

Level of Satisfaction and Commitment to a Decisional Choice as Mediated by Locus of Control

Michael A. Surrette
University of Wisconsin - Platteville

Lisa L. Harlow
University of Rhode Island

The present study investigated whether increasing the number of decisional choices would result in an increase in an individual's subsequent level of satisfaction and commitment with their choice. It was also predicted that an individual's locus of control would act as a mediating variable between decisional choice and satisfaction, with internals showing more satisfaction with more choices than would externals. Participants read a brief biographical scenario which described an individual's attempt to get accepted into graduate school. The scenario portrayed the individual getting accepted into either one, three, or five graduate programs from a list of ten. Participants were required to complete two measures of satisfaction (Job in General Scale & Kunin's Faces Scale) and one measure of commitment (Organizational Commitment Questionnaire) to indicate their perceptions of the scenario outcome. Rotter's Locus of Control Scale was also administered. Results showed that individuals reported greater satisfaction and commitment to a decisional choice if it was selected from a greater number of alternatives. There was also some evidence to show that internals were more satisfied with and committed to their decision than were externals. It was also found that there was a significant relationship between an individual's level of satisfaction and commitment with choice. Very little evidence was provided for an interaction between level of choice and locus of control. Suggested areas for future research to further investigate these results are encouraged and outlined.

A phenomena which has the attention of many individuals, professional as well as lay-people, is the search for a highly satisfying life. Factors which may influence the overall satisfaction of a person's life range from being physically and mentally fit to acquiring material possessions. According to Rotter's theoretical formulation of social learning (Rotter, 1954), these factors are either sought after or avoided, depending on their reinforcing quality and the expectancies of future outcome.

Although the construct of satisfaction in life has been examined from a number of perspectives (eg. Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976; Diener, 1984; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Harlow & Newcomb, 1990; Harlow, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1987), the area of satisfaction with one's decisional choice has received less attention. In this regard, it is reasonable to ask whether individuals who are given greater decisional choice feel more satisfied with and more committed to their decisions. The present study examined two factors, degree of choice and locus of control, which are expected to have an effect on a person's level of satisfaction and commitment to a decisional choice.

Degree of Choice and Level of Satisfaction

Research which has looked at the effect that having a choice of behaviors has on an individual's satisfaction has been conducted in a variety of contexts (e.g., organizations, family & single life, academia, etc.). A person who is given a choice over their behavior appears to have a higher level of satisfaction with their chosen activity in many different situations. Findings from a number of research studies, presented below, highlight the range of situations where having a decisional choice over one's behavior affects one's level of satisfaction.

Mannell, Zuzanek, and Larson (1988) demonstrated this relationship in the lives of older adults. They found that when retired adults (40 men and 52 women) indicated that they chose the activity they were engaged in, they reported having a higher level of positive affect (satisfaction) than individuals who experienced less choice over their behavior.

Kimmel, Price, and Walker (1978) investigated the effect of having a choice over when to retire on an individual's attitude and satisfaction with retirement. Individuals who reported that they chose to retire from their corporations were significantly higher on all measures of retirement satisfaction in the Retirement Description Index (RDI) compared to nonvol-

untary retirees. The individuals who chose to retire also reported having an easier time adjusting to retirement.

The effects having a choice of behavioral alternatives has on a person's level of satisfaction has also been demonstrated in the medical community. Morris and Ingham (1988) studied two groups of breast cancer patients, both of which required surgery. The results indicated that the group of patients who were offered a choice of surgeries were more satisfied with the complete process (pre- and post-operatively) than patients who had no choice but were forced to take a specified type of surgery.

Another area where having a choice has been shown to influence a person's level of satisfaction is in the area of marital status. Austrom and Hanel (1985) conducted a survey of unmarried Canadian adults. A self-selected sample of 482 unmarried adults responded to questions about their reasons, motivations, and satisfaction with single life. An analysis of variance revealed a significant mean difference in satisfaction between those who were single by choice (mean = 8.2) and those who were single for reasons beyond their control (mean = 5.0).

Research has also demonstrated that having a choice in and of itself may increase an individual's satisfaction, regardless of whether the available choices are used (Gorrell & Cramond, 1988). Gorrell and Cramond's research examined the effects of allowing students to use written justifications to back up their responses on a multiple choice exam. Results from a subsequent attitude scale revealed a uniformly positive (more satisfied) attitude toward the use of written justifications, even for those students who did not use this option.

Research conducted in organizations has also lent support for a possible link between degree of choice and increased satisfaction. A very salient issue within an organization is how to maximize the effects of employee training programs. Although the majority of training research conducted on such programs has taken an organizational perspective (Goldstein, 1974), Hicks and Klimoski (1987) approached employee training from the employees point of view. They manipulated the degree of choice employees had for attending a training program (low choice: required attendance; high choice: select from 5 sessions). Results indicated that employees who had a high degree of choice were more satisfied with the training program than those with a low-choice. This suggests that one way an organization can increase the appeal of their training programs is to provide some degree of choice to the employees.

