

Young People's Heroes in France and Spain

Hugh Gash¹ and Pilar Domínguez Rodríguez²

¹St. Patrick's College (Ireland)

²Universidad Complutense (Spain)

Heroes play collectivist or individualist roles in imagination and self-development. Representations of heroic figures in questionnaires given to French ($n = 241$) and Spanish ($n = 227$) samples of 10 and 15-year-olds were examined to assess the extent that heroes originated in digital media, and whether they were proximal or distal personalities. There is strong evidence that heroes in this sample were largely learned about in digital media (France 45%, Spain 50%): family and community heroes were a minority (France 11%, Spain 9%). Male heroes were more important to Spanish participants compared to their French peers. The acquisition sequence for hero type reported in the pre-television era, proximal (family and community) to distal (beyond the neighbourhood), is reversed in this study. Generally, 10-year-olds preferred heroes with collectivist qualities and 15 year olds with individualised qualities. Findings are discussed in terms of the emergence of social capital.

Keywords: hero, gender, French, Spanish, children

Los héroes juegan unos roles colectivistas o individualistas en la imaginación y en el auto-desarrollo. Se examinaron las representaciones de figuras heroicas en los cuestionarios entregados a muestras de niños franceses ($n = 241$) y españoles ($n = 227$) de 10 y de 15 años de edad para evaluar hasta qué grado los héroes se originaron en los medios digitales, y si eran personalidades próximas o distantes. Existe mucha evidencia de que los niños, sobre todo, se enteraron de los héroes en esta muestra en los medios digitales (Francia 45%, España 50%): los héroes familiares y de la comunidad eran minoría (Francia 11%, España 9%). Los héroes masculinos eran más importantes para los participantes españoles en comparación con sus iguales franceses. La secuencia de adquisición para el tipo de héroe referido en la etapa pre-televisiva, próximo (familia y comunidad) a distante (más allá del barrio), está invertida en este estudio. Generalmente, los niños de 10 años prefieren héroes con cualidades colectivistas y los de 15 años los prefieren con cualidades individualistas. Los resultados se comentan en términos de la emergencia de capital social.

Palabras clave: héroe, género, francés, español, niños

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Hugh Gash, Education Department, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, Ireland. Phone: +353 1 8842058. Fax: + 353 1 8376197. E-Mail: hugh.gash@spd.dcu.ie

How to cite the authors of this article: Gash, H., Domínguez Rodríguez, P.

Heroes are implicated in a variety of areas in psychology including play, role modelling (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), gender stereotyping (Liben & Bigler, 2002), influence of television (Heusmann & Miller, 1994) and self awareness (Hart & Fegley, 1997). In the present paper we are interested principally in the associations between gender and young people's heroes in France and Spain in late childhood (10 years of age) and adolescence (15 years of age). Our theoretical approach is akin to gender constructivism (Liben & Bigler, 2002), that is, we believe the choices young people make in selecting their heroes reflect their developing gender characterizations of themselves. We focus on the characteristics of heroes, their functions and domains of action. Earlier in this tradition, Huston (1983) outlined five content areas for gender typing: biological gender, activities and interests, personal social attributes, gender based social relations, and style and symbolic content. For each area there are four conceptual applications: concept, self-perception, preferences, and behavioural enactment. Our foci here are the two content areas; personal-social attributes and activities, and the conceptual application is self-perception.

We have three reasons for examining gender in relation to heroes: (a) heroes as ideal people are often gender stereotyped, (b) girls and boys have been shown to choose different types of heroes, and (c) heroes as possible selves are part of the gender identity of young people. Gash and Conway (1997) noted, for example, that heroic qualities chosen more frequently by girls rather than boys (beautiful, caring, gentle, honest, kind, and loving) are like gender stereotypes identified by Williams and Best (1990) (e.g., affectionate, gentle, soft hearted). Spanish elementary school children chose each of these three female stereotypes at higher rates than French participants (Williams & Best, 1990). In parallel, in boys chose heroic characteristics such as strong and warrior more often than expected and these characteristics feature among the male stereotypes identified by Williams and Best (1990) (e.g., fights/aggressive, adventurous, assured/confident and strong). While Liben and Bigler (2002) report that today these personal social characteristics are less likely to be gender differentiated in comparison with activities and occupations, two studies concerned with heroes (Gash & Conway, 1997; Gash & Bajd, 2005) found that heroic personal social characteristics were regularly associated with males or females. The present study allows a comparison of the association of gender with heroic characteristics in two culturally different contexts. Second, early studies (Hill, 1930; Stoughton & Ray, 1946) reported girls and younger children chose proximal heroes (family & community) whereas boys and older youngsters chose distal heroes (historic or public figures). In a recent study Gash and Bajd (2005) reported that in Ireland while girls more often chose proximal heroes, the developmental sequence (proximal then distal) had disappeared, and suggested that this was on account of the prevalence of

television as a source of information about the world in contemporary society. The present study provides an opportunity to examine these findings in two new cultural contexts. Third, an important task for young people is to construct self-identity. Gender is part of this construction. Heroes are like the possible selves we *could* become, or may be *afraid of* becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986). A person's set of possible selves contains goals and fears. Oyserman and Markus (1990) have argued that hoped for possible selves are most effective as motivators when balanced with feared possible selves, and have shown that delinquents less often display this balance. Bravery is desirable and sought after when its absence is understood and feared. Heroes may play a role in the development of the identity of males and females. An initial task is to identify gender related characteristics of children's heroes and heroines, and a sequel beyond the scope of the present study is to see what aspects of culture may relate to these qualities.

