



ISSN



The Sociological Quarterly

Routledge  
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0038-0253 (Print) 1533-8525 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/utsq20>

# "Integrity, Sportsmanship, Character": Baseball's Moral Entrepreneurs and the Production and Reproduction of Institutional Autonomy

Seth Abrutyn

To cite this article: Seth Abrutyn (2018) "Integrity, Sportsmanship, Character": Baseball's Moral Entrepreneurs and the Production and Reproduction of Institutional Autonomy, The Sociological Quarterly, 59:3, 519-544, DOI: [10.1080/00380253.2018.1479203](https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2018.1479203)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2018.1479203>



Published online: 27 Jul 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



# “Integrity, Sportsmanship, Character”: Baseball’s Moral Entrepreneurs and the Production and Reproduction of Institutional Autonomy

Seth Abrutyn

Department of Sociology, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

## ABSTRACT

Sociologists have long argued that institutions like religion or the economy can become relatively distinct spheres that facilitate and constrain action, goal setting, and decision-making. But few empirical studies have looked closely at how institutions become relatively distinct cultural and structural domains. This paper examines how institutional entrepreneurs—in this case, Major League Baseball (MLB) sportswriters—build and sustain institutional boundaries by considering how they create a distinct cultural discourse that infuses baseball places, times, and events with culturally distinct meanings. Drawing from sportswriters’ columns, documentaries, and monographs written on baseball I show that MLB entrepreneurs have developed and disseminated a discourse oriented around the generalized medium of sport exchange, interaction, and communication: *competitiveness*. Using these data, this article examines how baseball writing becomes quantified and embodied in tangible and intangible forms. Additionally, the paper draws on sport columns that illustrate how MLB entrepreneurs protect the autonomy of a sacred core (the Hall of Fame) from internal threats (gambling and performance-enhancing drugs) and external corruption (the influence of money). The paper ends with a discussion of implications for the applicability of the findings to other sports and institutional domains.

## KEYWORDS

Baseball; cultural sociology; institutions; moral entrepreneurship; sport

## Introduction

It has long been a sociological assumption that societies vary across time and space in terms of how distinct their major institutional domains or spheres of social life are from each other (Durkheim 1887 [1993]; Habermas 1973 [1976]; Merton 1979; Weber 1946a). In particular, this line of thought was fundamental to structural-functional accounts (Parsons 1971; Parsons and Smelser 1956) and has continued to inspire theoretical insights on institutions or institutional spheres (Abrutyn 2009, 2014; Turner 2010; Turner and Abrutyn 2017), their level of self-reflexivity or autonomy (Luhmann 1995), and the uniqueness of their “logic” (Friedland et al. 2014). On the macrolevel the idea that units of analysis such as institutional spheres can become (relatively) discrete structural and cultural spaces underscores a fundamental source of societal variation found across time and space; at the microlevel different types of autonomous spheres imply variation in how actors orient their emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. Thus, how institutional spheres

become relatively discrete structural and cultural entities matters for understanding how they penetrate the realities of a significant proportion of the population (Abrutyn 2016).

Nevertheless, sociologists rarely empirically interrogate these theoretical assumptions beyond considering the historical processes driving political (Eisenstadt 1963), religious (Eisenstadt 1982), and economic (Parsons and Smelser 1956) autonomy. Therefore, while historical evidence documents how—5,000 years ago in China, Egypt, and Mesopotamia—political goals came to be perceived “as different from other types of goals of other spheres [like kinship or religion]” in that their “formation, pursuit, and implementation became largely independent of other groups, and were governed mostly by political criteria and by consideration of political exigency” (Eisenstadt 1963:19), it remains an open question as to how we can ascertain autonomy in other institutions—like sports or medicine. To begin to remedy this gap, and because investigating an entire institutional sphere would be beyond the scope of this type of forum, this study considers one particular “field” within a sport institution (Major League Baseball; MLB) to illustrate some of the central dimensions of institutional autonomy. Of all the organized sports leagues, MLB is the oldest continuously run league. As such, past research has highlighted that its success and longevity encouraged isomorphism in the three other North American sports leagues and various manifestations of soccer leagues (Leifer 1998). In addition, a Weberian line of thought emphasizes the role real collective actors, or what we call institutional entrepreneurs (Eisenstadt 1980), play in erecting and defending structural and cultural boundaries. MLB is distinguishable by the fact that its entrepreneurs—in particular the sportswriters responsible for developing, applying, and disseminating distinctive themes of discourse and the medium of communication, interaction, and exchange—are the oldest self-reflexive sport entrepreneurs in the world (ca. 1908); like the organizational form, baseball writers’ influence has had isomorphic consequences for other sports (Schiff 2008).

To lay bare the process by which autonomy is constructed and maintained, this analysis leverages data drawn from baseball writers—primarily those who are members of the Baseball Writers’ Association of America (BBWAA) but also those who have written books on the subject and contributed to historian Ken Burns’s documentary on the MLB and America. Following a brief conceptual discussion meant to frame the theoretical argument and describe the case in greater detail, I turn to an analysis of the generalized medium of sport exchange, interaction, and communication—competitiveness (Abrutyn 2014; Abrutyn and Turner 2011)—to illustrate how a distinct logic and cultural discourse is used to shape the goals, lines of action, decisions, and such that athletes and fans alike employ to make sense of the beliefs and practices undergirding sports activities. From there I consider how sports entrepreneurs constructed a sacred physical space (the MLB Hall of Fame) that resides in what Mircea Eliade (1959) referred to as *illo tempore*, or “mythic and sacred time before time,” and how the debate over performance-enhancing drugs, gambling, and election into the Hall of Fame highlights the autonomous nature of baseball. The paper concludes by considering how autonomy works—I examine the corrupting and polluting effects of money and economy and the efforts to safeguard baseball from corruption as further evidence of the structural and cultural distinctiveness of the field of baseball. The discussion highlights the theoretical and empirical implications of the analysis.

## Conceptual frame

Institutions or institutional domains are the macrolevel structural and cultural spaces in which the vast majority of societies and the activities of their members are organized.<sup>1</sup> Historical, ethnographical, and archaeological evidence reveal a process by which different institutions become more autonomous as societies grow larger and more complex (Abrutyn 2014; Nolan and Lenski 2010). In short, institutions pattern and reproduce feelings, thoughts, and behaviors by delimiting *and* facilitating how individuals and groups subjected to them set goals, choose between competing lines of action, orient their attitudes, and so forth (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012; Turner 2010). Institutions do so through structural forces (e.g., hierarchicalization and legitimating authority) and cultural forces (e.g., generalized symbolic media of exchange; Abrutyn 2014). As an institution becomes more autonomous it comes to penetrate the realities of a greater number of people, such that they come to see it as discrete vis-à-vis other domains of social action.

For most of human existence the kinship institution dominated everyday life, permeating the political, legal, religious, and economic domains of these societies and therefore the texture and tone of political, legal, religious, or economic goals and decisions (Turner and Maryanski 2009). That is to say that most humans set goals, interpreted events and actions, and made decisions through the “lens” or discourse of loyalty (Levi-Strauss 1969) and, in some times and places, love (Friedland et al. 2014). These two “media” of exchange, interaction, and communication were/are the underlying “logic” of marriage, divorce, political decisions, economic production and reproduction, and so forth. Yet as societies have grown in size and scale more and more spheres of social action have grown autonomous (Abrutyn 2014), leading to different sets of goals and orientations (Turner and Maryanski 2009). The earliest large-scale societies, for instance, differed from their hunter-gatherer brethren in that polity and then religion grew autonomous, as illustrated by the reconfiguration of physical, temporal, social, and symbolic space (Abrutyn 2016). Though these historical processes are often examined at the macrolevel, bereft of agency and historicity, compelling arguments have been made that we need to pay closer attention to the collective agents capable of carving out autonomous institutions and sustaining them over indefinite periods of time (Eisenstadt 1980; Weber 1946b).

Drawing on Weber’s (1946b) notion of charismatic carrier groups, institutional entrepreneurs are, in essence, specialized collectivities that work to leverage structural opportunities to gain some degree of independence vis-à-vis other collectivities (Abrutyn and Van Ness 2015; Eisenstadt 1980). If successful—and that is a big “if” rooted in numerous contingencies—they are able to develop what Shils (1975:36–37) called an institutional core, or a “‘center of gravity’ within itself [comprised of] its own system of authority, within its own boundaries [as well as] its own culture [consisting of] beliefs about the history and nature of the [institution]” and its central values. Presumably, the more self-reflexive the culture the more bounded the institutional domain and, therefore, the more autonomous it is vis-à-vis other domains. Building on this argument Luhmann (1995) has argued that self-reflexivity is observable in the dominant themes of discourse that come to organize the system itself, in organizational forms, and in the ephemeral encounters that phenomenologically come to reproduce the system on a day-to-day basis. This point is not that radical, as Bourdieu (1991) talked of the “official” language that shapes the boundaries

of a field and constrains the rules of the game. This language or discourse is constructed by entrepreneurs and, where successful, imposed on any actors seeking to access the institution's core and thereby thus the institution-specific resources (including whatever solution to the concern or set of concerns entrepreneurs claim to monopolize, e.g., the laity must adopt religious discourse surrounding sacredness, morality, and piety if they are to interact with religious elite and gain access to a variety of "goods" and services offered only by religious actors and organizations).

