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## The Document:

The ideas presented here began more than four decades ago. In 1983 I documented and registered early manuscripts with the U.S. Copyright Office that outlined the core framework now known as The Theory of Behavior: A Fundamental Comprehensive Algorithm for Human Behavior.

This work that began in the 1980's was largely a statement of the problem. In time it developed into a suggested design for behavioral quantification. With further consideration the problem and quantification concepts merged into a process. Subsequent questions about the scope of this process led to an investigation into its validity. The need for such a concept, becoming apparent, led to current efforts to provide access and seek feedback.

The version 1.2 represents the current iteration of this work, now including a formal algorithm specification, mathematical formulation, and working Python implementation demonstrating the computational tractability of the model. A working Python implementation is publicly available at [github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior](https://github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior).

Critique is anticipated and invited. All inquiries are entertained.

— *D.M. Chabon*

### Document Availability:

The current version (v1.2) is available for download on this [thetheoryofbehavior.org](http://thetheoryofbehavior.org) web page and also archived on the Social Science Research Network (SSRN), Zenodo, and the Open Science Framework for scholarly reference and citation.

SSRN — Current definitive version (v1.2): [ssrn.com/abstract=6242578](https://ssrn.com/abstract=6242578)

Zenodo — Permanent archived version with DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.20069418](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20069418)

Open Science Framework: [osf.io/3fcnw](https://osf.io/3fcnw) DOI: [10.17605/OSF.IO/QP8VK](https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/QP8VK)

Amazon — Paperback and E-Book (earlier version): Paperback ASIN: B0FV3C4YJK E-Book ASIN: B0FHC25T2W

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Python implementation: [github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior](https://github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior)

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## The Author:

I am an Applied Behavioral Scientist, both by certified academic training and by many, many years of work “in the field.” I have tried OD, TA, MBO, most job enrichment designs, job enlargement, participation plans, incentive systems, reinforcement designs, and pretty much everything else the applied behavioral scientists could devise. I have tried this in the largest Fortune corporations, internationally, in trades, civic organizations, government, personally and in systems that were purported to be socialist. I have participated (both formally and informally) as an employee, a consultant, an observer, a manager and as a “technical expert.” My specialty was originally industrial/organizational.

But I began noting difficulties with this subject long ago, right after college, when an effort to do my job was followed by the realization that what I learned in graduate school was either wrong, or incomplete, or something - it just didn't work. Not well. Not reliably (like a science should.) And further offerings from “experts” weren't much better. So, I tried to figure it out. And while questions came early, insights took longer.

My professional career began as a Staff Associate in the large Midwest manufacturing facility of one of the biggest Fortune 500 Corporations. This complex of plants was the workplace of several thousand employees fabricating cable and wire switching equipment while personifying what literature had dubbed the “Blue Collar Blues.” Management, as is often the case, was interested in maximizing productivity and sought techniques to accomplish that end. Being a large corporation with a history participating in behavioral science research we regularly were visited by high-end consultants who would advocate then apply their latest trend. But we never saw a sustained result, or any result of note. Another consultant would show up; old-timers would shake their heads; time would pass; not much would change; and I wondered why.

Early work assignments allowed me to wander the shop floors. I liked it out there. I'd talk with operations, hang out with the crafts, drink coffee with supervisors and meet with managers and QC, and union reps too. Why were some work groups productive and some not? Some people more so than others? The machinery was constant. The organization was constant. The variable was the employee. But while the work environment was critical it was clearly only part of the picture. As one foreman reflectively put it, “...they bring more to work than their lunch.”

Of interest was Mike. I knew Mike because on joining the company my assigned desk in their ‘sea of desks’ was by chance directly in front of his desk. But then Mike was promoted to supervisor in the shops and we lost touch for some time. Every now and then, though, someone would mention his name. People liked working for him. When he took over an operation productivity would jump, and quality would climb. Absenteeism and turnover became minuscule - notable results in that environment. And furthermore, it turned out that when he was transferred to a different department (due to a rotational system) his old group's performance would slide to

factory norms while the new ones would climb. And even more enticing was that when management caught wind of his results and tried to institutionalize his “process” there was no change in overall plant performance. But Mike’s groups continued to excel, and I wondered why.

The result of this was a career-long inquiry that eventually resulted in the development of a white paper, called *The Theory of Behavior*. A fundamental comprehensive algorithm for human behavior – the algorithm behind our decisions and actions.

Critique is anticipated and invited.

[Note: As my employers and affiliations were often my subjects, I do not cite them by name.]

