

Inconsistencies in Female Hair Color Preferences

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Abstract & Summary

Females have often been classified as the “choosier” sex. Research on the hair color preference of females has not yielded consistent results. Familiarity has been shown to influence what people find attractive. However, previous studies have not tested female preferences in other females and did not consider parental influences on hair color preference. Knowing the preferred hair color choice of a population would be beneficial to the multi-million-dollar cosmetology industry. We predicted that females would choose hair colors similar to their own, or their mothers’, as most attractive in other females. We also predicted that females would have boyfriends with hair colors similar to their fathers’. Both of these hypotheses are based on familiarity. Results indicated that females did not choose other females based on their own, nor their mother’s hair colors, and they did not select boyfriends with hair colors similar to their father’s. However, we determined that female choice in hair color matched the distribution of hair color in the sample population. Thus, this lead us to infer that female hair color choice may be influenced by what is common in the population. Female choice varied by geographic region. Brunette, blonde, and red hair were chosen in the same frequency that they were available in each geographical region in the USA surveyed. The frequencies in which hair colors are available in the environment is the only variable that is related to female choice in hair color. Females do not fit models predicted in psychology based on familiarity.

Problems with Previous studies:

- Did not look at females’ preference in other females
- Had low sample sizes
- Did not distinguish between the dyed and natural hair colors
- Lack of parental hair color histories
- Lack of consistent results
- Lack of picture use

Objectives:

- Identify factors influencing hair color preference in females

Hypotheses:

- 1) Females will choose the hair color most similar to their own hair color
 - if not, their mother’s hair color
- 2) Females will have boyfriends with hair colors similar to their father’s
- 3) Female hair color choice will vary by geographic location

Methods

- Data collection using a 14-question survey
- Mid-sized, private, southern university
 - with a large out-of-state population.
- N=2005 participants
 - 699 males and 1213 females
 - Sex ratio 1:1.74
- Other questions included:
 - ethnicity
 - current/natural hair color
 - boyfriend’s hair color
 - parent’s current/natural hair color
 - region from

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Citations

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Results

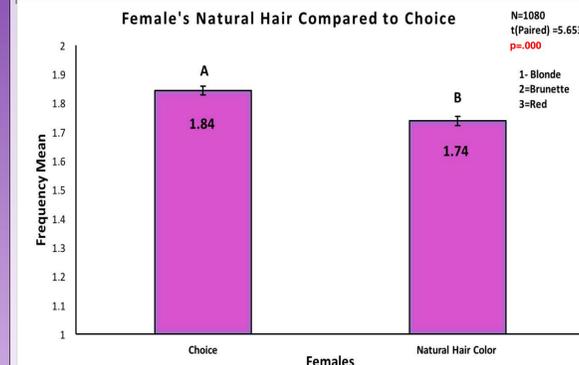


Fig. 1

- Females preferred hair colors different from their own.

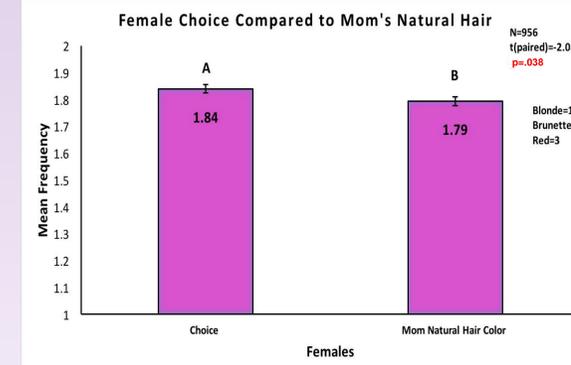


Fig. 2

- Females preferred hair colors different from their mothers’ hair color.

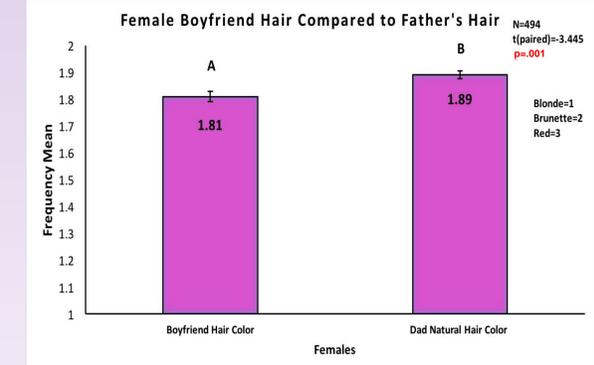


Fig. 3

- Females’ boyfriends had hair colors different from their fathers’ hair color.

