Gender Preferences in Character Archetypes of Western US High School Students

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In the past, there have been more males in fictional literature. Now, the ratio of female to male authors is closer to half and half, but studies have shown that there is still a significant number of male protagonists compared to female protagonists. This study was conducted to determine if there is a pattern in gender choice of the main character archetypes. A random sample of high school students from the Northwestern States were given a survey on what their gender is and, if they were to write a book, what gender their main archetypes would be. The four archetypes chosen were Hero, Sidekick, Mentor and Villain. The proportion of male characters in all four archetypes for male authors was significantly higher than female characters, where the ratio of male to female characters for female authors was closer to half and half. The archetype with the highest proportion of the author's respective gender was Hero, where Sidekick had the highest proportion of the opposite gender. Both Sidekick and Villain for female authors had a higher proportion of male than female characters. Statistical tests (chi square and 1 proportion z test) were done to determine relationships and trends. This study shows that in the rising generation of Western US students, males and females do have preferences for what gender their characters are. In general, males are biased toward male characters while females view characters as certain genders according to the role they play in the story.

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