Simulation research which has focused on organizational applications

provides support for the positive effect of having a choice on a person's level of satisfaction (Vanderslice, Rice, & Julian, 1987). These researchers examined the effect that participation in decision making has on worker's satisfaction and their productivity. Results showed that individuals in a high participation environment reported that they were significantly more satisfied with the production process than individuals in a low participation environment.

A good question is whether participation in decision making can be equated with an increase in the number of choices a person is given to perform a task or to set up strategies to reach a goal. Earley and Kanfer (1985) investigated this question by assessing the effects of different levels of participation (choice) in goal setting on an individual's acceptance and satisfaction with the goal, and strategy used to reach the goal. Results revealed that individuals in a high-choice condition were significantly more satisfied with the goals set than were individuals in moderate and no-choice conditions. In addition, individuals in the high and moderate choice conditions were significantly more accepting of the goals set than the individuals in the no-choice conditions. These results support the assertion that participation in decision making is similar to providing an increase in choice over subsequent behaviors, in terms of having a positive effect on satisfaction.

Negative Findings

The literature cited above provides some support for the connection between number of decisional choices and subsequent level of satisfaction with decisional choice. However, some research in this area has not produced consistent findings. A study conducted by Reibstein, Youngblood, and Fromkin (1975) found that although a manipulation check revealed a significant difference between high-choice and low-choice groups' perceived decisional freedom, there was a nonsignificant difference between the number of choices provided and a person's level of satisfaction with their decisional choice.

Harrison, Lewis, and Straka (1984) used a proof reading task to assess the relationship between decisional choice and level of satisfaction. Participants were either in a no-choice condition (each individual was told to use a manual method of proof reading) or a high-choice condition (each individual selected their proof reading method from two alternatives: manual or computer-assisted). An examination of responses to four 9-

point semantic differentials measuring task satisfaction revealed a nonsignificant difference between degree of choice and a person's level of satisfaction with the task.

In addition, Harrison et al. examined the relationship between a person's locus of control, their freedom of choice, and subsequent level of satisfaction with their choice. An analysis of variance of these ratings revealed a significant interaction between degree of choice and a person's locus of control.

Based on these latter results, one possible explanation for the research findings indicating that choice is not related to satisfaction is that the researchers may not have assessed participants' locus of control. Even those studies which revealed a significant relationship between degree of choice and level of satisfaction may not have accounted for all the potential variance in the relationship when locus of control is not taken into account.

Locus of Control, Level of Satisfaction, and Level of Choice

Research has provided some support for the contention that having a choice over behavioral activities influences a person's level of satisfaction. It has also been shown that this relationship may not apply to all individuals equally. A personality variable that may act as a moderating variable on a person's level of satisfaction with their decisional choice is locus of control. In a review of the literature, Diener (1984) examined a wide variety of variables which were believed to influence a person's subjective-well-being. A personality trait that he noticed was consistently related to satisfaction is internality (having an internal locus of control). Locus of control (LOC) is generally concerned with a person's outlook (internal vs. external) on who or what controls their life events. Individuals with an internal LOC perceive that they have control over the events in their life. Those with an external LOC perceive their life to be controlled by fate, chance, and powerful others.

It is reasonable to expect that a person who has a high degree of choice and has an internal LOC would be more satisfied, whereas a person who has an external LOC should be more satisfied in an environment where there is little freedom of choice. This has been demonstrated at the organizational level where internals appear more satisfied with participative decision making, whereas externals appear more satisfied with assigned goals (Spector, 1982). In addition, Spector suggests that

internals perceive a greater number of alternatives than do externals in a choice situation.

Commitment to Choice, Degree of Choice, & Locus of Control

In addition to satisfaction and Locus of Control, another variable of interest to researchers in this area is commitment. Research investigating the construct of commitment has operationalized the term in different manners. The present study used the definition set forth by Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974). Porter et al. define organizational commitment as a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to remain in the organization. Several studies, presented below, have investigated the determinants and antecedents of organizational commitment.

In an extensive review of the literature on demographic variables related to organizational commitment, Salancik (1977) concluded that a person with greater tenure in an organization is more committed. He also found that older workers tend to be more committed to the organization. Steers (1977), in a conceptual explanation of the relationship between demographic variables and commitment, suggests that commitment operates as a form of exchange. When a person perceives the exchange as appropriate, then commitment will grow.