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**Executive Summary:**

**Executive Summary**

*The Theory of Behavior*

*A Fundamental Comprehensive Algorithm for Human Behavior*

By D.M. Chabon

Applied Behavioral Science Strategies

The Theory of Behavior proposes a human operating system as an invariant algorithm modeling how people reach behavioral decisions.

The algorithm treats behavioral options as containing sets of perceived, value-laden attributes exerting positive and negative forces, each deriving influence from three component factors: its relative ranking, the attribute’s satiation level, and the contingency of its realization. As perceived conditions change, attribute values update continuously in a Bayesian framework.

The model differs from SEU by treating each option as a set of probabilistic attributes with dynamic satiation levels rather than requiring a single utility value per outcome. It aligns with MAUT in treating options as integrated attribute bundles but extends it by assigning each attribute its own probability, directional force, and dynamic satiation process. It accommodates heuristic constructs in the development of attributes and their pairing to behavioral options.

Invariance derives from the postulate that we operate from our perceptions of reality within our individual umwelt. Thus, the process remains universal even though the inputs vary.

The model further specifies the source of many common concepts such as underachievement, the unrealistic person, "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," and the spoiled child, while enabling quantification of previously unquantified behavioral states: Satisfaction, anxiety, fear, panic, despair, and happiness are defined not as subjective reports but as computable conditions of the algorithm's elements — each with a specific, testable structural definition.

The paper includes a formal algorithm specification, mathematical formulation, and working Python implementation demonstrating the computational tractability of the model.

For data collection, normative values can be obtained by available (valid) survey technique. Individual assessments are possible through testing, observation and interview evaluated against theory constructs. The model is designed to generate specific, testable, reproducible projections, while factoring-in the probability of their veracity.

Critique is anticipated and invited.

The document's presentation follows a basic logic train: Problem - Premise - Postulates and Axioms - Theory - Theorem - Induction - Proposition. The text is 75 pages long including footnotes with 4 appendices, 13 illustrations and 10 pages of references.

What is presented here began in the 1980's as a statement of the problem. In time, it developed into a suggested design for behavioral quantification. With further consideration the problem and quantification concepts merged into a process. Subsequent questions about the scope of this process led to an investigation into its validity. The need for such a concept, becoming apparent, led to current efforts to provide access and seek feedback.

The full document: *The Theory of Behavior – A Fundamental Comprehensive Algorithm for Human Behavior* can be found on the Social Science Research

Network at [ssrn.com/abstract=6242578](https://ssrn.com/abstract=6242578). A working Python implementation is publicly available at [github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior](https://github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior)

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19655150

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**Abstract:**

## **The Theory of Behavior**

A Fundamental Comprehensive Algorithm for Human Behavior

**D.M. Chabon**

Applied Behavioral Science Strategies

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### **Abstract**

This paper proposes a fundamental comprehensive algorithm for human behavior with four distinctive properties: it is invariant across all individuals regardless of physiological, genetic, or cultural variation; it is recursive, treating the decision to consider a decision as itself a behavioral computation; it incorporates Bayesian updating, continuously modifying values through experience; and it enables quantification of previously unquantifiable behavioral states as computable conditions of the algorithm's elements.

The model treats behavioral options as sets of perceived, value-laden attributes computed from three inherent factors — Rank, Saturation, and Contingency — whose combined values determine which behavior will be enacted. It differs from Subjective Expective Utility Theory (SEU) by operating at the attribute level with dynamic satiation and extends Multi-Attribute Utility Theory (MAUT) by assigning each attribute its own probability, directional force, and satiation process. It accommodates heuristic constructs in the development of attributes and their pairing to behavioral options.

The model precisely specifies the source of many common concepts, such as underachievement, the unrealistic person, "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," and the spoiled child, while enabling quantification of previously unquantifiable concepts: Satisfaction, anxiety, fear, panic, despair, and happiness are defined not as subjective reports but as computable conditions of the algorithm's elements — each with a specific, testable structural definition.

The paper includes a formal algorithm specification, mathematical formulation, and working Python implementation demonstrating the computational tractability of the model. A Python implementation is available at: [github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior](https://github.com/dmchabon/theory-of-behavior)

**JEL Classification:** D01, D81, D83, D87, D91, B41, I12

**Keywords:** Fundamental Behavioral Algorithm, Bayesian Synthesis, Human Operating System, Affective Synthesis, Behavioral Mechanics, Cognitive Architecture, Predictive Modeling, Decision Theory, Complex Systems, Artificial Intelligence, Behavioral Economics, Empirical Validation.

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Note: This edition spells out the axiomatic framework. Future iterations based on peer review will be tracked.

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