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Apologia in the Steroid Era: How Athletes Respond to Steroid Allegations

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In recent years, some of professional sports' highest profile athletes have been accused of cheating by using steroids to increase their athletic ability. This creates a rhetorical exigency that needs to be addressed. Just as political leaders turn to apologia in an effort to restore their images after their reputations are tarnished, so too do sports figures. The cases of four athletes, professional baseball players Roger Clemens, Rafael Palmeiro, and Ryan Braun, and professional cyclist Lance Armstrong, are examples of athletes faced with the task of responding to steroid allegations. In each of the aforementioned cases, the athlete responding to steroid allegations initially denied prior steroid usage using the apologetic strategies of denial and bolstering and the absolutive apologetic posture; each athlete then turned to the apologetic strategies of bolstering and differentiation and the explanative posture after steroid allegations were confirmed. As a result of the rhetorical decisions made by athletes responding to steroid allegations, athletes and their teams face negative economic consequences, while negative societal consequences are felt among children who view athletes as role models.

According to a January 2013 Harris Interactive poll, over two-thirds of adults in the United States report following at least one sport.[1] In addition to having a widespread following in the United States, the economic size of the sports industry in the United States—including sports leagues, teams, broadcast agreements, and advertisements—is estimated to be approximately $470 billion in 2013. This figure is equivalent to roughly three percent of the gross domestic product of the United States.[2] Americans follow sports to see competition between the best athletes in the country, they support those athletes through the purchasing of jerseys and/or team apparel, and they allow those athletes to influence their purchasing decisions by supporting businesses who make endorsement deals with popular athletic figures.

In addition to influencing the purchasing decisions of consumers across the United States, athletes also have the ability to influence the behavior of individuals, particularly children, based on how athletes themselves act. According to sports agent Leigh Steinberg, athletes are "figures of admiration and emulation in [the United States'] sports obsessed society…young people will

look to athletes whether we wish them to or not."[3] Given the ability of athletes to influence the purchasing decisions and actions of individuals, the consequences of any negative actions (such as the use of performance-enhancing drugs) taken by an athlete are magnified, particularly when those actions call into question the character of certain athletes.

In recent years, some of professional sports' highest profile athletes have been accused of cheating by using steroids to increase their athletic ability. As a result, their national prominence is increased due to increased performance.[4] When athletes cheat by using steroids their fans report feeling betrayed, which creates a rhetorical exigency that needs to be addressed.[5] Just as political leaders turn to apologia in an effort to restore their images after their reputations are tarnished, so too do sports figures. In sports, athletes found to have used steroids tend to deny any claims of wrongdoing until it has become completely clear that they have used steroids. This characteristic of steroid-using athletes creates two similar albeit distinct types of discourse: one which denies the usage of steroids and one which features an admission to the usage of steroids after an athlete previously denied doing so.

Steroid usage has been prevalent in American professional sports in recent years, but research into how athletes respond rhetorically to alleged and confirmed instances of steroid usage has been much less prevalent. In analyzing how athletes respond to steroid allegations, this study will examine the apologetic discourse of four athletes: professional baseball players Roger Clemens, Rafael Palmeiro, and Ryan Braun, and professional cyclist Lance Armstrong to determine which factors and postures of apologia are present in their respective discourses. This study will show that potential economic consequences of admitting to steroid usage led these athletes to deny steroid usage when first confronted with steroid allegations, only to admit and explain steroid usage once evidence proving athletes' steroid use becomes too difficult to counter. The tendency of steroid-using athletes to deny first and explain later will also be shown to have potentially negative economic consequences for athletes and teams and potentially negative societal consequences among children who view athletes as role models.

Prior Study of Apologia in Sports

Ware and Linkugel define the concept of apologia to describe public speeches with the purpose of self-defense.[6] Ware and Linkugel extend Abelson's "modes of resolution" to describe four "factors," or techniques, that are commonly used in speeches within the genre of apologia. Ware and Linkugel elaborate on four factors: denial,[7] bolstering (a speaker seeking to identify him-/herself with something viewed favorably by an audience),[8] differentiation (a particularization of the charge being addressed so as to create different audience interpretations about the charge),[9] and transcendence (which attempts to move the audience away from the particulars of the charge at hand in a direction toward a more general view of the character of the speaker).[10] Ware and Linkugel also describe the four postures, or types, of apologetic discourse.

