

COLLECTIVE MEMORY, THE NEWS MEDIA,
AND MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL'S
STEROID ERA

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ABSTRACT

News journalists are charged with documenting current events in an objective manner. As a by-product of this role, journalistic accounts are often seen outside of the cultural realm, as third-party reports that are free from personal bias or cultural influences. There is a growing body of scholarship that refutes this categorization, arguing that journalism is distinctly inside the cultural realm and necessarily influenced by societal factors. This study draws on collective memory theory, and seeks to understand how the collective memory of Major League Baseball's history influenced journalistic accounts of baseball's Steroid Era from the late 1990s up to the year 2013. Utilizing a grounded theory methodology, this study qualitatively analyzed 226 news articles from both national and local newspapers and sports magazines in the years 1998, 2002, 2004, 2007, and 2013. The researcher identified articles' narrative structures and transformations of collective memories over time. Both of these aspects were then measured against the study's stated goal of objectivity, which was to "to reach the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality" (Boudana, 2011, p. 396). The study found that the historical values with which the baseball collective identified—namely, that baseball had historically been a game of integrity—strongly influenced media coverage of the scandal. The partiality of collective memory negatively affected journalistic objectivity, as journalists often compared the current era to inherently incomplete versions of the past.

DEDICATION

For my parents, for providing me with every opportunity that I could ever ask for.

Words cannot express how appreciative I am.

For Jan, for without your guidance, support, and belief in me over the past two years, this thesis would have never been written. I am eternally grateful for everything you have done.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION	1
Literature Review.....	3
Rationale for the study	14
Methodology	16
CHAPTER 2	
DEEP COLLECTIVE MEMORY	25
1998:	28
2002.....	37
CHAPTER 3	
2004.....	49
CHAPTER 4	
2007.....	62
CHAPTER 5	
2013.....	74
CHAPTER 6	
CONCLUSION.....	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	87
APPENDIX A: ARTICLES ANALYZED IN 1998.....	94

APPENDIX B: ARTICLES ANALYZED IN 2002.....	97
APPENDIX C: ARTICLES ANALYZED IN 2004.....	100
APPENDIX D: ARTICLES ANALYZED IN 2007.....	104
APPENDIX E: ARTICLES ANALYZED IN 2013	108

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Baseball, more than any other American sport, has long been viewed as a repository of American virtue, with both sport and country seen to have been founded on the values of hard work, fair play, and equal opportunity (Butterworth, 2009; Von Burg & Johnson, 2009; Thorn, 1997). Accordingly, members of the baseball community take pride in the tradition and historical purity of America's Pastime. In the 1990s, revelations of the widespread prevalence of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) threatened to fracture the myth of innocence which the baseball collective commonly applied to the history of the sport. Over the following two decades, the controversy surrounding steroid usage in baseball exploded into what eventually became known as baseball's Steroid Era.

The Steroid Era, during which power numbers soared to record highs supposedly due to increased anabolic steroid use, is thought to have begun in the late 1980s or early '90s ("The Steroids Era," ESPN.com, 2013). Media coverage of the issue exploded after the 1998 season, in which Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa both broke Roger Maris' single-season home-run record, only for both athletes to later be linked to performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). In the years that followed, baseball superstars such as Barry Bonds, Alex Rodriguez and Roger Clemens were all linked to steroid usage, leading to several very public and heavily reported court cases. Throughout the last decade and a half, media coverage of the issue has been overwhelmingly negative (McCollough, 2006). Von Burg and Johnson (2009) found that much of the negative discourse

surrounding the steroid era is fueled by sports writers' "nostalgia," which led them to yearn for a time when baseball was allegedly purer.

Rather than an objectively historical account, however, nostalgic memories are often framed through the use of collective memory, as a means of reconstructing the past to better conform to our present day needs (Zelizer, 1995). Of the four American major sports leagues, Major League Baseball is the one with perhaps the most sordid history, with gambling scandals and racial segregation among the many indiscretions that have marred the league (Nathan, 2005). By using nostalgic narratives of a past that remember only virtuous persons and events while "forgetting" other, more disreputable figures, journalists framed the controversy in a manner that did not reflect objective reality.

This is problematic, as a crucial responsibility of the journalism industry is to act as the recorder of history (Zelizer, 2008). "Objectivity" is often cited as a standard to which the majority of journalists aspire (Boudana, 2011), but using partial memories of a continually reconstructed past to defend a misrepresentative contextualization of the present would see to undermine the concept. Journalists, as storytellers (Nathan, 2005; Zelizer, 2008; Zandberg, 2010; Roeh, 1989; Bird, 1990), are forced to select or omit the narratives they feel best represent the reality of the story they are trying to tell. As journalism is a society's historical record, there should be an obligation to ensure that the stories they are telling are objectively correct.

This study attempts to analyze the narratives that the media used to tell the story of the Steroid Era, beginning in 1998 and extending through 2013. Building off Von Burg & Johnson's (2009) work, the study will focus on how sports writers used a

reconstructed, nostalgic remembrance of baseball's allegedly pure past to defend their contemporary interpretations of the Steroid Era.

* * * * *

Literature Review

The following literature review reflects contemporary academic consensus on collective memory, the roles that journalistic tradition and narrative structure play in memory's construction and perpetuation, collective memory's impact on media objectivity, and the reciprocal effects that collective memory and sports media have on each other.

Memory studies conducted in the 19th and early portions of the 20th century situated memory within the realm of psychology. Early psychologists viewed memory as a cognitive function through which people recalled past events just as they happened, or at least with minimal explainable differences (Zelizer, 1995). According to Zelizer, sociologists in as early as the 1930s felt that the model of memory as a tool for individual retrieval did not sufficiently explain the process, and began to move the focus of memory studies from an individual psychological perspective towards one situated in sociology.

Frederic C. Bartlett's (1932) book *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* is a classic early example of memory being studied as a social process. Bartlett contended that memory was socially constructed, and that people remembered events through a shared social framework. Two decades later, in a landmark work entitled "On Collective Memory," French philosopher and sociologist Maurice

Halbwachs echoed Bartlett's findings. He writes, "there are as many ways of representing space as there are groups" (1950/1980, p.14), suggesting that memory is necessarily framed within a particular group's social context, which in turn, for the purposes of the present paper, raises questions about the validity of all historical accounts, a point that will be discussed later in the literature review. This idea of memory as existing within a malleable, shared framework forms the baseline for memory studies in the modern day.

Towards the end of the 20th century, scholarship on memory largely accepted the important role that social context plays on the general public's remembrances of past events. While a study of the literature on collective memory demonstrates that no two definitions of the subject are exactly the same, there are certain basic premises that are universally present. Zelizer (1995) offers six of memory's defining elements: collective memory is processual, unpredictable, partial, usable, particular and universal, and material. It is important to note that despite breaking collective memory in a series of components, all of Zelizer's premises work in tandem with each other to unify the theory. A brief description of each element will be given, as discussion of the study's results will call on each aspect as they reveal themselves to be pertinent.

"Processual" memory refers to the idea that rather than consisting of a singular event and a specific recollection, memory is now understood to be an ongoing process in which a memory's meaning is transformed in accordance with the contemporary social context (Zelizer, 1995, p. 218, Schuman & Scott, 1989.) Commemorative events demonstrate memory's tendency to transform itself (Zelizer, 1995; Isard and Kitch, 2012.; Edy, 1999). In tandem with the "unpredictable" and "partial" natures of memory, the act of socially remembering a tragic event such as the September 11th attacks can

cause a social group to choose, either subconsciously or deliberately (Nora, 1998), to emphasize only certain and sometimes unexpected aspects of the original event. Isard and Kitch (2012) found that even in anniversary coverage of 9/11 that was meant to promote “closure,” there existed “narrative dissonance” (p. 21), in which several different narratives were communicated. Rather than universally falling in line with the closure narrative the network intended to display, each child featured in the coverage related his or her memory relative to their own specific relationship with the event, demonstrating Zelizer’s point on partiality that “no single memory contains all that we know, or could know, about any given event, personality, or issue. Rather, memories are pieced together like a mosaic” (1995, p. 223). These disjointed remembrances also confirm memory’s particular and universal aspects, whereby events can hold specific meanings for certain members of a group, while collectively representing a universal significance for others (1995, p. 230).

“Usable” memory dictates that collective memory “is always a means to something else” (Zelizer, 1995, p. 226). It can be seen as a means of understanding shared past and present relationships (Kitch, 2008; Leavy and Maloney, 2009), while acting as a roadmap for our expectations about the future (Edy, 1999). Collective memory is often invoked by politicians attempting to win support during times of war (Weldon & Bellinger, 1997; Zelizer, 1995). The use of hyperbole and fear-mongering by policy makers and journalists throughout coverage of the American War on Drugs (Denham, 1997, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Leavy and Maloney, 2009) can be seen as an extreme version of using a shared past (in this case, the culturally resonant anecdotes of

shocking drug-related deaths) in order to condition our expectations for the future (drug-related deaths will continue) as a means of reaching a goal (stricter drug legislation).

“Material” memory recognizes that collective memory “exists in the world, rather than a person’s head, and so is embodied in different cultural forms” (Zelizer, 1995, p. 232). Material memory is of specific importance to the current study, as some of the most significant carriers of collective memory are mediated texts (Zelizer, 1995, 2008; Kitch, 2008). The material nature of memory relates to one of memory’s most important functions: its capacity to promote a shared sense of identity, such as national pride, amongst a social group (Zelizer, 1995; Shahzad, 2011; Leavy and Maloney, 2009). Normalized rituals in which members of a social group participate—for instance, wedding ceremonies, art, or singing the national anthem prior to sporting events—reinforce culturally significant memories while negotiating meaning for the present situation (Leavy and Maloney, 2009).

Taken together as components of a single unified theory, Zelizer’s premises demonstrate the malleable, social nature of memory. Other scholars’ stated definitions of collective memory offer similar sentiments. Barry Schwartz (1991) states, “‘Collective memory’ is a metaphor that formulates society’s retention and loss of information about its past in the familiar terms of individual remembering and forgetting” (p. 302). Schudson (1992) defines collective memory as “social memory, referring to the ways in which group, institutional, and cultural recollections of the past shape people’s actions in the present.” Edy (1999) explains that collective memory is a “past shaped by and meaningful for a community. Communication is a critical element...communication

makes possible the unique capacity of collective memory to preserve pasts older than the oldest living individual” (p. 72).

Though the scholarship on collective memory is significant (for more, see Bartlett, 1932; Zelizer, 1995, 2008; Halbwachs, 1950/1980; Weldon & Bellinger, 1997; Edy, 1999; Van den Bulck, 2010; Schuman & Scott, 1989), Zelizer’s premises and the definitions given by Schwartz, Schudson, and Edy are sufficiently indicative of the academic consensus surrounding the social and ever-changing nature of collective memory. For this reason, more discussion specifically of collective memory’s theoretical framework will be eschewed in this section in favor of reviewing the literature on memory’s more relevant applications to the current study. In later sections of the paper focused on discussing the results of the study, more aspects of collective memory theory will be presented and examined as they become apparent throughout the analytical process.

For now, and for the purposes of the rest of this paper, collective memory can be operationalized as containing a few universal characteristics. Collective memory is not finite, but rather an ongoing social process in which communities possess a shared understanding of the present, which is used to construct interpretations of the past and condition expectations for the future. Collective memory is mutable, able to transform unpredictably based on the needs and attitudes of people in a particular social context. Finally, collective memory is present in tangible forms such as mediated texts or cultural rituals, which construct and perpetuate meaning.

This final point leads to collective memory’s most tangible impact on the current study, in that mediated texts such as journalistic news accounts are an essential site for

the conception and proliferation of collective memory. The cliché goes that journalists are tasked with writing “the first draft of history,” which informs the manner in which people in the present and those who read the account in the future will interpret a given event. From a collective memory standpoint, it follows that journalistic accounts of newsworthy events should be considered the first material representations in the construction of a memory.

Because of journalists’ weighty assignment of being the recorders of contemporary history (Zelizer, 2008), the traditional implication is that they are expected to report information as “objectively” as possible, in order to most accurately depict that day’s news. The notion of objectivity has been challenged extensively over the past few decades (Boudana, 2011), with criticisms even influencing the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) to the point that the organization removed the term from its code of ethics in 1996 (Berry, 2005). Despite the criticisms, and importantly for this study, Boudana (2011) notes that objectivity is still the norm most commonly stated by journalists as the standard to which they aspire.

But what makes an account objective? “Truth” is often cited as an important guideline, but often times in stories of national importance, the entire truth of a story is not known. In his book “Saying It’s So: A Cultural History of the Black Sox Scandal,” which analyzes the transformations that the scandal’s collective memory has undergone over the past century, Daniel A. Nathan (2005) makes it clear that his goal was not to uncover the “truth” of what happened in 1919, but simply to establish the way in which the story has been written. Nathan’s reasoning is that the absolute truth is unattainable because without actually being directly involved in the scandal, no journalists could

accurately know what exactly happened. Secondly, Nathan claims that the truth is irrelevant, because the truth changes depending on the context and perspective of the cultural narrator. Without referencing the theory, Nathan indirectly invokes postmodernism by asserting that absolute truth cannot exist.

Former *New York World* editor Walter Lippmann's take on objectivity was centered on impartiality and detachment, two other cornerstones of the modern ideal (Boudana, 2011). Breaking from the early 20th-century popular edict of obtaining objectivity through scientific empiricism and focusing on facts, Lippmann championed journalists removing all personal attachment and presenting both sides of the story equally without expressing an opinion (Boudana, 2011). This view was ultimately undone through the heavy use of propaganda by American politicians throughout McCarthyism in the 1950s and the subsequent Cold War (Cunningham, 2003). As journalists were indoctrinated to only report the facts as they were offered, politicians used this to their advantage, oftentimes portraying the enemy in negatively stereotypical, reductive terms, which the press dutifully reported without criticism (Cunningham, 2003).

The most common criticism of objectivity remarks that the standard is inherently impossible because of the unrealistic standards it places on journalists. (Boudana, 2011; Berry, 2005; Cunningham, 2003; Zandberg, 2010). This perspective assumes that there is a defined standard that journalists are supposed to meet, but Boudana's (2011) review of the criticism of objectivity found that its detractors did very little to empirically identify what journalistic objectivity actually meant. Without a defined sense of the standard, of course remaining consistently objective would be seen as impossible, because each

scholar critiquing journalistic objectivity was looking for different, albeit related, characteristics. In order to sufficiently measure the state of objectivity in today's media, a consensus must first be reached on a definition.

