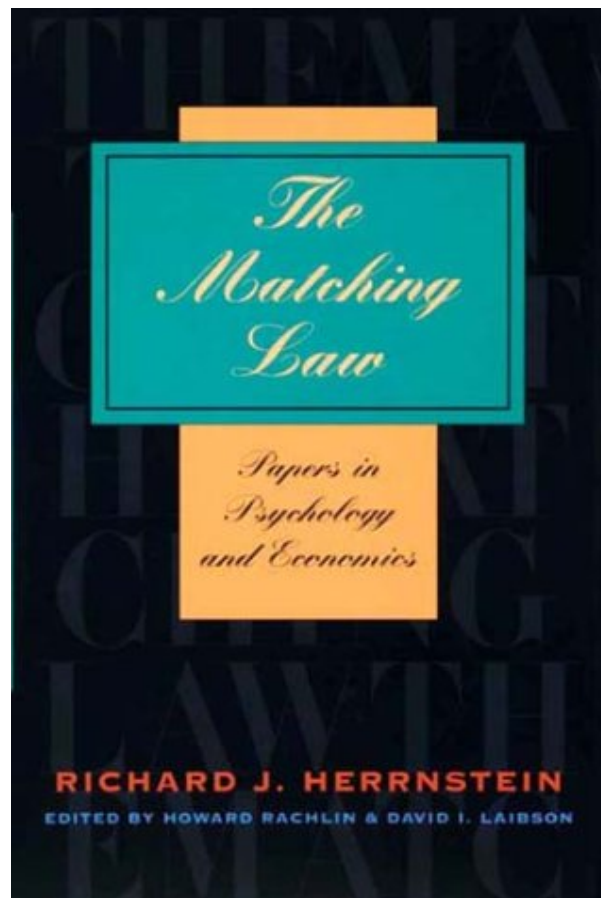
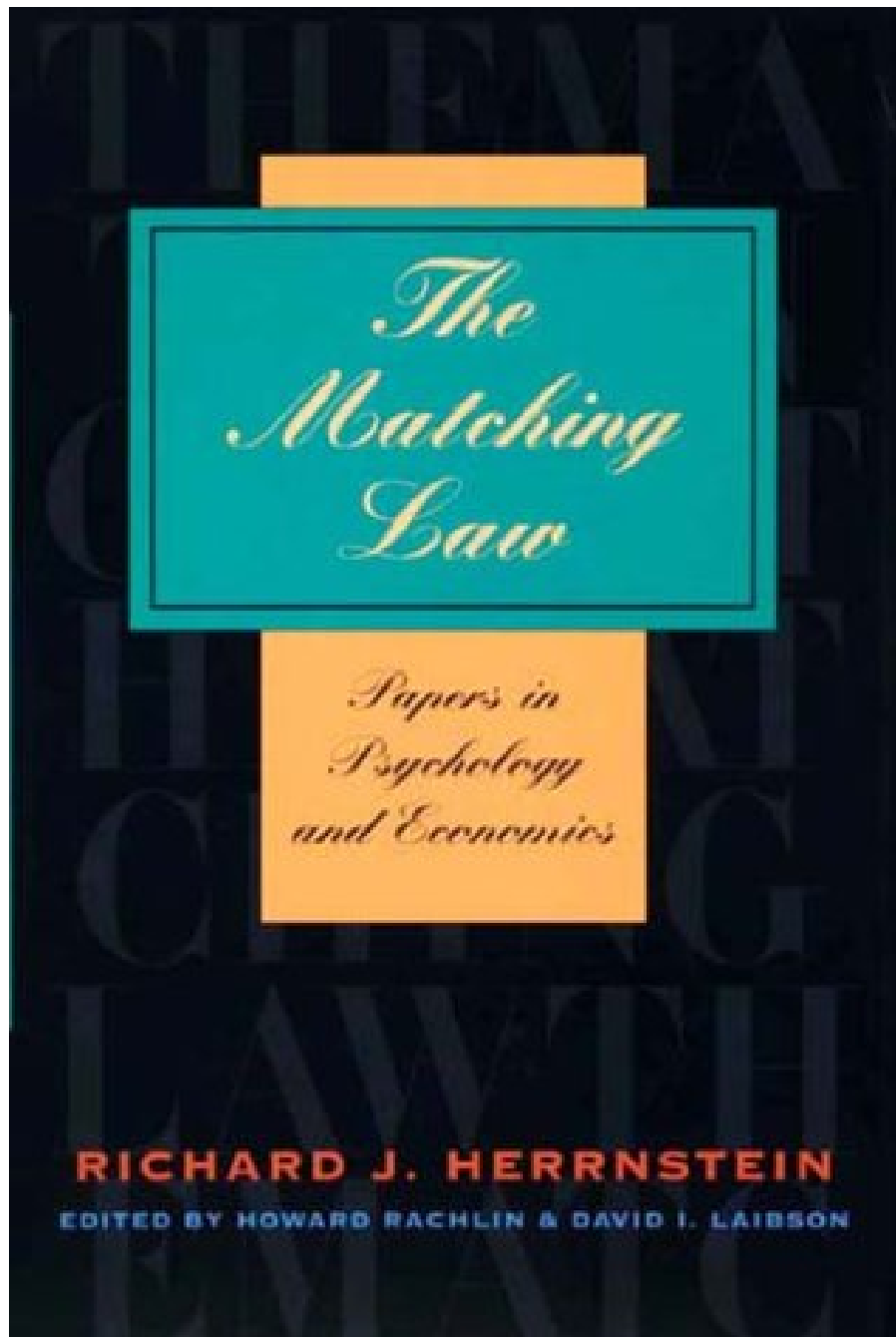


