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The University of Southern Mississippi

PREDICTORS OF MAJOR COMMITMENT

by

Anna Jill Womack

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved:

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August 2014

ABSTRACT

PREDICTORS OF MAJOR COMMITMENT

by Anna Jill Womack

August 2014

Contextual (e.g. job fit, job involvement), individual (e.g. job satisfaction, need for achievement), and demographic (e.g. gender, educational level) factors have been related to forms of career commitment (i.e. affective, continuance, and normative commitment), highlighting that the commitment one feels toward his or her career is a complex variable. Furthermore, commitment has been associated with intent to remain within a profession or organization (Bowling, Beehr, & Lepisto, 2006; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007; Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011; Goulet & Singh, 2002), suggesting that commitment is an important component of retention within a career.

Correspondingly, commitment to one's academic major may also provide information about retention within a university. However, relatively little research has examined the topic of major commitment. The purpose of the current study was to examine contextual, individual, and demographic factors that have been previously related to career commitment as they were assumed to also predict major commitment, using a sample of 316 undergraduate students to study this issue. Results indicated that subjective fit, major involvement, and need for achievement were significant, positive predictors of affective commitment. Ethnicity, major involvement, university commitment, and objective fit significantly predicted continuance commitment. Ethnicity, major involvement, and university commitment were predictive of increased normative commitment. The three forms of commitment were significantly predictive of intention to quit with affective

commitment being a significant negative predictor and continuance commitment being a significant positive predictor.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	vi
CHAPTER	
I. PREDICTORS OF CAREER AND MAJOR COMMITMENT	1
Career Commitment	
Major Commitment	
Intention to Quit	
The Current Study	
Hypothesis 1	
Hypothesis 2	
II. METHODOLOGY	18
Participants	
Measures	
Procedures	
Data Analysis	
III. RESULTS	31
Contextual, Individual, and Demographic Factors and Commitment	
Commitment and Intention to Quit	
Summary of Results	
IV. DISCUSSION	40
Implications	
Limitations	
APPENDIXES	50
REFERENCES	63

LIST OF TABLES

Table

1.	Reported college and major for the sample.....	18
2.	Alphas and correlations among study variables.....	32
3.	Hierarchical regression analyses for predictors of affective commitment.....	34
4.	Hierarchical regression analyses for predictors of continuance major commitment.....	35
5.	Hierarchical regression analyses for predictors of normative major commitment.....	37
6.	Hierarchical regression analyses for affective, normative, and continuance commitment in predicting intention to quit school.....	38

CHAPTER I

PREDICTORS OF CAREER AND MAJOR COMMITMENT

Research has shown that the amount of money individuals can expect to make during their working years is partially determined by completion of a bachelor's degree (Day&Newburger, 2002). Therefore, a college education can be an essential component of career development and can ultimately determine one's lifetime earnings. College is a pivotal point in an individual's life and choosing a major is one of the most important decisions made during this time period. However, some students struggle with making the ultimate decision about what major to pursue, therefore increasing the difficulty of completing a degree. For example, in a study of undergraduates, students were asked to write seven criteria for selecting a major and then do so again a year later. Within the span of a year, students had changed about half of their originally listed criteria for choosing a major (Galotti, 1999), illustrating the instability in student's reasons for committing to a college major. Understanding commitment to one's major may assist in comprehending why students tend to change college majors and how this process may be related to college retention. Despite the need for research on this topic, little literature articulates the predictors of major commitment.

To gain a further conceptualization of major commitment, the greater body of related literature on predictors of career commitment is first reviewed, as understanding the predictors of career commitment may provide some initial hypotheses about possible predictors of major commitment. Contextual factors such as job involvement and job fit are explored in relation to career commitment. In regards to college major, the concepts of major involvement and major fit are examined. Additionally, individual factors (e.g.

job satisfaction, need for achievement, organizational commitment) are investigated, first within the career commitment literature, then within the major commitment literature. Demographic (e.g. gender and education level) factors are also examined in relation to career commitment. All of these factors are then examined in relation to college major commitment in undergraduate students. Current research regarding the connection between major commitment and university retention is additionally explored and the need for further research in this area is discussed.

Career Commitment

Blau (1985) defined career commitment as “one’s attitude toward one’s profession or vocation” (p. 280). More recently, Carson and Bedeian (1994) have defined career commitment as “one’s motivation to work in a chosen vocation” (p.240). Research on career commitment by Meyer and Allen (1984, 1991) has suggested that the construct of career commitment can be categorized into three forms of commitment: affective commitment (i.e. feelings of commitment to a career), continuance commitment (i.e. perceived cost of leaving a career), and normative commitment (i.e. perceived obligation to remain with a career). While all three of these forms of commitment reflect individuals’ relationship to their careers as well as their intent to remain in that line of work, the separation of these forms of commitment is important, as each has been shown to relate differently to measures of other desirable job related behaviors (See for example Cohen, 1999; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Much of the research on career commitment has examined various constructs related to career commitment, including contextual factors, individual factors, and demographic factors. For example, a study of working adults found that affective commitment was positively related to fit (i.e. the extent to

which an individual's interests and abilities match up with job tasks), while normative and continuance commitment was not (Brkich, Jeffs, & Carless, 2002). Furthermore, Meyer et al. (1993) found that job satisfaction was positively correlated with affective and normative commitment, but negatively correlated with continuance commitment. Thus, research on the construct of career commitment has suggested that looking at all three forms of career commitment is necessary as each form may be related to different work outcomes. Various areas of research have investigated several factors that predict career commitment. In order to discuss these factors in a succinct fashion, they have been organized into three categories (i.e., contextual, individual, and demographic).

Contextual Factors

Career commitment has been shown to relate to many workplace constructs. Contextual factors, or factors related to the context of work, such as job involvement and job fit, have been found to relate to increased career commitment (Bowling et al., 2006; Carless, 2005; Goulet & Singh, 2002; Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). Research by Goulet and Singh (2002) explored constructs related to career commitment using Blau's Career Commitment Scale (Blau, 1985). Results suggested a positive relationship between job involvement (i.e. the level to which an individual is actively participating in his/her job) and career commitment, indicating that higher levels of involvement in one's job is related to higher level of commitment to one's career. Similarly, Bowling and colleagues (2006) found that job involvement was positively related to career commitment. Additionally, this relationship was found to be stable over a five-year time period (Bowling et al., 2006). These findings indicate that the more an individual is involved

with his or her job, the more commitment that individual will have to his or her overall career.

The second contextual factor examined in relation to career commitment is job fit. Job fit is typically referred to as person-job fit, which refers to the fit between a particular job and a person's knowledge, skills, and abilities (Edwards, 1991). While this construct has been researched within person-environment fit theory for many years (Holland, 1997; Pervin, 1968; Schneider, 1987), fewer studies have examined the specific relationship between person-job fit and career commitment. One study by Carless (2005) found support for the person-job fit and career commitment relationship. In a sample of 116 Australian police officers, person-job fit was a significant predictor of overall career commitment, finding that people report higher commitment to careers that match their skills and abilities. Additionally, Brkich et al. (2002) found that affective commitment was positively related to job fit, further establishing support for the relationship between job fit and career commitment.

Furthermore, career choice theory supports the relationship between career commitment and job fit. For instance, the Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) upholds the idea that people tend to remain in careers or jobs that match their skills and abilities, with research supporting this assumption (Hesketh, McLachlan, & Gardner, 1992). Support for TWA's assumption that individuals have longer tenure in jobs that match one's abilities have been found for specific populations as well, including persons with disabilities (Chiocchio & Frigon, 2006) and LGB populations (Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005).

Individual Factors

Individual factors (e.g. need for achievement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organizational commitment) have been shown to relate to career commitment as well. Need for achievement is characterized by an individual's attempts to accomplish goals within his or her environment (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989). Literature examining the relationship between career commitment and need for achievement is limited.

Nevertheless, Goulet and Singh (2002) found that need for achievement was positively related to career commitment. However, other factors, such as job satisfaction, job involvement, and organizational commitment mediated the relationship between career commitment and need for achievement. Despite Goulet and Singh's (2002) findings that suggest other variables may explain the relationship between need for achievement and career commitment more fully, further study of this relationship is warranted. The relationship between need for achievement and career commitment may be stronger for individuals in the beginning of their careers (i.e. undergraduates) as they are in the early stages of their career development and therefore may have more goals yet to achieve. The pressure of these unmet career goals may initiate a greater need to reach such career milestones and therefore possibly higher needs for achievement, translating to higher commitment to one's career as a means for career achievement.

A relationship also has been found between career commitment and job satisfaction (Blau, 1999; Bowling et al., 2006; Duffy et al., 2011; Goulet & Singh, 2002). Job satisfaction can be conceptualized as the extent to which employees like their job (Agho, Price, & Mueller, 1992). Consistent evidence for this relationship has been demonstrated in several studies. A recent study of 370 university employees found a

high positive correlation ($r = .71$) between job satisfaction and career commitment (Duffy et al., 2011). Further, in a longitudinal study, it was found that the positive relationship between job satisfaction and career commitment remained stable over five years (Bowling et al., 2006).

In addition to identifying a relationship between career commitment and satisfaction within a specific job, career commitment was found to be related to overall career satisfaction. A study by Fu (2011) illustrates the pronounced significance of career satisfaction (one's satisfaction with his or her overall career field) in predicting career commitment within a population of information technology professionals. The results of this study indicated that career satisfaction was the strongest predictor of career commitment when compared to other factors, such as professional self-efficacy and career investment, or the resources (i.e., money, time, energy) put towards a career. Moreover, others have found career satisfaction to be positively related to career commitment (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bowling et al., 2006; Raedeke, Warren, & Granzky, 2002), and this relationship also was found to be stable across five years (Bowling et al., 2006). These studies indicate that higher satisfaction within one's career or job is related to higher levels of commitment, with satisfaction being one of the most robust predictors of career commitment.

