

Image Restoration in Major League Baseball: An Analysis of Apologia Strategies during The  
Steroid Era

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## Introduction

Sports have played a vital role in American culture for centuries. Baseball, in particular, has transcended the imagination of fans and players to become one of the most played sports in American history. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, baseball developed from a basic bat-and-ball game to the American sport that it is now. Baseball even gained the title, “Our National Pastime”, which it’s still called today (Tygiel 2000). Coined our “nation’s sport”, baseball emerged as the most popular and influential professional sport in America. At the center of the popularity were the players themselves, influencing fans with their brilliant play on the field, and their personable human qualities off of it. For example, Babe Ruth, widely considered to be the greatest baseball player of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, excelled the sport. In an article by Larry Schwartz of ESPN, he tells an anecdote of Japanese soldiers during World War II, a period of time where political leaders and military commanders are at the forefront of every news program and newspaper headline. In the story he states that Japanese soldiers, when engaging in battle with American soldiers, would yell, “To hell with Babe Ruth”. Not “to hell with FDR” or “to hell with Douglass MacArthur” but “to hell with Babe Ruth.”(Schwartz). Babe Ruth, an American baseball player, was synonymous with American culture.

Since Babe Ruth, baseball has fielded players who have helped supplant the sport as an American fixture, who attract millions of fans to watch each year. Players like Jackie Robinson, the first African-American player in Major League Baseball (MLB) who single handedly changed the game from an all white sport to a culturally diverse game. And players like Henry “Hank” Aaron, who in 1974 broke the most cherished record in baseball by surpassing Babe Ruth as the all-time career homeruns leader. The famous video footage of Hank Aaron’s 715<sup>th</sup> homerun that passed Ruth is still replayed throughout each MLB season. Stadiums across the

country fill up every year to witness the game of baseball being played, and to cheer on and admire the individual players. In 2008 alone, the MLB attendance record surpassed 122 million in both its major league and minor league systems combined (Brown 2008).

Our “national pastime” has even found its way into our nation’s political realm. After 9/11, baseball games were used as beacons of hope and a way to honor the United States. American flags were printed on team uniforms, individual bases, and even mowed into the outfield grasses of some playing fields. Baseball even supplanted itself in the discourse of the American Presidency. After 9/11, President George W. Bush acknowledged the importance of baseball as, “an important part of the healing process” (Butterworth 2007).

Although baseball has seen its attendance records and popularity increase every decade, the sport took a hit in the late 1990’s (Brown 2008). Due to a players strike, the 1994 season was shortened, and ended without a World Series (AP 2004). The strike cost players and management billions of dollars, a result of low attendance in the previous year. One event in particular helped rebuild the game, and transformed a dying sport into the flourishing sport it had once been. The home run race of 1998, which consisted of Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa pursuing and surpassing the home run title previously held by Roger Maris, ignited the flame (Smith 1998). The race captivated the nation, and baseball fans across the country began filling the seats of major league ball parks.

However, the sudden success birthed an era that cast a dark shadow over baseball. In 2002, Ken Caminiti admitted he used steroids during his most valuable player season in 1996, becoming the first player to publicly acknowledge personal use of steroids (Anderson 2004). Soon after, a wave of accusations and reports linked many influential players with steroids, causing this time in baseball to be known as “The steroid era.” This era, also known as “the

juiced ball era” generated the downfall of some of the game’s greatest players. Ultimately, in 2007, former Senator George J. Mitchell released a report linking over 80 Major League Baseball players to the illegal use of steroids, or performance enhancing drugs. The Mitchell Report, its formal name, is a 400 page compilation of over 700 interviews and 115,000 pages of documents (Wilson 2007). The findings of the Mitchell Report called into question the integrity of the game, and its players. The accusations also forced players who were mentioned in the report to address the issue, and publicly defend their image. Even before the Mitchell Report was released, a handful of players were subpoenaed to appear before a Congressional hearing on steroid use. The players, who all had questions surrounding them regarding involvement with performance enhancing drugs, were required to state their defense on the issue. In particular, three high profile individuals were among the many baseball players accused of taking steroids during the “juiced ball era.”