The rest of this study will draw on the work of Boudana (2011) and Little (1993), and will directly utilize Boudana's (2011) conceptualization of objectivity. Importantly, objectivity is not the same as "certainty" (Boudana, 2011; Little, 1993), because even positivistic scientific standards recognize that no results or evidence are ever truly infallible. Instead of absolute certainty, Little (p. 4) writes that there are "standards of belief evaluation that permit us to assess the likelihood of a given ensemble of beliefs." Put another way, though we cannot assume that what we are saying is absolutely "true," we can ensure that the *process* we took to arrive to a conclusion increases the likelihood that the facts being presented are based in reality. Boudana (2011) calls for a redefining of objectivity not as an unattainable goal, but as something that we practice, akin to fact-checking or correctly attributing information. The goal, and the standard to which this study will hold journalists accountable, is to "reach the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality" (Boudana, 2011, p. 396).

Several scholars (Bartlett, 1932; Halbwachs, 1950/1980; Carey, 1988; Zelizer, 1995, 2008; Leavy and Maloney, 2009; Isard and Kitch, 2012) established the inherent flaw in relying on journalism to provide historical accounts of significant events, in that all reporting is done within the framework of the journalist's own social context (Winfield et al., 2002; Zandberg, 2010). Boudana (2011) refutes this argument, claiming that characterizations of journalists as lacking individual agency are reductive and deterministic. Instead, she writes, "A good journalist is able to transcend his/her own

[social] conditioning” (p. 392), and can view the world outside of his/her socially determined viewpoint.

There is a growing trend amongst memory scholars to disagree with Boudana’s assessment and subscribe to the former theory, that journalistic objectivity is inevitably permeated by social context. However, Zelizer (2008), Kitch (2008), and Zandberg (2010) all note that a shortcoming of modern memory studies has been the lack of recognition placed on journalism as a critical site for memory construction. Journalistic accounts of newsworthy events are too often presumed by memory scholars to be objectively historical, when in reality they are often as much a product of social context as the event itself. As Nathan (2005) writes,

Reporters are often an integral part of the narratives they tell. In addition, a reporter’s authority frequently endures and inevitably shapes the ways in which events are later understood. In this way, reporters are actively involved in the production of history. (p. 19)

Amos Funkstein (1989) quotes Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel’s 19th-century work *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, in which the German philosopher states the intrinsic distinction between history and journalistic accounts of history, saying, “History combines in our language the objective as well as the subjective side. It means both *res gestae* (the things that happened) and *historica return gestarum* (the narration of the things that happened)” (Quote and English translation taken from Funkstein, 1989, p. 5).

The narrative structure of journalism is a key factor in journalists’ tendencies to frame news accounts based on their own social context (Winfield et al., 2002; Zandberg, 2010).

Journalists are often referred to as “storytellers” (Nathan, 2005; Zelizer, 2008; Zandberg, 2010; Roeh, 1989; Bird, 1990) who use culturally resonant narratives and

archetypes (Kitch, 2008) from the past to place current events into historical context (Zelizer, 2008). Over time, as journalistic accounts vary and narratives shift, Wright (1977) posits that factual history and contemporary views of the past are irrevocably misaligned, and that collective memories should be seen more as “myths” than history. Zandberg (2010) notes that journalists invoke the past in order to reinforce the validity of current activities but often do so in a selective manner, omitting certain aspects of memories to fortify their utilization as a guide to the present. This sort of invocation is not a memory, but a “reconfiguration” of the past (Hutton, 1988, p. 314), which Nathan (2005) claims is “far from mimetic but that reflects (and reproduces) some of the assumptions, values, beliefs, and needs of its audiences” (p. 13). For their part, journalists have not been mindful of the degree to which collective memory affects their writing and remain oblivious of their status as recorders of memory (Zelizer, 2008).

In contrast to journalists’ opinions of their roles in constructing memories, current collective memory scholarship understands that journalistic portrayals of news, events, and people *matter*, because they are the lens through which people in the future view history. Memory studies dedicated to studying journalism have heavily relied on elite news media coverage of tragic events such as the Holocaust—which has been perhaps the most widely-studied topic—political uprisings, or assassinations (Kitch, 2008; Zelizer, 1995). Outside of these rare events, however, journalism on a day-to-day basis is much more ordinary (Kitch, 2008). Kitch calls for memory scholars to extend their studies to other, less morose topics, because journalism is equally as influential on matters of so-called “soft news” as it is through coverage of tragedies. Issues related to the weather, fashion, work, and sports hold far more cultural significance and are more central to the

creation of a national and cultural identity than an event like the Watergate scandal (Kitch, 2008, p. 313). Boyle (2010) agrees, contending that sports can be seen as “making a distinctive contribution to the national and cultural life” of a country, and so should be treated with the same weight as more traditionally studied topics by both the media and academia.

Sports, and baseball in particular, have long been established as a defining feature of American identity (Parsons & Stern, 2012). Through the use of tradition and ceremony, groups create social bonds and instill a sense of identity amongst members of the community (Durkheim, 1912/2001). As sport fandom can be argued to be a quasi-religious experience, members of communities connected through sports invest heavily in the use of collective memory and identity (Serazio, 2012).

The amount of scholarship dedicated to performance-enhancing drug use in baseball has risen dramatically since the beginning of the Steroid Era. Research of steroid use in baseball specifically focused in collective memory theory remains underrepresented, but the small amount of work available is relevant to the present study. Von Burg and Johnson (2009) contended that media coverage of the Steroid Era is best viewed through the lens of nostalgia, and that the media discourses surrounding the controversy sought to repair fractures in the damaged interpretations of American identity. Butterworth (2008) found a similar connection between country and sport, comparing political discourses in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks to baseball executives' attempts to rid the sport of performance-enhancing drugs. In each case, those attempting to defend their agendas called on rhetorics of the communities' historical purity.

In terms of the narrative and thematic structures of media coverage of steroid usage in baseball, Haigh (2008), McCollough (2006), Denham (2006a, 2006b, 2011) and DeJuliis & DeJuliis (2012) each analyzed some or all of 2004 and 2005. DeJuliis' & DeJuliis' (2012) work attempted to establish the tangible effects that media reporting had on legislative and league policy regarding drugs, and argued that intense media pressure directly contributed to the proposal of drug policy in 2005. Haigh (2008) and McCollough (2006) each found that media coverage of the controversy, players, and league was framed in a negative valence after the 2004 federal investigation into the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operation and Senate subcommittee hearings in 2005.

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Rationale for the study

If the narratives used by journalists are essential components of the construction of collective memory, then it stands to reason that journalistic accounts of sports, with their heavy reliance on tradition, would be valuable resources to utilize in collective memory studies. The following study is intended to add to the body of scholarship related to collective memory in baseball.

By nature of its popular designation as the “Steroid Era,” baseball in the 1990s and 2000s is necessarily situated in direct comparison to time periods from the game’s past. The history of the game is commonly broken into time periods referred to as “eras,” with each era’s given name denoting the contemporary dominant characteristics of the game, such as the “Integration Era” of the 1940s and ‘50s which references the breaking of the color barrier. The current study is an attempt to connect modern media coverage’s

common narratives and interpretations of the Steroid Era to the baseball collective's memories of the game's allegedly innocent past. Similar to Nathan's (2005) chronological re-construction of the various dominant collective memories of the 1919 Black Sox Scandal, the study will be presented chronologically, to establish the path of the construction of collective memory as events unfolded throughout the Steroid Era.

As recorders of history, and therefore memory (Zelizer, 2008), this study contends that members of the media have a duty to their audiences and to the figures and events they cover to ensure that the stories they tell "reach the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality" (Boudana, 2011, p. 396), or more concisely, reach the standard of objectivity. Though journalistic articles are inherently "stories," objectivity is an attainable goal through proper contextualization and the application of logic and reason to reactions of any individual or event.

There is a growing body of scholarship (Carey, 1988; Zelizer, 2008; Kitch, 2008) that views journalism as distinctly inside the cultural realm, rather than accepting its popular depiction as a community of outsiders dictating accounts free from personal or cultural biases. This study intends to add to scholarship on this topic, by studying both how the media narratives of the Steroid Era transformed as the era became more deeply embedded into baseball's collective identity, and how cultural context affected media members' stated aspirations of objectivity (Boudana, 2011).

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Methodology

The current study was designed in an attempt to answer the following four research questions:

- 1) What were the dominant thematic narratives and tones employed by the media in each time period, and how did these narratives transform over time?
- 2) As Zelizer (1995) noted, collective memory is made up of several defining elements, all of which are not always simultaneously present, and is invoked in a multitude of ways. How did each attribute of collective memory manifest itself in media coverage of performance-enhancing drugs during baseball's Steroid Era, and what inferences about collective memory may be drawn from the coverage?
- 3) How did the historical values with which the baseball collective identifies influence the cultural context surrounding performance-enhancing drugs in baseball, and did this social context affect the content and tone of journalistic narratives?
- 4) How did journalism's narrative nature and use of collective memory affect objectivity in media coverage of the Steroid Era?

Using Marzolf's (1978) concept of "content assessment," the present study qualitatively analyzed 226 newspaper and magazine articles. Using the LexisNexis database, a search for "Major League Baseball" and "steroids" was conducted, which was

then filtered to include only *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *The Sporting News*. In addition, the same search parameters were used in the NewsBank Access World News database to retrieve articles from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, as LexisNexis did not offer access to this newspaper. Articles from *Sports Illustrated* were retrieved through the magazine's online archives. Lists of the articles that were analyzed for the study have been catalogued by year and are available in Appendices A through E.

The selection of these newspapers and magazines was meant to provide a representative sample of both local and national news coverage of important events and persons. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, in addition to its coverage of the San Francisco Giants and Barry Bonds, was also the hub for coverage of the federal BALCO investigation. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* covered the St. Louis Cardinals' Mark McGwire, and was thus responsible for providing local coverage of the first player to be directly associated with the Steroid Era. Bonds and McGwire were implicated relatively early in the ongoing saga, with McGwire becoming involved in 1998, and Bonds entering the controversy around 2001. This allowed more time for collective memories to be produced and re-imagined over the course of the era.

The New York Times offers a combination of local and national coverage of the controversy, with the New York Yankees' Alex Rodriguez being the most prominent player implicated in a steroid distribution ring investigation in 2013. As America's "paper of record," however, the *Times* typically covers events with a national spin as well. *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, *The Sporting News*, and *Sports Illustrated* were all chosen to provide a representative sample of national coverage.

Database searches were filtered by years, and analysis was conducted chronologically in order to more effectively document the transformations that coverage underwent over time. The years for which the dataset was collected were chosen based on major events throughout the timeline. In all years, articles from throughout the year were analyzed, rather than focusing only on the immediate aftermath of important events. As Kitch (2008) noted, though the everyday functions of journalists can lean towards the mundane, this makes them no less relevant to memory studies. The articles analyzed in a year's "down time" from a news perspective offer clues into how the collective contextually interprets an issue free from any immediate reactionary bias, which helps to answer the research question regarding the influence of journalists' social contexts on their work.

The years chosen to be studied (1998, 2002, 2004, 2007, and 2013) were selected based on the following timeline. The Steroid Era is commonly thought to have begun some time in the early 1990s. At this time, however, steroid usage in baseball was not extensively written about, and thus does not offer an opportunity for detailed qualitative analysis. Instead, the study will begin in the year 1998 (with 42 articles from this year included in the dataset), when Mark McGwire was revealed to have used the steroid precursor androstenedione. Performance-enhancing drug usage was still not a dominant discourse in media coverage in 1998, but McGwire remained an important figure throughout the era, so articles written about him are pertinent to analysis of future years. It should be noted that because of the small number of articles from the chosen publications over these 12 months, a small number of articles from other large publications were studied, including the *Chicago Tribune*, Associated Press, and *Boston*

Globe. This was done for saturation purposes, as the researcher felt that studying articles from only the chosen publications was not a large enough dataset, and as the perceived beginning of the era, it was imperative to provide a contemporary baseline for the national context surrounding performance-enhancing drug use in baseball.

In 2002 (40 articles), a new collective-bargaining agreement (CBA) was signed between MLB team owners and the MLB Players Association (MLBPA), which called for the league to implement a drug policy that included testing for steroids for the first time in league history. The federal investigation into BALCO in 2004 (52 articles) tied several world-class athletes, including two highly recognizable baseball stars, to a highly publicized federal court case. The high profile of this case led MLB Commissioner Bud Selig to appoint former senator George Mitchell to conduct an independent investigation into steroid use in baseball, with Mitchell's findings released in 2007 (50 articles). Finally, 2013 (42 articles) was selected because of the arrival of a new steroid distribution investigation, the highly-publicized suspensions of Alex Rodriguez and Ryan Braun, Barry Bonds being passed over in his first year of eligibility for the Baseball Hall of Fame, and to provide a contemporary look at the manner in which narratives had transformed since 1998.

The exclusion of the year 2005 is notable, because 2005 was an important year in the interactions between the federal government and Major League Baseball over the issue of steroids. While the 2005 Congressional sub-committee hearings set in motion many of the MLB's future actions, the hearings have been sufficiently studied in terms of their narrative structures and tangible effects by Haigh (2008), Denham (2006a, 2006b), McCollough (2006), and DeJuliis & DeJuliis (2012), amongst others. The present study

saw it fit to contribute new information to the body of scholarship, rather than rehash the sound theoretical work that was already completed. The results of these studies will be referenced during discussion of the present study's results.

In order to conduct the analysis, a database search was conducted to retrieve all articles that contained the words "Major League Baseball" and "steroids" anywhere in the article, and was then filtered to include only the publications listed above. The date limits for each search were set to "January 1, [year being studied] – December 31, [year being studied]." Moving in chronological order, articles were selected based on their relevance to the issue of steroid usage in baseball. "Relevance" was subjective here, but the researcher based an articles' inclusion on whether or not steroid usage in baseball would be considered the main topic of discussion.

Though conducting a search with such wide parameters allowed for somewhat tangential articles to be returned by the databases—such as discussions of drug use in cycling or the Olympics with just an aside mentioning baseball—it also ensured that any and all discussions of steroid use in baseball would be accounted for. Especially beginning in 2004 with coverage of the BALCO investigation, the controversy surrounding athletic PED use extended outside of sport sections and into newspapers' more traditional news sections. Using wide search parameters ensured that coverage of the issue would be analyzed from all sides of the debate, which will be useful in identifying how a writers' cultural context affects objectivity.

