

The Paradox of Choice

Why More is Less



by Barry Schwartz

PROLOGUE. THE PARADOX OF CHOICE: A ROADMAP

About six years ago, I went to The Gap to buy a pair of jeans. I tend to wear my jeans until they're falling apart on my body, so it had been quite a while since my last purchase. A nice young salesperson walked up to me and asked if she could help.

"I want a pair of jeans—32-28," I said.

"Do you want them slim fit, easy fit, relaxed fit, baggy, or extra baggy?" She replied. "Do you want them stone-washed, acid-washed, or distressed? Do you want them button-fly or zipper-fly? Do you want them faded or regular?"

I was stunned. A moment or two later I sputtered out something like, "I just want regular jeans. You know, the kind that used to be the only kind." It turned out she didn't know, but after consulting one of her older colleagues, she was able to figure out what "regular" jeans used to be, and she pointed me in the right direction.

The trouble was that with all these options available to me now, I was no longer sure that "regular" jeans were what I wanted. Perhaps the easy fit or the relaxed fit would be more comfortable. Having already demonstrated how out of touch I was with modern fashion, I persisted. I went back to her and asked what difference there was between regular jeans, relaxed fit and easy fit. She referred me to a diagram that showed how the different cuts varied. It didn't help narrow the choice, so I decided to try them all. With a pair of jeans of each type under my arm, I entered the dressing room. I tried on all the pants and scrutinized myself in a mirror. I asked once again for further clarification. Whereas very little was riding on my decision, I was now convinced that one of these options had to be right for me, and I was determined to figure it out. But I couldn't. Finally, I chose the easy fit, because "relaxed fit" implied that I was getting soft in the middle and needed to cover it up.

The jeans I chose turned out just fine, but what occurred to me on that day is that buying a pair of pants should not be a day-long project. By creating all these options, the store undoubtedly had done a favor for customers with varied tastes and body types. However, by vastly expanding the range of choices, they had also created a new problem that needed to be solved. Before these options were available, a buyer like myself had to settle for an imperfect fit, but at least purchasing jeans was a five-minute affair. Now it was a complex decision in which I was forced to invest time, energy, and no small amount of self-doubt, anxiety, and dread.

When people have **no choice**, life is almost unbearable
But as the **number of choices** keeps growing,
negative aspects of having a **multitude**
of options begin to appear.

Buying jeans is a trivial matter, but it suggests a much larger theme we will pursue throughout this book, which is this:

When people have no choice, life is almost unbearable. As the number of available choices increases, as it has in our consumer culture, the autonomy, control, and liberation this variety brings is powerful and positive. But as the number of choices keeps growing, negative aspects of having a multitude of options begin to appear. As the number of choices grows further, the negatives escalate until we become overloaded. At this point, choice no longer liberates, but debilitates. It might even be said to tyrannize.

Tyrannize?

That's a dramatic claim, especially following an example about buying jeans. But our subject is by no means limited to how we go about selecting consumer goods.

Clinging tenaciously to **all the choices** available to us contributes to **bad decisions**, to **anxiety, stress**, and **dissatisfaction**—even to **clinical depression**.

This book is about the choices Americans face in almost all areas of life: education, career, friendship, sex, romance, parenting, religious observance. There is no denying that choice improves the quality of our lives. It enables us to control our destinies, and to come close to getting exactly what we want out of any situation. Choice is essential to autonomy, which is absolutely fundamental to well-being. Healthy people want and need to direct their own lives.

On the other hand, the fact that *some* choice is good doesn't necessarily mean that *more* choice is better. As I will demonstrate, there is a cost to having an overload of choice. As a culture, we are enamored of freedom, self-determination, and variety, and we are reluctant to give up any of our options. But clinging tenaciously to all the choices available to us contributes to bad decisions, to anxiety, stress, and dissatisfaction—even to clinical depression.

Many years ago, the distinguished political philosopher Isaiah Berlin made an important distinction between “negative liberty” and “positive liberty.” Negative liberty is “freedom from”—freedom from constraint, freedom from being told what to do by others. Positive liberty is “freedom to”—the availability of opportunities to be the author of your life, to make it meaningful and significant. Often, these two kinds of liberty will go together. If the con-

straints people want “freedom from” are rigid enough, they won’t be able to attain “freedom to.” But these two types of liberty need not always go together.