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Review

Herrnstein provided major contributions to several fields, like the understanding of crime, genetics, or problems of social policy. [This] book covers most of Herrnstein's work on economic problems...The editors, who wrote the introductions to the individual parts, provide concise and very informative summaries and discussions of them. (B. Kuon *Journal of Economics* [UK])

The Matching Law tells us one big thing: people systematically misallocate their resources. Like pigeons, humans tend to focus on immediate rewards, and to neglect how current activities affect future payoffs...Choose this book. It will change your perceptions of the world, and subsequently, quite possibly how you spend your time. (Richard J. Zeckhauser, Harvard University)

This collection of brilliant essays and lucid editorial introductions explains the fundamental law of action and choice that Herrnstein discovered, and highlights his unique contribution to our understanding of the persistence of self-destructive behavior. (Daniel Kahneman, Princeton University)

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This impressive collection features Richard Herrnstein's most important and original contributions to the social and behavioral sciences--his papers on choice behavior in animals and humans and on his discovery and elucidation of a general principle of choice called the matching law.

In recent years, the most popular theory of choice behavior has been rational choice theory. Developed and elaborated by economists over the past hundred years, it claims that individuals make choices in such a way as to maximize their well-being or utility under whatever constraints they face; that is, people make the best of their situations. Rational choice theory holds undisputed sway in economics, and has become an important explanatory framework in political science, sociology, and psychology. Nevertheless, its empirical support is thin.

The matching law is perhaps the most important competing explanatory account of choice behavior. It views choice not as a single event or an internal process of the organism but as a rate of observable events over time. It states that instead of maximizing utility, the organism allocates its behavior over various activities in exact proportion to the value derived from each activity. It differs subtly but significantly from rational choice theory in its predictions of how people exert self-control, for example, how they decide whether to forgo immediate pleasures for larger but delayed rewards. It provides, through the primrose path hypothesis, a powerful explanation of alcohol and narcotic addiction. It can also be used to explain biological phenomena, such as genetic selection and foraging behavior, as well as economic decision making.

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is optimization vs stability answer in bahavior

By M. Arraya

This book has several chapters which are fairly easy to read for those persons who do not enjoy "math"; the concepts in this book will be stimulating to those who wish to understand why Human behavior is oftentimes so "unreasonable" and beyond belief. For example, how can one explain human behavior when the same person buys a pack of cigarettes and a cure for smoking at the same time? Why is it that a bright physician will go down the primrose path and become an alcoholic? The answer to both of these puzzles lies in the concepts of "melioration" and the "matching law", which in a nutshell can be defined as the proportionate allocation of behaviors to different reinforcement rates. Example: In a given space of time (ie, one afternoon) Mary will spend about 30% of her time with Ann, 50% of her time with Tom and 20% of her time with Robin. All this is done "automatically" and without conscious effort from Mary's part. The matching law has "matched" her behavior proportionately to the amount of reinforcement that Mary gets from all these people. Melioration is the concept that guides one's behavior to what is reinforcing. Behaviors distributed across time (ie, learning of tennis, becoming a drunk, a loafer, ect) tend to stabilize around the matching law which is guided by "melioration" and not "rationality". The book and its concept may revolutionize Economic consumer behavior and psychology's understanding of behavior. The matching law has been substantiated by several hundred experiments with animals and human subjects. Dr. Herrnstein's untimely death was very unfortunate.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Great introduction to matching law

By Anna T

This book is both an introduction to the Matching Law (which I find fascinating and intriguing) and an update on the advances up to the date of the book. It mixes experimental data with discussions about the extension of these findings. The experimental data part can be a little boring for those not used to reading this type of material, but most people will find the discussions part interesting. I would strongly advise it to anyone interested in getting an overview on the subject.

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This is a good compilation of articles on The Matching Law

By Ross Tartan

This is a good compilation of articles on The Matching Law. If you train animals, it should be in your library.

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