Rafael Palmeiro, Roger Clemens, and Andy Pettitte are three players I am going to center my analysis on for this research project. More specifically, I will examine each player’s public response to accusations of using steroids. It is important to look at high profile players such as Palmeiro, Clemens, and Pettitte, because they have tremendously influenced the game of baseball and their fans. People go to games to watch their favorite players compete at the highest professional level. When a player is accused of using performance enhancing drugs, their personal character and the integrity of the game are called into question. Because there is so much emphasis put on winning in competitive sports, and in turn making money, the truthfulness and honesty of the game are sometimes jeopardized. This poses a problem not only from a business standpoint, but also because so many fans, young and old, admire Major League players. In a 2001 Monitoring the Future Survey conducted by the University of Michigan

Institute of Social Research, it found that 12% of high school boys admitted to using steroids, and the disapproval rate of steroids dropped from 91% to 86% in 2001 (Manning 2002). These are factors that may be correlated with directly observing MLB players being accused of taking steroids, to help them hit the ball farther, and throw harder (Manning 2002). These players, in addition to their play, are now a part of a genre of discourse called apologia that involves defending themselves through speech. As communication scholars, it is important that we study the artifacts of Rafael Palmeiro's, Roger Clemens', and Andy Pettitte's personal responses to steroid accusations.

Communication plays an important role in sports. Butterworth (2007) mentions that if communication is a key to how members of the community participate in sport, then the reverse must also be true. Moreover, the rhetoric and discourse in sports does not only define the players involved, but it also represents the communities that we live in. Professional athletes are often counted on to be the face of an entire city and are required to act appropriately and professionally at all times.

Palmeiro, Clemens, and Pettitte's addresses are accounts of apologia and image restoration. According to Benoit (2005), "Human beings frequently must attempt to restore their reputations after alleged or suspected wrong doing" (p. 1). Furthermore, he goes on to say,

Those who believe that their face or reputation has been injured or even threatened are unlikely to ignore these perils. When our image is threatened, we feel compelled to offer explanations, defenses, justifications, rationalizations, apologies, or excuses for our behavior (p. 2).

Such is the case with these players who were put in a position to not only save face, but save their careers. Kruse (1981) developed an idea of apologia in team sport. The study found that

apologia strategies did not differ greatly from those in the sociopolitical world (p. 280).

Evaluating apologia in sport is important according to Kruse (1981), ““An institution [sport] that has such a pervasive effect upon the lives of so many should not be ignored, especially when that effect is produced, in part, by rhetorical means” (p.283).

My goal is to analyze the apologia approaches taken by Rafael Palmeiro, Roger Clemens, and Andy Pettitte. I will examine the statements made by Palmeiro and Clemens during their testimonies at the Congressional baseball hearings, and Andy Pettitte’s press conference in New York to the fans and media. I will study the individual strategies of each presentation, and determine which approach was more successful in saving face, and maintaining or regaining credibility in baseball, and with the fans of baseball. Benoit (1995) states that “an attack on one’s image, face, or reputation is compromised of two components: 1) An act occurred which is undesirable, 2) You are responsible for the action” (p.71). Furthermore, Benoit (2005) contends that the person being accused must believe that a relevant audience does not approve of their actions. This applies directly to the beliefs and actions of the three players in their responsive discourses.

I will attempt to answer these two research questions: How do apologetic strategies vary between Palmeiro, Clemens, and Pettitte? Which strategy has proven to be most successful in maintaining credibility and saving face?