These are absolutive (featuring a speaker seeking acquittal), vindicative (seeking to preserve a speaker's reputation and worth relative to the worth of accusers), explanative (where a speaker hopes explaining him-/herself will lead to audiences who understand the speaker's motives and thus cannot condemn the speaker), and justificative (where a speaker seeks approval for his/her actions).[11] The aforementioned factors and postures that Ware and Linkugel describe are important to the study of apologia in sports because they provide a framework by which to identify differences in strategy that may be present in discourse before and after an individual has been proven guilty of using steroids. As Ware and Linkugel note, such identification of strategies and posture enables the critic to focus on strategic decisions made by athletes when those athletes determine from which posture they will speak.[12]

Although the rhetorical genre of apologia has been the subject of numerous studies, particularly as it relates to political discourse, less research has been done focusing on how apologia is applied by athletes. The first work on apologia in sports is Kruse's (1981) study of the role of apologia in team sports, with subsequent research carried out by Meyer (2007 and 2008), Frandsen and Johansen (2007), Brazeal (2008), and Fink, Borland, and Fields (2011).[13] Of these studies, Kruse; Brazeal; Fink, Borland, and Fields; and Meyer's 2008 study each feature the application of the factors used in apologia as described by Ware and Linkugel. Each of these aforementioned studies pay little to no attention on the postures of apologia, with only Kruse's study discussing the justificative posture. In the four studies that apply Ware and Linkugel's factors to sports apologias, all discuss denial and bolstering, all except Brazeal discuss differentiation, and all but Kruse and Brazeal discuss transcendence. The body of previous research thus leaves a hole to be filled relating to how factors and postures of apologia can be applied to sports; factors because the body of existing research is so small, and postures because the body of existing research on apologia in sports has paid little attention to Ware and Linkugel's postures.

While four of the aforementioned six studies utilize Ware and Linkugel's characteristics of apologia and apply those characteristics to sports, none focus on trying to identify the factors and postures that specifically characterize apologia in sports as it relates to discourse from athletes who have been accused of using performance enhancing drugs. Meyer and Brazeal focus specifically on analyzing the effectiveness of apologia from Michael Vick and Terrell Owens respectively. Kruse identifies situations that would call for apologia in team sports, though none of the exigencies listed include accusations relating to the usage of performance enhancing drugs. Fink, Borland, and Fields focus on sexist acts in sports, rather than steroids as their point of focus.

The remaining two studies on apologia in sports differ from the other four in that neither features analysis of apologia in terms of the factors and postures that Ware and Linkugel identified. Meyer's 2007 study discusses steroids in baseball from the perspective of Major League Baseball (MLB) and the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), but concludes that "apologia…theories do not sufficiently explain the self-defense rhetoric of

professional baseball" because of the fact that the apologist is a league, rather than an individual.[14] The work of Frandsen and Johansen, while discussing apologia in sports, studies only the application of apologia in one particular historical instance, as was the case with Meyer's study of Vick and Brazeal's study of Owens, but the lack of focus on Ware and Linkugel's study of apologia makes Frandsen and Johansen's study of apologia less useful for this particular study.

This study seeks to fill the void left by previous research of sports apologia by specifically examining the apologetic discourse of athletes who have used performance enhancing drugs. Specifically, this research will provide new insight with regard to the identification of apologetic postures and strategies employed by athletes responding to steroid allegations, in addition to identifying potential consequences of the rhetorical choices made by the same athletes. As previously noted, the examination of postures within the category of sports apologia has been minimal among scholars in the field of communication. In examining the discourse of steroid-using athletes, this study will also discuss the postures employed by athletes, the reasoning behind the usage of those postures, the potential economic implications associated with the usage of those postures, as well as the potential impact the usage of those postures have on children.

Steroids in Major League Baseball and Professional Cycling

The discourses of athletes in professional baseball and professional cycling who have used steroids are the subject of analysis in this particular study. Within Major League Baseball (MLB, the top professional baseball league in the United States), the usage of some steroids was banned in 1991, though league-wide testing for performance enhancing drugs did not go into effect until the 2003 MLB season. During this time period, increased offensive output in Major League Baseball led to the belief that a number of top professional baseball players were using steroids to increase their athletic ability and offensive performance.[15] In an overview of what has been named the "Steroid Era" in professional baseball, ESPN states that the Steroid Era in the MLB lasted from the late 1980s to the late 2000s. In reality, while steroid use in the MLB is believed to have declined, high-profile players continue to be found guilty of using steroids in violation of the league's substance abuse policies.[16]

Although the period lasting from the late 1980s to the late 2000s in Major League Baseball is referred to as the steroid era, only a small minority of players have actually faced suspension from Major League Baseball for their steroid usage. From 2005 through the 2013 MLB season, only 52 players have been suspended for using steroids.[17] Other professional baseball players have been shown to have used steroids, but high-profile athletes like Barry Bonds, Mark McGuire, and Sammy Sosa retired before their steroid usage was confirmed, leaving them unable to be suspended by Major League Baseball.[18] While the majority of professional baseball players in the United States have not been found guilty of using performance-enhancing drugs, a significant

number of top professional baseball players have been found to use steroids, which led to the perception of a steroid era in Major League Baseball.

The perception that Major League Baseball had a steroid era, even if most of its players did not use steroids, is not unfounded. Of the players who have hit the most home runs in a single Major League Baseball season, the athletes with the six top home run producing seasons in MLB history all used steroids.[19] In the MLB's American League, each player who hit the most home runs in 1996 and each season from 2001 to 2007 was found to have used steroids. The same is true of the National League home run leader during the 1993 season, the 1998 to 2002 seasons, and the 2004 and 2012 seasons.[20] Since 1990, nine National League Most Valuable Players and five American League Most Valuable Players were found to have used steroids.[21] While most professional baseball players may not have used steroids, the prevalence of steroid usage among the sport's top players correctly leads to the designation of a steroid era in Major League Baseball.

