

## **Professional Sports and Public Behavior (Discussion)**

*Transcript of discussion held in Washington, DC, on December 8, 1997*

*JUDITH RODIN:* Thank you very much, Richard, and I will open the floor for comment, question. Michael.

*MICHAEL SCHUDSON:* Richard, I—of all the work that—quite extraordinary work that your center is doing, I'm—one thing that kept coming up in your presentation is that one of the bad guys in all this is the news media. Are sports journalists reformable? And can dissent—I mean, is there a training program you would have for them?

*RICHARD LAPCHICK:* We have a—our diversity-training program has done the Associated Press sports editors. We also—I was a keynote speaker at their meeting in south Florida this year and talked about some of these things. You could tell that the ones who I knew—and I know a fair number of the editors—came up to me and—and were asking for copies of the speeches 'cause they were—not the speech, but the information in the speech, because they were shocked at the reality of when you put it in the context of what's going on in society.

However, I still haven't been called and asked to comment on a good-news story, but we—it's conceivable, but it's—it's really a hard road.

RODIN: Cass.

CASS SUNSTEIN: Yeah. Richard, a lot of what you said is connected with the issue of civility, and I had a particular example of an athlete's involvement in that topic and I wanted to ask you about it. There—the NBA did some advertisements a few years ago where Patrick Ewing and others I know were in the context where a fight was about to emerge. There was a new signal of a fist covered by a hand, which was supposed to alter the social meaning of a failure to fight from cowardice or capitulation and to turn it into something else; I forget Ewing's word for it. What I wanted to ask was, first, can you say something about the motivation for that particular set of advertisements, if you know? And second, more important—is there any study of its consequences? Does that sort of thing have an effect?

LAPCHICK: Excuse me. I do know the origin of it, because the NBA had as its community-service program a program called NBA Stay in School for five or six years. Reasonably good program; it wasn't just superficial; you know, it wasn't as deep as I would have liked, either, but they decided right about that time those PSAs that you're referring to came out that—that violence prevention was gonna become the theme for the NBA, and they ended up not going as far in the programmatic aspects as they did in the public service announcements.

I have not seen a study on the impact, but I can tell you that I was a speaker at the Boston Stay in School program one year, and I was gonna write a column on the kids' responses to it, so I was talking to the—there were about 800 Boston-area schools—children who had, they say, as a result of being part of this program, not only not missed a day of school but not had been late for school a single day during the school year, which is a pretty extraordinary number in a school system like Boston, but could have been other factors involved.

I asked one kid what he thought about NBA players, and he talked about not that particular commercial but one with Alonzo Mourning on child abuse, and he said that 'My father—the only thing my father and I ever do together is watch sports.' He said, 'My father had regularly beaten me throughout most

of my life' and at that moment that particular PSA came on the air he was sitting in the livingroom with his father watching the game, and his father looked at him and he stared at him and they went and got help the next day, or the next week, and the boy has told me that his father hadn't hit him in a number of months after that.

You know, abuse is a tough thing to tackle and I don't know how long that could last, but it certainly had an individual impact — systematic? I don't really know the answer, unfortunately.

*RODIN: Marty?*

*MARTY SELIGMAN:* I wanted to comment on the notion of children learning to hate, because I think there's some uncomfortable stuff we don't like to face about children learning to hate. The misconception I think comes out of South Pacific and the Rogers and Hammerstein lyric, which says that you have to be carefully taught to hate, and I actually don't think that's true.

Within psychology, people have been quite concerned with how we learn aversions, how we learn our fears, and one of the uncomfortable facts about the learning of aversions and fears is that there's biological preparedness, there's salience about certain fears, certain aversions, rather than others, and I'm afraid that racial hatred is in that category. And that in a society in which race is a salient element—it's a salient element of identity, a salient element of our politics, that it's devilishly easy for children to learn to hate.

And that one negative instance of the sorts that you have to respond to all the time can not be undone by one positive instance, and that there's an uncomfortable disproportion and a readiness with which this racial hatred can be learned. And I think this is something that we have to face and deal with.

