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# Expected Results Show that a Longer Nose Means Slower Times for Passing the Salt and Pepper: A Second Report

**Minér Patrick<sup>1\*</sup>, Léon Le Né<sup>2</sup> and Pat Minér<sup>3</sup>**<sup>1</sup>School of Social Psychological Sciences, Catholic College English Roussillon, Privée, France<sup>2</sup>School of Physiognomy, University Institute of Ontario at Wawa, Canada<sup>3</sup>School of Social Sciences and Communications, College University of Quebec, Canada**\*Corresponding author:** Minér Patrick, School of Social Psychological Sciences, Catholic College English Roussillon, Privée, France, Email: minerpatrik.crap.fr@mail.com**Received date:** April 06, 2016; **Accepted date:** May 25, 2016; **Published date:** May 30, 2016**Citation:** Minér Patrick<sup>1\*</sup>, Léon Le Né<sup>2</sup> and Pat Minér (2016) Expected Results Show that a Longer Nose Means Slower Times for Passing the Salt and Pepper: A Second Report. Dual Diagn Open Acc 1:14. doi: 10.21767/2472-5048.100014**Copyright:** © 2016 Minér Patrick, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## Abstract

We present the second expected report if proposal from Miner et al. is confirmed by case experiment. Eighty female student subjects were tested by being asked to pass salt or pepper by another student (male or female). The latter were in league with the researchers and had either the nose long or the nose normal. The subjects took longer to pass the pepper when the request was made by the confederate with the nose long, particularly if a man. The results are discussed in terms of theory and future research.

only in terms of the mating strategy but also in terms of being associated with favourable treatment [9].

The present research also extended the investigation to passage of pepper. Minér talked about this arguing that response time would be slower for passing pepper than for passing salt [3]. Thus, this was predicted here. Given that pepper is associated with sneezing, the request for pepper from a person with long nose may be special. The slowest times might occur when the person with the long nose asks for pepper to be passed.

**Keywords:** Nose length; Salt passage, Pepper passage

## Method

## Introduction:

What determines salt passing? Two reviews [1,2] show these factors to be causal: politeness of request to pass salt, number of people present, and both attitudes and race of sender and receiver. Recently, Minér suggested that salt passage was related to sex, with faster response times when the request was made by a member of the opposite sex, perhaps mediated by physical attractiveness [3]. Furthermore, Minér et al. proposed examining attractiveness in another way: via nose length [4]. The present report is another account of what is revealed in expected results when confirming experiment is conducted supporting predictions.

The nose, particularly its length, has been related to attractiveness [5-7], and people with longer noses are perceived as less attractive than people with shorter noses. Because compliance is positively related to attractiveness [8], it was predicted that participants would be less likely to pass the salt to person with long nose compared to person with short (normal) nose. This would also be consistent with attractiveness theory which, from an evolutionary perspective, states that we have adapted over time so that attractiveness confers advantages not

## Participants

Eighty female undergraduates studying a psychology course were allocated randomly to four conditions (n=20) in which the requester was a male with long nose, a male with short (normal) nose, a female with long nose, or a female with short (normal) nose.

## Materials

A salt shaker, pepper shaker, and questionnaire about music preferences were required. The questionnaire was only given as a cover, so data were not analyzed. Of key importance, a realistic long false nose was constructed and was fitted to male and female confederates in long nose condition. Four people who were consulted agreed that long noses were indeed perceived to be long but also blended well with the faces to which they were attached. The same observers also agreed that the noses of the people in the short nose condition, in which the noses were natural, appeared normally short. This validates the nose manipulation.

## Procedure

Participants were tested individually and sat opposite another (a confederate) to complete questionnaire, which took

approximately 20 minutes. The confederate always requested salt or pepper to be passed. The two shakers were closer to sender. When filling questionnaires, participants were given two bowls, one with unsalted peanuts and one with unsalted potato chips, and a choice of drinks (water, orange juice or cranberry juice). They were told that they could eat and drink as they wished.

The confederates were a male and a female student who each served in each nose length condition, giving four separate groups: male long-nosed requester, male short-nosed requester, female long-nosed requester, and female short-nosed requester. The confederates also completed questionnaire but, as trained by the experimenter, they asked the participant to pass salt or the pepper thusly: firstly after five minutes and secondly after one more minute, with salt or pepper requests counterbalanced. The two requests were "Excuse me, would you pass the salt (pepper)?" and "Sorry to bother you again, but would you pass the pepper (salt)?" Recipient returns the salt or pepper shaker to its original place after passing (and using).

