

# Music Preferences, and their effect on Personality, Coping Styles and Perceived Scholastic Competence in Students

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### **Abstract**

Research has recently turned its focus on the relationships between music and personality. This study aims to replicate and further this by investigating the effect of music preference on three psychological variables; personality traits, coping skills and perceived scholastic competence. A convenience sample of 108 students in Ireland participated by responding to four quantitative surveys: Short Test of Musical Preference revised (STOMP-R), Big Five Inventory (BFI), Brief COPE and Harter's Scholastic Competences subscale. Results yielded no positive significant correlations between music preferences and either personality traits, coping skills or perception of academic ability. However results did show that music training increases preference for complex music.

## **Introduction**

We are exposed to music at various different times a day in the Western world; it plays a large role in our lives, whether we intend this to be the case or not. Apart from actively choosing to consume music through the radio, going to concerts or by another means, we are constantly subjected to music without necessarily wishing to hear it. For instance every time we walk into a shop, get in a lift or go to a restaurant. Even television programmes and films come with a soundtrack. It can actually be somewhat hard to get away from music.

However this does not seem to be a problem or an irritant as we use music to our own ends. It allows us to assess and even predict another person's personality. From early adolescence, a very common question in the getting-to-know someone stage is very often "what type of music do you like?" (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006). The answer given can have far-reaching implications as allied tastes can often form the basis of new friendships, which could in turn lead to gaining access to another whole social group. University students too, use musical preferences as a barometer to assess whether other people have similar leanings or interests, and grasp at it as a basis for friendships, and even relationships. Just scrolling through somebody's ipod can be a tell-tale sign, and research has shown that the majority of people believe that our music preferences reveal very strong, and, perhaps more importantly, accurate insights into someone's personality and perhaps even into what type of person they are (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003). As this is the case, it is of interest to this research to

understand which style of music reveals which particular personality trait, hence specific traits and styles will be investigated to examine if correlations are present between them. We know there to be a relation with music preferences and personality, however research has indicated that other factors are also at play within us (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnhams 2007). It follows logically therefore, that our music preferences could have an effect on other aspect of our lives, for instance our ability to cope, or even impact our perceptions of our abilities in other areas, such as academia. This research will conduct analysis on these relationships to further extend the extent of our knowledge of music preferences.

We are aware that we do not always share music tastes, but why is it that some people gravitate to a certain genre of music and do not find other genres appealing at all? Our individual differences clearly play a large role. Research denotes that there is a definite correlation between personality and music preferences (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003, Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham 2007). For people who actively choose to involve music into their lives they will welcome most of the musical interludes they come across on a daily basis. People who can play one or more musical instrument(s) are presumably music-lovers who enjoy hearing music. They have spent considerable time throughout the course of their lives studying music on different levels; from learning to read music notes at the very start, to completing exams in both practical and theoretical music. Their knowledge is therefore substantial compared to their peers who have not been exposed to the underlying theory, and who enjoy music purely for the sound, rhythm and melodies that it produces. Does a knowledge and deeper understanding of the rules and methods of music lead to musicians liking a broader type of music? Research indicates that people with higher IQs tend to have a greater preference for the more complex musical genres (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003). Developing from this, it is theorised in this research that a thorough understanding of the structure and composition of music will affect the style of music preferred.

### *Musical preferences*

Considering how much music we are exposed to, and that it is a vital ingredient to so many social situations (e.g. parties, weddings, even funerals), it is surprising that music has received so little attention from psychological research until relatively recently. As Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) expressed it: “[Music] warrants the attention of mainstream social and personality psychologists”. Similarly, Zillman & Gan (1997, cited in Radocy & Boyle 2003) express concern that social psychology has not paid sufficient attention to popular music when it is such an influence in social development. Cattell in the 1950s was one of the first researchers to examine how music could contribute to our understanding of personality. Cattell believed music preferences gave a glimpse into the individual’s unconscious, allowing access to sides of us as yet untapped by any personality inventory (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003). The aim of Cattell & Anderson’s (1953) investigation was to create a method of measuring dimensions of unconscious personality traits. Their music-preference measure never gained traction, but their results marked the start of understanding that there is undoubtedly underlying relationships in music preferences. (Rentfrow, Goldberg & Levitin, 2011)

It was half a century later that others picked up his study of the individual differences between music preferences and personality. However, the contemporary view, far from music reflecting unconscious motive, urges and desires (Cattell & Anderson 1953, cited in Rentfrow, Goldberg & Levitin, 2011) states music preferences are manifestations of explicit psychological traits, most probably interacting with our various experiences, needs, or constraints (Rentfrow, Goldberg & Levitin, 2011). In fact, Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) state that, if music preferences are “partially determined by personality, self-views, and cognitive abilities,” then it stand to reason that by knowing a person’s music preferences, it may lead to

“clues to his or her personality, self-views, and cognitive abilities”. Most current research on music preferences has come from interactionist theories (e.g Buss 1987, Swann, Rentfrow & Guinn 2002, cited in Rentfrow et al. 2011) by hypothesising that people “seek musical environments that reinforce and reflect their personalities, attitudes and emotions”. Music has been seen as a “badge”, used by people to communicate their values, attitudes, and self-views (North & Hargreaves 1999). Swann, Rentfrow & Gunn (2002) also noted that people select music to reinforce their dispositions and self-views, and give the example that people who score highly in Openness (to experience) may choose music that reinforces their view that they are sophisticated and artistic. Rentfrow, & Gosling (2003) gives the example of Little & Zuckerman (1986) who reported associations between sensation seeking and a preference for rock and heavy metal and negatively correlated to soundtracks. Another similar example is that of McCown et al.’s (1997) study which predicts that those high in Extraversion and psychoticism prefer music with an exaggerated bass, as can be found in rap and dance music.

Much of our current understanding of music-genre preferences and structure comes from Rentfrow & Gosling’s (2003) study. They undertook a series of 6 studies, examining people’s lay beliefs about music, the structure underlying music preferences and the links between music preferences and personality. This study revealed four dimensions of musical preferences:

- Upbeat & Conventional      -as defined by Pop, Soundtracks, Oldies
- Intense & Rebellious        -as defined by Rock, Alternative, Heavy Metal
- Energetic & Rhythmic       -as defined by Dance, Hip-hop, R&B
- Reflective & Complex       -as defined by Classical, Jazz, Opera

Prior to Rentfrow & Gosling (2003), research had been patchy and incomplete on music preferences. They state that researchers had only investigated certain music genres, and only a

few personality dimensions, for instance sensation-seeking (Little & Zuckerman, 1986), Extraversion and Psychoticism (McCown et. Al, 1997), and Anti-Social Personality (McNamara & Ballard 1999). One finding to come out of Rentfrow & Gosling's work was confirmation that people believe very strongly that the music one listens to provides a substantial amount of information about who they are as a person. Participants also reported listening to music more than participation in any other activity.