The researcher included both hard news articles and commentary pieces in the dataset. Though commentary pieces are not typically assessed against the popular notion

of objectivity, the operationalized definition this study is working under—Boudana’s (2011, p. 396) conceptualization that sees the goal of objectivity as “reaching the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality”—applies to opinion pieces as well. Commentators are entitled to their own opinions, but because of the cultural importance of their positions as recorders of memory, commentators also have a responsibility to ensure that their opinions are logically sound. The problem is not whether or not journalists take sides for or against an issue or an individual player; this is natural, given the competitive nature of professional athletics. The concern is whether the argument is made, in a sense, correctly.

With that said, a critique centered on objectivity is necessarily a critique of the information presented by the journalist. If, for example, the historical integrity of baseball as a basis for condemning steroids appears as a theme in media coverage, the standard of objectivity demands that this be a sound foundational basis. This can be construed as glorified fact-checking, but again, the stated goal of objectivity is to “reach the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality” (Boudana, 2011, p. 396). If journalists present information that is incorrect in order to support their own positions, objectivity is undermined.

Once an article was selected for analysis, the researcher took note of the date, title, author(s), publication, and where in the publication the article was located (i.e. front page of the sports section, fifth page of the news section, etc.). The location of each article was noted to account for differences in objectivity between sections of the newspaper. Guided by Marzolf’s (1978) concept of content assessment and Corbin’s and Strauss’ (1990) overview of grounded theory, the researcher then qualitatively analyzed

each article to identify notable aspects of their narrative structures. “Content assessment,” is a process of “reading, sifting, weighing, comparing and analyzing the evidence in order to tell the story” (Marzolf, 1978, p. 15). In tandem with grounded theory, which requires that the researcher accounts for all possible themes and information before any can be discounted (Corbin and Strauss, 1990), the early stages of the analysis yielded much more eclectic results before patterns began to emerge.

Over time, the most commonly noted aspects of coverage included repeated narrative themes, any conscious or unintentional invocations of collective memory, quotes and the sources from which they were attributed, any time a journalist introduced his/her own opinion into the article, and any logical fallacies used by journalists that demonstrated a failure to think critically about the arguments they were making. The *absence* of certain information was also noted, as an important trait of collective memory is its partiality (Zelizer, 1995). The researcher identified which aspects of a story or memory a journalist chose to exclude from the narrative structure, the possible reasons for doing so, and how this exclusion affected the story’s tone and the audience’s understanding of it. At the conclusion of the article, the writer’s “general tone” was identified, which could often be seen a proxy for the collective sentiment surrounding a player or event. In each progressive year, narrative templates and themes similar to those seen in previous years were compared to determine how the collective consciousness had transformed.

Mirroring the manner in which the study was conducted, the following chapters will discuss the results chronologically. The results are presented in chronological order to demonstrate how the events at the beginning of the study, and the collective’s

memories of them, affect the context in which future events are interpreted. The chapters will begin with a brief summary of the time period's major qualitative results and an overview of the relevant theoretical principles that pertain to them. This will be followed by an extended discussion of the results and theory. Each subsequent chapter will discuss the next selected time period, with the exception of Chapter 2, which will include results from both 1998 and 2002.

Using an historical timeline of facts and events as a guide, the extended discussion of results will analyze the dominant thematic narratives from each time period to establish the social context that surrounded performance-enhancing drugs in baseball, and demonstrate how those narratives and themes shifted over time. The narrative structures journalists used to tell their stories as new information was made public or a significant event occurred will be identified. The objectivity of articles will be critiqued in relation to the degree to which collective memory caused journalists to incorrectly contextualize a situation based on a distorted version of historical reality.

In his work on the various permutations of the collective memory of the 1919 Black Sox Scandal, Nathan's (2005) intentions resemble those of the current study:

Rather than suggest that those who construct the news are not adept at doing so— for they are— I presuppose that how journalists and editors craft the news is essential to understanding its cultural and historical significance. So although the news offers us privileged renditions of social reality, it does not offer us transparent, unproblematic versions of it. (p. 13)

The study is not meant to be an attack on journalists' credentials as recorders of memory or on the journalism industry in general. Instead, it should be seen as a critique

of which aspects of the stories that have been told by journalists over the past 15 years match that of impartial history, and which have been commandeered and transformed by collective memory.

CHAPTER 2

DEEP COLLECTIVE MEMORY

Chapters 2-5 will each adhere to the same basic structure. They will begin with an overview of the pertinent theoretical concepts to be discussed in the chapter, and a brief summary of the chapter's major qualitative results. This will be followed by a cataloguing of the narratives that were most frequently identified during the time period, interspersed with theoretical discussions of the results as they relate to collective memory.

* * * * *

Though analyses of articles from 1998 and 2002 were conducted separately with the intention of presenting the results in separate chapters, media coverage in each of these years is most accurately represented as the product of what Wertsch (2008) refers to as "deep collective memory" (p. 137). Therefore, results from 1998 and 2002 will each be discussed in Chapter 2. A theoretical explanation of deep collective memory will be provided, followed by a discussion of the concept as it pertains to baseball's media coverage in 1998 and 2002.

The underlying and largely unspoken tone evident throughout media coverage in 1998 and 2002 is the collective assumption that baseball had always been, and continued to be, an inherently fair and unsullied game. In this view, heroes and their achievements from past generations are, unconsciously, viewed in a context-less vacuum, disconnected from the realities of racial segregation, individual scandals, and the evolution of the

Major League Baseball from its grassroots beginning to its current iteration of a multi-billion dollar athletic industry. As each name and number takes on its own culturally-constructed significance as the legends are told and re-told in the ensuing decades through the use of cultural archetypes (Kitch, 2008), the people and statistics have come to be seen as symbolic representations of the game's pure past.

Collective memory influences our interpretations of the past by filtering our remembrances through our understanding of the present (Kitch, 2008; Leavy and Maloney, 2009). Wilson (2005) contends that collective memory's effects are best witnessed on a macro level, through the way that memory contributes to development of a society's ideology by subconsciously ingraining in a social group the attitudes and values on which it was built. Wertsch (2008) argued that rather than conceiving of the term "collective memory" broadly, as an all-encompassing concept related to any remembrances of an ideological past, its manifestations and impacts should be dissected further. He argued for the existence of a second level of abstraction, called "deep collective memory."

Wertsch claims that memory is cultivated through a series of individual narratives, which he labels "specific narratives" (2008, p. 140). Specific narratives refer to stories told about a particular date, event, or other concrete subject. A second level of abstraction, called a "schematic narrative template" (p. 140), is a more generalized structure under which several specific narratives can be manipulated to conform. These narratives are typically much further ingrained in a community's ideology and usually go unnoticed by the people who employ them, thus making them very resistant to change (p. 151).

Sport is considered to be hugely important in contributing to national identity (Maguire, Poulton, and Possamai, 1999). As America's athletic pastime, baseball is a source of national pride for Americans, contributing heavily to the nation's ideological values (Butterworth, 2008; Briley, 1992). Birrell (1981, p. 357) argued that veneration of athletic icons "indicates affirmation for the abstract values for which [they stand]." During the sport's formative years, baseball "became the great repository of national ideals, the symbol of all that was good in American life" (Thorn, 1997, p. 6). As America developed its own ideology, which emphasized hard work, equal opportunity, and fair play (Thorn, p. 6), Birrell's (1981) theory would argue that the massive popularity of baseball, as America's pastime, indicates that baseball was also ascribed the same values. Maguire, Poulton, and Possamai (1999) found that sport plays an essential role in "keeping alive nations' dreams of their special charismas" (p. 441). Demonstrating the processual and partial aspects of collective memory, the abstract ideals that were subjectively applied to baseball allowed the collective to "keep alive the dream" of baseball as a pure representation of American ideology, while selectively discarding any person or event that might undermine this notion (Butterworth, 2008).

Birrell (1981) wrote that because it is difficult to honor abstractions such as values or beliefs, communities substitute and worship concrete representations of the values, or "totems" (Serazio, 2012), in order to express their beliefs. As the baseball collective identified with the values of hard work, fair play, and equal opportunity (Thorn, 1997, p. 6), players who are seen to embody these values are the totems through which the collective validates their beliefs. Using this argument, baseball's deep collective memory considers any threat to the game's past icons to be an attack on the

virtues with which the collective identifies. In 1998, that threat presented itself in the form of performance-enhancing drugs, and coverage of the issue in both 1998 and 2002 was grounded in the collective-memory driven basis that steroids were an affront to the game's historical integrity and credibility. Much of the discussion in this chapter will focus on the validity of this memory, because objective historical reality would argue that baseball is not as unblemished as the deep collective memory makes it out to be.

For all of baseball's virtues, its history is perhaps the most sordid of any of the four major American sports, littered with gambling scandals, poor management-labor relations and racial segregation that lasted well into the 20th century (Nathan, 2005). Impartial history and this study's standard of objectivity demand that, in addition to the sport's positive qualities, these blights be considered as equally representative of baseball's past in order to "reach the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality" (Boudana, 2011, p. 396). In failing to account for the impartial realities of baseball's past, stories that condemn steroids based on an inherently incomplete and misrepresentative perspective necessarily undermine objectivity.

* * * * *

1998

For the first year of the study, 42 articles were analyzed between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 1998 (see Appendix A for list of articles). In further filtering the search results, it becomes clear that before August of 1998, performance-enhancing drugs were not a significant part of the media discussion surrounding Major League Baseball. Between the beginning of 1998 and August 21st, when Mark McGwire was revealed to

have the steroid precursor androstenedione in his locker, LexisNexis returns only 13 results from all newspapers in the database within the search parameters “Major League Baseball” and “steroids.” After McGwire was outed, between August 21st and December 31, 1998, the number of results jumps to 205. Denham (2004) cites media agenda-building as a major factor in the eventual implementation of drug policy in Major League Baseball, and the dramatic increase in coverage of the issue in late 1998 and beyond can be viewed as the first step in this process, leading towards the eventual eruption of the topic into mainstream America a few years down the road.

Before late August, even a cursory inspection of common narratives reveal just how far outside of the media discussion steroids were. Of the 13 results returned prior to the McGwire story, the majority of articles are related to swimming, cycling, or Olympic scandals, usually with brief mentions that Major League Baseball and some other American sports leagues did not test for steroids. For the first eight months of 1998, journalists writing about performance-enhancing drugs in baseball were instead concerned mainly with the dietary supplement creatine, rather than traditional anabolic steroids,

In the 1998 season, the St. Louis Cardinals’ Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa of the Chicago Cubs were engaged in one of the most thrilling record-breaking chases in baseball history. Each had over 40 home runs entering August of 1998, and were inching closer to Roger Maris’ hallowed single-season home run record of 61. This record is considered to be one of baseball’s most sacred, and as such the chase was written about extensively during the season once it became apparent that McGwire, Sosa, and just behind the two front-runners, Ken Griffey Jr. had a realistic possibility of approaching it.

Any discussion of steroids, however, was notably absent from coverage of the chase. All of the articles returned within the “Major League Baseball” and “steroids” parameters before August 21st were about separate topics or entirely separate sports than baseball, making it clear that the thought of McGwire and Sosa using steroids to aid in their quests for the home run record was not part of the collective consciousness.

Throughout the chase, journalists attempted to statistically compare McGwire and Sosa to home run hitters from past generations. Many writers invoked the specific narrative (Wertsch, 2008) that the ability to judge players against their predecessors was a characteristic unique to baseball, because baseball was thought to have transformed the least of any of the major American sports since their inceptions. Graphics charting how many home runs McGwire and Sosa had compared to Maris at the same point in their seasons were staples in sports sections across the country, and there was a common theme of attempting to prove how similar the game was in the 1990s compared to past eras. A *Washington Post* article in August 1998 explicitly states how unchanged the game remained, claiming that McGwire, Sosa and Griffey, Jr. were hitting “under conditions that are virtually identical to players in the ‘30s, ‘40s and ‘50s” (Boswell, 1998, August 4). In 2002, baseball’s unchanging nature presented itself again when writers began to become concerned with supposed devolution of American values in the sport compared to past generations (Araton, August 11, Appendix B).

This perspective is a specific narrative that conforms to the schematic narrative template through which the contemporary collective interprets baseball’s past and present. Journalists often invoke collective memory as a means of helping to make sense of current events or predicaments (Parsons & Stern, 2012). The specific narrative that

baseball remains unchanged and unsullied fits neatly into the schematic narrative template of baseball as a pure representation of American values, while also assisting journalists in placing the home run chase into historical context.

From an objectively historical standpoint, however, assertions that baseball had not changed over the last century and that statistical comparisons could easily be made across generations are simply factually incorrect. The expansion of the league from 16 to 30 teams, the integration of African-American players, expansion of player scouting to create a global player pool, changes in ballpark dimensions, and advances in player equipment and rule changes make the modern league a far cry from its early 20th-century iteration (Burk, 2001). While the accomplishments of the hitters in 1998 were no less impressive than the achievements of those who came before them, the circumstances under which they occurred were vastly different. Wertsch (2008) noted that schematic narrative templates are often so deeply ingrained in a society that they usually go unnoticed by those who employ them, and journalistic invocations of the popular “baseball as unchanging” narrative seem to support this notion.

On August 20th, Associated Press reporter Steve Wilstein, while waiting for McGwire at his locker after a game, noticed a bottle of androstenedione inside the locker. A steroid precursor, “andro” was marketed as a dietary supplement and sold over-the-counter at the time. Andro was given the label “steroid precursor” because rather than directly injecting testosterone in one’s body, androstenedione is ingested in pill-form and is later converted to small amounts of testosterone. Despite its link to testosterone, andro had not been classified by Congress as a controlled substance, as steroids were.

The following day, Wilstein wrote an article under the headline “Drug OK in Baseball, Not Olympics” (Wilstein, August 21, Appendix A). A description of the narratives used in the article follows, as Wilstein’s story provides a generally comprehensive rundown of the most popular narratives used over the next several months.

Wilstein listed the purported benefits that andro claimed to offer, which were commonly cited to be quicker recovery from the wear-and-tear of a grueling baseball season and the pill’s ability to help build muscle mass. As evidenced by the headline, the article details why andro is banned by the Olympics, NCAA, and NFL. The majority of the focus is on how little is known about andro from a medical perspective, citing the lack of long-term studies dedicated to the supplement. Wilstein uses quotes from doctors and other professionals to identify andro as an anabolic steroid despite its “dietary supplement” classification, and lists the potentially fatal risks of steroids as identical to those presented by andro. McGwire, for his part, downplayed the risks of creatine and andro and claimed that taken responsibly, “there’s absolutely nothing wrong with them” (Wilstein, August 21, Appendix A). Perhaps naively, Wilstein seemed unaware of the controversy his article was about to unleash, saying, “No one suggests that McGwire wouldn’t be closing in on Roger Maris’ home run record without the over-the-counter drug.”