It has been demonstrated that there are several ways in which an individual may demonstrate commitment to his or her career, another of which is organizational commitment. Previous research has found that organizational commitment —one's commitment to the organization for which they work— is related to career commitment in particular (Bowling et al., 2006; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007; Duffy et al., 2011;

Goulet& Singh, 2002), meaning that commitment to one's specific organization is indicative of one's commitment to his or her overall career. For example, Duffy and colleagues (2011) found, in a study of university employees, that organizational commitment was positively related to career commitment. In sum, the unique aspects of peoples' work attitudes (e.g. need for achievement, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organizational commitment) have been shown to be related to career commitment.

Demographic Factors

Previous literature has examined the relationship between gender and career commitment and suggests that undergraduate women have a higher level of career commitment than undergraduate men (Chung, 2002). Similarly, in a study of pharmacists, women reported higher levels of career commitment (Hussain& Bates, 2002). It is possible that the gender differences in career commitment are due to the degree of difficulty associated with obtaining a new career. Women may feel that they would have greater difficulty than men in obtaining a new career and, therefore, demonstrate greater commitment to the one they already have. Whereas men have an advantage in the job market, they may feel less of a commitment to the career they are currently in, as changing careers may be an easier process for men. For example, Biemat and Fuegen (2001) found that men were more likely than women to be hired for a job, despite being equally likely to make the short list of preferred applicants. This finding indicates that women may be considered for a job at a similar rate to men, but in the final hiring decision, men were more likely to be selected over women, providing a possible reason for career commitment being higher for women.

Further, Goulet and Singh (2002) found that education level positively related to career commitment, indicating that higher levels of education related to higher levels of career commitment. Higher education levels are generally representative of more years of schooling in pursuit of a particular career path, and could possibly increase one's commitment to that career given increased investment in the pursuit of that career. Thus research suggests that particular characteristics of individuals, such as gender and education level, influence one's level of career commitment.

In summary, previous research has found many positive relationships between career commitment and other work related constructs (i.e., job involvement, job fit, job and career satisfaction, and organizational commitment). While these relationships have been established in the literature, the relationship between career commitment and need for achievement may be mediated by other variables (Goulet & Singh, 2002), but further study is needed to clarify this relationship. Therefore, the previously identified and discussed relationships are utilized as a basis for the investigation of possible predictors of major commitment.

Major Commitment

Before investigating possible predictors of major commitment, it is important to define what is known about the construct. Major commitment, similar to career commitment, can be conceptualized as one's attitude toward one's chosen academic major. Given that major commitment is analogous to career commitment, the two have been measured in similar ways. For example, major commitment has been measured using an adapted version of Meyer and Allen's (1991) measure of career commitment (Wessel, Ryan, & Oswald, 2008). As mentioned previously, Meyer and Allen (1991)

conceptualize career commitment as an overarching concept comprised of three forms of commitment: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Consequently, major commitment also has been conceptualized as being comprised of these three forms to describe the ways in which individuals may be committed to their academic major (Chang, 2009).

Substantially less research has been conducted on major commitment than career commitment; however, current research suggests that predictors of career commitment may also predict major commitment (Chang, 2009). Examinations of the predictors of major commitment can prove useful in better understanding students' intentions to leave a particular major or university. Tinto (1993) found that only 15-25% of students who drop out of college did so based on academic failure, yet the reasons for leaving among the remaining group of students were unknown. Research suggests that individuals who are committed to their major are more likely to obtain a bachelors degree (Landrum & Mulcock, 2007), indicating that the majority of students who drop out of school are likely doing so for reasons other than academic struggles. Further understanding of the construct of major commitment may provide significant gains in our knowledge on predicting students' intentions to remain enrolled in college. Furthermore, research regarding major commitment has been conducted utilizing similar variables to those used in career commitment research (e.g., job fit, job involvement, job satisfaction). Review of this literature provides some understanding of the construct of major commitment.

Contextual Factors

Contextual factors of major commitment are similar to those in relation to career commitment. Major involvement (the extent of involvement in activities relating to major

outside of the classroom) and major fit (how well a major coincides with an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities) seem to be relevant to major commitment (Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Wessel et al., 2008). Additionally, Graunke and Woosley (2005) found that interactions between students and faculty/staff as well as involvement in various campus-related activities (e.g. student organizations and on campus activities) were positively correlated with Grade Point Average (GPA), and in turn, GPA was positively correlated with major commitment. While this study established a relationship between major involvement and major commitment, moderated by GPA, the relationship between major commitment and major involvement needs to be directly examined further as no research examines the direct relationship between the two.

Major fit has also been shown to relate to major commitment. Wessel and colleagues (2008) examined major commitment and subjective major fit (i.e., student's perceptions that they fit with their major) in a study of 198 undergraduate students. Using an adapted version of Meyer and Allen's (1991) measure of organizational commitment, the researchers found a positive relationship between subjective major fit and major commitment, specifically affective commitment. Additionally, they found a positive relationship between objective fit, as measured by the relation between vocational interest congruence with one's major, and normative commitment. However, fit, subjective or objective, did not relate to continuance commitment. The identified relationship between subjective fit and affective commitment may be due to the emotional connection students have with their major, while feeling obligated to remain in a major is a product of a student's identified interests and skills (i.e. objective fit). Despite finding that major fit related to the majority of subscales assessing major commitment in this particular study,

there appears to be no other studies specifically examining this relationship, which illuminates the need for further investigation in this area to provide replication of the previous research.

Individual Factors

To gain a better conceptualization of what would compose individual factors relating to major commitment, the analogous factors of career commitment were reviewed previously. In the literature regarding career commitment, satisfaction was found to be the strongest predictor of career commitment (Fu, 2011). Braskamp, Wise, and Hengstler (1979) found that general satisfaction with one's major is a highly related dimension of overall student satisfaction, yet no literature has examined the predictive nature of major satisfaction in relation to major commitment. Therefore, it is expected that satisfaction with one's major will be positively and significantly correlated with major commitment.

Need for achievement has not been examined thoroughly in the literature regarding career commitment or major commitment, although one study demonstrated that need for achievement has a relationship (albeit weak) with career commitment (Goulet & Singh, 2002). However, this was examined in a population of established employees. The relationship may be stronger in a sample of undergraduate students, who are still in the process of reaching their career goals. If an individual (i.e. undergraduate student) feels a need to achieve certain goals then it is expected that he or she will be more likely to remain committed to the route (i.e. academic major) in which he or she has decided to pursue such goals. Consequently, it was expected that need for achievement

in a population of undergraduate students would be significantly correlated with and predictive of major commitment.

College students may develop a close attachment to the university from which they graduate. Additionally, while enrolled, students may feel committed to certain features of the university, such as academic major. In the career commitment literature, the concept of organizational commitment is representative of the commitment an individual feels for the company or organization for which he or she works. In parallel, within the major commitment literature, the concept of organizational commitment is adjusted to represent the commitment one feels to the institution or university he or she attends. Support for the relation between organizational/university commitment and major commitment has been found, although only in one sample. In a study of 1,093 first year students at a large Midwestern university, it was found that university commitment was positively and significantly correlated with academic major commitment (Graunke & Woosley, 2005). Additional studies may further assess the robustness of the relationship between major commitment and university commitment.

Demographic Factors

Given the literature regarding career commitment and gender and educational level, it is expected that these demographic factors may also relate to major commitment. Within the career commitment literature, it has been found that women have higher levels of commitment (Chung, 2002; Hussain & Bates, 2002). Although a relationship regarding gender and major commitment has not been found in a sample of students from the United States, a study of a Chinese student population found that women had higher levels of major commitment than men (Yang, Luo, & Peng, 2009).

Additionally, based on career commitment literature, it was expected that women would have higher levels of commitment to their major, especially given data that there are more female than male college students (Bae, Choy, Geddes, Sable, & Synder, 2000). This may indicate that women may be more likely to pursue college education and in turn are anticipated to be more likely to remain committed to a major.

Furthermore, research has found that education level is positively correlated with career commitment (Goulet & Singh, 2002). Therefore, a similar relationship is expected with major commitment. However, as education level is inappropriate to assess in a sample of participants that are currently in the process of obtaining a bachelor's degree, an alternative way to assess this hypothesis is needed. In order to measure the amount of time one has invested in his or her current major, it is anticipated that increased time invested in one's major (i.e. number of semesters declared in the major) will relate to higher levels of major commitment. Further, parental education level may likely be related to college-students' major commitment, as parents often exert a significant amount of influence over their children. As found in the literature, parents can influence their children's career development and career decision-making (See for example Young & Friesen, 1994; Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, & Glasscock, 2001; Scott & Church, 2001). Schultheiss and colleagues (2001) discovered that the majority of undergraduate students felt that family members had a positive impact on their career development through indirect (i.e., emotional support) and direct (i.e., sharing educational materials) means. Furthermore, in a study of undergraduate students, stronger vocational identity was associated with families that emphasized academic achievements (Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002). Therefore, it was anticipated that parents with higher levels of education

demonstrate greater commitment to their own careers and likely have socialized their children to value this as well, possibly increasing their children's' commitment to their undergraduate major.

