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Standard Guide for Time-Intensity Evaluation of Sensory Attributes¹

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1. Scope

~~1.1 This guide covers procedures for conducting and analyzing time-intensity (T-I) evaluations of products or other sensory stimuli. Time-intensity is the measurement of the intensity of a single sensory sensation over time in response to a single exposure to a product or other sensory stimulus.~~

1.1 This guide covers procedures for conducting and analyzing time-intensity (T-I) evaluations of products or other sensory stimuli. Time-intensity is the measurement of the intensity of a single sensory sensation over time in response to a single exposure to a product or other sensory stimulus. Simultaneous evaluations of multiple sensory attributes are possible, although are outside of the scope of this document. See bibliography for more information.

1.2 This guide utilizes a specially trained panel to measure the intensity of a single continuous sensation during the time from initial exposure:

- 1.2.1 To its extinction,
- 1.2.2 To a specified intensity, or
- 1.2.3 To a predetermined limit of time.

1.3 Applications not covered in this guide include measuring:

- 1.3.1 Multiple sensations,
- 1.3.2 Multiple exposures within a single measurement, and
- 1.3.3 Qualitative or hedonic changes in the perceived sensation.

1.4 This guide includes protocols for the selection and training of judges, descriptions and use of physical data collection devices, and methods of data handling, summarization, and statistical analysis. Illustration of two different data handling and analysis approaches are included in the appendixes.

1.5 This guide is not applicable to measure product shelf life or stability that require evaluations at discrete time intervals.

1.6 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

E253 [Terminology Relating to Sensory Evaluation of Materials and Products](#)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:* See Fig. 1.

3.1.1 *area after I_{max}* —post-peak area under the curve.

3.1.2 *area before I_{max}* —pre-peak area under the curve.

3.1.3 *AUC*—area under the curve.

3.1.4 *I_{max} or peak intensity*—maximum observed intensity during the time of measurement.

3.1.5 *perimeter*—measured distance of perimeter of area delineated by T-I curve.

3.1.6 *plateau time*—duration of peak intensity.

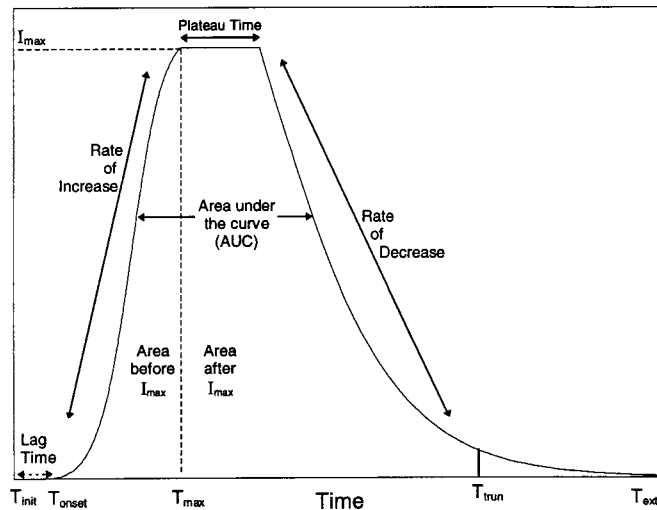
3.1.7 *rate of increase*—rate of intensity increase before peak intensity (slope).

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E18 on Sensory Evaluation of Materials and Products and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E18.03 on Sensory Theory and Statistics.

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² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.



NOTE 1—Based on a figure from Ref (15) .

FIG. 1 Representative Time-Intensity Curve with Selected Parameters Labeled

3.1.8 *rate of decrease*—rate of intensity decrease after peak intensity (slope).

3.1.9 T_{dur} or duration time—time from onset of sensation until it can no longer be perceived ($T_{ext} - T_{onset}$).

3.1.10 T_{ext} or time to extinction—time from initial exposure to the stimulus (T_{init}) until it can no longer be perceived.

3.1.11 T_{init} —time of initial exposure to the stimulus, typically when the clock starts.

3.1.12 T_{max} —time to reach maximum intensity of the sensation after exposure to the stimulus.

3.1.13 T_{onset} —time point when the stimulus is first perceived after initial exposure to the stimulus.

3.1.14 T_{trun} or truncated time—time until a specified minimum intensity or until a pre-determined time point has been reached.

