Apr 27th, 12:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Human-Based Social Interaction as a Primary Reinforcer for Long-Evans Rats

Amy Noel Stiers
Illinois Wesleyan University

James Dougan, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

HUMAN-BASED SOCIAL INTERACTION AS A PRIMARY REINFORCER FOR LONG-EVANS RATS

Amy Noel Stiers, Dept of Psychology, IWU, James Dougan*

Previous studies (Davis, 1988) have shown that social reinforcement is effective in shaping rats to bar press. The present study examines whether social handling can serve simultaneously as a reinforcing and an eliciting function in maze running behaviors. The subjects used were 14 (7 male and 7 female) Long-Evans rats, all of which were litter mates. Infant rats were either removed from the nest each day (handled) or left undisturbed (unhandled) for a postweaning period of 6 weeks. The rats were observed in a maze running procedure in which the experimenter was at one arm of the maze with food pellets and the other arm had just pellets. The rats were observed to see whether they preferred going to the arm the experimenter was at to receive social reinforcement. We predict that the handled rats will choose human-based social interaction more often than the unhandled rats. We predict human-based social interaction should be a stronger reinforcer than the non-human-based interaction for the handled rats.