

Hoai An Le Thi · Tao Pham Dinh ·  
Ngoc Thanh Nguyen  
Editors

# Modelling, Computation and Optimization in Information Systems and Management Sciences

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*Editors*

Hoai An Le Thi  
Laboratory of Theoretical and  
Applied Computer Science,  
University of Lorraine - Metz,  
France

Ngoc Thanh Nguyen  
Division of Knowledge Management  
Systems,  
Wroclaw University of Technology,  
Poland

Tao Pham Dinh  
Laboratory of Mathematics,  
National Institute for  
Applied Sciences - Rouen,  
France

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# Properties and Complexity of Some Superposition Choice Procedures

Sergey Shvydun<sup>1,2,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

<sup>2</sup> V.A. Trapeznikov Institute of Control Sciences of Russian Academy of Sciences,  
Moscow, Russia  
shvydun@hse.ru

**Abstract.** In this paper, the application of two-stage superposition choice procedures to the choice problem when the number of alternatives is too large is studied. Two-stage superposition choice procedures consist in sequential application of two choice procedures where the result of the first choice procedure is the input for the second choice procedures. We focus on the study of properties of such choice procedures and evaluate its computational complexity in order to determine which of two-stage superposition choice procedures can be applied in the case of large amount of alternatives.

**Keywords:** Superposition, Choice Problem, Choice Procedures, Computational Complexity.

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, due to the enormous increase of the amount of information, which led to a larger number of alternatives and criteria, there has been more attention given to the choice problem. The choice problem can be defined as follows. Consider a finite set  $A$  with  $|A| > 2$  alternatives where any subset  $X \in 2^A$  may be presented for choice. Denote by  $C(\cdot)$  a choice function that performs mapping  $2^A \rightarrow 2^A$  with restriction  $C(X) \subseteq X$   $C(X) \subseteq X$  for any  $X \in 2^A$ . The choice consists in selection according to some rule from some presentation  $X$  of the non-empty subset of alternatives  $Y \subseteq X$   $Y \subseteq X$  (non-empty subset of «best» alternatives).

There are a lot of different choice procedures that allow to choose and rank alternatives from initial set. All choice procedures can be divided into 5 following groups:

1. Scoring rules;
2. Rules, using majority relation;
3. Rules, using value function;
4. Rules, using tournament matrix;
5. q-Paretian rules.

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\* Corresponding author.



Unfortunately, most choice procedures cannot be applied when we deal with a large amount of alternatives due to its computational complexity. For instance, choice procedures based on the majority relation require pairwise comparisons of all alternatives and, consequently, if the number of alternatives is more than  $10^5$ , more than  $10^{10}$  comparisons should be performed which is not always possible to do in a sufficient time. Moreover, there are a lot of situations when after applying some choice procedures the remaining set of alternatives is too large. It means that other choice procedures should be applied in order to narrow the initial set of alternatives. Thus, there is a need to consider new approaches how to aggregate individual preferences in case of the large number of alternatives.

In this paper the application of the idea of superposition to the choice problem is studied. Let us remind that by superposition of two choice functions  $C_1(\cdot)$  and  $C_2(\cdot)$  we mean a binary operation  $\odot$ , the result of which is a new function  $C^*(\cdot) = C_2(\cdot) \odot C_1(\cdot)$ , having the form  $\forall X \in 2^A C^*(X) = C_2(C_1(X))$  [1]. In other words, superposition consists in sequential application of choice functions where the result of the previous choice function  $C_1$  is the input for the next choice function  $C_2$ .

The interest in superposition of choice procedures can be explained by several reasons. First, choice procedures based on the idea of superposition have a low computational complexity, which is crucial in the cases when the number of alternatives or/and criteria is very large. The use of superposition allows to reduce the complexity by applying choice procedures with a low computational complexity on first stages and more accurate choice procedures on final stages. Thus, the results can be obtained in a reasonable time. Second, the use of superposition allows to avoid situations when the remaining set of alternatives is too large through the use of additional choice procedures.

Thus, we consider the simplest type of superposition of choice procedures – two-stage superposition choice procedures. We focus on the study of properties and computational complexity of such choice procedures. The study of properties gives us information on how the final choice is changed due to changes of preferences, a set of feasible alternatives and a set of criteria while the study of computational complexity of two-stage choice procedures determines the list of choice procedures that can be applied when we deal with a large amount of alternatives.

