

# **Michael Jordan and his Successors: Heroism in Advertising**

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*The Greatest of All Time*

Michael Jordan is widely considered the best basketball player of all time. He was a force to be reckoned with on both sides of the court from the day he was drafted, and there was nothing he could not do well. Jordan was a prolific scorer, lock-down defender, clutch shooter, fierce competitor, and unselfish team player. His Chicago Bulls were unstoppable, winning six championships and setting the record for best ever regular season record. Hall-of-Famer Magic Johnson famously said, “ There’s Michael Jordan, and then theres the rest of us”.

However, Michael Jordan’s legacy transcends his achievements in the realm of basketball. Jordan signed an endorsement deal with Nike in 1984 that extended his influence across the globe. Nike created a line of shoes called Air Jordan that enjoyed massive popularity. Jordan quickly became the world’s most recognizable public figure. Jordan made two mid-career retirements from the game of basketball, yet never ceased to be marketable and in the public eye. Jordan’s legacy is huge: his game made basketball a global sport, he is still one of the most recognizable figures in the world, and his Air Jordan brand still has a 60% market share in the basketball shoe market ten years after his retirement. Many forget the huge role that his immensely successful partnership with Nike had in making him such a mythical character.

Twenty years later, Kobe Bryant and LeBron James are the two best paid endorsers in basketball and arguably the most well-known athletes of our generation. LeBron and Kobe ranked first and second, respectively, in earnings from endorsement deals in the NBA this year, and the rest of the field is far behind (Badenhauser). Their signature shoe lines are vastly successful and lucrative, but remain dependent and attached to the Nike brand and have not yet come near to eclipsing Air Jordan in popularity (Jordan outsells LeBron by a margin of 6 to 1). All three athletes have faced public controversies throughout their careers that have damaged their standing as heroic and admirable figures. By analyzing the advertisements Nike released

directly after each athlete's controversies, I found that Nike reappraised its endorser's public images by being attentive to what they represent on and off of the court. However, Michael Jordan became such ubiquitous figure that his public image did not have to be modified after his gambling controversy.

### *Literature Review*

In order to place my analysis of Jordan, Kobe, and Lebron ads in context, I did research on several sociological studies and theories regarding what factors make celebrity endorsements effective. I also researched how and why Jordan's partnership with Nike became so immensely successful. Finally, I did explore contemporary discourse on the Nike's advertising strategies, as well as the most effective ways to mitigate the difficulties of a public image disaster.

A significant amount of research has been done on the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers. Amos, Holmes and Strutton see celebrities as powerful tools of advertisement, but seeks answers as to why in his study "Exploring the Relationship between Celebrity Endorser Effects and Advertising Effectiveness". He notes that a whopping one-fourth of all American advertisements involve some kind of celebrity advertiser. Celebrities are effective at selling products due to what is called the meaning transfer model. The idea is that a culture assigns a meaning to a celebrity according to their role in society, and that this meaning is transferred to the brand or product through the advertisement. The question is what kinds of endorsers and endorsements are effective at making this transfer. Strutton looks to find answers to these questions through a meta-analysis of existing literature regarding advertisement effects. The methods of coding the results were thorough; the authors accounted for the differences between

studies with dimensions such as origin and study setting. Strutton concluded the most important components of a celebrity endorser are attractiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility.

James Hunt builds upon the meaning transfer model by proposing that endorsers transfer much more than just the meaning afforded by their celebrity. In his study “The Impact of Celebrity Endorsers on Consumers' Product Evaluations: A Symbolic Meaning Approach”, he confirms the significance of what he calls “symbolic meaning”. He agrees with Strutton on the three most prominent dimensions of endorser effectiveness. In his view, symbolic meanings “go beyond these traditional notions”. He defines this as the “cultural symbolic meanings and associations” that the celebrities embody and transfer to the product. Symbolic meanings are affected by “each role, event, or accomplishment in the career or the celebrity”. Hunt sees the danger of celebrity endorsements in “that if a celebrity has a negative image, it can be passed on to the product being endorsed”. This is an important insight for analyzing how Nike advertisements handle athletes’ public image.

