

The Effects of Professional Athletes as Role Models on High School Students

A Synthesis Project

Presented to the

Department of Kinesiology, Sports Studies, and Physical Education

SUNY Brockport

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science in Education

(Physical Education)

by

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December 16, 2020

SUNY Brockport

BROCKPORT, NEW YORK

Department of Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education

Title of Synthesis Project:

The Effects of Professional Athletes as Role Models for High School Students

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12/17/2020

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Date

Accepted by the Department of Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education, SUNY Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Science in Education (Physical Education).

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12/17/20

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Date

Acknowledgments

This page here is to thank a few people who have been important in my college journey during my six years here at SUNY Brockport. Thank you to my mother and father for helping put me through college and making this all possible. Your high expectations are what made me able to achieve all that I did during my time here. Thank you to my two sisters who always look to me as a role model and inspire me to do more. Thank you to my sister's boyfriend for being the older brother I never had. Thank you to my friends who I met at college that have further developed my love for sports with our countless hours of NBA conversations. Thank you to my college girlfriend Rachel, who always supports me and allows school to come first when it is needed. Thank you to all of my sports role models that have inspired this paper and the countless conversations I have had with my peers and friends on this topic. Lastly, thank you to all of my professors I have had during my time at SUNY Brockport. They have helped me develop into who I am and their constant focus on professionalism is something that I will forever hold as a key to success. One specific shout-out for Professor Raimondo for being the only professor I have had at college to remember me talking about WWE in one of my assignments. Everybody mentioned has played a part in my college experience and thank you for all that you have done.

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Abstract

Professional athletes have been around for decades with major mainstream attention. With all of that attention, comes many young eyes who look up to professional athletes as role models. Athletes are not the only role models that the youth look up to, but they are an important one that many do look to up to. Professional athletes are humans who also make mistakes and do not always agree with their position as a role model. This leads to positive and negative athletic role models. The purpose of this synthesis was to review the literature on the effects of professional athletes as role models for high school students.

Chapter 1- Introduction

When growing up, children connect with people they relate to or look up to and these people become their role models. The older the children grow the closer they become with said role models, due to the effect a role model plays on how children develop. Often times, when a child looks up to a role model, they try to imitate their role model and present themselves similar to how their role model presents themselves. For example, in the NBA Jayson Tatum was a fan of LeBron James growing up, and Larry Hughes, his godfather, played with LeBron. He even got to meet him as a young kid. As he continued to grow older, and closer to his NBA dream, he would study LeBron highlight tapes. Today, he is playing against one of his childhood role models at least twice a season (Schwartz, 2018). Youths' role models can take many forms – teachers, family members, community members, leaders, and often for many children, professional athletes.

Often times today athletes are thrown into the limelight. They are showcased nationally on television and their every action is exploited and followed by thousands to sometimes millions of people. An athlete's every move is always documented and reported in the current day and they are expected to use their voice and make a statement, even at times it is unfair to expect this of them. LeBron James, Colin Kaepernick, Serena Williams, and other professional athletes have made a huge impact on American youth – usually to a child's benefit. "Athletes are considered role models because of their presence and ability to help or change lives of those less fortunate" (Bright, 2017). On the other hand, some athletes may serve as a role model, but not in a positive way for a particular child. For example, Lamar Odom, former Sixth Man of the Year winner for the Los Angeles Lakers, and his post playing career are a constant in the media every

year for some reason or another. Whether it is him dealing with a loss of another loved one, almost overdosing, or just negative rumors being spread about him (Cacciola and Witz, 2015).

Thus, the following research examines the effects on the youth from viewing professional athletes as a role model. There are many examples of professional athletes who are good role models such as LeBron James who has never faced a scandal, but what about situations like the Rudy Gobert incident that happened days before the start of a global pandemic? Leng and Phua (2020) discuss the situation of Rudy Gobert touching all of the media equipment and laughing days before being the first positive COVID-19 test in professional sports. Role models are important because they help set groundwork for the person that you will become, depending on who is the role model. This is a phenomenon from the youth's perspective that needs to be explained to help build an understanding for others.

Statement of the Problem

Youth currently have so much access to the world and its ever-changing landscape through the use of social media, and it is becoming a norm for students to begin accessing such content at younger ages. When accessing social media platforms, youth are able to connect with the entire world and everything going on is delivered firsthand. Thus, with all of the connections, children are able to connect with their favorite celebrities and often times people they look at as role models. When having such access to these people, there is an ability to see more than what is just presented on the television or through the news sources. There may be more instant access available to these celebrities, but this also brings the bad moments.

When youth are able to see their role models every move, good or bad, how does this effect their development? Professional athletes are one of the most often found role models, and although they achieve many great accomplishments and are painted in a positive light, what about when somebody's favorite athlete does something wrong? How does this affect the youth when this is seen? Lance Armstrong and Lamar Odom are two examples of celebrities who have had a fall from grace for the world to see; both were once idolized by the youth during their professional careers (Bright, 2017). Lamar has suffered from drug addiction and faced many losses causing him to act out of character since retiring (Cacciola and Witz, 2015). While Lance was once a beloved American figure, who won seven Tour de France races and defeated cancer, but when he retired it came out he never competed without doping and has fallen from grace with the media (Cohen, 2020).

High schoolers are the portion of the youth that experience the most development prior to adult hood, and by freshman year, there is a general sense of who they look up to as role models. High school is a phase of life that every child has to go through in order to get to adult hood. During this time, many kids find out who they truly are and go through deep character development. However, through these developmental changes high school students can be susceptible to influence from their role models. The problem is how strong of an influence are athletes on high school students who look up to them? The relationship between the professional athletes and the high school students needs a deeper analysis. An explanation is missing of: How impactful are professional athlete role models and what is their effects on the younger generations who look up to them?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this synthesis project is to review the literature on the effects of professional athletes as role models on high school students.