### ***Defining "Sport"***

"Sport" is intimately tied to play and games (Goffman 1968) but is distinct in that it consists of a formalized system of individuals (athletes) embedded in collectives (teams) that are themselves embedded in collectives of collectives (leagues or supra-organizations like FIFA).<sup>2</sup> In Weberian terms, sports are rationalized entities in that rules are explicitly laid out in books, professionalization is complete as athletes are full-time salaried actors, and games are physically, temporally, socially, and symbolically bounded. And because sports are macrolevel social units in so far as they are not simply organizations (like politics are more than the state), but rather overlapping fields of collectives engaged in their own self-reflexive activities, sport may also be considered an institutional sphere (Turner 2010; Author). In theory, then, sport—as a macrolevel structural and cultural institutional domain—can also draw distinctive boundaries and impose a discrete cultural discourse on those wishing to access its core; that is, *if* sport has attained a degree of autonomy. As such, it provides a potentially fruitful institution to leverage for illustrative purposes. On the one hand, besides a few highly theoretical attempts at examining sport as an institution (Werron 2010) there have been few notable empirical attempts. On the other hand, institutional analysis in general has been either overly abstract or historically rooted. Thus, sport offers an interesting case to begin fleshing out some of the ways in which institutional spheres become autonomous and maintain that autonomy. That being said, interrogating an entire institutional domain as vast as sport in a journal-length article is difficult to accomplish. Hence I turn to a specific field—MLB—to explore some of the key dimensions related to institutional autonomy.

Before doing so, however, two issues must be briefly addressed: the complex series of levels at which baseball (and many other sports occur) and the institutional entrepreneurs of MLB, as they are the producers and reproducers of distinction. In terms of the former, MLB is not the only context or field of baseball within the sport institution: youth leagues (e.g., Little League), high school, college, various levels of minor leagues, and, finally, a less organized international series of leagues. At the "lower" levels we see the limits of sport autonomy as these leagues are shaped by the efforts of MLB itself, the entrepreneurs who write books and articles and blogs that influence the choices parents and youth make, and the various other institutional forces such as economic actors sponsoring leagues, political actors building parks with or without ballfields, and so forth. Indeed, because youth are not paid to play the meaning of sport is far more contested by these various actors. The minor leagues are developmental leagues meant to contribute to player training in terms of technical skills and professionalization; though players get paid far less, the games matter a whole lot more because performances determine whether players make it to an MLB team, play in the minors or some international league for the rest of their career, or

move on to some other job. Finally, as Leifer (1998) has cogently argued, all sports leagues have thoughts of expanding internationally, but the logistics have complicated matters. However, most teams have contributed to building international (especially Latin American) talent, while countries like Japan have their own formalized leagues resembling MLB. And, like soccer, baseball has recently moved away from the Olympics being central for international competition to a World Cup–like format. To explore all of these leagues would be far beyond the scope of this paper and, ultimately, reflect the unique historical and cultural contexts of the local communities they occur within or the nation-states and their distinct institutional arrangements. In the United States in particular it is plausible to conceptualize sport as potentially attaining some level of autonomy; thus, MLB is a good case for exploring the dynamics of institutions and tentatively answering whether sport has achieved a degree of institutional autonomy.

### ***Defining baseball entrepreneurship***

Entrepreneurs are actors who work to sustain and expand an institution's structural and cultural distinctiveness (Abrutyn 2009, 2014). No institution can attain full autonomy because each overlaps and penetrates the others in important ways. In MLB there are several candidates for entrepreneurs, including team owners, commissioners, and sportswriters. While all of these actors have played a role in what Allen and Parsons (2006) termed a "consecration project," sportswriters have an oversized role in controlling the narrative. At the risk of oversimplifying the argument, team owners are less likely to be cultural entrepreneurs than economic actors. On the one hand, there is always variation in motives within a class of owners and even within the goals of a given owner. Borer (2008), for instance, presents the current Red Sox owners as cultural stewards, aware of their role in preserving and perpetuating the mythos surrounding the team. On the other hand, teams cost upward of a billion dollars, which makes ownership an exclusive club of extraordinarily wealthy individuals. Team owners, in short, have a vested interest in MLB getting good publicity, fans attending and consuming the sport, and so on, but their interests lie in the economic gain of the team and, more importantly, the prestige of belonging to a wealthy club that only 30 other people can belong to. Commissioners also have vested interest, but they are strongly beholden to the owners who, in essence, employ them.

That leaves sportswriters who work for newspapers, internet sites, television shows, or radio stations. They are "liaisons" between owners, commissioners, or players and those who consume sport—for example, fans. As such, the BBWAA have attained a level of professionalization that restricts access to important responsibilities like voting for major awards and electing players to the Hall of Fame and, therefore, some level of independence vis-à-vis other stakeholders. They are free to critique players and owners alike because their jobs do not depend on the any one player's or team's success. In short, they control the "means of mental production." As liaisons their primary function is developing and disseminating the central positive and negative narratives surrounding owners, players, and teams (Leifer 1998). To be sure, sports entrepreneurs—and therefore sports in general—are not nearly as independent as legal or political entrepreneurs: newspapers and television stations like ESPN depend on advertising money so thus restrictions exist and, of course, owners and MLB have a lot of money to throw behind public relations campaigns. Unlike the American Bar Association that controls and regulates law schools, anyone can get a journalism or communications degree and find a job writing or in

broadcast. Because of these factors baseball writers are not fully independent from other entrepreneurs like team owners and their cadre of cultural purveyors; indeed, baseball, like any sport, represents a contested field in which meanings are negotiated, contradictory, and sometimes antithetical to each other. Nevertheless, the BBWAA plays an outsize role in shaping what professional baseball means and how fans, owners, and players interpret and evaluate performances, and thus if they are worthy of our attention. As such, this paper looks to examine several overlapping questions: if sport, or in this case baseball, is a relatively autonomous domain, what is the cultural discourse about? How does this discourse shape the average fan's experience of baseball activities? How does the potentially polluting and, in Habermas's (1973, 1976) term, *colonizing*, effect of economic culture shape fan experiences? First, however, it is important to discuss the method employed for answering these questions.

## Method

The bulk of these data were collected in 2013–2014 during the lead-up to the 2014 MLB Hall of Fame (HOF) election. Of the 571 BBWAA voters in 2014, 159 revealed their votes online, of which 106 were analyzed because the remaining 53 merely posted lists with no discussion as to why they chose one player over another. Though imperfect, and certainly not definitive, the 106 cases present a diverse data set illustrative of the discourse baseball entrepreneurs—regardless of their position in the debate—employ. This set includes all of the BBWAA writers on several of the most trafficked national sports sites, including ESPN and Fox Sports, as well as all of the columnists from the New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago papers (the first, second, and third largest markets, respectively).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, columnists from major cities like Boston, San Francisco, and Dallas were included as were many columnists from small-market newspapers like Kansas City and Minnesota.

On the one hand, the collection of the data was purely one of, to be honest, personal interest. As a baseball fan the Hall of Fame debate has long interested me, and in 2012 Barry Bonds became eligible for election. This marked an important moment because before him it was arguable whether many of the other players were helped or harmed by steroid use; Bonds was, both statistically and qualitatively, transcendent for his generation. Moreover, before using performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) he was already a likely Hall of Famer. Thus, in 2013 and 2014, the debate had crystallized and sides were entrenched around the polarizing candidacy of Bonds. On the other hand, the data are a sample of convenience: some writers published their votes, some did not. The larger goal was to get as representative a sample as possible by finding the same amount of columns by national writers, big newspaper writers (e.g., New York or Los Angeles *Times*), and local writers given their presumably different perspectives on matters large and small. The data set consists of 114 articles from 106 authors.<sup>4</sup> To provide context and broaden the analysis I searched for these writers' columns on the Pete Rose gambling scandal in 1989–1990 (three articles by three authors) and the baseball lockout in 1994–1995 (the first time the World Series had not been played since its inception in 1903; 80 articles by 30 authors). Because the internet was either nonexistent or in its infancy, these samples are less complete and thus are meant to support the HOF analysis and illustrate further the dominant discourse and the notion that baseball is indeed autonomous to some degree. Moreover, these samples point in important directions for future systematic research. The



interviews were uploaded into Nvivo 11. Themes were found through abductive reasoning, which emphasizes focusing on “surprising” findings (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). Thus, while some themes were already identified by the author, detailed coding of the transcripts ensured that any unexpected themes could emerge. Once major themes were established coding shifted to “focused” coding.

There are some limitations worth noting regarding the data. First, because a census of voters is impossible it is plausible that there are themes or perspectives omitted in this analysis. To reduce this limitation as best as possible, all of the data concerning voters who posted their votes were collected, while a second data collection effort ensued for the 2016 HOF vote. Though unreported here, these data confirmed the themes analyzed below. Second, the sample is not random but rather driven by methodological considerations (e.g., national websites reach more readers [including other voters] than big-market columnists and even more than local small-market columnists). That being said, the goal of this article is illustrative and not generalizable, so the sample fits both the methodological constraints and the theoretical aims.

## Building autonomous space

### *Symbolic differentiation: Cultivating cultural discourse*

#### *A word on generalized symbolic media*

First used by Simmel (1907) in his discussion of the cultural dynamics of money, the term *generalized symbolic media* refers to cultural mechanisms that reduce the complexity of exchanges, interactions, and communications by delimiting them in numerous ways. First, media has come to act as both means and ends to accomplishing certain institutionalized goals. In its material form money is an end in itself *and* a means to other economic goals (e.g., purchasing status goods) and noneconomic goals (e.g., subsistence). As such it regulates a wide array of exchanges. Second, media rationalize exchanges by introducing calculability, predictability, and relatively standard values. Third, money—in its symbolic form—is more than just currency; it is a medium of communication in so far as economic attitudes and behaviors can be interpreted through the lens of economic narratives and myths (Luhmann 1995); it is texts and themes of discourse emerging as self-reflexive forms of learning “economics” and assorted goals, lines of action, and the aforementioned interpretive tools; and, finally, it is a mode of evaluation—that is, money in its symbolic form as narrative, myth, and discursive theme implies some level of morals and ethics (Zelizer 1997).

