

*STUDENT PAPER WINNER:  
ABSTRACT*

*HUMAN GROUP CHOICE: THE RELATION BETWEEN TRAVEL COST AND THE  
IDEAL FREE DISTRIBUTION*

G. Anthony Benners

ARMSTRONG ATLANTIC STATE UNIVERSITY

Human group-choice research is an extension of the Ideal Free Distribution (IFD), a social foraging theory in behavioral ecology, to human behavior. The present study used a free operant procedure constructed as a between-groups experiment to test the relationship between the IFD and travel cost. The travel distance between resource sites was extended from 6 to 24 meters to investigate the effect on the group sensitivity measures. Although it was expected that group sensitivity would increase and overmatching would occur as the travel cost increased, sensitivity remained constant. However, when a large travel cost was employed, the orderliness of the group choices decreased. In addition, analysis of the individuals' switching behavior revealed a slight increase in switching as travel cost increased. Individual analysis also suggested that the group choice could be reduced to individual matching.