

RACE ON FIRST, CLASS ON SECOND, GENDER ON THIRD, AND SEXUALITY UP TO
BAT: INTERSECTIONALITY AND POWER IN MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL, 1995 - 2005

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ABSTRACT

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Baseball, in one form or another, has existed in the United States for well over one hundred years, and during that time it has become an important part of the nation's history and culture. Because of its long-standing presence, baseball has helped to create and maintain national sensibilities on a variety of topics, including race, class, gender, and sexuality through the use of symbolism and imagery.

This study will utilize elements from Black Feminist Thought, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) to explore white privilege as well as the ways in which power relationships are structured by the axes of race, ethnicity, class, gender, nationality, and sexuality within Major League Baseball (MLB). Relying on textual analysis as well as Susan Birrell and Mary McDonald's notion of reading sport critically, this dissertation analyzes the cultural meanings of four salient moments from the 1995 through the 2005 season to determine their cultural meanings which in turn will illustrate the persistence of racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc., in MLB and American culture overall.

The four moments include the 1998 home-run chase between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, the focus on Mike Piazza's and Kazuhiro Tadano's sexual orientation, Alex Rodriguez's contract worth approximately \$25 million annually for ten years, and Barry Bonds' record-breaking seasons from 2001 through 2005. This study asks the questions: how does each incident illuminate the different ways in which power operates in MLB; how do the ways in which power operates amidst these events help to create and maintain national sensibilities

regarding race, class, gender construction, sexual orientation, nationality, and age; and how is the operation of power in MLB made visible or rendered invisible by the media in their handling of each incident?

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Since the New York Mercury dubbed it “the national pastime,” the U.S. baseball establishment has grown into a multi-billion dollar per year industry (“The First Inning”).¹ For over one hundred years, baseball was seen by many as America’s national pastime. It is an integral part of our history and culture and one of the few things that unites the nation. However, in 1995 when Major League Baseball (MLB) returned from its eighth work stoppage in twenty years, and the first that caused the cancellation of the World Series, something had changed. According to sport columnist Leonard Koppett, “what would not be resumed was the unquestioning sense of loyalty and personal need in those fans who felt betrayed, and the manufacture of such feelings in the fans to come” (460). Whether or not baseball has regained its position as our national pastime is debatable, but what has not changed is the fact that professional sport in general, and MLB more specifically, still captivates fans, generates billions of dollars in revenue per year, and helps create and maintain national sensibilities regarding race, class, gender, and sexuality through the use of symbolism and imagery.²

Despite the role sport plays in U.S. popular culture, black feminist thinkers have not enthusiastically embraced sport as a site of analysis; though Jarvie and Reid argue that “a resurgence of black feminist writings on sport would help to challenge Eurocentric, masculinist and feminist thought which has at times pervaded the sociology of sport” (216). With the energy, finances, and time poured into sports annually, sports leagues in general and MLB in particular seem to be ideal institutions for black feminist thinkers to analyze especially if sport operates as

¹ In 2001 Major League Baseball released documents pertaining to its financial status in conjunction with Commissioner Bud Selig’s testimony before Congress. Between 1995 and 1999 industry revenues doubled, culminating in \$2.8 billion in gross revenue in 1999 (Levin et al. 15).

² According to Forbes, in 2004 MLB teams generated \$4.27 billion, NFL teams generated \$3.29 billion, and NBA teams generated \$3.01 billion in revenue (“NFL Team Valuations”; “MLB Team Valuations”; “NBA Team Valuations”).

morality play about race relations (Black Sexual Politics 153). It is particularly important to ask what MLB conveys about power relations along the lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Therefore, this dissertation seeks to analyze Major League Baseball using black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and Latina/o Critical Theory with the goal of exploring the meaning of specific events to illustrate the persistence of inequities with American society generally and MLB more specifically.

Conceptual Foundation

Patricia Hill Collins's articulation of black feminist thought operates to recognize black women as legitimate agents of knowledge, to discover/rediscover previous black female intellectuals, and to merge black women's lived experiences, political consciousness, and group-based oppression into one theoretical construct which would empower black women. Within black feminist thought, Collins defines several core themes, three of which – controlling images, work, and sexual politics – will be utilized in this study.

Controlling images, along with work and sexual politics, is one of the core themes addressed in this study. Patricia Hill Collins argues that controlling images are “the gender-specific depiction of people of African descent within Western scholarship and popular culture” (Black Sexual Politics 350). Stereotypes become controlling when “elite groups, in exercising power, manipulate ideas [and use] these controlling images [. . .] to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice to appear natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Black Feminist Thought 69). Traditionally, for black feminist thinkers, controlling images help define black women as objects and/or the other and reinforce the subjugation black women face in everyday life. For example, Collins discusses the image of the mammy which historically justified “black women's economic exploitation of house slaves and

sustained to explain black women's long-standing restriction to domestic service" (Black Feminist Thought 72). Though the mammy was one of the first controlling images applied to black women in the United States, it was not the last; as Collins notes, the exploitation of existing images as well as the creation of new ones are a way of exercising power which is defined as "the use of resources of whatever kind to secure outcomes" (Fighting Words 22). Other more contemporary controlling images include the welfare queen, who symbolizes "what's wrong with America" while at the same time erasing "the workings of racial segregation that produce black women's poverty and powerlessness" (Collins, Fighting Words 37), and the "black lady overachiever," a middle or upper-class black woman who has "made it" by assimilating and becoming "unraced" (Lubiano 34-51). The overachiever stereotype, much like the "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" myth, can be used by those in power to admonish poor and working class black women by asking, if they can make it why can't you? (Collins, Fighting Words 42). Much like the mammy stereotype, both the welfare queen and the overachiever e-raced – to use Kimberlé Crenshaw's term for the color-blind ideal which dismisses the "dynamics of racial power," – the racial structures that perpetuate black women's status within American society ("Color-Blind Dreams" 103).

While controlling images may vary due to gender and occupation, the outcome, maintaining the status quo, remains the same. Collins argues that schools, popular culture, and news media are just a few of the sites used to perpetuate controlling images (Black Feminist Thought 85). If we believe, as Todd Gitlin does, that there is a symbiotic relationship between professional sports and news media, then baseball can be included in the list of sites used to reproduce controlling images (582). Many of the controlling images within MLB highlight the league's status as a raced space: a place where race and/or ethnicity play a predominant role. For

example, unlike the NBA or NFL, professional baseball was briefly a racially integrated space at its inception, with black players like Moses Fleetwood Walker, his brother Welday Walker, and John W. (Bud) Fowler playing professional baseball (McNary 12). However, the “gentleman’s agreement,” which officially/unofficially expelled U.S.–born black and dark–skinned Latin players from MLB from the late 1800s until 1947, solidified the league as a white space to such an extent that separate leagues were created to accommodate the banned players.³ The message was that the black and dark–skinned Latin players were not “good enough” to play MLB, and even if they were, these players were certainly not welcome. The reintegration of professional baseball, starting with the 1947 signing of Jackie Robinson, and the fact that MLB is the most racially/ethnically diverse of the U.S. professional sports leagues, illustrate the ways in which race has played, and continues to play, a dominant role in the league.

When dealing with Collins’ second core theme of work, black feminist scholars “investigate how [...] paid work is organized within intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender” and presents workers “as constrained but empowered figures” (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 45-6). In the case of professional baseball today, paid work can be organized on the basis of race and nationality with predominantly white owners controlling a labor force comprised largely of black and brown labor. Baseball has not always been the financial powerhouse it is today; in fact, it was not uncommon in the nineteenth century for teams to fold before the end of the season. In an effort to stabilize the league in 1879, team owners instituted the reserve clause which tied players to a particular team/owner even after their contracts had expired. Since the player was prevented from moving to another team, the player had to take whatever wage the owner stipulated, which, of course, was kept artificially low (Koppett 35).

³ Baseball historians cannot confirm that there was a physical document barring black players from professional baseball; therefore, it is not known whether the gentleman’s agreement constitutes a de facto or de jure rule.

Providence Gray's player John Montgomery Ward likened the reserve clause to the Fugitive Slave Law because it "denies [players] a harbor or a livelihood and carries him back bound and shackled to the club from which he attempted to escape. We have then the curious result of a contract which on its face is for seven months being binding for life" ("The First Inning"). Ward's comments highlight the financial dynamics/hierarchy within MLB with team owners at the top controlling not only the player's salary but their ability to negotiate the terms of their employment. The terminology Ward chose also highlights MLB's status as a raced space with references to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act and the idea of a player being "bound and shackled," a phrase which is ironic given the gentleman's agreement ensured the league was composed of all white players.⁴ In other words, blacks were good enough to be used as cannon fodder to help liberate white players from the reserve clause but not good enough to play in the league itself.

The reserve clause remained intact, for the most part, until 1970 when Curt Flood, a twelve year veteran with six Gold Gloves and six seasons batting over .300 for the Cardinals, was traded to the Phillies without his consent (Acocella 21). Flood, who was black, argued, "I do not feel that I am a piece of property to be bought and sold irrespective of my wishes. I believe that any system which produces that result violates my basic rights as a citizen and is inconsistent with the laws of the United States" ("Curt Flood"). Though Flood did not make an explicit reference to his race, the racial implications of a black man not wanting to be framed as a "piece of property" are implicit. Later, in a televised interview, the slavery metaphor became explicit when veteran sports commentator Howard Cosell remarked, "It's been written truth that you're a man who makes \$90,000 a year which isn't exactly slave wages" to which Flood replied, "A well paid slave is nonetheless a slave" ("Curt Flood"). When John Montgomery

⁴ The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 required federal marshals to seize and return runaway slaves even if the "slave" was found in a free state.

Ward used The Fugitive Slave Act as a metaphor for the reserve clause in the late 1800s, his call fell on deaf ears. Did the fact that Flood was a black player give the slave metaphor more weight? Was the intersection between race and class underestimated in this instance? Though Curt Flood lost the financial battle, he successfully connected the reserve clause to slavery and brought the intersection of race and class in MLB to the forefront. Today, it seems absurd to describe current professional baseball players as oppressed since the minimum salary is \$316,000 (“Collective Bargaining Agreement” 11); it may be more useful to think of them as exploited or constrained, because despite their financial status and fame, players are still constrained by societal power structures.

Sexual politics, or “how sexuality and power become linked” (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 127), is the third core theme black feminist thinkers analyze. Most of the discussion surrounding sexual politics in MLB deals with the fact that with the exception of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) during World War II, MLB has been framed as a male space. Though the AAGPBL accentuated a certain idealized version of femininity through the use of clothing, high heels, and makeup both on and off the field (Burns et al. 280) this idealized femininity was still devalued as far as masculinity was concerned (Collins, Black Sexual Politics 187). Though the AAGPBL challenged the notion that professional baseball was a male space, the League did not challenge racial segregation: the AAGPBL was constructed as a white space. This racial segregation within a feminized space highlights Collins’ idea that “just as masculinities are simultaneously constructed in relation to one another and hierarchically related, femininities demonstrate similar patterns” (Black Sexual Politics 187). While white women could embody the idealized femininity perpetuated by the

AAGPBL, Latinas, black, and Asian American women were banned from the League and relegated to the lower rungs of the femininity ladder.

This study also relies on black feminist thought's articulation of power which involves the use of available resources to achieve desired outcomes (Fighting Words 22). Collins approaches power "not as something that groups possess, but as an intangible entity that circulates within a particular matrix of domination and to which individuals stand in varying relationships" (Black Feminist Thought 274). In this instance, power does not operate in a simple unilateral manner from the oppressor to the oppressed; instead, the players, owners, management, and baseball media use the resources at their disposal to secure their desired effect. For example, to illustrate sportswriters' role in MLB's power structure, Chris Lamb observes that when baseball was segregated, "Sportswriters were indeed quasi members of the baseball establishment. They reflected the views of baseball's management and served as its apologists" (180-1). John Singer goes even further when he writes, "The sport media helps to create, reproduce, and legitimate relations of domination in racist, sexist, and capitalist societies by placing affluent white Western males in their ideal subject position" (Singer 470). In light of those arguments, for the purposes of this dissertation, MLB's power structure includes players, team owners, managers, and sportswriters as well.

The matrix of domination, or the overall organization of societal power relations, contains four interrelated domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal (Black Feminist Thought 276). According to Collins, "The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience" (Black Feminist Thought 276). More specifically, the structural domain concerns institutions (i.e.,

MLB), the disciplinary domain concerns rules and bureaucracies (e.g., the gentleman's agreement, processes governing Hall of Fame induction, etc.), the hegemonic domain deals with ideology and culture, while the interpersonal domain concerns the "day-to-day practices of how people treat one another" (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 277-88).

Collins's definition of power conceptualizes the different ways power operates and also allows different identities to become more or less salient depending on the particular context. For French theorist Michel Foucault, individuals "are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation" (Power/Knowledge 98). Similar to Collins's articulation of power, Foucault's conceptualization challenges the view that power operates in a unidirectional manner from the oppressor to the oppressed and also reaffirms Collins's notion that there are neither "absolute oppressors nor pure victims. Each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone's lives" (Black Feminist Thought 126). For example, though black women are not in a position of power in terms of race and gender, heterosexual black women can benefit from power because of their sexuality.

Foucault's theory of the panopticon is a useful mechanism for examining power and explains how surveillance, or the threat of surveillance, helps regulate behavior. The panopticon draws on Jeremy Bentham's prison structure, which involves a circular building with a tower in the middle that allows inmates' behavior to be observed at all times, or at least lets the inmates believe that their behavior can or will be observed at all times (Discipline & Punish 200). Because of the possibility/reality of constant surveillance, inmates regulate their behavior whether or not someone is actually observing them from the tower. Over time, the nature of the

panopticon has evolved from being a concrete structure to describing any state of constant surveillance whether real or imagined. It can be argued that the media serve as a makeshift panopticon with the dual purpose of reporting on and regulating celebrity behavior which would mean that media representatives are operating under the disciplinary domain of power within Collins' matrix of domination. The disciplinary domain's main task is to manage oppression, which means a panopticon would be an ideal apparatus for accomplishing that goal since Collins maintains that "surveillance now constitutes a major mechanism of bureaucratic control" (Black Feminist Thought 281).

This study relies on the notion of intersectionality as a critical component of black feminist thought and Latina/o Critical Theory. Defined by Critical Race Theory scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw as "the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's employment experiences" ("Mapping the Margins" 385) intersectionality argues that analyzing race and gender separately would not be equivalent to the analysis of their intersectional relationship because "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism" ("Demarginalizing the Intersection" 24). For Patricia Hill Collins, Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality assumes "that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization" (Black Feminist Thought 299). This means that analyzing race, class, gender, and sexuality separately is an inadequate method of analysis and that analyzing these factors together, since they intersect with each other where power relations are concerned, would provide a more complete analysis. For example, when discussing black women's oppression, it would be inadequate and quite difficult to differentiate between the racial oppression and gender

oppression black women face. Intersectionality dictates that the racial oppression black women experience is related to their gender and their gender oppression is connected to their race.

Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory

Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality actually has its origins within Critical Race Theory (CRT), not black feminist thought. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic outline several common tenets within CRT. The first argues that "racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society. Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to a person in the culture" (xvi). Here, CRT scholars maintain that their goal is not to eliminate racism because that is impossible. Instead, the ultimate goal is to lessen some of racism's debilitating effects. A second component of CRT has to do with interest convergence: the notion that "white elites will tolerate or encourage racial advances for blacks only when such advantages also promote white self-interest" (Delgado et al. xvii). For example, the elimination of de jure segregation through the *Brown vs. The Board of Education* decision was not to move the nation in line with the principles of the Constitution but because the "separate but equal" ideology hampered the United States' reputation abroad during the Cold War. In that same vein, MLB did not begin to reintegrate because the team owners believed in equality; owners did so to win games and to make money by courting black fans. Finally, CRT scholars argue that "the traditional claims of the legal system to neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy [act] as camouflages for the self-interest of dominant groups in American society" (Monaghan A7). Like the justice system, sport, and MLB particularly, often is framed as a neutral and objective site based on merit: the only subject that matters is a player's ability on the field. According to Derrick Bell, who is credited as one of the theory's founders, CRT scholars "emphasize our marginality and try to turn it toward advantageous perspective building and

concrete advocacy on behalf of those oppressed by race and other interlocking factors of gender, economic class, and sexual orientation” (“Who’s Afraid of Critical Race Theory?” 79). This study will not be the first time CRT is used to discuss sport, Bell has written that “we boast that we have black millionaires, but most made their money in entertainment and sports because their talents and skill entertained millions of whites and enabled some of those whites to earn billions” (“Racism Is Here to Stay” 87). According to Kevin Hylton, CRT can provide an ideal conceptual foundation for sport research because it is concerned with

the legal system [which] embodies a conspicuous site of struggle that says as much about who has power and who is privileged in society as who has not.

Sport, just like the law, can be observed as a key tool in the subjugation of black people and the magnification of the place of “race” as a major mediating factor within society. Sport, like the law, is supposed to be a “level playing field,”

however there is a body of knowledge to suggest otherwise. (92)

The ways in which issues of race and privilege operate in the legal realm are certainly connected to the ways in which race and privilege operate in the sport arena. This dissertation seeks to become part of the body of knowledge which argues that sport is not a level playing field.

While Critical Race Theory has concerned itself with the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality, it is not without its limitations. The most glaring is the reliance on a black–white paradigm to define race relations in the United States. This black–white paradigm, as the name suggests, reduces race relations in the United States to the relationship between whites and blacks (Trucios-Haynes 8). There are obvious problems with reducing race relations to this black–white paradigm; as Kevin Johnson points out,

The long history of subordination of Asian Americans, Mexican–Americans, Native Americans, and other minorities in the United States demonstrates the unfortunate richness of racial subordination in this country. The complexity of race relations in the modern United States increases exponentially once one recognizes the racial diversity in society as a whole. A multicultural society makes race relations a multilateral, as opposed to a bilateral, issue. Unfortunately, such complexities often are missed by the black–white focus. (119)

The need for a multilateral paradigm of race relations, which would be more representative of how racism functions in the United States, has led to the development of the complementary Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit). For LatCrit theorists, within the black–white paradigm “Latinas/os are rendered invisible in this construct of race relations” (Trucios-Haynes 8). Though LatCrit draws upon the same components as CRT, because of the invisibility Trucios–Haynes points out, LatCrit developed in parallel to CRT “partly out of a need to address issues that were broader than race/ethnicity in the case of Latinos” and “analyze issues CRT cannot or does not, like language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality” (Villalpando 42-3). This project will discuss oppressions and privileges based not only on the “common” oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality, but also on language and nationality. Due to the increasing number of non–U.S.–born players in MLB for whom language and citizenship status is of particular importance, both CRT and LatCrit will be utilized.

White Privilege

Though not a core component of CRT, LatCrit or black feminist thought, white privilege is routinely addressed by these theories. In her influential article, “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Peggy McIntosh defined white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets

which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (97). McIntosh cites privileges which range from the mundane (i.e., finding flesh colored bandages and blemish cover) to the more substantive (i.e., not having race work against her should she need medical or legal assistance). Collins discusses white–skin privilege in terms of the relationship between black women and white women and the latter’s “inability to acknowledge how racism privileges them [and] reflects the relationship they have to white male power” (Black Feminist Thought 164). Collins later argues that white privilege allows “whites [to] routinely attribute their own success not to unfair advantage emanating from their group classification as whites in a racial formation that privileges whiteness, but to their *individual* attributes, such as ability, talent, motivation, self–discipline, and hard work. Within this logic of irresponsible individualism, they are not responsible for anyone but themselves” (From Black Power 180). In other words, the problems do not lie within the system itself, but within the individual; because individual attributes are to blame for society’s inequalities, systemic solutions are not necessary.

Tim Wise describes white privilege as a dynamic whereby “each thing with which ‘they’ have to contend as they navigate the waters of American life is one less thing whites have to sweat: and that makes everything easier, from finding jobs, to getting loans, to attending college” (107). George Lipsitz argues that there is a possessive investment in whiteness because “Whiteness is the key that enables some people to enter those exclusive areas of society that enjoy a better quality environment, receive better government services, and secure access to better educational, employment, and consumption opportunities” (Moment of Danger 86). CRT scholars take white privilege a step or two further. Stephanie M. Wildman and Adrienne D. Davis agree with McIntosh and Wise when they write, “When we look at privilege we see

several things. First, the characteristics of the privileged group define the societal norm, often benefiting those in the privileged group. Second, privileged group members can rely on their privilege and avoid objecting to oppression and third, privilege is rarely seen by the holder of the privilege” (658). They go on to situate white privilege within the legal realm by arguing that “law plays an important role in the perpetuation of privilege by ignoring that privilege exists. And by ignoring its existence, law, with help from our language, ensures the perpetuation of privilege” (Wildman et al. 658). Cheryl I. Harris takes the legal system’s complicity in white privilege even further by arguing that whiteness not only provides a set of privileges but that legal precedent establishes whiteness as a property right. Through an examination of case law ranging from slaves as property and Native American land rights to affirmative action, Harris concludes that “when the law recognizes, either explicitly or implicitly, the settled expectations of whites built on the privileges and benefits produced by white supremacy, it acknowledges and reinforces a property interest in whiteness that reproduces [...] subordination” (Cheryl I. Harris 1731).

Whiteness and the privileges/oppressions it manifests have also been topics within sports research. As C. Richard King points out in his “Cautionary Notes on Whiteness and Sports Studies,” scholars involved in sports studies have discussed issues of white privilege and power; he argues “as useful as it is to talk about unearned advantages, we have to be able to talk about those cheated, hurt, excluded, exploited, and maligned as well” (King 401). This project heeds King’s warnings by discussing both how white athletes benefit from their white-skin privilege and how those privileges negatively impact black, Latin, and Asian ballplayers and audiences.

To that end, this project will utilize elements from black feminist thought, CRT, and LatCrit to discuss issues of white privilege and power. Black feminist thought takes the forefront

by providing the core themes and conceptions of power that frame the project. Though Collins places black women at the center of her analysis, this study places Major League Baseball players at its center which would seem to contradict the tenants of black feminist thought. However, Collins contends that an important component of black feminist thought is the autonomy “to develop a self-defined, independent analysis means neither that black feminist thought has relevance only for African-American women nor what we must confine ourselves to analyzing our own experiences” (Black Feminist Thought 37). By expanding the subjects black feminist thought can be applied to, this study resists a form a silencing that confines its practitioners into what Collins terms a “narrow box of authenticity” (Fighting Words 54). At the same time, both CRT and LatCrit place the justice system at the center of their analysis. As mentioned earlier, sport and law have similar delusions of neutrality and play a decisive role in the ways race operates in American society. To that end, Critical Race Theory adds the fallacy of meritocracy and Bell’s concept of interest convergence to this analysis as well as both intersectionality and white privilege, which is analyzed in all three theories, to this study. Finally, this project utilizes LatCrit to help expand the traditional conception of race relations in the United States from a bilateral paradigm to a multilateral paradigm as well as to add analyses of language and nationality.

Methodology: Reading Sport Critically

Scholars in sport sociology and cultural studies use the methodology of reading sport critically which involves “focusing on a particular incident or celebrity as the site for exploring the complex interrelated and fluid character of power relations as they are constituted along the axes of ability, class, gender, and nationality” (McDonald et al. 284). The axes highlighted by Susan Birrell and Mary McDonald in their articulation of reading sport critically correspond to

the intersecting systems of oppression analyzed by black feminist thinkers generally and discussed by Crenshaw and Collins specifically. Since the analysis of power relations is central to Birrell and McDonald's articulation, Collins' conceptualization of power further links black feminist thought and reading sport critically. In much the same way, scholars who read sport critically understand that theoretical "models that treat ageism, sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism as independent forces aligned against one another rather than as potent interacting forces in our culture" are limited (284). For this reason, the notion of intersectionality forwarded by Crenshaw and Collins will prove vital. To read sport critically, scholars choose the representations of particular sporting events or personalities and treat those representations as cultural texts in an effort to read sport texts in much the same way that literary scholars utilize textual analysis to interpret traditional literary texts (McDonald et al. 290). For this project, each of the subsequent chapters is an attempt to read media representations of an incident involving a baseball player and/or controversy to ascertain how systems of oppression interact. Though reading sport critically can help illuminate the different ways power operates within specific sporting moments, Birrell and McDonald point out that "we cannot settle once and for all which relations of power are always and everywhere most important. What we can say as cultural critics is that at this historical moment, at this particular place, these discourses on race, gender, sexuality, and class were produced around this incident" (4). Despite the fact that this methodology cannot be used to make overarching generalizations about power relations, it can be used for "uncovering, foregrounding, and producing counternarratives, that is, alternative accounts of particular events and celebrities that have been decentered, obscured, and dismissed by hegemonic forces" (Birrell et al. 11). In other words, reading sport critically allows scholars

to expose the ways power relations operate by reading sporting celebrities and events in ways not originally intended by those exercising power at that moment.

The notion of producing counter–narratives, alternative readings of a particular event or celebrity, is synonymous with Stuart Hall’s concept of interpreting texts from an oppositional position, in which the reader “understands both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but [chooses] to decode the message in a *globally* contrary way” (517). In his influential essay “Encoding, Decoding,” originally published in 1974, Hall suggests two additional positions from which audiences can read or decode texts: a dominant–hegemonic position which is the position the text’s creators intended and a negotiated position, where the reader understands the dominant position but allows for exceptions to that position (515–6). Reading sport critically oftentimes requires the analyst to perform a negotiated and/or oppositional reading of the various sporting texts. This dissertation takes the representations presented by MLB’s power structure and reads them in an alternative way in an effort to expose intersecting systems of oppression.

As mentioned earlier, reading sport critically requires scholars to choose particular sporting events or personalities and treat them as cultural texts (McDonald et al. 290). To accomplish this goal this study utilized the method of textual analysis. Textual analysis as a method can be understood as “a genre of discourse in which observers who were also participants in the cultural processes under investigation could talk about questions of power, subjectivity, identity and conflict in the non–canonical context of everyday life, popular culture and wide–spread dissent from the official cultures and politics of the day” (Hartley 31). According to Alan McKee, textual analysis involves making “an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text” (1), which allows scholars to

“understand how a cultural text specifically embodies and enacts particular ranges of values, beliefs, and ideas” (White 163). Scholars make educated guesses guided by the context of the situation, understanding the condition surrounding the events/celebrities being represented and by intertexts, or “publicly circulated texts that are explicitly linked to the text” as well (McKee 97). For this analysis, intertexts include other national and sport related stories that are related to or occurring at the time as the primary event (McKee 92). Because the goal of textual analysis is to “identify patterns, themes, and biases,” this method is wholly compatible with black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and Latino Critical Theory (Singer 470). As Stuart Hall points out, there are multiple ways of reading or decoding a particular text or group of texts, which leaves no “correct” way to interpret a text. That being said, researchers employing textual analysis strive to “persuade a reader who approaches it with an open mind that the interpretation is plausible, is sufficiently well supported, and is concerned with a socially, critically, aesthetically, or theoretically important issue, construct, or text” (Berg et al. 33).

Research Questions

This analysis will focus on a few salient/controversial moments from the 1995 season through the 2005 season to determine their cultural meanings which in turn will illustrate the persistence of various “-isms” in MLB and American culture overall. The four moments are the 1998 home-run chase between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, the focus on Mike Piazza and Kazuhiro Tadano’s sexuality, Alex Rodríguez’s contract worth approximately \$25 million annually for ten years, and Barry Bonds’ record-breaking seasons from 2001 through 2005. The salience of race/ethnicity and nationality became visible through the controlling images created/exploited during the McGwire/Sosa home-run chase. Those same controlling images were then used to e-race – Kimberlé Crenshaw’s term for the color-blind ideal which dismisses

the “dynamics of racial power” (“Color-Blind Dreams” 103) – the intersection of race and age during Barry Bonds’ home–run chase four years later. Sexual politics intersect with race and nationality to influence the different ways in which issue of sexual orientation were discussed for Piazza and Tadano. While Alex Rodríguez’s sexual orientation was not questioned, his physical attractiveness dominated media discussions. Sexual politics along with the core theme of work highlight how issues of race, nationality, and objectification became salient for Rodríguez. What makes these particular incidents so interesting/controversial is the fact that they highlight the intersection of multiple discourses and reveal larger themes and issues that impact society at large. At the same time, these incidents and stories seemed to move beyond the sport pages. As Josh Suchon points out, “Dan Rather and Peter Jennings were talking about [these situations]; not just Dan Patrick and Peter Gammons” (20).

Overall, this project seeks to illustrate how black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and Latino/a Critical Theory can be used to analyze Major League Baseball by addressing the following questions: How does each incident illuminate the different ways power operates in MLB? How do the ways in which power permeates these events help to create and maintain national sensibilities regarding race, class, gender construction, sexuality, nationality, and age? How is the operation of power in MLB made visible/invisible by the media in their handling of each of these incidents?

Literature Review

This literature review will mesh different strands of sport research to coincide with the core themes of controlling images, work, and sexual politics that Patricia Hill Collins outlines. In this case, controlling images highlight analyses surrounding race, ethnicity, and/or nation, discussions of labor and economics correspond with the idea of paid work being organized

around intersecting systems of oppression, and the analysis of masculinity and sexuality highlight the core theme of sexual politics. These strands highlight Susan Birrell's comment that sport can be analyzed "as a sexist, racist, and classist institution, as a site for the reproduction of relations of privilege and oppression, and of dominance and subordination structured along gender, race, and class lines" (213). To that end, this literature view will focus on explicating MLB as a raced, classed, and gendered/sexed space.

Controlling Images

Contrary to the popular myth surrounding baseball's integration, Jackie Robinson was not the first black professional baseball player. For a brief period in the 1800s, MLB was a racially integrated space. In Only the Ball was White Robert Peterson chronicles this history of black baseball players before the gentleman's agreement through segregation, and ends with the signing of Jackie Robinson (Peterson). Joseph Dorinson's history of pre-segregation black baseball and the Negro Leagues "is predicated on the belief that knowing the past anchors our present and charts our future" (182). However, much of the literature discussing MLB's racialized history focuses on the black-white segregation brought by the "gentlemen's agreement." A 1996 HBO film gives a fictionalized account of Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, and Jackie Robinson's interaction prior to integration (Soul of the Game). Jules Tygiel analyzes how race operated within the Negro leagues prior to integration and argues that the Negro Leagues embody the struggle between Booker T. Washington who advocated separate economic spheres and W.E.B. DuBois' concept of double consciousness ("Unreconciled Strivings"). Gail Ingham Berlage acknowledges that not only did Jackie Robinson's signing make it possible for black male baseball players to enter the Majors but also made it possible for black women to venture into the Negro Leagues.