Each culture has its own heroic stories and in each country's history and literature these heroes transmit values in culturally important ways. Markus and her colleagues (Markus, Mullally, & Kitayama, 1997) examined self-development in different cultures. Specifically, they distinguish two types of culture, western cultures where the self stands apart from society, and some eastern cultures where participation in the group is more important. This focus in cross-cultural self-development between 'individualism' and 'collectivism' (Oyserman, Coon, & Kimmelmeier, 2002) appears to be akin to Putnam's (1993) concept of 'social capital'. Community heroes, for example, often have collectivist goals and contribute to the social capital in the community. Mother Theresa would be an example of this type of hero. Other heroes like Michael Schumacher excel in their domains and are recognized for their excellence. The identity of heroes allows insight into their characteristics and functions, and in this way heroes provide implicit information into the relative importance of individual versus collective social values. We suspect that this conceptualization of the self in different societies may provide a framework to understand differences in heroic choice both developmentally and in terms of gender. A recent study (Gash & Bajd, 2005) with Irish 10 and 15 year olds showed developmental changes in preferences for these dimensions of heroic choice. Specifically, it was shown that chosen heroes' pro-social characteristics diminished between the age of 10 and 15, and individual excellence characteristics became more important. Furthermore, females often preferred pro-social characteristics. In the domain of education it is important to understand the developmental trajectories of these socially relevant characteristics in young males and females. A next step is to deepen our understanding of the extent to which these characteristics are amenable to education. Gash and Conway (1997) have provided some encouraging signs that this is possible in a study of

elementary school children who shifted their attention to more pro-social heroes by means of classroom discussions on pro-social heroes. Furthermore, Malgady, Rogler, and Costantino (1990) have shown that discussion with Puerto Rican teenagers of heroes from their culture proved beneficial in terms of the increasing their sense of ethnic identity and their self-concepts.

Culture also influences gender development by providing images of males and females in society and the media. As Liben and Bigler (2002, p.14) put it, “children’s assimilation of cultural stereotypes plays a role in guiding and shaping their own gender role behaviour”. The word *macho* came to English as recently as 1959 (Etymological Dictionary, online) and signifies male animal in Spanish. We suspect that male heroes may be more important within Spanish culture than within French culture because bull fighting in its various forms is inextricably intertwined with Spanish culture (Douglass, 1991) and while some *toreros* (bullfighters) are female, the bull is indisputably male. Spanish people, of course, vary in their attitudes towards bullfighting, but attitudes towards *los toros* seem pivotal in assessing whether people orient to a modern or traditional Spain (Douglass, 1991). Furthermore, the bull is seen by some as encapsulating a central feature of a valued Spanish way of being. Douglass (1991, p. 19) but it this way, “... the anthropomorphism of the bull stresses freedom (lack of work), independence, and a moment of glory – all of which make life worthwhile.”

Overall, the main aims of this study are to identify the characteristics of contemporary heroes and heroines in France and Spain, and to examine the influence of age and gender on heroic choice within these differing cultural contexts.

Method

Participants

Participants attended primary or secondary schools in Versailles and Angers in France and in Madrid with students that could be described as middle class: all those in grade levels corresponding to age 10 and 15 were invited to complete the questionnaire. The schools were mixed, that is, with both male and female pupils. The French sample

consisted of 241 children, almost exclusively Caucasian, and the Spanish sample consisted of 227 children, also almost exclusively Caucasian (see Table 1). Participation was voluntary.

Hero Questionnaire

A questionnaire about heroes and heroines was constructed and used in Ireland and the US with children aged 9 and 10 (Gash & Conway, 1997). The original questionnaire provided characteristics, domains and functions of heroes. Pilot tests in France and Spain with children at both age groups (10 and 15) supported the questionnaire’s appropriateness, and the participants suggested few changes. Three additional heroic characteristics were added to the questionnaire used here: classy, hard working, and inventive. The questionnaire was translated professionally and checked prior to use taking care to ensure the characteristics, domains and functions of heroes had the same meanings in the target language as in English. The first step for pupils was to name their hero or heroine. Next they were asked to identify the gender, characteristics, and function (e.g., to do well) of their preferred heroic character, the domain (e.g., film or sport) in which they lived, and whether they identified with this person. The 27 characteristics on the questionnaire are listed in Table 3. Space was provided for the respondent to include additional words. The domains provided on the questionnaire in which their hero lived were as follows: family, film or video or TV, politics, the community, religion, music, sport, fashion, literature and or arts/sciences, or another open ended category. Information about heroes in many domains is available in digital media. Here, the audio-visual category was restricted to actors in film, TV and video such as Bruce Willis, and in computer games like Lara Croft. The possible functions of heroes were: to do good, to entertain, to excel, to give a good example, to protect against bad things, to risk their lives for others, to show how well things can be done, and there was an open-ended category. Participants used the open-ended categories so infrequently that these data were excluded from the analysis. Teachers administered the questionnaires in classrooms beginning by reading the list of domains in which heroic figures might live to the pupils. Administration of the questionnaire takes about 20 minutes.

