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## Reinforcer Predictability and Behavioral Economics

Lauri L. Shields  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

James Dougan, Faculty Advisor  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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## REINFORCER PREDICTABILITY AND BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS

Lauri L. Shields, Dr. James Dougan\*. Illinois Wesleyan University.

According to behavioral economic theory, the obtained cost of a reinforcer should be inversely related to the supply of that reinforcer. This prediction has recently been confirmed by Dougan (In Press). The present study investigates whether the effect is related to reinforcer "predictability." A reinforcer is "predictable" if regularly occurring cues (such as presentation of a stimulus or the passage of time) signal the availability of the reinforcer. A reinforcer is "unpredictable" if there are no cues which signal its availability. In the present experiment, animals were exposed to four sets of simple interval schedules. Schedules ranged from being highly predictable to unpredictable. According to economic theory, the obtained behavioral cost from conditions with the most predictive schedules should be highly similar to the functions from the least predictable schedules.