Joshua Shuart advances research by asserting the distinction between the qualities of heroism and celebrity in a celebrity endorser in his paper “The Media Dichotomy of Sports Heroes and Sports Celebrities: Marketing of Professional Woman’s Tennis Players”. He defines a hero as a “distinguished person, admired for their ability, bravery or noble qualities and worthy of emulation”, while a celebrity is “a famous person”. Many academics argue that heroes and celebrities are often indistinguishable, as the process of “celebrification” in mass media creates a perception of heroism. In order to prove the special significance of heroism in purchasing behavior and its distinction from celebrity, Shuart designed a Celebrity-Hero Matrix, a graph in which the axes are Celebrity and Hero. His survey collected opinions from college students on contemporary athletes and placed them on his matrix, as well as collecting data regarding

“intention to purchase” the endorsed product. The biggest flaw of this study is that it uses the same product for each endorser studied, ignoring the common marketing logic of matching a product or brand to the endorser as Hunt describes. Ultimately, he concluded that sports hero worship is prevalent and heroism is a more important factor endorsement effectiveness than celebrity. A question he leaves for future research is whether the public can discern between a genuine hero and a pseudo-hero created by the media.

The classical interpretations of heroism and celebrity were articulated by Orrin Klapp in his 1949 “Hero Worship in America”. One of the greatest points of this paper was Klapp’s identification of the five stages of development in a societal hero. They are as follows:

1. Spontaneous or unorganized popular homage
2. Formal recognition and honor
3. The building up of an idealized image or legend of the hero
4. Commemoration of the hero
5. Established cult

He considered the last two stages to usually occur after the death of the hero, but there are several modern heroes that have reached the ultimate stage of cult-status before their deaths. Still, these stages can be used to differentiate Nike’s basketball endorsers and understand the differing goals of each advertisement.

Mocarski and Billings take an in-depth look at how Nike has “commodified the public persona of LeBron James” throughout his career in their article “Manufacturing a Messiah: How Nike and LeBron James Co-Constructed the Legend of King James” (Mocarsi & Billings 1). They contend that Nike creates two main narratives; one of “the messiah” and one of “hegemonic masculinity”. The authors perform a rhetorical analysis on the advertisements that

Nike produces to sell James' shoes, and look at how Nike promotes its superstar at three different stages of his career. In the literature review, the authors state "In the analysis and discussion, the dialogic branding of James is shown to endorse parts of these tenets while challenging others, producing a brand of James that is both raced through the body and de-raced through normative understandings of Blackness" (Mocarski & Billings 4). They posit that an endorser needs to dispel certain threatening race stereotypes implicitly in their advertisements in order to gain more acceptance and marketability among a presumably white audience. Mocarski and Billings conclude that Nike follows Lebron's personality and career path in order to respond with ads that create an "uber-safe persona" that is prevalent among the promotions of other athletes today.

Michael Jordan had an enormous impact on American culture and economy that transcended his greatness in basketball. William LaFeber's argues in his book *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism* that Jordan's career came at the perfect time for his brand to become hugely popular and lucrative. By the time Jordan had signed his multi-million dollar endorsement deal with Nike in 1984, the revolution termed the "Information Age" was already in full swing. Before this revolution, only the rich could effectively transmit culture, as they could afford to travel and be literate. According to LaFeber, "Television and the post-1970s media, along with cheaper and more rapid transportation via jet airplanes, changed all that . Culture could move with nearly the speed of sound and reach billions of people, not just the privileged" (LaFeber 18). Another crucial development was the decentralization of the power to spread information and culture, exemplified by the marked increase of television channels available to most Americans. Transnational corporations were spawned in order to capitalize on their opportunity to market American goods and culture around the world. LaFeber sees such great

importance in Michael Jordan because his basketball prowess and marketability was the vehicle for Nike to become the ultimate cultural imperialist. LaFeber cites a *Fortune* article that estimated Jordan's total impact on the U.S. economy to be at least \$10 billion dollars, with more than half benefiting Nike. Jordan's status as the "Greatest Endorser of the Twentieth Century" was no coincidence, as LaFeber points out he was "Rated the most 'likable' and 'familiar' of all performers in America, according to one poll, Jordan was becoming equally popular in some overseas countries" (LaFeber 80). This sentiment echoes the findings Strutton made with celebrity endorsers. LaFeber agrees with Phil Knight's claim that "Sports has become the dominant entertainment of the world", and sees Jordan as a unique athlete in the right sport at the right time (Lafeber 143). William LaFeber's argument in his book *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism* is that Jordan's career came at the perfect time for his brand to become hugely popular and lucrative.

