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Baseball and steroids in the news: how politicians and reporters construct the news

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BASEBALL AND STEROIDS IN THE NEWS: HOW POLITICIANS AND
REPORTERS CONSTRUCT THE NEWS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
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B.A., Lebanese University, 2000
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ABSTRACT

This study is a content analysis of newspaper coverage of baseball and steroids. The data are a random sample from four newspapers: *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Washington Post*. The period under study consists of 77 weeks, from April 10th, 2003, to December 9th, 2004. The results supported four hypotheses and negated one. Analysis showed that the issue of baseball and steroids was not institution-driven news; it was the result of governmental action, events outside of government, and local interest. The number of stories rose after governmental action. It also rose after an event, but faded away quickly from the news. Other findings indicated that political reporters rely on government sources more than sports reporters do. They rely as heavily on sports and professional sources as they do on government sources. The results took the form of descriptive statistics. For statistical significance, the study used SPSS software to run an F-test and a paired-sample t-test.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Newsmaking occupies one of the broadest topics in journalism scholarship. News construction is a highly complicated process because it involves the filtering of reality and events. This study is a content analysis of newspaper coverage of the issue of baseball and steroids during a period in which the salience of the issue rose both in sports and politics. The purpose of this study is to trace the issue as a news story over time to find out when and under what circumstances it became news. This study also intends to differentiate between sports reporters and political reporters when they cover the same issue. The data are a random sample from four different newspapers during an 86-week period.

The issue of steroids in sports gained prominence in 2003. The death of several athletes as a result of steroids forced authorities and the public to think of the seriousness of the issue. Baseball player Steve Bechler died in February 2003 to thrust the issue of the banned substance, ephedra, in public. Other sudden deaths included football players Korey Stringer, Rashidi Wheeler, and Devaughn Darling. Steroids in baseball became a political issue when President George W. Bush devoted 98 words to it in his State of the Union address in January 2004. Political intervention and new developments in baseball pushed the steroids issue even further into people's consciousness.

The steroids issue was two-dimensional, capturing the attention of both sports and politics. This study chose the steroid controversy in baseball because sports form an important part of American culture. The sports section of a metropolitan daily newspaper accounts for more than 20 percent of its editorial content (Anderson, W.B., 2001). As mass entertainment, sports play a larger role in American culture than in any other

society (Koppett, 1981). The interaction between sports and politics, and how sports reporters work is important if the public considers sports to be part of its everyday consumption of knowledge through the media. By studying sports reporting and the construction of news, this study wishes to apply its findings to all areas of journalism.

This study expects to find both political and sports coverage of the baseball and steroids issue. It also expects to find the biggest cluster of stories when the government acts. The study anticipated that political reporters will quote government sources more than sports reporters will.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Because of the vast world in which we live, most people get their news about events beyond their reach from the media. This fact places a big responsibility on the media to present factual pictures of the world. Journalism did not always mean the same thing. Before the world recognized the need to have a free and responsible press, journalism underwent several changes. The nineteenth century was a battleground for redefining journalism. During those times, particularly in the 1830s, there were “constant debates over the nature of news and veracity of journalists” (Mindich, 1998, p. 2). In his book, *Just the Facts*, David T. Z. Mindich (1998) studies one of the journalistic practices, “objectivity”. He presents its history and evolution before it took its present meaning and became what journalists refer to today as “objectivity” (Mindich, 1998).

Newsmaking is one of the rich topics making up today’s journalism scholarship. To better understand the role of journalism in modern times, scholars have focused on the newsmaking process as an important part of the role the media play in society. The notion of newsmaking is fairly an old one, but it did not accompany the birth of journalism in the late seventeenth century. In the early days of journalism, the press was primarily concerned with providing the public with foreign news, news of arriving ships, and announcements (Franklin, 1990). Eighteenth-century newspapers did not collect news; they just printed what came to them (Schudson, 2003). Benjamin Franklin was the first to recognize the importance of the press in a society. Starting his own printing press, he upgraded the level of content that rival newspapers provided. In addition to news about the arrival of ships, Franklin included news about events and meetings in society (Franklin, 1990). A century and a half later, James Gordon Bennett revolutionized

reporting through the penny press and invented what scholars refer to today as newsmaking (Mindich, 1998). The shift from partisanship to commercialization in the nineteenth century press played a major role in the redefining of news. In the absence of governmental subsidies, the new profit-oriented newspapers found the need to appeal to a large audience. News became a commercial commodity. Change in American society, mainly industrialization, technology, and the rise of a market economy, “defined news within a business context” (Baldasty, 1992, p. 4). The new focus on business had its effect on the content of the news. In the absence of events, newspapers sought to fill their pages by producing news (Baldasty, 1992). To maximize circulation, journalists fabricated and sensationalized news (Baldasty, 1992). From that time on, the concept of newsmaking developed to form one of the most important processes in journalism.

What is newsmaking, what kind of stories make the news, when does a story become news, in addition to many others, are among questions that have concerned scholars of mass communication and political science for a long time. Literature about this subject holds different views about the process of newsmaking, the origin of stories that make news, the reasons why certain stories make it to the news while others do not, and the relative influence of journalists and the government in the newsmaking process. The concept of news constructing reality is common among scholars. According to these academic experts, news is “the result of journalistic activity of publicizing” (Schudson, 2003, p. 3), it is a socially structured representation of reality (Lawrence, 2000), and it “constructs and reconstructs a public reality from privately experienced events” (Cook, 1989, p. 8). Regina Lawrence was among many others who studied news and the newsmaking process. In her book, *The Politics of Force: Media and the Construction of*

Police Brutality, Lawrence (2000) conducts a content analysis on the news about the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles and other incidents of police use of force. Her research led her to conclude that one of the reasons event-driven problems become news is the journalists' judgment of newsworthiness (Lawrence, 2000). Police use of force was an issue for a long time, but it became news only after an event, the LAPD beating of King (Lawrence, 2000). Lawrence also found that certain accidental events become news for a short time, and fade away quickly from the scene with the absence of governmental actors, as in the cases of Federico Pereira, Jose Garcia, and Ernest Sayon (Lawrence, 2000). Pereira, Garcia and Sayon were the subject of police use of force. Lawrence's findings are important to this study because it bases the hypotheses around the subject of accidental and institutional news. Lawrence (2000) defines institutionally driven news as officially dominated and stemming from routine news "that has been studied and theorized extensively" (p. 175). Event driven news, on the other hand, is the result of unplanned, unexpected events and may take story cues from non-officials (Lawrence, 2000). In her study, Lawrence (2000) realized how difficult it was for "critical non-officials [to promote] a systematic frame for the issue of police brutality" (p. 179). These findings promote the importance of government officials in any event that becomes news.

Government officials are important not only to turn an event into news, but also to provide quotes for journalists. Reporters' reliance on official sources in the government is a basic element in this study. The relation between the media and the government has attracted the attention of mass communication and political science scholars for a long time. Most literature on this subject deals with political reporters and their news beats, and reporters' heavy reliance on officials and the governmental institutions they serve.

The relationship between government officials and reporters is adversarial and symbiotic at the same time (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1981). This study focuses on the symbiotic relationship of officials and the media. Symbiosis is at its best in the use of official governmental sources in media reports. Michael Schudson (2003) regards the news as the result of interaction between journalists and their sources. In his book, *The Sociology of News*, Schudson (2003) discusses how reporters rely on sources in their newsbeats to provide them with official information that they later on turn into news. Reporters “look up for sources who can speak for their institutions with full legitimacy”; they do not only seek authoritative sources, but “the higher up in the hierarchy they can maintain a source, the better” (Schudson, 2003, p. 137).

