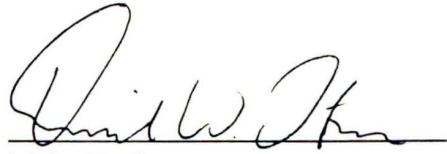


THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THREE FACETS
OF AUTONOMY AND JOB SATISFACTION

MARTINA O. OSBORNE

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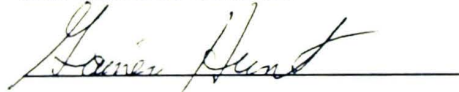


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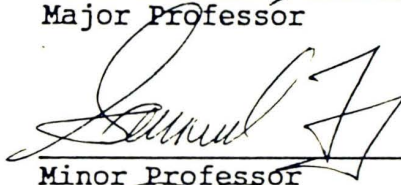
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A Thesis
Presented to
the College of Graduate
and Professional Programs of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Martina O. Osborne

May, 1998

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and grandparents

Alvin and Bonnie Oates

and

W.N. Oates II and Mabyn Oates

who instilled in me the value of education from a very young age.

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the relationship between three facets of autonomy and job satisfaction. Measures of autonomy and job satisfaction were administered to 80 participants employed by a manufacturing organization located in the Mid-West. The data collected addressed three questions: 1. Are the facets of autonomy correlated with the major facets of job satisfaction? 2. Do each of the facets of autonomy make an independent contribution to predicting overall job satisfaction? 3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the strength of the relationship between each facet of autonomy and overall satisfaction? The implications of this study and suggestions for future research were discussed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Several research studies have been conducted focusing on autonomy and job satisfaction. Autonomy can be defined as the degree of freedom, discretion, and influence one perceives in his or her work environment (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). The degree of autonomy present in a job can influence an employee's physical and psychological well-being (Breaugh & Becker, 1987).

The topic of autonomy and its outcomes are becoming of increasing importance due to the growing number of organizations modifying their management strategies and implementing employee empowerment programs (Fulford & Enz, 1995). A recent dynamic trend in management is a shift from a centralized to a decentralized style of management. This change flattens the traditional hierarchy so that employees at lower levels of the company are empowered to make decisions that significantly impact their work environment (Barker & Tompkins, 1994). Under the assumption that an increase in empowerment brings about an increase in autonomy, organizations are likely to reap large benefits from this change.

Decentralization can benefit organizations in many ways. Fulford and Enz (1995) found that this transition influenced performance and service delivery, but to a greater extent influenced employees' job satisfaction and loyalty. Increased productivity and flexibility in responding to business environment changes are two additional benefits discovered to be associated with flattening organizations and creating more autonomy for

workers (Barker, 1993). Some reasons for positive results include added responsibility, variety, and recognition from the incorporated autonomy (Breaugh, 1985). Changes are often observed in the attitudes of workers as well. New-found attitudes typically emerge in the employees of a company. As workers receive and apply the power that is transferred into their hands from management, a new set of values is formed in conjunction with the corporate vision statement to better meet the needs of all employees in the organization (Barker, 1993). Coordination between the employees' values and the company goals allows the desires and interests of all parties involved to influence the development of current policies and procedures in the work place (Fulford & Enz, 1995).

When redesigning jobs, it is important that job structures are modified slowly. Initially, a certain amount of boundaries and limitations should remain present in the employees' jobs. This allows employees to adapt their work behavior to include more decision-making processes. When employees feel that they can decide and implement their own rules for behavior, they begin to develop their own limits and boundaries. Employees start to feel that their work has meaning. This increase in autonomy produces a sense of responsibility in employees. For most workers, this process is viewed as an increase in freedom and a vehicle for allowing and producing personal and organizational growth (Fatout, 1995; Fulford & Enz, 1995).

Satisfied employees also need to feel proficient in their work. Behavior should be a choice instead of a controlled response. Impact on organizational outcomes needs to be felt. It is important that employees are given ample opportunity to make changes rather

than only the observation that they have the ability to affect change. (Fulford & Enz, 1995).