Rentfrow and Gosling's findings indicate that, if it is true that a person's preferences in music are somewhat regulated by personality, self-views and cognitive ability, then it follows that, by knowing what types of music a person likes can give a big clue to what that person is like; their personality, their self-views and their cognitive abilities. It would also seem that, from knowing someone's music preferences, we gain insight into their levels of openness, extraversion, intelligence, and even perhaps their political leanings. Rentfrow and Gosling go as far as suggesting that music choices can be revealing for other parts of our personality, such as our values and our goals. Indeed, Gosling (2002) had previously stated that Music can be used to make other-directed identity claims.

Later studies (such as Delsing, Ter Bogt, Engels & Meeus, 2008) yield very similar results with the musical preference factors. Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham (2007) praise Rentfrow & Gosling, not only for organising music into the four distinct factors, that "are not only associated with the level of complexity, emotionality and energy of musical compositions, but also individuals differences in personality, ability and self-perception. " (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham 2007). It is the individual differences which play a vital role in understanding our desire for one type of music over another.

In addition to establishing these four musical dimensions, Rentfrow & Gosling's (2003) study asked participants questions relating to their lifestyle preferences. They asked the participants how much music preferences reveal about their own, and other people's, personalities. The findings demonstrate that people consider music preferences to be more revealing than people's preferences for books, magazine, television programmes, films, food choices or clothes. The majority of participants therefore, believe that music preferences give the deepest insight into their own personalities, and are also the best assessment tool of another person's personality. This seems to be bigger than previous assumptions. Firth (1987, cited in Radocy & Boyle 2003) indicated that "popular music fulfils four social functions: It helps individuals in self-identity, relates public and private emotional lives, shapes popular memory and sense of time" and being part of a group proclaiming 'this is our music', but did not go as far to as suggest it reveals such personal information.

Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) further state that the relationship between cognitive ability and music preference adheres to the idea that people choose music that results in optimal levels of stimulation, and hence they suggest "that the optimal level of stimulation for highly intelligent individuals is produced by complex music whereas the optimal level of stimulation for less intelligent individuals is produced by comparatively simpler music". It is expected, therefore that less intelligent people will opt for the more simplex music.

Though Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) have been commended for such a comprehensive overview of musical preferences, they naturally were not able to address every conceivable facet of understanding our relationship with music. They themselves propose future research should be undertaken examining the individual differences in cognitive complexity and music complexity which is carried out by Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham (2007) who state that, as emotionality and intellect are clearly major components of musical appreciation, they need to be explored and identified along with our individual differences as they all interact with each

other to produce our preferences. This study will focus on three in particular: personality factors, coping strategies and academic perception.

### ***Personality factors***

It seems almost redundant, therefore, to even state that personality factors influence our musical preferences, as the above research has revealed the two elements to be so interlinked. Our personalities, and the differences found between each and every person, have long been a topic of interest for psychologists. The term “personality” was defined by Allport as “a dynamic organisation, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person’s characteristic patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and feelings. (Allport 1961, cited p.7 Maltby, Day & Macaskill, 2007). Personality refers to the set of stable traits which form the basis of consistent individual differences in behaviour. These traits give an indication of how a particular individual would behave in numerous diverse occasions. Our personality indicated that our behaviour should be reasonably consistent at all times.

In psychology today, we have five factor model of personality - that is five essential building blocks which, added together, form each individual personality, widely known as the “Big Five” trait dimensions. These five traits are based on Costa & McCrae’s work in 1982 and have been the measurement of personality ever since. Pervin et al. give a brief explanation of each O.C.E.A.N. trait:

*“Neuroticism contrasts emotional stability with a broad range of negative feelings, including anxiety, sadness, irritability and nervous tension. Openness to experience describes the breadth, depth, and complexity of an individual’s mental and experiential life. Extraversion and Agreeableness both summarise traits that are interpersonal, that is, they capture what people do with each other and to each other. Finally,*

*Conscientiousness primarily describes task- and goal-directed behaviour and socially required impulse control.”*

*-P245 Pervin, Cervone & John, 2005*

Personality inventories measure an individual's levels of the Big Five traits and can deduce from the results the individual's personality type and their predicted behaviour. The respondent will rate themselves on a scale to see if a particular statement is something they would do, or a way in which they would behave. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John 1991) for instance, has “I am someone who...” prefacing each question. People who score highly on the Openness (to Experience) are characterised by being curious, having broad interests, and being imaginative and creative. The low scorers are conventional, down-to-earth, and are considered neither artistic nor analytical. Conscientiousness is characterised by organised people, who are reliable, ambitious, and persevering. Their opposing traits are found in people who are careless, lazy, and negligent. Those who score highly on Extraversion are sociable, talkative, optimistic and fun-loving, while lower scores are characterised by people who are more reserved, retiring, quiet and task-oriented. People who are high scorers on Agreeableness are good-natured, helpful, forgiving and straightforward, while their lower scoring peers are cynical, ruthless, irritable and suspicious. Finally high scorers on Neuroticism are often worriers, emotional, insecure, hypochondriacal people. Low scorers on this scales show traits such as being calm, relaxed, secure and unemotional individuals.

### ***Coping strategies***

Coping is defined as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing” (Folkman & Lazarus 1991, P.91). We are faced with challenges on a daily basis that we must overcome. The way in

which we handle these challenges is down to our own individual and completely differing perceptions, firstly, of the stressful stimulus itself, and secondly, to how we choose to cope with them.

Initially, as we have a unique balance of our Big Five factor traits, we each view any events differently. Then, we will all react to a stressor in our own unique way. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) differentiate between the stages of stress assessment. During primary appraisal, we interpret a stimulus as stressful or not, while during secondary appraisal we determine if we can handle the stressor or not (Schacter, Gilbert & Wegner, 2012). Research has shown that the body will react differently based on us perceiving a stress, or a challenge. (Blascovich & Tomaka 1996, cited in Schacter et al. 2012) Two people may view the same event in very different ways. A student who has studied hard and feels well prepared will see an exam as a challenge, while on the other hand, a student who has not adequately prepared themselves will view the same exam as a threat.