The concept of official sources dominating the news is widespread in academia. Different scholars looked at government domination from different angles. Part of this study deals with the authors of the news; therefore, the focus will be on the angles that deal with the role government officials play in dictating the news. Walter Gieber (1960) discussed how reporters and sources become the two communicators of the news because of the gatekeeping nature of their work. The press pays attention to news events when a source decides to communicate them to the newspaper, which in turn, decides to tell the community (Gieber, 1960). Reporters focus on designated leaders “whose institutional position is taken as a sign that they have greater influence than the average member” (Cook, 1989, p. 52). According to Cook (2000), “news coverage could be crucial in certifying which political actors are influential or not”. The relative importance of political actors in the news media is clear in the hypothesis of “indexing”. In his essay, *Toward a Theory of Press-State Relations in the United States*, W. Lance Bennett

formulated the hypothesis of indexing. His hypothesis states that “mass media news professionals... tend to ‘index’ the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic” (Bennett, 1990, p. 106). This study does not attempt to focus on indexing, but is using it to point to the fact that there are vast numbers of studies about the use of sources in news. Mark Fishman joins other scholars who studied the newsmaking process of beat reporters in his essay *News and Nonevents: Making the Visible Invisible*. He concluded that reporters’ sense of newsworthiness is based on “schemes of interpretation originating from agency officials within the institutions beat reporters cover” (Fishman, 1979, p. 210). In his book, *Who Deliberates?*, Benjamin Page content analyzed the news surrounding the Fitzwater remarks in the Bush presidency to conclude that a small number of professional communicators play a central part in public deliberation (Page, 1996). Taking Page’s study as a framework, this study follows a story across time to depict patterns of mediated deliberation.

In this study, the government is the beat of political reporters; baseball is for sports reporters. Both sets of reporters covered the involvement of Congress in the issue of baseball and steroids. This is not unusual because Congress becomes attractive to reporters when it is related to other institutions (Cook, 1989). Although this holds true to the Golden Triangle of the White House, State Department, and Pentagon (Cook, 1989), it might be true with baseball as well.

Sports are an important part of American culture. Scholars have studied several years of sports and sporting events and placed sports among the most important institutions in American society. As mass entertainment, sports play a larger role in American culture than in any other society (Koppett, 1981). Gunther Luschen (1980)

views sport as an institution of social behavior that “extends into economics, education, and the mass media” (p. 315). Peter Levine (1989) describes sport in the twentieth century as “a multifaceted social institution of human interaction that illuminates a whole range of experiences, hopes, problems, limitations, and even fantasies of Americans” (p. 97). Sports get attention as business, as amusement, and as an arena that mirrors American society (Levine, 1989).

Sports reporting started as early as the 1800s, but did not take its present form and importance until the 1920s. In antebellum America, the first sports journalism took the form of the results of horse racing contests in dailies (Levine, 1989). Today, sports journalism has expanded to include stories, features, interviews, statistics, etc. Louis Gelfand and Harry Heath (1969) consider the newspaper sports page as an essential element in modern American journalism, and “a high-priority item on the reading list in American homes.”

Since its early days of reporting, sports journalism has undergone a major change. The first labels of sports reporters were that of cheerleaders for the home team. Sports media experts agree that today’s sports journalism is serious, comprehensive, and more critical than in the past. In his book, *Sports Reporting*, Bruce Garrison (1985) says today’s sports journalist is more serious, critical and thorough than ever before. Some still argue that today’s reporters are cheerleaders for their home team. William Anderson (2001) compared sports journalists of the Major League Baseball beat in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His study showed that cheerleaders and critical writers existed in both sets of reporters, and that “hastily placing labels on sports journalists... trivializes and misrepresents those that cover one of the most widely read sections in the

newspaper” (Anderson, W.B., 2001, p. 365). Douglas Anderson (1980) also studied the cheerleading labeling of sports journalists. The results of his mail survey showed that “sports editors believe sportswriting is getting better and that less ‘cheerleading’ occurs in their pages than used to” (Anderson, D.A., 1980, p. 497). Another survey by J. Sean McCleneghan (1990) focused on “sportswriters’ attitudes about their profession and how they think about themselves within the context of the daily newspaper writing/reporting grind” (p. 114). The reporters under study judged themselves as hardworking, conscientious, and “more often ethically tested than were other reporters” (McCleneghan, 1990, p. 114).

Sports journalism shares a lot with other forms of journalism, but it also has its differences. In sports journalism, as in the other forms, reporters rely on sources in their news stories because the only way they can obtain information is through someone else (Koppett, 1981). This makes the reporter the liaison between the source and the public. Just like political reporters rely on authoritative sources in the government (Schudson, 2003), sports reporters rely on authoritative sources in sports. The sports journalists’ primary source of information is the coach because of his “knowledge of the subject, position of responsibility, and accessibility” (Garrison, 1985, p.15). The second major source is the athlete because he/she is the major actor in the sports arena (Garrison, 1985).

Another commonality between sports journalism and the other types of journalism is that “the ‘what’ is inseparable from the ‘who’” (Koppett, 1981, p.91). Reporters judge newsworthiness by who did what (Koppett, 1981). This aspect of reporting will be evident in the issue of baseball and steroids. Most stories centered on baseball slugger

Barry Bonds because of his connection to people involved in the steroids investigation. In this case the “who” played a major role in determining the newsworthiness of the sports story.

Before a story becomes news, it has to fit in newsworthiness values. Generally, the decision about newsworthiness of an event is made after something has happened. In sports, most of the time, the newspaper is dealing with a scheduled event whose newsworthiness is the taking place, not the outcome (Koppett, 1981). In most news, a story breaks, a reporter covers it, then the editors judge whether to print it. In sports, the editors devote a standard space to sporting events, thus judging them as newsworthy before knowing their outcome.

As news, sport is unique because it “is the only form of news that gives detailed reports on things of entertainment value on a daily basis” (Caldwell, 1998, p.1). Sports news comes in different forms. The most common are the news story that reviews events and results, the feature story about a sports figure, editorial columns, and statistics (Caldwell, 1998).

Sports journalists, like all others, have obligations to objectivity, reliability, integrity, and other journalistic standards. But one major difference between sports reporters and political reporters is the level of objectivity they pursue or do not pursue in reporting. Gelfand and Heath (1969) list objectivity as one of the important qualifications of the sports writer. “More objective writing with less attempt at experting” is better reporting (Gelfand & Heath, 1969, p. 209). But sports reporters are becoming less objective than they were in the 1960s. Garrison (1985) predicted sports reporters of the '80s and '90s to be more investigative and indicated that subjective and interpretive

reporting is on the rise. Reporters were changing their roles as cheerleaders to more subjective, opinionated and in-depth reporting (Garrison, 1985). In a study about sports media, Jason Caldwell content analyzed American to trace the changing trends in sports journalism. He found that “sports controversy has become increasingly more common and, as a result, the standard norms and routines of sports journalism have shifted in an effort to more intensely cover these events and issues” (Caldwell, 1998, p.65). One reason for the heightened controversial sports stories today is “the increased level of controversy among sports figures” (Caldwell, 1998, p.5).

Theories of mass communication are abundant. Their views about the role of media and their impact in society range from total control to partial control. Agenda-setting theory partially applies to this research. McCombs and Shaw conducted a study on the 1968 presidential campaign to investigate the agenda-setting capacity of the mass media. For their study, they interviewed 100 respondents. They found that mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Michael Grossman and Francis Rourke (1976) found that, “a fundamental advantage that executive officials have in dealing with the media is the fact that their activities sit so high on the media’s agenda of subjects to cover” (p. 457). This paper does not directly apply the agenda-setting theory to the analysis. It uses it only to understand the important role the press plays in newsmaking. By choosing certain voices and neglecting others, journalists become the biggest authors of the news. By relying on authoritative sources, they frame the news according to their own agendas, as well as those of the sources.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Research Questions

Question 1: Is the story of baseball and steroids institution-driven or event-driven news?

Question 2: Are news stories confined to a single section, or do they move across sections?

Question 3: Do sports reporters and political reporters rely equally on government sources?

3.2 Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Baseball and steroids became a news story only after governmental action.

Hypothesis 2: The story of baseball and steroids reappeared after an event, but faded with the absence of government actors.

Hypothesis 3: Both political reporters and sports reporters covered the story of baseball and steroids.

Hypothesis 4: When a political story breaks on a particular day, it is as likely to be followed by a sports story the next day as by a political story.

Hypothesis 5: When covering the same story, political reporters rely on government sources more than sports reporters do.