## 1.1 Description of Choice Procedures

In this work we study two-stage superposition choice procedures which use scoring rules and rules, using majority relation on the first stage and scoring rules and rules, using majority relation, value function or tournament matrix on the second stage.

In Table 1 we provide a list of such procedures which are studied in this work.

**Table 1.** A list of studied choice procedures

<b>№</b>	<b>Name of choice procedure</b>	<b>Type of choice procedure</b>
1	Simple majority rule	Scoring rules
2	Plurality rule	
3	Inverse plurality rule	
4	q-Approval rule	
5	Run-off procedure	
6	Hare's rule (Ware's procedure)	
7	Borda's rule	
8	Black's procedure	
9	Inverse Borda's rule	
10	Nanson's rule	
11	Coombs' procedure	
12	Minimal dominant set	Rules, using majority relation
13	Minimal undominated set	
14	Minimal Weakly stable set	
15	Fishburn's rule	
16	Uncovered set I	
17	Uncovered set II	
18	Richelson's rule	
19	Condorcet winner	
20	Core	
21	k-stable set	Rules, using value function
22	Threshold rule	
23	Copeland's rule 1	
24	Copeland's rule 2	
25	Copeland's rule 3	
26	Super-threshold rule	Rules, using tournament matrix
27	Minimax procedure	
28	Simpson's procedure	

The definition of such choice procedures is given in [1-4].

### 1.2 Normative Conditions

All normative conditions, which characterize different choice procedures, can be divided in the following groups [1, 5-8]

- Rationality conditions;
- Monotonicity conditions;
- Non-compensatory condition.

Let us describe now these conditions.

**Rationality Conditions**

There are four rationality conditions for choice functions.

1. Heritage condition (**H**)

$$\forall X, X' \in 2^A, X' \subseteq X \Rightarrow C(\bar{P}_{X'}, X') \supseteq C(\bar{P}_X, X) \cap X', \tag{1}$$

where  $\bar{P}_X$  is a contraction of a preference profile  $\bar{P}$  onto a set  $X \subseteq A, X \neq \emptyset$ , i.e.,  $\bar{P}_X = (P_1 / X, \dots, P_n / X), P_i / X = P_i \cap (X \times X)$ .

If the presented set is narrowed by eliminating some alternatives, those chosen from the initial set and remaining in the narrowed set will be chosen from the narrowed set.

2. Concordance condition (**C**)

$$\forall X', X'' \in 2^A \rightarrow C(\bar{P}_{X' \cup X''}, X' \cup X'') \supseteq C(\bar{P}_{X'}, X') \cap C(\bar{P}_{X''}, X''). \tag{2}$$

Condition **C** requires that all the alternatives chosen simultaneously from  $X'$  and  $X''$  be included in the choice when their union  $X' \cup X''$  is presented.

3. Independence of Outcast of options (**O**)

$$\forall X, X' \in 2^A, X' \subseteq X \setminus C(\bar{P}_X, X) \Rightarrow C(\bar{P}_{X \setminus X'}, X \setminus X') = C(\bar{P}_X, X). \tag{3}$$

Condition **O** requires that the narrowing of  $X$  by rejection of some or all the alternatives not chosen from the initial set  $X$  does not change the choice.

4. Arrow's choice axiom (**ACA**)

$$\forall X, X' \in 2^A, X' \subseteq X \Rightarrow \begin{cases} \text{if } C(\bar{P}_X, X) = \emptyset, \text{ then } C(\bar{P}_{X'}, X') = \emptyset, \\ \text{if } C(\bar{P}_X, X) \cap X' \neq \emptyset, \text{ then } C(\bar{P}_{X'}, X') = C(\bar{P}_X, X) \cap X'. \end{cases} \tag{4}$$

For the case where the choice is not empty, Condition **ACA** requires that the alternatives chosen from the initial set  $X$  and left in the narrowed one  $X'$  and only such alternatives be chosen from  $X'$ .

**Monotonicity Conditions**

1. Monotonicity condition 1

$$\begin{aligned} & \forall X \in 2^A, x \in C(\vec{P}_X, X), \forall \vec{P}_X, \vec{P}'_X: \\ & (\forall a, b \in X, aP_i b \Leftrightarrow aP'_i b \ \& \ \exists y \in X, yP_i x \Rightarrow xP'_i y) \Rightarrow x \in C(\vec{P}'_X, X). \end{aligned} \tag{5}$$

Let alternative  $x$  be chosen from initial set  $X$ . Suppose now that the relative position of alternative  $x$  was improved while the relative comparison of any pair of other alternatives remains unchanged. Monotonicity condition is satisfied if alternative  $x$  is still in choice.