The process and aftermath of reintegration as well as Jackie Robinson's struggles and influences are popular topics for baseball historians. Peggy Beck's essay "Working in the Shadow of Rickey and Robinson" looks at the integrationist tendencies of Cleveland Indians owner Bill Veeck who, according to Beck, was actually the first major league owner to broach the subject of integration when he attempted to buy the Phillies in 1943 and "stock it with good players from the Negro League teams" (Beck 111). Brian Carroll highlights sportswriters role in baseball's power structure by asking how the integration of Major League Baseball affected the amount and nature of black press coverage devoted to Negro League Baseball ("The Black Press"). In a later essay, Carroll examines the process by which baseball's Spring Training facilities in the south desegregated and focuses on the efforts of Pittsburgh Courier journalist Wendell Smith ("From Jackie to Elvis"). Ron Briley examines institutional racism within the baseball establishment by comparing the retirements of Jackie Robinson and Bob Feller and, in a separate study, discusses the ways in which the baseball establishment ignored the needs of black players during the initial integration period ("Do Not Go Gently"; "Ten Years After"). Moving away from the baseball diamond, according to David Findlay and Clifford Reid, "One legacy of the Jackie Robinson phenomenon is the increased number of black and Latin players who are in the National Baseball Hall of Fame but who would not have been considered for induction if Jackie Robinson had not broken the major league baseball color barrier" (231). Arnold Rampersad and William Kashatus provide biographical accounts of Jackie Robinson's life before, during, and after baseball while Tygiel's "The Great Experiment: Fifty Years Later" moves through generational shifts in Robinson's legacy and the continued lack of a multicultural presence in the upper echelons of the baseball establishment. (Tygiel "Fifty Years Later").

As baseball's racial history has evolved, so has the literature on MLB's racial past and present. Though most of the research listed above highlights the black–white binary which dominates discussions of race relations in the United States, baseball has never been solely comprised of black and white players. To that end, a growing body of literature chronicles the history of Latin players within MLB and addresses issues important to LatCrit such as language issues, immigration, and nationality. Samuel Regalado's essay "Hey Chico!" discusses how national identity impacted the ways in which Latin players dealt with the racism they encountered, particularly in the early days of integration. Regalado's book Viva Baseball! and the subsequent yet unrelated documentary of the same name attempt a longitudinal discussion of Latin professional baseball players. Beginning with Orestes Miñoso and ending with Alex Rodríguez, Tim Wendel's The New Face of Baseball also offers a history of Latin/Latino players in MLB by discussing individual players and their struggles to play professional baseball in the United States. Particularly with the earlier players, Wendel discusses the discrimination dark-skinned players faced as they reintegrated MLB during the 50s and 60s. The chapter entitled "Talking Spanglish" discusses the language barrier Latin players sometimes face. Wendel displayed amazing foresight when he asked Omar Minaya, the first, and as of the 2005 season, only, Latin General Manager in MLB to help establish a Latino All–Century Team, a full two years before MLB would instate its own Latin Legends Team. Each of these works highlights the LatCrit position that race in the United States has never been just about black and white.

Moving into the present, Stanton Green uses the commentary surrounding Jackie Robinson's fiftieth anniversary celebration and the lack of black starters on the Dodgers to point out two noticeable trends which have taken place in the last few decades: globalization and the increase in non–U.S.–born players that coincided with the subsequent decrease in U.S.–born

black players (“Next Generation” 121-2). As Martin Manning points out in his essay on baseball and globalization, “the popularity of baseball abroad coincided with the rise of American imperialism at the beginning of the twentieth century” (111). Though baseball still plays a role in socializing immigrant populations, for Green, the sport is failing to socialize the younger U.S.-born population and for Manning the increased globalization means that international politics will play a larger role in baseball policies in the coming years. In that same vein, a later essay by Green expands on the decrease of U.S.-born black players and the increase of non-U.S.-born players by tracing baseball’s racial legacies from Jackie Robinson in the 1940s to Sammy Sosa in the 1990s and exploring “the impacts the game of baseball as America’s pastime has had on African-Americans during the twentieth century and the impact racism has had on baseball itself”(“From Robinson to Sosa” 52). Green compares the histories of Robinson, Hank Aaron, Joe Morgan, and Sammy Sosa and discusses how the latter straddles the line between being framed as “black” and being framed as “Latin.” This duality complicates controlling images of dark-skinned Latin players as they must contend with one set of controlling images based on race and another set based on ethnicity and nationality, and it highlights the ways in which race, ethnicity, and nationality can intersect, and sometimes, be conflated. David Ogden and Michael Hilt pick up on Green’s observation of the declining number of black baseball players by offering various explanations for declining interest in black communities. For them, the decrease coincides with and is a direct result of the rise in basketball’s popularity within inner-city black communities (Ogden et al. 217). In addition to unequal access to baseball facilities, the higher cost of playing baseball, and a lack of community support, basketball offers a larger number of black role models and the game serves as an example of mobility and

expression. In order to combat the decreasing numbers in baseball, the authors argue that the national pastime must re-establish its cultural significance within black communities.

Though Ogden and Hilt address the resegregation of baseball as a whole, a significant amount of the literature dealing with race and sports focuses on positional segregation or what is known as “stacking”. Jon Loy and J.F. Elvogue’s 1970 article “Racial Segregation in American Sport” pioneered the notion of stacking when they found that black baseball players are placed predominantly in outfield positions, which are “the most peripheral and socially isolated positions in the organizational structure of a baseball team”(8). Loy and Elvogue’s findings have been used to help explain the small numbers of black athletes in central positions such as pitcher and catcher in baseball or quarterback and kicker in football. Doris Corbett and Wayne Patterson posit stacking as one of the possible reasons for the decreasing number of black players – it stands to reason that if black players are being relegated to certain positions they must therefore compete with other black players for those same positions (175).

While the stacking of U.S.-born black players has been thoroughly researched since the 1970s, the stacking of Latin players has only recently gained attention. G. Leticia González agrees with studies like Corbett and Patterson’s which continue to find minority players stacked in supporting positions, competing with each other for those positions, and as a consequence decreasing the number of black players in MLB. However, González argues that while stacking is usually viewed as a discriminatory process, “the data have established that Latino players tend to be stacked in the core positions” (“A Forgotten Minority?” 152). In a follow-up article, González studies whether Latin players are stacked in core positions by dividing player positions into three categories: core (catcher, second base, and shortstop), peripheral (first and third base), and non-central (outfielders) (“Drafted” 322). The exclusions of pitchers could prove to be

incredibly problematic since pitchers are usually considered invaluable and the lack of U.S.-born black pitchers has presented some of the more compelling arguments supporting the stacking hypothesis in a baseball context. At the same time, including pitchers as core position players could have strengthened González' argument given the increase in and the prominence of Latin pitchers over the last few years (i.e. Pedro Martínez, Johan Santana, Bartolo Colón, etc).

While the previous articles seek to prove that stacking exists in MLB, Sack, Singh, and Thiel's article attempts to explain the rationale behind stacking. Loy and Elvogue's original essay did not attempt to explain why stacking occurred and conceded that the black players could be excluded from certain positions for "objective rather than arbitrary reasons" (13) and subsequent studies have forwarded a variety of different rationales ranging from economics (see Medoff; Lavoie) to plain racial discrimination (see Pattnayak et al.; Johnson et al.; Philips; Margolis et al.). Sack et. al. confirmed the Corbett and Patterson's as well as González' findings that stacking did/does exist in MLB; however, the study found that the rationale had less to do with individual and/or institutional discrimination than with individual ability. In studying players during the 1999 season, Sack et. al. found that black players were faster than white players, a finding which "lends some support to the human capital argument that management might be placing players where they fit best based on relevant skills and physical attributes" (313). To determine speed, the study utilized stealing-attempt percentage from first base (Sack et al. 307), which could prove problematic because not all managers/teams allow their players to run. For example, during the 2002 season, Ray Durham stole twenty bases with the White Sox; however, when Durham was traded to the A's, he stole seven not because of an injury or a lack of speed but because Oakland is not a running team: the team had 46 total stolen bases which was less than the MLB league leader stole that season (Thorn et al. 301, 1177). As a

consequence, a player could be faster than his base stealing percentage indicates which could skew the results if fast white players are signed to teams who do not steal many bases.

Moving away from the stacking argument but harkening back to González' analysis of Latin players, Alan Klein's "Latinizing Fenway Park: A Cultural Critique of the Boston Red Sox, Their Fans, and the Media" moves from the players to the fans. Using interviews, Klein contrasts the positive reactions Red Sox fans had to pitcher Pedro Martínez with the negative reactions they had to the increase in Dominican fans Martínez's presence brought to Fenway. While the Boston media viewed Martínez's arrival and the ensuing influx of Dominican fans as a positive turn for a team with a less than stellar racial record, fans had a slightly different reaction. According to Klein, "compared to the 95% approval rating that Martínez got from [Anglo fans], the 45% overall positive rating for Dominicans showed much less interest in, tolerance of, and desire to welcome on the part of Anglos" (413-4) and to that end, Klein concluded that sport media are "actually obscuring societal views by painting a much rosier picture than actually exists" (418) – a sentiment that could have serious ramifications for this dissertation since it is concerned with how media frame issues of race.

Marcos Bretón and José Luis Villegas analyze the status of Latin players in today's game. Their work follows then Oakland A's shortstop Miguel Tejada from his early teen years in the Dominican Republic through his major league debut several years later. In telling Tejada's story, Bretón and Villegas discuss several issues that will be reiterated throughout this dissertation. The first involves the "boatload mentality" which encourages teams to sign large numbers of Latin players for a fraction of what it would cost to sign one U.S.-born player, a practice which prompts the authors to ask, "Would it be tolerated if underprivileged Americans were treated by major league baseball the way Latinos are? Or does the fact that they are

immigrants – mostly black immigrants – make it acceptable?” (48). Bretón and Villegas also discuss how MLB functions within the overall economic domination the United States has over the Dominican Republic since not only did the U.S. invade the country twice during the twentieth century, it controls the two dominant industries in the Dominican Republic: sugar cane and baseball players. This economic discussion directly relates to Collins’s core theme of work and how it interacts with systems of oppression. At the same time, the book highlights the absence of Latin players in the writing of MLB history, arguing that “the Latin story in major league baseball is not so clear-cut. It is a story with muddled chapters and missing pages, significant events lost through the years because, until now, they were primarily known only in Spanish” (94). For example, baseball historians are having difficulty agreeing on who the first Latin player was in the United States or finding concrete information on those players whose skin was light enough for them to play despite the gentleman’s agreement. According to James C. Scott, the absence of Latin players from baseball history serves a distinct purpose because “suppressing the knowledge produced by any oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the seeming absence of dissent suggests that subordinate groups willingly collaborate in their own victimization” (qtd. in Collins, Black Feminist Thought 3).

Another area in need of further research concerns the plight of Asian American and Asian national athletes in the United States. Hajime Hirai analyzes the growing number of Asian MLB players, using former Dodger pitcher Hideo Nomo as an example. Though Nomo was not the first Japanese pitcher to play in MLB, his arrival had repercussions in Japan and the United States: his arrival helped spur the number of Japanese players in MLB.⁵ Hirai discusses how some baseball fans in Japan viewed Nomo as a hero with his games being televised live and

⁵ The first Japanese-born player in MLB was pitcher Masanori Murakami who signed with the San Francisco Giants in 1964 (Whiting 73).

viewed by millions of people despite the time difference, while others viewed Nomo as a defector for leaving the Nippon Professional Baseball Leagues (NPB). Since Nomo's arrival with the Dodgers occurred in 1995, "Nomo mania" as it became known, helped MLB recover from the season-ending strike by increasing attendance at Dodger Stadium, television viewers, and merchandise sales. David Mayeda discusses Hideo Nomo as well and compares him to former Yankee pitcher Hideki Irabu. Mayeda argues that "there has been an extreme dearth of literature written on Asian athletes in America. Among the sparse literature that is available, Asian athletes have been depicted as anything but normal. They are either mysterious competitors, cultural appropriators, cheaters, or simply athletically inept" (209). He uses the two pitchers to ascertain whether media framing perpetuated controlling images of Asian Americans and Asian nationals. Much like the absence of Latin players from MLB's history, the absence of Asian players is "neither accidental nor benign" (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 3) and serves to normalize oppression. According to Mayeda, in one case, "Nomo was presented as a very typical model minority. Hard working, self-sacrificing and quiet" (211) and in the other case, because of his large contract coinciding with fears of Japanese economic superiority, "both Japan and Irabu were depicted as economic dangers. The *New York Times*' constant mentioning of Irabu as a \$12.8 million, Japanese, and failing pitcher could only reinforce notions of Japanese as economic perils for America" (213).

Though the number of Japanese players in MLB continues to increase, at the same time, MLB is starting to see an influx of players from other Asian nations. Heejoon Chung's essay compares two popular celebrities from South Korea: Giants pitcher Chan Ho Park and rock musician Taiji Seo. In regards to Park, Chung argues that "since attaining such a level of stardom, [Park] has maintained a scandal-free lifestyle, while showing such values as courtesy,

respect, devotion, intimacy, patience, and the tenacity to overcome difficulties” (103). In direct contrast, Seo is framed as “the symbol of progressiveness, resistance, and deviation” (Chung 104). The traits ascribed to Park correspond to aspects of the model minority stereotype Mayeda outlines in his essay. At the same time, Chung recognizes some of the problems inherent in the migration of professional players from Korea clamoring toward MLB as fans begin to pay more attention to MLB than to local teams. At the same time, Korean broadcasting companies spend millions of dollars annually to televise MLB games, an expenditure which Chung reads as an “outflow of foreign currency, in this case, US dollars, in the midst of a national economic crisis” (105).

Robert Whiting’s The Meaning of Ichiro provides a straightforward history of Japanese players who have played MLB from Masanori Murakami in 1964 through the current crop of players signed for the 2003 season including stars Ichiro Suzuki and Hideki Matsui. Like Hirai, Whiting discusses how the players are viewed both in Japan and the United States; however, Whiting’s book goes into more detail about how player movement affects Japanese professional baseball teams, and some of the difficulties players face once they arrive in the States.

While many analyses discuss sports’ impact on black communities and athletes, several authors have recently discussed how whiteness impacts the sports arena which coincides with the theme of white privilege defined earlier. Kyle Kusz discusses the white backlash which has accompanied the increased number of black professional athletes in many team sports. Kusz responds to a 1997 Sports Illustrated article entitled “What Ever Happened to the White Athlete?” which begins by arguing that young white males are fleeing sports (Price et al. 31). The SI article argues that “white Americans have come to embrace black sports heroes in ways unimaginable in 1947. That a white majority calmly accepts minority status in one of its most

cherished social institutions is itself a measure of progress” (Price et al. 33). In other words, the authors interpret the fact that black and brown athletes are not subjected to the same overt racism Jackie Robinson experienced as a sign of racial progress. Kusz takes an extremely critical view of the SI article and argues that the sentiment expressed by Price and Cornelius highlights white male backlash politics, or the rolling back of racial gains made during the 1960s and 1970s, which became prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s and ignores two important facts: that there are still a variety of professional sports leagues that are dominated by whites (PGA, NASCAR, etc.) and that sports teams are still owned and operated by white males (Kusz 404–9).

Both the SI article and the Kusz analysis group MLB with the NBA and NFL as the “big three” without discussing the drastically different racial compositions of the three leagues. In 1997 when the SI article was published, white players made up 23% of the NBA and 33% of the NFL, while white players made up 59% of MLB rosters (Lapchick and Matthews, “1998 Report Card” 7). While the white athlete is disappearing from the NBA and NFL, he is still alive and well in MLB, a situation which sets baseball apart from basketball and football. Staying with the backlash politics of the 1980s and 1990s, Daniel Nathan and Mary McDonald’s analysis of Cal Ripken, Jr. argues that positioning Ripken as a throwback to baseball’s past (an important point given that Ripken broke the record the year after a contentious work stoppage) is significant because “the sordid history of contentious race relations and Jim Crow–ism in sport and the wider culture is literally whitewashed via a romantic depiction of a benevolent small–town white hero” (112-3).

Instead of focusing on the status of the white athlete like Price and Cornelius, John Hoberman describes his book Darwin’s Athletes as “a racial history of modern sport that explores our racial predicament in its broadest dimensions” (Darwin’s Athletes xxv). Instead of

focusing on a particular sport, Hoberman discusses how the “fixation” on athletics from basketball to boxing to track, has reified racial stereotypes, damaged black communities, and led to anti-intellectual sentiments within those same communities. In some ways, Collins would agree with Hoberman’s analysis since she argues that “athletics constitutes a modern version of historical practices that saw black men’s bodies as needing taming and training for practical use” (Black Sexual Politics 153); however, Collins, like many of Hoberman’s critics, would lay the blame not within the black community itself but within society’s power structure that gives black men the illusion of athletics as a way out. Darwin’s Athletes produced immediate, hostile, and insightful critiques. Russell Curtis argues that the Hoberman chronology of events is backwards: it is not athletics that destroys black communities but the “socioeconomic effects of racism” that causes the problem (890). For Curtis, athletics simply functions as a panacea that has not/will not solve structural inequalities. Lee Sigelman argues that what Hoberman characterizes as an African American fixation on athletics is actually more of an American fixation (894), though the argument could be made that the athletic fixation is more of a global phenomenon.

Work and Baseball Economics

As mentioned earlier, in addition to aforementioned controlling images, work constitutes a core theme of black feminist thought. Patricia Hill Collins argues that paid work is organized around intersecting systems of oppression such as race and gender. Unfortunately, much of the research on baseball economics discusses salary structures and competitive balance without discussing the systems of oppression. Andrew Zimbalist’s essay “Labor Relations in Major League Baseball” points out that MLB has never been completely forthcoming with its financial information. One of the reasons for the lack of disclosure has to do with what he terms related party transactions: when “a team owner who also owns a related business, such as a local sports

channel, transfer[s] revenue away from the baseball team to the related business or to add costs to the team that originate in the related business” (334). These less than honest accounting practices complicate labor and economic analyses, particularly within MLB.

Some scholars analyze sports labor and economic stratification. Robert F. Burk’s Much More Than a Game outlines the history of animosity between the owners and the players from the 1870s to 2000 and divides their history into three eras: “the trade war era” (1870s–WWI), “the paternalistic era” (1922–1965), and “the inflationary era which we are either in now or in the process of leaving” (vii–ix). His chapter on the current state of baseball economics, aptly entitled *Armageddon*, provides a straightforward account of the various work stoppages, behind the scenes haggling, as well as the technical details of the Collective Bargaining Agreements approved between 1989 and 2000. Where salaries are concerned, Burk points out that “as recently as 1976, big league players had made ‘only’ eight times as much as the average U.S. worker. By 1991 the figure was forty–seven times greater” (274), but he fails to discuss the net–worth of the owners and how it too has increased over the past few decades. Though Burk does not mention this as a possibility, it is interesting to question whether or not the literal changing face of the game has something to do with the increased financial animosity. It is possible that it is simply a coincidence that as more players of color enter professional baseball the owners, who until 2003 were all white, seem less willing to negotiate financial terms.⁶

The collection of essays included in Stee–Rike Four!: What’s Wrong with the Business of Baseball seeks to explain baseball economics to the layman baseball fan. Daniel R.

Marburger explains that “baseball fans have come to recognize that the *business* of baseball and

⁶ In 2003 Arte Moreno, who is Latino, purchased the Angels from the Walt Disney Corporation making him the first, and to date only person of color to own a majority interest in a MLB team. Robert Johnson joined the minority ownership ranks in 2004 by becoming the first black team owner in sport history when he purchased the Charlotte Bobcats NBA franchise. Surprisingly, the NHL was a few years ahead of the U.S. money sports when Charles Wang and Sanjay Kumar purchased the New York Islanders in 2000.

the *game* of baseball are indelibly intertwined. What happens at the bargaining table determines the names and faces of those who suit up in the home team's uniform" (2). As mentioned earlier, Leonard Koppett hypothesized that baseball is currently a whole new ballgame. This evaporated line between baseball as a business and baseball as entertainment is one of the primary consequences of this whole new ballgame.

Many baseball economics essays, including two from Marburger's anthology discuss player salaries: James Richard Hill's essay "Will Rising Salaries Destroy Baseball?" and James D. Whitney's essay "Whither Baseball After the Strike of 1994." Whitney's essay addresses the anger and alienation fans feel toward player's rising salaries, a response which Hill counters when he points out that "the rise in baseball revenue from broadcasting due to its popularity with fans allowed owners to pay players big bucks. It is important to stress this cause-and-effect relationship very clearly. The rise in revenue was the cause, and the rise in player salaries was the effect" (57).

Staying with player salaries, Burger and Walters calculate the monetary value of team wins in an effort to measure what effect market size has on player salary. "Large market teams are not just able to spend more for talent because they are blessed with bigger budgets but are willing to do so because extra wins have far greater value in such markets – especially if the team is a contender" (Burger et al. 118). Using Alex Rodríguez as an example, Burger and Walters calculate that for the Rangers, each win was worth \$1.76 million, and thus, "Rodríguez could justify such a salary by producing 11.8 extra wins. According to one respected source, Rodríguez has produced 12.3 wins/year in recent years. Thus, the Rangers' bid [of \$25 million annually] was roughly equal to Rodríguez's expected MRP in Texas"⁷ (120).⁷ In light of Burger and Walters' analysis, despite cries that Alex Rodríguez was overpaid, the shortstop was paid in

⁷ MRP = Marginal Revenue Product, or the additional revenue a player is expected to bring in.

accordance to the revenue his presence generated in terms of extra wins. At the same time – because the authors calculate that each win is worth \$3.62 million for the Yankees, to whom Rodríguez was traded – if he continues to bring in approximately 12 wins per year, it can be extrapolated that Rodríguez is worth \$44.53 million per year to the Yankees, and it can be argued that the team is seriously *underpaying* their third baseman at \$26 million.

Paul D. Staudohar's essay "Baseball's Changing Salary Structure" as well as Martha Hill Zimmer and Michael Zimmer's "Athletes and Entertainers: A Comparative Study of Earning Profiles" compare athlete salaries to those of entertainers such as singers and actors and find that athletes are underpaid compared to other entertainers. Staudohar makes two interesting points. First, not all baseball players are experiencing the salary boom equally: "In 1994, for instance, 12 percent of the players accounted for 54 percent of the payrolls" (Staudohar 146). High-profile and extremely lucrative contracts for the likes of then-Rangers shortstop Alex Rodríguez and Giants outfielder Barry Bonds tend to skew the salary information. Though the \$316,000 minimum salary is still a large sum of money, as Zimmer and Zimmer point out, "Athletes are among the lowest paid entertainers, based on simple averages and after controlling for measured sociodemographic traits" (213).

Moving away from player salaries, competitive balance, or the fact that there are some teams that are less likely to win games for reasons that have more to do with finances and less to do with talent (Hadley et al.; Sanderson; Sanderson et al.; Schmidt et al.), the imbalance continues to be discussed by a multitude of scholars in a variety of different ways. Though many economists interested in baseball agree that competitive imbalance is a problem, Michael Lewis' Moneyball highlights how the Oakland A's, despite being on the lower end of the team salary

scale, usually manage to earn a playoff spot by finding lower-priced talent other teams ignore to replace the players who flee Oakland once they are eligible for free agency (Lewis).

Sexual Politics

As mentioned earlier, Collins defines sexual politics as “how sexuality and power become linked” (Black Feminist Thought 127), a definition that can include the ways in which gender identities are constructed. In his book Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities, Garry Whannel argues that “as the intensity of media coverage of sport has increased, and as the image of the sporting star system has become central to the media sport industry, the images of sport stars become the point of convergence of social anxieties over morality and masculinity” (1). Therefore, baseball becomes an ideal location to discuss issues of masculinity. To that end, Nick Trujillo’s essay “Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture” outlines five features media scholars argue contribute to our understanding of hegemonic masculinity in U.S. culture: physical force and control, or “the language of the body”; occupational achievement; familial patriarchy or the framing of males as the breadwinners and protectors of a household; frontiersmanship or the cowboy image; and heterosexuality (Trujillo 15-17).

While sexuality can discuss the ways in which gender identities such as hegemonic masculinity are constructed, Patricia Hill Collins finds traditional definitions of sexuality limiting and too conservative for her purposes (Black Sexual Politics 11) and she warns black feminist thinkers to resist normalizing heterosexism by using the term sexuality to reference heterosexuality. Instead she recommends using sexuality will refer to sexual orientations ranging from homosexual to heterosexual.

Thomas Altherr's essay "Eros at the Bat: American Baseball and Sexuality in Historical Context" traces the relationship between baseball and sexuality by focusing primarily on the much touted sexual exploits of players from Babe Ruth to Gary Sheffield. The essay reminds us that "organized baseball has been relentlessly homophobic, often using homosexual imagery and joking as a common style of insulting other players" (175). Altherr argues that it is no longer just female fans who are being sexualized: "The borders between the marketing of the game and sexuality blur constantly [...]. The sexualization of baseball will probably only accelerate" (176-7). Altherr's premonition proved true in 2001 when the erectile dysfunction drug Viagra became an official sponsor of MLB. Russell Hollander's essay also plots a historical trajectory for sexuality in the national pastime. In the aftermath of homophobic comments made by Atlanta closer John Rocker and Giants pitcher Julian Tavares, Hollander asks, "Is there an underlying attitude within Major League Baseball that might condone a subtler, less public, anti-gay agenda when it comes to gay players?" (288-9) and ponders whether or not MLB is ready for an active, out player.⁸ Declining to make a prediction one way or the other, Hollander does maintain that support from team management is essential for the second "great experiment" to work.⁹

David Nylund approaches the issue of sexuality in sports in a different manner. In his essay, Nylund analyzes how The Jim Rome Show "reinforces and (less obviously) calls into question heterosexism [and discusses] sports talk radio and its link to traditional masculinity, homophobia, and heterosexism" (139). Jocks by Dan Woog, The Arena of Masculinity by Brian Pronger, and In the Game by Eric Anderson discuss the sporting experiences of both out and closeted gay male athletes as well as examining "homophobia from a number of perspectives, and realizes that there is no one reason for homophobia" (7).

⁸ Though the other 28 teams will be addressed by their team name, because of their offensive nature, both Cleveland and Atlanta will be addressed by their city's name

⁹ The Great Experiment is a phrase often used to refer to Jackie Robinson's reintegration of professional baseball.

Because issues involving sexuality, heterosexism, and homophobia have been more elusive within black feminist thought than issues of race, class, and gender, this dissertation hopes to create a bridge between the work discussed above and black feminist thought.

CHAPTER II. MARK MCGWIRE, SAMMY SOSA, AND THE POLITICS OF RACE AND NATIONALITY

One of the most hallowed records in sports remains the single–season home–run record. In 1961, Yankees outfielder Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth’s 34–year–old record. As Sports Illustrated’s (SI) Tom Verducci points out, the record is “engraved on Maris’s tombstone. No date of birth or death, just 61 and ‘61. The home run is America” (“Making His Mark” 30). For thirty–seven years, no player even came close to reaching Maris’s controversial record.¹⁰ In 1998, St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Mark McGwire, who is white, and Seattle Mariners center fielder Ken Griffey Jr. who is black, inched toward breaking the single–season home–run record, and both were quickly joined by Chicago Cubs right fielder Sammy Sosa, who hails from the Dominican Republic. The home–run chase provided both a diversion from the Clinton administration’s scandal and placed baseball back in the nation’s popular consciousness.

This chapter will use black feminist thought and Latino/a Critical Theory (LatCrit) to analyze the ways in which the 1998 home–run race to illustrate how race, ethnicity, and nation function in American society through the use of controlling images. As mentioned in the introduction, though Collins places black women at the center of her analysis; this study places Major League Baseball players at its center. This chapter seeks to expand the subjects black feminist thought can be applied to, which resists confining black feminist thinkers to a “narrow box of authenticity” (Fighting Words 54). At the same time LatCrit places the justice system at the center of their analysis. Both sport and law have similar delusions of neutrality and play a decisive role in the ways race operates in American society. LatCrit deals with the complexities

¹⁰ The year Maris broke Ruth’s, record MLB moved from having a 154 game season to a 162 game season to accommodate the addition of two expansion teams (Los Angeles Angels and Washington Senators). Because Maris was able to play in more games, there were some who questioned the record’s validity including Commissioner Ford Frick who wanted an asterisk placed next to Maris’ record.

that arise from the intersection and conflation of issues of race, ethnicity, and nationality. The latter simply refers to a person's nation of origin while Juan Perea provides a broad definition of ethnicity:

physical and cultural characteristics that make a social group distinctive, either in group members' eyes or in the view of outsiders. Thus ethnicity consists of a set of ethnic traits that may include, but is not limited to, race, national origin, ancestry, language, religion, shared history, traditions, values, and symbols — all of which contribute to a sense of distinctiveness among members of the group.
(575)

The problem Perea and other LatCrit scholars point out is that while the law protects against discrimination based on national origin, it does not recognize ethnicity as a protected characteristic despite the fact that “today's discrimination is much more likely to be based on ethnic traits such as nonconforming accent, language difference, surname, skin color, and manner of dress” (577). Unlike the legal system, Major League Baseball conflates ethnicity and national origin by categorizing all players from Mexico, Central and South America, as well as Caribbean nations' under the umbrella of Latin players. Latinos born in the United States run the risk of having their ethnicity completely erased as they are not included under the heading of Latin players but are, in many ways, still subjects to the same controlling images as players not born in the United States.

