

Where have you gone Joe DiMaggio?

An examination of adolescents' heroes and identity formation

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RUNNING HEAD: Heroes

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Erikson (1968) conceived of adolescent identity formation as a socio-cultural process in which personal identity is formed through interactions with the environment. These interactions are not indeterminate; rather, the universe of options is clearly delimited by the adolescents' community. What we as a culture hold in esteem, or shun as evil, is part of the shared knowledge of the community. We impart this knowledge to our children through the daily routines we establish for our children, as well as through the media, the educational system, and the value we place on various adult activities [Eccles (Parsons), 1983; Stein, Markus, & Roeser, 1995]. In addition, Erikson postulated that positive self-esteem comes from being able to assume one's identity from those that are valued and respected by the community. To understand adolescent identity formation, it is necessary to consider the effects of the socio-cultural context that shape the self (Eccles, 1987; Kiesler, Sproull, & Eccles, 1985).

One such context is the identification of adolescents with various heroes and heroines in our culture. The individuals whom we hold in esteem, the ones who we put in the spotlight, reflect what we as a culture value most. When Simon and Garfunkel (19xx) sang their lament, "Where have you gone Joe DiMaggio" over 30 years ago, we feared that our nation had lost its ability to identify with its heroes. The socio-cultural context that is necessary in the development of adolescents' identity formation had become a barren wasteland. We worried that our

adolescents would grow up without role models to spark their imagination and creativity. Thirty years later, popular wisdom suggests that the heroes of today are even more tarnished in their reputations, their images less than positive. So, we wonder if our youth, through identification with these role models, have come to identify with a set of values that we as a culture do not hold as good and acceptable. Alternatively, if our adolescents cannot identify heroes or heroines whom they admire, is this problematic in its effect on their developing sense of self?

There have been relatively few systematic studies of adolescents' heroes. Jackson (1970) conducted a survey study of 120 British teenagers to explore whether teens identified with fictional, historical, and political figures. The major finding from this study was that the adolescents preferred entertainment figures and had little interest in political figures. Balswick and Ingoldsby (1982) attempted to assess the type of heroes and heroines most often chosen by a group of 1,092 high school students in northeast Georgia. The authors examined how often adolescents chose heroes over heroines and the impact of sex and race on these choices. Balswick and Ingoldsby found that heroes were chosen over heroines more than 3 to 1 for both males and females. They also found that race was not a factor in this choice, although less than 20% of the sample was black. The authors suggest that, given their findings, it is necessary to understand the effect of cultural heroes, and of the shortage of heroines and positive heroes, on the formation of adolescents' personalities.

There have also been numerous popular studies of adolescents' heroes and heroines. Miller (1978), working for Ladies Home Journal, reported on the

responses of 800 teenagers from across the United States to their query to identify the famous person they believed should win a top prize in nine different areas of achievement including science, art, sports, etc. The author found that no women were mentioned on the winner's list by either males or females. The teens were also asked to identify one person they felt met nine criteria, including intelligence, personality, and whether they would like to be that person. The author reported that 12 of the 18 people identified were current media personalities. Leerhsen (1990), for a special issue of Newsweek devoted to teenagers, surveyed teens in four diverse settings: a military academy in Indiana, an eighth grade in the Bronx, a girls' school in Dallas, a Midwestern high school, and an Indian reservation in South Dakota. The author asked a group of students from each of these settings to write down their hero and to indicate what characteristics they liked best about that person. Leerhsen found that kids in these diverse settings appeared to have very similar heroes: sports figures, media personalities, and various other entertainers, many of whom were popular hero choices in the 1960's (e.g., James Dean, Elvis Presley, Martin Luther King, Jr.). The author also noted that many adolescents could not identify a hero and seemed to be bored with the whole notion of trying to think of someone they consider a hero (personal communication). Leerhsen concluded that his findings suggest that heroes might serve a different and "less vital function" (p. 47) for today's teens than they did for prior generations.