2. Monotonicity condition 2

$$\begin{aligned} & \forall X \in 2^A, x, y \in C(\vec{P}_X, X), X' = X \setminus \{x\}, X'' = X \setminus \{y\} \\ & \rightarrow x \in C(\vec{P}_{X''}, X'') \ \& \ y \in C(\vec{P}_{X'}, X'). \end{aligned} \tag{6}$$

Let two alternatives  $x, y$  be chosen from initial set  $X$ . Monotonicity condition 2 is satisfied if one of the chosen alternative ( $x$  or  $y$ ) is still in choice when the other chosen alternative ( $y$  or  $x$ ) is eliminated.

3. Strict monotonicity condition

$$\begin{aligned} & \forall X \in 2^A, \forall y \in X, y \notin C(\vec{P}_X, X), \forall \vec{P}_X, \vec{P}'_X: \\ & (\forall a, b \in X, aP_i b \Leftrightarrow aP'_i b \ \& \ aP_i y \Rightarrow yP'_i a) \\ & \rightarrow C(\vec{P}'_X, X) = \begin{cases} C(\vec{P}_X, X) \text{ or} \\ \{y\} \text{ or} \\ C(\vec{P}_X, X) \cup \{y\}. \end{cases} \end{aligned} \tag{7}$$

The change of relative position of unchosen alternative  $y \in X \setminus C(\vec{P}_X, X)$   $y \in XC(\vec{P}_X, X)$  so that its position will be improved while the relative comparison of any pair of other alternatives remains unchanged leads to the choice of alternative  $y$  or/and all alternatives that were in initial choice  $C(\vec{P}_X, X)$ .

**Non-compensatory Condition**

According to non-compensatory condition, low estimates of one criterion cannot be compensated by high estimates on other criteria.

**2 Two-Stage Superposition Choice Procedures**

A list of two-stage superposition choice procedures studied in this paper is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Two-stage choice procedures

№	Stage 1	Stage 2
<b>1-121</b>	Scoring rules (11 procedures)	Scoring rules (11 procedures)
<b>122-231</b>		Rules, using majority relation (10 procedures)
<b>232-286</b>		Rules, using value function (5 procedures)
<b>287-308</b>		Rules, using tournament matrix (2 procedures)
<b>309-418</b>	Rules, using majority relation (10 procedures)	Scoring rules (11 procedures)
<b>419-518</b>		Rules, using majority relation (10 procedures)
<b>519-568</b>		Rules, using value function (5 procedures)
<b>569-588</b>		Rules, using tournament matrix (2 procedures)

Thus, 588 two-stage procedures of 8 different types are studied. Before proceeding to the study of properties of two-stage choice procedures, it is necessary to make some notes.

First, as not all two-stage choice procedures make any sense, there were found 168 two-stage procedures the second stage of which does not change the choice. For instance, two-stage choice procedures which use simple majority rule, run-off procedure, Hare's procedure, Coombs' procedure or Condorcet winner on the first stage do not make any sense as such procedures choose no more than one alternative. Thus, 168 choice procedures were excluded from further consideration.

Second, there were found 25 two-stage choice procedures equivalent to one of existing choice procedures. For instance, two-stage choice procedure "Minimal dominant set-Single majority rule" is equivalent to Condorcet winner. Another example is two-stage choice procedure "Minimal dominant set -Minimal weakly stable set" which is equivalent to minimal weakly stable set. Properties of such procedures fully coincided with properties of such existing procedures. However, these two-stage procedures cannot be excluded from further consideration as the computational complexity of some of them can be lower than the complexity of existing procedures.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that properties of two-stage choice procedures which use Black's procedure on the first stage fully coincide with properties of two-stage choice procedures which use Borda's rule if there is no Condorcet winner.

Thus, it remains to study properties of 395 two-stage choice procedures.

### 3 A Study of Properties for Choice Procedures

A study of properties for choice procedures can be divided in two steps. First, it is necessary to study properties of 28 existing choice procedures which are used in two-stage choice procedures. Second, properties of 395 two-stage procedures are studied.

A study of properties is the following. If a choice procedure does not satisfy given normative condition, a counter-example is provided. On the country, if a choice procedure satisfy given normative condition a necessary proof is followed. The results of the study of properties are given in Theorem 1.

