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英文 (本試題共 4 頁)

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Celebrity Misbehavior in the NBA

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Journal of Sports Economics 2008; 9; 231 originally published online Oct 31, 2007 Published by Sage Publications <http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of The North American Association of Sports Economists

Introduction

Famous people are “leaders,” where trends in social behavior begin. One prominent facet of celebrity is the apparently high propensity to engage in socially disapproved behavior, including boorishness and general snobbery, as well as more pernicious misbehavior, such as substance abuse and debauchery.¹ Compared with other celebrities, professional basketball players are even more frequently accused of engaging in and promoting antisocial behavior.

In this paper, I analyze data on National Basketball Association (NBA) players in order to derive empirical relationships between individual misbehavior and player characteristics. I measure misbehavior by the propensity to receive “technical” fouls and to be ejected from games, but I also show that this propensity is correlated with players’ off-court legal incidents. This suggests that these results might have implications for misbehavior among other classes of celebrity, and for worker misbehavior generally.

The results indicate that factors related to salary are important determinants of misbehavior in the NBA. I also find that unmeasured aspects of personal character likely explain a substantial fraction of the variation in misbehavior between players. I find little evidence that age and peer effects matter, however.²

With regard to salary, I find strong evidence in favor of the importance of *relative* pay. A player’s salary, relative to that of others on his team or in the league generally, may be at least partially indicative of how easily other available players may substitute for him; thus, teams and fans may put up with more misbehavior from the top paid players on a team because of a lack of good alternatives. This lack of substitutability may be derived from the fact that the market for very highly skilled players is usually quite thin, or from the fact that fans associate their team closely with particular “star” players, and cannot easily switch their loyalties to new players. If players enjoy misbehavior (or find it costly to repress), top paid players may then engage in more misbehavior.³

In the next section I discuss this theory, and contrast it with several others that also may explain misbehavior among NBA stars and other celebrities. Following that I present empirical tests of some of these theories.

Six Factors Influencing Misbehavior among Celebrities

In this section, I briefly consider six simple theories of celebrity misbehavior generally with special application to professional athletes. I make no claim that this is an exhaustive list of reasons why stars misbehave, but I focus on factors I can empirically address with the data at hand.

(1) *Personal preferences*. Much antisocial behavior may simply represent odd preferences (Caplan, 2006). Success as a professional athlete is usually associated with many years of tedious practice in adolescence and beyond. The individual who is willing to undertake such an extreme commitment may be unusual in other aspects as well. Thus, if there is some exogenous, possibly even genetic, factor that leads individuals to be unusual both in their employment and in their personal preferences, then the brilliant performances that make one a celebrity would be more likely to originate from people who also have preferences considered outside of social norms.

(2) *Pure income effects*. It is possible that misbehavior is simply a normal good, so that star athletes, who are among the best paid workers in the world, lose less utility from the fall in demand for their services associated with bad behavior.⁴ Alternatively but equivalently, high earners may be able to hire better legal counsel and publicity representatives after misbehaving, lowering their effective price of bad behavior. Under this theory, however, one would expect CEOs of major corporations to engage in as much or more illicit drug use, marital infidelity, and public oafishness as movie stars, pro athletes, and rock stars, although wealth could also affect CEOs differently because of age or other differences.

(3) *Lack of substitutability*. Star players are difficult to replace for several reasons. First, top NBA players are unique world-class talents, and sufficiently qualified replacements are very difficult to come by. This problem is compounded by indivisibility in labor effort: two players, each half as talented as Michael Jordan, are not anywhere near as productive as one Michael Jordan.⁵

Second, team output is intrinsically tied to the team's stars. Fans do not simply follow the Cleveland Cavaliers; they also care about the particular players who *are* the Cavaliers. Similarly, in a non-sports context, the demand for a recording of the song "Yesterday," originally performed by the Beatles, is many orders of magnitude greater than the demand for the same song, as recorded by a Beatles "cover" band, even a very talented one. Therefore, it is generally difficult to replace celebrity labor output with noncelebrity output, even at par quality, much less below-par.⁶

(4) *Publicity*. Misbehavior may be a means of increasing fame, and raising demand for one's work. Dennis Rodman's frequently changing hair colors attracted worldwide interest in the mid-1990s Chicago Bulls, independent of their on-court success, and certainly increased the demand for Rodman's autobiography, his replica jerseys, and probably other Bulls-related paraphernalia. Similarly, if fans enjoy seeing celebrities misbehave, or live vicariously through their favorite star's exploits, stars will naturally respond to this demand by supplying more misbehavior.

