

Some Aspects of Selection and Ranking Procedures  
with Applications\*

by

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1. Introduction and Summary

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the problems of ranking and selection in a more or less unified form and suggest some applications to problems in reliability. More specifically, we discuss the problem of selecting a subset of  $k$  populations or processes which in some sense is a best subset.

We are given  $k$  populations  $\Pi_1, \Pi_2, \dots, \Pi_k$  with densities  $f_{\theta_1}(x), f_{\theta_2}(x), \dots, f_{\theta_k}(x)$ . We wish to define a rule for selecting a subset of the populations on the basis of observations from each of the  $k$  populations. In general, the parameters  $\theta_i$  are not known and usually range over some subset of the real line. It will be assumed for purposes of our discussion that the larger the parameter  $\theta$ , the more preferable is the selection of the corresponding population. The population with the largest parameter will be called the best. The definition of the best population is arbitrary, for example, the best could be the smallest. Modifications necessary in most cases will be clear.

The selection of any subset containing the best population is called a correct selection and will be denoted by (CS). If the selection proceeds according to some rule  $R$ , then the subset selected should contain the best population with a specified probability  $p^*$  i.e.

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$$(1.1) \quad P\{CS|R\} \geq P^* ,$$

whatever the unknown values of  $\theta_i$ 's may be. Moreover, the selection rule  $R$  should possess certain desirable properties. For example, the size of the selected subset should be made small in some sense.

In many problems the parameter  $\theta$  is directly related to some measure of the reliability of the populations or processes. For example,  $\theta$  may be the mean or median. In other situations one may be interested in some functional of the process, for example, the failure or hazard rate  $H(t) = f(t)/(1-F(t))$ . In the latter circumstance we may want to select those processes or populations for which  $H(t)$  or possibly some functional of  $H(t)$  is small.

It should be pointed out that we are considering procedures which select subsets of random size. Other types of procedures have been proposed. These refer mainly to the "indifference zone" type where usually one population is selected. Details of this type of approach for the normal means problem can be found in Bechhofer (1954). Other references can be found in Gupta (1965).

Section 2 of this paper deals with the selection rules for three specific situations. Properties of these rules are discussed in Section 3 and applications and examples are given in Section 4.

## 2. Some Selection Rules

In this section, we discuss some selection rules when the populations have densities  $f_{\theta}(x)$  of the following form.

$$(i) \quad f_{\theta}(x) = f(x-\theta) \text{ i.e. } \theta \text{ is a translation parameter.}$$

$$(ii) \quad f_{\theta}(x) = \frac{1}{\theta} f\left(\frac{x}{\theta}\right) \text{ i.e. } \theta \text{ is a scale parameter.}$$

$$(iii) f_{\theta}(x) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{e^{-\theta} \theta^j}{j!} g_j(x), \text{ where } g_j(x), j = 0, 1, \dots$$

is a sequence of density functions on  $[0, \infty)$ .

case (iii) arises in certain multivariate problems. The sequence  $g_j(x)$  are gamma or  $F$  (central) densities so that the resulting mixture  $f_{\theta}(x)$  is either a non-central  $\chi^2$  or a non-central  $F$  density.

In the general situation we are given an observation  $x_i$  from the population  $\Pi_i$  which has density  $f_{\theta_i}(x)$ . Let the ordered  $\theta_i$ 's be denoted by

$$(2.1) \quad \theta_{[1]} \leq \theta_{[2]} \leq \dots \leq \theta_{[k]} .$$

The correct pairing of the ordered  $\theta_i$ 's and the observed  $x_i$ 's is not known. A selection rule consists of  $k$  functions  $\varphi_i(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k)$ ,  $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$  where  $\varphi_i(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k)$  denotes the probability of selecting the  $i$ th population. Usually, the functions  $\varphi_i$  are indicator functions. Now we discuss the three cases separately.

#### Case (i).

For this case the following rule  $R$  has been proposed;

Select  $\Pi_i$  iff

$$(2.2) \quad x_i \geq x_{\max} - d$$

where  $x_{\max} = \max(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k)$  and the constant  $d \geq 0$  is the minimal value such that  $P\{CS|R\} \geq P^*$  ( $1/k < P^* < 1$ ). The function  $\varphi_i$  in this case is one if (2.2) holds and zero otherwise. The rule  $R$  selects a non-empty subset of random size and is translation invariant. Further properties of the rule  $R$  are given in the next section.

Cases (ii) and (iii).

