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GENERALISATION GRADIENTS AS A
MEASURE OF STIMULUS CONTROL
IN TWO-COMPONENT CHAINED SCHEDULES.

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis reports a number of experiments which measured the control each discriminative stimulus has on responding in a two-component chained schedule of reinforcement. In all experiments, generalisation gradients were utilised as the measure of stimulus-control in chained schedules. It was argued that generalisation gradients are a more sensitive measure than response rates in discrimination training, as each component stimulus may exert a different type of control on responding. Three indices of generalisation were derived: peak shift, generalisation index and asymmetry score. The asymmetry score was found to give more information on the generalisation gradient than the other two indices.

Variables which have been shown to be important in two-component chained schedules and in stimulus-control research, were evaluated. These were whether the stimulus used in preliminary training was made the initial or terminal component stimulus in discrimination training (Experiment 1), the component duration ratio (CDR) and interreinforcement interval (IRI) (Experiment 2), the training stimulus spacing along the test dimension (Experiment 3), the stimulus and response location (Experiment 4), interdimensional discrimination training (Experiments 5 and 6), and extended training (Experiment 7).

The results showed that the type of control the initial component stimulus has on responding is different from that of the terminal component stimulus. Generalisation gradients were a more informative measure of this difference than simple response rates within the chain. The gradients obtained following intradimensional discrimination training showed that the type of control was affected by the CDR, IRI and stimulus and response location. Interdimensional discrimination training also revealed gradients which indicated the difference in type of control the initial, compared to the terminal component stimulus, has on responding. The results were discussed in terms of the gradient interaction theory, conditioned reinforcement

and the "aversiveness" of the initial component. Some implications for token economies were also presented.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 CHAINED SCHEDULES.....	3
1.1.1 Changes in performance under chained schedules.....	6
1.1.2 Component schedule effect.....	8
1.1.3 Concurrent chains.....	9
1.1.4 Stimulus functions in chained schedules.....	10
1.2 STIMULUS-CONTROL GRADIENTS.....	13
1.2.1 Generalisation gradients after single-stimulus training.....	16
1.2.2 Generalisation gradients after intradimensional discrimination training.....	18
1.2.3 Generalisation gradients after interdimensional discrimination training.....	24
1.3 EXPLANATIONS OF GENERALISATION GRADIENTS.....	26
1.4 EXPERIMENTAL STRATEGY.....	31
Chapter 2 EXPERIMENT 1.....	33
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	33
2.2 METHOD.....	35
2.2.1 Subjects.....	35
2.2.2 Apparatus.....	35
2.2.3 Procedure.....	36

2.3 RESULTS.....	37
2.4 DISCUSSION.....	48
Chapter 3 EXPERIMENT 2.....	51
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	51
3.2 METHOD.....	52
3.2.1 Subjects.....	52
3.2.2 Apparatus.....	53
3.2.3 Procedure.....	53
3.3 RESULTS.....	54
3.4 DISCUSSION.....	60
Chapter 4 EXPERIMENT 3.....	62
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	62
4.2 METHOD.....	63
4.2.1 Subjects.....	63
4.2.2 Apparatus.....	63
4.2.3 Procedure.....	63
4.3 RESULTS.....	64
4.4 DISCUSSION.....	73
Chapter 5 EXPERIMENT 4.....	75
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	75
5.2 METHOD.....	76
5.3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	77
Chapter 6 EXPERIMENT 5.....	84
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	84
6.2 METHOD.....	85
6.3 RESULTS.....	87
6.4 DISCUSSION.....	93
Chapter 7 EXPERIMENT 6.....	95
7.1 INTRODUCTION.....	95
7.2 METHOD.....	96
7.2.1 Subjects.....	96

7.2.2 Apparatus.....	96
7.2.3 Procedure.....	96
7.3 RESULTS.....	98
7.4 DISCUSSION.....	104
Chapter 8 EXPERIMENT 7.....	105
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	105
8.2 METHOD.....	107
8.2.1 Subjects.....	107
8.2.2 Apparatus.....	107
8.2.3 Procedure.....	107
8.3 RESULTS.....	108
8.3.1 Peak Shift.....	108
8.3.2 Inhibitory gradients.....	110
8.4 DISCUSSION.....	111
Chapter 9 GENERAL DISCUSSION.....	113
9.1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS OBTAINED.....	113
9.2 POTENT VARIABLES AFFECTING GENERALISATION GRADIENTS IN CHAINED SCHEDULES.....	115
9.2.1 Effect of rate of reinforcement / IRI.....	115
9.2.2 Effect of component duration ratio (CDR).....	116
9.2.3 Effect of preliminary training.....	116
9.2.4 Effect of S_2/S_1 separation along the test dimension....	118
9.3 THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	119
9.3.1 The aversiveness of S_2 in a chain.....	119
9.3.2 The Conditioned Reinforcement Hypothesis.....	120
9.3.3 Gradient interaction theory.....	122
9.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR TOKEN ECONOMIES.....	123
9.5 CONCLUSIONS.....	124
REFERENCES.....	126
APPENDIX 1.....	139
APPENDIX 2.....	140