We **make the most** of our **freedoms** by learning to
make **good choices** about the **things that matter.**

Economist and philosopher Amartya Sen has also examined the nature and importance of freedom and autonomy and the conditions that promote it. In his book, *Development as Freedom*, he distinguishes the importance of choice, in and of itself, from the functional role it plays in our lives. He suggests that instead of being fetishistic about freedom of choice, we should ask ourselves whether it nourishes us or deprives us, whether it makes us mobile or hems us in, whether it enhances self-respect or diminishes it, and whether it enables us to participate in our communities or prevents us from doing so. Freedom is essential to self-respect, public participation, mobility and nourishment, but not all choice enhances freedom. In particular, increased choice among goods and services may contribute little or nothing to the kind of freedom that counts. Indeed, it may impair freedom by taking time and energy we’d be better off devoting to other matters.

I believe that many modern Americans are feeling less and less satisfied even as their freedom of choice expands. This book is intended to explain why this is so and suggest what can be done about it.

Which is no small matter. The United States was founded on a commitment to individual freedom and autonomy, with freedom of choice as a core value. And yet it is my contention that we do ourselves no favor when we equate liberty too directly with choice, as if we necessarily increase freedom by increasing the number of options available.

Instead, I believe that we make the most of our freedoms by learning to make good choices about the things that matter, while at the same time, unburdening ourselves from too much concern about the things that don't.

Following that thread, Part I discusses how the range of choices people face every day has increased in recent years. Part II discusses how we choose, and shows how difficult and demanding it is to make wise choices. Choosing well is especially difficult for those determined to make only the best choices, individuals I refer to as “maximizers.” Part III is about how and why choice can make us suffer. It asks whether increased opportunities for choice actually make people happier, and concludes that often they do not. It also identifies several psychological processes that explain why added options do not make people better off: adaptation, regret, missed opportunities, raised expectations, and feelings of inadequacy in comparison with others. It concludes with a suggestion that increased choice may actually contribute to the recent epidemic of clinical depression affecting much of the Western world. Finally, in Part IV, I offer a series of recommendations for taking advantage of what is positive, and avoiding what is negative, in our modern freedom of choice.

Throughout the book, you will learn about a wide range of research findings from psychologists, economists, market researchers, and decision scientists, all related to choice and decision making. There are important lessons to be learned from this research, some of them not so obvious, and others even counterintuitive. For example, I will argue that:

1. We would be better off if we embraced certain voluntary constraints on our freedom of choice instead of rebelling against them.
.....
2. We would be better off seeking what was “good enough” instead of seeking the best (have you ever heard a parent say “I want only the ‘good enough’ for my kids”?)
.....
3. We would be better off if we lowered our expectations about the results of decisions.
.....

4. We would be better off if the decisions we made were non-reversible.
5. We would be better off if we paid less attention to what others around us were doing.

These conclusions fly in the face of conventional wisdom that the more choices people have, the better off they are, that the best way to get good results is to have very high standards, and that it's always better to have a way to back out of a decision than not. What I hope to show is that the conventional wisdom is wrong, at least when it comes to what satisfies us in the decisions we make.

As I mentioned, we will examine choice overload as it affects a number of areas in human experience that are far from trivial. But to build the case for what I mean by “overload,” we will start at the bottom of the hierarchy of needs and work our way up. We'll begin by doing some more shopping.

CHAPTER 1. LET'S GO SHOPPING

A Day at the Supermarket

Scanning the shelves of my local supermarket, recently, I found 85 different varieties and brands of crackers. As I read the packages, I discovered that some brands had sodium, others didn't. Some were fat-free, others weren't. They came in big boxes and small ones. They came in normal size and bite size. There were mundane saltines and exotic and expensive imports.

My neighborhood supermarket is not a particularly large store, and yet next to the crackers were 285 varieties of cookies. Among chocolate chip cookies, there were 21 options. Among “goldfish” (I don't know whether to count them as cookies or crackers), there were 20 different varieties to choose from.