CHAPTER 4 METHOD

This study is a content analysis of newspaper coverage of the issue of baseball and steroids. The purpose of this study is to depict media trends in news coverage. It intends to find out who are the newsmakers in the issue of baseball and steroids, and to compare sports reporters to political reporters when they cover the same issue.

This study chose content analysis as its research method because it best fits the requirements of the research questions and their corresponding hypotheses.

The data are the news stories of four major newspapers in the United States. The study obtained the data from the LexisNexis Academic database. The papers are *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Washington Post*. These newspapers have the highest circulation in the United States. They also belong to the largest metropolitan areas in the United States. The largest metropolitan areas are New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington and San Francisco (Rosenberg, 2002). Chicago's two major dailies are *the Tribune* and the *Sun-Times*. The LexisNexis Academic database does not carry *the Tribune*. The study chose *The San Francisco Chronicle*, which represents the fifth largest area because it has a higher circulation than *Chicago Sun-Times* ("Top 150 Newspapers," n.d.).

Besides the criteria they fit in, *The Washington Post* and *The San Francisco Chronicle* have special significance because of the local angle. *The Post* is the major newspaper of the capital, where most government offices are; and *The Chronicle* represents San Francisco where the steroid investigation about the Bay Area Laboratory Co-operative started.

This paper will analyze print media rather than broadcast media for several reasons. Newspapers have more space and time to construct their stories, an element that is absent in television coverage. Newspapers do not restrict themselves to broadcast newsworthiness values, which Neil Postman (1985) described as vivid, entertaining, and appealing to the eye. In newspapers, the political section is completely distinct from the sports section; therefore, it is possible to tell which sections news stories appear in.

The content analysis will cover 77 weeks, the time period between April 10th, 2003, and December 9th, 2004. The central theme of this paper revolves around major governmental action, which ignited the problem of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs in American sports, particularly in baseball. The first of a series of actions were the indictments of February 2004. On February 12th, 2004, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft announced that a San Francisco grand jury charged four people with illegal distribution of growth-enhancing drugs. The 77 weeks that will provide material for the research cover 10 months before the indictments (February 12th, 2004) and 10 months after. The unit of analysis is the “news story.”

After choosing the period of analysis, other major events occurred, including players’ testimony in court, and other governmental actions. This study will consider all developments that happened during this period, and will analyze the data accordingly.

This paper consists of two studies: how journalists and politicians construct the news, and a comparison of coverage by sports reporters and political reporters.

In the first study, this paper will count the times the story of baseball and steroids made the news. It also will seek to find out how many of those stories were covered by sports reporters or political reporters, and when. The first study also will serve to find out

how one story travels from one section to another; in this case, from the sports section to the political section, or vice versa. This study will attempt to shed light on how certain news stories do not take certain sections as a permanent home. The results of the first study will take the form of descriptive statistics.

The second study will be an in-depth analysis of the news stories. The paper will count the frequency and type of sources in each story. Coding will distinguish between government, sports, professional and other sources. Using the quantitative data about sources, this paper will look for evidence about differences between the use of sources by political reporters and sports reporters when they cover the same issue. To measure the difference between the political section and the sports section of a newspaper when counting sources, the paper will use SPSS statistical software to run an F-test in which the dependent variable is the source and the independent variables are the sections. Because there were three dependent variables (news section, sports section, and other), the study performed a Post Hoc test to measure the statistical significance between the different sections. To measure different types of sources in one category, the paper ran a paired-sample t-test on the data.

This study obtained the data from the LexisNexis Academic database. Typing “baseball” and “steroids,” and not “editorials,” and choosing the “headline, lead paragraph(s), key terms” option yielded 535 stories, which included five Information Bank Abstracts. The study took out the abstracts because they were not news stories, and then chose every third story. In certain cases, the study discarded the third story and chose the next one because the former did not include baseball, steroids, or key words associated to them in the headline or lead paragraphs. Examples of key words are drugs,

MLB, Selig, Bonds, etc. The Lexis Nexis Academic database included in its list stories that did not include baseball, steroids, or key terms in the headline or lead paragraphs, even though the study had narrowed its search to those terms. The sample under study consists of 162 news stories.

The paper identified reporters by the desks for which they work. Political reporters belonged to the news desk, and sports reporters to the sports desk. In the pages to follow, political reporters are used to refer to the reporters working in the news desk and covering the government and other political institutions. This study also uses the words “political stories” and “stories in the news desk” interchangeably.

To establish intercoder reliability, this research used a fellow graduate student in The Manship School of Mass Communication. The tests between coders using Holsti’s formula came out reliable.

4.1 Code Definitions

Governmental action: refers to when the government takes action, such as schedule a meeting, hold a press conference, make an announcement, etc.

Government actors: refer to officials in all government branches (The White House, Senate, Court, etc.).

Event: refers to an unscheduled and unplanned event outside of government, such as death, confession, or voluntary action by a person.

Institution-driven news: refers to news that is generated after and because of action by the government.

Event-driven news: refers to news that is the result of an accidental event, not a pre-planned one, such as death or an accident.

4.2 Code Guide

Name of newspaper: Check on the line next to each category the name of the newspaper.

Number of words: Write on line the exact number of words in the story.

Date of story: Write on the line the date of the story.

Story placement: Check on the line next to each category if the story belongs to the category according to the following criteria.

- News/Section A: if the word across “Section” reads “*News*,” “*Section A*,” “*A Section*,” or “*AI*.”
- Sports: if the word across “Section” reads “*Sports*” or “*Sports desk*.” Also for a story that originated from the sports desk even if it appears in *Section A* too.
- Other: if a story does not apply to the above categories.

Sources: Write on the line across each category the exact number of sources used. Every source gets only one entry. Count as a source everything that the reporter quoted in the story, directly or indirectly. A source could be a person, a document or a newspaper, etc.

Identify each source by its profession. For example, a player’s profession is playing; therefore, he/she is a sports source. A team’s lawyer belongs to the professional category because by profession he is a lawyer, even though he works for a team.

- Governmental: stands for a source who works in the government. For example, Congressman, Senator, Mayor, etc.
- Sports: stands for a player, a trainer or a coach.
- Sports mgt: stands for a source that works in a sports organization. For example, representative, official, publicist, etc.

- Professional: stands for a source that is a professional. For example, doctor, lawyer, professor, etc.
- Other: stands for sources that do not belong to the above-mentioned categories. For example, athletes' family members, witnesses, fans, etc.

For a detailed code guide, refer to Appendix A. For the coding sheet, refer to Appendix B.

CHAPTER 5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to determine trends in newspaper coverage of the issue of baseball and steroids. The main research question that this study set to answer is whether this issue is institution-driven news or event-driven news. Another research question that this study is concerned about is whether there is a difference between sports reporters and political reporters when they cover the same issue. The study hopes that by answering these questions in the context of baseball and steroids, it could generalize the results to similar issues in political science and mass communication.

The content analysis covered a 77-week period, between April 10th, 2003, and December 9th, 2004. This period represents 10 months before and 10 months after the first governmental action, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft's announcement of the indictments of four people on charges of illegal distribution of steroids. The random sample yielded 162 news stories from *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Washington Post*.

Two coders performed the coding, the author and a fellow graduate student in The Manship School of Mass Communication. Each coder was responsible for coding 81 stories, to make a total of 162 stories. To establish intercoder reliability, the two coders performed a pilot study on nine news stories, which is 10 percent of the number of stories each coder is responsible for. Reliability coefficients using Holsti's formula for nominal-level variables were: Name of newspaper, 1.0; Number of words, 1.0; Date of story, 1.0; Story placement, 1.0. Reliability coefficients using Scott's pi for interval-level variables were: Governmental sources, .89; Sports sources, 1.0; Sports management sources, .89; Professional sources, 1.0; Other sources, 1.0.

5.1 Study One: News Stories

5.1.1 Baseball and Steroids over Time

Figure 1 will test Hypotheses 1 and 2. In the first, the study hypothesizes that the baseball and steroids story became news only after governmental action. Following the rise and fall of the number of stories will answer Hypothesis 1. The second hypothesis states that the baseball and steroids story reappeared after an event, but faded with the absence of government actors. Analyzing the graph will determine whether the rise in the number of stories is because of government action or an outside of government event, and whether the drop is because the government was absent.