Kobe Bryant's sexual assault case did not go unnoticed by the press or by his biggest sponsor, Nike. In "Image Reparation Strategies in Sports: Media Analysis of Kobe Bryant and Barry Bonds", Jennifer Kennedy gives suggestions on how to repair the image of a maligned superstar. With a good relationship with the media in the first place, she can mitigate a lot of the harm of any scandal. She also points out the best way to repair an athlete's public image is a quick, truthful response to the controversy, as well as a strong emphasis on athletic performance and avoiding other publicity afterward.

Reviewing these pieces of literature raised several questions. Does how does Nike use the concepts of symbolic meaning, heroism, and celebrity in its advertisements? To what extent did Nike attempt to reappraise its endorser's public image through advertisements? Does this relate to their heroic status?

## ***Damaged Public Image***

Neither Lebron or Kobe has been able to escape the spotlight since they came into the league straight out of high school, but it has not always been friendly. Both signed endorsement deals with Nike in 2003. In that same year, his “squeaky-clean” public image was ripped to shreds (McCallum). Kobe was accused of committing sexual assault on a 19-year old woman in Colorado. The case was eventually dropped, but not before Kobe publicly admitted to committing adultery. At the same time, Kobe’s struggles to get along with his veteran teammate Shaquille O’Neal made him no friends on the team or in the media. A *Sports Illustrated* article sums up the criticisms he faced “It is, when you think about it, a Machiavellian masterpiece. Kobe Bryant engineered a coup that has resulted in the departure of one of the greatest coaches of all time and a trade demand from one of the greatest centers of all time. And Kobe himself may not be a Los Angeles Laker next season--or even be a free citizen” (McCallum) . He became “one of the least liked players in the NBA” and his “situation” became the most written about subject in basketball (Kennedy 98). Lebron James faced similar problems after his highly publicized move from his hometown Cleveland Cavaliers to the Miami Heat. As sportswriter Dan Wetzel notes, “It wasn’t what Lebron James did, but how he did it” (Wetzel). Leaving a hometown team is always painful, Lebron caught a lot of flack for extending the ordeal. He playfully hyped up his free agency for years, until he finally announced his choice in an hour-long nationally broadcast special termed “The Decision”. A year later, a poll of 2,000 Americans revealed James was the country’s most unpopular basketball player (Ipsos).



Michael Jordan strived to avoid controversy throughout his career. He dodged any issues that could alienate his fans, and could hurt his value as an endorser. This included always being well-dressed and professional in front of the media (LaFeber 87). When asked why he would not endorse democratic candidate Harvey Gantt, he responded that “Republicans buy shoes too” (Badenhausen). Jordan’s fatal flaw was letting the competitiveness that served him so well on the court extend into his outside life. In 1993, reporters discovered Jordan was in Atlantic City gambling the night before a playoff game in New York. Jordan’s gambling problem became a public spectacle when several of his gambling cronies were found to be criminally active. Later that year, San Diego sports executive Richard Esquinas published a book claiming he had won over a million dollars from Jordan over the course of a ten day vacation. However, none of these accusations tarnished Jordan’s image. All of Jordan’s endorsers backed him up, and much of the press defended Jordan’s right to a private life (Lafeber 114). Even Bulls coach Phil Jackson respected his star’s decision to “let off some steam” (Lafeber 112). Some speculated that the death of Jordan’s father and his subsequent retirement due to “lack of desire” were related to his gambling issues. However, Jordan survived the episode while mostly avoiding the public resentment that plagued Kobe and Lebron.