Intention to Quit

For years, there has been a call for more research regarding college retention (Graunke&Woosely, 2005; Okun, Goegan, &Mitric, 2009; Tinto, 2006), as the importance of obtaining higher education has significant implications over one's lifespan. Individuals who graduate with a bachelor's degree earn about 2.1 million dollars over their working life, which is about double what an individual without a bachelor's degree can expect to earn (Day &Newburger, 2002). This disparity in lifetime earnings mayhave implications onthe availability of resources one has and their eventual quality of life. As mentioned, research suggests that most students are leaving college not due to academic problems (Tinto, 1993). One possible way to understand retention of college students is to examine the corresponding literature regarding career tenure. For instance, Meyer et al., (1993) found that career commitment was predictive of turnover intention. Consequently, a similar relationship may exist in college students. Therefore, it is important to consider the predictive nature of career commitment when examining college retention. It seems logical that if students feel higher levels of commitment to their particular major, then they will have a greater likelihood of persisting in that major and stay enrolled in school until completion of a degree. As expected, this notion has been supported in the literature. In a study of 629 introductory psychology students, it was found that those who reported being more committed to psychology were more likely to stay in that major and obtain a bachelor's degree in psychology (Landrum &Mulcock,

2007). Furthermore, Cooke, Sims, and Peyrefitte (1995) found that graduate students with higher school satisfaction and affective commitment were less likely to quit school, while those with lower need for achievement ended up quitting school at a higher rate. Therefore, the relationship between major commitment and retention was explored in the current study by examining students' intentions of remaining at a university. Fully understanding the predictors of major commitment creates a crucial foundation for examining the connection between major commitment and intentions to quit school.

The Current Study

Literature regarding commitment has demonstrated a positive relationship between career commitment and the following constructs: job fit, job involvement, job/career satisfaction, organizational commitment, education level, and gender. However, the relationship between need for achievement and commitment warrants further exploration. Further, prior research suggests that predictors of career commitment are similar to predictors of major commitment (Chang, 2009). The current study aims to determine the predictors of undergraduate students' commitment to an academic major in an effort to understand the way in which universities may increase student retention. This is primarily an exploratory study as there is little literature on major commitment from which to draw strong assumptions about potential relationships among the current study's variables. The only consistent findings within the body of literature on career commitment suggest a strong relationship between career commitment and career satisfaction and career commitment and fit, therefore providing a basis for tentative hypotheses about these variables. Based on the review of previous literature, the following hypotheses guided the study:

Hypothesis 1

1a. It was expected that higher levels of major involvement would be significantly and positively predictive of higher levels of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major.

1b. It was expected that subjective major fit (e.g., student's perceptions that they fit with their major) would be significantly and positively predictive of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major. This relationship was also expected between objective major fit (e.g., vocational interest congruence with one's major) and each form of major commitment.

1c. It was expected that major satisfaction would be significantly and positively predictive of each form of major commitment. Based on the career commitment literature, it was also expected that major satisfaction would explain the largest amount of variance for each form of commitment.

1d. It was expected that higher levels of need for achievement would be significantly and positively predictive of higher levels of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major.

1e. It was expected that organizational commitment would be positively and significantly predictive of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major.

1f. It was expected that gender would be a significant predictor of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's academic major, anticipating that females would demonstrate greater levels of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major than males.

1g. It was expected that semesters in major would be positively and significantly predictive of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major.

1h. It was expected that higher levels of parental education would be predictive of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major.

Hypothesis 2

It was expected that higher levels of affective, normative, and continuance commitment to one's major would predict decreased intentions to quit school.

CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGY

Participants

The sample assessed was undergraduate students enrolled at a southeastern university. Participants were recruited from various classes within different majors that fulfilled university required general elective courses. Drawing participants from various classes was intended to provide a representative sample of the different majors offered at the university. Data was collected from a total of 340 participants, 33.5% male and 66.5% female, with a mean age of 21.98 years ($SD= 6.45$). The sample was 59.6% White or Caucasian, 36% Black or African American, 1.8% Multi-ethnic/Other, and 1.2% Asian. Participants identifying as Native American/American Indian, Hispanic/Latino, or Native Hawaiian ethnicity comprised the remaining 1.4% of the sample. Of the overall sample, 94.4% of participants had declared a major, reporting an average of 2.76 semesters in their major ($SD= 2.2$). Data from students who had not declared a major, but indicated a specific major they intended to declare were still used in analyses ($n= 19$). Reported majors for all participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Reported College and Major for the Sample

	%	N
College of Arts and Letters	9.7	33
Communication Studies	.6	2
Design	.3	1
English	.9	3
Entertainment Industry	.6	2
Fashion Merchandising	1.2	4
French	.3	1
Graphic Design	.6	2
History	1.2	4

Table 1 (continued).

	%	N
Interdisciplinary Studies	.6	2
Journalism	.3	1
Languages	.3	1
Music Performance	.3	1
Political Science	1.2	4
Recording Production	.3	1
Sociology	.3	1
Theatre	.9	3
College of Business	11.2	38
Accounting	2.6	9
Banking/Finance	.9	3
Business Administration	4.4	15
Healthcare Marketing	.9	3
International Business	.6	2
Marketing	1.2	4
Tourism	.3	1
Vocational Rehabilitation	.3	1
College of Education and Psychology	24.7	84
Child and Family Studies	.6	2
Education	3.2	11
Family Relations	.6	2
Psychology	18.2	62
Special Education	2.1	7
College of Health	15	51
Athletic Training	.6	2
Exercise Science	3.8	13
Kinesiotherapy	3.5	12
Medical Technology	.6	2
Nutrition and Dietetics	.9	3
Physical Therapy	.6	2
Social Work	1.2	4
Speech Pathology	2.3	8
Sports Management	.9	3
Therapeutic Recreation	.6	2
College of Nursing	15	51
Nursing	15	51
College of Science and Technology	24.4	83
Biochemistry	.9	3
Biology	3.5	12
Chemistry	.6	2
Civil Engineering	.3	1
Criminal Justice	12.9	44
Forensics	2.9	10

Table 1 (continued).

	%	N
Industrial Engineering	.3	1
IT Networking	.3	1
Marine Biology	.6	2
Mathematics	1.2	4
Microbiology	.6	2
Physics	.3	1
Total	100.0	340

Measures

Major Commitment

Commitment to college major was assessed using an adapted version of Meyer et al.'s (1993) three-component measure of career commitment. This 18-item questionnaire was originally created using a sample of nurses, but has previously been adapted for use with college students to examine college major commitment (Chang, 2009; Wessel et al., 2008). Three types of commitment were examined: affective (i.e. attachment to one's major), continuance (i.e. commitment to continue within the organization or university), and normative (i.e. pressure to remain in within the organization or university). Examples of items included the following: "I am proud to be in my current major" (affective commitment), "It would be costly for me to change my major" (continuance commitment), and "I would feel guilty if I left my major" (normative commitment). Responses are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Each of the three subscales (i.e., affective, continuance, and normative scales) is comprised of six items. Confirmatory factor analysis of the original version demonstrated that each of these scales was comprised of items that supported the

overall construct of career commitment (Meyer et al., 1993). Further, Chang (2009) found that the coefficient alphas were .86, .86, and .82 for affective, continuance and normative commitment scales, respectively, when modified to examine major commitment. Alphas from the current sample were .87, .86, and .82 for affective, continuance and normative commitment scales, respectively.

Major Involvement

Major involvement was assessed with an adapted version of Kanungo's (1982) Job Involvement Questionnaire. This measure is comprised of ten items. Examples of items include "I am very much personally involved in my major" and "Most of my interests are centered around my major." Items were rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (6). Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was found to be .87, while the test-retest reliability over the span of three weeks was found to be .74 in a sample of full-time employees (Kanungo, 1982). As this scale has not been previously used in a sample of undergraduate students, an additional measure of major involvement was included, which was an adapted version of Strapp and Farr's (2010) measure of major involvement. This measure asks students to indicate the number of hours spent on major-related activities each week. Examples of such activities include major-related clubs (e.g., Psi Chi for psychology majors) and research or teaching assistant positions related to their major. Total scores on this measure were calculated by summing the total number of hours of involvement in major activities. Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine what items would be used in the final analyses. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using principle components to reduce data. EFA results found that all but two items from the Job Involvement

Questionnaire (Kanungo, 1982) loaded on one component accounting for 27.99% of the variance (Eigenvalue=5.6). Items from the second measure, examining number of hours spent on major-related tasks, loaded together on the second component, which accounted for 14.72% of the variance (Eigenvalue = 2.94). Items from component 1 were used in the final analyses, as the two components appeared to capture different constructs. Furthermore, items from Job Involvement Questionnaire had greater evidence of validity available (Kanungo, 1982). From this measure, the item “To me, my major is only a small part of who I am” was removed, as it appeared to be tapping into a separate construct as it had a low loading on the first component (.15). Alphas with and without this item were .88 and .90, respectively. The item “Usually I feel detached from my major” (reverse scored) had high cross loadings (loadings of .32, .37, and .38 on the first, fourth, and fifth components, respectively). Therefore, coefficient alphas were examined to determine if the item should be retained to use the measure in its entirety or modified for use in the current study. Alphas with and without this item (e.g. “feel detached”) were .90 and .92, respectively, so the item was removed. The remaining eight items were summed to create a total score with a possible range from 8 to 54. The alpha of the resulting scale was .92.

