

Fall 12-6-2017

Effect of Female Superhero Body Types on Parasocial Relationships, Perceived Homophily and Self-Esteem of College Women

Ashe C. Cleveland

Chapman University, cleve104@mail.chapman.edu


Michael John Farzinpour

Chapman University, farzi101@mail.chapman.edu

Alyssa Aroz Vega

Chapman University, vega137@mail.chapman.edu

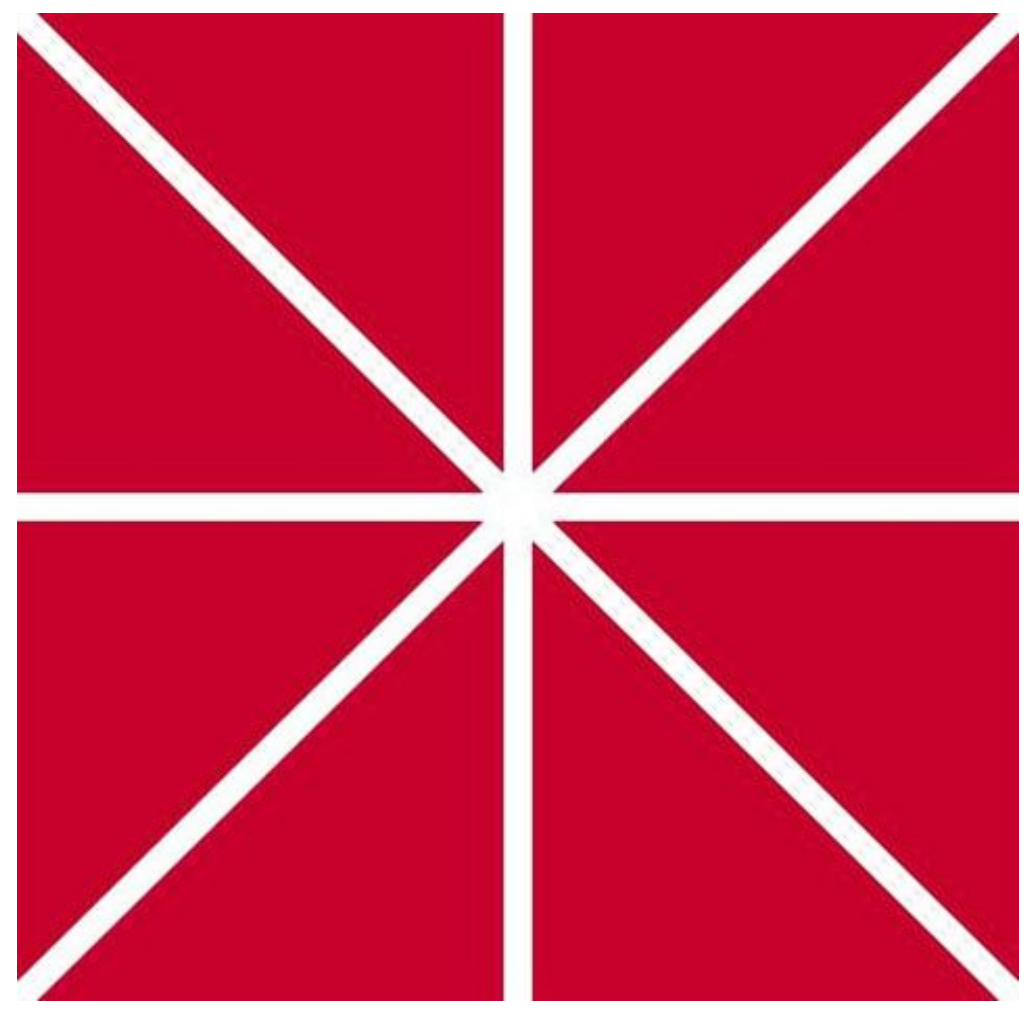
Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts

 Part of the [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), [Mass Communication Commons](#), [Other Communication Commons](#), and the [Social Influence and Political Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Cleveland, Ashe C.; Farzinpour, Michael John; and Vega, Alyssa Aroz, "Effect of Female Superhero Body Types on Parasocial Relationships, Perceived Homophily and Self-Esteem of College Women" (2017). *Student Research Day Abstracts and Posters*. 250. http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cusrd_abstracts/250

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Day Abstracts and Posters by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.



Effect of Superheroine Body Types on College Females

Cleveland, A.C., Farzinpour, M.J., Vega, A.A.

COM 498-03 Dr. Tukachinsky

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of viewing different body types of a female superhero on college-aged females. There is a need to conduct this research because previous studies have only examined the role of sexualized clothing or hyper-thin body types of women in media in relation to the definition of femininity, gender roles and self-esteem of female viewers. Our study compares three different body types: muscular, round, and hyper-thin. We examined the effects of a fictional character's body type on parasocial relationships (bonds with a fictional character) and perceived homophily (perceived similarity). We predicted that viewing the image of the hyper-thin superhero would have a negative impact on self-esteem because she embodies the modern beauty standard, while viewing the image of the round superhero would have a positive impact because we believe that viewers would like to see representation of a female superhero with an average body.

Hypotheses

H1: Women will have a stronger parasocial relationship with a female superhero who has a round body type, followed by a female superhero with a muscular body type, and least with a female superhero who has a hyper-thin body type.

H2: Women will perceive homophily with the female superhero most with a round body type, followed by a female hero with a muscular body type, and least with a female hero who has a hyper-thin body type.

H3: Women will experience low self-esteem with a female superhero with a hyper-thin body type, followed by a female hero with a muscular body type, and least with a female hero who has a round body type.

