

Influence of Need for Cognition and Cognitive Closure on Magic Perceptions

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Abstract: From children's parties to acts in Las Vegas, magic is one of the world's most timeless forms of entertainment. Current psychological research on magic has started to focus on how magicians are best able to elicit the observer reactions associated with their craft, such as what methods are most successful, as well as what cognitive mechanisms are specifically driving the observers' reactions. However, while research examining the practice of magic from a psychological perspective has been expanding, few studies have looked at how cognitive individual differences influence an observer's magic perceptions and experiences. In a collaboration with award-winning magician, Joshua Jay, we examined the impacts of Need for Cognition (NFC) and Need for Cognitive Closure (NFCC) on magic perceptions. Results showed that NFC and NFCC had opposite effects on engagement (i.e., rewatching and solution generation) and that frustration levels were behavior drivers for participants with high NFC or low NFCC.