How integral is it to a child's psychological development to have someone they consider a hero? One method of evaluating the importance of adolescents' hero choices is to examine the relation between the types of heroes chosen and the self

esteem or happiness of the adolescent. Cross and Markus (1991) investigated individuals' hoped-for and feared "possible selves" across the lifespan. These possible selves, much like hero choices, are representations of how the individual sees him/herself in the future. The authors found that across all age groups, those who were most dissatisfied with life reported striving for more personal hoped-for selves (such as desiring to be happy and somehow helping people) than did individuals who were more satisfied with life. Satisfied individuals identified occupational and family oriented hoped-for selves more frequently. The authors concluded that the hoped-for selves of low satisfied individuals may represent what is missing from their lives currently. Similarly, Stein, Markus, and Roeser (1995) found that, when asked to identify good and bad qualities about themselves, low self esteem boys and girls not only had more negative self descriptors, they also had fewer descriptors in domains that were clearly valued by the majority of respondents (such as athleticism, intellect, agreeableness, and extroversion). The authors suggest that this inability to embrace the collectively valued domains and identify with cultural norms may lie at the heart of negative views of the self in depression and low self-esteem. These two studies suggest that adolescents' choice of a hero may be related to their feelings of self worth and happiness. Adolescents with high self esteem may choose specific kinds of heroes because they have begun to identify with elements of our society that they feel are positive and valuable to them as adolescents. Alternatively, adolescents who have no heroes may, in some way, feel disenfranchised from the cultural norms. This, in turn, would be reflected in their level of self-esteem and self-reported happiness.

Generally when we think of heroes and heroines, we think of popular and/or historical figures who have accomplished wondrous and admirable achievements. However, heroes and heroines come in many shapes and sizes. Adolescent identity may only be marginally influenced by media figures. The people who more strongly affect adolescents' sense of self may be the adults who are directly involved in their day to day lives. Galbo (1984) reviewed the literature to date on the influence of significant adults in the lives of adolescents. He reported that by and large adolescents chose parents as the adults selected most often. He also reported that in general boys selected male significant adults and girls selected females. Galbo (1983) found similar results in his study of 31 high school juniors. He concluded that the influence of significant adults is felt by youths in how it affects their self-concept, their feelings of self worth, and their educational and occupational aspirations (1983, 1984). One limitation Galbo (1984) noted of many of the studies he reviewed was that researchers often determined which adults would probably be most important to the adolescents and asked the youths to indicate the importance of these individuals in their lives. Galbo suggests that future research needs to allow subjects to respond in a more open ended fashion to which adult is most significant in their lives. This paper will explore adolescents' famous heroes, as well as their "known" heroes, the person they know personally whom they admire.

Gender may be an important factor to consider in understanding the relation between hero choice and self-esteem. Numerous studies have reported that girls' self esteem is lower than boys', especially during the adolescent years (AAUW, 1991; Eccles et al., 1989; Harter, 1983; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). One explanation for this

fact may be that adolescent girls begin to recognize the dominance of males in positions of power and prestige and to feel restricted from aspiring to these positions. Balswick and Ingoldsby (1982), as noted above, found that girls chose male heroes over 75% of the time. Miller (1978) and Leerhsen (1990) found similar results in their popular reports of adolescents' heroes. The media's attention to male figures and its lack of attention to females certainly explains these findings to some extent. One question is whether identification of an opposite gender hero has an impact on one's developing sense of self. Research from the gender stereotyping literature suggests that individuals who describe themselves as having both androgynous and masculine characteristics tend to have high self-esteem in comparison with feminine and undifferentiated sex stereotyped individuals (Bem, 1977; Spence et al., 1975). This is true for women as well as men. Thus, it is hypothesized that high self esteem girls would identify strong males and females as their heroes, whereas low self esteem girls would identify women in more traditional or feminized roles such as modeling, singing, and acting.

One way to acquire insight into the nature and importance of the relationship of adolescents to their hero figures is to explore what characteristics the youths most admire about these individuals. Galbo (1983), in his investigation of significant adults, explored the personal qualities adolescents preferred in adults. He found that the qualities fell into three categories: 1) modeling and admiration, such as being worthy of respect and living an interesting life, 2) reciprocal friendship such that the adults treated the adolescents equally and helped them with their problems, and 3) specific qualities such as had a good sense of humor, was friendly and nice,

and took time to listen. Galbo (1984) reported that other researchers found their subjects identified similar characteristics in other studies of significant adults. No one has examined the characteristics adolescents admire in famous heroes.

