# Limitations of Voltage Clamp Studies of Slow Inward Current Using the Double Sucrose Gap

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**Abstract.** The electrical behavior of a preparation (single fiber or trabecula) voltage-clamped in a double sucrose gap was checked experimentally on a frog atrial trabecula or using computer simulations. Experimental alterations in isolation factors, maximal inward conductance and series resistance induced unexpected variations in the reversal potential $V_{rev}$ and maximal conductance $G_i$ of slow inward current. Two models were used to examine the conditions required to measure most accurately $V_{rev}$ and $G_i$. The first model accounted only for longitudinal non-uniformity whereas the second took into account both longitudinal and radial non-uniformities. The two models were compared. With thin preparations a classical single unidimensional model was sufficient to describe the electrical behavior of the preparation. Radial non-uniformity became significant only for preparations with a radius larger than 40 μm. The addition of a diffuse series resistance to the unidimensional model made it applicable to simulate radial non-uniformity of thicker preparations. The unidimensional model was chosen for simulations which revealed several sources of error in the estimation of $V_{rev}$ and $G_i$. A poor sucrose isolation and the non-uniformity of potential in the test gap appeared most significant; both induce an overestimate of $G_i$ and an underestimate of $V_{rev}$. These effects can be countered by moderate increases in the series resistance. Furthermore, decreases in slow inward conductance were associated with reductions in the apparent $V_{rev}$. Variations in the electrical characteristics of the preparation (leak membrane resistance, internal resistances in the different gaps, etc.) can also yield apparent alterations in $G_i$ and $V_{rev}$. Finally experimental conditions were simulated to reproduce the effects of drugs that alter the slow inward current. The results suggest that $V_{rev}$ (or its variations) cannot easily be determined with accuracy using the double sucrose gap method since its measured value may vary up to 15 mV under given ionic conditions.

**Key words:** Voltage clamp — Sucrose gap method — Cardiac muscle — Calcium current — Computer simulation

## Introduction

Since the double sucrose gap voltage clamp technique was first applied to multicellular preparations (Rougier et al.; 1968; Anderson 1969) several authors have pointed out that current recordings might be distorted by lack of control of membrane voltage (Johnson and Lieberman 1971; Tarr and Trank 1974). Some limitations of the double sucrose gap technique have been explored (Tarr and Trank 1971; Connor et al. 1975) including attempts to monitor the voltage homogeneity with a roving microelectrode (De Hemptinne 1976; Benninger et al. 1976; Tarr and Trank 1976; Horačkova and Vassort 1979; Sauviat 1980). Other investigations have been devoted to determining theoretically whether the current-voltage ($I$—$V$) relationships are significantly disturbed by voltage non-uniformities and leakage through sucrose gaps (McGuigan 1974; Ramon et al. 1975; Giles and Noble 1976; Beeler and McGuigan 1978; De Boer and Wolfrat 1979). To our knowledge, none of these authors has examined the conditions required to measure accurately maximal steady state conductance or reversal potential of an inward ionic current (Na, Ca). It was only quoted that changes in the magnitude of the background outward current in a preparation with a large series resistance produce an apparent shift of the reversal potential of an inward current (Connor et al. 1975; Attwell and Cohen 1977). Thus, it is widely held that the reversal potential of the slow inward current can be estimated accurately because near that potential current magnitude is almost negligible. Nevertheless, discrepancies between predicted and measured values of reversal potential of the slow inward current are puzzling. The reported experimental values of reversal potential are low ($V_{rev} \simeq 130$ mV) compared to the expected values assuming that Ca is the only ion flowing through the channel. Drugs that incresase (or decrease) the inward membrane conductance also increase (or decrease) the reversal potential in cardiac tissue of frog (Vassort et al. 1969; Goto et al. 1978; Nargeot et al. 1978), cat (Kohlhardt and Mnich 1978) and rat (Payet et al. 1978). The reported effects on $V_{rev}$ were ascribed to changes in the internal calcium concentration, despite the fact that these changes were opposite to the alterations in amplitude of the current and occurred without simultaneous variations in resting tension.

A single unidimensional cable has often been used to model a unicellular (Moore et al. 1975) or a syncytial preparation(Tomita 1966; McGuigan and Tsien, in McGuigan 1974; Ramon et al. 1975; Giles and Noble 1976) in a double sucrose gap set up. However, radial voltage variations are known to introduce important errors in voltage clamp studies. For example, Haas and Brommundt (1980) showed that the inner cells in a multicellular preparation may fail to achieve adequate voltage control through the intercellular clefts, at least during the early inward current. However, their model is incomplete, since they neglect all sources of distortion other than radial non-uniformity in the test compartment. In

particular their assumption of axial voltage uniformity can not be satisfied at the two test pool sucrose partitions, where external potential gradients are applied to the preparation.

The aim of the present study is to develop two theoretical models simulating the electrical behavior of a voltage clamped preparation in a double sucrose-gap apparatus when both reversal potential $V_{rev}$ and maximal steady state conductance $G_i$ of the slow inward current are measured. The first model, unidimensional, is derived from McGuigan and Tsien (in McGuigan 1974) and includes inward conductance and series resistances. It accounts only for longitudinal variation of membrane potential. The second, radial, accounts for both radial and longitudinal non-uniformity. The determinations of $V_{rev}$ and $G_i$ by the two models are compared. In the present work we also compare experimental results and simulations, and show that changes in some of the parameters characteristic of uni- or multicellular preparation in a double sucrose gap apparatus, can explain apparent variations in reversal potential and maximal steady state conductance.

## Methods

### *Experiments*

Voltage-clamp experiments using the double sucrose gap method with vaseline partition (Rougier *et al.* 1968) were performed on sino-auricular trabeculae, 80—120 μm in diameter, isolated from frog (*Rana esculenta*). Test gap was about 150 μm wide and sucrose gap 300 μm. The normal Ringer's solution contained (mmol/l): NaCl, 110.5; KCl, 2.5; $NaHCO_3$, 2.4; $CaCl_2$, 1.8; $MgCl_2$, 1.8; pH 7.4. Temperature: $20 \pm 1$ °C. Tetrodotoxin ($10^{-6}$ g $ml^{-1}$) was added during all experiments. Details of alterations of bathing solutions and drug addition are given for each experiment. Voltage clamp experiments were generally carried out with the holding potential equal to the resting membrane potential. In the following description $V$ is the displacement from the resting potential, $E_R$. Currents were digitized and stored, and the slow inward current analyzed as described later.

### *Simulations*

Calculations were done on a mini-computer system, Plurimat S, Intertechnique. Numerical (unidimensional and radial) models written in FORTRAN IV were accessible to the investigator from an on-line terminal. The mathematical development of these models is detailed elsewhere (Fischmeister 1980) and only most significative equations are given here. The symbols used in these equations as well as the intermediate operators are listed in the glossary.

## A. Experimental results

Variations in the apparent reversal potential were determined as a result of, or simultaneously with, variations in the maximal inward conductance in four experimental conditions.

*Isolation factors*

Under best sucrose isolations, the isolation factor in both gaps was 0.9. In the illustrated experiment (Fig. 1) the initial isolation factors, estimated from the amplitude of the action potentials, were close to 0.85 over both the voltage recording and the current applying gaps. We deliberately decreased the isolation by adding, alternatively to each sucrose gap, a resistance (2.2 MΩ) in parallel. The results are summarized by the two series of three $I-V$ curves obtained with alternation of voltage and current sucrose gaps. A decrease of the isolation factor over the voltage recording gap ($S_1$) induced a noticeable decrease in the apparent reversal potential (10 mV) while the maximal inward conductance is slightly increased. With the same trabecula the shift in $V_{rev}$ was 6 mV and $G_i$ not significantly changed when the shunt resistance was 3.8 MΩ. A decrease in the isolation factor over the current applying gap ($S_2$) did not noticeably alter $V_{rev}$ but enhanced 2.5 fold the maximal conductance (1.6 fold in case of 3.8 MΩ).

*Conductance*

Changes in the maximal inward going conductance, $G_i$, were produced by allowing for more or less repriming following inactivation by a 80 mV—230 msec depolari-

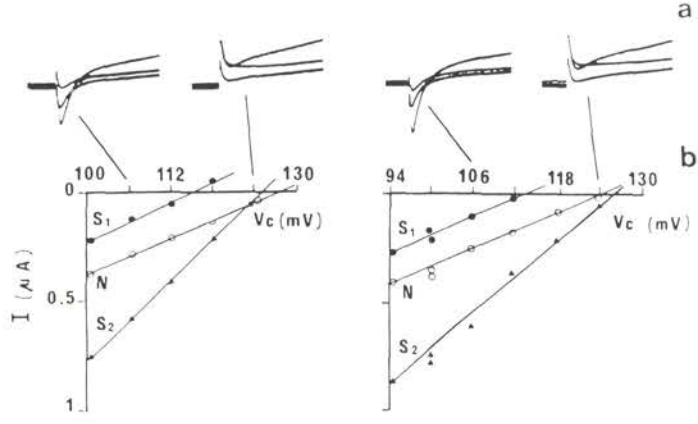



**Fig. 1.** Alterations in the apparent reversal potential and maximal inward conductance induced by decreasing the isolation factor by a shunt resistance of 2.2 MΩ placed in parallel on the voltage recording sucrose gap ($S_1$) or the current applying gap ($S_2$) (with permutation of the two gaps).
a) Current recordings elicited by 106 and 124 mV depolarizations of 200 ms duration.
b) Two series of current-voltage relationships of the maximal inward current for the range of potential in which its slope conductance is linear before and after permutation of the voltage recording and current applying gaps ($N$, in the absence of a shunt resistance).