### **Description of Method/Framework**

The criticism of apologia falls under the generic criticism genre. “Generic criticism is rooted in the assumption that certain types of situations provoke similar needs and expectations in audiences and thus call for particular kinds of rhetoric” (Foss 137). Moreover, Foss (2009)

states that generic criticism's purpose is to comprehend the different rhetorical strategies in different situations and spotlight the positive relations in the constructive responses to them.

Edwin Black was the first person to coin the term generic criticism, and in doing so developed a framework of ideas for the genre:

1) There is a limited number of situations in which a rhetor can find himself; 2) there is a limited number of ways in which a rhetor can and will respond rhetorically to any given situational type; 3) the recurrence of a given situational type through history will provide a critic with information on the rhetorical responses available in that situation (Foss 138).

When discourse occurs it is necessary to examine the historical context of the speech to unearth the related factors in each section (Foss 138). Within the generic criticism realm there are sub

genres. One of these genres is criticism of apologia. Burghardt (2005) contends that,

“apologetic discourses constitute a distinct form of public address, a family of speeches with sufficient elements in common so as to warrant legitimately generic status” (Burghardt p. 418).

There are four factors that characterize the apologetic form. Ware and Linkugel list these as:

denial, bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence (Ware & Linkugel 2005). Benoit (1995)

presents five other strategies that overlap with Ware and Linkugel's typology of apologia. They

are: denial, evasion of responsibility, reduction of offensiveness, corrective action, and

mortification. These five strategies, along with Ware and Linkugel's typologies account for some

of the necessary approaches to image restoration and apologetic responses. Apologetic

discourses are in response to a kategoria-an attack or accusation-that demands a defense of self.

Ryan (1982) adds that in a kategoria speech set an accuser perceives an evil and/or need and is motivated to expose it.



The first strategy, denial, is the complete separation of involvement with the act in question. Ware and Linkugel discuss denial of intent, where the speaker acknowledges other factors as the reason for any involvement. Furthermore, the act happened as “a part of the sequence of events” (Burghardt p.419). Moreover, denial does not attempt to change the listener, or audiences’ meaning of the issue; instead, it acts as a reformatory effect and dismembers the rhetor from the act itself (Burghardt p. 419). Another aspect of denial deals with a subtle shifting of blame, through the disassociation of one’s involvement. Benoit (1995) claims that when an audience listens to a rhetor deny a claim, the refusal applies guilt to another person. If the original rhetor did not commit the act, then the question arises, “Who did it?” Denial is a common defense strategy when attempting to save face.

Bolstering is when the accused stresses their positive attributes. The rhetor attempts to bring about a positive correlation between his/her self and the beliefs of the audience. Benoit (1995) contests that bolstering is an attempt to offset the audience’s disapproval by relating the speaker with a different action that the audience has a positive affect for. The rhetor’s goal with this strategy is to conjure up positive perceptions with the audience that will hopefully outweigh any negative ones caused by the action at hand. For example, bolstering occurs when a character witness is called to testify in court to positively reflect the personality of the defendant.

Ware and Linkugel (2005) define differentiation as an act to change the nature of the accusation, “any strategy which is cognitively divisive and concomitantly transformative” (p.421). Differentiation can be successful in apologia when the new definition of the accusation is interpreted far differently than the original definition. Benoit (1995) suggests differentiation is an attempt to separate the rhetor from the negative aspect of an accusation, rather than the object

at hand. An example of differentiation can be when someone accused of murder claims that they were engaging in self defense.

Along with differentiation is another strategy, transcendence. This technique is considered the counterpart to differentiation. With transcendence, the rhetor attempts to create a larger vision, and associates the undesirable action with a greater good (p. 422). Burghardt (2005) states that the strategy psychologically moves the audience away from the exact charge, “in a direction toward some more abstract, general view of the character (p.422). Using the same case of a murder accusation, the defendant may say that he/she committed one murder to save the lives of hundreds of people.

Benoit (1995) also noted five types of image restoration strategies used in apologia. The five categories include: denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification.