In Major League Baseball, Rafael Palmeiro, Roger Clemens, and Ryan Braun each denied the usage of performance enhancing drugs during their professional careers. Of the three aforementioned players, only Braun would later admit to using steroids. During their careers, both Rafael Palmeiro and Roger Clemens were called to testify before congressional committees investigating the usage of steroids in professional baseball. Under consideration by congress at the time was whether or not the government should implement "a single, stringent steroids policy for all athletics in the United States" that would cover all athletes from the high school level to professional level.[22] As part of the proceedings, several athletes were called to testify in Washington, DC to address their own steroid allegations. On March 17, 2005, Rafael Palmeiro testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform.[23] His prepared opening statement from that committee hearing will be one example of apologetic discourse from an athlete who denied using steroids that this study will examine. On February 13, 2008, Roger Clemens testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to address allegations that he used steroids during his professional career.[24] Like Palmeiro, Clemens denied using steroids, and Clemens' testimony will be another example of apologetic discourse from an athlete denying the use of steroids that this study will analyze.

Unlike Roger Clemens and Rafael Palmeiro, Ryan Braun did not testify before a congressional committee. Following the 2011 MLB season in which Braun was named the National League's Most Valuable Player, it was revealed that Braun tested positive for steroid use during the 2011 playoffs.[25] It was later revealed that the individual responsible for delivering Braun's sample to the lab for testing mishandled the sample, voiding Braun's positive test.[26] In response to the mishandling of his sample, Braun delivered a public address on February 24, 2012, at the Brewers' spring training facility in Arizona in which Braun denied having ever used steroids.[27] On August 22, 2013, Braun reversed from his previous position and admitted in a statement to have used steroids during the 2011 season.[28] Braun's speech denying the usage of steroids and his

statement admitting the usage of steroids serve as two examples of apologetic discourse from different postures to be examined in this paper.

If steroid usage among professional baseball players can be considered frequent, steroid usage among professional cyclists can be described as rampant. The Tour de France is considered to be one of professional cycling's three "grand tours," and is recognized as the most prestigious and difficult professional cycling race in the world.[29] Of the fifteen Tour De France races from 1996 to 2010, only one winner of the race (Carlos Sastre, the 2008 winner) was not later found to have tested positive for performance enhancing drugs. In addition, over one-third of the total top ten finishers from every Tour de France from 1998 to 2012 were later found to have used steroids during their professional cycling careers.[30] For seven of the fourteen Tour De France races during the aforementioned 1996 to 2010 window, first place was later awarded to the runner-up of each year's race.

While organizers of the Tour De France have awarded first place to the runner-up of the race from 1996 to 1998, 2006 to 2007, and 2009 to 2010, doping within the sport has been so prevalent that organizers were unable to award first place in the Tour De France to the runner-up of the 1999 to 2005 races. The winner of the Tour De France from 1999 to 2005 was American cyclist Lance Armstrong.[31] Throughout his professional cycling career, Lance Armstrong adamantly denied having ever used steroids. In July 1999, Armstrong said "I'm not stupid. I can emphatically say I am not on drugs."[32] As late as July 2010, Armstrong continued to deny having ever used steroids during his professional career, going so far as to say "As long as I live, I will deny it."[33] While Armstrong continued to deny having ever used performance enhancing drugs, in October 2012 the United States Anti-Doping Agency banned Armstrong from competing in Olympic sports for life, and the Court of Arbitration for Sport stripped Armstrong of his seven Tour De France titles earned from 1999 to 2005. Rather than award first place in the 1999 to 2005 Tour De France races, race organizers stated that those years' races "must be marked by the absence of a winner," because the runner-up in each of those years was also guilty of using steroids to increase athletic performance.[34] After winning a record seven Tour De France titles, many observers considered Lance Armstrong to be the greatest cyclist, and among the greatest athletes, of all-time.[35] Now, Armstrong is not only considered to be the greatest fraud in cycling history but also "the greatest fraud in American sports."[36]

As was the case with Ryan Braun, the discourse of Lance Armstrong provides another example of an athlete who vehemently denied using steroids only to later admit to using steroids after mounting evidence made it impossible for Armstrong to continue his denial. An example of Armstrong denying that he used steroids during his professional career can be seen during an interview that took place between Armstrong and Larry King during the August 25, 2005 episode of CNN's "Larry King Live," approximately one month after Armstrong won his seventh Tour De France title.[37] After Armstrong's seven Tour De France victories were stripped in 2012, Armstrong finally admitted to the usage of steroids during his cycling career in a January 2013 interview with

Oprah Winfrey.[38] By denying the usage of steroids before admitting to having used them, Lance Armstrong's discourse provides two differing examples of apologetic discourse from athletes who have used steroids.

