Searching for a Hero: A Research Project

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INTRODUCTION

Professional sports are an inescapable part of our everyday lives. Television channels such as ESPN, ESPN News, ESPN 2, Fox Sports, and CNNSI broadcast sporting events twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Bars and pubs across the nation hold special parties for all manner of professional events including the World Series, NBA playoffs and finals, the Stanley Cup finals, Monday Night football, and the Super Bowl. Regularly scheduled television programs are cancelled and advertising time becomes more expensive. America and the world hold their breath while the warriors of our time battle to the bitter end. How did our reverence of sport reach such heights? How did the pro athlete attain heroic, even god-like status in our society? And what do the previously mentioned facts mean to our children? I seek to answer these and other questions concerning our perceptions of professional sports and the athletes who have made them their livelihood. I also intend to delve into the muddy waters created when we ask, "Are pro athletes qualified to be heroes and role models for our impressionable youth?"

WHAT IS A HERO?

Before the discussion about why or if pro athletes are heroes can begin, the criteria for defining what a hero is should be established. In a simple world, the only definition needed would be the one offered by *Webster's Dictionary*, "any person admired for noble qualities or special achievements." However, we do not live in a simple world. The complexities of our society beg the questions, "What are noble qualities?" and "What achievements do we consider special?"

Whether in sport or everyday life, there are certain qualities that are necessary if a person is to be considered a hero. According to a 1999 study by Biskup and Pfister, heroes should "contribute to the image [of a person], strengthen identification with the 'group' and make possible a demarcation between the 'in group' and those outside it" (201). These qualities seem to suggest that the hero is an individual who has the ability to make us feel that we are better people or more accepted as a member of society's elite. Michael Oriard makes further delineation of the hero in his book *Dreaming of Heroes*. Oriard alleges that a hero takes on "the greatest responsibility for success" (34). The hero is our fearless leader, our go-to guy, the one we all count on and look up to. These sentiments are repeated in Marilyn Donahue's article for *Current Health 2* magazine. Her checklist includes such characteristics as "honesty, commitment, good sportsmanship, sense of humor, fairness, determination, good self-image, and high moral values" (25). In short, our heroes are the people we wish we were like.

There is, however, another set of people that we wish we could be. These individuals are known as celebrities. Is a celebrity different from a hero? In *The Image* by Daniel Boorstin, the differences between a hero and a celebrity are made abundantly clear. A hero is a person who has gained fame slowly, over the years, by performing great tasks or standing for great ideas and causes. Contrarily, a celebrity has been given fame, sometimes 'overnight' and is known only for being well known (46-48). Boorstin goes on to state that when we mistake celebrity-worship for hero-worship.

> [We] come dangerously close to depriving ourselves of all real models...[as] we lose sight of the men and women who do not simply seem great because they are famous but who are famous because they are great. (48)

This discussion forces us to ask, "Are professional athletes heroes or celebrities?" Because there is no clear-cut answer to the above question, both sides of the argument must be addressed.

According to Boorstin's definition of a hero, professional athletes do indeed qualify. The legends of the arenas and fields of sports have built names and reputations for themselves over years by means of outstanding play and exceptional service to the community. For example, Shaquille O'Neil is an unstoppable force on the basketball court and has also had the time and compassion to donate new police cruisers to the Los Angeles Police Department after their cruisers were damaged during a riot. Unlike many of his contemporaries, O'Neil is never seen smoking during press conferences or explaining why he was arrested for domestic abuse or DUI. Shaq, as the media and fans know him, is not a johnny-come-lately phenom who has been hyped by the media to be something more than he is. Rather, O'Neil has proven, season after season, that he is the most dominant center in the NBA today. He has earned and is still earning his greatness and deserves to be considered more than a celebrity—a hero, if you will.

There are, however, professional athletes that have not displayed greatness, but have merely been given star status by the media. A perfect example of this occurrence is the professional tennis player, Anna Kournikova. Despite early success, Kournikova has had little luck improving her rank because of her complete lack of wins. Under ordinary circumstances, neither the public nor the media gives a pro-athlete who is not playing well much thought. In Kournikova's case this is not true. She fits the Hollywood description of a star. She's tall, thin, blonde and beautiful. Because of her physical attributes, fame has been given to her despite her ineffectiveness on the court. She is a celebrity, not a hero.