Table 1
Country of participants by age by sex

	France age 10		France age 15		Spain age 10		Spain age 15	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Male	52	11	75	16	78	17	61	13
Female	57	12	57	12	40	9	48	10
Total	109	23	132	28	118	26	109	23

Results

Data were analyzed using 2 × 2 cross-tabulations and chi-square analyses on items in the questionnaire as described below. Only significant results (p < .05) with adjusted standardized residuals greater than +/- 2.0 are presented unless otherwise stated. The Fisher exact probability test was used in cases where one cell had an expected frequency of less than five. Percentages are given in Tables 2, 3, and 4, and the corresponding adjusted standardized residuals for significant findings are presented in Tables 5, 6 and 7.

First we present analyses of the choice of hero chosen in our national samples. Next we present analyses comparing characteristics, domains and functions in hero choice in the French and Spanish samples; these are followed by comparative analyses of age (10-year-olds and 15-year-olds) and sex (male and female) in each national sample.

The first row of numbers in Table 3 gives the numbers in the French and Spanish samples, so there are 127 French males and 114 French females, 109 French 10-year-olds and

132 French 15-year-olds and so on. The next row in Table 3 shows that 96 of the French sample selected active as a characteristic of their heroic figure, and that 49% of the French males and 30% of the French females chose this characteristic. Moving to the end of this row: 42% of the Spanish 10-year-olds and 40% of the Spanish 15-year-olds chose active, and this choice was made by 93 of the Spanish participants. Tables 2 and 4 also follow this format respectively for the heroes' domain and function.

Adjusted standardized residuals for significant chi-square statistics are presented in Tables 5, 6 and 7. In all tables the heroic characteristics, domains and functions have been categorized as reflecting either individual or social collective values. In some cases, such as music, this may appear arbitrary. However, we believe that this is a useful way to categorize the heroic qualities in the context of understanding both the results and the psychological meaning of heroes for our participants. There are columns in each row in Tables 5, 6 and 7: the first column on Table 5, for example, shows the three social variables that were significant for the French sample in comparison with

Table 2
Percentage choices of hero and heroic domain by sex, age and country

		France					Spain						
		Sex		Age		Total	Total	Sex		Age			
		Male	Female	10	15			Male	Female	10	15		
		n										n	
Hero		167	89***	48	60**	77	70	87	99***	68	90	84	193
Social values													
Domain		n	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	n
Proximal	Family	19	3**	13	3**	12	8	5	4	6	3	7	10
Proximal	Community	7	1	5	2	4	3	4	3	5	1*	7	8
Distal	Arts/ Science	10	3	5	8**	1	4	7	9	3	5	9	15
Distal	Politics	0	0	0	0	0	0*	3	2	3	0***	6	6
Distal	Religion	3	0	3	2	1	1	3	0	8	5	1	7
	Proximal N.B.	26	4**	18	5**	16	11	8	7	10	3**	13	18
Individual values													
Domain		n	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	n
Distal	Audio-visual	107	53**	35	54*	37	45	50	54	48	65***	37	114
Distal	Music	30	6***	20	16	10	13	11	6**	20	7*	16	25
Distal	Sport	61	33**	17	14***	35	26**	15	22***	5	13	18	34
Distal	Modelling	2	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	2	2	0	2
	Distal N.B.	215	96**	82	95**	84	89	92	93	90	97**	87	209

p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01;*** p < 0.001

N.B. Proximal-Distal are related, the hero is one or the other.

Note that 167 French participants choose a male Hero: 89% of French males selected a male Hero, and 48% of French females selected a male Hero (percentages are rounded)

Percentages have been rounded on each domain separately, so summed domains (e.g., a National grouping either across all domains, or some domains as in Proximal) may give totals slightly different than the summed parts

the Spanish sample. These are the characteristics friendly, honest and kind with their adjusted standard residuals in the next column. All adjusted standard residuals in these tables are positive because they indicate that the variable in question was chosen more often than expected than in the group with which it is being compared. In these cases, the French sample chose these variables at higher than expected frequencies in comparison to the Spanish sample. (The magnitude of adjusted standardized residuals can be interpreted in a similar way as a z-score.)