Across the aisle were juices—13 “sports drinks,” 65 “box drinks” for kids, 85 other flavors and brands of juices, and 75 iced teas and adult drinks. I could get these tea drinks sweetened (sugar or artificial sweetener), lemoned, and flavored.

My neighborhood supermarket **is not** a particularly **large store**, and yet next to the crackers, were **285 varieties** of cookies.

Next, in the snack aisle, there were 95 options in all—chips (taco and potato, ridged and flat, flavored and unflavored, salted and unsalted, high fat, low fat, no fat), pretzels, and the like, including a dozen varieties of “Pringles.” Nearby was seltzer, no doubt to wash down the snacks. Bubbled water was displayed in at least 15 flavors.

In the pharmaceutical aisles, I found 61 varieties of sun tan oil and sunblock, and 80 different pain relievers— aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, 350 milligrams or 500 milligrams, caplets, capsules, and tablets, coated or uncoated. There were 40 options for toothpaste, 150 lipsticks, 75 eyeliners and 90 colors of nail polish from one brand alone. There were 116 kinds of skin cream, and 360 types of shampoo, conditioner, gel, and mousse. Next to them were 90 different cold remedies and decongestants. Finally, there was dental floss. Waxed and unwaxed, flavored and unflavored, offered in a variety of thicknesses.

Returning to the food shelves, I could choose from among 230 soup offerings, including 29 different chicken soups. There were 16 varieties of instant mashed potatoes, 75 different instant gravies, 120 different pasta sauces. Among the 175 different salad dressings were 16 “Italian” dressings, and if none of them suited me, I could choose from 15 extra-virgin olive oils and 42 vinegars and make my own. There were 275 varieties of cereal, including 24

oatmeal options and 7 “Cheerio” options. Across the aisle were 64 different kinds of barbecue sauce and 175 types of teabags.

Heading down the homestretch, I encountered 22 types of frozen waffles. And just before the checkout (paper or plastic; cash or credit or debit), there was a salad bar that offered 55 different items.

Consumers tend to return to the products they usually buy, **not even noticing 75%** of the items **competing** for their **attention** and their **dollars**.

This brief tour of one modest store barely suggests the bounty that lies before today’s middle class consumer. I left out the fresh fruits and vegetables (organic, semi-organic, and regular old fertilized and pesticized), the fresh meats, fish, and poultry (free-range, organic chicken or penned-up chicken, skin on or off, whole or in pieces, seasoned or unseasoned, stuffed or empty), the frozen foods, the paper goods, the cleaning products, and on and on and on.

A typical supermarket carries more than 30,000 items. That’s a lot to choose from. And more than 20,000 *new* products hit the shelves every year, almost all of them doomed to failure.

Comparison shopping to get the best price adds still another dimension to the array of choices, so that if you were a truly careful shopper, you could spend the better part of a day just to select a box of crackers, as you worried about price, flavor, freshness, fat, sodium, and calories. But who has the time to do this? Perhaps that’s the reason consumers tend to return to the products they usually buy, not even noticing 75% of the items competing for their

attention and their dollars. Who but a professor doing research would even stop to consider that there are almost 300 different cookie options to choose among?

Supermarkets are unusual as repositories for what are called “non-durable goods,” goods that are quickly used and replenished. So buying the wrong brand of cookies doesn’t have significant emotional or financial consequences. But in most other settings, people are out to buy things that cost more money, and that are meant to last. And here, as the number of options increases, the psychological stakes rise accordingly.

Shopping for Gadgets

Continuing my mission to explore our range of choices, I left the supermarket and stepped into my local consumer electronics store. Here I discovered:

- 45 different car stereo systems, with 50 different speaker sets to go with them.
- 42 different computers, most of which can be customized in various ways.
- 27 different printers to go with the computers.
- 110 different televisions, offering high definition, flat screen, varying screen sizes and features, and various levels of sound quality.
- 30 different VCRs and 50 different DVD players.
- 20 video cameras.
- 85 different telephones, not counting the cellular phones.
- 74 different stereo tuners, and 55 CD players, and 32 tape players, and 50 sets of speakers. Given that these components can be mixed and matched in every possible way, that provides the opportunity to create 6,512,000 different stereo systems.

And if you don't have the budget or the stomach for configuring your own stereo system, there are 63 small, integrated systems to choose from.

