

# Does Our Personality Affect Our Level of Attractiveness?

May 26, 2011

Part of what determines how much success you will have in the dating world is whether you have a good sense of whether people find you attractive. A new study, which will be published in an upcoming issue of *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, finds that certain personality traits contribute to being a good judge of whether someone else thinks you're worth meeting again.

The study is one of a series to come out of a big speed-dating experiment held in Berlin about five years ago. "Most of the prior research had worked with hypothetical scenarios, where people are asked by a questioner, 'What kind of people would you like to get to know?' and so on," says Mitja Back of the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, who co-wrote the new paper with Lars Penke of the University of Edinburgh, Stefan Schmukle of Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, and Jens Asendorpf of Humboldt University Berlin. The problem, of course, is that what people say they like—honesty, humor, and so on—may have little to do with what they actually like—for example hotness.

In this case, Back was interested in another question: is there's something about personality that makes some people better at predicting whether others will want to meet them? In 17 groups, a total of 190 men and 192 women met members of the opposite sex—basically the standard speed dating routine, but this time, with psychologists collecting a lot of data. Among that data was personality information and the all-important question after each three-minute date: for each person you talk to, do you want to see that person again? They were also asked if they thought the other person would want to meet them.

On the whole, people are very bad at guessing how many of the other persons will want to meet them. Some people had no clue at all. But others did better. Success was correlated with particular traits that are stereotypically associated with the sexes: Men who have a more promiscuous orientation were better at guessing if a woman would want to meet them, and women whose personality was very agreeable were better at guessing if a man would meet them.

Back thinks men who are inclined toward casual sex are displaying behavior that's very stereotypically associated with their sex; this may in turn evoke more typical behavior in the woman they're talking to, which could make them more accurate at predicting whether the woman will be interested. Women who are agreeable, on the other hand, might make men more comfortable and more willing to flirt—which could make it easier to judge whether the man will want to meet them again.

"Speed dating is a very good context to study dating behavior" Back says. "It's almost like psychologists could have invented this."