

AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF THE REINFORCING AND EXTINGUISHING  
EFFECTS OF IMPLICIT REWARDS ON CHILDREN'S HANDWRITING

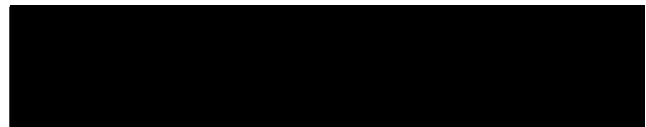
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of Doctor of Philosophy of the  
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I certify that the substance of this thesis  
has not been submitted for any degree  
and is not being currently submitted for any  
other degree.

Any help that I have received in preparing  
this thesis, and all sources used, have been  
acknowledged.



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## ABSTRACT

Two studies were conducted to investigate the effects of feedback of results, verbal praise, approval stamps and sweets as rewards for the correct letter-writing responses of typical elementary school children. The first study examined the effects of age and group-size upon the children's responses to variations in reward-administration procedures. Data were collected on the principal dependent variable of handwriting, comments and complaints were recorded, and a post-intervention questionnaire administered. The handwriting data were analysed by time-series and repeated measures analysis of variance procedures. Outcomes suggested that there were significant extinguishing properties associated with implicit reward conditions but no significant effects due to group-size. These data concurred with those from an earlier study (Sharpley, 1978), but appeared to contradict results from a number of other investigations in the area. The second study was designed to measure the effects due to between-session activity and sequential order of the implicit reward condition in relation to other phases. Data were again collected on correct handwriting responses over sessions and analysed by time-series procedures and repeated measures analysis of variance. Results indicated that there were no significant effects due to variations in between-session activity, but that sequential order of the implicit reward condition significantly affected children's responses. This variability of the reinforcer-power of an (assumed) reward supports previous statements by Premack (1965) and Bandura (1978) which suggest that "rewards" may vary in their reinforcing or extinguishing properties. These findings are in accord with a model of human behaviour which includes cognitive evaluations of rewards and rewarding procedures by recipients. The earlier-noted apparent contradiction between the wider literature and present data is resolved by the findings regarding sequential order of phases.

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