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National Post

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Smiling men are the least attractive: B.C. study



"We know that women like the bad boy. The James Dean, Edward the vampire -all these guys who are very broody, we know that women find them attractive," said Jessica Tracy, the study's lead researcher. Reuters

Postmedia News May 25, 2011 – 12:24 PM ET | Last Updated: May 25, 2011 12:30 PM ET

By Jordan Press

The axiom that nice guys finish last has received new validation in the form of a Canadian study that suggests women are less sexually attracted to men who smile.

The University of British Columbia study found that women were least attracted to smiling, happy men, preferring those who looked proud and powerful or moody and ashamed.

On the other hand, men were most sexually attracted to women who looked happy, and least attracted to women who appeared proud and confident.

The study, published Tuesday in the journal *Emotion*, is the first to show that women are sexually attracted to a brooding hulk, while men are sexually attracted to a smiling beauty.

"We know that women like the bad boy. The James Dean, Edward the vampire -all these guys who are very broody, we know that women find them attractive," said Jessica Tracy, the study's lead researcher.

Prof. Tracy said there was no clear explanation why the bad boy is more attractive, only that he stokes a woman's carnal instincts more than the nice guy with the smile.

The researcher conducted four different studies with a total of more than 1,000 participants.

In each experiment, people were asked to look at a series of pictures of the opposite sex in various emotional states and give their gut reaction to each.

In the first study, participants said they found smiling guys less attractive than those who were brooding or showing pride.

“That was one of the more surprising findings,” said Prof. Tracy, a psychology professor at UBC.

“Then we replicated it in three more studies with a pretty big sample, so I’m convinced at this point it’s a real finding.”

Previous studies have shown that smiling is considered a more feminine expression of emotion, which possibly makes it more attractive to men rather than women, Prof. Tracy said.

There’s also a possibility that smiling signals that someone is available and receptive of signals from the opposite sex, Prof. Tracy said.

“That’s a really good message to send, at least in men’s eyes. They want to know a woman is available and interested in them,” she said. “When men show that, it might almost signal too much availability.”

Women may be attracted to a shameful-looking guy because it shows he can be remorseful and accepting of social norms.

“That’s a really important message to convey because if you don’t show shame, essentially if you’re shameless, you could actually get excluded from the group,” Prof. Tracy said.

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