The denial strategy is similar to Ware and Linkugel’s definition of denial; consisting of “denial of intent” and “simple denial”. Benoit (1995) discusses the “shifting of blame” as a possible substitute for just a simple denial. Because an audience might not accept a simple denial as an answer to, “Who did it?”, pinning the blame on another person might ease any unrest in the audience. A rhetor might also choose to shift the blame to disassociate themselves from any ill feelings created by the accusation.

Benoit (1995) lists four variations of evasion of responsibility: scapegoating, defeasibility, accident, and good/bad intentions. Scapegoating is defined as claiming, “the act in question was performed in response to another wrongful act, which understandably provoked the offensive act into question” (p.76). Defeasibility is the rhetor’s attempt at pleading ignorance, or lack of knowledge of the accusation. If effective, Benoit (1995) states that defeasibility should

decrease the perceived responsibility of the accused. The third category is attempting to make an excuse based on accidents, “we tend to hold others responsible only for factors they can reasonably be expected to control” (p.76). The final approach under the evasion of responsibility is good intentions. This is when the rhetor contends that the action performed was for good intentions, rather than evil. The accused does not deny completing the wrongful act, but suggests that he should not be fully responsible because it was done with good motives (pp. 76-77).

In reducing offensiveness, Benoit (1995) claims this strategy minimizes the amount of ill feeling felt by the audience. Ware and Linkugel’s strategies of bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence fall under this approach. Another strategy of reducing the offense is to attack the accuser. Benoit (1995) says that, “if the credibility of the source of accusations can be reduced, the damage to one’s image from those accusations may be diminished” (p.78). This approach can also divert the audience’s attention toward the accuser and their credibility.

Corrective action occurs when the accused promises to correct the wrongful action. There are two forms to correcting the action, solving and preventing. Here the rhetor promises to “mend one’s ways” or help to prevent the recurrence of the action. Benoit (1995) argues that someone can take corrective action without admitting guilt. By vowing to help fix the problem, the rhetor can relate themselves to a positive attitude with audience.

The last approach to image restoration is mortification. When employing mortification the rhetor admits responsibility and asks for forgiveness. Benoit (1995) couples an admission of guilt with corrective action, but suggests the two do not have to be used together. Moreover, this strategy, if used successfully, allows the audience to view the rhetor and the confession as sincere and might choose to pardon the accused.

Using these strategies developed by Benoit, Ware and Linkugel, and Burghardt, I will attempt to explore the effectiveness of each. Furthermore, I will investigate how the before mentioned players employed such strategies in an attempt to uphold their credibility and individual stature in the sport of baseball.

### **Strike Out: Rafael Palmeiro**

Rafael Palmeiro was born in Havana, Cuba, and made his way to playing in the Major Leagues in September, 1986 (Arangure 2005). He began his career playing left field for the Chicago Cubs, and would go on to play two separate stints with both the Baltimore Orioles and Texas Rangers. He finished his career in a Baltimore Orioles uniform, playing his last game on August 30, 2005 just 29 days after being suspended ten days for a positive steroid test.

Throughout his career Palmeiro played mostly first base and designated hitter a position that only allows the player to bat during a game without playing defense. From 1995-2003 Palmeiro solidified his ability to hit home runs by smashing 373 homeruns in the nine season span (Arangure 2005). Palmeiro then went on to become one of four players in history to compile 3,000 hits and over 500 homeruns (Arangure 2005). Because of his accomplishments he is considered one of the most prolific home run hitters of all time. However, at the beginning of 2005 Palmeiro's name became linked to the "juiced ball era" when former teammate, Jose Conseco, admitted to using steroids with Palmeiro in his tell all book, *Juice: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big* (STAFF 2005). Following the accusation, Palmeiro and others who were mentioned in Conseco's book were summoned to testify to Congress about their steroid usage in March, 2005 before the Committee on Government Reform.

