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The Drive to Deceive: Lance Armstrong's Image Repair and Maintenance

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THE DRIVE TO DECEIVE:
LANCE ARMSTRONG’S IMAGE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design

by
S. Andrew Stowe
August 2016

Accepted by:
Dr. David Blakesley, Committee Chair
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Dr. Daniel E. Wueste
ABSTRACT

Lance Armstrong is one of the most recognized athletes of all time and one of the most successful cyclists ever. After surviving cancer, going on to win the Tour de France a record seven times, and being the center of a media empire, Armstrong’s reputation was publicly ruined after the United States Anti-Doping Agency released a huge case against him. Armstrong had to recant years of righteous denials and arduous insistence that he did not use performance-enhancing drugs. This doping scandal exposed a well-liked sports hero as a fraud and cheater, making him an exception case study in branding and crisis communication. Drawing on image repair theory as well ethical and sociological perspectives on performance-enhancing drug use, this dissertation seeks to better understand the rhetorical situations of cycling and doping, the relationship between Armstrong and the media, and the ways Armstrong’s identity construction damaged his reputation. Walter Fisher’s theories of narrative and Kenneth Burke’s dramatism are also brought to bear on the stories Armstrong uses throughout the scandal to explain or rationalize his acts.
DEDICATION

For Heather.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have completed this dissertation without a tremendous amount of hard work, support, and sacrifice from many. Firstly, for Heather, you grounded me through this whole process; there are not enough words to thank you for your help. Many thanks to my chair, Dr. David Blakesley, who provided clear insight, a keen editorial eye, and never ending support. Also, my committee members, Drs. Sean Morey, Jimmy Sanderson, and Daniel Wueste, brought interesting insights, varied perspective, and helped me manage the direction of this project. I owe special thanks to Cynthia Haynes whose words of wisdom have not failed to echo through my head every single day. Thanks to Jan Holmevik, Steve Katz, and Bryan Denham for their candor, care, and thoughtful feedback. Victor Vitanza provided valuable feedback and patient support for the initial seed that became this project. I could not have completed this project without the support of my family, specifically my parents (all of them). Thanks to my church family and pastor for all of their support, prayers, thoughtful question, and willingness to listen and talk out ideas. I’d like to acknowledge Ms. Anna Inabinet, Steve Knight, George Williams, Ben Myers and others who have been incredibly important figures in my education. Special thanks to Camille Cooper, for being my librarian extraordinaire. I’d like to thank my cohort (Mike Utley, Matt Osborn, Hayley Zertuche, Heather Christiansen, Data Canlas, Kathy Elrick, Lauren Woolbright, and Jay Jacobs) for their endless help, support and inspiration; I could not have done this with you all (and if I did, it would not have been nearly as much fun). Thanks to Verner Møller and Christopher S.
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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT’S THE PROBLEM WITH DOPING?

Introduction: Representative Anecdote

Lance Armstrong’s biography, It’s Not About the Bike, written with ghostwriter Sally Jenkins, was at the top of the New York Times Best Sellers list in the middle of August 2000. Recounting his battle with cancer, the book and the story it told became a symbol of strength, determination, heroism, and overcoming. The power of this book came from telling the story of how a young rising-star in the field of cycling survived cancer, chemotherapy, and brain surgery and went on to win the most important road race in all of cycling —the Tour de France.

From the time that Armstrong was diagnosed with cancer to the time he won his first Tour de France, less than three years had passed. Between 1999 and 2005, Armstrong went on to win the Tour seven consecutive times. He retired shortly after winning his seventh Tour in 2007, but returned from retirement to compete in 2009 and 2010. Following Armstrong’s return to cycling, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA), headed by Travis Tygart, began to pay attention to rumors of doping and one of cycling’s star athletes.

After former teammate Floyd Landis blew the whistle on Armstrong in the news media, various agencies started to look at the Armstrong story a bit more carefully. Journalists such as David Walsh and Paul Kimmage had long been skeptical of the Armstrong narrative and began to write aggressively, accusing
Armstrong of doping [See Seven Deadly Sins: My Pursuit of Lance Armstrong, by David Walsh, for a thorough recounting of these events].

After several rounds of lawsuits from Armstrong attempting to ban their investigation, the USADA prevailed. When Armstrong declined to continue his defense against USADA, it was taken as a tacit admission of guilt. By not fighting the charges, Armstrong avoided having to hear testimony against him from former teammates as the case went through arbitration. Perhaps he thought that quietly backing out of the fight would do less damage to his personal brand than continuing to wage a battle with the USADA in the media.

On October 10, 2012, USADA released its reasoned decision against Armstrong in a somewhat untraditional style. While USADA’s typical letter to athletes would highlight the sanctions and evidence in about one to two pages, for Armstrong USADA pulled out all of the stops. USADA published its sanctions and every piece of evidence and testimony that it had collected against Armstrong (Walsh, 2014, p. 366). This was no merciful coup de grace. Posting this information, in this way, was a knockout punch. In an untraditional style, and in the effort of persuading a public in love with the Armstrong story, USADA released the entire contents of their case against him at one time on the Internet.

Later in October, it was announced that Armstrong would appear in a special interview by Oprah Winfrey. If it is any indication of how important this interview was to Oprah, it is said that when Oprah flew from L.A. to New York she kept the tapes in her purse instead of mailing themf (Owen, 2013). During the interview,
which aired over two nights, Armstrong confessed to doping and to having bullied other cyclists in an elaborate system of doping. Prior to this, the public had largely, been able to maintain some plausible deniability that Armstrong had been doping; but now it was on the big stage and could not be ignored.

Figure 1.1: Armstrong and Oprah during confession (screen capture by author).

Armstrong’s performance during his interview with Oprah was not an overwhelming success. At times, he waffled between spreading blame around and acknowledging his own role in the scandal. At one point, when making statements about his deception, Armstrong alludes to the picture painted by his seemingly perfect, “mythic” life. When asked by Oprah if he was responsible for painting this mythical picture he responded, “Of course I did. And a lot of people did. All the fault
and all the blame here falls on me. But behind that picture and behind that story is momentum.” In speaking about the media and the fans, Armstrong paints the picture that the momentum was too much and that he “lost” himself “in all of that” (The Telegraph Sport, 2013). He was generally seen as being evasive and unrepentant. Macur explains that during the interview Armstrong “neither shed the obligatory Winfrey tear nor offered the anticipated apology” (2014, p. 390). One of Armstrong's friends characterized the performance as “hall-of-fame horrible” and went on to explain that the interview would certainly “become an exhibit for people who do crisis management on what not to do” (Macur, 2014, p. 391-392). Based on these evaluations it seems clear that many were not appeased by Armstrong’s apology.

Regardless of whether the public would have been satisfied by a pound of flesh, Armstrong maintained a cool demeanor throughout the interview. Following the Oprah interview, Armstrong maintained the story that he was being unfairly singled out. He claimed that the media made him the “Voldemort” of the doping scandal in professional cycling (John, 2015). Despite his allegations that he had been unfairly treated, he had engaged in vigorous identity repair efforts throughout his career. Throughout Armstrong’s life he has been tremendously successful in his sport. Perhaps it was the drive toward success that fueled Armstrong toward a willingness to construct such a strong persona. Those efforts have been largely unsuccessful, however at the time they were very successful. However, analyzing Armstrong’s situation using image repair theory and the terministic screen of
rhetoric and ethics, we can nevertheless shed further light on his motives, their impact, and even the ways that his context highlights insights into rhetoric, and image repair theory.

**Dissertation Framework**

Throughout Armstrong’s cycling career, he would regularly use references to his experiences with cancer as a sort of rhetorical shield that sport journalist Juliet Macur would go on to call Armstrong’s “cancer shield” (2014, p. 131). Armstrong’s philanthropic work with the Lance Armstrong Foundation also arguably highlights an example where past good works could outweigh future negative in the eyes of some fans. As a means of considering the ways that Armstrong’s philanthropic work could have affected the public’s perception of his character, Chapter 2 of this dissertation develops what I call a banking model of ethos\(^1\). This theory develops the notion that human expectations, especially when considered in light of crisis communication events, build on past perceptions. This theory paints human understanding of character evaluation as continuous and constantly affected by previous perceptions.

Despite the past events and the way the public and media might have perceived him, Armstrong’s interview with Oprah opened the doors for attack.

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\(^1\) The name for this theory is inspired by the banking model of education that Paulo Freire rails against in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The banking model of education espouses the notion that students are vacuous and waiting to be filled with knowledge provided by a teacher figure.
Accordingly, such an occurrence can prove to be useful in considering crisis communication. Chapter 3 of this dissertation explores the antapologia expressed in written media of Armstrong’s interview. This chapter explores rejections of Armstrong’s apology efforts on part of various media outlets. If apologia is the study of apology, antapologia studies the reception in terms of refutation or rejection of an apology. By understanding antapologia, Chapter 3 sheds light on specific image repair techniques (such as shifting blame and stonewalling) that are likely to draw the ire of media, specifically in crisis communication situations that call for image repair. The public image of Armstrong as being a cancer survivor and winner of the Tour de France versus that of Armstrong being a liar and a cheater allows for contrasting positions regarding the perceived success of Armstrong’s image repair methods. Ultimately, antapologia is useful for considering the ways offended parties might react when engaging in image repair efforts.

Building from the media responses to Armstrong’s apologies, Chapter 4 seeks to explore means of rationalizing doping behavior and how identity is constructed in professional road racing. In examining Armstrong’s autobiography It’s Not About the Bike, and comments from Armstrong during his Oprah interview, Chapter 4 will explore the ways that narrative studies and performance of identity change over the course of a major crisis communication incident. Of particular interest in this case are the ways that Armstrong spoke about doping and his use of performance enhancing drugs. Theoretical examination of Armstrong’s statements about doping
and cheating at different points in his career allow for an interesting examination of how public persona and stance relate to one’s avowed ethical and moral convictions.

Chapter 5 functions as a synthesis of findings and a conclusion to this project. This project was born as an interdisciplinary undertaking and draws insights and methodologies from various disciplines and discourses including rhetoric, communication studies, crisis communication, sociology, narrative studies and other areas. The reflexivity in researching and then synthesizing findings in this project allow a strong justification for interdisciplinary methods. Additionally, thoroughly exploring the various aspects of the interdisciplinary process and the ways this project was conceived and executed will serve as an interesting model of interdisciplinary practice.

**Beyond Lance Armstrong**

Throughout various discussions in sport, and not just those involving cycling or Lance Armstrong, doping is present at nearly every turn. The topic of doping in sport is highly controversial (at best) and tends to be toxic to all of those who are touched by it. Lance Armstrong’s admission to doping, and the attention it brought to doping, has made it clear that doping is the worst kept secret in all of cycling. One of the major issues is that the public seems generally unconcerned with whether cyclists do or do not dope. Schneider points out that following cycling’s Festina Affair in 1998, there was “little, if any evidence” that public interest was waning in the sport (2007, p. 220). Overall then, doping seems to be in the best interest of the
media who perpetuates narratives of athletic heroism, as the story of doping allows for a sinister “bad guy” to serve as the villain for the glorification of the hero figure. Despite the morality of doping, the narratives surrounding the practice of doping and those who use, or are accused of using, performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) are rich. Given the prevalence of doping’s place in sport today, a thorough examination of doping is warranted.

There are few terms in sport as maligned as doping. Various ideas of cheating, drugs, and bulky guys oozing steroids from their pores might come to mind. These ethical issues affect the conversation and rhetorical practice(s) surrounding doping. Definitions of doping are difficult to come by and risk allowing random enforcement of doping policy (Møller, 2009, p. 4).

In his poignant book, *The Ethics of Doping and Anti-Doping*, Verner Møller clearly captures the complexities of defining doping. For the sport of cycling’s governing body, The Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI)\(^2\), the World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA) definition of doping is used. Møller notes that, as of his writing in 2003, that doping, according to WADA is defined as breaking the WADA’s regulations about doping. Therefore, according to the WADA doping is whatever the WADA says it is (p. 4) as of 2015 (World Anti-Doping Code, 2015) the definition of doping has not significantly changed since the 2003 code (World Anti-Doping Code, 2003).

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\(^2\) Most commonly referred to as “The UCI”
This definition of doping helps the WADA to avoid the reasoning that doping is a process that benefits athletes, because energy bars are not a banned substance. Ultimately, the WADA selects what Møller calls a “vacuous definition of doping” to avoid such difficulties (p. 4). These policies, therefore, allow for very strict control on part of the WADA by using an arbitrary term. As the notion of doping is essentially referential to any concept that the WADA wishes, what doping is, and therefore what is punishable can be modified relatively easily.

Similarly to doping, within the academy, few disciplines are whispered with the pejorative air that emanates from discussions of “rhetoric.” In some ways, the two make for interesting bedfellows. Considering doping as the act of engaging in performance enhancing drugs and rhetoric (at its most nefarious) as making weaker cases stronger could quickly lead one to the notion that rhetoric is a way of “doping” or artificially enhancing one’s ability to be and to communicate in the world. In discussing Plato’s use of the word pharmakon, Derrida points out that the “common translation of pharmakon” is inaccurate (1981, p. 97). In the case of rhetoric, as in the case of doping in cycling, to consider the “cure” as remedy is “inaccurate” or at best grossly over simplified. According to Derrida “the pharmakon can never be simply beneficial” (1981, p. 99). In this case, as with rhetoric, the cure is also a poison. He notes that pharmakon “partakes of both good and ill, of the agreeable and the disagreeable” (1981, p. 99). Thus, the axiological connotation of such a substance is once again quite open to interpretation. Interestingly, Kenneth Burke explains, in A Rhetoric of Motives, that the goal of rhetoric is “identification,” or a
kind of joining of one purpose with another, while also remaining separate of each other in terms of motive and purpose (1969b, p. 20-21). Accordingly, removing the notion of motive and purpose from *pharmakon* leaves some sort of substance that evades invocation for lack of value-laden descriptive terms. Ultimately, the difficulty of these meanings is neatly identified by what Burke calls the “paradox of substance.” The crux of this issue comes in the idea that the word-meanings themselves are more linked to contexts and less so to the thing that is described by the term (1969a, p. 21-23).

In his overview article, *Towards a Sociology of Drugs in Sport*, Connor explains that, “it is the role of sociologists to question the way our society functions.” Further, he argues that the most robust contribution sociology makes toward the studies of sport and doping is its “focus on social forces and processes, not the lone drug-using athlete” (2009, p. 340). Connor argues that if scholarship focuses too closely on individual athletes, then the discipline of sociology can do nothing to “understand why an athlete will do anything to win” (2009, p. 340). The issue of doping is so much larger than any single drug-using athlete. However, it stands to reason that understanding the ways one or two cyclists rationalize the issue of doping could help to elucidate the problems in doping at the core of sport.

As Burke notes, the possibility of identification is built on the notion that there is at once division (1969b, p. 23). Accordingly, the ethical issues of doping provide such a splintering, further confounded by the political difficulty of speaking about doping. Additionally, the broad perspective favored in sociology provides a
general examination of the sport itself without becoming overly mired in the specifics of any one circumstance. Using basic ideas of image work, narrative analysis, and critical analysis of cycling, I move to the conclusion that the rhetorical situation surrounding the issue of doping is highly volatile, problematic, and functions to damage the reputation of the sport of cycling.

**The Issue of Motive**

The question of "why," or the question of motive, is always one of the most difficult questions to answer. Connor's endnote on understanding athlete motivation, and the lengths an athlete will go to in order to meet a goal, is noteworthy. Ultimately, “why” athletes are motivated is one of the largest issues taken up in the field of sociology, and it takes all of the perspectives outlined to even get close to discussing the complicated issue of motive in an informed manner.

Kenneth Burke’s notion of the dramatistic pentad provides a vocabulary: Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose. These terms allow for a discussion for the answer of the following five questions: “what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)” (1969a, p. xv). This framework allows for clarity in exploring Armstrong’s communication efforts that are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

Throughout sociological literature, I discovered discussions of motive or motivation in different forms (e.g. Why do athletes dope?, Why do athletes want to win?, What motivates athletes to win?). While many of these discussions addressed
motive tacitly, it was clear that the goal was to determine motive. The majority of these discussions focused on the issue of motivation. One such article was written by Stephen Wieting in the year 2000, following a particularly nasty period in cycling, and explains the different kinds of factors in the Tour de France that cyclists might find motivating.

Wieting notes that though the Tour offers prize money, the “real” prize comes in the symbolic value of winning the Tour de France (2000, p. 354). Wieting explains, “participation, completion, and becoming one of just over 50 individuals who have ever won this event is a supreme goal emblematically” (2000, p. 353). Given the number of stakeholders in the Tour (the rider, the riders’ teams, the race itself, and the race’s sponsors) (Thompson, 2008, p. vii) the pressure is high for the sport to be exciting.

The Tour de France “includes a variety of competitions for different prizes, the most prestigious of which is that for the overall Tour lead” (Dauncey & Hare, 2003, p. 11). “The winner of the Tour is the rider whose overall aggregate time for the total distance (including all stages, whether they be prologue, normal stage, individual or team time trial) is the smallest” (Dauncey & Hare, 2003, p. 11). The overall leader of any given stage, and at the end is awarded the yellow jersey or maillot jaune, to symbolize their role as leader of the race. All the while, other contests are occurring throughout, which reward those riders who are specialized toward a certain style of riding, “such as mountain climbing” or sprinting to win “stage finishes.” The red polka-dot jersey (maillot a pois), rewards the best overall
climber, the green jersey (maillot vert) rewards a rider who earns the most sprint points and the white jersey is awarded to “the best placed young rider under the age of 26. Additionally, a most aggressive rider award (prix de la comabaitivite) is given to a rider who rides with special braveness or aggressiveness.” (Dauncey & Hare, 2003, p. 12). Wieting points out that scarcity is a necessary element of sport. “Only some can win, otherwise “the point” is muted and the purpose for participants, fans, and sponsors is diminished” (2007, p. 360). Thus, the political power of winning cannot be diminished; to win is to be noticed, to lose is to be lost in the pack (peloton).

Wieting’s major argument is to point out the frameworks that incentivize winning, and the frameworks that permit one to win by any means necessary. Wieting asks, “what are the prospects for rule adherence” in a “context where major changes are occurring politically, technologically, and in terms of markets” (2007, p. 360). Indeed, Schneider asks if athletes should be exempt “from the values and culture of outsiders,” because of their “special status” in the world of sport (2007, p. 215). Schneider suggests, “professional cyclists tend to be reluctant heroes who are not inclined to dramatize their athletic ordeals even though they willingly risk life and limb” (2007, p. 219). But ultimately, the hero narrative is one of the perks of competing and winning the Tour de France. This narrative is mentioned and reinscribed in nearly every sociological article about the Tour and road racing in general.
Beyond the motivation provided by money, fame, and media coverage, some cyclists are motivated by the sheer challenge posed by professional sport. Schneider explains that cycling is somewhat like weight lifting, in that “the point of the sport is to push the body to the limits of its strength” (2007, p. 222). The physical toughness that the Tour requires of cyclists is undisputed. Schneider explains that many have claimed that the “physiological severity” is likely the cause for doping in the first place (2007, p. 222).

If the pressure of sport is not enough, the Tour de France (itself) can inspire cyclists to try things they have not done before. For the average cyclist, winning even one stage of the Tour is a significant achievement. The Tour’s long held relationship to media also likely plays a role in the ways that cyclists value their performance at the Tour de France above that of other races. At least for the Tour de France, the comical maxim of the golden rule which suggests “he who has the gold makes the rules” might reconstitute the gold to refer not to money (at least directly) but rather toward the power of wearing the Tour’s yellow leader’s jersey, the *maillot jaune*. Thus, motivation to win might lead riders to seek banned, or otherwise dubious, substances to achieve success.

**Doping as a Job Requirement**

The great French cyclist Richard Virenque has argued that doping is necessary to doing the job of a professional road racer (Mignon, 2003, p. 232). Schneider has argued, “doping and cycling are intimately linked in the public
imagination” (2006, p. 220), and the example from Virenque shows that doping also plays an intimate role in the professional cyclist’s mind.

For an athlete, who is measured and poked and prodded and optimized, “every activity has been geared to enhancing his performance so he can win. Yet, some enhancements are banned” and others are not (Connor, 2009, p. 327). The ethical issue surrounding doping is just one of many issues.

Connor suggests that athletes are basically widgets in the machine of the corporate apparatus and that, ultimately, they are being exploited (2009, p. 1369-1377). This harkens back to Virenque’s statement that he “had” to dope to get the job done. It is interesting to point out that, while various organizations proclaim the serious nature of doping, relatively little research has been conducted regarding public opinions of the issue (Connor, 2009, p. 340).

As Mignon (2003, p. 240) and others (Møller, 2009, p. 4) have noted, there is no clear definition of what doping is. “Doping substances are primarily forms of medicine taken for their potential performance-enhancing effect,” but “athletes can legitimately take doping drugs without being guilty of a doping offence” (Møller, 2009, p. 7). Cyclists “can be given dispensation to use medicine on the doping list” if a doctor approves the use (Møller, 2009, p. 7). The technological nature of doping is complicated when the techno-centric nature of cycling is considered. Mignon neatly spells out this difficulty, writing,

The criteria that allow doping to be defined are eminently debatable: take for example, the definition of doping as recourse to artificial means to gain an
unfair advantage – what is that worth when the whole of sport is based on the exploitation of increasingly sophisticated technology (2003, p. 240).

Mignon goes on to explain that the problem of doping cannot be combatted by the morality of “right and wrong” and that the issue is “a public health issue,” because of the widespread nature of the phenomenon (2003, p. 240). This emphasizes the need for more scholastic work surrounding the issue of doping as not only an issue for the Tour, but also for cycling more broadly, and for sport at large.

Cycling’s governing body, the UCI, has very specific rules regarding what is and is not permissible. In terms of doping, the UCI makes clear that “it is not necessary that intent, fault, negligence or knowing use on the rider’s part be demonstrated in order to establish an antidoping violation under article 21.1.” (“UCI Cycling Regulations,” 2014). To this end, a cyclist’s intentions are not considered when passing judgment. From this perspective, the athlete is in violation of the rules or not.

The issue of doping is further confounded by the public’s “ambivalence” (Schneider, 2007, p. 222). “On the one hand doping is seen as something that tarnishes the sport and provides a negative image for cycling.” But, “on the other hand,” cycling “is all about pushing the human body to its limits – and beyond” (Schneider, 2007, p. 222). Notably, Schneider reinforces the appeal of doping by explaining that the riders who successfully push the body to its limits are heralded as “heroes” (2007, p. 222). This idea is critically significant in that it supports the
idea that the stories told about the body have special meaning. Media often draws on the hero narrative to tell stories of cyclists. So, it can be seen that doping assists the media in providing a dramatic (and perhaps, doped) character to be developed through storytelling techniques.

A more recent article, by Morente-Sanchez and Zabala, reviewed 33 studies that were published between 2000-2011 regarding the perception, beliefs, and knowledge of doping of elite athletes. The synthesis of these studies suggests “that athletes who use banned substances mainly do so to improve their performance,” and all of this is despite the fact that most “athletes acknowledge that doping is dishonest, unhealthy and risky because of the impact of sanctions.” Further, the study suggests that athletes consider anti-doping programs to be “ineffective” (2013, p. 409). In a sport where the governing body is considered to be “ineffective,” then rules are critically important for the stability of the sport, particularly those rules that govern innocence or guilt. As rules are limiting factors that outline procedures that must be followed and those which must be avoided, any lack of clarity in such policies opens the door for tremendous unrest on part of the competitors and those who have a vested interest in the result.

The 1998 Tour de France had no fewer than two teams disqualified, five other teams withdrawn due to protest, and less than half of the 198 starting riders completing the race (Wieting, 2000, p. 384). One of these riders was Richard Virenque, who would later argue doping was necessary to succeed in the Tour. Schneider has also noted that the perception that doping is necessary may be caused
because “this kind of racing may well be the hardest sport competition that exists today” (2006, p. 213). The circumstances causing this debacle surrounded the fact that performance-enhancing drugs had been found in the vehicle of a Festina team trainer, and would go on to be called “The Festina Affair.” The trainer in question, Willy Voet, wrote a book that details his version of the events (2011). As previously mentioned, this led Wieting to ask if the age of the hero in the Tour de France was over (2000). Dauncey and Hare have keenly pointed out that the Tour is built on a “principal” of journalistic writing that “appealed to the imagination, and created a mythology” of the Tour which “turned its exploits into an epic” and “its protagonists into heroes” (2003, p. 8). Roland Barthe’s essay, The Tour de France as Epic, is perhaps the ideal of this sort of writing. As Barthes explains that “Homeric geography” of the Tour is “both a periplus of ordeals and a total exploration of the earth’s limits” (1957, p. 125), one can begin to understand how the Tour has been romanticized and built up to be an incredibly important player throughout cycling’s mythology.

While Wieting’s comments are rather sensationalized, this suggests doping, as an act, tends to damage the reputation of the rider or team that uses it. However, some have rode exceptionally well using illicit means and gone for years without getting caught.

Beyond mere cycling, sport itself “is under suspicion because of the limits of dope testing” which causes sport to produce “theatrical” doping affairs” (Mignon, 2003, p. 240). Wieting (2000) concurs by arguing that international governing
bodies have a stake in selling unbelievable feats of sport, but also in appearing to hold the moral high ground and in so doing may collude the nature of “pure sport.”

Setting the Stage: The Tour de France

It is generally held by cyclists that the Tour de France is “the Tour,” and winning even one stage is enough to highlight a professional cyclist’s entire career. The Tour has been wrought with “cheating” nearly from the very beginning. The year 1904 marked the second year in which the Tour de France was raced. It included cyclists who were friends of the previous year’s overall winner, Maurice Garin. These friends blocked the course to allow advantage to some and not others (Wieting, 2000, p. 361). Schneider notes that while some aspects of the Tour are widely publicized (including cheating) other things, such as the death of “a 7-year-old girl who was struck by one of the vehicles” in the Tour de France’s media caravan, receive very limited coverage from the media. She opines that these issues, such as the death of the 7-year-old, contextualized within the framework of the Tour, were not viewed as very important by the media (2006, p. 217). Such ideas portray coverage of the Tour as a political act subject to change and manipulation.

From its beginnings “the Tour was a ‘confected’ event,” designed as “both a media and a commercial event” aimed toward selling newspapers and bicycles (Dauncey & Hare, 2003, p. 7). “The Tour de France has always been an actor, director, producer, audience and critic for its own heroics” (Dauncey & Hare, 2003,
p. 4). Given the integrated nature of all of these roles, the Tour is in the interesting position of being able to chart much of its own course, which allows for the sport to be agile.

Dauncey and Hare note the Tour is a classic example of a tradition being invented (2003, p. 8). As it happens, the Tour and its practice are created, re-created, and modified. Mignon explains that “the Tour de France is the occasion when doping is defined and when the array of measures to deal with it will be set in train” (2003, p. 227). This implies the Tour is where various sport “governing bodies and political bodies” will have to pass judgment on doping in general (2003, p. 227). Thus, the Tour is a critical event for the establishment and enactment of doping procedure. Due to these various dubious distinctions, the Tour is a hugely popular race.

In the year 2000, shortly after some of the most tumultuous scandals in doping, television coverage for the Tour de France included 1 billion TV viewers, double the number of the viewership of the Super Bowl. Around 14.6 million spectators watched the race live (Wieting, 2000, p. 357). Schneider (2006) later notes that organizers of the Tour have estimated that “upwards of 18,000,000 spectators, of all ages, view the Tour from the side of the road” (p. 216). While it can be difficult to calculate how viewer figures are calculated for massive sporting events like the Tour (BBC, 2014), the Tour’s 2014 Grand Depart impact report suggests that at least 3.5 million unique spectators lined the route specifically for
the Yorkshire stages of the 2014 Tour (2014, p. 26). Interestingly, the 2014 Tour was estimated to have had about 3.5 billion viewers worldwide (Tour de Yorkshire).

As mentioned previously, Schneider has argued that “doping and cycling are linked in the public imagination” and that the media has “obviously” played some role in this linkage (2006, p. 220). The sheer number of riders who have been implicated in doping is staggering. It is critically important to theorize the ways that doping affects the nature of winning in sport. Additionally, the relationships between athletes and performance enhancing drugs should be considered.

The Tour de France serves as a catalyst for change and a stage on which change can occur. Hoberman notes that before the Festina affair of the 1998 Tour, the International Olympic Committee was never terribly concerned with an “international anti-doping campaign” (2001, p. 241). Schneider explains that, “since the 1998 scandal, [where it was discovered team Festina had a large amount of performance enhancing drugs (PEDs)] there has been little, if any, evidence of a decline in public support” for the Tour (2006, p. 220). Obviously, the Tour de France wins. But, what about the cyclists, why are they not considered? Though the public may revere various cyclists, and though this same public might not be terribly concerned when a cyclist is implicated in doping, what of the cyclist? The pressures placed by sport and media on cyclists is considerable. To this end, cyclists might be compelled misrepresent themselves to succeed in sport. The possibility of this condition begins to shine light on the ethical problems inherent with doping in sport.
Additionally, cyclists must deal with the issue of doping. It is worth noting that a main issue in PEDs is the way they fit into sport as being either “legal” or “banned.” This qualification depends on the degree to which any given definition of doping is inclusive, or exclusive, of various substances. Paul Kimmage, in particular, seems to entertain a highly inclusive definition of doping, as evidenced by the cognitive dissonance he displayed in taking substances [such as B12 (1990, p. 186) and caffeine pills (1990, p. 88)] that are commonly considered to be vitamins (1990).

Palmer has noted that one of the major difficulties regarding conducting research, and particularly ethnographic research, surrounding the Tour is gaining access (2000, p. 370). Cyclists as a whole have an omerta, a kind of code of silence, around the discussion of doping (Thompson, 2006, p. iix). Ultimately, this functions as a kind of deception tool. Getting to the “true” story is quite difficult in cycling. It would be wise to point out that I am not overly concerned with the “truth” of the claims made by cyclists. Rather, I am more interested in what they say, understanding (perhaps) why they say these things, and exploring some of the possible interpretations and effects of these statements.

**Identity Construction from Doping to Doper**

Thompson explains that in the early part of the 1900s, one of the rhetorical labels placed on cyclists was that of the les formats de la route, or literally, “convicts of the road” (2008, p. 180). At its inception, cycling was a sport that was primarily
comprised of the laboring class. Especially at its openings, cycling was a grueling sport that taxed athlete’s minds and bodies to their breaking point. While the Tour and other races are still quite difficult, they are much more humane now than they were in the early days of the sport, when cyclists were expected to ride nearly continuously.

Cycling has a very clear caste system. Some cyclists are competitors and some cyclists, called *domestiques*, function to assist the overall competitors in their efforts. In this way, cycling is a sport that values the economy of energy. “Winners” only exert themselves at critical moments. This binary of labor can be read across other social contexts. However, one main point is that only serious contenders get media coverage; everyone else is merely window dressing to heighten the narrative spectacle of the hero.