Operational Definitions

1. Role Model: A person who displays proper moral qualities and ethical principles (Melin, 2014).
2. High Schooler: A person in school especially in the United States including grades 9-12 (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Research Questions

The following research questions in this study will be:

1. What are some traits pro athletes have that make them good or bad role models?
2. To what extent do the developing youth gravitate towards athletes as role models if they do?
3. If the athletes are viewed as role models, what is their impact on the youth?

Delimitations

1. Participants in the review of literature are high school students, generally between the ages of 14-19. The only exceptions included ages 11-16 for one and from high schoolers to young adults.

2. Participants in the literature will include high schoolers' who look up to professional athletes as role models.
3. Articles used in this research synthesis were in peer and published journals between January 2010-2020. One article is an exception being from December 2009.

Chapter 2- Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methods used to review the literature on the how professional athletes as role models effect high school students. The literature compiled for this synthesis was located using the EBSCO database from the Drake Memorial Library located at the SUNY Brockport campus. Using the EBSCO database, the following databases were searched: SPORTDiscus, Sports Medicine and Education and Academic Search Complete.

From each respective database there were a total of ten articles found; three from the SPORTDiscus database, one from the Sports Medicine and Education Index and six from the Academic Search complete. The criteria for selecting articles to be used in the literature review had to fall under one of the three qualifications: the article had to include effects of athletes as role models, high school students and their opinions on professional athletes as role models, and/or the athletes being examined had to be from the professional level. The goal for the articles that were used for the research was to find articles that were under the category of data-based peer reviewed articles. The articles were published from 2010-2020. One article included in the literature review is from December of 2009, that will be the one exception to this rule. The date range was selected so the information and data gathered and reviewed is modern and there is not a risk of reviewing outdated data.

While searching through the respective databases, there were three key phrases included in the searches. The three key terms were: professional athletes, high school students, and role models. All three of the terms were searched with the set date range of January 2010-2020 and selected as peer reviewed articles. The term “professional athletes” yielded 29,000 results, which was narrowed down further after adding “professional athlete as role models” and it produced 43 results.

The articles found from the database all come from a variety of journals that have to do with sports and physical education. In the search results there were two articles from the Sports Ethics and Philosophy Journal, two articles from the Managing Sport and Leisure Journal, and one from the Journal of Psychology of Sport and Exercise. Additionally, there was one article from the Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, another from the Sport, Education and Society Journal, one article from the European Association for Sport Management, and one article from the Soccer and Society Journal.

The articles that are referenced throughout the literature review, to find the answers to the synthesis, have a varying number of subjects that helped draw their respective conclusions. Some of the articles use zero participants and look at other literature and various case studies to help draw conclusions such as Ho Keat Leng and Yi Xian Philip Phua (2020) studied athletes during the corona virus and their effects. Roger Melin (2014) looked at sportspersons as moral role models. There were as little as three subjects who were interviewed for Carrie Dunn's (2016) research. One study included 18 young adults with age ranges from 17-18, and another study included 97 boys and girls. The next largest included 305 questionnaires to high schoolers and young adults. The second largest included 662 ninth grade students from various schools. While the largest field examined, 2,701, eleven to sixteen year old students, from 222 schools over a three-year period.

The data from each respective article was analyzed differently, except for the one thing they all had in common was comparing and contrasting the results from the data collection. For Heather Reid (2017) the results were recorded and compared to see the total number for each category. Likewise, the same was true for the articles Noora J. Ronkainen, Tatiana V. Ryba, and Harri Selänne (2019) and Alan Davis (2013). As well as the articles from Kathleen Armour and

Rebecca Duncombe (2011) and Minhong Kim and Matthew Walker (2013) where they all collected data numbers and crunched them to group and compare results.

The articles written by Ho Keat Leng and Yi Xian Philip Phua (2020), Roger Melin (2014), and Cawyn Jones (2011) all compared their research from their respective literature findings to draw their conclusions. Compared to Carrie Dunn (2016) which compared and contrasted interview results from the research.

The information gathered included high school students who looked up to professional athletes as role models, along with research about how professional athletes feel they can help as role models and various character traits that professional athletes have that can be beneficial or harmful if imitated by those who look up to them. The gathered information from the various authors' data created a discussion on the effects of professional athletes as role models for high school students.

Chapter 3- Review of Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of literature on the effects of professional athletes as role models on high school students. In particular the following effects on students will be reviewed: how the role models can affect personal character, future aspirations, sports participation and what are ways they can be negative influences. These are all effects that athletes can have as role models. Athletes can be role models to high school students, however the way that they affect those who look up to them is what can vary. What many do not know is the way people can be affected by their professional athlete influences. It can come from an athletes actions, words or even the way they tend to carry themselves. The first effect that professional athletes can have on high school students who look up to them is their personal character.

Personal Character

Professional athletes' personal character is important when they are role models for high school students. In Heather Reid (2016) it is found "when athletes re-enact the actions of a hero he does not become the hero he represents, but he represents the heroes actions." The model that is made throughout the article teaches about athletes being heroic, their educational values and how they can even inspire others. Fans are able to tap into an athletes energy and reenact their trials and tribulations without having to go through the same experience. Their affect on personal character goes right into the idea behind "the practice of idealistically celebrating athlete's heroes may have some social value to it if it inspires others to strive for the virtues the athlete symbolizes, which they usually aren't modeling a role, but rather enduring virtues that our culture continues to value" (Reid, 2016)

Further personal character development that comes from professional athletes as role models come in the form from the ability of the professional athletes to spread positive messages and understand that their actions both on and off the field can affect other people. During this COVID-19 pandemic athletes have been placed in unknown territory where they have to step up “and encourage appropriate behaviors in order to mitigate risks” (Leng and Phua, 2020). Athletes had to begin using social media to encourage social distancing and the wearing of masks to try and help keep others safe.