Since Simmel (1907), numerous other institutional spheres besides economy and their typical media have been identified, including polity/power (Parsons 1963), kinship/love (Friedland et al. 2014) and loyalty (Levi-Strauss 1969), science/truth (Luhmann 1995), and, more recently, a whole host of media and the institutional spheres they tend to circulate within (see Abrutyn and Turner 2011). Media, as these various scholars have argued, has come to delimit and facilitate interactions, exchanges, and communications by way of a special logic distinct to the institutional sphere (Abrutyn 2016); they are, in a term, “conveyor belts” upon which “distant” macro-structure and -culture trickles down to the phenomenology of the average person (Vandenberghe 2007). Exchanges in polity, then, are characterized by the means-ends aspect of power as well as the fact that power (in the form



of political favors or franchised authority lent from the state to other actors) becomes the currency. To be sure, this does not mean all exchanges or interactions are power based, as corruption is always a possibility and, as Habermas (1973) noted, some media and institutions are capable of “colonizing” other institutions (e.g., money circulates in all institutions in the form of salary and can reorient the attitudes and actions of, say, a political actor away from politics and toward economics instead). However, colonization is an empirical issue, one I will have more to say about later in the study. For now it is worth noting that we can discern an institutional sphere’s autonomy through the efforts of entrepreneurs to produce and distribute distinctive media, protect the institution’s “core” in which this media is produced, and, ultimately, combat “foreign” or “alien” media from corrupting and polluting the cultural world that entrepreneurs and other actors inhabit (Abrutyn 2009, 2014). Sports are, at their root, formalized and regulated conflicts or competitions; hence, it is plausible to suggest that competitiveness is the medium of sport exchange, interaction, and communication. Our analysis then turns to how MLB entrepreneurs “measure” MLB greatness, as it is not as obvious as “dollars and cents.”

**Defining baseball status.** “No other sport has anywhere near such reverence for its statistics” as baseball (Schwarz 2004:xiv) because they became the entrepreneur’s first tool for measuring and discussing competitiveness. Like money the quantified form of competitiveness allows for comparison of value. Stats are recorded, analyzed, and memorized with an exactitude that humans summon only for matters so, well, so important. Eventually these numbers ascend to a meaning well above the simple digits that comprise them: the number .406 is Ted William’s 1941 batting average, 56 the length of Joe DiMaggio’s hitting streak. These numbers tell the stories of players and pennant races in a manner that words, photographs, and videotape never do (ibid.:iii).

Statistics are external, objectified referents of competitive value. As the above quotation implies, the number belongs to the person who achieved it as it reflects his status in terms of competitiveness. Moreover, numbers allow for the construction of sacred time, or a continual temporal reality linking the past to the present, running parallel to the profane time and only accessible through ritual. In Ken Burns’s 10-part PBS documentary on baseball and America, *Baseball*, sportswriter Daniel Okrent remarks that stats are

benchmarks that cross generations, and cross decades... . They aren’t numbers. A .300 hitter is not a number. A .300 hitter is a tag that means something today, as it did in 1930, as it did in 1890. So, the statistics become a means by which we can connect to the *permanence* of [baseball]. Uh, I can make that comparison with my father, who could have made it with his father on that *common language* of statistics [emphasis added].

It is for these reasons, as we shall see, that breaking records is not taken lightly.

These so-called objective measures are also subject to intense debate about which ones should matter. Traditionalists argue that the original “box score” numbers (batting average, homeruns, and runs batted in [RBIs])<sup>5</sup> matter most, whereas the younger crowd favors “sabermetrics” they believe measure the true competitiveness of a player: on-base percentage plus slugging percentage (OPS) or, even more radical, advanced metrics like wins above replacement (WAR) that attempt to measure a player’s “total” value vis-à-vis a player of average quality (Lewis 2003). These numbers matter because they shape the debates about who belongs in the Hall of Fame and who is the best at a position or overall. But value is

rarely purely objective, even when talking about the highly instrumental medium of money (Zelizer 1997); hence, competitiveness also manifests in intangible embodied forms.

*More than numbers.* “Statistics are important... . They give us a measure of performance and productivity [yet] baseball doesn’t begin and end with statistics. The game is *much too wide and much too deep* for that” (Peterson 2014; emphasis added). The fact that competitiveness is not simply objectively measured speaks to the fact that there is something much more moral and affectual—and, therefore, sacred—about the medium. The qualitative debate hinges on two separate but related arguments. First, some players or teams do not have the longevity to amass the hallowed, magic numbers, yet they embody intangibles that make them exemplary champions. Second, an anti-sabermetric/advanced statistics sentiment exists among many of the older voters who use qualitative assessments—often rooted in real and imagined past traditions—as one weapon against progressivism. In essence, the embodiment of competitiveness is used as a superlative to push a player/team above and beyond peers or to contextualize unique players/teams.

Thus, MLB status and election to the HOF goes beyond instrumentality: MLB entrepreneurs have the power to construct a mythos of a player and valorize him as a cultural object, which, in turn, can affect owners, players, and fans’ attitudes and beliefs about him. For instance, in my sample 90 out of 114 articles discussed three particular “borderline” HOF candidates’ competitiveness using qualitative language for or against their candidacy: Tim Lincecum, Curt Schilling, and Jack Morris.<sup>6</sup> Each of them suffer from not having “typical” quantitative measures of competitiveness: Lincecum was not a homerun hitter nor did he reach 3,000 hits despite playing for 23 years; Schilling’s 216 wins would only be 48th best in the HOF while his 3.46 earned run average (ERA) would put him at 63rd overall; and, though Morris’s 254 wins are certainly better than Schilling’s, his 3.90 ERA would be the worst in the HOF and is routinely the first statistic cited against him. However, consider some of the qualitative arguments made for Morris.

Words like “clutch” and “durable” are buttressed by the oft-cited fact that three different managers from three different teams had him start Game 1 of three different World Series (of which his team eventually won all three), as an honor indicative of his “ace” status. Additionally, some appeal to his legendary Game 7 World Series appearance in 1991 where he pitched a normal complete game shutout (no runs given up over all nine innings)—a rarity in modern baseball—and the 10th inning to clinch the championship. Thus, sport entrepreneurs look for preternatural talent and “epic,” nearly impossible to replicate moments as the ultimate sign of qualitative competitiveness. To throw weight behind these embodied aspects of competitiveness, highly specialized stats are employed, such as the fact that he won the most games in the eighties of any pitcher or that he threw more complete games in his career than all pitchers threw combined in 2013. Said one voter, “I would like to believe that I *knew* when I was watching someone *special*, [and that] *eyes-on opinion* counts for something” (Griffin 2013; emphasis added).

## Protecting against pollution

One of the dangers of any institution is its corruption (Abrutyn 2015). Media introduce a moral-evaluative dimension that allow actors to discern purity from pollution, or, for example, what attitudes and actions are good and which are deviant in order to protect the value of the medium and the institution from being corrupted. Abuses of power, for example, lead individuals to withdraw legitimacy from those who claim to possess power; illegitimate acquisition of money leads to the devaluing of that person's wealth, despite the objective amount of money she has. Thus, we would expect any type of behavior that threatens the ability to quantify and qualify competitiveness to be harmful. Gambling, in effect, is that behavior: in the words of former commissioner Bart Giamatti's son Marcus (2014), gambling is "baseball's *cardinal sin* [emphasis added]."

Why? Because gambling casts into doubt the authenticity of the competition and the purity of the measures of competitiveness produced during an event. It elicits moral indignation from commissioners, league officials, fans, and sportswriters in near unanimity. In 1919, for instance, eight Chicago White Sox players took money to throw the World Series, forever earning the name *Black Sox* (Nathan 2003). The gambling ended up tarnishing the reputation and finishing the career of one of the greatest players in the game, "Shoeless" Joe Jackson. And though the players were acquitted when the case went to trial, former commissioner Kenesaw Landis placed them all on the "ineligible" list, forever barring them from all MLB-related activities including enshrinement in MLB's HOF. The MLB commissioner, reacting to the MLB entrepreneurs' morally infused articles, used his official position to institutionalize the moral boundaries. A more recent case is instructive.

Pete Rose has one of the most hallowed records in the sport (4,256 hits) because it is generally believed to be an unreachable figure,<sup>7</sup> yet he was accused of (and later admitted to) gambling on games as the manager of the Cincinnati Reds in 1989. He publicly accepted expulsion and placement on the ineligibility list. Former commissioner Bart Giamatti remarked that Rose had "stained the game" by committing "grave" actions. Baseball "is so much a part of [US] history as a people and because it has such a purpose on our national *soul* [emphasis added]," he concluded he had no recourse but to protect "the integrity of the game of baseball—that is, the game's *authenticity, honesty, and coherence* [emphasis added]" by banning Rose forever (Sullivan 2010:153, 157–158). What makes this case so interesting is that Rose embodied competitiveness. His nickname was Charlie Hustle, which has been memorialized in a statue of his iconic head-first slide into first base at the Reds' stadium; he owned numerous records; he was the last player to simultaneously manage and play daily; and he had essential quantitative measures (Rookie of the Year; Most Valuable Player of the Year; three World Series). Since the mid-1990s, there have been calls for his enshrinement in the HOF even though he was banished. Yet as recently as 2014, Giamatti's son, Marcus, delivered an elegant rebuke to those reconsidering Rose's "banishment":

On a different level, one pertinent to the *moral* level of honesty, effort and citizenry that my father held so *sacred*, Bart might add today that Rose still does not deserve a second chance for the sake of a second chance—without earning it. This dilemma isn't about how great a player Mr. Rose was... It's about a broken rule [and the] arrogance to stomp on the heart of the game by committing baseball's cardinal sin: betting on the game (Giamatti 2014; emphasis added).