**Theorem 1.** Information on which choice procedures satisfy given normative conditions is provided in Table 3 and Table 4.

**Table 3.** Properties of existing choice procedures («+» - choice procedure satisfies given normative condition, «-» - choice procedure does not satisfy given normative condition, «X» - normative condition does not exist for a given choice procedure)

№	Choice procedure	Rationality conditions				Monotonicity conditions			Non-compensatory condition
		Condition H	Condition C	Condition O	Condition ACA	Monotonicity condition 1	Monotonicity condition 2	Strict monotonicity condition	
1	Simple majority rule	+	-	+	-	+	X	-	-
2	Plurality rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
3	Inverse plurality rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
4	q-Approval rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
5	Run-off procedure	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
6	Hare's rule (Ware's procedure)	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
7	Borda's rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
8	Black's procedure	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
9	Inverse Borda's rule	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	Nanson's rule	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	Coombs' procedure	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
12	Minimal dominant set	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	-
13	Minimal undominant set	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
14	Minimal weakly stable set	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
15	Fishburn's rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
16	Uncovered set I	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
17	Uncovered set II	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
18	Richelson's rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
19	Condorcet winner	+	+	-	-	+	X	-	-
20	Core	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
21	k-stable set (k>1)	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
22	Threshold rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
23	Copeland's rule 1	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
24	Copeland's rule 2	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
25	Copeland's rule 3	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
26a	Super-threshold rule (fixed threshold)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
26b	Super-threshold rule (threshold depends on X)	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-
27	Minimax procedure	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
28	Simpson's procedure	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-

**Table 4.** Properties of two-stage choice procedures («+» - choice procedure satisfies given normative condition, «-» - choice procedure does not satisfy given normative condition, «X» - normative condition does not exist for a given choice procedure)

Two-stage choice procedure		Rationality conditions				Monotonicity conditions			Non-compensatory condition
		Condition H	Condition C	Condition O	Condition ACA	Monotonicity condition 1	Monotonicity condition 2	Strict monotonicity condition	
Stage 1	Stage 2								
Borda's rule Black's procedure	Simple majority rule Run-off procedure Hare's rule (Ware's procedure) Condorcet winner	-	-	-	-	+	X	-	-
Plurality rule Inverse plurality rule q-Approval rule (q>1)	Simple majority rule Condorcet winner	-	-	-	-	+	X	-	-
Minimal undominant set Core	Simple majority rule	+	+	-	-	+	X	-	-
Fishburn's rule Uncovered set I Uncovered set II Richelson's rule	Simple majority rule Condorcet winner	+	+	-	-	+	X	-	-
Borda's rule Black's procedure	Inverse Borda's rule Nanson's rule k-stable set (k>1)	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Fishburn's rule Richelson's rule Uncovered set I	Minimal dominant set Uncovered set I Richelson's rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Minimal undominant set	Fishburn's rule Uncovered set II Copeland's rule 1-3	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Plurality rule Inverse plurality rule q-Approval rule (q>1) Borda's rule Black's procedure Minimal dominant set Minimal undominant set Minimal weakly stable set Fishburn's rule Uncovered set I Uncovered set II Richelson's rule	Plurality rule Inverse plurality rule q-Approval rule (q>1) Borda's rule Black's procedure Minimal dominant set Minimal undominant set Minimal weakly stable set Fishburn's rule Uncovered set I Uncovered set II Richelson's rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-

**Table 4.** (continued)

Two-stage choice procedure		Rationality conditions				Monotonicity conditions		
		Condition H	Condition C	Condition O	Condition ACA	Monotonicity condition 1	Monotonicity condition 2	Strict monotonicity condition
Stage 1	Stage 2							
	Core Threshold rule Copeland's rule 1-3 Super-threshold rule (threshold depends on X) Minimax procedure Simpson's procedure							
Minimal undominant set Uncovered set II	Uncovered set I Richelson's rule	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Uncovered set I	Core	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Minimal dominant set Minimal undominant set	Super-threshold rule (threshold depends on X) Minimax procedure Simpson's procedure	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
Core	Borda's rule Black's procedure Inverse Borda's rule Nanson's rule Minimal dominant set Minimal undominant set Minimal weakly stable set Fishburn's rule Uncovered set I Uncovered set II Richelson's rule Copeland's rule 1-3 Minimax procedure Simpson's procedure	+	+	-	-	+	+	-
Uncovered set II	Minimal dominant set	-	+	-	-	+	-	-

Two-stage choice procedures not included in Table 4 do not satisfy any given normative condition.