Collins defines controlling images as “the gender-specific depiction of people of African descent within Western scholarship and popular culture [that] are most closely tied to power relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (Black Sexual Politics 350). According to Collins, power, which involves the use of available resources to achieve desired outcomes, can be

exercised through the creation and/or manipulation of controlling images or stereotypes which “are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Black Feminist Thought 69). While black feminist thinkers often focus on controlling images of black women such as the mammy, welfare queen, or overachiever, for black men, the controlling images are a bit different. Ellis Cashmore notes that “the typical image of blacks in the media is that of a violent physical people, habitually involved in criminal activity, entertainment or sports” (126) and Collins argues that black men “were depicted primarily as bodies ruled by brute strength and natural instincts [...]. regulating black men to the work of the body was designed to keep them poor and powerless” (Black Sexual Politics 152, 53). While work of the body has traditionally kept black men poor, professional sport, which qualifies as body work, is also one of the few ways black men can gain money and status in American society. However, those financial and social status gains have a catch. As John Hoberman argues, “while it is assumed that sport has made an important contribution to racial integration, this has been counterbalanced by the merger of the athlete, the gangster rapper, and the criminal into a single black male persona” (Hoberman Darwin’s Athletes xviii). If that is the case, there is no way for black male athletes to challenge controlling images because their status as athletes reinforces existing stereotypes. Though many black feminist thinkers use the notion of controlling images to explain imagery dealing with black women, this chapter will apply that notion to mediated representations of McGwire, Griffey Jr. and Sosa: while controlling images may vary due to race, gender and class, among other identities, the outcome is the same. As mentioned in the introduction, many of the controlling images within MLB highlight the league’s status as a raced space such as the framing of Latin players as hot-tempered or not team players, or the notion that U.S.-born blacks “may not have

some of the necessities to be let's say a field manager or perhaps a general manager" ("The Ninth Inning"). Sosa's Dominican heritage emphasizes LatCrit theorists' notion that race relations in the United States cannot be framed bilaterally: the racial paradigm must be multilateral. The focus on Sosa's language skills and nationality also draw attention to some of the core themes of LatCrit. Analyzing the discussions surrounding McGwire, Griffey Jr. and Sosa should provide insight into the ways in which the controlling images mask the intersection between racism and bias based on national origin as well as shed some light on how popular media frame the ways in which power operates in MLB. To that end, this chapter will ask what controlling images were created, exploited, and/or reframed to make systems of oppression invisible?

Politics & Baseball

Despite the intense press coverage the home-run race garnered, it was not the year's lead story. During the 1998 season, American television and print media were riveted as special prosecutor Kenneth Starr revealed the details of President Bill Clinton's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. For New York Post columnist Mike Lupica, the home-run chase provided "a place every single day that we could go that had nothing to do with what did or didn't go on at the Oval Office" ("McGwire and Sosa"). For FOX baseball commentator Tim McCarver, whose book proclaims that 1998 was the best baseball season ever, "a baseball star was preferable to a prosecuting Starr" (xii). Other baseball fans seemed to agree; according to SI's Tom Verducci:

The ball has healing power. About two weeks ago a fan left a voice-mail message for Cincinnati manager Jack McKeon, whose Reds had walked McGwire 11 times in six games before the weekend. "Please pitch to McGwire," the fan pleaded.

“This is what we need. This is what the country needs to help with the healing process and all the trouble that’s going on in Washington. This will help cure the ills of the country.” (“Making His Mark” 32)

While many people seemed to recognize and embrace the home–run chase as a diversion from more controversial matters, it is possible that the events on the field were more closely linked to the scandal in Washington than audiences realized. For Edward Said, who characterized the home–run record holder as “a symbol of heroic triumph” (136), the importance of the timing of the home–run race cannot be underestimated since it took place “at the same time as the other pinnacle of American symbolic life, the president, has been debased and devalued” (136). Said goes on to hypothesize that “whenever [McGwire] hit the ball and scored still another home run he was, in effect, symbolically making up for Clinton’s shortcomings and sins” (137). Given the revered place the home–run record holds in American popular culture, the perceived downfall of one icon, the President, had to be replaced by the ascendance of another icon, the single–season home–run record holder. The segue from one icon to another fits with Collins’s hypothesis that power is exercised via the creation of existing symbols and/or the exploitation of existing symbols: when the President could no longer epitomize the white American male power structure, journalists used the resources at their disposal to resurrect the single–season home–run holder as the epitome of the white male power structure. The home–run chase essentially became a national election and thus received a similar level of media coverage. If power is defined as “the use of resources of whatever kind to secure outcomes”(Fighting Words 22), this chapter will illustrate how sport journalists used their resources to exploit existing symbols of Latin players as well as create new ones which highlight the intersection of race and nationality.

Prelude To The 1998 Season

When the 1998 season began, only thirteen players had ever hit more than 50 home runs in a single season.¹¹ During his 1987 rookie season, then–Oakland A’s first baseman Mark McGwire came close by hitting 49 home runs, a total which led the AL and helped him garner the AL Rookie of the Year Award (Thorn et al. 271). Fewer than ten years later, McGwire did slightly better, leading the majors with 52 homers in 1996 (Thorn et al. 289). One year after McGwire hit 52, Ken Griffey Jr. hit 56 home runs and led the AL that year. The year Griffey Jr. hit 56, McGwire countered by hitting 58 to once again lead the majors (Thorn et al. 291). Both McGwire and Griffey Jr. were known as power hitters, though the latter had the defensive edge since Griffey Jr. had ten Gold Gloves to McGwire’s one (Thorn et al. 729–30).

Compared to Griffey Jr. and McGwire, Chicago Cubs outfielder Sammy Sosa was neither an offensive or defensive threat. He had never hit more than 40 home runs in a season prior to 1998 and after fifteen seasons Sosa has yet to win a Gold Glove. Table 1 highlights Griffey Jr. McGwire, and Sosa’s career stats up to and including the 1997 season.

Table 1: Career–Thru–1997 Statistics¹²

	<i>AB</i>	<i>Hits</i>	<i>HR</i>	<i>SO</i>	<i>BA</i>	<i>SLG</i>
Griffey Jr. (9 seasons)	3985	1384	294	755	.302	.562
McGwire (11 seasons)	4082	1201	387	1104	.260	.557
Sosa (9 seasons)	3562	1186	207	1074	.257	.469

(Thorn et al. 1254, 443, 643)

¹¹ Johnny Mize (1947), Willie Mays (1955), Ralph Kiner (1947), and Cecil Fielder (1990) each hit 51 homers. McGwire (1996), Mays, (1965), Mickey Mantle (1956), and George Foster (1977) each hit 52. Ruth (1920; 1928), Mantle (1961), and Kiner (1949) hit 54. Hack Wilson (1930) and Griffey Jr. (1997) hit 56 while Hank Greenberg (1938) and Jimmie Foxx (1932) hit 58. Ruth belted out 59 homers in 1921 and his historic 60 in 1927. As previously mentioned, Maris hit 61 in 1961 (n.p.).

¹² See preface for statistical abbreviation definitions and formulas.

As the 1998 season progressed, these were the three players moving toward Maris' record. New York Times columnist Harvey Araton noticed that "at the far end of the 20th century, in a country with still-painful racial wounds, we have a white man, a black man and a Hispanic man in this contest of Men Chasing Maris" ("Why Three Is Better Than One" C1). Those still painful racial wounds Araton references may help account for the disparate ways the "Men Chasing Maris" were framed by sport journalists.

Araton's observation regarding the racial makeup of the "Men Chasing Maris" highlights baseball's changing demographics. In 1961 when Maris broke Ruth's home-run record, MLB had been a reintegrated space for just three years: the Red Sox were the last team to sign a U.S.-born black player, in 1959. MLB reached a glass ceiling during the 1970s when approximately 25% of major league players were black (Ogden et al. 216). Since then, there has been a steady decline of U.S.-born black players while, at the same time, there has been a rapid increase in the number of non-U.S.-born Latin players. In 1989, the year Griffey Jr. and Sosa entered the majors, 70% of the players were white, 17% were black, and 13% were Latin (Lapchick and Matthews, "1998 Report Card" 7). By the time the home-run chase began in 1998, the percentage of white players had declined to 59%, the percentage of black players had fallen to 15%, and the percentage of Latin players had jumped to 25% percent (Lapchick and Matthews, "2004 Report Card" 35) – a phenomenon highlighted by a 2005 White Sox TV ad which stated "To win you need speed, defense, and discipline, and the Department of Immigration" (Boyer n.p.). The commercial illustrates the deficiencies inherent in a black-white paradigm view of race relations in MLB and emphasizes the importance of non-U.S.-born players. As mentioned in the introduction, LatCrit argue that "a multicultural society makes race relations a multilateral, as opposed to a bilateral, issue" (Johnson 119). In addition, by highlighting the changing

demographics of MLB to include not only U.S.-born black players but players of color from across the globe, the ad helped frame what a major league player and team should look like.

Bootstraps & Banana Republics

As the 1998 season progressed and sport journalists began to realize that Maris' record was within reach for at least one of the sluggers, the press coverage exploded, and the story moved from the sports page to the front page. In the beginning, Griffey Jr. and Sosa handled the increased media scrutiny better than McGwire. But at the same time, the media coverage was not equitable: in early August, SI's Gary Smith visited all three players in a three-day period and while there were thirty journalists waiting to talk to McGwire (down from fifty the previous day), there were only nine journalists for Griffey Jr. and Smith was the lone writer talking to Sosa. At that time, Smith notes that McGwire had 42 homers, Griffey Jr. had 39 and Sosa had 36 ("Home Run Fever" 40). This begs the question: if all three players had a legitimate chance to break Maris' record, what accounted for the disparate coverage? In light of Said's analysis, if the home-run record-holder functioned as a surrogate president, then, as perfunctory as it may seem, it follows that McGwire would receive more media attention as the president is legally required to be born in the U.S. and historically has been white.

Of the three players, Griffey Jr. seemed to have the advantage where media exposure was concerned. As Time magazine's Joel Stein pointed out, he "has been in the spotlight since he was Little Kenny, when his father, outfielder Ken Griffey Sr., used the Cincinnati Reds locker room as a day-care center" (46). Despite the fact that Griffey Jr. was considered one of the best all-around players in the game as well as being one of the most popular, sport journalists did not flock to him the same way they flocked to McGwire. It is possible that writers were blessed with

extra sensory perception and foresaw Griffey Jr.'s eventual slump which caused him to finish the season with a highly respectable, AL leading, yet not record-breaking, 56 home runs.

Though McGwire did not have the same extensive history with sport journalists that Griffey Jr. had, he was still an eleven-year veteran who was not unfamiliar with the media. Any familiarity McGwire had with the spotlight manifested itself as contempt. As Gary Smith observed, "You have this feeling that if you ask the wrong question, he might chomp your head off, and you would absolutely deserve it, so you wait for someone else to ask it" ("Home Run Fever" 42). Another reporter remarked that "McGwire often acts like he'd rather get hit in the head with a Randy Johnson fastball than answer one more question from the media" ("McGwire and Sosa"). Despite McGwire's sour attitude, sport journalists continued to stalk him at every stop. There were so many journalists from across the country clamoring for interviews that the Cardinals began holding pregame press conferences specifically designed for McGwire to field questions about the home-run race.

While sport journalists flocked toward McGwire and Griffey Jr., Sammy Sosa was unknown to most people outside Chicago despite playing in the third largest media market in the United States. As mentioned earlier, since Sosa had never hit more than 40 home runs in one season, his name was nowhere near the list of players predicted to break Maris' record at the beginning of the season. But once baseballs started flying out of Wrigley Field, writers started paying attention. And as The Arizona Republic columnist Pedro Gomez points out, Sosa's newfound dominance may have something to do with "the long-held belief within management circles that a foreign player rarely blossoms until he grasps a certain command of the English language. It's hardly a coincidence that his career skyrocketed at about the same time his English skills flourished" (30). Gomez's statement highlights the lack of support non-U.S.-born players,

particularly Latin players, receive when they enter the majors. Gomez points out that “when a club signs a player from the Far East, it typically hires a full-time employee to help the player get accustomed to life in the U.S. When a young Latin player is promoted to the majors, he typically must lean on the club’s other Latin players for support” (Gomez 30). As LatCrit theorist Berta Esperanza Hernandez-Truyol argues, “The imposition of dominant English language-speak simultaneously grants power to the powerful and subjugates the subordinated” (910). By not providing interpreters for non-U.S.-born players who are not fluent in English, MLB is exercising power by imposing language values. The onus is on the players to learn English instead of asking managers and coaches to learn Spanish which sends the message that English is more important.

Gomez highlights the differential treatment non-U.S.-born players receive as MLB provides resources for players from Asia that it does not provide for the black and brown Latin players. In addition, much like the White Sox ad discussed earlier, Gomez brings attention to the fact that framing MLB as a “whites only” or “Americans only” domain is no longer accurate. Going back to Collins’s articulation of the matrix of domination which contains four interrelated domains of power: structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal (Black Feminist Thought 276), Gomez recognizes that MLB as an institution (the structural domain) has literally changed in complexion and nationality; however, the rules and bureaucracies governing MLB (the disciplinary domain) are attempting to maintain inequalities within the sport. The English-language imposition highlights the precarious position language occupies for LatCrit theorists: while national origin is protected against formal discrimination by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, language discrimination is not. As Trucios-Haynes points out, “Language, as a changeable trait, is not considered an immutable characteristic” (17).

When Sosa's accomplishments brought him into the national spotlight, according to Douglas Looney from The Christian Science Monitor, "His story makes us tingle. Here's a guy who sold oranges and shined shoes in the Dominican Republic to help his desperate family survive" (12). It is reminiscent of the infamous "pull yourself up by your bootstrap" myth, which urges people, particularly underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, to believe in the possibility of economic independence without systemic help. Sosa's emergence from a poverty stricken shoe-shine boy to baseball millionaire became a popular trope in media discussions, particularly because many Dominican players had similar backgrounds. Sosa's story served the dual function of presenting audiences with both an authentic success story as well as framing Latin players as "funny-sounding Latino[s] from a banana republic" (Bretón et al. 35). Focusing on Sosa's "rags to riches" story functioned in much the same way as the "overachieving black lady" controlling image: it is used to admonish black working-class and poor women while ignoring structural inequalities that contribute to poverty. According to Collins, in the sports realm "the myth of social mobility through sports represents [...] a gender specific social script for an honest way out of poverty" (Black Sexual Politics 156). Here, Sosa's story admonished blacks and poor whites – the message being that if a Latin player who comes from such an impoverished environment can pull himself up by his bootstraps then so can anyone else. Though Sosa's story proved popular with the national press, that persona was drastically different from the reputation Sosa had in Chicago before 1998. As one Time magazine article pointed out:

Until this year, Sammy Sosa was widely considered to be a Big Creep. The rap was that he was a selfish player, a braggart who couldn't deliver when it counted. Last year, up for a new contract and trying to impress his owners with gaudy numbers, he hit 36 homers but made a mess of it on the way, leading the league in

strikeouts, having a worse on–base percentage than some pitchers and being so reckless on the bases that his normally mellow manager [Jim Riggelman] had to scream at him in the dugout on live television. (Stein and Grace 76)

Framing Sosa as a selfish player and a braggart evokes the controlling images used to frame Latin players throughout the 1950s and 60s. According to Marcos Bretón, at the time, sportswriters framed Latin players as “‘moody,’ ‘hot–tempered,’ and, worst of all, ‘not a team player.’ These labels were rooted in negative white perceptions of Latinos, labels that took hold and became a burden even the great players had to carry” (n.p.). Though Sosa’s popularity was beginning to increase sportswriters were still able to frame Sosa with the stereotypes historically associated with Latin players.

As the season continued, the moniker “big creep” quickly faded. SI’s Steve Rushin wrote, “While McGwire can appear constipated in press conferences, Sosa has used them to hone his lounge act [...]. He likes to mix clichés as if they were paints, creating colorful new images [...]. Even when he says nothing at all, he seems to be sharing a confidence” (35). Tom Verducci added that Sosa’s “coyness adds fun to what has been a remarkably uplifting Home Run Chase [...]. You would think it impossible to hit 54 home runs quietly. Yet here’s Sosa, having tiptoed to the doorstep of history. He’s the one with the wink and the smile. He looks just like a Little Leaguer” (“Sosa: So, So Fun” 21). Given McGwire’s hostility toward the media, Sosa’s new attitude proved to be a welcomed change and provided a sharp contrast to McGuire’s sour attitude. Sosa’s new attitude plays into Collins’s notion that professional athletes “who earn large salaries but who are deferential and appear to uphold American values are acceptable” (Black Sexual Politics 155). In order for Sosa to be included in the home–run race narrative, he had to

hone his lounge act, to use Rushin's phrase, distance himself from the controlling images usually associated with Latin players, and not emulate McGwire's surly behavior.

Arguably McGwire was able to get away with behaving like a churl in front of the cameras because of his white privilege. As mentioned in the introduction, Peggy McIntosh defined white privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious" (McIntosh 97). One of the privileges McIntosh mentions is the ability to "swear, dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race" (99). McGwire could and did swear and refuse to answer questions – and sportswriters, the majority of whom were also white, chalked up his behavior to shyness and not to the bad morals of his/their race.

The Sidekick Stereotype

As McGwire and Sosa neared and finally surpassed Maris' home-run record, fans and sportswriters alike noticed that the treatment and coverage was far from equitable or without bias. At one point, Sosa was quoted in newspapers and magazines across the country as saying that "baseball has been berry, berry good to me" (Kindred, "The Class of '98" 14). While Sosa does have a noticeable Spanish accent, it is difficult to believe that sportswriters could not differentiate between "very" and "berry." It is also possible that sportswriters, and maybe even Sosa himself, were referencing the classic Saturday Night Live skit with Garrett Morris portraying a Latin ballplayer named Chico Escuela who had difficulties with English. At the same time, this is not the first time that sportswriters have misquoted Latin baseball players. In an episode of ESPN's Outside the Lines entitled "Language Barrier," Bob Ley recalls that Anglo reporters would quote Roberto Clemente, one of the first Latin baseball superstars, "not only

verbatim, but with phonetic emphasis on Clemente's difficulties with English" ("Language Barriers").¹³ For example, if Clemente said he "hit" the ball, journalists would quote him as saying he "heet" the ball. The trend continued into 2005 when Sports Illustrated's Rick Reilly missed White Sox manager Ozzie Guillén's point by phonetically quoting the skipper as saying "Jew are racis son of a beech. If I was black, could jew be sayeeng these theengs? An beside, Spaneesh ees groweeng so fas een thees country. Why no writers lur Spaneesh?" ("The Magical and Mysterious Oz" 86).¹⁴ In addition to phonetic quotations, journalists sometimes went so far as to change Latin player's names: Roberto Clemente became Bob Clemente and Orestes Miñoso mysteriously became Minnie Minoso. Clemente described the position Latin players found themselves in as being a double minority: "singled out for being dark skinned and unable to speak the language" (Wendel 11). The practice of phonetically quoting Latin players is a manifestation of that double jeopardy because it "not only subordinates but also silences the Latina/o worldviews" (Hernandez-Truyol 910). Light-skinned Latinos were not banned from MLB in the late 19th and early 20th century and there is no evidence to suggest that journalists imposed phonetic quoting onto light-skinned Latin players during that time. It is possible that this method of reporting served to disempower Clemente and other Latin ballplayers, particularly dark-skinned ones, by making them appear ignorant or uneducated.

The "berry good" misquote incident helped frame Sosa as more of a sidekick character than a legitimate threat to Maris' record as audiences were left with the impression that Sosa had

¹³ Roberto Clemente was the first round draft of the Pittsburg Pirates in 1954. During his eighteen year career, Clemente played in two World Series, was the NL Batting Champion four times, won twelve Gold Gloves, played in twelve All-Star Games, was selected NL MVP in 1966 and was chosen as the MVP in the 1971 World Series. Clemente was killed in 1972 in a plane crash while delivering humanitarian supplies to earthquake-stricken Nicaragua. Shortly thereafter Clemente was inducted into the Hall of Fame (Thorn et al. 239, 716, 30, 1109).

¹⁴ Though Reilly did not provide a translation for Guillén's quote, it would be safe to say that the quote should have read: "You're a racist son of a bitch. If I was black you wouldn't be saying these things. And besides, Spanish is growing so fast in the country, why [don't] writers learn Spanish."

the English–language skills of a child; after all SI's Tom Verducci had already compared Sosa to a Little Leaguer. Patricia Hill Collins outlines the components to the sidekick template:

He was friendly and deferential; he was loyal both to dominant societal values [...] as well as to individuals who seemingly upheld them; he projected a safe, nonthreatening black identity; and he was defined neither by his sexual prowess nor by any hint of violence. (Black Sexual Politics 166–7)

In terms of being friendly, deferential, and nonthreatening, Collins argues that “black buddies typically achieve acceptance through their friendly demeanors and clear deference to White authority” (167). Despite accomplishing similar feats, Sosa deferred to McGwire in order to achieve acceptance and recognition, even going so far as to refer to McGwire as “the man” during a joint press conference (“McGwire and Sosa”). At the end of the season, The Sporting News’ (TSN) Michael Knisley seemed to congratulate Sosa for playing the sidekick when he wrote: “[Sosa] was everything baseball needed in its summer of joy: agreeable, tactful, even-tempered, and compassionate. His deferral to McGwire had just the right combination of respect and coyness” (48). Framing Sosa as a deferential sidekick further separated the two home–run hitters and made it easier for journalists to tout equality since Sosa was being embraced by sportswriters specifically and America more generally, while reifying racial hierarchies. At the same time McGwire was still “the man” while Sosa was “the sidekick.”

In addition to being framed as deferential and nonthreatening, sidekick characters are conceptualized as asexual. For the sidekick image to be successful, media representatives must eliminate all aspects of the black buddy’s life that would compete with the black buddy’s loyalty to his partner. Many black buddies are depicted as not having families or any type of relationships, sexual or otherwise, that might distract them

from their main purpose of being loyal to the White protagonist or to their jobs.

(Collins, Black Sexual Politics 170)

While journalists continuously referenced McGwire's son, despite the fact that he was divorced and did not have custody, references to Sosa's wife and children were almost nonexistent. Sosa's existence was reduced to competing with McGwire for Maris' record and helping the Cubs reach the postseason for the first time in almost ten years. Sosa's situation presents an interesting manifestation of intersectionality. Sosa was depicted as embodying one set of stereotypes based on race in an effort to avoid stereotypes based on national origin. On the other hand, it is possible that media representatives molded Sosa's behavior and image to fit into the already existing symbol of the sidekick constructed to disempower U.S.-born blacks as well as Latinos/as living in the United States. bell hooks condemns the practice of using black characters as sidekicks which "includes us and subordinate[s] our representation to that of whites, thereby reinscribing white supremacy. While superficially appearing to present a portrait of racial social equality, mass media actually works to reinforce assumptions that [we] should always be cast in supporting roles in relations to white characters" (Killing Rage 114). Though hooks speaks specifically about U.S.-born black characters, arguably the practice functions in a similar manner for blacks throughout the diaspora.

By framing Sosa as a sidekick, the message was that the slugger should leave the offensive heroics and press conferences to the more articulate McGwire. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, when dark-skinned Latinos integrated the majors in the 1950s, sportswriters would often describe Latin players as "hot dogs" or "showboats, using labels which had their roots "in negative white perceptions of Latinos" (Bretón n.p.). While McGwire was framed as being shy,

Sosa would have to carry those negative labels if he had behaved in a similar manner and, as Collins argues, only those athletes of color who are deferential are deemed acceptable.

At the same time, if Sosa did in fact use press conferences to “hone his lounge act” as Rushin claims, the behavior could be interpreted as a way to increase his publicity without alienating media representatives and/or as an attempt to move past the controlling images often attached to Latin players.

The American vs. The Foreigner

As the 1998 season continued, the way the home–run chase was framed shifted from being strictly McGwire vs. Sosa to an “us” vs. “them” race or the “American” vs. “the foreigner.” According to Bill Dedman from The New York Times, “in all precincts, nationality is up for grabs. McGwire is often referred to as ‘the American,’ and Sosa as ‘the foreigner’” (3). This framing of Sosa as a “foreigner” reinforces LatCrit theorist Berta Esperanza Hernandez–Truyol’s observation that Latinos are often viewed as

not “real” Americans, notwithstanding their long established roots within the U.S. borders. Latinas/os [are viewed] as foreign others – those “little brown peons” who try to take advantage of, without being entitled to, “American” jobs and health, education, welfare, and social security benefits [and] this nativistic animus, based upon Latinas’/os’ perceived alienness, is targeted indiscriminately at all Latinas/os, regardless of citizenship. (907-9)

McGwire allowed sportswriters to portray him as heir apparent to Maris’ record by not contesting the image: he was the *American* hero whom everyone could rally behind, and everything that Sosa was *not*. CNN anchor Larry King summed up the binary perfectly when he characterized McGwire and Sosa as “an odd couple all right: white and black. One was a

middle-class guy from California; the other has been dirt poor in the Dominican Republic. One grew up speaking English, the other Spanish. Mark McGwire was shy, Sammy Sosa was extroverted” (“McGwire and Sosa”). This binary characterization allowed those in power to manipulate Sosa’s image in an effort to keep McGwire at the forefront of the home-run chase. What is interesting about the positioning of McGwire as “the American” and Sosa as “the foreigner” is the fact that Sosa had been an American citizen for three years by the time the ‘98 season began (Dedman 3). However, as the earlier quotation from Hernandez-Truyol pointed out, Latinas/os are framed as alien regardless of their actual citizenship status and, as Collins points out, “Only White Americans can be full, ‘red-blooded’ Americans [...] with Whiteness and the ability to speak standard American English serving as the markers of first-class citizenship in the American nation-state”(From Black Power 47,145). This definition of citizenship does not allow Sosa to be viewed as an American since McGwire has already claimed that mantle and the former did not readily fit into the mainstream definition of American (i.e., white, middle-class, native-born).

As the home-run chase continued, the American/foreigner (white/other) binary thinking that separated McGwire and Sosa went from the newspapers and news programs to the audience. Journalist Bill Dedman asked the question “Who are you rooting for in the home run race? And why? The answers are not so simple. It does not take long for the vexing issues of race and national origin to creep onto the field [...] awkward pauses and disagreements renew the long, uncomfortable relationship between the national pastime and the national enigma” (3). Framing the home-run race as an either/or question reinforces the binary thinking since “difference is framed in oppositional terms” (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 70). This binary thinking brought the uncomfortable relationships among baseball, race, and nationality to the forefront as

journalists began analyzing the coverage McGwire and Sosa received. In interviewing residents of a predominantly Dominican neighborhood in New York, New York Times writer David Chen found that

the Dominicans also wonder why McGwire has received so much more media coverage than Sosa, even though they both have been in hot pursuit of the home run record. After all, some contend, Sosa is carrying a team that is vying for the playoffs. “It’s always McGwire, McGwire, McGwire; there’s too much McGwire,” complained Charles Rosario, who works at an electronics store in Washington Heights. “I think it’s because McGwire is American, and white, and Sosa is a Dominican, and black. Americans want to see McGwire break the record.” (B3)

While journalists were slow to recognize that they were producing unequal coverage of McGwire and Sosa, fans, particularly fans of Dominican heritage, certainly noticed. When USA Today conducted a poll asking who people wanted to win the contest, seventy–nine percent chose McGwire and, according to Rick Reilly, “columnists all over the country started pulling their hair out. [Hall of Famer] Hank Aaron said he thought people favored McGwire over Sosa because Sosa is ‘from the Dominican and also happens to have black skin.’ In an Internet interview last week one of my colleagues, Gary Smith, wondered if ‘unconscious racism’ was at work in the coverage” (“Pride of the Yankees” 102).

Smith brings up the concept of unconscious racism which Critical Race theorist Charles Lawrence III defined when he wrote

Americans share a common historical and cultural heritage in which racism has played and still plays a dominant role. Because of this shared experience, we also

inevitably share many ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that attach significance to an individual's race and induce negative feelings and opinions about nonwhites. To the extent that this cultural belief system has influenced all of us, we are all racists. At the same time, most of us are unaware of our racism. We do not recognize the ways in which our cultural experience has influenced our beliefs about race or the occasions on which those beliefs affect our actions. In other words, a large part of the behavior that produces racial discrimination is influenced by unconscious racial motivation. ("The Id" 237)

Lawrence hypothesizes that in a society where overt racism is no longer tolerated, the negative attitudes created by the shared racist history will find an outlet. In the case of the home-run chase, since everyone in the United States internalizes the same racist history, this could lead sportswriters and audiences to express that Sosa was not good enough to be the home-run record holder. One of the ways sportswriters manifest this unconscious racism is through the seeming ease with which they framed Sosa as McGwire's sidekick, a controlling image which reaffirms the racial hierarchy within the United States with the white male at the top and "the other" at the bottom.

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The disparate coverage McGwire and Sosa received when they actually broke Maris' record demonstrates how both media representatives and MLB used the resources at their disposal to emphasize the fact that they wanted "the American" to break the record. In a scene that seemed scripted from a Hollywood movie, on September 7, 1998 when Sosa's Cubs met McGwire's Cardinals in Busch Stadium during the last week of the 1998 season, McGwire had 60 home runs and Sosa had 58. Maris' widow and children, MLB Commissioner Bud Selig, and

several hundred journalists attended the game in anticipation of McGwire's historic homer. When McGwire broke Maris' record with a solo homer that barely stayed fair, newscasts across the country preempted their programming to cover the event. The scene was surreal: McGwire picked-up and hugged his son as he crossed home plate, he took time to briefly talk to and hug Maris' children, McGwire then embraced Sosa, who had rushed over from right field to congratulate him, and later in the game the Blue Angels soared overhead to mark the occasion.

While Ruth's record stood for thirty-four years and Maris' record stood for thirty-seven years, McGwire held the record for five days before he was forced to share it with Sosa. On September 13, 1998 Sosa hit a two-run shot in the fifth inning against the Brewers for his 61st home run and then hit a solo shot in the seventh to surpass Maris. The scene surrounding Sosa's triumph was drastically different from McGwire's. SI's Gary Smith, who had earlier introduced the notice of unconscious racism into the home-run chase discussion, points out the differences when he asked the questions:

Where was the commissioner? Where were the 600 media members [...]? Where were the Blue Angels screaming over the stadium's rim? Where was America looking last weekend when Sammy Sosa of the Dominican Republic belted four baseballs over the ramparts and through the palace door to halt the coronation of Mark McGwire? Where were the zillion camera flashes [...]? Where were the major-network cameras [...]? Don't try to explain away the disparity between the national response to Mac's 62nd and Sammy's. Don't open America's chest and search for rotting racial reasons why the Caucasian is creaming the Hispanic in magazine covers and slo-mo replays. ("The Race Is On" 50)

As Smith points out, the celebration for Sosa was much more subdued than the one for McGwire, and Smith blames racism, conscious and/or unconscious, for the disparity. Granted, McGwire did get to the record before Sosa. However, there was no way of knowing when the celebration planning began which of the sluggers would get to the record first or, more importantly, who would have the most home runs at the end of the season. McGwire may have been the first to 62 but there was still no guarantee that Sosa would not pass him and be the official record holder before the season was finished – a situation which could have been very embarrassing for MLB.