Comparison of French and Spanish Samples

Heroes and Participants

There are three types of evidence indicating the strong association between sex and heroic choice. First comparing responses between countries, the association between sex of participant and sex of hero chosen was different in each country (Table 2). While most of the young people in each

Table 3
Percentage choices of heroic characteristics by sex, age and country

Characteristic	France				Spain							
	n	Sex		Age		Total	Total	Sex		Age		n
		Male	Female	10	15			Male	Female	10	15	
<i>Individual characteristics</i>												
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Active	96	49**	30	35	44	40	41	44	36	42	40	93
Beautiful	70	32	26	22*	35	29**	19	11***	31	14	23	42
Brainy	93	37	40	44	34	39**	48	53*	40	45	51	109
Brave	117	47	50	62***	38	49	45	51**	35	60***	28	102
Brilliant	63	31	21	12***	38	26	22	22	23	13***	32	50
Classy	22	23	18	15	26	20	27	29	24	42***	11	61
Confident	60	28	21	18*	30	25	18	19	17	23*	13	41
Dresses well	56	21	25	27	21	23	17	17	18	24**	10	39
Famous	120	55	44	50	50	50	42	40	44	46	38	95
Funny	62	18**	34	20	30	26	34	33	34	36	30	76
Good-looking	76	21***	44	40**	24	32***	17	9***	30	19	16	39
Hard working	21	16	24	19	20	19	28	26	32	15***	42	64
Important	28	12	11	11	12	12	15	17	11	13	17	34
Inventive	11	16*	4	6	15	10	12	11	14	7*	17	27
Rich	51	28**	14	19	23	21**	12	9	15	9	14	26
Skilful	70	43***	14	22*	35	29	33	48**	9	35	30	74
Strong	100	53***	29	41	42	42*	30	40***	16	41***	19	69
Warrior	93	49***	27	31*	45	39***	23	32***	8	20	26	51
<i>Social characteristics</i>												
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Caring	27	9	13	6*	15	11**	21	25	16	30***	12	48
Friendly	76	32	31	27	36	32*	23	22	25	30*	16	52
Gentle	25	7	14	11	10	10	3	4	2	4	2	7
Good	62	28	24	24	27	26*	37	32	44	47***	26	83
Helpful	35	15	14	23***	8	15	13	14	11	14	11	29
Honest	65	24	31	27	27	27*	18	19	16	11**	25	40
Kind	91	28***	49	42	34	38***	16	14	19	20	12	36
Loving	25	7	14	10	11	10	13	4***	27	18*	8	30
Loyal	42	24**	11	17	18	17	12	14	8	9	16	27

p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Note that 96 French participants selected Active: 49% of French males selected Active and 30% of French females, this was a significant difference p<0.01 (percentages are rounded)

Table 4
Percentage choices of heroic function by sex, age and country

Function	France				Spain				n			
	Sex		Age		Total	Total	Sex			Age		
	Male	Female	10	15			Male	Female		10	15	
	n	127	114	109	132	241	227	139	88	118	109	n
Individual values												
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
To excel	161	75**	59	59*	74	67***	44	48	38	38	51	99
Social values												
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
To do good	138	51*	65	66*	50	58***	84	82	87	87	81	186
To entertain	97	35	47	36	44	41***	62	69**	51	68*	54	137
Good example	147	55*	68	62	61	61***	80	73***	91	68***	93	178
To protect	71	28	32	39**	22	30***	65	67	61	85***	41	142
To take risks	105	45	43	56***	34	44***	64	64	64	84***	40	139
Lo show how well things can be done	145	56	66	51**	69	61***	77	72*	86	75	80	171

p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01;*** p < 0.001

Note that 161 French participants selected To excel: 75% of French males selected To excel and 59% of French females, this was a significant difference p<0.01 (percentages are rounded)

Table 5
Adjusted standardised residuals categorised by social and individual values: France and Spain

Social				Individual			
France		Spain		France		Spain	
Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res
<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>	
Friendly	2.1	Caring	2.9	Beautiful	2.7	Brainy	2.1
Honest	2.4	Good	2.5	Good looking	3.6		
Kind	5.3			Rich	2.8		
				Strong	2.5		
				Warrior	3.8		
		<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>			
		Politics	2.5	Sport	2.7		
		<i>Function</i>		<i>Function</i>			
		To do good	6.3	To excel	5		
		To entertain	4.5				
		Give a good example	4.3				
		To protect	7.5				
		To take risks	4.3				
		To show how well things can be done	3.9				

sample chose male heroes (French 70%, Spanish 87%), Spanish participants chose male heroes significantly more than expected by chance ($\chi^2(1, N = 462) = 20.19, p < .001$; adjusted standard residual = 4.5).

Second, within each country there were significant and strong associations between sex of participant and sex of heroic figure chosen: this occurred both across and within age levels. In the Spanish sample, those choosing male

heroes were more frequently male than expected by chance, and those choosing female heroes were more frequently female than expected by chance ($\chi^2(1, N = 222) = 45.16, p < .001$; adjusted standard residual = 6.7). Only 1% of the Spanish boys chose female heroes and 68% of the Spanish girls chose male heroes. In the French sample, those choosing male heroes were more frequently male than expected by chance, and those choosing female heroes were female more frequently than expected by chance ($\chi^2(1, N = 240) = 47.93, p < .001$; adjusted standard residual = 6.9). Looking at the female participants only, Spanish females (68%), in contrast to French females (48%), chose male heroes more than expected by chance ($\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 8.38, p < .005$; adjusted standard residual +/- 2.9). The overall difference between Spanish and French participants in the frequency of selection of male heroes also came about

in part because the 10-year-old French sample chose significantly fewer male heroic figures than expected by chance in comparison with the 15-year-old French sample ($\chi^2(1, N = 240) = 8.20, p < .004$; adjusted standard residual = 2.9). The Spanish 10- and 15-year-olds chose high proportions of male in contrast to female heroic figures.