In both of these situations the rule given in Case (i) is modified as follows:

Select  $\Pi_i$  iff

$$(2.3) \quad x_i \geq c x_{\max}$$

where  $0 < c < 1$  and  $c$  is again chosen to satisfy the  $P^*$  condition. It should be noted that the above rule is scale invariant.

It is worthwhile pointing out that the rules given in (2.2) and (2.3) are special cases of the class of rules which select  $\Pi_i$  iff

$$(2.4) \quad h_b(x_i) \geq x_{\max}$$

where the functions  $h_b(x)$  satisfy certain properties. In case (i),  $h_b(x) = x + b$  while in cases (ii) and (iii)  $h_b(x) = b x$ . The value  $b$  is chosen to satisfy the  $P^*$  condition. In general, we require certain minimal conditions on the function  $h_b(x)$ . For example, it would be necessary to have  $h_b(x) \geq x$  in order that the selected subset be non-empty.

### 3. Properties of the Selection Rules

In this section, we discuss some properties and performance characteristics of the selection rules given in Section 2. These properties together with numerical evaluations of the performance of these rules provide some justification for their use. The discussion here is mainly concerned with the translation case; the scale parameter case is entirely similar. The modifications and exceptions for case (iii) will be mentioned briefly at the end of this section.

Probability of a Correct Selection

For the rule  $R$  defined by (2.2) it is easily seen that

$$(3.1) \quad P\{CS|R\} = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left[ \prod_{i=1}^{k-1} F_{\theta_{[i]}}(x+d) \right] f_{\theta_{[k]}}(x) dx .$$

For any distribution function which is stochastically increasing in the sense that  $F_{\theta'}(x) \leq F_{\theta}(x)$  for all  $\theta' < \theta$  and all  $x$ , we see from (3.1) that

$$(3.2) \quad P\{CS|R\} \geq \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left[ F_{\theta_{[k]}}(x+d) \right]^{k-1} f_{\theta_{[k]}}(x) dx .$$

In the translation case, which is obviously stochastically increasing, the right hand side (3.2) is independent of  $\theta_{[k]}$  and hence the constant  $d$  can be evaluated from the equation

$$(3.3) \quad \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} F^{k-1}(x+d) f(x) dx = P^*$$

where  $F$  and  $f$  are independent of the translation parameter.

In the case of translation (3.1) can be rewritten as

$$(3.4) \quad P\{CS|R\} = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left[ \prod_{j=1}^{k-1} F(x+d+\theta_{[k]}-\theta_{[j]}) \right] f(x) dx$$

which shows that the probability of a correct selection using the rule  $R$  is an increasing function of each of the differences  $\theta_{[k]}-\theta_{[j]}$ ,  $j = 1, 2, \dots, k-1$ .

In the more general situation we are given a value  $P^*$  in  $(1/k, 1)$  and require a rule for which the probability of a correct selection is at least equal to  $P^*$  for all configurations of the parameters. Thus we essentially

require a sharp lower bound on an expression of the type given in (3.1). This lower bound is then set equal to  $P^*$  to solve for the constant which defines a specific selection rule. It would seem that in obtaining such a lower bound the first step for any "reasonable" selection rule would be to set all the  $\theta_i$  values equal to some fixed  $\theta$  as we did in going from (3.1) to (3.2). In this sense the set of parameter values where all the  $\theta_i$ 's are equal is "worst" or "least favorable" configuration.

#### Monotonicity and Unbiasedness

Using the same argument as in (3.4), one can obtain

$$(3.5) \quad P\{\text{Selecting the population corresponding to } \theta_{[i]} | R\}$$

$$= \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left[ \prod_{\substack{\ell=1 \\ \ell \neq i}}^k F(x+d+\theta_{[i]}-\theta_{[\ell]}) \right] f(x) dx .$$

From (3.5), we deduce that for the rule R the probability of selecting the population corresponding to  $\theta_{[i]}$  is greater than or equal to the probability of selecting the population corresponding to  $\theta_{[j]}$  provided  $\theta_{[i]} \geq \theta_{[j]}$ . Thus, the rule R is unbiased in the sense that the probability of rejecting any population not having the largest parameter  $\theta$  is not less than the probability of rejecting the best population.