Research which has investigated commitment beyond demographic variables suggests that a person's personality and/or attribution process (locus of control) is an important component to commitment (Luthans, Baack, & Taylor, 1987). Examining choice and commitment, Kiesler (1971) argues that as perceived level of choice increases commitment increases. According to Salancik (1977), an important component of commitment is cognitive consistency. Cognitive consistency is a theoretical perspective which stipulates that a person will attempt to maintain a consistent relationship between their thoughts and actions. The most celebrated formulation of this position is Leon Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance. As Festinger reasoned, when a person holds two cognitions (ideas about the state of events) that are consistent with each other, s(he) experiences a satisfying state of consonance. Festinger (1964) argued that people develop attitudes consistent with their choices. He recognized that decisions are committing and carry equivocal consequences for those who make them. When a person is committed and

bound to a choice, s(he) will resolve their inconsistencies to produce attitudes consistent with the choice.

The existence and strength of a relationship between degree of choice and level of commitment are in accordance with an attributional analysis of commitment. In this regard, Keisler's (1971) assertion could be restated as follows: an increase in the number of choices provided to an individual, increases the tendency to attribute causality for the act to self and hence also increase commitment. Hicks and Klimoski (1987) demonstrated this by showing that workers who were in a high-choice condition were more committed to a training program and learned more than those individuals who were in a low-choice condition.

Mayer, Duval, and Duval (1980) also conducted a study to assess the effect perceived choice has on the amount of commitment to a decision. In addition, the relationship between perceived choice and self attribution (internality) was assessed. An analysis of their manipulation of perceived choice indicated that subjects in a high-choice condition expressed greater perceived choice. Further, results revealed that subjects in the high-choice condition were less willing to change strategies than subjects in the no-choice condition. This suggests that commitment to the use of a strategy was higher when a choice was allowed.

Research Hypotheses

The present study examined the relationship between degree of choice, locus of control, and subsequent level of satisfaction and commitment with a decision.

(1) It is hypothesized that there will be a main effect for level of choice on satisfaction, such that greater choice will lead to greater satisfaction.

(2) It is hypothesized that there will be a significant main effect for level of choice on degree of commitment with a greater number of alternatives resulting in greater commitment to their decision.

(3) It is hypothesized that there will be an interaction effect between locus of control and level of choice on an individual's level of satisfaction. It is predicted that a person with an internal locus of control will be more satisfied with an increase in choice; whereas a person with an external locus of control may be less satisfied with an increase in choice.

(4) It is hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between level of satisfaction and level of commitment to a decisional choice.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 288 (31% males & 69% females) upper level undergraduate students from two northeastern universities. The average age of the participants was 20 years. Each person's participation was on a voluntary basis and s(he) was treated in accord with the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association.

Instruments

The degree of choice was experimentally manipulated by presenting the participants with one of three brief choice-scenarios that were developed for this study (see Appendix A). Each of the three choice-scenarios depicts a brief biography of events which took place in a fictitious individual's life. The sex of the individual in the biography is not revealed to remain gender neutral. The manipulated variable in the choice-scenarios was the number of universities into which the individual was accepted. There were three levels: the individual was accepted into either one, three, or five universities. The length of the biographies is the same for each condition.

Results from two independently conducted pilot studies, with a total of 44 participants, revealed that the degree of choice for the three scenarios was perceived as significantly different using ANOVA and follow-up tests. Thus, it is believed that the use of one, three, and five universities in the choice-scenarios is sufficient to assess the effects of increased number of choices on a person's satisfaction and commitment with their decision.

Rotter's (1966) Internal-External (I-E) locus of control scale was employed. The I-E scale consists of 23 locus of control items and six filler items. The response format of the scale is forced choice. Scores are calculated by summing the total number of externally oriented responses for each pair of choices. The range of scores is from 0-23, with high scores representing externality and low scores internality. Individuals who scored a 13 or greater on Rotter's I-E scale were categorized as the upper one third (Externals) and the lower one third were individuals who scored a 9 or lower (Internals).

The Kunin (1955) Faces Scale is a one-item measure of global satisfaction. The present study employed the Faces Scale as a measure of global

satisfaction with one's situation. The instructions were altered to reflect a measure of the present situation of graduate school acceptance. The Faces Scale has been shown to have good convergent validity and has been revealed as a good measure of global satisfaction (Brief & Robertson, 1989).

The Job in General (JIG) scale (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989) is an 18-item measure of general job satisfaction. The present study employed a slight variant of the JIG to get an additional measure of satisfaction with a person's decision for graduate school. The 18 adjectives/short phrases were not altered; the instructions were modified to reflect a graduate school perspective as compared to a job setting. The JIG has been shown to have excellent internal consistency with coefficient alpha ranging from .91 - .95.