In short, Shoeless Joe's and Rose's offenses were not simply against the sacred measures of competitiveness but against the purity and authenticity of the sport and its measure of value itself; they edged toward the core, with gambling calling into question the very context in which those measures are capable of evaluating baseball greatness. Despite the accolades and undeniable HOF career, Rose's moral transgressions followed by decades of lying will keep him in a state of disgrace. Turning to the PED crisis I find a different situation in which the rules have evolved and the meaning of enshrinement remains open and debated.

### ***Spatial and temporal boundedness: Protecting the sacred center***

The fact that a distinct discourse exists on the currency of competitiveness is important in understanding how it is produced and circulated. Importantly, the language with which entrepreneurs and those who subscribe to their discourse talk is infused with moral and religious coding that extends beyond the threat gambling poses (Butterworth 2012). Stadiums, for example, are often labeled “cathedrals” and the HOF a “shrine”; movies like *Field of Dreams* and *The Natural* connect the enchantment of childhood with the sacred nature of the field itself and, in the case of the former, an everlasting sacred time in which mythic “demi-gods” founded the game. Indeed, in *Field of Dreams* a Midwestern farmer hears a voice telling him to “build [a stadium] and [deceased legends] will come.” Upon destroying a significant portion of his farm to erect a field, players like Shoeless Joe—frozen in their youthful states—emerge from the cornfield in outfield and begin playing.

Indeed, one of baseball's distinct qualities vis-à-vis the other three big American sports is its intense reverence for the past, for something lost (Camp 1921; Leifer 1998). Its entrepreneurs have constructed a collective memory rooted in an amalgam of real and imaginary elements of 19th century America. Unlike the other sports that took greater hold of the American conscience in the late 1960s through the innovative use of television (Leifer 1998), baseball remains tethered to the past: slower and subtler, a form more suited to radio. It is a summer sport because of the demands of a now extinct agrarian age in which games had to happen after crops were planted and before they were harvested. Its popularity and its city-centric focus are tightly linked to the rapid expansion of the railroads, which brought the bucolic and the urban closer together. And, finally, it is the only sport that believes its measures of competitiveness transcend time: despite changes in the sport, players, and society, the belief, as detailed in the discussion on quantification and quality, is that players today can be compared to any before and vice versa. In this way baseball entrepreneurs seek to ritualize communication, interaction, and exchange such that it is passed down from one generation to the next (Lever 1983), thereby saturating competitiveness and the boundaries of MLB with moral-evaluative meaning. As such, baseball entrepreneurs have attempted to monopolize competitiveness as a means to “consecrate” or “valorize” (Allen and Parsons 2006) the physical, temporal, social, and symbolic dimensions of baseball (Abrutyn 2014; Abrutyn and Van Ness 2015). If this project has been successful, the need to protect all sorts of things associated with the sport—such as its generalized medium—would be tightly linked to protecting the integrity of the very “center” of the sport itself: the Hall of Fame.

### *Shrines to and of competitiveness*

Not surprisingly, enshrinement in the HOF is dominated by public debates through the discourse discussed above because it is the sacred, consecrated center of baseball (Allen and Parsons 2006). There are quantitative metrics that act as baselines for entry and, in some cases, “hallowed” numbers like 3,000 hits,<sup>8</sup> 500 homeruns,<sup>9</sup> or, for pitchers, 300 wins<sup>10</sup> (at one point) meant automatic election.<sup>11</sup> More recently there have been debates about “new” versus “old” quantitative metrics, as advanced statistical analyses have emerged to better assess a player’s competitive value. There are qualitative discussions, of course, that range from playoff prowess to intangibles to off-field distractions. All of these debates, however, are meaningful to the entrepreneurs (and the fans and players who read and hear them ad nauseam) because many employ morally tinged language when discussing their responsibilities and when talking about the meaning of enshrinement. As might be expected of a holy city like Jerusalem or Mecca, many MLB entrepreneurs conceptualize the HOF as the true center of baseball to which fathers and sons make pilgrimages; it is “hallowed” ground (Albee 2014). Enshrinement, consequently, is serious business if MLB entrepreneurs are to protect the sanctity of competitiveness by not “turning the Hall of Fame into Cooperstown Lite.” These concerns are backed by claims that the Baseball HOF is unique among HOFs. For instance, “I hold baseball to a challenging standard. Guilty as charged. Football, basketball and pornography are freak shows, and those people can do what they want, so far as I’m concerned. I’m not saying I dislike freak shows, but I detest freak-show baseball” (Peterson 2014). Since the HOF is the epicenter, so to speak, of entrepreneurship, it affords us a unique vantage to examine in great detail how autonomy may be constructed in one field of one institution and, thus, possibly in other spheres.

### *Cores and consequences*

Dubbed the “Mecca of baseball” (Springwood 1996) and “revered” by enthusiasts as a sacred space (Parsons and Stern 2012), the Baseball HOF provides the clearest example of the construction and maintenance of an institutional core, both physically and cognitively-culturally. The institutional center is sacred not in the religious sense but in the meaning Durkheim attributed to the term: set aside, in need of protection against pollution, the place that draws our attention and marshals mutual emotion. And while religious language is often coopted by nonreligious entrepreneurs, it is sacred more so because it “houses” the material and symbolic culture, the people, and the memories as well as facilitates the rituals that immerse actors in the collective effervescence and ultimate values that the institutional sphere is founded on (Shils 1975).

The center is often the site of a historical “theophany”/“hierophany,” or moment in which the sacred and profane come into contact with each other (Eliade 1959; e.g., Mt. Sinai). As such, it becomes part of the foundational mythology upon which the institutional sphere was created; the source from which entrepreneurs derive their authority; and the place that nonentrepreneurs can pilgrimage to so to come into contact, however ephemerally, with the ultimate values produced by the sphere and its entrepreneurs. One would then expect the creation myth to be shrouded in legend that bends the truth. And it is. According to one MLB entrepreneur (Posnanski 2014), the choice of Cooperstown, New York, as the site of the HOF was based on a popular myth that the game itself was invented there in 1839 by Abner Doubleday (Gould 1989). This myth,

however, is the first example of entrepreneurs trying to build protective defenses against the pollution of money in its material and symbolic forms. The real story is not as exciting and is much more utilitarian: a businessman, Alexander Cleland, saw an opportunity to build a museum that could play off the Cooperstown myth and make money. Cleland knew he needed some type of substantive legitimacy, which a baseball executive, Ford Frick, would provide. Frick, influenced by the entrepreneurs of his day, imagined a shrine that would honor only the greatest players in the greatest game at the spot in which he believed the sport emerged. Upon opening and dedicating it in 1939 he linked the HOF directly to the origin story: built on the very ground on which the game was first conceived and played, the HOF was opened on the 100th anniversary of baseball's advent and served as the site of direct contact with those mythic people and places. He successfully made sacred Cleland's motives. According to its website the HOF is visited by 315,000 people each year, which is 26,250 a month and 863 a day.

Given this discussion, it is not surprising that enshrinement in the HOF is the ultimate honor for a ballplayer and the ultimate "privilege" and responsibility of an entrepreneur. Unlike the other major or minor sports in the United States, the MLB HOF produces some of the most intense public disagreements and debates reflecting the sanctity of the center and the fear of pollution. Currently there are 575 voters who had to have spent at least 10 years covering baseball before becoming eligible. Entrance into the HOF is, thus, tightly guarded. The rules for voting, though vague, are as such: (1) a player with 10 years of major league service and who has been retired for five years is eligible and must garner 75 percent of the vote (432 voters) to be elected—there is no rounding up—and 5 percent to stay on the ballot (for a maximum of 10 years); (2) the voters are only (vaguely) instructed to vote "upon the player's record, playing ability, integrity, sportsmanship, character, and contributions to the team(s) on which the player played"; (3) a maximum of 10 players can be selected on a given ballot each year. Membership is exclusive. While baseball is nearly two centuries old and thousands have played professionally, only 220 MLB players have been elected.<sup>12</sup> Even more telling is the fact that not a single player has received a unanimous vote, which in itself is a major point of debate and contention that caused longtime Boston Globe entrepreneur Bob Ryan (2013) to ask about the 2014 election: "Will this finally be the year we have the preposterously overdue unanimous selection?" The debate itself reflects the separation among the HOF being a museum, a chronicle of historical events, and a coronation of new "immortals" into the sacred center. Ironically, enshrinement matters so much that Ryan, who could believe that baseball would ever elect someone unanimously, was also incredulous that Tom Seaver had the highest election percentage (98.84 percent) when there were so many players more deserving of that "honor." When Greg Maddux "only" received 97.2 percent of the vote, he declared his inability to surpass Seaver an "embarrassment" because Maddux deserved 100 percent of the vote. This argument is compounded by two facts: (1) some voters do not vote, and (2) an entrepreneur's vote is confidential unless voluntarily made public.