The graph represents the number of news stories over a 77-week period. The x-axis represents the weeks, and the y-axis represents the number of stories. Following the stories of baseball and steroids over time shows several peaks and valleys. The graph means that the issue of baseball and steroids was not always, or even usually, salient in the media. The story made the news at certain times, for concentrated periods of time, and then dropped completely, to rise again after a while.

The graph shows that the first period under study was a silent one. For 23 weeks, only six stories about baseball and steroids appeared. On July 16th, 2003, New York Governor George Pataki urged Major League Baseball to change its drug-testing policies in Latin America. Only one story about this action appeared.

The first peak in the graph starts in the 24th week and ends in the 27th week. These weeks represent the time between October 17th and November 11th, 2003. This period includes several events that stirred the steroid controversy. On October 16th, 2003, the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) said several track and field athletes tested

positive for steroids. Trevor Graham, the coach who sent the USADA the syringes, identified the source of the steroids to be Victor Conte, the founder and chief executive officer of a nutrition laboratory in Burlingame, California. The Bay Area Laboratory Co-Operative, known as Balco, became the target of federal investigations about illegal distribution of steroids. This news brought up talks about the San Francisco Giants slugger and baseball superstar Barry Bonds who had endorsed ZMA, a nutritional supplement from Balco. Three days later, a San Francisco federal grand jury subpoenaed 40 athletes, among them baseball players Jason Giambi and Barry Bonds, to testify in an investigation about steroids. Of the nine stories in this period, one was a political story about the subpoenas. Another story came from the national desk. The remaining seven stories were sports stories, and most of them discussed the subpoenas.

Following a drop in stories is another peak between week 28 and week 34, this time with 20 stories. Unlike in the previous peak, the stories do not dramatically disappear, but drop down more gradually. These weeks fall between November 12th, 2003, and January 6th, 2004. The number of stories rose to 10 in the first week when no events occurred. The next two weeks had three stories each, before dropping to one story per week for four weeks, preceding a week with no story at all. During this period the only development was the testifying of Giambi and Bonds. During this six-week period, only one political story appeared about Bonds' appearance in court and one story from the "Week in Review" desk. The other 18 stories came from the sports desk.

Week 36 had only one story. During that week, President Bush talked about steroids in his State of the Union address on January 20th, 2004. The only story about Bush and steroids in that week was a sports story.

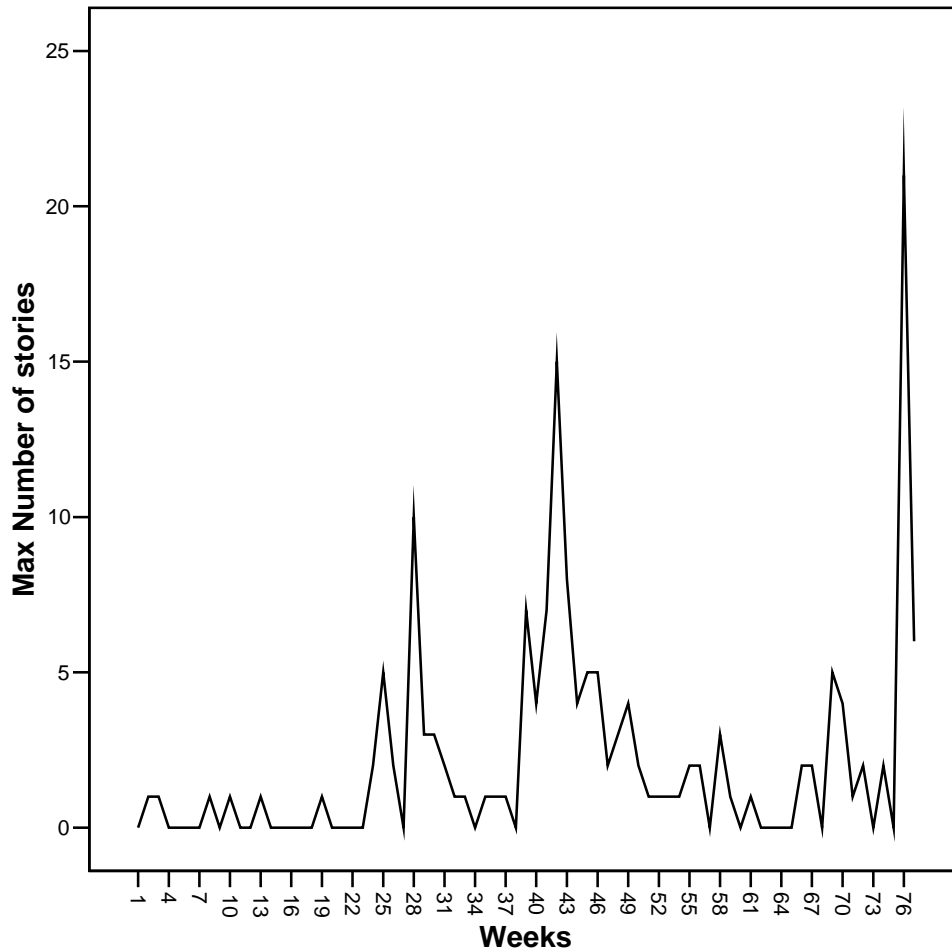


Figure 1. Stories over time

The third major peak in the graph takes place between the 39th and 57th weeks, between February 11th and July 12th, 2004. This time period witnessed news of all sorts, political and sports. It was a period of high salience of the baseball and steroids issue in the media.

The first peak in these series occurs in week 39, the time between February 11th and 15th, 2004. On February 12th, 2004, Ashcroft made his announcement. The number of stories during this period rose from zero to seven, and then dropped to four by February 23rd, 2004. The number rises again, this time to 15, the highest it had been up to that point. This rise takes place between March 3rd and 18th, 2004. On March 10th, Senate

Commerce Committee chairman John McCain (R-AZ) issued a warning to Major League Baseball asking it to stop the use of steroids by baseball players before the committee searches for “legislative remedies.” The day after, the Food and Drug Administration started a crackdown on androstenedione, or andro, the designer steroid that baseball slugger Mark McGwire used in 1998.

After reaching a low of four stories in the 44th week, the number of stories rises to five in each of the next two weeks. During this time, on April 2nd, the House Energy and Commerce Committee sent letters to MLB requesting documents on its policies and positions about the use of ephedra products by professional baseball players. One political story appeared in this period but it was not about the House letters. The rest of the 14 stories were all sports stories, and none was about the House.

After that, the number of stories swings up and down. During this period of inconsistency, on May 5th, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) said he might share with anti-doping officials evidence about some athletes’ dealings with Balco. Later, the number of stories drops to one story per week for four consecutive weeks. Toward the end of this period, on June 3rd, the House voted 408-3 to ban the supplement andro (Epstein, 2004). In the whole week following the vote, only one story appeared about the issue, and it was political. After doubling up to two stories in the next two weeks, the issue disappeared completely for 12 days for the first time in 18 weeks. In the week of July 23rd, U.S. House Energy and Commerce subcommittee heard evidence about ephedra-containing supplements. The only story that appeared in that week did not discuss the matter.

Following this period of relative silence is a 15-week period in which the issue appeared and disappeared several times. During this period, the number of stories rose to

five stories in the week of October 5th and 12th, 2004, followed by four stories in the week of October 13th and 20th, 2004. In the former week, on October 5th, 2004, Gary Sheffield admitted taking steroids. On October 9th, Conte filed complaints to the court and on October 10th, retired baseball player Ken Caminiti died. These three incidents are events that pushed the issue of baseball and steroids to the front again, before disappearing after a short while. Of the five stories in this week, only one was political, about Conte filing.

The final peak in the graph comes at the far end of the time period under study. The number of stories in the final two weeks totaled 27, with 21 of those stories in only six days. In those six days that fall between December 2nd and 7th, a combination of sports and governmental actions occurred. Those few days were a mixture of unscheduled, accidental events and institutional, governmental action. On December 2nd and 3rd, *The San Francisco Chronicle* published details of the testimony of Jason Giambi and Barry Bonds. Giambi admitted to using steroids, while Bonds admitted using a substance that he did not know was steroids. On December 5th, Senate Commerce Committee chairman John McCain said he might introduce legislation “that requires some kind of regimen for the testing” of baseball players. On December 6th, MLB and the MLB Players Association started negotiations about a tougher drug-testing policy. The combination of sports and government action proved attractive to both political and sports reporters. The result was the highest number of stories in the 77 weeks under study.