Pearson (1995) studied the relationships between teacher autonomy and several attitudinal variables. It was demonstrated that job satisfaction and a positive attitude towards the teaching profession seem to result from perceptions of autonomy. In addition, teachers often leave the profession due to the perceived lack of autonomy. The results suggest teachers with higher levels of perceived autonomy were more satisfied with their chosen profession and perceived themselves as having a lighter paperwork load. In addition, a more positive attitude towards students began to emerge when autonomy existed in their work environment.

Autonomy, such as that found within empowerment programs, encourages employees to shift from passive and helpless approaches to solving problems to active ones. With more autonomy, employees are more likely to face setbacks as challenges rather than defeats. Autonomy given by companies transforms state-oriented employees who have goals, but do little to achieve them, into action-oriented employees who translate goals quickly into action. These programs allow shop floor employees to actively participate in improving organization processes and products and problem-solving of organizational problems or events. This method seems advantageous in comparison with some current methods of supervision which apply more control when employees lack initiative. Applying more control has only proven to create a vicious cycle of reducing initiative further and further (Friese, Wolfgang, Soose, & Zempel, 1996).

Although autonomy has been discussed as a global construct (Hackman and Oldham, 1976), several researchers have operationalized the term as containing three independent characteristics. Roe, Thornberry, and Weintraub (1987) described autonomy as allowing employees to determine their own pace and supervision of job activities. In addition, Hackman and Oldham (1976) explained that autonomy meant leaving the scheduling and procedures of the job up to the discretion of the individual at that job. Finally, Sims, Jr., Szilagyi, and Keller (1976) also included employees determining their own procedures and scheduling of work in their definition of autonomy.

It has been suggested by Breugh (1985) that since autonomy is viewed by many as having three distinct and independent characteristics, it should also be defined and measured as such. Therefore, Breugh defined the three individual facets as follows:

Work Method Autonomy. The degree of discretion/choice individuals [feel they] have regarding the procedures (methods) they utilize in going about their work.

Work Scheduling Autonomy. The extent to which workers feel they can control the scheduling/sequencing/timing of their work activities.

Work Criteria Autonomy. The degree to which workers [feel they] have the ability to modify or choose the criteria used for evaluating their performance.

Breugh, in turn, developed an instrument that measures these three facets. To determine the generalizability of the scales, the instrument was administered to a large

chemical company. The results demonstrated that all three facets of autonomy were correlated with a number of variables as suggested by previous research. Specifically relevant to the present study, a stronger bi-variate correlation was discovered to be present between method autonomy and a number of satisfaction measures than was the case for the other two autonomy facets, scheduling and criteria (Breugh, 1985).

Although the exploratory factor analysis conducted by Brady, Judd, and Javian (1990) failed to support the validation of the three independent facets of autonomy, Breugh and Becker's (1987) confirmatory factor analysis suggested otherwise. Breugh and Becker examined Breugh's (1985) Work Autonomy Scale in detail. Three studies were conducted. The first utilized a confirmatory factor analysis to discover the factor structure of the measures of the three facets of autonomy. The second examined the relationship between subjective and objective ratings of autonomy. The final study was conducted in an attempt to discover the perceived usefulness of resulting information from Breugh's Work Autonomy Scale. These three experimental studies helped establish the construct validity of Breugh's instrument. The notion that subjective perceptions of individuals are based on objective elements was also suggested and supported. Overall, Breugh's instrument was found to be perceived as a useful, practical, and valuable instrument (Breugh & Becker, 1987).

One of the dependent variables in the studies, job satisfaction, can be defined as a positive emotional state resulting from the perception of one's important job values being attained through his or her job or job experiences (Locke, 1983). This is especially true if

the employee's job values are compatible with his or her basic needs. Job satisfaction, with or without the conjunction of other elements or conditions, can affect many different aspects that might be of interest to an employer as well as the employee. Some consequences include affects on: attitudes toward life, attitudes toward family, attitudes toward self, physical health, mental health, adjustment, absenteeism, turnover, and other types of on-the-job behavior. (Locke, 1983). Loher, Noe, Moeller, and Fitzgerald (1985) found global autonomy to be more highly related to job satisfaction than any other job characteristic.

