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Choice, Commitment, and Time Horizon

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CHOICE, COMMITMENT, AND TIME HORIZON

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Timberlake, Gawley, and Lucas (1986) found that rats were unable to anticipate future resources that were delayed by 16 minutes or more. This 16 minutes during which rats were able to anticipate future food is called the time horizon. The present experiment seeks to examine why the animals could not anticipate beyond this time horizon and also to test whether it could be lengthened. In most sessions, a single response bar (left or right) was presented at the start of the session. One bar was associated with 30 minutes of a progressive ratio schedule. The other bar was associated with the same progressive ratio schedule, followed by 5 minutes of free food. The bar that was presented alternated randomly from day to day. Once every four sessions, both bars were presented at the start of the session, and the animals were allowed to choose between them. Consistent choice of the progressive ratio and free food bar suggests "anticipation" over a 30 minute gap.