HUMAN BODY ODOUR COMPOSITES ARE NOT MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN INDIVIDUAL SAMPLES

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INTRODUCTION

Previous research has shown that composite facial images are perceived as more attractive compared to individual images. This is thought to reflect averageness which may cue to heterozygosity, a predictor of a pathogen resistance (1,2). Similarly, there is some evidence that preferences for olfactory odours might be linked to heterozygosity in major histocompatibility complex (MHC) genes which play role in pathogen recognition (3). However, it is not known, whether olfactory analogues to facial composites would show similar effect on attractiveness ratings.

AIMS

To test whether blends of individual body odours are rated as more attractive compared to the individual odours

METHODS

Odour stimuli:
- odour samples obtained from 26 men and 12 women (normal contraception users - to avoid fluctuations in body odour across the menstrual cycle)
- 2 days of donors’ “cery” (refrain from spicy food, alcohol, shower gels, perfumes, demanding physical activities, sexual intercourse) prior to odour sampling
- 12 hours of sampling on cotton pads from both armpits
- blends of either 2- (N = 19) or 4- (N = 9) composite body odour samples

Rating session:
- individual samples assessed by 56 men and 58 women
- composite samples rated by 50 men and 46 women
- ratings of 1) pleasantness, 2) attractiveness and 3) intensity on a 7-point scale

Statistical analysis:
- comparison of mean ratings of the composites with the mean ratings of the individual samples
- analysis by repeated measure ANOVA and bivariate correlations

RESULTS

Figure 1

Main effects (+SE) of odour attractiveness for individual samples (white columns) and ratings of blends of 2:composites (red columns) and 4:composites (3:composite column) body odour samples.

Figure 2

Positive correlation between calculated mean attractiveness rating of individual samples and blend of composites body odour samples.

DISCUSSION

We found no significant differences between mean ratings of composite odour blends and individual odours. This effect is not restricted to upper or lower part of the distribution; similar pattern appeared as in overall sample. Further, positive correlation between ratings of composite odour blends and individual odours was found. Our results indicate that, in contrast to faces, composite odours are not rated as more attractive. Odour blends retain similar hedonic perceptual qualities as individual odours suggesting emergent effects in body odour blends are limited. Moreover, the exact mechanism of perception of the body odour blending is currently not well understood.

REFERENCES


http://www.mcoevolve.com/refs/Jitka-Fialova/