

Need for Cognition, Tolerance for Ambiguity, and Need for Closure between Majors

Abstract

The present study investigated personality differences between students in two academic majors at SUNY Cortland, Upper level Psychology (N=29) and Physical Education (PE) undergraduates (N=15). The following tests were administered: Multiple Stimulus Types Ambiguity Test (MSTAT; McLain, 1993), Need for Cognition (NFC; Cacioppo, Petty & Kao 1984), and Need for Closure Scale (NFCS; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Significant differences were found between the majors in both NFC ($t(23, 20) = 2.81, p < .01$) and tolerance for ambiguity (TA; $t(46.88) = 2.172, p < .05$). To clarify, the Psychology students scored higher than their PE counterparts on both the NFC and MSTAT measures. No significant differences were found between majors in NFCS ($t(46) = -.171$). A significant negative correlation between TA and NFCS was noted ($r = -.41, p < .01$). TA was also significantly correlated with the close-mindedness and predictability sub-scales of the NFCS. The correlations were $r = -.68$ and $r = -.51$ at the $p < .01$ level, respectively. No significant correlation was found between NFC and both NFCS and TA. Individuals may be attracted to certain majors based on personality characteristics. Training differences in each major may also cause significant differences in personality. Future researchers could increase the sample size and the number of academic majors to increase external validity.