Complicating matters, voters are provided vague instructions or rules for election, leaving space for moral appeals. In particular, what is known as the "character clause" states that besides the tangible and intangible measures of competitiveness voters should consider "integrity, sportsmanship, [and] character." It is here that the essence of competitiveness is struggled over. That is, anything that corrupts or, worse, pollutes the cherished values should emerge in the discourse that comes to shape how



competitiveness manifests itself in the language and external objects that symbolically reflect the essence of sport. Indeed, it has already been shown that the “cardinal sin” of baseball, gambling, is so polluting that admission to the HOF is nearly impossible once a player is implicated. However, a new issue has emerged as a flashpoint for MLB entrepreneurs: the use of performance-enhancing drugs (PEDs) such as steroids and what this means for some of the greatest players of the 1990s and 2000s. What is so unique about the PED issue is that we can see entrepreneurship in action; with gambling, the debate—though not fully settled—was not much of a debate. With PEDs, however, the moralizing has been met by entrepreneurs trying to “de-escalate” and “de-sacralize” the HOF and the process itself. Though the debate often gets muddled with religious language of purity and sanctity, what is really at stake is found in Goffman’s (1968) dramaturgy: are the performers authentic in their roles, is the “drama” real, and can the audience walk away believing the ritual reflected the underlying moral nature of the encounter? Indeed, as one voter laments: “How can you reasonably judge the statistics and—more importantly to me—memories they left behind,” if they may have taken PEDs (Donnellon 2014)?

### *The PED moral dilemma*

Underlying the PED debate is whether or not baseball, and sports in general, are distinct from other spheres of social life, particularly the economy. At every turn sports entrepreneurs seek to build barriers between the “purity” of competition and the business side of leagues, teams, and players. On the one hand, moral entrepreneurship involves appeals to the sanctity, sacredness, and power of the baseball center: the HOF. On the other hand, some sports entrepreneurs “decouple” moral language from performance (Lee and Kwak 2016). Both types of entrepreneurs are involved in protecting the boundaries of the sport but have very different ideas of just how autonomous a field baseball is or ought to be. The following two quotations clearly summarize the debate:

The Baseball Hall of Fame isn’t a historical encyclopedia, incidentally... . The PED era happened. Nobody’s ignoring it. In fact, I’d argue just the opposite. But just because it happened doesn’t mean the players who excelled during that time, regardless of how, should have bronze statues cast, script induction speeches and be included among the greats of the game (Cazano 2014).

The biggest mistake people make about the Hall of Fame, which I’ve visited many times, is that it is some sort of Valhalla. In truth it is a museum, a repository of baseball history. And you can’t have a reputable museum without telling the complete history, tainted as it may be during certain periods (Steward 2014).

At the heart of these two quotations is a dispute over the significance of the HOF, its function, the ambiguous character clause, and, ultimately, whether protecting MLB’s core, its “center of gravity” in Shils’s (1975) term, is a moral imperative.

The most extreme “moralizer” argument works to fully block any hint of impurity: “No votes for guys caught cheating. And worse—no votes for guys *who just don’t look right*” (Shaughnessy 2014; emphasis added). Though most sportswriters are not this extreme in their criteria, they tend to use a common set of appeals. For instance, morality is deeply tied to immutable tradition:



People have twisted this to mean “morals,” or, that since “racists” are in the Hall, you must allow steroid users. Such assumptions have led people to promote the idea of removing the “character clause.” The clause comes from the man who came up with the very idea of the Hall of Fame itself: Alexander Cleland... . Now you know that one of the *founding fathers* instructed “character” to be considered from the birth of the Hall itself. It’s a central, *original principle* of the voting process. You don’t just dismiss the Thomas Jefferson of the Hall of Fame and 77 years of history to accommodate steroid users (Verducci 2013; emphasis added).

Others make explicit appeals to MLB entrepreneurs’ unique status as guardians of competitiveness and the sport’s autonomy:

Nothing changes the fact that PED users cheated the game. And in an otherwise very complicated, murky field, that’s enough of a violation of the Hall’s character, integrity and sportsmanship guidelines for me. Call it sanctimonious if you’d like, but I prefer to consider it my humble little effort to protect the game’s integrity (DeMarco 2014).

Finally, others simply refer to the consequences PED-tainted numbers have for the central measure of competitiveness: statistics.

And there it is, the so-called “character clause,” which really is not a clause at all. And yet, by juicing and making a mockery of the record book, which is a much more *sacred* text in baseball than in any other sport, they impugned the character of the game, regardless of the legal ramifications, or lack thereof (Gutierrez 2014; emphasis added).

This isn’t a character issue, it’s a competitive issue. Steroids gave players a huge boost in both performance and their ability to recover more quickly. If it didn’t help, then why won’t guys admit they did it? Because they knew it was wrong, knew they were getting an advantage akin to Ben Johnson running in the Olympics against Carl Lewis (Renck 2014).

In short, moralists see a clear boundary and fear what may come from pollution. In their estimation, competition, as a measure of sport greatness and as the primary measure of the status hierarchy, demand it be walled off from anything that might taint it.

Others, however, are not so sure that PEDs threaten competitiveness. A particularly common refrain is that sports entrepreneurs have no right to moralize about players’ character. These arguments often begin by claiming that “moralizers” do not seem to care that thugs and racists like Ty Cobb are enshrined despite violating the character clause. Moreover, voters have failed to differentiate “one form of cheating from another,” noting that spitballers and corked bat users are enshrined despite the clear advantages these rule-breakers earned (Gammons 2013). Finally, they note that drugs have long been a part of the game but until PEDs had not been treated as polluting:

Oh, we also have players who have tested positive for amphetamines. Are they now supposedly ineligible for Cooperstown? Greenies and beans were rampant in the Fifties, Sixties, Seventies and Eighties, eyesight’s [*sic*] were affected and the ability to ramp it up again helped career home run totals creep past 400 or 500 or 600. I love watching the grainy film of The Mick, head down, rounding the bases, or Don Larsen jumping into Yogi’s arms, but baseball was not played in a Franciscan ordinary (Gammons 2013).

For Gammons (2013) the search for an edge is a different yet legitimate embodied form of competitiveness. Thus, who are we to determine which competitive edge is purer? The response from the moralists to this line of argument is often as such:

Forget the racists and scoundrels comparison. Here's my issue with steroid users as it relates to the "character clause": it's about how they played the game between the lines, not how they conducted themselves outside of it. It's an issue of *competitive* integrity, not personal integrity. They bastardized baseball, eroded the implicit fairness of it and disadvantaged those who chose to play fairly to extents never seen before (Verducci 2013; emphasis added).

This type of counterargument is rebuffed in two ways. First, some MLB entrepreneurs rhetorically ask what it means to be a guardian of the HOF: does it require legal expertise or simply judgment about a person's performance? Unlike in the case of gambling, appeals to rules are effective: "In the absense of specific guidelines from the [HOF] ... I simply don't feel more comfortable withholding my vote" (Crasnick 2014).

I am a Hall of Fame voter. With that responsibility, I believe, comes many other titles. But definitely not plenty others. I am a judge, but not a cop... I don't conduct my own investigation into players' alleged performance-enhancing drug usage, nor do I seek to right past wrongs or protect "clean" players. If, and only if, baseball has punished someone for a violation, then I will factor that punishment into a candidacy (Davidoff 2014).

Second, MLB entrepreneurs also remind their colleagues that the guardians themselves were complicit in turning a blind eye and glorifying these players rather than admonishing them and putting a stop to it. By the mid to late 1990s, players grew physically in ways that were noticeable (e.g., heads, arms, and upper bodies grew huge). Some of this physical growth was predicated on changes in economics and sports medicine that saw rewards for bigger, stronger, faster performers and provided scientific regimens for naturally producing these. In essence, players were simply in better shape because resources were more available and the stakes for being the best were dramatically higher. Yet, by the late 1980s and early 1990s the signs of PED use were everywhere (Fainaru-Wada and Williams 2006) but were consciously and unconsciously ignored (Fletcher 2013). This sin of commission was intensified following the disastrous 1994–1995 strike that led to the World Series being canceled for the first time since 1904, and which lasted longer than the previous eight strikes (232 days). Attendance dropped 20 percent the following season, causing baseball to seek new methods of advertising and marketing. This break in action and the cancelation of the most important collective commencement ritual (the World Series) that imbues special intangible forms of competitiveness (Champions) on its performers was a huge polluting force (as we shall see shortly). Thus, not only had MLB entrepreneurs ignored the physical signs because they had a vested interest in reproducing the mythos but also the owners and the league felt the material threat of the strike and were interested in building a better product.

### **Postscript**

Given that the focus of the data are on the 2014 MLB HOF election, one may ask whether this issue has been resolved. For instance, in Mike Piazza and Jeff Bagwell were inducted in 2016 and 2017, respectively; both were accused of being PED-users though there was never any direct evidence. As one might expect, their inductions hardened the positions of the two sides rather than softening them. More recently, a "legend," Joe Morgan, wrote a letter to 2018 voters arguing against letting in PED-users (Gartland 2017). He wrote: "The more we Hall of Famers talk about this—and we talk about it a lot—we realize that we can no longer sit silent [lest] fans think our standards of election to the Hall of Fame are

relaxed, at least relaxed enough for steroid users to enter and become members of the most sacred place in Baseball.” Thus, the issue has by no means been resolved; and, with the two most infamous (and most talented) accused PED-users making significant gains on 2017 ballots, the issue may very well come to a public head sooner rather than later.

### Against colonization

In short, while sports, and specifically baseball, may appear as games that are distinguished only by the fact that they make money and actors are paid money, in the United States professional sports leagues like MLB have become relatively autonomous fields in a relatively autonomous sport institution. As illustrated above MLB entrepreneurs have worked hard for over a century to cultivate a distinctive cultural discourse that revolves around themes of competitiveness. These themes are mechanisms by which owners, athletes, sportswriters, and fans make sense of performances—that is, whether performances are authentic, appropriate, executed competently, transcendent, and so forth. Like the generalized symbolic medium of economy, competitiveness is more than just a material form of currency. Statistics provide a language and currency that allows actors to evaluate the differences between teams and players across time and space. The stats claim to be so precise that they can measure tenths and hundredths of a second in order to establish records and distribute competitiveness. Additionally, discourse surrounding intangibles like singularly transcendent and memorable performances or repeated playoff winning provides depth and texture to the quantitative aspect. By examining the intense moral indignation lobbed at gamblers and in many cases PED-users, we see that there is a moral-evaluative dimension to MLB entrepreneurship: endogenous boundaries matter, especially the institutional core (the HOF), and entrepreneurs act as though they have a responsibility to protect it from pollution.