Studies have shown that chronic stress can be very detrimental to our health in the long term. Marucha et al. (1998) (as cited in Butcher, Mineka & Hooley 2007) showed that stressful events can compromise the immune systems responses in fending off any infection even in the short term. For the research, they made a small wound in the roof of the mouth of medical students, and observed that the wounds healed slower during exam periods than in summer holidays. Owing to the vast amounts of negative consequences that can result from exposure to stressors, it is important that we develop a method of coping to help us overcome the challenges we are faced with. Coping styles have been categorised into Emotion-focused (such as avoidance, or looking at the world in an artificially positive standing) and Problem-focused (rational coping in which one attempts to find a solution). A subset of the problem-focused strategy is known by Carver (1997) as Active Coping. This style is recognised as being very healthy. It is characterised by immediate acknowledgment of the stressor, followed by

searching for ways to solve or at least reduce the problem. The individual may also engage in reframing; finding creative and new ways to consider the stressor and thereby reduce the threat it poses.

The use of humour when faced with a stressful situation has long been an anecdotal piece of advice. As Abel (2002) states; “humour has been described as producing a cognitive-affective shift, or a restructuring of the situation so it is less threatening”. It appears that humour acts as a buffer between the individual and the stressor. It can be a very positive coping tool as it helps the individual during the cognitive appraisal to view the situation as being less threatening, and therefore far less stressful.

As Lazarus et al.’s above mentioned stress model explains; stress depends upon a person’s cognitive appraisal of events and circumstances and the ability to cope. Owing to this, it has been proposed that our personality variables can explain the different and unique ways that we each use in our cognitive appraisal of novel and threatening situations and consequent reactions (Lazarus 1993, cited in Abel 2002). Kuiper’s et al. (1993) study showed that the use of humour positively affects the appraisal of stressful scenarios and decreases the negative response. In addition, the cognitive-affective shift produced by humour also reduces the physiological response to stress. Soon after, Kuiper et al. (1995 cited in Abel 2002) found that people with a high sense of humour will regard any events more positively than those who score lower for humour levels.

Using humour as a coping mechanism is largely a form of the emotion-focused technique (Lefcourt 1995, Rim 1988 cited in Abel 2002), (Although humour has also been categorised as problem-focused, by McCrea & Costa, 198d, cited in Abel 2002). It allows the individual to distance themselves from the stressor or negative event by taking themselves less seriously, which in turn reduces the emotional reaction to the original stressor (Lefcourt et al.

1995, cited in Abel 2002). It can also give rise to a “minimising” mechanism in which you look at the bright side of things, and also to “reversal” where one attempts to find the funny element in an upsetting condition (Rim, 1988 cited in Abel 2002).

University students are reportedly under vast amounts of pressure. The major cited stressors for students are the pressures of exams, deadlines, and daily challenges such as financial issues, time management and interpersonal relationships (Bland, Melton, Weles & Bigham, 2012). Significant amounts of research detail the use of music as a coping mechanism. It is believed that music can help regulate our emotions by allowing a temporary escape, or else it can validate thoughts and feelings which will allow the individual to release pent up feelings, for instance anger or anxiety (Rustad et al.,2003). In a similar manner, White (1985) found that music is, and will likely continue to be used as, a diversion from stress and a coping mechanism for many people. Considering the high levels of reported stress within the student body, it is of interest to ascertain that, if music can help lower the stress levels, what style of music would be most suited to the task.

### ***Academic Perception***

One expected outcome of a university graduate is that they have the capacity to think for themselves, as well as having learnt how to study independently. This is routinely reviewed and tested by the institution by means of essays and examinations. One way for students to recognise how they are managing in this respect (without the benefit of feedback from staff) is self-assessment, to see if they perceive that they are achieving what they should, and are at the same level as their peers. Bandurra (1997, as cited in Fazey & Fazey 2001) stated that “self-perceptions of competence in domains, along with global, contextual or task-related self-efficacy are known to be powerful influences on behaviour.” The way in which we perceive

our abilities (or lack thereof) in certain spheres will have an obvious effect on our on-going performance within these areas, and this can also give an insight into the person's personality. Zimmerman (1989 as cited in Fazey & Fazey, 2001) branded self-perceptions of competence as a 'thermostat' that regulates a learner's strategic behaviour in learning through a feedback loop. Fazey & Fazey (2011) affirm therefore, that the behavioural response is a direct result of the self-assessment of competence. In this way, if the self-perception of competence is low, it will frequently mean the individual will engage in task avoidance (they cite Harter, 1978, 1987; Bandura, 1989; Zimmerman, 1989). They further cite Nicholls & Miller's (1984) argument that "demonstration of competence is a basic human need". Thus, if the individual aspires to gain knowledge and to be able to show that they have, then it will act as an extremely strong motivator for action.

Self-perception is a multidimensional construct (Neemann & Harter, 1986). In the case of university students, the dimensions of self-concept can be classified as falling into one of two main categories: perceived competencies or abilities, and social relationships (e.g., perceived social acceptance) (Neeham & Harter, 1986). According to Harter, a 'domain' is "a discrete area of the self-construct in which we can report our assessment of competence or adequacy" (2001). The beliefs individuals hold about their various abilities will lead to predispositions to engage in particular behaviours, either achievement related or with an avoidance approach. In the long-term, this will affect the cognitive and selection processes of the individual (Fazey & Fazey 2001). As would be expected, if the activity (in this case scholastic competence) is personally salient to the individual, the effects of either high or low self-perception will have a larger impact on the individual's behaviour than if they are untroubled. (Harter 1987, cited in Fazey & Fazey, 2001)

Self-perception in the academic field has been found to predict college students' levels of academic success and/or scholastic competencies (Gerardi, 2005, as cited in DaRos-Voseles,

Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao 2008). In fact, according to Onwuegbuzie (2001, cited in DaRos-Voseles et al. ,2008) students with the lowest of perceived scholastic competence, perceived intellectual ability, and perceived creativity tend to have the highest levels of statistics anxiety, proving that our perception do have a visible effect on our behaviours. As this is the case, it is of interest to this study whether the musical preferences of an individual will affect their perceived competence in their own academic competences.

Rentfrow & Gosling's (2003) study indicated that people prefer music that provides optimal levels of stimulation, and that the more intelligent the person, the greater the preference for complex music. This study, however, aims to examine the aforementioned result from a different perspective. It is hypothesised that people who have actively studied music will have a better ability to appreciate complex music, as they will have an academic knowledge and understanding of what the composer is attempting, for instance with the discordant elements found within some types of jazz. This posits that a deeper understanding of the foundations of music will results in the person's cognitive abilities for music already being strong, and hence they will find more intellectually stimulating music more appealing owing to the fact that they have a greater knowledge of the complexities that make up this genre of music. Langmeyer, Guglhor-Rudan & Tarnai (2012) suggest that other predictors of music preferences may be differences in knowledge of music (e.g., knowing how to play an instrument). This is relevant to, and of interest to this study.