#### 4 Computational Complexity of Two-Stage Choice Procedures

Based on computational complexity of existing choice procedures and number of remaining alternatives we can divide all two-stage procedures in several groups in accordance with their computational complexity (see Table 5).



**Table 5.** A computational complexity of two-stage superposition choice procedures («...» - any studied choice procedure)

<b>Two-stage choice procedure</b>	
<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
<b>Choice procedures with a low computational complexity</b>	
Plurality rule q-Approval rule ( $q > 1$ )	...
Inverse plurality rule Borda's rule Black's procedure	Simple majority rule Run-off procedure Hare's rule (Ware's procedure) Borda's rule Black's procedure Condorcet winner Plurality rule Threshold rule Inverse plurality rule q-Approval rule ( $q > 1$ ) Super-threshold rule
<b>Computational complexity depends on initial set of alternatives</b>	
Inverse plurality rule Borda's rule Black's procedure	Inverse Borda's rule Nanson's rule Core Copeland's rule 1-3 Minimax procedure Simpson's procedure Coombs' procedure
<b>Choice procedures with average computational complexity</b>	
Inverse Borda's rule Nanson's rule Core Minimax procedure Simpson's procedure	Simple majority rule Run-off procedure Hare's rule (Ware's procedure) Borda's rule Black's procedure Condorcet winner Plurality rule Threshold rule Inverse plurality rule q-Approval rule ( $q > 1$ ) Super-threshold rule Inverse Borda's rule Nanson's rule Core Copeland's rule 1-3 Minimax procedure Simpson's procedure Coombs' procedure
Coombs' procedure	...
<b>Choice procedures with a high computational complexity</b>	
Inverse plurality rule Borda's rule Black's procedure Inverse Borda's rule	Minimal dominant set Minimal undominant set Minimal weakly stable set Fishburn's rule

**Table 5.** (continued)

<b>Two-stage choice procedure</b>	
<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>
Nanson's rule Core	Uncovered set I, II Richelson's rule k-stable set ( $k > 1$ )
Minimal dominant set Minimal undominant set Minimal weakly stable set Fishburn's rule Uncovered set I, II Richelson's rule k-stable set ( $k > 1$ )	...

To prove the results the run-time complexity was calculated for two-stage choice procedures from Table 5. For the case of 300 thousands of alternatives two-stage choice procedures with a low computational complexity calculated the results in less than 3 seconds. Two-stage choice procedures for which the computational complexity depends on initial set of alternatives calculated the results in less than 0.4-27 minutes. Two-stage choice procedures with average computational complexity calculated the results in less than 5 hours. The run-time for choice procedures with a high computational complexity was not calculated as they do not allow to obtain the results in a reasonable time.

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper, we studied the properties of 28 existing and 395 two-stage choice procedures, which can be used in various multi-criteria problems. It was defined which choice procedures satisfy given normative conditions, showing how a final choice is changed due to the changes of preferences or a set of feasible alternatives. Such information leads to a better understanding of different choice procedures and how stable and sensible is a set of alternatives obtained after applying some choice procedure.

The results show that only Simple majority rule, Condorcet winner, Core and Threshold rule with fixed threshold level satisfy condition **H**, only Minimal dominant set, Uncovered set II, Condorcet winner, Core and Threshold rule with fixed threshold level satisfy condition **C**, and only Simple majority rule, Minimal dominant set and Threshold rule with fixed threshold level satisfy condition **O**. As for two-stage choice procedures, most of them do not satisfy any normative conditions. Only some of them satisfy monotonicity condition 1. More information is provided in Table 3 and Table 4.

To compute run-time complexity of choice procedures the average computational complexity was used. All choice procedures were divided in different groups (see Table 5). It was shown that two-stage choice procedures, which use choice procedures with a high computational complexity on the first stage, require more time than other procedures. It means that such procedures are not recommended to use when the number of alternatives is too large. Two-stage choice procedures which use on the

first stage choice procedures with a low computational complexity and on the second stage - with a high computational complexity can be used in the case of large amount of alternatives, however, its application depends on the number of alternatives remained after the first stage. Two-stage choice procedures, which use on both stages choice procedures with a low computational complexity, can be used in the case of large amount of alternatives with no restrictions.

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