Though many sportswriters were still basking in the glow of McGwire's triumph, a few journalists, in addition to the aforementioned Smith, questioned the motives behind Sosa's snub. As Chicago Sun–Times columnist Dave Van Dyck pointed out afterwards, "It was just short of a national disgrace. Let's just hope that the seeming snub of Sammy Sosa came only because he was the second to get to 62 home runs, not because he is considered a second–class citizen" (Fitzgerald, "All's Quiet" 37). Here, Van Dyck acknowledges the racial hierarchy within the United States, a hierarchy LatCrit theorist Trucios–Haynes explicates: "Racial inequality in this country is assessed through the prism of the black–White paradigm and Latinas/os are rendered invisible in this construct of race relations" (8). What makes Sosa's treatment even more egregious is the fact that the Cubs are owned by the Tribune Company which publishes both the Chicago Tribune and the Los Angeles Times and is one of the largest media companies in the United States. While McGwire's accomplishment was front–page news across the U.S., Sosa's was relegated to the sports pages even by the team owners whose best interest would/should have been the promotion of their most popular player. Finally, Joel Stein and Julie Grace of Time magazine quote Jesse Jackson's letter to Commission Bud Selig: "Sammy deserves the same

infrastructure support [as McGwire], but he has not received it. While he will receive many honors in the coming days, it is a little after the fact. There was time to anticipate and to be there for him” (77). They conclude, “Baseball, for the moment, was very, very bad to him” (77). Referencing both Sosa’s and the Saturday Night Live “berry, berry good to me” quote/misquote further admonishes journalists who not only snubbed the slugger’s record-tying feat, but who had essentially ignored Sosa’s accomplishments throughout the season while subtly hinting at the racial and nationalistic undertones for the snub.

From a racial standpoint, it makes sense that MLB would choose McGwire as the heir apparent as Jane Juffer notes:

History suggests that Anglo baseball fans, especially men, would more likely identify with McGwire [...]. Likened variously to Paul Bunyon and John Wayne, McGwire is the prototypical all-American slugger [...]. A fitter version of Babe Ruth, he clearly was the fans’ favorite to break a record set in 1961 by Roger Maris, who was a Yankee like Ruth and therefore an acceptable replacement for the legend. The sequence thus made sense in terms of race: Ruth, Maris, McGwire. (350)

The lineage Juffer presents highlights the notion that neither Sosa nor Griffey Jr., whose chances of breaking the record had subsided by this point, had any chance of capturing the mantle reserved for legendary sluggers regardless of the number of home runs they would eventually hit. Juffer’s sequence also assumes that Anglo baseball fans could not or would not identify with non-white or non-U.S.-born home-run hitters and, at the same time, erases the slugger who holds the all-time home-run hitting record: the non-white Hank Aaron. Given the options,

McGwire was clearly the more acceptable choice to continue the white American home–run hitter lineage.

Performance–Enhancing Drugs Part One

Clearly the praise heaped upon McGwire’s offensive explosion was much greater than what Sosa received. While racism, conscious or unconscious, and what some dubbed as “simple” patriotism may help explain the differential treatment, the fact that McGwire’s accomplishments may not have been *wholly* legitimate further heightens the discrepancy. Prior to McGwire breaking the home–run record, before planning for the celebrations had even begun, Associated Press reporter Steve Wilsten spotted a bottle of androstenedione (andro) in McGwire’s locker. Andro is a hormone naturally produced by the body which may enable athletes to train harder and build muscles faster than they would otherwise (Administration). At the time, MLB banned only illegal drugs, though there was no testing system in place to detect illegal substances. Steroids and other performance–enhancing drugs were acceptable under baseball’s rules and regulations. McGwire spoke openly about the fact that he had been using andro for over one year, though shortly after the story broke, he stopped ingesting the substance. It is curious that even in light of McGwire’s admitted use of a performance–enhancing substance the nation would still continue to celebrate his accomplishments over Sosa’s. McGwire’s white privilege would shield him from any criticism concerning andro.

What is even more intriguing is the fact that sport journalists’ attitude toward andro seemed just as cavalier as McGwire’s. TSN’s Steve Marantz and Michael Knisley wrote

Not that [McGwire’s] perfect. His use of the over–the–counter supplement, androstenedione, makes us wonder about his judgment. A substance incompletely researched, banned from the NFL, NCAA and Olympics, barred from the shelves

of major dietary supplement chains, is dubious. We question that blind spot, yet perversely, find him more appealing because of it, in the way Cindy Crawford's mole accents her beauty. (20–21)

Even with McGwire's legal yet potentially unethical use of performance-enhancing drugs, the slugger was revered by fans and journalists alike. McGwire accused the AP reporter who originally wrote the andro story of "snooping" and Cardinal manager Tony La Russa wanted all AP reporters banned from the clubhouse (Fitzgerald, "Furor Follows AP Disclosure on McGwire" n.p.).

Clearly the support for McGwire on this issue took myriad forms. John Hoberman lamented that "public interest in sporting success outweighs public interest in drug-free sport [which] does reflect the historical record, and it is also compatible with the response to Mark McGwire in his role as a kind of Paul Bunyanesque distraction from the meltdown of the Clinton presidency" (Hoberman, "Little Helper" n.p.). This reverence in the face of character flaws once again harkens back to the connection between the home-run chase and government scandal as President Clinton posted record approval ratings when news of the sex scandal broke (Arnedt n.p.). It is almost as if despite his admission of using andro, McGwire was issued a free pass which meant that the controversy would not be allowed to stain his image. In both cases, the symbol of the white American male power structure was manipulated to allow for what was being framed as a momentary lapse in judgment. The controversy also effectively shows how entrenched the racial/nationality hierarchy within the home-run chase is: the white American remains on top despite questionable practices while the "black foreigner" who refrained from using performance-enhancing drugs is still relegated to the background. Few in MLB or the media at large questioned the validity of McGwire's record based on his use of andro or the

consequences of his admission. Indicative of how the andro story was framed by media representatives, Daniel Okrent from Time remarked,

Whatever else [andro] does, it can't help a player's timing, his hand – eye coordination, his ability to discern a slider from a splitter. But even if andro improved his power by an unlikely, oh, 5%, then instead of 70 home runs, McGwire this year would have hit... maybe 67. Take 5% off a 450–ft. missile, and you've got a 427–ft missile – long enough to clear any fence save center field in Detroit's Tiger Stadium. (Okrent 142)

Sportswriters used their resources to create the narrative that McGwire's andro use was not that helpful and they continued to frame him as the prototypical home–run slugger. In the end, the Blue Angels still flew over Busch Stadium, McGwire was still named Time's Man of the Year as well as SI and TSN's Player of the Year and, in what was probably an unintended consequence, the “sales [of andro] exploded by a factor of 10, to more than \$50 million annually”(Wertheim et al. 38).¹⁵

The free pass McGwire was issued for using performance–enhancing drugs becomes even more important in light of later events. During a game versus the Devil Rays in 2003, umpires discovered cork in one of Sosa's shattered bats. Sosa was ejected from the game and suspended for seven games as players are not allowed to use altered bats during games. Though Sosa claimed it was an honest mistake – he used the corked bat during practice, which is allowed, but grabbed the wrong bat during the game – the backlash was swift and decisive. The difference in treatment was not lost on everyone as USA Today's Christine Brennan noted: “Across the months and years, McGwire's big–boy–next–door image somehow never was seriously tarnished by his use of a substance that would have gotten an Olympic gold medalist

¹⁵ Both SI and TSN also named Sosa as their Player of the Year.

immediately and unceremoniously kicked out of the Games, sans his or her medal. Sosa's image, on the other hand, is on the verge of cracking into a thousand pieces virtually overnight" (3C). MLB quickly X-rayed all of Sosa's bats including the ones he used in 1998, which were in the Hall of Fame, and found no other corked bats. The revelation did not help remake his image as New York Amsterdam News columnist Jamie Harris wrote: "Sosa has discovered that in some quarters, he is viewed as being as black as O.J. Simpson. Whatever the truth may be, he is no longer perceived as the happy-go-lucky slugger of the Chicago Cubs. He is certain to finish his career in a cloud of suspicion" (52). Harris views the controversy as subjugating Sosa's Dominican heritage and reinscribing the black-white binary so prevalent in American culture. Though using a corked bat is in no way similar to being tried for murder, the illusion of transcending one's race or ethnicity applies to both athletes. Prior to his arrest, Simpson "was an exemplary figure to the white world [and] he was the kind of black man whom whites like and desire to promote, a depoliticized icon of racial amnesia"(Dyson 213). In her discussion of Simpson's trial and the aftermath, Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that "Simpson's fall from grace is potentially meaningful because it suggested that even the few who won the celebrity lottery might still be divested of everything on the basis of the one thing they continued to share with the rest of African Americans – their race" ("Color-Blind Dreams" 117). Though Sosa's and Simpson's situations are not analogous; the outcomes were similar: though Sosa never "transcended" his ethnicity in the way Simpson was framed as transcending his racial identity, any goodwill Sosa garnered during the 1998 home-run chase was quickly revoked. The free pass McGwire was issued allowed him to coast through the andro controversy unscathed; however, because of both his dark skin and his "foreign" heritage, Sosa never received a "get out of jail free" card and was forever tarnished for his mistake. Brennan's suggestion that "we have

different rules for different athletes” (3C) rings true: one set of rules for white American athletes and another set of more stringent rules for everyone else.

Postscript to the 1998 Season

When McGwire retired after the 2001 season due to a knee injury, he was fifth on the all-time home run list but no longer retained the single-season home-run record. Though McGwire kept a low profile during his retirement, after Giants outfielder Barry Bonds broke the single-season home-run record, journalists began taking a more critical look at McGwire’s heroics. It seemed as though journalists were finally revoking McGwire’s get out of jail free card, though arguably only because a black player dared break the record so soon after the nation basked in McGwire’s glory. As argued throughout this chapter, the home-run record holder is framed as a hero, a symbol of Americana, and as a U.S.-born white player. With this controlling image statistically shattered and the president no longer in need of a symbolic replacement, McGwire’s character flaws, which at one point made him more enduring to the public, were now subject to scrutiny.

The discussion surrounding steroid use in MLB intensified in 2004 when former NL MVP Ken Caminiti, an admitted steroid user, died of a drug overdose. One year later, former McGwire teammate José Canseco published the book Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant ‘Roids, Smash Hits and How Baseball Got Big which he said would chronicle the rise of steroid abuse in Major League Baseball. Canseco was not unfamiliar with MLB: he spent sixteen years in the Majors playing with the A’s, Rangers, Devil Rays, and both Sox franchises. His many professional accomplishments include winning the Rookie of the Year Award in 1986, the AL MVP Award in 1988, four Silver Slugger Awards, playing in six All-Star Games, and becoming the first player in history to hit 40 home runs and steal 40 bases in a single season (Thorn et al.

719,23,1086). An admitted steroid user like Caminiti, Canseco's life outside of baseball was less than stellar. New York Times columnist Michael Chabon described Canseco as "greedy, faithless, selfish, embittered, scornful, and everlastingly a showboat. He is a bad man" (21). Once again, the controlling images historically applied to Latin players resurface to describe a contemporary Latin player. In the book, Canseco alleges that he helped McGwire inject himself with illegal steroids in the 1980s. SI's Verducci review Canseco's treatment of McGwire:

McGwire used steroids as far back as 1988, when he first discussed them with Canseco [...]. The Cuban-born Canseco seethes at what he perceives as the preferential treatment afforded McGwire by baseball and the media, attributing it to the fact that McGwire is white. In short, Canseco does his best to smash McGwire's iconic stature. The McGwire that Canseco knows refers to reporters with a homophobic insult, is socially awkward and, above all, is a chemically made slugger ("Juice and Truth" 41).

Because of Canseco's off-the-field exploits, including more than one arrest on assault charges, sportswriters initially balked at his claims, and McGwire remained relatively silent over the accusations. However, at least one group of people was paying attention: the U.S. House of Representatives. In March 2005, the House Government Reform Committee conducted hearings to determine the extent of steroid use in MLB. Though McGwire did not officially exercise his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination, his evasiveness and comment that he was "not here to talk about the past," caused many people to conclude that there may have been some truth to Canseco's statements. After the hearing Newsweek's Mark Starr and Eve Conant wrote

Bill James, the noted baseball historian, told NEWSWEEK: "I certainly think that McGwire's Hall of Fame candidacy is damaged." So, too, may be his legacy in

the town where he is most beloved. On Friday, Congressman William Lacy Clay urged the Missouri State Legislature to remove McGwire's name from a five-mile stretch of I-70 that now honors him. (27)

Once praised as one of baseball's saviors, McGwire had officially fallen from grace and, as the running joke went for several months, became the first person in history to invoke the 4 ½ amendment during his Congressional testimony. Though McGwire successfully deflected steroid allegations in 1998, without the backdrop of a government sex scandal or a sidekick, his legacy was forever tarnished. It seems ironic that after relegating Sosa to the background of the home-run chase, it was another Latin player who knocked McGwire off the national pedestal.

Parting Shots

Edward Said argues that the single-season home-run record is the most famous record in sports and "it has become nothing less than a symbol of heroic triumph, unequalled, powerful, solitary, upright, public" (136). The 1998 home-run race gave MLB's power structure an opportunity to create the home-run slugger controlling image which could replace a damaged president as the epitome of the white American male power structure at a time when the league was becoming less white and less American. Mark McGwire became the poster child of the new prototypical slugger controlling image: a white American working- or middle-class male, who was uncomfortable with the spotlight, spoke proper English, was abrasive at times, had a personality flaw or two which only made him more loveable, and had a loveable sidekick waiting in the wings. However, the publication of José Canseco's tell-all steroid biography forced many journalists to rethink the feats accomplished in 1998 as well as the controlling image McGwire embodied. Celebrated as the game's savior and a national hero, McGwire's image, once coated with Teflon, was now irreparably damaged. Despite the fact that Sammy Sosa accomplished very

similar feats to McGwire's, he never received the same acclaim and, at the first sign of trouble, the goodwill he gained evaporated.

The inequitable media coverage of Sosa's feats, as well as his positioning as McGwire's always smiling sidekick, reinforce the idea that people of color must always be in a subordinate position to whites. The sidekick image, usually reserved for U.S.-born black characters in popular culture, becomes superimposed onto Latinos and blacks throughout the diaspora. McGwire and the mostly white sportswriters utilized their power by allowing white privilege to relegate Sosa to a sidekick role. At the same time, placing McGwire on a national pedestal created and reinforced the idea that the American public could not/would not embrace a non-white or non-U.S.-born players as a national hero at a time when the number of Latin players reached 25% and the nation's demographics show a "browning" of America.

The power dynamic in Sosa's case is more complicated. While sportswriters used their resources to frame Sosa as McGwire's sidekick, it is unclear to what extent Sosa was complicit with the creation and maintenance of that stereotype. At the same time, Sosa did experience a huge boost in popularity, which probably brought increased income, because of his willingness to play that particular role. On the other hand, by characterizing Sosa as a sidekick, MLB maintains a racial hierarchy in its ranks with white players on top and black and Latin players vying for second place. The message seems to be that if Latin players are willing to play the subservient role to whites, they can move to second place in the pecking order but no higher.

CHAPTER III. "OUT" ON THE FIELD: HOMOSEXUALITY AND OUR NATIONAL PASTIME

In a 1997 Advocate article discussing sexual orientation and collegiate athletics, Harriet L. Schwartz observed that "in competitive team sports there are at least two givens: One is that players want to win. The other is that being or appearing homosexual will bring shame to the team and the sport" (56). If Schwartz's observation applies to professional sports as well, then it would explain the reaction to Out magazine editor-in-chief Brendan Lemon's 2001 admission that "for the past year and a half, I have been having an affair with a pro baseball player from a major-league East Coast franchise, not his team's biggest star but a very recognizable media figure all the same" (15). Sportswriters quickly grabbed the story and ran with it, and thus intensified discussions regarding homosexuality in professional baseball. To date, no U.S. professional male team-sport athlete has come out during his career, and, according to sports agent Leigh Steinberg, "It would take a Jackie Robinson, someone who was willing to live with all of the slights, all of the comments, all of the hostility, and go through it. That's a rare type of person" ("The World of the Gay Athlete"). At the forefront of this intensified discussion was Mike Piazza and questions surrounding his sexual orientation. The New York Mets catcher seemed to fit Lemon's profile of a recognizable east-coast baseball player though; however, Piazza was arguably the team's biggest star at the time.

Two years after Piazza called a press conference to announce that he was not gay, the discussion turned to Japanese pitcher Kazuhiro Tadano. In 2002, Tadano was passed over during the amateur draft in Japan and later had difficulty finding a U.S. club that would sign him. These difficulties occurred despite one scout's assertion that Tadano "should have been a top five pick over there. He gets it up to 93-94 (mph) and he throws four different pitches for strikes" (Kline

n.p.). Neither pitch location nor shoulder strength kept Tadano from being signed: it was his participation in a gay pornography video in college that gave scouts pause. When Cleveland signed Tadano in 2003, the pitcher apologized to his new teammates for the “one-time incident” and the matter was quickly closed (“Forgiveness” n.p.). Sport media glossed over Tadano’s story despite the national debate on gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) rights occurring at the time, which included a U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning state sodomy laws and the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling that the state’s ban on same-sex marriages was unconstitutional. This chapter uses Piazza and Tadano’s situations to demonstrate how sexuality operates in American culture by asking, why did questions surrounding Piazza’s sexuality attract so much attention? If questions surrounding Piazza’s sexuality created a media explosion, what factors may have accounted for the different way journalists handled Tadano’s story?

Heterosexism & Black Feminist Thought

This chapter will focus on black feminist thought’s theme of sexual politics which analyzes “how sexuality and power become linked” (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 127). This chapter will concern itself with heterosexism, which, according to Collins, can be viewed as “a freestanding system of oppression similar to oppressions of race, class, and gender” (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 128). This allows heterosexism to be viewed as a system of oppression that affects baseball players in general and Piazza and Tadano specifically. Collins defines heterosexism as “an ideology or system of power that delineates what constitutes normal and deviant sexuality and distributes social rewards and penalties based on this definition” and homophobia can be thought of as “holding or expressing negative beliefs and actions toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgendered people” (Black Sexual Politics 351). It could be argued that MLB’s power structure, which includes players, managers, owners, and sportswriters, has

created and continues to maintain a hostile environment that has prevented gay players from coming out during their careers. MLB's power structure wields its authority in an effort to try to control the sexual orientation of its players. While Collins's definitions of heterosexism and homophobia will be particularly useful for the chapter on Piazza, overall, the interrelated concepts pose problems for black feminist analysis.

Collins recognizes that heterosexism and homophobia are sometimes overlooked in black feminist analysis and remarks that "black feminist thought remains emancipatory in some dimensions, namely, conceptualizing power relations through intersections of race, gender, and class, yet dominant in others, namely, its relative silence on issues of sexual politics and on nationalism" (Fighting Words 89). Historically, black feminist critics have been adept at analyzing and combating the intersection of race, class, and gender oppression; however, heterosexism and homophobia have been somewhat elusive. This is despite Michael Messner's assertion that sexuality is a key linking process within Collins's matrix of domination (223) which is defined as the overall organization of societal power relations. According to black feminist author Barbara Smith, black women do not have privileges based on their race, gender, and for many, class: "heterosexual privilege is usually the only privilege that black women have"(171). The minimalization of heterosexism within black feminist thought is an oversight at best and politically irresponsible at worse, given the theory's premise. As Smith points out, black women are often disempowered due to the relationship between race and gender; however, heterosexual black women can reap the benefits of heterosexual privilege and can ignore the benefits that privilege creates.

Coming Out

The panic concerning gay players in MLB did not begin with Lemon's 2001 editorial; it began in earnest two years earlier when former major leaguer Billy Bean's sexual orientation was revealed in a newspaper article. Having been a member of the Tigers, Dodgers, and Padres organizations from 1987–1995, Bean wrote in his 1999 book Going the Other Way that, at the time, “baseball wasn't ready for a guy like me, no matter how well I played. The game wasn't mature enough to deal with a gay ballplayer” (xvi). Reaction to Bean's admission was mixed. Some players seemed to shrug their shoulders at the thought of a gay teammate, much like Bean's former teammate Brad Ausmus, who was quoted as saying “It wouldn't have made any difference to me when we played together and it doesn't matter to me now” (Bean 217), while others took the opportunity to express their discomfort with the idea, such as Houston Astros pitcher Andy Pettitte who said, “There would be the question of being comfortable” (Bean 218). Bean responded to the reactions within MLB by writing,

The bonds of teammates, I was learning, were far stronger than prejudice [...].
The silence from other quarters was deafening. The baseball powers—that-be
could not be bothered to call or issue a statement. Bud Selig [...] didn't seem to
give a damn about the questions my stories raised. (217-8)

The silence from both the commissioner's office and the Major League Baseball Player's Association (MLBPA) was hardly surprising – heterosexuality was so normalized within MLB that it went unquestioned. If, as Collins points out that “in order to prosper, systems of oppression must regulate sexuality, and they often do so by manufacturing ideologies that render some ideas commonsensical while obscuring others” (Black Sexual Politics 36), then the commonsense ideology is that all male athletes in general, and professional baseball players

more specifically, are heterosexual which, by consequence, obscures both the presence of gay and bisexual athletes and the underlying homophobic environment within sport/MLB culture. At the same time, Collins reminds us that “if the invisibility of sexual oppression enabled it to operate unopposed, then making heterosexism visible by being ‘out’ attacked heterosexism at its core” (Black Sexual Politics 94). By coming out and discussing the homophobic environment within MLB, Bean may have helped MLB take its first steps toward combating homophobia and heterosexism. At the same time, the onus cannot fall solely on gay and bisexual players, as journalist Dave Zirin argues, “Given the current context, we cannot make demands on gay athletes to come out and risk their necks unless we are willing to hit the streets and do the same. If we aren’t willing to stand up right now for our gay brothers and sisters, then we shouldn’t expect an athlete to do it for us” (What’s My Name, Fool? 213).

Fighting Words

The interconnected possibility of out gay ballplayers and anti-gay sentiments within the clubhouse did not end with Bean’s admission. In the same year Bean began openly discussing his sexual orientation, SI ran an interview with then Atlanta closer John Rocker in which he expressed his feelings about a wide variety of topics. When asked about New York City, Rocker stated, “It’s the most hectic, nerve-wracking city. Imagine having to take the [Number] 7 train to the ballpark, looking like you’re [riding through] Beirut next to some kid with purple hair next to some queer with AIDS right next to some dude who just got out of jail for the fourth time right next to some 20-year-old mom with four kids. It’s depressing” (Pearlman, “At Full Blast” 61). The pitcher went on to disparage anyone who was not an English-speaking, heterosexual, white male (Price 42). Rocker’s comments could be characterized as what Collins calls fighting words. Critical Race theory scholar Charles R. Lawrence III discusses fighting words as “those [words]

‘which by their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite to an immediate breach of peace,’ and which are commonly understood to convey direct and visceral hatred or contempt for human beings on the basis of their sex, race, color, handicap, religion, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin” (“If He Hollers” 451).

In response to Rocker’s fighting words, Commissioner Bud Selig suspended the closer for 73 days with pay, fined him \$20,000, and ordered psychological counseling.¹⁶ There were some who found the punishment too lenient and others who thought it was too harsh. In either case, Selig was remarkably silent about Bean’s account of anti-gay sentiments in the clubhouse; the punishment handed down seemed to indicate that Selig would not tolerate fighting words outside the clubhouse. However, when an arbitrator later reduced the suspension to 14 days and the fine to \$500, some believed that MLB was excusing Rocker’s racial and homophobic remarks (Price 42). In responding to Rocker’s outburst, Bean wrote that the closer “simply got caught saying what some people think but are afraid to say. It’s easier for baseball to blame the outburst on the player than look in the mirror. They need to make it clear that harassment won’t be allowed on the field or in the locker room” (238). Granted, Selig’s original ruling could be interpreted as cracking down on fighting words, albeit outside the locker room. If that was the case, then we could assume that Selig would hand out similar punishments to other players who made racist and/or homophobic remarks. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

Having learned absolutely nothing from John Rocker’s public outburst and the resulting condemnation, during the 2001 season, former Chicago Cubs pitcher Julian Tavarez called San Francisco Giants fans “a bunch of faggots” after they booed him during a game (7). Instead of making yet another example out of Tavarez, and living up to Bean’s hope that MLB would not

¹⁶ Rocker was later fined an additional \$5,000 by Atlanta for confronting Jeff Pearlman, the journalist who wrote the original piece. Not long after, the team sent Rocker to the minor leagues; however, that was due more to the closer’s lack of production than to his remarks (Tatum 12).

tolerate such behavior, the league went in a different direction. According to Chicago Sun–Times columnist Jay Mariotti, Selig “whose heavy–handed stance in the Rucker saga represented some of his finest work, went mushy on Tavaréz. He didn’t issue a suspension and deferred to the Cubs, who criticized Tavaréz, slapped him with a fine and pointed him toward the mound, where he kept his place in the rotation” (7). What makes the punishment, or lack thereof, so ironic is the fact that the Cubs have one of the longest track records of any Major League franchise of embracing their GLB base (“Come Together” n.p.). For Collins the recurrence of fighting words is evidence that “such speech is less an anomaly than a visible, tangible manifestation of deep–seated ideas and practices that permeate and define the social structure itself” (Fighting Words 83). In other words, while one player’s tirade could be characterized as the ignorance of that player, two outbursts – that the press reported – signal a larger problem since, as Eric Anderson and others point out, “The institution of sport is, in general, highly homophobic” (139). Dan Woog goes so far as to state “The sports world does not exactly high–five [gay athletes] or grasp them in a winner’s hug. In fact, recent news stories make it seem as if athletes and coaches are caught in a queer time warp” (xii). Anderson and Woog’s comments would seem to indicate that Rucker’s and Tavaréz’ comments were not isolated and unconnected incidents: their fighting words help support a homophobic environment within MLB. In fact, “It is the knowledge that [fighting words] are not the isolated unpopular speech of a dissident few that makes them so frightening. These incidents are manifestations of an ubiquitous and deeply ingrained cultural belief system, an American way of life” (Lawrence III, “If He Hollers” 461). If that is the case, then Rucker’s and Tavaréz’ comments, as well as the accompanied minimal penalties, could reflect a more overarching heterosexist and homophobic environment present in MLB.

In fact, it could be argued that the type of behavior displayed by Rocker and Tavaréz “benefits powerful white–dominated institutions” (Lawrence III, “If He Hollers” 466) like MLB. According to Lawrence III,

This kind of behavior keeps [subordinate groups] on edge, a little off balance. We get these occasional reminders that we are different, and not really wanted. It prevents us from digging in too strongly, starting to think we could really belong here [...]. It assures that those of us of real spirit, real pride, just plain leave — all of which is a substantial benefit for the institution. (“If He Hollers” 466-7)

While Selig’s punishment of Rocker initially sent the message that fighting words were not tolerated in MLB, his acquiescence on Tavaréz’ behalf reflects the homophobic environment within MLB. At the same time, heterosexual MLB players benefit from Rocker’s and Tavaréz’ behavior insofar as their heterosexuality is affirmed by the tacit acceptance of the fighting words. The utterance, publication, and acceptance of fighting words sends the message that gay players are not wanted in MLB and if they are already present, they should stay in the closet.

15–Word Response

In the months following Lemon’s editorial, the discussion surrounding the possibility of an out ballplayer remained fairly abstract since no active player had come out in response to the editorial. The discussion moved from abstract to specific following a 2002 interview with then Mets manager Bobby Valentine in Details magazine. When asked whether or not baseball was ready for an openly gay player, Valentine replied, “The players are a diverse enough group now that I think they could handle it” (Kindred, “Everything Evolves” 64). Shortly after Valentine’s interview was published, New York Post gossip columnist Neal Travis framed Valentine’s statement as a “pre–emptory strike” due to “a persistent rumor around town that one Mets star

who spends a lot of time with pretty models in clubs is actually gay and has started to think about declaring his sexual orientation” (011). Though Travis’ column did not name Piazza directly, according to Pittsburg Post–Gazette sports columnist Ron Cook, the piece “didn’t have to [mention Piazza]. He’s the only Mets star who fits that description” (C-1) since it was common knowledge that the catcher had a weakness for club–hopping with supermodels and Playboy Playmates. There was no question in sportswriter’s or fan’s minds that Travis’ article was referring to Piazza.

It took less than twenty–four hours for Piazza to respond. The catcher held an impromptu press conference prior to a game in Philadelphia where he declared, “First off, I’m not gay. I’m heterosexual. That’s pretty much it. That’s pretty much all I can say. I don’t see the need to address the issue further” (Hermoso D:5). Piazza went on to state, “In this day and age, it would be irrelevant. If the guy is doing his job on the field [...] I don’t think there would be any problem at all” (Kindred, “Everything Evolves” 64). On some level Piazza’s comments seem disingenuous because if a player’s sexual orientation would be irrelevant as he claims, why go to the trouble of holding a press conference to publicly proclaim his heterosexuality? Though the catcher did not feel the need to address the issue further following the press conference, other baseball players, managers, and journalists continued to ponder whether MLB was ready for an openly gay player. Then Phillies manager Larry Bowa remarked, “I’d probably wait until my career was over. If he hits .340, it probably would be easier than if he hits .220” (D’Angelo 7B). This sentiment underscored the notion that production on the field is far more important than life off the field. When asked whether or not he would accept a gay teammate, Yankees pitcher Mike Mussina replied, “I’m going to make the assumption that I already have, that there already is a player like that out there. I don’t have any problems with it. It’s part of society” (D’Angelo 7B).

Mussina's comments underscored an important point that was missing from the discussion thus far: there have always been gay athletes in professional baseball, even, possibly, on the vaunted New York Yankees.

In the wake of Piazza's actions, sport journalists handled the questions surrounding an out baseball player differently: journalists began to ask whether or not a player's sexual orientation was cause for a press conference. Most columnists agreed that the Post column, which could not be substantiated, did not deserve this much attention; however, the lack of evidence did not stop anyone from writing about it. Some, like San Francisco Chronicle columnist Bruce Jenkins questioned Piazza's tactics: "You'd think he would just shrug it off, and that the Mets would have no reaction whatsoever" ("Baseball Isn't Ready to Open the Closet Door" C2). New York Times columnist Harvey Araton agreed with Jenkins' puzzlement:

Irresponsible and unfair as the item in The New York Post was, I'm wondering what the Mets accomplished or were even thinking with their unfortunate overreaction. The better response, for the sake of discouraging such future musings, would have been: You don't have the right to ask unless I want you to know. Instead, we had Piazza, a gentleman, calmly stating, "I'm not gay," in addition to a variety of Mets voicing anger and disgust, including [catcher] Vance Wilson, who chimed in with the gem, "He lives his life morally right." [This] leads me to think, contrary to Valentine's interpretations of baseball's diversity, that the standard antigay expressions so prevalent in our macho sports culture are now merely spoken in a variety of languages. ("Baseball Focuses on the Trivial"

1)

While some journalists like Araton may have questioned their right to know, many sportswriters continued to comment on the story. At the same time, some sportswriters expressed discomfort with player's homophobic remarks as Araton facetiously referred to Vance Wilson's comment as a gem. Despite the seeming disapproval of homophobic and heterosexist comments, it could be argued that one of the largest obstacles keeping gay ballplayers in the proverbial closet is not teammate reaction but the almost inevitable media frenzy.