Third, the distinction between proximal (family & community) and distal (art-science, politics, film-TV-video, religion, music, sport, and modelling) heroic figures was strongly and significantly associated with sex in the French but not the Spanish sample (Table 2). In the French sample the females chose proximal heroes more often than expected by chance and the males chose proximal figures less than expected by chance and also males chose distal heroic figures more often than expected by chance and females less than expected by chance ($\chi^2(1, N = 241) = 13.10, p <$

Table 6
Adjusted standardised residuals categorised by social and individual values: France by sex, and age

France							
Social				Individual			
Male		Female		Male		Female	
Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res
<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>	
Loyal	2.7	Kind	3.4	Active	3	Funny	2.9
				Inventive	2.1	Good looking	3.9
				Rich	2.6		
				Skilful	4.9		
				Strong	3.7		
				Warrior	3.4		
		<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>	
		Family	2.9	Audio-visual	2.8	Music	3.4
				Sport	2.9		
		<i>Function</i>		<i>Function</i>			
		To do good	2.1	To excel	2.6		
		Good example	2				
Social				Individual			
10-year-olds		15-year-olds		10-year-olds		15-year-olds	
Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res
<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>	
Helpful	3.4	Caring	2.1	Brave	3.6	Beautiful	2.2
				Good looking	2.7	Brilliant	4.6
						Confident	2.1
						Skilful	2.2
						Warrior	2.1
<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>	
Arts/ Science	2.9	Family	2.7	Audio-visual	2.5	Sport	3.7
<i>Function</i>		<i>Function</i>		<i>Function</i>		<i>Function</i>	
To do good	2.4	To show how well				To excel	2.4
To protect	3	things can be done	2.7				
To take risks	3.4						

.001; adjusted standard residual = +/-3.6). In the Spanish sample, the gender balances for distal and for proximal were approximately equal. The previously noted relation with age (as age increases distal heroes are chosen more often) was reversed in each sample here: in the French case, more of the 10-year-olds and less of 15-year-olds than expected by chance chose distal figures ($\chi^2(1, N = 241) = 7.95, p < .005$; adjusted standard residual = 2.8). In the Spanish sample the pattern was very similar with higher proportions of the younger participants choosing distal figures ($\chi^2(1, N = 227) = 6.94, p < .008$; adjusted standard residual = 2.6). So in each sample with increased age there was a slight but significant tendency to choose more proximal heroic figures than expected by chance. Overall, the French sample chose distal figures at similar rates (89%) to the Spanish sample (92%).

Country Comparisons of Hero Characteristics, Domain, and Functions

Cross tabulations were prepared for each item of the description of the hero by country (France or Spain). There were significant differences between the national samples in the frequency with which various heroic characteristics were chosen (see Tables 3 and 5). Greater proportions of pupils in the French sample, for example, chose the social characteristics friendly, honest, kind, and the individual characteristics beautiful, good-looking, rich, strong, and warrior more than expected by chance and in the Spanish sample, more pupils chose the social characteristics caring and good and the individual characteristic brainy more than expected by chance. In the choice of domain (Table 2 and Table 5) there were two significant differences between the

Table 7
Adjusted standardised residuals categorised by social and individual values: Spain by sex, and age

Spain							
Social				Individual			
Male		Female		Male		Female	
Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res
<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>			
		Loving	5	Brainy	2	Beautiful	3.8
				Brave	2.3	Good looking	3.9
				Skilful	6		
				Strong	3.8		
				Warrior	4.2		
				<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>	
				Sport	3.6	Music	3.1
				Music	3.1		
<i>Function</i>		<i>Function</i>					
To entertain	2.7	Good example	3.3				
		To show how well things can be done	2.3				
Social				Individual			
10-year-olds		15-year-olds		10-year-olds		15-year-olds	
Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res	Variable	Std Res
<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>		<i>Characteristic</i>	
Caring	3.3	Honest	2.7	Brave	4.8	Brilliant	3.5
Friendly	2.5			Classy	5.2	Hard working	4.5
Good	3.3			Confident	2	Inventive	2.5
Loving	2.1			Dresses well	2.7		
				Strong	3.5		
		<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>		<i>Domain</i>	
		Community	2.3	Audio-visual	4.2	Music	2.2
		Politics	2.6				
<i>Function</i>		<i>Function</i>					
To entertain	2.2	Good example	4.6				
To protect	6.7						
To take risks	6.7						