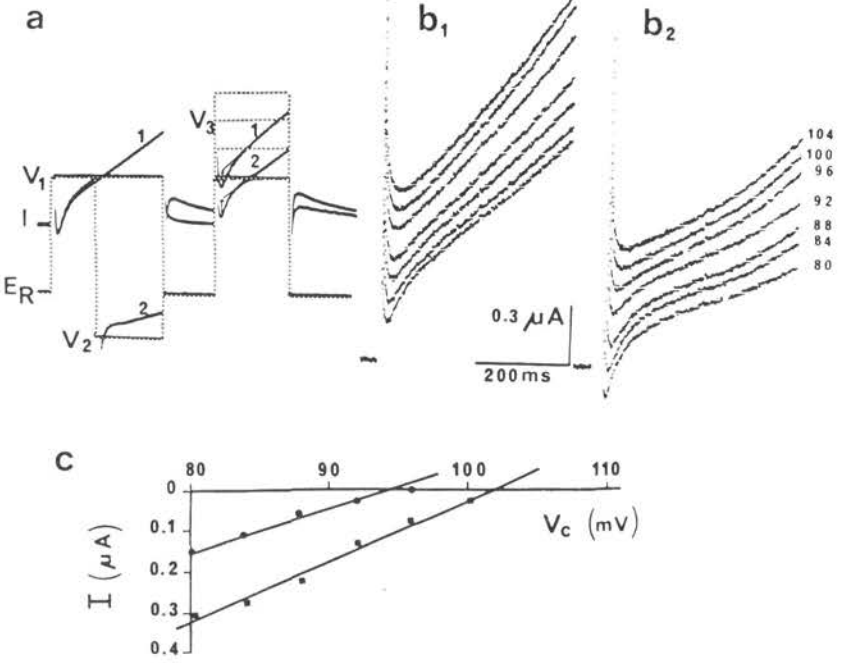



**Fig. 2.** Decrease in the apparent reversal potential induced by decrease in the inward conductance. a) The two voltage step sequences and the method of estimation of inward current ($V_c = 80$ mV); $b_1$) and $b_2$) digitized recordings of currents elicited by increasing $V_c$ from 80 to 104 mV in steps of 4 mV using protocol 1 (●) or 2 (■); c) current-voltage relationships of the maximal inward current obtained following protocols 1 and 2.

zing pulse. Before the test pulse, the membrane was held either at the same potential for further 300 msec (protocol 1) or hyperpolarized to $E_r$ — 30 mV (protocol 2) and in both cases during 270 msec at $E_r$. This latter membrane polarization allowed for partial repriming in (1) or complemented it in (2). It also resulted in the same capacitive surge making it easier to compare current traces. To minimize the difference in internal Ca concentration between the two protocols and to facilitate current estimation, Li ions were substituted for Na ions to block the Na—Ca exchange and 4-aminopyridine ($3 \times 10^{-3}$ mol/l) and adrenaline ($10^{-6}$ mol/l) were added. Fig. 2 shows the voltage steps and the estimation of inward currents (a) for the two protocols, the original recordings (b) and the resulting $I$—$V$ relationships (c). The prolonged depolarizations necessary for partial repriming decreased the inward current by about 30% (indicated by the difference in slope of the $I$—$V$ curves) and increased the outward current. These effects were accompanied by an 8 mV decrease in $V_{rev}$ (from 102 to 94 mV). The

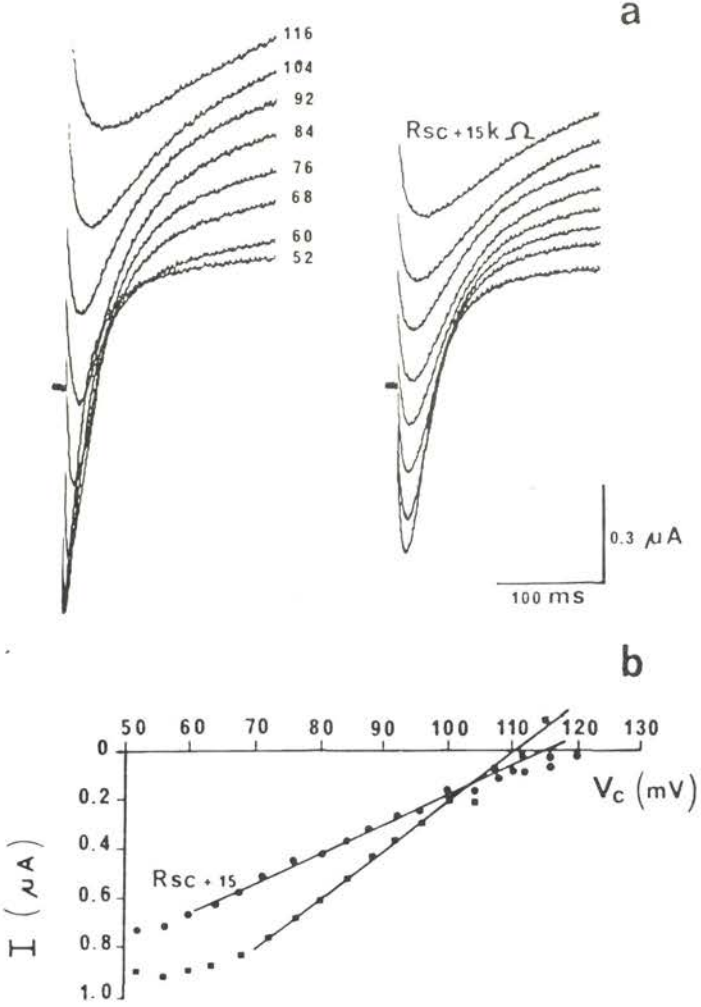



**Fig. 3.** Effects of the addition of a 15 k$\Omega$ series resistance on the maximal inward conductance and the apparent reversal potential: a) digitized recording of currents elicited by the same applied voltages in normal conditions or with a supplementary series resistance electronically added 2 msec after the depolarization; b) current-voltage relationships of the maximal inward current.

low value of $V_{rev}$ resulted (presumably) from the entry of Ca ions during the conditioning pulse and from the Ca-overloading caused by low Na solutions.

*Series resistance*

A series resistance in the voltage clamp circuit increased the time required to

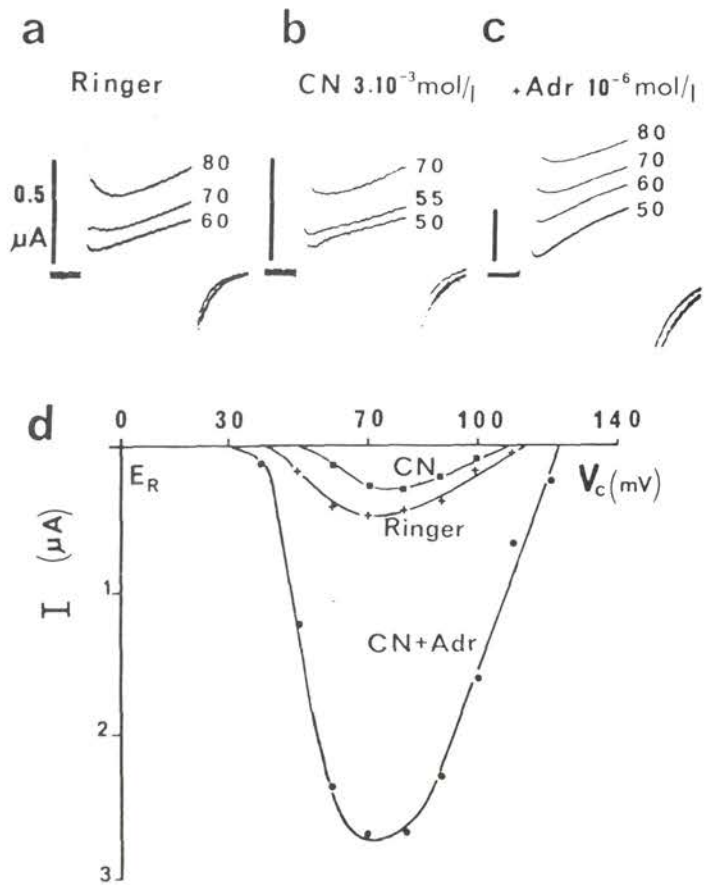



**Fig. 4.** Effects of cyanide, and adrenaline plus cyanide, on the reversal potential and the maximal conductance of the slow inward current: a) current recordings in Ringer; b) after 20 min of cyanide ($3 \times 10^{-3}$ mol/l) and c) after 4 min following further addition of adrenaline ($10^{-6}$ mol/l). The depolarizing steps (160 msec in duration) were applied from a holding potential of $E_r + 40$ mV. d) Current-voltage relationships of the slow inward currents obtained on another fiber in the same experimental conditions.

charge the membrane capacitance and altered the potential applied to the membrane. In the experimental preparation the common series resistance, $R_{sc}$, could be varied but not the diffuse series resistance, $R_{sd}$, which is in the core of the preparation. A 15 k$\Omega$-resistance was electronically added during the depolarizing pulse after a period of 2 msec to allow for charging of most of membrane capacitance. In Fig. 3 (a) are shown the currents elicited by depolarizing pulses in normal conditions or with the additional series resistance, and in 3 (b) the two $I$—$V$ relationships are drawn. Increasing the series resistance caused a 40% reduction in

the maximal inward and outward conductances, and increased the apparent reversal potential by at least 5 mV. Similar results were obtained in 3 other experiments.

*Drug effects*

The effects of two drugs, cyanide and adrenaline, known to alter the slow inward conductance in frog heart have been reinvestigated with a particular attention to their effects on the apparent reversal potential. Fig. 4 shows current records elicited by depolarizations applied on top of a holding potential $Hp = E_R + 40$ mV (a) in our standard Ringer's solution, (b) after 20 min in the presence of cyanide (CN, $3 \times 10^{-3}$ mol/l) and (c) after further 4 min of adding adrenaline (Adr, $10^{-6}$ mol/l). Current-voltage relationships (d) are given for the maximal inward current obtained with another fibre in the same experimental conditions. In this series of six successful experiments cyanide decreased the inward conductance by 40% and the reversal potential by 9 mV while adrenaline increased the inward conductance by 500% and the reversal potential by 8 mV in average.