The hearing took place on Thursday, March 17, 2005 in the Rayburn House Office building, Room 2154, Washington D.C. The committee called upon four separate panels consisting of doctors, baseball officials, and players. Palmeiro was a member of the third panel with other players, including Jose Conseco, Mark McGwire, Curt Schilling, Sammy Sosa, and Frank Thomas. The Congressional committee formulated questions, and interrogated the individual players separately. The audience in attendance consisted of attorneys and family members (STAFF 2005). The hearing was also broadcast to a national television audience, airing on both the ESPN and ESPN 2 channels. It is Palmeiro's opening statements that I wish to analyze.

Palmeiro's statement opens with, "...I'll be brief in my remarks today. Let me start by telling you this: I have never used steroids. Period. I don't know how to say it any more clearly than that. Never. The reference to me in Mr. Conseco's book is absolutely false" (Index). He begins with an immediate and simple denial. In addition to denying the claim, Palmeiro waves his finger toward the committee in an attempt to reinforce his denial. This act of "repeating" is using gestures to reinforce the verbal message (Knapp 2007). After denying the claim, Palmeiro goes on to attack the accuser, Jose Conseco:

I don't think that athletes should use steroids and I don't think that our kids should use them. That point of view is one, unfortunately, that is not shared by our former colleague, Jose Conseco. Mr. Conseco is an unashamed advocate for the *increased* steroid use by all athletes (Speech).

Palmeiro contrasts his opinion of steroids with that of Conseco's. He uses the reference to children to strengthen the credibility of his opinion over Conseco's. By calling Conseco an

“unashamed advocate” of steroid use, it implants a negative perception in the audience of Conseco, and in turn presents himself positively.

Immediately after his attack of Conseco, Palmeiro begins a chronological overview of his background. He references the “American Dream” and his family’s emphasis on, “hard work, discipline, and dedication.” It is evident here that Palmeiro begins implementing the strategy of bolstering to relate positively with the audience. Because baseball is our “national pastime” and a fixture in American culture, embodying the “American dream” is a useful strategy to forming a genuine, hard working appearance. His use of bolstering continues by mentioning the many charities he works for and supports. He states, “I am just honored to have worked with great organizations like the Make-a-Wish foundation, Shoes for Orphans Souls, and the Lena Pope Home of Fort Worth” (Index). This is a smart approach for Palmeiro, because the general relation our society has towards children is that of innocence and purity, something Palmeiro is trying to portray in his own testimony. Charitable work is also seen as a great gesture that is generally well respected. It is also a diversion method to sway the attention from his steroid accusation to his generous donations to children’s charities.

Palmeiro closes his argument with a corrective action, “To the degree an individual player can be helpful, perhaps as an advocate to young people about the dangers of steroids, I hope you will call on us. I, for one, am ready to heed the call” (Index). In this case, Palmeiro is taking a corrective action without admitting guilt. He is proposing an option to restore the integrity of the game and its purity. Ending his statement this way is effective because it brings full circle his reference to children and upholding their innocence. The overall theme of his response is that of a simple denial. From the start he denies any involvement with steroids and emphatically rejects the accusation. Along with denial, he uses strategies like bolstering,

corrective action, and attacking the accuser to strengthen his claim of denial. With denial being the umbrella approach of his apologia strategy, Palmeiro relies on his “outright noninvolvement” with the steroid accusation to appear innocent to the committee and national audience.