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ: Porter & Smith, 1970) is a nine-item measure, where organizational commitment is defined in terms of one's identification with the organization. The OCQ was slightly altered to reflect a measure of commitment with a Graduate School Program. The scale has very high internal consistency, measured by coefficient alpha, ranging from .82 to .93. The scale has also demonstrated relative stability over time (test-retest reliability, $r = .75$ over four months).

Design

This study used a 2 (locus of control) X 3 (level of choice) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) design. The two independent variables were the level of choice (low, medium, high) and the individual's locus of control (internal, external). The three dependent variables were the individual's score on the Job in General scale (JIG), Kunin's Faces (FACES) scale, and the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ). Operational definitions of the three levels of choice are: the individual described in the biography scenario was accepted to one graduate school out of ten (low choice), the individual was accepted into three graduate schools out of ten (medium choice), and the individual was accepted into five graduate schools out of ten (high choice).

Procedure

Participants were primarily juniors and seniors who were selected

from upper level undergraduate courses. The investigator recruited these individuals by providing a brief overview of the tasks that were required for participation. All individuals who expressed a willingness to participate were given a list of dates and times that they could participate. An incentive to participate in the research project was provided by the researcher in the form of a \$100.00 cash prize. At the end of the data collection phase of the project, all participants' names were placed in a lottery drawing for the \$100.00.

Upon arriving at the experimental setting the participants were first administered Rotter's Internal-External locus of control scale. Upon completion of Rotter's I-E scale, all participants assisted in the scoring of the instrument. Resulting scores were checked for accuracy by the attending researchers. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions. All three experimental condition contained an equal number of participants with an internal and external locus of control. Participants were then asked to read one of the three "choice scenarios." Upon completion, participants were instructed to assume the events in the scenario had occurred in their lives. Participants were then asked to read the instructions and complete the JIG, the FACES scale, and the OCC scale.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

The effectiveness of the choice-manipulation was assessed by asking each participant to indicate how much perceived choice they had (based on the scenario) in attending a graduate program on a 5-point Likert scale (with 1 being a little choice and 5 being much choice). Data were analyzed by an analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) test. Results indicate significant group differences for level of choice, $F(2, 282) = 17.40, p < .001$. HSD follow-up tests revealed that the participants' perceived choice was significantly different at each level of choice. These results lend support for the effectiveness of the level of choice manipulation.

Results also revealed significant group differences for locus of control, $F(1, 282) = 4.26, p < .05$. Internals perceived that they had more choice (mean = 3.56) than that perceived by externals (mean = 3.31). These results are in accord with previous research which has alluded to the

belief that internals may perceive the presence of more choice compared to externals in the same situation.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses one to three were analyzed for overall significance through a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The two independent variables analyzed were individuals' level of choice as described in the scenarios (low, medium, & high) and the participants' locus of control (internal vs. external) as measured by Rotter's (1966) I-E scale.

Results of the omnibus test for the first independent variable, level of choice, revealed a significant Wilks' Lambda of .81; $F(6, 380) = 6.97, p < .001$. These results indicate that 19% of the variance in a linear combination of the dependent variables was due to the manipulation of level of choice an individual was allowed. Results of the omnibus test for the second independent variable, locus of control, revealed a significant Wilks' Lambda of .95 for locus of control; $F(3, 190) = 3.20, p = .024$. These results indicate that 5% of the variance in a linear combination of the dependent variables was due to an individual's locus of control. A nonsignificant interaction between locus of control and level of choice was revealed with a Wilk's Lambda of .95; $F(6, 380) = 1.47, p = 0.18$.

Based on the overall significance revealed by the main effect for level of choice and locus of control, these data were further analyzed using a two-way ANOVA and Tukey's HSD planned comparisons. The three dependent variables (JIG, FACES, OCQ) were analyzed separately with the independent variables level of choice, and locus of control. These analyses assess which dependent variables showed significant group differences across the independent variable groups.

Results from the first ANOVA indicated a significant effect for level of choice on an individual's satisfaction as measured by the JIG; $F(2, 192) = 22.93, p < .001$. Follow-up HSD tests revealed that individuals were significantly more satisfied with the graduate school if it was selected from among five graduate programs compared to one or three graduate programs. Results also revealed that individuals were significantly more satisfied with the graduate program if it was selected from among three graduate program choices than if the selection was from one graduate program.

Results also revealed a significant difference between internals' level of satisfaction (mean = 69.61) and externals' level of satisfaction (mean =

65.28), as measured by the JIG scale, with their chosen graduate program $F(1, 192) = 6.03, p < .01$. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the means, across the three levels of choice. These results indicate that LOC has an effect on a person's level of satisfaction with choice. Results indicated a nonsignificant interaction effect for level of choice and locus of control as measured by the JIG scale, $F(2, 192) = 1.48, p = .23$.