In Snow and Anderson’s article, *Identity Work Among the Homeless: the Verbal Construction and Avowal of Personal Identities*, the authors explore “processes of identity construction and avowal among homeless street people” (198, p. 1338). This article has a number of critical insights that can be used to interrogate Christopher Thompson’s social discussion of cyclists as the *les forçats de la route*. Snow and Anderson explain that because homeless individuals are always “in uniform,” they must do something to maintain a sense of “self worth” (1987, p. 1340), and they must perform well to have worth. Ultimately, the main ideas that I wish to explore involve the ways that identity is constructed and perceived by others.
I would like to clarify, that I am not concerned in the veracity of various claims, but rather in the rhetorical implications that such stances may have on the identity construction of cyclists. In this way, we can understand that identity work and the forces that impact this performance are some of the most important ideas that create the spectacle of cycling. Throughout this dissertation, the purpose then, is to examine the relationship of doping, sport, and communication practices.

**Media Coverage of Dopers**

Overall, I contend that understanding the way(s) identity is constructed in the sporting world is a particularly worthwhile endeavor. As I have established, sport, and, particularly in this case, cycling and the Tour de France, are a veritable pressure cooker for the human drives toward capitalistic success and domination in sport. After all, riders need favorable results in order “to get a contract” (Hamilton & Coyle, 2012, p. 35).

Beyond merely being able to ride a bicycle, a professional cyclist must also be able to *play* the media (Hamilton & Coyle, 2012, p. 94). Part of being able to operate in the media circus of circulation is learning how to tweak responses to answers. Hamilton describes an instance where Lance Armstrong responded to a reporter (regarding doping) saying, “It’s been a week, and nothing’s been found” (2012, p. 94). Another time, Hamilton says that Armstrong answers a question saying, “I’ve never tested positive. I’ve never been caught with anything” (2012, p. 94)[emphasis added]. Both of these examples support the idea that deception and self-
rationalization techniques play a critical role in cyclist identity construction. Additionally, these anecdotes exemplify the idea that cyclists can manipulate the media, just as media can manipulate the cyclists.

Given the large number of stakeholders involved in cycling, and the various rewards and motivations of each group, it is unsurprising that competition can be quite brutal. In a sport where actions as extreme as doping are taken because “everyone is doing it,” the bar is bound to be pushed too far. The mid-race death of Tom Simpson is just one notable example of this. Simpson passed out while deliriously climbing Mount Ventoux in the 1967 Tour de France and passed away a few hours later. Simpson’s death was later attributed to amphetamines.

Heeding Mignon’s call (2003, p. 240), I have struggled to avoid dealing directly with issues of right and wrong. But, it is undeniable that ethics are unbelievably important to sport. Each stakeholder involved in cycling, and sport more broadly - be they athlete, coach, trainer, sponsor, race organizer, governing body member, journalist, or writer - has a responsibility to the sport. While I would still like to defer speaking in terms of right and wrong, instead of passing blame on the cyclists it seems reasonable to acknowledge that many parties and forces are at fault for the issue of doping. While others, including Thompson (2006), have discussed the role that capitalism has played in spurring on the competition of the Tour, I conjecture that the simple fact that man is a rhetorical (symbol using, story telling) animal might be a major factor in this drama. This is further compounded by
the media’s story telling. The story of the winner is repeated incessantly; all of the rest of the cyclists, narratively, might as well have not been there.

In terms of hierarchy in cycling, those who win, win big; those who lose, never go anywhere. As I have mentioned, a major problem with doping is that each athlete and stakeholder must take a stand both personally and professionally. I contend that a sport where the average athlete toils away in obscurity, coupled with the potential for vast performance increases by means of PEDs in a society where the media only pays attention to dramatic stories, is a society where there is no limit. To this end, it is completely foolish to place the blame of doping on any one individual.

However, one of the most damning issues that is largely unconsidered for cyclists is the weight of working at a “job” in which, for many, cheating seems to be a common practice. The problem of weighing the issues of doping, desiring to win, and maintaining a positive media image seems to be difficult at best. Further, I would argue that the major difficulty is in lying so consistently that to act inconsistently with the story one tells, fragments an already divided post-modern notion of identity into even more pieces.

Two of the most notable books to blow the whistle on cycling are Paul Kimmage’s *Rough Ride* (2007) and Tyler Hamilton’s *The Secret Race* (2013). If Hamilton and Kimmage wrote their books for cathartic reasons, it is just as possible (especially in Hamilton’s case) that the book was written to cash in on the sport of cycling one last time. Therefore, the issue comes back to motive. Truly, the ethics of
intentionality are nearly impossible to grapple with; however, the case study that can be taken from the unique rhetorical situation that cycling exists in, coupled with the phenomenon of PEDs, is worth examining.

Building off of these suggestions, I argue that where PEDs have the capacity to enhance the work of cyclists, rhetoric has the capacity to enhance the work of all parties at play. The various webs of stories, claims, allegations, and narratives provided first by the cyclist, and then to the media, opens wide avenues for the misrepresentation that is inherent in language. However, I would argue that rhetoric, as an understanding of persuasive techniques allows cyclists and media to inflect stories with their own motives and desires. The drive and the ability to create and alter stories is, I think, the main issue at play in the issue of doping, particularly as played out in the sport of cycling.

Conclusions

Thompson, Wieting, and others have all sought to elucidate various explanations that illuminate the issue of doping, but only in part. However, these individual effects are symptomatic of a much larger issue. Throughout, I strive to maintain awareness that considerations of various events should be examined, as much as possible, beyond an ethic of wrong and right. To that end, where possible I have sought to avoid value judgments. Regardless of whether doping is “good” or “bad,” doping is happening. This doping affects individual cyclists, media coverage, the sport of cycling, and sport overall. The right-ness or wrong-ness of doping is
only a very limited part of the situation. Of more interest, to me, is the ways that these issues are negotiated by cyclists and those responding to identity work relating to doping.

The issue of doping exists directly as a means to an end. In a rhetorical situation where winners win and losers lose and there is tremendous monetary and symbolic gain, the pressure is tremendous. Additionally, even though social media use is on the rise, mainstream media exercises tremendous control of the stories that are broadcast.

The goal in cycling is not just to excel, but rather to create the most efficient “machine” possible. In other words, the goal is to win and to have the ability to continue winning. The goal of journalism is not necessarily to simply report the facts, but to have a high readership. The goal of being a spectator is to be engaged in the spectacle. The audience is not concerned with doping (according to Schneider) and, generally, the audience is not accountable to the sport. In considering an ethic of enjoyment the notion of the economy of attention (Lanham, 2006) comes to mind. To this end, success is of concern to cyclists, spectacle is of major concern to the media, but the ethic of enjoyment is most important to the audience.

I contend that the dominant attitude in cycling has been that doping is not a problem. The problem is when someone is caught doping. The narrative of the “black hat,” or perhaps even the “victim,” is played. But, the larger issues in considering the narrative and ethical issues are still never addressed. When identity
work and narrative construction are bent toward the means of achieving speed, disaster looms ahead.

Ultimately, cyclists are only accountable to winning. They are not accountable to a sense of fairness. Cyclists are not seeking to level the playing field when they dope, though this is often cited as their justification. Rather, the goal of cycling is to win. In the absence of winning, the goal is speed. As can be noted through the writings of Hamilton and Kimmage, the cyclists were concerned with going faster. They were concerned with gaining a competitive edge. In short, they were concerned with winning. Even if cyclists are concerned about the moral and physical dangers of doping, in most cases, these concerns do not seem to make much of a difference. The goal is to increase their speed through whatever means necessary.

By extension, it can be argued that cyclists are subject to the media. While social media and similar technologies offer a tremendous democratization of sport media, media and sport journalists maintain a significant amount of power. To this end, I conjecture that cyclists can be considered subject to the media if media coverage is an indicator of success. To fit into the hero narrative that is so often rehearsed, cyclists generally must play the role of the hero. Given the state of cycling, where doping has been so prevalent, deception becomes a necessary technique for cyclists.

However, following Armstrong’s admission of doping and a seemingly greater public awareness of doping practice, it has not become any easier to be a
professional cyclist. If that is the case, then it stands to reason that more consideration should be placed on the ways cyclists comport their identities, the way doping is reported in news, and the ethical difficulties of being a cyclist in a sport where cheating seems to be a means to an end.
CHAPTER TWO
TOWARD A BANKING THEORY OF ETHOS

Introduction

From a public relations standpoint, doping is perhaps the most damning issue for cycling. Every single rider, and every stakeholder in the sport, is affected by the issue. Regardless of whether one does or does not dope, the issue of doping remains and must be answered to. Responding to the issue of doping is a critical component of the way that cyclists build their public image, or face. As the most fundamental issues of rhetoric include considerations of identification, speaker, message, and audience, notions of public image, self-presentation, and reception of that image are extremely relevant.

Because of the unavoidable nature of the doping issue to cycling and the fact that cyclists seem to be constantly embroiled in doping allegations, an examination of some of the factors that influence the way the public perceives doping is warranted. Considerations of doping are also useful case studies within the field of crisis communication as they allow for insight into ways that publics respond to various kinds of messages from a beleaguered party during a crisis situation. These kinds of data are therefore useful not only to developing knowledge but also to developing practical insights into how image functions rhetorically in society.

As Chapter 1 explored the reasons why doping is an especially challenging issue for cycling, with some emphasis on the difficulty of cycling in a post-
Armstrong age, this chapter deals more directly with audience perceptions of doping and how these ideas can be developed in light of communication theory. Drawing on theories of rhetoric and identity, I examine the function of brand as a method for creating and managing identification. Returning to the idea that identification is the purpose of rhetorical practice, this chapter explores the ways that a public’s relationship toward a brand in crisis might be impacted based on the public’s preconceived notions of that brand. This chapter develops a notion of a banking model of ethos that becomes relevant to theorizing about Lance Armstrong’s public popularity even in the light of his admission to doping and cheating. Building from the theories of identity, image, image repair, and especially Judee Burgoon’s (1988) nonverbal-expectancy violation theory (EVT), this chapter develops the idea that past events affect perceptions of future events. This consideration of the audience’s perception of credibility as being bankable is especially relevant when theorizing about Armstrong’s public persona during his crisis situation.

To develop this banking model, this chapter outlines Armstrong’s philanthropic work (particularly with Livestrong) and theorizes that such work might function to inoculate cyclists from future controversy. Regardless of the sincerity of such rhetorical actions, the public perception cannot be absolutely controlled, and different audiences can perceive any given message a multitude of ways. Accordingly, the sincerity, or truth, of such behaviors is not in question, beyond the ways that an audience might tentatively question such an act. Because of
the inability to distinguish between perception and a more positivistic sense of reality, assertions made by Armstrong and other gestures will be critically examined to consider the ethical symbolism of the action. Where possible, messages will be taken at face value.

*Crisis Communication*

As a subset of public relations, crisis communication is relevant to the ways that crisis situations affect audience viewpoints or perceptions. Often, notions of public communication, and especially crisis communication, techniques only become important when there is a crisis situation. “A crisis is typically defined as an untimely but predictable event that has actual or potential consequences for stakeholders’ interests as well as the reputation of the organization suffering the crisis” (Heath & Millar, 2004, p. 2). To minimize the damage of the situation crisis communicators “must respond in many ways” until the organization can demonstrate they have gained “control” of the situation (Heath & Millar, 2004, p. 2). Thus, the audience’s confidence in an organization’s ability to handle a crisis situation is critical. Also, insights gleaned from past crisis situations can help inform the way that future actions are negotiated.

Olaniran and Williams developed an anticipatory model of crisis and technology based on the scholarship of Kenneth Burke. This model “positions” crisis communicators to appreciate the “fallibility of technology” and to be vigilant in monitoring happenings in an “effort to prevent crisis escalation” (2004, p. 76). The
The anticipatory nature of this model seems to be a consistent strategy for crisis communication. After all, public relations first responders are not able to do their jobs if they are not anticipating and rapidly responding when needed. This anticipatory model is based on a desire to minimize errors and to establish programs that can help to minimize the potential for reputational damage (Olaniran and Williams, 2004, p. 80). For this kind of model, programs that are preventative in nature are emphasized. Other theorists examine how various communication strategies can minimize reputational damage during a crisis situation.

The response that an organization makes in response to a crisis “can serve to limit and even to repair the reputational damage” that might be sustained during such a crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 2002, p. 166). In this kind of case, the focus of crisis communication is often placed on message options designed to minimize damage to the brand or individual. This repair based crisis communication is distinct from but relatable to Olaniran and William’s anticipatory model of crisis communication.

I propose the banking model of ethos, that considers the idea that perspectives and judgments of any particular event are impacted by the weight of past events. Thus, this theory explicitly advocates for considering the ways a brand might build positive credibility with an audience, in anticipation of a negative occurrence. Based on this notion, it might be argued that preparation in the form of building (and therefore, banking) public goodwill by engaging in actions that are perceived as positive by the public is a viable strategy for weathering a future crisis.
situation. In terms of scope, my banking model of ethos both looks inwardly and outwardly, seeking to anticipate problems and also to provide more options in the light of extant problems.

Fombrun notes the importance of the corporate reputation toward a brand’s value (1996, p. 4) and recognizes that a poor reputation can cause a loss in sales (1996, p. 5). Additionally, a company with a strong reputation has the potential for more “options” for brand managers (1996, p. 5). Wigley and Pfau conducted a study exploring the impact of inoculation messages on audiences. Their study suggested that a public that was inoculated against a potential crisis did not have any negative impact (2010, p. 584). These ideas become very powerful when considering the ways that bankable ethos might be able to affect the way people perceive a brand's reputation.

Various audiences respond in different ways that one cannot always anticipate though this anticipation is a major consideration for crisis communicators. Considering the rhetorical implications of past efforts in anticipation of a crisis situation opens the door for questions of sincerity. If efforts at banking ethos, or goodwill, were perceived by the public as being insincere or deliberately manipulative, this could have the potential for public fallout. However, based on the unpredictability of audiences, this risk is almost always present and is the reason why crisis communication strategies are so critical in the first place.

Once a crisis or damaging action takes place, it is important that crisis communications professionals are able to take action to minimize further damage.
Kenneth Burke explains that human consciousness will always be occurring “in situations marked by crisis” (1954, p. 30). Further, Burke explains that humans will be concerned with the motive of these choices (1954, p. 30). Thus as long as there is humanity there will be certain crises and humans will concern themselves with exploring the motives for choices made in these situations. If all of that is true, then there will always be professionals tasked with minimizing reputational damage and building a positive brand identity.

Lance Armstrong Secular Saint

Lance Armstrong is one of the most famous and colorful characters in all of cycling history. His is a story that has been told many times; he survived cancer and won the Tour de France. In the midst of this, Armstrong started the Lance Armstrong Foundation to support those with cancer. This foundation was informally called Livestrong until the board made this their official moniker after Armstrong was ousted. Bill Stapleton, Lance Armstrong’s agent, suggested that Armstrong start a charitable foundation in 1996 (Macur, 2014, p. 89) after Armstrong had been diagnosed with cancer. In 2004 the foundation launched the well-recognized yellow silicone gel bracelet that one could buy for one dollar as a fundraiser for the foundation’s charitable work. These bracelets became a symbol of hope, of overcoming cancer, and they became a symbol that represented Lance Armstrong to the general population.
The first fundraiser that the Lance Armstrong Foundation put on occurred in Austin and was called the Race for the Roses. Juliet Macur explains that those who attended the fundraiser felt a deepened emotional connection with Armstrong because of his cancer. She goes on to explain that the fundraiser “brought together people who looked to [Armstrong] for inspiration, both as an athlete and a symbol of resilience. She calls this point the beginning of “Armstrong’s surge into the pantheon of American sports heroes.” And that he had ascended “from his deathbed to a secular sainthood” (2014, p. 92-93).

Armstrong’s cancer ordeal would go on “to be a financial boon for Armstrong” and his manager Bill Stapleton too. Stapleton reportedly called “a post cancer Armstrong a marketer’s dream.” Stapleton explained that “Lance isn’t just a cyclist anymore—because of the cancer the Lance Armstrong brand has a much broader appeal.” He goes on to explain that the challenge was to “leverage” this popularity (Macur, 2014, p. 97). Armstrong’s popularity was incredibly powerful and those nearly omnipresent yellow bracelets symbolized this popularity.

To be clear, Armstrong’s efforts and motives for philanthropy are not in question. Rather, the value in understanding his story comes from the ability to appreciate the strong connection that Armstrong was able to forge with fans and those whose lives were impacted by cancer. The benefit to Armstrong’s image because of these efforts was tremendous.
Image

I hold that various perceptions that are held by groups can be said to be, collectively, an *image* of a brand. Notions of identity, image, brand, or even avatar are very similar to one another. While notions of brand are more often used to refer to corporate entities, the notions of identity or avatar typically refer to a singular person or entity. For the purposes of this dissertation, the distinction between notions of identity for individuals and corporate groups is largely immaterial. Be there one cyclist or a group of cyclists under one banner, the public perception is relegated toward a particular *brand, identity, or image*. Generally, when referring to *image repair*, I am referring to the rhetorical practices or symbolic actions that one takes in attempt to affect public perception of this *image*. The motive behind these actions, while important, is secondary to the perceptions that any audience may have.

Identity Performance

Theorists, such as Goffman (1959, p. 17-20), have long noted the performative nature of identity. Carlson explains that performance is far from a settled thing (2013, p. 3) and that considering performance opens many doors and other questions. One of these is considering notions of identity in terms of the collective. In the case of considering a corporation, I argue that a corporation can be thought of as a brand, which has an image in the same way that a cyclist may have a brand and an image. Many scholars have discussed management during a crisis
(Barton, 1993) and crisis communication (Coombs, 1995), and it is generally accepted that individuals as well as organizations have a public image or brand. Image is critically important to organizations of all kinds (Benoit, 1997, p. 177). However, Benoit is cautious to note that individuals and corporations might employ different strategies (1997, p. 177). This is an important distinction in the Tour de France where there are so many stakeholders, such as the rider, individual rider sponsors, cycling teams and their sponsors, and the Tour de France and its sponsors. Accordingly, this banking theory of ethos is broadly applicable across various phenomena and takes a broad scope with regard to relevance of the individual or the collective entity.

Even a basic notion of what identity "is" is extremely dispersed and chaotic. The assemblages of opinions and projection of messages forms a dense series of ideas that one can call an identity. Todd May explains that he does not “imagine that there is any one thing that makes people who they are,” but he does go on to offer that “practices ... explain and help us understand a lot of what it is like to be who we are” (2001, p. 5). I have heard it colloquially said that, “you are what you do;” May's work in Our Practices Ourselves seems to appreciate this notion, though it paints a much more nuanced picture regarding the nature of self and how those practices work together to form identity. May is cautious to note that there is no one thing that makes a person who that person is. However, he argues, “the practices we participate in and are subject to—or our genetic make-up” are the probably the forces that play the greatest single role (2001, p. 4. Because many other things
impact identity to a lesser or greater extent, May explains, using a philosophically cautious tone, that the interplay between these different factors is “probably the interaction that makes us the people we are” (2001, p. 4). Without breaking out each and every of a multitude of pieces, this argument highlights the idea that identity is based on relationships between different traits and tendencies.

Identity becomes even more complicated when one begins to consider the ways that social media and other emerging technologies change the ways that one engages with an audience. Just as identity is performance, Pearson explains that social media use is also a form of identity performance (2009). Social networks and other digital means of portraying one’s self further complicate the communication process. Sherry Turkle explains that the relationship between the self and the virtual self comes to be a problem of “what is true and what is ‘true here.’” She goes on to explain that such social networks might lead one to believe that they are representing themselves accurately, but that their “profile ends up as somebody else,” which is often the “fantasy” self (2011, p. 153). This ability to easily portray the mediated self has had wide-ranging effects across the board, but is especially relevant for sports. The capacity to mediate the self allows for athletes to bypass traditional media constraints (such as newspaper) and produce and publish their own messages. Additionally, social media and other technologies allow fans and athletes to be able to consume huge amounts of media, and to generate viral messages. Sanderson explains that athletes are commonly “using social media, particularly Twitter, to break news and provide commentary on both sports and
political stories” (2011, p. 7). Based on this ability to readily communicate, athletes are able to speak to the public, and even to introduce counter narratives to things that are published by others. The power to communicate with audiences very quickly allows athletes a considerable amount of agency in working toward enacting their identity.

Since newspaper owner Henri Desrange concocted the Tour de France, its continual relationship with the media is not surprising. Desrange started the Tour as a stunt to boost sales of L’Auto, his newspaper. As the Tour started, sales of the paper soared (Lazell, p. 2014, p. 7). One of the continual challenges of the Tour is to allow fans access to a race that any single spectator can see relatively little of. Accordingly, news and telling the story of the Tour is incredibly important. Social media allows fans to have tremendous ability to access athletes (Sanderson, p. 69) and the narratives they create. Fabien Wille notes that the journalistic style of writing has affected the way television coverage of the Tour developed (2010, p. 134). The coverage of the races and the spectacle itself creates relationship with viewers. Thus, viewers have more and more access to athletes and sport. However, as Sanderson’s work points out, social media gives athletes the ability to communicate with fans beyond what the media would publish and gives athletes direct access to an audience hungry for information.

Hambrick and others conducted a research study that examined the way that Armstrong used image repair efforts through traditional and social media platforms (2013, p. 17). Additionally, the challenge of mediating multiple identity
performances can certainly be taxing. Hambrick et al. caution that “athletes should be aware that while they have greater control over their messages via social media platforms, they might at some point have to relinquish the reins” in the event of challenging discussions that could take place in other media (2013, p. 20).

For Todd May, the concept of practice “lies at the intersection of the individual and the social” (2001, p. 12). For the purpose of considering image from a public relations standpoint, it is impossible to consider identity as a single massive knowable thing. Given the relationship between an individual and their societies, identity is performed not merely from internal constraints, but also with social pressures as well. In considering notions of identity performance for the purpose of public communications, the ability to anticipate the way that publics might respond to any given action is especially important. Understanding the ways that the public responds to various messages is one of the primary functions of crisis communication. While there is no way to know exactly what the ever-fickle public might do or think, anticipating possible reactions allows for individuals to present themselves deliberately with an eye toward appealing to audiences in a particular way.

As Shakespeare wrote, “all the world’s a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts” (How’s, 1848, p. 32). Goffman explains that everyone has a “face” which can be defined as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself,” and this is based on the “line” or “pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts”
that one uses to express oneself (1955, p. 7). These ideas highlight the notion that identity is performative and is based on that which is external to an individual, which counts most for crisis communication. Regardless of an individual's substance, the actions, and practices, that have the capacity to engage an audience are those things which are the most important for considering the way that identity is formed, maintained and repaired.

The Need for Image Repair

While “enormous rewards for the winner, the effectiveness of the drugs, and the low rate of testing all combine to create a cheating ‘game’ that is irresistible to the athletes,” (Savulesco, Foddy, & Clayton, 2004, p. 666), it is worth noting that these same situations might draw very averse responses from a sponsor or concerned member of the public. However, even cyclists who do not use performance-enhancing drugs are not immune to accusation or scandal if a teammate is found to be doping. A reputation for doping is a bit like having paint on one’s hands: it spreads quickly and can color many in the proximity. Do note that no actual doping need occur for such a tarnishing of reputation. In the field of public opinion, perception drives reality. Because of this, image and the concept of image repair become incredibly important to cycling.
Image Repair

In image repair theory (IRT), a major assumption is that the corporation in question has taken some action that an audience finds objectionable, and that regardless of the veracity of these feelings, perception of wrongdoing is just as “real” for image repair theory as actual wrongdoing (Benoit, 1997, p. 178). To this end, notions of authenticity and truth are largely unimportant compared to the often dissonant and complicated narratives portrayed by an organization, various media channels, and social media? Ultimately, the sum of these narratives forms a brand identity in the eyes of various audiences.

The theory of image repair focuses on “message options” and what a company can (or does) say during a crisis. This typology provides a framework for understanding meaning, not a way of understanding public perception. Within Image Repair Theory, Benoit outlines five primary image repair classifications including, denial, and evasion of responsibility, corrective action, reducing offensiveness, and mortification. Some of these have subcategories, so according to Benoit’s early scholarship there are 14 different image repair techniques (Benoit, 1995, 1997, 2014). Denial simply involves the accused person professing to have not engaged in the activity they are accused of. Evasion of responsibility functions by reducing the accused person’s level of “apparent involvement” in the issue. Reducing offensiveness functions by seeking to reduce the negative feelings of the offended audience. Corrective action is the category wherein the accused vows to remedy a fault. Finally, mortification occurs when the
offending party takes blame and apologizes to the audiences (Benoit, 2014).

Recently, scholars have identified and developed more strategies beyond the original options that Benoit outlined. The techniques that are most relevant to discussions of cyclists include simple denial, spreading blame, mortification, and bolstering.

William Benoit’s image repair theory (IRT) functions as a heuristic for the various rhetorical maneuvers that one can make to appeal to an audience. IRT effectively function to describe the ways that one can make amends for some perceived wrongdoing. Image repair is useful when a subject has either conducted some misdeed or is accused of doing some misdeed. The theory does not distinguish notions of guilt versus innocence. Rather, IRT is built on the notion that if a public responds negatively, then some sort of action is necessary to positively affect the audience. The practical nature of IRT trends toward being more pragmatic such that it avoids “good” and “bad” and works toward considering how an individual could respond in various ways they feel would best benefit their goals. The goal of image repair is typically to gain or recover favor with an audience. While IRT is most often applied in response to a crisis situation, similar notions can be applied to brand building if these techniques can help to create a brand that is able to bank good will with its audience.

Situated in the larger field of public relations, and the subfield of crisis communication, Image Repair Theory was originally conceived as being an area of inquiry referred to as “image restoration.” Benoit later moved away from the notion
of “restoration” toward the idea of “repair” (Benoit, 2006). The implications of this change are grounded in the idea that one’s identity can never be reclaimed; rather, once harmed it can be “repaired.” One might consider that if a nail is put into a tree and removed, there is no longer a nail in the tree, but there is still a hole. The hole can be repaired but the hole cannot be removed.

At this point, I would note that IRT is a heuristic, not a science. Accordingly, IRT functions as a way of categorizing different kinds of apology speech acts. Like other category-based systems, IRT is a way of describing how decisions are made and how audiences perceive these decisions. As a social construct, then, IRT is not a fixed and finite program for rhetorical action; other scholars have added to Benoit’s original typology of techniques (see Smithson & Venette, 2013; Sanderson, 2008; Len Rios, 2010).

For example, Burns and Bruner attempt to update IRT by emphasizing the audience, by broadening the constraints implied by notions of a discreet source, and developing the notion of “text” (2009, p. 28). One of their main suggestions is that further research should more thoroughly examine the relationship between author and audience. Burns and Bruner’s revision of IRT was not a radical shift in the IRT paradigm, but it functioned more to advance ideas and vocabularies in IRT to be more flexible. Their article especially helps to paint a view and a research agenda surrounding IRT that opens more possibilities for theoretical consideration.

While Benoit casually took exception with many of the ideas Burns and Bruner put forth, he was also somewhat open to their ideas. The tension between
these competing perspectives on IRT reminds me of the arguments Ong makes in “The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction,” that it is ridiculous for a speaker to try and literally imagine each member of any given audience (1975, p. 10). Essentially, Ong argues that the various notions of audience are fictions created to serve the person or group that is crafting a message. There is not, necessarily, a strict connection between one’s ideas of an audience and the actual sentiment of that audience. Accordingly, while one might generalize and guess what or how any given audience might feel, these sentiments are guesses. With that in mind, an understanding of rhetoric can assist one in making a strong guess at meaning. However, no matter the strength of these understandings, they are always tentative and subject, no matter our confidence level, to being modified.

It is worth noting that the notion of image repair theory seems, on its surface, to favor visual means of knowing. It could be argued that image as a thing that is seen and image as a collective term for public perceptions creates an interesting tension. In one case image refers to a thing that is viewed; in the other image is the collective conglomeration of ideas and considerations that form a brand identity. Though image, in this case, literally refers to the perceptions that others hold, the use of the term opens room for consideration that visual communication and the notion of image is a common metaphor for understanding information especially in terms of an identity. Though the notion that one should not judge a book by its cover is often bandied about, in practice judgments are formed quickly, and for many different reasons, some of which are, likely, entirely subconscious. The power of
intuition is powerful, and it is one that “we can all cultivate for ourselves” (Gladwell, 2005, p. 16). Ultimately, practices, both intentional and unintentional, affect the way the public perceives and applies value to different communication efforts. When conceived of in relationship to the notion of banking, communication should be considered broadly. The flexibility allowed for by such a broad conception of communication allows for consideration of a variety of practices, both implicit and explicit. Such a conception helps broaden the impact of image repair theory by allowing its creative application to many different kinds of communication.

In acknowledging the role of intuition and perception in decision-making processes, it seems prudent also to consider that the decisions we make and the values we hold toward particular subjects are based on our own values and perceptions of other things. Image repair theory has the capacity to help view rhetorical acts in a more theoretically nuanced way than to say that an agent acts in such a way because he is a good guy or bad guy. However, such characterizations seem to be a key component in telling the story of cycling. The lone hero taking off flying up the mountain inspires certain values in a stereotypical sense. However, rigorous application of theory to such commonplaces can allow for deeper insight into symbolic action.

Beyond considering individual cyclists, Coombs’ work allows insight into how IRT can be understood for corporate image repair. Coombs explains that an organization that has a record of crises affects the perceptions of “crisis responsibility and organizational reputation” (2004, p. 283). Coomb’s Situational
Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) argues that crisis managers must “adjust their communication to account for possible past crises about which relevant publics are aware” (2004, p. 265). This adjustment highlights the importance of IRT by noting that image repair options can function to adjust the ways that identity is enacted to the public. As the Tour de France has had scandals and other forms of crisis revolving around doping throughout its history, an understanding of image repair techniques suggests a potential for understanding image repair. The potential benefit of flexibility in image repair efforts is important for an institution that is mired in controversy as cycling is, but is also viewed by millions of viewers for hours at a time (Mignon 227-228). SCCT was developed for the purpose of “matching crisis response strategies to the crisis situation to best preserve the organizational reputation” (Coombs, 2004, p. 266). As a distinction, the banking model of ethos is not directly concerned with message outcomes based on audience perceptions of a previous crisis, but is concerned with audience perceptions and the ways and extent that these perceptions can be affected by the use of image repair techniques.

**Expectations**

Nonverbal Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT) considers the assumption that the “road to success lies in conformity to social norms,” and ultimately frames the idea that, perhaps, there are some circumstances wherein violating social norms might prove beneficial (Burgoon & Hale, 1988, p. 58). Burgoon and colleagues, in an
impressive body of literature, first presented EVT (Burgoon, 1978, 1983, 1985; Burgoon, Coker & Coker, 1986; Burgoon & Jones, 1976; Burgoon, Stacks & Woodall, 1979) and later clarified it (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). I found Burgoon and Hale’s discussion of EVT in 1988 to be especially clear and rigorous; accordingly, I use this discussion to explain the model for banking ethos.