#### *Contributions of the current study*

The major work in this area (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003) has been American based. While there have more recently been similar European studies (such as Delsing et al., 2008 in the Netherlands and Langmeyer et al, 2011 in Germany) there has yet to be a comprehensive study completed in an Irish context, which this research seeks to achieve, to see if the results

are replicable here. It aims to see if positive correlations exist with certain musical genres and personality traits. In addition, this research will attempt to ascertain whether there is an association between particular musical preferences and certain coping styles which has yet to be explored. The relationship between levels of scholastic perception and specific musical genres will also be examined. Finally, this study aims to discover if being musically trained will result in a higher preference for reflective and complex music.

This study aims to explore the following hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: That Extraversion will be significantly associated with Intense & Rebellious preference.
- Hypothesis 2: That Agreeableness will be significantly associated with Upbeat & Conventional preference
- Hypothesis 3: That Energetic & Rhythmic music will be significantly associated with Neuroticism
- Hypothesis 4: That Intense & Rebellious preference will correlate positively with “Active Coping”
- Hypothesis 5: That Upbeat & Conventional will correlate positively with use of humour in coping
- Hypothesis 6: That Reflective & Complex will correlate positively with high perceived academic skills
- Hypothesis 7: That Energetic & Rhythmic music preference will correlate with low perceived scholastic competences
- Hypothesis 8: That musical training will significantly increase preference for Complex & Reflective music

## **Methodology**

There were 108 Participants for this study. A sample of convenience was used, with all the participants being students. The questionnaires were given in two ways: both paper-and-pencil style in Dublin Business School, and it was also put on the researcher's personal social networking page on Facebook through the use of Survey Monkey. Within Dublin Business School, permission was granted from a lecturer to gain access to a research class. The potential participants were approached and verbally asked to complete the survey; and the purpose and design was fully explained prior to their completion. A similar approach was used for the online survey. They were contacted with an email that described the study, the procedure and stating the only condition being that they must be a current student. The link to complete the survey was on the bottom. All participants took part voluntarily, and there was no motivating device used. A total of 59 students completed the online survey while 49 people participated with the traditional paper questionnaires leaving a total of 108 participants. The online survey was directed at students from various other Irish institutions, namely: Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, Dublin City University, Dundalk Institute of Technology and University of Limerick.

## Participants

The age of participants ranged from 18-61, with an average age of 24. The participants numbered more females, with 71, and 34 males (with 3 abstaining from responding). As stated, they were all students, although this study did not differentiate between Undergraduates, Master's levels students, or those completing a Ph.D. They were asked if they had received formal music training (anything from music classes in secondary school to individual music lessons). A total of 65 participants stated that they had received formal training, while the remaining 43 had not.

## *Design*

Of the eight hypotheses this cross-sectional quantitative study explored, seven were of correlational designs, while the final was a quasi-experimental design.

## *Materials*

Prior to partaking in the study (whether online or in person) a cover letter was read by all participants. It stated that it was a completely voluntary, confidential and anonymous, and informed the reader that they were welcome to withdraw from the task at any point during completion of the questionnaire if so desired.

The survey began by asking the basic descriptive questions of age and gender, and then inquired as to whether or not they had received formal musical training at any stage of their lives. All participants then completed four established questionnaires: the STOMP-R, Big Five Inventory, Brief Cope, and Harter's self-perception sub-scale for scholastic competences (for third level students).

## ***STOMP***

Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) developed The Short Test of Music Preference (STOMP) so that researchers would be able to categorise musical preferences by genre. STOMP was designed to assess music preferences, which are related to personality variables, self-views, and cognitive abilities. The original STOMP is a 14 item scale using 7-point rating. STOMP-R (2009) which was used in this study is a 23 item scale, listing various types of music (e.g. rock, punk, jazz etc.). Using 7-point rating scale, ranging from 1= “strongly dislike”, to 7= “strongly like”, the participant reflected their preferences. Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) derived four different sub-scales from their original questionnaire: Reflective & Complex (e.g. “Classical”), Intense & Rebellious (e.g., rock), Upbeat & Conventional (e.g. Pop, country,) and Energetic & Rhythmic (e.g. hip-hop).

STOMP was validated most recently by Langmeyer et al. (2012). They were the first to rate the STOMP using audio sample. In their study, the musical preferences were estimated by “both the particular STOMP genres and the corresponding sound files”.

## ***Big Five Inventory (BFI)***

The BFI was designed to assess the groups of traits as defined by the Five Factor Theory of Personality. This was originally introduced by Costa & McCrea (1984) based on the idea that personality is relatively stable across adulthood. Costa & McCrea identified five core traits (O.C.E.A.N), the basic dispositions that endure through adulthood and shape our behaviours and lives. The Big Five inventory consists of 44 items, where the respondent uses a using 5-point ratings (1=”strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree”). Each sentence begins with “I am a person who...”

Openness (to experiences) is characterised by creativity, curiosity, and ingenuity. It has an emphasis on intellectualism, independence of mind and reflection. (E.g., “I am a person

who prefers work that is routine”).)Those who score low prefer routine, and are generally conservative people.

Conscientiousness is characterised by responsibility, dependability and being organised. The opposite end of the scale is people who are disorganised, late, and somewhat aimless. (E.g. “I am a person who tends to be lazy”).

Extraversion is characterised by talkativeness, assertiveness, and energy. They are active and enjoy getting involved in things. Low scores here are more reserved, quiet individuals. (E.g. “I am a person who generates a lot of enthusiasm”).

Agreeableness is characterised by good-naturedness, cooperativeness, and trust. These traits can often be viewed as a combination of friendliness and compliance. (E.g. “I am a person who is helpful and unselfish with others”).

Neuroticism is a trait people who are easily upset often score high in. They can be worrying, emotional and vulnerable. It is polar opposite of emotional stability; even-tempered and calm individuals. (E.g. “I am a person who worries a lot”)

Previous studies such as those undertaken by John & Soto (2008) and Benet-Martinez & John (1998) have shown that this scale has high levels of validity and reliability.

### ***COPE***

Coping is defined as a reaction to a stressor. Lazarus (1984), states that developing individual strategies in response to stress is one of the requirements for successful adaptation (Hastings et al., 2005). One idea is that coping directly affects emotional well-being, independent of how powerful a stressor is perceived to be or its effect (Pottie & Ingram, 2008).