### ***Studying the Modern Sports Hero***

My analysis focused on Nike advertisements for Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, and Lebron James that came right after a public controversy in their careers. Holding the sport, brand, and product (basketball shoes) constant ensured that the target audience for each advertisement was similar if not identical. I studied the advertisements Nike released after a

public fiasco because these ads are sure to counteract the negative symbolic meanings that could transfer to the product and the brand. The dualism of heroism and celebrity is an effective way to categorize these symbolic meanings. In basketball advertisements, celebrity is inflated by calling attention to the athlete's mythical basketball performance; as this is what secures their fame. Heroism is promoted by highlighting the admirable or relatable aspects of the athlete's character and personality. I found that Nike's recent ads for Kobe and LeBron surpass the degree to which the classic Jordan ad implements the promotion of heroism, as well as confronting the endorser's public image issues much more explicitly. In Kobe and LeBron ads, celebrity status is secondary to heroism, while in the Jordan ad it is vice versa.

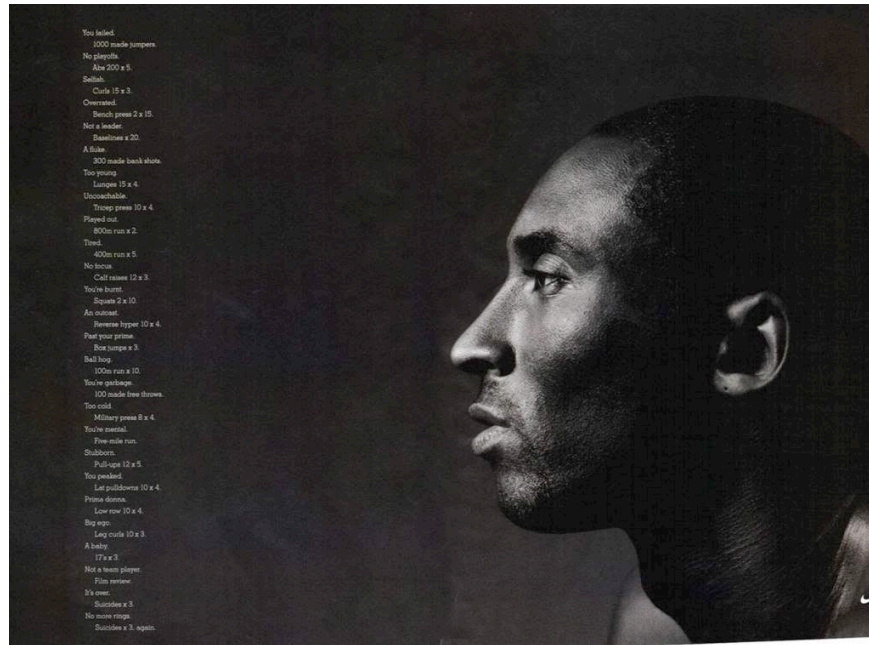


### *Post-Controversy Advertisements*

#### **Air Jordan IX “Johnny Kilroy” (1993)**

Nike emphasizes Jordan's passion and competitiveness for basketball throughout the sport. These were beloved parts of Jordan's public persona, and by emphasizing them Nike attempted to restore his status as a hero. Jordan's contract had an rare “love-of-the-game” clause

that allowed him to play recreational games during the offseason. The advertisement took the form of a news report on the appearance of Jordan look-a-likes in different amateur leagues across the country. Martin interviews several NBA stars, who all agree with one player's sentiment, "You can't blame the man. He just wanna play the game". However, the commercial's main focus is not on the reappraisal of Jordan's public image, or on Jordan's public persona. Instead, Nike smartly aims to increase Jordan's exposure and his celebrity. The advertisement's setting as a serious investigative report is poked fun at throughout, starting with at the very beginning when comedian Steve Martin emerges as the investigator. Martin's voice-over is comical, and every detail of the the story he presents adds to its implausibility and ridiculousness. Jordan is reported to be concealing his identity by wearing fake mustaches and goggles and using pseudonyms such as "Motorboat Jones". The commercial mirrors a real report with its interviews and expert testimony given by NBA players. The contrast between the hilarity of the story and the overly-dramatic and serious style of the report makes the advertisement funny and memorable. Nike effectively brings up the topic of Jordan's retirement for discussion, and keeps him relevant even while retired. The references to Jordan as "the greatest of all time" and the clips of him dunking seem to fill the void of the absence of those two on nightly television. The buzz created by the commercial was intended to boost Jordan's celebrity status and immortality within pop culture and basketball. Jordan's gambling problem is ignored, and his public persona is only referenced in the background of the main action of the ad.



