

Children's Heroes: Do They Vary by Age, Gender, and Race?

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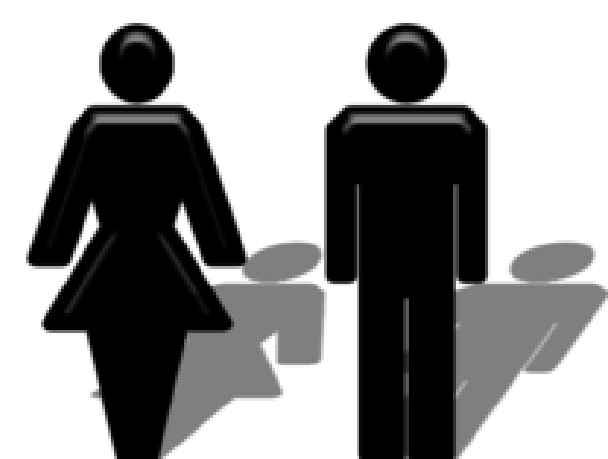
INTRODUCTION

- As children grow up, they are constantly asked about the who their heroes or role models are, and why they chose them.
- There is very little research about who children select as their heroes and why.
- Since heroes may become role models and influence children's values and behaviors, it is important to learn more about this.
- Children's choices of heroes may change over time.
- The purpose of this study was to investigate the rate at which children identify different types of people as their heroes.
- Additionally, the study explored whether those choices varied by age, gender, and race.

METHODS

Subjects

Participants (Surveyed):



- 1973 K-5 students
- Male: 50%, Female: 50%
- Age: 5-11
- African Americans: 52.8 %
- Caucasian: 13.2 %
- Asian: 1.9%
- Other/Mixed: 5.2%



Procedures

- The subjects in this study were students from Title I schools, who participated in a heroism-themed outreach (SHARE) program done by college students during a campus-wide service day.
- Trained college students taught students about heroism, and assisted them in creating a Thank You card for their heroes.
- Each student completed a survey that asked about their age, gender, ethnicity, wide variety of questions about who were their heroes?
- The students who were still learning how to read and write, were asked to verbal explain why they chose that individual.
- The IRB's of both the college and school district approved for the data to be disseminated without identifiers.



RESULTS

Figure 1 : A General Description of how genders varied in hero selection

	Police Officers	Active Duty	Veterans	Parent/Guardians	Other Relatives	Teachers and Coaches
Males	↑	↑	↑	↔	↔	↔
Female	↔	↔	↔	↑	↑	↑

