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Source: *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Dec., 1989), pp. 299-310  
Published by: American Sociological Association  
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2786993>  
Accessed: 16/11/2009 12:42

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## The Gloried Self: The Aggrandizement and the Constriction of Self

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*This is a study of changes in the selves of college athletes that result from their entry into a world of celebrity and glory. Drawing on five years of participant-observation research with a college basketball team, we discuss athletes' experiences with fame. They undergo concomitant processes of self-aggrandizement and self-diminishment whereby some dimensions of their identities expand and infuse the whole self while others are cast aside or are moved to a more peripheral status. These data cast light on the characteristics of the gloried self, a previously unarticulated form of self-identity, on the relationship between dramaturgical roles and real selves, and on the process whereby a "master status" is created and attains dominance.*

From a variety of interactionist social psychological perspectives, self, role, and identity theorists have sought to plumb the nature of the self—its composition, character, and change. Positing the reciprocity between self and society (Mead 1934), these theorists suggest that the highly differentiated character of society is replicated in the character of the self. The self, then, is composed of various identities (or role-identities; McCall and Simmons 1978) and is lodged in roles, relationships, and statuses that develop as the self reflects upon itself as an object (Stone 1962). These identities are organized in a salience hierarchy according to individuals' commitment to them (Kornhauser 1962), their likelihood of being invoked in various situations (Stryker 1968, 1980), and their degree of "merging" with individuals' "real selves" (Turner 1976, 1978). They arise as individuals form different sets of structured relationships with others, and are modified by persons' greater or lesser resistance to changes in the face of changing circumstances (Stryker 1980).

In this paper we describe and analyze a previously unarticulated form of self-identity: the "gloried" self, which arises when individ-

uals become the focus of intense interpersonal and media attention, leading to their achieving celebrity. The articulation of the gloried self not only adds a new concept to our self repertoire but also furthers our insight into self-concept formation in two ways: it illustrates one process whereby dynamic contradictions between internal and external pressures become resolved, and it highlights the ascendance of an unintended self-identity in the face of considerable resistance.

The development of the gloried self is an outgrowth of individuals' becoming imbued with celebrity. It does not matter whether that celebrity is positive or negative; in our society we accord status and recognition for both fame and notoriety (Goldsmith 1983). Development of a gloried self is caused in part by the treatment of individuals' selves as objects by others. A "public persona" is created, usually by the media, which differs from individuals' private personas. These public images are rarely as intricate or as complex as individuals' real selves; often they draw on stereotypes or portray individuals in extreme fashion to accentuate their point. Yet the power of these media portrayals, reinforced by face-to-face encounters with people who hold these images, often causes individuals to objectify their selves to themselves. Individuals thus become initially alienated from themselves through the separation of their self-concept from the conception of their selves held by others. Ultimately they resolve this disparity and reduce their alienation by changing their self-images to bridge the gap

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We would like to thank Paul Colomy, Stanford Lyman, and Ralph Turner for comments on earlier versions of this manuscript, which is a modified version of a paper presented at the 1988 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association in Atlanta. Please address all correspondence to Dr. Peter Adler, Department of Sociology, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208.

created by others' perceptions of them, even though they may fight this development as it occurs.

Characteristically, the gloried self is a greedy self, seeking to ascend in importance and to cast aside other self-dimensions as it grows. It is an intoxicating and riveting self, which overpowers other aspects of the individual and seeks increasing reinforcement to fuel its growth. Yet at the same time, its surge and display violate societal mores of modesty in both self-conception and self-presentation. Individuals thus become embroiled in inner conflict between their desire for recognition, flattery, and importance and the inclination to keep feeding this self-affirming element, and the socialization that urges them to fight such feelings and behavioral impulses. That the gloried self succeeds in flourishing, in spite of individuals' struggle against it, testifies to its inherent power and its drive to eclipse other self-dimensions.

Drawing on ethnographic data gathered in a college athletics setting, we discuss the creation and the character of the gloried self, showing its effects on the individuals in whom it develops. After introducing our setting and methods, we analyze athletes' experiences and discuss the aggrandizing effects of celebrity in fostering the gloried self's ascent to prominence. Then we look at the consequent changes and diminishment in the self that occur as the price of this self-aggrandizement. We conclude by discussing the relationship of the gloried self to social psychological theories of the self and by shedding light on the process whereby a "master status" (Hughes 1945) is constructed.