## Kobe Bryant “You Failed” (2005)

This advertisement represents a more serious attempt to restore Kobe’s marketability after two years of keeping him out of the spotlight. There is both an attempt at creating a hero and an implicit acknowledgement of Kobe’s rape case that was not evident in the “Kilroy” advertisement. The heroic trait that Nike focuses on is Kobe’s killer work ethic and intense practice. The text lists popular criticisms of Kobe, such as “Ball Hog” or “Outcast”. Kobe’s response to every one of these attacks is an exercise, such as “Lunges, 15x4” or “Suicides”. Instead of bending under the pressure put on him, Kobe admirably channels his frustrations into improving himself. The ad builds on Kobe’s elements of his public personality: Kobe is well-known for the long hours he puts into perfecting his jump shot. Nike’s use of the theme of purity is evident in the black-and-white color choice, the simplicity of the layout, and the lack of visual noise on the page. Nike suggests that training and basketball is paramount for Kobe, and anything else is a distraction. The hope is for the audience to adopt the same view, and let

Kobe's transgressions fade away. While the text of the ad elicits a fiery and physical image, Kobe's expression in the portrait is more reserved. Kobe looks calm and introspective, with no trace of the aggression he shows in games. His depiction can be interpreted as an attempt to make him appear submissive, regretful, or exposed. By showing these traits, Kobe is once again "made safe". His soft reentrance into the public eye quietly fights negative symbolic meanings of aggression and without explicitly reminding readers of his fiasco. In this way, Nike promotes Kobe's heroic characteristics, while fighting perceptions stemming from his rape case that were unheroic. No mention of Kobe's basketball play is made, and no attempt is made to promote his celebrity.



### **Nike "What Should I Do?" (2010)**

Nike directly confronts the bad press generated by *The Decision*. The very first scene makes an obvious allusion to the infamous press conference by showing LeBron on the same set wearing the same clothes. This contextualizes LeBron's subsequent rhetorical questions and narration as a response to the ensuing criticism in a way that neither of the other ads did. LeBron was blasted for being conceited and hubristic because of how his departure was turned into a

spectacle and the disregard it showed for his fans (Forbes). Instead of fighting against these perceptions, Nike twists them into heroic characteristics. Throughout the commercial, Lebron periodically looks into the camera and asks the audience, “What should I do?”. The implication is “What should I do about my public image after *The Decision*”. The ad cuts between 15 settings as Lebron sarcastically ponders what course of action he should take. The hypothetical solutions are diverse, and thereby illustrate the range of pressures Lebron faces and the complexity of being a public figure. Each potential course of action is mocked, setting up the resonant final question “Should I be who you want me to be?”. Even in this final slogan, the idea of a celebrity conforming to expectations is framed as a ridiculous proposition. One solution presented is to apologize for his missteps and mitigate the disapproval, another is to relish in his role as the anti-hero, and the last is to embrace mass media and live a celebrity lifestyle. Nike celebrates Lebron’s freedom and individualistic ideology as heroic by cheapening criticisms and the pressure put on Lebron. His independence from the media is framed as reasonable and therefore relatable and heroic. *The Decision* is now understandable to the viewer, Lebron’s image is improved. Again, little is presented in the way of the promotion of Lebron’s celebrity, and his basketball performance is not glorified significantly.

### ***Commemorating Michael Jordan***

Nike’s post-controversy advertisement for Jordan puts much less focus into reinterpreting his controversy and promoting his heroic characteristics. Instead, Jordan’s mythical athletic talents were emphasized repeatedly, and his standing as the “greatest of all time” is referenced repeatedly. To understand the Lebron and Kobe ads, one must already be familiar with them.