Major Fit

Major fit was examined by assessing both objective fit and subjective fit. First, objective major fit was measured by interest congruence between one’s scores on John Holland’s Self-Directed Search (SDS; Holland, 1994) and one’s declared major. If a student reported they had not declared a major, congruence was measured using the major he or she reported considering. The SDS consists of 228 items which generate six

subscale scores that assess vocational personality and occupation-environment fit based on Holland's theory of vocational choice (Holland, Powell, & Fritzsche, 1997). A code for each individual is generated based on the highest three of these six subscale scores on the SDS. High estimates of internal consistency (.87 to .93) have been found for all subscale scores on the SDS for adults ages 19 to 61 years (Holland et al., 1997). Congruence between major and interests was calculated using the Iachan index (Iachan, 1984). This procedure examines the similarity between the student's Holland code from the SDS and the Holland code for his/her major to create an index of congruence ranging from 0 to 28. For example, if a student's code and his/her major code are an exact match (i.e., the first, second, and third letter of both codes are the same) the Iachan Index would be a *perfect* score of 28. Higher Iachan scores are indicative of greater congruence between major and individual interests (Miller, 2007). However, if the codes were not similar, the participant would receive a much lower Iachan Index score. For example, if there were no similar letters in the participant's code and their major code, the participant would receive an Iachan Index score of 0, indicating incongruence. Calculated congruence scores, using the Iachan Index, were used as an index of objective major fit.

Additionally, subjective major fit (i.e., student's perceived major-ability fit) was examined by using an adapted version of Adeb-Halim's (1981) measure of ability-job fit. This five-item measure was rated on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). An example item is, "My major gives me a chance to do the things I feel I do best." Coefficient alphas have ranged from .73 to .74 when utilized as a measure of ability-job fit (Xie, 1996; Xie & Johns, 1995). Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) from this sample was .90.

Major Satisfaction

Major satisfaction was assessed by a nine-item measure investigating several experiences one has within (i.e., course availability and faculty interactions) his or her major (Strapp & Farr, 2010). Items were developed from prior research (Ogletree, 1998; Quereshi, 1988; Sheehan, 1994). Items on this measure were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from *very dissatisfied* (0) to *very satisfied* (4) and included items such as “How satisfied are you with the course variety in your major?” and “How satisfied are you with the overall experience within your major?” Internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) was found to be .89 in a sample of undergraduate students (Strapp & Farr, 2010). Cronbach’s alpha for the current sample was .89.

Need for Achievement

Need for achievement (nAch) was measured using a subscale of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (Heckert et al., 2000). The nAch subscale specifically examines need for achievement (e.g., “I try to perform my best at work”). This five-item subscale was rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Scores on this measure were found to remain stable over a time period of six weeks with the test-retest reliability estimate being .64 for the nAch subscale (Heckert et al., 2000). The nAch subscale was found to be related to, albeit, discriminated from the other needs subscales on this measure through confirmatory factor analysis (Heckert et al., 2000). An internal consistency estimate for the nAch scale of .76 has been found in a sample of undergraduates (Heckert et al., 2000); however, the alpha for the current sample was much higher ($\alpha = .92$).

University Commitment

Strauss and Volkwein's (2004) measure of organizational/university commitment, comprised of four items, was used to assess one's commitment to the university. An example item of this measure is "If I could start college over, I would choose to attend this college." Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Strauss and Volkwein (2004) found Cronbach's alpha to be .86 in a sample of first year college students.

Since validity evidence was not reported for the Strauss and Volkwein (2004) measure, the shortened version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) was adapted to use as well, as it has adequate evidence of reliability and validity. Cohen (1996) found that the shortened OCQ was empirically distinct from job involvement, career commitment, and work involvement, suggesting adequate evidence of discriminate validity. This measure is comprised of nine items that were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). An example of an item in this measure is "I talk up this university to my friends as a great university to attend." Coefficient alphas have ranged from .88 to .98 (Jones, Scarpello, & Bergmann, 1999; Mowday et al., 1979).

In order to determine which measure would be used or if they should be combined to measure organizational commitment, these two measures were assessed utilizing factor analysis and internal consistency estimates. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using a principal components method was conducted to determine if items from the two measures could be combined to appropriately measure organizational/university commitment. EFA results found that all the items primarily loaded on one component accounted for 57.85%

of the variance (Eigenvalue=7.52); however, one of these items appeared to load equally on two components. To determine if this item should remain in the measure, internal consistency estimates (alphas) were examined. Reliability coefficients with and without this item were .93 and .94, respectively. As there was little difference in the alphas, the item was included in the final scale. These measures utilized different Likert scaling anchors (i.e., 1 to 5 versus 1 to 7). Therefore, items on the Strauss and Volkwein (2004) measure were weighted (i.e., each multiplied by 1.4), and all items from both measures (i.e., 13 items) were then summed to create a total score with a possible range of scores from 14.6 to 91. The alpha of the resulting scale was .93.

Intention to Quit

Items used to measure intention to quit were adapted from two previous studies. The first and second items were adapted from Eaton and Bean (1995), while the third was adapted from Griffeth and Hom (1988), as previously used in Schmitt et al. (2007). These three items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Scores are additive, with higher scores reflecting greater intention to quit. An example item was as follows: "I intend to be enrolled in this school 6 months from today." The internal consistency for these three items was found to be .79 (Schmitt et al., 2007). A final item from Spector (1991) was adapted to examine the frequency of thoughts regarding a student's intention to quit school. This item is rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from *never* (1) to *extremely often* (6). The reliability coefficient for these four items was .62. An EFA, using principal components factoring, was conducted to determine if all four of these items could be reduced into one scale. EFA results found that all the items loaded primarily onto one component accounting for 48.03% of the

variance (Eigenvalue=1.92). However, one item had a weak loading on this component (e.g., loading less than .40). Internal reliability coefficients with and without this item were .62 and .68, respectively. Therefore, the item from Spector (1991) “How often do you seriously consider quitting school?” was removed. Consequently, the final measure was the one previously used in Schmitt et al. (2007). The remaining items were summed to create a total score that ranged from 3 to 15. The alpha of the resulting scale was .69.

A demographic form was also included to assess student’s personal information, including parental education level and the length of time (i.e., the number of semesters) the student has been declared in his/her major. Students who had not yet declared a major were not used in analyses examining predictors of the three forms of commitment that included the variable “number of semester in major” as it was not applicable ($n = 19$).

Procedures

Participants were recruited from The University of Southern Mississippi’s campus primarily through SONA systems, an online database to solicit research participants through the university. Course instructors were also contacted individually to recruit for participants. Individuals were compensated for their participation by either receiving course or extra credit, or entering a drawing for the opportunity to win one \$50 VISA gift card.

Data Analysis

First, analyses were conducted to examine the validity and reliability of the measures of major involvement, university commitment, and intention to quit that were initially assessed using multiple measures. The final measure of major involvement was comprised of the modified Job Involvement Questionnaire, except for two items that

were dropped due to loadings (i.e., high cross loadings or a low loading on the main component). The shortened OCQ and Strauss and Volkwein's (2004) measure of organizational/university were combined to measure university commitment. The final scale of intention to quit was examined using three questions assessing students' intention of leaving their current university after 6 months and a year from the completion of the survey. Additional information regarding these analyses can be found in the measures section. Furthermore, gender was dummy coded prior to final analyses such that 0 was representative of females and 1 was representative of males. Additionally, ethnicity was dummy coded (i.e., White = 0, non-White = 1) for regression analyses.

Preliminary statistics were conducted to examine any demographic variables that may need to be controlled for final analyses. ANOVAs examining the impact of ethnicity and academic major on the scales of major commitment and intention to quit were conducted. Academic major was organized by college (e.g., College of Business, College of Education, and Psychology) to aid in statistical analysis. Ethnicity was categorized into White participants ($n = 202$) and non-White participants ($n = 137$). Participants who identified as something other than White (e.g., Black, Native American, Hispanic/Latino) were categorized as "non-White" for statistical purposes as there were many groups, with many groups having low numbers. Furthermore, research has suggested that educational and occupational disparities exist between individuals from White backgrounds and minority backgrounds (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Therefore, organizing participants into these two groups (e.g., "White" and "non-White") is representative of the existing disparities for career development issues in the literature. These analyses found that continuance commitment ($F(1, 337) = 7.67, p < .01$), normative

commitment ($F(1, 337) = 14.08, p < .01$), and intention to quit ($F(1, 337) = 6.61, p < .05$) varied by ethnicity. Participants who identified as non-White ($m = 20.39, sd = 5.86$) reported greater continuance commitment than those who identified as White ($m = 18.54, sd = 6.14$). Moreover, those who identified as non-White ($m = 20.01, sd = 5.33$) reported greater normative commitment than those who identified as White ($m = 17.85, sd = 5.09$). Affective commitment did not vary by ethnicity or college. In regards to intention to quit, those who identified as non-White ($m = 6.62, sd = 2.81$) reported greater levels of intention to quit when compared to those who identified as White ($m = 5.79, sd = 3.01$).

Continuance ($F(5, 334) = 3.06, p = .01$) commitments significantly varied across colleges, with students in the College of Business reporting the most continuance commitment ($m = 20.53, sd = 5.7$) and students in the College of Arts and Letters reporting the lowest ($m = 17.09, sd = 5.88$). Tukey post-hoc analyses did not reveal any significant differences in scores among the colleges. Additionally, the intention to quit varied across colleges ($F(5, 334) = 3.14, p < .01$), where students in the College of Science and Technology ($m = 6.75, sd = 3.22$) had the highest scores and College of Health ($m = 5.25, sd = 2.54$) and College of Nursing ($m = 5.25, sd = 2.47$) students had the lowest. Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed a significant difference between students in the College of Science and Technology and the College of Health ($m \text{ difference} = 1.49, p < .05$), as well as the College of Nursing ($m \text{ difference} = 1.49, p < .05$), with students in the College of Science and Technology reporting higher levels of intention to quit. Given these findings, ethnicity and college were controlled in the final analyses.

