
A CASE REGARDING ATHLETES SERVING AS IDEOLOGICAL ROLE MODELS

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ABSTRACT

Scholars and the general public agree that well-known athletes should do more to contribute to public debate on political problems. This notion is similar to the notion that athletes should serve as broad role models. An athlete as role model argument is first examined and critiqued in this article, then the "athlete as political activist" argument is used. Athlete activism may really cause more damage than good, according to this study, which draws on empirical political psychology research. My thesis would be doomed if the results could not be extrapolated beyond voting and other kinds of direct involvement in politics. Despite this, I believe the results are applicable to political activity as a whole. Activism becomes political when it attempts to change people's minds about politics or puts them in a more political frame of mind. The call for political action may be explicit (e.g., vote for candidate X) or the activity itself could have political meaning.

KEYWORDS: *Activism, Athlete, Political Psychology, Role Model, Obligation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

During the 2016 NFL season, Colin Kaepernick staged a well-publicized protest in which he sat out the whole game. Praising individuals for speaking up on political problems stems in part from the belief that this is a positive thing. It's hoped that this kind of action would help start "national discussions" about difficult and contentious issues. People in the US may be less divided and politicized if more sportsmen, like Kaepernick, spoke out on political issues. As a result, sportsmen should set an example by speaking out on social issues. This seems logical and commendable on the surface. Researchers, on the other hand, argue in this study that encouraging professional athletes to become more politically engaged is not as beneficial as it may appear.

For now, I'll focus on the broader "athlete as role model" argument, since there are many similarities between it and the former. Does it fall to athletes to serve as role models in general, or do they have specific responsibilities? In contemporary society, do athletes have a greater duty to behave properly or in ways that affect others positively? To answer these role model concerns, scientists are concentrating on two closely connected topics. To begin, what and how can athletes as role models make a good argument? Another important question is whether athletes can serve as political role models or campaigners in light of this[1].

Prior to addressing these issues, Randolph Feezell argues in "Celebrated Athletes, Moral Exemplars, and Lusory Objects," many key differences must be made. Feezell distinguishes between a limited and a wide definition of 'role model' while defining the term. Role model in the narrowest meaning is "restricted to a specific situation in which some individual or people would try to emulate the conduct of the role model. Modeling one's conduct after that of the role model is a great way to inspire those who want to be in the same position as you. Role model in the

broadest sense refers to someone who serves as a role model in a variety of different circumstances during one's life. Feezell recommends referring to a 'moral example,' in this wider meaning, to prevent any misunderstandings. A moral exemplar is a person "whose entire life is worth imitating."

In discussing athletes as role models, the distinction between these two concepts is often omitted, resulting in misunderstanding. This does not tell us anything about whether or not the athlete as an individual is a moral example in accordance with the rules and expectations of their particular sport. Role model may be used normatively or descriptively, and this difference is important. One whose behaviour (or life) is the subject of imitation or at least seen to be worthy of imitation" is a role model. A person who is worthy of imitation in either the narrow or wide meaning described above is referred to as normatively[2].

We may deduce four potential meanings for the term "role model" by using Feezell's distinctions. Role model in the limited sense may be either descriptive or normative, depending on whether it focuses solely on actions directly linked to the role being modelled. Feezell refers to a role model as a moral exemplar when using the border meaning of the word. In the following, I will use the term "role model" in the broadest, most normative meaning possible. The Case for Having Role Models:

1. The broader 'athlete as role model' argument goes something like this:
2. Athletes with a high level of fame and notoriety have the power to influence others via their words and acts.
3. Assuming all else is equal, if you have the unique capacity to favorably affect people, you should use it.
4. As a result, all else being equal, well-known sportsmen should behave in a manner that influences others positively.
5. There is a widespread belief that athletes should serve as good role models because of their position of influence.

1.1 Allow-ability, Obligation, and Virtuosity:

A clearer understanding of what the argument implies when it argues that athletes should serve as role models will help us assess it. This 'ought' assertion may be interpreted in one of three ways. However, the word "ought" may also mean permissibility, as in the argument that athletes should be allowed to serve as role models. Others have a responsibility to not stop athletes from becoming role models if they want to be role models themselves. This view seems to be much too flimsy and trite to be accurate. One does not have to provide a case as to why one should be allowed to serve as a role model. According to what I've read, not even opponents of the concept of athletes serving as role models argue that an athlete shouldn't have the option of serving as one if she so chooses.

It's also possible to read the 'ought' assertion as stating that athletes have a particular responsibility or duty to serve as role models. This is an overstatement compared to permissibility. A burden that is unjust, excessive, and most likely ineffectual is imposed[3].