The Brief COPE (Carver, 1997) is a self-report questionnaire which is used to assess different coping behaviours and thoughts that each person may have in response to a stressful situation. It was created as a more manageable questionnaire than its longer predecessor (the COPE inventory). It has a total of 14 subscales: self-distraction, active coping, denial, substance use, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, behavioural disengagement, venting, positive reframing, planning, humour, acceptance, religion, and self-blame. Although the entire scale was administered for this research only the subscales for Active Coping and humour will be used to test the hypotheses. The participants are informed that the researcher wishes to see how they cope with stressful problems or situations in their lives, and advised to respond regardless of whether they appear to work for the individual or not. A total of 28 situations are listed, and the participant uses a 4 point likert scale (1= "I haven't been doing this at all", up to 4="I've been doing this a lot") to rate their actions. E.g. "I have been making jokes about it".

The Brief Cope has been shown to have validity and reliability by several studies; quite recently by: Yusoff, N., Low, W. Y., & Yip, C.H. (2010)

### ***Perceived Scholastic Competence***

The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter 1986) was created to deal with domains relevant to young adults who were pursuing a third level education. Harter's entire scale explores the individual's self-perceptions on various aspects of their lives (liked by others, school work, good at sports etc.) and was originally created to use with a sample of children. By the time we graduate to college, however, we are also able to "differentiate the domains of Intellectual Ability and Creativity, each of which defines its own factor" (Harter 2001), and this requires further elements being added to the scale, it is these that are used for this particular study. She elucidates that, even though a student may work hard and get good results, they may nonetheless feel that he/she lacks a certain level of

intellectual ability or creativity. Conversely, another student may feel that they are extremely creative, or perhaps highly intelligent, but feel that they are not fully applying their aptitudes to their academic career.

Self-perceptions of competence in domains (Harter, 1987), along with global, contextual or task-related self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997 cited in Harter), are known to be powerful influences on behaviour. According to Harter, a domain is a discrete area of the self-construct in which we can report our assessment of competence or adequacy (e.g. intellectual ability, athletic competence, close friendships). Individuals' beliefs about their abilities mediate motivational predispositions to engage in achievement behaviours, affecting cognitive and selection

The Self-Perception Profile for College Students (Neemann & Harter, 1986) was used to measure students' self-perceptions of competence in two academic domains: scholastic competence (ability to undertake academic study), and their perceived intellectual ability (perception of intelligence). Participants picked between two alternative statements, for example "Some students feel confident that they are mastering their coursework" and "other students do not feel so confident." They then chose whether the chosen statement was "really true for me" or "sort of true for me". An example can be seen in the attached questionnaire in the appendix. The items were scored from left to right 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively, where 1 indicated high self-perception on the target question, with 4 rating lowest. A mean score was then totalled for each individual participant.

The validity and reliability of this scale has been shown by Fazey & Fazey (2001)

## Procedure

From the outset, participants were informed that this study was investigating the relationship between musical preferences and personality styles, coping skills and perceived academic competences. Online participants read the study's title, and were informed that participation was voluntary and anonymous when asked to take part via a social networking site ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) and they were then directed to the survey (on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). Participants who completed the questionnaires in a pen-and-paper format were verbally informed of the same information. In addition, all participants read a cover letter preceding the surveys re-stating the study's purpose, and also advising that it was a voluntary, anonymous survey which they had the right to withdraw from at any time either before, or during the questionnaire completion. They were given the supervisor's contact details, as well as those of the researchers should they wish to further discuss either the study, or the end results. Finally, at the end of the questionnaires, contact details for various helplines and charities were listed should the participant wish to talk to anyone.

The questionnaires began by asking the participant their age, gender, and whether they had received any formal music training to date. Next, the STOMP-R was administered, followed by the BFI, the Brief COPE and the Scholastic Competence subscale of Harter's Scholastic Competence. The questionnaire can be viewed in the appendix. It took an average of 15 minutes to complete. All the data was collected in the same week at the start of March 2013.

## Results

### a) Descriptive Statistics

Of the 108 student who participated, 71 were female, 34 were male, and there were 3 who preferred not to state their gender. They ranged in age from 18-61, with an average age of 24 (mean= 24.07, SD=6.785). A total of 65 respondents (60.2%) had received formal musical education, whilst 43 (39.8%) had not.

Descriptive statistics were obtained for all four music dimensions (Reflective & Complex, Intense & Rebellious, Energetic & Rhythmic and Upbeat & Conventional), as well as for the five personality dimensions (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism). Table 1 below shows all the correlations produced.

Table 1: *Correlations between the four music dimensions with the Big Five personality traits.*

	<b>Intense &amp; Rebellious</b>	<b>Reflective &amp; Complex</b>	<b>Energetic &amp; Rhythmic</b>	<b>Upbeat &amp; Conventional</b>
<b>Openness</b>	r=.21 P=.03	r=.25 p=.009	r=.135 p=.170	r=.152 p=.120
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	r=-.159 p=.109	r=.058 p=.550	r=.004 p=.968	r=.033 p=.734
<b>Extraversion</b>	r=-.087 p=.382	r=.046 p=.640	r=.010 p=.918	r=.051 p=.604
<b>Agreeableness</b>	r=-.212 p=.033	r=-.018 p=.858	r=.057 p=.567	r=.070 p=.477
<b>Neuroticism</b>	r=.015 p=.884	r=.112 p=.249	r=-.086 p=.385	r=-.097 p=.325

*b) Inferential statistics*

In order to identify the relationships between music preferences with personality factors, coping skills, and perceived academic skills, correlations were calculated between the respondent's scores. For hypotheses 1-7, analysis was carried out on the various necessary relationships, as measured by STOMP, BFI, brief COPE and Harter's scholastic competence. The data was all normally distributed (as verified by histograms) hence Pearson's Correlation tests were run. Hypothesis 8, as a quasi-experimental design, required the use of an ANOVA test.

*H 1: That Extraversion would be significantly associated with Intense & Rebellious preference.*

The mean scores for Intense & Rebellious was 18.62 (SD = 4.98) and for Extraversion was 3.5 (SD = .77). A Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was no significant relationship between Extraversion and the Intense & Rebellious music type.  $R(101) = -0.09, p = .38$ .

Therefore the Null hypothesis is accepted

H 2: *That Agreeableness would be significantly associated with Upbeat & Conventional preference*

The mean scores for Upbeat & Conventional was 27.15 (SD=4.79) and for Agreeableness was 3.85 (SD=.58). A Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was no significant relationship between Upbeat & Conventional music and Agreeableness.