Breaugh (1985) studied the issue further by examining the relationship between the facets of autonomy and two facets of job satisfaction, i.e., satisfaction with the work itself and satisfaction with supervision, using scales developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976). He found that method autonomy was more highly correlated with each of the satisfaction measures than were scheduling autonomy and criteria autonomy. While this research was important, several issues remain unaddressed.

Specifically, researchers in this area have not examined the relationship between other facets of satisfaction and the facets of autonomy. Overall job satisfaction has been shown to be affiliated with work aspects such as: absenteeism, turnover, safety, stress, and work group variables. These economic concerns as well as general concern for their employees' well-being has motivated employers to increasingly place value on the study of job satisfaction (Balzer et al., 1997). The relationship between the individual facets of

autonomy and overall job satisfaction has not been investigated. Examining this may shed light on the extent to which all facets of autonomy contribute to overall job satisfaction. In addition, Breugh (1985) suggested that method autonomy is more highly correlated with overall satisfaction than the other facets of autonomy, however no statistical test was performed to support this conclusion.

Based on these gaps in the existing literature, the present study seeks tentative answers to the following research questions:

1. Are the facets of autonomy correlated with the major facets of job satisfaction?
2. Do each of the facets of autonomy make an independent contribution to predicting overall job satisfaction?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the strength of the relationship between each facet of autonomy and overall satisfaction?

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 80 employees of a manufacturing organization in the Mid-West. The ages of the employees ranged from 18 to 63, with 79% falling between the ages of 25 and 44. The sample included 58 males, 20 females and 2 blank responses. In addition, 80% of the participants were White, while the remaining 20% were non-White. Of the 76 respondents to the Years of Service category, 8 had worked less than one year, 24 had worked 1-3 years, 10 had worked 4-5 years, and 34 had worked 6-8 years for the company.

Procedure

Three instruments measuring work autonomy, overall job satisfaction, and the facets of satisfaction were administered to the participants. These instruments are described in the following section. General demographic variables of age, gender, race/ethnicity, area, work shift, team affiliation, and years of service were requested. Approximately 15 minutes were required to administer the three instruments. All participants were taken from different areas of the plant floor. The instruments were administered to each shift at the available times allowed by the participating organization. Second shift was administered the instruments before the start of their shift, while first and third shifts were administered the instruments during their lunch break. Identical instructions were given to all participants. An informed consent form was distributed and collected from all participants. The voluntary nature of participation was explained.

Confidentiality was assured and the purpose of the instruments and the research were described.

Instruments

Each participant completed Breugh's Work Autonomy Scale, the Job Descriptive Index (JDI), and the Job In General (JIG) Scale. Breugh's Work Autonomy Scale was introduced by Breugh in response to his desire to improve the definition and usage of autonomy. Breugh developed an instrument that measured three distinct aspects of autonomy: Method, scheduling, and criteria. Breugh's study found the scales to have an acceptable degree of internal consistency (i.e., α of .853 for work scheduling, .914 for work method, and .777 for work criteria). These three measures were found to be relatively stable (i.e., test-retest reliabilities of .76 for method, .71 for scheduling, and .65 for criteria). Breugh also found the instrument to have construct validity with an average correlation of .37 with other measures of autonomy. The scale consists of nine items and responses are gathered on a seven-digit likert scale. The participants were instructed to circle their preferred response (Breugh, 1985). Scoring each section was accomplished by simply adding the values previously assigned to the chosen responses.

The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) and Job In General (JIG) are very widely used measures of job satisfaction. The original JDI was published in 1969 and the latest revision was completed in 1997. In the late 1970s, a revision of the JDI included an additional facet, Job in General. The Job in General is presented as a sub-section of the JDI, but discussed by the authors and reviewers as a separate instrument. The responses

to the JIG represent individuals' general perspective of their jobs. Some important aspects of the JDI and the JIG are:

1. A wide range of people can use it.
2. It is written at a low, practical reading level.
3. It can be administered in a reasonable amount of time.
4. It offers a comprehensive view of norms for comparison.
5. It is statistically sound in reference to reliability and validity.
6. It measures various characteristics of the job.

