## Free to Choose: An Experimental Investigation of the Value of Free Choice\*

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## **Abstract**

This study is the first economic experiment that tests the economic significance of the theory of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966). For this purpose, I design an economic experiment in which subjects are asked to express their valuation of two-choice situations. In one case, subjects are given absolute freedom, whereas in another, the extent of their freedom of choice is limited. As the experimental data revealed, subjects' valuation of free and limited choice situations did not differ significantly. Thus, in the experiment, the subjects did not display signs of reactance. In the end, the potential reasons of why the subjects did not exhibit reactance are discussed. The lessons derived from this study may serve as a future guide for testing the economic significance of the reactance theory.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato studie je prvním ekonomickým experimentem, který testuje ekonomický význam teorie psychické reaktance (Brehm, 1966). Za tímto účelem jsem navrhl ekonomický experiment, ve kterém participanti jsou požádáni, aby vyjádřili své ocenění dvou situací obsahující rozdílné volby. V jednom případě, participantům je dána úplná svoboda, zatímco v druhém je omezen rozsah svobody jejich volby. Experimentální data ukázala, že ocenění participantů situací se svobodným a omezeným výběrem se významně nelišily. Tedy, v daném experimentu, participanti nevykazovali známky reaktance. V závěru jsou diskutovány potenciální důvody, proč participanti nevykazovali známky reaktance. Poznatky získané z této studie mohou sloužit jako východisko pro budoucí testování ekonomického významu teorie reaktance.

Kewords: psychological reactance, freedom of choice, law enforcement

JEL Classification: K0, C90, A1

<sup>\*</sup> Acknowledgments: This research was supported by a grant from the Grant Agency of Charles University (GAUK) No. 583812. All opinions expressed are those of the author's and have not been endorsed by CERGE-EI or the GAUK. The financial support of the Czech Science Foundation project No. P402/12/G097 DYME Dynamic Models in Economics is acknowledged. I would like to thank Miroslav Zajicek, the director of the Laboratory of Experimental Economics (LEE) at The University of Economics, Prague (VSE). I would like to thank Peter Katuscak and Michal Bauer for providing valuable academic support. All errors remaining in this text are the responsibility of the author.

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