$R(104)=.07, p=.48$

Therefore the Null hypothesis is accepted

H 3: *That Energetic & Rhythmic music would be significantly associated with Neuroticism*

The mean scores for Energetic & Rhythmic was 23.88 (SD= 4.42) and for Neuroticism was 3.14 (SD =.88). A Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was no significant relationship between Energetic & Rhythmic music type and Neuroticism.

$R(101)= -0.09, p= .38.$

Therefore the Null hypothesis is accepted

H 4: *That Intense & Rebellious preference will correlate positively with "Active Coping"*

The mean scores for Intense & Rebellious was 18.62 (SD = 4.98) and for Active Coping was 5.69 (SD = 1.80). A Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was no significant relationship between Intense & Rebellious music and Active Coping.

$R(101)= .027, p=.79$

Therefore the Null hypothesis is accepted

H 5: *That Upbeat & Conventional will correlate positively with use of humour in coping*

The mean scores for Upbeat & Conventional was 27.15 (SD= 4.79) and for humour in coping was 4.84 (SD =2.17). A Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was no relationship between Upbeat & conventional and humour used in Coping.

$R(104)=.14, p= .15$

Therefore the Null hypothesis is accepted

H 6: *That Reflective & Complex will correlate positively with high perceived academic skills*

The mean scores for Reflective & Complex was 34.94 (SD= 7.94)) and for perceived academia was 2.34 (SD= .92). A Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was no significant relationship between Reflective & Complex and high perceived academic skills.

$R(103)=0.15, p=.14$

Therefore the Null hypothesis is accepted

H 7: *That Energetic & Rhythmic music preference will correlate with low perceived academic skills.*

The mean scores Energetic & Rhythmic was 23.88 (SD= 4.42), and perceived academic skills was 2,34 (SD= .92) A Pearson's correlation coefficient found that there was no significant relationship between Energetic & Rhythmic and academic skills.

$R(103)=-.029, p=.77$

Therefore the Null hypothesis is rejected.

H 8: *Musical training will significantly increase preference for Complex & Reflective preference.*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was run showing whether music training would significantly increase preference for Reflective & Complex music types (The results can be seen below in table 2.) The Independent variable was a preference for Reflective & Complex music, while the dependent variable was music training. It showed that there was a significant difference between those that had, and those who had not, received formal music training with regards to their liking of Reflective & Complex music. The mean of Reflective & Complex preference with musical training was 36.63 (SD= 6.50), and reflective & Complex preference with no musical training was 32.33 (SD= 9.26).

( $F(1,105) = 7.95, p = .006$ )

Table 2. *Results of ANOVA test between Musical Training and Reflective & Complex preference.*

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Music training</b>	36.63	6.50	7.95	1	.006
<b>No music training</b>	32.33	9.26	7.95	1	.006

## Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between music preferences with particular personality traits, coping styles and perceived academic competences within a student sample.

In contrast to the previous research in the area, this study revealed no relationship between music preferences and personality type, which was being tested for the first time in an Irish context. Nor was there any correlation found with music types and either styles of coping or perception of academic competences. However, this study did find that people who have received formal music training are more likely to find Reflective & Complex music appealing than their peers who did not study music.

*H1: That Extraversion would be positively correlated with Intense & Rebellious music preferences.*

In most studies, extraversion is positively associated with Upbeat & Conventional music (Desling & Engels, 2008, Rentfrow & Gosling 2003; Zweigenhaft, 2008), while Intense & Rebellious music has been positively linked to Openness (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003, Zweigenhaft, 2008). This study aimed to see if a similar correlation existed with Intense & Rebellious (the most highly favoured music style in this sample). However, no significant relationship was found, it is not clear why there was no significant relationship found here.

H2: *That Agreeableness would be positively correlated with Upbeat & Conventional music preferences.*

This hypothesis has been shown to correlate positively in previous research. In fact Langmeyer et al., (2012) found that Agreeableness only affected the liking of Upbeat & Conventional. Both Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) and Zweigenhaft (2008) found a positive relation, though did caution that neither reached levels of conventional significance. This study found no correlation, unlike the above research. It is not known why no relation was found, although as Zweigenhaft expressed caution on that research, we know it has not been conclusively proven. Further research is needed to clarify this point. This particular sample was perhaps not large enough to verify this hypothesis.

H3: *That Neuroticism would be positively associated with a preference for Energetic & Rhythmic music.*

Energetic & Rhythmic has been linked to Extraversion (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003, Zweigenhaft 2008) and to Agreeableness (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003). Zweigenhaft (2008) states “ratings for rap/hip-hop correlates significant with impulsiveness, extraversion, gregariousness, excitement seeking...and correlated negatively with straight forwardness and self-discipline.” (Desling & Engels, 2008; Rentfrow & Gosling 2003; Zweigenhaft, 2008). High scorers on Neuroticism are less likely to enjoy Intense & Rebellious, but do show a preference for Upbeat & Conventional (Langmeyer et al, 2012). Once again, changing the hypothesis for one which has not been previously explored resulted in a finding of no significance. It was thought that the rhythmic element would be reminiscent of the tempo found in Upbeat & Conventional, but this was shown not to be the case.

*H4: That preference for Intense & Rebellious music would be positively correlated with an Active Coping style.*

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there have been no published studies regarding the various types of coping skills and music preferences. Intense & Rebellious music preference has been associated with Openness to experience (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003, Zweigenhaft 2008). It was hypothesised that perhaps it would also be positively correlated to an active coping style (facing up to the stressor and trying to find a solution, or look at it from another perspective) owing to the fact that those who show a preference to this style of music are generally being more open to new things and experiences, and might be willing to try new approaches in their coping strategies. However, the results recorded no significant relationship between the two variables. Perhaps the reason for this is that, although higher in Openness, they tend not to be conscientious, and so may not take such a proactive approach to stress. It is likely that high scores on Conscientiousness would show a strong relation with active coping, although that would require further investigation.

*H5: That an Upbeat & Conventional music preference would be positively associates with the use of Humour as a coping style*

Similarly to H4, no previous research was found on this particular correlation. It has been shown that Upbeat & Conventional music is positively associated with Extraversion (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003, Zweigenhaft 2008). Since Extraverts are generally characterised as talkative and fun-loving, it was hypothesised that a similar correlation would follow for Upbeat & Convectional music preference and the use of humour as a coping style. However, the results here show no significant relationship between the two variables. It is not known why this is, although previous research did indicate that there is a negative association between

Upbeat & Conventional and the Openness trait (Desling & Engels, 2008; Langmeyer et al 2012; Rentfrow & Gosling 2003; Zweigenhaft, 2008). Perhaps people who use humour as a coping tool score higher in Openness. This would need to be further researched to be confirmed or contradicted.