Beyond mere speech acts, EVT is applicable to a variety of communication practices and social interactions (see Buller & Burgoon, 1986; Burgoon, & Coker, 1986). Ultimately, the theoretical implications of EVT prove itself a useful premise in theorizing a banking concept of goodwill. A broadened idea of EVT summarizes the idea that “people hold expectations about the nonverbal behaviors of others” and that “violations of these expectations” will “trigger a change” of viewpoint of an audience toward the violator of those expectations (Burgoon & Hale, 1988, p. 59). While the various factors that go into forming one’s opinion before and after interaction is quite complex, individuals find it relatively simple to form a “net expectancy of how others should behave” (Burgoon & Hale, 1988, p. 59).

This is useful when considering the notion of goodwill banking because of the notion of normative behavior and the idea that violating the norm can have positive results. In this case, if one expects a certain quality of action and that quality is exceeded the net benefit is positive. In terms of banking ethos, if an individual performs in a way that is desirable or pleasing to the audience, according to the banking theory, they can maintain these favorable judgments.
Like EVT, the banking model is based on the notion that humans judge character. Considering that human judgment very quickly assesses and applies value to various actions, many different engagements can ultimately inform opinion while still being averaged into one’s overall judgment on an issue. Thus, a banking notion suggests that humans have the capacity to remember past judgments of actions and carry these judgments toward those of the future.

Burgoon and Hale note that “expectancies . . . operate within a range, rather than [just] representing some specific behavior” (1988, p. 60). The strength of one’s beliefs is varied in onset and in strength of feeling. While the causation of any given expectancy might be hard to predict, it should be noted that these judgments do not exist fixed and final. Rather, expectancies slide along a valence with regard to the strength of one’s feelings toward them at any given moment.

“Most sociological writings on norms, rules and roles implicitly assume that any form of violation is negative” (Burgoon & Hale, 1988, p. 61). When considering banking goodwill, it should be noted that the valuation of any given action is continually affected by various behaviors. A positive outlook from the past, balanced against a negative action, might still result in a net positive reaction. Also, a positive past action and another positive assessment might result in an increased net result. Later in this chapter I highlight considerations of whether Lance Armstrong’s philanthropic work might have served to build a sufficiently large amount of goodwill to maintain a positive general impression even after having confessed to doping and cheating.
The overall picture becomes that these judgments along a valance based on preference are cumulative and continuous. Perceptions take into account previous experiences and they may change over time. Any one act has the potential to carry “multiple interpretations among which several alternatives are plausible” (Burgoon & Hale, 1988, p. 63). The notion that various individuals can have multiple interpretations of an event or action is at the heart of Kenneth Burke’s theory of Dramatism, which is, explored more in Chapter 4.

A violation of one’s expectancy is caused when an action that sufficiently violates the expectation occurs; the result, as EVT holds, could then either be positive or negative. However, the banking model differs from EVT by advancing the notion that a sufficient amount of banked positive feelings toward past actions might possibly allay the deviation of an expectation.

Armstrong and Image Repair Strategies

While Patrick Mignon argues that the public is generally sympathetic to cyclists and the sport of cycling in the plight of doping, the public is fickle and unpredictable. Benoit’s update of image repair theory in 1997 argues that celebrities might have an easier time with image repair methods than politicians. When Armstrong fell from grace immediately following the Oprah interview, his overall public image suffered immensely. However, some cyclists are treated differently than others. These differences can be caused by any sort of preference or prejudice that they public may have, but it is the presence of these distinctions in
preference that make the banking model of ethos possible. The importance of consideration of public attitude becomes very relevant from a public relations perspective.

In cycling, nearly every cyclist confronted with doping allegations waxes poetically about how “everyone does it.” This common response theoretically limits the culpability of the individual rider in the face of the argument that all cyclists dope, or take performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs). Similarly, this argument develops into the idea that one must dope to be successful, because all of the others dope. Though this argument is frequently used by cyclists, does not mean that this *ad populum* logical fallacy is an incredibly rigorous use of logic.

Above all of the techniques outlined in Benoit’s arsenal, for the purposes of cycling, mortification is perhaps the most poignant and effective image repair strategy. Mortification, as Kenneth Burke explains it, is based on the idea of achieving redemption through sacrifice (1970, p. 208) and the idea of paying penance for one’s misdeeds. Indeed, Coombs’s Situational Crisis Communication Theory advances the idea that “as the reputational threat increases, the crisis manager should use response strategies that demonstrate acceptance of responsibility for the crisis and that address victim concerns” (Coombs, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Because of the public’s quickness to forgive the sport, an athlete or other individual who takes ownership of a perceived misdeed can achieve redemption through sacrifice to regain a respectable position with relative ease. Lance Armstrong, however, didn’t employ this technique.
It is challenging to talk about cycling in public without discussing the only man to have ever won the Tour de France seven times without ever having won the Tour de France. To be clear, I feel that Armstrong and doping are a symptom of the doping problem, not the cause. However, the public’s consternation toward him is not so surprising given the poor use of image repair techniques and the lengths that Armstrong took to avoid being implicated. Additionally, Armstrong’s perceived lack of repentance (discussed more in Chapter 4) highlights a lack of mortification-based practice and has likely led to an unsympathetic public.

The poor reception of Armstrong’s image repair strategies and his past philanthropic work makes him the perfect example to use to discuss the banking model of ethos. Macur (2015) and Kimmage (2012) have noted Armstrong’s tendency to discuss his experience with cancer as a defense tactic.

Research on Lance Armstrong’s image repair efforts allows for insight into the strategies that he used. Hambrick and colleagues report that Armstrong’s Twitter feed, prior to the USADA investigation, featured the image repair techniques of attacking the accuser, bolstering, and stonewalling (2013, p. 9). After the investigation the researchers note that Armstrong’s number of tweets dropped by about half but were still predominantly the same, attacking the accuser, bolstering, and stonewalling. During Armstrong’s confession with Oprah they note that Armstrong used those three attacks but frequently leaned toward mortification by frequently apologizing. Additionally, he used simple denials, blame shifting, suggesting he was provoked into doing what he did, by playing a strategy of
victimization, by explaining how he conformed to the socially acceptable cycling culture, and by expressing retrospective regret (p. 12-17). This research ultimately showed that Armstrong’s confessional strategy in his confession to Oprah differed from his performance on Twitter (p. 18). They concluded that Armstrong could have used more image repair options on Twitter (p. 18). Moreover, the implications of this research suggest that even a plurality of image repair techniques do not ensure success and even though social media allows athletes to reach their publics directly, they may do more harm than good.

In one aspect of the banking model, Armstrong’s turn toward the cancer narrative represents a strong rhetorical move, but only if the audience doesn’t perceive it as a tactic. Additionally, beyond merely having had cancer, Armstrong’s work with Livestrong has been very meaningful to many members of the public. Brands can “leverage emotional connections by embracing . . . causes that are important to their customers” (Mangold et. al., 2009, p. 364). To appreciate the strength of these concepts, one has to appreciate the culture power that Armstrong wielded at the height of his career. Kimmage argues that Armstrong’s biography, It’s Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life (Ghost Written by Sally Jenkins), characterizes Armstrong as a Jesus figure (2012). However, despite his incredible popularity Kimmage refers to an instance in a press conference where he asks Armstrong about doping, Armstrong replies,
“When I decided to come back, for what I think is a very noble reason, you said: 'Folks the cancer has been in remission for four years but our cancer has now returned,' meaning me. I am here to fight this disease...

So I think it goes without saying: No, we're not going to sit down and do an interview...You are not worth the chair that you are sitting on, with a statement like that, with a disease that touches everybody around the world" (Kimmage, 2012).

Armstrong's comments to Kimmage highlight Armstrong's rhetorical turns toward his status as a cancer survivor, the righteous rhetoric impugning anyone who would question him as being against those with cancer. Armstrong's tendency to attack his accusers, as a form of image repair, and his tendency of claiming his innocence in the most righteous ways possible, forms the basis of the potency for his downfall. Given that Kimmage has been called “one of the first professional cyclists to expose the culture of doping within the sport” (Dime, 2014, p. 955), it is perhaps then understandable that Armstrong would react so aggressively.

Based on Armstrong's aggressive rhetorical practices, USADA countered his moves by presenting an overwhelming amount of data that systematically revealed Armstrong's lying and cheating to the public in the USADA “Reasoned Decision” release. The USADA’s release is generally considered to be the turning point for Armstrong. At this point he goes from being victorious but under siege, to being at the bottom of the world. If doping allegations are too general of a crisis to name as
Armstrong’s downfall, then USADA’s reasoned decision functions as the *coup de grace*, which practically ended Armstrong’s popularity.

**Discussion**

Returning to the idea that the purpose of rhetoric is identification, it should be noted the best image repair strategies are nothing without appreciation of basic image maintenance. Though Armstrong took efforts to silence his accusers, the evidence against him eventually outweighed his arguments. In this case, the USADA Reasoned Decision functions as the tipping point for Armstrong. It is at this point where considerations of Armstrong as a public figure become especially interesting. Following this report, Armstrong was interviewed by Oprah in front of an estimated 28 million viewers, where he admitted to doping and engaging in an involved cover-up (*Telegraph*, 2013).

Following these events, Armstrong’s formal relationship with Livestrong ended (*Schrotenboer*, 2012). Despite the fact that Armstrong’s brand is strongly linked to the issue of doping following these events, the advocacy and philanthropy he did for cancer and Livestrong did not disappear. John Richardson, writing for *Esquire*, asks,

> After a great fall, what do we remember? We remember the cheating, and the lies. We remember the cult of personality that we eagerly embraced, and then felt betrayed by. But what of the man who fell? What about the work he didn’t cheat at? What about the 16 years Lance Armstrong spent building a global
cancer advocacy? Did it matter? Does it still? Does it matter that Livestrong, the foundation that kicked him out, now wants him back? Do we care what happens to the great work a man has done, after a great fall?” (Richardson, 2014).

These questions exactly highlight the potential for considering such actions through the lens of a banking model of ethos. As in all things, that which happens in the past does not cease to be, in the face of an image crisis. Further, the Esquire article describes how Armstrong sends messages to cancer patients during his free time. Based on this, we can consider that even in the face of such crises, one can still continue working to build image capital, even if those activities do not formally fall within the framework of *apologia* that Benoit and others line up.

I would caution that the notion of banking and considering the power of past experience does not make any implicit guarantee that outcomes would be positive. While this theory can be applied to hypothesize that past good works can serve to bolster reputation during a crisis, it could just as easily be argued that past events that are taken poorly by the public could serve to tarnish future works. Future research might examine the ways that audiences recollect past events that are categorized as positive and negative.

Regardless of the motive or the innate goodness of these actions, there is always likely to be some group that will take exception to any given action. The build-up of these groups (that is, an action that causes the expectations of these groups to be violated) opens up the potential for criticism. Because of this, a best
possible offense is beginning with a strong brand that is inoculated by a positive public sentiment. An appreciation of the potential for actions to increase or decrease identification with given audiences would be an important step in valuing the potential in a banking model of ethos.

Image repair is an art, not a science. While rules can be developed and followed, it is important to remember that the public is fickle, and (looking back to Ong) ultimately a fiction. While ideas of trends and best practices can be developed, a general awareness of the relevant issues might be the best defense a public relations practitioner has in dealing with the next big crisis. Regardless of what the plan is, the plan may fail, and then it is up to the brand to figure out how to repair their image, by being aware of the relevant issues, knowledgeable about media practices, and able to target audiences effectively. I propose that these steps will also be greatly enhanced if pre-emptive steps are taken to strengthen a brand’s reputation ahead of crisis situations.

Image is a concept that is multifaceted in its composition and somehow quickly evaluated in terms of worth to different audiences. Accordingly, it should be understood that notions of good and bad past work will be subjectively different for the various audiences that perceive it. Ultimately then, the banking model functions as a theoretical consideration for the ways that past experience can affect the way that publics view image repair efforts and evaluate their efficacy.

On the way to discussing the performative nature of identity, Goffman introduces the idea that if one is familiar with an individual, then that observer can
“glean clues from that individual’s conduct and appearance which allow the public to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them” (1959, p. 1). He goes on to explain that this is effectively the application of “untested stereotypes” (1959, p. 1). People apply stereotypes to others based on observation and past experience. These stereotypes can be, and often are unconscious biases. Overall, our past experiences play a major part in deciding how one views the world and the way that one might value any given action.

The way that one views the world is based on the strategies this individual uses for interpretation. One’s orientation or tendency toward seeing the world a certain way is far from a fixed thing. Burke’s example of the sophisticated trout highlights the idea that our past experiences influence our future perceptions (1954, p. 5). While noting that “all living organisms interpret” the symbols around them – the ability to stretch and change our understanding of the symbols is of the utmost importance because this dynamic understanding allows for increased critical ability (1954, p. 5). Because of the capacity to allow past experience to influence future perception, the pressure to be able to modify public opinion is most critical for those in public relations and crisis communication. Additionally, considering the ways that these interpretations change and can affect the way individuals view a given brand functions as a basis for the banking model of ethos.
CHAPTER THREE

ANTAPOLOGIA: CONSIDERING THE IMPACT OF THE MEDIA

Introduction

Because the relationship between the media and its public is so important special consideration of how the media perceives an event is warranted. When Lance Armstrong confessed to doping in the special Oprah interview his confession was one of the most significant instances of *apologia* in recent sporting history. *Apologia* not to be confused with apology is not an expression of guilt or remorse, but refers to a desire to communicate where one stands with regard to a particular issue. Lance Armstrong’s *apologia* highlights, amongst other things the idea that Armstrong feels scapegoated for all of the cyclists who have doped. However, prior to his admission he adamantly maintained that his success was due to hard work and not performance enhancing drug use. So, when Armstrong formally admitted to doping shortly after the United States Anti-Doping Agency released a massive body of evidence against Armstrong the media response could be telling.

Because of the media’s role in gatekeeping for the general public the way that they responded to Armstrong’s *apologia* becomes important. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to understand the ways that journalists in English language newspapers throughout the world reacted to Armstrong’s *apologia*. The media’s response to the *apologia*, referred to, as *antapologia* can be useful to public relations practitioners to consider the ways that media might respond in crisis
communication situations. These *antapologia* are analyzed using thematic analysis to categorize the rhetorical stance of various statements. In turn, consideration of these themes can suggest patterns of response on part of the media, which might have impact on the broader public response as well.

**The Power of the Media**

Within the sport of cycling, viewers and fans are a major motivator who would entice a team or race sponsor. Lance Armstrong’s power as a brand depends on how popular he is with cycling fans and with the general public. Armstrong’s tremendous marketability comes from the fact that he was able to draw a large audience to cycling and to his philanthropic works in general. Armstrong was often able to wield power in creating his identity narrative by harnessing the power of mass media. Armstrong’s book, and news articles highlighting Armstrong’s narratives (and creating new narratives) created a huge amount of public awareness of Armstrong and his actions.

Within our society (especially in times before social media), mass media has popularly functioned as a gatekeeper to the public. With the rise in popularity of social media and other forces that have democratized mass media, athletes and others have gained the ability to reach audiences without the hassle of having to go through a traditional news source. Despite this flexibility, newspapers and other traditional mass media play a significant role in disseminating information.
Because of the power that mass media organizations have, the ways they provide coverage and respond to issues become important. In the case of Armstrong, many who might not have watched the primetime two-night confession would likely hear reports of it through the mass media. With that in mind, this chapter seeks to understand not only how journalists responded to Armstrong’s confession but also what the impacts of this response may have had.

Coverage of Le Tour

Many of Armstrong’s victories, collectively referred to as *palmares*, occurred at the Tour de France. While other events in cycling are notable within the sport, the Tour is an event that draws a much broader public audience. During Armstrong’s streak of winning seven Tours, his name and image became highly linked to the Tour de France. This linkage manifested itself through frequent coverage during the races, advertisements that featured him, and coverage in the popular press.

Cycling, and the Tour in particular, face unique challenges to the way that it is covered in the news. Paradoxically, the closest people (the spectators) to the Tour see much less of it than those far away watching video coverage. Also, the different classifications of riders riding for stage wins or sprinting points versus those competing for the overall lead can be cumbersome to report. Additionally, as the Tour builds its own mythologies, its relationship with the athlete mingles. The athletes create the drama of the Tour, and the Tour creates the venue for the athletes. The “spectacle” of the Tour de France draws huge amounts of media
attention and is “the greatest free sporting event in the world” (Wille, 2003, p. 128). Wille has argued that television is the most pervasive form of media covering the Tour de France (2003, p. 129). It is a strange paradox that those physically closest to the Tour, those on the sidelines, can see the race from only the narrowest viewpoint, whereas those at a distance, watching on their televisions at home, can view the race in its entirety. These constraints lead to an increase in the imagination on part of the cycling fan (Wille, 2003, p. 144). As the onsite fan is not able to move along with the race they rely instead on media coverage. The onsite fans could not fail to miss when the Tour draws near to them because of the publicity caravan that comes through ahead of the riders; however the end of the race is unceremonious for those fans strewn along the course.

Interestingly, the language television uses to cover the Tour is the same “live coverage” style favored by newspaper press (2003, p. 134). The Tour de France has caused significant changes in journalistic practice (Wille, 2003, p. 144). The Tour caused journalists to actually attend the race in order to cut down on the amount of time that it took to report the event. The live journalistic presence at events “brought about a renewal and spectacularization of news.” This news coverage brought about more promotional opportunities for bicycle manufacturers and even those who sold motorcars (Wille, 2003, p. 144). The Tour even caused improvements in technology by extending the range early television cameras could cover (Wille, 2003, p. 144).
Roland Barthes uses the most spectacular language to performatively describe the creation of narratives within the Tour de France (1957). By using soaring language to compare the Tour de France to the journey of Homer's *Iliad*, Barthes argues that men have two different states of “strength:” *form* and *leap* (1957, p. 126). *Form* is the state of riding where the body is functioning at the height of its potential; *leap* is, in Barthes own words, “a veritable electric influx which erratically possesses certain racers beloved of the gods and causes them to accomplish superhuman feats” (1957, p. 126). *Doping* is a “hideous parody” of *leap*. In Barthes words, *doping* is “as criminal, as sacrilegious as trying to imitate God” (1957, p. 126).

Sloterdijk calls Barthes *leap* the “Jump” and cites an example where Armstrong was so favored by Barthe’s Gods in the 2003 Tour de France in the Pyrenees after Luz Ardiden, a ski resort. Eleven kilomters before the finish Armstrong’s handlebar was caught in a spectators plastic bag during an ascent, causing him to crash.” This crash propelled Armstrong into one of these Jumps “with the fury of Achilles” to pass every rider ahead of him on the way to winning the stage (“Philosopher Peter Sloterdijk on The Tour,” 2008). In light of Armstrong’s doping admission, is Armstrong’s *leap* actually a result of seeking to steal God’s own thunderous Leap? Sloterdijk maintains that Armstrong’s ride was inspired and not to considered doping because everyone else was also doped. As an example, Barthes discussion of doping, and Sloterdijk’s narrative highlight the ways that narrative can
be framed in terms and the ways that these terms can be appropriated, as when Sloterdijk denies the flawed nature of Armstrong’s leap.

But these narratives and spectacles effectively fuel further journalistic coverage. The importance of this relationship between journalists and the sport of cycling cannot be overstated. Beyond reporting the facts of cycling, the narratives and stories of cyclists gaining or being denied glory highlight the distinction between that which occurs and the way that the story can be told. The basic facts of the Tour de France are rather dull without the humanity of telling a story. This is especially true when one considers that the Tour de France was effectively started by journalists from L’Auto (Wille, 2003, p. 130; Wheatcroft, 2013).

As the bicycle became a more common mode of transportation, bicycle racing moved from being a sport dominated by the aristocracy to being a sport championed by working class individuals seeking to better their financial situation. Because of this interest, promoting sporting events became a profitable endeavor for newspapers that housed advertisements for sporting events and for various bicycles (Wille, 2003, p. 131). L’Auto effectively invented the on the spot report in order to sell their readers the “illusion of a shared experience” by providing newspaper purchasers with “legendary and dramatic dimension” to the narratives of cycling (Wille, 2003, p. 132). The Tour de France started as an incredible event designed to create heroes and to woo advertisers and current observation of the sponsors of the Tour and various teams suggest that this is still the case.
Palmer explains that the group that runs the Tour de France, *La Societe du Tour de France*, seeks to control the coverage of the Tour by ensuring that only some “images and narratives about the Tour are fed into global media circulation” (2000, p. 369). While it is not unreasonable to expect a governing body to take interest in that which is published about their properties, this kind of practice highlights the rhetorical implications in portraying even a race to the public; the practice of creating and seeking to control narrative is very common.

Wille cautions against falling into “common prejudices” which seek to discredit the relationship between “sport, the media and the business world” (2003, p. 129). External sponsors support the Tour itself and the teams that participate in the Tour, thus supporting corporations are important stakeholders in the sport. Wille goes on to explain that these questions become especially loud during challenging moments between media and sport such as moments of drug allegations or admissions (2003, p. 129-130). Schneider notes that cycling and doping are “linked in the public imagination” and that the media must have had some role to play in creating this link. However, more pertinently, Schneider explains that some have argued that the Tour de France media coverage was primarily to blame for this link (2007, p. 220). Despite numerous and relatively frequent doping scandals, there seems to be no “evidence of a decline in public support” (Schneider, 2007, p. 220). So, regardless of the connection between the Tour and doping, the public does not seem to be turned away from the sporting event because of doping.
Given the spectacular nature of the Tour, media characterization and narrative creation is an important issue. Ultimately, the narrative importance of the Tour is born out of the need to move from the pack as an anonymous laboring cycling to being a winner. Not only cyclists have interest in the way that stories are framed, a boring Tour does little to inspire more fans. Fans are the product that the Tour’s management sells to sponsors and narratives are the main way that fans are created.

Further, then, the ways that the media portrays cyclists, and the issue of doping becomes critical to shaping the public face of the individual cyclist and tacitly of the race itself. Schneider explains that the link between cycling and the effects of doping is very clear: the purpose of cycling is to push the body’s limits, and the purpose of doping is to push the athlete’s limits. Thus, Schneider writes, “on the one hand doping is seen as something that tarnishes the sport and provides a negative image for cycling. On the other hand, long distance stage racing is all about pushing the human body to its limits—and beyond. The athletes who do this are heroes” (2006, p. 222). In contrast, Wieting questions the continued celebration of riders as ‘heroes’ in the age of Tour de France doping (2000, p. 348-363). The rise and fall of celebrity is a common practice as narratives are formed and evolve; however the importance of athletic achievement in the form of winning drives the pressure to dope.
Social Media

Consideration of the way the media covers cycling and the characterization of its riders is important. Indeed, the creation of heroes is itself something that the media has power over, though this power is not absolute. When considering the idea of “media,” it is important to appreciate the democratization that social media and the Internet allows. Sanderson notes that athlete’s identities “are largely scripted and presented through the lens of the sports team and mass media” (2014, p. 208). However, as has been noted, social media has changed the media game for athletes as well as the organizations they represent (Sanderson, 2011, p. 5-6). Social media allows the athlete to directly communicate and represent themselves to the public, without an intervening media, through forums such as Twitter and Facebook. These different avenues for communication and newsgathering create a broad and complicated system of information creation, consumption, and commentary.

In this media climate, “sports news and information is available on demand” (Sanderson, 2011, p. 17). This availability has perhaps further increased the frenzy that Real describes as he discusses the active participation of fandom as people are seeking information, betting, playing fantasy sports, and otherwise being tuned in to the world of sports information (1998, p. 14).

Agenda Setting and Narrative

Agenda-setting theory highlights the idea that mass media may not tell people what to think, but that it certainly tells them what to think about (Cohen
1963, p. 13). Entman points out a problem with the distinctions this idea imposes. He explains that this distinction is misleading because “short of physical coercion, all influence over ‘what people think’ derives from telling them what to think about” (2007, p. 165). Based on Entman’s work, the thoughts and ideas are certain to influence an audience, but this relationship is not granted by the original formulation of agenda-setting theory. McCombs and Shaw explain, “the mass media force attention to certain issues” and “build up public images of political figures” (1972, p. 177). Later, McCombs and Shaw explain that agenda setting goes beyond the initial assertion posed that “news tells us what to think about,” noting, “the news also tells us how to think about it” (1993, p. 62).

There is a Chinese Proverb that says, “The thing a fish thinks about least is water.” Berger explains that narratives are around us all the time, and that we are immersed in a “sea of stories and tales that we hear or read or listen to or see” (1996, p. 1). Effectively though, narratives are a recounting of some actions that happen over a period of time (Berger, 1996, p. 4). It can be reasoned that the news of the day contains a great many narratives. However, beyond the mere recounting of events, narratives are loaded with ideological baggage, though this baggage may or may not be intentional, and it might be subtle in one case or very outspoken in another. The implied messages, or unintentional messages, all have the capacity to impact the audiences. As carriers of messages, the media plays a tremendous role in moderating the ways, by means of framing, inclusion, and location, that the audience might perceive any of these narratives.
In dramatic style, Benat Lopez argues that cycling’s war on Erythropoietin (EPO) is largely cooked up based on sensational journalism and the misrepresentation of facts. Examining many accounts of EPO deaths and the dangers of EPO use, Lopez finds that many of the stories feature dramatized outcomes or lack empirical evidence. For instance, a common anecdote about the dangers of EPO tells of “18 Dutch and Belgian cyclists who allegedly died between 1987 and 1990 due to EPO abuse” (see Coyle, 2009, p. 109-110; and Macur, 2014, p. 55; and Rogan, 2015); Lopez asserts that these claims have “no empirical basis” (2011, p. 101). Understanding this argument allows for insight into the notion that while the news media has depicted EPO as being the cause of 18 deaths, careful examination problematizes the simple understandings of the news stories. These kinds of disputes highlight the importance of considering what counts as admissible evidence, and what is deemed as being true to any given audience. Regardless of whether the media has committed any wrongdoing in this case, this example, and examples like it highlight the important duty that the media has to provide truthful coverage to the public. This gatekeeping function is, to an extent epistemic in that the media has the ability to decide what information reaches their audience.

**Armstrong and His People Control Media**

Regarding writing about the pre-confessional Armstrong, Daniel Coyle notes the difficulty journalists faced in gaining access to Armstrong. Armstrong’s people allegedly did a background check on one journalist that Coyle spoke to. This
journalist also notes that Armstrong’s people watched his “every step.” Coyle also
notes that within the relatively obscure American cycling scene, Armstrong had a
tremendous amount of “control over the telling of his story,” which had primarily
come from his two books and media coverage from the Outdoor Life Network, who
had just become an official team sponsor (Coyle, 2009, p. 33). Effectively,
Armstrong’s books gave him power over the way his narrative was constructed,
because he was able to fashion an interesting narrative that was easily digested by
the media and public and therefore repeated as being true.

One of Armstrong’s repeated narratives was his cancer narrative. This is
featured prominently around the time that his first autobiography, It’s Not About the
Bike (2001). After heroically defeating a very serious case of cancer (including brain
surgery), he was able to win the Tour de France, not just once but an unequaled
seven times in a row. Additionally, Armstrong’s image was strongly tied to his
philanthropic work with Livestrong, where he was the public face of the fight
against cancer. Armstrong had legions of fans, which was in large part due to the
power and flexibility of the “cancer narrative,” which tells of Armstrong’s survival
and successes. He became a hugely popular figure. Even the timing of forming
Armstrong’s cancer foundation can be considered. Armstrong’s manager suggested
that this might be a good way for Armstrong to maintain public awareness while
fighting cancer (Macur, 2014, p. 89).

Regardless of the entirety of Armstrong’s motive for starting his foundation,
Stapleton’s statements highlight the notion that his association was intentionally
created as a public relations tool. While this should not diminish Armstrong’s philanthropic success, it can be understood that such an association can be seen as both a public relation tool and as a genuine philanthropic benefit to society without perceiving one as manipulating the other.

Another interesting example of Armstrong working toward controlling the narrative can be seen in the way that he situated himself toward the reporter David Walsh, who published articles that accused him of doping. Armstrong would frequently feud with journalists who wrote things he disagreed with. For journalists to “anger Armstrong was to risk losing access” (Coyle, 2009, p. 185). As Armstrong was the major interest in cycling for American audiences, to risk losing access to him was to lose value to the outlet that employed a writer. In one case, a helper from Armstrong’s team discovered another journalist riding in a car with Walsh and subsequently blacklisted that journalist from having access to the Armstrong camp (Coyle, 2009, p. 186). These sorts of maneuvers were made to silence Walsh’s story by harming those who interacted with him, and noticeably then chilling other reporters toward Walsh and the ideas that he espoused.

Though Armstrong worked diligently to control the narratives surrounding him, allegations of doping from journalists like Walsh followed throughout much of Armstrong’s career. His righteous denials of these allegations are especially troubling after Armstrong has admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs. While giving a speech after winning his seventh consecutive Tour de France Armstrong said, “I’ll be a fan of the Tour de France for as long as I live. And there are
no secrets – this is a hard sporting event and hard work wins it” (USA Today, 2005). And that is the way Armstrong wrapped up that chapter of his life. However, Armstrong returned from retirement to finish 3rd in the 2009 Tour and 23rd in the 2010 Tour before announcing his retirement in 2011. Armstrong’s return to cycling renewed the public interest in whether or not Armstrong had cheated to reach such a level of dominance in cycling.

The United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) released its reasoned decision against Armstrong including hundreds of pages of damning testimony in a show designed to convince even the most ardent Armstrong supporter of the fact that he did in fact cheat to achieve success in cycling. After the reasoned decision was released Armstrong then had the ability to go into image repair mode and to seek to make the best of a situation that cast him and the US Postal Service Pro Cycling team as having run “the most sophisticated, professionalized and successful doping program sport has ever seen” (USADA, 2012). By failing to fight USADA’s case against Armstrong tacitly admitted guilt but did not explicitly take on the burden of guilt or render an apology to fans.

Armstrong Confesses to Oprah

Given the criticism of Armstrong’s image repair efforts, the moments following the Oprah interview can be considered a choice moment to view the ways journalists reported on Armstrong’s admissions of guilt. Armstrong was interviewed by Oprah in 2012 and admitted to doping and conspiring to cover it up. Armstrong’s
fall from grace was remarkably swift. Following his interview with Oprah, Armstrong’s sponsors began abandoning the foundation (see Pearson, 2012) and Armstrong stepped down from his position of Chairman in the Lance Armstrong Foundation (see Schrotenboer, 2012), which would go on to drop Armstrong’s name entirely and move forward as The Livestrong Foundation (see Maclaggan, 2012). Mark McKinnon is reported to have called Armstrong’s Oprah confession “hall-of-fame-horrible” and opining that it “will become an exhibit for people who do crisis management on what not to do” (Macur, 2014, p. 391-392).