Results from the second ANOVA indicated a significant effect for level of choice on an individual's satisfaction, as measured by Kunin's Faces scale; $F(2, 192) = 12.15, p < .001$. Follow-up HSD tests revealed that individuals reported being significantly more satisfied with the graduate program if it was selected from among five or three graduate program choices compared to one graduate program. Results revealed that individuals were not significantly more satisfied with the graduate program if it was selected from five alternatives compared to three graduate program choices.

There was no significant difference between internals' level of satisfaction (mean = 4.10) and externals' level of satisfaction (mean = 3.88), as measured by Kunin's Faces scale, with their chosen graduate school program $F(1, 192) = 2.53, p = 0.11$. A nonsignificant interaction effect between level of choice and locus of control was also revealed, $F(2, 192) = 2.58, p = .08$.

Results from the third ANOVA indicated a significant effect for level of choice on an individual's degree of commitment, as measured by the OCQ; $F(2, 192) = 6.22, p < .01$. Follow-up HSD tests revealed that individuals indicated that they would be more committed to the graduate program if it was selected from among five graduate programs compared to one or three graduate programs. Results also revealed that individuals reported that they would not be more committed to a graduate program if they selected the graduate program from three graduate program choices than if the selection was from one graduate program.

Results also revealed a significant difference between internals degree of commitment (mean = 5.41) and externals degree of commitment (mean = 5.05), as measured by the OCQ, with their chosen graduate school $F(1, 192) = 7.02, p < .01$. In addition an interaction effect was revealed between locus of control and level of choice $F(2, 192) = 3.61, p = .03$. Figure 2 provides a graphic representation of the mean commitment scores across the three levels of choice. These results indicate that individuals with an internal LOC react differently to an increase in choice than do individuals with an external LOC.

Figure 1

Mean level of satisfaction, as measured by the JIG, across the three levels of choice

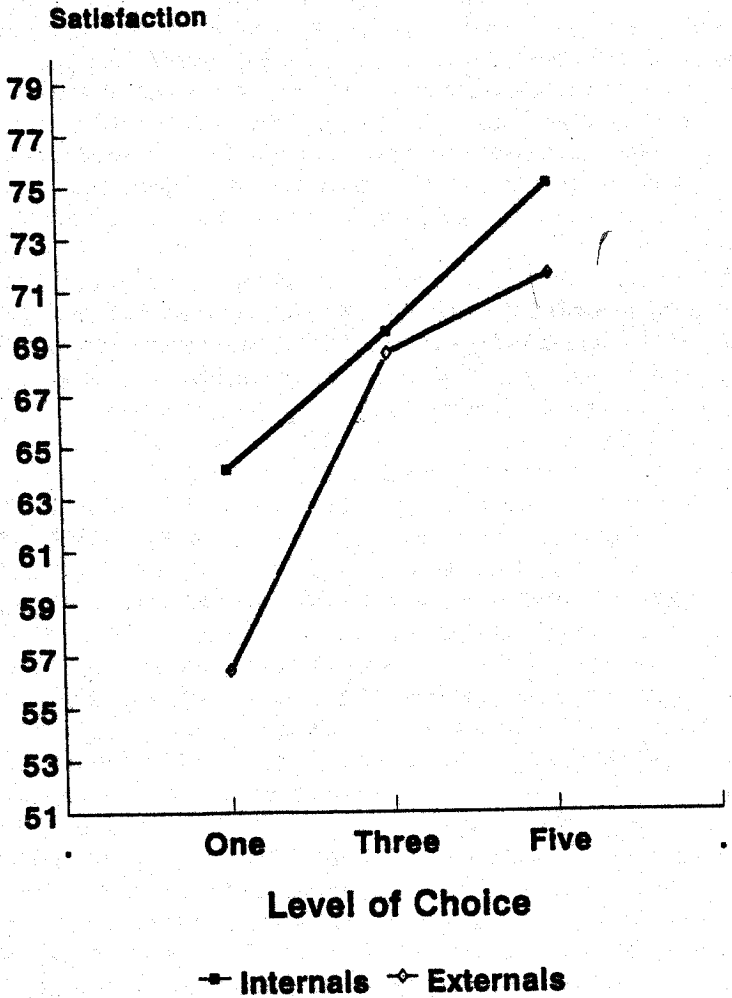


Figure 2

Mean level of commitment, as measured by the OCQ, across the three levels of choice