Unlike supermarket products, those in the electronics store don't get used up so fast. If we make a mistake, we either have to live with it or return it and go through the difficult choice process all over again. Also, we really can't rely on habit to simplify our decision, because we don't buy stereo systems every couple of weeks and because technology changes so rapidly that chances are that our last model won't exist when we go out to replace it. At these prices, choices begin to have serious consequences.

Shopping By Mail

My wife and I receive about 20 catalogs a week in the mail. We get catalogs for clothes, luggage, housewares, furniture, kitchen appliances, gourmet food, athletic gear, computer equipment, linens, bathroom furnishings, and unusual gifts, plus a few that are hard to classify. These catalogs spread like a virus—once you're on the mailing list for one, dozens of others seem to follow. Buy one thing from a catalog and your name starts to spread from one mailing list to another. From one month alone, I have 25 clothing catalogs sitting on my desk. Opening just one of them, a summer catalog for women, we find:

- 19 different styles of women's T-shirts, each available in 8 different colors.
- 10 different styles of shorts, each available in 8 colors.
- 8 different styles of chinos, available in between 6 and 8 colors.
- 7 different styles of jeans, each available in 5 colors.
- Dozens of different styles of blouses and pants, each available in multiple colors.
- 9 different styles of thongs, each available in 5 or 6 colors.

- And then there are bathing suits—fifteen one piece suits and among two piece suits:
.....
- 7 different styles of top, each in about 5 colors, combined with
.....
- 5 different styles of bottom, each in about 5 colors, to give women a total of
.....
- 875 different “make your own two-piece” possibilities.
.....

Shopping for Knowledge

These days, a typical college catalog has more in common with the one from J. Crew than you might think. Most liberal arts colleges and universities now embody a view that celebrates freedom of choice above all else, and the modern university is a kind of intellectual shopping mall.

A century ago, a college curriculum entailed a largely fixed course of study, with a principal goal of educating people in their ethical and civic traditions. Education was not just about learning a discipline—it was a way of raising citizens with common values and aspirations. Often the capstone of a college education was a course taught by the college president, a course that integrated the various fields of knowledge to which the students had been exposed. But more important, this course was intended to teach students how to use their college education to live a good and an ethical life, both as individuals and as members of society.

This is no longer the case. Now there is no fixed curriculum, and no single course is required of all students. There is no attempt to teach people how they should live, for who is to say what a good life is? When I went to college, 35 years ago, there were almost two years worth of general education requirements that all students had to complete. We had *some* choices among courses that met those requirements, but they were rather narrow. Almost every

department had a single, freshman-level introductory course that prepared the student for more advanced work in the department. You could be fairly certain, if you ran into a fellow student you didn't know, that the two of you would have at least a year's worth of courses in common to discuss.

Students come and go in and out of classes just as browsers go in and out of stores in a mall.

Today, the modern institution of higher learning offers a wide array of different “goods” and allows, even encourages, students—the “customers”—to shop around until they find what they like. Individual customers are free to “purchase” whatever bundles of knowledge they want, and the university provides whatever its customers demand. In some rather prestigious institutions, this shopping mall view has been carried to an extreme. In the first few weeks of classes, students sample the merchandise. They go to a class, stay ten minutes to see what the professor is like, then walk out, often in the middle of the professor's sentence, to try another class. Students come and go in and out of classes just as browsers go in and out of stores in a mall. “You've got ten minutes,” the students seem to be saying, “to show me what you've got. So give it your best shot.”

About 20 years ago, somewhat dismayed that their students no longer shared enough common intellectual experiences, the Harvard faculty revised its general education requirements to form a “core curriculum.” Students now take at least one course in each of seven different broad areas of inquiry. Among those areas, there are a total of about 220 courses from which to choose. “Foreign Cultures” has 32, “Historical Study” has 44, “Literature and the Arts” has 58, “Moral Reasoning” has 15, as does “Social Analysis,” “Quantitative Reasoning” has 25, and

“Science” has 44. What are the odds that two random students who bump into each other will have courses in common?

At the advanced end of the curriculum, Harvard offers about 40 majors. For students with interdisciplinary interests, these can be combined into an almost endless array of joint majors. And if that doesn't do the trick, students can create their own degree plan.