#### SETTING AND METHODS

Over a five-year period (1980–1985) we conducted a participant-observation study of a major college basketball program. We used team field research strategies (Douglas 1976) and differentiated roles to enhance our data gathering and analysis. Although college and professional sport settings generally are characterized by secrecy and by an extreme sensitivity to the insider-outsider distinction (see Jonassohn, Turowetz, and Gruneau 1981), we gradually gained the trust of significant gatekeepers, particularly the head coach. Peter was granted the status and privileges of an assistant coach (the "team

sociologist"), while Patti became close with persons in the setting as a friend, as the coach's wife, and as a professor at the university. These differential roles helped us to experience both the involved passion of the active member and the more detached objectivity of the peripheral participant.<sup>1</sup>

The research was conducted at a medium-sized (6,000 students) private university (hereafter referred to as "the University") in the mid-south central portion of the United States, with a predominantly white, suburban, middle-class student body. The basketball program was ranked in the top 40 of Division I NCAA schools throughout our research, and in the top 20 for most of two seasons. The team played in post-season tournaments every year, and in four complete seasons won approximately four times as many games as it lost. Players generally were recruited from the surrounding area; they were predominantly black (70%) and ranged from lower to middle class. In general, the basketball program was fairly representative of what Coakley (1986) and Frey (1982) term "big-time" college athletics. Although it could not compare to programs at the largest athletic universities, its recent success compensated for its size and lack of tradition. The basketball program's national ranking and its success (along with that of other athletic teams) in sending graduating members into the professional leagues further imbued the entire athletic milieu with a sense of seriousness and purpose.

#### THE EXPERIENCE OF GLORY

Experiencing glory was exciting, intoxicating, and riveting. Two self-dimensions were either created or expanded in the athletes we studied: the reflected self and the media self.

##### *The Reflected Self*

As a result of the face-to-face interactions between team members and people they encountered through their role as college athletes, the athletes' impressions of themselves were modified and changed. As Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934) were the first to propose, individuals engage in role-taking;

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed and more thorough discussion of the methods used in this research, see Adler and Adler (1987a.).

their self-conceptions are products of social interaction, affected by the reflected impressions of others. According to Cooley (1902), these "looking glass" selves are formed through a combination of cognitive and affective forces; although individuals react intellectually to the impressions they perceive others forming about them, they also develop emotional reactions about these judgments. Together these reactions are instrumental in shaping their self-images. Thus individuals use what Rosenberg (1979) and Sullivan (1953) call "reflected appraisals" in forging a new sense of self.

The forging and modification of reflected selves began as team members perceived how people *treated* them; subsequently they formed *reactions* to that treatment. One of the first things they all noticed was that they were sought intensely by strangers. Large numbers of people, individually and in groups, wanted to be near them, to get their autographs, to touch them, and to talk to them. People treated them with awe and respect. One day, for example, the head coach walked out of his office and found a woman waiting for him. As he turned towards her she threw herself in front of him and began to kiss his feet, all the while telling him what a great man he was. More commonly, fans who were curious about team matters approached players, trying to engage them in conversation. These conversations sometimes made the players feel awkward because although they wanted to be polite to their fans, they had little to say to them. Carrying on an interaction was often difficult. As one player said:

People come walking up to you, and whether they're timid or pushy, they still want to talk. It's like, here's their hero walking face-to-face with them and they want to say anything just so they can have a conversation with them. It's *hero worshiping*. But what do you actually say to your hero when you see him?

These interactions, then, often took the form of ritualized pseudo-conversations, in which players and their fans offered each other stylized but empty words.

Many fans accorded players "cognitive recognition" (Goffman 1963), identifying them socially and expecting them to respond in kind. Players found themselves thrust into a "pseudo-intimacy" (Bensman and Lilienfeld 1979) with these fans, who had seen them so often at games and on television. Yet

although their relationship with players was one-sided, fans often expected players to reciprocate their feelings of intimacy. As a result of their celebrity, team members found themselves in "exposed positions" (Goffman 1963), where they were open to engagement in personal interaction with individuals whom they did not know at all.