**B. Theoretical results**

1. *Models*
   a) *General Hypothesis*

An idealized double sucrose gap with sharp boundaries between the solutions is considered. In the two external pools, isotonic KCl solution is applied to short circuit the membrane. One is used for recording voltage $V_c$; current $I$ is applied through the other.

The peak amplitude of the slow inward (or minimal outward) current is measured after graphical substraction of the delayed outward currents. These are extrapolated either linearly (see Horačkova and Vassort 1979; Fig. 5) or exponentially (see Ten Eick et al. 1976; Fig. 1) from the total current elicited after slow conductance had inactivated. The transient capacitive component of current is taken to be zero when the slow component is maximal. This experimental procedure of determining the maximal amplitude of slow inward current was modeled by considering that at each potential any membrane patch in the test node can take only two states: one "active" when the slow conductance reached its peak value and one "passive" when the slow conductance was fully inactivated. Then, the pure inward current $I_i$ can be given by the difference between the two currents obtained in active $I_a$ and passive $I_p$ states. Membrane capacitance is ignored (see discussion).

Since the experimental current-voltage relationship for slow inward current is

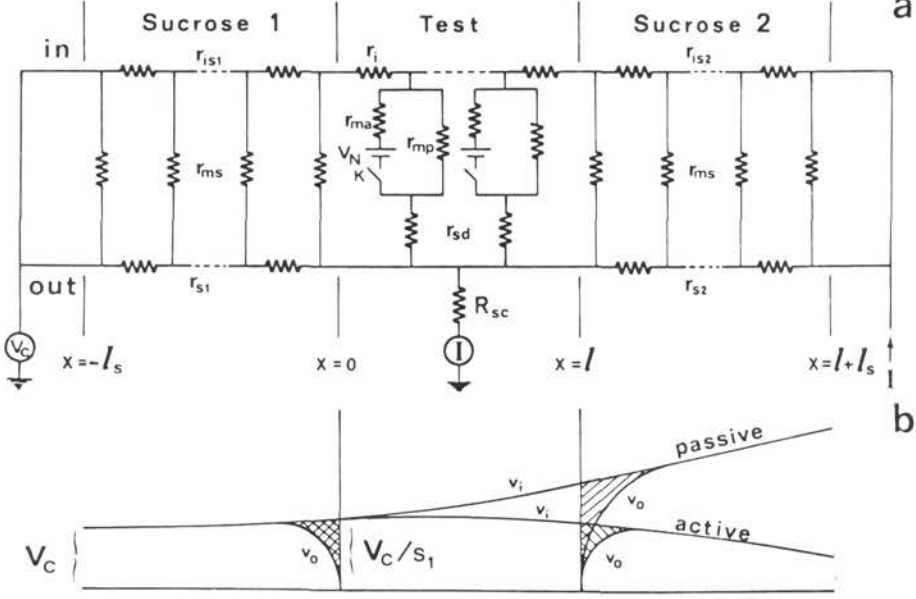



**Fig. 5.** a) Unidimensional electrical scheme of a preparation set in a double sucrose gap apparatus under voltage clamp conditions. The control potential, $V_c$, is measured on the left sucrose gap and the current, $I$, applied on the right sucrose gap. Compartment lengths are $l$ and $l_s$ for test- and sucrose gaps, respectively. Distance $x$ is referred to the idealized partition between test- and sucrose pool on the left side (where $x=0$). Any membrane patch in the test gap can take two states: one passive when the switch "$K$" is open (as shown), and a second active when the switch $K$ is closed simulating full activation of the slow inward conductance. $V_N$ is the Nernst equilbrium potential and $1/r_{ma}$ is the maximal steady state conductance of slow inward current. $r_{ma}$ and $r_{mp}$ are the membrane resistance in the sucrose gaps and test gap, respectively, $r_{is(1,2)}$ and $r_{s(1,2)}$ are the longitudinal internal and external resistances in the sucrose gaps; $r_i$, the internal longitudinal resistance, and $r_{sd}$ and $R_{sc}$, the diffuse and common series resistances in the test compartment. All electrical resistances $r$ are expressed per unit length and can be calculated from specific resistances $R$ using the relations $r(\Omega.\mathrm{cm}^{-1}) = R(\Omega.\mathrm{cm})/N\pi a^2$ for longitudinal intra- and extracellular resistance, and $r(\Omega.\mathrm{cm}) = R(\Omega.\mathrm{cm}^2)/2N\pi a$ for membrane and series resistances; $N$ and $a$ being respectively the number and the radius of longitudinally orientated fibers.
b) Longitudinal variations of internal, $v_i$, and external, $v_o$, potentials during current flow (induced by applying a control potential $V_c$) for the passive and active states of the preparation. Series resistances were supposed to be nul. Dashed area are proportional to current leak through the sucrose gaps. The isolation factor of the voltage recording sucrose gap $S_1$ is the ratio $r_{s1}/(r_{s1}+r_{is1})$. The space constant at rest or after the slow inward current has inactivated is $\lambda_p = [(r_{mp}+r_{sd})/r_i]^{1/2}$.

linear in the range of the potentials where the control potential $V_c$ is close to the apparent reversal potential $V_{rev}$, the active membrane conductance $g_{ma}$ $(=1/r_{ma})$ was set to a constant value. Thus, $g_{ma}$ was in series with a battery, which is assumed to be the Nernst potential for Ca ions, $V_N$. In the passive state, transmembrane current flows only through the passive membrane conductance $g_{mp}$ $(=1/r_{mp})$. $g_{mp}$

was also set to a constant value on the assumption that no anomalous rectification occurs in this range of potentials. In the active state, $r_{mp}$ was in parallel with $r_{ma}$ and $V_N$. All membrane potentials are referenced to the resting potential.

b) *Unidimensional model*

This model was based on the one described by McGuigan and Tsien (in McGuigan 1974), but with added inward currents. An asymmetry in the electrical properties of the three central compartments was also introduced.

The equivalent circuit for the preparation is shown in Fig. 5a. All electrical resistances $r$ are expressed per unit length and could be calculated from specific resistances $R$ using the relations $r = R/N\pi a^2$ for longitudinal intra-and extracellular resistances and $r = R/2N\pi a$ for membrane and series resistances, $N$ and $a$ being respectively the number and the radius of the longitudinally oriented fibers. $N$ is eliminated in the following equations since the unidimensional model is independent of radial dimension. Two types of series resistances have been included in this model: one diffuse, $r_{sd}$, in series with each membrane segment (Ramon et al. 1975) and one common, $R_{sc}$, a part of which corresponds to the resistance between the electrode and the bundle surface in the test compartment. These two resistances may be insufficient to account for the cleft resistances in a multicellular preparation unless they can be lumped (Johnson and Sommer 1967). A more realistic representation then requires a continuous variation of the series resistances and can be only provided by a radial model (see later).

The mathematical development of McGuigan and Tsien (in McGuigan 1974) has been used to derive expressions of intracellular and extracellular potentials $v_i$ and $v_o$ as functions of longitudinal distance $x$ in the three compartments (test + two sucrose). Using the intermediate operators $\Phi$ and $\Psi$, general solutions in sucrose pools 1 and 2 are:

$$\Phi = A \sinh (x/\lambda_{s(1,2)}) + B \cosh (x/\lambda_{s(1,2)}) \tag{1}$$

and

$$\Psi = Cx + D\,. \tag{2}$$

In sucrose 1 compartment, $C$ equals zero since no current is applied to this region. The intracellular and extracellular resistances act as a voltage divider and the transmembrane potential $V_0$ at $x = 0$ is:

$$V_0 = \frac{V_c - R_{sc} I}{S_1}\,. \tag{3}$$

This differs from the control potential $V_c$ even when the common series resistance $R_{sc}$ is set to zero (McGuigan 1974; De Boer and Wolfrat 1979). $v_i$ and $v_o$ are then

given by:

$$v_i = V_0 \left\{ (1 - S_1) \frac{\sinh [(x + l_s)/\lambda_{s1}]}{\sinh (l_s/\lambda_{s1})} + S_1 \right\} + R_{sc} I \tag{4}$$

and

$$v_o = S_1 V_0 \left\{ 1 - \frac{\sinh [x + l_s)/\lambda_{s1}}{\sinh (l_s/\lambda_{s1})} \right\} + R_{sc} I \,. \tag{5}$$

Similar equations for $v_i$ and $v_0$ may be written in sucrose 2 compartment, except that the current, injected on this side, modifies the boundary conditions.

In the central test pool, the two states, active and passive (see Fig. 5a), of the preparation have to be considered.