5.1.2 Who Reported the Story?

This part of the analysis will test Hypothesis 3, which states that both political and sports reporters covered the story of baseball and steroids. Table 1 shows the number of stories each section devoted to the issue, and the percentage of stories belonging to the different sections.

Table 1. Stories in sections

Sections	Number of stories	Percent
News	23	14.2
Sports	131	80.9
Other	8	4.9
Total	162	100

The frequency tests show that the issue of baseball and steroids was primarily a sports story. The sports desk provided 80.9 percent of the sample, the news desk 14.2 percent. The remaining eight percent came from the metropolitan desk, the national desk, style, Bay Area, etc. Table 1 supports Hypothesis 3 that states both political reporters and sports reporters covered the story of baseball and steroids. While it is true that the bigger percentage of stories came from the sports desk, political reporters also devoted some space to the issue.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 detail the distribution of stories across newspapers. Of the 162 stories, *The San Francisco Chronicle* provided 38.3 percent, the highest percentage among the four newspapers. Remarkably, *The Chronicle* provided 21 of the 23 political stories (91.3 percent) and 40 of the 131 sports stories.

All newspapers, except for *Los Angeles Times* had a similar number of sports stories. The highest number, 43, came from *The New York Times*. The absence of political stories in *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* means that they did not

consider the political side of the issue of baseball and steroids to be of a national interest. The newspapers that reported on it in their news desk had their reasons. For *The Chronicle* political reporters, it was a local story. For *The Post* too, it was also a local story because the news generator in this case, the government, is located in Washington. These numbers suggest that different newspapers devoted greatly varying interest to the baseball and steroids story. For all but *The Chronicle*, the story was almost exclusively a sports story.

Table 2. Distribution of stories in newspapers

Newspapers	Number of stories	Percent
LA Times	9	5.6
NY Times	48	29.6
SF Chronicle	62	38.3
Washington Post	43	26.5
Total	162	100

Table 3. Distribution of political stories in newspapers

Newspapers	Number of stories	Percent
LA Times	0	0
NY Times	0	0
SF Chronicle	21	91.3
Washington Post	2	8.7
Total	23	100

Table 4. Distribution of sports stories in newspapers

Newspapers	Number of stories	Percent
LA Times	9	6.9
NY Times	43	32.8
SF Chronicle	40	30.5
Washington Post	39	29.8
Total	131	100

Among the results that this study concludes is that when the government gets involved, the number of stories rises. Both sports reporters and political reporters paid close attention to the government as a newsmaker. However, for sports reporters, the issue of baseball and steroids was primarily a sports story. In a particular week when the government took action, sports reporters found ways of talking about baseball and steroids apart from governmental action. The number of stories that rose in a week of governmental action was not always because of stories about the government.

These findings negate the first hypothesis. The issue of baseball and steroids was not institution-driven news. It did not become news only after governmental action. While the salience of the issue rose with the involvement of the government, the government was not the only newsmaker. Events outside of government also contributed to the high salience of the issue in the news.

The rise and fall of the sports stories was the result of neither institutional news nor accidental news, but rather followed no obvious pattern. With political reporters, coverage was uniform and predictable. They gravitated toward and relied upon governmental action. All federal actions attracted them. Several stories appeared about the proceedings of the grand jury in the steroid investigation. All of the political stories came on dates when the government was involved one way or other, either with court or Congress, or any other governmental office. With the exception of a case or two, all stories appeared immediately after governmental action and federal developments. In the majority of their stories, political reporters mentioned previous governmental actions. They frequently made reference to the President Bush's State of the Union address, Ashcroft's announcement of the indictments, and McCain's warning to baseball.

The data also show that many governmental actions received little or no news coverage. Political reporters had one story for the House vote, none for the House letters, none for McCain's evidence-sharing threat, none for the House hearing on ephedra, and none on Bush's State of the Union address. Except for the last, those were mere preliminary actions; therefore, the focus was not huge on them, as was in the case of the Ashcroft announcements and the congressional hearings. These findings suggest that for political reporters, the issue of baseball and steroids was the result of important governmental action and local developments. However, governmental action is necessary but not sufficient news, as political reporters largely overlooked many possible events.

Findings support the second hypothesis that the story of baseball and steroids reappeared after an event but faded with the absence of government action. The number of stories rose following an event outside of government, and then dropped again. But in some weeks, it is difficult to judge whether the issue stayed in the news because of an event or not. There are several weeks in which a few developments, both political and sports, took place.

5.1.3 Case Studies

While it is true that the number of stories rose with governmental action, the graph does not tell us if sports reporters and political reporters focused on the same angles in their stories. This study will analyze qualitatively three sets of stories. Each set contains one sports and one political story.

The first set is two stories from *The San Francisco Chronicle* that appeared on February 13, 2004, the day following Ashcroft's announcement of the indictments. In the lead paragraphs of the political story, the reporter referred to Ashcroft's television

appearance and used a quote from him. There is reference to President Bush and an excerpt from the State of the Union address. The story, whose headline read “Bush clammers aboard a convenient political bandwagon,” was about Bush’s interest in the steroid issue and his anti-drug campaign. The reporter used seven government sources, among them John Kerry, then presidential candidate, a GOP strategist, a spokesman for the Democratic National Committee, etc. The reporter also included a television show host and a professor of law. The sports story that appeared on the same date had the following headline: “Balco indictments put heat on Bonds; baseball braces for same scrutiny track and field has faced for years.” The two sports reporters who wrote the story based it mainly around the indictments and Barry Bonds. They also included a few paragraphs about track and field athletes and an NFL player. They did not quote any government source, but mentioned that Ashcroft announced the indictments. The story used six sports sources and a member of the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Analysis of these two stories shows that on a date on which the government took action, the two sets of reporters wrote completely different stories, though the same political event, Ashcroft’s announcement of the indictments prompted both. The political reporter took this opportunity to stress another political angle, Bush’s interest in the steroid issue, while the sports reporters focused on the indictments to shed light on players and their steroid use. Both reporters, sports and political, started off with the governmental action but diverged away from the main action to stress their desk’s angle.

The second set of stories was from *The San Francisco Chronicle* and *The Washington Post*. The stories appeared on March 11, 2004, a day after the congressional hearing. The political story in *The Chronicle* had a headline that read “Senators warn

baseball – stop steroid use; start testing for the drugs or Congress will find a remedy.”

The reporter wrote his story about the hearing on MLB and NFL testing policies. He also mentioned Ashcroft’s announcement and President Bush’s State of the Union address. He quoted three senators; Donald Fehr, the chief of the baseball players union; and the CEO of the United States Anti-Doping Agency, in addition to mentioning that seven players denied steroid use. The sports story on this date in *The Washington Post* was about Fehr and McCain, with the headline “Fehr and Loathing on Capitol Hill.” The reporter gave details about the hearing and the testimonies from baseball, football and the USADA. He quoted two sports sources, McCain, and a report from *The San Francisco Chronicle*. The story focused mainly on Fehr.

In this second set, the stories were almost similar. The only difference was that the political reporter detailed the hearing slightly more than the sports reporter did. Both dedicated a big part of their stories to Fehr who is responsible for pushing a new drug testing policy. When sports figures, such as Fehr interact with governmental actions, the resulting coverage tends to overlap more between political and sports reporters.

The final set appeared on December 5th, 2004, the day on which McCain threatened to push new legislation. Both stories were in *The Washington Post*. The sources in the political story that had the headline “McCain Threatens Baseball Over Drugs” were a combination of sports and government sources. The story made reference to the congressional hearings of March and to the State of the Union address. The sports story had the headline “Say It’s So: Selig to Watch Baseball in D.C.” and was mainly about Selig and the new improvements in baseball. Only one paragraph mentioned the steroid issue, with reference to Giambi and Bonds’ testimony in court. On a day when the

chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee spoke, the sports reporter wrote about the new stadium in Washington, D.C. There is no reference at all to McCain or his threat.