And Harvard is not unusual. Princeton offers its students a choice of 350 courses from which to satisfy its general education requirements. Stanford, which has a larger student body, offers even more. Even at my small school, Swarthmore College, with only 1350 students, we offer about 120 courses to meet our version of the general education requirement, from which students must select nine. And though I have mentioned only extremely selective, private institutions, don't think that the range of choices they offer is peculiar to them. Thus, at Penn State, for example, liberal arts students can choose from over 40 majors, and from hundreds of courses intended to meet general education requirements.

There are many benefits to these expanded educational opportunities. The traditional values and traditional bodies of knowledge transmitted from teachers to students in the past were constraining and often myopic. Until very recently, important ideas reflecting the values, insights, and challenges of people from different traditions and cultures had been systematically excluded from the curriculum. The tastes and interests of the idiosyncratic students had been stifled and frustrated. In the modern university, each individual student is free to pursue almost any interest, without having to be harnessed to what his intellectual ancestors thought was worth knowing. But this freedom may come at a price. Now, students are required to make choices about education that may affect them for the rest of their lives. And they are forced to make these choices at a point in their intellectual development when they may lack the resources to make them intelligently.

Shopping for Entertainment

Before the advent of cable, American television viewers had the three networks from which to choose. In large cities, there were up to a half dozen additional local stations. When cable first came on the scene, its primary function was to provide better reception. Then, new stations appeared, slowly at first but more rapidly as time went on. Now, there are 200 or more (my cable provider offers 270), not counting the on-demand movies we can obtain with just a phone call. If 200 options aren't enough, there are special subscription services that allow you to watch any football game being played by a major college anywhere in the country. And who knows what the cutting edge technology will bring us tomorrow.

But what if, with all these choices, we find ourselves in the bind of wanting to watch two shows broadcast in the same time slot? Thanks to VCRs, that's no longer a problem. Watch one, and tape one for later. Or for the real enthusiasts among us, there are "picture-in-picture" TVs that allow us to watch two shows at the same time.

And all of this is nothing compared to the major revolution in TV watching that is now at our doorstep. Those programmable, electronic boxes like TiVo enable us, in effect, to create our own TV stations. We can program those devices to find exactly the kinds of shows we want, and to cut out the commercials, the promos, the lead-ins, and whatever else we find annoying. And the boxes can "learn" what we like and then "suggest" to us programs that we may not have thought of. We can now watch whatever we want, whenever we want to. We don't have to schedule our TV time. We don't have to look at the TV page in the newspaper. Middle of the night or early in the morning—no matter when that old movie is on, it's available to us exactly when we want it.

So the TV experience is now the very essence of choice without boundaries. In a decade or so, when these boxes are in everybody's home, it's a good bet that when folks gather around the water cooler to discuss last night's big TV events, no two of them will have watched the

same shows. Like the college freshmen struggling in vain to find a shared intellectual experience, American TV viewers will be struggling to find a shared TV experience.

But Is Expanded Choice Good or Bad?

Americans spend more time shopping than members of any other society. Americans go to shopping centers about once a week, more often than they go to houses of worship, and Americans now have more shopping centers than high schools. In a recent survey, 93% of teenage girls surveyed said that shopping was their favorite activity. Mature women also say they like shopping, but working women say that shopping is a hassle, as do most men. When asked to rank the pleasure they get from various activities, grocery shopping ranks next to last, and other shopping fifth from the bottom. And the trend over recent years is downward. Apparently, people are shopping more now but enjoying it less.

There is something puzzling about these findings. It's not so odd, perhaps, that people spend more time shopping than they used to. With all the options available, picking what you want takes more effort. But why do people enjoy it less? And if they do enjoy it less, why do they keep doing it? If we don't like shopping at the supermarket, for example, we can just get it over with, and buy what we always buy, ignoring the alternatives. Shopping in the modern supermarket demands extra effort only if we're intent on scrutinizing every possibility and getting the best thing. And for those of us who shop in this way, increasing options should be a good thing, not a bad one.