1.2 Failure of The Obligation Interpretation:

Let's take a look at the first premise to understand why the duty interpretation falls short. Do athletes make as much of an impact as we believe? This is a difficult empirical issue to answer, although there are some grounds to believe that this unique capacity to influence isn't all that potent or widespread. An obligation can't be justified if Premise I is incorrect.

Evidence suggests that individuals select or follow role models who already fit their previous

commitments, viewpoints and beliefs. Athletes' capacity to influence behaviour beyond their previous commitments may be considerably more restricted if this is true than we as a society tend to believe. An athlete may serve as inspiration for someone who identifies with the athlete in some way, whether it's via shared ideals, religious beliefs, or some other dimension. However, if the athlete's role model and the person's previous commitments differ, we may observe a decrease in the identification with the athlete and, as a result, in the athlete's ability to influence the person's conduct. The athlete's effect on a person's conduct would wane if the athlete was no longer seen as a role model in this regard[4].

While athletes may serve as role models, there is evidence to suggest that individuals can tell which roles the athlete is modelling when they see one. Teenagers may view their favorite athletes as role models as athletes, but they may not see them as role models for good conduct in general. Footballers and golfers look to their role models for guidance on how to succeed in their respective sports. However, this does not mean that they are seen as role models in general or as anything other than as an athlete. While someone may copy an athlete's batting stance or clothing style, they are not necessarily copying the athlete's conduct away from the field (for good or ill). According to Reuben A. Buford May's study, young men "are discriminating in their acceptance or rejection of certain actions and attitudes of their role models." he interviewed. A role model's impact appears restricted and less effective since the individual may evaluate and select what is accepted or rejected by the role model; the role model's conduct is not followed blindly or completely[5].

If athletes can influence others as role models, then we should be suspicious of that notion, since data suggests most young people don't even look to professional sports as role models. If the degree to which sportsmen are ever regarded as role models has been grossly overstated, then Premise I seems to be incorrect. As role models, athletes are seldom in a position to influence others since most young people do not see them as such.

1.2.1 The Virtue of Role Modeling:

However, an alternative interpretation of the 'ought to' assertion is as a virtue. Talking about a 'ought' as a virtue is uncomfortable. However, my goal is not to make a clear meta-ethical difference between the two ideas discussed in this article. Being a natural language speaker means that people often use these words in overlapping and ambiguous ways. Sally ought to be nice to her coworkers in a natural and meaningful manner and not imply that Sally has a duty or an assignable responsibility to be friendly so that when she is not friendly she fails to fulfil that duty. Sally should be friendly. To say that Sally and her coworkers would benefit if her regular manner of behaving was nice rather than unfriendly is all it really implies. To put it another way, the speaker is implying a virtue with the use of ought[6].

The argument is that an athlete's regular style of behaving should be one that has a good effect on others when applied to the topic here. It is the responsibility of the athlete to mold himself or herself into a kind of person: one who has a good impact on others. No particular action is required, but developing habitual methods of behaving so that he or she may serve as good role models should be considered a responsibility. The virtue approach views the agent as accomplishing something commendable when he or she behaves in certain ways, but the details of how and when the action is carried out are too complex, contextual, and variable to be regarded as a duty that the actor must fulfil.

This view of the role model argument appears more plausible than the duty interpretation. It's not too demanding; it's more open and flexible in terms of how the role model ideal may be fulfilled. For example, one person may be a role model for their charitable work, another for their academic achievements, and still another for their commitment to athletics.

In addition, the virtue interpretation appears more likely to be successful than the duty interpretation. Sportspeople, when seen in virtue terms, are more likely to be really driven to be positive role models for others. They're not following rules or expectations imposed by others; instead, they're following their own sense of what's right. Because of this genuineness, the athlete has a better chance of connecting with others who see him or her as a role model, and therefore has a greater chance of influencing them positively[7].

But even here, experts believe that there are certain problems and grounds to be cautious, even if being a role model may be commendable and good. Role models are secondary and derived concepts, not primary ones. Rather, it relies on the opinions of others, especially those who have differing views on what constitutes moral behaviour. We should be wary of placing our moral judgments in the hands of others. Aristotle's criticism of honor serves as a good model for this argument. The reason he opposes honor is because it is too reliant on those who give it and not enough on the recipient. An athlete's role model position, on the other hand, relies on whom you ask rather than whether you ask an athlete about his or her values and judgement.

