



Disgust Levels Associated with Moisture Content of Seen and Unseen Objects



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Background

- Disgust is a feeling that can be caused by a multitude of cues, however little research has identified the nuanced sensory cues that initiate the emotion.
- Disgust is an important evolutionary emotion that facilitates recognition of objects and situations that could lead to the risk of infection and to drive towards hygienic behavior (Curtis, 2011).
- Other research on disgust has also been shown to be closely associated with eating disorders, symptoms of schizophrenia, hypochondriasis, height phobia and claustrophobia, and sexual dysfunction in women (Davey, 2011).
- We decided to expand the limited knowledge on the sense of tactility and its relationship with the feeling of physical disgust rather than moral disgust.

Current Study

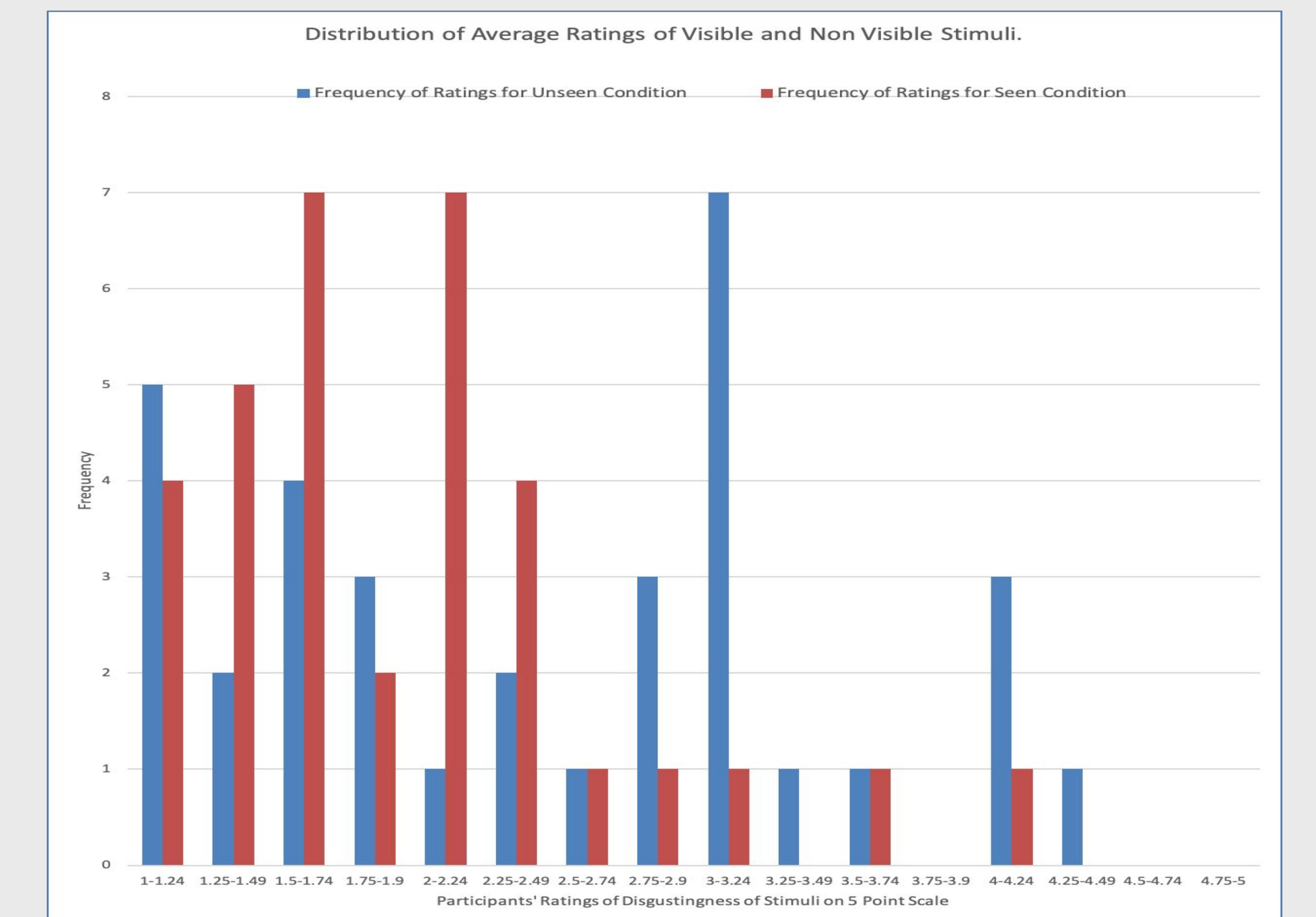
- We hypothesized for Study 1 that a higher level of moisture in unknown objects will cause an increased amount of disgust when it's touched than it would if it had a lower level of moisture.
- We hypothesized for Study 2 that added visual cues and the visibility of the objects will result in a lower level of disgust, no matter the moisture content.
- In both studies, participants touched different stimuli that varied in moisture content, then rated their level of disgust on a 5 point scale.

Methods

- Sample taken from two classes on campus on two separate days
- Two separate tables.
- First table, 2 trifolds with 2 holes per board
- Second table, no visual barrier
- Variety of objects all of them wet.
 - Sponge, Oats, Bread, Sand, and Cotton Balls
- Rated on a scale from 1-5
- COVID-19 precautions; 6 feet apart, sanitation, and face masks

Results

- Subsequent analyses using two-tailed *t* tests indicate that disgust ratings were significantly different by condition with higher ratings of non visible stimulus (M= 2.45, SD= 0.98) versus visible stimuli (M=1.96, SD=0.69), $t(34) 4.193, p < 0.0002$, Cohen's $d = 0.56$. These data strongly support our hypothesis that non visible stimuli were perceived as more disgusting than visible stimuli.
- Results from Study 1 showed that participants rated stimuli with a higher moisture content as more disgusting, compared to those with a lower moisture content.
- Results from Study 2 showed that when visual cues were added the disgust levels decreased in participants, supporting the hypothesis that visual cues decrease disgust.



Conclusions

- By manipulating the tactical cues between wet and dry objects, we were able to determine that wet objects were found more disgusting than dry objects.
- We have concluded that moisture content and visibility of objects is significantly related to disgust levels.
- It is important to be able to understand this feeling because it is a common emotion in every human being.
- Detecting what elevates these disgust levels could provide more research about how we can manage the suffering that this emotion can cause.
- While these results are significant, there is not a great amount of research regarding the feeling of disgust, and researchers should take further action to continue finding benefits of disgust knowledge.