Players also found themselves highly prized in interacting with boosters (financial supporters of the team). Boosters showered all players with invitations to their houses for team meetings or dinner. They fought jealously to have players seen with them or gossiped about as having been in their houses. It soon became apparent to players that boosters derived social status from associating with them; boosters "basked in the reflected glory" (Burger 1985; Cialdini et al. 1976; Sigelman 1986) of the players. This situation caused players to recognize that they were "glory bearers," so filled with glory that they could confer it on anyone by their mere presence. They experienced a sense of the "Midas touch": they had an attribute (fame) that everybody wanted and which could be transmitted. Their ability to cast glory onto others and their desirability to others because of this ability became an important dimension of their new, reflected self-identity.

### *The Media Self*

A second dimension of the self created from the glory experience was influenced largely by media portrayals. Altheide (1984) discusses the effect of the media as a fulcrum between self-feelings and the impressions, expectations, and behavior of others. He argues that modern life is characterized increasingly by media attention, leading to the creation of a "media self" whereby the self is raised to the level of self-consciousness, the focus of the individual's own attention. Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss (1975) call this state "public self-consciousness," in which the self comes to be perceived as a social actor who serves as a stimulus for others' behavior. Most of the athletes who came to the University had received some media publicity in high school (68%), but the national level of the print and video coverage they received after arriving, coupled with the intensity of the constant focus, caused them to develop more compel-

ling and more salient media selves than they had possessed previously.

Radio, television, and newspaper reporters covering the team often sought out athletes for "human interest" stories. These features presented media-framed angles that cast athletes into particular roles and tended to create new dimensions of their selves. Images were created from a combination of individuals' actual behavior and reporters' ideas of what made good copy. Thus through media coverage, athletes were cast into molds that frequently were distorted or exaggerated reflections of their behavior and self-conceptions.

Team members, for whom the media had created roles, felt as if they had to live up to these portrayals. For instance, two players were depicted as "good students"—shy, quiet, religious, and diligent. Special news features emphasized their outstanding traits, illustrating how they went regularly to class, were humanitarian, and cared about graduating. Yet one of them lamented:

Other kids our age, they go to the fair and they walk around with a beer in their hand, or a cigarette, but if me and Dan were to do that, then people would talk about that. We can't go over to the clubs, or hang around, without it relaying back to Coach. We can't even do things around our teammates, because they expect us to be a certain way. The media has created this image of us as the "good boys," and now we have to live up to it.

Other players (about 20%) were embraced for their charismatic qualities; they had naturally outgoing personalities and the ability to excite a crowd. These players capitalized on the media coverage, exaggerating their antics to gain attention and fame. Yet the more they followed the media portrayal, the more likely it was to turn into a caricature of their selves. One player described how he felt when trapped by his braggart media self:

I used to like getting in the paper. When reporters came around I would make those Mohammed Ali type outbursts—I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that. And they come around again, stick a microphone in your face, 'cause they figure somewhere Washington will have another outburst. But playing that role died out in me. I think sometimes the paper pulled out a little too much from me that wasn't me. But people seen me as what the paper said, and I had to play that role.

Particular roles notwithstanding, all the players shared the media-conferred sense of self as celebrity. Raised to the status of stars, larger than life, they regularly read their names and statements in the newspaper, saw their faces on television, or heard themselves whispered about on campus. One team member described the consequences of this celebrity:

We didn't always necessarily agree with the way they wrote about us in the paper, but people who saw us expected us to be like what they read there. A lot of times it made us feel uncomfortable, acting like that, but we had to act like they expected us to, for the team's sake. We had to act like this was what we was really like.

Ironically, however, the more they interacted with people through their dramaturgically induced media selves, the more many of the team members felt familiar and comfortable with those selves ("We know what to do, we don't have to think about it no more"). The media presented the selves and the public believed in them, so the athletes continued to portray them. Even though they attempted to moderate these selves, part of them pressed for their legitimacy and acceptance. Over time the athletes believed these portrayals increasingly, and transformed their behavior into more than mere "impression management" (Goffman 1959). Gradually their behavior evolved from role-playing into role-making (Turner 1978), the development of a role infused with elements of the individual's core self. Treatment through such public selves, as Mead (1934) first implied in his discussion of the role-taking interplay between the "I" and the "me", penetrates deeply to influence individuals' private selves, those self-conceptions which spell out the kind of people they sincerely consider themselves to be. In many instances, as Hochschild (1983) notes, it is easier actually to change one's emotions than to pretend to emotions one does not feel. Athletes thus went through a gradual process of abandoning their "role distance" (Goffman 1961) and becoming more engrossed or more deeply involved in their media selves. The recurrent social situations of their everyday lives served as the foils against which both their public and their private selves developed. The net effect of having these selves placed upon them and of interacting through them with

others was that athletes eventually integrated them into their core selves.

#### SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT

Athletes were affected profoundly by encounters with the self-images reflected onto them by others, both in person and through the media. It was exciting and gratifying to be cast as heroes. Being presented with these images and feeling obligated to interact with people through them, athletes added a new self to their repertoire: a glorified self. This self had a greater degree of aggrandizement than their previous identities. The athletes may have dreamed of glory, but until now they had never formed a structured set of relationships with people who accorded it to them. Yet although they wanted to accept and enjoy this glory, to allow themselves to incorporate it into a full-blown self-identity, they felt hesitant and guilty. They wrestled with the competing forces of their desires for extravagant pleasure and pride and the normative guidelines of society, which inhibited these desires. The athletes' struggle with factors inhibiting and enhancing their self-aggrandizement shows how and why they ultimately developed gloried selves.

#### *Inhibiting Factors*

Players knew they had to be careful both about feeling important and about showing these feelings. The norms of our society dictate a more modest, more self-effacing stance. Consequently the players worked hard to suppress their growing feelings of self-aggrandizement in several ways. First, they drew on their own feelings of *fear* and *insecurity*. Although it violated the norms of their peer culture to reveal these feelings, most of the athletes we interviewed (92%) had doubts or worries about their playing abilities or futures.

Second, they tried to *discount* the flattery of others as exaggerated or false. As Jones and Nisbet (1972, p. 80) hypothesized, "There is a pervasive tendency for actors to attribute their actions to situational requirements, whereas observers tend to attribute the same actions to stable personal dispositions." Athletes, then, tended to evaluate their behavior less globally than did their audience and to interpret their successes as based less on their own outstanding characteristics than

on some complex interaction of circumstances.

Third, the athletes' feelings of importance and superiority were constrained by the actions of the coach and by the norms of their peer subculture. For his part, the coach tried to keep players' self-aggrandizement in check by *puncturing* them whenever he thought they were becoming too "puffed" (conceited). He "dragged" (criticized, mocked) them both in team meetings and in individual sessions, trying to achieve the right balance of confidence and humility.

In addition, players punctured their teammates by ridiculing each other publicly in their informal sessions in the dorms. Each one claimed to be the best player on the team, and had little praise for others. The athletes did not actually think their teammates had no talent; rather, the peer subculture allowed little room for "glory passing." As a result, except for the braggarts (about 20% of the group), none of the players expressed in public how good they felt and how much they enjoyed being treated as stars. Instead they tried largely to suppress the feelings of excitement, intoxication, and aggrandizement, not to let themselves be influenced by the reflected sense of glory. As one player remarked:

You feel it coming up on you and you know you got to fight it. You can't be letting your head get all out of control.

Fourth, the coach helped to *normalize* the athletes' experiences and reactions by placing them in the occupational perspective. Being adulated was part of the job, he believed, and this job was no more special than any other ("When you get past the glory part, although I know that strikes you so hard in the beginning, you see that this's just a work-a-day job like any other job"). He conveyed this sense of occupational duty to his players and assistants. Like him, they had to "get with the program," to play to the public and help support people's sense of involvement with the team. In public, then, players feigned intimacy with total strangers and allowed themselves to be worshipped, meanwhile being told that this was merely a job.

#### *Enhancing Factors*

Yet as tired as they were, as repetitive as this behavior became, the athletes knew that

this job was unlike any other. The excitement, the centrality, and the secrecy, which did not exist in the everyday world, made this arena different. As one assistant coach explained:

The times were exciting. There was always something going on, something happening, some new event occurring each day. We felt like we were newsmakers, we were important. We touched so many more lives, were responsible for so many more people, and so many more people cared, wanted to know something from us. It was very intoxicating. Everyone even close felt the excitement, just from elbow-rubbing.

Athletes also were influenced in their developing feelings of self-importance by the concrete results of their behavior. Through *self-attribution* (Bem 1972; Rosenberg 1979) they were able to observe the outcomes of their behavior and to use them to form and modify assessments of their selves. Thus when the team was winning, their feelings of importance, grandeur, talent, and invincibility soared; when they lost, they felt comparatively incompetent, powerless, and small. Because the team's record throughout our research period was overwhelmingly successful, team members reviewed the outcomes of their contests and the season records, and concluded that they were fine athletes and local heroes.