When it was announced that Armstrong was going to do an interview with Oprah, the reason for the interview was not given. However, given that Armstrong had refused to fight USADA’s reasoned decision, many assumed Armstrong would speak about doping. However, even before Armstrong’s interview with Oprah, the media already seemed hesitant to accept any potential Armstrong apology. One headline in the days leading up to Armstrong’s interview read, World awaits Oprah’s Lance Armstrong interview, but will it change anything? (Payne, 2013). The article, which seems to have benefitted from leaked information about the already taped but not yet released interview, noted that the interview reportedly contained an admission to doping. The article cautiously looks forward to Armstrong’s interview, stating, “whatever transpires, Armstrong’s carefully constructed persona has been altered forever” (Payne, 2013). Beyond the slightly cynical headline, the tenor of the article was anticipatory and not judgmental.
This instance certainly highlights one of the most (if not the most) publicly visible falls from grace in the history of cycling. Beyond merely being relevant to cycling, Armstrong’s fall was a major story in the general news worldwide. Considering the variety of media narratives surrounding Armstrong and doping, it seems relevant to consider the different ways the media responded to Armstrong’s ultimate admission of guilt on the Oprah show. Scholarly consideration of Armstrong’s apology attempts and analysis of the antapologia on part of the media are especially significant, given the magnitude of Armstrong’s admissions.

**Antapologia as an Indicator of Distrust**

Ware and Linkugel note the special importance that speaking in defense holds as being one that deserves its own area of study (1973, p. 273-274). This study is commonly referred to as apologia. By contrast, antapologia is generally considered as the response to apologia (Husselbee & Stein, 2012, p. 61). Like apologia, antapologia can be categorized and analyzed by researchers.

Husselbee and Stein note there is relatively little work that has been done that focuses on applying the study of apology to the sporting situation (2012, p. 61). However, as I outlined earlier in Chapter 2, research into apologia by Benoit and others, in support of Image Repair Theory has discussed various athletes. The apologia of various athletes has been studied to some extent and apologia in team sport has been considered (Kruse, 1981). The Tonya Harding and Nancy Kerrigan incident was analyzed by Benoit and Hanczor (1994). The apology of tennis player
Billie Jean King after it was discovered that King had engaged in affair with her secretary (Nelson, 1984) and a variety of other celebrities, including Hugh Grant (Benoit, 1997), not related to sporting events have also been analyzed.

Theoretical consideration of antapologia helps to extend the discussion of apologia beyond the apology into the realm of possible responses (Stein, 2008, p. 33). Ultimately, this gives voice to a richer understanding of apology-based discourse. Sanderson and Hambrick researched the expression of antapologia on Armstrong’s Facebook page during the trying period shortly before Armstrong’s Oprah-confession as USADA closed in Armstrong with allegations of doping. They identified nine antapologia themes throughout the comments to several key Facebook posts including such broad themes as, “defending the apologia,” “weakening the apologia,” and “ambivalence toward the apologia” (Sanderson, Forthcoming).

Thematic Analysis

Richard Weaver’s The Ethics of Rhetoric paints a broad argument that the rhetorical components of communication allow for insight into the ethical standpoint of those who crafted the message (1985). Broadly understood, the values that one interprets by considering some action allow for insight into the potential ethical stance of that communicator. If sustained trends among the communication can discerned, these patterns can indicate the stances of those who make the
comments. Accordingly, this project is concerned with engaging in the thematic analysis of such comments.

As a method, thematic analysis serves as a tool to identify and report themes in data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Braun and Clarke go on to argue that, prior to their 2006 article, thematic analysis was “widely used” but not clearly established in such a way to prove useful in providing consistent, rigorous methodologies and results (2006, p. 78). Boyatzis further argues “thematic analysis is a process that many have used in the past without articulating the specific techniques” (1998, p. vi).

While Boyatzis (1998, p. 4) posits that thematic analysis does not refer to a particular method, but a technique applicable to various methods, Braun and Clarke argue, “thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis” (2008, p. 78). The flexibility of this method is especially appropriate, as it can be applied to “essentialist and constructionist paradigms” (Braun & Clarke, 2008, p. 78). And while Braun and Clarke speak of this method specifically applied to the discipline of psychology, and are very conscious of delineating boundaries for the theory and allowing flexibilities, the flexibilities and structure of this method allow it to be applied to methods across various disciplines. Boyatzis highlights the utility of thematic analysis as speaking across disciplines and epistemological squabbling (1998, p. 5).

Boyatzis explains that “thematic analysis is a way of seeing” and notes that “what one sees through thematic analysis does not appear to others” even if they are
viewing the same things. Though perceptions among various viewers may be similar to one another, no two people are ever going to perceive something exactly the same way. Accordingly, he explains that agreement with an insight leads one to view the insight as “visionary,” but disagreement leads one to view the insight as “delusionary” (1998, p. 1). Building on this subjectivity, Boyatzis explains that, “recognizing an important moment (seeing) precedes encoding it (seeing it as something), which in turn leads to interpretation. As Boyatzis explains it, thematic analysis moves “through these three phases of inquiry” (1998, p. 1).

Braun and Clarke note that thematic analysis allows for the data corpus to consist of all relevant artifacts (or data items), or in terms of reference wherein each mention of a theme would be relevant to the corpus (2008, p.79). Boyatzis explains that the “perception” of a pattern is what allows thematic analysis to begin (1998, p. 3).

Thematic analysis allows for a rigorous method that describes the way in which conclusions are drawn from data. Braun and Clarke argue that this helps alleviate the methodological inaccuracy of phrases that imply that “themes emerge from the data” (Braun and Clarke, 2008, p. 80). Accordingly, it is understood throughout that the themes of this study are linked toward an understanding of the interpretive qualities of those who wrote the news stories and then the coders who analyzed the expression of antapologia.

Thematic analysis differs from grounded theory and therefore imposes no mandate that practitioners follow its “implicit theoretical commitments” (Braun &
Clarke, 2008, p. 81). Glaser and Strauss express the belief that much of the sociological work of C. Wright Mills exhibited only a limited amount of “theoretical control,” despite his claims that the data “disciplined his theory” (1967, p. 5). Despite distinctions from grounded theory, thematic analysis can enjoy rigorous application, though much of the rigor comes from the strength of coding. It is noted that, “Thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality.’” Regardless of which position is used, it is important that the “theoretical position of thematic analysis is made clear” (Braun & Clarke, 2008, p. 81).

Neither the length of text relating to any given theme within a data item nor the saturation of the data corpus itself provides an accurate valuation on any given theme. Thus, the subjectivity of the method and the importance researcher judgment is acknowledged (Braun & Clarke, 2008, p. 81). With this in mind, it is to be considered that the “keyness” of any given theme “is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2008, p. 81).

Boyatzis notes three major challenges “to using thematic analysis effectively in research.” projection, sampling, and mood and style (1998, p. 12). Projection occurs when the coder attributes their own character, moirés, or values onto that which is analyzed (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 13). Beyond the difficulty of interpreting the meaning, it is also important to gain a rigorous sample of a population. Sampling leads one to appreciate that a final work is directly impacted by the quality of the
work that is selected, or sampled, in the first place (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 14). Issues of mood and style are various challenges that impact the coder, such as “frustration with the raw information,” confusion, and cognitive style (Boyatzis, 1995, p. 15).

Based on the public interest in Armstrong’s story and the attempts that Armstrong made in narrative control make him an interesting case study for thematic analysis. Thus, the remainder of this chapter outlines the findings of an examination of journalistic responses to Armstrong’s apology.

**Research Question**

Based on the tremendous power of the media to create messages and transmit them to vast audiences, consideration of the way that media responds to *apologia* is warranted. In particular, as Armstrong’s *apologia* is one of the more significant instances of admission of guilt in doping, and as Armstrong is a popular sporting figure who has transcended sporting popularity into the popular consciousness special consideration of the way that his apology was perceived is justified. Consideration of media response to Armstrong’s *apologia* can reveal bias that the media holds and also a strong sense of the sentiment that the media has toward Armstrong and his efforts of *apologia*. With this in mind, the primary research question for this section asks:

R1.) How did journalists employ *antapologia* toward Armstrong immediately before and after his admission of using performance-enhancing drugs to Oprah?
Method

This study began by generating a population of newspaper articles and then selecting an adequate sample for further coding. The code that was devised to evaluate the antapologia is based off of Sanderson and Hambrick’s coding of antapologia on Armstrong’s social media platforms. Sanderson and Hambrick used constant thematic analysis to generate themes (Forthcoming). Pilot sampling suggested that Sanderson’s thematic framework would be appropriate for further examination. Accordingly, the coders began coding by employing Sanderson’s framework though they maintained an openness to further inductive categories that might emerge.

Comments that were coded voiced some kind of assessment of Armstrong’s apologia and were coded as being a defense of the apologia, weakening the apologia, or showing ambivalence toward the apologia. Further, themes were extrapolated to outline the rhetorical purpose of the statements. Six antapologia themes were noted in the texts. The coders analyzed the comments as they went to verify that the comments fit in a given category. Though there was some debate about adding a section regarding “atonement,” as a way of suffering toward repentance, as opposed to the “new beginning” category – the similarities were ultimately too strong to allow clear differentiation. In this way, each section was coded with an open mind toward an inductive analysis (per Boyatzis, 1998) though the coding category described by Sanderson and Hambrick emerged as sufficiently broad and descriptive for this study.
Sample

In Stein’s examination of antapologia regarding the Soviet U-2 incident, he conducted a constant comparison, which he based in a grounded theory to develop categories. In collecting a sample, Stein selected a variety of texts and newspaper articles during a relevant time frame; he does not specify how many are selected (2008, p. 23).

For this study, 82 articles were coded searching for themes of antapologia. Articles were sampled by searching Lexus Nexus for articles that contained the terms “Armstrong” and “Oprah,” between January 17-20, 2013, which covered the time before and immediately after the Armstrong interview. Based on information that was leaked to the press, most of the advance articles had some idea of what was being reported. Additionally, this range of articles allowed for a sampling of initial responses to Armstrong’s image repair efforts. Only English language newspapers were part of the total population though papers came from various countries across the world. These were sorted from oldest to newest to get an approximately equal sample of newspaper across the population. The total population was 1,152 and every 14th article was selected for coding.

Seventeen or (21.25%) of the articles in the sample were released the day before Armstrong’s confession. Based on the content of the articles in the sample, much of the material in the interview was leaked to the media. Accordingly, the interview itself was less revelation than opportunity to hear Armstrong tell the
story and engage in image repair. Because of this, the articles that were published ahead of time were still written in response to the content of the interview. As they were written with at least some knowledge of the content of Armstrong’s interview, they were deemed eligible for coding. To ensure intercoder reliability, two coders simultaneously coded each article and agreed on themes based on consensus. In the event of disagreement, the different options were discussed until there was agreement.

**Figure 3.1:** Number of news articles published around Armstrong’s televised confession (1/17-1/18).
Results

The findings of this study suggest a severe criticism of Armstrong's *apologia*. Sixty-two (75.6%) of the 82 articles sampled contained comments that were coded as being *antapologia*. Generally, *antapologia* was more likely to be present in opinion based writing, such as op-eds. As a general rule, those pieces which consisted of statement of facts did not feature *antapologia*.

Forty-eight (58.5%) of the articles coded were critical of Armstrong. It is also worth noting that 27 (32.9%) of the articles in the population did not express *antapologia* one way or the other and were thus described as being more hard journalism pieces. Factoring this in, 48 of the articles sampled included weakening as a code even if they featured defending or ambivalent techniques as well. Of the 62 coded instances of *antapologia*, 48 (77.4%) were dedicated toward weakening the effectiveness of Armstrong's *apologia*.

Defending the Apologia

Defending the apologia resulted in only two instances. In each case these were comments that were made with knowledge of the content of Armstrong's interview, but sought to maintain an open mind prior to the release of the full interview. While these instances were not full-throated defenses, they were in keeping with an ethical journalistic approach.
Support

In one instance, a reporter recounted Oprah discussing the interview and speaks of Armstrong in terms of coming “clean over his past” (Haynes, “Lance’s Trial By TV”). While this is far from a resounded statement of support it was open minded and cast enough judgement on an understanding of Armstrong’s *apologia* to be considered support. This was one of two similar instances and is representative of the meager support that journalists allowed.

*Weakening the Apologia*

Statements that functioned to weaken Armstrong’s confession were a majority of the instances *antapologia* that were coded. Out of the population examined for this study, 48 (58.5%) functioned to weaken Armstrong’s confession. Two major kinds of weakening were noted: criticism and sarcasm. These statements ultimately revealed the deep level of contempt that many of the journalists seemed to hold toward Armstrong. The way criticism was manifested in these articles was interesting, because it allowed for a very clear distinction between hard journalism, which is geared toward reporting facts and editorial pieces, which gave journalists more space to express personal opinions. In many cases, the discussions where criticisms were present were deeply critical of Armstrong and his interview with Oprah.
Criticism

Thirty-eight (46.3%) of the articles contained comments that were coded as critical. Comments such as “I’m not convinced even now he is telling the whole truth” (Sweet, 2013, p. 57-58) were coded as being critical. In the example, it is clear that the writer does believe Armstrong’s statements and thus expressed doubt as to their veracity.

Many of the stories made clear that Armstrong’s apology was inconsistent and unclear at sometimes such as, “as the 90-minute interview unfolded it became increasingly unclear what exactly Armstrong regretted” and that it became “unclear whether Armstrong was uttering carefully scripted lines, speaking from the heart or a bit of both” (“Is Drug Pedaller,” 2013, p. 5). Ultimately, these statements serve to cast doubt on the sincerity of Armstrong’s comments and his willingness to admit to the scope of his wrong doings.

Sarcasm

Fifteen (18.2%) of the articles contained sarcastic comments toward Armstrong and even toward Oprah. In one case it was suggested a special Emmy be awarded to “the disgraced doping cyclist” for “reviving the career- at least for two nights – of the long-in-the-tooth entertainer Oprah Winfrey” (2013, “The Thursday Wrap”). Most of these sarcastic comments seemed to allude to more of a feeling of bitterness and a sense of betrayal. However, most of these comments came across as rather severe, no matter how well justified. I have the general sense that many of the
more sarcastic pieces were intended to entertain a betrayed audience at Armstrong’s expense just as much as if they were really trying to seriously damage Armstrong’s credibility.

**Ambivalence**

Twelve (14.6%) of the articles seemed to be more ambivalent in tone. Many of these sought to seek some sense of justification for Armstrong’s actions and the authors’ attempts to rationalize Armstrong’s behavior and comments. It is interesting to note that many of Armstrong’s comments were geared toward justifying his wrong doing and seeking to gain room for maneuvering. If this was an attempt on Armstrong’s part to “seed” the journalistic grounds, very few allowed him his justifications, though many sought to grapple with Armstrong comments by seeking to rationalize Armstrong’s behavior.

**Justification**

Just two (2.4%) articles in the sample revealed attempts at trying to justify Armstrong’s actions. While Armstrong himself spent much of his time on the screen engaged in justifying his behavior, the media did not echo his defenses. However, in some cases they did try to rationalize his behavior by seeking to provide justification. In one case, it is noted that “lying is part of the human condition,” and therefore we should not be so surprised to find that an athlete or a role model has engaged in such a behavior (“BC-AP News Digest,” 2015, p. 2). This kind of argument
establishes a plausible reason that one could take up in considering the efficacy of Armstrong’s *apologia*.

**Grappling**

Grappling comments were those comments where one had trouble in accepting Armstrong’s apology, but was ultimately hesitant to pass judgment entirely one way or the other. In total, eight (9.7%) of the articles contained notes of grappling. In one notable example, the author cast criticism on Oprah’s interviewing style insisting that Oprah began by “insisting on straight” answers and then pines “if only she had carried on this way” (Slot, 2015, 4-5). In reading this, it seemed as if the author wanted to believe Armstrong’s report, but just could not. Based on the conflicted interpretation and a hopeful tone, the author of this piece is grappling with interpretations of Armstrong’s statements.

**New Beginnings**

Ten (12.1%) of the articles sampled alluded to themes of a new beginning. These sorts of comments referenced Armstrong's *apologia* as being a sort of atonement and alluded to the way his apology might lead toward moving forward with a “clean slate.” In one case, the journalist wrote, “he [Armstrong] hopes that forgiveness starts tonight, with his two-part interview” (Fernandes, 2013, p. C01). In another case, it was suggested that Armstrong “ended a decade of denying doping allegations by confessing guilt” (Ryan, 2013). In terms of style, most of these
references were quite brief and thrown in almost as a sort of optimistic relief mechanism. Interestingly, none of the articles that displayed sarcasm had comments that were coded as having references toward new beginnings.

**Discussion**

The data collected in this chapter suggests that journalists across the world perceived Lance Armstrong’s confession very skeptically. Journalists throughout the articles generally echoed a theme that Armstrong’s apology was not sufficient. Thompsen and Andersen’s findings support the claim that the public was generally dissatisfied with Armstrong’s apology attempts because they perceived them to be “inauthentic” (2015, p. 93). Additionally, the brief examination of *antapologia* that Thompsen and Anderson conducted yielded consistent results with this study. Ultimately, journalists seemed to be displeased with Armstrong’s attempts because he was perceived as being inauthentic. In this study such responses were coded as criticism or sarcasm. As mentioned in the results, 77.4% of articles that had any *antapologia* emerged as having content that weakened the effectiveness of Armstrong’s *apologia*. Thompsen and Anderson argue that Armstrong’s opportunity to “atone for his sin” was “undercut,” mixing atoning language with traditional apologetic strategies such as justification and spreading blame (2015, p. 93). The inconsistency of Armstrong’s communication strategy likely led to an enactment of all image repair strategies. Further, such a mixed delivery of results likely led to an audience that showed uncertainty of how to respond to Armstrong’s confession.
In the study at hand, this often manifested itself in articles that were incredibly brutal. When coding the articles for this study, I noted that the earliest responses in the news cycle following the televised special were especially critical of Armstrong. I expect that many of the responses immediately following Armstrong’s confession were especially visceral and thus led to extreme criticism of his statements. In many cases the acute brutality of the writing came through based on the tone of the writer. In some of the articles where the writer seemed to be not only distrustful but also to feel personally slighted by Armstrong’s actions, the language could be quite harsh. In some of these cases, it seems that the hurt experienced manifested itself in writing with a callously aggressive tone toward Armstrong.

Throughout the articles I noted that there were many shared quotations, which is likely due to the impact of news agencies such as The Associated Press. Accordingly, it seems likely that the information provided by such wire services impacted the way that journalists responded to Armstrong’s confession. In reading the articles one could quickly get a sense for the fact that many of the common quotes and even some of the specific language was drawn from wire services. This was most notable because of the repetitive nature of some of the phrasing. Given the emphasis on speed in journalism, this is not entirely surprising.

If rhetoric seeks to form identification, then this identification can also be enacted through the common rejection of an other. In this case, it seems like the public opinion was squarely weighted against Armstrong. Thus, the rhetorical snowball built in the case against Armstrong based on his answers to questions and
the ways that these were leaked to the media and then portrayed to a more general audience was clearly against Armstrong. It is therefore very possible that the antapologia expressed by the various journalists influenced the way that the public perceived Armstrong’s apology attempts.

Conclusion

It is fascinating that in the time that Armstrong was being interviewed on a Monday night, his response to these questions could have been nearly anything. They could have been appealing to his audience. But, if expressions of journalistic antapologia are any indicator, his audience was not impressed with his admission of guilt. It is possible and even likely that many of the responses that Armstrong made were geared toward limiting his culpability for future litigation. However, if he managed to successfully save himself any sort of legal responsibility in the sense of the judicial system, he was judged and sentenced by the media and the public at large. The media response to Armstrong’s apology was incredibly critical as befitting an individual who had perpetuated a practice of lying to the media and engaging in cheating in sport. From a public relations standing, the patterns of antapologia explored herein could help to illuminate ways that figures might approach the rhetorical act of apology in the future with more attention towards the way that media might perceive them and not just the way that the public in general might perceive them. Given the continued importance of media in even this democratized
era of communication, consideration of media response is critical and allows insight into a general understanding of the sentiment regarding Armstrong’s apology.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE LANCE ARMSTRONG STORIES:

A DRAMATISTIC CONSIDERATION OF NARRATIVES

“While I was sick, I told myself I’d never cuss again, never drink another beer again, never lose my temper again. I was going to be the greatest and the most clean-living guy you could hope to meet. But life goes on. Things change, intentions get lost. You have another beer. You say another cussword.”

—Lance Armstrong, It’s Not About the Bike (p. 182)

Introduction

At a basic level, people tell stories in an effort to communicate with one another. Retelling these stories does not make the stories fairy tales; they are simply retellings of events. Stories that are told and retold are eventually labeled as history. These stories are more than the sum of their parts. The very act of telling a story allows that the story was selected, as being something that one would share with another. As Foucault explains, “history is that which transforms documents into monuments” (1972, p. 7). The value placed on any given story comes from those who tell the story and from those who listen to it. At every instant, interpretation is key, both in terms of the interpretation of facts and consideration of how a potential audience would understand these stories. Such stories symbolically communicate the values and some of the attitudes of the storyteller. And, for the listener, stories
have an epistemic quality wherein they convey meaning and allow various subjects to have identity. Stories, in other words, allow for identification at a very basic level.

One does not have to search very far to hear very disparate stories of Armstrong. The truthiness of these stories is often dependent upon when they were written. These stories create a mythology around Armstrong, and other characters as well. However, among cyclists of recent times, Armstrong was one of the most engaging. He seems to have a very charismatic personality, and his impassioned defense of his innocence has been captivating journalism fodder. Accordingly, this chapter delves into exploring the ways that Armstrong tells stories about himself before and after his confession of using performance-enhancing drugs. I will analyzing texts produced by Armstrong before his confession and also material from his confession to Oprah. Such a discussion allows for insights into the ways that stories, as part of a narrative arc, provide a basis for communication but also a basis for the ways that a public image can be created and maintained.

**Telling the Story**

Throughout Armstrong’s history, he has produced many stories and texts in the forms of interviews, books, and social media posts. Additionally, many stories have been told about Armstrong. David Walsh penned, with Pierre Ballester, perhaps one of the most influential texts in Armstrong’s history, *L.A. Confidential: Les Secrets De Lance Armstrong* (2003), which was later reprinted in English as *From Lance to Landis* (Walsh, 2007). This text went a long way toward bringing down
Armstrong’s house of cards because it told the story of those who were around Armstrong when he was engaged in cheating. The book journalistically sources that which was seen and tells the stories of those who saw Armstrong’s actions.

Armstrong’s early book, *It’s Not About the Bike* told the story of Armstrong as a heroic cancer survivor who won the Tour de France. This book went a long way to creating public awareness of who Armstrong was by disseminating stories that highlighted Armstrong’s work ethic and resiliency by recounting his experiences in cycling and battling cancer. Later, after he achieved more success, he wrote *Every Second Counts*. Along the way, journalists such as Daniel Coyle penned process pieces (see Coyle’s *Lance Armstrong’s War*) about Armstrong. Coyle’s text was generally favorable toward Armstrong but highlighted the tensions between Armstrong and the journalist David Walsh, who heralded Armstrong as a doper. Walsh’s vendetta has been recounted in his book *Seven Deadly Sins* (2012) and the biopic *The Program*. As Armstrong’s card castle crumbled, other journalists penned their own takes on the Armstrong take down, including Reed Albergotti and Vanessa O’Connel of the *Wall Street Journal* who wrote *Wheelmen* (2013) and Juliet Macur of *The New York Times* who wrote *Cycle of Lies* (2014).

**Background**

In a textual experiment that he conducts on Shakespeare’s *Coriolanus*, Kenneth Burke explains that he is engaged in the “surest kind of prophecy,” which is, he explains, the kind of prophecy that occurs after the event (1966, p. 81). In other
words, he went back to look at how past events might have gone on to inform future events. By employing this method, one can evaluate the accuracy of their “prophesy” by examining the text (1966, p. 81). Based on our expectations of the way things *tend* to go and our previous knowledge of the text, as an audience our expectations and desires can forecast what ought to be, as opposed to that which actually happens. Burke is quick to explain some of the ways that ethics function in such an unusual form of analysis.

In such a sort of analysis, aesthetics and ethics collide in a way that Burke describes as being a sort of “benign perversity” (1966, p. 81). Based on any understanding of the way things *ought* to be, there arises the ability of an author to write against expectations—to violate the expectations of the audience. Or, conversely, the same author could write text meeting the fullest possible set of expectations that a general audience might have. This kind of writing could use common tropes and could be perceived as being predictable. Poetically, when certain patterns occur we expect further patterns. The potential for conflict in what *could be* can be incredibly engrossing. Additionally, when things do not go the way they are expected to, they can be incredibly disappointing.

The incongruity I describe is the main reason Lance Armstrong’s story resonates so powerfully throughout both sporting and popular culture. Up to this point, I have discussed the rhetorical difficulties of doping in cycling, a possible way of considering Armstrong’s image maintenance, and the ways the press criticized
Armstrong’s confession. Therefore, it makes sense to pay more attention to Armstrong’s story, and why it is so captivating to the media and to the public.

This chapter examines the ways that Armstrong’s comments situate his identity performance and allow for insights toward understanding his motives. Throughout his career, Armstrong and therefore his identity performance has changed. At one point he ardently defended himself, and at later points he admitted to using performance enhancing drugs. Stories also change based on who the audience is; Armstrong’s discussions with his teammates and doctors were probably different from the narrative he intended for broader public consumption. To examine the meaning behind Armstrong’s stories, this chapter explores the ways narrative theory and understanding the symbolic power of stories and action inform our expectations. Working with Fisher’s narrative paradigm and Burke’s dramatistic theory allow for agile analysis of Armstrong’s stories.

*The Stories That We Tell and What They Mean*

Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm theory “insists that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons” (1984, p. 2). Additionally, Fisher notes that his invocation of the term paradigm explicitly avoids any specific methodologies, though he does later consider dramatistic theory (1984, p. 2). In short, Fisher explains that one of the basic qualities of humanity can be described in naming man as “*homo narrans*” (1984, p. 6). Speaking of man as a storytelling
animal is appropriate since the basic notion that Fisher advances is that the basic element of humanity is storytelling. Fisher acknowledges Burke’s definition of “man” as being a “symbol-using (symbol making, symbol misusing) animal” (Burke, 1966, p. 16) but Fisher explicitly seeks to extend Burke’s metaphor (1984, p. 6).

In a later publication, Fisher clarifies that the narrative paradigm differs from Burke’s dramatism in two major ways. The first distinction has to do with the way Burke situates the part people play in interpreting and assessing meanings. Fisher goes on to explain that “dramatism implies that people function according to prescribed roles,” that dramatism sees people as “actors performing roles constrained or determined by scripts provided by existing institutions” (1987, p. 18). Fisher explains that the goal of the narrative paradigm is to see people as “storytellers” or “authors” who “creatively read and evaluate the texts of life and literature” (1987, p. 18). Accordingly, for Fisher “people are full participants in the making of messages” regardless of whether “they are agents (authors) or audience members (co-authors)” (1987, p. 18). For Fisher, “a narrative perspective focuses on existing institutions as providing ‘plots’ that are always in the process of recreation rather than as settled scripts” (1987, p. 18). Fisher’s second distinction from dramatism arises in considering the goals of dramatism and the narrative paradigm. Fisher explains that dramatism’s goal is identification. Fisher argues that Burke’s conception of identification assumes that identification will “engender humane, reasonable action” however; Fisher does not assume that all identification will end with “humane, reasonable action” (1987, p. 19).
The avowed purpose of dramatism is to discuss “what is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (Burke, 1969, p. xv). By this interpretation, the only fixed parts of human action are the perceptions of those who speak about an action. This highlights the distinctions that go into even the act of considering how one would rigorously discuss human motivation.

Fisher begins leaning towards the symbol-juggling power of dramatism when he explains “rhetorical experience is most fundamentally a symbolic transaction in and about social reality” (1987, p. 17). Thus, as Fisher notes, the work of the narrative paradigm (and dramatism, I would argue) allow for a more thoroughly ontological understanding of rhetoric in terms of the way symbols (and stories) are examined as artifacts (1987, p. 17). Thus, for the purpose of this discussion, the action of communication is taken as the substance of study, and the means of interpreting this substance and discussing what it represents is the challenge of rhetorical identity studies.

For Fisher, the act of being a storyteller implicates humans in the act of using symbols. He holds, therefore, that communication functions to compose and transmit symbols, which allow for interpretation and various other realms of human experience. These in turn allow for the potential of identification and a sense of community (1984, p. 6). For Fisher, this tendency to tell and interpret stories is the most basic aspect of being human. In searching for identification and community, stories are told that include and exclude others; identity is performed, refined, and
continually developed through the stories we tell and through those we choose to accept.

Lance Armstrong uses several different media to engage the public and advance his ideas. While Armstrong can and does use social media he also has a knack for providing interesting sound bites that are frequently represented in newspapers and other print and screen based media. If Armstrong’s books were a foundation for establishing his narrative, then the day-to-day narratives are pushed through Twitter and other media. Notably, Armstrong recently started a podcast where he speaks with people that he finds interesting about music, culture and many things besides cycling. Through such means Armstrong is able to draw a more nuanced picture of himself, and he is able to continually update the stories he tells about himself. Ultimately, Armstrong seems to be very adept at creating narratives, which are for Fisher’s purposes stories, and then getting them to his audience.

The enormity of the power of stories comes into focus as one considers the vast array of communication and meaning-making functions that Fisher’s narrative paradigm implicates. Latour and Woolgar’s *Laboratory Life* describes the idea that scientific “fact” is based on the process of social construction. These constructions function to describe (in some cases) a natural phenomenon, and various hypotheses can be adjusted until a workable solution (or story) can be told to describe the event or phenomenon in question (1986, p. 252-58). Basically, this idea highlights that science seeks to create stories that explain various situations and phenomena. Even these constructions, and the stories that are told about them, are affected by the
social forces that Foucault describes in his *Discourse on Language* (1972, p. 215-37). Who gets to tell the story, and when? Who gets to hear the stories? Such factors make stories a privileged action that has political implications.

Fisher clearly expresses the presuppositions that give his narrative paradigm structure by explaining:

(1) Humans are essentially storytellers; (2) the paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is “good reasons” which vary in form among communication situations, genres, and media; (3) the production and practice of good reasons is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character . . . (4) rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative begins—their inherent awareness of *narrative* probability, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing *narrative fidelity*, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives (1982, p. 7-8).

So, as storytelling creatures, humans make sense of their lives by understanding stories; they inform others of their exploits by telling stories, and stories form a basis for the way the human experience is understood. Further, telling and retelling stories allows an individual to test the fidelity of their stories. These points are clear from Fisher’s narrative paradigm. Burke’s notion of dramatism adds even more to consider. Beyond a sort of journalistic who, what, when, where, why, and how, Burke’s notion of dramatism functions as a way to speak of human action and what might be a motivator of that action. While there are distinctions between these two
theories, the main point I want to emphasize is that both theories discuss the notion that communication is an act grounded in symbolic transfer. The way that one speaks about him or herself and is spoken of is a critical element in the communication world, nothing less than the very nature of identity construction is at stake.

As Walter Ong explains “oral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all,” but writing has never existed without orality (1982, p. 8). The distinction that Ong makes allows for one to understand distinctions between different forms of knowledge transfer. At various times stories are captured in different media, as narratives told by one person to another, or written accounts of these narratives, and even audio recordings of narratives. Ong’s point allows interesting insight into the development of inscription, and accordingly affords the freedom that we can consider narratives that are captured in a number of different ways for consideration. Thus, Lance Armstrong’s statements will be considered the same, whether he wrote them in his autobiography or whether he spoke them to Oprah in an interview. No matter how he told these stories, they intentionally create a sense of identity and telling them seeks to transfer meaning to a general audience.