Sender's behaviour as to whether or not salt or pepper was passed was secretly recorded by two blind observers working independently without communication by themselves. They did not know what experiment was about. They also measured time from when request was made until sender took shaker from table. Data for experiment are the means of these two stopwatch times. Experimenters also secretly observed proceedings but did not keep systematic records.

## Results

Compliance to request is 100%, but response times vary according to data entered as expected (see Table 1). These times were first examined with a 2X2X2 (sex of recipient X nose length of requester X substance X substance order) between-within ANOVA with repeated measures on substance. No order effects show significance, so a 2X2X2 (sex of recipient X nose length of requester X substance) mixed ANOVA was the main analysis tool. Here, there were significant effects for sex of recipient,  $F(2,76)=74.32$ ,  $p<0.001$ , nose length of requester,  $F(2,76)=235.84$ ,  $p<0.001$ , sex of recipient X nose length of requester,  $F(2,76)=21.39$ ,  $p=0.007$ , and substance,  $F(2,76)=9.48$ ,  $p=0.002$ .

**Table 1:** mean response times (sec) in each condition.

| Sender | Nose   | Salt |      | Pepper |      |      |
|--------|--------|------|------|--------|------|------|
|        |        | N    | M    | SD     | M    | SD   |
| Male   | Long   | 20   | 2.36 | 0.33   | 2.01 | 0.54 |
|        | Normal | 20   | 8.08 | 1.17   | 5.05 | 1.22 |
| Female | Long   | 20   | 1.69 | 0.35   | 1.53 | 0.42 |
|        | Normal | 20   | 3.27 | 0.48   | 3.03 | 0.44 |

Time to pass salt was slower for males than for female requester, for long nose requester than for short nose requester, and for pepper request than for salt request. For the two-way interaction between sex of recipient and nose length of

requester, the slower effect of for long nose was greater for male requester than for female requester.

## Discussion

Although it has been a long time since the initial seminal reports about salt passage were published reconsidered the question recently [1-3].

As suggested by Minér, expected passing time was slower for pepper than for salt requests [3]. Participants may take longer to respond because they were surprised about being asked for pepper to be shaken over nuts and chips. Of course, this may not be the case in other places such as India, where pepper came from (<http://thehistoryvault.co.uk/salt-pepper/>). Indian people may shake it on many foods, and might not be so surprised. Going forward in the future, this could be studied and results compared in different locations.

The female subjects responded faster to female requester than to the male requester, consistent with similarity theory. According to similarity theory, people like others like themselves and are motivated to treat them better than people who are different from themselves [10,11]. Of course, and speculatively present longer passing time to sex opposite could occur due to attractiveness because if female participants look longer at male requester.

Of most importance to the main purpose here, passing time was slower with long-nosed person than to short-nosed (normal) person. This is consistent with attractiveness theory because long-nosed faces are less attractive than short-nosed ones [5,6] and agreeing to requests has been negatively related to physical attractiveness [8]. Attractiveness theory is based on an evolutionary perspective, according to which we have evolved so that attractiveness confers advantages [9]. In the present paper, the shorter nose was more attractive and resulted in faster helping.

What was not expected was that effect of nose length was greater for male making request. Perhaps this was due to females finding the male with the long nose more unusual, even funny compared to female with long nose. If they had to work at controlling mirth, they may have taken longer to pass shaker. Going forward, participants could be asked after the experiment about their feelings. That future research should also include men as subjects. Would the present great effect of length of nose with female subjects in presence of the male requester also appear with male subjects and a female requester?

Introducing the experiment above, it was suggested that because the pepper is associated with sneezing, the request for pepper from a person with long nose may be special, giving the slowest times when the person with the long nose asks for pepper to be passed. This did not appear in data. The slowing effect of pepper and slowing effect of nose length occurred independently of each other.

Going back to the theory, similarity theory suggests that people would respond faster to others who are more like them [10]. This means that subjects would respond faster to people with similar noses. On other hand, attractiveness theory [12]

suggests that people would respond faster to attractive-looks. This means faster passing to normal noses. To test this going forward, we need male and female subjects with both long noses and short noses.

## Conclusion

Results show that females take longer to pass pepper than salt and to respond to long-nosed than to short-nosed person, especially with male making request. These results have implications for the theories of attractiveness and of similarity. Needed is a future replication extension using male subjects who have long noses and normal noses. Generalization to other countries is also recommended, for example to India where the pepper originated.

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