— Passive state: according to McGuigan and Tsien (in McGuigan 1974) $v_i$ is in the form:

$$v_i = V_0[\cosh (x/\lambda_p) + B \sinh (x/\lambda_p)] + R_{sc} I_p \tag{6}$$

while $v_o$ is independent of $x$

$$v_o = R_{sc} I_p \,. \tag{7}$$

A combination of Eq. 3 and of equations describing the continuity of $v_i$ and its derivative $dv_i/dx$ at $x = 0$ and $x = l$ gives an evaluation of the passive current $I_p$ which may be written in the form:

$$I_p = \frac{V_c F(\lambda_p)}{R_{sc} F(\lambda_p) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2} \lambda_p} \,. \tag{8}$$

Because of the series resistance $r_{sd}$, the membrane potential in the passive state $v_{mp}$ will be only a fraction $f = r_{mp}/(r_{mp} + r_{sd})$ of $v_i - v_o$. Thus,

$$v_{mp} = V_c f S_2 r_{is2} \lambda_p \frac{\cosh (x/\lambda_p) + \lambda_p/\lambda_1 \sinh (x/\lambda_p)}{R_{sc} F(\lambda_p) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2} \lambda_p} \,. \tag{9}$$

When evaluated at $x = 0$:

$$v_{mp}(x = 0) = \frac{V_c f S_2 r_{is2} \lambda_p}{R_{sc} F(\lambda_p) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2} \lambda_p} \,. \tag{10}$$

This expression may be compared to that obtained by McGuigan and Tsien (in McGuigan 1974):

$$v_{mp}(x = 0) = \frac{V_c}{S_1} \,. \tag{11}$$

An equivalent isolation factor $S_{eq}$ may be introduced,

$$S_{eq} = S_1\left(1+\frac{r_{sd}}{r_{mp}}\right)\left(1+R_{sc}\frac{F(\lambda_p)}{S_1 S_2 r_{is2}\lambda_p}\right). \tag{12}$$

$S_{eq}$ differs from $S_1$ because of the non zero series resistances $r_{sd}$ and $R_{sc}$. $S_{eq}$ is the ratio of control potential $V_c$ to membrane potential at $x=0$ thereby should ideally be 1. From Eq. 12, $S_{eq} \geq S_1$, then as long as $S_{eq} < 1$, the presence of series resistances $r_{sd}$ and $R_{sc}$ will tend to reduce the error due to a poor electrical isolation of sucrose solution so that $v_{mp}(x=0)$ is less than expected from Eq. 11.

— Active state: a similar series of equations may be obtained if one considers a Thevenin's representation of a membrane patch. The active equivalent circuit may be deducted from the passive one by replacing $r_{mp}$ by a resistance $\alpha r_{ma}$ in series with a battery $\alpha V_N$, where $\alpha = r_{mp}/(r_{mp}+r_{ma})$. The length constant is therefore:

$$\lambda_a = \left(\frac{\alpha r_{ma}+r_{sd}}{r_i}\right)^{1/2}. \tag{13}$$

The intracellular potential may be written in the form:

$$v_i = (V_0 - \alpha V_N)\,[\cosh(x/\lambda_a) + B'\sinh(x/\lambda_a)] + \alpha V_N + R_{sc} I_a\,, \tag{14}$$

where the active current $I_a$ is given by:

$$I_a = \frac{V_c F(\lambda_a) - \alpha S_1 V_N G(\lambda_a)}{R_{sc} F(\lambda_a) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2}\lambda_a}. \tag{15}$$

Because of the series resistance $r_{sd}$, the membrane potential in the active state $v_{ma}$ differs from $v_i - v_o$ as follows:

$$v_{ma} = f'(v_i - v_o) + (1-f')\alpha V_N \tag{16}$$

where $f' = \alpha r_{ma}/(\alpha r_{ma} + r_{sd})$. While $v_o = R_{sc} I_a$, $v_{ma}$ may be written using Eq. 15 and 16. Thus,

$$v_{ma} = f'[V_c S_2 r_{is2}\lambda_a + \alpha R_{sc} V_N G(\lambda_a)]\frac{\cosh(x/\lambda_a) + \lambda_a/\lambda_1 \sinh(x/\lambda_a)}{R_{sc}F(\lambda_a) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2}\lambda_a} +$$

$$+ \alpha V_N[1 - f'\sinh(x/\lambda_a)]\,. \tag{17}$$

Equations describing $v_{mp}$ (9) and $v_{ma}$ (17) may be used to evaluate membrane potential distribution within the test node for the two states of the preparation. Equations of $v_i$ and $v_o$ in sucrose compartments 1 and 2 give longitudinal variations of intra- and extracellular potentials in these pools and the leak current through the sucrose solution can be substracted (Fig. 5b). Eq. 8 and 15 lead to the current-voltage relationship between total recorded ionic current $I_i = I_a - I_p$ and control potential $V_c$. $I_i$ may be written in the form:

$$I_i = G_i(V_c - V_{rev}) \tag{18}$$

where $G_i$ and $V_{rev}$ are the apparent values of maximal inward conductance and reversal potential, while the true values are $G_{ma} = 1/r_{ma}$ and $V_N$. Therefore, two correction factors, $f_v$ and $f_g$, may be introduced as follows:

$$f_v = \frac{V_{rev}}{V_N} \tag{19}$$

and

$$f_g = \frac{G_i}{G_{ma}} . \tag{20}$$

Their complete expressions are given by:

$$f_v = \frac{\alpha G(\lambda_a)[R_{sc}F(\lambda_p) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2}\lambda_p]}{S_2 r_{is2}[\lambda_p F(\lambda_a) - \lambda_a F(\lambda_p)]} \tag{21}$$

and

$$f_g = \frac{r_{ma}}{l}\left[\frac{F(\lambda_a)}{R_{sc}F(\lambda_a) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2}\lambda_a} - \frac{F(\lambda_p)}{R_{sc}F(\lambda_p) + S_1 S_2 r_{is2}\lambda_p}\right] . \tag{22}$$

$f_v$ and $f_g$ may then be used to evaluate separately the influence of each parameter included in our unidimensional model on both determinations of reversal potential, $V_{rev}$ and maximal conductance, $G_i$ of slow inward current.

c) *Radial model*

In this case, the preparation is assumed to be a bundle of fibers (radius $A$) with a cylindrical symmetry of voltage distribution. Intracellular medium is modeled by an electrically resistive continuum with an effective resistivity $R_i$. All fibers are considered to have a hexagonal cross section (Adrian et al. 1969). The intercellular space (clefts) in the test pool is filled with a fluid of resistivity $\rho_e$. Effective external resistivity to radial current flow, $R_e$ is then (Haas and Brommundt 1980):

$$R_e = \rho_e \frac{a\sqrt{3}}{d} \tag{23}$$

where $a$ is the radius of the fibers and $d$ the distance between the surfaces of adjacent fibers. For longitudinal current flow, the effective external resistivity given by the hexagonal model was half the value for radial current flow. However, we considered both resistivities identical which greatly simplified the mathematical model. Thus, extracellular medium may be modeled as a second continuum (Peskoff 1979a and b) electrically coupled to internal space by passive and/or

active membrane resistances ($R_{mp}$, $R_{ma}$). For comparison with the unidimensional model, common series resistance $R_{sc}$ was neglected assuming that the outermost layer of fibers in the test gap was at a zero (extracellular) potential. Membrane resistance, $R_{ms}$ and intracellular resistivity, $R_{is}$ in both sucrose gaps were identical and equalled respectively passive membrane resistance, $R_{mp}$ and intracellular resistivity, $R_i$ in the test pool. $S$ was the sucrose isolation factor in either sucrose 1 or sucrose 2 compartment, where the effective extracellular resistivity was $R_{es}$.

The second order derivatives $d^2/dx^2$ of the unidimensional model are now replaced by the Laplacian operator in cylindrical coordinates $\Delta = \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x^2} + \frac{1}{r}\frac{\partial}{\partial r}\left(r\frac{\partial}{\partial r}\right)$; $r$ being the distance to the center of the bundle in the radial direction. Differential equations and boundary conditions for $\Phi$ and $\Psi$ can be expressed in both sucrose gaps and in the test compartment using, in the active state, the same equivalent membrane patch representation as that used in the unidimensional model.

The mathematical treatment was simplified by using an additional condition placed on the arrangement of electrodes. This condition recognizes that current applied to the bundle in KCl solution was equivalent to that which would have been applied by a disc electrode placed at right angles to the long axis of the preparation, equal to its diameter, at the KCl/sucrose 2 compartment boundary. Similarly potential measured in KCl solution was equivalent to that measured with a disc electrode at the KCl/sucrose 1 compartment boundary. The condition requires also that the preparation, under the sucrose solutions, behaves like a single cell. This latter assumption is justified only when no activity occurs in any fiber of the bundle: this is the case in this part of the preparation since all membranes are in resting state. Then, according to Taylor (1963) and Eisenberg and Johnson (1970), no radial voltage gradient has to be considered when the length constant is larger than the diameter of the preparation. The variation of potential in the two sucrose compartments occurs then only in a direction longitudinal to the fiber axis.

The resolution of the differential equations is based on the study of electrical potential in cylindrical syncitia resulting from an intracellular point source of current (Peskoff 1979b) and is detailed elsewhere (Fischmeister 1980). Relatively simple expressions for passive $I_p$ and active current $I_a$ were derived and could easily be calculated for a given set of electrical properties. As for the unidimensional model, the two correction factors $f_v$ and $f_g$ might be expressed from the total recorded ionic current $I_i = I_a - I_p$.

d) *Comparison between the two models*

The unidimensional and radial models developed above allow two different evaluations of the errors occurring during determinations of both reversal poten-

tial $V_{rev}$ and maximal conductance $G_i$ of the slow inward current. It is thus possible to compare the two models through the correction factors $f_v$ and $f_g$. Although the unidimensional model is insensitive to the radius $A$ of the cylindrical bundle, the radial non-uniformity of potential can partly be accounted for by the presence of a diffuse series resistance $R_{sd}$. Results obtained with the radial model for different values of radius $A$ can then be compared to those obtained with the unidimensional model for different values of $R_{sd}$.