They are never named, and neither are their teams. In contrast, Jordan is named ten times throughout the advertisement. His Chicago Bulls and iconic jersey number are also referenced often. The “Kilroy” ad is boastful of Jordan’s talents, while “You Failed” and “What should I do?” are boastful of Kobe and Lebron’s character.

These differences in Nike’s response to scandal reveal underlying differences between the level of hero of these three athletes. Orrin Klapp described five levels of heroism, and it is Nike’s goal to move its endorsers up on the hierarchy. Kobe and Lebron fit into Klapp’s third category of hero, which is characterized by “the building up of an idealized image or legend of the hero”. By the time Jordan’s gambling case came to a head, his legendary performance on the court and monumental success with Nike off the court had already catapulted him into a class of international superstardom that neither Lebron or Kobe has reached thus far. Jordan had reached the fourth stage, consisting of “the commemoration of a hero”. Nike ignored the issue of the gambling case because Jordan had already become an unquestionable hero whose image had already been secured and was no longer threatened by his off-court activities.

### *A New Era*

No matter how complete a comparison of modern athletes to Michael Jordan, one must acknowledge the complications of comparing between time periods. Joshua Shuart, whose theory on celebrity-hero endorsers I borrowed, articulates what has changed within celebrity endorsing since the 90s, “...the tragic events of 9-11-2001 helped society to re-focus on heroes. The focus on the actions (heroic deeds) of the fire fighters and volunteer workers positively contributed to a nationwide reconsideration of ideals, values and morals. Inherent with this rethinking was a

return to the classic definition of the hero (Klapp 1969), whereby professional athletes were relegated to celebrity status.” (Shuart). This leads to a valid counterargument. Nike may have had much less trouble establishing the heroism of Jordan than it does in this new era. Therefore, Nike’s ignorance of the gambling controversy has a smaller implication for Jordan’s unquestioned level of heroism.

### ***Will his Airness Dethroned?***

Neither LeBron James or Kobe Bryant will ever surpass Michael Jordan’s global presence, universal likability, or commercial success. But it is too soon to say if posterity will remember them as better basketball players. Both are lock-in hall-of-famers and garner constant comparisons to the legend. Jordan’s gold standard of six championship rings has been safe for years, but Kobe’s five with the Lakers has a strong case. After a drought with the Cavaliers, LeBron will fight for his second title with the Heat in the coming days. Advanced statistics suggest LeBron is having the best NBA season *ever*. What should we expect Nike to do if LeBron or Kobe usurps Jordan’s title of the game’s best ever? How will Air Jordan ads reconcile being second place?



## Work Cited

Amos, Holmes, Strutton." Exploring the relationship between celebrity endorser effects and advertising effectiveness." *International Journal of Advertising* 27.2 (2008): pp 209-234.

Online

The authors find the most effective factors of celebrity endorsement to be trustworthiness, credibility, and attractiveness. They do so by evaluating endorsers on several characteristics and finding correlations to their effectiveness in endorsement. This lays the foundation for my discussion on celebrity endorsers.

Badenhausen, Kurt. "Kobe And LeBron Top List Of The NBA's Highest-Paid Players." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 23 Jan. 2013. Web. 08 June 2013.

Forbes lists the top earners through endorsement deals in the NBA, and discuss their accomplishments and deals.

"Betty White Is America's Favorite and Most Trusted Personality, and the Most Prone to Driving Brand Purchase." *Ipsos*. N.p., 18 Aug. 2011. Web. 08 June 2013.

Ipsos published a poll of Americans to find the most effective celebrity endorsers in America, and found Jordan to be on the list. This supports my assertion that Jordan is among the most well-known personalities ever.

Hunt, James. "The Impact of Celebrity Endorsers on Consumers' Product Evaluations: A Symbolic Meaning Approach." (n.d.): n. pag. Print.

Hunt proposes the role of symbolic meaning on top of attractiveness, trustworthiness and credibility. He studies this by polling people on how well 20 characteristics describe an endorser and a product, and finds a correlation.

Kang, Stephanie. "Nike Relaunches Kobe Bryant after Two Years of Prep Work." *Wall Street Journal*. N.p., 11 Nov. 2005. Web. 8 June 2013.

