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Cross-Motivational Choice: A Test of Two Theories

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CROSS-MOTIVATIONAL CHOICE: A TEST OF TWO THEORIES

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Choice, the simple allocation of responses amongst alternatives, has been extensively studied in the past. Most often, choice has been studied on concurrent variable interval schedules. A variety of quantitative models, including matching, behavioral economics, and momentary maximizing, have had varying degrees of success in accounting for choice behavior. The present study examined predictions of two more recent theories, behavior systems and delay reduction. Rats were deprived of both food and water, and were exposed to a "cross-motivational" choice in which one alternative produced food, the other water. Periodically, the animal was given the opportunity to immediately obtain water. According to the delay reduction theory, the rat should choose the more immediate reinforcer, even if this involves changing its initial choice. According to the behavior systems theory, the rat will be "locked in" to a particular choice alternative once the initial choice is made.