Yet, MLB is a business and thus the thorny issue of how sport and economy are related deserves some attention. To be sure, money matters: owners spend inordinate amounts to purchase teams;<sup>13</sup> players and coaches earn inordinate amounts to play what are, ultimately, games; and fans spend obscene amounts to “consume” their favorite sport, team, and players. Furthermore, baseball’s history is inextricably linked to labor relations, which, since the 1960s, have been explicitly central to the history of baseball (Helyar 1995). Numerous institutionalists have pointed out how money and power, and their respective institutional domains economy and polity, dominate modern societies (Abrutyn and Turner 2011; Luhmann 1995; Parsons and Smelser 1956); how their media circulate much more readily in other institutional domains in the form of salaries and franchised authority (Abrutyn and Turner 2011); and how they provide the discourse as well as material and symbolic resources that are ubiquitous at every level of social reality. Perhaps, then, the above analysis overstates the autonomy and the degree to which competitiveness is the principal currency and form of discourse in MLB? It is equally plausible to caution against cynicism as athletes are not that different from professors or doctors who are also paid a salary but who are often committed to truth/knowledge and health care, respectively, more so or equal to money.

Consider, for instance, how MLB entrepreneurs work to protect the core of their domain. During the season, for example, when ritualized events are the center of the production and distribution of competitiveness, discussions of money (e.g., contracts and

free agency) are relegated to the background; the season is sacred time set aside from the mundane (Mount 1994). In the offseason mundane affairs become foreground material as MLB entrepreneurs evaluate teams' decisions regarding the labor market. Using competitiveness as a measure they write about a player's body of work and the contract he does or does not deserve; they write about a team's performance and their willingness to spend. The primary standard owners are held to is, arguably, whether or not they spend the money necessary to field the most competitive team possible.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, some teams, such as the Miami Marlins, have a reputation for being in a cyclical state of building up assets and then, when the team is sold, having a "fire sale." For instance, the team was sold this offseason (2017) to a large group of investors who subsequently traded one of the three best players (Giancarlo Stanton) in the whole sport for almost nothing in return. This move has been reviled by the national media and referred to as a disgrace to the nature of the game (Baumann 2017) because it revealed the corruption of money over competitiveness in two respects. From the Marlins' side, it is a betrayal of the logic of the game: teams owe their allegiance to their hometowns, who pay for the stadiums through taxes and who treat their teams tribally (Leifer 1998)—money objectifies this relationship. During the offseason, then, when money is part of the central narratives, competitiveness remains as important as ever; very often the two discourses enter into dialectical relations.

Consider the 1994–1995 strike as a special case study. On the one hand, the strike interrupted the ritual flow of the season, creating a prolonged offseason. Money was thrust into the center as players and owners debated whose contribution was of greater value. An easy analysis of the lockout would resort to a classic Marxian analysis of labor versus capital and so forth. And in one sense this would not be wrong. But, as I have labored to show, MLB (and sport) are about something more than money. There is something visceral, moral, affectual about competitiveness that draws fans, athletes, and many owners into an engrossed state during the season, and which is carefully constructed and maintained by sports entrepreneurs. The specter of money corrupting this sacred time and place elicits moral indignation.

The 750 adult males getting paid an average \$ 1.1 million a year to play a boys' game ... are picking up their gloves and going home because they don't think they can risk settling for less... . And the 28 adults who paid up to \$173 million to own major league teams are willing to shut baseball down, not because they fear the players, but because they fear each other. They want to cap team payrolls so no owner can pay players as he or she wishes. Freedom isn't part of their vocabulary (McMahon 1994).

Thus both sides were considered at fault in many cases, But the argument was often different. For owners motives of money were not violations of their expected behaviors or attitudes but rather exposed their efforts to conceal these motives; they were authorized, however unsavory and immoral it was, to want money. "Major league baseball owners want to put this all on the players... . But their dirty *little secret* is out now. This is the owners' greedy mess" (Burwell 1994; emphasis added). Players, who play a "boys' game," were held to different standards. Framing of their fault was less direct by the MLB entrepreneurs, who let "regular" fans communicate their messages:

Michael Grodinsky used to go to baseball games and see heroes on the field. But if he ever returns to Olympic Stadium, Grodinsky says, he will see businessmen in funny suits who decided to become baseball players instead of doctors or lawyers—because it pays better.

[Likewise, longtime] fans Rocky and Judy Rapoport said there is no real good guy in this latter-day morality tale; pick any side and you'll find *greedy, avaricious people* who have lost all senses of proportion and reality. But they blame the players more, and said somebody has to stop them from riding roughshod over a game that is quickly turning from America's pastime to rich America's pastime... "It's disgusting that it had to go so far... If we, as Jews, could make peace with the Arabs, then why couldn't the players make peace with the owners?" (Fitterman 1994).

Of course, everyone involved was guilty: "Overpaid lawyers and labor negotiations have robbed baseball fans of their usual autumn menu. We can only hope the World Series returns in 1995" (Bodley 1994). Ultimately, entrepreneurs sought to chastise the major players who purposely called into question the definition of the situation, halted the unending flow of sacred time for self-interest, and broke traditions (World Series had been played every October since 1905) that were at the heart of the production and reproduction of competitiveness. Acting as liaisons between the consumers of competitiveness and the embodiment of it, they worked to rebuild and strengthen the walls around the core.

Thus, what seems like a game and, for many, a profession like law or medicine that is ultimately about dollars and cents has far deeper meanings for those oriented toward the sport sphere. These actors, who dedicate their lives to producing and reproducing competitiveness, adhere to a moral code that regulates their interpretations of actions and attitudes associated with MLB. As one MLB entrepreneur concluded, baseball "in much popular writing and reporting remains a metaphor for purity" (Schwarz 2004). Once again it is possible to see how MLB, and perhaps sports in general, are relatively autonomous spaces because their entrepreneurs work to protect against both internal threats (gambling that destroys the value of competitiveness) and external threats that might corrupt or pollute the purity by reorienting the feelings, thoughts, and actions of all sport actors.

## The bigger picture

Thus far the paper has focused exclusively on how MLB entrepreneurs work to produce and reproduce a degree of structural and cultural autonomy such that the field of professional baseball is its own "life-world" replete with themes of discourse that delimit the exchanges, interaction, and communication deemed "baseball." They perpetuate a mythos that emphasizes the bucolic origins of the sport (Thorn 2012), the halcyon days of yore (Ritter 1966), and the purity of the game (Kahn 1972) while juxtaposing the "scoundrels" of yore like Ty Cobb with the virtues of baseball (e.g., leading the charge of racial integration in the United States [Tygel 1993]). In short, MLB entrepreneurs have strove to build a high degree of autonomy by presenting the sport as an external representation of the United States itself: competitive but rule-abiding; agrarian yet industrious; behind in social policy but always willing to make difficult, uncomfortable change (Halberstam 1994; Helyar 1995). Put in the words of an entrepreneur (Posnanski 2014):

I think baseball is our National Pastime because the qualities it develops in its contests—the team play, cooperation of all the members toward one purpose, with stardom achievable only through and with such cooperation—come closer to representing the fundamental principles that make up the *spirit* of the American people than is true in the case of any other sport on the calendar.

Yet, the question we now turn to is how does this inform a broader sociology of institutions?

First, as has been argued herein as well as by many other cultural sociologists, to understand how distinct a cultural reality is we have to pay attention to language. The world is made and remade through language, and it is through language that distinctions are drawn between the experiences, events, emotions, attitudes, actions, and goals in one context and in another. MLB entrepreneurs employ a discourse of competitiveness to discuss the sport; they transform it into metrics that have moral-evaluative content for judging athletes and teams, establishing a hierarchy with real consequences (e.g., enshrinement in the Hall of Fame), and interpreting events into a generalized set of meanings accessible to owners, players, and fans alike. Of course, we would expect that this is the case in other sport fields like football or soccer and, more generally, other spheres would be discrete by way of distinct themes of discourse (e.g., medical knowledge and practices are rooted in health care, legal knowledge and practices in justice, and scientific knowledge and practices in truth). Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate these claims, they are worthwhile empirical questions for future research.

Second, and closely related, it has too often been the case that the study of cultural discourse and institutional differentiation and/or autonomy has been overly macro or micro in its orientation. On the one end, there is a tendency to see large-scale historical patterns in which complexity and growth in size and scale are pointed to as evidence of important processes. On the other end, microinteractions highlight the specific use of words strung together to make sense of the world. Neither approach is wrong; rather, without considering the role entrepreneurs, or macrolevel collective actors, play, they are incomplete. One of Weber's most important insights was not that charismatic leaders reshape the world but rather that they inspire the closest cadre of followers to carry on their burgeoning traditions and build a charismatic community (Weber 1968). The efficacy and longevity of the leaders' innovations are directly tied to the fate of this small group of disciples or lieutenants. Thus, MLB entrepreneurs are a species of sport entrepreneurs who should share similar characteristics with NFL or NBA entrepreneurs and, presumably, entrepreneurs in other institutional spheres. In many ways the approach above suggests bringing a collective behavior approach, like Fligstein and McAdam's (2012) strategic action fields, to institutional analysis. To be sure, Eisenstadt (1980) has explored political and religious entrepreneurs operating within orthodoxies to build heterodoxies, but far less work has considered medical, scientific, legal, or other entrepreneurs and their efforts to reconfigure the social world and build autonomous spheres of their own. All of these are avenues for innovative historical approaches to the question of institutional differentiation and autonomy and, more broadly, historical change.