The Media Panopticon Part One

Due the public nature of their professions, celebrities (actors, athletes, politicians, etc), are under constant surveillance by news organizations. Because of this, some celebrities are inclined to regulate their behavior, especially if they believe that their career will be jeopardized if they are outed (whether or not they are actually gay). Gerry Callahan of The Boston Globe discussed the ramifications faced by an out athlete, saying, "It would affect his relationship with his teammates, his fans, the media, the advertisers. For Piazza, [the endorsement deals] would end before he closed the closet door behind him. To think otherwise is to be as naive or as disingenuous as those who ask, 'Who cares?'" ("Issue Too Big to Come Out" 119). Since no gay male team-sport athletes in the United States have come out, there is no way to corroborate or contradict Callahan's ramification hypothesis.

As mentioned in the introduction, Michel Foucault's theory of the panopticon helps explain how surveillance, or the threat of surveillance, regulates behavior. Jeremy Bentham's ideal prison structure is described by Foucault:

at the periphery an annular building; at the centre, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the

building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a schoolboy. (Discipline & Punish 200)

Because of the possibility of constant surveillance, inmates regulate their behavior whether or not someone is actually observing them from the tower. Though the panopticon began as a concrete prison structure, the concept has expanded to describe any state of constant surveillance whether real or imagined. With that in mind, it can be argued that the media function as a panopticon with the dual purpose of reporting on and regulating celebrity behavior, which would mean that media representatives are operating under the disciplinary domain of power within Collins' matrix of domination. As mentioned in the introduction and in chapter two, Collins posits that a matrix of domination, or the overall organization of societal power relations, contains four interconnected domains of power: "the structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience" (Black Feminist Thought 276). The disciplinary domain's main task is to manage oppression, and a panopticon would be an ideal apparatus for accomplishing that goal since Collins maintains that "surveillance now constitutes a major mechanism of bureaucratic control" (Black Feminist Thought 281).

The prison imagery becomes particularly salient as Collins connects prisons as a metaphor for racism to the notion of the closet: "Racism and heterosexism, the prison and the closet, appear to be separate systems [however] racism and heterosexism certainly converge on certain key points. For one, both use similar state-sanctioned institutional mechanisms to maintain racial and sexual hierarchies" (Black Sexual Politics 95). This connection between the

prison and the closet not only highlights the relationship between racism and heterosexism and in a sense foreshadows the use of the panopticon to keep GLB celebrities in the closet since the nature of the panopticon has evolved from being a concrete structure to describing any state of constant surveillance. John Thompson argues that

the development of communication media provides a means by which many people can gather information about a few, and, at the same time, a few can appear before many; thanks to the media, it is primarily those who exercise power, rather than those over whom power is exercised, who are subjected to a certain kind of visibility. (134)

With that in mind, it can be argued that the media serve as a makeshift panopticon with the dual purpose of reporting on and regulating celebrity behavior. The combination of heterosexism and media surveillance keeps some celebrities in the closet.

In Foucault's words, "The Panopticon is a marvelous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power" (Discipline & Punish 202). A media panopticon helps to reproduce the notion that the default sexuality of professional athletes is heterosexual, forces athletes to regulate their behavior regardless of their sexual orientation, and helps to keep gay and bisexual players in the closet during their careers. The media scrutiny might also help explain why players are more willing to come out after they have left professional sports – the media panopticon is not as great if they are no longer in the spotlight and consequently if an athlete is no longer in the spotlight, the need to discipline/control their behavior diminishes.

The Media Panopticon Part Two

Though the discussion surrounding openly gay players in MLB was tabled after Piazza's press conference, the issue would return two years later. According to Baseball America's Chris Kline, "with a 93–94 mph fastball and three quality secondary pitches, [Kazuhiro Tadano] was one of the most talented amateur pitchers in Japan [in 2002]" (n.p.). Despite the talent, the right-hander, whom scouts expected to be chosen in the first round of Japan's amateur draft, was not chosen at all. If Tadano was as talented as scouts observed, the pitcher should have been picked up by a major league team; however, despite being close to securing a deal on more than one occasion, that did not happen. Quietly, word circulated that "Tadano (along with several of his college teammates at Rikkyo University) was paid to take part in a pornographic video that contained acts of homosexuality" (Kline n.p.). Coming less than one year after the Piazza media circus and Bobby Valentine's declaration that baseball players could handle an openly gay player, multiple clubs passed on signing Tadano, arguably because scouts assumed he was gay.

The discrimination Tadano faced because of his participation in the pornography video is indicative of the heterosexist system of oppression. In this case, the mere hint of homosexuality was enough to keep Tadano out of both the Japanese professional leagues and MLB. After some time, Cleveland signed Tadano to a minor league contract, and the team made it clear that "they would support Tadano when the video became public knowledge" (Kline n.p.). When word of the video finally reached the U.S. sport media, Tadano quickly stated through an interpreter, "I'm not gay. I'd like to clear that fact up right now" ("Forgiveness" n.p.) and added that he participated in the video as a way to support himself while in school (Kline n.p.). The fact that several major league clubs initially passed on signing Tadano is not that surprising; neither is the

fact that at least one team put winning above other concerns. What is interesting is the relative lack of attention Tadano's situation garnered.

The question surrounding Mike Piazza's sexual orientation made national headlines while Tadano's taped homosexual encounter did not illicit the same level of media response. The varied response may be related to the fact that Piazza occupies a higher place within the masculinity hierarchy. According to Collins, there is a three-tiered masculinity structure with the top tier consists of "predominately wealthy white men" (Black Sexual Politics 186). Men in the second tier have "greater access to white male power, yet remain marginalized [and consists of] working-class White men and Latino, Asian, and White immigrant men," while the bottom tier consists of black and indigenous men (186). Because of his racial and nationality status, Piazza occupied the top tier of the masculinity structure – not to mention the fact that he was an already established player in the nation's largest media market, which helps to explain the increased media attention. For Collins, elite white men in the top tier of the masculinity structure "so dominates positions of power and authority [that] the view of masculinity patterns is well known and is often taken as normal, natural, and ideal" (Black Sexual Politics 185-6). If Piazza represented these elite white men throughout his career, then any questions surrounding Piazza's sexual orientation would be more damaging to the white, male power structure and therefore be more newsworthy. Piazza's "outing" also raises the question of whether or not Piazza could still epitomize the white, American male power structure if he was gay. However, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Tadano's struggle paralleled existing controversies which were gaining national attention at the time. Three months after Cleveland signed Tadano, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that sodomy laws were unconstitutional (*Lawrence et. al. vs. Texas*), and later that same year the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that the state's ban on same-sex

marriages was unconstitutional (Goodridge vs. Dept. Of Public Health). Both decisions were interpreted as steps forward for GLB rights in the United States. Though Tadano quickly affirmed his heterosexuality, the difficulties he faced making it to the majors based on the mere perception of homosexuality coincided with discussions surrounding GLB rights in much the same way the integration of MLB coincided with the civil rights movements during the 1950s and therefore could have been framed as a much larger and more influential story than it was.

One of the reasons why Tadano's story was downplayed by sport journalists may have to do with unconscious stereotypes regarding Asian masculinity. As mentioned in chapter two, Charles R. Lawrence III's notion of unconscious racism hypothesizes that, since racism played a large part in America's shared past, all Americans unconsciously harbor negative opinions about nonwhites. Because society no longer tolerates overt racism the way it once did, the negative attitudes created by the shared racist history will find another outlet ("The Id" 237). Some of those lingering attitudes concern sexuality and the construction of different masculinities. As Chong-Suk Han points out, "For decades, the mainstream media have usually portrayed Asian men as meek, asexual houseboy types or as sexual deviants of some kind" (35). In the article "Representing and Reconstructing Asian Masculinities," Allen Luke goes further when he writes

Looking in the mirror, we find ourselves without any of the defining characteristics of dominant masculinity – white skin, hairy chests, beards and facial hair, big arms and big muscles. Quite the contrary: we have all the characteristics of something Other, something more feminine in the normative eye of Western sexuality: slender and relatively hairless bodies, differently textured and coloured skin and straight hair. In Western public representations of masculinity we are defined in terms of absence, lack or silence. (32)

As Luke points out, Asian men broadly and, by extension, Tadano more specifically are the opposite of the masculine ideal. Writer David Mura echoes Luke's sentiment when he acknowledged, "Deep down, I knew that if I was different from other Asian men, I wasn't that different. In the hierarchy of American sexuality, we were all relegated to the bottom" (189), and Shinhee Han observed, "the U.S. cultural obsession with body image symbolizes ultimate masculinity as a white male who is strong, muscular, and sexual, which ostracizes the Asian males' body types" (213). It is possible that, given Tadano's placement near the bottom of the masculinity hierarchy, questions surrounding his sexual orientation were neither surprising nor newsworthy.

Tadano's placement as an Asian male in the masculinity hierarchy highlights the ways in which race and ethnicity intersect with gender construction. According to Collins, society "privilege[s] the masculinity of propertied, heterosexual White men as natural, normal, and beyond reproach. In this fashion, elite White men control the very definitions of masculinity, and they use these standards to evaluate their own masculine identities and those of all other men" (Black Sexual Politics 186). Despite being one of the top amateur prospects with a 93mph fastball, Tadano's race and nationality prohibit him from occupying the top tier of Collins' masculinity structure. At one point, Details, the same magazine that asked Bobby Valentine whether MLB was ready for an out player, "featured an item entitled 'Gay or Asian,' and challenged its readers to ascertain whether a given man was, in fact, gay or Asian" a situation which highlights how popular media frames Asian masculinity as congruent with homosexuality (Chong-suk Han n.p.). Because Tadano could not be an iconic representation of masculinity within mainstream U.S. culture, not only did it seem as though heterosexuality was *not* assumed but questions surrounding the pitcher's sexual orientation were framed as un-newsworthy.

Parting Shots

Though Gerry Callahan suggests that MLB would offer an openly gay athlete the best chance of success due to the individual nature of the game, the fact remains that no gay MLB player has come out during his career (“Issue Too Big to Come Out” 119). When WNBA star and Olympic Gold Medalist Sheryl Swoopes came out in 2005, PTI’s Tony Kornheiser remarked that gay male athletes “are scared to death to come out and say if they are homosexual that they are, scared to death [...] In fact, Mike Piazza went out of his way to run to a press conference to say I am not gay” (“Significance of Coming Out?”). The brouhaha surrounding Brendan Lemon’s editorial and Mike Piazza’s alleged “outing,” illustrate how media representatives operate as a panopticon whose purpose is to regulate celebrity behavior which, in turn, effectively keeps gay athletes from coming out during the careers and sends heterosexual athletes running to press conferences to reaffirm their sexual orientation.

In this situation, media representatives, functioning as a panopticon, manage oppression by regulating sexuality and perpetuating a masculinity hierarchy which places white, heterosexual males above everyone else. It was Piazza’s status at the top tier of the masculinity structure that made him an acceptable target for media scrutiny. At the same time, Kazuhiro Tadano’s race and nationality prevented the pitcher from occupying the top rungs of the masculinity hierarchy ladder, an omission which in turn shifted the spotlight away from questions surrounding his sexual orientation. This is not to say that in the future players of color or non-U.S.-born players would have an easier time proclaiming their sexual orientation; however, in this instance, the intersection of race and sexuality worked against Piazza and helped Tadano keep a relatively low profile. On the other hand, Tadano’s low profile was partially founded on unconscious stereotypes regarding Asian masculinity which relegates Asian men to

the bottom of American masculinity hierarchy (Mura 189). When all is said and done, as Jim Buzinski, creator of outsports.com, points out, “Everybody will say, ‘We aren’t ready.’ Society was not ready for Jackie Robinson. If you are going to wait for everybody to be ready, nobody will do it” (D’Angelo 7B).

CHAPTER IV. THE \$252 MILLION MAN: ALEX RODRÍGUEZ, OBJECTIFICATION, AND MONEY

He was called sport's poster boy for greed (Sullivan et al. 63). It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that Alex Rodríguez, his agent Scott Boras, Texas Rangers owner Tom Hicks, and baseball Commissioner Bud Selig were likened to four horsemen of the baseball apocalypse. In 2000, Rodríguez signed a ten-year contract with the Texas Rangers worth approximately \$25 million per year. His total salary would be more than the assessed value of eighteen of the thirty major league teams and two million dollars more than Hicks paid for the Rangers in 1998 (Sappenfield et al. 1). The largest professional sports contract in history was lambasted from almost every direction. Sports Illustrated's (SI) Tom Verducci noted, A-Rod's "contract is the smoking gun for disillusioned fans in their case against overpaid ballplayers" ("The Lone Ranger" 34). Since, as the quote opening this chapter points out, most people agreed that A-Rod was one of the best players in the game, the collective animosity toward both the player and the contract seemed misplaced. Both the media and fans seemed to turn against A-Rod despite his continued exceptional level of production, which unfortunately did not help move the Rangers out of last place.

Despite the accolades, the contract was viewed as one of the final nails in baseball's coffin as the Collective Bargaining Agreement was set to expire in less than two years and everyone braced themselves for the possibility of another work stoppage. However, in the September 9th 2002 edition of SI, Tom Verducci wrote, "The official announcement is about to be made in New York: Alex Rodriguez and his \$252 million contract did not kill major league baseball as we know it" ("The Lone Ranger" 34). This acknowledgement came after the Player's Association (MLBPA) and team owners inked a labor agreement without a work stoppage for the

first time in over thirty years. And, as Verducci points out, this occurred “20 months after Rodríguez signed his contract with the Texas Rangers, the one that was supposed to be the asteroid that wiped out planet baseball” (“The Lone Ranger” 34).

This chapter will use the controversy surrounding A-Rod’s contract to discuss the intersection of race, nationality, and sexualization, and analyze Patricia Hill Collins’s articulation of black feminist thought’s core theme of work, which “investigates how [...] paid work is organized within intersecting oppressions” and presents workers “as constrained but empowered figures” (*Black Feminist Thought* 45–6). Black feminist thinkers typically analyze black women’s unpaid labor during slavery through the present as well as the ways in which black women’s paid labor is exploited via unequal wages and unequal access to high paying jobs. Though black feminist thought is not usually applied to millionaires, playing professional baseball is a job for these players and thus can be analyzed as work. As Collins argues, “At the turn of the twenty-first century, work still matters, but it is organized via social class formations that often place working-class and middle-class women in new, uncharted territories” (66). The same can be said for black men and Latinos whose entry into the middle and upper-class is also a recent phenomenon. Collins also argues that work is “shaped by intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class” (66) and in the case of professional baseball, players’ salaries in general, and Rodríguez’s salary more specifically, can be discussed in terms of not only ability as one might expect, but also race and nationality. MLB’s power structure is organized with wealthy, white, male owners, with one exception, controlling a labor force comprised largely of black and brown labor.¹⁷ Of course, this work is also shaped by gender oppression as women are barred from MLB which denies them access to the sizeable income professional baseball players make.

¹⁷ In 2003 Arturo Moreno purchased the Angels from the Walt Disney Corporation to become the first person of color to own a MLB team and the first Latino to own a majority interest in any U.S. professional sports franchise (Lapchick et al. “2004 Report Card” 36).

At the same time, while it almost seems absurd to describe contemporary professional baseball players as oppressed, it may be more accurate to think of them as exploited or constrained, to use Collins's terminology.

The A–Rod controversy exemplified the fact that MLB resides in a bizarre parallel financial universe. According to the National Committee on Pay Equity, in mainstream American society, blacks and Latinos occupy the bottom rungs of the male socioeconomic ladder with black males making 78% and Latinos making 63% of what white males earned in 2000 (n.p.). A 2003 Census Bureau study revealed similar findings, as college–educated white males earned approximately \$66,000 per year while similarly educated Latinos earned \$49,000 and educated black males earned approximately \$45,000 (“Census” n.p.). On the other hand, in professional baseball, players of color occupy the financial upper echelon as eleven of the twenty–five highest paid players during the 2005 season were men of color (“Salaries Database” n.p.).¹⁸

Rodríguez's contract situation also highlights the theme of sexual politics, which analyzes “how sexuality and power become linked” (Collins *Black Feminist Thought* 127). While chapter three discussed this concept in terms of questions surrounding Mike Piazza's sexual orientation, A–Rod's sexuality will be examined differently. Rodríguez's sexual orientation has never been questioned; however, his physical attractiveness has dominated media discussions. As mentioned in chapter three, Collins outlines a number of ways sexuality can be analyzed as part of a black feminist analysis. In Piazza's case, heterosexism was analyzed as a system of oppression and power similar to racism, sexism, classism, et cetera. For this chapter,

¹⁸ According to the *USA Today* Salary Database, the highest paid players in 2005, in salary order include (players of color are in italics): *Alex Rodríguez*, *Barry Bonds*, *Manny Ramírez*, *Derek Jeter*, Mike Mussina, Jeff Bagwell, Roger Clemens, *Sammy Sosa*, Mike Piazza, Chipper Jones, Randy Johnson, Kevin Brown, Mike Hampton, *Chan Ho Park*, Curt Shilling, Jason Giambi, Darren Dreifort, Jim Thome, *Bobby Abreu*, *Andruw Jones*, *Garry Sheffield*, Larry Walker, Todd Helton, *Ken Griffey Jr.*, and *Vladimir Guerrero* (“Salaries Database” n.p.).

sexuality serves as a site where racism, classism, and privileges based on nationality intersect. Analyzing sexuality in this manner concurs with Collins's notion that "all systems of oppression rely on harnessing the power of the erotic" (Black Feminist Thought 128). For A-Rod, systems of oppression relied on the expression of the erotic to perpetuate themselves. It is clear that his physical attractiveness helped frame the discussion, especially before he signed with the Rangers. Rodríguez was able to market himself in ways that few other baseball players were able. His status as a sex symbol brought in a new legion of fans, primarily women, a segment of the population MLB was eager to exploit. On the other hand, it could be argued that by objectifying Rodríguez, sportswriters shifted the focus away from his professional accomplishments, a shift that begs the question of how much control Rodríguez had over the ways his image was framed. In essence, foregrounding A-Rod's physicality allowed racism, classism, and nationalist bias to go uncontested.

The Boatload Mentality and Its Exception

According to ESPN baseball analyst Tim Kurkijan, in 1994 one American League scouting director observed that A-Rod was "the best amateur prospect I've ever seen. He might be the best player ever in the draft" (68). The Seattle Mariners, who had the first pick in the draft that year, signed Rodríguez to a three-year, \$1.3 million contract. Signing such a lucrative deal as a rookie is not unheard of in MLB – for American players. According to the book Away Games: The Life and Times of a Latin Baseball Player, by Marcos Bretón and José Luis Villegas, as a general rule, Latin players, who are often not U.S. citizens when they begin their careers, are "attractive to major league scouts because they [can] be signed for less than American players, providing cheap labor like so many other Latin immigrants in other walks of life" (18). For example, in 1997, All-Star shortstop Miguel Tejada from the Dominican Republic

would begin his career with the Oakland A's for only two thousand dollars, primarily because, like many other Latin players, Tejada, "didn't have college offers to use as leverage against his meager bonus, or agents who could protect his interests, or parents who could help him maneuver through the land mines of modern-day major league sports. He was just a kid with precious few English skills and no other compelling options in his life but to play baseball" (Bretón et al. 18).

Because Latin players can be signed for less money, teams are subscribing to what is being called the boatload mentality: "teams can "sign a 'boatload' of Latinos for little money and if only a couple make it to the big leagues, [the teams] still come out ahead. Instead of signing four [Americans] at \$25,000 each, [teams can] sign 20 [Dominicans] for \$5,000 each" (Bretón n.p.). This trend of using Latin players in lieu of higher paid U.S.-born players mirrors a trend noted in black feminist scholarship on work. Collins points out that while U.S.-born black women have historically been called upon to do domestic work, "a good deal of this work in private homes is now done by undocumented immigrant women of color who lack U.S. citizenship" (*Black Feminist Thought* 40). In a similar fashion, as mentioned in chapter two, higher-paid U.S.-born black players can be/are being replaced by Latin players who at the beginning of their careers do not command as much money. Latin players like Tejada who do not have U.S. citizenship and the resources that citizenship provides must wait to take advantage of the financial benefits U.S. players gain: players such as Sammy Sosa signed with Texas for \$3,500 and Mets pitcher Pedro Martínez signed for \$8,000 three years later (Knisley, "Everybody Has the Dream" 52).

Since Alex Rodríguez was born in the United States, his nationality worked to his advantage in the negotiations. Scott Boras, his advisor, was able to parlay A-Rod's admission to

the University of Miami into a negotiating advantage since the Mariners knew, as A-Rod remembered, “that if I walk[ed] into that classroom, then I [could not] go pro for three years” (Nadel et al. n.p.) and the team would have lost out on a first-round draft pick. If A-Rod had grown up in the Dominican Republic, where his parents were from, it is likely that he would not have someone like Scott Boras fighting for him. He likely would not have been able to use college entrance as leverage, and the initial contract would have more closely resembled Tejada’s, Sosa’s, or Martínez’s. In this case, while it is tempting to discuss baseball’s salary structure in racial terms (i.e. white players vs. black players, vs. Latin players) the intersectional nature of A-Rod’s situation reveals a more complex structure. Not only is it possible that race and ethnicity play a role in salary discussions but an individual’s nationality also plays a role in determining a player’s position in baseball’s power structure.¹⁹

Decreased starting salaries are not the only disadvantage facing Latin baseball players. One of the most notable problems facing non-U.S.-born players is the language barrier. Since English is not always the primary language of the growing number of Latin American and Asian players, the difficulties involved in communicating with managers, owners, and sportswriters increase as well. As mentioned in chapter two, the Outside the Lines exposé entitled “Language Barrier,” points out that Anglo reporters would often quote Roberto Clemente “not only verbatim but with phonetic emphasis on Clemente’s difficulties with English” (“Language Barriers”). This method of reporting served to disempower Clemente and other Latin ballplayers by making them appear ignorant or uneducated. The language issue became prevalent again with Sammy Sosa in 1998 when he was phonetically quoted as saying “baseball is berry, berry good to me” (Kindred,

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that Tejada, Sosa, and Martínez are all dark-skinned Latinos who would have been, and in some ways still are, classified as “black” and therefore would have been banned from playing in the majors under the Gentlemen’s Agreement in the early 20th century. Rodríguez, who is light-skinned, may have been able to pass and play professional ball at a time when U.S. born blacks and dark-skinned Latin Players were banned from MLB.

“The Class of ‘98” 14) and again in 2003 when an Associated Press article discussing Sosa’s corked bat incident quoted the slugger as stating “You got to stand up and be there for it” (Weir et al. 03C). ESPN’s Bob Ley also pointed out that “while Asian players are customarily provided interpreters to assist with interviews, Latin players are not” (“Language Barriers”). Given the smaller number of Asian players in the majors, it is conceivable and not at all cost prohibitive to provide each player with an interpreter. However, given the eagerness with which MLB teams have been courting “boatloads” of Latin players and Latina/o audiences, it seems counterintuitive not to provide at least one interpreter per team to help promote Latin players and sell the league to Latin and Anglo audiences. This reliance on English, despite the growing number of players for whom English is not their first language, “can only serve to entrench Latinas’/os’ outsidership, foreignness, and nonmembership in ‘America’” (Hernandez-Truyol 910). As it stands, players must either rely on bilingual teammates or managers to translate or avoid talking to the media altogether. Going back to the interpreter discussion in chapter three, recall that Collin’s matrix of domination – the overall organization of societal power relations – contains four interconnected domains of power: “the structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression, and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experience” (Black Feminist Thought 276). The interpreter issue is a case where the institution of baseball (the structural domain) has changed its demographics; however, the rules and bureaucracies (the disciplinary domain) are attempting to keep non–U.S.–born Latin players at a disadvantage by not providing the resources players need to be as successful as they can be. Because of his dual citizenship and fluency with English, A–Rod bypassed the oppressions faced by many of his countrymen.

Those Latin players who speak English well are singled out by sportswriters as “special” because of their fluency. In one MLB.COM piece on Pedro Martínez, Marty Noble mentions:

What makes Martinez unusual is that he speaks English almost flawlessly. That puts him among a small percentage of players in the game, regardless of heritage. And it speaks well for the pitcher who is the most visible pitch man on the roster. Martinez’ Spanish accent is evident when he speaks English, but his good grammar and syntax are equally apparent. He’ll never be the one to use any of the phrases that ring through baseball clubhouses and cause the most tolerant grammarians to blanch. (n.p.)

In this instance, Martínez, in addition to being one of the best pitchers in the game today, is recognized for his English language skills.²⁰ Martínez was determined to speak English well due mostly to the struggles his brother Ramon faced in the majors because he could not speak English.²¹ The accolades Martínez received are in direct contrast to the treatment other Latin players receive. In his book The New Face of Baseball, Tim Wendel writes, “Talk to any Anglo beat writer about Manny Ramirez and he’ll probably tell you that the Red Sox superstar is moody, not a good quote” (125). Wendel discussed the stereotype with bilingual Miami Herald writer Dan Le Batard, who observed that “far from being moody, Ramirez is simply shy in English” (125). In his own defense, Ramírez has been quoted as saying, “Perhaps the American press treats [Latin players] a little differently, since sometimes we don’t feel so comfortable speaking English. And sometimes if a reporter comes along and they want to talk with us,

²⁰ While praising Martínez’ language skills, Noble’s comment also contained an admonishment directed not only at non-U.S.-born players but select U.S.-born players as well. Noble remarks that Martínez’ flawless English places him within a small group of players “regardless of heritage” which separates Martínez from both non-U.S.-born players but U.S.-born players with poor language skills as well. Noble privileges a particular way of speaking English which has racial and economic implications.

²¹ Ramon Martínez pitched for the Los Angeles Dodgers from 1988–1998, pitched with his brother on the Red Sox in 1999 and 2000, and finished his career in 2001 with the Pirates (Thorn et al. 1423).

someone might say no. It's not because we're being hateful but because we don't feel comfortable enough speaking the language" ("What They Are Saying" 3C). Often, sportswriters label players with what they deem as poor English-language skills as moody or unfriendly which can limit the amount of press coverage those players receive. By labeling non-U.S.-born players in this manner, sportswriters are able to

simultaneously grant power to the powerful and subjugate the subordinated [sic].

The imposition of the English language also imposes its social context of monolingualism, homoculturalism, and ethnic and national origin supremacy.

English is the dominant paradigm. Its very use evokes, infuses, and entrenches its race-based identity construct and its conflated view of race and

ethnicity/nationality in everyday conversation. This monolingualism not only

subordinates but also silences the Latina/o worldviews. (Hernandez-Truyol 910-1)

By refusing to interview non-U.S.-born players who do not speak "flawless" English, sportswriters effectively silence the players on an individual and cultural level and at the same time reinforce notions of linguistic superiority.

In contrast, A-Rod, who grew up primarily in the United States, would not be labeled as moody because of his language skills since he speaks flawless English and has a barely noticeable Spanish accent; LatCrit theorist Berta Esperanza Hernandez-Truyol points out, "Virtually un(Spanish)-accented English, [is] a veritable boarding pass to many mundos" (893). In fact, English became so dominant in Rodríguez's life that when he was traded to Texas "he had to brush up on his Spanish [because he] was losing it" (Wendel 202). The ease with which Rodríguez communicates with both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking media helps increase his marketability. At the same time, his mannerisms and language skills proved to be a

double-edged sword in Rodríguez's case since "Some sportswriters [...] loved Rodriguez because he almost always said the right thing and was a natural spokesman. But some sportswriters [...] grew tired of A-Rod because he almost always said the right thing and was a natural spokesman" (Sanchez n.p.). It was almost as if sportswriters were not used to and did not know how to deal with an articulate Latino ballplayer.²²

Regardless of the difficulties sportswriters faced in interviewing some Latin players, the number of Latin players continues to increase. As mentioned in chapter two, in 2005 Latin players made up 25% of Major League rosters and this number does not include U.S.-born Latinos like Rodríguez or then Red Sox shortstop Nomar Garciaparra. Even though A-Rod is not included in MLB's count of Latin players, the League continued using Rodríguez to market the sport toward the Latina/o population. Newsweek's Allison Samuels and Mark Starr argued that "A-Rod is the linchpin of Major League Baseball's increasingly aggressive marketing to Hispanics which explains why baseball's 2001 season opener Sunday showcased A-Rod's Rangers vs. the Toronto Blue Jays – and was played in San Juan, Puerto Rico" (54). While MLB went to great lengths to court Latin players and fans, the League is not the only sports industry going after the audience. One year prior to the aforementioned MLB opening day game in Puerto Rico, ESPN launched a Spanish Language feed to cater to stateside Latina/o sports fans and ESPN Deportes became a full-fledged cable network station in 2004 ("Spanish Language Station" n.p.). While other sports leagues relied on holding contests in international locales to

²² The lack of coverage as well as the controlling image applied to Latin players because of their English-language skills places Latin players at a disadvantage that not only manifests itself during their playing career but has ramifications later. Collins argues that "black women and men alike are more vulnerable than Whites to being excluded from professional and managerial occupations" (Black Feminist Thought 65). This exclusion plays itself out within MLB's power structure since, during the 2005 season, there were only three Latin managers (Felipe Alou, Ozzie Guillén, and Tony Peña who was fired at the end of the season) and only one Latin General Manager (Omar Minaya) and having former Latin players occupy these managerial positions could, in theory, help new Latin players with their transition to the majors as well as help affect change particularly within MLB's disciplinary and hegemonic domains of power.

draw Latina/o fans, MLB relied on Rodríguez as its key in much the same way that Pedro Martínez helped to bring Latino fans to Fenway Park after signing with the Red Sox (Klein). But at the same time, MLB had plenty of talented Latin baseball players available to actively promote the league. So what did Alex Rodríguez have that others did not?

