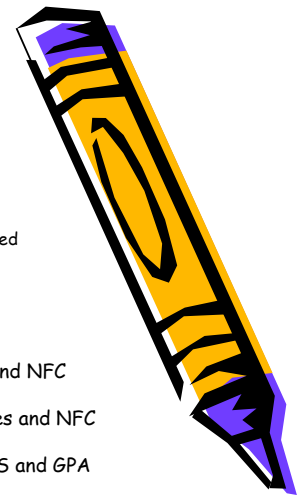


Is desire to learn related to happiness and success in school?

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In two studies, the relationship between need for cognition, life satisfaction, and academic achievement in college students were assessed using a need for cognition scale, two life satisfaction scales, and self-reported GPA. Results indicate inconsistencies in the relationships between need for cognition and the two life satisfaction scales.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding what contributes to academic achievement can lead to the development of ways to enhance the learning environment of students and increase individual student's academic achievement.

Need for cognition (NFC) is a stable individual difference in people's tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive activity (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982).

Individuals high in NFC are more likely than individuals low in NFC to expend effort on information acquisition, reasoning, and problem solving, and have active, exploring minds.

Individuals high in NFC are intrinsically motivated and desire new experiences that stimulate thinking (Cacioppo et al., 1996). They achieve more academically (Sadowski & Gulgoz, 1996) and expect to do well on difficult tasks (Gulgoz, 2001). NFC is also related to a decrease in skill-based learning when intermittently evaluated (Espejo, Day, & Scott, 2005).

Those who score low in NFC are often referred to as cognitive misers (Cacioppo et al., 1996).

NFC reflects cognitive motivation rather than intellectual ability and individual differences in intrinsic motivation to engage in effortful cognitive process.

NFC is a consistent predictor of grade point average (Gulgoz, 2001). Coutinho and Woolery (2004) even found that NFC was positively related to life satisfaction among college students. NFC is modestly related to intelligence, as well as ACT scores and high school and college grade point averages. It is more closely related to verbal intelligence rather than abstract intelligence (Cacioppo et al., 1996).

The purpose of this study is to replicate and extend some of the previous research using the current class of college students.



MATERIALS

STUDY 1

- *Need for Cognition Scale* (NCS; Cacioppo et al., 1984).
- *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985).
- Academic achievements was measured by self-reported grade point average (on a 4.00 scale), grade summary (i.e., *Would you say you receive mostly A's, a combination of A's and B's, etc.*), and number of times on the Dean's List (categorized by grade point average of 3.4 on a 4.0 scale during a semester).

STUDY 2

- *Need for Cognition Scale* (NCS; Cacioppo et al., 1984).
- *Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* (BMSLSS; Huebner, 1997).
- Academic achievement was measured by self-reported grade point average (on a 4.00 scale), grade summary (i.e., *Would you say you receive mostly A's, a combination of A's and B's, etc.*), and answers to questions related to intelligence and academic success (i.e. *Do you consider yourself a good student? and Are you part of the honors program?*, etc.)

METHOD

PROCEDURE

Surveys were administered to General Education classes during the scheduled class time. The survey packet was passed out to each student and a consent form was read, informing students of the study and their right to choose whether or not they would participate. After students were finished, they returned the surveys to an envelope at the front of the classroom.

PARTICIPANTS

	Study 1	Study 2
N	214	116
Age	M = 20	M = 20
Academic Status	24.8% first years 30.4% sophomores 22.9% juniors 22% seniors	24.1% first years 24.1% sophomores 26.7% juniors 24.1% seniors
Sex	80 males 134 females	44 males 72 females
Ethnicity	90.7% Caucasian 4.7% African American 0.5% Hispanic 2.3% another ethnicity	81.9% Caucasian 6% African American 3.4% Hispanic 5.2% another ethnicity

RESULTS

STUDY 1

- Significant relationship between GPA and NFC
 $r(207) = .308, p = .000$
- Significant relationship between grades and NFC
 $r(205) = .273, p = .000$
- Significant relationship between SWLS and GPA
 $r(207) = .165, p = .017$
- No relationship between life satisfaction and NFC
 $r(207) = .097, N.S.$

STUDY 2

- Significant relationship between NFC and GPA
 $r(111) = 0.297, p = 0.001$
- Relationship between NFC and BMSLS
 $r(113) = 0.179, p = 0.057$
- No relationship between BMSLS and GPA
 $r(109) = 0.109, N.S.$

DISCUSSION

Like expected, in both Study 1 and Study 2 there was a statistically significant relationship between NFC and GPA.

Interestingly, in Study 1, seniors had significantly higher NFC scores than freshmen, $F(3, 207) = 2.791, p = .042$. This may indicate that with further education students develop more desire to and enjoyment for learning. It could have implications for the quality of education students are receiving at institutions and warrants further research.

Surprisingly, in Study 2, a relationship was found between NFC and whether subjects reported themselves as being smart, but not between NFC and whether subjects considered themselves to be a good student. This begs the question: What qualifies a person as a good student? Further research could determine whether qualities of a "good student" are similar to those of someone high in NFC.

Study 2 revealed potential relationship between NFC and BMSLS. Further study with an even larger sample of students could show a significant relationship.

In conclusion, this topic deserves further exploration to uncover the implications for education and life satisfaction. With regard to student achievement, this research area holds great potential for educators and psychologists.

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Electronic copies available at: <http://capital2.capital.edu/faculty/akarkows/studentresearch.html>