Methodology

To examine the apologias of Rafael Palmeiro, Roger Clemens, Ryan Braun, and Lance Armstrong, the application of Ware and Linkugel's factors and postures of apologetic discourse will be utilized. To accomplish this task, all examples of denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence within the discourses being examined will be identified. After identifying the factors or "modes of resolution" that each athletes employ are identified, the posture from which each athlete speaks (or writes, in the case of Braun's 2013 statement) will also be identified. At the most basic level, the application of Ware and Linkugel's work allows the critic to identify the factors and postures utilized by each athlete, while also allowing the critic to determine whether or not athletes tend to employ the same factors and postures when faced with similar rhetorical exigencies. The ability of Ware and Linkugel's research to provide a basis from which apologias may be compared represents one reason why Ware and Linkugel's apologetic postures and strategies merit further scholarly attention.

The identification of the factors and postures utilized within a given piece of apologetic discourse provide a basis for apologetic criticism; however, Ware and Linkugel note that while the categorizing of apologia into subgenres allows critics to compare "rhetorical uses of language occurring across somewhat different apologetic situations… [t]he act is not, in and of itself, criticism." Instead, Ware and Linkugel go on to say that the advantage of their mapping of the apologetic genre allows the critic to focus upon the strategic decisions that speakers make when choosing from which posture they wish to speak.[39] The ability of the critic to utilize Ware and Linkugel's research to analyze the strategic decisions made by individuals, in this case athletes, when crafting their apologias provides an additional reason as to why Ware and Linkugel's research merits additional attention, in addition to providing a basis for critics to examine the motives behind such rhetorical decisions. As such, this study will also seek to examine the various constraints that led to each athlete choosing the apologetic factors and postures that they did. This analysis will allow the determination of whether each athlete was able to decide how to proceed with their respective apologias or if each athlete was bound by their own previous decisions and rhetorical constraints to fit an existing discourse with a limited number of available rhetorical options.

Following the identification of which factors and postures of apologetic discourse each athlete employs within his respective set of apologias and an analysis of the constraints on their discourse, the discourses of each athlete will be compared to determine whether or not each athlete utilized similar rhetorical strategies in crafting each apologia. The analysis will also examine whether each athlete's discourse was subject to similar constraints. If the discourses of

each athlete are similar, and the constraints each athlete faces are similar, it becomes possible to draw conclusions about the apologetic sub-genre of steroid-related discourse. This ability to draw conclusions stems from the critical foundation provided by Ware and Linkugel and their mapping of the apologetic genre. The conclusion of the study of apologetic discourse as it relates to the steroid usage of professional athletes is thus found in the determination of which rhetorical elements are characteristic of the aforementioned sub-genre of apologetic discourse.

Analysis of Athletes' Discourse and Constraints

There are two primary situations athletes face in which it becomes necessary to address the usage of performance enhancing drugs: following alleged steroid usage and following confirmed steroid usage. These two situations, although similar, lead to two distinctive types of apologetic discourse. This current study of the discourse of athletes who are addressing only alleged steroid usage will show that such athletes speak from an absolutive posture, while employing the apologetic factors of denial and bolstering. In contrast, athletes who are addressing proven steroid usage utilize the apologetic factors of bolstering and differentiation, resulting in discourse from the explanative posture.

When Rafael Palmeiro testified before the House Committee on Government Reform, Palmeiro's steroid usage had yet to be proven. As such, Palmeiro began his testimony with a repeated denial of having ever used steroids, saying "I have never used steroids. Period. I don't know how to say it any more clearly than that. Never."[40] To compliment his repeated denial, Palmeiro continued his testimony by repeatedly bolstering in an attempt to increase his credibility. Palmeiro first bolstered within his testimony while describing how he and his family fled from communist Cuba, and how he was then able to achieve the American Dream through "hard work, discipline, and dedication."[41] The bolstering within Palmeiro's testimony continues as Palmeiro describes his charitable work and community involvement. As Palmeiro concludes his testimony, he praises the steroid policy being implemented by Major League Baseball, again a form of bolstering as Palmeiro attempts to identify himself with the MLB's substance abuse policy that his audience views favorably. In denying that he ever used steroids, Palmeiro speaks from the absolutive apologetic posture, seeking acquittal in the minds of the public for an action he denies having ever partaken in. Palmeiro's absolutive discourse is thus characterized by the factors of denial and bolstering, as Palmeiro seeks to identify himself with the characteristics of hard work and charity and the MLB's anti-steroid policy that the public views favorably.

Just as Rafael Palmeiro's guilt was not yet confirmed when he delivered his testimony to the House Committee on Government Reform, neither was the guilt of Roger Clemens when he delivered his own testimony to the House of Representatives in 2008. Unlike Palmeiro, Clemens' denial of steroid usage is buried within his testimony. In fact, the final statement made by Clemens in his testimony is his denial saying, "let me be clear, I have never taken steroids or

HGH."[42] The remainder of Clemens' testimony features the apologetic factor of bolstering. Like Palmeiro, Clemens describes how hard work and determination led to his success in baseball, saying that shortcuts (like steroids) were not an option.[43] Clemens also discusses his own history of giving back to the community, discussing how he prides himself as an example for children, and how he has "shared [the] talents God gave [him] with children."[44] The only time Clemens mentions Major League Baseball's steroid-testing policy is when Clemens states that he believes the testing program should be more extensive, again an example of bolstering as Clemens identifies himself with a popularly-held position. The apologetic testimony of Roger Clemens thus serves as an additional example of discourse from the absolutive posture, featuring a denial from Clemens and repeated bolstering in an attempt to restore his fractured reputation.

