Using Big Data Methods to Analyze the Matching Law Relative to Performance for all Members of a Population

David J. Cox1,2, Bryan Klapes3, and John Michael Falligant4

Affiliations:

1Behavioral Health Center of Excellence

2Endicott College

3?????

4Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

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Abstract:

The generalized matching equation (GME) has been used to describe the behavior of individual organisms in operant chambers, artificial environments, and nonlaboratory human settings. Most of these analyses have used a handful of participants with the aim of determining how well the GME describes choice in the experimental arrangement or how some experimental manipulation influences estimated parameters. No known studies have fit the GME to the behavior of all individuals in a population and how those parameters align with performance. This is likely because the population-level data was not available or because time and computational constraints made population-level analyses prohibitive. In this study, we demonstrate how big data methods can be combined with the GME to: (1) identify the events likely to serve as reinforcement; (2) estimate GME parameters; and (3) associate the estimated parameters with often-used metrics of performance. Importantly, 1-3 were accomplished for every one of *NNNN* individuals within the targeted population. The results suggest different individuals were more sensitive to different degrees of environmental change following behavior. [*Something about pitching performance. Something about the main takeaway.*]

Keywords: matching law; big data analytics; baseball;

**Using Big Data to Analyze the Matching Law for All Members in a Population**

Introduce choice and matching.

Matching in laboratory settings.

Matching in nonlaboratory settings.

General characteristics of matching studies – small *n*, yes GME works, yes in some contexts. Limitations to these approaches. Absurd to think the reinforcers for one apply to all.

Why the above limitations exist.

Big data methodologies solve those limitations.

Why big data methodologies might tell us something new. Different reinforcers for different people. Analyze sports performance and how GME parameters associate. Analyze how individual fits in a population of behavior/performance ~ game theory, information theory.

Why big data methodologies may help move operant quantitative models into more applied relevance.

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate how combining big data methodologies with one operant quantitative model may help make the model more practically applicable. Specifically, we sought to demonstrate how big data methodologies allow researchers and practitioners to: (1) identify the likely environmental changes that are controlling individual responding; (2) associate each individual’s GME parameters with overall performance; and (3) leverage information about one individual’s behavior relative to the population to strategize behavior change.

**Methods**

**Data.** The data were obtained from [*website*] by using the available dropdown menus to include all information about the game context, pitch type, pitch characteristics, and pitch outcome for every pitcher in MLB during the 2016-2019 Major League Baseball (MLB) seasons. These seasons were chosen because [*reason*]. All data can be found at Cox (2020).

**Quantitative Model.** We used the generalized matching equation (GME; Baum, 1974) to describe each pitcher’s allocation of pitches to the different pitch types. The GME can be written as:

. (Equation 1)

In this equation, *Bi* refers to the behavior of interest (i.e., the specific pitch type we might focus on), *Bo* refers to all other behaviors (i.e., all other pitch types thrown by that pitcher), *Ri*and *Ro* refer to the reinforcement contacted by *Bi* and *Bo*, respectively. And, *a* and *b* are estimated free parameters where *a* refers to the organism’s sensitivity to changing reinforcement schedules and *b* refers to the organism’s bias toward *Bi* or toward *Bo* that is not captured by the measured reinforcement schedules. Based on past research by Cox et al. (2017) and Falligant et al. (2020), *Bi* was always the count of pitches per game that were of the fastball variety (e.g., four-seam fastball, two-seam fastball) and *Bo* was always the count of pitches per game that were of any other pitch type (e.g., curveball, slider, eephus).

Based on past research,

**Calculating Different Reinforcers**.

**Scripts and Computational Environment.** Words.

**Analyses.** Words.

**Results**

**Identifying Likely Reinforcer.** Words.

**Population Parameters and Pitching Performance.** Words.

**Leveraging Reinforcers and Location in Population for the Individual.** Words.

**Discussion**

Words.

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