(5) *Youthful immaturity*. With few exceptions, the ranks of professional athletes are constituted overwhelmingly by men between the ages of 18 and 35. Young celebrities may be less risk averse, or may misunderstand the potential consequences of bad behavior, leading them to engage in activities towards which more mature individuals would be less inclined.

(6) *Peer effects*. High-profile athletes (and similarly, movie stars and top musicians), may be pestered or even mobbed by fans asking for autographs and other favors when they make public appearances. For this reason, many celebrities employ professional assistants to do their grocery shopping and other tasks that noncelebrities typically would do themselves.⁷ This leads celebrities to engage in a disproportionate number of social interactions with other celebrities. This is particularly true for athletes, who travel with their teammates to away games, and practice together when at home. Such a tight-knit group may lead to different social norms than those that arise among noncelebrities, who interact frequently with persons from a variety of walks of life.⁸

Conclusion

Although there are many reasons celebrities might engage in a disproportionately large amount of bad behavior, the empirical evidence from the NBA analyzed in this paper suggests a significant role for lack of substitutability in the production process. Players who are sufficiently unsubstitutable can “get away” with more misbehavior simply because team and fan options are so limited.

These results may even hold lessons for worker misbehavior generally. As a specific example, janitorial services within firms are likely to be more easily substitutable than, say, computer assistance services, as working in a dirty environment or cleaning up one’s own workspace constitute relatively low-cost substitutes to good janitorial services, while most people cannot fix their own computers. The results presented in this paper suggest that janitors should have friendlier personalities than IT professionals, an observation that fits at least the stereotypes for these two professions.⁹ As another example, higher rates of malfeasance with students among tenured than among nontenured university faculty would also be a prediction of this theory, one that has some justification in survey data by List, Bailey, Euzent, and Martin (2001).

Notes

1. This does not seem to be driven entirely by the greater media focus on stars’ lives; see Fowles (1992) for evidence on causes of mortality by celebrities in comparison to noncelebrities.
2. A number of recent articles have attempted to disentangle individual and group effects as causes for worker misbehavior generally (Ichino & Maggi, 2000; Costa & Kahn, 2003; Ferris, Jagannathan, & Pritchard, 2003).
3. Rosen (1981) also emphasizes consumers’ inability to substitute across performers of differing talent levels. My argument is that the nature of celebrity magnifies this aspect of consumption.
4. In a study of 40 professional athletes sentenced to community service for crimes committed, McCarthy and Upton (2006) found that much of the punishment “involved activities such as throwing out a ceremonial first pitch at a Major League Baseball game, posing for pictures or attending or coaching at youth sports camps.” In only four of the cases did star athletes serve the type of menial labor typically required of noncelebrity defendants.
5. This is true for a variety of reasons, including technical issues in the production process (e.g., there is only one ball in play at a given time, and only five players allowed on the floor), and fixed costs of consumption (e.g., fans may enjoy wearing a replica Jordan jersey more than alternating between two less talented player jerseys). Neale (1964) refers to this aspect of sports production as “Bobby Layne” rigidity.
6. By contrast, purchasers of noncelebrity products, such as dry cleaning services, may care about the quality of a particular dry cleaner’s services, but are usually indifferent as to who owns the plant or what technology was used to produce a given level of quality.
7. This is especially problematic for basketball players, whose height cannot be easily disguised in the way a movie star can use dark sunglasses or a scarf to hide from the public.

8. Similarly, Becker and Murphy (2000) suggest that peer effects can explain different norms in speech patterns among teenagers and the different social norms regarding smoking that exist in Japan and the United States.
9. In its discussion of IT professionals in the U.S. economy, a government report states, “[A] lack of social skills contributed to their public reputation as ‘nerds’, ‘geeks’, ‘bit heads’, ‘propeller heads’, and the like” (Commerce Department, 2003).

請根據上文回答下列各題：

Part I. Short Answer (50分)

1. The title of the article is _____. (5分)
2. The author of the article is _____. (5分)
3. The article is published in the periodical named _____. (5分)
4. You may retrieve or have access to the complete version of the article via _____. (5分)
5. The main idea of the article is about _____. (5分)
6. The empirical evidence of the study suggests that _____ may be the most significant factor contributing to a disproportionately large amount of NBA players’ bad behavior. (5分)
7. Doing grocery shopping is problematic for basketball players because _____. (5分)
8. The factors contributing to pro athletes’ misbehavior include _____. (15分)

Part II. Write two paragraphs including a summary and a critique, maximum 250 words altogether, based on your comprehension. DO NOT COPY words, phrases, or sentences in the article. If you write in Chinese, you will get half of the points at most. (50分)