Unlike the absolutive apologias of Rafael Palmeiro and Roger Clemens, Ryan Braun's denial of having used steroids was not delivered under oath in front of a congressional committee; it was delivered in front of members of the media. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the apologias of Palmeiro, Clemens, and Braun are quite similar. Although Braun's denial is less straightforward than the denials of Palmeiro and Clemens, Braun is no less adamant about his innocence, saying "I would bet my life that this substance never entered my body at any point."[45] Braun's denial also takes an interesting turn when he frames his denial in terms of his on-field performance. He stated that he didn't get any heavier, faster, or stronger during the period in which it was alleged that he had used steroids.

In addition to denial, the apologetic factor of bolstering is prevalent within Ryan Braun's discourse. Braun utilizes bolstering by describing himself as an individual with honor, integrity, class, dignity, and professionalism. Through bolstering, Braun also seeks to create a sense of identification between himself and Major League Baseball's drug testing policy, despite the fact that it led to accusations of steroid use. Of Major League Baseball's steroid-testing system, Braun states that "the system worked" because he was eventually able to prove his innocence, but explains that the reason why he was accused of having used steroids was because "the system in the way it was applied to [him]…was fatally flawed." By describing Major League Baseball's steroid testing system as flawed only as it applied to himself, Ryan Braun was able to maintain identification with the league's testing system which allowed him to utilize bolstering within his address. By denying that he used steroids, and simultaneously using bolstering in an attempt to improve his reputation, this Braun apologia serves as a good example of discourse presented from the absolutive posture, as Braun's primary concern is clearing his name of any wrongdoing.

A final example of apologetic discourse delivered by an athlete in response to alleged but unconfirmed steroid usage is seen in Lance Armstrong's responses to questions asked by Larry King in 2005 on King's nationally broadcast television program. As was the case for each athlete previously studied, Armstrong denies that he used steroids at any point during his professional career. In response to a question posed by King about steroid accusations,

Armstrong says "that kind of an accusation is preposterous," before continuing to deny saying, "I've said it for longer than seven years. I have never doped."[46] Later in his interview with Larry King, Armstrong seeks to change the subject of conversation to the work of his foundation and its involvement in the fight against cancer. On the subject of cancer, Armstrong states "I would much rather be on this show talking about the illness and what we're going to do to fix it versus having to sit here and defend myself." Here, Armstrong utilizes bolstering to identify himself with something viewed with nearly unanimous favorability, the fight against cancer. Unlike the aforementioned apologias of Palmeiro, Clemens, and Braun, Armstrong does not praise the steroid-testing policies of professional cycling in an attempt to bolster, but does argue, as Braun did, that sample testing protocol was not correctly applied in his case. As was true of the three previously studied apologias, Lance Armstrong's apologia serves as an example of an athlete utilizing the absolutive posture in defense against unconfirmed steroid allegations, specifically using the apologetic techniques of denying and bolstering within his discourse.

Whereas the previous four examples of apologetic discourse relating to steroid usage in sports have been attempts from athletes to address unconfirmed allegations of steroid usage, the final two discourses examined in this study provide examples of how athletes seek to defend themselves after it has been proven that they used steroids during their professional careers. In both the cases of Ryan Braun and Lance Armstrong, whose rhetoric will be studied, each athlete repeatedly denied having ever used steroids—meaning that each athlete lied repeatedly to the American public. As such, after denying the usage of performance enhancing drugs, an athlete must not only use their apologia to defend themselves against their recently confirmed steroid usage but also against the fact that they lied repeatedly in denying that they used steroids during their professional careers.

Following official confirmation that Ryan Braun had in fact used steroids during his Most Valuable Player Award-winning 2011 season, Braun delivered an apologia in the form of a written statement. In his apologia in defense of confirmed steroid usage, Braun continued to bolster just as he had in apologias delivered before his steroid usage was confirmed. As he concludes his statement, Braun states that his personal values include "hard work and dedication, and being honest both on and off the field" though Braun admits that what he did "goes against everything [he has] always valued."[47] Braun himself notes that he will have to work "very, very hard" to earn back the trust and support of those individuals who had supported him. Although his commitments to such values as hard work, dedication, and honesty have been tarnished, Braun continues to attempt to identify with those values through bolstering to support his ailing reputation. As was also the case in his previously examined apologia, Braun also sought to identify with Major League Baseball's anti-steroid policy in this apologia after it was proven that Braun violated the policy. In the final paragraph of his statement, Braun states that he "support[s] baseball's Joint Drug Treatment and Prevention Program and the importance of cleaning up the game." Despite having been found guilty of using performance enhancing

drugs, Braun seeks identification with the MLB's anti-steroid policy in an attempt to bolster his reputation.