Notably, the process of social comparison (Festinger 1954; Rosenberg 1979) was not significant to team members' developing sense of self-esteem. Rather than comparing themselves competitively to other teammates (which they did, but to a surprisingly minor degree) and feeling negative about themselves in light of the team's high standards for success, players invoked the *normative* (Bandura 1971; Felson 1981; Kelley 1952) and *associative effects* (Felson and Reed 1986) in forging their self-conceptions. First, they used their athlete peers as a reference group to set normative group standards and evaluations of their behavior and self-worth. These group self-conceptions were extremely favorable and generated positive self-appraisals for all team members; they ignored variations among individuals. Second, the players made positive inferences about themselves based on their association with the team. Using the team again as a reference group, they basked in their reflected glory and

forged individual self-conceptions based on the performance of the team as a whole. The players' tendency to forge self-conceptions based on collective behavior and membership rather than on individual attributes was influenced by their participation in this team sport and by their constant identification by each other and by outsiders as members of the program.

One result of receiving such intense personal interest and media attention was that players developed "big heads." They were admired openly by so many people and their exploits were regarded as so important that they began to feel more notable. Although they tried to remain modest, all of the players found that their celebrity caused them to lose control over their sense of self-importance. As one player observed:

You try not to let it get away from you. You feel it coming all around you. People building you up. You say to yourself that you're the same guy you always were and that nothing has changed. But what's happening to you is so unbelievable. Even when you were sitting at home in high school imagining what college ball would be like, you could not imagine this. All the media, all the fans, all the pressure. And all so suddenly, with no time to prepare or ease into it. Doc, it got to go to your head. You try to fight it, and you think you do, but you got to be affected by it, you got to get a big head.

Although the players fought to normalize and diminish their feelings of self-aggrandizement, they were swept away in spite of the themselves by the allure of glory, to varying degrees. Their sense of glory fed their egos, exciting them beyond their ability to manage or control it. They had never before been such glory-generating figures, had never felt the power that was now invested in them by the crowds or worshipful fans. They developed deep, powerful feelings affirming how important they had become and how good it felt.

All the members of the University's basketball program developed gloried selves, although the degree varied according to several factors. To some extent, their aggrandizement and glorification were affected by the level of attention they received. Individuals with more talent, who held central roles as team stars, were the focus of much media and fan attention. Others, who possessed the social and interpersonal attributes that made them good subjects for reporters, fruitful

topics of conversation for boosters, and charismatic crowd pleasers, also received considerable notice. In addition, those who were more deeply invested in the athletic role were more likely to develop stronger gloried selves. They looked to this arena for their greatest rewards and were the most susceptible to its aggrandizing influence. Finally, individuals resisted or yielded to the gloried self depending on personal attributes. Those who were naturally more modest and more self-effacing tried harder to neutralize the effects and had more difficulty in forging grandiose self-conceptions than those who were boastful or pretentious.

### THE PRICE OF GLORY

Athletes' self-aggrandizement, as we have seen, was a clear consequence of the glory experience. Self-diminishment was a corresponding and concomitant effect. Athletes paid a price for becoming gloried in the form of self-narrowing or self-erosion. They sacrificed both the multidimensionality of their current selves and the potential breadth of their future selves; various dimensions of their identities were either diminished, detached, or somehow changed as a result of their increasing investment in their gloried selves.

#### *Self-Immediacy*

One of the first consequences of the ascent of the gloried self was a loss of future orientation. In all their lives, from the most celebrated player to the least, these individuals had never experienced such a level of excitement, adulation, intensity, and importance. These sensations were immediate and real, flooding all team members' daily lives and overwhelming them. As a result, their focus turned toward their present situation and became fixed on it.

This reaction was caused largely by the absorbing quality of the moment. During the intensity of the season (and to a lesser extent during the off-season), their basketball obligations and involvements were prominent. When they were lying exhausted in their hotel rooms, hundreds of miles from campus, or on their beds after a grueling practice, the responsibilities of school seemed remote and distant. One player described his state of preoccupation:

I've got two finals tomorrow and one the next day. I should be up in the room studying right now. But how can I get my mind on that when I know I've got to guard Michael Jordan tomorrow night?