We would anticipate that boys and girls would choose different characteristics to admire given the differences in socialization patterns between the sexes (Eccles, 1987; 1993). Additionally, we predict that the kinds of characteristics admired by adolescents would change and mature as the youths got older. Younger, less mature adolescents may be impressed by the physical prowess of an athlete or desirous of the lifestyle of a rock and roll star. However, older adolescents, who are beginning to take on more adult roles and are cognitively more sophisticated, may endorse other characteristics such as altruism and genuine caring as admirable traits. Finally, we predict that adolescents with low and high self esteem and who are low and high on a measure of happiness would report admiring different characteristics.

This study examines the socio-cultural context that shapes adolescents' development by asking a sample of adolescents to identify two hero figures, one they know personally and one they do not know personally but who is famous. The approach taken in this study is that the heroes chosen, as well as the admirable traits ascribed to those heroes, reflect the collective ideal of the good and acceptable self. Initial analyses explore the differences between boys and girls in their identity formation in terms of their hero choices across several age groups. Then, we examine differences between high and low self-esteem and happy and unhappy adolescents in their hero choices and the characteristics they admire. Finally, we explore the valued characteristics that adolescents share across the total sample and

as they mature. Gender and grade differences and differences in low and high self esteem adolescents are also explored.

Methods

The study presented here uses data collected as part of a longitudinal investigation being conducted by Eccles and her colleagues (Eccles, Wigfield, & Blumenfeld, 1984; Eccles, Wigfield, Blumenfeld, & Harold, 1990) examining children's achievement motivation and the development of their identity across the school years. Data for this study include children in the 7th, 8th, and 10th grades. Subjects were recruited from four school districts in predominantly white, middle class communities. Six hundred thirty-three (633) adolescents, 323 girls and 310 boys, completed a questionnaire that included The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982), and a measure of happiness (see Appendix for items and reliabilities). The following questions were also asked: Of all the adults you know personally, think of the one you admire the most. Is this person male or female? How do you know this person? What are three things you admire most about this person? Next, students were asked: Now think about other adults you do not know personally but who are famous. Pick the one you admire the most or think of as a "hero". Is this person male or female? Give this person's name and what this person is best known for. What are three things you admire most about this person?

In order to assess differences in low and high self esteem adolescents in their choice of hero, the sample was bifurcated into Low and High self esteem groups based on mean level scores across the 7 items on Harter's Perceived Competence

Scale for Children (1982). The Low self esteem adolescents (108 girls and 81 boys) represented the bottom 30% of the group on this measure, while the High self esteem adolescents (206 girls and 210 boys) represented the top 70% of the sample on this measure. The adolescents in the Low self esteem group scored between 1.14 and 2.83 out of a possible 4.0 and the High self esteem group scored between 2.86 and 4.0. Then, four new groups were computed that included gender and self esteem level so that comparisons could be made among the groups: Low self esteem girls, High self esteem girls, Low self esteem boys, and High self esteem boys.

Similarly, in order to assess differences in happy and unhappy adolescents, a mean score across the 6 items was computed with a possible low score of 1 and a possible high score of 7. The sample was bifurcated into Happy and Unhappy groups. The Happy adolescents (244 girls and 229 boys) represented the top 75.4% of the sample, while the Unhappy adolescents (76 girls and 78 boys) represented the bottom 24.5% of the sample. The adolescents in the Unhappy group scored between 1.66 and 4.0, and the Happy group scored between 4.17 and 7.0. Again, four new groups were computed that included gender and level of happiness so that comparisons could be made among the groups: Unhappy girls, Happy girls, Unhappy boys, and Happy boys.

Over 50 different responses were generated from the question asking about a hero the adolescents know personally (Known Hero). These responses were collapsed into the following categories: 1) **Parental figures**, including parents, stepparents, and foster parents; 2) **Other relatives**, including siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins; 3) **Friends**, including godparents, friends of the family,

and neighbors; 4) **Teachers/coaches/ministers/priests** and other school personnel; and 5) **No hero** indicated or said they have no hero.

Over 100 different responses were given in response to the question, of the adults you do not know personally but who are famous who is the one you admire the most (Famous Hero). These responses were collapsed into the following categories: 1) **Sports figures**, including baseball players, basketball players, football players, boxers, hockey players, female athletes, and other sports; 2) **Musicians** (popular), including individual recording stars and rock groups; 3) **Actors/entertainers**, including television and movie male and female actors, comedians, models, professional wrestlers, talk show hosts, fictional characters such as Superman and Batman, and other entertainers; 4) **Other famous people**, including news and sports casters, political activists, artists and classical musicians, politicians, historical figures such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Writers/authors, and religious leaders; and 5) **No hero** indicated or said they have no hero.