All of these six stories, both political and sports, ranged between 1,000 and 1,500 words each. The general analysis points out that while the number of stories rose when the government took action, the stories themselves were not always about the government. Political reporters were always concerned about their governmental beat, while sports reporters did not care as much about the government's involvement and chose their topic with rare reference to a government source.

5.1.4 Stories across Sections

Hypothesis 4 states that when a political story breaks on a particular day, it is as likely to be followed by a sports story the next day as by a political story. Figure 2 details the dates when different sections of a newspaper, mainly the news (political) section and the sports section covered the baseball and steroids issue. The lines from one section to another represent the times when the story traveled across sections.

The graph shows that the issue of baseball and steroids received routine coverage by sports reporters, while it received sporadic coverage in the political/news section of the newspaper. The vertical lines from a news story up to a sports story mean a sports story followed a political story, but the opposite was not always true. There is also a certain period of time when all reporters covered this issue. This time period falls between late October 2003 and late June 2004, in addition to the last two months of 2004. The heaviest focus was in February, March and December 2004, with sports, news and other desks involved in writing stories.

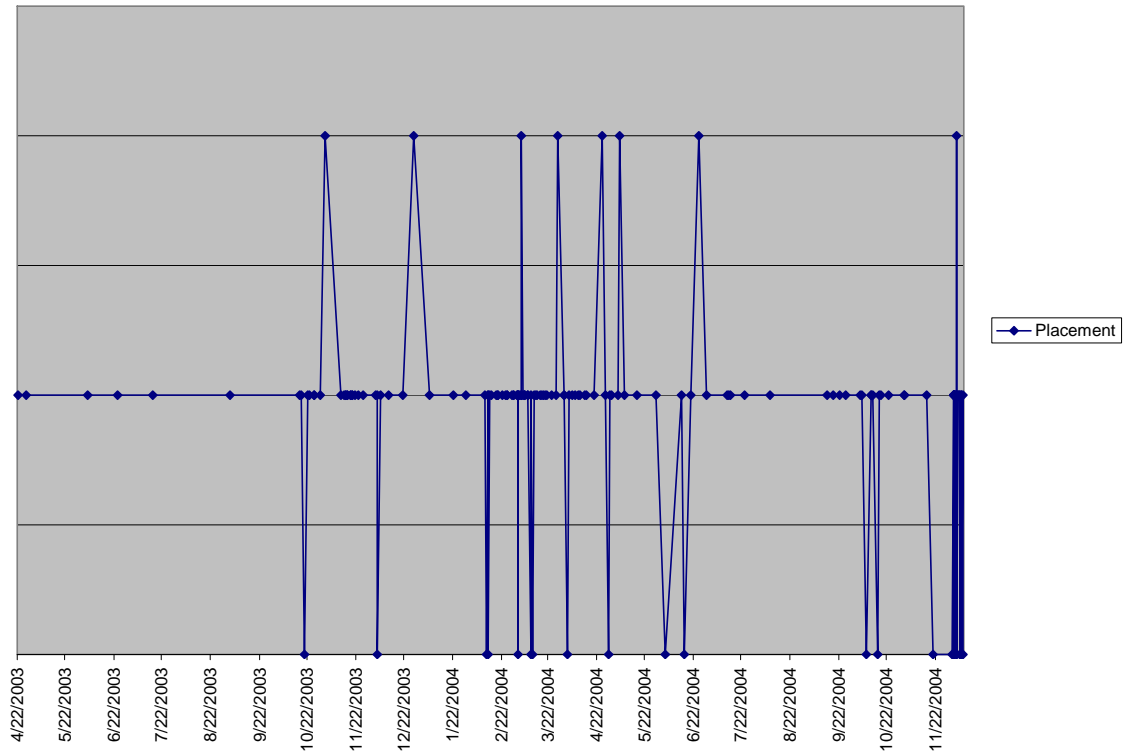


Figure 2: Stories across sections

The fact that a sports story always followed a political story might be because of the fact that the news involved the baseball beat and the government beat; therefore, both sets of reporters had an interest in the story. Political reporters cover the government exclusively, while sports reporters go beyond their beat to cover the government whenever both beats interact. It is also important to remember that the coverage between sports and political stories was different in one day, as the case studies showed.

These findings support Hypothesis 4. When a political story breaks on a particular day, it is likely that a sports story follows it. These findings resonate with the frequency tests that showed the issue of baseball and steroids to be mainly a sports story.

5.2 Study Two: Sources

The second study is about the use of sources by political reporters and sports reporters. The main reason this research study coded all kinds of quotes, primary and secondary, is because its focus is on reporters' reliance on sources, human or material (e.g. memo, affidavit, etc.). Attributing all quotations to a source is a common practice among reporters. This study is concerned with the final product of sourcing and not the process.

5.2.1 Sources and Sections

This part of the study will test Hypothesis 5 to determine if political reporters rely on government sources more than sports reporters do. The types of sources coded were government sources, sports sources, and professional sources.

Table 5. Government sources across sections

Sections	Number of Stories	Mean of sources	Percent of stories with sources
News	23	1.91	78.3
Sports	131	0.52	33.6
Other	8	0.38	25
Total	162	0.71	-

While 66.4 percent of the sports stories did not include a government source, only 11.5 percent did not include a sports source. This percentage is closest to the 21.7 percent of the political stories that did not have a government source. This comparison means that the sources that reporters most heavily use change from one beat to another. As authoritative as a government source is, a sports reporter will prefer a sports source in his particular beat. However, political reporters were much more likely to use sports sources in their stories than sports reporters were to use government sources. The data in Table 5

show that political reporters use an average of 1.91 government sources while sports reporters use an average of 0.52 government sources per story. These findings support Hypothesis 5.

Table 6. Sports reporters and sports sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	15	11.5
1	31	23.7
2	21	16
3	16	12.2
4	16	12.2
5	12	9.2
6	6	4.6
7	5	3.8
8	2	1.5
9	1	0.8
10	1	0.8
11	2	1.5
13	2	1.5
17	1	0.8
Total	131	-

Table 7. Sports reporters and government sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	87	66.4
1	30	22.9
2	11	8.4
3	1	0.8
4	1	0.8
9	1	0.8
Total	131	-

Table 8. Political reporters and government sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	5	21.7
1	7	30.4
2	4	17.4
3	2	8.7
4	4	17.4
7	1	4.3
Total	23	-

Political reporters were consistent in their use of all sources. They used government sources, sports sources, and professional sources with similar percentages. The percentage of political stories that included a professional source is 87, versus 78.3 for government sources, and 82.6 for sports sources. This means that political reporters relied more on professional sources more than any other type of source.

Table 9. Sports sources across sections

Sections	Number of Stories	Mean of sources	Percent of stories with sources
News	23	3.78	82.6
Sports	131	3.18	88.5
Other	8	1.38	37.5
Total	162	3.17	-

Table 10. Professional sources across sections

Sections	Number of Stories	Mean of sources	Percent of stories with sources
News	23	2.91	87
Sports	131	1.3	56.5
Other	8	1.63	75
Total	162	1.54	-

Sports reporters include a sports source in 88.5 percent of their stories. Most frequently, they use one source, 23.7 percent of the time. But they could use as much as 17 sources in one story.

5.2.2 Comparing Sections and Sources

This part of the analysis will test the statistical significance of the use of sources by sports reporters and political reporters. While the previous part showed how reporters use sources differently, this part will examine the significance of those numbers.

5.2.2.1 Government Sources

The relation between the use of government officials as sources by sports reporters and political reporters is significant. There is a significant difference between the use of government sources by both sets of reporters. The dependent variable was government sources, the independent variable was placement: news, sports, and other.