Interpretation

Every time I pick up Derrida’s “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,” I am immediately immersed in an opening quote by
Montaigne; “We need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things” (as cited in Derrida, 1993, p. 223). The challenge of understanding the way things are understood is striking and has great interest to me. Accordingly, I seek to explore the ways that interpretations can be drawn from the symbolic communication of Lance Armstrong and the way that it represents his changing identity throughout the course of his career before and after his “fall from grace.”

This difficulty in interpretation is further complicated when one considers McLuhan’s dictum, that the medium is the message (1967, p. 1-8). Despite this difficulty, some examination of possible interpretations of messages is quite possible with the proper vocabulary. Though I think Fisher’s distinctions between the narrative paradigm and dramatism provide valuable critique of dramatism, the vocabulary built into dramatism allows for clear analysis.

*Dramatism*

Kenneth Burke’s dramatism provides the potential of and vocabulary for describing events to create some sense of understanding. For Burke, dramatism helps us to answer “what is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” (1969, p. xv).

Dramatism involves analyzing a text according to each of five “terms:” Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, and Purpose. Burke explains that:

In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names
the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (agent) performed the act, what means of instruments he used (agency), and the purpose (1969, p. xv). Together, these terms form what can be called the dramatistic pentad.

By understanding dramatism, we have a way of understanding the symbolic power of language and all forms of communication. Blakesley describes this clearly in explaining that “language is a form of symbolic action” for dramatism. Thus, “the dramatistic view of the world holds that language is not simply a tool to be used,” but that it is “the basis for human beings acting together and thus all human relations” (2002, p. 4). Functionally, the pentadic relationship develops understanding by considering the relationships between the act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose of a given act. Therefore, by viewing language as representative of symbolic action, we have means of understanding the potential of motive by examining the rhetorical implications of language use. Though it is clear by understanding some of the aspects of Fisher’s narrative theory that Burke’s understanding of language is not explicitly unique, the emphasis that Burke places on symbolic action as a form of language use advances his theoretical contributions significantly for the purpose of considering the arena of human activity which Burke memorably called “the human barnyard” (1969, p. xvii). Lest we think that Fisher was entirely critical of Burke, it should be noted that Fisher calls Burke’s notion about rhetoric as the substance of symbolic transfer “the most revolutionary move in the twentieth century regarding rhetoric” (1987, p. 18).
Interpretive Criticism of Armstrong

After exploring the ways that stories can express attitudes, I now turn to the stories themselves. Though analysis of motivation can be complex, terminologies from dramatism provide a rich method of conducting analysis. Conducting dramatistic analysis allows us to explore the ways that Armstrong’s stories express his motives and attitudes toward doping. By considering these implications I hope to explore the broader identity performance that Armstrong enacts through face work relating to doping.

Examining language as a medium of identity performance allows for insight into the motivations and biases of a subject. Though emphasis in this section focuses on textual renderings of Armstrong’s stories, symbolic action could also be considered to provide an artifact of analysis. Indeed, different lenses of interpretation of any given action or statement can provide interesting insights, which allow for more understandings of the underlying motives and implications of meanings.

There is an interesting body of scholarship that provides interpretive criticism of Armstrong and some of the narratives that are associated with him. These narratives allow the development and discovery of themes through critical readings of Armstrong’s speech acts. Several of these texts, including those by Butryn and Masucci, and Sparkes, analyze his communication practice in *It’s Not About the Bike* (Armstrong and Jenkins, 2001).
One of the notable interpretations of Armstrong’s work comes in the form of a “cyborg counternarrative” by Ted Butryn and Matthew Masucci, which pays particular attention to instances of “juxtaposition and convergence of identity and technology,” and ultimately confronts Armstrong’s “status as a cyborg ‘hero’” (2003, p. 125). Methodologically, this study is grounded as a critical narrative approach, which allows researchers to manage “multiple identifications against more traditional social expectations” (2003, p. 127-128). Accordingly, such analyses allow for new and more varied forms of understanding and constructing narrative.

Similarly, Andrew Sparkes examines similar themes as those discussed by Butryn and Masucci, but Sparkes seeks to continue in advancing the discussion on Armstrong by offering even more alternative readings pushing toward understandings of ways that identity is shaped through and by narrative (2004, p. 398). Thus, as stories are told by and about Armstrong, the culture surrounding Armstrong changes the potential for understanding identity and embodiment. Sparkes explains that “culture speaks itself through an individual’s story by providing the narrative resources for the construction of a particular self” in a certain time and under specific “sociopolitical conditions” (p. 421). Thus, understandings of culture, embodiment, and identity are all interwoven. The interwoven nature of culture and embodiment allow for a rich appreciation of the complexity of identity construction and performance.

Other studies have come at understanding the ways that Armstrong’s identity is portrayed in different ways. One study by Bryan Denham and Andrea
Duke seeks to explore portrayals of Armstrong in U.S. and International news (2009). This was achieved by analyzing the distinctions between news coverage about Armstrong in domestic and international news articles. They concluded that identities could be portrayed differently within different cultural boundaries (p. 126).

The variety of these interpretive works highlights the multiplicity of different readings and interpretations that one can have. A major difficulty in interpretive research is considering the role of the interpreter or scholar in the work. While much more positivistic scholarship seeks to exclude the researcher, interpretive work axiologically embraces the identity of the researcher. This section embraces both the difficulty of presenting impartially and understanding that bias is always present. The stories that are considered in this chapter were selected because of their impact, so even the selection of stories is based on interpretation and then either included or excluded.

**The Armstrong Stories**

This chapter seeks to draw similarities and distinctions in the stories Armstrong tells about himself before and after his confession of doping. By considering the ways that Armstrong’s platform changes over time, insight can be gleaned into which portions of Armstrong’s story are more stable and which sections have changed. These inconsistencies allow a closer examination of Armstrong’s identity performance and the way that it has developed in the light of
his doping scandal. The primary texts for this analysis are Armstrong’s pre-confession autobiographical works and the tape and transcript of Armstrong’s confession itself. Admittedly each of these texts brings different analytical needs in terms of content and media.

As demonstrated in the different interpretations offered by Butryn and Masucci, and Sparkes, different stories can be interpreted in multiple ways. These stories, in and of themselves, are open to interpretation and reinterpretation. However, I hold that there is use in paying attention to the nature of each story for the sake of gaining insight into the rhetorical position of the author. Richard Weaver’s *The Ethics of Rhetoric* advances the idea that one’s statements can provide a lens to understand that individual’s ethical stance (1985). This adds to the idea that consideration of the speech acts of an individual can allow for insight into their motivation and for further understanding of their general rhetorical position. By performing dramatistic analysis to examine the pentadic ratios in key Armstrong narratives, we can begin to generalize some understanding of how Armstrong portrayed himself while proclaiming his innocence and after he admitted to doping.

**Pre-Confession Narrative: Hard Work**

Armstrong’s first ghost written autobiography, *It’s Not About the Bike* (2000), is a story of hard work overcoming any obstacle. The major arc of the book describes Armstrong’s cycling experiences and his cancer diagnosis. However, after the cancer treatments, Armstrong’s discussion of his hard work takes center stage.
Armstrong begins his hard work narrative by grounding himself as an every day guy. He asks, “how do you slip back into the ordinary world?” (p. 182) as if elite cycling is an ordinary world. He explains, “people think of my comeback as a triumph, but in the beginning, it was a disaster” (p. 182). And long before Armstrong ever told Joe Rogan that he wasn’t ready to confess when he confessed to Oprah, Armstrong explains that he wasn’t ready to get back to cycling. Armstrong heightens the impact of his eventual hard work by explaining, “deep down, I wasn’t ready” (p. 183).

During his comeback narrative, Armstrong recounts dropping out of a race (p. 186) and telling his coach (Chris Carmichael) and Manager Bill Stapleton that he was “done” (p. 189). He recounts moving back to the United States after having packed in 24 hours speaking of his efforts as if they were extraordinary. “In 24 hours we did more than most people do in two weeks” (p. 188). After being a “bum” (p. 191) Armstrong describes how his support team motivated him by providing him with a target “one last race, the U.S. Pro Championships” (p. 194). To prepare for this Armstrong describes a somewhat romanticized back to basics training regime in Boone, North Carolina. There, Armstrong explains, Carmichael challenged him (Armstrong) that he could not get his wattage over 500. After that, Armstrong said, “all we did was eat, sleep, and ride bikes” (p. 195). “We rode in the rain every day. The cold seared my lungs, and with every breath I blew out a stream of white frost, but I didn’t mind. It made me feel clean” (195). This moment of breakthrough was motivated by a challenge, was fueled by Armstrong’s hard work. The rhetoric of
purification through the cycling in the “constant fog and drizzle that seemed to muffle the piney woods” (p. 195) highlights the effects that Armstrong’s work had on him. After this, Armstrong’s story highlights the conception of his child through IVF and his re-found determination to be a successful cyclist.

If the emphasis of such challenges and setbacks seems more focused, than the actual succeeding then consideration that highlighting the low points highlighted the impact of Armstrong’s eventual hard work. This is strong storytelling that his shaped to be powerful. This story emphasizes the impact of hard work. Now, let’s pause and consider the rhetoric of Armstrong’s “hard work” narrative through pentadic analysis.

**Act:** Armstrong attributes success to hard work.

**Agent:** Lance Armstrong

**Agency:** Commercials, autobiographical text

**Scene:** Across a popular audience which in many cases was largely American allowing Armstrong’s story to tap into the grand narrative of the American Dream (work hard, and you will be rewarded!).

**Purpose:** To deny doping allegations

**Ratio:** Act/Purpose: This act allows Armstrong to explain his success in a way that distances him from doping allegations.
Analysis of Armstrong’s Hard Work Narrative

One of the main narratives that surrounds Armstrong is that of hard work. Armstrong’s Nike commercial perhaps best sums up this narrative:

“This is my body and I can do whatever I want to it. I can push it, study it. Tweak it. Listen to it. Everyone wants to know what I’m on? What am I on? I’m on my bike busting my ass six hours a day. What are you on?” (Macur, 2014, p. 168).

This text captures his pre-confession tone of strength and defiance remarkably well. The infamous Michelle Ferrari spoke of Armstrong, before either of them were banned from sporting, explaining that, “Lance does not admit weakness,” and he explains that even at a time when Armstrong was weak “he would not show it” (Coyle, 2004, p. 9). One of Armstrong’s closest friends, John Korioth, explains that people have a hard time believing that Armstrong is “not a happy-go-lucky, Mr. Smiley, save-the world-from-cancer type person.” He goes on to explain that Lance Armstrong is always the alpha, whether dealing in sports or in business (Coyle, 2004, p. 7). In his second book, Armstrong describes himself as being “a regular, hardworking, motivated, complicated, occasionally pissed-off, T-shirt guy” (2004, p. 25). Based on this, it is clear Armstrong values his temperament and his ability to work hard. These statements highlight at once Armstrong’s motive to ground himself by claiming to be a regular guy and also to exemplify his work effort as being his means to success.

Throughout Armstrong’s autobiography, this narrative of hard work continues. At one point, he explains that one does not simply fly up a hill, but rather
he “struggle[s] slowly and painfully up a hill, and maybe,” if he “work[s] very hard,” [he] might get to the top ahead of everyone else” (2001, p.3). In another spot, he describes the key to his success in beating his adversaries as being specific hard training (2001, p. 233). Macur describes an interview that Armstrong did with SBS Television out of Australia. Armstrong told them, “There’s no secret here. We have the oldest secret in the book—hard work” (2014, p. 143). Armstrong credits cancer with being “the best thing that ever happened” to him, because it cured him of “laziness.” He explains that before he had the illness he “was a slacker” who got paid a lot of money for a job that he did not do “100 percent” (2004, p. 7).

The invocation of such rhetoric readily feeds into the grand narrative of the American Dream, which espouses the notion that hard work is rewarded. By leaning on the rhetoric of hard work Armstrong creates an argument toward identification that he is an American and that hard work pays off. The subtle nationalism in this argument appeals to the broader audience in American sporting culture and thus can be considered a powerful tool for identification in Armstrong’s narrative arsenal.

**Pre-Confession Narrative: Cancer Shield**

Perhaps one of the most upsetting techniques that Armstrong used to deny doping allegations was to signal his status as a cancer survivor as proof that he would not dope. When asked about doping before winning the 1999 Tour de France Armstrong replied, “What can I do, I’ve been on my deathbed and I’m not stupid”
(Macur, 2014, p. 142-143). Another time, to insinuate that he would not dope or cycle at the Tour de France, Armstrong argued “they say stress causes cancer so if you want to avoid cancer, don't come to the Tour de France and wear the yellow jersey” (Macur, 2014, p. 143). Through these comments Armstrong is making the argument that he would not dope either because he had cancer or that he feared that cancer would come back from being stressed while cycling. But, let's take a look at the different moving parts in this story.

**Act:** Armstrong defends against doping allegations by noting his experience with cancer.

**Agent:** Lance Armstrong.

**Agency:** Commercials, autobiographical text. Interviews.

**Scene:** The cultural climate surrounding cancer highlights the distinction between a cancer victim and a cancer survivor. The rhetoric of identification in casting himself as a warrior against cancer creates opportunity for identification.

**Purpose:** To deny doping allegations and to silence critics.

**Ratio:** Agent/purpose. This highlights Armstrong’s ability to defend himself by referring to his narrative.
Analysis of Armstrong’s Cancer Shield

Armstrong frequently used a rhetorical maneuver to defend himself by explaining that he would not dope because he was a cancer survivor. This move came to be referred to as Armstrong’s “cancer shield.” In instances like this, he would refer to what became known as Armstrong’s “cancer shield.” In this maneuver, Armstrong would rhetorically “use his survivor’s story to gain sympathy” (Macur, 2014, p. 143). Armstrong’s second co-authored autobiography, Every Second Counts, functions enthymatically as a cancer shield. The text outlines his success and his struggles and narratively links his success in cycling with overcoming cancer. Throughout the text he recounts “the challenge of living in the aftermath of his experience” (2003, cover flap). In describing the challenges of life after cancer and the concern he had for it, Armstrong also describes the “hundreds of drug tests” (2003, p. 4) and claims that he was “surely the most drug-tested man on the planet,” which he claims involved 30-40 drug tests a year (2003, p. 60). All of this was “welcome,” he explains, because it was the “only proof” he had of his “innocence” (2003, p. 60). Journalists have argued that Armstrong’s It’s Not About the Bike made him out to be a “Jesus” figure describing how his “fans waved their wristbands and reached for him like Jesus” (Sunday Independent, 2012). The article goes on to cite his victory speech at the 2005 Tour de France where he expressed sorrow for “the people who don’t believe in cycling, the cynics, the skeptics.” He doubles down and says, “I’m sorry you can’t dream big and I’m sorry you don’t believe in miracles” (Sunday Independent, 2012).
In one notable instance, where doping whistleblower Paul Kimmage, a former cyclist turned journalist, goaded Armstrong in an interview by asking why Armstrong admired dopers. Here is an account of Armstrong’s response to Kimmage,

“What is your name again?

Confession: My heart was racing. Struggling to control my nerves, I explained who I was and reminded him that he had refused my request to be interviewed. Then it was his turn to blink -- rather than address the question, he went straight for the cancer shield.

"When I decided to come back, for what I think is a very noble reason, you said: 'Folks the cancer has been in remission for four years but our cancer has now returned', meaning me. I am here to fight this disease. I am here so that I don't have to deal with it, you don't have to deal with it, none of us have to deal with it, my children don't have to deal with it but yet you said that I am the cancer. And the cancer is out of remission. So I think it goes without saying: No, we’re not going to sit down and do an interview. And I don't think anybody in this room would sit down for that interview. You are not worth the chair that you are sitting on, with a statement like that, with a disease that touches everybody around the world” (Sunday Independent, 2012).
In this statement, Kimmage captures Armstrong’s powerful use of the cancer shield, his power as a cancer spokesperson, and a domineering side of his personality. Ultimately, the strength of Armstrong’s denials would magnify the damage done to his reputation.

In the instance described above, Armstrong’s act, combined with the purpose of his statements, created a strong rhetorical situation wherein one would be instantly othered and have to take a stance against the hero figure. Ostensibly, Armstrong’s goal in this is not merely to deny the doping allegations, which he did vehemently, but also to silence those who would speak against him. In this example, Armstrong equates Kimmage’s worth as being less than that of the chair on which Kimmage sat. The strength of his cancer defense, and of the attack on Kimmage, read differently before and after Armstrong’s confession. The change in interpretation of these events is key. In a pre-confession instance it seems more likely that Armstrong’s attack could be justified by arguing that he was defending himself against unjust claims. In a post-confession world, though, Armstrong comes across looking poorly because of the overwhelming severity and personal nature of his attack. This example highlights the ways that audience interpretation of events has the capacity to change over time.
Lance Armstrong Confession

After refusing to dispute USADA’s reasoned decision, Armstrong was in limbo after having tacitly admitted to doping, but without having made it formal. When he scheduled his interview with Oprah, the world (including me) was expecting to hear a confession and an apology. Armstrong’s words following the Oprah confession reveal his feelings about his confession. In a more retrospective tone, Armstrong acknowledges that his confession “was not well received” (Rogan, 2015). When Rogan asks Armstrong about how he felt about his confession, whether he felt like he had any relief, Armstrong replied, “not immediately, . . . but it’s not like I walked out from Oprah thinking ‘oh my God, I feel amazing’ that was an ass whooping” (Rogan, 2015). Armstrong ultimately explains how he felt during the interview and why consented to have the interview:

I wasn’t emotionally ready to do that interview. I wasn’t in a place where I think that I sit today . . . It is a position of contrition and understanding the tremendous sense of betrayal that’s out there. My perception of that today is much sharper than it was three years ago when I sat with her. The feds and other lawsuits forced my hand. I had to sit there with that because I knew I was going to be sitting with her, or you, or Tom Brokaw or I was going to be sitting with a government lawyer being deposed, being videoed, and being leaked. (Rogan, 2015)

Armstrong’s statements highlight the idea that he felt forced into confessing to Oprah. Perhaps these difficulties contributed to the lack in popularity of
Armstrong’s confession. To more closely consider the different elements of Armstrong’s apology, I turn back to dramatistic analysis.

**Agent:** Lance Armstrong.

**Agency:** Oprah Special television interview.

**Scene:** Culturally, this interview fits into the genre of a public confession.

**Purpose:** To admit to doping and minimize reputational damage.

**Ratio:** Act/Purpose: Armstrong admits to doping but attempts to minimize culpability by spreading blame.

**Analysis**

During Oprah’s interview with Armstrong, he admitted to using performance-enhancing drugs, he admitted to being at fault, and he admitted to being “flawed,” but he did not offer an apology for his actions. Though Armstrong admits that he is flawed, he does admit that he, in Oprah’s words, helped to “paint that picture” of the perfect, cancer-surviving cyclist. Armstrong claims that he lost himself in the “momentum” of the lie. Here’s a sample of the text as he discusses the narrative that he created:

... I know the truth. The truth isn’t what was out there. The truth isn’t what I said, and now it’s gone—this story was so perfect for so long. And I mean that, as I try to take myself out of the situation and I look at it. [Begins counting on fingers] you overcome the disease, you win
the Tour de France seven times, you have a happy marriage, you have children, I mean, it’s just this mythic perfect story, and it wasn’t true” (Oprah Interview).

Further, he explains the kind of control he tried to place by controlling the narrative that surrounded his story:

I was a bully in the sense that I tried to control the narrative and if I didn’t like what someone said—and for whatever reasons in my own head, whether I viewed that as somebody being disloyal, or a friend turning on you or whatever—I tried to control that and said “that’s a lie, they’re liars.”

Through these statements Armstrong outlines the importance of controlling the narrative. Ultimately such maneuverability is granted by Armstrong’s unique position as a cancer survivor and as a sport superstar. Without a tremendous platform to lend ethos, Armstrong would have had greater difficulty creating a scene where such rhetorical gymnastics were acceptable. In seeking to justify such behavior, Armstrong explains that he has been this way for his “entire life.” While I would certainly argue that Armstrong worked to drive the narrative, it is also prudent to point out that such lies drive their creator just the same. Thus, Armstrong’s narrative is a thing that he seeks to control, but that also affects the way that he furthers the narrative.

The televised public confession is a noted genre, and Oprah has officiated her fair share of these, but something in Armstrong’s performance failed to impress the
audience. Overall, Armstrong’s television performance offered very little in the way of apology. Even when there were moments of admission of wrongdoing, they were peppered with “but’s” and attempts toward spreading the blame. From a scenic perspective, Armstrong was on television with Oprah engaged in a performance in the genre of a confession. Though these are often teary-eyed spectacles, Armstrong’s demeanor could be described as sober. Functionally, his admission offered revelation without much in the way of remorse. To this end, while an avowed purpose of these sorts of statements might be to apologize, Armstrong’s comments read more like an effort to avoid being scapegoated.

In this case, the audience likely expected to receive their sacrificial pound of flesh and a hearty apology, based on the commonplaces of a television confession. Instead, they got someone who was much more interested in preserving his identity and not being the scapegoat for all of cycling’s many drug and enforcement related issues. The disappointment of the audience is a classic example of disappointment because of expectation violation.

Post-Confession Narrative

Following Armstrong’s confession he went relatively quiet. In 2015 when Armstrong spoke with Joe Rogan he circumspectly notes,

For the diehard cycling fans I didn’t say enough. ‘You didn’t name names, you didn’t call anybody out, it wasn’t detailed enough, you’re holding back, you’re protecting people.’ That’s what they said. That’s a very small
percentage of the population. For the majority of the population those first five minutes was way too much information. They were like ‘what the fuck did I just hear? Like blood bags, EPO, testosterone, transfusions, cheating?’ It was way too much (Rogan, 2015).

Armstrong explains that for one “camp” there was too much information and for the other camp that Armstrong was holding back. Perhaps most tellingly, Armstrong’s posture still avoids taking blame for the actions. These statements implicate audiences in perceiving his apology differently, but they do not provide commentary on Armstrong’s apology or stance toward apologizing. Ultimately, Armstrong seems to refuse blame while acknowledging the problematic nature of his actions. To explore this more, we turn once more to break this down dramatistically.

**Act:** Armstrong admits fault, but refuses to be the scapegoat.

**Agent:** Lance Armstrong.

**Agency:** Through interview with Oprah and relatively few other interviews.

**Scene:** In a primetime interview on nationwide television.

**Purpose:** To publicly admit to doping.

**Ratio:** **Purpose/Act** : Armstrong admits doping – but he does not take the blame as scapegoat.
Analysis of Armstrong’s Refusal to Be Cycling’s Scapegoat

Following Armstrong’s confession to Oprah, one of the major strategies he played was that of the scapegoat. In this manner, he sought to spread the blame around and simultaneously played the martyr figure that symbolically took all of the blame. After being stripped of his Tour de France titles, Armstrong compared himself to the evil figure Voldemort from the Harry Potter series. Armstrong asked, "Who’s that character in Harry Potter they can’t talk about? Voldemort? The one everybody wants to pretend never lived" and goes on to clarify, "But you can't think that way. The world can't think that way, the historians can't think that way, the guys I raced against can't think that way, and you guys can't think that way. It happened, everything happened, we know what happened" (Dickinson, 2015, p. 15).

Armstrong’s invocation of a “Voldemort,” or evil figure, points to the idea that Armstrong is, after his confession, unwilling to take the fall for all of the actions that he had taken. Based on an ethic of rationalizing the notion that doping isn’t cheating if everyone does it, Armstrong is not the sole guilty party. The animosity that the public felt toward Armstrong likely comes in proportion to the vehemence with which he denied his wrongdoing before the fall. Armstrong did not simply deny doping, he proclaimed his innocence with indignation and tore at the reputations of those who would dare to attack him. Likewise, I expect the public would have been more pleased to see the spectacle of the humbled gladiator as opposed to the still combatant role that Armstrong played.
Rhetorically, Armstrong’s performance was not hailed as a success. As chapter three pointed out Armstrong’s apology was generally weakened and mocked cynically. The *Sunday Times* of London points out that Armstrong’s interview did more to shed light on Armstrong’s personality than on his misdeeds. But they explain, a “weepy confession,” from an athlete who is known for being severe, “would have stretched credibility excruciatingly” (“Confessions of a con man,” 2013). The difficulty for this comes in the lack of apparent shame or remorse. The *Times* goes on to note “hints of true contrition were difficult to locate in his coolly disciplined verbal choreographing of the exchanges with Oprah.” They go on to explain, “there was something chilling” about the televised confession because of the “gulf between the enormity of his misdeeds and his precisely controlled responses.” They seem to capture the overall mood of the confession by arguing that Armstrong “seemed” to be doing little more than “paying lip-service to the raw need for genuine and total owning-up” (“Confessions of a con man,” 2013).

**Conclusions**

Ultimately, though all humans tell stories, the impact of some stories reaches a more broad audience for some than for others. Because of his legion of fans, Lance Armstrong’s narrative was able to spread throughout the media and across the entire world. Lance Armstrong is not just a person; he is the embodiment of a global brand. However, the way that Armstrong has created his brand is also the cause of difficulty in continuing to communicate this brand. Through time and shifting public
opinion the balance of Armstrong's brand has largely shifted. However, through the
stories that he tells, and based on the rhetorical comments he has made, we can
begin to understand some of the dominant stories that Armstrong tells about
himself and how these situate him ethically.

Because of the tremendous power of Armstrong’s narrative and the stories
that compose it, the public was justifiably upset when he confessed to doping
allegations. One of the main attributes of Armstrong’s pre-confession narratives is
that they make him appealing to an everyday person. By speaking of himself as
being a regular guy who happens to work hard, he appeals to a very broad audience
in terms that they can understand. His hard work narrative furthers this
identification by making it seem as if a person could be just as successful if they
could work as hard as he did. Perhaps Armstrong's fatal flaw is the outraged
rhetoric of indignation that he used throughout his career. The transition of
narratives from being a hard working person defending himself to being an
admitted cheat who blasted those spoke against him does not create any audience
sympathy.

One of the takeaway lessons one could generalize from these findings is to
consider the transition between message changes. While Armstrong’s camp may
have lightened its rhetoric before changing the story, it seems that it was too little
change that came way too late. By this point, the messages repeatedly proclaiming
his innocence and attacking those who attacked him were relatively commonplace
even in the broader public.
In addition to trying to soften the severity of a transition, Armstrong would, perhaps, have been well served in seeking to pass less of the blame around during his Oprah confessional. While it seems reasonable on some levels that Armstrong was seeking to preserve his reputation (in so far as that was possible), it might have been rhetorically beneficial for him to shoulder the blame in that moment and then to work toward educating the public about the culture of doping in cycling in further efforts.

At the time of Armstrong’s confession, and even at the time of this writing, he is still facing significant legal issues. It is worth noting that the content of his confession was likely carefully constructed to allow him the best possible legal recourse. However, if the judicial system has a court, then it is also fare to extend the metaphor to the court of public opinion. Based on my impressions of Armstrong’s confession, he was tried in the media court of public opinion and found guilty.
CHAPTER FIVE
WHAT CAN LANCE ARMSTRONG TEACH US ABOUT COMMUNICATION?

The issues that surround doping and cycling are rich and varied. The broader purpose of this dissertation seeks to explore how identity is constructed and affected with regard to doping in sport. Lance Armstrong became the face of this dissertation to provide specific examples and because of the widespread popularity of his doping confession. As a person and as an athlete Armstrong provides an interesting case study to explore identity performance.

To explore Armstrong's identity performance without considering the environment would be fruitless. Accordingly, Chapter 1 explores some of the aspects that form cycling's rhetorical situation. Money, media, and performance play a tremendous role in exploring the cyclists’ motives and why and how they succeed. However, man is not an inherently rational creature and prejudices and past events affect the way that we balance our perceptions of goodness in any given action. With this in mind, Chapter 2 advanced the theory that one’s perceptions of someone’s character are affected by their past actions. Violating the expectations of an audience can be incredibly damaging (if the audience is displeased) or powerfully wonderful (if the audience is pleased). This idea can be especially useful to crisis communicators considering identity construction.

Stories are arguably the basic building block of identity construction. We come to understand stories, and to construct our own in terms of our own symbolic
understandings. As print media disseminates stories in a way that is often perceived as credible, the way that these narratives are created is important. By considering the ways that journalists reacted to Lance Armstrong’s admission to doping, future individuals might be able to respond to the public in a more immediate manner. As narratives provide the epistemological basis for identity the way that these ideas are created and conveyed can be tremendously revealing. By exploring some of Lance Armstrong’s main narrative themes, we can consider that Armstrong’s motives are complex and prevent Armstrong from being cast as a pure hero or a pure villain. Such circumspection allows for appreciation of the situational complexities that exist in all things. Now, to compliment these earlier findings, I want to explore recent trends in doping, revisit Lance Armstrong, and to consider the ways that doping, ethics, and media form basis of Lance Armstrong’s continued identity construction efforts.

**Considering Armstrong’s Identity**

When considering concepts of rhetoric, *ethos, logos* and *pathos* often come to mind. So, too, does the concept of *kairos*. Another aspect of rhetoric that is less frequently considered is *mythos*, used as the basis of the word *mythology*. Mythos implies an additional subjective lens of interpretation, something extra to consider. For me, all of the research I have conducted on Lance Armstrong’s narratives points to the importance of *mythos*, to the way/s the Armstrong story is captured, told, and re-told. Firstly, there is no one Armstrong story. In his earlier biography, the story
told differs substantially from those that are printed (or circulated) after Armstrong's re-telling of the story in the Oprah interview. After all, rhetorically, his Oprah interview both edited the old Armstrong story, confirmed parts of circulating and competing other stories, and told a new story. At the core, the fundamental assumptions and characterizations that had been previously made (often in good faith) were then changed.

This does not mean the stories were ever wrong or right, or true or untrue; but that the casting of further information forever changed the way the old stories had to be interpreted. The *mythos* and the story of Armstrong's story changed. For better or worse, Armstrong is a hugely influential character (to this day) in cycling. He cast an aura over cycling that has not yet diminished. But, through the creation of stories, and new and continuing events, I do expect the Armstrong story will continue to change and evolve and eventually be passed by other stories.

To talk about the Armstrong story at all is to talk about cycling and about an individual. The basic findings of this dissertation, as I discussed in Chapter 1, are caught up in understanding the situation in which the events described occur—the *kairos*. To try to speak of anything away from the situation in which it occurs (in so far as we are able) is to avoid speaking of the thing in any systematic sense. Nothing exists in a theoretical vacuum, and to try to move beyond that is theoretically interesting but also dubious. Thus my considerations of Armstrong and of cycling are dialogical in the ways they inform one another.
Armstrong’s Identity Performance After the Confession

After admitting to doping in his confession to Oprah, Lance Armstrong kept a low profile. I track his reemergence as occurring around April, 2014, when he appeared in a video for Outside, an outdoor magazine. Armstrong’s efforts following his confession paint the former champion as a slightly melancholy regular guy who is attempting to get on with his life.