*LAPCHICK:* I think that's one of the hardest tasks we face as a society, is doing that, and it's frequently done by individuals with other individuals rather than institutions doing it with people or other institutions. But its the fact that we are still sitting here talking about it — I believe that this moment in

American history is the most racist in my lifetime. I have no doubt that that's the case, and I've spent most of my life working on it and still want to keep on doing it, not getting discouraged, because I've seen too many instances where people changed, but it's clearly an enormous problem.

*RODIN:* Richard, to stay with psychological data for a moment, there also is a fair body of evidence suggesting that events that occur that are quite salient, including salient figures, are over-represented when they are recalled in people's minds, and that it's the saliency, the evocativeness of the figure that makes this happen. You challenged the fact that sports figures who engage in violent behavior are more memorable, or talked about differentially, in a way that seems quite unfair. I would argue, again from these data, that it is cognitive information.....

[Break in coverage]

*UNIDENTIFIED MAN:* ...and if you'd just talk a little bit about what people at—at that level might do to hasten the kind of change you advocate.

*LAPCHICK:* Well, I think that college presidents, starting with the gentleman over here, [gesturing to Derek Bok] started to organize in the mid-1980s or early 1980s to talk about presidential responsibility at the college level, and I think it's been one of the most important developments in college sport. It's an unwritten conclusion to the book yet, but I think we're into the last chapter. Owners, because they are for the most part corporate entities, present a little bit more difficult problem, but I think that if they see—if there is a public voice of protest—for instance, the matter—you know, I don't know how people in this group feel about Jesse Jackson, but Jesse Jackson went out and started to protest the hiring practices in the streets, in front of stadiums, and it got the attention of the owners very quickly, because they didn't want their corporate entity associated with the issue and, to some degree, started to change. I think you have to keep the pressure up and sustain it, however.

Newspaper editors—when I had the opportunity to be at a roundtable at a newspaper where it's not just the sports editors but the editors of the paper—they are much more open to the information than the sports people are,

'cause the sports people have kind of had it ingrained in themselves. But we don't get that much access to the—the editor in chief of papers.

*RODIN*: Derek, you had your hand up.

*DEREK BOK*: Go on by me.

*RODIN*: Kathleen.

*KATHLEEN HALL JAMIESON*: I agree with what Marty said, which is I think there's a human disposition here to overreport things that are negative, and I agree with what Judy says—there's then a tendency to take those events that are dramatic and vivid and to give them an overrepresented weight that one really ought not to. I think if we have those two dispositions in place, the question one should ask about the press is, once one has done those two things, is the context in which one is overweighting and overreporting one in which the behavior is approved or one in which the behavior is blamed? And in that context, I think, for example, the reporting was very different about the boxer who bit off the portion of the ear and the baseball player who spit at the umpire. I think the context there was clearly a context in which the reporters said to us, 'That is inappropriate behavior.' And I think that, if, in fact, the notion that it happened and it is inappropriate is overweighted, that's probably good, because it reinforces the notion that society did not approve of that. At the same time the behaviors were both sanctioned and so there was a penalty structure that was attached to it.

But I would like to ask you this question: In light of the materials that we read about violence in hockey, have we seen a change in the structures in which the rules are enforced within the game so that there now is a reward for violence where there once was a penalty? And secondly, have we seen a change in sports reporting so that a game in which violence does not occur is a bad game, and a game in which violence does occur is a good game?

*LAPCHICK*: The hockey situation is that—I don't think there's a reward for players for being violent, but I used to—we used to do the degree-completion program for the National Hockey League as well, and we'd go to the Players

Association meetings every year, and the primary topic on their agenda was always violence in the game and how they wanted it to be dissolved. They wanted it to end, but that the league would not discourage it; they wouldn't put in sufficient penalties, because they did—they would talk about them coming home and their kids thinking they were thugs, and that that was a feeling that they were very unhappy with.

In terms of coverage of it, you would be—you'd be hard pressed to turn on a television broadcast at night of a hock—that—not a live broadcast, but on the news coverage—if there was a fight at the game, it'll be part of the news coverage. It could have been, you know, five seconds of the two hours of the games taking place, but it's almost always reported on—the idea is that fans won't go to the games if there's not violence. Violence is the most exciting part of the game. Personally, I don't believe that. Like the stor—what I said about how do they know whether good news sells or not? They haven't tried it.