Their basketball affairs were so much more pressing, not only in the abstract but also because other people made specific demands on them, that it was easy to relegate all other activities to a position of lesser importance.<sup>2</sup>

Many players who had entered college expecting to prepare themselves for professional or business careers were distracted from those plans and relinquished them (71%).<sup>3</sup> The demands of the basketball schedule became the central focus of their lives; the associated physical, social, and professional dimensions took precedence over all other concerns. Despite their knowledge that only two percent of major-college players eventually play in the NBA (Coakley 1986; Leonard and Reyman 1988), they all clung to the hope that they would be the ones to succeed. One of the less outstanding athletes on the team expressed the players' commonly held attitude toward their present and their future:

You have to have two goals, a realistic and an unrealistic. Not really an unrealistic, but a dream. We all have that dream. I know the odds are against it, but I feel realistically that I can make the NBA. I have to be in the gym every day, lift weights, more or less sacrifice my life to basketball. A lot.

To varying degrees, all players ceased to think about their futures other than as a direct continuation of the present. They were distracted from long-term planning and deferment of gratification in favor of the enormous immediate gratification they received from their fans and from celebrity. What emerged was a self that primarily thought about only one source of gratification—athletic fame—and that imagined and planned for little else.

The players imagined vaguely that if they did not succeed as professional athletes, a rich booster would provide them with a job. Although they could observe the older players leaving the program without any clear job

<sup>2</sup> See Adler and Adler (1987b) for a fuller discussion of the role strain, role conflict, and role conflict resolution inherent in college athletics.

<sup>3</sup> See Adler and Adler (1985) for a more thorough discussion of the transformation of athletes' academic aspirations.

opportunities, they were too deeply absorbed in the present to recognize the situation. Ironically, they came to college believing that it would expand their range of opportunities (see Adler and Adler 1985); yet they sacrificed the potential breadth of their future selves by narrowing their range of vision to encompass only that which fed their immediate hunger for glory.

### *Diminished Awareness*

Locked into a focus on the present and stuck with a vision of themselves that grew from their celebrity status, all team members, to varying degrees, became desensitized to the concerns of their old selves. They experienced a heightened sensitivity and reflectivity toward the gloried self and a loss of awareness of the self-dimensions unrelated to glory. Nearly everyone they encountered interacted with them, at least in part, through their gloried selves. As this self-identity was fed and expanded, their other selves tended to atrophy. At times the athletes seemed to be so blinded by their glory that they would not look beyond it. As Goffman (1967, p. 43) observed, "Whatever his position in society, the person insulates himself by blindnesses, half-truths, illusions, and rationalizations."

This diminished awareness had several consequences. First, in becoming so deeply absorbed in their gloried selves, athletes relegated nonathletic concerns to secondary, tertiary, or even lesser status. These concerns included commitments to friends, relatives, and school. For example, many athletes (54%) began each semester vowing that it would be different this time, but each semester they "forgot" to go to class. Reflecting on this occurrence, one player mused:

You don't think, it's not like you goin' to be a bad boy today, or you goin' to pull the wool over someone's eyes. You just plain ol' forget. You sleep through it.

For a while the athletes could ignore the facts and the consequences of their behavior, but this denial wore thin as the semester progressed and they fell behind more noticeably. Then they moved into a stage of neutralization, blaming boring professors, stupid courses, exhaustion, coaches' demands, or injury.

Second, their new personas were ex-

panded, even in their interactions with friends. Players referred to this situation as being "puffed," and each accused the others of it:

Sometimes I can't even talk to Rich no more. He's so puffed in the head you can't get him to talk sense, he's lost touch with reality. It's like it's full of jello in there and he's talking a bunch of hot air.

What the athletes sensed as filling the heads of these puffed players was the self-image created by the glory experience.

Third, some athletes plunged into various acts because these acts fed their gloried selves (60%). They distanced themselves from their old values and took potentially career-ending risks. For example, when a player who filled a substitute role was "red-shirted" (excused from play without losing his scholarship or expending a year of eligibility) for the year because of injury, he was willing to give up this desirable and protective status when asked to do so by the coach. He was convinced easily, despite his secondary position, that the team could not function without him; like others, he had blocked off the warnings and the caution that stemmed from an awareness of other needs and interests. The same lack of reflectiveness and self-awareness prevented players with chronic injuries, those who were hobbling and could no longer jump, from admitting to themselves that their playing days were over, that their gloried selves had to retire.