In April 2014, Armstrong appeared in a video for Outside where he demonstrates how to change a bicycle tire (“How to Fix”, 2014). This video is one of Armstrong’s earliest public media moves after confessing to doping. The video serves as an attempt to cast Armstrong as an everyman former great cyclist. The video seems to grasp at a dry humor, but has been called “depressing” by Bleacher Report’s Gabe Zaldivar (2014).

Outside’s film begins with Armstrong, dressed like a bicycle mechanic, saying, “Hi, I’m Lance Armstrong, seven-time winner of the Tour de France.” As he says this, a name bar with Armstrong’s name and the title “7-Time Tour de France Champion” appears. As Armstrong says this there is an audible ding when an asterisk appears over the accolade. Armstrong shakes his head as he dryly intones, “Hey, I didn’t write the script.” This line highlights a sort of tongue-in-cheek circumspection that Armstrong seems to take toward his circumstances. This film firmly moves Armstrong past the mea culpa stage and toward an attempt at rebuilding his brand. Despite the fact that the tone of this film is awkward, it marks a distinct difference from the posture that he maintained around the time of his confession.
If Armstrong’s major difficulties after his confession were that he felt reserved, then this appearance portrayed a different aspect of Armstrong, if not exactly a warmer more sincere version. Perhaps Armstrong’s re-emergence was an attempt to relate to common people and to distance himself from the somewhat reserved persona that spoke so unsuccessfully to Oprah. Sam Dansie, writing for Bike Radar explains that “Outside’s publicity stunt featuring a faux-humbled Armstrong is likely to get the views” but notes that Bike Radar’s how-to videos are “better” than Armstrong’s video (2014).

Though Armstrong has kept a relatively low profile at first, after a while he began to make more public appearances. However, he encountered serious backlash as he tried to step back into the peripheries of sport and public life more broadly. When Armstrong’s former teammate, George Hincapie, held the George Hincapie Gran Fondo cycling race in Greenville, South Carolina, Armstrong had planned to attend. Hincapie has explained that Armstrong had been given authorization to ride, however when USADA and USA cycling heard of the event that changed. Hincapie declined to indicate who the original governing body was (Rogers, 2014).

Though many have written about Armstrong and even interviewed him in the time after his confession, two interviews, one by Juliet Macur (2014), and another by John Richardson (2014) paint interesting impressions of the post confession Armstrong. These articles especially highlight my interpretations of Armstrong being cast as a fallen former champion attempting to rebuild. I’ll elaborate more on this below.
Richardson’s profile of Armstrong, entitled “Lance Armstrong in Purgatory: An After-Life” describes Armstrong in the wake after his confession. The article depicts an Armstrong that is notably different from the pre-confession Armstrong. While another might be more humbled, by a fall from the heights that Armstrong fell, Richardson describes Armstrong as a “lousy penitent” (2014). Though he is depicted as being a bit restless, but certainly not depressed or full of self-loathing. In this interview, he points out that he is no longer permitted to compete in sanctioned events – anywhere, ever. He explains, “anything I try to do, any sport, even archery and volleyball, I can't do it” (Richardson, 2014).

Armstrong is still also not ready to budge on the issue of doping. He calls his behavior where he lied and bullied cyclists and members of the press “indefensible” and “pure hubris.” But he also refuses to admit that he did not win the races he won, “nobody has stepped forward and said, ‘I really won those races.’ “’They didn’t award those jerseys to somebody else. I won those races” (Richardson, 2014).

And lest we get carried away with the value of doping, let’s also consider that winning the Tour de France is about achieving the perfect amount of preparation, fitness, mental fortitude, and luck. Serious crashes are common in cycling, and though those who eye the overall win work to avoid circumstances where crashes are more likely, crashing is not so much an if but a when. And despite Armstrong’s doping, he seemed to be the best of that. No one else during Armstrong’s time period rode with the same level of consistent dominance. Additionally, to attribute all of
Armstrong’s winning on doping would be to overlook the giant heap of luck that it takes to even complete the Tour de France once.

However, Armstrong’s inability to compete competitively or in sanctioned events has not prevented him from finding things to do. Richardson points out that Armstrong has continued to be active in the cancer community and sends out videos to various individuals who are battling cancer (2014). Richardson explains that Armstrong’s messages come across with “steely eyes and a steady smile, his natural abrasiveness adding a nice gritty texture to the underlying message.” This gritty confidence allows survivors to identify with Armstrong as a “fearless warrior” and to feel that they can be warriors too. Richardson names Armstrong, in part because of his style, “patron saint of fighting like a junkyard dog” (2014). Despite the fact that such things might seem small scale, they can still be perceived to be image repair efforts and they also demonstrate characterizations of Armstrong’s identity performance.

With regard to image repair, Armstrong seems to be making rhetorical adjustments in how he portrays himself. Notably when speaking with Joe Rogan, Armstrong refused Rogan’s attempts at minimizing the severity of Armstrong’s offenses (2015). While Armstrong’s motivations are uncertain it does seem that he is portraying himself carefully. Though Armstrong’s attacks on those who questioned him were harsh, it is very likely that Armstrong’s posturing in those cases was designed to repel further criticism. Richardson’s profile of Armstrong is
interesting in that it makes significant moves to distance Armstrong from the fallen athlete toward resuming his posture of being an inspiration to those with cancer.

This posturing signifies an awareness that changing the rhetorical situation can be useful and could strengthen the positive feelings of one of Armstrong’s most ardent constituencies. In June of 2016 he announced that he is starting a podcast called *Forward* ("Road", 2016). As he moves forward, he continues to be Lance Armstrong. He avows that cycling and sports will not be the main topic of concern with entertainment, music and the arts being areas of interest ("Lance Armstrong Launches," 2016).

While it is utterly uncertain what Armstrong’s future will hold, I find it plausible and even likely that his reputation will continue to recover. Even since the time that Armstrong admitted doping I perceive that the bitter and critical rhetoric that flavored stories about Armstrong has begun to wane. This is especially visible in profiles such as Richardson’s that depict a more circumspect Armstrong who has suffered because of his faults. Perhaps even gaining attention for his work with cancer patients could help his reputation to improve.

One of the major hurdles that remain in front of Armstrong at present is the status of the whistleblower case that the government started. It is commonly reported that Armstrong stands to lose a fortune if the courts do not find in his favor. Though Armstrong lost many corporate sponsors, I find it plausible that he will be able to generate income in the future. he is quick to note that his new podcast does not have any corporate backing ("Road", 2016). This suggests that he might be
intentionally portraying an image that lacks conspicuous consumption. So while money is a monetary way to understand Armstrong’s success or failure in this case the larger issue is his image. Would a negative court finding damage him further or cause the broader audience to take pity on him? It would be interesting to examine the way that journalists’ relationship with Armstrong continues to develop in light of this court case and compared to what it was in the earlier days of the scandal.

I have heard it said that statesmen are deceased politicians. This attempt at humor highlights the notion that time can lessen the severity of damage. Though I resist the term healing in this case—what we are talking about is plain. Will Armstrong’s ethos ever be strong again? I conjecture that the answer to this and other questions is always yes and no. Success is determined not only by what Armstrong hopes to get out of life and how he continues to portray himself, but also in how audiences continue to engage with his narrative. If Richardson’s interview is any indication, it seems that Armstrong would most enjoy continuing competition. Though his ban has caused difficulties for his future in competition, it does seem that he has begun to find ways to fill his athletic desires outside of sanctioned events. Fitness is a regular theme in his Twitter feed, and he is noted to participate in group rides, such as those mentioned in Richardson’s article (2014). As Armstrong has subtly changed in the way he presents himself, so too has cycling’s world of doping.
The Doping Problem Continues

Cycling and sport at large still faces the issue of doping. Not many weeks go by before one hears about another cycling with a positive reading. However, cycling is not the only sport to be haunted by the specter of doping. Frankly, doping seems to resist being discussed. It is only a matter of perspective and degree to say there has not been a recent doping scandal. However, just as soon another instance of doping seems to occur with limited public awareness. And, if there were awareness, I would argue that many instances of doping are met with public indifference.

If Armstrong’s confession of doping was flawed, then perhaps he is dealing with his situation in a more transparent manner (even if he is unwilling to take all of the blame). I conjecture that if the broader sport community moves toward more transparency in discussing doping it might help the problem. Doping should not be the scourge that is swept under the rug, because it seems to figuratively multiply when it is unchecked for a while. With this in mind, I’d like to turn toward issues of doping in the broader sporting community before turning back toward cycling.

Doping in the Broader Context

Regardless of how the public feels about an athlete, doping stories are almost a genre of their own in the media\(^3\). These stories draw awareness to issues of doping but do not help enforce doping policies. One of the major problems with anti-doping

\(^3\) At the time of this writing, the cycling junior time trial champion Gabriel Evans was suspended from competition in any sport for three and a half years after he admitted to taking EPO (Wynn, 2016).
rules is that they seem to be inconsistently applied. Sport sociologists Møller and Dimeo ask, in an article published for Velonews, why Armstrong’s Tour de France wins are nullified when others keep their records intact (2014). The problem is consistency. While Armstrong’s actions were egregious, is he to be expected to serve as the atoning sacrifice for all of the cyclists’ and even athletes from other sports misdeeds? I’m concerned that severely punishing Armstrong is a strong arm tactic to try and quiet doping and go back to pretending that it is not a problem. As Armstrong is now held accountable to doping, the rest of sport should acknowledge the issue. One issue that was prevalent during Armstrong’s time was that doping tests were not as sophisticated as the dopers. With this in mind, it is important that sport governing bodies takes an active role in actively pursuing doping tests in order to attempt to stay ahead of doping rather than pretending that it is not happening.

Recently, the Russian Athletics association has been banned from all international competition after a whistleblower provided evidence of a systemic doping program. This marks the first time that an entire country has been banned from international competition (“Russia Accepts”, 2015). Banning a country is a powerful punitive message and strikes me as a strong step toward acknowledging the doping problem. However, the sporting community and governing agencies will have to work all the harder to help ensure that sporting groups that have been found guilty of such actions can be more effectively policed in the future.
Møller and Dimeo argue, “Anti-doping has gone too far and now poses more of a threat to the spirit of athletic competition than a solution” (2014). Aside from the inconsistency in how rules are applied, Møller and Dimeo seem to suggest that anti-doping rules and punishments are being doled out as a public relations aid for sport. They cite a case where Tom Boonen tested positive (outside of competition) for using cocaine and was issued a ban. However, this is a problem because cocaine is banned only during competition. “These decisions were taken based upon public perception and image concerns—not the rules of the sport”(2014).

Most recently, tennis star Maria Sharapova tested positive for meldonium during the Australian Open. Meldonium is a drug that is commonly used to treat heart disease (“Maria Sharapova,” 2016). Meldonium is just the latest drug that is being used. The rules surrounding its use are in flux, and because of its prevalence the tests to detect it will likely become stronger. In April of 2016, 14 athletes had doping bans lifted because the rules for Meldonium violations changed (“Doping Suspensions”, 2016). Though these do not mean that investigations have ended, it does allow the athletes to continue training. Even Sharapova faced uncertainty after her ruling was handed down because of inconsistent scientific results surrounding the measurement of meldonium (“Maria Sharapova Offered”, 2016). Perhaps because of concerns like this, other athletes are anxious to stay above the fray. Andy Murray, in response to the Russian doping ban, argues that there needs to be more doping testing. He even goes so far as to argue that athletes should help give up some of their winnings to help cover the costs (“Andy Murray”, 2016). In response
to the Russian athletic ban, the International Olympic Committee announced that each Russian athlete who wanted to participate in the Olympics would have to undergo testing to prove that they are “clean” in order to compete (“Russian Athletes,” 2016). These issues and developments highlight the complications even in keeping abreast of doping rules. The complexity and flux in rules and regulations require constant monitoring in order for athletes to ensure that they are training and recovering in a legal manner.

The problem of doping is an ethical one and thus solutions must come by way of modifying interpretation of behavior by the wider social context. Lance Armstrong notes that using cortisone is legal in American Football, but not legal in cycling (Rogan, 2015). These sorts of inconsistencies highlight the differing norms at play within different sports and accordingly athletes from different sports are held to different levels of accountability. I think it is important to highlight the notion that doping rules are in place to protect athletes. However, the equal application of enforcement is absolutely vital for the rules to have any merit at all. Thus even the super star athletes that bring viewers and therefore money to the sport must be treated the same as their competitors.

*Cycling’s Omerta: Spiraling into Silence*

If the first rule of *Fight Club* is to avoid talking about fight club, what else is to be said? How does one speak against a topic that resists discussion? Additionally, to speak against doping was to be brought down. Elisabeth Noelle-Neuman’s spiral of
silence theory, which finds its grounding in communication theory, highlights the tendency that one has to hide their opinions when they feel that they are not in agreement with the majority opinion (1974, p. 44). The spiral of silence in this case relates to cycling’s code of silence around doping by creating a system wherein concealing use of doping is the accepted norm and that speaking about or against doping is to hold the less popular opinion.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the situation that cycling exists in, in terms of labor and resources, is one where a very few have the majority of the power. In this situation, those who have not are expected to support those who have in order to have worth and relevancy. One result of this situation is that the haves have everything; they have success, and therefore media coverage, and therefore sponsor support, and therefore resources to engage in cycling in more costly and successful ways.

One common defense of doping is to justify use of PEDs by claiming everyone was doing it. This is an *ad populum* argument that is built on considering the fairness of the sport. Does everyone play on an equal playing field or have equal chances for success? It seems to me that the goal of cycling and other competitive sports is to achieve the greatest potential for success that one can, by eating better, sleeping better, training better, and so on. The goal in all of these cases is never to have an equal basis with one’s peers, but to succeed. The distinction between claiming to dope for the sake of equality and then training and participating in other
activities for the sake of success seems philosophically suspect, though I readily see the reason that one would grasp on to any reason to justify one’s actions.

This relationship and differences between action and performance highlights the importance of rhetorical theory in considering these issues. If we continue the exploration of identification as a way of seeking unity and agreement, then we have to consider that the purpose of competition is to break these unities. The winning condition in cycling means that others do not win. To have the upper hand on a team means that other cyclists on the team are to support one rider. To win in cycling is to set the terms of what is acceptable within the peloton. Within the Tour, the overall leader has social power over the peloton to signal biological breaks or to cause the field to informally neutralize to allow an injured cyclist to rejoin the group. If this dominant power engages in doping, as most of the riders did during Armstrong’s tenure, then speaking against Armstrong is to speak against the dominant hegemonic voice.

Within the spot of cycling and within communication acts, different people may have different goals: to win, to appeal to a specific audience, to make money. There can be many motives for why one might do something. However, to speak of one’s goals is to speak of that which motivates. In considering identification, is it really fair to say that one seeks agreement? I think that it is. All communication is rhetorical. In an interview that was republished by Kairos News, Jacob Robertson opines that even silence is rhetorical (2011). While the value of meaning is always subjective, I would hold that silence could be just as powerful as not speaking.
However, in the case of power relationships, as is made clear for me by Foucault’s *Discourse on Language*, the power to speak and the power to be heard are different; power is a (possibly the) major factor at play in this case. One of the capabilities this power lends its possessors is the ability to reframe and change the nature of the discourse community. Accordingly, the balance of power must be considered in sport. If cyclists are only accountable to their sponsors, they will be very likely to push farther and farther into doping. However, if anti-doping measures are rigorously applied, it might help to curtail doping. While I acknowledge Møller and Dimeo’s concerns about anti-doping over moralizing sport, I see very little in the way of alternative. Though I am open to other ideas, I think doping will best be contained through purposeful, direct, and transparent action on the part of various sport governing bodies and teams.

Chapter 2 of this project allows an interesting case study in considering ways that an audience can deny doping allegations. While considering an athletes ethos and their perceived guilt for a rule infraction are separate and intertwined, this relationship is important for the ways that identity is managed. USADA’s reasoned decision against Lance Armstrong was not published in its typical manner. The decision was published in whole to the public all at once available on the Internet. Thousands of pages of interviews, evidence, and testimony all came together to form a persuasive message: Armstrong was a liar and a cheater. How else could one convince someone who does not want to be dissuaded? Even the most ardent supporter was forced to appreciate that Armstrong had engaged in an incredibly
sophisticated doping scheme and lied about these actions with righteous vehemence for years. Even in this case, information is not the end-all and be-all of persuasion. Emotional connections have the potential to run deep. One must also be prepared to have been wrong to see things in a different way. There is a certain humility that comes with the ability to listen and change one’s mind. It is this kind of humility that I think would allow one to repair a broken image in a public arena.

Armstrong’s performance with Oprah occurred on television. The televised mea culpa is an accepted format by virtue of its practice. However Lance Armstrong violated the expected narrative arc of the mea culpa by failing to express remorse. In listening to a very telling podcast interview that he conducted with Joe Rogan in December of 2015, Armstrong spells out that he was emotionally unprepared for the Oprah interview. USADA’s reasoned decision had forced Armstrong’s hand, and he was unprepared to play cards.

Based on his tone in the Rogan interview, Armstrong was still not remorseful for what he had done at the time of the recording. If anything, I would say that he was more circumspect about his situation and aware of the power of his actions and deeds. At one point during the podcast, he stops Rogan and asks him not to defend his (Armstrong’s) actions. Armstrong explains that the public doesn’t want to hear “that.” Further, in this interview, he seems to rely on simple apology (to those he wronged) and time, though the lack of specificity in his apology does little to atone for previous remarks. In his world, he is just one of many. In the world of communication, Armstrong still has considerable power. In the world of cycling, he
was once a mighty and powerful figure in sport and in the broader marketing world around sport. Though he may avoid public remarks, Armstrong’s primary rhetorical techniques have not changed after his confession: he feels that he is the scapegoat of all of cycling and he does not like it.

Sport in general should take a stand against doping and not seek to cover up doping occurrences. By acknowledging various situations sport in general avoids appearing like they are denying the existence of doping. If, however, the instances of doping are not met with consistent discipline the governing bodies will appear to be quite weak and will ultimately not be effective in policing doping.

**Conclusion/s**

The moment where Lance Armstrong confessed to doping to Oprah represents a moment where the occluded world of doping was suddenly thrust into the public eye. After that moment, doping has been once more receding into the dark. Who can say if cyclists dope? We only know what Armstrong did during his winning years, he does not admit to doping in 2009-2010. Cyclists are still testing positive for banned substances periodically, but is doping still an accepted practice within the sport? I cannot say. I can, however, say that the sport of cycling is still based on sponsor dollars and that those dollars are fueled by winning, or else by being marketable. But even this is not the end result.

In one of the most illuminating quotes about the state of cycling, Lance Armstrong told *Golf Digest* that golf has a “code of honor that we in cycling didn’t
have” he goes on to expound on this saying “if I moved my ball in the rough and got caught, I wouldn’t just regret it, I’d be heart broken forever. When I think about reform in cycling, I think about golf” (“Lance Armstrong: Cheating”, 2014). These comments highlight not only Armstrong’s lack of remorse for engaging in doping, but also what was likely a sense of apathy about doping that was endemic during his prime. Armstrong’s comments seem to suggest that he values sporting integrity, but it also paints the sport of cycling in unfavorable terms. If there is to be meaningful change in sport, I join with Armstrong to call for a sense of pride in engaging the sport with integrity under the eyes of watchful minders.

Throughout this study I have only touched at the surfaces of rhetoric, communication, media theory, identity studies, sport theory, sociology, and interdisciplinary studies. However, I hope that I have cast light on the complexities of doping in sport and cycling and the ways that Lance Armstrong’s story might influence our understanding of these issues. There are limitations in this project that are mainly due to my fandom of Armstrong. I hesitate to moralize this relationship and call the limitation of it a bad thing, but my prior relationship with cycling and Armstrong certainly colors my view of the issues.

Further research into doping and sport might seek to explore the effectiveness of modern doping testing techniques. Additionally, the political climate in the run-up to the 2016 presidential election is likely to shake up previous tenets of image repair theory. Further research examining Armstrong could take a longitudinal examination of audience sentiment of Armstrong’s past actions.
Updated examination of more recent newspaper articles about Armstrong would likely reveal a shifting media perception of Armstrong’s identity performance.
On Your Marks, Get Set, Go!

My engagement with cycling begins sometime after the publication of Armstrong’s first autobiography and gained consciousness as yellow bracelets touting the word “LIVESTRONG” became incredibly widespread. I had one of these bracelets [after a while it broke]. At this point in time, I was in high school; it was summertime, and I was flipping through television channels when I came across cycling. My relationship with cycling, at this time, was based entirely on the Armstrong story that was common on the street and in the news; thus, when watching the television, it was the main story that drove my interest in cycling.

For better or worse, at the beginning of my cycling fandom, Armstrong was the king, and on American TV coverage the king received a huge ransom in the form of coverage. I recall the first Tour after Armstrong came back to cycling after a short retirement; it seemed like every commercial featured Lance Armstrong.

From my earliest recollections of cycling my understanding of Armstrong was limited. Beyond mountain biking around the neighborhood, I knew very little about cycling in general and I knew almost nothing of the competitive world of cycling. In my world, there were no threats to Armstrong’s reputational kingdom. At an airport, I purchased Daniel Coyle’s *Lance Armstrong’s War* which told the story of a persecuted Armstrong who was being chased by unfair doping allegations. In the
broader news, as my understanding of these allegations unfolded, Armstrong stood with a firm back and a vicious tongue against those who would threaten his walls.

Based on his defense of himself, and his characterization in Coyle's book, I appreciated the duality of Armstrong's character as being lion and lamb. He is a cancer survivor, and he is many other things too. Identity is impossible to absolutely identify though sometimes we might resist the tentative nature of understanding identity. Armstrong is brash and stopped at nothing (seemingly) to pursue excellence in cycling. In many cases, the appreciation of his characterization as pluralistic is very relevant to this story. Armstrong's story is not a binary; there are an infinite number of tellings and re-tellings. While this might seem to be convoluted to others, the Armstrong story becomes more clear to me when considered rhetorically.

Armstrong's identity, like all other identities, is performed. The stories he tells are told by him, they are told by others, and other stories are told too. To limit the way Armstrong's story is created is to limit the way the story can be understood; I would rather ask to broaden our appreciations of the way these things can be understood. The story and the mythos, that are indistinguishable from one another, allow for Armstrong to exist with an enormous multitude of understandings from various audiences.

Perhaps some people are disinterested in the lies Armstrong perpetuated because of his philanthropic work with cancer. Rhetorically, there is a space where one can distinguish a person's deeds from his comments. Armstrong's cancer shield
can function rhetorically to foster security based on moral argumentation and/or it can function as a public relation device. There does not have to be a strict divide in discussing the motive of Armstrong’s actions. To embrace the possibility of interpreting Armstrong’s actions is to embrace the notion that interpretations will be limited. After all, Burke reminds us that a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing (1984, p. 49).

After considering Armstrong’s actions and the greater situation that cycling and sport finds itself in, I am inclined to view Armstrong sympathetically. From my perspective the things that make Armstrong great also make him terrible. The single minded focus required to excel to the level that Armstrong did is remarkable and destructive. There are plenty of stories of those who Armstrong figuratively rode over in order to win the Tour de France an unprecedented seven times.

As I tell it, Armstrong is the only person to have ever won the Tour de France seven times without ever having won the Tour. Despite the fact that Armstrong has been stripped of these accolades, I watched him win. The history of Armstrong’s wins were not erased, they were altered. I think it is imperative to note that cycling is not won by doping alone; otherwise many of the cyclists during Armstrong’s era (and probably now too) would have won. It takes more than determination and fitness to excel at cycling; it takes luck and never ending attention to detail. If he had one flat tire at an inconvenient spot Armstrong would not have put together seven victories. Cyclists crash and get injured, often. During the Tour de France I generally
expect to see at least a few of my favorite riders drop out. In my mind, regardless of doping, and perhaps because of it, Armstrong was one of the greatest cyclists ever.

While one could smear Armstrong for lying and for attacking those who impugned his version of the story, I am not that interested in casting Armstrong as a moral super hero. When USADA’s reasoned decision was released, I spent hours reading through it. As an outsider to cycling, though a fan nevertheless, I did not have any real understanding of doping. This ignorance allowed the power of Armstrong’s narrative to be incredibly engaging to me. When Armstrong admitted to doping, I cannot say I was surprised, but I was certainly disappointed.

This project has allowed me to appreciate the complexity of doping and the situations that surround cycling. This complexity is what allows me to sympathize with Armstrong. To argue that anyone is all bad or good is moot. Armstrong has panache, skill, and willingness to do anything to succeed. These are, I think, the things that make a cyclist great. However, there is more to life than cycling. To call Armstrong all bad is to ignore the work he has done for cancer advocacy and to write him off as a saint is to overlook the damage that he dealt. Armstrong and, indeed, life are more complicated than that. An appreciation for complexity is, I suppose, what I have gotten out of this project, and that strikes me, in this moment, as very satisfying.
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Transcript of Lance Armstrong’s Oprah Confession

Part One

[Introductory Video Clip containing voice over]
Authoritative Voice Over Man: Live around the world... After years of denial...
Lance Armstrong: [various clips from his past] I have never doped... Is there evidence?
Where is evidence of doping here?... I'm sick and tired of these allegations... I'm sorry
you don't believe in miracles.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: A federal investigation that was ultimately closed...
Random reporter 1: Armstrong has consistently denied the doping claims.
Random reporter 2: His lawyer calls the report a witch-hunt.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: And finally a reasoned decision by USADA, the United
States Anti Doping Agency...
Random reporter 3: A dramatic twist in the case against Lance Armstrong.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: Seven time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong...
Pat McQuaid: UCI will ban Lance Armstrong from cycling.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: Stripped of his titles, and banned for life from elite
competition.
Pat McQuaid: Lance Armstrong has no place in cycling.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: Then...
Random reporter 4: Abandoned by his sponsors and his reputation destroyed...
Authoritative Voice Over Man: The final blow...
Random reporter 5: Lance Armstrong is stepping down as chairman of the Livestrong
Foundation.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: For months speculation mounted: would Lance
Armstrong ever address the epic fall in a formal interview. Now, the worldwide
exclusive: Oprah and Lance Armstrong.
[Clip ends. Cut to hotel room in Austin with Armstrong and Oprah seated, both cross
legged and looking relaxed. Armstrong, wearing a blue jacket, blue shirt, blue trousers
and yellow Livestrong wristband sits upright and expectant. Oprah, in a turquoise
dress, attempts to conceal a turquoise spray painted iPad full of questions in her lap
(or maybe they're just blue paper...) as she begins the discussion.]

Oprah Winfrey: So here we are in Austin Texas. A few days ago you texted to the
Associated Press and said, “I told her to go wherever she wants,” – her being me –
“and I'll answer the questions directly, honestly and candidly. That's all I can say.”
Those are your words?

**Lance Armstrong: Those are my words.**

OW: When we first met a week ago today, we agreed that there would be no holds barred, there would be no conditions on this interview and that this would be an open field.

**LA: I think that’s best for both of us.**

OW: I agree. So here we go, open field. So let’s start with the questions that people around the world have been waiting for you to answer, and for now I’d just like a yes or no, ok?

**LA: Ok.**

OW: This whole conversation – we have a lot of time – will be about the details. Yes or no, did you ever take banned substances to enhance your cycling performance?

**Lance Armstrong: Yes.**

OW: Yes or no. Was one of those banned substances EPO?

**LA: Yes.**

OW: Did you ever blood dope or use blood transfusions to enhance your cycling performance?

**LA: Yes.**

OW: Did you ever use any other banned substances like testosterone, cortisone or Human Growth Hormone?

**LA: Yes.**

OW: Yes or no, in all seven of your Tour de France victories, did you ever take banned substances or blood dope?

**LA: Yes.**

OW: In your opinion was it humanly possible to win the Tour de France without doping, seven times in a row?

**LA: Not in my opinion.**

OW: So when did you first start doping?

**LA: We’re done with the yes and nos?**

OW: [nervous laugh] We’re done with the yes and nos!

**LA: I suppose earlier in my career there was cortisone and then the EPO generation began.**
OW: Began when?
LA: For me or for...?
OW: For you?
LA: Mid 90s.
OW: [confirming] Mid 90s. For thirteen years you didn't just deny it, you brazenly and defiantly denied everything you just admitted just now. So why now admit it?
LA: That is the best question. It's the most logical question. I don't know that I have a great answer. I will start my answer by saying that this is too late. It's too late for probably most people, and that's my fault. I viewed this situation as one big lie that I repeated a lot of times, and as you said, it wasn't as if I just said no and I moved off it.

OW: You were defiant, you called other people liars.
LA: Right, I understand that. And while I've lived through this process, especially the last two years, one year, six months, two, three months... I know the truth. The truth isn't what was out there. The truth isn't what I said, and now it's gone – this story was so perfect for so long. And I mean that, as I try to take myself out of the situation and I look at it. [begins counting on fingers] You overcome the disease, you win the Tour de France seven times, you have a happy marriage, you have children, I mean, it's just this mythic perfect story, and it wasn't true.
OW: And that was not true?
LA: And that was not true. On a lot of levels.
OW: Was it hard to live up to that picture?
LA: Impossible. Certainly I'm a flawed character, as I well know, and I couldn't do that. But what we see now and what's out there –
OW: But didn't you help paint that picture?
LA: Of course, I did. [talk over each other] And a lot of people did. Listen, all the fault and all the blame here falls on me. But behind that picture and behind that story is momentum. Whether it's fans or whether it's the media, it just gets going. And I lost myself in all of that. I'm sure there would be other people that couldn't handle it, but I certainly couldn't handle it, and I was used to controlling everything in my life. I controlled every outcome in my life.
OW: You’ve been doing that forever?
LA: Yeah, especially when it comes to sport. But just the last thing I’ll say is that just now – the story is so bad and so toxic. And a lot of it’s true...
OW: You said to me earlier you don’t think it was possible to win without doping?
LA: Not in that generation – and I’m not here to talk about others in that generation. It’s been well documented. I didn’t invent the culture, but I didn’t try to stop the culture, and that’s my mistake, and that’s what I have to be sorry for, and that’s what something – and the sport is now paying the price because of that. So I am sorry for that. I don’t think... I didn’t have access to anything else that nobody else did.

OW: Ok let me read you this. The United States Anti Doping Agency, USADA, issued a 164-page report which I’ve read. The CEO Travis Tygart said that you and United States Postal Service Cycling Team pulled off, his words: “the most sophisticated, professional and successful doping programme the sport has ever seen.” [sic] Was it?
LA: No, no. And I think he actually said that “all of sport has ever seen.” [sic] Oprah, it wasn’t. It was... It was definitely professional and it was definitely smart – if you can call it that – but it was very conservative, very risk-averse, very aware of what mattered and what didn’t: one race mattered for me. But to say that that programme was bigger than the East German doping program in the ’80s? In the ’70s and ’80s? That’s not true.
OW: So you’re saying that you didn’t have access to certain things that other people didn’t have access to?
LA: Absolutely not.

