.02*	
2	Age	.12	2.36*	.00	.05	−.01	.27	−.18	3.62**	.04	.90
	Gender	.09	1.65	.10	1.58	−.00	.13	.06	1.11	−.08	1.49
	N	−.05	1.00	.03	.48	.00	.08	.16	2.90**	.01	.31
	E	−.08	1.56	.16	2.45*	.06	1.13	.05	.97	−.05	1.01
	O	−.12	2.38*	.03	.56	.21	4.08**	−.14	2.78**	−.01	.23
	A	.07	1.25	.00	.09	.13	2.19*	.11	1.98*	.14	2.34*
	C	−.16	2.54**	.11	1.46	−.05	.84	.10	1.66	.12	2.00*
F	(7360)	*3.61***		*1.80**		*3.44***		*6.29***		*4.01***	
Adj. R^2		$.05^{\Delta **}$		$.05^{\Delta **}$		$.04^{\Delta **}$		$.09^{\Delta **}$		$.05^{\Delta **}$	
R^2		*.06*		*.06*		*.06*		*.11*		*.07*	
3	Age	.09	1.88	.02	.45	−.02	.44	−.15	3.09**	.05	1.09
	Gender	.06	1.15	.08	1.14	.01	.16	.07	1.39	−.11	2.07*
	N	−.07	1.20	−.00	.05	−.01	.26	.11	1.94*	−.02	.35
	E	−.10	1.86	.14	2.16*	.04	.83	.02	.51	−.08	1.48
	O	−.15	2.58**	.12	1.75	.19	3.32**	−.04	.79	.05	.91
	A	−.02	.22	−.06	.52	.15	1.44	.27	2.72**	.02	.26
	C	−.14	2.29*	.13	1.77	−.05	.87	.09	1.50	.14	2.27*
	SM	−.05	.83	.04	.53	.10	1.59	.15	2.50**	.02	.38
	DM	.16	2.34*	−.10	1.32	.04	.62	.04	.61	.02	.39
	AM	−.00	.10	.14	1.36	−.09	1.07	−.21	2.55**	.11	1.26
	SS	.13	2.16*	.07	1.01	−.01	.27	.09	1.51	.12	2.01*
	DS	.05	.82	−.06	.73	.04	.56	−.13	1.91*	−.05	.80
	AS	−.03	.72	−.06	.52	.16	1.44	.35	.2.77**	.18	.26
F	(12,354)	*3.43***		*1.88**		*2.40***		*5.62***		*3.19***	
Adj. R^2		$.07^{\Delta **}$		*.08*		*.04*		$.13^{\Delta **}$		*.07*	
R^2		*.07*		*.08*		*.07*		*.16*		*.10*	

Note: N = 387; gender coded 0 = female, 1 = male; N = Neuroticism, E = Extraversion, O = Openness, A = Agreeableness, C = Conscientiousness; SM = Surface motive; DM = deep motive; AM = achieving motive; SS = surface strategy; DS = deep strategy; AS = achieving strategy; $**p < .01$, $*p < .05$; Δ = significant Delta change (increase in variance %); all β coefficients are standardized.

(2005) study, the present paper employed a more rigorous scoring system for the ratings of lecturers' personalities (based on the comprehensive list of NEO-PI-R primary facets) as well as a more representative sample comprising a larger group of students from different universities as well as two countries. It is thus likely that personality partly determines the choice of specific lecturers and that choice tends to prioritize preference for lecturers with similar characteristics to that of students.

The fact that, unlike other traits, Neuroticism levels were not significantly correlated in students and lecturers is not surprising, but consistent with Furnham and Chamorro-Premuzic's (2005) results. Indeed, Neuroticism was the least desired trait in a lecturer and there is no reason to expect less emotionally stable students to prefer lecturers with similar Neuroticism scores. If anything, the opposite pattern of results may be expected, though the general trend for all the students was to prefer stable lecturers quite unanimously. Thus, there were arguably "floor effects" in their ratings for lecturers' N scores. A surprising association was that of deep and strategic motives with lecturers' N. One possibility is that neurotic lecturers are more likely to be perfectionist in their teaching styles (e.g., including more detailed information, being more accurate, and obsessional), which may suit deep learners more. However, it is not clear how this may relate to strategic learners, and in any case until this association is replicated our interpretation will remain purely speculative.