The F tests yielded the following results: $F=14.182$, $df=2,161$, $p<.001$

Difference between News [mean=1.91(1.78)] and Sports [mean=0.52 (1.06)]

Difference between News [mean=1.91(1.78)] and Other [mean=0.38 (0.74)]

There is a significant difference between the News (political) section and the other two in the use of governmental sources. For the relation between News and Sports, $p=.000$ and between News and Other, $p=.005$. The relation between Sports and Other desks was not significant, $p=.939$

To exclude the possibility that these findings pertain to *The Chronicle's* journalistic practices, the study ran an F-test on the sports and political stories in their use of government sources. The result was significant. This means that the significant difference between the use of government sources by sports reporters and political

reporters is not because of *The Chronicle* but because of the difference in sports and politics.

The F tests yielded the following results: $F=14.789$, $df=2$, $p=.000$

Another possible way to interpret the results is to hypothesize that the significant relation between sources is because of *The Chronicle*. To exclude this possibility, this study compared the number of government sources in *The Chronicle* sports stories to those of the other three newspapers.

Table 11 shows that *The Chronicle* sports reporters used an average of 0.2 government sources per story, which is the lowest average among the four newspapers. Since *The Chronicle* does not have a higher representation of government sources than the other three, the difference is between sports reporters and political reporters and not between *The Chronicle* and the other newspapers.

Table 11. Mean of government sources in newspapers

Newspaper	Sports stories
LA Times	0.56
NY Times	0.39
SF Chronicle	0.2
Washington Post	0.9

5.2.2.2 Sports Sources

The relation between the use of sports figures as sources by sports reporters and political reporters is not statistically significant. It is possible that in a larger sample the relation would be significant.

The F tests yielded the following results: $F=1.942$, $df=2,161$, $p=.147$

Difference between News [mean=3.78(3.29)] and Sports [mean=3.18 (2.96)]

Difference between News [mean=3.78(3.29)] and Other [mean=1.38 (2.32)]

The relation between the sections is not significant. For the relation between News and Sports, $p=.64$, between News and Other, $p=.123$, and between Sports and Other, $p=.224$

These numbers suggest that political reporters rely as heavily on sports sources as do sports reporters.

5.2.2.3 Professional Sources

Because this study focused on political reporters and their use of government sources, sports reporters and their use of sports sources, it is important to add that professional sources are crucial to both sets of reporters. One major reason is the authoritative nature of professional sources. These sources include lawyers, doctors, professors, experts, presidents and high-ranked executive of organizations other than sports and government. It is not a coincidence that these sources are in demand because the issue under study is baseball and steroids. The major events that the issue of baseball and steroids revolves on are federal indictments of four people. Steroids and drug-testing require professional explanations from anti-doping experts that included professors and doctors. The indicted people had a big team of lawyers, which reporters needed as sources who could explain legal matters. Conte is the founder and president of Balco, and he is at the heart of the steroid controversy; therefore, reporters called upon him as a source.

The relation between political reporters and sports reporters in their use of professional sources is significant. The dependent variable was professional sources, the independent variable was placement: news, sports, and other.

The F tests yielded the following results: $F=7.373$, $df=2,161$, $p=.001$

Difference between News [mean=2.91(2.19)] and Sports [mean=1.3 (1.79)]

Difference between News [mean=2.91(2.19)] and Other [mean=1.63 (1.92)]

The only significant difference is between the News section and the Sports section in the use of professional sources. For the relation between News and Sports, $p=.001$

The relation between News and Other, and Sports and Other is not significant ($p=.214$ and $p=.880$ respectively).

Professional sources are an important part of a political story. They appear in 87 percent of the stories. The data show that political stories can contain as many as 7 professional sources in one story. Most frequently, though, political reporters use three professional sources in 30.4 percent of their stories.

Table 12. Political reporters and professional sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	3	13
1	5	21.7
2	1	4.3
3	7	30.4
4	2	8.7
5	2	8.7
7	3	13
Total	23	-

As for sports reporters, the highest number of professional sources they used in a single story is 11. Their most frequent number of professional sources is one per story, 24.4 percent of the time. The average number per story is 1.3 sources for sports reporters and 2.91 for political reporters. Sports reporters focused on including sports sources in their stories, but did not equally include other kinds of sources with the same amount.

There is an approximate difference of two sources when comparing the average of sports sources (3.18) to government (0.52) and professional sources (1.3).

Table 13. Sports reporters and professional sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	57	43.5
1	32	24.4
2	17	13
3	15	11.5
4	3	2.3
5	4	3.1
6	1	0.8
10	1	0.8
11	1	0.8
Total	131	-

5.2.2.4 Athlete/coach and Sports Official Sources

The relation between the use of athletes/coaches and sports officials as sources by sports reporters is not statistically significant but the p value is very close to being significant. A larger sample might show a significant relation.

The paired-sample t-test gave the following results: $t=1.88$, $df=130$, $p=.06$

Mean of athlete/coach sources=1.6, mean of sports official sources=1.18

Sports reporters use sports officials in 57.3 percent of their stories, while they use athlete/coach sources in 68.7 percent of their stories. The tables show that sports stories include a bigger number of athlete/coach sources (13) than sports official sources (6).

The insignificance of the test suggests that in the sample under study there is not a big difference between athletes/coaches and sports officials when it comes to sourcing. For sports reporters, authoritative sources are sports figures, regardless of their specific

position in the sports world. For political reporters too, the relation was not significant, but came close. The results of the paired-sample t-test were: $t=3.88$, $df=22$, $p=.06$

Table 14. Sports reporters and sports official sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	56	42.7
1	39	29.8
2	15	11.5
3	10	7.6
4	4	3.1
5	3	2.3
6	4	3.1
Total	131	100

Table 15. Sports reporters and athlete/coach sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	41	31.3
1	41	31.3
2	24	18.3
3	12	9.2
4	5	3.8
5	3	2.3
7	1	0.8
8	1	0.8
9	1	0.8
13	2	1.5
Total	131	100

The frequency tests show that political reporters rely on sports officials as sources in 43.5 percent of their stories. But more important is their reliance on athletes and coaches as sources. As the data show, 82.6 percent of the political stories included an athlete or a coach as a source.

Table 16. Political reporters and athlete/coach sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	4	17.4
1	4	17.4
2	6	26.1
3	1	4.3
4	4	17.4
6	1	4.3
7	2	8.7
9	1	4.3
Total	23	100

Table 17. Political reporters and sports official sources

Sources	Frequency of stories	Percent
0	13	56.5
1	6	26.1
2	1	4.3
3	2	8.7
4	1	4.3
Total	23	100

The average length of stories was 947 words. Fifty-two percent of the stories fell in the category of words between 501 and 1,000. The news stories were longer than the sports stories. The average number of words for a political story was 1,216 versus 877 for sports.

Table 18: Word count

Sections	Mean of words	Minimum	Maximum
News	1,216	424	3,429
Sports	877	98	3,241
Other	1,303	1,304	3,771
Total	946.5	98	3,771

Table 19: Word range

Word range	Frequency	Percent
1-500	28	17.3
501-1000	85	52.5
1001-1500	30	18.5
1501-2000	10	6.2
2001-2500	4	2.5
2501-3000	1	0.6
3001-3500	3	1.9
3501-4000	1	0.6

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

As of today, the issue of baseball and steroids is still high on the media's agenda. For a few months, the government got involved in its efforts to push legislation to toughen the drug-testing policy of Major League Baseball. The doping scandal that involved several baseball stars awakened American authorities to the dangers of steroids and their negative effects on younger children who imitate celebrity athletes and look up to them as role models. The issue of baseball and steroids became one of the most frequent conversations in the sports world, and for short periods of times, in the political world.

After this study finished collecting the data, several events occurred. Talks about steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs continued. On January 13th, 2005, Major League Baseball and Players Association agreed on a new steroid policy, which they planned to implement before spring training, starting February 15th, 2005. On February 10th, 2005, Jason Giambi met the media, speaking publicly for the first time about the steroid controversy that has surrounded him for more than three months. The final development was the release of former Oakland Athletics slugger and poster child for steroids Jose Canseco's book on February 14, 2005. In "*Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits & How Baseball Got Big*," he admits using steroids during his playing days and accuses former teammates Jason Giambi and Mark McGwire of injecting one another with steroids (Taylor, 2005).

Analyzing 162 news stories from four different newspapers, across a 77-week period yielded several results. The findings supported four hypotheses and negated one.