When the pandemic began many athletes were making jokes about COVID-19 and not taking it seriously. It was not until Rudy Gobert was diagnosed with COVID-19, that attitudes changed, but by then the sports world was already shut down (Leng and Phua, 2020). Since then, athletes have had to take a step back and “review their role in society” (Leng and Phua, 2020). They have stepped up, trying to stop the spread of COVID-19 and have been influential in trying to help turn this pandemic around. Athletes have millions of followers on their social media platforms, so if they see their role model doing the right thing and taking precautionary steps, they too will follow suit.

Another example of professional athletes affecting personal character development comes from an analysis through the Changing Lives program found in the UK (Armour and Duncombe, 2012). The authors were able to conclude “athlete mentors are able to inspire kids, change their attitudes, help improve futures, and allow pupils to feel special” (Armour and Duncombe, 2012). The Changing Lives programs consists of mentor/pupil relationships through various middle and high schools found across the country. The mentor is a successful sports person and the pupils are the students in these schools. The Armour and Duncombe (2012) study

of a program consisted of 2,701 students from 222 schools with students that age varied from 11-16.

The study and its findings were able to reinforce the popular belief that sport stars can act as role models to motivate and inspire young people. The mentors were able to visit students three times over the six month period and one of them commented, “I think the changes to the youth are small... but I think we can put them on the right track” (Armour and Duncombe, 2012). During the various visits the mentors and pupils worked to identify their respective struggles that they have encountered. This was a way for the pupils to see that the athletes were once just like them, and they too can get past their struggles and accomplish great things.

An additional final affect that professional athletes can have on high school students who look up to them is influence on their philanthropic decisions in life. This study includes more than just high schoolers, but it shows strong data that should be discussed. Kim and Walker (2019) were able to distribute 305 questionnaires at a sporting event to high school aged students through young adults. The survey asked questions related to donation intentions, reasoning for donating, and if athlete image plays a role. The theory behind the survey questioned whether athletic image leads to trust towards various philanthropies, and an intention to donate for people (Kim and Walker, 2019).

The results from the survey suggest that this theory stands true because when athletes are involved with causes their image may reflect the foundations unique characteristics (Kim and Walker, 2019). The reasoning behind this is because of the tests of the aforementioned effects revealed general positivity in potential donors level of trust toward the athlete, which was significantly related to intention to donate (Kim and Walker, 2019). Athletes hold this power, where they connect their image with a brand or a message, it can gain traction as proven true

from the study. Consumers/fans hold a certain trust with athletes they look up to and this can be an explanation of why seeing an athlete image connected with a foundation can cause people to want to help support the foundation.

Future Aspirations

A second affect that professional athletes as role models can have on high school students that look up to them is influence on their future aspirations. Often times these effects include motivating students to pursue future sporting endeavors that consist of college basketball, or even the hopes of playing professionally one day. In Ronkainen, Ryba, and Selänne (2019) the authors interviewed 18 total participants exploring role model selection by student athletes and understanding the impact of gender on the selection of role models.

In the study it was found that young men were more likely to select popular athletes as role models, rather than young women. Apart of the reason for men, rather than women is because of there being more prominent male athletes in the spotlight than women. These role models are often times selected due to being able to identify development and through exploration of future selves when identifying with these role models (Ronkainen, Ryba, and Selänne, 2019). When they are able to explore their future selves, it helps the athletes understand what they wish to do in life. These younger high school athletes see parts of themselves in the role models they look up to because they are able to connect with them. It is not as easy for women, due to having less role models to pick from in the professional athlete field, but there are cases where they can identify and choose from pro athletes.

In the other study by Alan Davis (2013), 662 ninth grade students were surveyed about their career aspirations. Often times when students have a desired career aspiration, it stems from

another source such as who their role models are, which can inspire students to want to do what their role models do. Schools do not always do the best of providing the full range of occupational possibilities, and this is why students look to their role models on deciding what they may want to be (Davis, 2013).

The study had students from every background surveyed come back with results stating they want to be professional athletes. The results included 41% of black young men, 25% of Latino young men, 21% of white young men, 7% of young black women, 5% of Latino young women, and 5% of young white women all aspire to be a professional athlete one day (Davis, 2013). The goal of being a professional athlete, also helps students further their education post high school, with many attending colleges to try and further their athletic careers. This is an added bonus, to high school students trying to pursue the same careers as their professional athlete role models.

Sport Participation

Inspiring high school students to continue to participate and be involved with sports is another way professional athletes affect high school students. In Dunn (2015), three professional football players from England were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions of being a role model in their position and how it can affect their performance and how they can affect young footballers. The professionals felt they could positively affect the youth. The professionals can be inspirations and help motivate and improve the soccer skills of youth football players (Dunn, 2015).

The professional football players welcome the responsibility of being a role model and they believe that they can make is encourage more young girls to get involved by participating in

sports (Davis, 2015). However, in order for them to be successful and able to fully motivate the youth, there has to be a direction for the game and the sport itself for their efforts to not be negated. There has to be a continued effort to push female sports and bring more mainstream media attention to them. This is similar to what we saw this summer with the NBA athletes doing everything they can to endorse the WNBA and show support. Male counterparts worldwide have to show similar support to their respective female leagues for their sport. (Taylor, 2020) More attention brought to the leagues, will bring more exposure and more opportunities for more eyes to discover how women sports are equally as competitive and needed as men sports.

The study by Wicker and Frick (2016) examined the trickle-down effect of potential role models and the effects of their sporting achievements. The study identified causal links from sporting achievements and role models to changes in amateur participation. We live “in the age of role models” which plays a part in the creation of role model images (Wicker and Frick, 2016). Role models are prominent in today’s society, and with the media attention they are given, role models are created everywhere. So, when sports athletes show results, which include sporting achievements, this can automatically turn the successful pro athletes into role models without much say on the matter. Even failure can paint athletes as negative role models, if an athlete is on the big stage, people are watching and looking to create an image of them (Wicker and Frick, 2016).