The regressions showed that students' personality traits are better predictors of their preferences for lecturers than are learning approaches or demographic variables. In fact, similarity between students' and (perceived) lecturers' personalities tends to predict preference regardless of gender, age, and learning approaches used by the students. For each of the Big Five traits used to rate preferences for lecturers, the students' own personalities explained a significant amount of additional variance over and above gender and age. Learning approaches, on the other hand, only provided useful additional information to predict ratings of lecturers' Neuroticism and Agreeableness.

It is however noteworthy that, for each of the traits used to rate students' preferences for lecturers, only a small amount of variance was accounted for. Yet the Adj. R^2 values are likely to under-estimate the degree to which students' personality and learning approaches predict their choices of lecturers. First, the criteria used (the Big Five) were already computed after Principal Component Analysis and are thus far from perfect measures of the target constructs. Second, these criteria are "other" rather than self-ratings of personality (that is, the personality of the lecturers' has been estimated from students' ratings rather than self-reports). Accordingly, they should be less accurate describing the lecturers students prefer than a self-reported inventory completed by the lecturers themselves. Indeed, this may explain why the structure of the Big Five personality traits – particularly the loadings of the primary facets of Extraversion and the overlap between Extraversion and Openness primary facets – differed from the typical structure (Costa & McCrae, 1992), though Block (1995) argued that Openness and Extraversion could be subsumed under a common higher order trait representing exploration/approach.. Thus future studies in this area should assess lecturers' personality through self- rather than other-reports (and maybe compare both). Last, but not least, social desirability may have distorted both students' self- as well as lecturers' other-ratings of personality, as terms such as "competent", "modest", "anxious" are value-laden and likely to reduce individual difference determinants of choices (causing unrealistically uniform preferences).

Once again (replicating Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic's (2005), findings), Agreeableness was the best marker for individual differences in preference for lecturers' personalities. Younger students (regardless of their gender, personality, and learning approach) preferred more agreeable lecturers, and the same was true for neurotic and agreeable students, as well as those less open to new experiences. Students who preferred agreeable lecturers were also more likely to use surface motive and less likely to have achieving motives and deep strategies. Although the prelimin-

ary and correlational nature of these findings (i.e., this is only the second time students' preferences for their lecturers' personality traits have been examined as a function of their own personality characteristics) makes it difficult to provide a conceptual framework to understand the causal links between the variables examined, it seems clear from the regressions that the overlap between personality and learning approaches produced little incremental validity. Thus, personality and learning approaches were "competing" for the same rather than explaining difference variance. Perhaps more importantly, the absence of actual academic performance data makes it difficult to elaborate a comprehensive path analysis whereby lecturers' personalities can not only be examined in relation to students' preferences and learning approaches, but also their actual learning outcomes. In fact, it is equally possible that students' choices of learning approaches are affected by the personality of their lecturers, than vice-versa, but only more research, in particular longitudinal studies, can answer this question.

Appendix A. Instructions for the lecturer preference questionnaire (LPQ)

What do you look for in a lecturer?. When lecturers get feedback from students they are often surprised by the variability in response. Some students clearly liked the content, style, pace etc. of the lecturer while others did not. This brief questionnaire looks at the sort of characteristics you most (and least) want in your lecturers. We want you to think of someone who lectures, gives tutorials or supervises projects. The list below is in fact based on a study that looked at the personality characteristics associated with lecturers. The trait is in italics, the description underneath. Your task is to indicate the extent to which you would like your lectures to have, or not to have, these characteristics. Show your preference by completing the 11 point scale. The more you want that characteristic in your lecturer the higher the positive score (i.e. +4, +5). The less you want those characteristics the higher you circle a negative score (i.e. −4, −5). The middle score (0) means this is not important or relevant to you

		Negative						*Positive*				
		−5	−4	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
1	*Warm*: Friendly, warm, sociable, cheerful, affectionate, outgoing.	−5	−4	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
2	*Gregarious*: Pleasure-seeking, talkative, spontaneous.	−5	−4	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5

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