And when you look at the rising popularity of women's sport, it's the fastest-growing part of our sports industry, and it's where the greatest reservoir of sportsmanship exists, the greatest camaraderie; the greatest sense of competition, I think, is in women's sports today. That's not to say that it's gonna stay that way; I hope they don't model themselves after men's sports. But it's there.

And I think some you may have seen—ESPN did a 90-minute town meeting on sportsmanship about two weeks ago or three weeks ago — and everybody was applauding the fact that they did this, but I sat there in the audience, not as a panelist or anything, but I was just there, and was really dismayed at what I was watching. I mean, it was good that the discussion was taking place, but they had two women; there were 15 people in and out. They had two women on for the first seven minutes; they were gone for the next, whatever it took to get to an hour and a half; came back for the last seven-minute segment, and they were angry at the end of the show—it was Jackie Joyner-Kersey and Rebecca Lobo—that they had no voice.

They had three athletes that were focused on Orel Hershiser, who's white, another white—I think he might have been a football player—I don't remember his name—and a guy called Bryan Cox, who was on via remote. And Bryan was black and the quote, unquote, the "bad guy"—the guy who admitted that he was such a—he loved to be bad, is what he said. He loved to break the law.

And I'm watching kids in the audience talking to Bryan Cox via remote, admiring him, and they're putting this behavior out there as if, one, it's OK, and two, the imagery is the white guys do good things; black guys don't. The videotape of Roberto Alomar played five times during the course of the hour and a half. That was the only representation of Latino athletes. So Latinos, blacks and women are either marginalized or have the finger pointed at them in the best of the shots, when they were trying to deal with the issue.

So it's not only getting to deal with it, it's to be sensitive at how you deal with it, and understand the implications.

*RODIN: Paul.*

*PAUL VERKUIL: Richard, as you know, our commission is concerned about the creation and support of community in an era where there's fragmentation, as has been talked about by our chair at the outset. And speak to me a little more about the NBA, because it seems to me that there is a potential community. It's a community that has, after all, succeeded very well. It has integrated better than most—I think by your statistics better than all the other professional and certainly the—the college environments. It has leadership higher up, at least to the general manager level and so forth; yet you get this Latrell Sprewell incident, and I don't know whether you were about to say this or not, but I guess my question is, if there's ever—is there a baseline where there ought be agreement about a kind of behavior which isn't condemned because of its racial overtones, but because it's, you know, outside the scope of what people can accept?*

It seemed to have been a premeditated act. It was—there were actually two incidents, and yet we get the—what we hear about is that the head of the

NBA Players Association is raising a racial question. Wouldn't it have been possible for the head of the NBA and the Players Association, if he even in advance of this, but certainly before action was taken, to have said, 'Look, maybe there are situations where we can both agree, for our community's sake, ought to be dealt with, and then beyond that we ought to have debates and arbitration and legal actions and accusations of race and so forth'?

*LAPCHICK:* I think that the players associations sooner or later are gonna have to realize, and when I started out in 1984 I was a big supporter of the Players Association. I'm on the advisory board of both the NBAPA and the NFLPA on issues of race. But their constant supporting of players no matter what the circumstances, in the view of a public who I think is turning anti-athlete very quickly, is hurting themselves. They're shooting themselves in the foot each time they do that. So I think that, for those reasons alone, and what—just simple morality of what's right and wrong, when—in cases this dramatic, that, you know, you just go ahead and act and do what—what's right, and clearly what's right here has, you know, minimally, at least, been done with this one-year ban.

*RODIN:* Amy.

*AMY GUTMANN:* This is fascinating, and the beginning—the facts really do underline the point that you make that athletes are being singled out, and then your recommendation, of course, is to hold athletes to a higher standard, and that makes a lot of sense. People who are more advantaged and more privileged in our society we do hold to a higher standard. But it leads to this paradox, and this is a sequel to Kathleen. Your more advantaged and more privileged you hold to a higher standard. The press covers you when you do something bad. Now if that were just bad, it would feed the high—it would reinforce the higher standard, but that's publicity. What's good for an individual athlete may be bad for the group if the athlete's black or Latino, and it—but it may be good for the athlete if—unless the penalties are really strong and appropriate.