The values of other electrical and morphological parameters of the preparation are referred particularly to frog heart trabeculae. The passive length constant $\lambda_p$ ($5.0 \times 10^{-2}$ cm) was taken from the literature (Trautwein et al. 1956; Brown et al. 1976; Chapman and Fry 1978). The value of $R_i$ (588 $\Omega$.cm) is given by Chapman and Fry (1978) and $R_{mp}$ (11.76 K$\Omega$.cm$^2$) was then calculated from $\lambda_p$ and $R_i$, assuming a 2.5 μm radius $a$ for each fiber. The cleft width $d$ ($3 \times 10^{-6}$ cm) and the resistivity $\varrho_e$(83.3 $\Omega$.cm) of the extracellular fluid were taken as in Haas and Brommundt (1980) leading to a high effective resistivity $R_e$ (12.02 K$\Omega$.cm). For both models a perfect symmetry was considered between internal resistivities and passive membrane resistances in all compartments ($R_{is1} = R_{is2} = R_i$ and $R_{ms} = R_{mp}$). The isolation factors ($S_1$, $S_2$) were assumed identical in both sucrose gaps and equal to 0.9. It results that with the unidimensional model the control potential $V_c$ is only 90 per cent of the potential actually applied to the membrane at the left boundary of the test gap (McGuigan and Tsien, in McGuigan 1974; Fig. 5b). The active conductance was chosen two times larger than the passive one, and the true reversal potential $V_N$ was set at 160 mV. Three different values of the test gap length $l$ were considered because this parameter plays a predominant role (through the ratio $l/\lambda_p$) in the longitudinal voltage non-uniformity. $l_s$ is taken sufficiently higher than $l$ and the common series resistance $R_{sc}$ is set at zero.

Calculated values of $f_v$ and $f_g$ are shown in Table 1. For three values of the test compartment length ($l = 100$, 200 and 300 μm) $f_v$ and $f_g$ were calculated with the unidimensional model considering a diffuse series resistance nul or 580 $\Omega$.cm$^2$, or with the radial model for $A = 20$, 40 or 80 μm. Results obtained either with unidimensional or radial model showed that $f_v < 1$ and $f_g > 1$. Measurement conditions were improved when $l$ was decreased since $f_v$ increases and $f_g$ decreases, but no optimal conditions were found (see later). Thus, with both models, the reversal potential $V_{rev}$ was always underestimated and the maximal conductance $G_i$ overestimated. Adding series resistance $R_{sd}$ to the unidimensional model, or increasing the diameter of the preparation in the radial improved both determinations of $V_{rev}$ and $G_i$. Results obtained with either unidimensional or radial models of a preparation with a small radius ($A = 20$ or 40 μm) were similar. Besides, for larger preparations ($A = 80$ μm), values of $f_v$ obtained with the radial model could be accurately fitted by the unidimensional model when a 580 $\Omega$.cm$^2$ series resistance $R_{sd}$ was added. In this case, values of $f_g$ obtained with the unidimensional

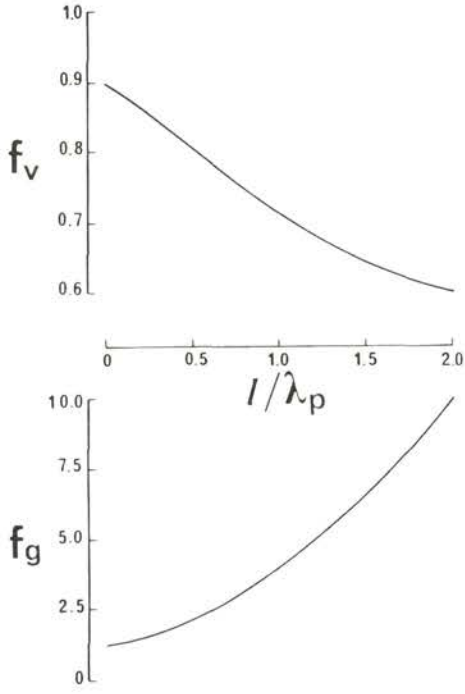



**Fig. 6.** Dependence of the correction factors $f_v$ and $f_g$ (ratios of estimated to real values of the reversal potential and the maximal conductance) on the electrotonic distance $l/\lambda_p$, when either $l$ or $\lambda_p$ is modified.

model are slightly higher than those obtained with the radial model. Thus, radial inhomogeneity is not significant in small preparations and is equivalent to a series resistance added to a unidimensional cable model.

## 2. *Simulations*

Following the above conclusions the unidimensional model was selected to analyse the consequences of alterations in different parameters on the determination of both the apparent reversal potential $V_{rev}$ and the maximal inward conductance $G_i$. The variations were quantified by the two correction factors $f_v$ ($= V_{rev}/V_N$) and $f_g$ ($= G_i/G_{ma}$).

a) *Parameters related to the test gap*

*Electrotonic distance:* $l/\lambda_p$

The electrotonic distance depends on both the preparation and the experimental set up. If has often been recognized as an important factor that determines potential non-uniformity during voltage clamp experiments. Usual values range between 0.2 (Tarr and Trank 1971) and 0.6 (Brown *et al.* 1976). Large values of $l/\lambda_p$ (0.6—0.9) have been shown to minimize the relative contribution of the leakage current to the total current (McGuigan and Tsien, in McGuigan 1974). This is justified for outward currents but should be reconsidered for inward currents. Fig. 6 shows the effects of electrotonic distance on $f_v$ and $f_g$ as either $l$ or $\lambda_p$ are altered. It appears that $f_v$ is always less than 1 while $f_g$ is greater than 1 and that both differences from unity increase with $l/\lambda_p$. This implies that the reversal potential $V_{rev}$ is always underestimated and the active conductance $G_i$ overestimated. Furthermore, except when $l/\lambda_p \ll 1$, $f_v$ is always less than $S_i^0$ (i.e. 0.9); thus the reversal potential is underestimated even more than the control potential.

Since degree of voltage uniformity in the test gap determines the accuracy of voltage clamp studies, $f_v$ and $f_g$ were calculated for three different test gap lengths giving values of 0.2, 0.4 and 0.6 for the initial electrotonic distance. For these three increasing values of $l/\lambda_p^\circ$ and for the other parameters at their initial state it was possible to calculate the two correction factors $f_v$ and $f_g$ for the beginning of any experiment: $f_v = 0.87$, 0.83 and 0.79; $f_g = 1.35$, 1.55 and 1.83.

*Active membrane conductance:* $G_{ma}$

The dependences of $f_v$ and $f_g$ on the relative variation of $G_{ma}$ are reported in Fig. 7a. Both $f_v$ and $f_g$ increase with $G_{ma}/G_{ma}^\circ$, the variations being more marked with large values of $l/\lambda_p^\circ$. The increase in $f_v$, towards values close to $S_i^\circ$, suggests that a better estimation of $V_{rev}$ may be possible with large values of active conductance. It implies variations of the estimated reversal potential even when only the active conductance is altered. The increase in $f_g$ indicates that the conductance will be increasingly overestimated as $G_{ma}$ and $l/\lambda_p^\circ$ increase. These results extend those of Giles and Noble (1976) who considered a perfect isolation in both sucrose compartments.

Under voltage clamp conditions the maximal active slow membrane conductance may be up to 20 times the value of passive membrane conductance. This should correspond to large variations of $f_v$ and $f_g$ when the active conductance is altered by external agents. This is emphasized in Fig. 7b which shows reconstructions of $I-V$ curves put in legend only for three values of $G_{ma}/G_{ma}^\circ$. Everything

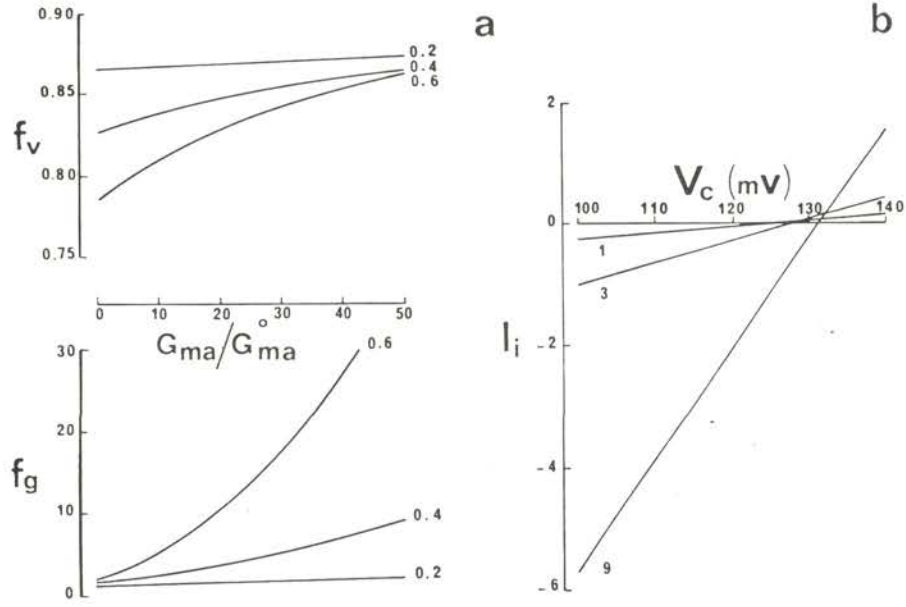



**Fig. 7.** a) Dependence of $f_v$ and $f_g$ on $G_{ma}/G^{o}_{ma}$, the maximal active conductance relative to its initial value, for three different values of the test gap length so that $l/\lambda_p^o = 0.2$, 0.4 and 0.6. b) Reconstruction of $I$—$V$ curves for three different values of $G_{ma}/G^{o}_{ma}$: 1, 3 and 9, when $l/\lambda_p^o = 0.6$. $I_i$ in arbitrary unit (for details see text).

else being constant the larger the inward conductance the higher the reversal potential.

*Internal resistance and passive membrane resistance: $R_i$, $R_{mp}$*

Modifications in $R_i$ and $R_{mp}$ can result from changes in external and/or internal medium. Changes in internal resistance are mostly due to alterations in intercellular junctions and have been attributed to an increase in the intracellular Ca concentration (De Mello 1975; Weingart 1977; Loewenstein et al. 1978) or to a decrease of pH (Turin and Warner 1977). Recent works have described a marked increase in $R_i$ under anoxia (Payet et al. 1978) or hypoxia (Wojtczak 1979). The reported variations of $R_{mp}$ are opposite: Meech (1974) and Isenberg (1977) observed a decrease of $R_{mp}$ when increasing the intracellular Ca concentration, and Payet et al. (1978) measured a 44 percent decrease of $R_{mp}$ within 20 min of anoxia.

