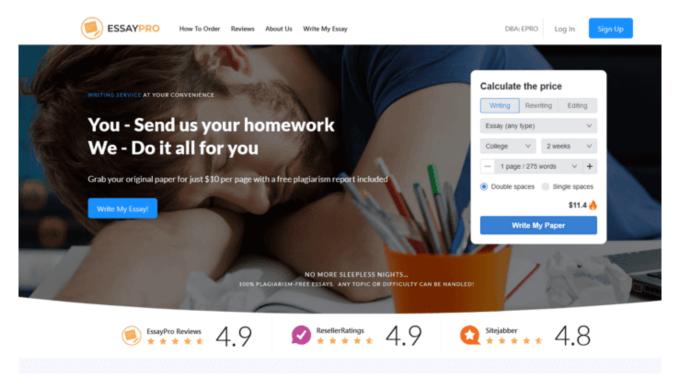
Replication Of Human Pheromones



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Sexual Or Sexist? Replication Of Human Pheromones

From the elixer in Love Potion Number Nine to the Orgasmatron in Orgazmo, the media reflect a popular fascination with the idea of an object that can control other people's sexual desires and behaviors. On a similar but dorkier note, I have occasionally heard at Haverford someone attribute a sexual "lucky streak" to the influence of pheromones. In our well-educated but socially awkward mind frame, we have hit on a more promising possibility than magic potions or radar guns. From the Greek for "excitement carrier", pheromones <u>carry</u> chemical messages between members of the same species (2). Present in many animals and often responsible for aspects of mating behavior, the idea of pheromones in humans has in recent years been a subject of interest. The idea of pheromone perception as a "sixth sense" is intriguing, as it means our behavior is influenced by input from outside stimuli that we cannot consciously perceive. Evidence points to the output by and influence on humans of natural pheromones, and these pheromones are under attempt at imitation by commercial products. What are the possible ramifications of such developments? Experimental evidence also shows differences in the way men and women respond to pheromones, and the possible implications of these differences on gender roles is the aspect of human pheromone research that interests me

most.

These chemical signals are detected in the vomeronasal organ, or VNO, which is present in the noses of most species of vertebrates. In other mammals, the VNO is located in a longitudinal bulge at the base of either side of the nasal septum (4). Humans lack this bulge marking the position of the VNO, and although there are nerve bundles running from the human VNO to the brain, it is still unclear whether they contain actual sensory <u>neurons</u> or just autonomic nerves. Unlike that in animals, the human VNO does not have an obvious sensory epithelium; however, it contains cells that are considered to be bipolar receptor neurons. The human VNO is thought to be stimulated by airborne chemicals, as opposed to stimuli dissolved in mucus (3). Although most exploration of the possibilities of human pheromone perception has happened recently, scientists have known about the human VNO since 1703, when Dutch surgeon Roysch discovered it in the nose (2). Since then the VNO has been commonly thought to be present only in fetuses, disappearing over the course of prenatal development.

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