Finally, the study of boundary maintenance is central to understanding institutional spheres or domains. Long forgotten are the insights of Shils's (1975) institutional ecology. There are centers or cores that act as forces of gravity, pulling people physically and, more often, cognitively toward the cultural discourse produced and distributed by entrepreneurs. The Bourdieusian field metaphor has reimaged the world as a grid in which groups compete while fully abandoning the notion that Jewish synagogues, Catholic churches, and Muslim mosques face east in North America because their parishioners are to worship facing the holy centers of each religion; politics always occurs in a capital city in which the congress becomes the center of power; the Hall of Fame and the



stadiums that are infused with sacredness during games draw the attention and emotion of fans, owners, and players; and, finally, courthouses in the United States, with their Roman architecture, pull legal disputes into their orbit. In these centers power dynamics operate less overtly and strategically as in the field metaphors in style: the physical organization of space and its centrality weakens resistance, encourage unthinking subordination, and make interactions flow accordingly. Indeed, ecological analyses—mostly touched on in passing above—offer a complementary perspective to the vertical/horizontal grid of field metaphors; perhaps, through empirical analysis, they may bring innovative integrative insights.

In sum, by looking at the use of a particularized cultural discourse, we are able to illustrate how institutional entrepreneurs like our MLB sportswriters erect and maintain a distinct reality. A reality in which athletics are transformed from games and businesses into a morally charged event that is embedded in a much longer history of previous events. Successes and failures are judged through a specific language meant to isolate what is relevant while attempting to insulate against what is deemed irrelevant, especially that which is polluting or corrupting. While this analysis is not generalizable to other sports or to the sport institution itself—especially given the wide variation from amateur to professional sports, from MLB to less legitimized leagues like the XFL or the defunct USFL—it is suggestive of how one might pursue more comprehensive and robust analyses with more time and space.

## Notes

1. The definition of “institution” is rather murky despite its centrality in sociology since Durkheim and Spencer. For the purposes of the discussion institutions are considered macro domains that vary in terms of how distinct they are from each other (Abrutyn 2014). Though abstract and invisible, as institutions grow more autonomous we can see their outlines in the ways they change physical, temporal, social, and symbolic space.
2. For the sake of brevity the focus of this article is on professional sports. However, the Olympics is an example of how formalized amateur sports may become.
3. The New York and Los Angeles *Times*, respectively, prohibit writers from voting, citing conflict of interest; yet these writers still weigh in on the debate.
4. Some authors had two-part columns explaining their votes while for others the data had to be collected both from the official news sources they work for and the blogs they posted to further clarify their position.
5. Because of space limitations morning-edition newspapers chose some metrics over others in reporting the previous night's scores.
6. As of 2017 Raines has been elected, while it was recently announced that the Veterans' Committee—a group of retired players who can elect players who fall off the ballot—selected Morris for the 2018 class. Schilling, however, presents a fascinating case in that he has many of the intangibles necessary for enshrinement, as noted above. Yet there is much debate every year about whether his quantitative measures or his outspoken conservatism (he was suspended and eventually fired by ESPN for bigoted tweets) hurt his candidacy most.
7. The next closest hitter, Ty Cobb, who Rose surpassed, set the hit mark in 1928; it took 53 years for the record to be broken. Since Rose retired no one has come within 500 hits of his mark (or, the equivalent of three exceptional seasons of hitting).
8. Thirty-one players have reached this number: twenty-five are in the HOF, two are still playing (Ichiro Suzuki and Adrian Beltre), one (Derek Jeter) just retired and is talked about as a lock for the HOF, while the remaining three are not likely to gain entrance because of gambling (Pete Rose) and suspected cheating (Rafael Palmeiro and Alex Rodriguez).



9. Twenty-seven players have reached this number: eighteen are in the HOF, one is still playing, and two have yet to become eligible for election—one of those may not get in because of his known PED use (Rodriguez). Of the remaining six cases, election is in doubt because of known or suspected PED use, with three having already fallen off the ballot.
10. Twenty-four players have reached this mark: twenty-three are in the HOF while one, Roger Clemens, who has the ninth-most wins in baseball history, is another case of PED use whose fate remains underdetermined.
11. Said one voter regarding why he did not vote for recent candidate Fred McGriff (McNeal 2014): “Seven more homers and he would have hit the magic number of 500. But a line has to be drawn somewhere and given that power was his biggest asset, he falls seven homers short of my vote.”
12. For comparison, the National Football League HOF (opened in 1963) has 287 members; the National Basketball Association HOF (1959) has 335; and the National Hockey League HOF (1945) has 381 members, 260 of which are players.
13. The average team, according to various sources, is valued at \$1.3 billion with the New York Yankees estimated at \$3.4 billion.
14. One of the more notable baseball comedies, *Major League*, centered on an owner’s widow attempting to strip the Cleveland Indians of nearly all its material resources in hopes of fielding a team so bad that she could move it to Florida. The comedy played off the well-worn idea that owner’s interests directly conflict with the players, fans, and sportswriters—an idea, incidentally, found in other sports movies like the Paul Newman hockey film *Slapstick*.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the reviewers, editors, and Justin Van Ness for comments and suggestions on previous drafts. In addition, I would like to express my appreciation for my former graduate assistant, Anthony Lemonis, who was largely responsible for compiling the data used herein.

## References

- Abrutyn, Seth. 2009. “Toward a General Theory of Institutional Autonomy.” *Sociological Theory* 27 (4):449–65. doi: [10.1111/j.1467-9558.2009.01358.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9558.2009.01358.x).
- Abrutyn, Seth. 2014. *Revisiting Institutionalism in Sociology: Putting the “Institution” Back in Institutional Analysis*. New York: Routledge.
- Abrutyn, Seth. 2015. “Money, Love, and Sacredness: Generalized Symbolic Media and the Production of Instrumental, Affectual, and Moral Reality.” *Czech Sociological Review* 51 (3):445–71. doi: [10.13060/00380288.2015.51.3.186](https://doi.org/10.13060/00380288.2015.51.3.186).
- Abrutyn, Seth. 2016. “Institutional Spheres: The Macro-Structure and Culture of Social Life.” Pp. 207–228 in *Handbook of Contemporary Sociological Theory*, edited by S. Abrutyn. New York: Springer.
- Abrutyn, Seth and Jonathan H Turner. 2011. “The Old Institutionalism Meets the New Institutionalism.” *Sociological Perspectives* 54 (3):283–306. doi: [10.1525/sop.2011.54.3.283](https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2011.54.3.283).
- Abrutyn, Seth and Justin Van Ness. 2015. “The Role of Agency in Sociocultural Evolution: Institutional Entrepreneurship as a Force of Structural and Cultural Transformation.” *Thesis Eleven* 127 (1):52–77. doi: [10.1177/0725513615575935](https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513615575935).
- Albee, Dave. 2014. “My Baseball Hall of Fame Ballot Is Stretched.” Retrieved December 7, 2014 ([http://blog.davealbee.com/2014\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://blog.davealbee.com/2014_01_01_archive.html)).
- Allen, Michael Patrick and Nicholas L Parsons. 2006. “The Institutionalization of Fame: Achievement, Recognition, and Cultural Consecration in Baseball.” *American Sociological Review* 71 (5):808–25. doi: [10.1177/000312240607100505](https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240607100505).