1.2.2 The Argument of the Activist Athlete:

I'd want to move the discussion away from role models as a whole and instead concentrate on athletes as political activists who can serve as role models. Because of their popularity in our society, do sports figures such as professional and Olympic athletes have a duty or responsibility to lead by example on social and political issues? The Activist Argument is a rewording of the role model argument:

1. Because of their fame and notoriety, well-known sportsmen have a unique potential to influence the political beliefs and actions of others when they become politically engaged.
2. Assuming all else is equal, if you have the unique capacity to favorably affect people, you should use it.
3. As a result, with all other factors being equal, well-known sportsmen should choose political positions that benefit others.
4. Despite the fact that many people are persuaded by this pro-activism argument, there are many reasons why I believe it is flawed.

1.3 Anti-Activist:

Researchers aim to develop an argument that provides reasons to be suspicious about this perspective, which seems logical and plausible on the surface. It's possible that being a political activist while being an athlete isn't as admirable as it first seems. Overall, I believe players utilizing their sport fame to participate in political activism is more detrimental than beneficial; thus, I reject the activist argument that athletes have a unique capacity to favorably influence others, since this is not the case in most cases. What scholars is trying to say is this:

1. Political activism is a way of becoming involved in the political process.
2. People's well-being and relationships suffer when they participate in politics, according to political psychology research.
3. The political involvement of well-known sportsmen will have a negative impact instead of a positive one following from A and B.
4. Activists' second premise is thus untrue: athletes in general lack the power to positively influence others' political beliefs.

The switch to C completes the argument. It's a step that a lot of people will probably oppose, too. Furthermore, it is based on a huge number of empirical assertions that are not amenable to

philosophical scrutiny. However, I provide reasons why, assuming the empirical assertions are correct, this is a sensible course of action[8].

2. DISCUSSION

However, before we examine the argument, we must first define the term 'politics,' at the very least, roughly. Politics may apply to anything that involves the exercise of power, including personal relationships. They argue that "no element of existence is not political" in a political geography textbook, which discusses "informal politics." Fredric Jameson, a literary critic and Marxist political theorist, argues that "everything is 'in the final analysis,' political" as another typical example. In order to be of use, these opinions must be restricted to a narrower area; otherwise, they are utterly worthless. They politicize every interaction and endeavor. Proponents easily acknowledge this, but a unified political perspective obliterates important conceptual differences between social and economic factors, as well as cultural and personal ones. Even while the connections between these facets of our lives are important, to disregard them is simply too much of a waste of time.

There is too much to say about this way of looking at politics, so I will just say that I am adopting a more conventional and limited definition of the word "politics." The process by which choices affecting a group of people are made and then implemented or imposed on that group of people is called politics. Coercive power is crucial in both scenarios. It's up to the decision-procedures to decide what sorts of things the community may or should be forced to accept. Coercive authority is clearly involved or relied upon in the implementation and execution of these judgments. Coercive power has a place in politics, but in other organizations, such as religious ones, it should have no place since they are entirely voluntary. It is not essential for politics to be conducted exclusively via the state, but that is the way it is done most of the time, and that is reflected in this use. Politics, in its simplest form, is the study of state activities, the exercise of political authority, or the participation in these activities by oneself[9].

The field of political psychology is vast, and although there seems to be some agreement on the negative consequences of political involvement, opinions on how to mitigate or rectify these problems differ greatly. The growing polarization of society, according to Cass Sunstein, is due to filtering that might be countered, for example, by exposing people more spontaneously to different viewpoints. Diana Mutz, on the other hand, finds that although exposure to politics lowers polarization, it also decreases political involvement. According to these results, the less divided and tribal a person gets, the less political they become as they learn more about opposing viewpoints. As previously said, other evidence suggests that the opposite is also likely: as one gets more political, the polarization and tribalism increase. Even if the data is inaccurate, it does appear to tell us that if we care about our well-being, our relationships with others, and learning and sharing about the world, we should avoid politics as much as possible. This may sound paradoxical, but it does make sense[10].

3. CONCLUSION

If the political psychology literature is correct, and this includes athletes who are politically active, then their involvement is likely to make them and the rest of us worse off as a result. Even if athlete activism is acceptable, we should exercise more caution when applauding or supporting it. Athletes should weigh the benefits of their involvement against the potential harms of politics of sport. More evidence is undoubtedly required to back up my claim that sport's intrinsic qualities rather than overt political activity have historically made it a force for social and political transformation. Even with a few instances, my interpretation of them is woefully inadequate for understanding. This article does not address the empirical issue of what causes social and political change. It would be a cause to reject my theory if my interpretation of these instances is incorrect and the openly political has a far greater effect than I've seen. When it comes to long-term social

change, genuine or organic sports actions have a greater impact than political activity because of their greater ability to create enduring change.

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