*H6: That Reflective & Complex music preference would correlate positively with a high perception of scholastic competence.*

Complex music has been found to be linked to people who score highly in the Openness trait, and high scores on the Openness (to Experience trait) has been associated with higher intelligence (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003). Chamorro-Premuzic et al. (2010) posits that this could be because they are more likely to appreciate and understand the various different intricate elements of music that are expressed in complex music in which all the strands are needed to come together to produce, for instance, Jazz. It has also been expounded that people who are open to new experiences will enjoy the challenges brought with listening to unfamiliar elements (such as unusual time signatures, and rhythms found in e.g. Jazz) than their peers who prefer more conventional, familiar styles they are more accustomed to, perhaps even that is more predictable.

Taking this information, this study examined whether, therefore, reflective & complex would be positively correlated with high perception of academic competence. Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) asked participants to rate themselves on intelligence. It was found that people who preferred Reflective & Complex music saw themselves as more intelligent, and actually scored higher on the verbal section of the Wonderlic test (but not the analytical section). However, this study showed no such correlation with the respondents perceived competences. Perhaps they are unskilled at self-assessment, though it is more likely that they is no

correlation to be found, as Zweigenhaft (2008) saw a suggestive pattern that rock and punk (and not Reflective & Complex) correlated with high grades.

*H7: That Energetic & Rhythmic music preference will have a negative correlation with perception of scholastic competence.*

Research has shown associations between Energetic & Rhythmic and Extraversion (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003, Zweigenhaft, 2008). Rentfrow & Gosling (2003) also found correlation with this music style and agreeableness, while Zweigenhaft (2008) found a link with openness. Zweigenhaft (2008) did not ask for self-assessments or administer tests, but looked at his participants final grades. Though no statistical significance was revealed, he saw suggestive patterns that rap/hip-hop correlated negatively with grades, which supports this study's findings, and the hypothesis.

*H8: That Musical training will significantly increase preference for Complex & Reflective preference.*

Individuals with a preference for Complex & Reflective music tend to score highly on the Openness trait (Rentfrow & Gosling 2003). Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham (2007) reported that intellectual individuals, that is to say people who score highly on IQ tests or the openness to experience trait, tend to prefer Reflective & Complex to Upbeat & Conventional music. People with higher IQ scores also tend to use music in a cognitive and rational manner (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham 2007). It has been proposed that, if one has studied music, and has a greater understanding of the various elements and the complexity of it, they are undeniably more aware of the cognitive understanding and appreciation of it, and that this, in turn, will increase their liking for Complex & Reflective music. The findings of this study support this premise, which indicated that a greater understanding of the underlying structure

of music will result in greater appreciation for its complexity demonstrated best by the Reflective & Complex genre.

### *Limitations*

A limitation of this study is that only self-reports are used. We assume respondents are accurately able to report on their music preferences. However it could be expected that certain of the musical genres offered in the STOMP-R are not fully recognised (at least in an Irish context). For instance, for those who completed a pen and paper questionnaire, the researcher was often asked to clarify what “New Age” was, or to differentiate between certain genres (e.g. Folk and Country). This was further reflected in the online survey with some respondents choosing to not rate some of the lesser known genres. Perhaps future research may wish to either given some famous examples of each genre within the questionnaire, or else should re-evaluate the music styles known and used in Ireland, and reallocate based on that information, as Delsing et al. (2008) did for their Dutch sample, or Langmeyer et al. (2012) for the German sample.

A further limitation that comes from using the STOMP (or, indeed, most inventories of musical preference) is that it is quite common for artists to cross over into multiple genres and not stick entirely to the one style, which can pose some difficulties for some respondents. The genres established in the STOMP are extremely broad in nature. Rentfrow, Goldberg & Levitin (2011) point out that this can be particularly troublesome if comparing preferences across different ages, as different generations may be unfamiliar with certain styles, be they new or older ones that have fallen out of fashion.

Finally, the sample was not fully representative. It was relatively small, numbering 108 participants, and it was based solely in Ireland. With the exception of respondents from the

University of Limerick, it was heavily Leinster-, indeed (saving one) Dublin city based. The use of students as participants is always in question when generalising results to the general population. It is highly probable that the relationships between personality and music preferences are influenced and shaped by other personal indicators, such as age and personal background which, within a student group, are generally homogenous. Furthermore, in this sample the gender groups were disproportionately divided. Ideally research will have more equality within the sex of the respondents.

The results of the present study were generally inconsistent with similar recent research (Rentfrow and Gosling, 2003, Delsing et al, 2008, and Zweigenhaft, 2008, Langmeyer et al, 2011) however this study also explored correlations that as yet have not been investigated very thoroughly.

Some weaknesses are that the analyses are based on cross-sectional data, meaning that no causal conclusions could be made. Owing to this, it can be said that personality influences our music preferences, however it is just as correct to posit that music preferences influence our personalities (as Rentfrow & Gosling's theory of self-expression illuminates, 2007). As these findings did not prove any association with certain genres to particular traits, and keeping in mind the fact that some of the previous research only resulted in weak correlations, this indicates that there are clearly other factors that influence our music preferences (Langmeyer et al. 2012).

However, overall this study has contributed significantly to the existing research in the area of music preferences and personality, and has added to our knowledge in this domain, particularly as it assesses these themes in an Irish context. It has also extended the current research by investigating new correlations in relation to music preferences, such as their effect on our coping styles, and our perceived academic skills. Although the latter subject areas did

not yield much information in this study, perhaps some of these hypotheses will lead to others. For instance, perhaps coping skills and the uses of music (as Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007 investigated) will show some correlation.

It is recommended that future research definitely continues with the findings from H8, that is that music training influences complex music preference. Perhaps future research looking at music training should ascertain to what degree the person reached in their musical studies. For instance, this research included people who had followed the national school curriculum in Music up to the age of 16, but who had not learned to play an instrument, nor had taken music theory lessons. More stringent attention to this may show more significance in the preference for complex music. Perhaps people who have learned an instrument for longer than a specific period, for instance two years, or people who have reached a certain grade in practical or theoretical exams.

It would be further beneficial to future research to carry out investigations on non-student populations so as to have a more authentic cross-section of society.

