What Personality Traits Are Associated With The Ability To Pantomime?

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Introduction

Successful communicators have been found to use more nonverbal behaviors when conversing with others (Noller, 1986). This suggests that one's ability to employ gestures and body movements while talking to another can greatly improve the accuracy with which the listener comprehends the message. Pantomime is perhaps the purist activity that involves using one's body language to communicate with others.

In this study, we attempted to identify the personality traits of people who pantomime well, and are thus skilled nonverbal communicators.

Method

Participants

A total of 140 undergraduate students (89 females, 51 males) at Oregon State University participated in this study for academic credit. They were separated into groups of seven.

Procedure—Pantomime Audition

Subjects completed a "Pantomime scene (Table 1)." After the performance, the fellow group members inferred the performer's intended message on a multiple-choice test.

Procedure—Personality Assessment

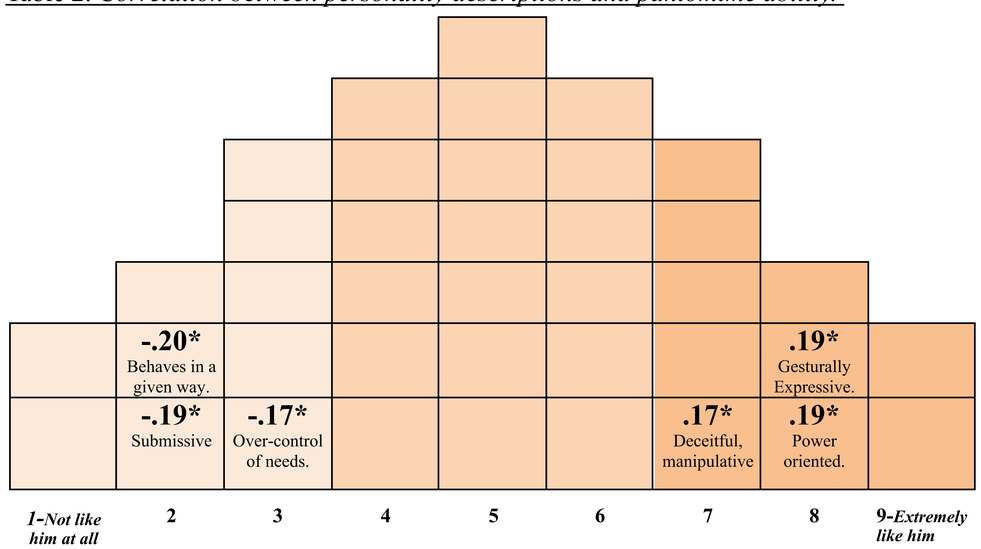
Subjects brought in two friends/family members to describe them on the *California Q-Sort Descriptions of Personality (Block, 1961/1978).* The Q-Sort has 100 one-sentence description of personality. Raters evaluate each statement on a 9-point Likert scale where 1 is ***not like him at all***, and 9 is ***extremely like him*** **(**Table 2**).**

Table1. Sample "script" for the pantomime

Context	You wake up in the morning and go out for a run. You see your friend and wave your hand to her. You run into a tree and hurt your head.
Intent	You are embarrassed because you did silly things in front of your friend.

Result

Table 2. *Correlation between personality descriptions and pantomime ability.*



Discussion

- Successful nonverbal communicators were described by people who knew them well as **gesturally expressive, deceitful, manipulative, self-controlled, power oriented, and never submissive.** Doesn't this sound like Frank Underwood?

- We all know an individual who speaks fluently, uses vivid facial expressions, and employs rich hand gestures and body movements. You find it is fun to listen to them and have always been persuaded by them.

- It seems that this talent is associated with interpersonal dominance. These individuals (with high interpersonal dominance) may have realized they had the ability to manipulate others through communication when they were young. From there, they cultivated this skill and took advantage of it.

- Therefore, the next time you are struggling at why on Earth half of the America love Trump and voted for him, ask whether his expressive pantomime skills count.

References

Block, J. (1961). *The Q-sort Method in Personality Assessment and Psychiatric Research.* Springfield, IL: Thomas.

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