Immediately after Wilstein’s report, coverage of the issue divided into two factions of journalists: one that did just as Wilstein said they wouldn’t in claiming that andro should be banned from the sport and that McGwire’s home runs were a farce, while the other supported McGwire somewhat blindly. From a narrative structural perspective,

the aspects of the debate that each side chose to emphasize offer insights into the manner in which collective memory manifested itself throughout the era. A description of the arguments' narratives follows, after which it will be clear that both sides of the argument were advocating for a similar goal: a reaffirmation of baseball's deep collective memory. It should be noted that while the narratives mentioned below are representative of the coverage surrounding andro in baseball in 1998, the issue had yet to take hold as a widespread discourse in coverage of the sport at large.

Those who were against McGwire's andro use tended to frame their positions as a league-wide problem, placing the locus of the discussion on the league instead of the player by arguing that the drug was a steroid and that it should be banned by the sport. They mostly agreed that McGwire's home runs were the direct product of the supplement and his statistics were therefore "tainted," but the majority of their ire was more focused on the fact that the MLB considered andro to be legal while other athletic organizations had banned it. These writers leaned on the unstudied health risks of creatine and andro, claiming that until more was known about them, the supplements should be considered dangerous. Children were seen as particularly at risk, as journalists repeatedly predicted that "impressionable" (Jenkins, August 29, Appendix A) young athletes would flock to pharmacies to buy the drugs when they saw baseball players using them.

In condemning the drug, writers often invoked fear-mongering and hyperbole to sway public sentiment against andro. Skip Bayless of the *Chicago Tribune* listed domestic abuse as a potential danger, saying, "Taking andro maximizes the body's ability to produce testosterone, which can build muscles as quickly as it can destroy a man's self-control. Dangerous stuff, testosterone. Ask many women" (Bayless, September 1,

Appendix A). Despite andro being an over-the-counter supplement available at any pharmacy, The *San Francisco Chronicle*'s Bruce Jenkins called it a "black-market steroid" that McGwire gets "pure," and asks how parents would feel if their child received a "bad batch" of it in trying to emulate the slugger (Jenkins, August 29, Appendix A).

In a recurring theme, journalists opposed to andro claimed moral superiority over other members of the baseball collective by implying that they were the only ones who cared about andro use. In an article headlined "Baseball's Pandora's Box is Open," *The New York Times*' William Rhoden calls creatine use an "epidemic," and disparages fans of the game for their lack of scorn for McGwire, claiming, "fans don't seem to mind; [there were no] negative signs, no catcalls. Either we've suddenly become more compassionate, or the routine failures of would-be heroes and heroines have made us collectively impervious to shame" (Rhoden, August 27, Appendix A).

Conversely, rather than offering rebuttals to criticisms of the pill, those who supported McGwire tended to support the *player*, while downplaying both the performance benefits and health risks of andro. McGwire's hard work and dedication to his health and his craft were cited as reasons for his hulking stature and extraordinary ability to hit home runs. McGwire's charity work and his status as an upstanding citizen who represented the integrity of the game were narratives commonly used as rebuttals, in place of any direct response to the validity of the other side's claims of cheating.

The cruxes of many writers' arguments were based on two rather myopic rationalizations. First, though andro was banned in other athletic organizations (with the

Olympics being the most commonly-cited entity), it was not outlawed by Major League Baseball, which for McGwire supporters rendered any criticisms of its ethical use in the sport to be invalid. Secondly, it was available as an over-the-counter supplement, which in turn meant that it was not a steroid, as steroids were illegal without a prescription.

Exemplifying both of these rationalizations, a common device used to downplay andro's performance benefits and health risks was to compare it to other harmless food-related items. The *NYT*'s Ira Berkow (Berkow, August 27, Appendix A) claimed andro was just next in the progression of things that McGwire had eaten throughout his lifetime to make himself stronger: "he began with lemonade, escalated to oranges and candy bars (Snickers, he said) and on to broccoli and -- it's true -- spinach." Dan Shaughnessy of the *Boston Globe* attacked the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) credibility, rationalizing that since the IOC had limits on how much caffeine its athletes could intake, andro must be no worse (Shaughnessy, August 26, Appendix A). This type of attack on the IOC's credibility was common, as many writers, in defending McGwire, tried to showcase the many missteps the IOC had taken in years past, while sidestepping the validity of the ban on andro.

It can be argued that both factions of journalists—those who condemned andro and those who supported McGwire—were using the same collectively-constructed schematic narrative template that sees baseball as inherently pure and fair, and its athletes as heroes. This template allows for seemingly contradictory narratives to each contribute to the collective memory (Wertsch, 2008), because the underlying basis for the arguments conformed to the same schematic narrative template and advocated for the same goal: a

return to baseball's status quo (Wilson, 2005) and the confirmation of the community's deep collective memory.

By rebuking the league's implied condoning of steroids and the fan's ambivalence towards them while giving a relative pass to McGwire (Denham, 2004), journalists legitimized their contemporary interpretation of the sport's history. The fault was not with the inherent nature of the game as a competitive enterprise or with inconsistencies in the way baseball's history is remembered, but rather with the current league executives who allowed the drugs to permeate the sport. McGwire, on the other hand, though his numbers may have been aided by andro, was still playing within the rules, and therefore should not have been punished, allowing the athlete to remain a totem of veneration (Birrell, 1981). By pressuring the league to change its rules and scolding the fans for not caring enough about what drugs were doing to the game, it seems that journalists were attempting to exorcise the immediate crisis and confirm baseball's purity. Similarly, those who supported McGwire by emphasizing his status as a role model and his dedication to the game—rather than condoning his andro use—justified their positioning of McGwire as equally deserving of the hero archetype as Maris and Ruth.

On September 7th, 1998, coincidentally while playing against Sosa's Cubs, McGwire beat Sosa to the home run record with his 62nd home run. As this was the most significant record to be broken in baseball since the mid-1970s, media coverage of the moment was abundant. In what will prove to be a stark departure from the coverage surrounding Bonds' eventual takeover of the career home run record, any mentions of andro or steroids were largely absent from coverage in the days leading up to and following the home run. A cursory LexisNexis search offers evidence of the lack of

discussion about andro use surrounding McGwire's record. A search between the dates of September 1st and September 20th of 1998 for newspaper articles containing the words "McGwire" and "record" returns 2,244 articles. Conversely, when the word "andro" is added to the previous search along with "McGwire" and "record," the database returns only 56 results, and the number drops even lower when "andro" is replaced with "steroids." When McGwire broke Maris' record, performance-enhancing drugs were simply not a significant part of the collective discussion.

McGwire finished the 1998 season with 70 home runs, with Sosa also topping Maris in totaling 66 home runs. Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig announced plans to commission a study on andro in the following year, with the help of two researchers from Harvard. The results of the study, released in February 2000, found that andro consumption did result in slightly elevated testosterone levels. More importantly, it also increased levels of estrogen, which could result in breast enlargement and heart disease in men (Justice, 2000). Selig announced that until more studies had been conducted detailing andro's long-term effects, it would remain legal in baseball. McGwire later claimed to have stopped taking andro after the 1998 season, and retired in 2001 after dealing with chronic knee problems.

* * * * *

2002

By 2002, the national conversation had moved beyond creatine or andro, and steroids had begun to take shape as a common subject of discussion across the sport. After Maris' 61 had stood its ground as the single-season home run record for 37 years, it

had since been surpassed six times, with the new high-water mark being set by Barry Bonds in 2001, when he belted 73 home runs. Steroids had not yet exploded into dominating discourse the way they would in 2004 and beyond, but Bonds' assault on the record books raised considerable suspicion (Rosenthal, April 15, Appendix B).

Many of the articles written in early 2002 mention baseball players' "secret" use of steroids, because no player, active or retired, had ever admitted to nor been caught using them. Writers, players, and people in team management acknowledged that steroid use was occurring, but the media painted a picture of it happening in the shadows. In late May, former player Ken Caminiti became the first player to be directly associated with using steroids when he admitted his use in an interview with *Sports Illustrated* (Verducci, June 3, Appendix B), a year after his retirement from the game. Though not a superstar on the level of McGwire or Bonds, Caminiti was the National League MVP in 1996 and was a three-time All-Star, and was well-known in the baseball world.

Caminiti initially said that about half the league was using steroids, but later claimed that this number was coaxed out of him by the reporter and called baseball "a relatively clean sport" (*Washington Post News Services*, May 31, Appendix B). In the immediate aftermath of Caminiti's confession, there was a flurry of articles concerned with Caminiti's initial, extremely surprising estimate, many of which took on moralizing tones. The *Washington Post's* Thomas Boswell claimed that all players had a choice:

"Either use illegal drugs that may do serious long-term damage to your health, or watch as others who do use steroids cheat you out of the money, the fame or the records that ought to be yours if the playing field were truly level. The devil could hardly concoct a more perfectly sinister moral dilemma. (May 30, Appendix B)

The press reaction to Caminiti's *Sports Illustrated* confession was covered heavily by sports commentators. Conversely, reports about his recantation and the more reasonable estimates from players and coaches that placed the percentage of users at around 10 to 20 percent were typically covered in less dramatic terms in more traditional news formats (Hermoso & Kepner, May 30; Strauss, May 30; Antonen, May 30; Appendix B). When the retraction was written about by sports commentators, Caminiti's initial estimate still seemed to be given more credence. Jon Saraceno of *USA Today* acknowledged Caminiti's retraction, but disregarded it, saying, "Too late, Cammy. I believe your first version, that steroid use is epidemic. The sport has booted away much of its integrity" (Saraceno, May 31, Appendix B).

A few weeks after Caminiti's confession, a U.S. Senate subcommittee held a hearing with MLB players and owners to discuss steroid use in the sport. The subcommittee urged the league to establish a testing program for steroids (Heath, August 8, Appendix B), as at the time, the league only tested for illegal recreational drugs. The MLB Players Association (MLBPA) had notoriously opposed drug testing, on the grounds that it was an invasion of privacy. With the league's collective-bargaining agreement having expired during the previous season, the often-contentious negotiations between the MLB and MLBPA were already the dominant storyline surrounding baseball for much of the summer. Caminiti's confession, the subcommittee hearing, and memories of the 1994 CBA negotiations that resulted in a work stoppage and cancellation of the World Series created an environment that pushed steroid testing to the forefront of media coverage of the sport.

The subcommittee hearing over steroid use in baseball was the latest evidence that beginning in 1998 with the revelation of McGwire's andro use, a moral panic had taken over media coverage of the issue, based on Goode and Ben Yehuda's (2010) conceptualization of the term. Their work *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance* (2010) identified several key features of the phenomenon, including concern, hostility, consensus and disproportionality (p 37-41).

Concern can be shown in a variety of ways in moral panics, with a primary source typically coming in the form of a heightened level of media coverage (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2010). The increase in the amount of articles written about the controversy, beginning in late 1998 and rising steadily for the next decade, indicates that discussion of steroids rose dramatically. Importantly, the concern shown must see the behavior in question as a threat to the well-being or basic values of society (Cohen, 2004; Mazzarella, 2007; Springhall, 1998). Repeatedly, journalists claimed that the continued proliferation of steroids would damage the integrity and credibility of the sport and the health of children who looked up to athletes caught using PEDs. A *USA Today* article claimed steroids were "the most serious credibility issue in the game" (Brennan, July 25, Appendix B). An article from *The Washington Post* said that testing for steroids would "restore a semblance of integrity in competition" (Miklasz, May 30, Appendix B). The negative impact that andro and steroid use by professional athletes would have on "vulnerable" children was established as a primary concern throughout coverage in both 1998 and 2002. In separate *NYT* articles, athletic surgeon Dr. James Andrews claimed, "They don't have any healthy kids left," and "There's something different going on with kids" (Olney, March 31, June 3, Appendix B). In addition to his concern shown for the

affected children, Andrews also exemplified another characteristic common in moral panics: proselytizing from perceived “elites” (Mazzarella, 2007).

Hostility is then directed towards those that society feels is responsible for the unacceptable behavior (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2010). Goode and Ben Yehuda (2010, p. 35) write that a “major cause of the problem is, some say, society’s feeble and insufficient efforts to control the wrongdoing.” Journalists often placed the blame on the league for failing to institute a drug testing policy, claiming that MLB intentionally ignored the issue because increased offensive numbers were beneficial to the popularity of the game (Verducci, June 3; Kindred, August 19; Shipley, May 29, Appendix B). In addition, players who used steroids were condemned, because their use jeopardized baseball’s level playing field (Boswell, May 30, Appendix B; Olney, March 31, Appendix B). A solution to the problem is often to re-strengthen efforts to control the problem (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2010, p. 35). As CBA negotiations were ongoing, calls for the implementation of strict Olympic-style drug testing were prevalent (Araton, August 11; Dickey, June 4; Knapp, May 30; Anderson, June 1; Appendix B).

Consensus that the behavior in question is a threat to societal values, as admitted by Goode and Yehuda (2010, p. 39), is relatively subjective in this context, as it is impossible to judge exactly when a significant enough consensus is reached to constitute a moral panic. Though this study does not have nearly the amount of volume to definitely state that opinions on steroids in baseball were definitively negative, the quantitative work of McCollough (2009) indicates that this was indeed the case. In terms of the media coverage analyzed in this study, only one article in 2002 downplayed the significance of

the controversy, a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article that theorized that the scandal would “blow over” (Durando, June 2, Appendix B).

Importantly for an episode to be characterized as a moral panic, the level of concern shown about the damage that the unacceptable behavior could potentially cause must be disproportional to the actual threat (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2010; Mazzarella, 2007; Cohen, 2004). The news media often exaggerated the problem beyond its actual scope, exemplified by the repeated description of steroid use in baseball as an “epidemic” (Rhoden, August 27, Appendix A; Saraceno, May 31, Appendix B; Lopresti, May 30, Appendix B.) In addition, the potential consequences of steroid use were exaggerated, such as the 1998 *Chicago Tribune* article identifying domestic violence as a potential effect of andro use without any sort of context offered (Bayless, September 1, Appendix A). An article in *The Washington Post* (Boswell, May 30, Appendix B) summed up many of the arguments utilized in coverage of the controversy, claiming that steroid use, “distorts the game, defaces the record book and calls every honest man's achievement into question. It can also kill you.”

Goode and Ben Yehuda's (2010) conception of disproportionality can also be shown through societal fear of a slippery slope. They write,

The threat this evil presumably poses is felt to represent a crisis for that society: something must be done about it, and that something must be done now; if steps are not taken immediately, or soon, we will suffer even graver consequences. (2010, p. 35)

Illustrating this fear of dire consequences if steroids were not quickly regulated, Knapp (May 30, Appendix B) wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “The next generation needs protection. If Major League Baseball doesn't institute aggressive,

random testing in the next two or three years, it might as well tell every kid with big-league dreams to start shooting up now.”