#### Expected Size of the Selected Subset

In trying to obtain selection rules which are optimal in some sense a number of natural criteria arise. For example one might try to find a rule satisfying the  $P^*$  condition of (1.1) which minimizes the expected size of the selected subset, the expected sum of ranks of the selected populations or some other

appropriate expression. This minimization could be attempted uniformly for all configurations of the  $\theta_i$  values or for a restricted set of  $\theta_i$  values if no uniformly best rule exists. We shall confine our remarks here to the subset size which we denote by  $S$ .

It can be shown that the rule  $R$  defined in (2.2) has the property that if we set the first  $m$  of the  $\theta$  values equal; i.e. we let

$\theta_{[1]} = \theta_{[2]} = \dots = \theta_{[m]} = \theta \leq \theta_{[m+1]} \leq \dots \leq \theta_{[k]}$  then  $E(S|\theta_{[1]}=\dots=\theta_{[m]}=\theta)$  is a non-decreasing function of  $\theta$  for  $\theta \leq \theta_{[m+1]}$ . Thus the expected subset size increases if we set all of the  $\theta_i$  values equal to  $\theta_{[k]}$ . It then follows,

since  $ES = \sum_{i=1}^k P(\text{selecting } \Pi_i)$ , that

$$\begin{aligned} \sup_{\Omega} ES &\leq k \int F^{k-1}(x+d) f(x) dx \\ &= k P^* . \end{aligned}$$

(The supremum is taken over the set  $\Omega$  of all configurations of the  $\theta_i$  values.)

Thus subject to the basic  $P^*$  requirement the procedure  $R$  satisfies the condition that the expected size of the selected subset is  $\leq k P^*$  for all choices of  $\theta_1, \theta_2, \dots, \theta_k$ .

#### Minimax Property of the Rule $R$ .

Let  $\underline{\theta} = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_k)$  denote the vector of parameters associated with the populations  $\Pi_1, \dots, \Pi_k$ . It will be noticed that the rule  $R$  defined in (2.2) satisfies the equations

$$(3.6) \quad \inf_{\Omega} P_{\underline{\theta}}(CS|R) = P_{\underline{\theta}_0}(CS|R) = P^*$$

and



$$(3.7) \quad \sup_{\Omega} E_{\underline{\theta}} (S|R) = E_{\underline{\theta}_0} (S|R)$$

where  $\underline{\theta}_0 = (\theta_0, \theta_0, \dots, \theta_0)$  is some vector with all components equal. For notational convenience we have now displayed  $\underline{\theta}$  which was previously suppressed. For the translation case we note, in fact, that the right sides of (3.6) and (3.7) are actually independent of  $\theta_0$ .

We now show that equations (3.6) and (3.7), together with a simple invariance condition, imply that the rule  $R$  is minimax in the sense described below.

Suppose that  $x_1, \dots, x_k$  are a set of observations from the  $k$  populations  $\Pi_1, \dots, \Pi_k$  and that with this set of observations we select the  $i$ th population with probability  $\varphi_i(x_1, \dots, x_k)$ . The invariance or symmetry condition we impose is that if the  $i$ th and  $j$ th observations are interchanged, i.e.  $x_j$  is observed from  $\Pi_i$  and  $x_i$  from  $\Pi_j$ , then we select the  $j$ th population with the same probability  $\varphi_i(x_1, \dots, x_k)$ . More specifically, we shall require that

$$(3.8) \quad \varphi_i(x_1, \dots, x_i, \dots, x_j, \dots, x_k) = \varphi_j(x_1, \dots, x_j, \dots, x_i, \dots, x_k)$$

for all  $i$  and  $j$ .

A simple change of variable shows that for any rule  $R'$  satisfying (3.8) we have

$$(3.9) \quad \begin{aligned} E_{\underline{\theta}_0} (S|R') &= \sum_{i=1}^k P_{\underline{\theta}_0} (\text{selecting } \Pi_i | R') \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^k \int \varphi_i(x_1, \dots, x_k) \left[ \prod_{j=1}^k f_{\underline{\theta}_0}(x_j) \right] dx_1, \dots, dx_k \\ &= k P_{\underline{\theta}_0} (CS|R'). \end{aligned}$$

It should be noted that in the case of two or more populations having equal values  $\theta_{[k]}$ , one of them is considered 'tagged' and a correct selection is defined as the selection of any subset that includes this 'tagged' population. From (3.9)

$$(3.10) \quad k[P_{\underline{\theta}_0}(CS|R') - P_{\underline{\theta}_0}(CS|R)] = E_{\underline{\theta}_0}(S|R') - E_{\underline{\theta}_0}(S|R).$$