And so my question is: Is there a way out of this paradox, which is that the publicity of bad behavior actually can redound to the benefit of individuals at



the same time as everybody is shrugging and saying, 'Oh, this is terrible,' and really redound to the disadvantage of the group that that athlete is without—is representing, even if that athlete doesn't want to be representing that group? I mean, so this is the problem of race and gender and role models.

LAPCHICK: The—there are several examples that are similar to Sprewell...

GUTMANN: Mm-hmm.

LAPCHICK: ...Alomar, Tyson, Tonya Harding.

GUTMANN: Right.

LAPCHICK: I found it fascinating that Tyson was automatically banned for a year after he bit another boxer's ear, but was not banned when he was convicted of rape; that Edward DeBartolo was accused several years ago, some of you may remember, of abusing his wife; never thought about stepping down as chairman of the board of the 49ers, but when this particular set of incidences came up...so I—I think we have to be—part of what you're saying is to get uniform on what are the issues—what's the line?

GUTMANN: Mm-hmm.

LAPCHICK: For me, violence against a woman is—is one of those lines. The types of things that these individuals did are other parts of those lines. And as I said when I was making the remarks earlier, there's gonna be some sense of unfairness. When Michael Ray Richardson became the first NBA player banned for life because of drugs, you know, it was estimated that 60 percent of the players were using drugs three years before; policy's invoked, he gets hit, he's gone, he's paying the price for a lot of other people. There's definitely a sense of unfairness there, but what—you know, som—there has to be a starting point somewhere. I don't know; wha—what do you think about the question you posed?

GUTMANN: Well, I think one is that there has to be a sense that publicity in itself is not a punishment, because it isn't.

LAPCHICK: Mm-hmm.

GUTMANN: It's the opposite. So there have to be penalties for the things that we as a society can agree are over the line, as you put it. Number two is what we come back to, that if all there are are stories about these kinds of things—after all, sports is also entertainment, and this is entertaining to people. If those are the only stories that constitute entertainment or the ones that get the most press, that's going to feed the impulse to do more of this if—and try to get away with it. Some people are gonna get away with it all the time. There's no perfect set of penalties. So the other thing is finding other ways that sports can be as entertaining as it is, apparently, when these things happen. But I have to look to you and others for more of what you are doing, which seems to be very positive.

LAPCHICK: I want to add the—when the press recently did what I thought was a—*an heroic job*—and I don't think it's just because I'm writing his book—on Eddie Robinson's retirement...

GUTMANN: Yeah.

LAPCHICK: ...I have never seen an out—this is a guy who hadn't won in three years, and you could be cynical the other way, that he was losing. Nobody wrote about his games. They just wrote about him as a person. And the tributes that poured in—"Nightline" devoted to him, 30 minutes on CNN, 30 minutes on NBC. It was just incredible...

GUTMANN: Yeah.

LAPCHICK: ...and all glowing and positive. And I was in the box with Mrs. Robinson, his wife, to bring her down at halftime to the field, and there was a guy—a very frail-looking man sitting on the edge of one of the rows in the box, and Mrs. Robinson brought me over to introduce me to him. He was 74 years old. He had played on Eddie Robinson's first team, and he's dying of cancer and the doctors told him he had about a week to live on the Sunday before the game, and his response was, `If I take my last breath this week, I

want it to be at Eddie Robinson's last game.' That can be the positive relationships between players and coaches and educators and...

*RODIN:* Mari.

*MARI FITZDUFF:* I have—I have a great admiration for a philosopher called Michael Ignatieff, and he recently wrote a book called "Blood and Belonging." And at the end of it he came to the conclusion, after his travels through most of the ethnic conflicts of the world, that the real problem was with young males between the ages of about 18 and 24 who did not have, as it were, places to place their energy. And it reminded me of a statement by two sons who are very involved, very significantly involved, in sport, and the eldest one said to me, 'Mom,' he said, 'I could do your work for you.' My field is ethnic conflict. He said, 'I'll put all the young men of the world on the field playing rugby, and that will solve your problem.'