3.2 The graphical illustration of a typical time-intensity curve is shown in Fig. 1. The time increment may be seconds, minutes, hours, etc., depending upon the characteristic of the particular material under study.

4. Summary of Guide

4.1 This guide describes procedures utilizing specially trained panelists to measure the intensity of a single sensory sensation as it changes with time and the possible approaches to collect and analyze such data. Details on specific procedures are given in Sections 6-9 of this guide. Examples of time-related evaluations are included in the Appendixes.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 The purpose of time-intensity measurements is to establish the pattern of development and decline of a particular sensory characteristic under study. T-I evaluations are applicable when measurements at a single time point (an averaging process) are not sufficient to distinguish products that have very different temporal characteristics. As pointed out by Lee and Pangborn (1)³, “This averaging process results in the masking or complete loss of important information such as rate of onset of stimulation, time and duration of maximum intensity, rate of decay of perceived intensity, time of extinction, and total duration of the entire process.”

5.2 Products rated similarly using traditional single point techniques of product profiling may provide very different temporal sensory experiences to the consumer. Acceptability of the product may be affected, and traditional descriptive methodology does not reflect the changes in an attribute’s intensity over time.

5.3 T-I has applications for a variety of products. Examples include: food products, ranging from short-term sweetness in a beverage to long-term elasticity in chewing gum; personal care products, measuring the development and longevity of shampoo lather and the residual skin feel of a skin cream; household care products, monitoring the intensity of scents over time; pharmaceuticals, monitoring skin cooling after application of a topical analgesic. Auditory signals or visual changes in products can also be evaluated by the T-I technique.

6. Time-Intensity Panel Selection and Training

6.1 Screening and Selection of Panelists

6.1.1 Time-Intensity evaluation is a specialized type of descriptive analysis. Therefore, use of randomly selected, naive panelists is neither appropriate nor recommended. Panelists selected for Time-Intensity studies are screened as recommended for other

³ The boldface numbers given in parentheses refer to a list of references at the end of the text.

descriptive methods (see STP 758 (2)). Use of panelists with previous descriptive training facilitates the T-I training because these panelists are competent in both recognizing and intensity scaling an attribute.

6.1.2 The goal of the selection process is to identify panelists who have the ability to:

6.1.2.1 Continually focus on a single sensory attribute,

6.1.2.2 Accurately identify and quantify a single sensory attribute within a simple or complex sample,

6.1.2.3 Accurately record changes in sensations as they occur,

6.1.2.4 Perform consistently,

6.1.2.5 Perform all test procedures with appropriate motor skills (for example, ability to chew gum while manipulating the input device to indicate the intensity of the mint flavor).

6.1.3 Compared to other descriptive methods, T-I panelists require more skills to complete the time-intensity task. Due to the complexity of the method and techniques involved, final selection of panelists may not occur until after completion of the training.

6.2 *Time-Intensity Panel Training:*

6.2.1 The purpose of T-I training is to demonstrate how to perform the physical, mental and psychological tasks associated with temporal profile method. Training begins with an orientation to the T-I method. Orientation to the method involves explanation and demonstration of the temporal nature of sensory properties, utilizing products having diverse temporal profiles. General time-intensity concepts may be illustrated by showing examples from alternate sensory modalities. Sound, light, odor, taste, touch/pressure or texture may all display temporal properties.

6.2.2 During training, panelists are thoroughly familiarized with all testing equipment and procedures.

6.2.3 The purpose of training samples is to demonstrate different onset, plateau, or duration characteristics. These are often best presented in contrasting pairs or sets. One example is a set of chewing gums, one with a fast flavor onset, another with a slower onset. Another example is a series of margarine products that demonstrate different textural properties, such as rate of melt.

6.2.4 References are samples that demonstrate an attribute at a given intensity. Use of references to calibrate intensity ratings occurs prior to the test. This is critical because in T-I analysis, attribute intensity is recorded without interruption during the test.

6.3 *Panel Performance Monitoring and Feedback*

6.3.1 Monitor panelist performance during the training and evaluation sessions. At the start of the study, determine an acceptable level of individual and group performance. This can include deviation around a scale value at a specified time point or similar indicator. STP 758 (2) provides statistical procedures suitable for monitoring panelist performance.

