

# Competence, Styles, and Quality in Everyday Decision Making

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Department of Psychology 2015

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Avhandling för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i Psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligens försvaras fredagen den 16 oktober 2015, kl. 10.00, Sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor JoNell Strough, West Virginia University

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The thesis is based on the following three studies:

- I. Geisler, M., & Allwood, C. M. (2015). Competence and quality in real-life decision making. Manuscript submitted for publication
- II. Geisler, M., & Allwood, C. M. (2015). Cognitive decision making, social approach and time-approach associations with perceived stress. Manuscript submitted for publication
- III. Geisler, M., & Allwood, C. M. (2015). Relating decision-making styles to social orientation and time-approach. Manuscript submitted for publication



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ABSTRACT

Geisler, M. (2015). *Competence, styles, and quality in everyday decision making*.  
Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

This thesis had three aims. First, it explored the benefits of expanding the existing cognitively-oriented definition of individual differences in decision-making competence (i.e., measured by performance on traditional decision-making tasks) by including decision-related aspects of social skills and time-approach. Second, it investigated how an objective and normatively defined indicator for real-life decision-making outcome(s) relate to other, subjective indicators. Third, it examined if decision-making styles relate to individual characteristics in terms of social skills and time-approach.

**Study 1** used questionnaires and included three sub-studies. Study 1.1 targeted a community sample, and Study 1.2 and Study 1.3 examined two samples of professionals (Study 1.2 – police investigators; Study 1.3 – social workers). Study 1.1 explored how an objective and normative indicator for decision-making outcome (the *Decision Outcome Inventory: DOI*) relates to subjective indicators (measured by *satisfaction with life* and *experiences of daily hassles*). Study 1.2 and Study 1.3 explored how decision-making competence measured by cognitively-oriented skills (the *Decision-Making Competence scale: DMC*), social skills/competence (*self-monitoring ability* and *trait emotional intelligence*), and time-approach (*time-styles* and *procrastination behavior*) respectively predict subjective and objective indicators of outcomes. The results showed that objective and subjective outcome indicators were related. Furthermore, DMC performance did not predict the variance in outcomes. However, competence in terms of social skills and time-approach were significant predictors for the variance in outcomes.

**Study 2** further explored the predictive validity of the three competence factors in Study 1 by investigating if individual differences in these skills explain decision-making outcome indicated in terms of *perceived stress*. Study 2 included two sub-studies. Study 2.1 used a university student sample and Study 2.2 used the same sample of police investigators as in Study 1.2. Except for the different outcome measure used, the materials and procedure of Study 2 were largely the same as in Study 1. Results confirmed the findings of Study 1 by demonstrating that DMC performance did not predict levels of perceived stress, but social skills/competence and time-approach did.

**Study 3** used the same samples, materials and procedure as Study 2 but analyzed the relationship between social skills/competence, time-approach and reports of *decision-making styles*. Results show that styles reflecting if and when decisions are made (i.e., the Avoidant and Dependent styles) were related to, and could to some extent be explained by, social skills and time-approach. However, only weak relationships were observed between social skills and time-approach and the styles that reflect how decisions are made (i.e., the Rational, Intuitive and Spontaneous styles).

In total, the results from the three studies demonstrate the importance of attending to social skills and time-approach in order to gain a better understanding of individual differences in decision making. The results demonstrate the benefits of using multi-faceted criteria for evaluating decision quality.

*Keywords:* Decision making, Decision-making competence, Decision-making styles,  
Decision quality, Decision outcome, Social skills, Time-approach

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