As in most debates, a strong argument can be made for both sides. Pro athletes not only fit Boorstin's concept of a hero but also conform to his definition of a celebrity. We as educators and parents must teach our children to analyze people, as well as information, in order to find the truth behind the headlines.

DO YOUTHS STILL SEEK HEROES?

Since I have been able to establish many characteristics of what a hero is or should be, I must now provide a counter argument to those who would say that heroes are no longer sought after by the youths of our society. A study conducted at the University of Memphis investigated which group of individuals had the strongest influence on adolescents. This study found that parents, athletes, and entertainers were cited by youths as hero figures (Martin and Bush, 443). Martin and Bush's study provides us with definitive proof that young people still actively seek and evaluate people in their lives as heroes. Further proof is found in a similar survey cited in Janet Harris's *Athletes and the American Hero Dilemma*. This survey proves not only that adolescents still seek heroes, but that they also find their heroes in all walks of life. For example, the 1991 Heroes of Young America list cited by Harris includes Oprah Winfrey and Madonna as well as Michael Jordan and H. Norman Schwarzkopf (30-31). From these studies alone it becomes obvious that young people still actively seek and find heroes to admire and emulate.

WHY DO WE LOOK TO PRO ATHLETES AS HEROES?

So far, I have established what a hero is and that the youths of America still actively seek heroes. My next step is to determine why professional athletes are so often given hero status. The reasons that we, as Americans, make our professional athletes heroes are far too numerous to list here, but I will cover the basic arguments. First, as Harry Edwards indicates, there is the common assumption that "star athletes and their fans share a uniform group of values" (32). Because the fan, or everyday guy, believes that his favorite player holds the same values as he, the fan will then identify with that sports star. This identification brings to light a second reason that pro athletes are made heroes. They are successful, usually rich, and usually embody a state of extreme or heightened physical fitness. These characteristics alone do not lead fans to identify with their heroes since the fans can rarely equate their lifestyles to those of the athletes. However, the fan knows that his hero was once a regular guy just like him who has become what the fan himself always wanted to be. It is that knowledge that leads the fan to identify, admire, and finally choose the pro athlete as a hero.

The athlete is raised to an even higher level when he is a pro football player. Gerald Gems asserts that football is a "thorough education in all the qualities that go to make a manly man. It teaches obedience, self-restraint, unselfishness...self-denial, [and] quickness of thought and action." He goes on to state that aggressiveness and the ability to conquer are praised and rewarded grandly while a loss elicits dishonor (55). After reviewing these assertions, it is easy to understand why so many men, young and old alike, feel that being a football player is an accomplishment worthy of respect and admiration. The American professional football player embodies what it means to be a man in our society: the ability to conquer enemies, protect those weaker than oneself, exhibit selflessness when needed, and break the limits of individual achievement in order to gain victory.

How Do Female Professional Athletes Fit in as Sports Heroes?

Up to this point, the discussion of heroes has been limited to male athletes. However, the number of professional female athletes has steadily increased over the past three decades. Do these women qualify as heroes? If so, to whom are they heroes? In the introduction of this paper, I cited the definition of the word "hero" as it appears in *Webster's Dictionary*. In fact, that definition was not the first entry. The first entry for *hero* is "A man who has performed brave deeds." According to this definition, the male athlete, especially the football player, fulfills the requirement for a hero. Yet, sadly, the female is unquestionably left out. Angela Schneider brings this discrepancy to light when comparing the ideal man, the ideal woman, and the ideal athlete. She finds that the qualities expected of the ideal man, being "hard, powerful, strong, rational, a leader, a warrior, and a father," are inseparably tied to the qualities of the ideal athlete. In direct contrast to the match between ideal man and ideal athlete, the ideal woman is traditionally thought of as possessing qualities such as "soft [ness], graceful [ness], weak [ness]...beauty, chastity, modesty, obedience, inconspicuous behavior and being a good wife and mother" (124). Society's expectations tell us in no uncertain terms that women, more specifically the ideal woman, should not possess any of the qualities of the ideal athlete.