Objectification

In addition to the accolades he received for his feats on the field, A-Rod's physicality was attracting attention as well. Rodríguez made People's 50 Most Beautiful People list in 1998, and the magazine writers remarked "it's [A-Rod's] buff body underneath that caused a Seattle Times reporter to lose linguistic control. His physique, she opined, is 'as lovely as the glow of Mount Rainier during a summer sunset'" ("Most Beautiful List" 157). SI's Gerry Callahan mentioned that Rodríguez "appears to be as flawless as a hot fudge sundae" ("The Fairest of Them All" 40), Newsweek's Samuels and Star point out that Rodríguez "can also compete with Hollywood's finest for position on the ladies' bedroom walls. He's a tall, buff, soft-spoken charmer with caramel skin, shimmering hazel eyes and a boyish smile" (54). When Rodríguez was listed as one of the sexiest athletes by FOX Sports' The Sports List, one guess commentator remarked, "If I was Alex Rodriguez for a day I think I would probably see how many women *don't* want me, that's what I'd do. I'd probably see how many women don't want to touch me. You know he makes dudes go 'man he looks fine, I hate him, he's pretty'" ("Sexiest Athlete"). At the same time, Michael Knisley of The Sporting News (TSN) confirmed A-Rod's "image as Seattle's most eligible bachelor. At 6-3, wealthy and attractive, he is unquestionably a heartthrob for women of all ages, and certainly the wholesome role model every mother wants her daughter to date – or every mother wants to date herself" ("All A-Rod" 18). Clearly Rodríguez made

headlines not only because of his talent on the basepaths, but also because of his physical attractiveness.

As Toby Miller points out in his book Sportsex, “Commercial sports today are a site for activating the female gaze and even empowering it, part of a momentum that is putting the public presentation of men under scrutiny in the same way as women. Men, too, are becoming dependent on the gaze directed at them” (40). In other words, almost everybody and everything can be reduced to sexual objectification and male public figures, at least in Rodríguez’s case, do not balk at sexual objectification. Miller’s analysis is suggestive of Laura Mulvey’s groundbreaking essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” first published in 1975. For Mulvey, “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (837). This brings the question of whether or not pleasure in looking can ever be passive/male or active/female as long as the sexual power imbalance within society is maintained. Unfortunately Mulvey’s viewpoint seems to dismiss the possibility of women actively seeking or deriving pleasure from viewing a situation which is happening with Rodríguez. Later in her essay, Mulvey writes, “According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the physical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification” (838). As A–Rod’s situation shows, not only can men bear the burden of sexual objectification but they can use it to their advantage.

A–Rod’s newfound attention was ideal from a marketing perspective as female fans enamored with Rodríguez would flock to games often with marriage proposal posters in hand. However, is this a case of MLB objectifying and exploiting Rodríguez, or is A–Rod marketing himself in this manner? As Collins points out, systems of oppression rely on the suppression and/or the expression of the erotic to perpetuate them. At the same time, Collins’ argues that

there are neither “absolute oppressors nor pure victims [since] each individual derives varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives” (Black Feminist Thought 126). This means that even if a player is being exploited by MLB’s power structure, they could, at the same time, use the resources at their disposal to influence fellow players, fans, or MLB itself. If that is the case, then both MLB and Rodríguez collaborate in and benefit from the sexualization process. Both MLB and Rodríguez can utilize physicality as a means to gain power in the form of increased visibility and an increased fan base, both of which can lead to more money for the player, the team, and the League.

The objectification of athletes is usually mentioned in the context of female athletes and tends to manifest itself in two ways. In one instance, “news media, local communities, and in some cases [the athletes] themselves [...] emphasize the femininity of female athletes” (“Cheering on Women and Girls” 1631). This form is evident when sport media highlight “women’s difference or fragile youth” or provide more coverage of traditionally feminine sports such as gymnastics or figure skating as opposed to traditionally masculine sports such as basketball or soccer (“Cheering on Women and Girls” 1631). Objectification can also manifest itself when more emphasis is placed on an athlete’s sexuality or physical attractiveness than on their athletic ability. One only has to browse any website devoted to tennis player Anna Kournikova or peruse SI’s swimsuit issue to see this form of objectification in action. Alina Bernstein argues that this objectification both trivializes female athletes and robs them of “athletic legitimacy” (422). If that is the case then it could be argued that the objectification serves to disempower the increasing number of women and girls participating in sports. Though that may be true, it does not explain the purpose behind objectification of male athletes.

Intersectionality dictates that male athletes would experience objectification differently from female athletes because of their gender. In fact, the notion of differential experiences based on identity is one of the primary rationales behind black feminists branching off and conceptualizing their own type of feminism since black women experienced gender oppression differently from white women. According to bell hooks, “all white women in this nation know that their status is different from that of black women/women of color” (Feminism Is for Everybody 55).

It could be argued that sport media and league publicity managers have realized that sexy male athletes are just as likely as sexy female athletes to attract viewers. As Toby Miller points out, “the process of body commodification through niche targeting has identified men’s bodies as objects of desire and gay men and straight women as consumers” (10). The commodification can be seen in the fact that “in the decades to 1993, women were three times more likely to be portrayed in a sexualized manner, but explicit and suggestively alluring representations of men had become much more common – up from 11 percent to 18 percent of images” (39). On the other hand, it could be argued that the increased objectification of male athletes has less to do with appealing to the female gaze and more to do with alleviating criticism for objectifying female athletes as objectifying both female and male athletes would serve to “level the playing field.” By increasing the ways in which male athletes are objectified, media makers can create the impression that the objectification of female athletes is decreasing when in actuality the objectification of male athletes is simply catching up. It is also possible that the ways in which Rodríguez was objectified, at times, overshadowed his on-field achievements and allowed systems of oppression to go unrecognized. Framing A-Rod through an objectified lens moved both his ethnicity and nationality, and the privileges and oppressions associated with them, to the

background. Instead of discussing the privileges Rodríguez received because of his nationality or the ways in which MLB exploits and marginalizes non-U.S.-born players, the discussion centers around A-Rod's good looks.

Free Agency

In 1998 Rodríguez became the third player in history to join the 40–40 club and, on defense, he had a .975 fielding percentage to go along with the homers and stolen bases.²³ Though A-Rod missed part of the 1999 season due to an injury, during the 2000 season, A-Rod had a .318 batting average (BA), .399 on-base percentage (OBP), and a .622 slugging percentage (SLG) (Thorn et al. 1531). In that same year he hit 52 homers and drove in 135 runs (1531). TSN's Jon Hayman wrote, before the contract figure was announced, that “many believe Rodriguez will establish himself as the greatest shortstop ever. Considering age and talent, he [...] could command a contract of \$200 million—plus for eight or 10 years” (61). In the annual poll conducted by TSN, which ranks the top thirty players in the game, A-Rod came in second behind Pedro Martínez (Barber 14). Forgetting the actual sum for a moment, if that is possible, was anyone really surprised that A-Rod left Seattle and signed such a large contract?

Rodríguez was *the* free agent during the 2000 off-season, but unfortunately because of baseball's ever-increasing competitive imbalance, or the fact that there are some teams that are less likely to win games for reasons that have more to do with finances and less to do with talent, most teams understood that A-Rod would be out of their price range. MLB's Blue Ribbon Panel Report, created to examine the League's financial status and future, noted that there was a “revenue difference of \$125 million in 1999 between” the richest and the poorest teams (Forrester 1). It is no coincidence that from 1995–2005 the teams who maintained payrolls in the top ten won eight championships (“Salaries Database” n.p.). The lone exceptions were the

²³ See the appendix for a list of statistical abbreviations and definitions.

Angels – whose payroll ranked fifteenth in 2002; the 2003 Marlins – whose payroll was twenty-fifth when they won the Series; and the White Sox – whose payroll ranked thirteenth in 2005 (“Salaries Database” n.p.). Clearly, large payrolls do not automatically translate into World Series titles, as Rangers owner Tom Hicks would soon learn, but money certainly helps. In the end it was Hicks who won the bidding war and signed Rodríguez to the largest contract in sports history, one worth approximately \$25 million per year for ten years.

Performance-Based Incentives

Given the amount of money involved, it was no surprise that the contract was rather complicated. Even though \$252 million over ten years would seem to translate into \$25 million per year, a sizable sum of A-Rod’s money was deferred until well past the contract’s expiration (Verducci, “Powerball” 104–5). In addition to his salary, Rodríguez received a \$10 million signing bonus paid semi-annually over five years. Finally, the Rangers included, as is customary in many baseball contracts, performance-based bonuses which allowed Rodríguez to earn \$50,000 for finishing sixth in MVP voting, \$100,000 for making the All-Star Team, \$100,000 for winning the Silver Slugger Award, and \$200,000 for making both Baseball America’s and TSN’s All-Star Team for a grand total of \$25.45 million in earnings in 2001.

It could be argued that some of the performance bonuses listed in A-Rod’s contract are not necessarily tied to performance. For example, MVP and newspaper awards are decided by the very journalists who often shun Latin players whose English proficiency is deemed insufficient. At the same time, All-Star team selections are based on fan voting via punch-ballots available at ballparks and, in recent years, over the Internet. The former method may exclude many working-class and lower-income fans from voting because they simply cannot afford to attend games. Latin players in smaller markets with limited English-language skills

may not get the media exposure their on-field performance deserves and therefore may not be able to capitalize on such bonuses. While it is true that many players in smaller markets suffer from a disadvantage due to the decreased amount of coverage, players with limited English-language skills have an extra hurdle to overcome. Since, as the Outside the Lines exposé on the language barrier pointed out, sport journalists are less likely to interview players with what they deem as poor language skills or label them as moody, listings in magazine and newspaper polls may also be limited and that lack of exposure can deprive Latin players of income (“Language Barriers”).

Though Rodríguez’s on-field numbers were clearly worthy of praise and media attention, he played in a smaller market which should have limited his exposure. However, as Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin maintain, “Men can no longer get by on their achievements, as has long been the case, their appearance less important than their activities. Goodbye to all that. Boys just gotta be hot” (Heywood et al. 103). In A-Rod’s case, the attention he received because of his physical attractiveness offset any negative impact playing in Seattle would have had. At the same time, the privileges Rodríguez has because of his citizenship empowered him to accumulate even more income based on performance bonuses, as did the extra media exposure he received because of his looks. This combination produced endorsements not readily available to non-U.S.-born players with limited English-language skills or players deemed less attractive than Rodríguez.

Who Controls the Money?

The ink on the contract had not had a chance to dry before the outrage began. Rangers’ owner Tom Hicks was called “a fool and the harbinger of baseball’s apocalypse” (Deveney 54–5). Rodríguez’s agent Scott Boras was called everything from “the most hated man in baseball”

to the “Darth Vader of baseball” and was described by one team official as a man who “sees all the devious ways you can rip people off and make a bundle on ‘em” (Forrester 1). Rodríguez did not fare any better, as Blaine Newnham of The Seattle Times relayed a conversation he had with a Mariners fan who asked, “Do you know that \$25 million would pay for 625 teachers a year?” (D1). An article in The Christian Science Monitor calculated that Rodríguez would make about \$49,000 per at–bat and that his “yearly salary is enough to pay for all of the Boston Ballet’s expenses this year (with about \$9 million left over)” (Sappenfield et al. 1).²⁴ When People magazine named Rodríguez one of the most intriguing people of 2000, the writers noted “at least one official raised the possibility that Rodríguez might soon be remembered not as the superb athlete he is but as the catalyst for a bitter player–management showdown triggered by the game’s financial inequalities” (“Intriguing People” 75). Finally, Ross Atkins pointed out, arguably with tongue planted firmly in cheek, that

Rodríguez could take some comfort in knowing that Oscar–winning actress Julia Roberts will make more this year, an estimated \$51 million, according to Parade magazine’s annual salary comparison of a cross section of Americans. On the other hand, there’s little comfort in the fact that President Bush, the Rangers’ former part owner, will make only \$400,000 as the leader of the free world. (12–13)

Some may argue that historically the President is underpaid given the demands of the office, and this is not the first time a baseball player’s salary has been compared to the president’s. In 1930 when Babe Ruth was asked whether it was unusual for him to be making more than President Herbert Hoover during The Great Depression Ruth replied, “Why not? I had a better year than he

²⁴ Sappenfield et. al.’s analogy privileges “high” art over popular entertainment which has both racial and class implications/bias.

did” (Lipsyte et al. 109). Going back to Atkin’s comparison between Rodríguez and Julia Roberts, the latter grossed income proportional to the revenue she generated. The \$51 million Roberts made in 2001 relates to the \$343.8 million her films grossed that year (“Julia Roberts” n.p.). If Roberts’ salary is related to the income she generates, then as the argument goes, an athlete’s salary should reflect both his or her talent and the revenue she/he generates. When asked about the criticism his contract caused, Rodríguez replied, “Listen, the contract is what it is, and I’m proud of it. To me, it’s symbolic for what I’ve worked for my whole life. It has been a huge point of criticism for a lot of people, but I can’t control that. All I can control is how I go out and play on the field, try to back up what I earn” (Feinsand n.p.). If Rodríguez was considered the best player in the game and he could arguably bring in a substantial amount of revenue for his team, it stands to reason that he would be one of the highest paid players in the game.

At the same time, Atkin brings up an interesting concept: the fact that other entertainers such as Roberts make large sums of money as well. But unlike professional athletes, entertainers such as actors or singers typically do not receive the same criticism in regard to their salaries. Granted, the fact that other entertainers are not criticized in the same way athletes are does not negate the criticism athletes receive; however, it does point out a double standard with possible racial implications. One study by Martha Hill Zimmer and Michael Zimmer compared the salaries of professional athletes, singers, actors/directors, musicians, as well as other entertainers and found that “athletes are among the lowest paid entertainers, based on simple averages and after controlling for measured sociodemographic traits” (213). In 2001, the year A–Rod signed with the Rangers, the top ten entertainers listed on the [Forbes](#) Top 100 Celebrities List corroborated the Zimmer’s findings (Table 2).

Table 2: 2001 Forbes Top 10 Celebrities List

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Salary in 2001</i>
1.	George Lucas	\$250 million
2.	Oprah Winfrey	\$150
3.	The Beatles	\$70
4.	Bruce Willis	\$70
5.	David Copperfield	\$60
6.	Michael Schumacher	\$59
7.	Tiger Woods	\$53
8.	Stephen Spielberg	\$51
9.	Sieffield & Roy	\$50
10.	Mike Tyson	\$48

(Armstrong et al. n.p.)

Compared to director George Lucas' annual income, Rodríguez's \$25 million seems almost meager. It is interesting that the members of the celebrity list, who are, with a few notable exceptions, predominately white, are able to avoid the "overpaid" moniker while professional athletes, a large number of whom are black and Latino receive the brunt of the criticism. This unequal treatment harkens back to Collins's notion that "paid work is organized within intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender" (*Black Feminist Thought* 45). If we think of professional athletes as entertainers, it would seem that they are, in fact, underpaid compared to other entertainers. So if everyone agreed that Rodríguez as one of the best players in the game, if sportswriters predicted he would sign an unprecedented contract, and if entertainers in other fields make larger sums of money, where does the animosity come from?

Many sportswriters argued that A-Rod was not "worth" \$25 million. That type of argument seemed predictable given the amount of money involved. Rodríguez supporters were quick to point out that attendance rose by more than 28,000 in A-Rod's first year in Texas and over 30,000 in 2001 (Verducci "Stumbling Start" 59). In addition, group sales rose 41% from 1999, merchandising revenue increased 25%, and the 1.6 million advance ticket sales sold before the season began were the most since 1994 when The Ballpark at Arlington opened (Verducci

“Stumbling Start” 59). Shortly after Hicks signed A–Rod, Forbes “listed the Rangers as the sixth most valuable franchise in baseball, worth \$342 million. [Hicks states] ‘We were never that high without A–Rod’” (Verducci “Stumbling Start” 59). Clearly, regardless of whether or not A–Rod is worth \$25 million, his presence brought in a nice chunk of revenue for the Rangers. Going back to the Julia Roberts comparison, if an actor’s salary is related to the income produced and Alex Rodríguez’s presence with the Rangers generated new revenue, then it stands to reason that his salary should reflect not only his talent but the profits he helped produce for the Rangers in general and Tom Hicks more specifically. The animosity directed toward Rodríguez despite the increased revenue his presence brought to the team and its owner is puzzling.

Though A–Rod received the brunt of the criticism for the contract, what about the animosity toward Tom Hicks, who had the honor of signing A–Rod’s paychecks? Most of the criticism directed toward Hicks was not because he *could* pay A–Rod \$25 million per year, but because he actually *did* pay A–Rod that sum. In 2000, Hicks made Forbes’ list of wealthiest Americans with a net worth of \$750 million which only put him at 382 on the list (247). Journalists never ask if the owners, who were predominately white, were “worth” all that money. It is doubtful that Hicks questioned A–Rod’s worth on a monetary basis since Hicks saw his net worth and his standing on Forbes wealthiest list increase after signing the shortstop (Miller et al. 219). James Richard Hill’s asserts that “average fans consider their own salary and the meager increases doled out in the last few years in our competitive economic environment and often feel disgust for millionaire players protesting owners’ attempts to constrict future pay raises” (56). If that is the case, then where is the outrage surrounding the likes of Yankees’ owner George Steinbrenner, White Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf, or Atlanta owner Ted Turner? Notice that Hill points out the disgust fans have toward the millionaire players but does not mention any

animosity aimed at the billionaire owners. The discrepancy cannot solely be linked to visibility since Steinbrenner and Turner are often in the spotlight more than their players – and they are probably disliked by more people. Reinsdorf has the dubious distinction of being hated by both baseball and basketball fans in Chicago though the disgust is not tied to his personal finances.²⁵ There are unfortunately very few who agree with Joel Shuman who laments “a part of me will always believe that if a player from a middle or working–class background – especially one as good as Rodriguez – can get twenty–five million a year from a group of rich owners who probably got their money on the backs of workers, so much the better” (300) or Dave Zirin who wrote “the real obscenity of riches is not on the field but in the owner’s box. As the inimitably prickly Barry Bonds once said, ‘Nobody is complaining about the owners’ salaries. So don’t complain about us’” (What’s My Name, Fool? 101). One would think that sympathy would lie with the workers, as Shuman’s and Zirin’s sympathy seems to, instead of management, none of whom have never hit, thrown or fielded a baseball. However, in baseball’s alternate reality, the acrimony is aimed toward the players while the owners’ wealth, which is considerably more sizable than the player’s wealth, is ignored. Is it possible that the invisibility of Steinbrenner, Reinsdorf, and Turner’s finances is the by–product of white privilege? Until 2003, all of the major league teams were white–owned and as Tim Wise points out in his essay on white privilege “the virtual invisibility that whiteness affords those of us who have it is like psychological money in the bank, the proceeds of which we cash in every day while others are in a state of perpetual overdraft” (108). In essence, the team owners’ whiteness may have protected them from the hostility leveled at the player’s increasing income by rendering their income virtually invisible. At the same time, as Critical Race Theory scholar Derrick Bell points out, “To

²⁵ In addition to owning the White Sox, Jerry Reinsdorf also owns the Chicago Bulls and is considered by many to be at least partially responsible for breaking up the six–time championship team after Michael Jordan’s second retirement in 1999.

give continued meaning to their whiteness, whites must identify with the whites at the top of the economic heap, not with blacks, with whom most whites hold so much in common save their skin color” (“Wanted” 330). Bell’s acknowledgement of racial solidarity fits well with George Lipsitz’s notion of a possessive investment in whiteness which he argues “is about assets as well as attitudes; it is about property as well as pigment”(“The White 2k Problem” 519). Since many of the sportswriters ignoring the team owner’s finances are white, like the majority of the owners, leveling hostility toward Rodríguez’s contract helps to maintain not only the team owner’s white privilege but the sportswriters’ privilege as well.

In addition to asking whether or not Rodríguez was “worth” the money, another way sportswriters displayed their displeasure with the contract was to focus on the entire sum of A–Rod’s contract instead of breaking it down into its annual sum. Though \$25 million is still a considerable sum of money, in sport salary terms, it sounds more reasonable than \$252 million. In fact, Rodríguez’s annual salary was comparable to those of several NBA players. At the time, Minnesota Timberwolves forward Kevin Garnett earned \$25.4 million per year, and then Los Angeles Lakers center Shaquille O’Neal earned \$21.43 million annually (“Salaries Database” n.p.). In 2004 Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning, who is white, quietly dwarfed them all by earning slightly over \$35 million for that season (“Salaries Database” n.p.). Since Garnett and O’Neal are black, touting Rodríguez as the \$252 million man as opposed to the \$25 million man cannot solely be attributed to race. However, it begs the question: is it possible that the sight of a *Latino* with \$25 million in hand helps explain some of the hostility? Professional sports have been producing black millionaires for the past few decades; however, in the sports world, Latino millionaires are a more recent phenomenon. It is also possible that white journalists are more protective of MLB than the NBA since approximately ninety percent of

NBA players are black while MLB is still a predominately white institution, at least for the time being (Leonard n.p.). That being said, sportswriters rarely asked if New York Yankees pitcher Randy Johnson is “worth” \$16 million, though, admittedly, some did think Houston Astros pitcher Roger Clemens was out of line when he asked for and received \$25 million in salary arbitration during the 2004 off season and neither Johnson nor Clemens are everyday players. In the same way that white privilege protected white team owners from the hostility white sportswriters leveled against Rodríguez’s contract, Johnson’s and Clemens’ earnings were similarly shielded from criticism due to their white privilege. By framing Rodríguez’s contract discussion in terms of the total sum instead of the annual sum, it is possible that sportswriters effectively painted A–Rod as an economic outcast. The criticism potentially sends message to other players that if the best player in the game does not deserve this much money then neither does anyone else. Though \$25 million is still a sizable amount of money for a professional athlete, the controversy surrounding A–Rod’s contract essentially creates a glass ceiling and subjects anyone attempting to break through that ceiling with a barrage of criticism. As Curt Flood remarked when criticized for challenging the reserve clause thirty years earlier, “a well paid slave is nonetheless a slave” (“Curt Flood”).

While Rodríguez continued to be constrained by the backlash the contract produced, he was still empowered by the fact that his abilities could command such a large sum of cash. At the same time, it was almost as if A–Rod’s contract dwarfed A–Rod’s previous and continued professional accomplishments. SI’s Tom Verducci wrote, “Alex Rodriguez, the man who signed the richest contract in professional sports history, is synonymous with a number. That figure is bigger in every way than the one on the back of his Texas Rangers uniform. *Now batting, number 252....*He wears it wherever he goes” (“Stumbling Start” 54). The framing of

Rodríguez's performance in terms of his contract harkens back to Collins's notion of workers being empowered and constrained at the same time because, as Verducci's quote alluded to, regardless of how Rodríguez performs on the field, the commentary is immediately brought back to the contract. While Rodríguez is empowered by the fact that he is still considered one of the best players in the game, he is, at the same time, constrained by the fact that his performance is couched in terms of the contract.

All Good Things...

Despite A-Rod's continued offensive and defensive production, the Rangers continued to languish in last place. During his 2003 MVP season, Rodríguez began to express his desire to win a championship, an outcome that clearly could not happen in Texas. The Rangers rewarded Rodríguez's MVP win by approaching him with the possibility of being traded. The speculation intensified before the engraving on A-Rod's MVP trophy was completed. In December 2003, the Dallas Morning News published reports that "the Rangers are willing to part with A-Rod in exchange for [Red Sox outfielder] Manny Ramirez and a financial package that liberates them from Rodriguez's expensive contract" (Mankiewich n.p.). The deal would have involved the Red Sox paying an estimated \$180 million over the next seven years remaining on A-Rod's contract in addition to a portion of Ramirez' \$20 million annual salary. The deal would also compel Boston to trade their shortstop Nomar Garciaparra. The complexity of A-Rod's contract posed severe economic and legal hurdles to any team involved in trade negotiations. When it seemed as though the Rangers and Red Sox had worked out an amicable deal, the MLBPA, in an unprecedented move, rejected the proposal because, in their mind, the deal was less about restructuring the contract and more about reducing the amount of money Rodríguez would receive (Browne n.p.). While Rodríguez himself was willing to take a reduction in salary to

move to a winning team, the MLBPA did not want to set that precedent. It seemed as though Rodríguez would continue his tenure with the Rangers since there were few teams who could afford to restructure the contract to the MLBPA's satisfaction.

Fortunately or unfortunately, depending on the point of view, the one team that did have the financial resources to restructure A-Rod's contract in a way that would satisfy the MLBPA was interested. Though George Steinbrenner initially balked at paying such a high price for one player, the fact that the Yankees had not won a championship since 2000 caused him to reconsider. In view of the fact that the Yankees consistently generate the largest revenue stream in MLB, it makes sense that that team would also have the largest payroll. Before signing Rodríguez, the Yankees maintained a \$152.7 million payroll, which was by far the largest payroll in the majors ("Salaries Database" n.p.). Since the ultimate goal of any team is to win championships, which can in turn bring in more revenue, it seemed that to Steinbrenner, money was no object. In March 2004, right before the start of spring training, the Rangers traded Alex Rodríguez to the Yankees for Alfonso Soriano and the ubiquitous "player to be named later," in a trade which forced Rodríguez to move from shortstop to third base.

The trade increased the Yankee payroll to \$184.3 million: their infield alone, which included Jason Giambi, Miguel Cairo, Derek Jeter, and Rodríguez, earned \$53.9 million, which was higher than the total payroll of eleven other teams at the time ("Salaries Database" n.p.).²⁶ Despite the bloated overall payroll, few realized that the Yankees only paid Rodríguez approximately \$16 million that season which was "less than Jeter and Giambi, less than what the Red Sox will pay Manny Ramirez, and Pedro Martinez, and less than what the Houston Astros pay 35-year-old first baseman Jeff Bagwell" (Verducci, "Hello, New York" 38). Since

²⁶ In 2004, the eleven teams with lower total payrolls than the Yankees infield include the Expos (\$51.9), Blue Jays (\$51.9), White Sox (\$51.0), A's (\$50.2), Tigers (\$49.2), Marlins (\$48.7), Indians (\$48.5), Padres (\$45.2), Brewers (\$40.6), Royals (\$40.5), and Devil Rays (\$19.6) ("Salaries Database" n.p.).

Rodríguez changed positions and ultimately gave up the chance to go down in history as the greatest shortstop ever it seemed only natural that the animosity toward A–Rod and his contract would subside. Unfortunately for him, that did not happen.

When the Yankees played in Seattle for the first time during the 2004 season, MLB.COM writer Mike Bauman asked the question “who wins the A–Rod boo–a–thon? Without a reliable, standardized measurement [...] this task is necessarily subjective. But the only thing you can say with certainty is that the competition is fierce” (Bauman n.p.). When the Yankees played in Texas that season, the Fort–Worth Star–Telegraph distributed signs that read “A–Rat” for fans to display throughout the park (Albert Chen 52). Rodríguez was booed in Seattle and Texas for leaving, booed in Boston for not signing with the Red Sox, and booed everywhere else both because of his monster contract and because he signed with the hated Yankees.

Parting Shots

For Alex Rodríguez, the intersection of nationality, race, and objectification framed discussions of his historic contract. In essence, examinations of Rodríguez’s career would be incomplete without these intersecting positions/oppressions/privileges. A–Rod’s entrance into the majors underscored the privileges U.S.–born ballplayers receive in terms of compensation. The combination of Rodríguez’s athletic ability, physical attractiveness, and language skills helped elevate A–Rod past the increasing number of Latin players in the league. A–Rod’s position in terms of ability, physicality, and language skills also helped create the conditions where he could sign the largest contract in sports history. Despite being considered one of the best players in the game, many sportswriters were surprised and outraged that any one player would be “worth” \$25 million annually, though no one thought to ask whether Ranger owner Tom Hicks was worth his estimated \$750 million. As Collins points out in her discussion of

black NBA players, “The problems arise when players realize their value, their significance to the game, and try to capitalize on their accomplishments. Then they are often held in the highest contempt” (Collins, Black Sexual Politics 155). In essence, Rodríguez was “safe” so long as he played the role of the objectified, nonthreatening, English-speaking athlete; however, when he demanded and gained compensation in league with both his talent and the revenue he generates, A-Rod was framed as unworthy. Focusing attention on A-Rod’s contract deflected attention away from the owner’s finances, and that diversion allows the latter group’s white privilege to remain intact and invisible.

By objectifying A-Rod, both MLB and Rodríguez can utilize sexuality as a means to gain power in the form of visibility and an increased fan base, the latter of which leads to more money for everyone. It is also possible that the ways in which Rodríguez was objectified, at times, overshadowed his on-field achievements and allowed systems of oppression to go unrecognized. Objectifying A-Rod moves both his ethnicity and nationality, or the ways in which non-U.S.-born players are exploited by MLB; the discussion centers around A-Rod’s good looks. Whether Alex Rodríguez remains famous for his sex appeal or infamous because of his contract, one thing is certain, A-Rod has the power and ability to be one of the best players, if not the best player, in baseball.

CHAPTER V. BARRY BONDS AND R-E-S-P-E-C-T

As discussed in chapter two, when Roger Maris set a new single-season home-run record in 1961, Major League Baseball (MLB) had been a reintegrated space for just three years: the Red Sox were the last team to sign a U.S.-born black player in 1959. MLB seemed to reach a ceiling during the 1970s when approximately 25% of major league players were black (Ogden et al. 216). Since then, there has been a steady decline of U.S.-born black players who made up 9% of the rosters during the 2005 season. In fact, that same season, the Houston Astros became the first World Series team in over fifty years to not have a single U.S.-born black player on its roster. It is ironic that at a time when Major League Baseball is trying to figure out why the number of players has reached its lowest point in almost thirty years, one of the most dominant players in the game, who is black himself, is often shunned by the media. San Francisco Giants outfielder Barry Bonds is also one of the most well known MLB players in the game today though some would describe the slugger as being more infamous than famous.

For almost sixty years, much of which occurred during the Jim Crow era, the undeniable king of statistical dominance was Babe Ruth. During his twenty-two year career (1914-1935), Babe Ruth placed his mark on baseball immortality, holding seven major league records. Though several of these records eventually fell, Ruth set the bar for offensive dominance and is considered by many to be the best baseball player in history. However, as the cliché goes, records are made to be broken, and in 2001, Barry Bonds' career became a statistical marvel. Beginning in that year, Bonds challenged Ruth's statistical domination and began making the case that he is, in fact, the most dominant baseball player in history by breaking six major league

records, in addition to becoming the charter member of the 500–500 club (Thorn et al. 1045).²⁷

Table three provides a parallel comparison of Ruth and Bonds’ statistical achievements.