The results showed that the issue of baseball stayed in the media even when the government was not involved. Its significance became stronger and the number of stories rose with government involvement and the occurrence of sports events. More specifically, political reporters uniformly reported on the issue when the government had something to say, and when the local angle got important, as in the case of Bonds' testimony in court. The majority of the political stories came from *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Sports reporters, on the other hand, followed no obvious pattern. They talked about the issue whenever and wherever, without a reason from the government or the sports world.

While it is true that baseball and steroids attracted the attention of both political and sports reporters, the heaviest focus was in the sports pages of the newspapers. The issue traveled from one section to another several times, but it spent most of the time in the sports section. The issue of baseball and steroids turned out to be a sports story.

Another distinction between political reporters and sports reporters was in their use of sources. The data showed that political reporters relied on government sources more than sports reporters did. They also included sports and professional sources in the majority of their stories. In contrast, sports reporters relied heavily on sports sources, but hardly on government sources.

The results showed major differences between sports reporters and political reporters. Qualitative analysis could also favor political reporters because of the specific style and route they followed in their coverage of the issue of baseball and steroids. On the other hand, sports reporters covered the story randomly, without following a specific pattern. While these results came from studying the issue of baseball and steroids, one

should not disregard their larger implications on sports journalism versus political journalism.

Politicians, experts, doctors and reporters talked about the dangers of steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs. If this issue is as important as reporters said it was, then it is safe to conclude that sports reporters did not give the issue the deserved importance. An issue that received so much political attention from the government did not receive the same importance in the sports pages of the newspapers. Their stories lacked the “straight facts” factor that was evident in the political stories. In-depth analysis of the sports stories shows constant sarcastic remarks about athlete’s alleged use of steroids. Talking about the issue constantly does not mean the sports reporters rendered it important. They mentioned steroids in baseball constantly without any reason from government or from sports. This could lead the readers to misjudge the importance of the issue. Following no pattern in their coverage does not make sports reporters reliable in handling important issues. Had the sports stories treated the steroids issue seriously, then talking about it with the absence of government actors would have been a good sign. But the sports reporters discussed steroids lightly. Most of the stories that appeared on dates which did not include any government action or sports action did not present the issue in a serious manner. They did not try to search for possible solutions for the steroids problem, did not get as much expert opinion on the subject, did not give sufficient reasons for bringing the issue up, etc.

This study cannot pinpoint the real reasons behind the differences in reporting between sports and political reporters. However, one thing that comes to mind is the fact that most political reporters hold a college degree in journalism. This is not the case with

sports journalists. Most are sports enthusiasts, either with a college degree or without one. Hence the conclusion that formal journalism education might lead to better coverage. Another reason might be due to the difference in newsrooms. Since most schools teach the same journalistic principles, without differentiating between sports journalism and political journalism, then it is the newsrooms that dictate a certain type of reporting.

Moreover, the political stories were more balanced than the sports stories. Since balance is one of the main components of journalistic writing, it is therefore important to stress balance in a news story. Political reporters used government, professional and sports sources almost equally, thus giving their stories a balanced amount of sources. Sports reporters on the other hand, used sports sources more frequently than government or professional sources. This could tip the scale in favor of sports voices and opinions, which in turn might give the public an unbalanced version of the truth.

This study briefly discussed the role the media play in public life. To give the public the best story, reporters need a balanced use of sources. And to treat an important issue such as steroids in sports with sarcasm will affect negatively the receptors of these stories, influencing their opinions and decisions about the issue itself. The general conclusion is that, for the reasons discussed above, the political stories had better quality than the sports stories. The larger implications of this conclusion are the building of a more informed public, equipped with a chance to better evaluate the issue at hand.

6.1 Future Research

Books and studies have long researched the media's use of official government sources. Different studies showed news could be institution-driven or event-driven. It could be the result of a planned, scheduled event in the government, or an accidental,

unplanned event in society. This paper focused on these areas and added to previous studies a comparison between sports reporters and political reporters when they cover the same issue. This is a rare comparison in academia simply because scholars have not been interested in comparing sports to politics. This study is unique in its focus on baseball and steroids because this is a fairly recent issue in the United States. This research paper is the first to include all these elements in one study.

Several improvements could make this research study better. For future research, this paper suggests some tips.

This thesis considered only news stories and not interviews. Future research could consider all kinds of print material. It could also compare television coverage to newspaper coverage.

Another option is to follow up on the issue and get a bigger sample from more newspapers in a longer period of time, or consider all the stories that appeared in the 86-week period under-study.

Future research could divide the data according to days and not weeks when analyzing stories across time. This method will eliminate the chance that the number of stories rose because of several events and not a specific one.

Qualitative research could also analyze the subject matter of each news story. Quantitative research could count the number of paragraphs and code them according to their subject. This option would make the results more accurate.

This study made the assumption that all the reporters who wrote stories for a certain desk belong to that desk. Another research could identify reporters' names, find out what kind of reporters they are, and group them accordingly.

Further research could study the agenda-setting abilities of the media and see how much this issue affected the public and changed its view about the players involved in the steroid controversy, those players that they look up to as heroes and celebrities.

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APPENDIX A CODE GUIDE

1. Name of newspaper

The name of the newspaper appears at the top of the page where the story is printed, in the centered headline. Check on the line opposite to each category the name of the newspaper.

LA Times: stands for *Los Angeles Times*.

NY Times: stands for *The New York Times*.

SF Chronicle: stands for *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

Wash. Post: stands for *The Washington Post*.

2. Number of words

Write on line the exact number of words in the story. The number of words appears across the word “Length” in the summary of the story, found at the beginning of each story.

3. Date of story

The date of the news story appears at the top of the page, after the newspaper name.

Write on the line the date of the story.

4. Story placement

The section or desk can be found after the word “Section” in the summary of the news story, found at the beginning of each story. Check on the line next to each category if the story belongs to the category according to the following criteria.

- News/Section A: if the word across “Section” reads “*News*,” “*Section A*,” “*A Section*,” or “*A1*.”

- Sports: if the word across “Section” reads “*Sports*” or “*Sports desk*.” Also for a story that is in the sports desk even if it appears in *Section A* too.
- Other: if a story does not apply to the above categories.

5. Sources

Write on the line the exact number of sources used in the article. Also, write the definition of the source. For example, player, senator, fan, etc. Every source gets only one entry, even if it used several times.

Count as a source everything that the reporter quoted in the story, directly or indirectly. A source could be a person, a document or a newspaper, etc. Examples of the verbs that help to identify a human source are said, commented, admitted, etc. A reporter can identify a human source by its name, by its profession, or even leave it nameless. For example, a source could be “an expert,” “an official source,” etc.

Identify each source by its profession. For example, a player’s profession is playing, therefore he is a sports source. A sports team’s lawyer belongs to the professional category because by profession he is a lawyer, even though he works for a team. A sports organization is a team/club competing in sports. A sports marketing agency is not a sports organization because it does not compete in sports.

Sources can be primary and secondary. A primary source is a person the reporter talked to in person. A secondary source is a source that the reporter did not interview in person, but used what appeared somewhere else. Code both primary and secondary sources. If the reporter quotes a media organization, then code the organization as a source only if the reporter quoted a report or a paragraph that appeared in the media organization. But if the

reporter quotes a source that has appeared in another media organization, then code the source and not the organization.

- Governmental: stands for a source that works in the government. For example, Congressman, Senator, Mayor, etc.
- Sports: stands for a player, a trainer or a coach.
- Sports mgt: stands for a source that works in a sports organization but is not a sports source. For example, manager, representative, official, publicist, etc.
- Professional: stands for a source that is a professional. For example, president of a company, doctor, lawyer, etc.
- Other: stands for sources that do not belong to the above-mentioned categories. For example, athletes' family members, witnesses, fans, etc.

**APPENDIX B
CODING SHEET**

1) Name of newspaper:

LA Times _____ NY Times _____ SF Chronicle _____ Wash. Post _____

2) Number of words: _____

3) Date of Story: _____

4) Story Placement

News/Section A _____

Sports _____

Other _____

5) Sources

Governmental _____

Sports _____

Sports mgt. _____

Professional _____

Other _____

VITA

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