### **Strikeout: Roger Clemens**

Roger Clemens, like Rafael Palmeiro is considered one of the best players ever at his position. Clemens pitched in the MLB for 23 years, beginning his career in 1984 with the Boston Red Sox and ending in 2007 with the New York Yankees. Over his career, Clemens earned the nickname “The Rocket” because of his powerful arm and dominating presence on the mound. He won seven CY Young awards – which are awarded to the best pitcher that season – two more than any other pitcher ever. In addition to the awards, Clemens accumulated over 300 wins and over 4,000 strikeouts (Long 2009). Unfortunately, like Palmeiro, Clemens’ name began being mentioned with the steroid scandal. He too was mentioned in Conesco’s book but was not accused of actually taking steroids (STAFF 200). It was in 2007 when Roger Clemens was formerly accused of taking performance enhancing drugs with the release of the Mitchell Report. Clemens was mentioned by former trainer Brian McNamee of taking performance enhancing drugs. In the report, Clemens’ name was mentioned 82 times, and McNamee claimed to have injected Clemens with steroids during the 1998, 2000, and 2001 seasons (Long 2009). The story captivated fans of baseball because Clemens was considered arguably the best pitcher in MLB history. He became the focal point of the aftermath of the Mitchell Report. After the report was released Clemens appeared on *60 Minutes* with Mike Wallace and vehemently denied using steroids. Thereafter, Clemens filed a deposition suit against Brian McNamee, and the two were summoned to appear before Congress. On February 13, 2008, Clemens spoke before the United

States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. It is his opening statements, like that of Palmeiro's, that I wish to address in my analysis.

Clemens' opening statement begins by expressing his condolences in the passing of a member of the committee, Congressman Lantos. He states, "I understand that he was a Holocaust survivor and that he lived a life full of courage, conviction and accomplishment" (Index). From the beginning this forces the audience to remember a fallen colleague and past events like the Holocaust. It slightly pushes the focus away from Clemens and conjures up deeper, sentimental emotions in the audience, so that they might view his testimony more positively. Clemens then presents his response to the accusation by denying any and all involvement with steroids, and repeats his initial response again, "Let me be clear again: I did not" (Index).

Similar to Palmeiro, Clemens discusses his historical background and the difficult upbringing he endured: "I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth. My step-father died when I was a young boy. I was raised by a hard working mother and grandmother who took care of and provided for six children" (Index). Alluding to the vision of the "American Dream", Clemens portrays himself as a hard working, dedicated person that has strong family values. Once again he is attempting to bolster his image with the audience. Another attempt at bolstering is evident when he mentions his previous visits to Kuwait, Qatar, and Afghanistan to honor the American troops: "I have had the honor and privilege to visit our troops...and salute them as our nation's true role models" (Index). I can understand his attempt to once again bolster his character by doing this, but I question his statement that the soldiers are "our true role models." Agreed, soldiers are and should be our nation's true role models; however, because Clemens is fighting to uphold his own character and stature in a game that is considered to field role models



for today's youth, he separates himself from that honor. Major sports figures consistently take pride in influencing young people, and Clemens subtly distinguishes himself from being a "true role model" by acknowledging American troops as our nation's truest heroes. After hearing this statement, some audience members might begin to realize that Roger Clemens, the athlete, might not be an appropriate role model for kids.

Since Brian McNamee poses a direct threat to Clemens' reputation and character, he too utilizes the strategy of attacking his accuser. He states, "I had no idea this man [Brian McNamee] would exploit the trust I gave him to try and save his own skin by making up lies that have devastated my family" (Index). Because both Clemens and McNamee are testifying, it is essential to address the accuser in some regard. Clemens chooses to portray McNamee as a liar and a man who is trying to ruin his family.

Clemens utilizes another element of apologia to discredit the accusation made by Brian McNamee. He claims that if he is guilty of something, it is, "being too trusting of others; wanting to see the best in everyone, and being nice to everyone. If I am considered to be ignorant of that, then so be it" (Index). This statement is a clever approach at differentiation and bolstering. Although it is not completely changing the nature of the accusation, it is shifting the charge to having positive attributes. He goes on to couple this technique with one of victimization. He states;

When I kept quiet at the advice of my attorney until he could find out why in the world I was being accused of these things, I was accused of having something to hide, so I am guilty. When I did speak out, I was accused of protesting too much, so I am guilty.

