

Research dispels popular claims linking power poses to powers of persuasion

September 5 2017, by Tom Mclaughlin



Credit: Karolina Grabowska from Pexels

Strike a pose like Wonder Woman or Spider-Man – and the powers of persuasion are yours!

Well, not so fast, according to a new study by Rutgers University–Camden researchers.

Throwing cold water on popular claims, the study, titled "Power vs. Persuasion: Can open body postures embody openness to persuasion?," found that adopting power poses does not affect either feeling powerful or being persuaded. The findings are documented in a recent issue of *Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology*.

"We found evidence showing that this claim is questionable both in terms of the subjective feelings of power or the ability to be persuaded," explains Sean Duffy, an associate professor of psychology at Rutgers–Camden, who conducted the study with Ioana Latu, a [social psychologist](#) at Queens University in Belfast, and Rutgers–Camden graduate students Vaani Pardal and Madeline Alger. "The study also adds to the understanding of the role that the body plays in cognition and what we know about how embodied cognition might be."

According to Duffy, 200 participants were randomly asked to adopt either a power pose or closed body posture while reading either a strong or a weak persuasive message regarding junk food taxation. The researchers then measured the participants' attitudes toward [junk food](#), subjective feelings of power, thought confidence, and openness.

The results failed to duplicate a previously found effect of [body posture](#) on [subjective feelings](#) of power. Furthermore, compared to weak messages, strong messages led to more persuasion, higher subjective power, more thought confidence, and more openness. However, [body posture](#) did not affect these outcomes.

As Duffy explains, the paper stemmed from a question that arose during a presentation on jobs that Latu had given at Rutgers–Camden.

The talk focused on whether adopting a power pose – for instance, arms on the hips or outstretched – affects whether people are more susceptible to persuasion.

For the past eight years, he notes, an idea proposed by Harvard Business School social psychologist Amy Cuddy has gained steam promoting the notion that physical poses expressing power have important psychological and physiological implications.

"If you adopt a certain pose to look like Wonder Woman – to use a current meme – you feel like Wonder Woman," says Duffy.

However, says the Rutgers–Camden scholar, questions have arisen as to whether this claim was reliable or valid. To that end, the researchers replicated the study but extended its scope by having people adopt [power](#) poses and analyzed if it affected how powerful they feel or how open they are to persuasion.

The findings are also included in the same journal in a meta-analysis report titled "Power poses – where do we stand?"

More information: Kai J. Jonas et al. Power poses – where do we stand?, *Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/23743603.2017.1342447](https://doi.org/10.1080/23743603.2017.1342447)

Provided by Rutgers University

Citation: Research dispels popular claims linking power poses to powers of persuasion (2017, September 5) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-09-dispels-popular-linking-power-poses.html>

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