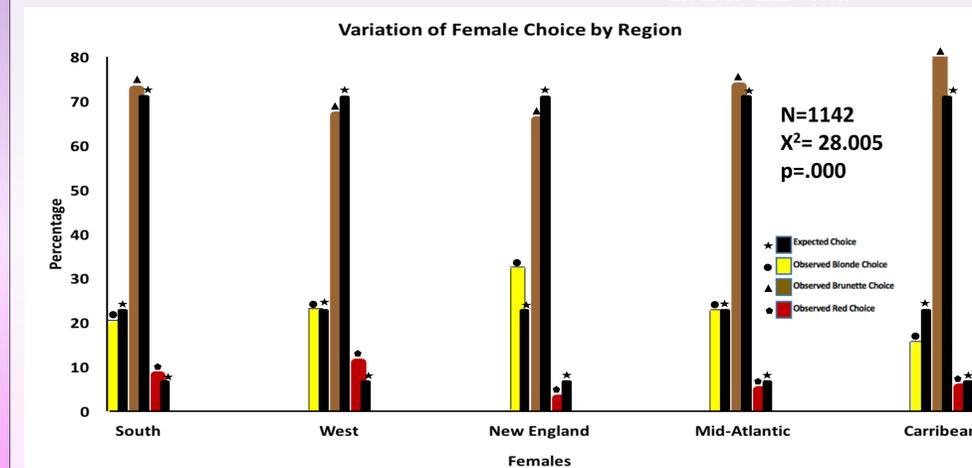


Fig. 4

- Region did influence female choice.
- They choose **blonde** more than expected in New England, and **brunette** more than expected in the South.

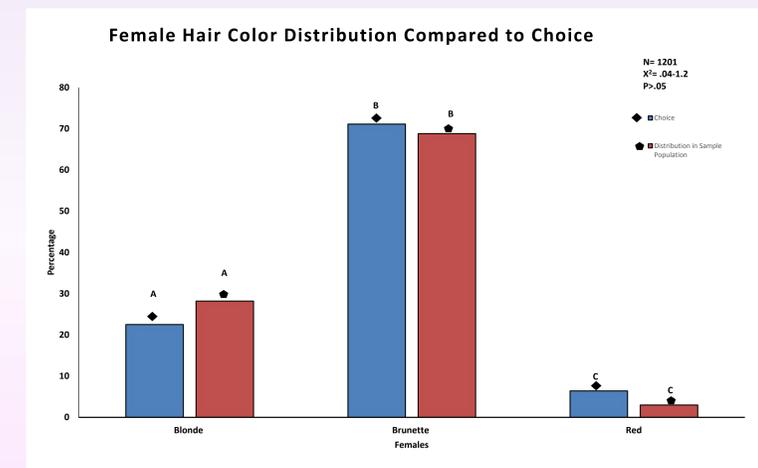


Fig. 5

- Female preferred hair color followed the population distribution.
 - Females preferred **brunette** (71.1%); population (68.8%)
 - Females preferred **blonde** (22.5%); population (28.2%)
 - Females preferred **red** (6.4%); population (3%)



Conclusion and Hypotheses:

1. Females will choose the hair color most similar to their own hair color, if not, their mother’s hair color
 - Not accepted
 - Females chose differently than themselves and their mothers.
2. Females will have significant others with hair colors similar to their father’s
 - Not accepted
 - Females did not choose hair colors similar to their father's hair color.
3. Females choice will vary by region.
 - Accepted
 - Female preference is based on population distribution.

Big Picture:

Females:

1. do not suffer from the Oedipus complex
2. do not have boyfriends that look like their fathers
3. do not prefer women who look like their mothers

Female preference:

1. based on distribution of hair colors around them.
2. makes it easy to predict what products a hair salon should carry based on geographic region