Methods

Eighty-one students in the Communication Studies Subject Pool at a west coast university were randomly assigned to view one of three images of the female superhero. After viewing the images, the participants were asked to answer three Likert scales to determine the strength of parasocial relationships to the superheroine, perceived homophily, and self-esteem.

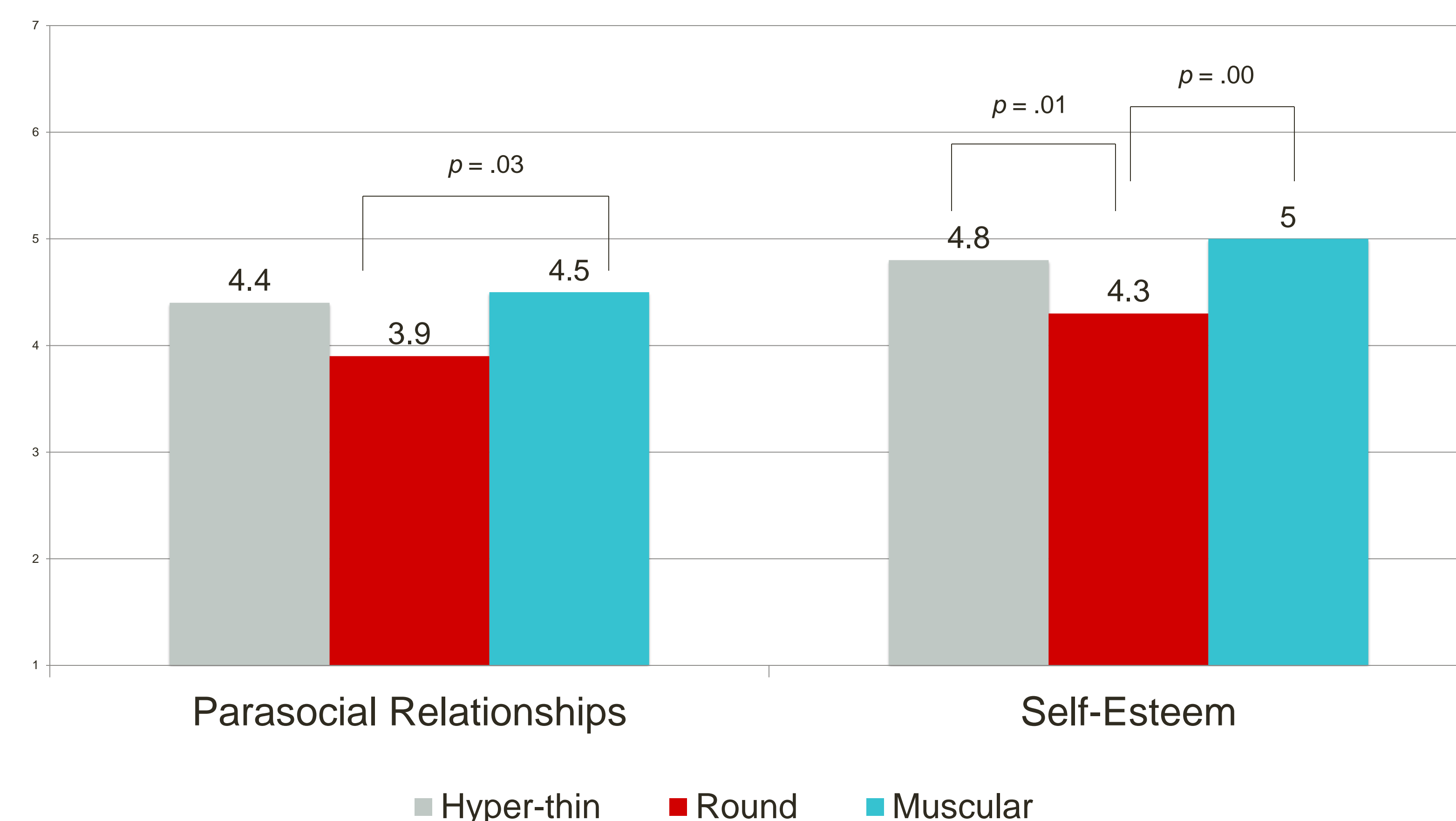


Results

H1: $F(2,69)= 3.87, p< .05)$

H2: There is not a significant difference between round, muscular and hyper-thin body types on participants' perceived homophily. $F(2,69)=2.24, p=.12)$

H3: $F(2,69)=9.72, p< .05)$



Discussion

- ◆ It is possible that the muscular body type was refreshing to participants since female superheroes, or women in general, are not usually portrayed as strong.
- ◆ There is not a significant relationship between body types and perceived homophily.
- ◆ It was surprising that the round manipulation of the superhero threatened self-esteem of participants the most, while the muscular body type seemed to raise their self-esteem. It was also interesting to see the hyper-thin body type have such a small effect on self-esteem, since it is currently a sought-after body type of women in media. The muscular body type of a female superhero was reported as being best for participants' self-esteems, this might be true because it can be empowering for women to see a female character who is strong and healthy.

Limitations

- ◆ The sample was not large enough to represent a wide range of body types.
- ◆ The accuracy of the manipulated images compared to subjectivity of round, muscular, and hyper-thin body types.

References

- Schiappa, E., Allen, M., & Gregg, P. B. (2007). Parasocial relationships and television: A meta-analysis of the effects. *Mass Media Effects Research: Advances through Meta-Analysis*, 301-314.
- Tukachinsky, R. (2010). Para-romantic love and para-friendships: Development and assessment of a multiple-parasocial relationships scale. *American Journal of Media Psychology*, 3(1/2), 73-94.