

A TYPOLOGY FOR THE STUDY OF RECREATIONAL DECISION STYLES

September 13, 1974

David L. Groves
Assistant Professor
Division of Forestry and Wildlife Resources
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

and

Harvey Kahalas
Assistant Professor
Department of Business Management
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

There have been many empirical and proposed systems for the study of man-environment relations that relate to the system components of input, process, and output. Most of the typologies that have been developed usually relate to input or output types of measure. Additionally, there have been a few elegant measurement systems proposed based upon the net change between input and output. The output measures have been the most widely accepted and used to study these types of problems. A process oriented approach has been the least explored. (Sewell and Roston, 1970)

A process approach holds implications for the study of recreation decisions because the information has transferability from one situation to another and is not tied to a particular content. Such a method has particular appeal as a predictive measure. Most efforts to operationalize a process approach have centered on the risk probability associated with obtaining a specific objective. These approaches have centered on the rational aspects of decision making and have not been highly successful where decisions are made on a more intuitive or (habitual basis). Kernan (1968: 155) has stated the problem thusly:

... Typically, decision theory specifically the prescriptive theory that claims to resolve the choice problem under conditions of uncertainty is not shown as descriptive. Its supporters emphasize that it dictates how decision makers should behave if they wish to be rational. However, rationality tends to be defined vaguely. Presumably it is reflected in behavior consistent with whatever goal assumptions underlie the particular choice criterion used. It is sensible intuitively that if a decision makers's choice criteria are known his choice behavior can be predicted. Decision theorists have proposed several

alternative choice criteria . . . the various choice criteria, formally or intuitively recognized, reflect differing cognitive dispositions . . .

There should be a synthesis of the rational and intuitive (or habitual) processes as well as the elements of input and output, so that a comprehensive system can be developed to describe decision styles. (Bettman, 1971; Pepitone, 1971)

A preliminary study was undertaken by the authors to develop and isolate a decision typology based upon both rational and intuitive measures (Groves and Kahalas, in press). The authors isolated the following three empirical styles in making decisions:

Selection Process Style Typology

1. Selection process level 1 (low): very little familiarity with the object (awareness factor) and selecting alternatives on the basis of chance (rationality factor).
2. Selection process level 2 (medium): familiarity with a few object types (awareness factor) and selecting alternatives on the basis of high risk methods (payoff or weighted comparison) and/or influences such as convenience, friends, or habits (rationality factor).
3. Selection process level 3 (high): a familiarity with all object types (awareness factor) and selecting alternatives on the basis of low risk methods (consequences or regrets) and/or influences such as systematic exploration, discussion with professional personnel, or experience (rationality factor).

The difference between selection process levels 2 and 3 is the locus of the decision orientation. Selection process level 2 is on the results of the decision with little or no consideration being given to the impact the decision will have upon input, process, or output. The orientation of selection process level 3 is on the impact that the decision will have upon input, process, or output. Each selection process level depends upon consistency between awareness and the mode of selection. If there was inconsistency, the mode of selection was the factor that determined the selection process level.

The typology developed does not give a total view of decision styles. A comprehensive model of a measurement system about decisions must also incorporate the quantitative aspects of input and output. A modification to the previous typology should be developed to achieve this synthesis. The first aspect of a new model should be studying the decision style or the locus of the decision. The next phase should be the examination of the quantitative measures of input and output that are related to a particular decision style. The modification that needs to be made in the selection process style typology is of a mathematical nature, especially in terms of levels 2 and 3. The modification in the first level of the typology, that is, chance is a difficult task because there is no systematic element on which to base an operational definition. This decision style is a random function and can only be expressed in terms of random risk probability. The modification in the second level of the typology, that is, a decision style related to results of the

decision can be quantitatively expressed if these decision styles are thought of in terms of objectives accomplished as a function of the total objectives sought (a proportional ratio). A modification in the third level, that is, a decision based on consequences can be quantitatively expressed if this decision style is thought of as ratio function between opportunity costs and payoffs. The difference between the last two levels in the typology is the difference between effectiveness and efficiency. By adding the concept of percentages and ratio to the decision styles, a quantitative concept of input and output can be added to the decision model for a synthesis of both content and process.

With a quantitative expression of decision styles, it is possible to obtain an indication of how well the individual is performing within a particular style. These decision styles are not a mutually inclusive phenomena. At some point in the individual's life all three decision styles are exhibited but there is one particular decision style that will dominate an individual's behavior. The degree to which the decision situation influences the decision styles seems to be a function of the familiarity with the object. It was found from a previous study that the more familiar a participant was with a recreational area, the more pervasive the decision style (Groves and Kahalas, in press). The immediate question raised is under what circumstances does a decision style appear and under what circumstances will it change. This type of information will give a direct indication of type of decision style, the quantitative measurement of the performance within the style, and to the degree behavior can be predicted from the decision style.

The modified typology seems to have an intuitive use in helping to understand why and how people make their decisions. In the past, it has been assumed that if an individual does not make a decision based on a rationality element, there is no sound basis for the decision. This is not true and such a proposed typology will facilitate an understanding of why and how people make their decisions and on what parameters.

REFERENCES

- Bettman, J. R. "The Structure of Consumer Choice Process," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8: 465-471, 1971.
- Groves, D. L. and Kahalas, Harvey. "A Structural Approach to the Individual-Environment Interface," *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, In press.
- Kernan, J. B. "Choice Criteria, Decision Behavior, and Personality," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 5: 155-164, 1968.
- Pepitone, A. "The Role of Justice in Interdependent Decision Making," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 7: 144-156, 1971.
- Sewell, W. R. D. and Rostron, J. "Recreational Fishing Evaluation." Department of Fisheries and Forestry, Ottawa, Canada, 1970.