The study was done through data collection from 21 regional football associations of Germany, with a total of 315 observations of amateur members of the association whose ages ranged from 15-19. The results from the study showed that the achievements of the men’s national teams had an affect on the amateurs, including the females of the association (Wicker and Frick, 2016). These amateur players see the successful professionals win and this would

often pushes them to get involved and try to imitate the success. Men's sporting achievements play a role on affecting new involvement of the amateur, including females, and it is not only women's sporting achievements because of the attention and respect that is brought to the accomplishments (Wicker and Frick, 2016). Male professional athlete role models can inspire both young men and women to be involved with their respective sports.

Negative Influences

The final affects that professional athletes as role models can have on high school students who look up to them is being negative influences. Role models like anybody else are humans, and humans make mistakes. Often times professional athletes are under a microscope and their mistakes are broadcasted to the larger audience, for everybody to see. This can be a bad thing because high school students can see their role models making huge mistakes and these mistakes can rub off ineffectively on the high school students who often times imitate their role models.

Roger Melin (2014) performed a study trying to figure out if sportspersons are good moral role models. He looked to problematize the idea that sportspersons can have a special moral value for society (Melin, 2014). Throughout sport, Melin (2014) was able to conclude from his research that there are several normal cases that undermine the problem of sportspersons being moral role models. "Sports is a social field in which behavior that is normally thought to be morally bad, is often times promoted and institutionalized" (Melin, 2014). In sports it is not uncommon to see an athlete break the rules, when they can gain an advantage from it or seeing athletes use recreational drugs that give them a competitive advantage over their competition (Melin, 2014).

Athletes do these unethical acts, because they are competitors and winning is their ultimate goal, in which is not always right, but it is often times a part of the game. These athletes when participating in sport does not give sportspersons morally good character, and sport often times is not a good basis for moral education (Melin, 2014). Athletes are often caught doing unethical acts that do not translate to the real world for non-athletes. High school students cannot cheat on their test and should not be using recreational drugs for any reason. However, these are acts they will see their role models do and try to imitate for their own life where applicable.

Another negative influence many professional athletes as role models can have on high school students who look up to them is the promotion of alcohol and other substances. In the last research discussion we talked about recreational drugs, but in Jones (2011) she studied the impact and the influence of problematic drinking behaviors in a number of high profile male athletes in the UK. The literature review looked at athletes who struggled with alcohol, but could still be considered role models. The author looked at the idea of athletes cleaning up and not promoting a culture that is considered to be a negative gate-way.

Due to social media, today professional athletes are very open about their extracurricular activities and a lot of what they do and where they go in their free time ends up online by choice or not. It is very public that many professional athletes today are known to go to the club and party often during the season and off-season. “Professional athletes know how to handle being a pro-athlete, so they cannot be told not to party and drink” (Steiner, 2019), but that doesn’t mean the people who look up to them know how hard it is to balance that, while still doing what you have to do. Jones (2011) states that a number of professional athletes are bad role models, particularly in relation to alcohol demonstration. “Athletes should work to modify their behavior in relation to alcohol misuse” (Jones, 2011).

Athletes themselves and the sporting culture they represent have a weighty responsibility to set a good example when it comes to levels of alcohol consumption and related intoxicated behavior (Jones, 2011). They have to understand the position they are in and there are people who look up to them and often times imitate their actions, so they should consider their choices in order to set better examples. As role models you want to help those who look up to you develop good habits and not encourage behavior that can be harmful (Jones, 2011). Jones (2011) finishes her argument that athletes need to be better role models by having a safe and sensible approach to alcohol consumption, not only for those who view the athletes as role models, but for the athletes themselves.

Finally, professional athletes as role models can sometimes be a negative influence for high school students who look up to them because they do not sign up to be role models (Johnson, Lynch, and Adair, 2013). It is something that unfairly comes with the job that can provide standards that are unfair for the athletes. There is no clear definition for the role of athletes as role models and that is where a problem arises and a standard needs to be defined (Johnson, Lynch, and Adair, 2013). Many professional athletes when they make mistakes in various ways are painted poorly and unfairly. They are forced into role model positions, rather than just being celebrities, which some feel that is all they are.

An example of this is Charles Barkley, NBA Hall of Famer, has only ever felt like a celebrity because of the status the game brought him. Back in 1993, when he was recording a commercial, he said “just because I dunk a basketball, does not mean I should raise your kids” (D’Adamo, 2014). Charles had a very successful NBA career, but throughout it anytime he made a mistake, the media scrutinized him. He didn’t care though, because he never felt that was a part of the job. He gets paid for his on the court production, not what he teaches those who look up to

him. Johnson, Lynch, and Adair (2013) concluded that we need to establish broad and narrow senses of being a role model. Also try to more deeply define the difference between being a role model and a moral exemplar. It has to be more fair for professional athletes that when they voluntarily adopt role model status, that they are subject to obligations that accompany the status, rather than the unfair ones they face today (Johnson, Lynch, and Adair, 2013).

An unfair obligation that professional athletes have to deal with is that nothing in their lives is private. There has to be a consideration when sharing information or viewing a professional athlete after an incident, because they too are human and deserve some level of privacy that they often do not get (Johnson, Lynch, and Adair, 2013). There are hundreds of cases of people who have adopted the “role model” status and have no privacy regarding their mistakes, the news comes out almost immediately. The most recent example at the time of writing this paper, happened days ago when Terrence Davis got into a dispute with a woman in her apartment that resulted in seven charges (Bontemps, 2020). The news broke not even 24 hours later and much of the world found out and immediately chimed in their opinions. This happens all the time with professional athletes where they do not even get a day to process what they have done and they have to deal with thousands of people from the internet, scrutinizing and expressing their grief. This is unfair and professional athletes are humans too, who deserve the same privacy many other people get in their lives.