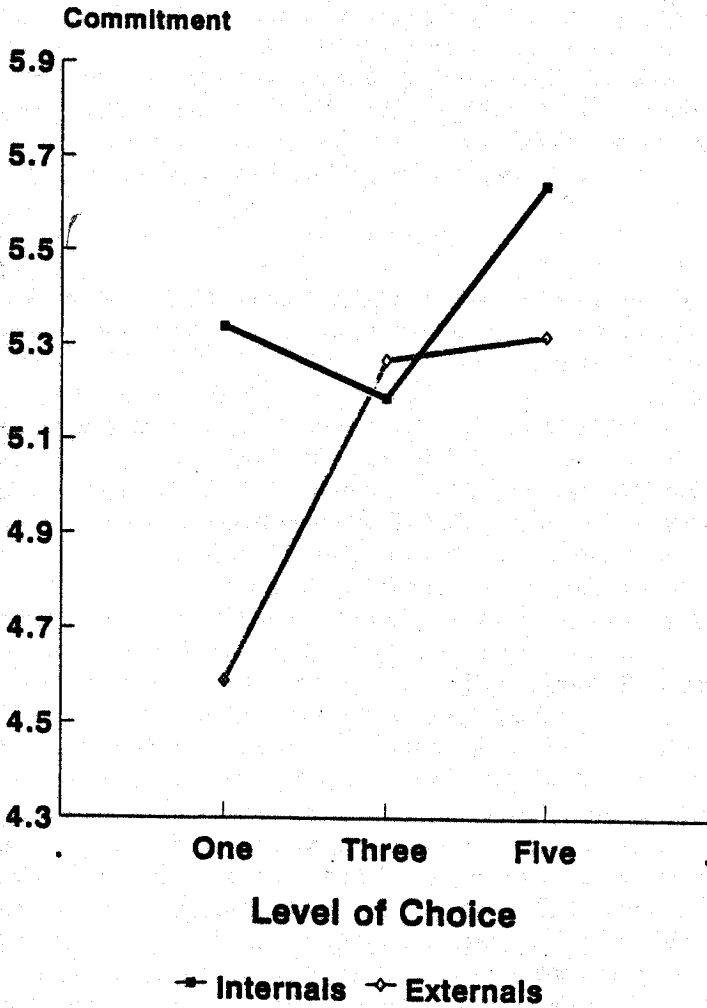


Table 1 provides the means and standard deviations for the dependent variables (Job in General, Kunin's Faces, and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire) by locus of control and by levels of choice.

Intercorrelation Among Dependent Measures

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to assess the relationship between an individual's level of satisfaction with their choice and their degree of commitment to the decision. As predicted by the fourth hypothesis, the Job in General scale was significantly related to Kunin's Faces Scale ($r = .72, p < .01$). The Organizational Commitment Questionnaire was significantly related to both the Job in General Scale ($r = .46, p < .01$) and Kunin's Faces Scale ($r = .47, p < .01$).

DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to assess the effect decisional choice and locus of control has on individuals' level of satisfaction and commitment with their choice.

The overall results provide some support for all four hypotheses. An increase in the number of graduate school choices was related to an increase in satisfaction and commitment. Although the hypothesized interaction was not found in the omnibus MANOVA, there was some partial support for a univariate interaction with the commitment dependent measure, the OCQ. Lastly, the two sets of dependent measures, satisfaction and commitment, were significantly related.

The significant findings related to increased decisional choice with increased satisfaction replicate and extend previous findings in this area (eg. Hicks & Klimoski, 1987). This appears to be a rather robust effect, occurring across a wide range of settings and conditions.

The nonsignificant omnibus interaction between a person's locus of control and level of decisional choice can be explored within the context of the area of choice examined in the present study. The present study used brief scenarios that described an individual's attempt to get accepted into a graduate school program. The scenarios described the person getting accepted to either one, three, or five graduate school programs. Each participant was instructed to assume those events had occurred in their life. For most individuals, being accepted into a graduate program is a very satisfying achievement. The results of this study indicate that being

Table 1**Satisfaction means and standard deviations by locus of control and levels of choice**

Locus of Control/Levels of Choice	Measure of Satisfaction		
	JIG	Kunin's Faces	OCQ
Internal Locus			
1	64.16 (12.57)	3.87 (0.96)	5.34 (0.80)
2	69.40 (12.22)	3.96 (1.05)	5.19 (1.15)
3	75.06 (07.38)	4.43 (0.50)	5.64 (0.58)
External Locus			
1	56.45 (14.47)	3.32 (1.02)	4.59 (0.96)
2	68.57 (11.72)	4.12 (0.93)	5.27 (0.89)
3	71.58 (09.03)	4.22 (0.76)	5.32 (0.88)

accepted into a graduate program is a very salient issue within the lives of the individuals' who participated in the study. Regardless of an individual's locus of control, it appears that getting accepted into a higher number of graduate school programs is associated with an increase in satisfaction. This assertion is supported with the results attained for both measures of satisfaction (Job in General Scale & Kunin's Faces Scale).