Clemens tries to create himself as the victim. By claiming that he tried every approach to dealing with the accusation, and was subsequently deemed guilty each time, he is assuming the role of the victim. Since he is innocent until proven guilty, Clemens transforms himself from accused to victim, in order to boost his image with the audience. .

Again, like Palmeiro, Clemens closes his response by adding another firm denying response, “Once again, I never took steroids or human growth hormone” (Index). The main basis of Clemens’ defense is denial, and he too supports his stance with other defense strategies. Whether he is truly innocent or not, Clemens decided that denying all allegations was the best strategy in main lining his credibility in baseball, upholding his personal character as a human being, and keeping his name synonymous with the proud integrity of baseball.

### **Homerun: Andy Pettitte**

Andy Pettitte, a left-handed starting pitcher, burst into the MLB in 1995 for the New York Yankees. He played eight seasons in New York, then spent two years with the Houston Astros before returning to the Yankees, where he still pitches today. Pettitte is the all time wins leader in postseason history with 18. He compiled his 18 wins on his way to winning five World Series championships, with the most recent being the 2009 World Series. He has over 220 career wins with a career E.R.A of 3.90 respectively (AP 2009). Unfortunately, Pettitte was also named in the Mitchell Report, and like Clemens, became a public face in the MLB steroid scandal. He was also accused of receiving HGH injections by trainer Brian McNamee when he was a teammate and work out partner with Roger Clemens. Unlike Palmeiro and Clemens, Pettitte did not testify to Congress. Instead, he took a different approach, and issued a formal confession and apology to the baseball community. I am going to analyze his press conference delivered at Yankee stadium on Monday, February 18, 2008. He addressed a room full of reporters as it was

televised on ESPN for a national audience to see. I will only examine the opening statement made by Pettitte and not the question-and-answer segment that followed. A few days prior to the press conference, Andy Pettitte and his attorney issued a public apology, and admitted to taking the substance HGH. However, this press conference was his first public address.

Andy Pettitte takes a completely different approach than Palmeiro and Clemens. He uses the approach that Benoit (1995) describe as mortification. He is very forward in his confession and takes full responsibility of his actions. However, Pettitte acknowledges that he took HGH because of an injury he had at the time. His statement is a form of differentiation, by transforming the “cheating” aspect of the accusation to that of trying to heal an injury. Burghardt (2005) would label Pettitte’s overall address as an “explanative address”, contesting that, “...the speaker assumes that if the audience understands his motives, actions, beliefs, or whatever, they will be unable to condemn him” (p.425). Pettitte also asks forgiveness from his fans, and apologizes for the embarrassment and shame he may have caused them. Asking for forgiveness is an important element of mortification, and is essential to completely taking on responsibility and owning up to one’s mistake. Throughout the opening statement Pettitte apologizes four separate times, and reemphasizes his apology (AP 2009):

I want to apologize to the New York Yankees' and to the Houston Astros organizations and to their fans and to all my teammates and to all of baseball fans for the embarrassment I have caused them...I also want to tell anyone that is an Andy Pettitte fan I am sorry, especially any kids that might look up to me.

During the press conference there is evidence of “visual bolstering”. Teammates Derek Jeter, Mariano Rivera, and Pettitte’s catcher Jorge Posada are all seated next to the pitcher. Also there is Yankee’s general manager Brian Cashman, and head coach Joe Girardi. The presence of his

Yankee teammates, who are viewed as stand up players and good-character people, helps bolster Pettitte's own character and credibility (AP 2009). The fact that not only his teammates, but his general manager and head coach, are all present and supporting Pettitte helps depict him in a positive light. The presence of these players and coaches help strengthen Pettitte's integrity and standing in the public eye.

Pettitte's overall apologetic tone, and his choice to admit his wrongdoings, might create a feeling of sincerity and warmth within the audience. Pettitte also mentioned the time he and his father injected themselves with HGH, and the decision that was made between the two of them to address the accusation, "...I testified about my dad...mainly because he urged me to tell the truth, even if it hurt him" (AP 2009). The simple act of referencing the word "truth" can help correlate a positive connection with his confession with the audience.