There were over 150 different characteristics ascribed to the Known and Famous heroes. These codes were collapsed into 10 major categories based on the nature of the characteristic. The 10 categories are: 1) **personality characteristics** such as cool, brave, honest, fun, etc.; 2) **interpersonal/social characteristics** such as nice, kind, helpful, a good friend; 3) **physical characteristics** such as the way they look, their gender or age, their physical abilities; 4) **smart or intelligent**; 5) **interaction with child** such as understands me or does things for me; 6) **activities they do** such as the job they have or that the child wants to do what they do; 7) **possessions** they have

such as cars, money, travel a lot, etc.; 8) **role model** such as they are a leader; 9) **no negative characteristics** such as doesn't break the rules, never in trouble with the law, etc.; and 10) **negative characteristics** such as gets his/her way, drinks, gets away with things.

Results

In the first set of analyses we examine the relative percentages of responses for each of the categories for the Known and Famous heroes and the gender and grade level differences in these choices. Next we examine the gender choices of the heroes chosen in relation to the gender of the adolescents. The relation of these gender choices to the self esteem and happiness measures for boys and girls is also examined. Adolescents' choices of heroes are also compared on two independent measures of adolescents' adjustment: self esteem and happiness. Finally, the kinds of characteristics ascribed to the Known and Famous heroes are compared. The characteristics mentioned are also analyzed in terms of gender, grade, self esteem, and happiness differences.

Known hero choices

Table 1 presents the frequency distributions for the adolescents' choice of the person they admire whom they know. Approximately 38.2% of the adolescents identified a parent or parental figure as the person they know whom they admire the most. This was followed by 26.7% of the adolescents identifying a relative, 17.5% identifying friends, 10.1% identifying teachers, coaches, ministers, etc., and 6.6% not identifying any hero (see Table 1).

Gender and grade level differences were then examined (see Table 1). There were no differences between boys and girls in the Known Heroes they identified. However, there were significant grade level differences [$\chi^2(10, N = 628) = 27.48, p < .01$]. Adolescents in Grade 7 chose parental figures more often than expected by chance, and Grade 10 adolescents chose them less often than expected. Eighth graders did not differ in observed versus expected choice. Tenth graders identified friends and teachers, coaches, ministers, etc. more often than expected, while 7th graders identified these groups less often. Eighth graders also identified teachers and coaches less often than expected but friends slightly more often than expected.

Famous hero choices

Table 2 presents the frequency distributions for the adolescents' choices of the person they admire who is famous. For famous heroes, over one fourth of the sample could not or did not identify a hero (26.2%) (see Table 2). Another one fourth of the sample identified sports figures as their hero (24.4%), including baseball, basketball, football, boxing, hockey and other sports stars. Next came actors/entertainers (18.6%), including movie and TV stars, comedians, models, professional wrestlers, fictional characters, and talk show hosts. Next most frequently mentioned were other famous people (17.9%) such as political activists and politicians, artists and classical musicians, historical figures, writers, and religious figures. Finally, the smallest percentage of the sample identified musicians and popular music groups (12.8%).

There were no grade level differences in choice of Famous hero. However, there were significant gender differences [$\chi^2(4, N = 633) = 71.54, p < .01$]. Girls chose

sports figures less often than expected and musicians and actors/entertainers more often than expected. In contrast, boys chose sports figures more often than expected and musicians and actors/entertainers less often than expected. Additionally, girls indicated no hero more often than expected and boys less often than expected.

It is interesting to consider which famous heroes were actually chosen most often by the adolescents. Sergei Federov, a Detroit Red Wings hockey player, and Kurt Cobain, a rock musician, got the most number of responses (15 and 12 responses respectively). The Red Wings were in the hockey playoffs at the time the survey was administered and Kurt Cobain had committed suicide one month prior to the administration of our survey. The other popular choices, Michael Jordan, Cindy Crawford, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Cruise, Madonna, Isiah Thomas, Steve Yzerman (a Red Wings hockey player), and Mariah Carey (a singer), along with the top two choices, suggest that adolescents' heroes are frequently determined by recent events and media attention.