### *Self-Detachment*

For some team members and at times for all, the distinction between their gloried selves and their other selves became more than a separation; the distance and the lack of reflectiveness grew into detachment. In the most extreme cases (18%), some athletes developed a barrier between this new, exciting, glamorous self and their old, formerly core selves. They found it increasingly difficult to break through that barrier. They experienced a dualism between these selves,<sup>4</sup> as if occasionally they represented discrete individuals and not multiple facets of the same person; at times they shifted back and

<sup>4</sup> This dualism has some parallels to Laing's (1960) and Sennett and Cobb's (1972) conceptions of the "divided" self.

forth between them. Ultimately the different images became so disparate that they could not be fused or else individuals became so deeply involved in their gloried selves that they lost control over their efforts to constrain and integrate them. The more these individuals interacted with others through this self, the more it developed a life and a destiny of its own.

For instance, one of the most popular players on the team developed a gloried self that was tied to his self-proclaimed nickname "Apollo." Charismatic and enthusiastic whenever he was in public, he generated enormous amounts of attention and adulation through his outgoing personality. On the court he would work the crowd, raising their emotions, exhorting them to cheer, and talking brashly to opposing players. Reporters thronged to him because he was colorful, lively, and quotable. In public settings he was always referred to by his nickname.

Yet although this player deliberately had created the Apollo identity, eventually it began to control him. It led him to associate at times with people who valued him only for that self; it surfaced in interactions with friends when he had not called it forth. It led him to detach himself from responsibility for things he did while in that persona. As he reported:

I had a summer job working for some booster at a gas station. I figured he wanted to show off that he had Apollo pumping his gas. I'd go into my act for the customers and the other employees, how fine I was, lotta times show up late or not at all. I figured he wouldn't fire me. But he did. Looking back, I can't see how I just up and blew that job. That ain't like me. That was Apollo done that, not me.

As Elliot (1986) hypothesizes, the tendency to engage in fantasy self-imagery (as in ascribing responsibility for one's actions to some other person rather than to self-identity) disrupts individuals' self-consistency by blurring their distinction between fantasy and reality. Yet behind Apollo's swagger and bravado there was still a person who was not always putting on an act. This self had been left behind by the gloried self, and had become detached from it.

Other team members, who did not go so far as to create separate identities for their gloried selves, still experienced feelings of bifurcation. Their former selves were mundane and

commonplace compared to their new, vibrant selves. These contrasting selves called forth different kinds of character and behavior. At times the team members found it difficult to think of themselves as integrated persons, incorporating these divergent identities into one overall self. Feelings of fragmentation haunted them.

## DISCUSSION

As we have shown, high school graduates entered the world of college athletics and underwent a fundamental transformation. Thrust into a whirlwind of adulation and celebrity, they reacted to the situation through a process of simultaneous self-aggrandizement and self-diminishment. The gloried self expanded, overpowering all of their other statuses and self-dimensions; it became the aspect of self in which they lived and invested. They immersed themselves single-mindedly in this portion of their selves, and the feedback and gratification they derived from this identity dwarfed their other identities. They had not anticipated this situation, but gradually, as they were drawn into the arena of glory, they were swept away by stardom and fame. Their commitment to the athletic self grew beyond anything they had ever imagined or intended. Once they had experienced the associated power and centrality, they were reluctant to give them up. They discarded their other aspirations, lost touch with other dimensions of their selves (even to the point of detachment), and plunged themselves into the gloried self.

Athletes' gloried selves arose originally as dramaturgical constructions. Other people, through the media or face to face, conferred these identities on athletes through their expectations of them. Athletes responded by playing the corresponding roles because of organizational loyalty, interactional obligations, and enjoyment. Yet in contrast to other roles, which can be played casually and without consequence, athletes' actions in these roles increased their commitment and their self-involvement in them and made the athletes "more or less unavailable for alternative lines of action" (Kornhauser 1962, p. 321). The gloried self not only influenced athletes' future behavior but also transformed their self-conceptions and identities. This finding refutes Goffman's (1959) notion that selves are merely masks without substance

behind them; it supports Mead's (1934) view that people have anchored selves which grow, decline, and change as a result of their experiences. The entire process, moreover, illustrates the relationship between dramaturgical roles and real selves, showing how the former comes to impinge upon and influence the latter.