Based on these findings a question arises as to whether a greater number of choices beyond five would increase an individual's level of satisfaction. Using the mean levels of satisfaction reported by the participants over the three levels of choice, a linear trend for both measures of satisfaction is apparent. Intuitively it would be expected that at some point, the level of satisfaction expressed by an individual based on the number of choices available would reach a ceiling point. Although the present study did not encounter a ceiling effect for satisfaction across the three levels of choice, it is interesting to speculate that satisfaction would probably level off, and potentially start decreasing, if too many more choices were provided. This could be explored further in a future study.

Results support the hypothesis that individuals who were accepted into five graduate programs would be significantly more committed to the graduate program than those individuals who were accepted into one or three graduate programs. Results also revealed that individuals accepted into three graduate programs were not significantly more committed with their choice than if they were accepted into one graduate program.

These results are in accord with Salancik's (1977) notion of cognitive consistency. This theoretical perspective stipulates that people will attempt to maintain a consistent relationship between their thoughts and actions. Therefore, individuals who select their graduate program from a high number of graduate programs would report that they are more committed to the graduate program. Under the same circumstance if people indicate that they were not committed to the graduate program they chose, there would be some degree of cognitive inconsistency for these people.

The hypothesized positive relationship between an individual's level of satisfaction and his/her level of commitment to a decisional choice was also supported. These results were consistent for both measure of satisfaction (JIG & FACES), suggesting a strong relationship between feeling both satisfied and committed to a decisional choice.

Overall, the results of the present study provide strong support for the

belief that increasing an individual's decisional alternatives may increase the person's level of satisfaction and commitment with their choice.

The Effect for LOC

It is less clear what role a person's locus of control played in this relationship. In a post hoc examination of the study, several social factors may have contributed to the small effect size for locus of control (5%) including: the nation was at war, the economy was in a recession, local government was faced with a major banking crisis, and most of the individuals in the sample were at an age that could make them eligible to be sent to war. Each of these factors are under the control of powerful others. Therefore, at the time of the study, a person who attributes life events from an internal locus of control perspective may be feeling a little less control over their lives. An interesting and unexpected finding was the effect LOC has on an individual's commitment to a decisional choice. Figure 2 illustrates these findings very clearly. Internals were found to be more committed to their decisional choice when the number of choices increased from three to five, whereas internals were found to have a slight reduction in commitment when the number of choices increased from one to three. Externals reaction to increases in decisional choice was inversely related to an internals reaction. Based on the effect found for LOC on an individual's commitment to an increase in choice, further research is recommended.

Additional Factors Affecting Satisfaction & Commitment

It would be a gross oversight to assert that this phenomena would apply to all individuals in all situations. O'Reilly and Caldwell (1980) investigated additional factors which may influence an individual's satisfaction and commitment to a choice. O'Reilly and Caldwell assessed the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic factors related to job choice on subsequent satisfaction and commitment. Intrinsic factors were a person's interest in the job and chances for advancement in the company. Extrinsic factors were concern about family and geographic location. Results revealed that job choices made on intrinsic factors are related to an increase in both satisfaction and attitudinal commitment. External pressures such as family or finances were shown to be inversely related to attitudinal commitment, behavioral commitment, and job satisfaction. These results

provide some insight into the mixed results found within previous research and offer some suggestions for future research.

In another line of research, professional industrial consultants, while working with displaced AT&T employees, found that older workers were not more satisfied with an increase in relocation options. It was found that these employees were more satisfied in a situation when they were told exactly what they were expected to do next. Although these findings are anecdotal, they suggest an interesting hypothesis. A factor which may influence the likelihood of an individual being more satisfied or committed with an increase in choice may be their previous experiences with having choices or not. This possible factor should be explored more in future studies.

Future Research Needs

It is believed that the use of a different set of circumstances, such as vacation spots or sport events which could be attended, may be better suited to assess the effect locus of control has on an individual's satisfaction with their choice. Getting accepted into graduate school may be too important of an event for a difference between internals and externals to be detected.

REFERENCES

- Andrews, F.M., & Withey, S.B. (1976). *Social indicators of well-being: America's perception of life quality*. New York: Plenum.
- Austrom, D., & Hanel, K. (1985). Psychological issues of single life in Canada: An exploratory study. Special Issue: Feminist psychology: Singlelife and married life and women's sexuality. *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 8(1), 12-23.
- Brief, A.P., & Roberson, L. (1989). Job attitude organization: An exploratory study. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 19(9), 717-727.
- Campbell, A. Converse, P.E., & Rodgers, W.L. (1976). *The quality of American life*. New York: Wiley.
- Diener, E. (1984). Subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin*, 95(3), 542-575.