Table 3: Ruth vs. Bonds Statistical Comparison

	<i>Babe Ruth (22 seasons)</i>	<i>Barry Bonds (19 seasons)</i> ²⁸
Games	2503	2730
AB	8399	9140
Single–Season HR	60 (1927)	73 (2001)
Career HR	714	708
Single–Season BB	170 (1923)	232 (2004)
Career BB	2062	2311
Single–Season SLG	.847 (1920)	.863 (2001)
Career SLG	.690	.611

(Thorn et al. 1045, 592–3)

Given those numbers, there are some baseball fans who argue that Barry Bonds is the best baseball player in the game today, maybe even the best player ever to pick up a bat and glove. However, there are others who are unwilling to give Bonds some respect. As Pat Conroy points out, “Baseball fans love numbers” (390) which begs the question: in a sport that is obsessed with statistical analysis and comparison, why are so many sports commentators dismissing the numbers?

This chapter will use the narratives about Bonds’ accomplishments to demonstrate how race and age function in American society through the use of controlling images. According to Collins, controlling images are “gender–specific depictions of people of African descent within Western scholarship and popular culture [which are] tied to power relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (*Black Sexual Politics* 350). John Hoberman highlights the controlling images of black men when he discusses “the merger of the athlete, the gangster rapper, and the criminal into a single black male persona” (*Darwin’s Athletes* xviii). Power can be exercised

²⁷ See appendix for definitions and statistical formulas.

²⁸ Since Bonds is still active, these statistics are through the 2005 season.

through the creation and/or manipulation of these controlling images, in Bonds' case, the controlling image of the prototypical home-run hitter "e-raced" the effects of racism and ageism. This chapter will analyze how images have been framed by sport journalists and will address these questions: how was Bonds' record-breaking home-run chase framed in comparison to Mark McGwire's and Sammy Sosa's chase three years prior? Why have some sport journalists seemingly adopted a guilty-until-proven-innocent posture toward Bonds where performance-enhancing drugs are concerned when some other (white) athletes are perceived to be innocent until proven guilty? Finally, what controlling images were created, exploited, and/or reframed to make systems of oppression invisible?

As discussed in chapter two, during the 1998 season, Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa shattered Roger Maris' single-season home-run mark of 61. In the process, McGwire embodied the controlling image of the new prototypical slugger: a white American working or middle-class male, who was uncomfortable with the spotlight, spoke proper English, was abrasive at times, exhibited a personality flaw or two which only made him more endearing, and had a loveable sidekick by his side. This controlling image disempowered any non-white, slugger who dared challenge the record as Bonds would eventually discover.

Barry Bonds entered the 2001 season with 494 home runs, 1405 RBI, 1547 walks, and a .567 SLG, each mark registered in the top three of the league at that time (Ladson 12). These numbers, acquired in seven seasons with the Pirates and eight with the Giants, led to three Most Valuable Player Awards (MVP), eight Gold Gloves, and nine All-Star Game appearances (Thorn et al. 719-20,30,1045). The combination of Bonds' offense and defense was so impressive that The Sporting News (TSN) named Bonds its player of the decade for the 1990s (Rosenthal 14). In the annual poll conducted by TSN in 2000, Bonds was ranked the fourth best

player in the majors (Barber 14). Jeff Pearlman of Sports Illustrated (SI) called Bonds one of the best all-around players in the game and described his left arm as “an assault weapon once banned by the US government” (“Appreciating Bonds” 48–9). Clearly, before the 2001 season, Barry Bonds was already having a Hall of Fame career. To make matters more interesting, Bonds became a free agent at the end of the 2001 season, a situation which, some speculate, gives players an incentive to step their game up a notch.

The Angry Black Man/Athlete

The commentary surrounding Bonds’ achievements during the 2001 season seemed to fall into two distinct camps. The first group recognized that personality could not/should not trump on–field achievements. Todd Jones of TSN relayed an impassioned plea: “Please don’t lose sight of what he has done just because you don’t like him. Nobody likes him” (12). The second, populated mostly by the national media (e.g. The New York Times, SI), tend to couch Bonds’ accomplishments in terms of his personality. Falling squarely within this group, SI’s Rick Reilly began one article on Bonds with the statement: “Someday they’ll be able to hold Bonds’ funeral in a fitting room” (“He Loves Himself Barry Much” 102). Tony Kornheiser of The Washington Post and ESPN’s Pardon the Interruption (PTI) mentioned that Bonds “has been a cold, angry, condescending person for most of his career, he’s not lovable and he wants it that way and has wanted it that way” (“Does Barry Deserve More Love?”). Ken Rosenthal of TSN brings up the fact that Bonds “regularly behaves like a churl with the media and elicits mixed feelings inside his own clubhouse” (14). Sportswriters used their recourses to focus on Bonds’ personality instead of his on–field performance. During the 1998 season when it seemed, as one reporter put it, that McGwire would “rather get hit in the head with a Randy Johnson fastball than answer one more question from the media” (“McGwire and Sosa”), sportswriters continued

to follow his every move and frame him as shy as opposed to surly. Though Bonds seemed to conform to curmudgeon portion of the controlling image McGwire represented; it worked for McGwire and against Bonds arguably because of racism. It could be argued that sportswriters emphasized Bonds' surliness as a means to lessen his professional achievements. This is not to say that a player's personality or off-field exploits should be completely discounted; however, the question becomes, is surliness the primary explanation for Bonds' reception?

Bonds is not the first, and certainly not the last, baseball player to have a lukewarm relationship with sportswriters, fans, and fellow players. With that in mind, one of Bonds' biographers Steven Travers points out that "there is not much that supersedes ability on the field. It is about winning, and talented players put money in their teammates' pockets. That is the real bottom line. It has been said that Stalin could have had a job in baseball if he could hit with consistent power" (120-1). Though it hardly seems fitting to compare Bonds to Joseph Stalin, it helps to put Bonds' supposed surliness into perspective; especially since, as one journalist notes, Bonds "has never publicly embarrassed himself, never demanded to renegotiate his contract, never given less than his best" (Rosenthal 14). Granted, professional baseball players are not saints; at the same time there is evidence to suggest that sportswriters have placed on-field performance above surliness and far more serious offenses.

Marcus Henry of The New York Amsterdam News pointed out the hypocrisy involved in deciding whose personality traits become newsworthy: "Rarely does anyone talk about Ty Cobb's racist views. Nor do they emphasize Mickey Mantle's problem with alcohol addiction or allegations that [Atlanta] manager Bobby Cox is a wife-beater" (44). Cox, Mantle, and Cobb all have one thing in common: they are all white while Bonds is not. Henry's examples do not even include the likes of Pete Rose who, despite being banned from MLB and the Hall of Fame for

gambling while he managed the Reds, is beloved by many sportswriters and fans.²⁹ The fact that sportswriters continue to “e-race” Cobb and Cox’s actions reflects the hierarchical power structure which frames white men as “beyond reproach” (Collins, Black Sexual Politics 186). At the same time Michael Eric Dyson points out that framing black athletes in general and Bonds specifically, as angry black men/athletes can be described as an attempt “to demonize black people, to label them as somehow peculiarly possessed of an unwarranted ungratefulness for what our country offers. These athletes are angry about racism, they’re angry about the unfair treatment they are receiving...” (216). By demonizing Bonds for his surly attitude while ignoring the offenses of white players and managers, sportswriters highlight George Lipsitz’ notions that “Whiteness is the most subsidized identity in our society [and] the most powerful identity politics are those that protect the value of whiteness (“The White 2k Problem” 521). In essence, Cobb, Cox, Mantle, and Rose receive a free pass for their behavior which protects “the value of whiteness” while Bonds, because of his race, does not.

The racial component of mostly white sportswriters critiquing a black athlete was barely discussed by sportswriters. In fact, focusing on Bonds’ attitude deflected attention away from any discussions of racism: if racism was brought up as a rationale for any differential treatment, sportswriters could simply deny the charge and point to Bonds’ attitude. When an AP writer asked Bonds whether or not racism played a part in his lukewarm reception, Bonds replied, “Does the KKK exist? Sure. Probably. I don’t know. [Racism] hadn’t changed drastically [since

²⁹ After Rose released his book My Prison Without Bars where he finally admitted to betting on baseball after fourteen years of denials, ESPN’s Alysse Minkoff remarks “To many die-hard baseball fans nothing Pete Rose will ever do, or say will be enough. To others, Rose can do no wrong. Remember that moving three-minute ovation when Rose was named to the All-Century Team at the 1999 All-Star Game?” (n.p.). When NBC reporter Jim Gray asked Rose about the gambling allegations after the All-Century Team ceremony, the reporter was lambasted by fans and later had to apologize for even asking the questions (“Yankees Not Yet Willing to Forgive Gray” n.p.). The adoration Rose received comes despite being accused of, denying, and later admitting to doing something expressly prohibited by MLB guidelines.

1974]” (Travers 195).³⁰ Even Bonds himself is at a loss to explain the treatment he received. Since the national media focused primarily on Bonds’ attitude, few speculated that racism was at the root of the animosity. The New York Amsterdam News, a black newspaper that did consider racism as one of reasons for the ill will, likened the press treatment of Bonds to “the racist attacks on Hank Aaron when he was in full pursuit of breaking Babe Ruth’s all–time home–run mark, which he did” (Evans, 44). It is ironic that a few months after the 2001 season ended, the public learned that Bonds received death threats similar to Aaron’s though sportswriters failed to give the issue much attention (Suchon 296). When Aaron received death threats during his quest to break the career home–run record, sportswriters did not shy away from reporting the issue. One sports writer remembered,

Last summer the hate mail made a good story. When the epistolary Klansmen took up their pens armed with malevolent rhetoric about a black man surpassing Babe Ruth, it was a grand focus [...]. Even Richard Nixon said on film that Aaron is what this country’s all about. One thing sportswriters agreed upon was that what this country was not about was calling Hank a nigger. (Conroy 310)

The use of racial slurs, particularly in public settings, is tolerated less now than it was during Aaron’s time as racism is expressed less explicitly. What is interesting about Conroy’s observation is that while hate mail made a good story in 1974, it did not even warrant mention in 2001. It is difficult to believe that sportswriters reversed their position on what America does and does not stand for in the intervening twenty–seven years: arguably calling Bonds a nigger and/or threatening his life would still rate high on the list of things this country is not. There has been no evidence to suggest that Mark McGwire or Sammy Sosa received death threats during their home–run chase three years earlier. As mentioned in chapter two, critical race theorist Charles R.

³⁰ Referring to the year Hank Aaron broke Babe Ruth’s all–time home–run record.

Lawrence III's notion of unconscious racism hypothesizes that since racism played a large part in America's shared past, all Americans unconsciously harbor negative opinions about nonwhites. Because society no longer tolerates overt racism the way it once did, the negative attitudes created by the shared racist history will find an alternative outlet ("The Id" 237). In the case of the 1998 home-run chase, sportswriters manifested this unconscious racism through the seeming ease with which they framed Sosa as McGwire's sidekick, a controlling image which reaffirms the racial hierarchy within the United States with the white male at the top and "the other" at the bottom. Since Bonds was alone in his quest for the record, sportswriters framed Bonds as a malcontent who was somehow unworthy to break McGwire's record, an image which may have helped create an atmosphere in which death threats are understandable and acceptable. Is it possible that sportswriters did not report on the threats Bonds received because they would have to accept some responsibility for those threats?

Whether or not sportswriters intentionally helped create a hostile environment for Bonds is debatable; however, media representatives do have the power to frame the debate.

Unfortunately, as Douglas Kellner points out, "such is the power of the media to define and redefine images, that even the greatest African American icons and spectacles can be denigrated to embody negative connotations" (77). Kellner's conception of the media's power coincides with Collin's notion of how controlling images in general are employed by those in power to mask social inequalities. This means that, regardless of what Bonds achieved on the field, sportswriters had the power to frame the discussion in such a way that it diminished or shifted the focus away from his professional achievements. If that is the case, and in light of Richard Dyer's expressed notion that "Entertainment is not simply the expression of eternal needs – it responds to the real needs *created by society*" (376–7), then what societal need is being fulfilled

or created by framing Bonds in this manner? Bonds' biographer Steven Travers argues that "the reality is that most whites love to like blacks. It makes them feel good. It helps convince them that racism is not what it used to be. What is not on the surface, however, is that most whites love to like *certain kinds* of blacks. Barry Bonds has not always been the kind of black athlete that they love to like" (254). For Travers, it is not that Bonds is a black athlete that causes problems, it is that Bonds refuses to be a particular type of black athlete. Journalist Dave Zirin agrees as he notes "the media have been crushing Bonds without evidence because he has never played their game. If Michael Jordan was the Tom Hanks of the pro sports world, Bonds is Sean Penn, beating down the paparazzi and challenging their self-importance" (What's My Name, Fool? 244-5). Though Bonds could not be described as radical in a political sense, his relationship with the media could symbolize a power shift as Bonds forces sportswriters to meet him on his own terms: regardless of whether or not sportswriters like Bonds, his continued dominance forces those same writers to deal with him. On the other hand, it could be said that by framing Bonds as a malcontent, sportswriters are attempting to put the slugger "in his place" which sends a message to other black athletes: be the type of black athlete white America wants you to be or your image will be ruined. If Bonds behaved more like Sammy Sosa, whose persona in 1998 was more of a happy-go-lucky sidekick or a Michael Jordan/Tiger Woods type who "transcends race," or "perceived as both black and not black, as a superior athlete and an all-American clean-cut young man who transcended race and yet was obviously an African American" (Kellner 73) might the commentary be different? It is possible.

If ever there was a black athlete who seemingly "transcends" race it was Chicago Bulls basketball player Michael Jordan. In a similar manner, golfer Tiger Woods "embodies the imagined ideal of being and becoming American" (Cole et al. 72). Patricia Hill Collins highlights

Jordan and Woods as examples of “black buddies” who can be “physically black yet lacking a racial identity. [Their] phenomenal success points to the lucrative benefits for those black buddies who manage to develop personas as ‘raceless’ individuals” (Black Sexual Politics 168). Arguably, sportswriters and marketing executives deliberately frame athletes such as Jordan and Woods in direct contrast to athletes like Bonds so mainstream society can have the “certain kinds” of black athlete available for adoration. On the other hand, Bonds’ status as a professional athlete in and of itself reinforces a racial hierarchy. “The typical image of blacks in the media is that of a violent physical people, habitually involved in criminal activity, entertainment or sports” (Cashmore 126). If that is the case, even as Bonds attempted to challenge the controlling images via his continued dominance which shifts the flow of power from the writer → athlete dynamic to an athlete → writer one, Bonds’ status as an athlete still reinforces the controlling image of black males as athletes. In other words, Bonds was in a no-win situation.

It is interesting to note that even athletes who embody society’s notion of what a black athlete should be are not protected from hostility. After winning the 1997 Masters, golf’s golden boy Tiger Woods began receiving death threats though, like Bonds, he would not discuss how serious they were or if they were racially motivated (Bamberger 18). And in the case of Michael Jordan, as documentary filmmaker Michael Moore points out, when NIKE encourages consumers to “be like Mike,” “the operative word there is *like*, because no matter how many millions he makes, to *be* Mike would mean spending an awful lot of time pulled over on the New Jersey Turnpike” (66). As transcendent as Jordan and Woods appear to be, the former’s failed attempts to buy an NBA franchise and the possibilities of racial profiling, as well as the latter’s death threats, show that transcending race has its limits. As Collins points out, controlling images

are designed to make injustice appear natural, but framing Jordan and Woods as transcending race makes the racism they suffer invisible to their fans.

Then again, as intersectionality dictates, it is possible that race alone does not tell the whole story. There have been other curmudgeonly athletes over the years who did not incur the media's wrath (e.g. Reggie Jackson, Charles Barkley). On the other hand, there are a few unruly white players, such as Boston Red Sox pitcher David Wells and former Texas Rangers pitcher Kenny Rogers, who are shunned by the media. Wells experiences problems due to his outspoken nature and a penchant for being involved in bar fights while Rogers physically assaulted not one but two cameramen before the Rangers released him in 2005. Clearly race alone does not dictate how unruly players will be framed. If race does not tell the entire story, what other intersecting factors are at work in Bonds' narratives?

Does Ageism Exist in Baseball?

While Bonds' race was rarely brought up to explain either his accomplishments or his reception by fans and sportswriters, age was ever present in the discussion. Sportswriters consistently framed Bonds' offensive assault in terms of his age. As Pat Conroy noted, "In baseball time [a man of Bond's age] should be caring for his sores and drooling in his spikes" (310). Since Bonds turned thirty-seven during the 2001 season, it seemed inconceivable that instead of thinking about retirement, Bonds continued to be amazingly productive. The idea that Bonds should be walking away from the game at this age instead of dominating it, can be seen as "an expression of ageist society, in which ageist norms and assumptions govern ideas about fitness to work" (Irwin 699). As Bonds moved closer to McGwire's home-run record, SI columnist Tom Verducci pointed out that "what makes no apparent sense about this career-best power display is that on July 24 [2001] Bonds will turn 37, an age when Mickey Mantle, his

closest statistical twin, was finished and most players' best years are well behind them. The average age of the 16 other 500-home run hitters when they belted their career high in homers was 29" ("The Producers" 56). Because of its unusual timing, some interpreted Bonds' dominance as a product of performance-enhancing drugs since no baseball player could perform at such a high level at such an "old" age. However, there was one problem with this line of thinking: Bonds was not the only dominant "senior citizen" in the game at that time.

In 2001, then Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Randy Johnson, who is one year older than Bonds, won his fourth Cy Young Award by having the lowest earned run average (ERA) in the majors as well as leading the majors in strikeouts and pitching a perfect game in 2004. At the same time, then New York Yankees pitcher Roger Clemens, who at age 39, is two years older than Bonds, earned his sixth Cy Young Award by leading the American League in strikeouts. Despite the fact that the majority of the players suspended for using performance-enhancing drugs have been pitchers, it was never suggested that Johnson or Clemens, who are considered two of the best pitchers ever, resorted to performance-enhancing drugs to perform at such a high level at such an old age (Olney 46).³¹ It is also interesting to note that the two "elderly" pitchers have behaved curmudgeonly and sometimes violently during their careers: Clemens has a history of hitting batters and once threw a broken bat at Mets catcher Mike Piazza, while Johnson physically assaulted a cameraman before his first press conference in New York in 2005. Despite this history, the two future Hall of Famers are revered by most sportswriters.

In one article discussing how Clemens has remained dominant for such a long time, ESPN's Bob Klapisch touts Clemens' vigorous weight-training ritual wherein the pitcher

³¹ It must be noted that pitchers tend to have longer careers than everyday players since they are only required to take the field once every four or five days. Therefore, the comparisons between Bonds and Clemens/Johnson are not entirely symmetrical. On the other hand, give the extremely small number of U.S.-born black pitchers in MLB, the fact that batters have been disproportionately highlighted part of the steroid debate has racial implications as well.

explains “my only day off is the day I pitch” (n.p.). If this article was written about Bonds, who is younger and just as dominant, the discussion probably would have at least hinted at the possibility of performance-enhancing drugs. When discussing Clemens’ surliness, sportswriters often joke about his exploits explaining that Clemens is a “thrower of balls. And sometimes of bats. Both of which may be aimed at an opponent at any time” (Merron n.p.). The confrontations with Piazza are reduced to a punch-line instead of being framed as potentially serious assaults. The joking strategy works for Johnson as well as evident by ESPN’s Jayson Stark’s comments after the pitcher assaulted a cameraman that “No cameras got mauled. No questioners got stared down. No voices were raised. This was Randy Johnson at his friendliest, most congenial, most amusing best” (n.p.). As with Clemens, Johnson’s physical assault of a cameraman is reduced to a joke. Though past surliness is alluded to, Johnson’s new demeanor is welcomed instead of being criticized for being insincere as it more than likely would have been with Bonds. In a manner similar to McGwire’s 1998 situation, Johnson and Clemens are able to cash in on their white privilege which shields their violent behavior from public criticism and reframes it as an endearing personality quirk. In addition, much like McGwire before he retired, white privilege protects Johnson and Clemens’ continued dominance from the steroid shadow. At the same time, because, as Valerie Barnes Lipscomb and Cynthia Rich point out in their conversation, “ageism is not different from other ‘isms’ [and] it’s essential to recognize that ageism is in the same category as racism and sexism” (5) the intersection between racism and ageism has to be considered. Though players such as Bonds, Clemens, and Johnson are prolonging the career-span of a dominant major league baseball player, it is Bonds alone whose age seems to work against him in the eyes of the press. Unlike his fellow senior citizens, Bonds has the added burden of race to complicate the age issue. Intersectionality dictates that Bonds would experience

ageism differently than Clemens or Johnson and would experience racism differently than younger black players because of his age.

Home–Run Chase Part Two

Though there was not much discussion on the ways in which racism and ageism framed the discussion on Bonds, one thing that most sportswriters did discuss was the fact that the 2001 home–run chase was framed differently than the 1998 Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa home–run chase. According to Bonds’ biographer Josh Suchon,

America loved it in ‘98 when Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa put on a home–run derby for the ages. They went mano y mano through the heart of the summer. It no longer became a sports story. It was national news. Now, just three years later, Bonds was alone in the national spotlight. You couldn’t help but feel sorry for Bonds. Here he was, producing the finest offensive season in baseball history, and it was as if the nation yawned. (20)

Though Bonds’ achievements still warranted some national attention, the level of attention was more restrained. In fact, the number of journalists assigned to cover Bonds’ quest, 350, was about half the number assigned to cover McGwire (Verducci, “Pushing 70” 43). A variety of different explanations for the disparity emerged. There were some who argued Bonds’ record–breaking season came too soon after the McGwire/Sosa chase (Rosenthal 14) and others who, as previously mentioned, blamed Bonds’ attitude. Bonds himself blamed the media for the differential treatment and still others blamed the nation’s ambivalence in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11th (Travers 195). In the eyes of San Francisco journalists, however, these were just excuses designed to hide the fact that Bonds’ 2001 campaign was worthy of more praise than the McGwire/Sosa race.

It is interesting that the San Francisco media, who are arguably more familiar with Bonds and conceivably would be subjected to more of his curmudgeonly behavior, or saw more of his good side, had a completely different view of Bonds' 2001 season than the national media had. Bruce Jenkins of The San Francisco Chronicle observed that “for his supreme, otherworldly accomplishment, Bonds got a shrug. He got Page 5 in sports sections around the nation as he edged closer to Mark McGwire. [It seems that] we're the only ones who get it. We're watching Michael Jordan at the top of his game, Jim Brown reducing massive would-be tacklers to small children, Tiger Woods on the back nine at Pebble Beach” (“Unprecedented, Unappreciated” D2). It seems ironic that Jenkins would compare Bonds' accomplishments to Jordan and Woods, the very racially transcendental figures Bonds could not or would not emulate. Others in San Francisco pointed out that when doing a direct comparison, Bonds was a better player, and deserved the home-run record more than McGwire:

There are two reasons I hope Barry Bonds breaks Mark McGwire's home-run record: 1) Bonds is a better player. 2) Bonds is a better person. McGwire is a one-trick pony, a weak defender, poor baserunner and a below-average percentage hitter [...]. Meanwhile, Bonds has been an eight-time Gold Glove winner, he is approaching 500 stolen bases for his career and he has hit .300 or better seven times; this year almost assuredly will be his eighth. (Dickey E2)

Describing Bonds as a better person than McGwire is not a concept national media representatives would ever fathom. As mentioned in chapter two, though it took some time for McGwire to warm to the increased media scrutiny, his evasiveness was framed as shyness. Bonds, who displayed similar behavior, was framed as a churl. Describing Bonds as a better player did have merit as Bonds accumulated better offensive and defensive numbers. By all

statistical measures, Bonds 2001 season far exceeded McGwire's 1998 totals as shown in Table four.

Table 4: Home–Run Season Statistical Comparison

	<i>McGwire (1998)</i>	<i>Bonds (2001)</i>
<i>HRs</i>	70	73
<i>AB</i>	509	476
<i>AB Per Home Run</i>	10.61	6.52
<i>BA</i>	.299	.328
<i>BB</i>	162	177
<i>OBP</i>	.470	.515
<i>SLG</i>	.752	.863
<i>Stolen Bases</i>	1	13
<i>Strike Outs</i>	155	93

(Thorn et al. 1045, 443)

Every record McGwire broke in 1998, Bonds broke in 2001 and then some. Although Bonds had a better statistical season than McGwire, this did not help move him into the spotlight. When comparing the two seasons, statistical dominance is not the only place where Bonds excelled. Some sports journalists reminded their readers that in the midst of his home–run chase, Bonds had to

help provide entertainment for a nation in dire need of diversion; lead the San Francisco Giants in a come–from–behind drive for a playoff berth; smile and expound for a vast press corps that he usually shunned; watch ball four after ball four after ball four after...; play while mourning the death of a friend and former bodyguard Franklin Bradley [and] worry about his impending free agency.

(Pearlman, “It’s a Wrap” 48)

While McGwire and Sosa could bask in the national glow of their achievements, Bonds’ accomplishments hung in the shadow of September 11th, a far more somber backdrop than the White House sex scandal McGwire and Sosa endured. Despite the fact that President George W.

Bush, former owner of the Texas Rangers, urged professional sports to play their regularly scheduled games, following the NFL's lead, baseball suspended games for one week (Brown 119). Commissioner Bud Selig released a statement which read "Our game, besides being a national pastime, is a social institution with social responsibilities that include responding to an unimaginable crisis such as this in a timely and significant manner" (Kraus 92). Even with the pause, it would be misleading to argue that the ambivalence toward Bonds' season was due entirely to the terrorist attacks. On the contrary, when New York hosted its first home games after the attacks, Mayor Rudolph Guiliani stated that one of the few things that got his mind off the terrorist attacks was baseball and to that end, despite being a strident Yankees fan, Guiliani attended a Mets game (Nine Innings from Ground Zero).

Following that game, which was the first large-scale public gathering in New York since the attacks, newspapers ran stories entitled "Baseball Helps Heal Stricken City" and "Through the Tears, Let's Play Ball," so clearly baseball could and did have a place after September 11th. According to Rebecca Kraus, "Baseball provided an emotional release, a sense of hope, and a place for the community to gather in its time of need, thus fulfilling its role as the national pastime" (96). However, instead of playing up Bonds' quest for the record, and the fact that he pledged \$10,000 to The United Way for every home run he hit for the rest of the season, the focus shifted to the New York Yankees, a team headed, as usual, for post-season play. While some sportswriters maintained a "been there, done that" attitude toward Bonds' home-run chase, the same ambivalence was not levied toward the Yankees, who were making their fourth straight World Series appearance. It is interesting to point out, as former Yankees first baseman Scott Brosius remembered, "For the rest of that year anyway we weren't the hated New York Yankees" (Nine Innings from Ground Zero).

The continued framing of Bonds as the angry black man/athlete seems to go against CRT scholar Derrick Bell's interest convergence theory which argues that "the interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites" ("Interest-Convergence Dilemma" 39). As mentioned in the introduction interest convergence in a baseball context hypothesizes that professional baseball did not reintegrate because it has the best interests of black players in mind: it was the financial gains and the prospect of winning fueled desegregation efforts. In the case of Barry Bonds, it would seem that it would be in sportswriters' best interests to frame Bonds' chase as a unifying force for the nation to rally behind. Unfortunately, the controlling image of the angry black man/athlete, according to Micheal Eric Dyson "is in some ways a species of un-Americanness. The subtext is that such angry people are not accepting of the American way" (216). In other words, an angry black man was not the white, patriotic, image of America media representatives wished to forward. While McGwire and Sosa could provide a diversion from a presidential scandal and the spirit surrounding 9/11 was enough to reform the image for the entire New York Yankees roster, it was not enough to reform Barry Bonds' image. Sportswriters have framed Bonds in such a way that no amount of good deeds or need for national unity could alter that image. At the same time, praising the storied Yankees instead of Bonds fit into the racialized politics surrounding September 11th. According to Manning Marable,

The post-September 11 image of a unified city transcending boundaries of class and color became widely and quickly popularized. Despite the newfound civic hype, the harsh reality is that this remains a bitterly divided city. American apartheid is strikingly and visually apparent in almost every neighborhood of New

York City, and the events of September 11 have only made the racial and class stratification worse. (297-8)

The Yankees, with their multi-ethnic lineup helped confirm the unified city/nation image being perpetuated far more effectively than a defiant Barry Bonds. What is often forgotten about the 2001 season is that while Bonds did in fact break the home-run record, the Yankees lost the World Series.

Performance-Enhancing Drugs Part Two

Though, as mentioned in chapter two, the discussion of steroids in MLB began after McGwire's admitted use of andro during the 1998 home-run chase, it was Bonds' offensive surge that heightened the debate. Throughout the early 1990s, baseball experienced a surge in offensive numbers as, starting in 1993, "the rate of home runs per game jumped 24% from 1.44 to 1.78. Homers and muscles have kept growing since then" (Verducci, "Asterisk Era" 39). A variety of explanations were offered to explain the increased offense including "an unprecedented boom in the building of ballparks, many with reduced foul territory, closer outfield fences and improved lighting – each a condition that improved hitting. There's also better manufacturing of equipment (making for harder baseballs and bats), a tighter strike zone, four expansion teams and continued advances in nutrition and training" (39). Despite the fact that any of the factors Verducci presents might help explain the increased offensive numbers, it was the revelation that Mark McGwire used a performance-enhancing drug during the 1998 home-run race that caused steroids to become a factor for the offensive surge. McGwire continues to insist that andro had no effect on his performance, stating the substance "has nothing to do with you hitting home runs [it's about] hand-eye coordination and God-given talent" ("Sunday Conversation"). It got to the point where Chicago Tribune columnist Rick

Morrissey suggested, “From about 1995 on, it was like the Wild West of performance–enhancing drug use out there, and we have no earthly idea what was real and what wasn’t, in terms of records. So we’re putting a big, fat asterisk over the whole era. That asterisk would say: Records are in question because of widespread use of anabolic steroids” (1).

However, despite the information surrounding McGwire’s use of performance–enhancing drugs, MLB did not institute any drug testing or prohibit the use of performance–enhancing drugs until 2003. Unfortunately, the instituted policy did not test all players, and there were no penalties for a positive test. Under the Collective Bargaining Agreement, if more than five percent of the players on any 40–man roster tested positive, MLB would move to more stringent testing.³² And in fact, because between five and seven percent of the players tested in 2003 had positive results, every player was randomly tested during the 2004 season and there were mild disciplinary measures in place for positive results.