I'm just interested as a thesis, and why is it—if it is a correct thesis, why is it not publicly established in debate? Is it because we're afraid to acknowledge that—as Marty would say, the tendency towards division is almost innate within us, that in fact much of the deba—much of the problems exemplified throughout division are exemplified by men? So the testosterone factor is one that is very rarely alluded to, and I would have thought it actually—it is—chose the opposite thesis to the one shown by the press. We are much safer having our men involved, frankly, on the fields of sport where they can use their energies. But why am I—why do we not hear this publicly said?

*LAPCHICK:* I think we do, in certain of the American media sources, but they put it in the opposite way. They say that they—you know, the violence that they'll exhibit in that rugby match is gonna be carried over someplace else.

*FITZDUFF:* No. No.

*LAPCHICK:* And I can assur—when we started—'cause some of you may remember a man called Satch Sanders, who was a great Celtic player. He was the associate director of the center. His feeling was, 'We're never gonna get athletes to wanna go back into the schools and give their time,' and from the

very first time we brought athletes in to talk about something other than their game, they loved it, because for so many athletes, it was the first time that anybody asked them about anything besides how they played their game. They were asking them about the economy, they were asking about politics, about race, about gender, but everything but the—we wouldn't let the kids talk about sports. And these athletes were suddenly multidimensional people in their own minds, so, you know, I would encourage you to take them, also, after the rugby game...

*FITZDUFF*: Ah.

*LAPCHICK*: ...into the conflict-resolution component.

*FITZDUFF*: But you have avoided my question.

*LAPCHICK*: Bring it back, then.

*FITZDUFF*: I mean, if we are prepared to acknowledge that, in fact, having most of our young men involved in games where aggression is regulated—carefully regulated—in fact, by and large, our society is much safer. Now do we accept that as a thesis? Do you accept it as a thesis? If so, is it one you'd be prepared to state publicly, or is it too politically problematic to do so?

*LAPCHICK*: Because they're off the streets they're safer, or because something of what they did in the field made them less likely...

*FITZDUFF*: Because it—it is—I have reared sons, and frankly, I feel much, much happier on a Saturday and Sunday when most of their energy is very constructively engaged in their games of Gaelic and rugby. Fr—that is a thesis that most mothers and fathers would acknowledge, because you have growing young men who are frankly far too big for the house, for the rooms. It's either that or a Saturday night. But it surprises me that we feel so reticent about actually acknowledging this. It—and if, as I say, there is clear evidence that most of the wars in our world—I'm not sure how your wars are played out here—most of the wars in our world are wars of testosterone. That is a truth. There—OK, there are—there are major generals organizing the testosterone, but I'm interested that you're avoiding it as a thesis. Is there an

acknowledgment of it as a reality, as a really useful way to constructively use our men?

*LAPCHICK:* Let—let me just say I've never seen anybody systematically put that out in a study form. I think that there's lots of documentation on why participating in sport, whether at the youth level or as adults, is beneficial, from health to social transformation to all kinds of issues. It's not just about boys and men, by the way; the value to girls and women is enormous to—competing in sports as well. So...

*FITZDUFF:* OK. Again, I'm questioning—my son has taken to training women in rugby, and I say, 'Do you say the same thing about women?' And he says, 'No.' He says, 'The women don't need it. It's the men that need it.'

*RODIN:* Linda.

*LINDA KERBER:* Thanks. My question, I supposes, bounces off that one in a different way, and I suspect it is as much for the members of universities here around this table as it is directly for Dick Lapchick. But I'm reminded as I listen to this that the presence of women in college athletics and, to some extent, then, spilling over into independent athletics, is directly dependent on the passage of Title IX; that is to say that universities did not, as a matter of abstract intellect, come to the conclusion that they needed to offer equal athletic opportunity to their women students. They were forced into doing it by public policy.

And I remember lengthy discussions in the mid-'70s in which the presence of women in athletics was part of a feminist agenda. It was an element in an old feminist agenda which included training women for athletics and in the use of their bodies, and I remember in the late '70s the argument that went—that it was very important to focus on athletic opportunity for girls at high schools and in colleges, because if they did compete vigorously, and ultimately they did in the Olympics, then people who would not take their minds seriously and who would not take issues of equality seriously in other sectors of our world would take it seriously because they saw Jackie Joyner-Kersey or her equivalents on the playing field.