Other author's characterizations of moral panic all reference the same ideas as Goode's and Ben Yehuda's. Moral panics arise when a group of people or behavior are seen as threatening to societal values, leading to an uprising of concern. The press then presents the issue out of proportion with the actual threat offered, and calls for government or legal intervention are made before the issue eventually fades away, often after the behavior had been either self-regulated or addressed through government legislation (Cohen, 2004; Mazzarella, 2007; Springhall, 1998). Analysis of media coverage in 1998 and 2002 indicates that the controversy over PED use in Major League Baseball meets all of these requirements.

Mazzarella also notes another critical aspect of moral panics: the current problem a society faces is seen as inherently different and more morally corrupt than those faced in the past (Mazzarella, 2007). Collective memory can be noted for its role in this perception, due to the fact that communities often revert to distorted, nostalgic remembrances of the past when faced with adversity (Wilson, 2005). Rather than critically appraising our conceptions of the past and facing the difficulty immediately, people often use nostalgia as an “escape” to retreat to a more comfortable ideological place until the crisis passes (p. 45). Journalists repeatedly forgave some of baseball's historical icons for their indiscretions—Hank Aaron and Willie Mays, despite infamously having routinely taken amphetamines before games (Los Angeles Times Archives, 1985), were lauded as “respectable leaders,” and Babe Ruth, a notorious alcoholic, gambler, and womanizer (Vail, 2001), was said to be a “playful product and symbol of his Roaring 20s

environment” (O’Neill, August 11, Appendix B). Steroid use, conversely, was “contemptible behavior, far worse than an old-time boxer putting a horseshoe in his glove” (Boswell, May 30, Appendix B).

Wilson’s (2005) description of collective memory’s role in “maintaining the status quo” (p. 42) offers a similar sentiment to Wertsch’s deep collective memory. While she takes exception with the neo-Marxian notion that the ruling class deliberately utilizes memory as a tool for the reification of social structures, she points to collective memory’s critical role in establishing a group’s ideology as evidence that we use adulterated iterations of the past when shaping our interpretations of the present. Over time, as communities distort their versions of the past to make it appear more appealing (p. 45), the distorted version becomes, in a sense, more “real” than objectively historical reality. Nostalgia, then, is a form of invocation of collective memory that causes people to desire a return to a status quo that never actually existed.

Supporting this notion, Von Burg and Johnson (2009) contended that coverage of the Steroid Era is best understood through the lens of nostalgia, as baseball writers were eager to exorcise steroids from the game in order to return baseball to its unsullied, natural state. Writers who, in 1998, tried to compare statistics across eras on the basis that baseball had not changed since its inception were using a distorted remembrance of the past to legitimize their present interpretations of the game. This comparison assumed that the status quo had remained constant throughout the previous century, despite overwhelming evidence of the enormous changes that Major League Baseball had undergone (Burk, 2001). The moral panic of 2002 demonstrates a similar desire to return to a simpler time, exemplified by people excusing past icons’ faults while vilifying

current players for similar indiscretions. Charles Yesalis, Penn State professor and an expert on athletic PED use who was commonly used as a source by journalists reporting on steroids in baseball, was quoted in a 2002 issue of *The Sporting News*: “I’m bothered by the fact these chemically-enhanced athletes are breaking records of my idol, Mickey Mantle, where my strong belief is these clowns couldn’t carry Mantle’s jockstrap” (Kindred, 2002, August 19, Appendix B). A Yankee legend, Mantle was widely known to have been an alcoholic and amphetamine user (Leavy, 2010).

Closing out the cycle of moral panic described by Mazzarella (2007), the wave of media controversy led to government hearings, and eventual voluntary self-regulation by the industry supposedly at fault. On August 30, hours before the MLBPA was set to go on strike and cancel the rest of the season, team owners and the union reached an agreement on a new CBA, successfully avoiding a work stoppage for the first time since the 1960s (Chass, August 31, Appendix B). Included in the new CBA was the implementation of testing for anabolic steroids, albeit on only a two-year exploratory basis, under which there would be no disciplinary action. Beginning in 2003, random tests would be administered, and if a predetermined percentage of players tested positive, a punitive system would be implemented the following season (Chass, March 3, Appendix C). While the program was less strict than many writers had hoped for, it was nonetheless seen as a step in the right direction, and the CBA agreement was widely portrayed as an historic and successful day for baseball.

* * * * *

Media coverage in 1998 and 2002 was consistently characterized by a nostalgic, ideological view of the values journalists believed baseball to embody, while the writers displayed an obstinate refusal to critically appraise the validity of their memories. This likely is partly due to journalists being unaware of how significantly collective memory informs their perspectives (Zelizer, 2008). From an objectivity standpoint, the problem with collective memory infusing itself into journalistic narratives is that collective memory is inherently partial (Zelizer, 1995). Zelizer (1995) and Zandberg (2010) speak of collective memory's crucial tendency to "forget" certain aspects of a memory in order to facilitate an imagined higher degree of correspondence between contemporary perceptions of the past and objective history. In journalism, this is typically done through selective narration, as journalists "use historical sources, but in a selective creative manner and thus blur the lines of fact and fiction" (Zandberg, 2010, p. 8).

While the deep collective memory of baseball as a pure representation of American values is comforting—a common trait in nostalgic remembrances (Wilson, 2005)—the aspects of history that it ignores drastically alter the reality. Baseball's history to this point looks nothing like the collectively-constructed memory of it, which disregards racial atrocities and gambling scandals as far back as the 1870s (Voigt, 1976; Nathan, 2005). The only way to reconcile the collective's Puritanical myth of baseball and the objective reality of the sport's history is through conditioned cognitive dissonance and the absence of thinking critically about the past, two characteristics repeatedly evident in coverage in this time period.

The narrative nature of journalism irrevocably alters the way that future communities think about the past (Nathan, 2005; Wright, 1977; Zandberg, 2010; Hutton,

1988). The 1919 Black Sox scandal—in which eight members of the Chicago White Sox were discovered to have intentionally lost the World Series in exchange for payment from a gambling ring, and subsequently were banned from baseball for life (Nathan 2005)—is a story that every baseball fan grew up hearing, and is as much a part of baseball’s collective memory as Babe Ruth is. But despite the story’s dishonorable nature, through the use of selective narration, it has over time been transformed by the collective to somehow add to the charm of baseball’s history. The 1919 Black Sox aren’t discussed in terms of a professional team betting away the World Series; the modernized story instead focuses on “Shoeless” Joe Jackson, his quirky nickname and his incredible statistics in that World Series, while situating the team and the scandal as simply a product of the times (Nathan, 2005).

The Black Sox are a singular example. On a sport-wide level, as a similar pattern is repeated and selective narration remembers only the parts of the story that can conform to the collective’s pure and innocent images of themselves and the past, a kind of religion is formed (Serazio, 2012). Once this ideology proliferates throughout the social group, with no critical evaluation of the validity of our conceptions of the past, the distorted version is accepted without any critical skepticism (Wilson, 2005).

The fear-mongering and hyperbole used by writers in denouncing andro and steroids seemed to be a defense mechanism, intended to combat the threat posed by drugs before they irreversibly damaged the collective memory. Rather than attempt to provide reasoned analysis of the drugs’ benefits and realistic potential side effects, journalists resorted to scaring their audiences into swaying their opinions. Denham (2006b) even found that these tactics do not work, as drug messages that consistently contain hyperbole

are less effective in deterring adolescent steroid use than “accurate, factual representations.” McGwire’s supporters chose the opposite tactic by downplaying andro’s benefits and effects, portraying the pill as no more dangerous than lemonade and launching ad hominem attacks on any person or organization that disagreed. They focused instead on McGwire’s admirable traits, attempting to place him on the same pedestals as athletic icons before him to perpetuate the narrative of athletic mythicization (Serazio, 2012). 2002’s moral panic was steeped in the same flawed assumptions that baseball players of past generations were worthy of idolization, and that steroids were destroying the integrity that past eras had bestowed upon the game. In trying to present baseball players’ steroid usage in its objective socio-historical context, baseball’s collective memory guided the media conversation to a subliminal and often petty defense of the sport’s imagined ideals.

CHAPTER 3

2004

If 1998 and 2002 were the agenda-building years (Denham, 2004), in which steroids were confined mostly to speculation and the sports section, the events of 2004 saw the controversy take over front-page news headlines across the country. The baseball collective became increasingly aware of the prevalence of PEDs throughout the league, and political, legal, and athletic elites all referenced the deterioration of “the integrity of the game” due to steroid usage. Writers and fans were forced to slowly adopt steroids into the collective understanding of the sport. The vitriol and backlash displayed from those coming to grips with steroids’ alleged assault on baseball’s ideals contributed to tangible changes in both league and legislative policy.

Zelizer (1995, p. 226) contended that we invoke collective memory as a means of “defending different aims and agendas,” which is what gives memory its “usability.” Repeatedly throughout the year, politicians and media members alike invoked collective memories in calling for stricter penalties for steroid usage, both through proposed legislative means and in baseball’s policies. Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2013) differentiated between invocations of collective memory for its usability. She uses the term “collective retrospective memory” for when we talk about our memories of the past, and “collective prospective memory,” which consists of reminders of things that still need to be done. The reminders from politicians and media members were attempts to use memories of the past to defend agendas targeted at enacting specific policy changes, epitomizing collective prospective memory.

The results from this time period extend the work of Denham (2004), and contend that media coverage of baseball's steroid controversy, in accordance with the goal of collective prospective memory, contributed to the enactment of legislative and MLB drug policy proposal. In studying the enactment of drug policy in Congress in 1990 and 2004 and in Major League Baseball in 2002, Denham (2004) found that policymakers looking to more strictly regulate steroids often used information from *Sports Illustrated* articles in arguing the need for such legislation. Denham found that during the 1980s, late 1990s, and early 2000s, *Sports Illustrated* contributed heavily to public awareness of the presence of performance-enhancing drugs in professional sports, leading to the Anabolic Steroids Control Act of 1990, the enactment of steroid testing in MLB in 2002, and the Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 2004 (Denham, 2004).

The current study's analysis confirms the work of Denham (2004) on the prominence of athletic PED use in media coverage in 2004, and adds to Denham's (2004, 2006b), Haigh's (2008), and DeJuliis and DeJuliis's (2012) identification of the common narratives used by the media when discussing steroids in professional sports. The following results will argue that the schematic narrative template of baseball as a game of integrity influenced coverage from baseball journalists during this year, and that political and legal authorities and the sports media utilized the invocation of collective memory to defend their agendas.

* * * * *

After LexisNexis returned 647 and 505 results in 2002 and 2003, respectively, within the search parameters "Major League Baseball" and "steroids," the number jumps

to 1,442 in 2004 and has not dropped below 1,000 since. Amongst several other developments, 2004 saw the relationship between the federal government and the MLB intensify with the passing of new steroid legislation and a nationally publicized federal drug probe and grand jury hearing. The hearing led to the outing of two of baseball's biggest stars as steroid users in Barry Bonds and the New York Yankees' Jason Giambi.

The events of 2003 are important due to their effects on the cultural environment surrounding steroids in 2004. A brief recap of notable incidents will be discussed in order to provide background for subsequent discussion of mediated coverage in 2004.

In March of 2003, survey steroid drug testing began on the Major League level, under the 2002 collective bargaining agreement. If more than five percent of players tested positive throughout the season, a punitive system would be put in place the following year, but those who tested positive would remain anonymous and would not face punishment. In November 2003, MLB announced that between five and seven percent of the league had tested positive, which triggered the implementation of a disciplinary system (Antonen, January 22, Appendix C), which will be discussed later.

The most significant event of 2003 took place in August, when the federal government began investigating the Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative (BALCO), a nutritional supplement laboratory located outside of San Francisco. The United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) had obtained a sample of an undetectable designer steroid said to be used by several elite American athletes (Curry, February 13, Appendix C). USADA traced the origin of the drug to BALCO, and on September 3rd, 2003, federal IRS and San Mateo County narcotics agents raided BALCO's facilities (Williams &

Fainaru-Wada, October 30, Appendix C). Two days later, they raided the home of trainer Greg Anderson, a BALCO employee who was Barry Bonds' childhood friend and current personal trainer. At Anderson's home, agents found steroids, documents, and usage schedules tying the drugs to American athletes in several different sports (Sheinin, February 13, Appendix C).

The probe stayed mostly under the public radar for several more months, but concern had been growing amongst government officials. In 2003, Joe Biden, then a senator from Delaware, introduced legislation that would seek to add steroid precursors, such as andro, to the Schedule III list of controlled substances, assigning them the same designation as anabolic steroids (Fainaru, January 22, Appendix C). This bill was later passed in October 2004, leading MLB to add andro to its list of banned supplements in June 2005 (Bloom, 2004).

On January 20, 2004, during his annual State of the Union address, President George Bush surprised many in the media by calling for professional sports to crack down on steroid use and implement heavy-handed testing procedures. Bush, a member of the baseball collective due to his former position as the general managing partner of Major League Baseball club the Texas Rangers, hit on several of the thematic narratives common throughout coverage of the Steroid Era. His comments mentioned the poor example that professional athletes were setting for children, the devolution of American values in sports compared to past generations, and the long-term health risks posed by steroids (Shea, January 21, Appendix C).

Bush's words struck a cord with the baseball media collective, as they came just after the league had announced its plans for the newly-implemented punitive phase for steroid testing. The punishments were extremely limited, allowing for multiple positive tests before incurring a fine or suspension, and a suspension for a full year not coming until a player's fifth failed test (Chass, March 3, Appendix C). Many in the media took Bush's address as an opportunity to condemn the policy that they perceived to be insufficient. A major talking point amongst MLB executives, first seen in responses to questions about Bush's address and repeated throughout the year, was that the league's eventual goal was a "zero tolerance" policy on steroids (amongst others: Fainaru, January 21, Appendix C; Chass; February 13, Appendix C). Many in the media, however, felt that the penalties the league had instituted were extremely weak, and that the flawed testing design allowed for athletes to easily cheat the system (Kindred, August 19, Appendix B; Saraceno, February 25, Appendix C; Chass, March 3, Appendix C).

Here, the narrative remained the same as it was in 1998 and 2002. The media felt that the league and its fans were to blame for the outbreak of PED usage in baseball because they remained far too ambivalent to the problems presented by steroids. The enactment of a weak drug policy—which was eventually admitted to be as much by league executives due to the difficulties in persuading the MLBPA to agree to testing at all (Chass, February 13, Appendix C)—was portrayed as symptomatic of the general *laissez-faire* sentiment towards the issue.