While Braun bolsters in his 2013 apologia just as he did in his 2012 apologia, his 2013 statement differs from his original address in that it uses the apologetic factor of differentiation to explain his steroid usage rather than denying the usage of steroids altogether. In utilizing differentiation, Braun attempts to create a new context through which his steroid usage can better be explained. Braun begins his usage of differentiation by describing how he was suffering from a "nagging injury" toward the end of the 2011 Major League Baseball season, leading Braun to turn to steroids to shorten the recovery time from his injury. According to Braun, this steroid usage caused Braun to enter a mental state whereby he convinced himself that he had done nothing wrong leading to his repeated denials of having ever used steroids. Braun concludes his differentiation by stating that once he had recovered from his aforementioned mental state, he voluntarily acknowledged his violation of Major League Baseball's drug policy in a meeting with the league. As such, Braun emphasized that he was not forced to admit his guilt as a result of another positive steroid test. Through differentiation, Braun is able to explain both why he turned to steroids and lied about using them through the context of injury and a changed mental state.

Having utilized the apologetic factors of bolstering and differentiation within his discourse, Braun's statement admitting that he used steroids during the 2011 season is an example of apologetic discourse from the explanative posture. As Ware and Linkugel note, the explanative posture exists as "a combination of bolstering and differentiation."[48] Ryan Braun's goal of avoiding audience condemnation through the explanative apologetic posture is evidenced by Braun's use of bolstering and differentiation as Braun hopes his audience will not condemn him once they understand the rationale for his prior actions.

Like Ryan Braun's apologia in which he admits to having used steroids, Lance Armstrong also admits to having used steroids using the explanative posture of apologia and the factors of bolstering and differentiation. In his interview with Oprah Winfrey, Armstrong bolsters through the description of his personal history, describing how growing up with a single mother led him to be "a fighter" and how his cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment made him a "fierce competitor."[49] By describing himself as a fighter and fierce competitor who has fought adversity to find success, Armstrong is able to use bolstering to identify with the American value of perseverance. Armstrong also uses bolstering to identify with the anti-steroid policies implemented by the International Cycling Union (UCI). Specifically, Armstrong praises the implementation of out-of-competition-testing by the UCI in addition to the creation of a biological passport for all professional cyclists. Just as Braun used support for Major League Baseball's anti-steroid program in an effort to improve his reputation, so too did Lance Armstrong within his own apologia.

In admitting to having used steroids during his professional cycling career, Lance Armstrong utilized the apologetic factor of differentiation to construct

the context of a steroid culture in professional cycling to explain his own steroid usage to the public audience. Armstrong begins his description of the steroid culture in professional cycling by discussing how he felt that winning in professional cycling without doping was not possible. As part of the steroid culture in cycling, Armstrong goes on to say that in his view, doping was "part of the job," and his usage of steroids was not cheating because "the definition of cheat[ing] is to gain an advantage on a rival or foe…that they don't have," and Armstrong viewed doping "as a level playing field."[50] Through differentiation, Armstrong's goal is to have his audience view his steroid usage in a new context, the context of a steroid culture in professional cycling, so that Armstrong's behavior is not viewed as cheating, but rather as competing on an equal level with his fellow cyclists.

Through the usage of bolstering and differentiation, Armstrong's admittance of steroid usage is a second example of apologia from the explanative posture. In his apologia, Armstrong seeks to prevent his audience from condemning him by giving them an understanding of the motives behind his steroid use, a task he achieved through differentiation. Armstrong also uses bolstering in his explanative apologia to further improve his diminished standing with his audience. Armstrong's admission of guilt regarding his steroid usage thus stands as an explanative apologia achieved through bolstering and differentiation as was the case for Ryan Braun's previously examined apologia.

Analysis of Outside and Rhetorical Constraints

When addressing either alleged or confirmed steroid usage, an athlete has three rhetorical options. An athlete can choose to deny the usage of steroids, admit to the usage of steroids, or choose to ignore the subject of steroids altogether. Considering the significant amount of money athletes stand to lose if found guilty of having used steroids, it is not surprising that athletes accused of using steroids first turn to the strategy of denial in their apologias. For example, it is estimated that Lance Armstrong has lost at least $150 million in lifetime earning potential due to endorsement deals that were ended after Armstrong's steroid usage was confirmed.[51] Due to the fact that athletes stand to lose millions of dollars if their steroid usage is revealed, it makes sense that athletes would deny any steroid usage as clearly as possible—as Palmeiro, Clemens, Braun, and Armstrong each did in their previously studied apologias. Given the desire among athletes to preserve future income, certain apologetic postures are not logical options for athletes.

For athletes seeking to deny prior steroid usage in an attempt to preserve his/her reputation and future earning potential, the explanative, justificative, and vindicative apologetic postures are not logical rhetorical options. Explanative and justificative postures are not logical options for athletes seeking to deny steroid usage because both admit steroid usage, either explaining one's steroid usage or justifying it, respectively. A vindicative posture in this situation would not necessarily feature a denial of steroid usage, instead focusing on the relative value of an athlete compared to his/her accusers. Because the vin-

dicative posture does not feature a clear denial, the posture is logically worse than the absolutive posture for athletes seeking to make a clear statement that they have never used steroids in an attempt to maintain their reputation and earning potential. Given their shortcomings in this specific rhetorical situation, the explanative, justificative, and vindicative apologetic postures are not logical options for athletes who do not wish to admit to having used steroids. The elimination of the three aforementioned postures leaves the absolutive posture as the only logical rhetorical option for athletes addressing unconfirmed steroid usage.