What does this imply about our attitude toward the thousands of professional female athletes around the world? The scale is tipped radically in favor of the male athlete becoming an accepted hero to young people of either gender. Janet Harris found that when asked to choose heroes, young American males chose male sports heroes 100% of the time while young American females chose male sports heroes 82% of the time. It is clear that both boys and girls feel more comfortable choosing male heroes as opposed to female heroes. A similar study conducted by Rachel Bromnick and Brian Swallow corroborates Harris's findings. Of the 244 boys and girls surveyed, 30.3 % chose a sports figure as his or her hero. However, Bromnick and Sallow note that "both boys and girls named male heroes significantly more frequently than female heroes, with boys in particular rarely stating that they admired a famous woman" (122). It is my opinion that professional female athletes are indeed heroes, but they are heroes only to those girls who are also athletes. I also believe that as the prevalence and popularity of women's professional sports grows so will the number of girls who have female sports heroes.

Do professional athletes have a choice about their hero or role model status?

As with any debate, the controversy over whether professional athletes have a choice about their status as a hero or role model has two equally convincing sides. On the one hand, professional athletes are highly visible members of society who often live rich, exciting lives and are the envy of youths and adults across the nation. On the other hand, pro athletes are employees who are paid to play a particular sport; their contracts do not include a clause pertaining to inspiring and leading the youth of America. Both sides of the

argument are compelling and worthy of a closer look.

A person would have a difficult time watching television, listening to the radio, or surfing the Internet without seeing or hearing a news story or advertisement about a professional athlete, team or sporting event. Some of the most recognizable and successful product lines use professional athletes as their main spokespeople. Nike employs Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods. Sprite capitalizes on Kobe Bryant's fame. Gatorade borrows the faces of Mia Hamm, Derek Jeter, Vince Carter, Peyton Manning, and others to promote their sports beverage. The few examples listed above barely scratch the surface of companies' use of pro athletes to promote products. In fact, Andrews and Jackson cite a statistic from a study conducted by Dyson and Turco, which states that in 1995 "sports celebrity endorsers were present in 11 percent of all television advertisements [and] receive[d] more than $1 billion dollars from U.S. companies for their services" (7). Yet many athletes, despite their high public visibility, believe that they do not have a responsibility to the public to embody and live by high moral standards and values. Countless athletes continue to participate in their sports, making healthy salaries, after having been charged, indicted, and sometimes even convicted of such crimes as shoplifting, assault, drug possession, domestic violence, and rape. Kevin Cook and Richard O'Brien cite a survey done by two of their *Sports Illustrated* colleagues on 509 of the 1,650 men then playing in the NFL. This survey found that 21% of the players surveyed "had been arrested or indicted for…serious crimes" (31).

In combination, the indiscretions of professional athletes and the intense media coverage of such events tend to lead the public to believe that professional athletes are out of control. *Ebony* magazine offers some reasons why athletes may indeed be stumbling more often than in the past. The first reason offered is that these young athletes are not equipped to handle the limelight properly. Fame goes to their heads and clouds their decision-making processes. Secondly, the amount of money earned by blue chip athletes is "too much, too soon." Some of these young people are barely out of high school and ill-equipped to handle the vast freedom and power that can be associated with being a millionaire. Finally, because free agency and rampant trading are commonplace in pro sports, the young superstars lack the knowledge and wisdom of a stable and ever-present role model. This lack of role models for the young athletes may be the leading reason that the young stars themselves are not considered role model material. (*Ebony*, 48-49)

Regardless of pro athletes' criminal indiscretions or the reasons for them, very rarely does the league or organization for which the athlete plays take action. For example, Darryl Strawberry has been convicted of and served jail sentences for numerous drug charges, tax evasion, and domestic violence. However, after he was released from prison, the New York Yankees signed Strawberry to an $850,000 a year contract. This incident clearly sends a message to young people that even after breaking the law repeatedly, as long as the athlete can play the game well, it will be ok. Unfortunately, the vast majority of people will never play professional sports. They will have to find and keep jobs in the

"real" world. Few employers have the patience to hire a repeat offender. The last thing students need is to be misled into believing that there are no, or only minor, consequences for breaking the law.