Legal proceedings in the BALCO case intensified in February 2004, and for the first time since steroid usage in baseball had been covered extensively, the traditional news media began to cover the controversy as well. Two events—a grand jury subpoena

for the results of all of baseball's steroid tests in 2003, and the indictment of several men tied to BALCO—demonstrated a significant difference in the way that cultural context and narrative story-telling affect coverage between the traditional news media and sports journalists.

On February 10th, Mark Fainaru-Wada of the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported that the grand jury investigating BALCO had issued subpoenas for the results of Major League Baseball's 2003 steroid tests. Both the league and Players Association strongly opposed the order, as the MLBPA had only agreed to the survey testing under the condition that all names would remain anonymous and that the results would be confiscated and destroyed. Informed of this, the grand jury handed down the subpoenas on the day before the records were scheduled to be purged. If the grand jury obtained access to the list, the names could eventually become public through their inclusion in public court records (Fainaru-Wada, February 10, Appendix C).

Two days later, on February 12th, BALCO's founder and CEO Victor Conte, Bonds' friend and trainer Anderson, BALCO vice president James Valente, and Remi Korchemny, who coached several United States track and field athletes, were charged with conspiracy to distribute steroids, money laundering, and possession of human growth hormone (HGH), with a total of 42 charges divided amongst the men. (Curry, February 13, Appendix C). In his televised press conferences announcing the charges, United States Attorney General John Ashcroft made it clear that the investigation went beyond BALCO, and that the government was holding firm in Bush' commitment to rid professional sports of drugs. Ashcroft's announcement invokes collective memory-driven

narratives of professional athletic integrity, characteristics indicative of the American Dream (Hoerl, 2002), and the safety of children:

Illegal steroid use calls into question not only the integrity of the athletes who use them, but also the integrity of the sports that those athletes play. Steroids are bad for sports, they're bad for players, they're bad for young people who hold athletes up as role models. The tragedy of so-called performance-enhancing drugs is that they foster the lie that excellence can be bought rather than earned and that physical potential is an asset to be exploited rather than a gift to be nurtured. (Curry, February 13, Appendix C)

Nearly every newspaper analyzed for this study featured a story on the indictments on the front page of the following day's issue (with the exception of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*), and coverage in front page news sections was noticeably more objective than commentary on the subpoenas and indictments found in the sports sections. This study judged the goal of objectivity to be "reaching the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality" (Boudana, 2011, p. 396.) In writing about the indictments, news journalists tended to deal only in facts, reporting information as it became available, and keeping the issue restricted to its status as a criminal investigation. By doing this, journalists confined their reports to reality, allowing them to assert only things that had been proven.

An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (Fainaru-Wada, February 12, Appendix C) provided an extensive summary of the indictments and the affidavit which accompanied them, which detailed the actions law enforcement had taken over the course of the case to reach the current stage of the investigation. Other articles in *The New York Times* (Curry, February 13, Appendix C) and *The Washington Post* (Fainaru, February 13, Appendix C) provided similar reports as the one in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

While many articles in sports sections contained references to players who had been connected to performance-enhancing drugs only in rumors, news journalists largely confined their reports to only verifiable information. Notably, with the exception of Bonds, none of the articles named any specific players that could be connected to the case, and mentions of Bonds were based on his personal ties to the company and the people involved. In addition to having a long-standing relationship with his friend and trainer Greg Anderson, Bonds had also publicly advertised BALCO and had endorsed several of their products (Fainaru-Wada, February 12, Appendix C). A *Washington Post* article acknowledged Bonds' involvement and the potentially far-reaching consequences of the investigation, but situated Bonds' place in the case within only the known aspects of his association, saying, "The case is potentially explosive for all major sports, but particularly Major League Baseball, whose most prominent player, Bonds, is closely tied to Conte and Anderson, who played Little League with the Giants slugger. Bonds was BALCO's most prominent endorser" (Fainaru, February 13, Appendix C). This quote can be compared to a quote from a 2002 *USA Today* article, a juxtaposition notable for the discrepancy in tone about the potential ramifications of the controversy: "We're not exactly sure how many people are involved in this unorthodox plot to bring down the game of baseball. It could be everyone who plays in the National League West. It could be everyone in the big leagues, period" (Brennan, July 25, Appendix B).

When the indictments and subpoenas were discussed within the realm of sports journalism, articles exemplified a common narrative seen throughout coverage of the Steroid Era, with baseball writers attempting to act as moral caretakers of the game. Perhaps influenced by the ongoing court proceedings, sports journalists in 2004 were

fixated on ensuring that baseball players who used steroids were identified and properly disciplined. Many reporters took it upon themselves to make certain that the issue would not rest until some entity—whether it was the legal system, Major League Baseball, or the court of public opinion—judged players for their indiscretions. This reaction is common during times of moral panic (Goode & Ben Yehuda, 2010, p. 35).

A *USA Today* article exemplified the type of rage and moral policing common throughout the baseball media collective for much of the year, saying that reporters were “walking right up to superstars and boldly asking them to take a drug test to prove their innocence. Baseball is getting exactly what it deserves. If it won't punish players properly, the outside world will be happy to do it” (Brennan, February 26, Appendix C). Reporters confronting players with drug tests in the locker room was a common enough tactic that it was claimed to have happened several times in the past year (Brennan, February 26, Appendix C; Burwell, February 27, Appendix C). A *San Francisco Chronicle* article called the use of PEDs an attempt to “commandeer a sport chemically, [and] is worse than cheating. It's a crime” (Knapp, February 13, Appendix C). The same article claimed that being identified as a steroid user would do more damage to a player's reputation than if they were prosecuted and convicted of a crime. Another story maintained that Major League Baseball executives moved slowly on the issue intentionally, so as to not expose many of the superstars the league knew were using steroids, a hesitation that “threatened to stain the innocent” (Saraceno, February 25, Appendix C).

These types of dramatic declarations are made possible through a shared understanding of values between the writer and his audience (Kitch, 2008), and research

has found that identification with athletic totems is important in establishing and affirming a common core of values (Maguire, Poulton, and Possamai, 1999; Birrell, 1981). Adding to this research, the current study contends that the backlash exhibited by sports writers—which was importantly *not* exhibited by those in traditional news sections—is evidence that journalists are influenced by their own cultural contexts.

The anger displayed can be seen to demonstrate journalists' tendencies to use collective memory to make their stories resonate with cultural assumptions and beliefs (Bird, 1990; Roeh, 1989; Leavy and Maloney, 2009). As was the case in 1998 and 2002, the baseball collective's interpretation of steroid use saw PEDs as a threat to the schematic narrative template of baseball's historical integrity. Baseball writers who penned articles located in newspapers' sports sections were writing for an audience with a shared understanding of the present and a common set of values. As such, the intensity with which they reacted to the subpoenas, compared to the much more moderate takes found in traditional news sections, indicates that sports writers were heavily influenced by the values with which the baseball collective identified, and therefore were influenced by the cultural context surrounding the controversy.

On October 10th, Ken Caminiti, the subject of the 2002 *Sports Illustrated* article that made him the first player to be officially associated with steroid use, died of a drug overdose (ESPN News Services, 2004). Though his death was a result of a mixture of cocaine and opiates, and was unrelated to steroids (ESPN News Services, 2004), baseball journalists took his death as an opportunity to advocate for stronger steroid testing in baseball, which offers an example of Tenenboim-Weinblatt's (2013) "prospective collective memory." Caminiti's death was used by sports writers as a reminder to the

baseball collective of the dangers posed by steroids, with journalists drawing on emotional appeals with quotes such as, “I can imagine him looking down and hoping people see what happened, and he's saying, 'Look where I'm at right now’” (Knapp, October 14, Appendix C). Writers often pointed to Caminiti’s past struggles with addiction, which Caminiti had admitted to and had made public years before, as a means of connecting the present issue to a memory from the past, seeking to defend their agenda of strengthening the drug testing program. A *New York Times* article claimed, “With luck, his death will lead to even stricter testing” (Anderson, October 13, Appendix C).

The subpoenas ordered by the grand jury for the 2003 drug testing results were deemed to be over-reaching, and were instead limited to only those who were called to testify, which narrowed the scope from over 1,400 tests to only seven. Among the seven were Barry Bonds and Jason Giambi, two of baseball’s superstars (Pogash & Longman, April 10, Appendix C). In December 2004, Bonds’ sealed grand jury testimony was leaked to Fainaru-Wada and Williams, who in turn published the transcript in the *San Francisco Chronicle*. In the transcript, Bonds admitted to a close relationship with BALCO and his childhood friend and current trainer Williams, but denied ever “knowingly” taking steroids by claiming to have mistaken the undetectable designer steroids that Williams provided him for flaxseed oil and an arthritis balm (Williams & Fainaru-Wada, December 3, Appendix C). Meanwhile, many of the other athletes who had testified before the grand jury—all of whom, including Bonds, were given the same guarantee of immunity as long as they told the truth, with the threat of perjury charges for those who lied— had confessed that Bonds was often the one recruiting them to BALCO, and had occasionally been the middleman in procuring PEDs for the players. After the

testimony leaked, though many had already deeply suspected Bonds, the overriding sentiment in sports media was that this was the final straw, and they used Bonds' almost certainly disingenuous testimony as a catalyst in hoping to spur further reform.

The day after the testimony leaked, Senator John McCain announced that if Major League Baseball did not introduce a stronger testing policy, he would introduce legislation the following month (Milbank & Heath, December 4, Appendix C). McCain's call to action was framed in the media as a direct reaction to the release of Bonds' testimony, as one of the most high-profile players in the game was now directly and publicly implicated in the case. MLB executives responded quickly and vowed to introduce a tougher policy (Milbank & Heath, December 4, Appendix C), but a U.S. Senate subcommittee hearing on steroids in baseball was headed by McCain in March anyway.

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Coverage of the hearings in 2005 was not analyzed in this study, as Denham (2006b), Haigh (2008), McCollough (2006) and DeIuliis & DeIuliis (2012) have already done so sufficiently. These authors found that government figures in the hearings often drew on selectively narrated dramatic anecdotes from the past to invoke emotional reactions (Denham, 2006a). DeIuliis & DeIuliis (2012) found that McCain cited the safety of America's youth as a primary concern in introducing the Clean Sports Act of 2005. Collective memory's imprint is evident both in the fact that Congress felt the need to call the hearings in the first place, which was possibly due to baseball's status as the "American Game" (Butterworth, 2008, p. 146), and in McCain's invocation of American

children. Hoerl (2002, p. 261) noted that youth represent a culture-type of the collective memory of the American Dream, and that children are connected to “utopian images of the future.” McCain utilized this particular prospective collective memory in defending his agenda (Zelizer, 1995) of introducing stricter steroid testing. This led to the introduction of flawed legislation (DeIuliis & DeIuliis, 2012) and was followed by coverage of baseball to be characterized by an overall negative tone (Haigh, 2008).

The purpose of this chapter is not to contend that the schematic narrative template of baseball as a game of integrity was directly responsible for the enactment of new drug policy in Congress and Major League Baseball. Instead, this study argues that, beginning in 1998, the controversy over steroids in baseball was interpreted by the baseball collective as a matter of PEDs destabilizing the community’s contemporary shared understanding of baseball’s historical values. This can be seen by the constant repetitions of collective memory-driven narratives by elites and media members attempting to defend their agendas (Zelizer, 1995): Bush in his State of the Union address, Ashcroft in the press conference announcing the indictments, McCain in the introduction of the Clean Sports Act, and sports writers in their passionate defending of the game’s integrity in advocating for the release of the names of those who tested positive. These invocations were not necessarily deliberate tools or even conscious efforts to relate the current dilemma to memories of the past. Rather, they are indicative of collective memory’s robust influence on the collective’s ideological values, which many people in the baseball community feel are shared by the game and America: fair play, hard work and determination, and equal opportunity (Thorn, 1997).

CHAPTER 4

2007

By 2007, the shock of the BALCO scandal had mostly evaporated, giving way to the baseball collective becoming grudgingly aware of the widespread penetration of performance-enhancing drugs into the league. Coverage reflected PEDs' prominence, as both of the year's dominant storylines were grounded in the steroid controversy. First, there was Bonds, whose pursuit of baseball's hallowed all-time home record was the biggest on-the-field storyline throughout the season. Ever since 2004, he had been judged by the court of public opinion to be a liar and a cheat, and Bonds and the rest of the baseball collective were waiting to hear whether or not the San Francisco grand jury would charge him with perjury for allegedly lying during his 2004 testimony. The other major headline concerned steroids from a league-wide perspective. In 2006, Commissioner Bud Selig had retained former senator George Mitchell to head an internal investigation into baseball's steroid problem, with the results expected to be released some time in 2007.

In each of these cases—and in other stories throughout the year, such as McGwire being denied entry into baseball's Hall of Fame for the first time due to his steroid use—Tenenboim-Weinblatt's (2013) "prospective collective memory" was on full display, as sportswriters clamored to decipher how each of the figures and events in the controversy would be remembered by the baseball collective in the future. Talk of Bonds' "legacy" was prevalent throughout the year, ramping up as he got closer to and eventually broke Hank Aaron's record in August. When Mitchell released his report in December, calling

baseball's previous decade the sport's "Steroid Era," journalists immediately attempted to move forward, debating how the league could close the book on the Era and confine it to the past. In quickly adopting Mitchell's framing of the period as the Steroid Era and looking forward to better days, media members attempted to provide hope for the future by situating the Era as a finite period located in baseball's past.

After McGwire did not garner enough votes to earn entry into the Hall of Fame, the disparity between the tones of coverage in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and in the national newspapers represented the partial, particular, and universal nature of memory. Analysis of the coverage indicated that those in the St. Louis baseball community had either forgotten or ignored McGwire's indiscretions during his playing days, and were focused on redeeming his reputation. These memories were inherently partial, as they downplayed McGwire's negative actions in favor of emphasizing his humanitarian work and, for St. Louis fans, his likable personality. Conversely, those in the national baseball community focused on his PED use, and chose to hold it against him.

Each of these narratives were influenced by the schematic narrative template of "the integrity of the game," and each used this template to legitimize the baseball collective's interpretation of the present. On the whole, media coverage in 2007 of McGwire, Bonds, and Mitchell's report attempted to utilize the past to determine the present's future legacy.

* * * * *

Voting for the baseball Hall of Fame is perhaps the aspect of the game that is both most influenced by and most influential on collective memory. Induction into the Hall,

which is the highest honor a player, manager, or executive can receive, is representative of anointing the inductee as important to baseball's history (Gould, 1989; Parsons and Stern, 2012). Thus, members of the Hall of Fame are deemed worthy to be remembered over time, while others become lost to history (Parsons and Stern, 2012).

