

Study shows people can guess personality via body odor

December 5 2011, by Bob Yirka

(Medical Xpress) -- An interesting study conducted by Polish researchers Agnieszka Sorokowska, Piotr Sorokowski and Andrzej Szmajke, of the University of Wroclaw, has found that people are able to guess a person's type of personality to a reasonable extent, simply by smelling them, or their clothes. The team did some testing with volunteers, as they describe in their study published in the *European Journal of Personality*, and found that people could guess another's personality through odors at least as well as they could when shown videos of people in action.

To find out just how well people can gauge [personality](#) types through smelling odors given off by other people's bodies, the team asked 60 people, half men and half women to wear plain white t-shirts while they slept, for three nights in a row. Each was asked to not use perfumes, soap or deodorants and to not smoke or eat or drink things that affect [body odor](#), such as onions or garlic. Each of the participants were also given personality tests before the t-shirt wearing part of the study began, to asses personality types.

At the end of the three days, the t-shirts were all collected and put into non-clear, labeled plastic bags. Then, two hundred volunteers, half men and half women, were enlisted to sniff the bags and offer their opinions on personality type based on nothing but the odors wafting from the bags. Each volunteer sniffed just six bags to avoid becoming inured presumably and each bag was sniffed by twenty sniffers to get a large enough sample to avoid coincidence.

After all was said and done, those doing the sniffing were able to guess whether the person who had emitted the odor was anxious, outgoing or dominant at least as well as people in a previous study had been able to do watching videos of people interacting with others. Also interesting was that the sniffers were particularly adept at picking up dominant personality types from odors that came from someone of the opposite gender.

While clearly not at a hundred percent, the researchers indicate the study shows that there is something going on regarding how much a person sweats and under what conditions as well as a correlation between the components in sweat and personality traits and that other people are able to pick up on those differences when in their vicinity. Thus, the results are actually two-fold. The first is that people apparently give off personality clues when sweating, and second, that people are able to not only smell the differences in people, but make judgments about them based on what they smell.

More information: Does Personality Smell? Accuracy of Personality Assessments Based on Body Odour, Article first published online: 12 OCT 2011. DOI: 10.1002/per.848

Abstract

People are able to assess some personality traits of others based on videotaped behaviour, short interaction or a photograph. In our study, we investigated the relationship between body odour and the Big Five personality dimensions and dominance. Sixty odour samples were assessed by 20 raters each. The main finding of the presented study is that for a few personality traits, the correlation between self-assessed personality of odour donors and judgments based on their body odour was above chance level. The correlations were strongest for extraversion (.36), neuroticism (.34) and dominance (.29). Further analyses showed that self–other agreement in assessments of neuroticism slightly differed

between sexes and that the ratings of dominance were particularly accurate for assessments of the opposite sex.

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