Even pro athletes who have committed no crime can potentially lead young people astray. For example, Mark McGwire is known to have taken performance-enhancing products to increase his muscle mass. However, since major league baseball does not have a rule against taking such substances, McGwire has committed no crime. Even though his use was *legal*, very few adults would advise a developing student-athlete to use performance-enhancing supplements. These substances can, and often do, have terrible and debilitating side effects that can potentially cut an athletic career short or even end a life.

Several professional athletes, such as David Robinson of the San Antonio Spurs and Franco Harris, a Hall of Fame player for the Pittsburgh Steelers, feel that professional athletes do not have a choice about whether or not to be a hero or role model to young people. In an interview with author William Cox, Harris states that it doesn't matter which position the athlete takes in the debate; it is "how the kids perceive it" that makes the difference. "No matter how [the athlete wants to] look at it, kids do look at athletes as role models. They do look up to athletes and they follow their athletes" (32). Robinson expresses a similar sentiment with his comment on a Charles Barkley Nike commercial. In an article for *USA Today* magazine, Robinson states that he felt Barkley only had one decision to make. It was not whether or not to be a role model, but whether to be a good role model or a bad one (Sailes, 56).

Who can change the way the *system* works? There would need to be several changes on all sides of the system to affect any change. Coaches and owners would need to enforce strict consequences for infractions, criminal or otherwise, by their players. League officials and team owners would need to police their coaches to be sure that consequences followed. Finally, fans would need to express their disapproval of leniency with criminals by not buying tickets or team merchandise. Realistically, these changes would be nearly impossible to achieve. In the meantime, parents, teachers, and coaches need to be strong, positive leaders in children's lives to counteract the negative messages sent by professional sports and to be a guide to children whose hero has fallen. Gelman and Springen write that parents should help their children "understand that people the children admire can do things that are disappointing, or even wrong…when good people do bad things, part of what [is learned] is to come to terms with one's own limitations" (57). Taking the approach that even an athlete's "fall" can be used as a learning and formative event for a child, it becomes easier to accept that athletes can function as viable heroes and role models.

The other side to the athlete-as-role-model argument is voiced by many athletes and fans and is somewhat more cut and dry than the opposing argument. Charles Barkley

expressed the heart of the debate in a Nike commercial when he says, "I am not a role model! I am paid to wreak havoc on the basketball court. Parents should be role models!" (Gelman and Springen, 56). The fact of the matter is that professional athletes are hired to play a sport. As a teacher, I am not expected to know how to repair my car. That's not my job; I am expected to lead, inspire, and educate students. Likewise, pro athletes are paid to sink three pointers, hit 95 mph fastballs, serve aces, run for touchdowns, and score goals; they are not hired to be moral leaders for our young people. Perhaps the reason that athletes tend to "get away" with more is that there are so few people who can perform at their level of play. The job pool is very shallow. Kevin Cook and his co-author Richard O'Brien put a humorous twist on the issue. They quip, "Looking to the NFL for moral guidance is like asking the Vatican when to blitz" (32). Their point, although funny, is well made. Each vocation has its own set of objectives. Pro athletes are hired to help their teams win; priests are hired to govern and monitor their parishioners' moral and spiritual lives.

THE UNIT

I have had the chance to explore the intricacies of what a hero is and the debate about pro athletes being heroes or role models to young people. I will now explain what this curriculum unit will seek to teach, why the topic is important, and how the lessons will be covered in class.

What will this unit seek to teach?

The culmination of this unit will be a research paper that answers the following questions: "What is a hero?" "Do professional athletes qualify as heroes?" and "Do professional athletes have a choice about whether or not they are viewed as heroes?" In order to prepare students to successfully complete their papers, they will be involved in many lessons and activities whose goals will aid them in finding *their own* answers to the questions above. I place emphasis on the phrase *their own* because it is my intention not to reveal my personal answers to the research questions. I think that I will get truer answers from the students if they are not influenced by my personal feelings. I will, however, guide the students through a series of activities designed to help jump start their ideas about athletes and heroism. I will outline several such activities below. Students will keep all work completed dealing with this topic in a notebook or folder.

Why is this topic important?