Most of Bonds’ steroid related troubles began in September 2003 when federal investigators seized anabolic steroids from the home of his friend and personal trainer Greg Anderson. Anderson worked for Victor Conte’s Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative (BALCO) which supplied nutritional supplements and strength training advice to professional athletes. The federal government began investigating BALCO after it received reports that the company was providing illegal steroids to their customers. During the raid, authorities also seized names and drug intake schedules from Anderson’s home. Bonds, as well as New York Yankees stars Jason Giambi and Gary Sheffield and over thirty additional athletes were called to testify in front of a Grand Jury regarding their involvement with BALCO.

³² Not all players were happy with the toothless drug policy. In fact, sixteen members of the White Sox were poised to refuse to take the drug test. Because not taking the test would be labeled as “failing” the test, MLB would be forced to institute a stronger policy. When the MLBPA heard of the protest, the union pressured the players to comply with the existing drug policy (“Players’ Goal Was to Make Steroid Testing Permanent”).

Stories alleging that Bonds took illegal steroids were widely published despite the continued assertions made by Anderson's lawyer that Bonds "never took anything illegal" ("Report" n.p.). This statement did not satisfy sportswriters because steroids were completely acceptable within baseball's rules. The story became such a national firestorm that President Bush took time in his 2004 State of the Union Address to admonish MLB and their weak testing policy:

Athletes play such an important role in our society, but, unfortunately, some in professional sports are not setting much of an example. The use of performance-enhancing drugs like steroids in baseball, football, and other sports is dangerous, and it sends the wrong message – that there are shortcuts to accomplishment, and that performance is more important than character. (n.p.)

As a former MLB team owner, President Bush arguably had first-hand knowledge of how common steroid abuse was among players. In fact, José Canseco, who is considered the Typhoid Mary of steroids in MLB, was a member of the Rangers when Bush owned the team; however, there is no evidence to suggest that Bush addressed the steroids issue while he owned the Rangers.³³ At the same time, some questioned why, in the midst of the War on Terror and an economic recession, baseball warranted special attention. It could be argued that President Bush tried to use the steroid scandal to divert attention from the War and the economic downturn in much the same way that the McGwire/Sosa home-run chase provided a diversion from President Clinton's sex scandal as discussed in chapter two.

³³ An investor group led by Bush purchased the Rangers in 1989. That group sold the team to current owner Tom Hicks in 1998. Canseco was with the Rangers from 1992–1994.

Guilty Until Proven Innocent

Since Bonds is arguably the most dominant player in the game today, if not ever, it is only fair that his relationship with BALCO would raise a few eyebrows. However other players who were linked to BALCO, specifically Giambi and Gary Sheffield, both of whom played for the beloved New York Yankees, seem to have earned a free pass despite some suspicious activity during the 2004 season. The free pass was issued in that year when Giambi arrived at Spring Training visibly thinner and proceeded to miss half of the season due to unspecified health reasons (“Jason Giambi”). Those unspecified health reasons were later revealed to be an intestinal parasite and a benign pituitary tumor, the former being a known side-effect of steroid use. With Giambi’s obvious physical change, there was some speculation, albeit muted, that the weight loss and physical ailments were due to steroid abuse. Bonds, whose physical appearance and professional aptitude remained the same, continued to be the poster child for suspected steroid abuse. McGwire and Giambi benefited from the differential treatment their white privilege afforded them where steroid allegations were concerned.

Were sportswriters after Bonds because he was the most visible and dominant player in baseball? Or, did Bonds’ race and age effectively place a bull’s-eye on his back? As mentioned in the introduction and discussed again in chapters two and four, Peggy McIntosh defined white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (McIntosh 97). Though not present in McIntosh’s original list of white privileges, has the assumption of innocence until proven guilty moved from constitutional right to white privilege? Is it possible that Giambi’s whiteness protected him from the hostility leveled at Bonds? Is the very ability to pronounce guilt or

innocence itself an aspect of white privilege as a large number of sports reporters are white while a substantial portion of athletes are black and Latin?

It got to a point during the 2004 season, that when Bonds was randomly tested for steroids he announced it to the media and stated the test would clear his name. ESPN's PTI analyst Tony Kornheiser responded to Bonds' assertion by saying "I think a lot of people think that Barry Bonds *used* steroids. Fewer people think he *uses* steroids" ("Will Test Clear Bonds' Name?"). Despite his continued exceptional performance, which included breaking the single-season walk record again and becoming only the third member of the 700-home-run club, Bonds still seemed to be guilty until proven innocent in the eyes of the sport media. As Kornheiser implies, even if Bonds' tests are negative, there is no way for him to prove he did not take performance-enhancing drugs during the 2001 season.

On the December 5, 2004 edition of ESPN's The Sports Reporters, John Saunders, Mitch Albom, Mike Lupica, and William C. Rhoden discussed the use of steroids by Bonds and Giambi in terms of violating the ethos of fair play and the notion of a level playing field. The Detroit Free Press's Mitch Albom made the analogy of one player having a rocket pack on his back while the other players merely relied on their two feet to run from base to base ("Jason Giambi"). What the writers failed to recognize was that professional baseball in the United States has never existed on a level playing field.

The idea of a level playing field has some problems in the history of Major League Baseball. This history should not be used to condone the use of performance-enhancing drugs; however, it must be pointed out that the use of the level playing field argument, as it has been constructed as a way to condemn steroid use, is inherently flawed. For over fifty years MLB effectively barred U.S.-born black and dark-skinned Latin players from the league. It is only in

the last few years that Asian players have further integrated the majors. It was during this time that Babe Ruth set his offensive records; however, sportswriters do not question whether Ruth would have hit 60 home runs during a single season or 714 career homers if he had to face the likes of Satchel Paige or Willie Foster on a regular basis. At the same time, the “World Series” was played for several decades before MLB played a single game outside the United States. The financial obstacles one faces in terms of equipment and facilities can impede players from lower socioeconomic classes from participating and competing effectively in the sport. And, to date, with the exception of the All-American Girls Baseball League and the Negro Leagues, no women can be seen on a major league roster. In fact, the entire discussion surrounding home-run records is evidence of baseball’s exclusionary history. What gets lost in the discussions surrounding the single-season home-run record is the distinct possibility that not Bonds, McGwire, Maris, or Ruth may in fact hold that record. There is evidence to suggest that Negro League star Josh Gibson hit 84 homers as a member of the Pittsburgh Crawfords in 1936 (Olbermann 74). Because the record cannot be concretely confirmed, as few mainstream white newspapers followed Negro League games, Gibson’s accomplishment is rarely mentioned in the record books. The all-time home-run record also highlights the game’s exclusionary history. Baseball statisticians know that Sadaharu Oh hit 868 career home runs in the Nippon Professional Baseball League in Japan, which dwarfs Hank Aaron’s MLB record of 755 (Whiting 121). In essence, baseball has never operated on a level playing field as the game and its record books have historically excluded more people than it has included. The controlling image of baseball’s alleged level playing field allows sportswriters and fans to ignore the sport’s historical and contemporary inequalities and allows those same sportswriters to frame Bonds as a cheater despite a lack of credible evidence (and an effective drug policy).

In 1998, when Mark McGwire admitted to using andro during part of his record-breaking season, there was no discussion of placing an asterisk next to his mark. Is it possible that this is an instance where Bonds' race worked against him? Given the fact that McGwire was thirty-five when he broke the record, age bias may not enter the discussion at this point. However, as in the previous discussion comparing Bonds to Roger Clemens and Randy Johnson, Bonds would experience age bias differently than McGwire because of the added burden of race. In addition, the home-run slugger controlling image surrounding Bonds effectively guaranteed that he would not receive the benefit of the doubt where asterisks were concerned, unlike McGwire. While many initially assumed that Bonds would eventually break the all-time home-run record as well, the fact that he missed the majority of the 2005 season due to complications from knee surgery quelled that discussion but intensified the speculation that Bonds' previous good health was due to performance-enhancing drugs. PTI analyst and Washington Post sportswriter Michael Wilbon commented, "If you were going to be the cynic, because Barry Bonds has never tested positive for anything, and if you were going to say oh here's how he got himself together physically to play. He's got this incredible workout regimen [. . .] he must do something in the off-season that enables him to workout this hard well if he was prone to do that well he couldn't now" ("Will Barry Every Play Again?"). In addition to questioning whether or not Bonds' records should have an asterisk, there were some who asked whether the ever-present cloud of steroids should/would affect his Hall of Fame induction. However, ESPN's Tim Kurkjian points out, even if Bonds' performance from 2000 forward was thrown out, he would still be a first-ballot Hall of Famer, though given Bonds' relationship with the press, Kurkjian's assertion could prove incorrect ("Barry Bonds").

Parting Shots

Pat Conroy reminds us that “baseball fans love numbers” (390). There are volumes of books dedicated to the study of baseball statistics which fans use to compare and contrast their favorite players both past and present. By all statistical measures, Barry Bonds is one of the best, if not the best offensive player in the history of the game. The problem Bonds encounters is that despite the numbers, some sportswriters refuse to give him any respect. The fact that Bonds’ personality which is often described as surly, standoffish, and downright hostile is one possible explanation for the diminished media attention. It is also possible that age plays a part as well since Bonds was thirty–seven years old when he began his offensive assault. This is an age when most major league player’s skills begin to decline, not an age when players start breaking offensive records. Another possible reason has to do with Bonds’ association with BALCO which was under investigation for supplying illegal steroids to professional athletes. Still another rationale could have to do with Bonds’ race. As Ralph Wiley pointed out, “What Barry Bonds has done is show great merit in the game. Unfortunately when you are what is called ‘black,’ that can be inconvenient; often when you show merit, the rules on merit are changed to make them more obtuse” (n.p.). By framing Bonds as a surly, doping, curmudgeon, sportswriters obscured the role that the intersection of race and age play in how some media representatives discussed Bonds’ accomplishments. Characterizing Bonds in this manner also guaranteed that “no matter how many home runs he hits, if he hits 780, [Bonds is] never going to be recognized as the greatest home–run hitter in the game. He may not like that, it may not be fair, but that’s the reality” (“Will Barry Every Play Again?”).

Patricia Hill Collins argues, “Because the authority to define societal values is a major instrument of power, elite groups, in exercising power, manipulate ideas [...]. These controlling

images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice to appear natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Black Feminist Thought 69) and if that is the case, sportswriters can frame Bonds with the home–run slugger controlling image to both downplay his historic accomplishments, which would preserve the white Babe Ruth as the king of statistical dominance, as well as mask the intersection of racism and ageism. As Richard Dyer points out, entertainment both expresses and responds to society’s needs (376–7). If this is true, then as overt racism becomes less acceptable in American society, other methods must be used to denigrate people of color (i.e. Bonds’ surliness can be used to obscure the fact that racism and ageism are the real reasons why sportswriters do not like Bonds). Since power does not operate in a unidirectional manner, Bonds does exercise some agency by refusing to play the role media representatives and fans expect him to play. In fact, when Bonds commented that he might not return to baseball even after his injury healed, he signaled a further willingness not to play the role society expects him to play. When Bonds begins the 2006 season and continues his assault on baseball’s record books, he forces sportswriters, regardless of their personal feelings, to meet him on his own terms.

Despite how sportswriters framed Bonds, when he is eligible for the Hall of Fame, there will undoubtedly be sportswriters who hold his surliness against him and still others who will finally give him the dap he deserves as they remember that “Bonds didn’t just have a brush with greatness, he knocked down the door, plopped down on the sofa and put his feet up” (Travers 216).

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

John Thorn, one of the editors of Total Baseball: The Ultimate Baseball Encyclopedia, argues that “fundamentally, baseball is what America is not, but has longed or imagined itself to be” (Thorn 3) and writer Gerald Early hypothesizes that there are “only three things that America will be known for two thousand years from now when they study this civilization: the Constitution, jazz music, and baseball”(“The First Inning”). Given MLB’s prominence within popular culture, it seemed like an ideal location for using black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and Latina/o Critical Theory to achieve the goal of reading sport critically put forth by Susan Birrell and Mary McDonald: “exploring the complex interrelated and fluid character of power relations as they are constituted along the axes of ability, class, gender, and nationality” (284). Though the four incidents analyzed here span ten years and a multitude of people, places, situations, and identities, they are indicative of intersectionality as well as the ways in which media frame power relations in MLB.

This project sought to analyze Major League Baseball using black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Latino/a Critical Theory (LatCrit) by addressing how the chosen incidents illuminated the different ways power operates in MLB; how the ways in which power permeated the events help to create and maintain national sensibilities regarding race, class, gender construction, sexuality, nationality, and age; and how the operation of power in MLB were made visible/invisible by the media. In answering these questions, this study hopefully demonstrated that black feminist thought, CRT and LatCrit could work together and be applied to situations not usually thought of as being within their purviews. If the overarching goal of black feminist thought is to struggle “against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice

based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking” (Collective 13), then it stands to reason that scholars employing black feminist thought would oppose oppression in a multitude of contexts including bastions of white seemingly heterosexual male power, such as MLB specifically and professional sport more generally.

Critical Race Theory investigates how “cherished and supposedly neutral tenets of American society [. . .] in fact serve to subordinate minority racial groups (Monaghan A7). Though CRT primarily concerns itself with the legal system, there are commonalities with sport. Similar to the legal system, sport is often framed as a neutral and objective space based entirely on a player’s ability on the field. In addition, since one of the primary foci of CRT is civil rights legislation, it is only fitting that “sport is one institution in society where people of color (particularly blacks/African Americans) have benefited from civil rights legislation” (Singer 469). At the same time, LatCrit “encompasses all of the assumptions and underpinnings of CRT but focuses more specifically on the experiences of and realities of Latinos. LatCrit helps to analyze issues CRT cannot or does not, like language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality” (Villalpando 43). Given the increasing number of non-U.S.-born players in MLB for whom language, ethnicity, and citizenship status is of particular importance, the inclusion of LatCrit in this analysis was crucial.

How did these three theories work together? Black feminist thought takes the forefront by providing the core themes of controlling images, work, and sexual politics, as well as the definition of power that frame the project. Patricia Hill Collins defines controlling images as “the gender-specific depiction of people of African descent within Western scholarship and popular culture” (Black Sexual Politics 350) and defines power as the use of available resources to achieve desired outcomes (Fighting Words 22). Sportswriters used the resources at their disposal

to frame Sammy Sosa as a sidekick: a friendly, deferential, asexual male who projected a nonthreatening black identity (Collins Black Sexual Politics 166-7). Sosa collaborated with this framing in an effort to avoid the controlling images usually associated with Latin players: showboats from banana republics who cannot speak proper English and aren't team players. Framing Sosa as a sidekick allowed the outfielder to avoid controlling images based on ethnicity and nationality by embracing controlling images usually reserved for U.S.-born blacks. The sidekick image also allowed Mark McGwire to be touted as the new home-run slugger: a white American working- or middle-class male who was uncomfortable with the media attention, spoke proper English, was abrasive, had a forgivable personality flaw or two, and a loveable sidekick beside him. At a time when the President was embroiled in a sex-scandal, the home-run slugger embodied by McGwire would epitomize the white American male power structure. While the home-run slugger image may have helped invigorate the white American male's image, it would hinder Barry Bonds three years later. The controlling image of the home-run slugger set up unattainable expectations as Bonds broke McGwire's record and assured that no matter how many home runs Bonds hit, he would never be recognized as the legitimate record holder. At the same time, while being uncomfortable with the spotlight worked in McGwire's favor, it helped constrain Bonds within the angry black man/athlete controlling image. As Michael Eric Dyson points out, that controlling image serves "to demonize black people, to label them as somehow peculiarly possessed of an unwarranted ungratefulness for what our country offers" (216). Given the patriotic fervor that gripped the country in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks, a controlling image that framed Bonds as ungrateful ensured that he would not receive the public support McGwire and Sosa received during their chase.

The core theme of sexual politics worked in several different ways. The first involves gender construction. Collins envisions a three-tiered masculinity with the first tier occupied by wealthy white men; the second tier consists of working-class white men, Latinos, Asian and white immigrant men, black and indigenous men are on the bottom (Black Sexual Politics 186). The second way sexual politics operates is by viewing heterosexism as a freestanding system of oppression. Heterosexism and gender construction intersect with race and nationality to impact Mike Piazza and Kazuhiro Tadano's situations. The fact that Piazza represented the elite white males ensured that any questions surrounding his sexual orientation would be more damaging to the white, heterosexual, male power structure and therefore would be extremely newsworthy. Tadano's involvement with a homosexual pornography video did not garner the same amount of attention due to the fact that Asian and Asian American males are near the bottom of the masculinity hierarchy. This placement meant that questions surrounding Tadano's sexual orientation were neither surprising nor newsworthy. The final incarnation of sexual politics has to do with physicality and objectification. By focusing on Alex Rodríguez' physicality, the former shortstop's on-field achievements could be overshadowed and privileges he gained by being born in the United States went unchallenged. Framing A-Rod in this manner was in direct contrast to the way Sosa was desexualized in 1998, a situation which, though not discussed in this study, could have something to do with skin color. It is also possible that objectifying male athletes functions as a way to alleviate criticism for objectifying female athletes: objectifying everyone would "level the playing field" in the mind of sportswriters and obscure the fact that male athletes gain power from objectification while female athletes often lose power.

Staying with Rodríguez, the core theme of work analyzes the ways in which "paid work is organized within intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender" and presents workers "as

constrained but empowered figures” (Collins, Black Feminist Thought 45-6). A-Rod’s initial contract worth \$1.3 million highlights how U.S.-born players can capitalize on the privileges based on their national origin. If Rodríguez had been raised in the Dominican Republic, his initial contract would have more closely resembled that of players like Sammy Sosa’s, whose \$3,500 signing bonus in 1986 was the same amount the Dodgers paid Jackie Robinson in 1947 (Bretón n.p.). Despite being considered one of the best players in the game, A-Rod’s contract drew outrage that was swift, decisive, and hostile. Since professional sport has been producing black millionaires for the past few decades, it is possible that the sight of a Latino with \$25 million helps explain some of the hostility. At the same time, the criticism Rodríguez’s contract received helped create a glass ceiling for other players by sending the message: if the best player in the game does not deserve this much money than neither does anyone else. It is telling that between 2001 and 2005 both the NBA and the NFL has had several players make over \$25 million but Rodríguez is the only MLB player to make \$25 million (“Salaries Database”).

Though Collins’ core themes and definition of power were at the forefront of this study, concepts from CRT and LatCrit enhanced the analysis. What the cases of Sammy Sosa and Alex Rodríguez illustrate is that, as both MLB and the United States as a whole continue to “brown,” discussing race in terms of black–white obscures some of the complex ways race and ethnicity function in the U.S. This theme highlights a core point within LatCrit: the fact that viewing race relations in the United States as a black–white binary is wholly ineffective and inaccurate. Sosa and Rodríguez differing experiences also exemplify the various ways race and nation intersects and impact people’s lives. While Rodríguez was able to capitalize on his bilingual skills, Sosa’s linguistic missteps were mocked and ultimately served to distance him from Mark McGwire. The focus on language discrimination emphasizes LatCrit theorist Berta Esperanza Hernandez-

Truyol's point that, "virtually un(Spanish)-accented English, [is] a veritable boarding pass to many mundos" (893). Finally, as mentioned earlier, Rodríguez was able to parlay his U.S. citizenship into a substantial starting contract while Sosa's contract resembled what American players were earning in the 1940s. The message appears to be that, despite increasing globalization, both within the game and in society at large, the U.S. and its institutions will not conform to the new international flavor. Instead, everyone will be required to learn proper English and abide by U.S. standards.

Concepts from CRT recurred throughout this study. Charles R. Lawrence III's concept of unconscious racism hypothesizes that, since racism played a large part in America's shared past, all Americans unconsciously harbor negative opinions about nonwhites. Because society no longer tolerates overt racism the way it once did, the negative attitudes created by the shared racist history will find another outlet ("The Id" 237) helps explain the seeming ease with which sportswriters framed Sosa as McGwire's sidekick. This controlling image reaffirms the racial hierarchy within the United States with the white male at the top and "the other" at the bottom. Since Bonds was alone in his quest for the record, sportswriters framed Bonds as an angry black male/athlete that was somehow unworthy to break McGwire's record, an image which may have helped create an atmosphere in which death threats are understandable and acceptable. Lastly, unconscious racism and stereotypes about Asian masculinity which relegate Asian men to the bottom of American masculinity and sexuality hierarchies were some one of the reasons why Tadano's story was downplayed by sport journalists. Lawrence III's definition of fighting words "which are commonly understood to convey direct and visceral hatred or contempt for human beings on the basis of their sex, race, color, handicap, religion, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin" ("If He Hollers" 451) helped place comments by John Rocker and Julian Tavarez

in a larger context. Their use of fighting words, and the tacit acceptance MLB had of their fighting words, helped frame MLB as a homophobic environment which led to the media frenzy surrounding Mike Piazza's sexual orientation.

There are two concepts which are utilized by black feminist thought, CRT, and LatCrit and which serve to tie the three theories together. The first is intersectionality which assumes "that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization" (Black Feminist Thought 299). For Sammy Sosa and Mark McGwire, it was the intersection of nationality and race/ethnicity which influenced the way the 1998 home-run chase was framed. This intersection highlights the ways in which race, ethnicity, and nationality intersect and can sometimes be conflated. For Mike Piazza, it was heterosexism coupled with his placement at the top of the masculinity hierarchy that helped perpetuate the frenzy surrounding his sexual orientation. As mentioned in that chapter, this does not mean that players of color or non-U.S.-born players would have an easier time being out in MLB; it simply means that in this case, the intersection of race, heterosexism, and masculinity worked against Piazza and protected Tadano from the media panopticon. In the case of Alex Rodríguez, physicality helped mask the intersection of race, class, and privileges based on nationality, while framing Bonds as a steroid-using malcontent obscured the fact that Bonds' age intersected with his race to create a situation where no matter what statistical feats he accomplishes, he might never receive the recognition he deserves.

The concept of white privilege is also employed by and helps create a bridge between black feminist thought, CRT, and LatCrit. White privilege underscores the fact that "people of color in the U.S. are not so much disadvantaged as much as taken advantage of. At the same time, their unearned disadvantages structure unearned advantages for whites (Lipsitz "The White

2k Problem” 519). These unearned advantages manifested themselves at multiple points throughout the study. Mark McGwire’s curmudgeonly behavior was excused by white sportswriters and not framed as bad morals of his/their race and, at the same time, white privilege initially helped shield McGwire from any criticisms concerning his andro use. White privilege helped shield team owner’s billions while the black and brown players’ millions were constantly criticized. Players such as Roger Clemens and Randy Johnson were able to cash in on their white privilege, which shielded their violent behavior from public criticism and reframed it as an endearing personality quirk. In addition, much as with McGwire before he retired, that same privilege protects Johnson and Clemens’ continued dominance from the steroid shadow. Sportswriters’ “possessive investment in whiteness,” to use Lipsitz’ phrase, helped them perpetuate the white privilege players like McGwire, Johnson, and Clemens received and helps explain why Sosa, Rodríguez, Tadano, and Bonds were framed in the manners they were. Hopefully this study has illustrated the ways in which black feminist thought, CRT, and LatCrit can work together while remaining consistent with each theory’s goals and avoiding the pitfalls inherent in applying concepts to new territories.

If it has, then hopefully scholars will employ these three theories and choose sport as a site for future inquiry since there are many other sport incidents/controversies that could benefit from a similar intersecting analysis. For example, in 2005 Sheryl Swoopes became the most prominent U.S. professional team–sport athlete to come out during her career. Consistent with the analysis of Mike Piazza and Kazuhiro, Swoopes’ identity as a black woman, which occupies a place on the femininity hierarchy subordinate to white women, may have influenced the lack of publicity the story received. However, unlike male professional athletes, for female professional athletes, as Collins points out, “the danger lies in being identified as lesbians” (Black Sexual

Politics 135). One question to raise in a black feminist analysis would be how stereotypes surrounding race, sexual orientation, and gender intersect to frame Swoopes' image.

At the end of the 2005 season, MLB announced a special Hall of Fame election to highlight the contributions of Negro League and pre-Negro League black players. Included on the list of possible inductees was Effa Manley, owner and manager of the Newark Eagles whose players included Hall of Famers Larry Doby and Monte Irvin. A critical analysis of Manley's life and career could analyze how the intersection of race and gender impacted her decision, as a white woman, to choose to live as black. Manley was the only female Negro League team owner and was a champion for civil rights: she organized a boycott of Harlem stores that would not hire black clerks and held an anti-lynching day during an Eagles game in 1939 (Crawford n.p.). Along with Manley, critical analyses of Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, Toni Stone, and/or Connie Morgan would be perfect for an intersectional analysis. As women, Johnson, Stone, and Morgan could not play within MLB and because of race were not allowed to participate in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League during World War II; however, because of the intersection of race and gender, each played for Negro League Teams at a time when players began migrating to MLB.

Moving to a more contemporary case, for two years former Florida Marlin first baseman Carlos Delgado held a silent protest by not standing in ballparks while "God Bless America" was being played during the seventh inning stretch.³⁴ While many did not notice Delgado's protest against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, this was not the first time Delgado expressed displeasure with U.S. government policies: he has spoken out against the Navy's use of Vieques Island in his native Puerto Rico for bombing target practice (Zirin "The Silencing of Carlos

³⁴ While "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" was usually played during the seventh inning stretch, after September 11th, many teams switched to "God Bless America" instead.

Delgado” n.p.). When Delgado was traded to the Mets in 2005, Chief Operating Officer Jeff Wipon promptly informed him that his protest would not be tolerated. While team ownership did not support Delgado’s protest, management was a different story. Though Wipon, who is white, stated in his press conference that he had the support of team management, upon hearing the news, Willie Randolph, the first black manager for the franchise, replied “I’d rather have a man who’s going to stand up and say what he believes. We have a right as Americans to voice that opinion” while Mets General Manager Omar Minaya, the first Latin GM in MLB history, “commented curtly, with an arctic chill, ‘This is from ownership’” (Zirin “The Silencing of Carlos Delgado”). An analysis involving black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and Latina/o Critical Theory could investigate why Delgado’s protest barely registered in the national media – effectively silencing the first baseman’s silent protest – as well as the racial dynamics involved with team policies and how patriotism gets defined in sport settings.

These are only a few examples of how scholars can use black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and Latina/o Critical Theory along with Birrell and McDonald’s articulation of reading sport critically to examine how power operates and how race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect within sport since, as William Zinsser points out “sport is now a major frontier of social change, and some of the nation’s most vexing issues are being played out in our stadiums, grandstands and locker rooms. If you want to write about America, this is the one place to pitch your tent” (185).

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APPENDIX

One aspect of the game that Major League Baseball (MLB) owners, coaches, players and fans love is statistics. The accumulation of baseball statistics has spawned an entire field of knowledge, sabrmetrics, the mathematical study of baseball statistics.¹ Because the study of baseball invariably involves citing various statistics and mathematical abbreviations, what follows is a list and explanation of frequently used abbreviations, statistics, and baseball terminology.

1. 40–40 Club: Achieved when a player hits 40 home runs and steals 40 bases in a single season. At the end of the 2005 season there were only three members: Jose Canseco, Barry Bonds, and Alex Rodriguez.
2. 300–300 Club: Achieved when a player hits 300 career home runs and steals 300 bases during his career. As of 2005 there were four members: Willie Mays, Bobby Bonds, Andre Dawson, and Barry Bonds. To date, Barry Bonds is also the only member of both the 400–400 club and the 500–500 club.
3. All-Star Game: an exhibition match between the American and National League which takes place mid-season. Fans vote for one player in each position while the manager chooses the pitching staff. The team managers are from the previous season's World Series teams.
4. At-Bat (AB): Any time the batter gets a hit, makes an out, or reaches base on an error or fielder's choice.
5. Base on Balls (BB): What a pitcher surrenders whenever the umpire calls four of his pitches out of the strike zone during the hitter's at bat. Also known as a walk.

¹ The term is derived from The Society for American Baseball Research (SABR).

6. Batting average (BA) = $\frac{\text{hits}}{\text{ab}}$: The highest single-season batting average recorded in the modern era was Ted Williams .406 in 1941
7. Cy Young Award: Given each year to the best pitcher in each league as voted on by the Baseball Writers Association of America.
8. Earned Run Average (ERA) = $\left(\frac{\text{earned runs}}{\text{innings pitched}}\right) \times 9$: The lowest ERA recorded after the dead-ball era (approximately 1900 – 1919) is Bob Gibson's 1.12 in 1968.²
9. Fielding percentage = $\frac{(\text{putouts} + \text{assists})}{(\text{putouts} + \text{assists} + \text{errors})}$
10. Free Agent: A player who is not contracted to play for any team. Under the current system players are eligible to declare free agency after six full years of service. The player's current team has fifteen days following the end of the World Series to negotiate with the player, but after that, he is free to negotiate with any club.
11. Gold Glove: Yearly award presented to top fielders at each position in each league and decided by managers and coaches, who are not permitted to select their own players.
12. Hall of Fame: Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum located in Cooperstown, New York. Voted on by the Baseball Writers Association of America, players are eligible for induction if they played for at least ten seasons and have been retired for at least five years. Players must receive at least 75% of the votes to be inducted.
13. Hit-by-Pitch (HBP): A plate appearance that results in the batter being hit by a pitch. The batter is awarded first base.

² The dead-ball era refers to the lowest-scoring point in MLB history which occurred from approximately 1900–1919.

14. MLBPA: Major League Baseball Player's Association.

15. On-Base Percentage (OBP) = $\frac{(hits + bb + hbp)}{(ab + bb + hbp + sacflies)}$: The highest OBP recorded was

Ted William's .551 in 1941 until Barry Bonds broke the record in both 2002 (.589) and 2004 (.609)

16. Perfect Game: A complete game where the pitcher does not hit any batter with the ball and does not allow any hits, walks, or errors. In other words, no opposing hitter reaches base. There have been seventeen official perfect games in baseball history; the last was recorded by former Arizona Diamondback pitcher Randy Johnson in 2004 (who was also the oldest pitcher to record the honor).

17. Runs Batted In (RBI): A batter is credited with a run batted in when he drives a runner home via a hit, a sacrifice bunt or fly, a walk, a hit batsman, a fielder's choice, or on an error if the official scorer rules the run would have scored had the error not been made. The batter is also credited with an RBI if he drives himself in with a home run.

18. Sacrifice fly (sacfly): A ball hit deep enough to score a runner from third base with fewer than two outs.

19. Silver Slugger Award: Given each year to the best offensive player at each position as voted on by managers and coaches.

20. Slugging Percentage (SLG) = $\frac{total\ bases}{ab}$: The highest SLG recorded was Babe Ruth's

.847 in 1920 until Barry Bonds broke the record in 2001 (.863).