6.3.2 Panelists should be able to demonstrate consistency in their evaluations. One approach is to measure reproducibility in selected curve parameters, for example, I_{max} , T_{max} , T_{ext} , of their individual T-I curves. However, consistency with other panelists is less likely than with general descriptive analysis, as each panelist tends to produce distinctive curve shapes. In T-I analysis, within-panelist consistency, particularly in their ability to communicate relative differences among samples, is more important than panelist-to-panelist agreement. See discussion in Section 9.

6.3.3 One parameter that should show some degree of agreement among the panelists is I_{max} , particularly if reference standards for intensity are being utilized. The I_{max} value can be used to compare panelist performance with an appropriate means-separation test, percent standard deviation, or other analysis methods commonly used in monitoring descriptive evaluations. 909-11

7. Panel Protocol

7.1 Specifics of the actual management of a time-intensity panel are highly dependent upon study objectives. The following topics represent major steps or considerations in the design and execution of time-intensity panels. It is assumed that basic panel training on the product of interest and selection of the appropriate data collection device have been completed (see Sections 6 and 8, respectively).

7.1.1 *Design Considerations*—Before the panel is conducted, the following sample, experimental design, and set-up issues are resolved:

7.1.1.1 The first consideration in designing a time-intensity panel is to determine the length of time for data collection. It can be relatively short, like the meltdown of a pat of butter when placed in the mouth, or relatively long, like the longevity of mint flavor in a chewing gum.

7.1.1.2 Knowing the expected duration, and designing the study to cover critical changes in a product is prerequisite to other design considerations. The number of sampling points and the time interval between points is set to capture the changes in an attribute at the time it occurs. Factors which may affect the duration of the attribute to be measured include: sample form (crystalline versus dilute solution of sugar), sample size (larger amount of sample versus smaller amount of sample), evaluation technique (dissolving versus chewing a hard candy), other materials (water hardness for soaps and shampoos).

7.1.2 The number of samples evaluated in a panel session is primarily dependent upon the duration of the time-intensity sensation. If the evaluation of a chewing gum is designed to measure mint flavor intensity changes over a 20 min period, one to two samples may be the maximum number panelists can evaluate without excessive physical or mental fatigue. Conversely, 5 to 6 potato chips may be evaluated for duration of crisp/crunchy attributes before fatigue sets in.

7.1.3 If the test is designed to measure the perception of an attribute to extinction, there is generally no need for lengthy waiting periods between samples. However, a longer waiting period is required when the perception of an attribute is affected by a preceding sample. Examples include: allowing mouth temperature to return to normal after ice cream evaluations, and recovery from numbing effects due to menthol or spices.

7.1.4 Sample presentation order may be randomized, fixed, balanced, or presented as an incomplete block, depending on study objectives. Typically, samples are presented in a balanced order to minimize position bias, context effects, etc. as recommended for most sensory evaluations. During training, samples may be presented in fixed order (that is, all panelists see the same samples in the same order of presentation), to facilitate discussion and learning.

7.2 *Data Collection Considerations*—In any time-intensity experiment, regardless of the type of data collection device used, the rate at which information is collected must be determined. Data recording intervals are set to capture maximum/critical change on a product's profile, with intensity ratings collected at various time points depending on the study objective (see Sections 8 and 9).

7.3 *Sample Preparation*—As with any sensory evaluation, sample preparation and presentation for T-I analysis need to be controlled to eliminate extraneous effects. Recommended guidelines are to be followed (Manual 26)(3).

7.3.1 *Reference Samples*—If appropriate in the test design, use of reference samples is recommended. References are evaluated prior to test samples, so that test sample evaluation is conducted without interruption. References are evaluated by the same technique as the test samples and may be used to specify an attribute's intensity at a specific point in time.

7.3.2 *Conditioning Sample*—Use of a conditioning sample, presented prior to the actual test sample, can be used to calibrate panelists to the same sensation, and to some extent, to control first position bias or context effects. Consideration should be given to adaptation, carryover, and fatigue in deciding whether or not to use a conditioning sample.

7.3.3 *Inter-Stimulus Procedures*—Specify whether panelists are to rinse, re-taste reference standards, or use a palate cleanser such as a cracker, celery, etc. between samples.