Gender choices

Known hero

Not surprisingly, the girls who identified a known hero chose a female person for their Known hero more often than expected by chance and boys chose a male figure more often than expected [$X^2(1, N = 603) = 182.57, p < .01$] (see Table 3). Of the girls who chose a male figure, 35.1% chose a father figure as their Known hero, while 31.2% chose another male relative. Of the boys who chose a female figure, 54.2% chose a mother figure as their Known hero and 20.3% chose a female

adult friend. There were no differences on the self esteem or happiness measures among boys and girls who chose a male or female figure.

Famous hero

Similarly, in choice of Famous hero, girls again chose female figures and boys chose male figures more often than expected by chance [$X^2(2, N = 607) = 112.54, p < .01$] (see Table 4). Of note, however, is that nearly one third of the girls indicated they had no hero, compared to 17% of the boys. Also, girls were more likely to choose a male hero than were boys choosing a female heroine. Girls who chose a woman for their hero tended to choose actors/entertainers (41.1% of the girls who chose a woman), followed by other heroes such as politicians, historical figures, writers, etc. (24.1% of these girls). Boys who chose a male figure tended to choose sports figures (51.4% of the boys who chose a male figure). In contrast, girls who chose a male figure and boys who chose a female figure chose other heroes the most (29.8% of girls choosing a man and 37.5% of boys choosing a woman), followed by actors/entertainers and musicians (24% for both actors and musicians of girls choosing a man and 20.8% for both actors and musicians of boys choosing a woman). There were no differences on the self esteem or happiness measure among boys and girls who chose a male or female Famous hero.

Self esteem and happiness

Adolescents' choices of heroes were compared on two independent measures of adolescents' identity and sense of self: self esteem and happiness. The two measures correlated at .56 ($p < .01$). Girls and boys did not differ significantly on these two measures. Adolescents' ratings on the self esteem and happiness measures

were divided into two groups and then four groups based on gender and low and high ratings on the two measures as described above. There were 108 girls and 81 boys in the Low self esteem groups, and 209 girls and 211 boys in the High self esteem groups. For the Unhappy groups, there were 77 girls and 77 boys; for the Happy groups there were 245 girls and 228 boys.

Known hero

There were marginally significant differences among high and low self esteem boys and girls in their choices of Known heroes [$X^2(12, N = 604) = 19.97, p=.07$] (see Table 5). Low self esteem girls mentioned parental figures less often than expected, whereas high self esteem boys mentioned parental figures more often than expected. High self esteem girls and low self esteem boys mentioned parental figures as expected. Low self esteem girls mentioned relatives and friends more often than expected, whereas low self esteem boys mentioned relatives less often and friends more often than expected by chance.

There were significant differences between Happy and Unhappy boys and girls [$X^2(12, N = 627) = 27.04, p<.01$] (see Table 6). Unhappy boys and girls chose parental figures less often than expected, whereas happy boys and girls chose them more often than expected. Unhappy girls chose relatives less often than expected, whereas happy boys chose them less often. Finally, happy boys chose friends less often than expected.

Famous hero

There were significant differences among high and low self esteem boys and girls in their choices of famous people whom they admire the most [$X^2(12, N = 609$

= 83.75, $p < .01$] (see Table 6). By and large, many of these differences reflect gender differences more than self esteem differences. Both low and high self esteem girls mentioned sports figures less often, musicians more often, and no hero more often than expected by chance. High self esteem boys tended to mention musicians less often than expected. Low self esteem girls mentioned actors and entertainers more often than expected, whereas low self esteem boys mentioned them less often.

There were also significant differences among happy and unhappy boys and girls [X^2 (12, $N = 632$) = 83.04, $p < .01$] (see Table 6). The contrast among these groups was with happy and unhappy girls and happy boys. Happy and unhappy girls mentioned sports figures less often, musicians and actors more often, and no hero more often than expected. In contrast, happy boys mentioned sports figures more often than expected, musicians and actors less often, and no hero less often than expected.

Admired characteristics

The adolescents were asked to list up to three characteristics that they admire most about their Known and Famous hero. In order to determine how often a characteristic was mentioned by the sample, the characteristics were collapsed across the three responses and percentages were calculated on how often a characteristic was mentioned given the number of adolescents in the sample. Table 7 presents the percentage of responses of admired traits for Known and Famous heroes. As can be seen, for the Known hero, 62.2% of the adolescents mentioned personality characteristics of the individual, 57.0% mentioned interpersonal/social characteristics, and 23.3% mentioned interaction with the child. In contrast, for the

Famous hero, 57% of the adolescents mentioned physical characteristics as admirable traits, while 48.8% mentioned personality characteristics, and 37.2% mentioned interpersonal/ social characteristics.