Summary

Professional athletes as role models for high school students can be a double edged sword when it comes to how they influence those who look up to them. They may not be the only role models that high school students look up to, but they are definitely an important group of mentors that have to understand the power they hold. Often times when a high school student

does look up to a professional athlete they tend to imitate the behaviors of their role model and this can be good or bad.

Professional athletes need to understand their role model status. They can be positive influences in several ways. They can help develop high school students personal characters. Pro athletes give the students someone they can relate to and connect with, someone they see themselves in. They can teach them some of the right things to do in life, and help to try and correct their poor habits. Professional athletes can pass along positive messages, inspire philanthropic endeavors, and pass along educational values in hopes of inspiring the youth.

Pro athletes inspire the youth in many ways besides trying to help them learn and move forward in life. They inspire them to pursue different career paths and to get more involved in athletics. Seeing the success and recognition professional athletes get for their hard work, inspires the youth to want to gain the same results in life. Professional athletes give many high school students hope that they can too be a role model and achieve success in their lives.

However, with all the good professional athletes can exemplify for the youth, they can also highlight negative things, resulting in being a negative influence at times. They are unfairly signed up as role models and assumed to be teachers to the youth and expected to act correctly, but in reality that is not what they signed up for and are also humans who make mistakes. Professional athletes often times normalize doing things that are considered wrong outside of the sports world, teaching teenagers that look up to them unacceptable norms. Lastly, they promote a party life-style that has lots to do with recreational drugs and alcohol, which is teaching teenagers at an age before it is even legal, that it is ok to make those a constant in their lives. Professional athletes can be great role models for the youth, but they can also be poor role models, as they are human and allowed to live life how they please. When high school students

look up to professional athletes as role models, they have to learn to pick and choose correctly in what ways they imitate their idols.

Chapter 4- Results, Discussion, and Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret and examine the results of the review of literature on professional athletes as role models for developing high school students. This chapter will also present how these results align with the proposed research questions which acted as a guide to this synthesis project. In addition, recommendations for future research, as it relates to pro athletes as role models, and how they affect high school students is presented.

The results of this review of literature revealed that there are many cases in which pro athletes as role models are positive influences on high school students, but there are also cases of them being negative influences. This typically occurs in situations where the pro athletes do not view themselves as role models or are unaware of the idea that their position holds so much power on those who look up to them. High school students who look up to professional athletes have shown correlations between character development and centering athletes as role models. One example is a stronger participation in sports. Lastly, professional athletes can affect future aspirations of being involved with sports and the hope of a future sports career.

Interpretations

As part of this literature review, several research questions were posed. The first research question was what are some of the traits pro athletes have that make them good or bad role models? The research showed evidence that pro athletes positively affect high school students' choices in future aspirations, growth of personal character development, and sport participation. However, they can be a negative influence when it comes to the consumption of alcohol and not always being good moral role models. Heather Reid (2016) found that athletes can be good moral athletes and build high school students up to overcome personal challenges they may face

in life. They do not go through the same struggles as the athletes they look up to, but they can compare their struggles to the athletes and put themselves in the athletes' shoes to try and mimic their strength and what they had to do to overcome their own respective situation. Whilst in Roger Melin (2014), it was argued that sportspersons normalize bad behaviors through a field in which it is institutionalized. These bad behaviors were considered norms in the sports world, but if translated to everyday life, would not be universally accepted. These norms in the sports world are seen around the world by spectators and this causes high school students to pick up on the ideas.

Carwyn Jones (2011) shares examples of many high-profile athletes who are bad role models, particularly in relation to alcohol consumption. The athletes demonstrate the number of problems with the partying lifestyle that many professional athletes live and glorify, causing a misconception of their lives. As a result, this can cause confusion and encourage high school students to try things that they may not normally get involved with (Johnson, Lynch, and Adair, 2013). Athletes are held to high standards, and are often placed in a role that they did not agree to, but it comes with the job. The standards for role models are often confused by the spectators and the athletes respectively, as both have different ideas of what the standards entail. These standards have to be defined and established.

The second question was to what extent do the developing youth gravitate towards athletes as role models if they do? The data suggests that high school students often do gravitate towards professional athletes as role models. Professional athletes are one of the common role models found among all students and are usually towards the top of the list of possible role models. Ronkainen, Ryba, and Selänne (2019) explained that athletes are people who high school students are able to identify with and when looking to them for guidance, they are able to

help identify development, and use these pro athletes as a road map for developing their future selves.

When being able to self-identify and connect with professional athletes Alan Davis (2013), found that this causes many students to want to become pro athletes one day because of the connection they establish with them. If a pro athlete comes from a similar background or faces similar struggles, young high school students are able to relate and will look to them to help navigate future challenges. This is backed up further through Kathleen Armour (2012) where the data found shows athlete mentors are able to inspire kids, help change their attitudes and provide help for improving future self for the pupils. Though their inspiration and connection does not only come from relatable traits, as shown in Wicker and Frick (2016), the success of the athletes has an effect on how influential professional athletes can be as role models.

The final research question was, if the athletes are viewed as role models, what is their impact on the youth? The results indicate they do have an impact on the youth, both positive and negative impacts and that is why they are a double edged sword as role models. They can teach many positive lessons, but since pro athletes are not required to be role models they can also teach negative lessons. As seen in Leng and Phua (2020), professional athletes who were first poor examples, eventually become better role models when it came to the COVID-19 outbreak. The athletes did not understand their influence, but when it was communicated, they had to provide positive messages to inspire..

Pro athletes can have many positive influences on the high school students who admire them. As seen in Kim and Walker (2013), professional athletes can inspire others to get involved with philanthropies. If an athlete's image is associated with a philanthropy, then this causes a

build in trust and a desire to get involved. This is similar to what is found in Carrie Dunn (2015) where the study shows professional athletes can be motivational to high school students who look up to them. They can work with inspiring athletes and help push them to do better along with helping them become better athletes.