7.4 *Evaluation Procedures:*

7.4.1 Evaluation begins as soon as the stimulus is introduced to the panelist, for example, when the sample is applied, tasted, or smelled. The evaluation is completed upon reaching a predetermined time limit, intensity, or extinction of the sensation.

7.4.2 Standardized evaluation procedures such as the force and frequency of manipulations (for example, chews per second of a cookie, rubs of a hand lotion, or whether to expectorate or swallow) must be specified and incorporated into the panel training and test procedures to assure all panelists receive the same sample stimulus.

7.5 *Other Panel Protocol Considerations:*

7.5.1 *Testing Environment*—Follow recommended guidelines for physical testing facilities in STP 913 (4).

8. Data Collection Techniques

8.1 *Introduction*—The two modes of data collection in time-intensity evaluation are cued and real-time. With cued techniques, panelists are instructed to report their responses at specific, predetermined points in time during the evaluation. With real-time techniques, panelists report their responses continuously over time during the evaluation. Selection of one technique over the other depends on such issues as the goals of the study, the desired time points, available resources, and economic considerations.

8.2 *Cued Techniques:*

8.2.1 This mode of data collection uses an external device or a person other than a panelist to provide an audible and/or a visual cue at the time when a response is required. Examples of cueing devices are: stop watches, visual or audible metronomes, or both, other beeping or blinking devices with adjustable timing, and computers.

8.2.2 The main advantage of cued techniques is the simplicity of the task for the panelists. Also, cued techniques often are less costly than real-time techniques. Limitations of this mode are low precision of data when short time intervals are used, possible distraction or biasing of the panelists by the cueing device and, when applicable, by viewing of previous ratings.

8.3 *Real-Time Techniques:*

8.3.1 This mode of data collection uses an external device that allows the panelists to report their responses continuously during the evaluations. Examples of such devices include strip-chart recorders and computers. With a strip-chart recorder, a panelist moves a pen along a straight edge fixed over a moving strip-chart to indicate the intensity of the attribute at each instant in time. The speed of the recorder establishes the time axis. Similarly, with computers, a scale is displayed on the computer screen and the panelist manipulates an input device, such as a light-pen, joystick, or mouse, to position the computer's cursor on the scale to indicate the intensity of the attribute at each instant in time. The on-board clock of the computer is used to establish the time axis.

8.3.2 Several options are available for recording data obtained using real-time techniques. One approach is to measure reported intensities at a fixed number of predetermined time-points—for example, at selected locations along the strip-chart, or by instructing the computer to only record or store data at selected time-points. (Note that the panelist would not be aware of the time-points actually recorded for analysis.) Another approach is to record all the data obtained in a real-time evaluation. For example, the curve formed on the strip-chart could be recorded using a digitizer, or the computer software could be instructed to record a panelist's intensity readings as frequently as the computer allows.

8.3.3 The main advantages of real-time techniques are the flexibility afforded the analyst for controlling the collection intervals and by having all of the panelists' readings available for numerical analysis and interpretation. Another advantage of most real-time techniques is that they do not allow the panelist to view previously reported intensity values, thus eliminating the potential bias resulting from observations of the completed portion of the evolving T-I curve. Disadvantages of real-time techniques are more cumbersome or complex hardware requirements, the need for more sophisticated data handling systems, and typically higher costs.

9. Data Handling, Analysis, and Summarization

9.1 Introduction:

9.1.1 There are two aspects of T-I data that present challenges not typically encountered in other types of sensory data.

9.1.2 First, instead of a single response associated with each stimulus, T-I data consists of a collection of responses consisting of the intensity at each time point. The multiple values arising from T-I data can either be handled directly by special statistical analysis approaches or by data handling steps performed prior to the statistical analysis.

9.1.3 Second, T-I data typically exhibits greater panelist variability than found in other methods. This is seen in time-intensity curve shapes, sometimes referred to as “curve signatures”, that are either unique for each panelist or that fall into various broad categories of shapes. Part of this variability in curve shape can be reduced by training and standardization of techniques, but it is generally believed that it cannot be completely eliminated.

9.1.4 The following section discusses several data handling techniques for T-I data. It is important to understand that there have not been a sufficient number of critically reviewed published studies to warrant setting specific guidelines or recommendations.