To address study hypotheses, hierarchical multiple regression was used. Correlations between study variables were calculated to examine the relationships

between variables prior to regression analyses. Next, three separate analyses were conducted to examine the predictors of the different forms of commitment. Ethnicity and collegewere controlled in the continuance and normative commitment regressions. Finally, hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine if the three forms of major commitment predicted intentions to quit. Ethnicity and collegewere also controlled in this analysis, suggesting that intention to quit varied by these demographic variables.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Contextual, Individual, and Demographic factors and Commitment

Prior to regression analyses, zero-order correlations were calculated to examine relationships between study variables (see Table 2). To examine the predictive value of several individual and academic related factors (i.e., major involvement, major fit, major satisfaction, need for achievement, university commitment, semesters in major, parental education, and gender) on the various forms of commitment individuals may have toward their academic major, a series of multiple regression analyses were conducted. Due to the large number of predictors and increased chance of type I error, $p < .01$ was used for interpreting significance.

Affective Commitment

In the first set of regression equations, major involvement, subjective major fit, objective major fit, major satisfaction, need for achievement, university commitment, semesters in major, parental education, and gender were used as predictor variables, and affective commitment was used as the criterion variable. No control variables were included in this set of analyses. Results of these analyses, found in Table 3, show that study predictors explained 43% of the variance in affective commitment ($F(9, 310) = 25.96, p < .001$). In particular, subjective fit (i.e., how much a student believes his/her major is the right fit ($\beta = .34$), major involvement ($\beta = .23$), need for achievement ($\beta = .16$), and major satisfaction ($\beta = .14$) were significant predictors in this model with higher levels of each being related to higher levels of affective commitment. Objective major fit ($\beta = .06$), university commitment ($\beta = .03$), semesters in major ($\beta = -.05$), parental

Table 2

Alphas and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Affective Commitment	.87											
2 Continuance Commitment	.12*	.86										
3 Normative Commitment	.27**	.51**	.82									
4 Intention to Quit	-.20**	.17**	-.01	.69								
5 Subjective Major Fit (Ability-fit)	.56**	.10	.21**	-.21**	.90							
6 Objective Major Fit (Iachan Index)	.07	-.11*	-.12*	-.19**	.06	--						
7 Major Involvement	.46**	.26**	.44**	.02	.43**	-.02	.92					
8 Need for Achievement	.34**	.12**	.14**	-.18**	.30**	-.00	.23**	.92				
9 Major Satisfaction	.40**	.03	.13*	-.14*	.49**	.00	.29**	.20**	.89			
10 University Commitment	.24**	.08	.26**	-.34**	.23**	.01	.28**	.20**	.39**	.93		
11 Highest Parental Education	-.06	-.08	-.07	.01	-.02	-.04	-.08	-.01	-.02	-.08	--	
12 Semesters in Major	.00	.48**	.15**	.22**	.06	-.12*	.11	.03	.01	.01	-.09	--

Table 2 (continued).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>M</i>	24.52	19.28	18.73	6.12	20.39	13.99	34.64	22.45	28.4	66.85	5.86	2.76
<i>SD</i>	4.55	6.08	5.28	2.95	3.71	7.93	9.35	2.95	4.32	14.31	2.2	2.2

Note: Alphas for each measure are included on the diagonal.

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

education ($\beta = -.03$), and gender ($\beta = -.06$) were not significant predictors. Therefore, subjective fit, involvement, need for achievement, and satisfaction were related to increased affective commitment as predicted. Parental education, university commitment, gender, objective major fit, and semesters in major were not significant predictors in contrast to expected results.

Table 3

Regression Analyses for Predictors of Affective Commitment

Variables	<i>B</i>	β
<i>F</i> (9, 310) = 25.96, $p < .01$, $r^2 = .43$		
Subjective Fit	.42	.34**
Objective Fit	.03	.06
Involvement	.11	.23**
Table 3 (continued).		
Variables	<i>B</i>	β
Need for Achievement	.25	.16**
Satisfaction	.15	.14**
University Commitment	.01	.03
Semesters in Major	-.09	-.05
Parental Education	-.06	-.03
Gender	-.60	-.06

Note. ** = $p < .01$

Continuance Commitment

The next analysis examined these variables in predicting continuance commitment. Given prior analyses, college and ethnicity were entered as control variables in the first step. These variables accounted for 1.6% of the variance in continuance commitment, $F(2, 316) = 2.58$, $p = .08$, $r^2 = .02$. College ($\beta = .05$) was not a

significant predictor in this model; however, ethnicity ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) was a significant predictor, such that Non-whites reported higher levels of continuance commitment. Conversely, ethnicity was not significant when other variables were entered in the second block ($\beta = .09, ns$). Results of the second analysis, found in Table 4, show that study variables uniquely accounted for 25.9% of the variance in continuance commitment, $\Delta F(9, 307) = 12.21, p < .01, \Delta r^2 = .26$. In this model, major involvement ($\beta = .15$) and semesters in major ($\beta = .46$) were significant predictors, with higher levels of each relating to higher levels of continuance commitment. Subjective fit ($\beta = -.03$), objective fit ($\beta = -.03$), need for achievement ($\beta = .06$), major satisfaction ($\beta = -.05$), university commitment ($\beta = .06$), parental education ($\beta = -.01$), and gender ($\beta = -.05$) were not significant predictors of continuance commitment to one's academic major. As predicted, major involvement and semesters in major were related to increased continuance commitment. On the other hand, parental education, gender (i.e., being female), objective major fit, subjective major fit, satisfaction, need for achievement, and semesters in major were not significantly predictive of continuance commitment.

Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Predictors of Continuance Major Commitment

Variables	<i>B</i>	β	Δr^2
Block 1. $F(2, 316) = 2.58, p = .08$.02
College	.20	.05	
Ethnicity	1.34	.11*	
Block 2. $\Delta F(9, 307) = 12.21, p < .01$.26
College	-.19	-.05	
Ethnicity	1.04	.09	
Subjective Fit	-.05	-.03	

Table 4 (continued).

Objective Fit	-.03	-.03
Involvement	.10	.15**
Need for Achievement	.13	.06
Satisfaction	-.07	-.05
University Commitment	.02	.06
Semesters in Major	1.26	.46**
Parental Education	-.03	-.01
Gender	-.59	-.05

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Normative Commitment

The third analysis examined the ability of these variables to predict normative commitment. Given prior analyses, ethnicity was entered as a control variable in this set of analyses. Ethnicity accounted for 3% of the variance in normative commitment $F(1, 317) = 9.88, p < .01, r^2 = .03$. Ethnicity ($\beta = .15$) was a significant predictor in the model when all variables were entered into the model, such that Non-whites reported higher levels of normative commitment. Results of this analysis on normative commitment, found in Table 5, show that study variables accounted for an additional 21.3% of the variance in normative commitment ($\Delta F(9, 308) = 9.62, p < .01$). In particular, major involvement ($\beta = .34$) and university commitment ($\beta = .20$) were significant individual predictors of normative commitment, with higher levels of both variables relating to higher levels of commitment. Subjective major fit ($\beta = .04$), objective major fit ($\beta = -.07$), need for achievement ($\beta = .01$), major satisfaction ($\beta = -.07$), semesters in major ($\beta = .09$), parental education ($\beta = .01$), and gender ($\beta = -.07$) were not significant predictors of normative commitment to one's academic major. Major involvement and university commitment related to increased normative commitment as anticipated. However,

contrary to expected results, parental education, being female, objective major fit, subjective major fit, major satisfaction, need for achievement, and more semesters in one's major were not significant predictors.

Table 5

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Predictors of Normative Major Commitment

Variables	<i>B</i>	β	Δr^2
Block 1. $F(2, 316) = 8.47, p < .01$.05
College	.47	.14**	
Ethnicity	1.73	.16**	
Block 2. $F(9, 307) = 8.96, p < .01$.20
College	.24	.07	
Ethnicity	1.61	.15**	
Subjective Fit	.04	.03	
Objective Fit	-.03	-.05	
Involvement	.19	.34**	
Table 5 (continued).			
Variables	<i>B</i>	β	Δr^2
Need for Achievement	.02	.01	
Satisfaction	-.08	-.07	
University Commitment	.07	.20**	
Semesters in Major	.21	.09	
Parental Education	.05	.02	
Gender	-.80	-.07	

Note. ** = $p < .01$

Commitment and Intention to Quit

Next, a hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to examine the association between the forms of commitment and the intention to quit school. As discussed in the

preliminary analyses, intention to quit varied significantly across ethnic groups and colleges. Therefore, these variables were entered in the first step as controls. In this regression, each of the three forms of commitment was entered as a predictor variable in separate steps (i.e., step two was affective commitment, three was continuance commitment, and four was normative commitment). Results are summarized in Table 6. Intention to quit school served as the criterion variable. Control variables accounted for 1.9% of the variance in intention to quit ($F(2, 336) = 3.29, p < .05, r^2 = .02$), with Non-whites reporting significantly greater intentions to quit ($\beta = .14, p < .05$) in this model. The three forms of commitment explained 7.3% of the variance in intention to quit together, where decreased affective commitment ($\beta = -.19, \Delta r^2 = .04, p < .01$) predicted increased intentions to quit school and increased continuance commitment ($\beta = .22, \Delta r^2 = .03, p < .01$) predicted increased intentions of quitting. Normative commitment ($\beta = -.10, \Delta r^2 = .01$) was not a significant predictor of intentions to quit.

Table 6

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment in Predicting Intention to Quit School

Variables	<i>B</i>	β	Δr^2
Block 1. $F(2, 336) = 3.29, p < .05$.02
College	-.00	-.00	
Ethnicity	.83	.14*	
Block 2. $F(1, 335) = 12.67, p < .01$.04
College	.04	.02	
Ethnicity	.74	.12*	
Affective Commitment	-.12	-.19**	
Block 3. $F(1, 334) = 10.99, p < .01$.03

Table 6 (continued).

