

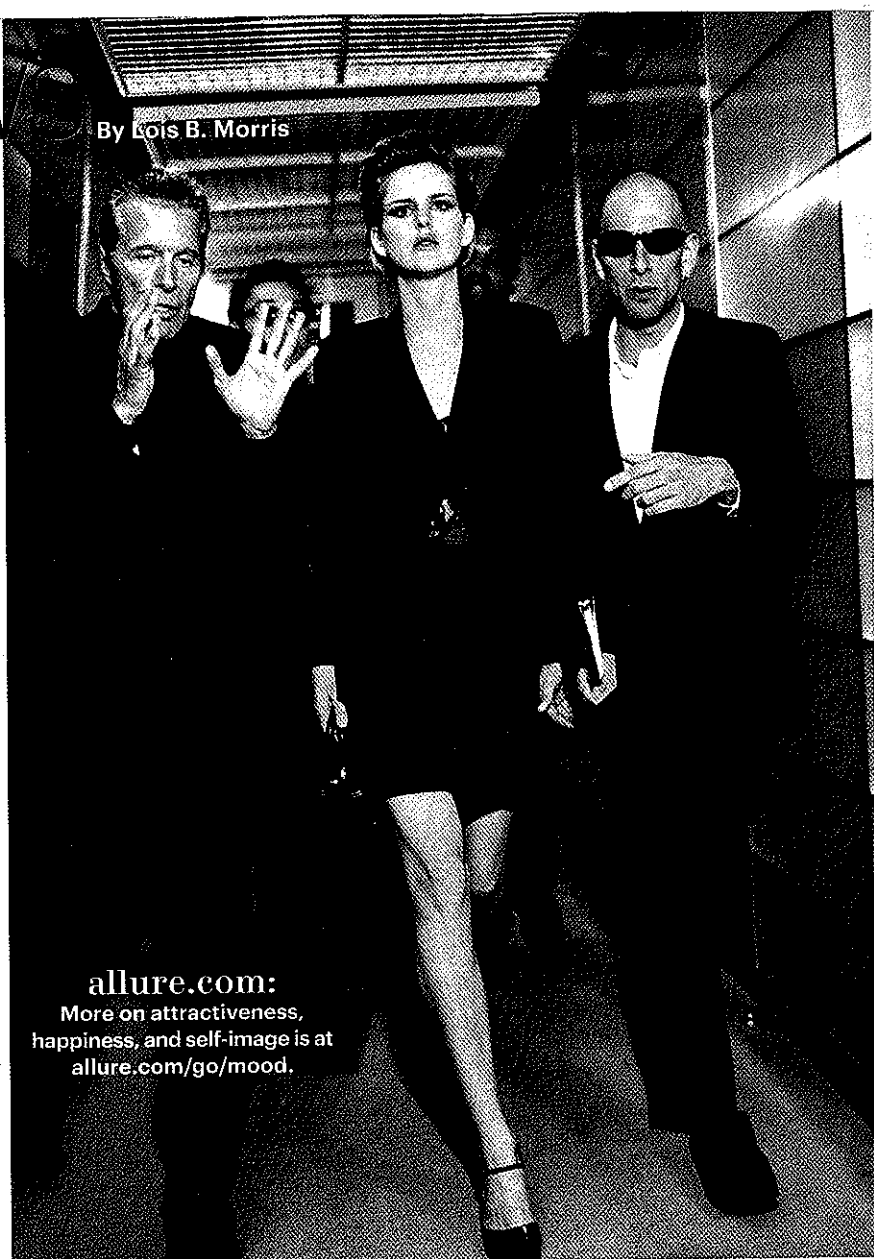
By Lois B. Morris

Sexy Faces

People's facial expressions can make a surprising difference in how sexually attractive they seem, a Canadian study reveals. Jessica L. Tracy and Alex T. Beall, psychologists at the University of British Columbia, showed 1,041 people photographs of men and women, each displaying one of four expressions: happiness, pride, shame, or neutrality. The smiling women were most sexually attractive by far to the male judges, and the proud-looking women appealed least. But results were the reverse for male sexual attractiveness. Proud-looking men were seen as the most desirable, and happy ones as the least. The researchers suggest an evolutionary explanation: A man's pride displays high status and suggests he is a better provider, while "a friendly and approachable woman may seem more sexually interested or receptive." Yet both men and women were also attracted to expressions of shame, perhaps because they convey moral sensitivity, the researchers say.

Shy Socializing

Shy people's willingness to interact with strangers depends heavily on their mood, suggests a study led by Christina M. Brown, an assistant professor of psychology at Saint Louis University in St. Louis. When volunteers were asked to place their chair near the chair of a conversation partner who was said to be coming, shy people in neutral moods sat closer than shy participants in happy moods. More sociable types who felt happy sat closest, but when feeling neutral, outgoing and shy people sat similarly. Introverts keep their distance when they're cheerful so that their mood won't be thwarted by social discomfort, Brown theorizes. She advises shy people to focus on the benefits of socializing—an interesting chat, a new friend—rather than the risks.



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High and Mighty *Feeling powerful can change our sense of our own height.*

Power and height are strongly linked in people's minds. For a study by psychologists at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and Washington University in St. Louis, 98 women and men wrote about an experience in which they felt more or less powerful than someone. Then they estimated the height of a pole that was adjusted to be exactly 20 inches taller than each of them. Those who had recalled feeling dominant judged the pole to be about 19 inches taller than themselves, while the disempowered group estimated it at 25 inches taller. "Not only do powerful people feel bigger than they actually are but also, for the powerless, objects and people in the environment loom larger," says study coauthor Jack Goncalo, associate professor of organizational behavior at Cornell. Wearing high heels can give women a psychological boost, he says: "There is such a clear association between height and power that making yourself appear taller should put you at an advantage." There's also evidence that feeling more powerful is associated with straighter posture, he adds.