In Fig. 8 are shown the variations of $f_v$ and $f_g$ under specificic alterations in $R_i$ and $R_{mp}$. The first alterations (Fig. 8a) is to assume an asymmetry between the three internal resistances; the second (Fig. 8b) is to introduce a modification of the relative value of the active conductance with respect to the passive one. Both $R_i$

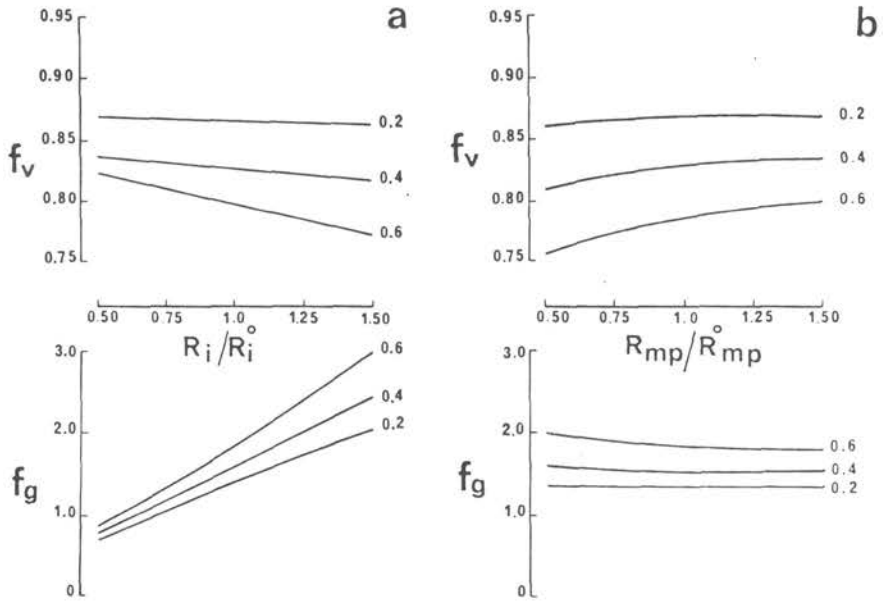



**Fig. 8.** Dependence of $f_v$ and $f_g$ on the relative values of internal resistivity $R_i/R_i^o$ (a) and passive membrane resistance in the test gap $R_{mp}/R_{mp}^o$ (b) for $l/\lambda_p^o = 0.2$, 0.4 and 0.6.

and $R_{mp}$ control the length constant. An increase in $R_i$ as well as a decrease of $R_{mp}$ induces a decrease of $f_v$ and an increase in $f_g$. Since under experimental conditions the variations of $R_i$ and $R_{mp}$ are opposite, their effects on $f_v$ and $f_g$ will be cumulative. Moreover, if changes in $R_i$ and $R_{mp}$ are due to variations of the internal calcium concentration a non-constant $V_N$ should be introduced. Thus a larger shift of $V_{rev}$ would be induced since $f_v$ and $V_N$ vary in the same direction.

b) *Parameters related to the sucrose gaps*

*Isolation factors:* $S_1$, $S_2$

Only those variations in $S_1$ and $S_2$ that result from changes in $R_{s(1,2)}$ are considered. Since one can assume that $R_{s(1,2)}$ remains constant during an experiment (except for the first few minutes), the variations reported here may correspond to different initial conditions concerning the sucrose isolation. For a single cell the value of $S_{(1,2)}$ is close to 1 (within 5%) (Julian et al. 1962) but for multicellular preparations $S_{(1,2)}$ is never greater than 0.9 and is sometimes as low as 0.7 (New and Trautwein 1972).

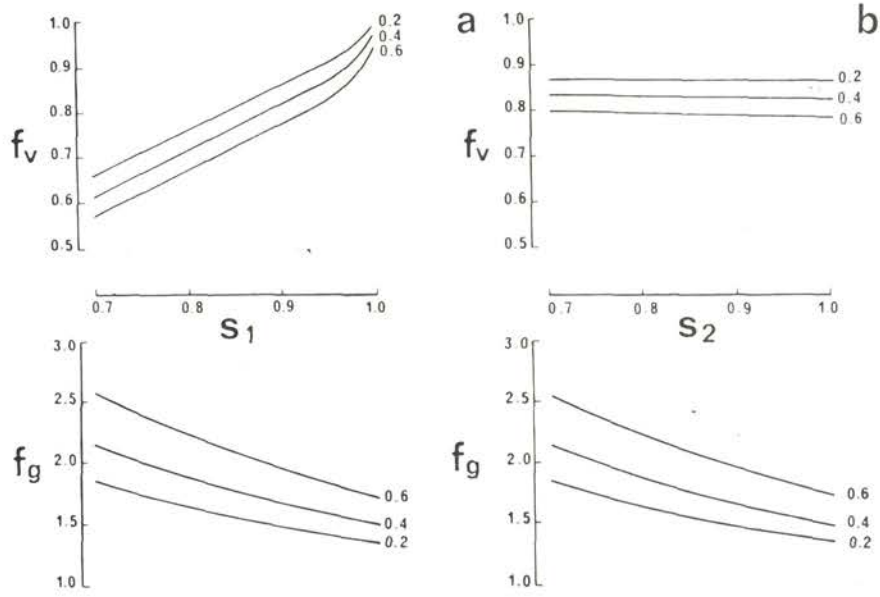



**Fig. 9.** Dependence of $f_v$ and $f_g$ on the isolation factors $S_1$ (a) and $S_2$ (b) for $l/\lambda_p^\circ = 0.2$, 0.4 and 0.6.

The influence of $S_{(1,2)}$ on the two correction factors, $f_v$ and $f_g$, is shown in Fig. 9 (a and b). It appears that $f_v$ increases with $S_1$ but remains smaller than $S_1$. $f_v$ is almost unaltered by changes in $S_2$. $f_g$ is greater than 1 and is similarly decreased by increasing values of $S_1$ and $S_2$.

*Internal resistances:* $R_{is1}$, $R_{is2}$

Variations in the internal resistances, $R_{is1}$ and/or $R_{is2}$, relative to the initial value $R_{is1}^\circ = R_{is2}^\circ = R_i^\circ$, alter $S_1$ and $S_2$ but also induce an asymmetry between the 3 gaps. Their effects on $f_v$ and $f_g$ are shown in Fig. 10 (a and b) together with the alterations in $S_{(1,2)}$ for comparison with the specific effects of $S_{(1,2)}$ reported in Fig. 9. Surprisingly, it appears that following modification of $R_{is2}$, the variation of $f_g$ is opposite to that expected from the alteration in $S_2$. This is due to a change in the voltage drop across $R_{is2}$ when current is injected. Such variations in the internal resistances may occur during an experiment. It has been reported (Kléber 1973) that the internal resistance under the sucrose solution increases exponentially by ten times in four hours i.e. more than 20 percent in the first 20 min. The increase may be even larger in the gap through which the current is injected. Thus, one can expect a decrease with time of apparent reversal potential unrelated to variations of the internal Ca concentration.

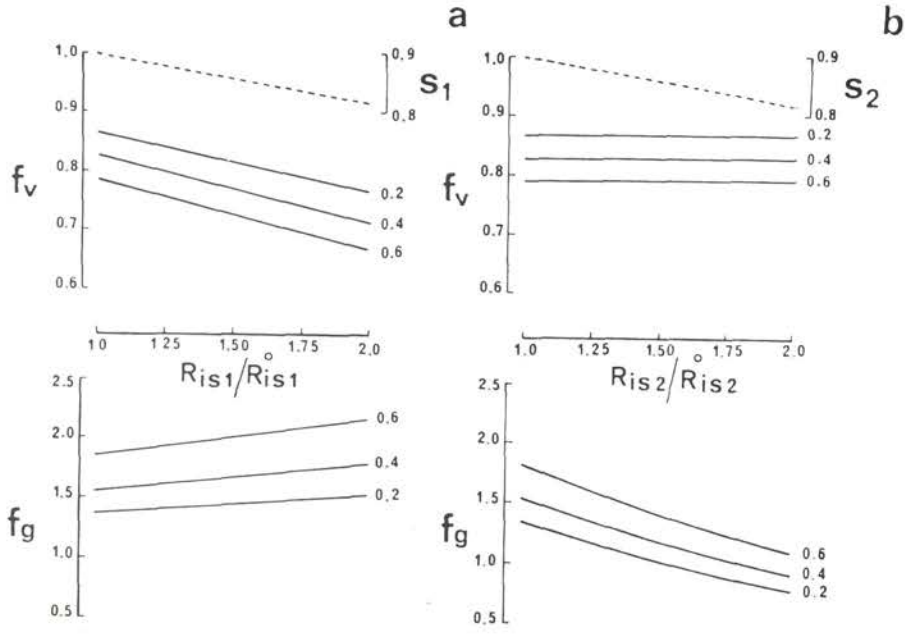



**Fig. 10.** Dependence of $f_v$ and $f_g$ on the relative values of internal resistivities in the two sucrose compartments $R_{is1}/R^o_{is1}$ (a) and $R_{is2}/R^o_{is2}$ (b) for $l/\lambda^o_p = 0.2$, 0.4 and 0.6. Simultaneously the consequent variations of the two isolation factors, $S_1$ and $S_2$ are reported in the upper curves.