So now I guess my question, particularly for the university presidents and former university presidents among us, but also for the rest of us, is whether the reverse has, in fact, worked; that is, the choice of front-loading athletics was partly a matter of athletic equity, but it also was expected to redound to equality and vigor in other fields of endeavor. And I don't know that we yet know how to evaluate that effect. We certainly can see its effect in the universities on the—in the names of people who play, and we've made some reference to the presence of women in commercial athletics. But the meaning of that is still, I think, very, very unclear, and I wondered if people have some comments to make about that.

*LAPCHICK*: I assume you're asking the presidents.

*KERBER*: Well—well, I'd ask you if you want—anyone who wants to take...

*RODIN*: Well, there are—there are a couple of former presidents as well as a current one. I—I don't know if any of my colleagues would like to comment. Paul?

*VERKUIL*: Well, I can only say that I once had to review the ROTC—on a regular basis, the ROTC would march by in the Sunken Gardens in Williamsburg, and when the commander of the corps of cadets was a woman, that was very impressive and, I think, highly symbolic. And so—it carries over for Title IX as well. It seems to me that you do view your colleagues differently when they have a common denominator; they do what was prior to this a male-only activity, and I think it makes a difference. I have to believe the socialization process is improved on college campuses as a result.

*RODIN*: Derek.

*DEREK BOK*: Yeah. I lived through that period where women's athletics came in, and I do not believe that any colleague that I know could take credit for anything nearly as subtle and elevated as the theory you describe as a reason for doing it. I think it was much more straightforward, that it was a response to growing interest on the part of women students, growing pressures in the larger society, and—but I think it was very straightforward.

I—I don't—there may have been a hidden agenda in the—or not a hidden agenda, but a more subtle agenda, in the minds of women's groups who were pushing this, but I don't think a university president did it.

And then, of course, on some campuses, including my own, athletes are not role models that really impress many people, and therefore, probably, if you were really worrying about what you're worrying about, you would probably try to press for greater visibility for women in other spheres.

*RODIN:* Like university presidents. Neil, you had...

*NEIL SMELSER:* Yes. I realize that you chose to emphasize the racial aspect, but I'd just like to observe that perhaps there's something more generic going on here. I'll do it by making two observations. I was a reporter for a city newspaper in Phoenix, Arizona, as a—working in the summer as a college student, and I was instructed by the editor, city editor, not—I was on the police beat. I was instructed by the city editor not to report barroom brawls involving blacks or Hispanics; that's not news, right? But the very same summer, a well-known physician killed his wife, and it was front-page stuff for weeks. So you had a kind of—you might say this is racist in some way; on the other hand, it—element of eminence or public visibility or whatever seemed to overwhelm the issue here.

Similarly, we treat Hollywood movie stars without reference to anything in the same way, being especially interested in the lurid side of life, and morality gets ballooned up when you get an incident of that sort. So something's going on about the heroes and villains that we create and treat in society, which may or may not reinforce racial attitudes, but something more general is probably going on here.

*RODIN:* Did you have a comment, or—you don't have to.

*LAPCHICK:* No...

*RODIN:* Can I—the one group that you didn't talk about that's part of this whole institution is the fans, and I'm curious to know why. I mean, I find myself embarrassed to read in the city of Philadelphia that the police

department now has to have—and the magistrate—has to have a court in the football stadium to take care of the behavior of fans, something that we kind of assumed only happened in Europe and at soccer games, and now suddenly see happening in the United States. Seriously, though, the role of fans in all of this.

*LAPCHICK:* No, I think fan beha—I'm gonna—there are a lot of people of color in Boston who won't go to a sporting event because they have a fairly high chance of having racial epithets used among the fans. Alcohol consumption at sports events is considered to be the major contributory factor to the type of bad behavior I think you're referring to. There was almost a license after championship events in this country—NBA finals, major-league baseball, NFL, Super Bowl—that after the game people could run ramp—run—rampage the city and burn cars and loot stores and everything, as if that was acceptable behavior. It's finally been called to a stop and most cities are now preparing for it, but I think we had for a while sent out the message that 'Boys will be boys and we can do anything we want.' I think that message is—has stopped, but the carryo—carryon is still happening.

*RODIN:* Edna, you had a question, and then Marty, and then we will conclude.

*ULLMAN-MARGALIT:* Yeah. I'd like—does this work?