- Diener, E., Emmons, R.A., Larsen, R.J. & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 71-74.
- Earley, P.C., & Kanfer, R. (1985). The influence of component participation and role models on goal acceptance, goal satisfaction, and performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 36(3), 378-390.
- Festinger, L.A. (1957). *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press.
- Festinger, L.A. (1964). *Conflict, Decision, and Dissonance*. Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press.
- Goldstein, I.L. (1974). *Training: Program development and evaluation*. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks Cole.
- Gorrell, J., & Cramond, B. (1988). Students' attitude toward and use of written justification for multiple-choice answers. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 48(4), 935-943.
- Harlow, L.L., & Newcomb, M.D. (1990). Towards a general hierarchical model of meaning and satisfaction in life. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 25, 387-405.
- Harlow, L.L., Newcomb, M.D., & Bentler, P.M. (1987). Purpose in life assessment using latent variable method. *The British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 26, 235-236.
- Harrison, W., Lewis, G., & Straka, T. (1984). Locus of control, choice, and satisfaction with assigned task. *Research in Personality*, 18, 342-351.
- Hicks, W.D., & Klimoski, R.J. (1987). Entry into training programs and its effect on training outcomes: A field experiment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 30(3), 542-552.
- Ironson, G.H., Smith, P.C., Brannick, M.T., Gibson, W.M., & Paul, K.B. (1989). Construction of a job in general scale: A comparison of global, composite, and specific measures. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74(2), 193-200.
- Keisler, C.A. (1971). *The psychology of commitment*. New York: Academic Press.
- Kimmel, D.C., Price, F.K., & Walker, J.W. (1978). Retirement choice and retirement satisfaction. *Journal of Gerontology*, 33(4), 575-585.
- Kunin, T. (1955). The construction of a new type of attitude measure. *Personnel Psychology*, 8, 65-78.

- Luthans, F., Baack, D., & Taylor, L. (1987). Organizational commitment: Analysis of antecedents. *Human Relations*, 40(4), 219-236.
- Mannell, R.C., Zuzanek, J., & Larson, R. (1988). Leisure states and "flow" experiences: Testing perceived freedom and intrinsic motivation hypotheses. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 20(4), 289-304.
- Mayer, F.S., Duval, S., & Duval, V.H. (1980). An attributional analysis of commitment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 39(6), 1072-1080.
- Morris, J., & Ingham, R. (1988). Choice of surgery for early breast cancer: Psychological considerations. *Journal of Social Science Medicine*, 27(11), 1257-1262.
- O'Reilly, C.A., & Caldwell, D.F. (1980). Job choice: The impact of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on subsequent satisfaction and commitment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 65(5), 559-565.
- Porter, L.W., & Smith, F. (1970). *The etiology of organizational commitment*. Unpublished manuscript, University of California at Irvine.
- Porter, L.W., Steers, R.M., Mowday, R.T., & Boulian (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59(5), 603-609.
- Reibstein, D.J., Youngblood, S.A., & Fromkin, H.L. (1975). Number of choices and perceived decision freedom as a determinant of satisfaction and consumer behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60(4), 434-437.
- Rotter, J. (1954). *Social learning theory and clinical psychology*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Rotter, J. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs*, 80, No. 609.
- Salancik, G.R. (1977). Commitment and the control of organizational behavior. In B.M. Staw and G.R. Salancik (Eds.), *New directions for organizational behavior* (pp. 1-54). Chicago: St. Clair Press.
- Spector, P.E. (1982). Behavior in organizations as a function of employee's locus of control. *Psychological Bulletin*, 91(3), 482-497.
- Steers, R.M. (1977). Antecedents and outcomes of organizational commitment. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 17, 340-350.
- Vanderslice, V.J., Rice, R.W. & Julian, J.W. (1987). The effects of participation in decision-making on worker satisfaction and productivity: An organizational simulation. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 17(2), 158-170.

APPENDIX A

Instructions: The following description is a self-report of a series of events which have actually occurred over the last few months. The individual's identity and the identity of the universities are not disclosed to assure the person's anonymity. Please read the biography carefully. You will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires once you are finished.

Biography

I had known for a while that I would continue my education past the Bachelors degree. But it was only recently that I aspired to attain a Doctorate degree. Knowing the effort required to get into graduate school I began reviewing several brochures of graduate programs to gain a better understanding of what to expect.

After a couple of months I narrowed my selection down to ten comparable universities. Each of them had their strengths and weaknesses but overall they were equally desirable. I acquired the application materials from each university and soon thereafter completed filling them out and mailed them back to their respective university. The only thing left for me to do was wait to hear from each university about their decision regarding my acceptance or rejection.

A few months passed and I slowly began hearing from each of the universities about whether I was accepted to their school. All ten schools replied within a couple weeks of each other. The results were that I had been accepted into (one, three, or five) of the ten universities in which I sought admission. In the weeks that followed, I thought about my present situation and my plans for attending graduate school in the fall.

* Note: Each participant received only one of the three scenarios with either one, three, or five graduate school choices.