*Membrane resistance and length of the sucrose gaps: $R_{ms}$, $l_s$*

The length constant in the two sucrose gaps is $\lambda_{s(1,2)} = \{r_{ms}/[r_{is(1,2)} + r_{s(1,2)}]\}^{1/2}$ and equals $[1 - S_{(1,2)}]^{1/2}\lambda_p$ (i.e. $1.58 \times 10^{-2}$ cm) in our initial conditions. In ideal case the electrotonic distance should be $l_s/\lambda_{s(1,2)} \gg 1$ (McGuigan and Tsien, in McGuigan 1974). This might be difficult to achieve when the passive length constant of the tissue is in the order of a few millimeters (e.g. more than 2 mm in sheep Purkinje fibers; Bonke 1973) or when the sucrose isolation $S_{(1,2)}$ is poor. Furthermore $R_{ms}$ may increase during the experiment (Kléber 1973) which would result in an increase in $\lambda_{s(1,2)}$. However the model shows that only a small error (a few percent) is introduced when the electrotonic distance in the sucrose gaps is close to 1.

c) *Influence of series resistances: $R_{sd}$, $R_{sc}$*

The usual values reported in the literature of $R_{sd}$ range between 0.02 to 0.06 times the passive membrane resistance (Beeler and Reuter 1970; Connor et al. 1975; De Hemptinne 1976) while $R_{sc}$, calculated for a unit membrane area, is generally lower (Attwell and Cohen 1977). The variations of the two correction factors $f_v$

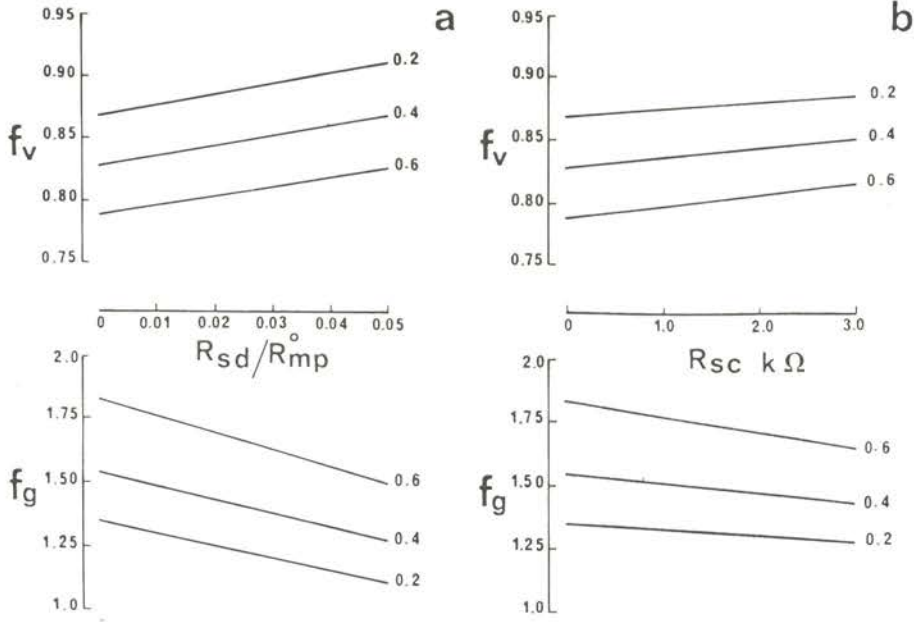
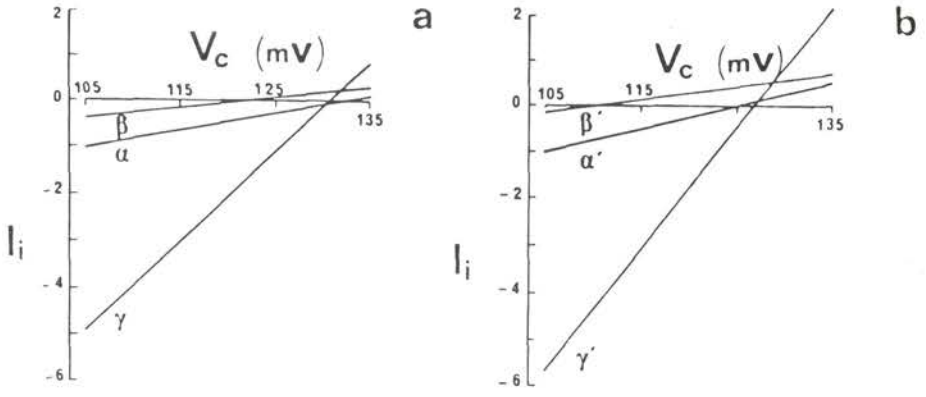



**Fig. 11.** Dependence of $f_v$ and $f_g$ on the two series resistances $R_{sd}$ (a) and $R_{sc}$ (b) for $l/\lambda_p^o = 0.2$, 0.4 and 0.6. $R_{sd}$ is expressed relatively to the passive membrane resistance $R_{mp}^o$.

and $f_g$ with alterations in the two series resistances $R_{sd}$ and $R_{sc}$ are shown in Fig. 11 (a and b). An increase in either $R_{sd}$ or $R_{sc}$ increases $f_v$ and decreases $f_g$. Thus the series resistances tend to reduce the errors caused by the other parameters in both determinations of reversal potential and conductance. This compensation is due to opposite effects of longitudinal gradient and series resistances on voltage uniformity. Such a fact has been already pointed out by Ramon et al. (1975) though they did not simultaneously study the two effects on current-voltage relationships. The model shows that both series resistances increase the equivalent isolation factor $S_{eq}$ (Eq. 12) and furthermore that $R_{sd}$ extends the length constant $\lambda_p$. Both effects tend to improve the measurement conditions.

d) *Applications to drug effects*

To compare with the experimental results reported in Fig. 4 the effects of drugs that alter inward membrane conductance were simulated assuming they do not modify the true reversal potential. While the inhibitory effect of cyanide was maximal within 20 min, the stimulatory effect of adrenaline was quasi instantatenous. Two series of $I$—$V$ curves obtained for two electrotonic distances are reported (Fig. 12). As parameters other than $G_{ma}$ were also influenced by the drugs




| | Curve | $\frac{R_{is}}{R_{is}^{\circ}}$ | S | $\frac{R_i}{R_i^{\circ}}$ | $\frac{R_{mp}}{R_{mp}^{\circ}}$ | $\frac{G_{ma}}{G_{ma}^{\circ}}$ | $V_N$ | $\frac{G_i}{G_i^{\circ}}$ | $V_{rev}$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | mV | | mV |
| a $l/\lambda_p^{\circ} = 0.4$ | α | 1.0 | 0.90 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 160 | 1.0 | 132 |
| | β | 1.2 | 0.88 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 0.4 | – | 0.6 | 122 |
| | γ | 1.2 | 0.88 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 10.0 | – | 5.1 | 131 |
| b $l/\lambda_p^{\circ} = 0.6$ | α′ | 1.0 | 0.90 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 160 | 1.0 | 125 |
| | β′ | 1.2 | 0.88 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 0.3 | – | 0.6 | 111 |
| | γ′ | 1.2 | 0.88 | 0.5 | 1.5 | 9.0 | – | 5.2 | 127 |
| | | | | | | real | | estimated | |

**Fig. 12.** Simulations of the effects of cyanide ($\beta$ and $\beta'$) and adrenaline ($\gamma$ and $\gamma'$) on the estimated values of reversal potential $V_{rev}$ and maximal conductance $G_i$ of slow inward current ($\alpha$ and $\alpha'$: initial conditions) for two values of $l/\lambda_p^{\circ}$: 0.4 (a) and 0.6 (b). $I_i$ in arbitrary unit. In the Table are listed the values of the selected parameters used in the simulation. The real value of revesal potential, $V_N$, was constant and the relative variations of maximal conductance, $G_{ma}/G_{ma}^{\circ}$, were chosen to obtain relative variations of the estimated conductance, $G_i$, $G_i^{\circ}$, close to those observed experimentally.

and the duration of the experiment, their variations in Fig. 12 were also included in the simulation (see Table 1). Series resistances were not taken into account since the diameter of the preparations we used were close to 80 μm for which we have shown that the effect of diffuse series resistance can be neglected, and we suppose the common series resistance was electronically compensated.

Assuming $l/\lambda_p^{\circ}$ to be respectively 0.4 (Fig. 12a) and 0.6 (Fig. 12b), a 40% decrease in $G_i$ during simulation of CN effects is obtained by decreasing $G_{ma}$ by 60 or 70% respectively. This occurs together with a diminution of 10 and 14 mV of $V_{rev}$. These values are in the range of those observed in Fig. 4 and reported by others (Nargeot et al. 1978; Kohlhardt and Mnich 1978; Ventura-Clapier and Vassort 1980).

**Table 1.** Comparison of the correction factors for the reversal potential $f_v$ and maximal conductance $f_g$ of the slow inward current obtained for three test-gap lengths with the unidimensional model without or with a diffuse series-resistance and with the radial model considering three different radii of the preparation.

| | Unidimensional model | | | | Radial model | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | $R_{sd}=0$ | | $R_{sd}=580\ \Omega cm^2$ | | $A=20\times10^{-4}$ cm | | $A=40\times10^{-4}$ cm | | $A=80\times10^{-4}$ cm | |
| $l\ \mu m$ | $f_v$ | $f_g$ | $f_v$ | $f_g$ | $f_v$ | $f_g$ | $f_v$ | $f_g$ | $f_v$ | $f_g$ |
| 300 | 0.79 | 1.82 | 0.83 | 1.43 | 0.78 | 1.83 | 0.79 | 1.62 | 0.83 | 1.30 |
| 200 | 0.83 | 1.54 | 0.87 | 1.26 | 0.83 | 1.60 | 0.84 | 1.44 | 0.88 | 1.17 |
| 100 | 0.87 | 1.35 | 0.91 | 1.11 | 0.87 | 1.48 | 0.88 | 1.33 | 0.92 | 1.09 |

Therefore the apparent diminution of $V_{rev}$ should not necessarily be attributed to an increase in the internal calcium concentration. On simulating the addition of adrenaline to cyanide $V_{rev}$ approximatively recovers its value in Ringer solution if $G_{ma}$ increased by 9 or 10 fold, an increase necessary to account for the 5 fold measured increase in $G_i$. Since experimentally the values of $V_{rev}$ are 5 to 10 mV higher in adrenaline than in Ringer a real decrease of the intracellular Ca concentration might be considered in this case.