The gloried self is not a newly emergent form of self-identity; gloried selves have existed throughout history, as we learn from the biographies of people as diverse as Marilyn Monroe, Martin Luther King, George Patton, Gandhi, and the Beatles. Characteristically they arise among groups that generate public "stars": military heroes, entertainers, leaders of social and religious movements, popular politicians, and athletes, among others (Goode 1978; Klapp 1962). Although this form is not new, it is a concept which has not yet been articulated analytically. It augments the literature on the self and on self-identity by suggesting another dimension of the self, one which takes its place in what Turner (1978) calls the individual's "role repertoire."

In introducing the concept of "master status," Hughes (1945) referred to an individual's position in society as it is influenced by the most salient role in his or her repertoire. As such, the master status influences individuals' interaction with others by affecting the way in which others perceive, interpret, and define them and their behavior. The master status, then, is critical to individuals' place in society. As the position most central to their lives, the master status also influences or determines other roles or identities in individuals' role repertoires. It is germane to the structure and position of the various roles or identities that constitute the total self. These identities shift over the course of individuals' lives; as a result they ascend or fade, and the master status changes. Yet Hughes offered no explanation of the dynamics underlying the shift among roles and causing one role to assume a master position over available alternatives.

Our research discloses the process by which a master status emerges. One role, whether new or already in existence, ascends from its former stature to a position of prominence or "psychological centrality" (Rosenberg 1979) in an individual's constellation of identities. In the case of the basketball players we studied, the athletic role

became dominant through the creation of the gloried self within it. It drew its strength from a combination of internal push and external pull factors: internal forces included the promise of fulfilling players' dreams, the ability to make them feel important and famous, and larger-than-life media stature; among the external factors were the demands of the athletic scholarship, reinforcement of the role by athletic role-set members, and the status of this role as the primary identity conferred on athletes by other people. As the athletic role rose to prominence, it captured the athletes' self-involvement. Moreover, if "the strength of a commitment can be measured by the number of social spheres for which it enforces lines of action" (Kornhauser 1962, p. 322), the dominance of the athletes' athletic role over social and academic spheres contributed to their growing commitment to this role and to its ascent to master status. Thus the other dimensions of their identity were relegated to what Hughes called subordinate statuses.

Not only did players receive less gratification from these other roles; they also distanced themselves from them and lost much of their desire and ability to see the world through them. The longer the gloried, athletic self served as their master status, the harder the athletes found it to conceive of any other identity for themselves. This master status spilled over and infused other facets of their selves, a point that Turner (1978) discusses in his concept of "role-self merger." It became the generative category from which all others took their meaning. Thus it became aggrandized; as a result, the athletes' other roles and statuses were constricted or transformed.

Schur (1971) discusses the process of "role engulfment," whereby individuals engaged in deviant activities become increasingly centered around their deviant role through the effects of labeling; this process leads to changes in self-concept and to activities of secondary deviance. Supports to a legitimate self-identity are withdrawn, and the individual is left with only the deviant role. Schur's study highlights the effect of external forces on individuals' engulfment in a role, but it is incomplete; he neglects to consider the internal pressures that involve deviants further in their roles. Athletes' engulfment by the glorified self was fueled both internally and externally. They developed gloried selves as

new, more powerful, more alluring identities were set before them. Then they chose to diminish the salience of other self-dimensions (see Adler and Adler 1987b) in order to seek fulfillment from the new, intoxicating identity. In doing so they shunted aside significant others associated with their former identities and sought the company of those who would reinforce the gloried self. As labeling theory implies but never states clearly, a preoccupation with one role can lead to the neglect of other roles; moreover, the labeling can be done by the individual.

Identity theorists have focused on the effects of the role-salience hierarchy on individuals' performance in various statuses or roles. In this article we augment that literature by suggesting the dynamics leading to the shifts among those statuses and by discussing the consequences of the shifts for the character of the statuses and the relationships among them. In doing so we also highlight the integrating role of the reference group in influencing evolution or modification of the self-concept. Whereas theories of social comparison, social evaluation, and self-attribution tend to set individuals' ongoing self-concept formation against the backdrop of the reference group, this research supports the normative and associative principles that lodge individuals and their sense of self within their conception of the group.

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