As evidence mounts against a particular athlete accused of using steroids, the rhetorical strategies an athlete employs must change. When the amount of evidence against an athlete reaches the point where that athlete's steroid usage is confirmed, the explanative apologetic posture becomes the most logical rhetorical option for an athlete to employ, leaving the absolutive, justificative, and vindicative postures as less ideal rhetorical options. The absolutive posture is difficult to justify in a situation where an athlete's steroid usage is confirmed and a punishment is imminent or has already been made due, in large parts because American sports fans disapprove of steroid usage and think athletes who have used steroids should be punished.[52] American sentiment against steroid usage is strong enough that some sports observers have called for punishments against teams with steroid users on their roster.[53]

The justificative apologetic posture is equally difficult to justify as a rhetorical strategy for an athlete guilty of using steroids given that it requires athletes to seek approval for their actions, the usage of steroids, an activity that a majority of Americans view unfavorably. In the sport of baseball for example, a 2009 poll from CBS and The New York Times found that 60 percent of Americans said it mattered to them "a lot" if players used steroids, and a 2005 poll from ABC and ESPN found that 62 percent of survey respondents said the records of players who used steroids should be erased from history.[54] If the majority of the members of their respective audiences disapprove of steroid usage, it is a fool's errand for an athlete to speak from a justificative posture about their own steroid usage.

After an athlete has been found guilty of using steroids, the vindicative apologetic posture is difficult to employ for the same reason the justificative posture is not an ideal apologetic posture in the given rhetorical situation. It has been previously discussed in the literature review that vindicative addresses seek to prove the greater worth of a speaker relative to the worth of his accusers.[55] Since a majority of Americans disapprove of steroid usage, it is unlikely that an athlete using the vindicative posture will be able to prove him or herself to be of greater worth than their accusers. Given the rhetorical difficulties associated with using the absolutive, justificative, and vindicative apologetic postures after an athlete has been definitively found to have used steroids, the only logical option for an athlete is to speak from the explanative posture using a combination of bolstering and differentiation,[56] as both Braun and Armstrong did in their respective apologias.

Steroid-Using Athletes' Apologias as a Sub-Genre of Apologia

In an ideal world, an athlete who has used steroids would be honest and forthcoming to the American people about their steroid usage. In reality, economic constraints lead athletes to deny any steroid usage. Though not ideal, the most logical apologetic posture for athletes denying prior steroid usage is the absolutive posture. Inevitably, history suggests that athletes who have used steroids will not be able to deny and hide from their past forever. When an athlete's prior steroid use is confirmed, the most logical apologetic posture for an athlete to turn to is the explanative posture. If the apologetic discourse of athletes who have used steroids is to be considered a sub-genre of the apologetic genre—and the distinct characteristics of steroid using athletes' apologias suggest that it should—it can be concluded that the sub-genre features athletes who deny first through the absolutive posture before turning to the explanative posture once evidence against a particular athlete has mounted to the point that denial is no longer effective.

Implications of Athletes' Rhetorical Decisions

As was previously discussed, sports have a widespread following in the United States. Sports also have a significant economic impact. When athletes choose to deny the usage of steroids, only to later admit to having used steroids, the potential exists for a negative economic impact to be felt by both athletes and their teams. At least this seems the case if the steroid-using athlete is competing in a team sport. The case of Ryan Braun and the Milwaukee brewers provides an example of how a sports team may spend extra money to compensate for negative publicity surrounding an athlete guilty of using steroids. Following Braun's 2013 suspension, the Milwaukee Brewers announced the creation of a "Fans First" campaign in which the Brewers gave a $10 food, beverage, ticket, and merchandise voucher to each fan who attended an August home game. Of the campaign, Brewers Chief Operating Officer Rick Schlesinger said "we were finalizing something like this to give back to our loyal fans just as news of Ryan [Braun]'s suspension hit." Estimates suggest the Fans First program cost the Brewers $3.6 million.[57] The $3.6 million spent by the Brewers to counter negative sentiment surrounding Braun's steroid admission is likely only a fraction of the economic loss suffered by the Brewers following Braun's suspension. The figure, after all, does not include revenue lost from individuals who would otherwise have purchased Braun memorabilia, which also forced retailers to offer discounts on Braun jerseys and t-shirts.[58] The aforementioned figure also fails to account for lost ticket revenue from fans not attending games with the Brewers' star player missing from the lineup.