Spanish and French samples, sport and politics –and though the numbers of political heroes were very low, the Spanish participants chose more political heroes than expected by chance. The French sample, in which more sports heroes were chosen than expected by chance, selected a range of sports heroes ranging from French soccer players to American tennis players. In fact, order of popularity of domain (expressed as percentage of sample choice) for the three most popular domains were identical for the French and Spanish samples: (a) audio-visual, (b) sport, and (c) music. Bruce Willis, Demi Moore, James Bond, Leonardo DiCaprio, Penélope Cruz, Lara Croft, Celine Dion and Superman and the present Governor of California were mentioned by small numbers of participants in the audio-visual domain. While the Spice Girls, Kurt Cobain, and Celine Dion featured in the music domain where there was considerable variety in choices made and no one performer reached double figures in this sample. Greater proportions of Spanish than expected by chance felt that a hero's (social) functions were to do good, to entertain, to set a good example, to protect, to take risks, and to show how well things can be done (Tables 4 and 5). A greater proportion of the French participants than expected by chance felt the (individual) function of heroes was to excel.

Participants answered a question about whether they identified with their hero. In the 10-year-old age group 76% in France and 75% in Spain identified with their hero, whereas in the 15-year-old age group 69% of the Spanish participants which was higher than expected by chance, and 56% of the French participants identified with their hero $\chi^2(1, N = 231) = 3.95, p < .05$ (adjusted standardized residual = 2.0).

Participant Sex, Age, and Hero Choice in the French Sample

French sample: sex. In the social domain the French males chose the characteristic loyal at higher frequencies than expected by chance in comparison to French females who in turn chose the characteristic kind and the domain of family, and the functions to do good and to give a good example at higher frequencies than expected by chance (see Table 6). In the individual domain, French males selected at higher than chance frequencies the characteristics active, inventive, rich, skilful, strong, and warrior, and the audio-visual and sporting domains, and the function of excelling: French females selected the characteristics funny and good-looking and the domain music at higher than chance frequencies.

French sample: age level. In the social domain the ten-year-olds chose the characteristic helpful, the domain arts/sciences, and functions to do good, to protect and to risk at higher frequencies than expected by chance in comparison to fifteen-year-olds who in turn chose the characteristic caring, the domain of family and the function to show how well things can be done at higher frequencies than expected by chance. In the individual domain, 10-year-olds selected at

higher than expected frequencies the characteristics brave, and good-looking and the audio-visual domain: 15-year-olds selected the characteristics beautiful, brilliant, confident, skilful, and warrior, and the domain sport and the function to excel at higher than chance frequencies.

Participant Sex, Age, and Hero Choice in the Spanish Sample

Spanish sample: sex. In the social domain the Spanish males chose the function to entertain at higher frequencies than expected by chance in comparison to Spanish females who in turn chose the characteristic loving, and the functions to give a good example and to show how well things can be done at higher frequencies than expected by chance (see Table 7). In the individual domain, Spanish males selected at higher than chance frequencies the characteristics brainy, brave, skilful, strong, and warrior, and the domain of sport: Spanish females selected the characteristics beautiful and good-looking and the domain music at higher than chance frequencies.

Spanish sample: age level. In the social domain the 10-year-olds chose the characteristics caring, friendly, good and loving, and functions to entertain, to protect and to risk at higher frequencies than expected by chance in comparison to 15-year-olds who in turn chose the characteristic honest, the social domains community and politics (though very small numbers) and the function to give a good example at higher frequencies than expected by chance. In the individual domain, 10-year-olds selected at higher than chance frequencies the characteristics brave, classy, confident, dresses-well and strong and the audio-visual domain: 15-year-olds selected the characteristics brilliant, hard-working and inventive and the domain music at higher than chance frequencies.

Discussion

Recently Liben and Bigler (2002) discussed alternative ways gender attitudes may affect and be affected by self schemata and behaviours. We suggest that the data here are pertinent to understanding the construction of self-empowering ideas. In terms of Huston's (1985) framework we note that heroic characteristics often reflect gender based personal-social attributes; that heroic functions in some cases reflect gender based activities; and that the relevance of this work for self perception is assured by the numbers of participants who identified with their hero. The importance of literature and film in providing a medium to pass on or record culture is well recognized. These data provide an unobtrusive measure of the impact of these cultural images from childhood to adolescence. Knowing values is central in understanding human culture and facilitating educational and personal development requires knowledge of the qualities that enliven young people's imaginations, and heroes have a special place in the imagination.

We begin our discussion by examining the association between sex of hero and sex of participant. The origin of the hero chosen (proximal or distal) is part of this discussion and this origin also varies with age. Next for the French and Spanish samples, we compare the different developmental and gender trajectories of participants in terms of the characteristics, domains and functions of their heroes. In some cases the heroes express collective social value through their characteristics (e.g., friendly, honest, and kind) and their functions (e.g., to do good, to protect and to show how well things can be done), and in other cases the heroes embodied individually valued characteristics such as beautiful, strong and warrior and functions such as to excel. Finally, we examine the developmental and gender trajectories of heroic qualities within each country.