9.2 *Data Handling*—Several data handling techniques can be used to process the multiple-valued nature of T-I data prior to analysis. These techniques include: collecting only data relevant to the study objective, eliminating redundant data, removing data contributing to bias, smoothing noisy data, or summarizing the data by extracting curve features of interest.

9.2.1 Study objectives can determine which data points are of interest. For example, if the purpose of the study only requires information on the time to maximum intensity, then only this specific data could be collected.

9.2.2 An example of redundant data would be the collection of response values more frequently than the response is changing. This would result in a response plateau that may not be of interest in the study. In this case, the data between the start and the end of the plateau can simply be deleted from the data file, leaving two points to define the plateau.

9.2.3 Bias or data error arises when the response is influenced by factors other than the stimulus itself. Examples of such factors include variations in panelist evaluation techniques, such as expectation prior to the designated expectation time. If it becomes known that such actions tend to result in characteristic response patterns, that is, an extraneous curve peak, then the associated response data could be removed prior to analysis.

9.2.4 If the response data do not exhibit regular or smooth trends, but rather has noisy fluctuations around a general trend, the data can be processed by “smoothing” algorithms. Such algorithms replace the original data with transformed values that reflect the trend, but do not include the noisy fluctuations (5). The resulting smoothed data are typically what is used in any further analyses.

9.2.5 The T-I data can also be reduced to just a set of key curve characteristics. Each characteristic, or parameter, represents a specific feature of the time-intensity curve. Commonly used parameters include the following (see Section 3 for definitions):

9.2.5.1 I_{max} ,

9.2.5.2 T_{onset} ,

9.2.5.3 T_{max} ,

9.2.5.4 $T_{plateau}$,

9.2.5.5 T_{ext} ,

9.2.5.6 Area under the whole, or part, of the curve,

9.2.5.7 Slopes, or rates of intensity increase or decrease, and

9.2.5.8 Other parameters defined as needed, such as curve perimeter or curve shape.

9.3 Data Analysis:

9.3.1 Several options for the analysis of T-I data are described in the sections given below. It is important to note that not every method is applicable to every research situation. The methods vary in their complexity and the circumstances for which they are best suited. No matter what method is used it remains important to ensure that the data are accurate, that the analysis is consistent with how the study was designed, and that analysis assumptions are met.

9.3.2 Since complete details on the analyses are not given below, statistical advice or references should be utilized as needed.

9.3.3 A preliminary step for most analyses should be a visual inspection of the individual panelist time-intensity graphs. This involves plotting out specific curves to identify situations described in 9.2.1 and 9.2.2. Visual inspection will also help in making decisions regarding the most appropriate data analysis.

9.3.4 If curve parameters (see 9.2.5) are used as the “raw data” for the statistical analysis, conventional statistical techniques can be used. For example, analysis of variance (ANOVA) may be performed to compare means and form confidence intervals (see Appendix X1). These ANOVA models may include a term, or factor, for judge effects. The judge term will often be statistically significant as it has generally been found that judge signatures remain, even after extensive training (see 9.1).

9.3.4.1 Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) could also be performed on the set of all curve parameters. Other multivariate methods can also be used, such as performing a principal components analysis on selected curve parameters (6). The principal component scores are then analyzed by analysis of variance or other methods.

9.3.4.2 The advantage of using any of these multivariate methods over the univariate ANOVAs is that patterns of differences can be detected. For example, modest differences in T_{max} , $T_{plateau}$, falling AUC, and T_{ext} may all give rise to one stimulus differing from another when looked at jointly, that is, using a multivariate method. The general pattern of longer-lasting response intensity may not be significant when each of these parameters is analyzed separately.

9.3.5 If the data consist of only a relatively small number of time points, then repeated measures analysis of variance with time and time by stimulus as model factors can be utilized. The advantage of this approach over analyzing curve parameters is that the parameter estimates may be quite imprecise when there are few time points. For example, if sweet intensity was collected on a gum only every minute, then T_{max} cannot be more precise than a minute. This approach requires examining the time by stimulus interaction term in order to assess and compare stimulus effects.

