

SMELLINESS AND PERSONALITY: DOMINANCE

Research about the mutual influence of smell and self
compiled by Nan Swift, Improbable Research staff



Body odor researcher Agnieszka Sorokowska. Drawing by Nan Swift, Improbable Research staff.

Personality Clue Strength: Appearance or Odor?

“Seeing or Smelling? Assessing Personality on the Basis of Different Stimuli,” Agnieszka Sorokowska, *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2013, pp. 175-179. The author, at the University of Wroclaw, Poland, explains:

This study examines whether people can accurately assess personality on the basis of facial images and body odor and whether attractiveness influences these relationships.... Naive observers assessed neuroticism and dominance at above-chance levels based on body odor, and they assessed extraversion (and in some cases, neuroticism) at above-chance levels based on either facial images alone or body odor and facial images presented together. The accuracy differed depending on the sex of the targets and the raters. In addition, facial and body odor attractiveness predicted the targets’ personalities and the assessments of their personalities.

Some People Can Smell Your Personality Traits, Maybe

“Does Personality Smell? Accuracy of Personality Assessments Based on Body Odour,” Agnieszka Sorokowska, Piotr Sorokowski, and Andrzej Szmajke, *European Journal of Personality*, vol. 26, no. 5, 2012, pp. 496-503. (Thanks to Hugh Henry for bringing this to our attention.) The authors, at the University of Wroclaw and at Opole University, Poland, explain:

Odour donors were given 100% cotton white T-shirts laundered in delicately scented washing powder... and were asked to wear them for three consecutive nights on one scheduled weekend.... 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.... Further analyses showed that... the ratings of dominance were particularly accurate for assessments of the opposite sex.

Table 1. Correlations between self-reported traits of donors and judgments based on scent

| Trait | All ratings of all scents (N = 60) | Women rating all scents (N = 60) | Men rating all scents (N = 60) | Women rating men (n = 30) | Men rating women (n = 30) | Men rating men (n = 30) | Women rating women (n = 30) |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Age | .24* | .18 | .18 | .11 | .19 | .18 | .26 |
| Neuroticism | .34** | .39** | .15 | .46** | .12 | .17 | .24 |
| Extraversion | .36** | .31** | .28** | .17 | .24 | .16 | .30* |
| Openness to experience | .01 | .00 | .00 | .18 | .05 | -.07 | -.10 |
| Conscientiousness | -.01 | .02 | -.07 | .11 | -.01 | -.12 | .15 |
| Agreeableness | -.03 | .03 | -.04 | -.26 | -.20 | -.01 | .31* |
| Dominance | .29** | .19 | .16 | .30* | .30* | .03 | .08 |

One-tailed test of significance. Significant values are stated in bold.
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Detail from the study “Does Personality Smell? Accuracy of Personality Assessments Based on Body Odour.”

Does Personality Smell? Accuracy of Personality Assessments Based on Body Odour

AGNIESZKA SOROKOWSKA^{1*}, PIOTR SOROKOWSKI¹ and ANDRZEJ SZMAJKE²

¹Institute of Psychology, University of Wroclaw, Wroclaw, Poland

²Institute of Psychology, Opole University, Opole, Poland

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