*RODIN:* Mm-hmm.

*ULLMAN-MARGALIT:* I'd like one question to you and one observation or suggestion to us. But first, let me register my really huge respect and admiration for the work you do, and for the way, from my perception, your own life and personality sort of meshes smoothly with everything you do. And I think that's really very laudable, and I'm very struck by this.

The question to you has to do not with fans or with participants, but with spectator sport. And I wonder if there is any information, evidence, data, about what spectator sport does to communities or to families? The—is it divisive to families? Is it cohesive to families? Does it divide between the



men and the women in the family? What does it do? I was struck by your comment about the father and son, but that was a particular thing about the violence thing between them. But in general, the Saturday or Sunday weekend sports on television—what does it—what does it do to our families and to our communities? That's one question.

And the observation is, I was struck by many of the comments here about, you know, the relationship between the s—the sports personalities and the media coverage and the bad guys and the good guys and the way we treat as representative, fairly or unfairly, various kinds of behavior, and it strikes me that this really, in our work here, should be generalized into a theme which, to me, is extremely large and we should, I think, address, and I suggest this. I think we should be concerned with the notion of celebrity and what it does to our society, to our community, to our perceptions, and how can we use celebrities in positive ways?

And, of course, this relates to your remark now about Hollywood. It relates to free speech, a phenomena—whether celebrities are dealt more harshly than, you know, their fair share, and how, in general—I think that this sports phenomena is only part of a larger picture of what—how we should treat this notion of celebrity and try to weave it into our considerations about community leadership and our concerns. Thank you.

*LAPCHICK:* First, thank you for your personal comment. On your last comment, I couldn't agree more. As for what it does to communities and families, watching sport, I think that there was a long history of men watching sport at home on the weekend and wives and daughters moving away from it. I think as women's sport has become more popular and women's sport starts to be carried on television that's changing a little bit, but I think, by and large, it's still divisive. I think it has the potential to stop that.

There was a story in yesterday's New York Times that I meant to point out before. I think it was written in the context of the Sprewell incident, and it was—the point of it on—it was in the sports section on the Views page, written by a woman whose name I had not known—I think she was a member of the first America's Cup team—saying that women already have

all these problems. She listed the example of the Colorado Silver Bullets and two other incidents where women got in fights during games during the year, and she strung a whole—like five or six different things together, as if that was supposed to tell us that women's sport are just as corrupt as men's sport. And it was—th—they were doing the exact same thing that—that they're doing that I was referring to before.

I think that you can look at, in terms of communities and what spectator sport does—you can see people say that cities come together after a team wins a championship, and it appears that they do. I don't think it's a very long-term coming together; I think it's similar to use the analogy of the work we do. Our principle of operation is never to go into a school with a group of athletes once. You can make a real sexy splash, get everybody all excited about what your message is, but if you don't go back—and our athletes go back at least once a month—then there's no real lasting impact. I think that's true of sport. It can have a short-term unifying effect, but long-term, it—it's probably not.

*ULLMAN-MARGALIT:* Can I just throw in the comment—I've heard it said that Iran's good performance in soccer lately is going to be the one factor that might bring Iran into—you know, closer to the Western world than anything that has happened in recent years, and I wonder whether there is anything in that. But I've heard it said, I mean, and not jokingly.

*LAPCHICK:* Well, apparently the reaction in the country was unprecedented...

*ULLMAN-MARGALIT:* Right.

*LAPCHICK:* ...in terms of what women did and were allowed to do.

*ULLMAN-MARGALIT:* Right.

*RODIN:* Finally, Marty.

*MARTIN SELIGMAN:* Yeah. Two more—one more remark about salience and the work of the commission; it's an observation. Much of the structure of Richard's argument today was there are these salient instances which, when

you look at the statistics, are just untrue—unrepresentative. Bertrand Russell said that the mark of a civilized human being—note the word `civilized'—was the ability to read a column of numbers and then weep.

Part of our job, it seems to me, as educators, as members of this commission, is to try to find a way to make these statistical truths weigh at least equally to these salient instances. And when we think about things like the Sprewell incident and how salient they are, it's not things like setting up a foundation or seeing a crippled child; that's a countersalient institute. It's things like heroics that are.