9.3.5.1 When the number of time points becomes large, say greater than eight, examining such an interaction becomes unwieldy. In addition, assumptions on how time points correlate to each other, required for what is called the “univariate approach,” may not be met, particularly as the number of time points increases. This can sometimes be handled by modeling the variance-covariance structure using general linear mixed model methods (7).

9.3.5.2 Alternatives to a repeated measures analysis would be either a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on the set of intensity values or separate analyses at each time point. As the number of time points increase both techniques would become increasingly unwieldy. The MANOVA would also require a large amount of data, that is, judges, in order to be feasible.

9.3.6 Analyses based on time-to-event models (8) can also be used for time intensity data if there is a specific time parameter of interest or if the only data recorded were time parameters, such as T_{onset} , T_{max} , or T_{ext} . These models are sometimes referred to as either “survival models” in the medical field or “failure models” in manufacturing. An example “event” for T-I data would be the time when the sensation was no longer perceived, that is, T_{ext} . The collection of event times would then be the data analyzed by these techniques.

9.3.6.1 Methods that do not rely on a particular time model, that is non-parameteric methods, include the method due to Kaplan-Meier, also called the product-limit method. This approach estimates the odds of the event occurring at any given time point. For example, the particular time point when there is a 50 % chance of reaching the I_{max} could be estimated.

9.3.6.2 The advantages of using time-to-event methods depend partly on the nature of the data. The method can handle what is called “censored” data, that is, data that were truncated. For example, suppose that time-intensity values were collected for only the first two minutes, but extinction of the intensity for several panelists exceeded two minutes. In this case their T_{ext} values would be “censored” at two minutes. Standard ANOVA does not handle censored data. In addition, the event times may not satisfy other ANOVA assumptions, such as normality, that the time-to-event model does not require.

9.3.7 A method that is not particularly applicable to T-I data is autoregressive integrated moving average (ARIMA) time series models introduced by Box and Jenkins (9). This methodology is primarily used for forecasting and process control. Such applications are not the goal of T-I research. Furthermore, ARIMA models require that the time interval be fixed, that is, equally spaced, but T-I data are often recorded or collected with varying time intervals.

9.4 *Curve Summarization*—Since a key aspect of T-I studies is that data are collected over time, it is clearly natural to display the data with the time dimension included. Although individual time intensity curves may be plotted, it is also very useful to be able to summarize what the panel as a whole says about a given stimulus. This is particularly useful to visualize sample differences. Several techniques for summarizing individual T-I curves into a panel consensus curve are described below.

9.4.1 A natural, though simplistic, approach to combining individual time-intensity curves is to average the intensity responses at each time point, and then plot these mean values as the summarized curve. This approach will often introduce distortions unless each individual curve follows a highly similar time course pattern.

9.4.1.1 An example using just two panelists is shown in Fig. 2, below. One panelist reaches a response extinction point (T_{ext}) at 40 s and another panelist at 60 s. Although, in this two-judge example, the mean extinction time is 50 s, the plot of the simple

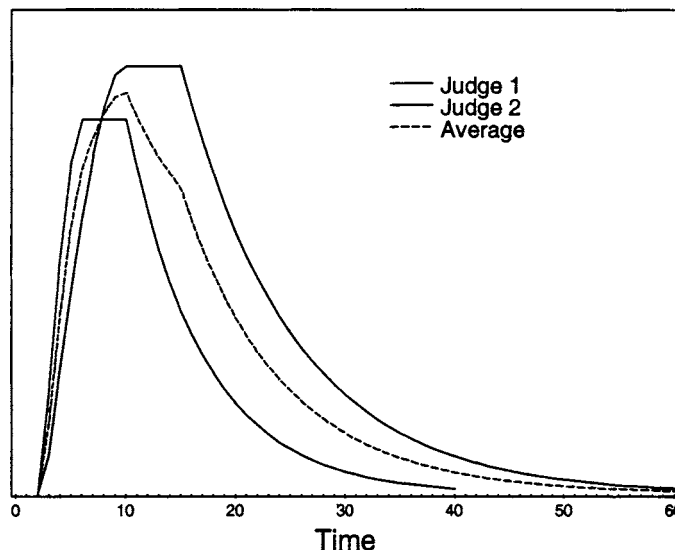


FIG. 2 Example Time-Intensity Curves Showing Two Judge Curves and the Result of “Simple” Averaging