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>PAGE</u>
<u>Table 2.1</u> Mean response rates in the initial (S_2) and terminal (S_1) components for all subjects. Discrimination indices are also presented.	
<u>Table 2.2</u> Generalisation indices (GI), asymmetry scores (ASYM) and percentage of test responses to S_1 , in group 1 (S_1 used in single-stimulus training) and group 2 (S_2 used in single-stimulus training).	
<u>Table 3.1</u> Component duration ratio (CDR) and interreinforcement interval (IRI) for each group of (N) subjects, in Experiment 2.	
<u>Table 3.2</u> Mean response rates in the initial (S_2) and terminal (S_1) components for each subject. Discrimination indices are also presented.	
<u>Table 3.3</u> Generalisation indices (GI) and asymmetry scores (ASYM) for each subject.	
<u>Table 4.1</u> Component duration ratio (CDR) and interreinforcement interval (IRI) for each group of (N) subjects, in Experiment 3.	
<u>Table 4.2</u> Mean response rates in the initial (S_2) and terminal (S_1) components for each subject. Discrimination indices are also presented.	

- Table 4.3 Generalisation indices (GI) and asymmetry scores (ASYM) for each subject.
- Table 5.1 Training schedule and one or two-key condition for each subject in Experiment 4.
- Table 5.2 Mean response rates in the initial (S_2) and terminal (S_1) components for each group.
- Table 5.3 Generalisation indices, asymmetry scores and percentage of total responses to S_1 in the test, for each subject on each key.
- Table 6.1 Intradimensional (I^A) and/or interdimensional (I^{ER}) training conditions for each group of (N) subjects.
- Table 6.2 Mean response rates in the initial (S_2) and terminal (S_1) components for each group.
- Table 7.1 Training schedule, the interdimensional (I^{ER}) training stimuli and the generalisation test given first (I^{ER} or I^A), for each subject in each group.
- Table 7.2 Mean response rates in the initial (S_2) and terminal (S_1) components for each group.
- Table 7.3 Whether peak shift was obtained, the generalisation indices and asymmetry scores for each subject. The number of responses made in the test and the percentage of that total made to S_1 are also presented.

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>PAGE</u>
<u>Figure 1</u> Schematic diagram of a two-component chained schedule.	5
<u>Figure 2.1</u> Mean relative (% of total responses) gradients for groups 1 and 2, and the no-blackout and blackout subjects (across groups).	43
<u>Figure 2.2</u> Relative gradients for group 1 subjects.	44
<u>Figure 2.3</u> Relative gradients for group 2 subjects.	45
<u>Figure 2.4</u> Absolute (number of responses made) gradients for group 1 subjects.	46
<u>Figure 2.5</u> Absolute gradients for group 2 subjects.	47
<u>Figure 3.1</u> Mean relative gradients for groups 1 and 2.	58
<u>Figure 3.2</u> Mean relative gradients for groups 3, 4 and 5.	59
<u>Figure 4.1</u> Mean relative gradients for groups 1 and 2.	70
<u>Figure 4.2</u> Mean relative gradients for groups 3 and 4.	71
<u>Figure 4.3</u> Mean relative gradients for groups 5 and 6.	72
<u>Figure 5.1</u> Relative S_2 gradients for 10:1 C.D.R. two-key subjects.	79

<u>Figure 5.2</u>	Relative S_2 gradients for 1:10 C.D.R. two-key subjects.	80
<u>Figure 5.3</u>	Relative S_2 gradients for one-key subjects.	81
<u>Figure 6.1</u>	Mean relative gradient along the S_2 and S_1 dimensions for all subjects.	89
<u>Figure 6.2</u>	Relative S_2 gradients for I^{ER} subjects.	90
<u>Figure 6.3</u>	Relative S_2 gradients for I^A/I^{ER} subjects.	91
<u>Figure 6.4</u>	Relative S_2 gradients for $I^A \rightarrow I^{ER}$ subjects.	92
<u>Figure 7.1</u>	I^{ER} and I^A mean relative gradients for Ch VI 10-min VI 1-min subjects.	100
<u>Figure 7.2</u>	I^{ER} and I^A mean relative gradients for Ch VI 1-min VI 1-min subjects.	101
<u>Figure 7.3</u>	I^{ER} and I^A mean relative gradients for Ch VI 70-sec VI 7-sec subjects.	102
<u>Figure 7.4</u>	I^{ER} and I^A mean relative gradients for Ch VI 7-sec VI 70-sec subjects.	103