Implications

The research is able to support previous research on the topic; however similar to previous research it is not able to fully conclude if professional athletes are good or bad role models. They do have many positive effects, but that also comes with some negatives. It seems the good outweigh the negative, but future research is needed to fully support such a statement. The research conclusions do agree with previous research, adding additional reasoning for why pro athletes are good role models or why they should not be viewed as role models for high school students. From the results found within the various studies, there is confirmation of professional athletes as role models being good and bad role models. There are various cases of both being the answer, however there are more cases to make that professional athletes are often times more a positive role model than a negative role model.

The practical implications that come following the research is an increase in knowledge on professional athletes as role models for developing high school students. With an increase in knowledge, professional athletes are able to learn how their actions affect those who look up to them and view them as more than just another sports athlete. It is important to educate athletes on their position and the duties it brings to it, so they can always aim to put their best foot forward and try to always be the best example they can be for those respect them. Also, for them to understand that this comes with the role, and even if you do not feel like a role model, there are people who view them as such.

Recommendations for Future Research

In reviewing the data base on professional athletes as role models for developing high school students, the following limitations were noted regarding the studies under review. There is a lack of knowledge of where professional athletes rank as role models for students. Alan Davis (2013) is a great example of a study that can be repeated for this purpose. The researcher would have to change the measurement from what do students want to be when they grow up, to who do students look up to as role models? Everything else from there can be relatively the same, gather the numbers and crunch to compare where role models rank against one another.

The differences in sample sizes from each respective study may need to be adjusted. More research could be conducted to get an idea of the bigger picture. Many of the survey studies can be repeated with more participants. There can even be an emphasis on trying to identify other age groups and use them as the participants, for example middle schoolers. If more narrow studies are needed, focus on specific grade levels in high school, such as a study performed only on ninth graders or twelfth graders specifically. A final limitation noted is what qualifies someone as a role model varies from person to person. Not everybody has the same idea or definition of what makes somebody a role model. There needs to be a literature review performed, on what makes a professional athlete a role model, focusing solely on athletes to create a definition and an ideal image. This study can be conducted through literature review and further surveys of the youth who look up to professional athletes as role models.

Based on these limitations and other insights related to the literature, the following recommendations for future research should be considered:

1. Future research will need to examine how athletes can be more affective as role models in encouraging appropriate behaviors. The research can aim to establish guidelines of efficient ways professional athletes can provide a greater impact on those who admire them. High school students from a location of their choosing, can respond to surveys about ways they have been influenced by a professional athlete. The researcher can crunch the results and use them to publish a study.
2. Future research should focus on the number of high school males versus females that are influenced by professional athletes. Throughout the research there have been signs of female high school students being influenced by professional athlete role models, but there is an obvious differential. Finding the female students that are affected, can later be used to figure out the right ways professional athletes can connect with more female high school students.
3. Future research should look to quantify the number of high school students who put an emphasis on drinking and partying because of their role models as compared to those who do not. The researcher can use anonymous studies, in different high schools, to examine a correlation between high school students engaging in risky behaviors and those who do not.
4. Future research should qualitatively explore and compare the effects of different role models on high school students. The researcher could use a broad range of articles and databases to collect literature to determine if certain types of role models, can be deemed more affective or better role models than others. Also, researchers should examine where professional athletes measure up against other role models.

Summary

Overall summary

The purpose of this literature review was to determine the effects of professional athletes as role models for developing high school students. Delimiting variables were used to do an exhaustive data-based search which yielded 11 articles. These articles were then systematically used to determine the effects of professional athletes as role models on developing high school students.

Research revealed that professional athletes as role models are complex. They provide high school students who admire them with positive and negative traits they can choose to adopt. Professional athletes can help with positive character development, staying involved with sports, and influencing future aspirations, while also promoting a negative culture that glorifies partying and drinking. Also, professional athletes do not always do what is best in the means of the sporting world, and that does not translate well into real life for high school students to adapt. The main reasoning for professional athletes not always setting the best example is because often they do not want to accept or are not educated on the fact that being a role model comes with their job and position in the world.

There is still hope through future research that professional athletes can be further evaluated as role models to determine if they are a correct source for high school students to look up to. With an increase in knowledge, professional athletes can be informed with future research that this is a part of their job, they can aim to set better examples, and can become the best role model they can be for high school students.

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Appendix A

<p>Armour, K. (2012)</p>	<p>Changing Lives? Critical evaluation of a school-based athlete role model for intervention</p>	<p><i>Electronic Sport, Education and Society Journal</i></p>	<p>The first task is to review the existing evidence on the role of successful sports stars as mentors or role models for young people.</p> <p>The second task of this paper is to report evaluation data from the program, in particular considering whether there is strong evidence to suggest it could or did have a positive impact on young people.</p> <p>The third task is to critically reflect on the literature, the CL program and the evaluation data to consider whether such programs have</p>	<p>2701 students from 222 schools ages 11-16 over a three year period. Case studies for the students that included analysis of contextual information, observation of project activities, interviews, and conversations with mentors.</p>	<p>Data from pupil profiles and impact statements were entered into Excel to generate descriptive statistics. Data was then analyzed and reported to sponsors of programs.</p>	<p>Athlete mentors are able to inspire kids, help change their attitudes, hope to improve futures, allows pupils to feel special.</p>	<p>At one level, it could be argued that the findings from the evaluation reinforce the popular belief that sport stars can act as role models to motivate and inspire young people.</p> <p>As one of the athlete mentors involved in a similar program commented: 'I think the changes to the youth are very small, I mean six months...it's not a great sort of time to change people but hopefully we can put them on the right track.</p> <p>Athlete mentors visited schools on up to three occasions, and pupils were encouraged to identify with the struggles they had encountered in their paths to success.</p>
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			a place in schools				
Davis, A. (2013)	Pediatrician or Professional Athlete? Gender, Ethnicity, and Occupational Aspirations of Urban Adolescents	<i>Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)</i>	Study compared the occupational aspirations of beginning high school students by gender and ethnicity, and examined the relationship between the educational demands of the occupations desired by students and their academic performance before and after entering high school.	662 ninth grade students were surveyed. 51% were male and 49% were female. Researched their career aspirations which included becoming a professional athlete.	Crunched the numbers looked at career aspirations and grade correlations. Painted an image of what students wanted to become. Often times career aspirations stem from somewhere.	In the urban school district where the study was conducted, Latina, African American, and Caucasian young women were more prone to aspire to professional occupations than were young men, and the average educational demands of the occupations they aspired to were higher than those to	Schools have to educate and familiarize students with a range of occupational possibilities. This study also adds to a small but growing body of evidence that many low-income teenage males aspire to be professional athletes, and that this aspiration is especially prevalent among African American young men. The overwhelming majority of men who become professional football or basketball players enroll in college, and so the aspiration is compatible with college enrollment. It may be that the downside of aspiring to be a professional athlete is that it provides no real rationale for why one needs to study algebra, or history, or anything else in high school, apart from simply getting into college. And when no offer comes from a

