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Cognitive differentiation as a function of information type and its relation to career choice

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Abstract

Although providing occupational information is a common vocational counseling practice, recent research has raised questions about the utility of such information. Cognitive differentiation (the ability to differentiate among job titles on 12 constructs) has been shown to be positively related to an "appropriate" career choice. Differentiation, however, appears to decrease as a function of traditional types of occupational information (e.g., *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C., 1980). The present study investigated the hypothesis that information related to Holland *personality* characteristics of persons in various occupations would increase subjects' ability to differentiate among those job titles. One hundred fifty undeclared-major freshman undergraduate students were randomly assigned to one of three condition groups: objective information, personality

information, no information. All subjects were administered the Career Decision Scale and Cognitive Differentiation Grid. Results indicated that subjects receiving personality information exhibited a significantly greater degree of differentiation among careers than subjects receiving objective information. These results confirm the major hypothesis of the study and suggest that the provision of personality information may be more useful in promoting career choice than the types of information traditionally provided.



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