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Game theory, the formalized study of strategy, began in the 1940s by asking how emotionless geniuses should play games, but ignored until recently how average people with emotions and limited foresight actually play games. This book marks the first substantial and authoritative effort to close this gap. Colin Camerer, one of the field's leading figures, uses psychological principles and hundreds of experiments to develop mathematical theories of reciprocity, limited strategizing, and learning, which help predict what real people and companies do in strategic situations. Unifying a wealth of information from ongoing studies in strategic behavior, he takes the experimental science of behavioral economics a major step forward. He does so in lucid, friendly prose.

Behavioral game theory has three ingredients that come clearly into focus in this book: mathematical theories of how moral obligation and vengeance affect the way people bargain and trust each other; a theory of how limits in the brain constrain the number of steps of "I think he thinks . . ." reasoning people naturally do; and a theory of how people learn from experience to make better strategic decisions. Strategic interactions that can be explained by behavioral game theory include bargaining, games of bluffing as in sports and poker, strikes, how conventions help coordinate a joint activity, price competition and patent races, and building up reputations for trustworthiness or ruthlessness in business or life.