						<p>which young men aspired, requiring study beyond a college degree. In addition, the educational demands of desired occupations were significantly associated with students' GPAs</p>	<p>professional team, there may be no Plan B waiting in the wings</p>
<p>Dunn, C. (2015)</p>	<p>Elite Footballers as role models: promoting young women's football participation</p>	<p><i>Soccer and Society</i></p>	<p>This article reports from a study in progress which explores the experiences of elite female athletes in Britain, It explores what they perceive as a role model in their position and how it effects their sport performance, and how they're</p>	<p>Interviewed three people involved with professional women's soccer in England. Two females and one male were interviewed.</p>	<p>Given semi-structural interviews and after the interviews drew conclusions from what was presented after comparing and contrasting the</p>	<p>Female footballers welcome the responsibility of being a role model, they feel with recent changes in their sport they can help encourage</p>	<p>There needs to be a direction for the game and sport in order for their efforts to not be negated.</p> <p>There is a feeling as professionals they can be inspirational to the youth.</p> <p>Can help motivate/improve sports skill, but also the youth's health as well.</p>

			work with young footballers helps promote sporting excellence.		interview results.	ge more young girls to get involved .	
Johnson, P.T., Lynch, S. & Adair, D. (2013)	The Contractual And Ethical Duty For A Professional Athlete To Be An Exemplary Role Model: Bringing The Sport And Sportspeople Into Unreasonable And Unfair Disrepute	<i>Australian and New Zealand Sports Law Journal</i>	The article talks about the unfair standards athletes are held to as role models, away from the court and how there needs to be adjustment in the system and education to fans about athletes as role models.	Literature review studying various cases of athletes losing employment due to breaches in their contract of vague terms that accused the athlete of hurting their brand, often linked to not being a perfect human being in society even if it was in their private life.	We need to define the role of an athlete as a role model, clarify it and refraining from discourse when it comes to professional athletes. Also educate the community about role models.	Establish the narrow and broad senses of being a role model. There is a difference between being a role model and a moral exemplar. Whenever one voluntarily adopts role model status, they are subject to obligations that accompany that status, which	When professional athletes sign on there has to be an account of presumption of innocence when they mess up and their privacy deserves consideration in various scenarios. Good article to show why professional athletes aren't always the best choice of a role model, very different then many of the others on the grid with a different perspective Athletes are painted poorly unfairly when they mess up, they are unfairly forced into role model positions, rather than just being celebrities which some feel that's all they are. Charles Barkley example .

						can be often unfair.	
Jones, C. (2011)	Drunken Role Models: Rescuing Our Sporting Exemplars	<i>Sports, Ethics and Philosophy</i>	The research studies the impact and influence of the problematic drinking behaviors of a number of elite, high-profile male athletes in the United Kingdom.	Literature review looked at cases of athletes who struggled with alcohol and how they can still be deemed role models and how cleaning up and getting help can help with that.	Looked at the literature review and drew conclusions and presented them on how she thinks they can become better role models and the dangers of athletes showing off drinking alcohol.	The author states that a number of high-profile athletes are bad role models, particularly in relation to alcohol consumption. They demonstrate a number of problems and should work to modify their behavior in relation to alcohol misuse	<p>The author believes that individual athletes themselves and the sporting culture they represent have a weighty responsibility to set a good example when it comes to levels of alcohol consumption and related intoxicated behavior.</p> <p>The author argues that it is vital that sporting practice communities have a safe and sensible approach to alcohol consumption.</p> <p>Athletes need to fix their demonstration because they set examples for others who may feel inclined to copy them and should help others develop good habits.</p>
Kim, M. &	The influence of professional	<i>European Association for</i>	Examines whether the high-profile status of a	305 questionnaires were given to	Crunched the numbers and looked	The results suggest that	Future Research: The gender, ethnicity, and sport the athlete plays should be tested as