Gender differences

There were several significant gender differences in the kinds of characteristics admired by boys and girls. For the Known hero, girls were more likely to mention interpersonal/social characteristics than were boys [$X^2(1, N = 593) = 9.11, p < .01$]. Boys, however, were more likely to mention possessions [$X^2(1, N = 593) = 7.30, p < .01$] and activities they do [$X^2(1, N = 593) = 7.26, p < .01$] as admired characteristics than were girls as expected by chance. For the Famous hero, boys were again more likely to mention possessions [$X^2(1, N = 460) = 20.65, p < .01$] and activities they do [$X^2(1, N = 460) = 4.48, p < .05$], as well as physical characteristics [$X^2(1, N = 460) = 14.00, p < .01$] than were girls.

Grade level differences

Grade level differences in the kinds of characteristics admired were also found. For the Known hero, 7th and 8th graders were more likely to admire an individual because he/she understands them and respects them than were 10th graders [$X^2(2, N = 593) = 10.69, p < .01$]. Alternatively, 10th graders were more likely to mention the Known heroes' personality characteristics such as being cool or honest than were 7th and 8th graders [$X^2(2, N = 593) = 12.66, p < .01$]. For the Famous hero, 10th graders were again more likely to mention personality characteristics as admirable traits more often than were 7th and 8th graders [$X^2(2, N = 460) = 6.61,$

$p < .05$). Tenth graders were also more likely to mention that their hero was smart than were 7th and 8th graders [$X^2(2, N = 460) = 8.10, p < .05$].

Self esteem and happiness differences

There were no differences in characteristics mentioned between high and low self esteem or happy and unhappy adolescents for either the Known or Famous hero.

Conclusions

What are the collective representations of the good and acceptable self found in adolescents' known and famous heroes? This research finds that parental figures and other family members play a significant role in the formation of adolescents' identities. Not surprisingly, girls identified with female figures and boys with male figures. As adolescents mature, they rely less and less on parental figures as models in the development of their identities and instead turn to adult friends, teachers, coaches, etc. perhaps to enhance their emerging sense of self (?). The importance of identification with parental figures is highlighted by the fact that low self esteem girls and unhappy boys and girls chose parental figures less often than expected by chance. The finding that only low self esteem girls and not low self esteem boys chose parental figures less often than expected suggests that girls' identity formation and their satisfaction with the self may be more strongly influenced by their relationship with their parents than are boys'.

In terms of famous heroes, over one fourth of this sample had difficulty identifying a hero, suggesting that today's adolescents may have given up searching for Joe DiMaggio. However, a closer examination of these findings reveal that girls

especially find it difficult to choose a hero. In fact, gender was more salient in relating to choice of famous hero than either self esteem or happiness. Girls, regardless of self esteem or happiness, chose sports figures less often and had no hero more often than did boys. Approximately 40% of the boys identified a sports figure as the person they admire most. Self esteem and happiness were not related to this choice. For these boys, Joe DiMaggio may still be important in the development of their identity.

The adolescents in this study identified different characteristics for the traits they admire in their known and famous heroes. The majority of the adolescents admire their Known hero because they possess such positive qualities as being honest, fun-loving, kind, and helpful to others. Famous heroes were admired for their looks and their physical abilities, as well as for their positive personality traits. It is interesting to note that boys identified possessions and the job they have as admirable characteristics more often than did girls for both their known and famous heroes. Having possessions and one's job are status symbols in our culture and may reflect the importance of agency in the boys' identity development. In contrast, girls identified interpersonal and social characteristics as important admirable traits in their known heroes more often than did boys, suggesting that girls organize their identity around interpersonal connection. Younger adolescents admired characteristics in their heroes that were directly related to them (e.g., understands me, does things for me), whereas older adolescents were more likely to admire their heroes because of the kind of values and qualities they possess.

Appendix

The Perceived Competence Scale for Children (Harter, 1982) - a 7 item measure of satisfaction with self

($\alpha = .78$):

First decide which is more like you. Once you decide that, then check the box next to the statement you chose to indicate how true it is for you. Is this statement sort of true or really true for you? Check only one box for each question.

