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Conceptual Review of Smell Communication

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Abstract: ***Recent evidence suggests that human odor communication may have particular relevance for family scholars. This paper examines the role of odor communication in kin recognition, parental attachment, mate selection, and procreation. Evidence for odor communication in each of these areas is critically presented. Weaknesses in the current literature are addressed and the implications and potential research avenues for family scholars are outlined. Nonhuman animals communicate their emotional states through changes in body odor.***

1. Introduction

Communication is the exchanging of information by speaking, writing or using some other medium. Non- verbal communication between people is communication through sending and receiving wordless clues. It includes the use of visual clues such as body language, distance and physical environments / appearance of voice and of touch.

Nonverbal communication comes in many forms and odor is one of those. While less explored it still matters. It's the olfactics of nonverbal communication. The sense of smell is an important but poorly understood factor in human communication. It is hard to define smells and to talk about them, but they can send important chemical cues to those around us. Other areas of nonverbal communication like movements, distance and facial expressions are well covered in literature and on the internet. The matter of smell and scent is less covered, and less distinct too. But there are some interesting findings to share:

"A nauseating odor is repulsive; while a cinnamon aroma is inviting to many."

2. Conceptual Review

a) Effects
It is thought that smells can affect us at very basic levels, such as moods, emotions, mate selection, immune system health, endocrine system responses and overall health. Some researchers believe that much of olfactory feedback is done at an instinctive level and bypasses conscious thought.

b) Memory
Smell is thought to be the sense that triggers memories most effectively. Determining which smells have positive ramifications for most people can affect nonverbal communication.

c) Trait Indicators
Fragrance experts have researched which basic smells consistently convey personality traits. Intelligence is signaled by cedar, orange, lime, cinnamon and peppermint. Kindness is indicated by vanilla, jasmine and lemongrass. Pepper, marjoram, basil and tangerine denote humor and playfulness. Safety is conveyed by orange, sandalwood and frankincense.

d) Cultural Differences
In the United States, personal odors are masked by fragrances and frequent bathing. In many other cultures, such as European and Arabic, body odors are thought of as natural. In Asian cultures, frequent bathing is important, and Westerners are considered to not bathe enough.

e) Personal Odors
According to Michael Argyle in "Social Interaction," although humans emit signals through perspiration that indicate emotional arousal, Westerners minimize these odors and keep enough social distance away from each other so that these clues are diminished.

Exposure to fear and disgust sweat also tainted women's perceptions during the visual search task, altering their eye scanning and sniffing behavior in accordance with the specific emotion.

Dr Gun said: 'Importantly, the women were not aware of these effects and there was no relationship between the effects observed and how pleasant or intense the women judged the stimuli to be.

'These findings are important because they contradict the common assumption that human communication occurs exclusively through language and visual cues.'

He said that the findings suggest that chemo signals act outside of conscious awareness.

This could explain the type of 'emotional contagion' often found in dense crowds.

Fear signals, for example, not only help to warn others about environmental danger, they are also associated with behaviors that confer a survival advantage through sensory acquisition.

Research has shown that taking on a fearful expression (opening the eyes) leads us to breathe in more through our noses, enhances our perception, and accelerates our eye movements so that we can spot potentially dangerous targets more quickly.

Disgust signals, on the other hand, warn others to avoid potentially noxious chemicals and are associated with sensory rejection, causing us to lower our eyebrows and wrinkle our noses.

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3. Conclusion

Humans can communicate emotions through smell, researchers say that:-

An experiment found that emotions of fear and disgust could be passed on through sweat.

Sweat coming from individuals displaying that emotion triggered the same emotion in those who smelt it, reports journal Psychological Science. Smell communicates in all contexts of human communication.

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