OW: What was the culture? Can you explain the culture to us?
LA: It’s hard to get into that without... And again, I don’t want to accuse anybody else, I don’t want to necessarily talk about anybody else. I made my decisions, they are my mistakes, and I am sitting here today to acknowledge that and to say I’m sorry for that. The culture was what it was.
OW: Was everybody doing it? That’s what we’ve heard. Was everybody doing it?
LA: And that’s not my... I didn’t know everybody. I didn’t live and train with everybody. I didn’t race with everybody. I can’t say that. There will be people
that say that. There will be people that say, “OK, there are 200 guys on the tour, I can tell you five guys that didn’t, and those are the five heroes,” and they’re right.

OW: What did you think of those guys – now you just called them heroes – but what did you think of those guys at the time when you were riding, who were riding clean? Did you think they were suckers? Did you think that they were... what?

LA: No and that’s – No, I didn’t… [pause] The idea that anybody was forced, or pressured, or encouraged is not true… I mean I’m out of the business of calling somebody a liar, but if you ask me “If it true or not,” I’ll tell you if it’s true or not. That is not true.

[Video Clip]

OW: Last Fall the US Anti Doping Agency, USADA, published details of how some of the United States Postal Service Cycling Team – and former team captain, Lance Armstrong – conducted their years’ long doping scheme.

Travis Tygart: I think there were parts of this scheme that were run like a mafia.

Tyler Hamilton: Back in the day we had code words for certain things. We had secret phones. We had secret code words. It was either Poe or Edgar Allan Poe. Which was kinda – that was the code name for EPO.

OW: According to USADA, they devised a systematic doping ring in several countries, that ran nearly undetected for close to a decade. Reports say private jets flew some team members to Spain for secret blood transfusions. Payments were transferred through Swiss bank accounts, banned substances were smuggled across international borders, blood was stored in hidden refrigerators in preparation for blood doping. Armstrong’s former team-mate, Tyler Hamilton, described how riders got rid of the evidence after injecting Performance Enhancing drugs.

Tyler Hamilton: All three vials would go into a coke can, crush it, give it to a team doctor to dispose.

[End video clip]

OW: How were you able to do it? I mean you talked a bit the culture. And there were all kinds of stories out that you were going to confess, you were going to talk to me but you wouldn’t tell me everything – we said no-holds barred. How was it done? You said it was smart but that it wasn’t the most sophisticated. What we’ve read,
what we’ve heard, is it true? Motoman dropping off EPO?

LA: That was true.

OW: [confirming] That was true. Were you blood doping in the Stage 11 of the 2000 Tour? Stopping at a hotel? Tyler Hamilton says you stopped at a hotel –

LA: I’m confused on the stages but yes certainly that was the –

OW: – that in the middle of the Tour. Tyler Hamilton also said that there would be times when [she mimes injecting herself] you all were injecting EPO in a camper or in a tent and right outside the fans would be right outside and you all would be dumping the syringes in coke cans. Is that true?

LA: I didn’t read Tyler’s book. I don’t necessarily remember that... But I’m certain not going to say, “That’s a lie,” or “That’s not true.”

OW: But my question is: I’d like you to walk me through it. Were there pill deliveries and blood in secret refrigerators? Was there...? How did it work?

LA: [laughs] Oh you’d need a long time.

OW: How did it work?

LA: I viewed it as very simple. You had things that were oxygen boosting drugs – for lack of a better word or way to describe it – that were incredibly beneficial for performance or endurance sports, whether it’s cycling or running or whatever. And that’s all you needed. My cocktail so to speak was only EPO, but not a lot, transfusions and testosterone. Which in a weird way I almost justified [referring to testosterone] because of my history. Obviously, the testicular cancer and losing... I thought, surely I’m running low.

OW: So you could justify the testosterone.

LA: Well I –

OW: Could you in some way justify the blood transfusions because it is your blood, they keep your blood, and then put your blood in?

LA: Well there’s no true justification for those.

OW: Were you afraid of getting caught?

LA: No. Drug testing has changed, it’s evolved. In the old days they tested at the races. They didn’t come to your house, they didn’t come to your training camps, they tested you at the races. That’s shifted a lot, so now the emphasis of the testing – which is right – is in out of competition testing.

OW: And in 1999 there wasn’t even a test for EPO.
LA: And there was no testing out of competition. They may, I mean theoretically there may have been, but they never came. And for most of my career there wasn’t that much of that. So two things changed –

OW: That much of what?

LA: There wasn’t that much out of competition testing. So you’re not going to get caught, you know? Because you’re clean at the races. [long stare] Clear.

OW: Would you take several days before... You take it and give it enough time for it to move through your system?

LA: Yeah it’s just a question of scheduling.

OW: [confirming] Scheduling.

LA: I know that sounds weird. Two things changed: the shift to out of competition testing, and the biological passport. It really worked. I’m no fan or defender of the UCI but they implemented the bio passport.

[Video clip]

OW: The International Cycling Union, or UCI, and the World Anti-doping Agency, or WADA, began using the biological passport he refers to in 2008. The bio passport creates a profile of each cyclist’s natural blood and urine levels from samples collected several times throughout the year. Any fluctuations in riders’ blood or urine level are red flagged as possible doping.

The 2012 USADA report says expert examination established that quote, “the likelihood of Armstrong’s blood values from the 2009 and 2010 Tours de France occurring naturally is less than one in a million.” The report went on to say this builds quote, “a compelling argument consistent with blood doping.”

[End Video clip]

LA: And it’s the only thing in that whole report that upset me – I mean all of it obviously upset me – but the accusation and the alleged proof that they say I doped after my come back is not true. The last time I crossed the line – that line – was 2005. And so –

OW: So when you placed third in 2009 you did not dope?

LA: No. And again, the biological passport was in place...
OW: Ok does that include blood transfusions?
LA: Absolutely.
OW: Ok so you did not do a blood transfusion in 2009 –
LA: Absolutely not.
OW: You did no doping or blood transfusions in 2010?
LA: Absolutely. 2009 and 2010. Those were the two years I did the Tour. Absolutely not.
OW: So 2005 was the last time?
LA: Absolutely true.

[Video clip]

OW: For seven years Lance Armstrong led the US Postal Service Cycling Team and later the Discovery Channel Pro Cycling Team to the top of the podium. Armstrong was the team captain – and according to USADA – part owner of the US Postal Service Cycling Team. Reports said it was written in Armstrong’s contract he had the power to both hire and fire the other riders. The USADA report stated, “the evidence is also clear that Armstrong had ultimate control over not only his own personal drug use, which was extensive, but also over the doping culture of his team.”

[End of video clip]

OW: Were you the one in charge?
LA: Well I was the top rider, I was the leader of the team. I wasn’t the manager, the general manager, the director...
OW: But if someone was not doing something to your satisfaction could you get them fired?
LA: It depends what they were doing. I mean if you’re asking me, somebody on the teams says, “I’m not going to dope.”
OW: Yes?
LA: And I say you’re fired?
OW: Yes?
LA: Absolutely not.
OW: Could you..?
LA: I mean could I? I guess I could have, but I never did. Look, I was the leader of the team and the leader of any team leads by example. There was never a
direct order or a directive to say you had to do this if you want to do the Tour / if you want to be on the team. That never happened. It was a competitive time, we were all grown men and made our choices. But there were people on the team that chose not to.

OW: One of your former team-mates, Christian Vande Velde, told Usada you threatened to kick him off the team if he didn’t shape up and conform to the doping programme?

LA: That’s… that’s not true. There was a level of expectation. We expected guys to be fit, to be strong, to perform… But I certainly didn’t – I’m not the most believable guy in the world right now I understand – but I did not do that.

OW: When you say there’s a level of expectation, could that level of expectation be implied to mean, “If you don’t do this you’re not on the team?”

LA: Em…

OW: Because you’re Lance Armstrong –

LA: And this is what I said earlier –

OW: And if you say it?

LA: But even if I don’t say it, if I do it and I’m the leader of the team, you’re leading by example so that’s a problem.

OW: Can you understand how he would feel, or someone would feel, that if you’re doing it and this is how we win and I don’t do it, then I might not be able to be on the team? You can understand?

LA: I can understand that.

OW: [confirming] I can understand that.

LA: But I can also understand the difference between saying that and saying, “You have to do this if you want to do the Tour or stay on this team.” There is a big difference. But neither are good but –

OW: Are we talking semantics here? Are we talking semantics, meaning a fine line between, “You have to do it but hey look you’re on this team, you want to win”? Are we talking semantics?

LA: Well no. I don’t know, I view one of them as a verbal pressure, a directive and that didn’t exist.”

OW: But you do accept that if you are Lance Armstrong… [waves hands as if to say “Hello?!”]

LA: Yeah, I take that.
OW: Yeah. The captain, the power, force-field, the leader of the team...
LA: ...the leader of the team. The guy that my team-mates looked up to.
OW: That’s right.
LA: Yeah, I accept that. Hundred percent.
OW: Ok, and accepting it can understand that “If he didn’t do it, then maybe he would feel that he wouldn’t make the team.”
LA: Correct.
OW: Ok.
LA: But now, having said that, I just, I don’t want to split hairs here, but when guys go on to other teams – and Christian, I care a lot about Christian, he’s a good guy – but when you go on to other teams and you continue the same behaviour it’s not... I wasn’t on those teams. And –
OW: Same behaviour meaning doping?
LA: Correct.
OW: Were you a bully?
LA: Yeah, yeah I was a bully.
OW: Tell me how you were a bully.
LA: I was a bully in the sense that I tried to control the narrative and if I didn’t like what someone said – and for whatever reasons in my own head, whether I viewed that as somebody being disloyal, or a friend turning on you or whatever – I tried to control that and said “That’s a lie, they’re liars.”
OW: Is that your nature: when somebody says something that you don’t like, you go on attack? Has that been your –
LA: ...my entire life.
OW: [confirming] Your entire life.
LA: ...my entire life.
OW: So you were doing that when you were 10-years-old, and 12-years-old, and 14-years-old?
LA: It’s interesting... I grew up – as most people know – I mean, we grew up as fighters. My Mom was young when she had me. We sort of always felt like, maybe it wasn’t reality, but we felt like we had our backs against the wall the whole time. So I was always a fighter. My Mom was always a fighter, still is a fighter. Before my diagnosis I would say I was a competitor but I wasn’t a fierce competitor. And in an odd way that process turned me into a person
that gonna – it was truly win at all costs. When I was diagnosed and I was being treated I said, “I will do anything I have to do to survive.” And that’s good. And I took that attitude – that ruthless and relentless and win-at-all-costs attitude – and I took it right into cycling, because quite frankly it followed it up almost immediately. And that’s bad.

OW: But you’d already been doing drugs before that…? Doing drugs meaning taking banned substances.

LA: Correct. But I wasn’t a bully before that.

OW: [confirming] You weren’t a bully before that. What made you a bully?

LA: I think, just again, trying to perpetuate the story and hide the truth. This is the second time in my life where I can’t control this outcome.

OW: First time was the cancer?

LA: First time was the disease which – obviously… And now. The scary thing is that winning seven Tours I knew, I knew, I was going to win.

OW: How important was winning to you, and would you do anything to win at all costs?

LA: Basically. Winning was important, winning was important. I still like to win but I view it a little differently now.

OW: You’ve been quoted as saying, “We had one goal, one ambition and that was to win the greatest bike race in the world, and not just to win it once, but to keep on winning it.” And to keep on winning it meant you had to keep on using banned substances to do it.

LA: Yes. But – and I’m not sure that this is an acceptable answer – but that’s like saying we have to have air in our tyres or we have to have water in our bottles. That was, in my view, part of the job.

OW: Are you saying that’s how common it was?

LA: [laughs] Again, I don’t want to… My view was that it was, and others will have to attest to that. I don’t want to accuse anybody, I don’t want to make any excuses for me. But that was my view and I made those decisions.

OW: Are you saying to me that you did not expect or require other top riders, your key guys, to dope in order to reach that team’s goal?

LA: Absolutely not.

OW: [confirming] You did not.
LA: Absolutely not.
OW: You never offered it to them? You never suggested that they see Ferrari?
LA: Em... Ferrari... and again it’s hard to talk about some of these things and not mention names. But there are people in this story – let me say this – that are good people. Ok? And we’ve all made mistakes. And there are people in this story that are not monsters and they’re not toxic and they’re not evil. I viewed Michele Ferrari as a good man and a smart man, and I still do.

[Video Clip]
OW: According to the US Anti-doping Agency, USADA, Lance Armstrong began working with controversial Italian sports trainer and medical consultant Dr Michele Ferrari as early as 1994. Known in cycling circles as “the master of doping,” the report says Armstrong and other riders on his team paid Dr Ferrari in return for putting them on a doping regime. Armstrong reportedly paid Dr Ferrari a million dollars over the course of ten years.

Dr Ferrari still maintains his innocence and has denied doping Lance Armstrong. Last July USADA issued Ferrari a lifetime ban from cycling. In sworn testimony from a 2005 lawsuit, Armstrong denied using banned substances and gave this answer about Dr Ferrari...
[End of clip]

OW: Ok let’s go to the tape.

[Oprah shows video clip to Armstrong of him replying to questions under oath in the 2005 SCA Promotions lawsuit]

Interviewer: Did Dr Ferrari ever suggest to you that you should use, take or consider take performance enhancing drugs or substances.
LA: Never, absolutely not.
Interviewer: Is the anything about your dealings with Dr Ferrari over the decade or so that you’ve known and dealt with him that would suggest to you that perhaps he was using or encouraging other athletes to use performance enhancing drugs or substances?
LA: No, in fact to the contrary.
Interviewer: Tell me what you mean when you said “to the contrary.”
LA: He’s the – I know you’re going to find this hard to believe – but he’s to me, totally clean and totally ethical, believes in clean, fair sport, but produces great results with his athletes because he’s so focused. But I’ve never – I’ve never had a conversation with him regarding that.
[Tape ends]

OW: Would that be your same response today?
LA: Eh... no.
OW: [confirms] No. Because – LA: My responses on most of these things are going to be different today.
OW: Yes. Would you say... Was he the leader and the mastermind behind the team’s doping programme?
LA: No. And again Oprah –
OW: That might not be the correct characterisation so how would you characterise his influence on the team?
LA: But I’m not comfortable talking about other people. Listen it’s all out there.
OW: Let me ask you this: David Walsh, reporter for the Sunday Times newspaper in London, says that your association with Ferrari immediately dialled up suspicion on you. Looking back on that time would you say that it was reckless for you to be involved and engaged with Ferrari?
LA: From a public’s perception standpoint sure, yeah. But there were plenty of other reckless things. In fact, that would be a very good way to characterise that period of my life.
OW: [confirming] As reckless. Let’s talk about that. What was going on with you?
You know, you and I both know that fame just magnifies whoever you really are.
LA: [confirming] Mmm hmm.
OW: So if you’re a jerk you’re a bigger jerk.
LA: [now suspicious] Hmm.
OW: If you’re a humanitarian you’re a bigger humanitarian. So what was going on with you at that time and what did fame, what did that do?
LA: I think it – and I don’t know if you pulled those two words out of the air, jerk and humanitarian – I’d say I was both, and we saw both, and now we’re
seeing certainly more of the jerk part than the activist, the humanitarian, the philanthropist, the leader of the Foundation. We’re seeing that now. I am flawed, deeply flawed. I think we all have our flaws, but... If the magnifying glass is normally this big [forms small circle with his hands], I made it this big [brings hands apart] because of my actions and because of my words and because of my attitude and my defiance, and I’m paying the price for it – and that’s ok. You know, I deserve this. I don’t look around and go, “Hey Oprah, hey! I am getting so screwed here.” Are there days, were there days early on when I said that? Absolutely. Those days are fewer and fewer, and farther and farther between. Listen I deserve it.

OW: What was for you the flaw or flaws that made you willing to risk it all?

LA: I think just this just ruthless desire to win, win at all costs truly. Served me well on the bike, served me well during the disease, but the level that it went to – for whatever reason – is a flaw. And then that defiance, that attitude, that arrogance, you cannot deny it. I mean you watch that clip, that’s an arrogant person. I look at that I go “Look at this arrogant prick.” I say that today. It’s not good.

[Video Clip]

OW: In 2005 after a gruelling three week two thousand mile mountainous ride in the Tour de France, Lance Armstrong rolled through the streets of Paris in triumph. He had achieved the unimaginable: a record setting seventh consecutive win of the world’s toughest race.

[End clip]

OW: This is the clip that I just cannot reconcile what you were thinking when you were saying this. Play the winning clip.

[Oprah shows Armstrong a video clip of himself delivering “winning” speech from the Tour de France podium on the Champs-Élysées]

LA: And finally the last thing I’ll say to the people that don’t believe in cycling, the cynics and the sceptics: I’m sorry for you, I’m sorry you can’t dream big and that you don’t believe in miracles, but this is one hell of a race, this is a great sporting event and you should stand around and believe. You should believe in these athletes and you should believe in these people. I’m a fan of the Tour de France for as long as I live and
there are no secrets. This is a hard sporting event and hard work wins it so – vive le Tour, forever.
[End of clip]

OW: What were you trying to accomplish there?
LA: [laughs] Yeah, I’ve made some mistakes in my life that’s for sure – that would be one – and that’s not one that I would think of often but watching that, that’s a mistake…
OW: Were you particularly trying to rub in the face of those people who had come out against you, who had said you were lying?
LA: No so much, I –
OW: Were you addressing them? Who were you… What were saying that for?
LA: I don’t know. You it’s interesting, that was the – maybe they did it long, long ago – but that was the first year that they gave the mike to the winner of the Tour. And I found out just before, and I’m all of a sudden thinking, “What the hell am I going to say?” So I didn’t have any time to sort of think, “I’m going to shove it in these people’s face,” I mean, that just came out. Looking at that now it just sounds ridiculous. I got it.
OW: When you look at that now do you feel embarrassed, do you feel shame, do you feel humble, tell me what you feel?
LA: I’m definitely embarrassed. Listen that was the last time I won the Tour de France, that was my last day, I retired immediately after that. That’s what you leave with? That’s… You can leave with better than that Lance. That was lame.
OW: Tell me Lance was there happiness in winning? Was there happiness in winning when you knew you were taking these banned substances?
LA: There was more happiness in the process, in the build, in the preparation. The winning was almost phoned in. And again I don’t want this issue of performance enhancers to… again to me that was, “We’re going to pump up our tyres, we’re going to put water in our bottles, and oh yeah that too is going to happen.” That was it.

OW: Was it a big deal to you, did it feel wrong?
LA: At the time? No.
OW: It did not even feel wrong?
LA: No. Scary.
OW: Did you feel bad about it?
LA: No. Even scarier.
OW: Did you feel in any way that you were cheating?
LA: No. The scariest.
OW: You did not feel that you were cheating taking banned drugs?
LA: At the time, no. And I look up – I have this exercise where, you know, because I kept hearing...
OW: That you're a cheat.
LA: That I'm a drug cheat, I'm a cheat, I'm a cheater. And I went and just looked up the definition of cheat.
OW: Yes?
LA: And the definition of cheat is to gain an advantage on a rival or foe – you know – that they don't have. I didn't view it that way. I viewed it as a level playing field.

OW: But you knew that you were held to a higher standard. You're Lance Armstrong.
LA: I knew that, and of course hindsight is perfect. I know it a thousand times more now. I didn’t know what I had. Look at the fallout...
OW: What do you mean by you “didn’t know”? I don’t think people will understand what you’re saying.
LA: Well I mean I didn’t understand the magnitude of that following. And we see it now because this is why it is such a –
OW: That’s going to be hard for people to believe, when we met a week ago you said, “I didn’t realise it was this big,” to which I was like, “How could you not know.”
LA: [laughing and mumbling something]
OW: How could you not know it’s big? Presidents are calling, you’re dating rock stars, everywhere you go…
LA: [still laughing] Hey you ask me the question, I said I didn’t know, and I didn’t. But the important thing is that I’m beginning to understand that, and I’m understanding it not because I see clips and we’re talking about this but because I see the anger in people.
OW: Anger and disappointment.
LA: And betrayal, it’s all there and these are people that supported me, that
believed in me, believed me – not just believed in me but believed what I was saying – and they have every right to feel betrayed, and it's my fault. I will spend the rest of my life – you know some people are gone forever – but I'll spend the rest of my life trying to earn back trust and apologise to people for the rest of my life.

OW: When you say you didn't know that it was this big, when you were in it, it feels like what?
LA: It was easy.
OW: Easy?
LA: Well it just flowed, it was just, it wasn't eh... I was in the zone – like athletes get. It wasn't exactly a perfect world, that wasn't the happiest time of my life believe it or not, I mean I could tell you with all honesty that I am happier today than I was then for a whole host of reasons.
OW: Even with all of this that's happened?
LA: I said I'm happier today. Not yesterday.

[Video clip]
OW: For years Lance Armstrong has repeatedly stated that he's been tested hundreds of times and never failed a test. In 1999 after winning the Prologue of the Tour de France samples from Armstrong's urine sample were frozen and stored. Last week Travis Tygart, the CEO of USADA, gave an interview about Armstrong's samples to 60 Minutes Sports.

[Clip of 60 minutes interview, 09/01/2013]
Travis Tygart: Six samples that were taken from Lance Armstrong were retested in '05 and they were positive.
Interviewer: In '99 when the tests were originally taken was it reported that they were negative?
Travis Tygart: There was no test for EPO. They were not tested for EPO at that time.
Interviewer: And when you tested for them in 2005 you discovered that –
Travis Tygart: All six were flaming positive.
[End clip]
OW: You said time and again in dozens of interviews that you’ve never failed a test. Do you have a different answer today?

LA: No I mean never – I didn’t fail a test. Well there’s some stuff – stuff was retroactively tested in ‘05

OW: Yeah [samples taken in] ‘99?

LA: Right, so technically yes those were retroactively, I failed those. But the hundreds and hundreds of tests that I took, I passed them, and I passed them because there was nothing in the system.

[Video clip]

OW: For their 164 page “Reasoned Decision”, USADA interviewed eleven of Armstrong’s former team-mates, including Tyler Hamilton and Floyd Landis. Hamilton and Landis said that Armstrong told them on separate occasions he had tested positive for EPO at the Tour de Swiss in 2001 and implied it would not come to light. In the 60 Minutes interview Tyler Hamilton gave this account:

Tyler Hamilton: Lance kind of told me in this nervous laughter that he had an EPO positive, but no worries it was going to be taken care of.

[End of clip]

OW: What about the Tour de Swiss, the Swiss Tour?

LA: Right.

OW: Yeah.

LA: Again... I’m going to tell you what’s true and not true. That story isn’t true. There was no positive test. There was no paying off of the lab. There was no secret meeting with the lab director.

OW: The UCI? The UCI didn’t make that go away?

LA: Nope. I’m no fan of the UCI. That did not happen.

OW: [confirming] That did not happen.

LA: That absolutely did not happen.

OW: You made a donation to the UCI and unfortunately said –

LA: – these two came together –

OW: Yes, yes. You made a donation to the UCI and you said that donation was about helping their anti-doping efforts. Obviously it was not. Why did you make that donation?
LA: Because they asked me to. I mean it wasn’t a... There was no deal. This is impossible for me to answer this question and have anybody believe it. It was not in exchange for any cover up – and again, I am not a fan of the UCI. I have every incentive to sit here and tell you, “Yes, that’s right. They’re all crooked da da da.” Are there things that were a little shady? That was not one. You know they called and said they didn’t have a lot of money. I was retired, I had money. They said would I consider a donation, I said “Sure.”

OW: So you did not pay UCI in helping them, or in aiding them, or in assisting them in any way in overlooking some of your tests?

LA: No. And the only one there really is would be the one from the 2001 Tour of Switzerland.

OW: [confirming] Tour of Switzerland?

LA: There was the retroactive stuff later on which was, obviously at the time, a huge story.

[Video clip]

OW: Even before those 1999 samples tested positive for EPO retroactively, Armstrong had another positive test that same ’99 Tour de France for cortisone steroid. Emma O’Reilly, a former masseuse for Armstrong’s team, told journalist David Walsh she in the room when Armstrong and other team leaders made a plan to cover it up. O’Reilly said a team doctor back-dated a cortisone prescription claiming Armstrong needed treatment for saddle sores.

Emma O’Reilly: The problem was Lance had tested high on the cortisone. The solution was a potential prescription. “What was the prescription for?” “Why was he taking it?” “Are we all happy with that?” “Yeah we’re happy with that.” “Right let’s go down and get him to write the prescription.” It was just purely back-dated to cover up that cortisone elevation, yeah. The back-dated prescription was rigged to suit the test.

[End of clip]

OW: What about the story that Emma O’Reilly tells about the cortisone and you having the cortisone back-dated? Is that true?

LA: That is true.

OW: [confirming] Yes. What do you want to say about Emma O’Reilly?

LA: Hey she’s one of these people that I have to apologise to. She’s one of these
people who got run over, got bullied.

OW: Isn’t she one of the people – you sued her?

LA: To be honest, Oprah, we sued so many people I don’t even [know]. I’m sure we did. But I have reached out to her and tried to make those amends on my own. But –

OW: This is what doesn’t make any sense: when people were saying things – David Walsh, the *Sunday Times*, Emma O’Reilly, Betsy Andreu, many others were saying things – you would then go on the attack for them. You were suing people and you know that they were telling the truth. What is that?

LA: It’s a major flaw, and it’s a guy who expected to get whatever he wanted and to control every outcome and it’s inexcusable. When I say that there are people who will hear this and will never forgive me, I understand that. I do. I have started that process – all of this is a process for me. One of the steps of that process is to speak to those people directly and just say to them that “I’m sorry”, and “I was wrong, you were right.”

OW: Have you called Betsy Andreu?

[Video clip]

*OW:* Betsy Andreu, the wife of Armstrong’s former team-mate, Frankie Andreu, was one of the first to speak out about Armstrong’s doping. While visiting him in an Indiana hospital in 1996 she says she overheard Lance Armstrong admitting to using performance enhancing drugs.

Betsey Andreu: The doctor started asking Lance questions and then boom, “Have you ever used any performance enhancing drugs?” Lance, hanging onto his I.V. rattled off “EPO, testosterone, cortisone, growth hormone and steroids.”

*OW:* In Armstrong’s 2005 deposition he testified under oath that Betsy’s story was not true.

[clip of Armstrong answering questions under oath during the 2005 SCA Promotions lawsuit against him]

Interviewer: Do you deny the statements that Ms Andreu attributed to you in the Indiana State university hospital?

*LA:* One hundred percent, absolutely... How could it have taken place when I’ve never
taken performance enhancing drugs? How could it have happened? ...How many times
do I have to say it?

Interviewer: I’m just trying to make sure your testimony is clear.

LA: Well if it can’t be any clearer than I’ve never taken drugs then incidents like that
could never have happened.

Interviewer: Ok.

LA: How clear is that?

OW: In the aftermath Betsy Andreu says, “Lance Armstrong went on the attack against
both her and her husband.”

Betsey Andreu: When it affects Frankie’s ability to work in the sport, that’s when I said,
“Enough! I’m not going to put up with it.”

[End clip]

OW: Have you called Betsy Andreu?

LA: Yeah.

OW: Did she take your call?

LA: She did.

OW: [confirming] She did. Was Betsey telling the truth about the Indiana hospital,
overhearing you in 1996?

LA: I’m not going to take that on. I’m laying down on that one.

OW: Was Betsy lying?

LA: I’m just not... I’m going to put that one down. She asked me, and I asked her
not to talk about the details of the call. It was a confidential, personal
conversation. It was forty minutes long. I spoke to Frankie as well.

OW: Is it well with two of you? Have you made peace?

LA: [laughs] No.

OW: [breathless] Ok.

LA: Because they’ve been hurt too badly, and a forty minute conversation isn’t
enough.

OW: Yes because you repeatedly characterised her as “crazy,” called her other
horrible things.

LA: Well I clarified some of those... I did call her crazy.

OW: [confirming] You did.

LA: I did.
OW: If you were to go back and look at all the tapes of things that you’ve said over the years about Betsy –
LA: – Oh yeah I know, I know –
OW: Ok.
LA: And I think she’d be ok with me saying this, and I’m going to take the liberty to say it, and I said, “Listen I called you crazy, I called you a bitch, I called you all these things, but I never called you fat.” Because –
OW: That’s one of the things she –
LA: She thought I said you were “a fat, crazy bitch.” And I said, “Betsey, I never said you were fat.”
OW: This is what’s interesting to me: if a person is accusing you, and they say three things that are true but one of them is out of order and not true, do you then take that to mean the whole thing’s not true?
LA: That’s it, you’re out. Yeah.
OW: Yeah. That’s how you operate?
LA: Well because that’s… Three to one wouldn’t be accurate I would… That’s a score.
OW: [laughing as if you say “you’re crazy”] Ok. Ok.
LA: I know.

OW: Ok.
LA: If they said ten things and two of ‘em were right and eight of ‘em were false then I figured I had every right to –
OW: [prompting an answer] To go after them.
LA: [confirming] To go after them. But if one of those things is that Lance Armstrong doped to win the Tour de France they win. You can’t overcome that.
OW: Well she [Betsey Andreu] said that.
LA: I know.
OW: She said that and you still went after her all these years. Yes?
LA: Yes.

OW: Emma O’Reilly; you actually – I’ve watched the tape several times – sort of under your breath but you implied the “whore” word. You used the whore word.
How do you feel about that today?

**LA: Em... Not good.**

OW: You were just trying to put her down? Or were you trying to shut her up? What were you...?

**LA: No, no I wasn’t... I was just on the attack, Oprah.**

OW: [confirming] You were just on the attack.

**LA: Yeah that’s just what it... Territory being threatened... Team being threatened... Reputation being threatened... I’m gonna attack.**

[Video clip]

**OW: In 2006 Lance Armstrong’s former team-mate, Floyd Landis, became the third American to win the Tour de France after Greg LeMond and Lance Armstrong. Four days after his victory Landis tested positive for a performance enhancing drug. Landis was stripped of his title and banned from the sport for two years. At the time he denied using banned substances.**

[clip of Landis at a 2007 press conference denying everything]

**Floyd Landis: I didn’t do what I’m accused of doing.**

**OW: Three years after that, in a headline making interview with ABC Nightline, Landis admitted to doping and alleged Armstrong, his former mentor, had done the same.**

**Floyd Landis: Lance Armstrong handed me some testosterone patches.**

**Interviewer: Did you see Lance Armstrong receiving transfusions?**

**Floyd Landis: Yes.**

**Interviewer: More than once?**

**Floyd Landis: Yes, multiple times.**

**Interviewer: Did you see Lance Armstrong using other performance enhancing drugs?**

**Floyd Landis: Yes I saw Lance Armstrong using drugs.**

**Interviewer: You’re saying is that Lance Armstrong is a liar.**

**Floyd Landis: Yes I suppose it that’s the question, yes.**

[End of clip]

OW: Many people think that the real tipping point was Floyd Landis and his decision to come forward and confess?

