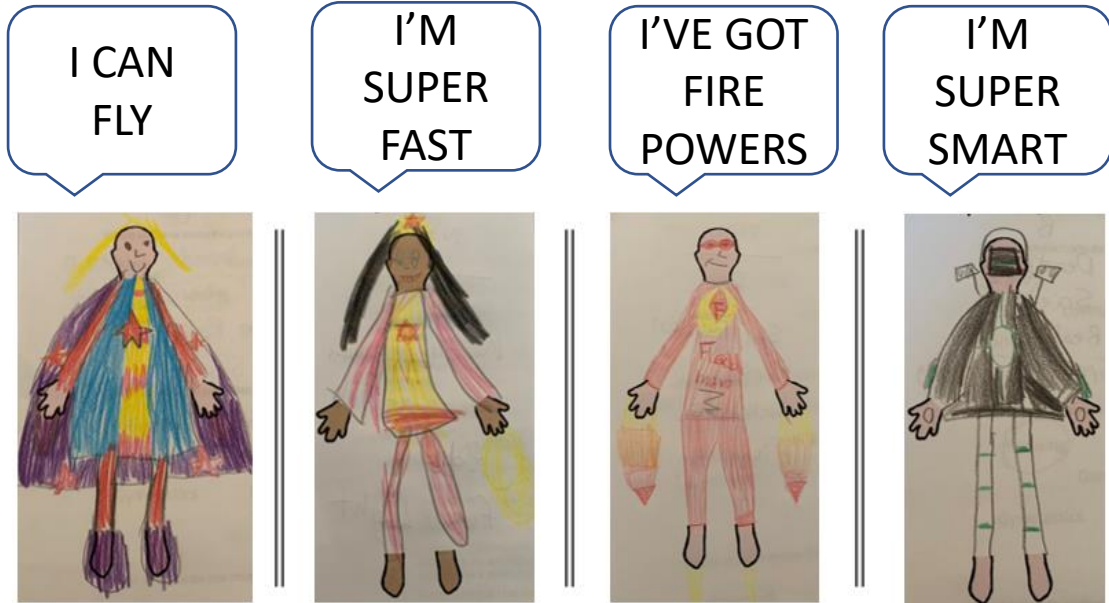
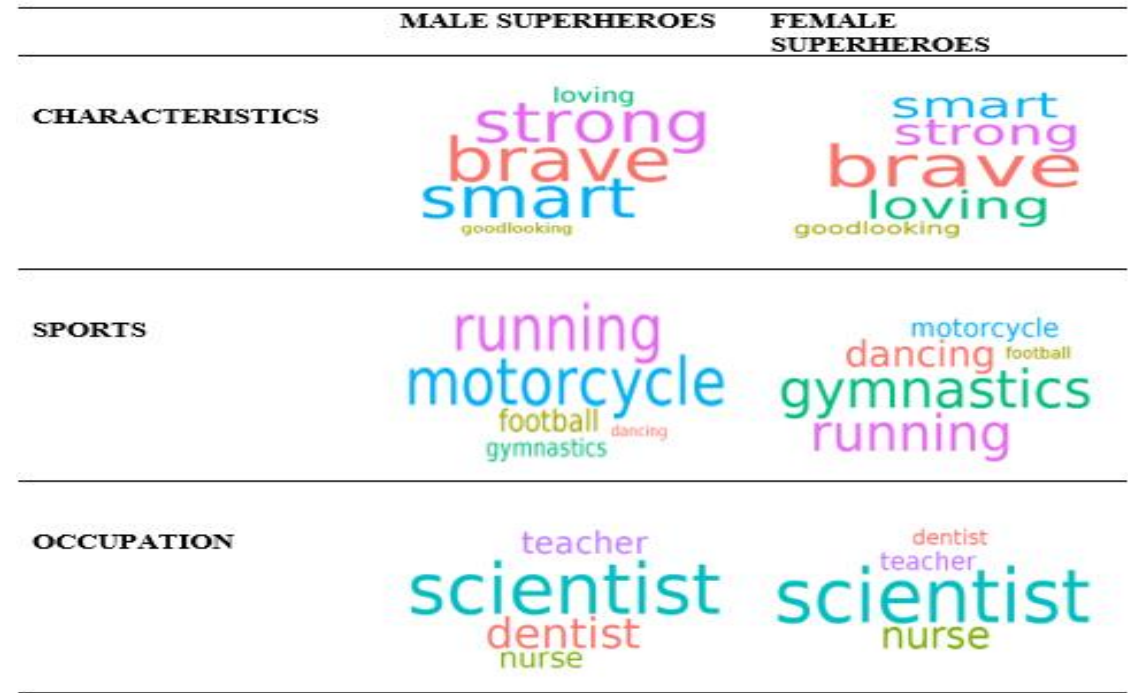


DO SUPERHEROES CREATED BY CHILDREN ADHERE TO GENDER STEREOTYPES?

Aim: This study was to explore the decisions young children make when creating their own imaginative character - specifically their own superhero – and whether their choices conform with gender stereotypes.



Methods: All children who participated in this study were asked to draw their own superhero and answer corresponding open-ended questions about their superhero. Children above the age of 7 were additionally asked to complete a questionnaire which gave a more restrictive choice on the characteristics they could give their superhero.



Results: Logistic regressions found that the gender of the child was a significant predictor of both what gender they drew their superhero as, and what gender their favourite superhero was. T-tests further revealed significant differences between the masculine and feminine scores given to both male and female superheroes. Word clouds were made to visualise the difference in frequencies of the choices in the questionnaire given to male and female superheroes showing that sports contained the highest differentiations.

Conclusion: This study revealed that children are prone to use gender stereotypes when creating their own superhero character. However, not to the extent that previous research would have predicted. It is seen that children were more prone to use gender stereotypes when deciding the sporting abilities of their character than they were when deciding on their characteristics and occupations. This study provided a foundation to exploring what is causing children to use less stereotypes in certain categories over others and how this use can be decreased in future.