Voting is conducted by members of the Baseball Writers Association of America (BBWAA), an organization made up of journalists who cover major league baseball on a regular basis. When voting, writers are tasked with not only judging merit and excellence on the field, but also judging potential inductees' "integrity, sportsmanship, and character" ("BBWAA Election Rules," Baseball Hall of Fame). McGwire, on the ballot for the first time and despite probably possessing the desired on-the-field statistics (Jaffe, 2013), did not receive the required 75 percent of the votes when the results were released in January (Vecsey, January 10, Appendix D).

Though members of the BBWAA are not required to publicly release or defend their ballots, media coverage of McGwire's exclusion is representative of the common sentiment surrounding his omission. In the 2005 Senate subcommittee hearings, a teary-eyed McGwire famously refused to discuss his alleged steroid use, repeatedly claiming, "I'm not here to talk about the past" (Barrett, 2005). This was taken as a tacit admission that he had used steroids beyond his known uses of andro and creatine, and members of national publications, for the first time, took the stand that they would never vote for a player who had been connected to steroids regardless of whether he had been officially caught. A story in the *New York Times* was indicative of the reasoning of many in the sports media:

I could note that he was ordinary on defense, had a relatively low career batting average of .263, and broke down relatively early, which can be seen as a sign of reaction to performance-enhancing drugs. The New York Times does not allow reporters to vote for awards, but I would not have voted for McGwire mostly because of his pathetic performance before Congress. (Vecsey, January 10, Appendix D)

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, conversely, supported McGwire, and demonstrated a clearly differently-constructed memory of McGwire and his playing days than the one displayed in national publications. In 1998, this disparity in coverage was also present, as the *Post-Dispatch* was amongst the most vocal supporters of McGwire. The *Post-Dispatch*'s article on McGwire's exclusion, in similar fashion to 1998, lauded his humanitarian work, his role in resuscitating baseball's popularity after the work stoppage in 1994, and claimed that McGwire's PED use was simply a product of the times, as MLB had not yet implemented any rules against it (Miklasz, January 10, Appendix D). The paper portrayed McGwire as the archetypical victim who was condemned by a spiteful media corps, and advocates for his redemption through induction into the Hall of Fame.

Wertsch's (2008) concepts of specific narratives and schematic narrative templates complement Zelizer's (1995) particular and universal elements of memory here. The universal significance that an event holds for the entirety of a community—here, that steroids and the integrity of the game are in some manner inherently linked—resembles the schematic narrative template, as the community uses an event's universal significance to interpret its meaning in the present. On a more individual level, each subset of the collective is able to recall particular aspects (or specific narratives) of the memory in order to defend their own agendas (Zelizer, 1995). Both local and national coverage indicated that the universal baseball collective recognized the schematic

narrative template that steroids and the game's integrity were linked, but the St. Louis collective and the national collective selectively remembered only the particular aspects that could buttress their contemporary arguments.

Over the course of the year, it was common to see writers from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* each supporting both McGwire and Bonds. Because of their shared collective memories of the ways in which their hometown heroes were wronged, a new social group was unconsciously formed, founded on a shared understanding of the players' victimizations and hope for their redemptions. Journalists writing with a national perspective as a part of the larger baseball collective shared no such attachment to or shared past with the local players, and thus vilified Bonds and McGwire for their attacks on baseball's presumed belief system.

In excluding McGwire from the Hall of Fame, sports writers used him as a scapegoat, utilizing a process "through which a *community* rids itself of its own imperfections" (Butterworth, 2008). In scapegoating McGwire, the baseball collective exorcised the immediate crisis, and established the standard to which future PED users would be held. As the site of baseball's "institutional memory" (Parsons & Stern, 2012, p. 64), the exclusion of McGwire and all future steroid users from entering the hallowed grounds of Cooperstown served to purge steroids from the memory of the game.

Though McGwire's exclusion from the Hall of Fame was far from the most important or newsworthy story of the year, it offers a representative example of the manner in which the sports media attempted to ritually cleanse itself throughout the rest of the season, especially through coverage of Bonds. Entering the season with 734 career

home runs, Bonds was just short of Hank Aaron's all-time record of 755 (Chass, February 17, Appendix D), which is largely considered baseball's most sacred record. By this point in his career, the entire baseball collective had widely accepted that Bonds had used steroids to aid his late career surge to the top of the record books.

In 1998, though there was a subset of reporters who condemned McGwire during his record-breaking season, the prevailing sentiment was one of nervous anticipation about whether or not McGwire or Sosa would actually beat Maris' 61. Conversely, coverage of Bonds was characterized by pessimistic inevitability that Bonds would break Aaron's record, resulting in a mixture of "ambivalence and disdain" towards the player (Tucker, July 21, Appendix D). Coverage of the home run chase was heavily centered on how to react if and when Bonds broke the record. Journalists, aware of the magnitude of the record, felt that the way in which the baseball collective reacted towards Bonds would decide how both he and the collective would be remembered as part of the Steroid Era's legacy. A *USA Today* article, headlined "Era of Bonds isn't noteworthy," asked a question that was commonly discussed throughout the chase: "What will those future sports fans think of us decades from now? Won't they look at the replays of Bonds' 756th home run and ask how everyone, how anyone, could be so ecstatic knowing our own era's steroid history?" (Brennan, August 9, Appendix D).

Both before and after he broke Aaron's record in August, Bonds underwent a similar scapegoating process as McGwire had in January. Instead of becoming immortalized in the sport like Ruth and Aaron were, Bonds' accomplishments were seen as irrelevant to the sport's history, because Hank Aaron would popularly be seen as the

home run king until a clean player took the crown from him (Grady, June 21, Appendix D; Tucker, July 21, Appendix D; Brennan, August 9, Appendix D). Birrell (1981) claimed that adulation of athletes was affirmation of belief in the values which they are seen to represent. As the most sacred record in the sport, recognizing Bonds as the record-holder would be akin to marking Bonds as representative of the sport and its values, and would deem him a part of baseball history.

In order to correct this, the baseball collective, led by journalists, refused to acknowledge Bonds as the record-holder by devaluing the statistics, illustrated by a quote from a *USA Today* article: “Baseball, of all sports, sells tradition and statistics. If drug hypocrisy prevails, tradition is a lie. We merge into unreality when medical artifice creates sports heroics” (Grady, June 21, Appendix D). This was a departure from 1998, when journalists emphasized McGwire’s and Sosa’s statistics as evidence to validate their beliefs that what the players were doing was legitimate, such as the 1998 *Washington Post* article that claimed McGwire and Sosa were hitting under circumstances that were “virtually identical to players in the ‘30s, ‘40s and ‘50s” (Boswell, August 4, Appendix A).

Instead, sports writers in 2007 invoked Aaron’s and Ruth’s intangible contributions to the game, with many writers claiming that Bonds could not reach the same standards. Ruth was referred to as “the patron saint of American possibility” (Tucker, July 21, Appendix D), while Aaron “was an earnest, working-man player with steel-band wrists, [who] set his record amid racist taunts and death threats that make Bonds' march look like a waltz” (Tucker, July 21, Appendix D; Grady, June 21,

Appendix D). Conversely, Bonds was often portrayed as aloof with teammates and cold to the media (Jenkins, April 14; Nightengale, May 18a; Tucker, July 21; Appendix D). He was called an “embarrassment” to the sport (Chass, November 16, Appendix D) and a “cheater” (Saraceno, March 16, Appendix D).

Bonds’ statistics were seen as particularly shady, even by Steroid Era standards, and were directly attributed to performance-enhancing drugs because of how far they laid outside of conventional wisdom. After hitting 40 or more home runs two times in his first 14 seasons, he topped the 40-mark in all five of his age 35-39 seasons (baseball-reference.com). That stretch included his infamously-outlying 73-home run campaign at age 36, a time when most players’ careers are in steep decline. Bonds was largely portrayed as the poster-boy for the moral corruption of baseball over the past decade (Tucker, July 21; Wendel, July 17; Grady, June 21; Appendix D). Tim Wendel of *USA Today* wrote that after Bonds broke Aaron’s record, “baseball will have lost its sense of history along with what was left of its innocence. What has long separated the national pastime from other sports is the ability to compare stars through the ages. That ends with Bonds” (Wendel, July 17, Appendix D).

The coverage of Barry Bonds and Mark McGwire in 2007 can be seen as evidence that baseball’s historical values influenced the cultural context surrounding the steroid controversy, and that the social context influenced journalistic accounts. Vilification of the two athletes, especially when they were placed in direct comparison to players that came before them, was repeatedly framed as a matter of integrity, which Bonds and McGwire were seen to lack (Vecsey, January 10, Appendix D; Chass,

November 16, Appendix D; Grady, June 21, Appendix D). Calling Ruth “the patron saint of American possibility” (Tucker, July 21, Appendix D) and admiring Aaron for his work ethic and enduring of racial hardships (Grady, June 21, Appendix D) echoes the values that Thorn (1997, p. 6) claimed that the baseball collective envisions itself sharing with American identity: fair play, hard work and determination, and equal opportunity.

The partiality of these memories affects the objectivity of journalistic accounts. As stated previously, baseball’s history is far more complicated than the deep collective memory makes it out to be. Ruth was a well-known adulterer and alcoholic (Vail, 2001) and Aaron used amphetamines throughout his playing days (Los Angeles Times Archives, 1985). Arguments that steroid use had caused baseball to lose “the ability to compare stars through the ages” (Wendel, July 17, Appendix D) were based in the schematic narrative template of baseball’s historical continuity, which was commonly invoked in 1998 when writers claimed that McGwire set his record against conditions that were “virtually identical” (Boswell, August 4, Appendix A) to those in the early- and mid-20th century. This narrative is similarly weakened by its partiality, as baseball’s myriad transformations over the preceding century made the game significantly different from the game that Ruth was playing (“Baseball History,” The Baseball Page, 2012), with some changes as substantial as permitting black people to play in the league.

In 2007, analysis of coverage offers evidence that journalists used selective narration to recall only the parts of collective memories that could help them defend their agenda of denouncing Bonds as baseball’s home run record-holder. If the goal of objectivity is to “reach the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic

assertions and reality” (Boudana, 2011, p. 396), however, arguments made based on the partial collective memories of the historical integrity and continuity of Major League Baseball fall short of the standard.

Bonds finished the season with 762 home runs. Despite his continuing to be a productive player in his last few seasons (Knapp, 2008), no teams signed him the following season, and he never played in the Major Leagues again. On November 15, 2007, Bonds was charged with four counts of perjury and one count of obstruction of justice for allegedly lying under oath during his grand jury testimony in 2004 (Williams, November 16, Appendix D).

Coverage of the indictment was again split between the traditional news and sports sections of the paper. Again, significantly more objectivity was shown by news reporters, who focused on the case and charges at hand and provided insight into how the case was likely to play out. Many sports commentators, conversely, displayed the same vengeful attitude towards Bonds as they had in arguing for the release of the alleged cheaters’ names in 2004. Many writers took this opportunity to add to the narrative that Bonds was not worthy of being recognized as a significant part of baseball’s history, but instead should be filed away as just another player in baseball’s Steroid Era. A rhetorical question in a *New York Times* article about the charges was indicative of the extent of the vitriol felt towards both Bonds and baseball’s PED problem: “Should a perjurer be treated more harshly than a steroids cheat?” (Chass, November 16, Appendix D). Bonds was later convicted of one count of obstruction of justice, but is undergoing the appeals process and is likely to have the conviction overturned (Calcaterra, 2014).

After being hired in 2006 by MLB Commissioner Bud Selig to head an investigation into baseball's steroid problem, former senator George Mitchell released the results of his investigation in December 2007. The report named 89 players who could be proven to have used performance-enhancing drugs over the last decade, which Mitchell termed "baseball's Steroid Era." Every team had at least one player named, and the report included several high-profile stars, with Bonds among them (Wilson & Schmidt, December 14, Appendix D). Given its length, the report added a relatively small amount of new information to the scandal outside of a few unexpected bombshell names, but for years, the baseball collective had been clamoring for some sense of transparency in the practice to gain an idea of how prevalent PEDs were. The anticipation of the report's release, its sheer volume, and the fact that the curtain had finally been pulled back to reveal how ubiquitous PEDs had been created a media frenzy. All of the newspapers analyzed for this study featured a story about the Mitchell report on its front page the day after its release, and each contained multiple commentary pieces in the sports sections as well.

Mitchell argued that rather than focusing on the past and punishing those named in the report, the goal of the investigation was to bring an end to the era (Sheinin, December 14, Appendix D). Interestingly, in stark comparison to their vengeful tones throughout much of the previous year, most sports writers were content to acquiesce to Mitchell's request and attempt to move forward. Calls for baseball to implement the harshest drug testing program in American sports were present in nearly every commentary piece about the report, but the most common narrative was that the Mitchell

report should mark the end of the Steroid Era, and that the report would allow the baseball collective to put the disgraceful era in the past.

CHAPTER 5

2013

As the most recent fully completed year, media coverage in 2013 was chosen to represent the contemporary cultural context surrounding performance-enhancing drugs in baseball. Though resentment and anger towards players who were caught or suspected of using PEDs remain prevalent, there is evidence that the baseball collective is becoming more tolerant of steroids, and is slowly moving towards the incorporation of steroids into baseball's collective memory.

In contrast to the 2007 Hall of Fame elections, a substantial subset of writers supported the election of players connected to steroids. Writers invoked memories of past Hall of Famers' known indiscretions in rationalizing that steroid users were no worse than some players that had previously been elected to immortality, representing journalists' most deliberate acknowledgement of the improprieties that existed in the game long before steroids from any of the years that were studied.

Major League Baseball conducted an investigation into another steroid distribution center, a Miami-based rejuvenation clinic named Biogenesis. The investigation resulted in over a dozen players, including superstars Alex Rodriguez and Ryan Braun, being out as PED users and subsequently suspended by the league. The media hoopla surrounding Rodriguez's suspension, especially, indicated that the Steroid Era had not yet been forgotten to history by many in the baseball collective.