## **Conclusion**

Since the arrival of the juiced ball era, more and more players every year are being accused of and suspended for taking performance enhancing drugs to improve their play on the field. The Mitchell Report alone connected 80 MLB players to the steroid scandal (Wilson 2007). Because baseball places a weighted importance on the integrity of the game and upholding its name as "America's pastime", it pressures some players into maintaining these traditions. When a player is accused of using steroids, whether they are guilty or not, the situation calls forth some form of discourse. In the three cases presented in this study, the players tailored their respective discourses with different approaches.

The steroid era has allowed rhetorical critics to analyze the image restoration strategies taken by players accused of using steroids. Rafael Palmeiro, who was accused of taking steroids

by former teammate Jose Conseco, denied ever using the illegal substances. Even when he tested positive shortly after his denial to Congress, Palmeiro continued to deny the claims and attacked Conseco's credibility (Angure 2005). Palmeiro played his last game shortly after testing positive for steroids, and to this day continues to deny ever taking steroids. Similarly, Roger Clemens maintained a strong stance of denial during his Congressional hearing that still continues today. Although he has not officially tested positive to steroids, Brian McNamee has provided overwhelming evidence that shows Roger Clemens' involvement with performance enhancing drugs. In January, 2009, McNamee presented positive DNA tests from syringes and gauze padding with Clemens' blood, linking him to steroid use. After the hearing, Clemens never played in another MLB game and has yet to announce a formal retirement (Long 2009).

Another factor working against Clemens and his denial is the confession from Andy Pettitte. Both were accused by Brian McNamee of taking steroids, and Andy Pettitte admitted to taking the illegal supplements. Pettitte's mortification strategy is not popularly used by players accused of steroid use, but it appears the most successful. Upon admitting full guilt, Pettitte played in the following season for the New York Yankees. During this year's 2009 World Series Pettitte was even called upon to be the starting pitcher in the deciding game six of the World Series (AP 2009). Because Pettitte admitted to using HGH, it was hard for the public to believe that Clemens had no involvement with the illegal substances when Pettitte and Clemens were workout partners under Brian McNamee.

The denials of Palmeiro and Clemens were met with public scrutiny and the two of them disappeared from the limelight of MLB. Howard Bryant, a writer for ESPN.com, saw Clemens' denial as a complete failure, "Clemens had his day under oath in front of the country and spent it flailing, splashing against relentless waves of facts he could not calm" (Bryant 2008). He later

wrote, “At the ready, his finger was always pointing at a reason, but it was never at himself. And that is why so many of the committee members did not believe him” (Bryant 2008).

Contrastingly, Andy Pettitte’s admittance and use of mortification was met with a more positive reaction. Richard Justice, a sports columnist for the *Houston Chronicle*, admired Pettitte for admitting his mistake. In one of Justice’s articles, he wrote: “He’s a role model for every player that used illegal performance-enhancing drugs” (Justice 2008). Justice finished with, “...he has done the best he can do to admit his mistake, ask for forgiveness and keep going. He did exactly the right thing” (Justice 2008).

The defensive strategies employed by Palmeiro, Clemens, and Pettitte serve as models for future players and persons who are ever put in a similar situation. In the case of MLB players and steroid accusations, mortification appears to be a more successful strategy in upholding one’s character and credibility. Denying involvement with steroids has become the immediate response for many accused MLB players. But, with each positive test or eventual admittance that follows, the initial denial seems meaningless. It is customary now to assume that a player will deny using any illegal performance-enhancing drugs. Because of this, each future denial will seem just as hollow as the one before. Furthermore, players like Andy Pettitte, who break away from the norm and admit to making a mistake, immediately appear more genuine and credible.

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