Gender and Hero

Looking first at the evidence on gender differences in the hero chosen in the Spanish and French samples, we note that in the work by Williams and Best (1990) on personal social gender stereotypes in elementary children, Spanish participants in comparison to French participants had higher percentage scores on female stereotypes (affectionate, gentle, and soft-hearted) that seem associated to heroic characteristics such as loving and kind: the evidence on male stereotypes pertinent to our heroic characteristics, such as aggressive, adventurous and assured/confident, is mixed with Spanish participants choosing aggressive at higher rates and the French participants choosing adventurous and assured/confident at higher rates (Williams & Best, 1990, pp. 182-183). The Spanish cultural interest in bulls (Kennedy, 1999; Douglass, 1991) may be associated with these heightened sensitivities to certain male and female qualities, though we could not identify a similarly iconic image for French culture. Certainly in the present study, male heroes are more important to the Spanish participants than to the French: the overall percentage choosing male heroes is significantly higher for Spanish pupils. In pre-television times male heroes were chosen about 51% of the time in the United States (Stoughton & Ray, 1946). Here the French 10-year-olds choose male heroes 60% of the time, which is slightly higher -whereas the concept of hero is close to being entirely male for Spanish 10-year-olds at 90%. In addition, the male hero is more important to the Spanish female than to the French female, whereas males in each country did not choose male heroes at different than expected rates. The low numbers of female heroes (13%) in the Spanish sample and the virtual absence of female heroes in the Spanish male sample is a striking image of the importance of the male hero in Spain.

Furthermore, the importance of the male is also prominent in Spanish but not French young people's thinking about proximal and distal heroes. Pre-television data indicated that girls chose proximal heroes more than boys

(Hill, 1930; Stoughton & Ray, 1946). In the present study in the French sample more females than expected chose proximal heroes. This is in line with previous literature and in more recent research in Ireland, the US and Slovenia (Gash & Conway, 1997; Gash & Bajd, 2005). However, in Spain this expected gender relation between proximal and distal did not appear, with more than 90% of males and females choosing distal heroes. Evidence on television viewing of pupils at about this age in Spain and France indicates similar amounts of television viewing per week in each country (TIMSS, 1997), however we did not ask participants about their personal use of digital media.

In the pre-television era there was evidence of a developmental sequence with proximal heroes appearing first and distal heroes appearing later (Hill, 1930; Stoughton & Ray, 1946). At that time children learned about proximal heroes in their communities and families before they learned about distal heroes further away in time or geography. A striking finding of the present study is that in both the French and Spanish samples distal heroes appear first and proximal heroes later. A recent study with Irish developmental data (Gash & Bajd, 2005) found no association between this categorization of heroes (proximal and distal) and the age level of participant (10-year-old, and 15-year-old). However, the present data set provides clear evidence of a reversal in the order of acquisition of heroic figure (distal then proximal) for these 10-year-old and 15-year-old participants. We suggest that this is because today heroic figures appear first to children on the television and other digital media. Furthermore, in both France and Spain audio-visual media were the main source of heroes and in each case the numbers of younger participants, as compared to older participants, identifying audio-visual heroes as the domain of their heroic figure were significantly greater than expected (Table 2). In the Gash and Bajd (2005) study the percentages of Irish participants that identified their heroes on television was much lower (7% for 15-year-olds and 32% for 10-year-olds). Further, the TIMSS (1995) data indicate that the Spanish 8th graders surveyed watch more television and video than the French 8th grade participants and in parallel 50% of the Spanish participants in the present study locate their heroes in the audio-visual domain, whereas the French figure is lower at 45%.

Country of Participant and Hero

In comparing Spanish and French hero choice the most obvious difference were the rates at which functions of heroes were chosen. Spanish participants selected six social functions of heroes (to entertain, to do good, to give a good example, to protect, to take risks to save lives, and to show how well things can be done) and two social characteristics (caring and good) at higher than expected rates; whereas the French choose only three social characteristics at higher than expected rates; friendly, honest, and kind. It is clear

from the results that the richest sources of heroes are the audio-visual domain and the worlds of sport and music and we find it is reassuring that young people in each country prioritize heroes with a number of positive social qualities.

The French choose five individually oriented characteristics at higher than expected rates (beautiful, good looking, rich, strong, and warrior) and one function (to excel); whereas the Spanish only chose one characteristic brainy at higher than expected frequency. Liben and Bigler (2002) suggested that today individuals may be less likely to differentiate between the sexes on personality traits than in terms of occupations and activities. These data indicate that such traits are involved in the selection of heroes, and that this takes place in different ways in these two cultural contexts.

Gash and Bajd (2005) found their Irish participants prioritised sporting heroes whereas their Slovene sample prioritised audio-visual heroes: here sporting heroes were chosen more than expected by the French (25%) and political heroes more often by the Spanish participants though in very small numbers (3%). Males in each country selected sports heroes more often than their female peers and in France 15-year-olds chose sports heroes more often than 10-year-olds. These findings are clearly associated with the selection of characteristics of sporting heroes by French and Spanish males (skilful, strong, warrior) and by French 15 year olds (confident, skilful, warrior).