## Discussion

Although a unidimensional cable has often been used to model the electrical behavior of multicellular preparations (Tomita 1966; McGuigan and Tsien, in McGuigan 1974; Jack et al. 1975; Ramon et al. 1975), such representations are not sufficient to account for the transient charging of membrane capacitance, since during that period the extracellular resistance to radial current flow is the major resistive determinant of the membrane capacitive response. As shown by Jakobsson et al. (1975), a distribution of extracellular resistances and membrane capacitances in the cross section leads then to a much more realistic representation. A model concerned solely with the influence of radial non-uniformities upon the current records, obtained with a double sucrose gap, is justified for studying the capacitive transient and the fast sodium current in a multicellular preparation (Jakobsson et al. 1975; Haas and Brommundt 1980) but may be inadequate to represent other slower or delayed currents. The present study shows that, at least during the slow inward current, the influence of longitudinal non-uniformity upon the voltage clamp records becomes predominant in a double sucrose gap set up. The particular application we have had in mind is to determine the reversal potential and maximal conductance of the slow inward current for cardiac

preparations. Comparison between results obtained with a classical unidimensional model and with a model accounting for both radial and longitudinal variations of potential leads to the following conclusions: i) radial voltage non-uniformity during the slow inward current becomes significant only for preparations with large radius ($A > 40$ μm for frog heart), ii) for thin preparations, a classical single unidimensional model is sufficient to describe the electrical behavior of the preparation, iii) the addition of an adequate diffuse series resistance to this model makes it applicable to simulate radial non-uniformity of larger preparations.

The most important errors in the determinations of $V_{rev}$ and $G_i$ arise from longitudinal non-uniformity of potential in the test gap (Fig. 6) and from poor isolation in the sucrose gaps (Fig. 1 and 9 a—b). Optimal conditions can be found only by decreasing the test gap length. Nevertheless, with $l/\lambda_p = 0.2$ most of our curves still show some sensitivity to variations of specific parameters and a non negligible error remains in the determinations of both $V_{rev}$ and $G_i$. Our results confirm and extend the works of McGuigan and Tsien (in McGuigan 1974) and De Boer and Wolfrat (1979). Our correction factor $f_g$, for an inward going conductance, should be compared to the correction factor q of the first authors for the outward going conductance, for which they showed an optimal electrotonic distance of about 0.9.

The apparent reversal potential of inward currents has long been considered as that potential at which there was no difference between the applied and the true membrane potential notwithstanding the presence of a series resistance (Ramon et al. 1975). However, Attwell and Cohen (1977) suggested that an increase in the outward conductances, attributable to $G_{mp}$, could increase the apparent reversal potential of the related current. In both our model (Fig. 7) and our experimental observations (Fig. 2) a decrease in $G_{ma}$ or an increase in $G_{mp}$ reduces the apparent reversal potential. This results from an enhancement of the longitudinal non-uniformity which is the main cause of the underestimate of $V_{rev}$. Our experimental and computed data (Fig. 3 and 11) also show that the series resistance (independent of capacitance charge) alters $V_{rev}$. This is due to the cable properties of the preparation and the imperfect isolation of the central compartment by the two sucrose gaps. To test the second factor, Ramon et al. (1975) introduced in their model a shunt resistance, accounting for the leak current in the sucrose gap through which the current is applied. The lack of effect on the reversal potential together with the increase in the maximal conductance (of the sodium current) are compatible with the above variations in $f_v$ and $f_g$ induced by altering $S_2$ (Fig. 1 and 9b). The direct effects of series resistances on $V_{rev}$ are negligible because the magnitude of the slow conductance is small (Reuter and Scholz 1977). However the unidimensional model shows that in the case of large series resistances the effects of variations in other parameters are attenuated while they are amplified with preparations of small diameter in which the specific series resistances tend

towards zero. Furthermore the effects of series resistances in relation with the membrane capacitance may also be neglected. First the time constant of slow channel activation is large, compared with the time constant of capacitance charge and the above protocols allow to bring into comparison currents elicited by the same voltage steps applied in different conditions. Secondly, the radial non-uniformity induced by membrane capacitance is small at peak activation of slow inward channel (Kass et al. 1979; Schoenberg and Fozzard 1979); indeed, this factor is even smaller with the double sucrose gap than with the microelectrode method, since we show that the radial component is less important. Thus the addition of a membrane capacitance to the model is not required.

One inference of the present study is that, with the double sucrose gap voltage clamp method, the reversal potential $V_{rev}$ of the slow inward current is underestimated whereas the maximal steady state conductance $G_i$ is overestimated. The relatively low experimental value for the reversal potential in cardiac tissues, by comparison to the value calculated from Nernst potential for the $Ca^{2+}$ ions, may not be due only to imperfect selectivity of the slow inward channel, as suggested by Reuter and Scholz (1977). Other implications of the present work concern the variations of $V_{rev}$ and $G_i$ recorded during an experiment which may be the results of modifications in other parameters than the internal ionic concentration and channel conductance. Indeed any alteration in the passive characteristics of a preparation, induced by drugs or duration of experiment, will modify the apparent active conductance and reversal potential. To be valid a physiological interpretation requires the control of all electrical and morphological parameters of preparations set in the experimental apparatus.

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## Glossary

*Unidimensional model*

| | |
|---|---|
| $x$ | longitudinal coordinate (cm). |
| $l$, $l_s$ | length of test, sucrose compartments (cm). |
| $R_i$, $r_i$ | intracellular resistivity in test compartment ($\Omega$.cm), ($\Omega$.cm$^{-1}$). |
| $R_{is(1,2)}$, $r_{is(1,2)}$ | intracellular resistivity in sucrose (1,2) compartments ($\Omega$.cm), ($\Omega$.cm$^{-1}$). |

| | |
|---|---|
| $r_{s(1,2)}$ | extracellular resistivity in sucrose (1,2) compartments ($\Omega.cm^{-1}$). |
| $S_{(1,2)} = r_{s(1,2)}/(r_{s(1,2)} + r_{is(1,2)})$ | isolation factors of sucrose (1,2) compartments (dimensionless). |
| $R_{m(p,a)}$, $r_{m(p,a)}$ | membrane resistance (passive, active) in test compartment ($\Omega.cm^2$), ($\Omega.cm$). |
| $R_{ms}$, $r_{ms}$ | membrane resistance in sucrose compartments ($\Omega.cm^2$), ($\Omega.cm$). |
| $R_{sd}$, $r_{sd}$ | diffuse series resistance ($\Omega.cm^2$), ($\Omega.cm$). |
| $R_{sc}$ | common series resistance ($\Omega$). |
| $\lambda_p = [(r_{mp} + r_{sd})/r_1]^{1/2}$ | length constant in passive state in test compartment (cm). |
| $\lambda_a$ (Eq.13) | length constant in active state in test compartment (cm). |
| $\lambda_{s(1,2)} = [r_{ms}/(r_{is(1,2)} + r_{s(1,2)})]^{1/2}$ | length constant in sucrose (1,2) compartments (cm). |
| $v_i$, $v_o$, $v_m$ | intracellular, extracellular and transmembrane potential (mV). |
| $V_0$, $V_l$ | transmembrane potential at both sides of the test compartment (mV). |
| $v_{mp}$, $v_{ma}$ | transmembrane potential in passive and active state in test compartment (mV). |
| $I$ ($I_a$ or $I_p$) | total current, active or passive (mA). |
| $I_i$ (Eq.18) | net slow inward current (mA). |
| $G_i$, $G_{ma} (= 1/r_{ma})$ | apparent and true total maximal inward conductance ($\Omega^{-1}$). |
| $V_{rev}$, $V_N$ | apparent reversal potential or Nernst potential of slow inward current (mV). |
| $S_{eq}$ (Eq.12) | equivalent isolation factor (dimensionless). |
| $f_v$ (Eq.19), $f_g$ (Eq.20) | correction factors for the reversal potential or the maximal conductance (dimensionless). |

*Radial model*

| | |
|---|---|
| $R_e$, $\varrho_e$ | effective and specific extracellular resistivity in test compartment ($\Omega.cm$). |
| $A$, $a$ | radius of the trabeculae, of one fiber (cm). |
| $d$ | distance between two adjacent fibers (cm). |
| $r$ | distance to the center of the bundle in radial direction (cm). |

*Intermediate operators*

| | |
|---|---|
| $\Phi$ | $= v_i - v_o$. |
| $\Psi$ | $= v_i + \beta v_o$. |
| $\beta$ | ratio of intra- to extracellular resistivity in the different compartments (dimensionless). |
| $\frac{1}{\lambda_{(1,2)}}$ | $= \frac{1 - S_{(1,2)}}{\lambda_{s(1,2)}} \coth (l_s/\lambda_{s(1,2)})$. |
| $F(\lambda)$ | $= \lambda\left(\frac{1}{\lambda_1} + \frac{1}{\lambda_2}\right) \cosh (l/\lambda) + \left(1 - \frac{\lambda^2}{\lambda_1 \lambda_2}\right) \sinh (l/\lambda)$. |
| $G(\lambda)$ | $= \frac{\lambda}{\lambda_2} [\cosh (l/\lambda) - 1] + \sinh (l/\lambda)$. |

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