College	.03	.02	
Ethnicity	.58	.10	
Affective Commitment	-.14	-.21**	
Continuance Commitment	.09	.18**	
Block 4. $F(1, 333) = 2.37, p = .12, \Delta r^2 = .01$.01
College	.05	.03	
Ethnicity	.66	.11*	
Affective Commitment	-.13	-.19**	
Continuance Commitment	.11	.22**	
Normative Commitment	-.06	-.10	

Note. * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Summary of Results

Overall, initial hypothesis were somewhat supported in that a few of the anticipated variables were significantly predictive of each form of commitment. In regards to affective commitment, subjective fit, major involvement, need for achievement, and major satisfaction were the only significant predictors. Major involvement and semesters in major were the variables significantly predictive of continuance commitment, while major involvement and university commitment were positively, significantly predictive of normative commitment. Furthermore, the hypothesis that satisfaction would be the strongest predictor across the three forms of commitment was not supported. Some variables (i.e., objective fit, parental education, and gender) were not significantly related to any form of commitment. Major involvement was found to be the most salient predictor variable across the three regressions as it was significantly predictive of each form of commitment. Finally, only affective commitment was significantly, negatively predictive of the intention to quit

school. Continuance commitment was significantly predictive of intentions to quit; however, contrary to initial hypotheses, the directionality of this relationship was positive as normative commitment did not significantly predict intentions to quit.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Overall, some hypotheses were supported, while others were not. Furthermore, some of these results were surprising. For instance, contrary to the initial hypotheses, major satisfaction was not found to explain the greatest amount of variance for each form of major commitment, albeit satisfaction was significantly correlated with affective and normative commitment. The relationship between major commitment and major satisfaction in a population of undergraduate students has not been directly examined, although literature suggests that job satisfaction is a strong predictor of career commitment in working adults (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bowling et al., 2006; Fu, 2011; Raedeke et al., 2002). Previous research that conceptualizes career development in terms of age may provide some insight as to why major satisfaction was not related to major commitment, analogous to the relationship between job satisfaction and career commitment. Morrow and McElory (1987) found that among organizational tenure, positional tenure, and age, employee age explained the greatest amount of variance in work related variables (e.g., involvement, satisfaction, organizational commitment), and thus proposed three different stages of career development demarcated by one's age. In Morrow and McElory's (1987) stage model, career development was conceptualized into three stages (i.e., trial stage, stabilization stage, and maintenance stage). The trial stage was comprised of individuals younger than 31 years (i.e., typical college age), the stabilization stage was formed with professionals ages 31-44 years, and the maintenance stage encompassed those older than 44 years (Morrow & McElory, 1987). In sum, Morrow and McElory found that age accounted for the greatest amount of variance in

satisfaction compared to organizational and positional tenure. Utilizing Morrow and McElory's (1987) three-stage model to examine the relationship between satisfaction and commitment, Aryee, Chay, and Chew (1994) examined the moderating effect of these career stages on the relationship between job satisfaction and career commitment. They found that the relationship between satisfaction and commitment was only significant in the stabilization stage. Therefore, it may be that career development stage affects the relationship between satisfaction and commitment, finding that the relationship between satisfaction and commitment is only significant for individuals in the later stages (and also older ages) of their career. Satisfaction may increase in later stages of career development as employees (or students) have had time and experience to become more comfortable and competent in their position, and thus become more satisfied with their job. Furthermore, the average age of the undergraduate students sampled in the current study ($M = 21.98$, $SD = 6.45$) falls into Morrow and McElory's (1987) trial stage of career development, which may explain why major satisfaction was not a significant predictor of major commitment as originally hypothesized. Others have also not found satisfaction and commitment to be significantly related in this age group (Aryee et al., 1994).

Major involvement was the only construct that was found to significantly predict all three forms of commitment. While this relationship was not originally hypothesized to be the most salient predictor, a case supporting the relationship between involvement and each form of commitment can easily be acknowledged. Involvement may be predictive of affective commitment because as students spend more time involved in their major, they may develop greater feelings of attachment to that major (i.e., affective

commitment). Furthermore, the time spent getting involved in major-related activities, and the feeling that leaving this major results in this time invested being wasted, may increase one's thoughts about needing to stay in his or her major to recoup this investment and minimize the costs of leaving (i.e., continuance commitment). Further, as students become more involved in their major, they likely feel a sense of obligation to remain in that major (i.e., normative commitment) after establishing working relationships outside of the classroom.

It may be that the connection found between major involvement and each form of major commitment reflects the overarching principle that involvement and commitment are connected in general, in a way that satisfaction and commitment may not be. Previous literature suggests that the formation of high levels of involvement in an activity leads to psychological commitment to an agency, site, or specific event (Iwasaki & Havitz, 1998). Further, major satisfaction may not be as related to major commitment as much as involvement because a student may not like (e.g., feel satisfied) their major but still feels committed to it because the major leads to a career that he or she thinks will be satisfying later on. Therefore, it stands to reason that the formation of high levels of involvement in an activity specifically related to an academic major would lead to greater commitment to that major. Ultimately, it appears that satisfaction and involvement are both important factors in understanding commitment, as satisfaction was significantly predictive of two of the three forms of commitment and involvement predictive of all three.

Furthermore, ethnicity was a significant predictor for two of the three forms of commitment (continuance and normative commitment). Non-White students reported

higher levels of continuance and normative commitment than the White students. As previously mentioned, current research suggests that there are educational and occupational disparities between individuals from majority backgrounds and minority backgrounds (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011), providing some reasoning for the results of the current study that suggest that White students may not feel as if there are as many costs associated with leaving their major (i.e., continuance commitment) or that they have an obligation to remain in their major (i.e., normative commitment). Research has shown that there are ethnic and racial disparities in educational attainment and achievement between less advantaged (e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans) and more advantaged (e.g., White) students, with those in the more advantaged group being more likely to reach higher educational attainment and achievement (Kao & Thompson, 2003). Therefore, White students may not feel as great of a “cost” associated with leaving their major or as great of an obligation to remain within that major as they may be more likely to perceive greater opportunities from other educational pursuits (i.e., majors). Additional support for this notion can be found in the career commitment literature. For example, Chung (2002) found that in a sample of undergraduate students, African American students reported higher levels of career commitment than White/Caucasian students.

Overall, the three forms of commitment significantly predicted the intention to quit with affective commitment being a significant negative predictor and continuance commitment being a significant positive predictor. These findings have been previously supported in the literature. For example, it has been found that employees with higher affective commitment tend to find their organizational membership inherently

satisfying, report feeling engaged at work, and are more accepting of organizational goals (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Moreover, Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (2002) found further support for the negative relationship among affective commitment, withdrawal cognitions (i.e., intention to quit), and turnover in a meta-analysis of over 50,000 employees, with others also finding support for this relationship (e.g., Bentein, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg, & Stinglhamber, 2005; Meyer et al., 1993; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Cooke et al. (1995) also found that greater affective commitment was related to a decreased likelihood of quitting school in a sample of undergraduate students. Additionally, research has shown that positive emotions are more likely to lead to positive judgments (Blaney, 1986; Rusting, 1998). Therefore, it may be that students engage in mood-congruent processing, where positive feelings of affective commitment to one's major relate to a positive judgment of a student's university, reducing thoughts about leaving the university. Given these data, students' affective commitment to their major may be an area of particular importance for focusing retention efforts.

Furthermore, previous research suggests that continuance commitment has been shown to have a weak or inconsistent relationship with intention to quit (Meyer et al., 2002). The current study found that with increased continuance commitment, or the belief that leaving one's major has high costs, students reported increased intentions to quit school. One explanation for these findings could be that if students are considering the costs associated with leaving their major, they may already be considering quitting school. Farrell and Rusbult's (1981) investment model suggests that high rewards within a current job, low costs of staying in a job, high investment in the current job, and low alternatives lead to increased job commitment and decreased turnover (i.e., quitting). For

example, in a longitudinal study of employees, Rusbult and Farrell (1983) found that those who had actually left the organization endorsed having perceived their jobs as having few rewards and increased costs of remaining. Similarly, it may be that if students perceive high costs associated with staying in their major, such as financial costs, loss of other opportunities, unfair grading practices, or inadequate resources, they may be more likely to quit school. Moreover, the relationship between semesters in one's major and intentions to quit ($r = .22$) also supports this point, suggesting that continued time invested in one's major as well as the assessment of the costs of this investment (e.g. continuance commitment), is likely coupled with increased thoughts of whether to remain in school or not.

Additionally, conceptual issues may explain the current findings on continuance commitment and intentions to quit. Some researchers conceptualize commitment as a four-factor model where continuance commitment is separated into two different forms (i.e., continuance-sacrifices and continuance-alternatives). Continuance-sacrifices can be conceptualized as the feeling that it is stressful to leave work, as one would also lose resources associated with that position. Alternatively, continuance-alternatives describes a commitment to remain because people feel 'trapped' in their current position due to a lack of viable substitutes (Vandenberghe et al., 2007). A positive relationship has been found between continuance-alternatives commitment (i.e., perceived lack of alternative employment) and turnover (Vandenberghe, Panaccio, & Ayed, 2011). Thus, if students interpret continuance commitment as related to feelings of commitment to a major because of few other alternatives (i.e., but not really wanting to be in it), it is logical these students may also be thinking about quitting more frequently. Future research that

includes a more nuanced assessment of continuance commitment to one's major may be able to shed light on this issue.