Compared to 2004, however, there was significantly less coverage of the Biogenesis case than there was devoted to the day-to-day workings of the BALCO hearings. Far more focus was placed on the potential punishments the players would

receive, and subsequent defending of the heavy-handed punishments after they were meted out. A commonly-used narrative in discussions of the suspensions raised the concern that the league would never be able to rid the sport entirely of steroids. After the release of the Mitchell Report, it is possible that one of the reasons the baseball collective was so willing to accept use of the term, the “Steroid Era,” was because it situated the problem as a matter of the past. In 2013, analysis of coverage indicated that the baseball community had begun to become, if not tolerant of steroids, at least aware that PEDs were not likely to be eradicated from the sport. In 2013, PEDs were often compared to methods of cheating that had been around for decades such as spitballs or corked bats, rather than being portrayed as a stain on the game unlike any seen before. The beginnings of acceptance that steroids would remain a facet of the game, in tandem with the subdued coverage of the legal workings of the Biogenesis scandal and an emerging willingness to vote PED-connected players into the Hall of Fame, can be seen as indicative of the baseball collective slowly incorporating performance-enhancing drugs into the sport’s collective identity.

* * * * *

Similarly to 2007, coverage of steroids in 2013 began with the exclusion from the Hall of Fame of any players tied to steroids. Voters denied entry to pitcher Roger Clemens, who was the biggest superstar to be surprisingly named in the Mitchell Report, McGwire, Bonds, and Sosa, despite them all possessing undeniable Hall of Fame credentials. Even players who had never been officially connected to steroids outside of

baseless rumors or speculation were excluded, showing that baseball writers had stuck to their words from 2007 that no PED-tainted player would be elected to the Hall.

In 2007, McGwire was pilloried by national organizations for his lack of integrity, while his hometown newspaper and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, perhaps influenced by San Francisco's own hometown, PED-using superstar, supported his candidacy. The *Chronicle* and the *St Louis Post-Dispatch* each used narratives of redemption that were supported by the partiality of their memories, downplaying his steroid use and emphasizing his charity work and community status. In 2013, many national publications joined the local papers in using redemptive narratives after the players' Hall denials, utilizing selective narration to recall partial aspects of their memories. A *New York Times* headline proclaimed, "Hall of Fame Has Always Made Room For Infamy," (Pennington, January 9, Appendix E) before naming several disreputable figures who had been elected to the Hall in the past. Another article rationalized that if steroids had been available 50 years previously, Hall of Famers would undoubtedly have used them. Since they weren't, many players, including Hall of Famers, popularized the use of amphetamines, which were similarly illegal and yet distributed by team physicians (Nightengale, January 8, Appendix E).

In the following months, during a new PED-supplier scandal similar to the BALCO case, it remains clear that steroids continued to be a matter of dishonor amongst the baseball collective. Coverage of the Hall of Fame votes, however, displayed tones that fans and media members were slowly moving on from the moral hysteria prevalent throughout the previous 15 years. Rather than portraying beloved Hall of Famers from the past as pillars of virtue, many writers referenced some of their well-known

transgressions, in order to support contemporary interpretations of the severity of PED users' alleged crimes.

Election to the Hall of Fame is symbolic of marking an inductee as an indispensable part of baseball's memory (Parsons & Stern, 2012), so as such, calls to enshrine steroid users confirms a willingness to incorporate the Steroid Era into the collective memory. The use of favorable comparisons to players from the past demonstrates that this faction of the baseball collective saw steroid users as equally worthy of veneration as past icons, evidentiary of attempts to redeem their tainted legacies. This represented a stark philosophical departure from the previous decade's prevailing sentiment. Whereas steroid usage had previously been portrayed as a uniquely reprehensible stain on the history of the game, this particular social context of PED use had shifted beyond moral outrage towards acceptance of its status as a part of baseball's past.

This change in narrative is more representative of the unpredictable ways in which collective memory can be invoked to defend particular agendas, rather than of a wholesale shift in the baseball collective's opinion. Throughout the rest of the year, though the majority of journalists demonstrated some progression towards a more moderate stance on steroids compared to previous years, disdain for outed PED users remained prevalent.

This was evident in coverage of the Biogenesis case. After several major leaguers associated with the Miami-based clinic tested positive for PEDs, both the MLB and law enforcement conducted investigations into the clinic. This led to the outing of several

prominent major leaguers as client of the clinic, with documents identifying them as PED users (Schmidt & Eder, February 7, Appendix E).

The amount of coverage devoted to the legal workings of the case was significantly different than coverage of the BALCO hearings, despite the cases' inherent similarities. The scope of the BALCO case surely played a role, as the San Francisco lab was tied to athletes in several sports, including the American track team just months before the Summer Olympics. Importantly, the BALCO case was the investigation that opened the public's eyes to the prevalence of steroids, in a way that Caminiti's 2002 confession was unable to accomplish. By 2013, it seems that the shock and awe had subsided. Coverage of the legal proceedings, accordingly, took on a far more subdued tone than the "Journalism of Outrage," intent on triggering policy change (Protess, 1991), which was present in 2004. Even when the issue was covered in sports sections, objectivity largely remained intact due to the absence of moralizing or speculation.

Among the players named by the Biogenesis documents were former baseball MVPs Ryan Braun and Alex Rodriguez. Braun had tested positive for steroids in 2011, but escaped suspension on a technicality while pleading innocence (Kepner, July 23, Appendix E). Rodriguez was at one time seen as the best hope for a clean player to break Bonds' record (Chass, November 16, Appendix D), but in 2009 had admitted to steroid use earlier in his career.

In late July, Braun negotiated a deal with the league to suspend him for 65 games—a middle ground between the punishments for a first and second time offender—after he admitted his use that caused the 2011 failed test (Kepner, July 23, Appendix E). Rodriguez, in an extremely highly-publicized decision both before and after it was

handed down, received the longest suspension for steroid use to date. The 211-game ban—later reduced to 162 after an appeal by Rodriguez—was due to what the league claimed was the use of several banned substances over the course of several years (Brennan, August 6, Appendix E).

In the lead-up and aftermath of the suspensions, it is clear that many in the baseball collective continued to view steroids as a stain on the game. Contrasting heavily with the redemption narratives applied to the Hall of Fame candidates in January, many writers reverted back to the same vindictive tones that they had used in previous years, especially when discussing the how harsh they wished the penalties to be. Quotes from players, fans, and media members repeatedly harped on “the integrity of the game” to justify their support for the severity of the suspensions, particularly in Rodriguez’s case. After he appealed his suspension, the general consensus among the baseball collective was that they wanted him to either drop the appeal or retire altogether, in order to limit the shame he had brought to the game.

Despite the disdain showed for the players, coverage of the Biogenesis case and reactions to the players’ suspensions also presented a tone scarcely seen in previous years: the loss of hope that the Steroid Era would ever officially come to an end. In analyzing the narratives surrounding the release of the Mitchell Report in 2007, it can be argued that one of the main reasons the media was so quick to adopt Mitchell’s name for the era, outside of the ability to use it in catchy headlines, was that it situated steroids as a problem of the past and offered hope for the future. Labeling a time period as an “era,” especially in a context specific to baseball, connotes a sense that the game had moved on. This served to make the years after the Mitchell Report akin to the “Post-Steroid Era,”

juxtaposing the era's falling action to the climax of the release of the report. This is a form of redemption narrative, as baseball was portrayed to be moving on from a dishonorable era of the game, and was on its way to being restored as a game of integrity. The baseball collective was willing to embrace this, exemplified by Commissioner Bud Selig famously declaring in 2010 that, "The so-called Steroid Era is a thing of the past" (Schmidt, 2010).

The Biogenesis case fractured this narrative. Alongside the spiteful calls for harsh punishments was a restrained sense of helplessness, that no matter how hard the league tried, performance-enhancing drugs would remain a part of the game. Journalists, in contrast to the early years of the era when they thought the league was too lax on steroids, lauded MLB on its drug policy and active pursuit of the Biogenesis investigation. The crux of the problem, to which many writers and players pointed, was that new, undetectable performance-enhancing drugs were constantly being designed, and that it was impossible for the league to keep up (Gillespie, July 24, Appendix E; Wise, July 28, Appendix E; Brennan, August 1, Appendix E). References to the undetectable drugs that BALCO supplied and the testosterone booster Human Growth Hormone (HGH), which had been available for over a decade but for which no reliable test had ever been designed, served as prospective collective memories, reminding the collective that action needed to be taken. Rather than angling for stricter drug policy or the banishment of players from the game, however, the prospective collective memories seemed to make an argument for negotiating steroids into the collective identity of the sport.

The relatively small amount of coverage devoted to the legal aspects of the Biogenesis case, in comparison to the overwhelming discussion and reaction to the

suspensions, offers evidence that the problem was not necessarily with performance-enhancing drugs, but the act of cheating in itself. The scandalized coverage of and reaction to the BALCO hearings, with articles about the day-to-day court workings of the case as plentiful as sports commentary, indicated that the baseball community was as much fascinated with the story and particular *variety* of cheating as with the fact that players were doing it. In 2013, the novelty had worn off. The Biogenesis case, though effectively covered by the media in terms of its major incidents and figures, was not covered with nearly the sheer volume nor sensationalized tone that characterized media commentary of the BALCO investigation. Instead, coverage of steroid usage was grounded only in the basis that use of performance-enhancing drugs constituted cheating, and therefore must be governed, making it similar to iterations of cheating used in the past like corked bats or spitballs (Perry, 2013).

It needs to be stated that the negotiation of steroids into the collective interpretation of the sport is far from reified. The qualitative analysis of articles from 2013 offers clues that the collective is beginning to slowly progress away from the rage present in the early parts of the era towards a more reasoned stance on the issue, but the general sentiment remains weighted in anger's direction. Nearly all of the 2013 articles analyzed about the Hall of Fame candidacy of steroid users utilized redemptive narratives, but the fact remains that no player who was connected to steroids received more than 37 percent of votes. This can be considered a flaw in the current study's design, as though there is a substantial subset of the collective who supported the players' elections, there are clearly more writers who felt differently than the few who wrote for the major publications this study utilized. Likewise, the largely negative tone of coverage

of Braun and Rodriguez's suspensions demonstrates that the baseball collective has not yet fully moved on from the scandal.

Instead, the narratives presented in this chapter should be taken as evidence that the baseball collective is continuing the process of negotiating its contemporary interpretations of the game, resulting in the slow progression towards acceptance of PEDs as an unavoidable aspect of baseball's history. In 2007, in his first year on the ballot, McGwire received only 23 percent of Hall of Fame votes. In Clemens' and Bonds' first ballot appearances in 2013, they received 37 and 36 percent, respectively, demonstrating a steady climb in voters' tolerance of steroid users. Steroids are not yet constructed as an indelible facet of baseball's collective identity, but analysis of media coverage in 2013 offers evidence that the baseball community is slowly moving in that direction.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In working to identify the thematic narratives prevalent throughout the Steroid Era, it becomes clear that the schematic narrative template of baseball as an unchanging game of historical integrity was the dominant underlying tone utilized repeatedly by journalists. Writers leaned on this narrative to support their contemporary interpretations regarding the egregiousness of PED users' crimes, despite the memory's inherent partiality. Fifteen years after McGwire confessed to using androstenedione, a subtle change in the baseball collective's identity appeared, in which the baseball community began to incorporate steroids as a part of the game. Media coverage in 2013 offered the most noticeable instances of journalists acknowledging the game's sordid history alongside its virtues, demonstrating that though the integrity of the game would continue to be valued above all other things, narratives about steroids had moved beyond rage and progressed towards more moderate disapproval.

The second research question sought to identify which aspects of collective memory journalists most often used, and what inferences could be made drawn from the coverage. Clearly, Zelizer's (1995) notion of collective memory's "usability" is the most obvious answer here, as journalists frequently used their memories to defend their agendas. Memory's partiality was also essential, especially when writers directly compared modern-day players to past icons. Discussions of Bonds and the Hall of Fame candidacy of McGwire were dominated by recollections of Aaron's and Ruth's virtues, while ignoring the indiscretions and historical realities of each player and their eras.

Similarly, when McGwire and Sosa were being lauded for their torrid home run paces on the basis of baseball's historical continuity, writers largely ignored the holes in their memories to substantiate their opinions that the hitters' numbers were legitimate.

Newspapers dedicated to only one geographic region—the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*—were much more likely to draw on narratives evidentiary of memory's particular nature, while national media outlets depicted players and events in terms of their universal meaning for the entire collective. This was done in order for writers to connect with audiences through a shared sense of cultural values, and memory's particularity was often utilized in tandem with its partiality in order to downplay past faults in the hopes of redeeming a player's legacy.

This study found evidence that the historical values with which the baseball collective identified—fair play, hard work and determination, and equal opportunity (Thorn, 1997, p. 6)—influenced the cultural context surrounding the controversy. Articles found inside sports sections of newspapers, and therefore written for a particular social group, consistently reflected the shared values of the baseball collective more so than articles found in traditional news sections. A community's ideology and shared contemporary values are heavily influenced by the community's deep collective memory (Wertsch, 2008; Wilson, 2005). The backlash directed at steroid users was oftentimes presented as an issue of integrity, which the baseball collective envisioned the game to historically possess. This framing incorrectly contextualized the contemporary crisis, because the condemnation was based on journalists' collectively constructed, incomplete memories of the past.

Boudana (2011) contended that this view of journalism as a product of cultural context was reductive and depicted journalists as without agency, whereas she felt successful journalists were able to “transcend their own social conditioning” (p 392). The results of the current study found little evidence to support Boudana’s (2011) assertions. While Boudana’s claims may be valid on an individual level, the current study found that the large majority of reporters were far more likely to reproduce attitudes consistent with the contemporary values of their cultural context, while relying on ideologies that were heavily influenced by a community’s collective memory. Much more research devoted to furthering knowledge of social context’s effects on journalistic work is needed.

Evidence that baseball’s historical values affected journalistic narratives had considerable impact on the answer to the final research question, which asked how narrative structure and the use of collective memory would affect journalistic objectivity. The study found that the inability or refusal of journalists to correctly contextualize their current crises, usually because of false comparisons to inherently partial memories of the past, negatively affects objectivity. Journalists were held to the standard of “reaching the highest degree of correspondence between journalistic assertions and reality” (Boudana, 2011, p. 396). Based on this criterion, media members should have shown an impartial understanding of baseball’s history, and based their condemnation of the Steroid Era on logically sound reasoning such as steroids’ negative health effects or their ethical use. Instead, the media conversation remained for several years centered around steroids’ assault on baseball’s historical integrity. In writing the first draft of history, journalists both misrepresented modern circumstances and perpetuated misconceptions about the past.

The qualitative work in this study adds to the body of scholarship surrounding collective memory's influence on journalism, specifically in the realm of sports. It offers evidence that journalistic narratives are often influenced by the cultural context surrounding both the issue and the writer presenting the account. This study agrees with Nathan (2005), in that though journalistic accounts are useful in helping to understand the cultural and historical significance of an event, person, or issue, their accounts should not be viewed as impartial, objectively historical accounts. While journalistic stories are still historical records, they also often reflect the cultural values with which a community identifies.

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