And this, indeed, is the standard line among social scientists who study choice. If we're rational, they tell us, added options can only make us better off as a society. Those of us who care will benefit, and those of us who don't care can always ignore the added options. This view seems logically compelling; but empirically, it isn't true.

A recent series of studies, titled “When Choice Is Demotivating,” provides the evidence. One study was set in a gourmet food store in an upscale community where, on weekends, the owners commonly set up sample tables of new items. When researchers set up a display featuring a line of exotic, high-quality jams, customers who came by could taste samples, and they were given a coupon for a dollar off if they bought a jar. In one condition of the study, six varieties of the jam were available for tasting. In another, 24 varieties were available. In either case, the entire set of 24 varieties was available for purchase. The large array of jams attracted more people to the table than the small array, though in both cases people tasted about the same number of jams on average. When it came to buying, however, a huge difference became evident. Thirty percent of people exposed to the small array of jams actually bought a jar; only 3% of those exposed to the large array of jams did so.

Those of us **who care** will **benefit**, and those of us who **don't care** can always **ignore** the **added options**.

In a second study, this time in the laboratory, college students were asked to evaluate a variety of gourmet chocolates, in the guise of a marketing survey. The students were then asked which chocolate—based on description and appearance—they would choose for themselves. Then they tasted and rated that chocolate. Finally, in a different room, the students were offered a small box of the chocolates in lieu of cash as payment for their participation. For one group of students, the initial array of chocolates numbered six, and for the other, it numbered 30. The key results of this study were that the students faced with the small array were more satisfied with their tasting than those faced with the large array. In addition, they were four times as likely to choose chocolate rather than cash as compensation for their participation.

The authors of the study speculated about several explanations for these results. A large array of options may discourage consumers because it forces an increase in the effort that goes into making a decision. So consumers decide not to decide, and don't buy the product. Or if they do, the effort that the decision requires detracts from the enjoyment derived from the results. Also, a large array of options may diminish the attractiveness of what people *actually* choose, the reason being that thinking about the attractions of some of the unchosen options detracts from the pleasure derived from the chosen one. I will be examining these and other possible explanations throughout the book. But for now, the puzzle we began with remains: why can't people just ignore many or some of the options, and treat a 30-option array as if it were a 6-option array?

A large array of options may discourage consumers because it forces an increase in the effort that goes into making a decision.

There are several possible answers. First, an industry of marketers and advertisers make products difficult or impossible to ignore. They are in our faces all the time. Second, we have a tendency to look around at what others are doing and use them as a standard of comparison. If the person sitting next to me on an airplane is using an extremely light, compact laptop computer with a large, crystal clear screen, the choices for me as a consumer have just been expanded, whether I want them to be or not. Third, we may suffer from what economist Fred Hirsch referred to as the "tyranny of small decisions." We say to ourselves, "let's go to one more store," or "let's look at one more catalog," and not "let's go to all the stores," or "let's look at all the catalogs." It always seems easy to add just one more item to the array that is already being considered. So we go from six options to 30, one option at a time. By

the time we're done with our search, we may look back in horror at all the alternatives we've considered and discarded along the way.

Our culture sanctifies **freedom of choice** so **profoundly** that **the benefits** **of infinite options** seem self-evident.

But what I think is most important is that people won't ignore alternatives if they don't realize that too many alternatives can create a problem. And our culture sanctifies freedom of choice so profoundly that the benefits of infinite options seem self-evident. When experiencing dissatisfaction or hassle on a shopping trip, consumers are likely to blame it on something else—surly salespeople, traffic jams, high prices, items out of stock—anything but the overwhelming array of options.

Nonetheless, certain indicators pop up occasionally that signal discontent with this trend. There are now several books and magazines devoted to what is called the “voluntary simplicity” movement. Its core idea is that we have too many choices, too many decisions, too little time to do what is really important.

Unfortunately, I'm not sure that people attracted to this movement think about “simplicity” in the same way I do. Recently I opened a magazine called [Real Simple](#) to find something of a simplicity credo. It said that “at the end of the day, we're so caught up in doing, there's no time to stop and think. Or to take care of our own wants and needs.” [Real Simple](#), it is claimed, “offers actionable solutions to simplify your life, eliminate clutter, and help you focus on what you want to do, not what you have to do.” Taking care of our own “wants” and focusing on what we “want” to do does not strike me as a solution to the problem of too much

choice. It is precisely so that we can, each of us, focus on our own wants that all of these choices emerged in the first place. Could readers be attracted to a magazine that offered to simplify their lives by convincing them to stop wanting many of the things they wanted? That might go a long way toward reducing the choice problem. But who would choose to buy the magazine?