Before beginning to teach a unit, it is important for educators to understand the value of the topics and objectives they will be covering with the students. This unit's objectives will not only foster success in an academic setting, but also aid students with decisions once they leave school. First, the research and writing process will help students succeed in every subject they take from high school through college and even graduate school. By

developing writing skills, all aspects of the students' academic lives will be improved. This unit also asks the students to critically analyze their opinions and reasons for those opinions. By engaging in this type of higher-level thinking, students will be better prepared for the decisions that will be required of them once they are in the real world. Far too often, we, as a society, are led blindly by advertisers, the media, and politicians into thinking and believing whatever they want us to think and believe. If we can equip our students with analytical thinking skills, they will be more apt to make informed choices.

ACTIVITY 1

My Hero (Idea building)

Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the characteristics that determine if a person is considered a hero.
- Compare and contrast arguments on opposing sides of the issue.

Procedures

1. The teacher will instruct the students to create a list of characteristics that they believe to be common and necessary to all heroes.
2. The teacher will instruct the students to use their lists to generate names of people whom they believe to be heroes.
3. The teacher will organize the students into groups of four to answer the following questions. The students should provide a yes or no answer along with "proof" from their list of characteristics for each item.
    - Can a parent or another family member be a hero?
    - Can a person your own age be a hero?
    - Can a teacher or principal be a hero?
    - Can a professional athlete be a hero?
    - Can a hero make mistakes and still be a hero? Why or why not?
4. The teacher will instruct the students to revise their lists of heroic characteristics if the questions have caused a change of opinion.
5. The teacher will focus the students on the last two questions in particular and distribute copies of "I'm Not a Role Model" by David Gelman and Karen Springen. The article will be read and discussed thoroughly.
6. The teacher will instruct students to compare and contrast the article's two arguments by using a Venn diagram.

Outcome

This lesson is designed to spark the students' ideas concerning the athlete-as-hero debate. The thesis of their research paper will stem from ideas generated during this lesson.

ACTIVITY 2
"Casey at the Bat," "Casey's Revenge," and "Casey–Twenty Years Later"

Objectives
Students will:
- Identify characteristics that made Casey a hero to the people of Mudville and how those characteristics shifted from poem to poem.
- List three reasons why Casey lost his hero status.
- List three reasons why Casey regained his hero status.
- Compare Casey's experiences with those of a real sports star of their choice or with a sporting experience of their own.

Procedures
- The teacher will distribute copies of the poem "Casey at the Bat" by Earnest Thayer, "Casey's Revenge" by James Wilson, and "Casey–Twenty Years Later" by S.P. McDonald.
- The teacher and students will read the poems while focusing on information given about Casey's demeanor, behavior, and personality.

Outcome
This lesson will be a success if students are able to understand that a person is only a hero as long as the public views him or her as one.

ACTIVITY 3
If I Could Be Like Mike (Adapted from *Scholastic Update*)

Objectives
Students will:
- Identify the qualities that young people admire in athletes.
- Differentiate between athletic talent and quality of character.
- Discuss whether athletes should be role models for young people

Procedures
The teacher will:
- Instruct students to refer to their list of role model/hero characteristics/qualities and their list of role model/hero candidates.
- Guide the student discussion of the article by Phil Mushnick, "Good and Bad, What Athletes Do Is Emulated by Kids."
- Ask the students the following thought-provoking questions:
  1. Why would young people want to emulate athletes?
  2. Should we associate winning with character, or the manner in which one wins?

3. Why do so many people idolize the "bad" athlete (i.e. Latrell Sprewell, Dennis Rodman)?
4. Do teens see athletes as role models because they aspire to be athletes themselves?

Outcome

This lesson will be a success if the students are able to:

- Write a tentative thesis expressing their opinions about whether an athlete should be a hero or not.
- List at least three reasons to support that thesis.