If  $R'$  satisfies the basic  $P^*$  condition it follows from (3.6) that the left side of (3.10) is nonnegative. This fact together with (3.7) implies that

$$E_{\underline{\theta}_0}(S|R') \geq E_{\underline{\theta}_0}(S|R) = \sup_{\Omega} E_{\underline{\theta}}(S|R)$$

so that

$$(3.11) \quad \sup_{\Omega} E_{\underline{\theta}}(S|R') \geq \sup_{\Omega} E_{\underline{\theta}}(S|R).$$

Thus the rule  $R$  is minimax in the sense that it minimizes  $\sup_{\Omega} E_{\underline{\theta}}(S|R')$  over the class of rules satisfying the basic  $P^*$  condition and the invariance condition (3.8).

#### Some Comments on Case (iii).

The properties we have described in this section for the translation parameter also hold for the scale parameter case. However in case (iii) several changes should be noted. In the following all of the expressions will be calculated using the 'scale' rule proposed for case (iii) and  $\Omega_0$  will denote that subset of  $\Omega$  for which all of the parameter components are equal.

We first observe that if the distribution function  $F_{\theta}(x)$  is stochastically increasing then

$$(3.12) \quad \inf_{\Omega} P_{\underline{\theta}}(\text{CS}) = \inf_{\Omega_0} P_{\underline{\theta}}(\text{CS}).$$

In case (iii) however the probability of correct selection when all of the  $\theta_i$  values are equal to  $\theta$  is not independent of  $\theta$ . Sufficient conditions are given in Gupta and Studden (1965) which guarantee that the infimum on the right side of (3.12) will occur when all  $\theta_i$  are equal to zero.

The statements concerning the monotonicity and unbiasedness for the translation and scale case hold whenever  $f_{\theta}(x)$  has a monotone likelihood ratio. This is the situation in case (iii) if  $g_j(x)$ ,  $j=0,1,\dots$ , represents central  $\chi^2$  or central F densities.

The situation when considering the expected size of the selected subset is similar to that described above for the probability of a correct selection, i.e.,

$$\sup_{\Omega} E_{\underline{\theta}} S = \sup_{\Omega_0} E_{\underline{\theta}} S.$$

It can also be shown that for case (iii) the supremum on the right side in the above expression is  $k$  and not  $kP^*$  as in cases (i) and (ii). The value  $k$  is obtained as the common value  $\theta$  approaches infinity. The above remarks concerning  $ES$  were also noted by Alam and Rizvi (1965).

The fact that  $\sup_{\Omega} E_{\underline{\theta}} S = k$  implies that the rule proposed for case (iii) is not minimax since the randomized rule which selects each population with probability  $P^*$  satisfies  $E_{\underline{\theta}} S \equiv kP^*$ .

#### 4. Applications and Examples

##### Selection and Ranking of Multivariate Normal Populations in terms of

$$\lambda_i = \underline{\mu}_i' \Sigma_i^{-1} \underline{\mu}_i \quad .$$

Let  $\Pi_i: N(\underline{\mu}_i, \Sigma_i)$ ,  $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$  be  $p$ -variate normal populations with mean vectors  $\underline{\mu}_i$  and covariance matrices  $\Sigma_i$ , respectively. Let  $\lambda_i = \underline{\mu}_i' \Sigma_i^{-1} \underline{\mu}_i$ . Assume  $\Sigma_1, \Sigma_2, \dots, \Sigma_k$  are known. Let  $\underline{x}_{ij}$  denote the  $j$ th observation of the  $p$ -dimensional random vector on the  $i$ th population. We have  $j = 1, 2, \dots, n$  independent observations from each of the  $k$  populations and we compute

$$(4.1) \quad y_{ij} = \underline{x}_{ij}' \Sigma_i^{-1} \underline{x}_{ij}, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, k; \quad j = 1, 2, \dots, n \quad .$$

Since  $y_{ij}$ ,  $j = 1, 2, \dots, n$  correspond to  $n$  independent observations on a non-central  $\chi^2$  for each  $i$ , then  $Y_i = \sum_{j=1}^n y_{ij}$  is distributed as a non-central  $\chi^2$  with non-centrality parameter  $\lambda_i' = n\lambda_i = n\underline{\mu}_i' \Sigma_i^{-1} \underline{\mu}_i$  and degrees of freedom  $p' = np$ . The proposed selection rule for the population with the largest value of  $\lambda_i$  is:

**select**  $\Pi_i$  iff

$$(4.2) \quad c \sum_{j=1}^n y_{ij} \geq \max_i \left\{ \sum_{j=1}^n y_{ij}, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, k \right\}$$

where the constant  $c = c(k, np, P^*)$  ( $c > 1$ ), is determined to satisfy

$$(4.2) \quad \inf_{\lambda'} \int_0^{\infty} F_{\lambda'}^{k-1}(cy) f_{\lambda'}(y) dy = P^*$$

where, now,  $F_{\lambda'}(\cdot)$  and  $f_{\lambda'}(\cdot)$  are the cdf and the density function of a non-central  $\chi^2$  with  $np$  degrees of freedom. Since the infimum of the above

integral takes place when  $\lambda' = 0$  (see Cor. 3.1.a in Gupta and Studden (1965)), the equation determining  $c$  is

$$(4.3) \quad \int_0^{\infty} H_{p'}^{k-1}(cy) h_{p'}(y) dy = P^*, \quad p' = np$$

where  $H_{p'}(x) = \int_0^x \frac{e^{-y}}{\Gamma(p')} y^{p'-1} dy$  and  $\frac{d}{dx} H_{p'}(x) = h_{p'}(x)$ .

The values of  $c' = 1/c$  satisfying (4.3) are given by Gupta (1963) for selected values of  $p'$  and  $P^*$  (see Table 1,  $p' = \nu/2$ ). Armitage and Krishnaiah (1964) have extensive tables for  $c'$ .

The rule for selecting the population with the minimum value of  $\lambda$  is defined by

select  $\Pi_i$  iff

$$\sum y_{ij} \leq b \min_i \left\{ \sum_{j=1}^n y_{ij}; \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, k \right\}.$$

The constant  $b = b(k, np, P^*)$ , in this case, is given by

$$(4.4) \quad \int_0^{\infty} \left[ 1 - H_{p'}\left(\frac{y}{b}\right) \right]^{k-1} h_{p'}(y) dy = P^*, \quad p' = np.$$

The values of  $b' = 1/b$  satisfying (4.4) are tabulated in Gupta and Sobel (1962) for selected values of  $p'$  and  $P^*$  and more extensively by Krishnaiah and Armitage (1964).

#### Selecting the Exponential Population with the Largest Mean Life or the Smallest Failure Rate

Assume that the life model (time to failure) is the negative exponential with density  $e^{-t/\theta}/\theta$ . We are interested in the selection of the populations

with large mean life ( $=\theta$ ) or small failure rate  $1/\theta$  (the failure rate in this case is independent of time). Now, in many problems in reliability, the statistical inference is to be based on a truncated life test. Assume that the experimenter waits till a fixed number  $r$  of the total  $n$  units on life test fails so that for each of the  $k$  populations  $\Pi_i$  ( $i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ ), the ordered values  $t_{i1} \leq t_{i2} \leq \dots \leq t_{ir}$  are available. A natural statistic in this case to consider is the total life statistic

$$(4.5) \quad T_i = t_{i1} + t_{i2} + \dots + t_{ir} + (n-r) t_{ir}$$

It is known (see Epstein and Sobel (1953)) that this statistic is optimum for estimating  $\theta$ . A selection rule based on  $T_i$  is as follows:

select population  $\Pi_i$  iff

$$c T_i \geq \max_{1 \leq j \leq k} T_j$$

Since  $2T_i/\theta_i$  follows a gamma or  $\chi^2$  distribution with  $2r$  degrees of freedom, the appropriate value of  $c$  can be found in Gupta (1963).

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13. ABSTRACT In the density $f_{\theta_i}(x)$ , let $\theta_i$ represent a physical characteristic which, in some sense, is a measure of the reliability of the $i$ th population, $i=1,2,\dots,k$ . In many situations, the experimenter is interested in selecting a subset of the $k$ populations which posses high reliability or large $\theta$ -values. In this type of selection, one wishes to ensure that the population with largest $\theta$ is contained in the selected subset (non-empty, small and of random size) with a given probability. Selection rules are suggested and studied when the parameter $\theta$ is: (i) a location parameter (ii) a scale parameter (iii) $\theta$ enters as a Poisson mixing parameter of the form $f_{\theta}(x) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{e^{-\theta} \theta^j}{j!} g_j(x)$ where $g_j(x)$ is a sequence of density functions. Properties of the selection rules are discussed. A result concerning the minimax character of (i) and (ii) is proved. Applications and examples are given.			



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