We can imagine a point at which the options would be so copious that even the world's most ardent supporters of freedom of choice begin to say "enough already." Unfortunately, that point of revulsion seems to recede endlessly into the future.

In the next chapter, we'll explore some of the newer areas of choice that have been added to complicate our lives. The question is, does this increased complexity bring with it increased satisfaction?

ALSO BY BARRY SCHWARTZ

Click on the title for the book description or to buy the book:

[*The Battle for Human Nature: Science, Morality and Modern Life*](#)

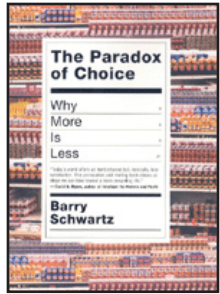
[*The Costs of Living: How Market Freedom Erodes the Best Things in Life*](#)

[*Psychology of Learning and Behavior*](#)

[*Behaviorism, Science, and Human Nature*](#)

[*Learning and Memory*](#)

info

**BUY THE BOOK**

For more details or to buy a copy of *The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less*, click here.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Barry Schwartz is the Dorwin Cartwright Professor of Social Theory and Social Action in the Psychology Department at Swarthmore College, where he has taught since 1971. He is the author of ten books, among them [The Battle for Human Nature](#), [The Costs of Living](#), and in 2004, [The Paradox of Choice: Why More Is Less](#). He is a fellow of both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychological Society. His research and teaching focus on the intersection of psychology and economics, and more specifically on how the abundance of choice in modern life both liberates and bedevils those who face it.

DOWNLOAD THIS

This manifesto is available from <http://changethis.com/13.ParadoxOfChoice>

SEND THIS

Click here to pass along a copy of this manifesto to others.

<http://changethis.com/13.ParadoxOfChoice/email>

SUBSCRIBE


Learn about our latest manifestos as soon as they are available. Sign up for our free newsletter and be notified by email. <http://changethis.com/subscribe>

info


WHAT YOU CAN DO

You are given the unlimited right to print this manifesto and to distribute it electronically (via email, your website, or any other means). You can print out pages and put them in your favorite coffee shop's windows or your doctor's waiting room. You can transcribe the author's words onto the sidewalk, or you can hand out copies to everyone you meet. You may not alter this manifesto in any way, though, and you may not charge for it.

NAVIGATION & USER TIPS

Move around this manifesto by using your keyboard arrow keys or click on the right arrow (→) for the next page and the left arrow (←). To send this by email, just click on .

HAVING PROBLEMS SAVING TO DISK?

First, make sure you have the latest version of Acrobat Reader 6 which you can download from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>. If problems persist, it may be due to your Acrobat Reader settings. To correct the problem (for Windows), a reader, J. Hansen, suggests going to your Acrobat Reader Preferences > Options > Web browser Options. Check the “Display PDF in Browser” option. Then click on Save to Disk .

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

	PC	MAC
Zoom in (Larger view)	[CTL] [+]	[⌘] [+]
Zoom out	[CTL] [-]	[⌘] [-]
Full screen/Normal screen view	[CTL] [L]	[⌘] [L]

BORN ON DATE

This document was created on 7 February 2004 and is based on the best information available at that time. To check for updates, please click here to visit <http://changethis.com/13.ParadoxOfChoice>

info

SOME RIGHTS RESERVED



COPYRIGHT INFO

The copyright in this work belongs to the author, who is solely responsible for the content. Please direct content feedback or permissions questions to the author.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution–NonCommercial–NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 559 Nathan Abbott Way, Stanford, California 94305, USA.

Cover image from stock.xchng <http://sxc.hu>

ABOUT CHANGETHIS

ChangeThis is a vehicle, not a publisher. We make it easy for big ideas to spread. While the authors we work with are responsible for their own work, they don't necessarily agree with everything available in ChangeThis format. But you knew that already.