Kang talks about what Nike has been doing while keeping Kobe in the shadows. Nike has dropped his name from shoes, but has produced a special version of the Huarache 2K4 for him to wear in games and has released several successful limited edition collectible versions. The first ad featuring Kobe after his case is pictured.

Kennedy, Jennifer. "Image Reparation Strategies in Sports: Media Analysis of Kobe Bryant and Barry Bonds." *Elon Journal in Undergraduate Research Publications* 1.1 (2010): 95-104. Print.

Kennedy analyzes both Bond and Bryant's public image problems after their respective steroid and sexual assault cases. She finds that keeping the athlete out of the spotlight and addressing the topic directly are the most important. She also says that if an athlete's

performance remains elite, the public will eventually forget about the issue, which I agree with to an extent. I still believe it leaves a blemish on a clean slate; LeBron will never be as likable as Jordan.

Klapp, Orrin. "Hero Worship in America." *Hero Worship in America* 14.1 (1949): 53-62. Print.

Klapp sets out the frame work for analyzing athletes and celebrities as heroes. He states that there are five stages of hero worship that one must progress through. The highest of these is cult status, which is characterized by a public observation of greatness or interest groups. I think this work is very interesting and helpful for classifying today's athletes.

Lafeber, William. *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2002. Print.

This book surveys Jordan's rise to international influence through Nike and also gives a biography of the major events of his life. It provides a good framework for my understanding of Jordan, and the information age. It also gives good details about his gambling case.

Nike. "Johnny Kilroy" (Michael Jordan). TV Commercial. YouTube. Youtube, 28 Nov 2012. Web. June 7 2013.

This is one of the primary ads I focus on analyzing. It was made for Jordan and was released shortly after his gambling case, retirement, and third championship.

Nike. "Rise" (LeBron James). TV Commercial. YouTube. Youtube, 4 Nov 2012. Web. 4 June 2013.

This is another ad I analyzed. It was released shortly after James' free agency decision and was made in direct response .

Shuart, Joshua. "The Media Dichotomy of Sports Heros and Sports Celebrities: Marketing of Professional Woman's Tennis Players." *Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* 317 (2004): 145-51. Print.

Shuart creates two categories of heroism and celebrity, and rates athletes on a matrix of these two dimensions. He finds that heroism is a more effective tool of endorsement than celebrity by comparing these scores to endorser effectiveness. I found this to be an insightful way to look at celebrity endorsements and borrowed heavily from his ideas in my essay.

Wetzel, Dan. "Lebron's Decisive Backlash Tops All Stories." *YahooSports*. N.p., 21 Dec. 2010. Web. 8 June 2013.

This is an article that gave me good details about the media response and to James' decision and why the public found such issue with it. It allowed me to analyze the Lebron ad and understand the criticism it referred to.

## **Work Referenced**

Janoff, Barry. "The World Not According to Kobe." *Brandweek* 45.2 (2004): 20-24. Web. 8 June 2013.

This article talks about Kobe's life story and personality. He moved from Italy and had difficulties socializing in high school due to the language barrier. The article talks about his relationships with girlfriends, and his nerdy obsession with watching Michael Jordan clips. In

addition, it talks about how Kobe interacted with team members and his difficulties containing his competitiveness. He was also a sweetheart to the media, answering any questions. This helps me understand the surprise that the rape case had, and the purpose of the ad afterward.

Rovell, Darrell. "A Year Later, Polls Show LeBron Still Hasn't Recovered." *CNBC.com*. CNBC, 8 July 2011. Web. 08 June 2013.

This is a short article talking about LeBron's persistent negative public image a year after his fiasco. This shows that his free agency decision was actually significant, and the advertisement was definitely needed.

Telander, Rick. "Ready...Set...Levitate." *Sports Illustrated*. N.p., 17 Nov. 1986. Web. 8 June 2013.

This article is a contemporary look at Jordan's media personality, and symbolic meanings. It gave me the details of his persona, and allowed me to analyze the ad more completely. Specifically, it confirmed my beliefs about Jordan's competitiveness, and talked about his "love of the game" clause.