Significant developmental trends were shown in the Spanish sample for heroic characteristics associated with gender. The general finding reported in Gash and Bajd (2005) is repeated, namely that socially related characteristics and functions are important to the 10-year-olds but individually important qualities are more important to 15 year olds. So, Spanish 10-year-olds chose caring, friendly, good, and loving at higher than expected rates. Each of these has strong female gender links. Giving a good example was chosen more than expected by the Spanish 15-year-olds and this is also socially valuable and gender related. In the French sample, the younger participants prioritise the social functions to do good, to protect, and to take risks to save lives. The French 15-year-olds prioritise a number of socially related qualities: the function to show how to do things well, the domain family and the characteristic caring.

In conclusion, we argue from these data that digital media and television play an important role in the construction of young people's heroes. Researchers (e.g., Ruble & Martin, 1998) have called for more research into the development of gender identity. At a time when social capital is recognized as being vitally important for society, the heroes that young people admire provide an unobtrusive measure of the relative importance of individual and collective values. Recent work by Liben and Bigler (2002) highlights variation in the developmental trajectories of gendered selves. We believe that the pattern of social and individual values shown here for males and females at elementary and high school poses an educational challenge.

Gash and Conway (1997) have shown it is possible to promote pro-social heroes through classroom discussion and Malgady et al. (1990) have shown that discussion of culturally relevant heroes is beneficial to one's sense of identity and one's self concept. We hope these data will stimulate the type of discussion that will promote harmony between individual achievement and a sense of community.

References

- Bussey, K., & Bandura, A. (1999) Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. *Psychological Review*, *106*, 676-713.
- Douglass, C. B. (1997). *Bulls, bullfighting, and Spanish identities*. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press.
- Gash, H., & Bajd, B. (2005) Young people's heroes in Ireland and Slovenia. *Irish Journal of Psychology*, *26*, 137-148.
- Gash, H., & Conway, P. (1997) Images of heroes and heroines: How stable? *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *18*, 349-372.
- Hart, D., & Fegley, S. (1997). Children's self-awareness and self-understanding in cultural context. In U. Neisser & D. A. Jopling (Eds.), *The Conceptual Self in context: Culture, Experience, Self-Understanding* (pp. 154-175). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Heusmann, L. R., & Miller, L. S. (1994). Long-term effects of repeated exposure to media violence in childhood. In L. R. Heusmann (Ed.), *Aggressive behavior: Current perspectives* (pp. 153-186). New York: Plenum Press.
- Hill, D.S. (1930). Personification of ideals by urban children. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *1*, 379-393.
- Huston, A. C. (1983). Sex-typing. In P. H. Mussen (Series Ed.) & E. M. Hetherington (Vol.Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 4. Socialization, personality, and social development* (3rd ed., pp. 387-467). New York: Wiley.
- Kennedy, A. L. (1999) *On bullfighting*. London: Yellow Jersey.
- Kohlberg, L.A. (1966) A cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex role concepts and attitudes. In E.E. Maccoby (Ed.), *The development of sex differences* (pp. 82-173). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Liben, L. S., and Bigler, R. S. (2002). The developmental course of gender differentiation. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *67*(2), Serial No. 269.
- Liebert, R. M., & Sprafkin, J. (1988). *The early window*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- McCutcheon, L. E., Lange, R., & Houran, J. (2002), Conceptualization and measurement of celebrity worship. *British Journal of Psychology*, *93*, 67-87.
- Malgady, R.G., Rogler, L.H., & Costantino, G. (1990). Hero/heroine modeling for Puerto Rican adolescents: A preventive mental health intervention. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *58*, 469-474.
- Markus, H. R., Mullally, P.R., & Kitayama, S. (1997). Selfways: Diversity in modes of cultural participation. In U. Neisser &

- D.A. Jopling (Eds.), *The conceptual self in context: Culture, experience, self-understanding* (pp. 13-61). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41, 954-969.
- Martin, C. L., & Halverson, C. (1981) A schematic processing model of sex typing and stereotyping in children. *Child Development*, 1119-1134.
- Online Etymological Dictionary. Retrieved October 27, 2006, from <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=macho>
- Oyserman, D. & Markus, H.R. (1990). Possible selves and delinquency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 112-125.
- Oyserman, D., Coon, H.M. & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002) Rethinking individualism and collectivism: Evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 128, 3-72.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Ruble, D. N., & Martin, C. L. (1998) Gender development. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) and N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3. Social, emotional and personality development* (5th ed., pp. 933-1016). New York: Wiley.
- Stoughton, M.L., & Ray, A.M. (1946). A study of children's heroes and heroines. *Journal of Experimental Education*, 15, 156-160.
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS]. (1999) Retrieved May 8, 2006, from <http://nces.ed.gov/timss/>
- Williams, J.E., & Best, D.L. (1990). *Measuring sex stereotypes: A multinational study*. London: Sage.

Received May 16, 2007

Revision received August 15, 2008

Accepted September 21, 2008