Furthermore, the current study only measured intentions and thoughts, not actual behaviors that would be associated with quitting school. Therefore, this relationship may be tapping into students' thought processes regarding the decision to remain in school or to quit, which may differ among students who have actually left the university. However, previous research supports that intentions do predict future behavior (Ajzen, 1985). Studies suggest that turnover intentions or withdrawal cognitions are the strongest predictor of turnover (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Tett & Meyer, 1993), suggesting that those who have been thinking more about leaving in the long run, are more likely to actually leave their jobs. Furthermore, the same sentiment has been found in a sample of undergraduate students. Bean (1982) found that the intent to leave was the most important factor influencing school dropout. Thus, it would be expected that participants who are thinking of leaving, are most at risk for actually dropping-out. Regardless, further research on attitudes for students thinking of leaving versus students who have actually left can provide clarification if these two groups differ.

Implications

Thinking on a global scale, the results of the current study may assist in understanding the factors that promote students' commitment to their major, which ultimately contributes to understanding the relationship between commitment and university retention. Overall, the results of this study suggest that major commitment is affected by several different factors unique to each form of commitment. However, major involvement was a consistent, significant predictor across these various forms.

Therefore, increasing students' involvement in activities related to their major may be helpful in increasing different types of commitment to that major. Specifically, Astin (1996) noted that increased involvement with peers (e.g., clubs and organizations), faculty (e.g., meeting with professors outside of class), and academics (e.g., course-related involvement) lead to higher reported involvement on campus. Moreover, efforts to increase involvement should be implemented early in the school year, as students who become involved in the fall semester tend to remain involved into subsequent semesters (Berger & Milem, 1999). Therefore, promoting opportunities for involvement in the fall semester would likely be beneficial in increasing overall involvement. Moreover, research has found that involvement is related to many positive academic outcomes, including retention (e.g., Astin, 1993; Hartnett, 1965; Kuh, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1993), emphasizing the overall importance of increasing involvement in college students.

Additionally, ethnicity may be another factor to consider when encouraging major commitment and retention as it varied across the forms of commitment. The current study found that ethnic minority students endorsed higher continuance and normative commitment when compared to White students. As mentioned previously, this may also be related to the notion that White students perceive more educational opportunities than those from a minority background (Kao & Thompson, 2003). Therefore, minority students may believe that there are less opportunities available to them and, consequently, express high levels of commitment to their current major. Implications of this may be two-sided. On the one hand, higher affective commitment of minority students may be beneficial in that they may be less likely to think about leaving school. As previously

mentioned, the negative relationship between commitment and intention to quit has been established in the literature (Cooke et al., 1995; Landrum & Mulcock, 2007; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Increased commitment and retention can translate into greater financial earnings over an individual's lifetime (Day et al., 2002). Implications of increased minority commitment may extend outside of just the individual. For example, an increase in reported commitment may be indicative of greater pressure on minority students to succeed so they feel that they ought to be committed to their major. By the year 2050, it is expected that the minorities will constitute about 50% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000); therefore, increasing commitment of minority students now may play an important role in ensuring the education of the half of the future U.S. population. To further this point, Seidman (2007) found that the percentage of minority students enrolling in college increased by 11.5% between 1990 and 2000; however, these students are also dropping out at a higher rate. Therefore, it may be that if minority groups are reporting higher commitment, there may be a future trend of increased retention rates for these students, which may be beneficial for future generations.

On the other hand, minority students also report fewer opportunities to be involved in their major, which is related to both commitment and retention (Astin, 1993; Graunke & Woosley, 2005; Hartnett, 1965; Kuh, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1993; Wessel et al., 2008). For example, Watson and Kuh (1996) found that African Americans received fewer benefits from their involvement in campus activities. Minorities may not feel supported to make the most of their involvement, as researchers found that African Americans were more likely to perceive less institutional support

(Berger & Milem, 1999; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). Furthermore, minority students may experience difficulties adjusting to and getting involved in an environment (e.g., college campus) where the majority culture is White (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Fischer, 2007; Zea, Reisen, Beil, & Caplan, 1997). Research on African American students by Flowers (2004) highlights some particular areas of intervention for increasing minority student involvement in college. Using a large national sample of African American students, Flowers (2004) found that library experiences (i.e., student's involvement with the local or college library and his or her extent of interaction with library resources), course learning, personal experiences (i.e., student's level of effort used to understand himself or herself as well as others), experiences with faculty, experiences in the student union, and experiences with athletic and recreation facilities all had positive gains on educational outcomes. Additionally, some involvement experiences (i.e., library experiences, course learning experiences, personal experiences) had a greater positive impact on outcomes than other experiences (i.e., experiences in the student union, experiences with athletic and recreation facilities, participation in clubs and organizations; Flowers, 2004). Flower's results suggest that efforts to increase experiences in library involvement, courses, and personal development may be particularly useful in facilitating greater retention rates. Further investigation of the relationships between ethnicity, commitment, and retention can be beneficial in fully understanding how best to address commitment for different ethnic groups.

Ultimately, universities should continue to be aware of the potential educational and academic disparities that exist between ethnic minorities and White/Caucasian students as they attempt to tailor opportunities to meet the needs of each group. For

example, increasing affective commitment may be a beneficial area to target interventions for minority students, as the relationship between affective commitment and intention to quit was the strongest amongst the forms of commitment. Interventions that increase affective commitment may be related to those aspects of involvement that have shown positive student outcomes (i.e., library experiences, course learning experiences, and personal experiences; Flowers, 2004).

Correlational analyses suggested that university commitment ($r = -.34, p < .01$) and subjective fit ($r = -.21, p < .01$) were the variables most related to intention to quit.

Previous research highlighting the importance of person-environment fit in regards to career development suggests that the match between one's unique interests and skills and one's academic major affects retention within that major (Feldman, Smart, & Ethington, 1999; Porter & Umbach, 2006; Spokane, Meir, & Catalano, 2000).

Therefore, interventions aimed at helping students become more aware of their skills and interests, such as individual career counseling, use of career inventories, or groups focused on career exploration (Nichols, 2009; Spokane, 1985; Spokane et al., 2000) may also be helpful in assisting students to select a more appropriate major and decrease the likelihood of quitting. Additionally, fostering a sense of university connectedness or a specific university culture in undergraduate students may also assist in encouraging university commitment, which, in turn, is correlated with decreased intentions of quitting.

Limitations

Although this study was intended as a preliminary investigation of major commitment, there are several important limitations to consider when examining the current study. Firstly, the particular sample used may present some issues with

generalizability of the findings. For example, the population used was a convenience sample of undergraduate students from a Southeastern University that has low overall graduation rate with only 20.6% of students graduating in four years and only 44.5% graduating in six years (Mississippi Institution of Higher Learning, 2013). This indicates that this particular university may not portray the most accurate representation of a typical undergraduate student's level of commitment to education, as this particular university is not representative of typical graduation rates. The national average graduation rate in the United States after six years of school is 55.5% (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2013). Therefore, this sample may not be generalizable to the undergraduate population as a whole. In order to gather data that may be more representative of the undergraduate population, it is recommended that future research expand the sample to include participants throughout the United States.

Additionally, the current study utilized a self-report measure that asked students to report their intentions of leaving or staying at the university. However, the best way to assess whether or not a student remains in school would be through their actual behavior instead of their intentions. While intentions have been theorized to predict future behavior (Ajzen, 1985) and previous research suggests that turnover intentions or withdrawal cognitions are the strongest predictor of turnover (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Steel & Ovalle, 1984; Tett & Meyer, 1993), the most accurate measure of retention would be the actual completion of a degree (i.e., graduation rates). Therefore, in future studies researchers may consider utilizing a prospective longitudinal approach to study retention rates and the corresponding relationship to an individual's commitment to his or her academic major. Furthermore, commitment predicted about 10% of the variance in

intention to quit. Therefore, there are likely other predictors of retention that should be investigated in order to add further understanding of the process of dropping out for university students. However, incorporating the findings of the current study (i.e., influence of major commitment) when developing retention interventions may have a large impact on increasing retention rates.

Despite these limitations, the current results are valuable as they identified factors that may lead to increased thoughts of leaving one's university and thus may offer some ideas for developing interventions to target students thinking of leaving in an effort to keep them from actually discontinuing their education. Therefore, future research should investigate specific interventions that encourage student involvement and, subsequently, affect commitment to one's major and retention. Additionally, further investigation into the relationship between ethnicity, commitment, and retention may be useful in understanding components of academic success for undergraduates from ethnic minority backgrounds.

APPENDIX A

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

AUTHORIZATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Consent is hereby given to participate in the study titled:
Academic major fit and personality

Purpose

You are invited to participate in a study measuring what factors predict academic major commitment and relationship between a student's chosen academic major, their fit with that academic major and the presence of certain personality characteristics. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a current undergraduate college student. We ask that you read this form before agreeing to be in the study. The researchers conducting this study are Katherine Patterson and Anna Womack, Doctoral students in Counseling Psychology, who are being supervised by Drs. Melanie Leuty and Jon Mandracchia from the University of Southern Mississippi, Department of Psychology.

Description of Study:

The purpose of this study is to gather information about which factors are predictive of major commitment. Additionally, this study will examine personality characteristics as they relate to and/or fit with academic major.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to complete several questionnaires and a demographic information sheet. You may be asked to complete these measures online or in person. It is expected that it will take you approximately 45-60 minutes to participate in this study.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks associated with your participation are minimal. You may find that a few of the questions are sensitive in nature and therefore they may be difficult to answer. The benefits of participating in this study will be the possibility of extra credit or entry in to a drawing for a \$50 Visa gift card. In addition, you may find that responding to questions about your preferences could increase your self-awareness regarding personality traits and academic attitudes.