<p>Walker, M. (2013)</p>	<p>l athlete philanthropy on donation intentions</p>	<p><i>Sport Management</i></p>	<p>professional athlete can influence third-party donations to charitable causes that the athlete will also support.</p>	<p>responders. 83.7% were male and the other 16.3% were female. Ages were various from high schoolers to young adults, to as old as people with college degrees.</p>	<p>for if there was identification with the athletes, personal involvement, athlete image effects personal involvement and to figure out if pro athletes have an effect on charitable causes for the individuals.</p>	<p>athlete identification, image of the athlete, trust toward the athlete can cause involvement significantly influenced on donation intentions. The results also indicate that athlete trust mediated the relationship between identification, image, and donation intentions. Finally, cause involvement moderated the relations</p>	<p>additional factors that influence attachment, image, and donation intentions.</p> <p>Future Research:</p> <p>Should qualitatively explore the underlying dynamics that influence donor behavior to the non-profit organizations that athletes support.</p> <p>Since the literature has shown that trust, identification, image, and personal involvement assume significant roles in interorganizational relationships, each of these variables were tested as an element of donation intentions.</p> <p>Tests of the aforementioned effects revealed general positivity in potential donors level of trust toward the athlete, which was significantly related to intention to donate.</p>
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						hip between identification with, and trust toward, the professional athlete.	
Leng, H.K., & Phua, X.P., (2020)	Athletes as role models during the COVID-19 Pandemic	<i>Electronic: Managing Sport and Leisure Journal</i>	Looks to determine whether society should hold professional athletes to a higher standard and expect them to be role models during a pandemic.	Used other literature findings and current day events to compare and contrast and discuss athletes and what their impact is.	Analyzed the literature findings and drew conclusions.	The pandemic has demonstrated that athletes will also need to review their role in society and take a more active role during a crisis.	<p>Future research will need to examine how athletes can be more effective as role models and in encouraging appropriate behaviors. This may include examining the type of platform and message used. Perhaps the opportunity is not limited to athletes. Sports Organizations are included in this.</p> <p>Athletes need to understand that their actions both on and off courts can affect others. They will need to do their part during a crisis such as the current pandemic and encourage appropriate behaviors to help reduce the risks.</p>
Melin, R. (2014)	Are Sportspeople Good	<i>Physical Culture and Sport Studies</i>	The aim of this project is to look closer at the idea of sportspersons	Used other literature findings and current day events	Reviewed four case studies that help or fight	There are several normal cases in	Sportspersons can be morally good, and can even be morally good role models, but you cannot assume that all

	Moral Role Models	<i>and Research</i>	being moral role models. I will problematize the idea that sportspersons, can have a special moral value for society.	to compare and discuss athletes and if they are good moral role models or are, they are just good sportsman.	against the argument presented in this article, looked at them and analyzed to draw the conclusions.	sporting practice that really undermine this idea of sportspersons being moral role model. Sport is one of the social fields in which people meet and act, and it is even a social field in which behavior normally thought to be morally bad many times is promoted and sometimes even institutionalized	sportspersons are the being of moral role models. Respectful behavior towards opponents is not something that should be expected. There are implications throughout that there is no reason to think that sportspersons should be understood to be moral role models.
Reid, H.	Athletes as heroes and	<i>Electronic:</i>	The author argues for the	Asked 97 total Boys	Results were	When a athlete	The modern media construction and

(2016).	role models: an ancient model	<i>Sports, Ethics, and Philosophy Journal</i>	social and educational value of sport built upon the relationship between athletes, heroes, and the song culture that celebrated them in ancient Greece. Discusses the service, association with heroism and with moral education may ultimately be justified.	and Girls if they had a role model. Then took the 50% who did and asked the 32 boys and 17 girls who their role model is and why they chose that person as a role model	recorded and compared to one another to see the total number for each category.	re-enacts the actions of a hero he does not become the hero but he represents heroes actions. Athletes through the model from the article can teach about being heroic, educational values and are even inspirational. Fans can tap into their energy and re-enact their trials and tribulations without having to go through	sometimes destruction of athletic heroes is often to place them in a cultural idea. The practice of idealistically celebrating athlete's heroes may have social value if it inspires others to strive for the virtues the athlete symbolizes, which they usually aren't modeling a role but rather enduring virtues that our culture continues to value.
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						the same experiences.	
Ronkain, N.J., Ryba, T.V., & Selänne, H. (2019)	She is where I want to be in my career Youth Athletes' role models and their implications for career and identity construction	<i>Electronic: Psychology of Sport and Exercise Journal</i>	<p>The present study explores the patterns of role model selection by adolescent student-athletes and the narrative maps these role models provide for self-construction.</p> <p>The study also looks to understand the impact of gender on the selection and meaning of role models.</p>	18 total participants from the ages of 17-18... 10 women and 8 men. Interviewed the participants and then compared their answers.	Took the data from the participants and analyzed the data by finding commonalities and establishing patterns and grouping findings.	The participants identified two types of role models: elite athletes and family members. Young men were more likely to select popular athlete superstars, young women were more concerned about the relationship and similarities between the role model and themselves.	<p>Finnish youth athletes are inspired by athlete role models whose lives are not completely constituted by performance narratives of elite sport. From an applied perspective, role models could be incorporated into career counselling with athletes to support identity development and exploration of future selves</p> <p>Future Conversations should include conversations around role models in applied sport psychology and athlete career counselling can help athletes in developing self-awareness and a clearer understanding of their interests and needs.</p>

						They seemed to explore more in selecting their role models. Most of the youth athletes rejected the totalitarian ideologies of elite sport and chose role models who could have other identities and do other things alongside sport.	
Wicker, P. & Frick, B. (2016)	The inspirational effect of sporting achievements and potential role models	<i>Managing Sport and Leisure</i>	This study examines the trickle-down effect of potential role models and sporting	Literature review and data collection from the 21 regional football association	Identified causal links from sporting achievements and role models to changes in	Role models have a measurable inspirational effect on	Results show achievements of men's national teams have an effect on number of females who get involved in their

	<p>in football: A gender specific analysis</p>		<p>achievements, respectively.</p>	<p>s of Germany. 315 total observations of amateur memberships. Members range from 15-19.</p>	<p>amateur participation. Panel data was used to provide the theoretical opportunity to distinguish cause and effect.</p>	<p>amateur sport participation. Females 16 and under are influenced by male role models. Men's sporting achievements show a greater effect than women's sporting achievements.</p>	<p>respective football clubs. Failure can be the cause of negative role models. 2006 World Cup men's national team. Age of the role models can play a role in the creation of role model images.</p>
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