Response latencies to chromatic
and achromatic visual stimuli

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2014

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy
Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the support of the following people during my candidature. I thank Prof. David O’Carroll for his guidance on critical thinking and discussions of data analysis. I thank Prof. Alex Wade for his help, particularly in understanding colour vision and estimating neural response functions. I thank Dr. Mark Yates for his guidance on writing for publication. I also wish to thank Assoc. Prof. Anna Ma-Wyatt for her help, effort, support and understanding over the duration of my candidature.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the extended support and tolerance of my wife. My candidature has impacted on her as much, if not more, than it has on me. Her acceptance of such a long period of limited income during such an unsure and changing period of our relationship demonstrated that, often against rational thought, she was willing to let me pursue my goals in developing my career as I saw fit. Without her support, this thesis would not have been possible.
Abstract

There has been considerable debate about how visual information is processed for the perception of stimuli and the generation of motor responses to the same stimuli. While there are well-documented differences in conduction latencies of the luminance and chromatic pathways, it is unclear if information that is integrated from these pathways is used in a similar way across motor and perceptual tasks. Key aspects of human behaviour have different requirements in terms of the spatial and temporal resolution required to complete the task. Certain tasks may therefore rely on processing of information that has spatial or temporal characteristics that are most informative for that specific task. Three studies examined tasks with different task demands; a simple reaction time task, three perceptual asynchrony tasks and a reaching task. Differences in processing for perceptual and motor responses were investigated by measuring differences in the relative response latencies to chromatic and luminance stimuli in these tasks.

In the first study, I investigated ways to equate the contrast of different chromatic and luminance stimuli. I then measured RTs to these stimuli as a function of contrast. RTs to luminance stimuli were approximately 45 and 60 ms shorter than RTs to L-M and S-cone stimuli respectively. RTs decreased as a function of contrast more rapidly to luminance stimuli than to chromatic stimuli.

In the second study, I used three tasks to investigate relative latencies with which chromatic and luminance stimuli were perceived to appear. I demonstrated that two of the existing tasks typically used to investigate
perceptual asynchrony were unsuited for this comparison. I then developed a task that determined the minimum backmask onset delays that allowed participants to accurately locate stimuli. The differences in the delays between the pathways indicated the differences in the latencies in when the stimuli appeared to participants. The temporal advantage for the luminance pathway was only approximately 9 and 14 ms over the L-M and S-cone pathways respectively.

In the final study, I examined the delays in correcting rapid reaches to luminance and chromatic stimuli. The temporal advantage for the luminance pathway was approximately 15 and 20 ms over the L-M and S-cone pathways respectively.

The temporal advantage found for the luminance pathway in the RT task may be larger than the advantage that would be predicted on the basis of differences in conduction latencies alone. Thus, the relatively rapid decrease in RT with contrast for the luminance pathway, and the large dissociation in the response latencies measured in the RT and perceptual tasks, is consistent with there being separate decision making processes for RT and perception, with the RT response being relatively more reliant on luminance information. The reaching correction response however appears to rely on a similar contribution from the pathways to the perception of the stimuli. It is discussed how these stimuli and results could be readily utilised to extend these comparisons to further develop understanding of commonality and differences in processing visual information for different visual tasks.
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Declaration

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### Abbreviations

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L-M</td>
<td>L-M opponent or parvocellular retino-geniculate pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-cone</td>
<td>S-cone opponent or koniocellular retino-geniculate pathway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Simple reaction time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEP</td>
<td>Visually evoked potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOJ</td>
<td>Temporal order judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>Simultaneity judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>Alternative forced choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>Mask-onset asynchrony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Long wavelength photoreceptive cone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Medium wavelength photoreceptive cone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Short wavelength photoreceptive cone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGN</td>
<td>Lateral geniculate nucleus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Middle temporal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPC</td>
<td>Posterior parietal cortex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB-DKL</td>
<td>MacLeod, Boynton, Derrington, Krauskopf &amp; Lennie colour space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRT</td>
<td>Cathode ray tube</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMS</td>
<td>Root mean square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDT</td>
<td>Multiples of detection threshold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Perceptual asynchrony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOA</td>
<td>Stimulus onset asynchrony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>Anticipatory reaction time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>