Compensation:

Students enrolled in a psychology course at the University of Southern Mississippi will receive one (1) research credit for participating in this study if taken through the university's SONA system. If you are not completing the survey through the SONA system, you may receive extra class credit if a current professor offers credit for participation. If your participation in this study was not completed through the university's SONA system or you are not eligible to receive extra credit you will have the opportunity to enter in to a drawing for one (1) \$50 Visa gift card. You will be asked to select your choice of compensation in the consent to participate section.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. Your name is requested on this page only and is for the sole purpose of fulfilling the ethical obligation of gaining written consent for participation. After the study has been completed, a unique number will be assigned to your information. In any sort of report that might be published from this data, no information will be included that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be stored securely on computer devices and only the researchers involved in this study will have access to the research records. If completing an in-person questionnaire it will be stored separately from the consent form and will not be identified as yours. The information you provide will be secured under lock and key.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Southern Mississippi or the Department of Psychology. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Participant's Assurance:

Whereas no assurance can be made concerning results that may be obtained (since results from investigational studies cannot be predicted) the researcher will take every precaution consistent with the best scientific practice. Participation in this project is completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, prejudice, or loss of benefits. Questions concerning the research should be directed to Katherine Patterson (katherine.patterson@eagles.usm.edu) or Anna Womack (anna.j.womack@eagles.usm.edu). This project and this consent form have been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research participant should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-6820. A copy of this form will be given to the participant.

Consent to Participate:

I consent to participate in this study; in doing so I am agreeing that:

1. I am at least 18 years of age,
2. I am being asked to complete a set of questionnaires, which will take up to 1 hour and for which I will receive one of the following:
Please indicate your preference
 - 1 research credit
 - extra credit from my instructor for a course I am enrolled
 - participate in the \$50 Visa gift card drawing
 Email address: _____
3. All information I provide will be used for research purposes and will be kept confidential

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. If I decide to participate in the study, I may withdraw my consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I have read and understand the information stated, am at least 18 years of age, and I willingly sign this consent form.

(Subject name printed)

(Subject signature)

(Date)

Major Commitment

Please read the following statements and consider your current major when responding to how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

“1” if you strongly disagree with the statement

“2” if you disagree with the statement

“3” if you somewhat disagree with the statement

“4” if you neither agree nor disagree with the statement

“5” if you somewhat agree with the statement

“6” if you agree with the statement

“7” if you strongly agree with the statement

1. ___ My current major is important to my self-image.
2. ___ I regret having entered my current major.
3. ___ I am proud to be in my current major.
4. ___ I dislike being in my major.
5. ___ I do not identify with my major.
6. ___ I am enthusiastic about my major.
7. ___ I have put too much into my major to consider changing now.
8. ___ Changing majors now would be difficult for me to do.
9. ___ Too much of my life would be disrupted if I were to change my major.
10. ___ It would be costly for me to change my major.
11. ___ There are no pressures to keep me from changing my major.
12. ___ Changing majors now would require considerable personal sacrifice.
13. ___ I believe people who have been trained in a major have a responsibility to stay in that major for a reasonable period of time.
14. ___ I do not feel any obligation to remain in my major.
15. ___ I feel a responsibility to my major to continue it.

16. ___ Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel that it would be right to leave my major now.
17. ___ I would feel guilty if I left my major.
18. ___ I am in my major because of a sense of loyalty to it.

Have you decided what career you will pursue after college?

___ No

___ Yes (specify the career you have chosen):

Major Involvement

Please read the following statements and consider your current major when responding to how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

1-6 rating where 1= Strongly disagree and 6= Strongly agree

1. ___ The most important things that happen to me involve my present major
2. ___ To me, my major is only a small part of who I am
3. ___ I am very much involved personally in my major
4. ___ I live, eat, and breathe my major
5. ___ Most of my interests are centered around my major
6. ___ I have very strong ties with my present major, which would be very difficult to break
7. ___ Usually I feel detached from my major
8. ___ Most of my personal life goals are major-oriented
9. ___ I consider my major to be very central to my existence
10. ___ I like to be absorbed in my major most of the time

Please indicate the number of hours spent on each activity over the course of 1 month

1. Internship related to my major
2. Research Assistant for research related to my major
3. Teaching Assistant for a course in my major field
4. Honors society related to my major or career (e.g. Psi Chi for Psychology majors)
5. Major-related Clubs
6. Volunteer positions that are related to my major
7. Paid work related to my major (e.g. an advertising major working for an advertising agency)
8. Honors classes in my major

9. Work on an Honors thesis
10. Time spent talking to professors' or advisors for guidance, assistance, or mentorship relating to your major

Major fit

Subjective Major Fit

Please read the following statements and consider your current major when responding to how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

1. ___ I feel that my major utilizes my full abilities
2. ___ I feel competent and fully able to handle coursework in my major
3. ___ My major gives me a chance to do the things I feel I do best
4. ___ I feel that my major and I are well matched
5. ___ I feel I have adequate preparation for the major I now hold

Major Satisfaction

Please read the following statements and consider your current major when responding to each of the following statements.

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

0-4 point scale, where 0= very dissatisfied and 4= very satisfied

1. ___ How satisfied are you with the course variety in your major?
2. ___ How satisfied are you with the course availability of your major?
3. ___ How satisfied are you with the quality of instruction in your major?
4. ___ How satisfied are you with the quality of advising in your major?
5. ___ How satisfied are you with the faculty accessibility of your major?
6. ___ How satisfied are you with the faculty interactions within your major?
7. ___ How satisfied are you with the job market preparation in your major?
8. ___ How satisfied are you with the further study preparation in your major?
9. ___ How satisfied are you with the overall experience within your major?

Needs Assessment Questionnaire

Please read the following statements and consider your current major when responding to how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

1. ___ I try to perform my best at work.
2. ___ I am a hard worker.
3. ___ It is important to me to do the best job possible.
4. ___ I push myself to be "all that I can be."
5. ___ I try very hard to improve on my past performance at work.

Organizational Commitment

Please read the following statements and consider your current university when responding to each of the following statements

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

1. ___ If I could start college over, I would choose to attend this college.
2. ___ My overall impression of the quality of education at this college is excellent.
3. ___ My level of satisfaction with the college in general is high.
4. ___ I have a strong sense of belonging to this campus.

Please read the following statements and consider your current university when responding to each of the following statements

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

“1” if you strongly disagree with the statement

“2” if you disagree with the statement

“3” if you somewhat disagree with the statement

“4” if you neither agree nor disagree with the statement

“5” if you somewhat agree with the statement

“6” if you agree with the statement

“7” if you strongly agree with the statement

1. ___ I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help my university be successful.
2. ___ I talk up my university to my friends as a great university to attend.
3. ___ I would select almost any type of major in order to keep attending this university.
4. ___ I find that my values and the university’s values are very similar.
5. ___ I am proud to tell others that I attend this university.
6. ___ This university really inspires the very best in me in the way of performance.
7. ___ I am extremely glad that I chose this university to attend over others I was considering at the time I joined.
8. ___ I really care about the fate of this university.
9. ___ For me, this is the best of all possible universities to attend.

Intention to Quit

Please read the following statements and consider your current university when responding to how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

1. ___ I am certain that I will be enrolled in this school one year from today (reverse scored).
2. ___ I intend to remain in my major but leave this university 6 months from today.
3. ___ I intend to remain in my major but leave this university at the end of the year.

Fill in the corresponding blank with:

1-6 with 1=never and 6=extremely often

1. ___ How often do you seriously consider quitting school?

Demographic Form

Please provide the following demographic information.

Age: _____

Sex: O Female O Male

Sexual Orientation:

O Straight

O Other (please describe):

- Bisexual
- Gay/lesbian

Race/Ethnicity:

- Alaskan Native
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian
- American Indian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Pacific Islander
- Asian American
- White or Caucasian
- Multi-ethnic/Other (please describe): _____

Years in College:

- 1 (Freshman)
- 2 (Sophomore)
- 3 (Junior)
- AND
- 4 (Senior)
- 5+
- Graduate/Professional Student

Relationship Status:

- Single/Never Married
- In a committed relationship
- In a committed relationship
living together
- Married
- Divorced/Separated
- Widowed

What (if any) is your religious affiliation?

Have you declared a major?

- Yes
- If yes, what is your declared major?

How many semesters have you been declared in this major?

- No
- If no, what majors are you considering?

What occupations are you considering for work after graduation?

If money were not a consideration, what occupations do you think you would most enjoy?

If you had the skills and abilities to accomplish anything you wished, what occupations would you pursue?

Please indicate the highest degree your parent(s) earned.

Parent 1

- Some High School Associates Degree Bachelors Degree
 High School Diploma/GED Technical/Vocational Masters Degree
 Some College Certificate Doctoral Degree
 Other: _____

Parent 2

- Some High School Associates Degree Bachelors Degree
 High School Diploma/GED Technical/Vocational Masters Degree
 Some College Certificate Doctoral Degree
 Other: _____

Please estimate your parent's annual income.

\$ _____ per year.

In the past 6 months, have you done anything illegal OR done something socially unacceptable

(e.g., stealing, cheating on an exam, underage drinking, lying, drinking to excess, etc.)

- Yes No

If you answered "Yes" to the above question, please list the illegal or socially unacceptable behaviors you've done (remember, just in the past 6 months).

Are you currently receiving medication or therapy/counseling for a mental health problem?

- Yes No

If you answered "Yes" to the above question, please all medications or therapy/counseling you are currently receiving.

APPENDIX B

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39405-0001
 Phone: 601.266.6820 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/irb

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
- Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: **12091807**
 PROJECT TITLE: **Predictors of Career and Major Commitment**
 PROJECT TYPE: **New Project**
 RESEARCHER/S: **Anna Womack**
 COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Education & Psychology**
 DEPARTMENT: **Psychology**
 FUNDING AGENCY: **N/A**
 IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
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