The current JDI contains 72 descriptive adjectives that represent opinions of five varied facets of job satisfaction: The work itself, pay, promotions, supervision, and co-worker. The JIG consists of 18 adjectives of the same design. The administration of the JDI is reasonably straightforward and simple. Responses can be given by participants with a simple Y (yes), N (no), or ? (cannot decide). The JIG can be administered individually or in groups in five minutes or less. Each section of the JDI and the JIG is scored separately. Data has been analyzed from the scores of each section separately rather than as a cumulative score. This is the approach recommended by the users' manual (Balzer et al., 1997). Approximately half of the items in both instruments are worded favorably and half worded unfavorably. Therefore, reverse-scoring is appropriate for half of the items. In addition, some sub-sections have fewer items than others. Two sub-sections require doubling of the scores. Analysis and interpretation in an organizational setting are

accomplished by comparison of the individual's score on each section to the normative group.

Previous research has demonstrated that the internal consistency of the JDI and JIG to be as follows: Work .90, Pay .86, Opportunities for Promotion .87, Supervision .91, Co-Workers .91, and Job in General .92. Correlations with other global measures of job satisfaction represented convergent validity of the latest revision. The range of the correlations were .66 to .80 (Balzer et al., 1997; Leong & Vaux, 1992).

Data Analysis

A correlation matrix was analyzed to examine research question one: Are the facets of autonomy correlated with the major facets of job satisfaction?. A multiple regression analysis was applied to examine the second research question: Do each of the facets of autonomy make an independent contribution to predicting overall job satisfaction?. A t-test to determine the significance of the difference between dependent correlations was used to examine the third research question: Is there a statistically significant difference in the strength of the relationship between each facet of autonomy and overall satisfaction?.

The third research question requires the application of a specific t-test. Just as it is important in some research to determine if two means are significantly different from one another, it is also important to determine whether two correlations are significantly different from one another. Addressing this issue is complicated by the fact that each of the correlations being compared was computed using the same outcome measure, overall

job satisfaction, and were computed on the same sample of participants. This situation is analogous to testing the difference between means for two dependent samples since the independent groups' t-test is not appropriate. When two dependent correlations are being compared, a special t-test is required to deal with the dependencies in the data. That test is the Hotelling-Williams test (Bobko, 1995) and the test statistic has a student's t-distribution. Three such tests were performed comparing the difference in the size of the correlations: Work method autonomy vs. work criteria autonomy, work method autonomy vs. work scheduling autonomy, and work criteria autonomy vs. work scheduling autonomy.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

To examine the first research question regarding the relationships between the facets of autonomy and the facets of job satisfaction, a correlation matrix was analyzed. Descriptive statistics and variable intercorrelations can be found in Table 1¹. Several significant correlations were found based on an examination of a matrix of probabilities corrected using the Bonferroni adjustment. Given the fact that multiple correlations were computed, the Bonferroni adjustment was used to minimize the possibility of incorrectly rejecting a "true" null hypothesis (i.e., committing a Type I error). Significant correlations were found between all facets of autonomy and Work on Present Job with correlations of .55 for Work Method Autonomy, .56 for Work Scheduling Autonomy, and .47 for Work Criteria Autonomy. Other significant correlations involved Work Method Autonomy and Present Pay (.59), Work Method Autonomy and Supervision (.52), and Job In General and both Work Method (.54) and Work Scheduling Autonomy (.47).

A multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the second research question. The results from this analysis can be found in Table 2. While the overall regression was significant ($F = 11.67, p < .001$), the analysis revealed that only Work Method Autonomy was a significant predictor of overall job satisfaction. The failure of Work Scheduling and Work Criteria Autonomy to be significant predictors of overall satisfaction may be due to the high intercorrelations among the facets of autonomy ($r \geq .54$). Work Method Autonomy had the highest bi-variate correlation with overall job

¹ All tables can be found in the Appendix

satisfaction and was the only autonomy scale that was significant in a regression equation containing all three.

The third research question was analyzed by performing three separate Hotelling-Williams tests to determine the significance of the difference between dependent correlations. The results of these analyses are contained in Table 3. Though all three relationships between the scales of autonomy and overall job satisfaction were significantly different from 0 as shown in Table 1, these three correlations were not significantly different from each other as shown by the results from the Hotelling-Williams tests in Table 3.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between three facets of autonomy and job satisfaction as measured by Breugh's Work Autonomy Scale, the Job Descriptive Index, and the Job In General Scale. The results from the first data analysis indicated that significant relationships did exist between all facets of autonomy and Work on Present Job. Significant correlations were also discovered between Work Method Autonomy and Present Pay, Work Method Autonomy and Supervision, and Job In General and both Work Method and Work Scheduling Autonomy.

The second data analysis revealed through a multiple regression analysis that only work method autonomy was a significant predictor of overall job satisfaction. The third set of analyses, using the Hotelling-Williams test, determined that the three facets of autonomy were not significantly different in the strength of their correlation with overall job satisfaction from each other.

It is important for organizations to examine the variables of this research, autonomy and job satisfaction, including each facet. Beneficial outcomes are often acquired by workers and their employing organizations due to enriched or empowered work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Product organizations as well as service organizations have discovered advantages to employee empowerment. Many service organizations have determined that implemented empowerment programs often result in an increases in profitability and enhanced customer service (Fulford & Enz, 1995). A new pattern of employees that bring higher expectations to their work place has been observed. These

employees seek more responsibility than ever before (Loher & Noe, 1985). This is one important reason for employers to explore and consider empowerment possibilities.

This research has important implications for growing and improving organizations. Some additional research areas also might also be contributive to organizational improvements in the future. The first suggested research is in the area of autonomous work teams. Barker, Melville, and Pacanowsky (1993) found that the implementation of self-directed work teams not only altered the culture of the work environment, but also communication patterns, control, and decision-making. Research of this nature might assist organizations responsive to these areas.

An additional area for research might be individuals' need for autonomy. This topic can be found in Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Growth Need Strength Model. Within the model, autonomy is referred to as one Core Job Dimension that ultimately results in the Personal and Work Outcome of High Satisfaction with the Work. The idea of Growth Need Strength can be summarized by suggesting that "people who have high need for personal growth and development will respond more positively to a job high in motivation potential than people with low growth need strength." An interesting topic for future research would be to study autonomy and its role within this model.

Another possible future study is to examine and analyze the correlations between the attitudinal and work-related variables and facets of autonomy, the facets of job satisfaction, or overall job satisfaction. Pearson (1995) studied these variables in a teaching environment and suggested that overall job satisfaction is associated with

autonomy and a positive attitude towards students. Additional related research in different settings would be valuable.

Finally, a possible study could focus on other business sectors. The data for this research was gathered solely from a manufacturing facility. Therefore, the results may or may not be the same when applied to other settings. Caution should be used when generalizing the results of this study to other business sectors. Similar studies should be conducted, gathering data from retail or service organizations.

Due to the difficulty of obtaining data in this field setting, more data could have inadvertently been collected from particular areas or work shifts than others. For this reason, the sample of this study may not be entirely representative of the population from which it was drawn. Also, uncontrollable factors might have been present that unknowingly contaminated the results. This study was correlational, therefore no cause and effect relationship is suggested. Research involving the facets of autonomy is limited. Current, global organizational changes have produced a need for research concentrating on this topic. With research of this type, organizations will hopefully adjust and grow to develop more productive, healthy, and satisfied employees producing quality products or services for our world.