Admission of steroid usage after previous and repeated denials also leads to potentially negative economic consequences for players who are later found guilty of using steroids. After admitting to having used steroids, several companies ended their sponsorship of cyclist Lance Armstrong. For Armstrong, it

is estimated that the loss of endorsement deals represents a loss of over $150 million in future earning potential.[59] Similarly, Ryan Braun's steroid admission and subsequent suspension led to the Brewers' outfielder losing several of his own endorsements, although the monetary value of Braun's endorsement losses is not known.[60] While sports teams may experience economic losses following the steroid usage of certain players, the case of Lance Armstrong shows that those losses can be dwarfed by endorsement losses faced by individual athletes found guilty of steroid usage.

In addition to potentially resulting in negative economic implications, when athletes continually lie and deny steroid allegations until their denials are no longer convincing to the public they wrongly teach children who view athletes as role models that it is okay to cheat by using steroids in an effort to become better athletes. According to a study published in the journal Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 57 percent of students in grades 8 through 12 who admitted to using steroids said professional athletes influenced their decision to use steroids. 63 percent of students also said that their friends' decisions to use steroids were influenced by professional athletes.[61] This consequence of professional athletes' steroid usage and the influence of professional athletes on children is especially troubling considering the potential of steroid use to result in damage to the vital organs of children or even death.[62] The economic impact of athletes guilty of using steroids may be significant, but it pales in comparison to the impact of professional athletes' influence over young people and their ability to influence children to use steroids.

Following the analysis of apologias from four professional athletes accused of using steroids, specific characteristics found in each apologia studied were revealed. The apologias examined in this essay that were delivered before an athlete's steroid usage was confirmed each featured the absolutive apologetic posture and the apologetic strategies of bolstering and denial. Each apologia studied that came after an athlete's steroid usage was confirmed and a punishment had been made utilized the explanative apologetic posture and the strategies of bolstering and differentiation. Further analysis of the economic implications associated with admitting steroid usage also suggests that athletes will deny any steroid usage when first confronted with steroid allegations, making the explanative, justificative, and vindicative apologetic postures logically inferior to the absolutive posture in such a situation. Once an athlete's steroid usage is confirmed, analysis of the available apologetic postures suggests that the explanative posture is the best logical option for an athlete. The analysis of the postures available to athletes addressing steroid allegations seem to suggest that the apologias of athletes examined by this study utilized the most logical rhetorical postures given their situations in addition to suggesting that the absolutive and explanative apologetic postures are characteristic of the apologetic sub-genre of athletes' steroid-addressing discourse.

While this research provides new insight to the study of apologia, particularly as it relates to sports, a discussion of the implications of this study must also include a note of caution as to what this study does not do. The results of this study show how athletes respond to allegations that they used performance

enhancing drugs, but the results of this study should not be applied to the discourse of athletes who have responded to allegations that they have used drugs or some other banned substance other than steroids. Within the American populace, different drugs or banned substances have different connotations, meaning that the apologetic rhetorical strategies that must be used to address steroid usage may not be the same strategies that the usage of a different substance necessitates. As the literature review that prefaced this analysis of apologia in sports noted, very little previous research has been done with regard to these apologias in general. While this study describes how athletes utilize apologetic discourse to respond to the question of steroids in sports, it does not describe how athletes speak apologetically about any other subject. As such, the results of this research project should not be considered to be characteristic of any athlete's apologia on any subject. Essentially, this study provides an analysis of one sub-genre of apologetic discourse that athletes can employ, meaning that the results of this analysis may not apply to other apologetic discourse that seeks to address rhetorical exigencies other than the ones that this study analyzes.

Although the results of this research may not be applicable to the apologias of professional athletes in general, it has been noted that a study of the apologias within the realm of sports discourse is virtually non-existent. Very few studies have attempted to analyze how athletes respond to rhetorical situations calling for apologia, a surprising fact given the role that sports plays in American society. As a result of this lack of research, significant opportunities exist for further analysis into how athletes use apologias in response to various situations. Such situations in sports that could call for apologetic discourse from athletes include: decisions made during the course of a game or match that led to a team or individual's defeat, a significant number of penalties or fouls from an athlete during a game, fighting or arguing with players or officials that lead to an ejection, other off-the-field actions such as criminal activity or non-steroid substance abuse, or any number of additional situations. Simply put, this analysis of athletes' apologias in response to steroid allegations only begins to delve into the subject of apologias in the context of sports discourse.

In the United States, professional sports and the athletes who compete in them are an influential part of society. Individuals make purchasing decisions under influences from professional athletes based on endorsement deals, and they look up to professional athletes as role models. Because of the influence professional athletes have on the American population, when athletes engage in a behavior or are rumored to have engaged in a behavior that the American public views unfavorably, their public apologias have a significant impact on how the public views those athletes. The usage of steroids is an example of a behavior that the public views unfavorably, and while the specific content of athletes' apologias in response to steroid usage may differ, the apologias of Rafael Palmeiro, Roger Clemens, Ryan Braun, and Lance Armstrong studied here suggest that the apologias of athletes who have used steroids have similar characteristics. These similar characteristics suggest that athletes will deny from the absolutive posture when first facing steroid allegations only to move

to the explanative posture once evidence against them becomes more concrete. Consistent characteristics across the aforementioned apologias studied here suggest that the discourse of athletes addressing steroid allegations can be considered as a specific sub-genre of the apologetic genre.

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