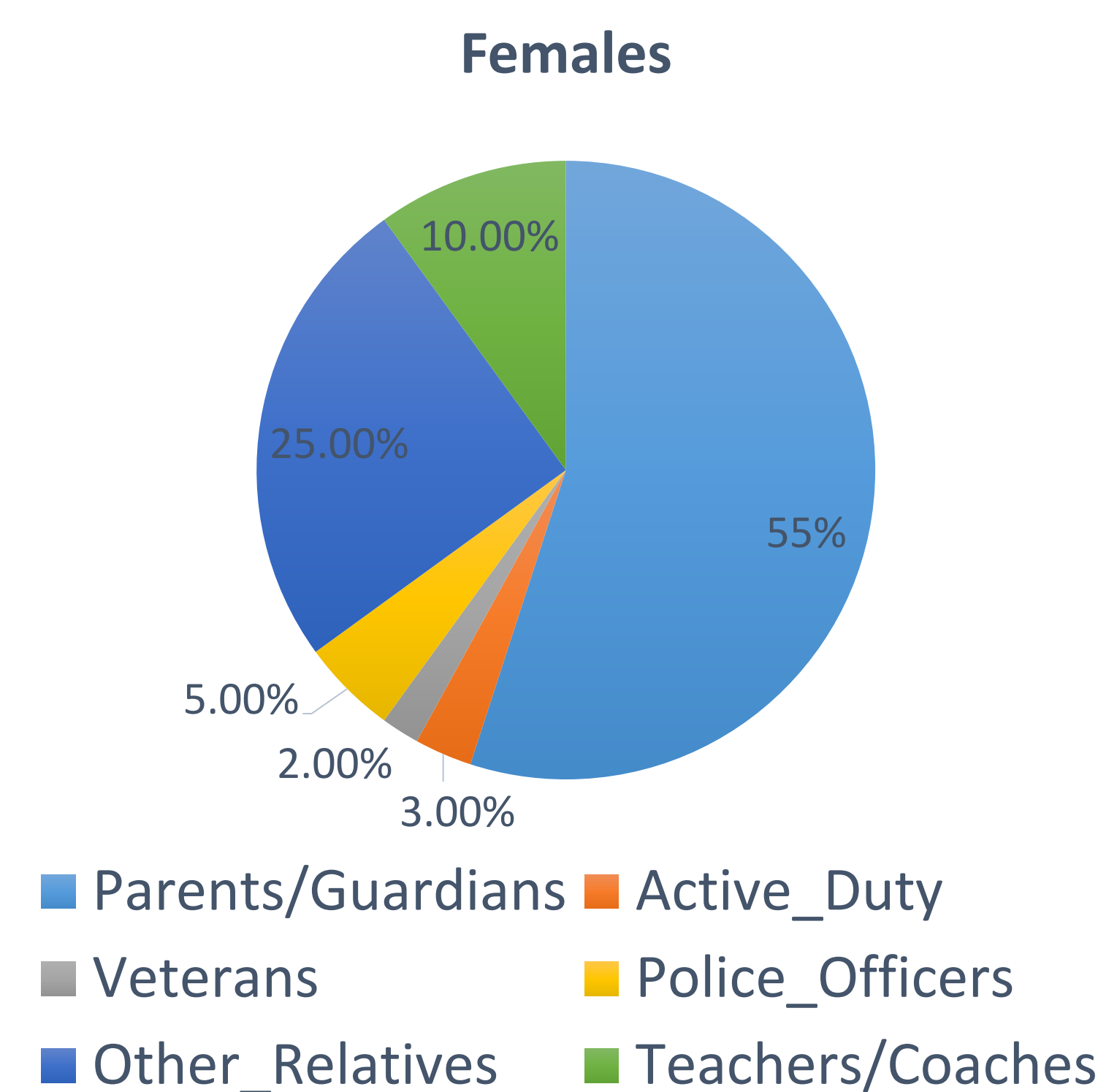
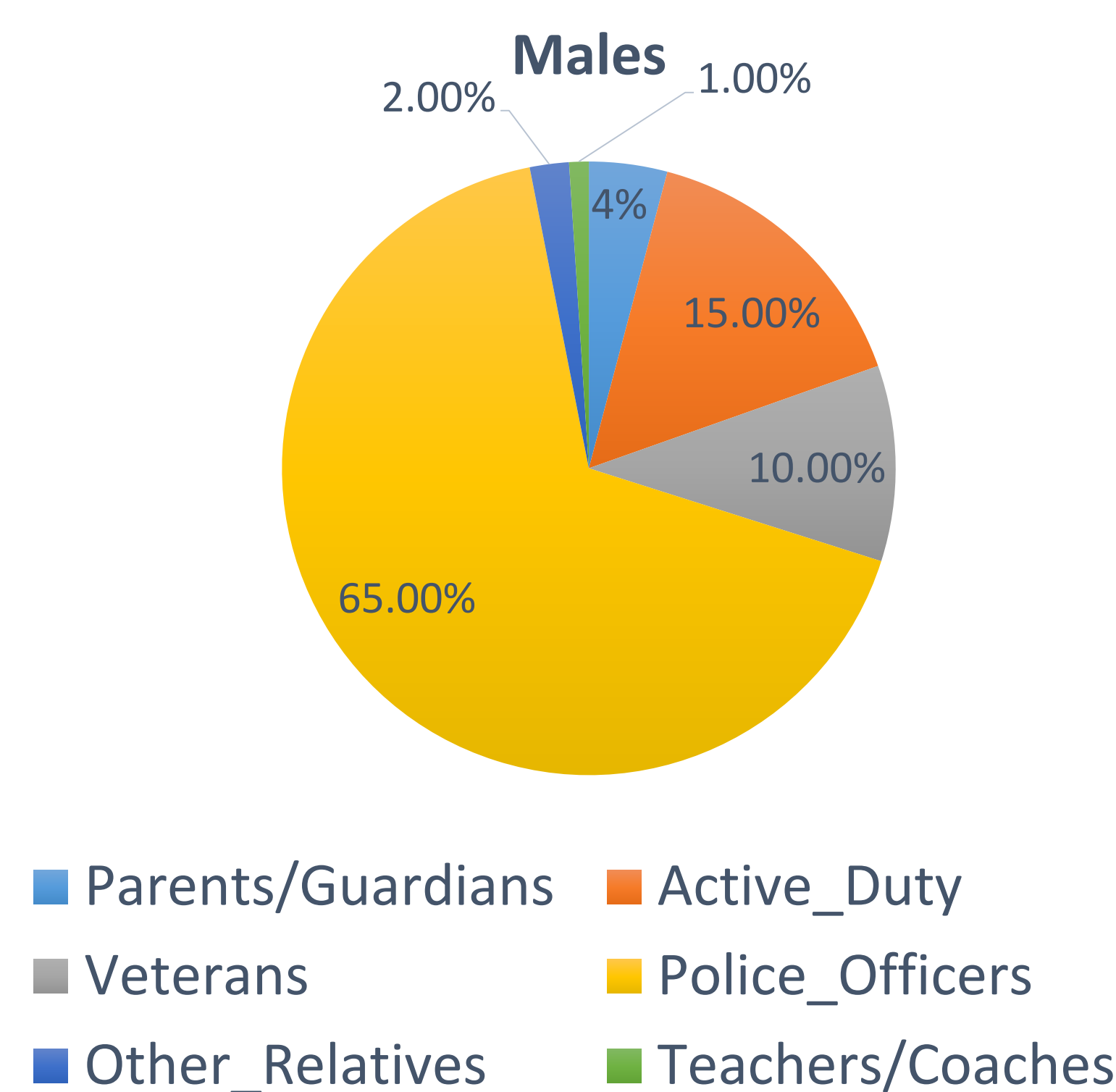
In this study, we discovered that in the sample of 1973 K-5 students, the **TOP 5** hero groups that were reported were:



**Parents/Guardians (42.5%),
Police Officers (13.4%),
Active Duty Military (10.3%),
Teachers/Coaches (9.6%),
Various Public Figures (9.2%)**



Figure 2 : Percentage of each gender who named Parents, Other Relatives, Veterans, Active Duty Military, Police Officers, or Teachers as their heroes



DISCUSSION

- There were no significant differences among on the age groups in regards of naming other relatives, firefighters, police officers, healthcare professionals, and publics figures.
- Among all of the listed heroes, teachers, and adult mentors had the most impact on older children.
- However, overall, 40% of the children chose their parents/guardians as their heroes.



- This research showed us that children's heroes may slightly differ from one gender to another; however, the idea of having a hero/role model does not significantly change regardless of age or ethnicity.
- Simply having someone there to look up to, and to be inspired by, is good enough for the children to strive for.
- Parents and teachers may underestimate how important they are as role models.

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