ACTIVITY 4

Homecourt Hero (Adapted from *Scholastic Scope*)

Objectives

Students will examine the theme of:

- Role models
- Female role models
- Sports role models

Procedures

- The teacher will distribute copies of "Lisa Leslie: Women Who Win" by Brent P. Kelley.
- The teacher will provide the following questions to guide reading and discussion.
  1. Can a role model have faults?
  2. Can a woman be a role model to males as well as to other females?
  3. What feelings allow Lisa to agree that her mom should take a job driving a truck?
  4. What kind of messages does Lisa's mom's decision convey to the family?
  5. What are the sources of Lisa's success in high school and beyond?
  6. How do Lisa and the rest of the U.S. Olympic team affect the nation?
  7. In what ways was the creation of the WNBA an important historical change?
  8. The words "pride" and "confidence" come up often throughout the play. How did these concepts affect Lisa?
  9. Lisa's mother was a role model to her; then Lisa became a role model to thousands of others. How does this show the importance of having good examples to follow?
- The teacher will assign an out-of-class assignment that students create a collage representing their personal role model. This role model does not have to be an athlete.

Outcome

This lesson is designed to present the idea that women can be strong role models for not only other women, but for everybody.

Student Population

This unit has been written with the student population of Sam Houston High School in mind and would be appropriate for English classes levels II, III, and IV. The student population at Sam Houston is predominantly Hispanic. Many of these students read and write below grade level standards and often speak English as their second language. Often, the resources at school are the only ones students have access to. Therefore, it will be necessary to do nearly all of the lessons, projects, and activities within the constraints of regular class time. Also, since high scholarship on the subject of role models and heroes is not often available in the high school library, easily accessible sources should be made available to students through the Internet, magazines, and newspapers.

The main goal of this unit is to allow students who shy away from forming and supporting their own ideas on paper to engage in a detailed paper writing and researching activity under the close guidance of their teacher.

Correlation to Project CLEAR

This unit will cover the following Project CLEAR objectives (Note: The objective correlate with tenth grade level English):

Reading Objectives

- ELAR 10.2a The student selects and reads a variety of texts from varied sources for a variety of purposes.
- ELAR 10.5c The student determines a text's main or major ideas and the salient supporting details.
- ELAR 10.5g The student evaluates text for point of view, propaganda, and to distinguish fact from opinion.
- ELAR 10.5h The student demonstrates skill in comprehension through his/her responses to a variety of questioning strategies.
- ELAR 10.6b The student uses elements of text to defend his/her own responses and interpretations.
- ELAR 10.7b The student compares texts events with his/her own and other readers' experiences.
- ELAR 10.8a The student generates and refines questions for inquiry.
- ELAR 10.8b The student locates appropriate print and non-print information using a wide variety of texts and technical resources.
- ELAR 10.8c The student evaluates the credibility and appropriateness of information sources.
- ELAR 10.8d The student draws conclusions from the information gathered.
- ELAR 10.8e The student creates a variety of products using a variety of media to

report results of inquiry.

Writing Objectives

- ELAW 10.2b Write persuasive discourse of a variety of types.
- ELAW 10.2e Organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence, logical progression, and support for ideas.
- ELAW 10.2g Use formal and informal language appropriately.
- ELAW 10.5a Generate ideas and plan for writing.
- ELAW 10.5b Use and expand ideas and information from sources other than personal experiences.
- ELAW 10.8a Choose and develop research topics.
- ELAW 10.8b Takes notes from relevant and authoritative sources.
- ELAW 10.8c. Evaluates own research, draws valid conclusions, and frames new questions for further investigation.
- ELAW 10.8d Write a research paper on an assigned or self-selected topic, following accepted formats.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Teacher Resources

Andrews, David L. and Steven J. Jackson. *Sport Stars: The Cultural Politics of Sporting Celebrity*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
This intriguing book discusses how sports stars are made and the impact society has on creating them as well as the impact the stars have on society.

"Be Like Mike…" In *Scholastic Update* 131 (22 February 1999).
This lesson was adapted for this unit.

Biskup, Claudia and Gertrud Pfister. "I Would Like to Be Like Her/Him: Are Athletes Role Models for Boys and Girls?" In *European Physical Education Review* 5 (1999): 199-218.
This European article deals with role models in general, but its main contribution to this unit is its research dealing with the gender roles of athletic heroes. Other helpful sections deal with what kind of role models children and teens choose over all.

Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961.
The chapter outlining our country's transformation from hero-worshipers to celebrity-worshipers is a must-read. Although Boorstin is writing from a different era, the points made are as true today as they were when first written.