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APPENDIX A

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Variable Intercorrelations¹

<u>Variable</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
1. Work on Present Job	80	27.40	15.73	1.00								
2. Present Pay	79	39.27	15.27	0.62	1.00							
3. Opportunities for Promotion	79	26.18	18.55	0.52	0.40	1.00						
4. Supervision	78	35.81	15.93	0.70	0.61	0.37	1.00					
5. Co-Workers (People)	80	36.66	13.12	0.43	0.34	0.42	0.31	1.00				
6. Job In General	80	37.94	12.84	0.79	0.65	0.50	0.75	0.31	1.00			
7. Work Method Total	78	4.82	1.67	0.55	0.59	0.27	0.52	0.30	0.54	1.00		
8. Work Scheduling Total	80	3.44	1.85	0.56	0.41	0.19	0.44	0.34	0.47	0.68	1.00	
9. Work Criteria Total	80	4.18	1.49	0.47	0.39	0.28	0.43	0.36	0.39	0.55	0.54	1.00

¹r ≥ .37 is significant at p ≤ .05 using a Bonferroni adjustment

Table 2

Multiple Regression Results for Predictors of Overall Satisfaction

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Beta-weight</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>P (2-Tail)</u>
Work Method	0.38	2.76	0.01
Work Scheduling	0.16	1.15	0.26
Work Criteria	0.11	0.92	0.36
Multiple R = .57 F = 11.67 p < .001			
Multiple R ² = .32			
Adjusted Multiple R ² = .29			

Table 3

Hotelling-Williams Tests for Determining the Significance of the Difference Between
Dependent Correlations

	<u>WMA</u>	<u>WSA</u>	<u>WCA</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>p</u>
Overall Job Satisfaction	.54	.47	----	.96	>.05
Overall Job Satisfaction	----	.47	.40	.71	>.05
Overall Job Satisfaction	.54	----	.40	1.56	>.05

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE QUESTION FROM JDI

PRESENT PAY

- ☐ Income adequate for normal expenses
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Barely live on income
- ☐ Well paid
- ☐ Underpaid

SAMPLE QUESTION FROM JIG

JOB IN GENERAL

- ☐ Pleasant
- ☐ Undesirable
- ☐ Makes me content
- ☐ Worthwhile
- ☐ Worse than most

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM BREAUGH'S WORK AUTONOMY SCALE

WORK METHOD AUTONOMY

I am allowed to decide how to go about getting my job done (the method to use).

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)

WORK SCHEDULING AUTONOMY

I have control over the scheduling of my work.

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)

WORK CRITERIA AUTONOMY

I am able to modify what my job objectives are (what I am supposed to accomplish).

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)

APPENDIX C

Work on Present Job

<u>Response</u>	<u>Response Scoring</u>			<u>Actual Score</u>
	<u>Y</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>blank/?</u>	
<u>Y</u> Routine	0	3	1	
<u>Y</u> Satisfying	3	0	1	0
<u>Y</u> Boring	0	3	1	3
<u>Y</u> Pleasant	3	0	1	0
<u>Y</u> Useful	3	0	1	3
<u>Y</u> Challenging	3	0	1	3
<u>?</u> Simple	0	3	1	3
<u>Y</u> Repetitive	0	3	1	1
<u>N</u> Creative	3	0	1	0
<u>N</u> Dull	0	3	1	0
<u>N</u> Uninteresting	0	3	1	3
<u>Y</u> Can see results	3	0	1	3
<u>Y</u> Uses my abilities	3	0	1	3

Total: 25

Source: Adapted from User's Manual for the Job Descriptive Index and the Job In General Scales, (Balzer et al., 1997).

VITA

Martina O. Osborne was born in Madisonville, Kentucky on June 10, 1971. She attended elementary school at Mortons Gap Elementary School and graduated from South Hopkins High School in June, 1989. The following August, she entered Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky and in May, 1993 received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business in the area of Marketing. In June, 1994, she entered Austin Peay State University to obtain an undergraduate psychology background. In January, 1995, she entered the Graduate College in pursuit of a Master of Arts Degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. She plans to graduate from Austin Peay State University in May, 1998.