## **Conclusion**

This Study has explored the relationship between specific music preferences with our personality traits, our coping styles, and the perceived scholastic competence of students. There were no positive correlations found in any of the hypotheses tested. Although some (such as those with the coping styles) had not been previously the subject of investigation, others (for instance Agreeableness and Upbeat & Conventional music) had been formerly explored. Post hoc conjecture can offer various potential reasons; such as sample size, the

participants all being students, or that previous research was carried out in another country and did not apply in Ireland, and suggest limitations to be avoided in forthcoming tests. However, the only way for us to gather a more comprehensive and reliable understanding is through continued research in the area of music preference, which is still so new to psychological analysis. The significant result regarding having deeper musical knowledge and being more likely to have preference for certain genres gives us yet more information that can be built on in our quest to identify what it is within us each individually that makes us chose the music we do.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire

Gender(Please circle):        Female        Male

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you had formal music training? (*e.g. Piano lessons, studied music at junior/leaving cert. level*)

Yes    No

If yes, please specify:

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### STOMP-Revised

Please indicate your basic preference for each of the following genres using the scale provided.

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7  
 Dislike    Dislike    Dislike a    Neither like    Like a    Like    Like  
 Strongly    Moderately    Little    nor dislike    Little    Moderately    Strongly

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Alternative

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Bluegrass

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Blues

4. \_\_\_\_\_ Classical

5. \_\_\_\_\_ Country

6. \_\_\_\_\_ Dance/Electronica

7. \_\_\_\_\_ Folk

8. \_\_\_\_\_ Funk

9. \_\_\_\_\_ Gospel

10. \_\_\_\_\_ Heavy Metal

11. \_\_\_\_\_ International/Foreign

12. \_\_\_\_\_ Jazz

13. \_\_\_\_\_ New Age

14. \_\_\_\_\_ Oldies

15. \_\_\_\_\_ Opera

16. \_\_\_\_\_ Pop

17. \_\_\_\_\_ Punk

18. \_\_\_\_\_ Rap/hip-hop

19. \_\_\_\_\_ Reggae

20. \_\_\_\_\_ Religious

21. \_\_\_\_\_ Rock

22. \_\_\_\_\_ Soul/R&B

23. \_\_\_\_\_ Soundtracks/theme song

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others*? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which **you agree or disagree with that statement.**

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly

### I am someone who...

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. _____ Is talkative                            | 20. _____ Has an active imagination                  |
| 2. _____ Tends to find fault with others         | 21. _____ Tends to be quiet                          |
| 3. _____ Does a thorough job                     | 22. _____ Is generally trusting                      |
| 4. _____ Is depressed, blue                      | 23. _____ Tends to be lazy                           |
| 5. _____ Is original, comes up with new ideas    | 24. _____ Is emotionally stable, not easily upset    |
| 6. _____ Is reserved                             | 25. _____ Is inventive                               |
| 7. _____ Is helpful and unselfish with others    | 26. _____ Has an assertive personality               |
| 8. _____ Can be somewhat careless                | 27. _____ Can be cold and aloof                      |
| 9. _____ Is relaxed, handles stress well.        | 28. _____ Perseveres until the task is finished      |
| 10. _____ Is curious about many different things | 29. _____ Can be moody                               |
| 11. _____ Is full of energy                      | 30. _____ Values artistic, aesthetic experiences     |
| 12. _____ Starts quarrels with others            | 31. _____ Is sometimes shy, inhibited                |
| 13. _____ Is a reliable worker                   | 32. _____ Is considerate and kind to almost everyone |
| 14. _____ Can be tense                           | 33. _____ Does things efficiently                    |
| 15. _____ Is ingenious, a deep thinker           | 34. _____ Remains calm in tense situations           |
| 16. _____ Generates a lot of enthusiasm          | 35. _____ Prefers work that is routine               |
| 17. _____ Has a forgiving nature                 | 36. _____ Is outgoing, sociable                      |
| 18. _____ Tends to be disorganized               | 37. _____ Is sometimes rude to others                |
| 19. _____ Worries a lot                          |  |

38. \_\_\_\_\_ Makes plans and follows through with them
39. \_\_\_\_\_ Gets nervous easily
40. \_\_\_\_\_ Likes to reflect, play with ideas
41. \_\_\_\_\_ Has few artistic interests
42. \_\_\_\_\_ Likes to cooperate with others
43. \_\_\_\_\_ Is easily distracted
44. \_\_\_\_\_ Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature

## Brief COPE

These items deal with ways you've been coping with the stress in your life. There are many ways to try to deal with problems. These items ask what you've been doing to cope.

Obviously, different people deal with things in different ways, but I'm interested in how you've tried to deal with it. I want to know to what extent you've been doing what the item says. How much or how frequently. Don't answer on the basis of whether it seems to be working or not—just whether or not you're doing it. Try to rate each item separately in your mind from the others. Make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can.

1	2	3	4
I haven't been doing this at all	I've been doing this a little bit	I've been doing this a medium amount	I've been doing this a lot

1. \_\_\_\_ I've been turning to work or other activities to take my mind off things.
2. \_\_\_\_ I've been concentrating my efforts on doing something about the situation I'm in.
3. \_\_\_\_ I've been saying to myself "this isn't real."
4. \_\_\_\_ I've been using alcohol or other drugs to make myself feel better.
5. \_\_\_\_ I've been getting emotional support from others.
6. \_\_\_\_ I've been giving up trying to deal with it.
7. \_\_\_\_ I've been taking action to try to make the situation better.
8. \_\_\_\_ I've been refusing to believe that it has happened.
9. \_\_\_\_ I've been saying things to let my unpleasant feelings escape.
10. \_\_\_\_ I've been getting help and advice from other people.
11. \_\_\_\_ I've been using alcohol or other drugs to help me get through it.
12. \_\_\_\_ I've been trying to see it in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
13. \_\_\_\_ I've been criticizing myself
14. \_\_\_\_ I've been trying to come up with a strategy about what to do.

15. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been getting comfort and understanding from someone.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been giving up the attempt to cope.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been looking for something good in what is happening.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been making jokes about it.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been doing something to think about it less, such as going to movies, watching TV, reading, daydreaming, sleeping, or shopping.
  
20. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been expressing my negative feelings.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been trying to find comfort in my religion or spiritual beliefs.
  
23. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been trying to get advice or help from other people about what to do.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been learning to live with it.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been thinking hard about what steps to take.
  
26. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been blaming myself for things that happened.
27. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been praying or meditating.
28. \_\_\_\_\_ I've been making fun of the situation.