Bromnick, Rachel D. and Brian L. Swallow. "I Like Being Who I Am: A Study of Young People's Ideals." In *Educational Studies* 25 (July 1999).
This eye opening study discusses what type of role model/hero today's youths choose and the possible reasons and implications for those choices.

Cook, Kevin and Richard O'Brien. "Crime and Banishment." In *Sports Illustrated* (November 1998): 30-32.
This article presents statistics regarding the percentage of NFL players that have been arrested. However, it also presents facts and opinions arguing that athletes, specifically football players, have no more responsibility as role models as anyone else does.

Cox, William E. "Learn How to Position Yourself to Win." In *Black Issues in Higher Education*. (April 1997): 31-35.
This article is an interview with football star Franco Harris of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Harris expresses his views on a number of pertinent topics, including the athlete-as-role-model controversy. Harris thinks that athletes don't have a choice to make; it is the kids who decide who the role models are going to be.

Donahue, Marilyn Cram. "Athletes as Role Models." In *Current Health* 2 (January 2002): 22-25.
Marilyn Donahue seeks to define the characteristics of a role model in this article, as well as urge young people to choose a role model based on that person's qualities, not fame. Also, when choosing a sports star as a role model or hero, the young person must realize that the hero is prone to errors and bad decisions just like the rest of us.

Edwards, Harry. "The Athlete as Role Model: Relic of America's Sports Past?" In *Sport* (November 1994): 32.
Harry Edwards expresses the opinion that athletes, as well as other celebrity figures, have no special obligations to lead children or teens. He cites Charles Barkley as a courageous and honest figure.

Gelman, David and Karen Springen. "I'm Not a Role Model." In *Newsweek* 121 (28 June 1993).
This article covers Charles Barkley's controversial comments as well as how influential athletes actually are as role models.

Gems, Gerald. *For Pride, Profit, and Patriarchy*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2000.
I highly recommend this book. Gerald Gems covers football from a variety of angles, including the reasons football is considered to be a 'manly' and militaristic institution, multiculturalism in football, and nationalism in football. The chapter on football and feminism is especially helpful when dealing with the stereotype of the male athletic hero.

Harris, Janet C. *Athletes and the American Hero Dilemma*. Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Publishers, 1994.
This book covers the same topics that this unit seeks to explore. Topics range from how athletic heroes compare with other famous heroes to the remarkable research that reveals that even female youths choose male role models. This source was invaluable to my research.

"Homecourt Hero." In *Scholastic Scope* 50 (6 May 2002).
This lesson was adapted to this unit.

Martin, Craig A. and Alan J. Bush. "Do Role Models Influence Teenagers' Purchase Intentions and Behaviors?" In *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 17 (2000): 441-54.
Martin and Bush's research focuses on whether or not teenagers are influenced by their role models when deciding what to buy and when to buy a particular item. Both famous (athletic or otherwise) and familiar (family, teachers, etc.) role models are discussed.

Oriard, Michael. *Dreaming of Heroes: American Sports Fiction, 1868-1980*. Chicago, Ill.: Nelson-Hall, 1982.
Oriard traces the development of the sports hero in American fiction. He brings to light characteristics common to all heroes and stories and explains their psychological and sociological importance.

Sailes, Gary. "Professional Athletes: Cultural Icons or Social Anomalies?" In *USA Today* (September 2001): 56-58.
Gary Sailes also cites Charles Barkley's controversial role model quote but uses it to argue that athletes do not have the luxury of choosing if they are role models are not. He also cites statistics that report what a group of college students think about the athlete-as-role-model issue.

Schneider, Angela J. "On the Definition of 'Woman' in the Sport Context." In *Values in Sport: Elitism, Nationalism, Gender Equality and the Scientific Manufacture of Winners*. Edited by Torbjorn Tannsjo and Claudio Tamburrini. New York: E&FN Spon, 2000. pp. 123-38.
Angela Schneider's article is extremely enlightening. Dealing with gender issues in sports, she highlights the characteristics it takes to be an ideal athlete in our society and compares and contrasts them with the characteristics of the ideal man and of the ideal woman.

"Why So Many Athletes and Entertainers Are out of Control." In *Ebony* 55 (May 2000).

Student Resources

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