Really true of me	Sort of true of me			Sort of true of me	Really true of me
1	2	Some kids feel that there are a lot of things that they would change if they could	BUT	Other kids would like to stay pretty much the same	3 4
1	2	Some kids are very happy being the way they are	BUT	Other kids wish they were different	3 4
1	2	Some kids aren't very happy with the way they do a lot of things	BUT	Other kids think the way they do things is fine	3 4
1	2	Some kids are pretty sure of themselves	BUT	Other kids are not very sure of themselves	3 4
1	2	Some kids feel good about the way they act	BUT	Other kids wish they acted differently	3 4
1	2	Some kids are usually sure that what they are doing is the right thing	BUT	Other kids aren't so sure whether or not they are doing the right thing	3 4
1	2	Some kids think that maybe they are not a very good person	BUT	Other kids are pretty sure they are a good person	3 4

A 6 item measure of happiness (1=not at all happy; 4=happy; 7=extremely happy)

($\alpha = .82$):

- How happy are you with
- the kind of person you are?
- your closest friend?
- your popularity?
- your relationship with your parents?
- your life now?
- how well you are doing in your school courses?

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TABLE 1.

Frequency table:

Adolescents' choices of the person they admire whom they know

<u>PERSON</u>	Frequency						Total (% of total sample)
	Girls (expected)	Boys (expected)	Grade 7 (expected)	Grade 8 (expected)	Grade 10 (expected)		
Parent or parental figure	115 (123.5)	127 (118.5)	86 (69.6)	71 (70.3)	85 (102.1)	242 (38.2%)	
Other relative - aunt, uncle, grandparent, cousin	95 (86.2)	74 (82.8)	48 (48.6)	51 (49.1)	70 (71.3)	169 (26.7%)	
Friend - adult or adolescent	59 (56.6)	52 (54.4)	22 (31.9)	37 (32.3)	52 (46.8)	111 (17.5%)	
Teacher/coach/minister/ priest	37 (32.7)	27 (31.3)	15 (18.4)	8 (18.6)	41 (27.0)	64 (10.1%)	
No hero indicated or said they have no hero	16 (21.4)	26 (20.6)	10 (12.1)	16 (12.2)	16 (17.7)	42 (6.6%)	

Note: No significant differences between boys and girls

Significant grade level differences: $X^2=27.48$, $p<.01$, $df=10$

TABLE 2.
Frequency table:

Adolescents' choices of the person they admire who is famous

FAMOUS HERO	Frequency						Total (% of total sample)
	Girls (expected)	Boys (expected)	Grade 7 (expected)	Grade 8 (expected)	Grade 10 (expected)		
Sports figure	34 (79.1)	121 (75.9)	57 (44.6)	42 (45.1)	56 (65.4)	155 (24.5%)	
Musician	52 (41.3)	29 (39.7)	17 (23.3)	22 (23.5)	42 (34.2)	81 (12.8%)	
Actors, entertainers	73 (60.2)	45 (57.8)	32 (33.9)	39 (34.3)	47 (49.8)	118 (18.6%)	
Other famous people - artists, politicians, historical figures	62 (57.7)	51 (55.3)	29 (32.5)	29 (32.8)	55 (47.7)	113 (17.9%)	
No hero indicated or said they have no hero	102 (84.7)	64 (81.3)	47 (47.7)	52 (48.3)	67 (70.0)	166 (26.2%)	

Note: Significant gender differences: $X^2=71.54$, $p<.01$, $df=4$

No significant grade level differences

Table 3. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN KNOWN HERO CHOICES

	Girls who chose a: Frequency Expected (% of girls)	Boys who chose a: Frequency Expected (% of boys)
Female hero	230 147.1 (75%)	59 141.9 (20%)
Male hero	77 159.9 (25%)	237 154.1 (80%)

Table 4. GENDER DIFFERENCES IN FAMOUS HERO CHOICES

	Girls who chose a: Frequency Expected (% of girls)	Boys who chose a: Frequency Expected (% of boys)
Female hero	116 69.2 (36%)	24 66.6 (8%)
Male hero	104 166.0 (34%)	222 160.0 (75%)
No hero chosen	91 71.8 (30%)	50 27.1 (16.9%)

Frequency table 5:

**Adolescents' choices of the person they admire
whom they know - self esteem and happiness**

PERSON YOU KNOW	Girls		Boys	
	Low self esteem (expected)	High self esteem (expected)	Low self esteem (expected)	High self esteem (expected)
Parent or parental figure	30 (41.1)	83 (79.2)	30 (30.5)	87 (79.2)
Other relative - aunt, uncle, grandparent, cousin	35 (29.3)	58 (56.5)	15 (21.7)	56 (56.5)
Friend - adult or adolescent	25 (19.1)	32 (36.8)	21 (14.2)	29 (36.8)
Teacher/coach/minister/priest	14 (11.1)	23 (21.4)	6 (8.2)	19 (21.4)
No hero indicated or said they have no hero	4 (7.3)	12 (14.1)	8 (5.4)	17 (14.1)

Note: Marginally significant differences among groups: $X^2=19.97$, $p<.07$, $df=12$

PERSON YOU KNOW	Girls		Boys	
	Unhappy (expected)	Happy (expected)	Unhappy (expected)	Happy (expected)
Parent or parental figure	16 (29.6)	99 (94.2)	22 (29.6)	104 (87.6)
Other relative - aunt, uncle, grandparent, cousin	31 (20.8)	64 (66.0)	19 (20.8)	55 (61.5)
Friend - adult or adolescent	16 (13.6)	43 (43.4)	19 (13.6)	33 (40.4)
Teacher/coach/minister/priest	9 (7.9)	28 (25.0)	9 (7.9)	18 (23.3)
No hero indicated or said they have no hero	5 (5.2)	11 (16.4)	8 (5.2)	18 (15.3)

Note: Significant differences among groups: $X^2=27.04$, $p<.01$, $df=12$

Frequency table 6:

**Adolescents' choices of the person they admire
who is famous - self esteem and happiness**

FAMOUS HERO	Girls		Boys	
	Low self esteem (expected)	High self esteem (expected)	Low self esteem (expected)	High self esteem (expected)
Sports figure	8 (26.6)	26 (51.5)	35 (20.0)	81 (52.0)
Musician	18 (13.8)	33 (26.8)	10 (10.4)	17 (27.0)
Actors, entertainers	34 (20.0)	37 (38.8)	8 (15.0)	34 (39.2)
Other famous people - artists, politicians, historical figures	16 (19.3)	45 (37.4)	12 (14.5)	36 (37.8)
No hero indicated or said they have no hero	32 (28.2)	68 (54.6)	16 (21.1)	43 (55.1)

Note: Significant differences among groups: $X^2=83.75$, $p<.01$, $df=12$

FAMOUS HERO	Girls		Boys	
	Unhappy (expected)	Happy (expected)	Unhappy (expected)	Happy (expected)
Sports figure	6 (18.9)	28 (60.3)	21 (19.1)	100 (56.7)
Musician	15 (9.9)	37 (31.5)	9 (10.0)	20 (29.6)
Actors, entertainers	19 (14.4)	54 (45.9)	11 (14.6)	34 (43.1)
Other famous people - artists, politicians, historical figures	14 (13.8)	48 (44.0)	16 (13.9)	35 (41.3)
No hero indicated or said they have no hero	23 (20.1)	79 (64.2)	21 (20.4)	42 (60.3)

Note: Significant differences among groups: $X^2=83.04$, $p<.01$, $df=4$

Table 7. Percentages of responses of admired traits across three responses.

	PERSON YOU KNOW % ^a	FAMOUS PERSON % ^a
Personality characteristics - cool, brave, honest, hardworking, fun	62.2%	48.8%
Interpersonal/social - nice, kind, helpful, good friend	57.0%	37.2%
Physical characteristics - looks, gender, age, physical abilities	15.5%	57.0%
Smart - intelligent, good decision maker	18.3%	9.9%
Interaction with child - understands me; does things for me; I love him/her; respects me	23.3%	4.9%
Activities they do - job they have, want to do what they do	10.0%	13.6%
Possessions they have - car; rich/money; clothes; travel a lot	3.5%	9.7%
Role model - leader; political activist; peacemaker	4.4%	6.4%
No negative characteristics - Doesn't break rules; never in trouble with the law;	.8%	3.3%
Negative characteristics - Gets his/her way, drinks, does dangerous things, gets away with things	.3%	1.4%
Total number of responses across three possible	1236	934
Total number of students who indicated a hero	593	460

^aNote: Percentages do not total to 100% because they have been calculated across possible responses.