*LAPCHICK:* I—the—was there one more question?

*RODIN:* Martin—Marty—I said Marty and then I gave two people license.

*MARTIN MARTY:* Two Martys in the same line of vision here.

*MARTIN SELIGMAN:* Same line.

*MARTIN MARTY:* Mine will only take a few seconds. In our working group this morning, we spent a good deal of time asking whether exemplary stories might be a mode of communicating. I'm always as interested in why are there so many good kids as why are there so many bad kids; I mean, how in the midst of the culture we describe—I'm the chair of a board of a college, I teach some undergrads, and I c—just get over—far more of them volunteer for Habitat for Humanity than did when I was in college. I mean, this—we gotta explain that. And do the stories help?

You shot past, very fast, about that there are very few such stories about athletes, and therefore we don't know the effect. I wonder whether—it wouldn't be hard to measure, and I'd give the quick illustration—I read Sports Illustrated, and never do four issues go by without them giving a four- or five-page profile of a very positive figure. Last week the guys appeared with Billy Graham. I mean, this is really quite an athlete to—you know, to exemplify. Do they do that just out of charity? People must read these stories. We talk about 'em at our house all the time with our kids and grandchildren. Wouldn't it be easy just to go up to them and just say, `You—you have to

take market analysis; are these read?' Are there such studies forthcoming, or how...

*LAPCHICK:* Well, I think Sports Illustrated has the luxury of being a magazine format and having a lot more space to devote...

*MARTY:* Mm-hmm.

*LAPCHICK:* ...to stories like that. I was really referring to the national newspapers.

*MARTY:* Mm-hmm.

*LAPCHICK:* And local newspapers, ironically, do a better job at doing the positive stories. But I think that when I said we haven't measured things, in terms of the programs that we have, one—early on in our —when the center opened, we realized that unless we evaluate the programs almost annually, we won't know how we should change it and if it's effective. So we do that, and the response of children and teachers and community center leaders where the athletes go in is almost always very, very positive, with dramatic results in terms of crime, violence, attitudes toward women, attitudes toward different racial groups. It's a tremendous vehicle. I— if I can, I'd love to close with one...

*RODIN:* You close.

*LAPCHICK:* ...with one story. I don't mean to close it off, but if this is the closing...one of the lucky parts about what I do is I get to meet some people who are pretty extraordinary and over the past couple of years have become pretty good friends with Muhammad Ali, and we were having dinner together at a North End restaurant in Boston. He came to Boston to do two appearances in schools for us around the time that his book "Healing" had come out. And we were in the restaurant with a very distinguished group of people; maybe 13 people. They had closed it off—his wife, son and daughter; my wife, eight-year-old daughter; his close friends and a couple of professors from Harvard.

And a waiter came in about 20 minutes into the evening and said that 'The O.J. Simpson verdict is coming back tonight.' And the—one of the professors said, 'Can you bring a television in?' So they brought the television in and set it down so that we could watch. And, of course, it came two hours later, and we went on about our business during the night. But now the jur—the—the verdict is coming back in; we're all standing up. This is the civil case, the last case, not the criminal case. And everybody stands up. And I'm watching Ali just transfixed, watching the television set.

And I realized what an ironic moment it was, that here was an athlete who was on trial who was being credited or discredited in the press as presenting a case of a former athlete who has created a great deal of racial division in the country, who at one time was considered to be among the African-American athletes who had had more—so much appeal to white people in the country. And here was a black athlete watching him who was held in incredibly low esteem in the white community at one point in his history, around when he had become a black Muslim and the draft—his decision with the Vietnam draft, who now was credited as probably being the one athlete in the world who could bring people together.

And I'll always remember what—after the verdict came back, I asked Muhammad how he felt about it, and he said, 'Thank God that the verdict went this way. I want this story to end. It's creating too many divisions in the country.' And, of course, he said it a lot more slowly than that, but Ali still has all his facilities, for those of you who wonder; he's—his mind is as sharp as it ever was.

But sports can do both things. It can divide people and it can bring people together. And—and I hope that the commission comes up with ways that—not only with sport, but with other things—take the best—takes the best of what we have in so many different areas and puts it out there as a model for the country.

Thank you very, very much.