**LA: I’d agree with that.**
OW: [confirming] That was the tipping point. Yeah.
LA: [nodding head] I might back it up a little and talk about the comeback. I think the comeback didn’t sit well with Floyd.
OW: Your comeback?
LA: Yeah. And so... Yeah all that period began this...
OW: Do you remember where you were when you heard that Floyd, your former team-mate and protege, was going to talk?
LA: I was in a hotel room at the Tour of California when... Actually Floyd had been sending me these text messages and said, “I’ve recorded everything. I’ve put everything – I’ve videoed everything, I’m going to put it on YouTube.” And I kept getting these messages and finally I said, “Look man, do what you gotta do, just leave me alone.” And he didn’t go that route, he didn’t go the YouTube route, but he went to the Wall Street Journal with the story.

OW: Did you rebuff him, would you say that you rebuffed Floyd?
LA: I rebuffed him after he came out. Up until that point I actually supported him. Even when he tested positive I supported him. When he went on trial I supported him. And even afterwards I supported him.
OW: Did you rebuff him after he was stripped of his Tour win?
LA: No.
OW: You didn’t just blow him off?
LA: Well we didn’t give him a spot on the team which he wanted. But that’s not necessarily entirely my decision –if that’s a “blow off,” yeah. I tried to keep him on quote unquote “my team,” because of course you would because you know what other’s don’t.
OW: Because he knew what other’s didn’t know.
LA: Exactly. But to say that I shunned him or I put him out, no. I didn’t do it that way. Obviously I think he did, but I also think he felt like the sport did. He felt like the sport just didn’t want to take him back.
OW: So that was a tipping point. And your comeback was also a tipping point. Do you regret now coming back?
LA: I do. We wouldn’t be sitting here if I didn't come back.
OW: After winning his seventh Tour de France in 2005 Lance Armstrong retired. Three years later with much fanfare he announced a comeback. That year he placed third. He raced the Tour de France one last time in 2010 and placed 23rd.

[Video Clip]

OW: You would have gotten away with it?
LA: It's impossible to say, much better chances, but I didn’t –
OW: [confirming] You didn’t.
LA: I didn’t.

OW: Did you not always think that this day was coming? Not that you and I would be sitting here – but did you not think that... First of all Third Law of Motion which you put out to kind of comeback – did you not think you would be found out at some point, especially since so many people knew?
LA: Well I just assumed the stories would continue for a long time. This isn’t an issue of news stories or interviews, that’s not why we’re sitting here. We’re sitting here because there was a two-year criminal federal investigation of me.
OW: Yes.
LA: Athletes, everybody involved with this story was called in, subpoenaed, deposed, there’s a man with a gun and a badge, and the consequences are serious.

[Video clip]

OW: In 2010, shortly after Floyd Landis accused Lance Armstrong of using performance enhancing drugs, the US Department of Justice launched an investigation into those allegations. Among the possible charges against Lance Armstrong were, “fraud,” “drug trafficking,” and “witness tampering.” Last February, after a nearly two year investigation, federal prosecutors dropped the case with no explanation.
[Clip ends]

LA: And then USADA started. Again with the same – not equal pressure – but similar pressure. And you know guys were offered deals. Fine, that’s the way it works. But that's why this got out. I assumed that the stories and the accusations would continue forever.
OW: When the Department of Justice just dropped the case – and nobody knows why – I have to ask you, did you have influence in that whatsoever?

LA: No. None.

OW: None. When they dropped that case –

LA: That’s very difficult to influence.

OW: [abashed] Well I have to ask. Ok. When they dropped the case did you think “now finally over, done, victory”?

LA: That’s hard to define victory. I thought I was out of the woods.

OW: [confirming and prompting] You thought you were out of the woods. The wolves had left the door.

LA: And those were some serious wolves.

OW: Yes.

[Video clip]

OW: In the 2012 USADA investigation into Lance Armstrong’s cycling career 26 witnesses were called, including eleven former team-mates who were questioned about their own banned substance use and Lance Armstrong’s. Former cyclist and long time friend and confidant, George Hincapie, was one of them. Hincapie was the only teammate to race in all seven of Lance Armstrong’s Tour de France wins.

In July USADA charged Lance Armstrong with “possession, trafficking, and using banned substances.” Armstrong filed a law-suit to block the charges. A judge dismissed the case. By August, USADA had found “overwhelming evidence” that Armstrong doped through much of his professional cycling career. This time Lance Armstrong chose not to contest their findings. In October he was stripped of all seven Tour de France titles and banned for life from elite competition.

[clip ends]

OW: What was your reaction then when you learned that USADA was going to pick up the case and pursue their own investigation of you?

LA: Great question. My reaction was the same as it was had been. [clenches fists together and assumes boxing pose] You know, coming in on my territory? I’m gonna fight back. Oprah, I’d do anything to go back to that day.

OW: Why?
LA: Because I wouldn't fight, I wouldn't sue them, I'd listen. I'd do a couple of things first. I'd say guys, granted I was – cannot deny – treated differently to other guys. That's ok, I was bigger, I won more races, etc. But I was treated differently but –
OW: Treated differently how?
LA: Treated differently in the sense that I wasn't approached at the same time as other riders, and there were lots of riders that were approached.
OW: Approached how?
LA: They approached them and asked them to come in and talk about the culture of cycling and what they did or didn't do, and of course with that they were going to be penalised. They gathered all of the subpoenas, affidavits and the evidence and then they came –
OW: 26 people including eleven of your former team-mates testified.
LA: Right. And they came to me and said, “Ok, what are you going to do?” To go back to that moment I would say, “Guys, give me three days. I’m gonna call,” – and again this is in hindsight, I wish I could go do it but I can’t – “Let me call some people. Let me call my family; let me call my mother; let me call my sponsors; let me call my foundation; and tell them what I’m going to do, and I’ll be right there.” I wish I could do that but I can’t.
OW: So in the future, you can’t take that back, you can’t go back there, will you cooperate with USADA in order to help them clear up the sport of cycling?
LA: Look I love cycling, I really do, and I say that knowing that I sound like – people will see me as somebody did has disrespected the event, the sport, the colour yellow, the jersey, and I did.
OW: You abused your power.
LA: Yeah, and I disrespected the rules, regardless of what anybody says about the generation, that was my choice. But if we can, and I stand on no moral platform here, it’s certainly not my place to say, “Hey guys let’s clean up cycling.” If there was an effort to... If there was a truth and reconciliation commission – again I can't call for that, I've got no cred – if they have it and I'm invited I’ll be first man through the door.
OW: When you heard that George Hincapie had been called to testify and had spoken, did you feel that was the last card in this deck of cards? Did you feel that was the last straw?
LA: Well my fate was sealed. I think for those people that were my supporters who I’m assuming have left, he was the... They could have heard anybody say anything and if George didn’t say it they’d say, “Well George didn’t say it so I’m sticking with Lance.” And I don’t fault George at all, there was a lot of pressure with that. Listen George is the most credible voice in all of this. He did all seven Tours, I’ve known him since I was sixteen, we practically lived together, we trained together every day, and for the record we’re still great friends. We still talk once a week. I don’t fault George. But George knows this story better than anybody.

[End of Part One]

Some Twitter thoughts posted between Part One and Part Two:

Part Two

[Introductory Video clip] Authoritative Voice Over Man: Live around the world... You heard the confessions...
OW: Yes or no, in all seven of your Tour de France victories did you ever take banned substances or blood dope?
LA: Yes.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: Now...
OW: Were you trying to pay off USADA?
LA: [silent]
Authoritative Voice Over Man: Oprah and Lance Armstrong, the Worldwide Exclusive part two.
LA: Nike called, they're out.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: The sponsors...
LA: It was a 75 million dollar day, gone.
OW: Gone.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: Livestrong...
LA: That was the most humbling moment... We need you to consider stepping down for yourself.
Authoritative Voice Over Man: His children...
OW: Luke’s thirteen. You’ve been fighting this thing for his entire life. You heard that he was defending you. What did you say to him?

Authoritative Voice Over Man: His devoted mother...
LA: She’s a wreck.

Authoritative Voice Over Man: What’s next for Lance Armstrong...
OW: A lot of people say that you’re doing this interview because you want to come back to the sport. What do you say to the millions of people who are wearing Livestrong bracelets? What do you say to those people who believed?
[Introductory video ends. We’re back in an Austin hotel and nothing much has changed...]

OW: Every article that I’ve seen and everything that is written about you begins with the word “disgraced.”

LA: It’s terrible.
OW: Do you feel disgraced?
LA: Of course. But I also feel humbled, I feel ashamed. Yeah this is ugly stuff.

[Video clip]

OW: in October 2012 the United States Anti Doping Agency, known as USADA, stripped Lance Armstrong of his seven Tour de France wins and banned him from elite competition. Then came the fallout. For years sponsors lined up to associate their brand with cycling’s golden boy: Nike, Anheuser Busch, Oakley Sunglasses, and Trek. Sponsorships that had earned him tens of millions of dollars all cut ties with Lance Armstrong.
[Clips ends]

OW: What was the humbling moment that brought you face-to-face with yourself?
LA: I believe it was a Wednesday. Nike called – and this isn’t the most humbling moment, I’ll get to that – and they said basically – Cliff’s Notes here – that they were out. OK? And then the calls started coming. Trek, Giro, Anheuser-Bush... It just –
OW: On the same day, the same couple of days?
LA: Yeah, a couple of days. Everybody out. Still not the most humbling moment. Not a fun period.
OW: But how did that hit you, though?
LA: You know, in a way I just assumed we'd get to that point. The story was getting out of control, which was my worst nightmare. I had this place in my mind that they would all leave. The one person that I didn't think would leave was the Foundation.

[Video Clip]
OW: When he was just 25-years-old Lance Armstrong was diagnosed with stage three testicular cancer. Doctor’s said his chances of survival were less than fifty percent. Within months of his cancer diagnosis Armstrong started Livestrong to raise cancer awareness and empower cancer survivors. Less than three years after he beat the odds he went on to win the Tour de France. Livestrong became one of the most well known charities in the country. Lance Armstrong teamed up with Nike to introduce the now iconic yellow Livestrong bracelet. It was a genius stroke which caught on like wildfire around the world. Today 80 million wristbands have been sold.

Some critics challenge Livestrong for spending too much on PR and not enough on cancer research. Others say Lance Armstrong has used the organisation to deflect any criticism against him. Livestrong has raised nearly 500 million dollars for cancer awareness. Last October Lance Armstrong stepped down as chairman of Livestrong but remained on the board. In November he severed all ties to Livestrong. [Clip ends]

LA: And that was the most humbling moment. To get that call... Two parts: one to step down as chairman and stay on the board, stay involved; but that wasn’t enough – that wasn’t enough for the people, for our supporters, and then a couple of weeks later the next call came, “We need you to step aside.”
OW: Not just step down, to step aside?
LA: And I don’t think it was – it wasn’t, “We need you to step down,” it was, “We need you to consider stepping down for yourself,” and I had to think about that a lot. And this is... None of my kids have said, “Dad you’re out,” none of my friends have said, “Hey Lance you’re out.” The Foundation was, is like my sixth child and to make that decision to step aside, that was big.
OW: They made it for you.
LA: I was aware of... I wouldn't at all say “force out,” “told to leave”... I was aware of the pressure and yes I had interactions with Doug and some of the board members. It was the best thing for the organisation but it hurt like hell. OW: Of everything that's happened in this entire process, in this fall from grace, has that been the hardest? LA: That was the lowest, the lowest.

OW: Can Livestrong live without your story?
LA: I certainly hope so. Yeah, I hope so.

OW: Because your story transcended sports and gave hope to so many people fighting cancer. I have this email that a friend sent to me after finding out I was going to be doing this interview and said, “I've heard that he is a real jerk” – meaning you.

LA: Oh I knew who you were talking about.

OW: [still quoting from letter] “But I will always root for Lance. He gave me hope at a very dire time. My first-born son had just been diagnosed with leukaemia two weeks before his first birthday. And I’m in intensive care barely able to breathe and my brother sends me Lance’s new book, It’s Not About the Bike, I read it cover to cover through the night, it showed me there was hope for my son to not only live but to thrive. I had a choice to make that night on how I'd respond to my son’s illness and teach him how to face the world. My prayer for Lance is that as he faces his demons he remembers it's not about the bike.”

LA: Amen.

OW: [confirming] Amen. Are you facing your demons?

LA: Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah. It's a process and I think, you know, we're at the beginning of the process.

OW: Do you think that banned substances have contributed to you getting cancer.
LA: I don't think so. I'm not a doctor, I've never had a doctor tell me that or suggest that to me personally, but I don't believe so.

OW: This is the last tape I want you to look at, take a look at this.
[Oprah shows Armstrong another video clip from the 2005 SCA Promotions lawsuit against him]

LA: If you have a doping offence or you test positive it goes without saying that you’re fired from all of your contracts not just the team but there’s numerous contracts that I have that would all go away.

Interviewer: Sponsorship agreements for example?

LA: All of them –

Interviewer: Erm –

LA: ...and, the faith of all the cancer survivors around the world. So everything I do off of the bike would go away too – and don’t think for a second I don’t understand that. It’s not about money for me, everything, it’s also about the faith people have put in me over the years, so all of that would be erased. So I don’t need it to say in a contract, “You’re fired if you test positive,” that’s not as important as losing the support of hundreds of millions of people.

[clip ends]

OW: And here we are in that moment.

LA: Yep.

OW: It feels like self prophecy almost.

LA: Yeah, it’s sick.

OW: When you look at that what do you think?

LA: Ah it’s just – I don’t like that. I look at that I go, “This guy’s a...” I don’t like that guy.

OW: I wanted to ask you, this is my question: who is that guy?

LA: That is a guy who felt invincible, was told he was invincible, truly believed he was invincible. That’s who that guy was. That guy’s still there. I’m not going to lie to you or to the public and say, [puts on fake crying voice] “Oh I’m in therapy, I feel better...” He’s still there. Does he need to be exiting through this process? Yes. Am I committed to that process? Yes. We talked about apologies and I told you that I owe a lot of people apologies, and the obvious ones – the ones that we know by name, the Frankies, the Betseys, the Greg Lemonds, the Tyler Hamiltons, the Floyd Fandises, the Emma O’Reillys – I owe them apologies and whenever they’re ready I will give them.
OW: Do you owe David Walsh an apology?

LA: [laughs] That’s a good question.

OW: Do you owe David Walsh an apology who for thirteen years has pursued this story, who wrote for the Times, who has now written books about you and this entire process?

LA: I would apologise to David.

OW: What do you say –

LA: Yeah exactly I’ve had a couple of these conversations –

OW: What do you say to the woman who wrote that email and the millions of people who are wearing Livestrong bracelets, whether physically or...

LA: Sure.

OW: ...spiritually, emotionally for themselves. What do you say to those millions of people who believed?

LA: I say I understand your anger, your sense of betrayal. You supported me forever through all of this, and you believed, and I lied to you, and I’m sorry. And I will spend, I will spend – and I am committed to spend – as long as I have to, to make amends knowing full well that I won’t get many back.

OW: A lot of people think you are doing this interview because you want to come back to the sport.

LA: If you’re asking me, “Do I want to compete again?” the answer is “Hell yes.” I’m a competitor, it’s what I’ve done my whole life. I love to train, I love to race, I love to tow the line. If I was ever to – and I don’t expect it to happen –

OW: You want to compete again on the bicycle? You want to run races on the bike?

LA: Not the Tour the France but there’s a lot of other things that I could do but I can’t with this penalty, with this punishment – and again I made my bed... But if there was a window... Would I like to run the Chicago marathon when I’m 50? I would love to do that and I can’t.

OW: So right now you can’t run a marathon?

LA: I cannot run any marathon. I can’t run the Austin 10k. I would love –

OW: Can you not run or can you just not run anything that pays you money?

LA: Anything that is sanctioned. If there are forty thousand runners there but it is sanctioned by the official governing body I cannot run it.

OW: [confirming] You cannot run it.
LA: I can’t lie to you, I would love the opportunity to be able to compete but that isn’t the reason that I’m doing this. Frankly, this may not be the most popular answer, but I think I deserve it. Maybe not right now but if you look at this situation, if you look at the culture and you look at the sport and you see the punishments, that’s why I told you if I could go back to that time I’d say, “Ok, so you’re trading my story for a six month suspension?” [nods head indicating “fair enough”] That’s what people got.

OW: Which is what other people got.

LA: What everybody got. So I got a death penalty –

OW: Meaning you can never compete again –

LA: In anything. And I’m not saying that that’s unfair necessarily but I’m saying it’s different.

OW: Do you think you’ve gotten what you deserve?

LA: Erm…

OW: For a long time you were saying everybody was on the witch hunt, on the witch hunt, on the witch hunt for you. Do you think in this moment considering now big you were, what that meant, how much people believed, what your name and brand stood for…

LA: Sure.

OW: All of that…

LA: I deserve to be punished. I’m not sure that I deserve a death penalty.

OW: So was it just you being your cocky, arrogant, jerk self that did the tweet with you lying with all of the jerseys?

LA: Yeah that was another mistake.

[Video clip]

OW: Just weeks after being stripped of all seven of his Tour de France titles and banned from elite cycling for life, Lance Armstrong tweeted this photo of himself in his Austin home. He wrote, “Back in Austin and just layin’ around…”

LA: [laughing]

Oprah: [laughing and exasperated] Why did you...? The wolves are at the door, really, the wolves are at the door, they’re in your house and you tweet out that
picture?
LA: It's just... [punches his palm]
OW: Yeah... What were you doing that for? What was that?
LA: That was just more defiance.
LA: And you know what's scary is I actually thought it was a good idea.
OW: You did?
LA: Mmm hmm, at the time.

OW: So tell me, when something this gargantuan happens in your life, how has it changed the way you see yourself?
LA: You know it –
OW: Or has it, has it changed the way you see yourself?
LA: Not completely. No this is heavy and this is messy and this is not something I can sit with and then leave and go “OK, we're all good.” Or I can –
OW: You mentioned therapy a minute ago, are you doing therapy?
LA: Yeah, yeah.
OW: [confirming] You are doing therapy.
LA: Over the course of my life, I've done it sporadically. I'm the type of person that needs to not do it sporadically, it needs to be consistently... You know, I've had a messy life, but it's no excuse. This is going to be a long process.

OW: So do you have remorse? Is there real remorse or is there a sense of, “I'm sorry I got caught, and I'm sorry I had to go through all of this, and I wish this hadn’t happened?”
LA: Everybody that gets caught is bummed out they got caught. I am only starting and I will continue, listen when this [all] comes out, the ripple effects...
OW: Of people analysing what you said and why you said it...
LA: Yes. And people who still are sitting there today that are true believers: they're going to hear something totally different. So do I have remorse? Absolutely. Will I continue to, will it grow? Absolutely. For me this is the first
step. And again, these are my actions. I am paying the price but I deserve it.

OW: When something like this happens what you hope is that it leaves an impression that causes a shift or a change within you. Has that happened with you yet?

LA: I’d be lying if I said that it had. Again I keep going to this word and this idea of “process”... I got work to do, and I can’t – there’s not going to be one tectonic shift here that says, “Oh ok, he’s on his way now, he’s good now.”

OW: Were there people that cared about you who knew about this who wanted you to stop it? Stop the lying? Stop the doping?

LA: Of course.

OW: Was there anything they could have said or done?

LA: Probably not. And I’m going to name...

OW: Because I’m thinking about your ex-wife Kristin.

[Video Clip]

OW: Lance and Kristin Armstrong were divorced after five years of marriage. They have three children together: 13 year-old Luke, 11 year-old twin daughters Isabelle and Grace. Armstrong has two other daughters with his girlfriend of five years now, Anna Hansen: three year-old Max and two year-old Olivia.

[end clip]

LA: I was going to say if I could say one name it’d be Kristin. I mean she was... She’s a smart lady, she’s extremely spiritual, she believes in honesty and integrity and the truth. She believes that the truth will set you free. We believe differently on a lot of things. She may come at it from a religious standpoint where I may not but it doesn’t matter. We have three kids together, they deserve the honest truth. They deserve a dad that is viewed as telling the truth to them, to the public. You know, Anna has always wanted that; she doesn’t know that whole story back then because we weren’t together.

OW: Was there anybody who knew the whole truth? Have you told anybody the whole truth?

LA: [laughs] Yeah.
OW: Let’s go back to Kristin. She was aware of what was going on?
LA: [grunts an affirmative]
OW: Had she had conversations with you about stopping or getting out?
LA: She... And I asked Kristin... I saw her at the kids’ game two days ago and said if this comes up can I talk about this and she said yes. She was not – you know – she was not that curious. Perhaps she didn't want to know. She certainly knew but didn’t... [it was] on a need-to-know basis. I guess maybe I protected her a little bit from that. The thing about her and my doping and this comeback was she was the one person I asked if I could do that.
OW: If you could come back?
LA: [confirming]If I could come back. And I figured, “If I’m going to do this,” – it was a big decision – “I need her blessing.” And she said to me, “You can do it under one condition: that you never cross that line again.”

OW: The line of drugs?
LA: Yes. And I said, “You got a deal.” And I never would have betrayed that with her. It was a serious... It was a serious ask, it was a serious commitment, she gave me her blessing... If she would have said no, “I don't like this idea,” I would not have done it. But I gave her my word and I did stick to it.
OW: So you came back and you were willing to – you said to me at the beginning of our conversation here – that you didn’t believe it was possible to win seven in a row without doping, so you came back: not going to dope, not going to do blood transfusions and you expected to win still?
LA: Yes, yeah. Because I thought and I still think that the sport was very clean. There really was a major shift in the mid-2000s with the bio passport.
OW: So you thought you were coming back into a clean sport?
LA: And a level playing field.
OW: [confirming] And a level playing field. How was it to you to come in third? You who loves to win, win at all cost.
LA: I didn’t expect to get third, I expected to win, like I always expected. And at the end I just said, “I just got beat by two guys that are better.” That’s why we have the events... I know that doesn’t sound like something I would say but –
OW: Right.
LA: But I did everything I could in training and I just got beat.
OW: You just were talking about Kristin: y’all have three children together, what do you tell Luke? You’ve been fighting this – Luke’s 13 – you’ve been fighting this thing his entire life. What do you tell Luke? Because at 13 he’s old enough to know what’s going on.

LA: Oh yeah trust me [they know]. They know a lot. They hear it in the hallways.

OW: Luke and the girls?

LA: [confirming] Luke and the girls. Their schools, their classmates have been very supportive. Where you lose control with your kids is when they go out of that space, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, in the feedback columns.

OW: But what did you tell him?

LA: Well first I want to tell you what happened. When this all really started, I saw my son defending me, and saying, “That’s not true. What you’re saying about my dad is not true.” And it almost goes to this question of “why now?” You know he can’t… [chokes up] Yeah… That’s when I knew I had to tell him. And he’d never asked me. He’d never said, “Dad, is this true?” He trusted me, and I heard about it in the hallways…"

OW: What did you say to him?

LA: At that time I didn’t say anything, but that’s the time I knew I had to say something.

OW: You heard that he was defending you?

LA: Yeah, other kids, on Instagram or [note: not sure what he says here] it gets ugly. And then I had to – you know – at that point I decided I had to say something, this is out of control and then I had to have that talk with him, which was here just over the holidays.

OW: What did you say?

LA: I said listen there’s have been a lot of questions about your dad any my career and whether I doped or did not dope and I’ve always denied that and I’ve always been ruthless and defiant about that – you guys have seen that, it’s probably why you trusted me on it – which makes it even sicker… And I said, “I want you to know that it is true.” Then there were the girls who are 11 – they’re twins as you know – and Luke, and they didn’t say much. They didn’t say, “But wait Dad?” They just accepted it and I told Luke, I said… [chokes up] I
said “don’t defend me anymore, don’t.”

OW: How’d he take it?

LA: He has been remarkably calm and mature about this. I said, “If anybody says anything to you,” – they’re going to see this [show] – “If some kid says something, do not defend me, just say ‘Hey, my Dad says he is sorry.’” He said, “Ok.”

OW: Did he say anything?

LA: He just said, “Look, I love you, you’re my dad and this won’t change that.” I had expected... I don’t know, I guess you always expect something. But it was –

OW: Defiance? Had you expected defiance?

LA: [suddenly, his guard down for once, his body language indicates he had not expected defiance] From him?

OW: Anger? Disappointment?

LA: Thank God he is more like Kristin than he is like me.

OW: Are you hopping with this conversation, this admission, your saying you wished you’d done things differently with USADA, that your lifetime ban will be lifted from competition? Are you hoping that?

LA: Eh selfishly yes, but realistically I don’t think that’s going to happen, and I have to live with that, I have to sit with that.

OW: Certainly people are discussing – there has been a lot of talk about why you’re doing it and what you were going to and how you were going to say it, what was your intention or hope that would come out of it?

LA: Listen the biggest hope and intention was the well being of my children, it really was. The older kids need to not be living with this issue in their lives. It isn’t fair for me to have done to them and I did it. And also for the little ones, they have no idea, they’re two and three. They have, Oprah, obviously they have no idea, but they will learn it. This conversation will live forever, everything we have done today, that dumb tweet with the yellow jerseys lives forever. So I have to get that right for them as they enter the – you know the depth of their lives.

OW: Last Wednesday night, Travis Tygart CEO of USADA, told 60 Minutes Sports that someone on your team offered a donation which USADA did not accept. He said it was over $150,000. Were you trying to pay off Usada?

LA: No, that is not true.
OW: That’s not true?
LA: That is not true. In the thousand page reasoned decision that they had issued, there was a lot of stuff in there, everything was in there, why wasn’t that in there? Pretty big story. Oprah, it’s not true.
OW: No one representing you...
LA: Nobody, certainly I had no knowledge of that but I asked around, “Did anybody...?” Not true.
OW: And you are Lance Armstrong and you run your own show so if somebody was going to offer $150,000, you would know about it?
LA: I think the claim was $250,000. I mean it was broad number but they narrowed it down. That’s a lot of money, yeah I would know –
OW: If that was happening?
LA: [nods head]
OW: And you’re saying to me that that is not true?
LA: That’s not true.
OW: What has been the cost, the financial cost? Have you lost everything?
LA: I’ve lost, certainly lost all future income. You could look at the day, or those two days or the day and a half when people left. And I want to give you a number, you asked me the cost. I don’t like thinking about it but that was a, I don’t know, that was a $75m day.
OW: That just went out of your life.
LA: Gone.
OW: [confirming] Gone.
LA: Gone, and probably never coming back.

OW: Were you ever in the position where you felt like, “Wow I don’t want to get out of bed”? I know you’ve been running and jogging... Did it hit you to the point of, “I don’t know what to do?”
LA: I’ve been to a dark place that was not my doing; I’ve been to a place where I didn’t know if I was going to live a month, six months, a year, five years, ten years...It’s helped me now. I mean this is not a good time but it isn’t the worst part of my life. You cannot compare this to a diagnosis and an advanced
diagnosis, you know, fifty-fifty odds or whatever the odds are... That sets the bar. It's close but I'm an optimist and I like to look forward. This has caused me to look back and I don’t ever look – I mean my Mom and I, we’re very similar in this regard, she doesn’t look back. We don't talk about the past. We don’t talk about what's happened. I've never asked her about my biological father. We've never sat down and had that – we just don’t go there, that was yesterday, that was last year.

OW: How is she handling all of this?
LA: She is a wreck.

OW: Yeah, because the people that love you take it as hard as you do, and harder.
LA: She’s a wreck. And she’s not the type of person that would call me and say “Lance, I'm a wreck,” but my stepfather called and said, “Your Mom is having a really hard time,” and I said, “I’m sure but she’s a tough lady. She’s gotten through every other tough moment in her life.” Then we were facetimeing with my kids, her grandkids back and forth, and I saw my mum and I thought, “Oh... this woman’s a wreck.”

OW: [confirming] This has hit her hard.
LA: Yeah.
OW: [confirming] This has hit her hard.
LA: And it took seeing her to really understand that this has taken a toll on her life. So...

OW: And there others – I know you spoke about that – all those people. Are you in space now where you can... Because obviously that guy wasn’t even aware of what you were doing and how that was affecting other people...

LA: [confirming] No idea.
OW: So in that way, that was bully, sociopathic, only obsessed with yourself –
LA: Narcissistic.
OW: Narcissistic behaviour; you would say that?
LA: [nodding] Got it...

OW: [confirming] Yeah. Are you now in a space as you called former friend, friends, associates, last night to apologise, are you in a space where you’re not just
apologising but you can begin to feel how you shattered other people's lives? Are you in that space yet?

LA: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And we don’t need the... I don’t need to be back in that place where I can slip like that and take things for granted and abuse privilege. You know, to go back to my... If I had a child – if one of my kids acts... You know, we watched those tapes, if I had one of my kids act like that I’d be apoplectic.

OW: We all know that when you're famous people love to see the rise, the heroic rise, and they also love to see you stumble and fall. Will you rise again?

LA: I don’t know, I don’t know. I don’t know what’s out there. And again I go to this thing, I do not know the outcome here, and I’m getting comfortable with that. That would have driven me crazy in the past. And I’m getting there, I’ve got to get even more there. I don’t know, I’m deeply sorry for what I did. I can say that thousands of times and it may never be enough to “get back.” You’re asking me if I can “come back.”

OW: More importantly than your “come back,” I’m not as interested in your comeback to the sports world, I more interested what’s going to happen to you as a man, as a man, as a human being. Are you a better human being today because this happened. Did this help you become a better human being?

LA: Without a doubt, without a doubt. And again, this happened twice in my life, when I was diagnosed I was a better human being after that and I was a smarted human being after that. And then I lost my way.

OW: [confirming] You lost your way.

LA: And here’s the second time, and it’s easy to sit here and say, “I feel different, I feel smarter, I feel like a better man today,” but I can’t lose my way again. And only I can control that, and I’m in no position to make promises - I’m going to slip up again but that is the biggest challenge for the rest of my life: it’s to not slip up again and to not lost sight of what I got to do. I had it, and it just... Things got too big, things got too crazy. So... an epic challenge.

OW: It’s an epic story. What’s the moral to the story?

LA: It’s... I don’t have a great answer there. I can look at what I did, cheating to win bike races, lying about it, bullying people, of course you’re not supposed to do those things – that’s what we teach our children. That’s the easy thing. There’s another moral to this story, and I think for me, I just think it was about
that ride and about losing myself and getting caught up in that and doing all of those things along the way that just enabled that. And then the ultimate crime is the betrayal of these people that supported me and believed in me and they got lied to.

OW: First of all thank you for trusting me to do this. You know what I hope the moral to this story is? I hope the moral of this story is what Kristin told you in 2009: the truth will set you free.

LA: Yeah, yeah. She continues to tell me that.

OW: Thank you.

LA: Thank you.

[they shake hands, interview ends]
Appendix B

Articles coded for *Antapolgia* in Chapter Four


Armstrong admits doping: 'I'm a flawed character'. (2013, January 18). *The Bangkok Post*

Armstrong let all athletes down, says Serena Williams. (2013, January 19). *Philippines Daily Inquirer*

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Is drug pedaller lance genuine or just acting? (2013, January 20). *Argus Weekend (South Africa)*

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LARRY RYAN: Road to redemption a road known only too well. (2013, January 19).

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