- Baumann, Michael. 2017. "The Marlins' Giancarlo Stanton Trade Is a Baseball Disgrace." Retrieved December 18, 2014 (<https://www.theringer.com/mlb/2017/12/9/16756778/giancarlo-stanton-trade-miami-marlins-new-york-yankees-bruce-sherman>).
- Bodley, Hal. 1994. "Someone Still Can Be the Hero of October." *USA Today*. Retrieved April 2, 2014 (<http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3S7T-65P0-008G-54S3&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t000240&perma=true>).
- Borer, Michael Ian. 2008. *Faithful to Fenway: Believing in Boston, Baseball, and America's Most Beloved Ballpark*. New York: NYU Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burwell, Bryan. 1994. "Owners are Fighting Socialism, Not Players." *USA Today*. Retrieved March 24, 2014 (<http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3S7T-6BD0-008G-51YS&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t000240&perma=true>).
- Butterworth, Michael L. 2012. *Baseball and Rhetorics of Purity: The National Pastime and American Identity during the War on Terror*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press.
- Camp, Walter. 1921. "The Broad Folk Highway of American Sport." *American Scandinavian Review* 9:257.
- Cazano, John. 2014. "Baseball Hall of Fame Vote Isn't A Mess, It's A Message." *The Oregonian*. Retrieved December 17, 2014 ([http://www.oregonlive.com/sports/oregonian/john\\_canzano/index.ssf/2013/01/canzano\\_baseball\\_hall\\_of\\_fame.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/sports/oregonian/john_canzano/index.ssf/2013/01/canzano_baseball_hall_of_fame.html)).
- Crasnick, Jerry. 2014. "The Rumor Factor: Cooperstown Limbo." Retrieved December 17, 2014 ([http://espn.go.com/mlb/story/\\_/id/10215926/mlb-craig-biggio-mike-piazza-jeff-bagwell-hall-fame-limbo](http://espn.go.com/mlb/story/_/id/10215926/mlb-craig-biggio-mike-piazza-jeff-bagwell-hall-fame-limbo)).
- Davidoff, Ken. 2014. "Vote Is In: Davidoff Breaks down His HOF Ballot." *New York Post*. Retrieved December 17, 2014 (<http://nypost.com/2014/01/05/vote-is-in-davidoff-breaks-down-his-hof-ballot/>).
- DeMarco, Tony. 2014. "Filling Out Hall Ballot Now Angst-Filled Burden." Retrieved December 17, 2014 (<http://www.nbcsports.com/baseball/filling-out-hall-ballot-now-angst-filled-burden>).
- Donnellon, Sam. 2014. "One Baseball Hall of Fame Voter's Angst." Retrieved December 7, 2014 (<http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/sports/phillies/One-baseball-Hall-of-Fame-voters-angst.html>).
- Durkheim, Emile. 1887 [1993]. *Ethics and the Sociology of Morals*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Eisenstadt, S.N. 1963. *The Political System of Empires: The Rise and Fall of the Historical Bureaucratic Societies*. New York: Free Press.
- Eisenstadt, S.N. 1980. "Cultural Orientations, Institutional Entrepreneurs, and Social Change: Comparative Analysis of Traditional Civilizations." *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (4):840–69. doi: 10.1086/227091.
- Eisenstadt, S.N. 1982. "The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of Clerics." *European Journal of Sociology* 23 (2):294–314. doi: 10.1017/S0003975600003908.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1959. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. San Diego: Harvest Book.
- Fainaru-Wada, Mark and Lance Williams. 2006. *Game of Shadows: Barry Bonds, BALCO, and the Steroids Scandal that Rocked Professional Sports*. New York: Gotham.
- Fitterman, Lisa. 1994. "Players Strike Out; Their Greed Killed Baseball Season, Fans Complain." *The Gazerter*. Retrieved April 5, 2014 <http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3SR8-WHM0-002G-H44H&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t000240&perma=true>).
- Fletcher, Jeff. 2013. "No Hesitation Voting for Bonds, Clemens." *OC Register*. Retrieved December 17, 2014 (<http://www.oregionlive.com/articles/players-382860-hall-played.html>).
- Fligstein, Neil and McAdam Doug. 2012. *A Theory of Fields*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Friedland, Roger, John W Mohr, Henk Roose, and Paolo Gardinali. 2014. "An Institutional Logic for Love: Measuring Intimate Life." *Theory and Society* 43 (3–4):333–70. doi: 10.1007/s1186-014-9223-6.

- Gammons, Peter. 2013. "The Hall of Fame Debate; PEDs." Retrieved December 7, 2014 (<http://www.gammonsdaily.com/peter-gammons-the-hall-of-fame-debate-peds/>).
- Gartland, Dan. 2017. "Joe Morgan to Hall of Fame Voters: 'Steroid Users Don't Belong Here'." Retrieved December 15, 2017 (<https://www.si.com/mlb/2017/11/21/joe-morgan-letter-hall-fame-steroids>).
- Giamatti, Marcus. 2014. "A Son Recalls His Father." Retrieved December 11, 2014 (<http://www.murraychass.com/?p=7284>).
- Goffman, Erving. 1968. *Strategic Interaction*. New York: Free Press.
- Gould, Stephen Jay. 1989. "The Creation Myths of Cooperstown." *Natural History*. Retrieved December 13, 2014 (<http://www.naturalhistorymag.com>).
- Griffin, Richard. 2013. "No Room for Clemens on This Hall of Fame Ballot." Retrieved December 7, 2014 ([http://www.thestar.com/sports/baseball/2013/12/30/mlb\\_no\\_room\\_for\\_clemens\\_on\\_this\\_hall\\_of\\_fame\\_ballot\\_griffin.html](http://www.thestar.com/sports/baseball/2013/12/30/mlb_no_room_for_clemens_on_this_hall_of_fame_ballot_griffin.html)).
- Gutierrez, Paul. 2014. "More Questions than Answers on Hall of Fame Ballot." Retrieved December 17, 2014 (<http://www.csnbayarea.com/blog/paul-gutierrez/more-questions-answers-hall-fame-ballot>).
- Habermas, Jurgen. 1973 [1976]. *Legitimation Crisis*. London: Heinemann.
- Halberstam, David. 1994. *October 1964*. New York: Ballantine.
- Helyar, John. 1995. *Lords of the Realm: The Real History of Baseball*. New York: Ballantine.
- Kahn, Richard. 1972. *The Boys of Summer*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lee, Joon Sung and Dae Hee Kwak. 2016. "Consumers' Responses to Public Figures' Transgression: Moral Reasoning Strategies and Implications for Endorsed Brands." *Journal of Business Ethics*. 137(1):101–113.
- Leifer, Eric. 1998. *Making the Majors: The Transformation of Team Sports in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lever, Janet. 1983. *Soccer Madness*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Lewis, Michael. 2003. *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Luhmann, Niklas. 1995. *Social Systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- McMahon, Michael. 1994. "Players, Owners Begin Siege of Ineptitude and Greed." *USA Today*. Retrieved March 21, 2014 (<http://www.lexisnexis.com.ezproxy.memphis.edu/lnacui2api/api/version1/getDocCui?lni=3S7T-6BF0-008G-520W&csi=270944,270077,11059,8411&hl=t&hv=t&hnsd=f&hns=t&hgn=t000240&perma=true>).
- McNeal, Steve. 2014. "Mlb Hall of Fame 2013: No on Jack Morris, Yes on Jeff Bagwell, Tim Lincecum" in *The Sporting News*, Vol. (<http://www.sportingnews.com/mlb/story/2012-12-28/mlb-hall-of-fame-2013-jack-morris-dale-murphy-jeff-bagwell-tim-raines>(retrieved12/17/14)).
- Merton, Robert K. 1979. *The Sociology of Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mount, Nicholas J. 1994. "Baseball Time." *Time & Society* 3 (3):377–83. doi: 10.1177/0961463X94003003008.
- Nathan, David. A. 2003. *Say It's So: A Cultural History of the Black Sox Scandal*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Nolan, Patrick and Gerhard Lenski. 2010. *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macrosociology*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Parsons, Nicholas L. and Michael J Stern. 2012. "There's No Dying in Baseball: Cultural Valorization, Collective Memory, and Induction in the Baseball Hall of Fame." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 29 (1):62–88. doi: 10.1123/ssj.29.1.62.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1963. "On the Concept of Political Power." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 107 (3):232–62.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1971. *The System of Modern Societies*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Parsons, Talcott and Neil J Smelser. 1956. *Economy and Society: A Study in the Integration of Economic and Social Theory*. New York: The Free Press.
- Peterson, Bill. 2014. "Another Hall of Fame Vote, Another Round of Questions." Retrieved December 7, 2014 (<http://www.labigleagues.com/2014/01/another-hall-of-fame-vote-another-round.html>).

- Posnanski, Joe. 2014. "The Massive Hall of Fame Post." Retrieved December 8, 2014 (<http://hardballtalk.nbcsports.com/2014/01/07/joe-posnanski-hall-of-fame-ballot/>).
- Renck, Troy. 2014. "Larry Walker, Barry Bonds Not Worthy of Hall of Fame Vote ... Yet." *Denver Post*.
- Ritter, Lawrence. 1966. *The Glory of Their Times: The Story of the Early Days of Baseball Told by the Men Who Played It*. New York: Macmillan.
- Ryan, Bob. 2013. "Hall of Fame Voting Always a Great Debate." Retrieved December 7, 2014 (<http://www.bostonglobe.com/sports/2013/12/15/bob-ryan-hall-fame-voting-always-great-debate/BepktARMKrCqCmzIVFIjPI/story.html>).
- Schiff, Andrew. 2008. *The Father of Baseball: A Biography of Henry Chadwick*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Schwarz, Alan. 2004. *The Numbers Game: Baseball's Lifelong Fascination with Statistics*. New York: Thomas Dunne.
- Shaughnessy, Dan. 2014. "Strong Case for Pedro Martinez, Curt Schilling for Hall of Fame." *Boston Globe*. Retrieved December 17, 2014 (<http://www.bostonglobe.com/sports/2014/12/16/shaughnessy/yoF2ilYf2MFeJ9uoX49ygK/story.html>).
- Shils, Edward A. 1975. *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 1907. *The Philosophy of Money*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Springwood, Charles F. 1996. *Cooperstown to Dyersville: A Geography of Baseball Nostalgia*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Steward, Carl. 2014. "Here's How Bay Area News Group Writers Voted on Baseball Hall of Fame Ballots." *Mercury News*. Retrieved December 27, 2014 ([http://www.mercurynews.com/ci\\_24865159/heres-how-bay-area-news-group-writers-voted](http://www.mercurynews.com/ci_24865159/heres-how-bay-area-news-group-writers-voted)).
- Sullivan, Dean A, Ed. 2010. *Final Innings: A Documentary History of Baseball, 1972-2008*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Thorn, John. 2012. *Baseball in the Garden of Eden: The Secret History of the Early Game*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Thornton, Patricia H., William Ocasio, and Michael Lounsbury. 2012. *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Timmermans, Stefan and Iddo Tavory. 2012. "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 30 (3):167–86. doi: 10.1177/0735275112457914.
- Turner, Jonathan H. 2010. *Theoretical Principles of Sociology, Volume 1: Macrodynamics*. New York: Springer.
- Turner, Jonathan H. and Seth Abrutyn. 2017. "Putting the "Social" Back into Evolutionary Sociology: Reconsidering Spencer, Durkheim, and Marx's Models of "Natural" Selection." *Sociological Perspectives* 60 (3):529–56. doi: 10.1177/0731121416641936.
- Turner, Jonathan H. and Alexandra Maryanski. 2009. *On the Origins of Societies by Natural Selection*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Tygel, Jules. 1993. *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vandenbergh, Frédéric. 2007. "Avatars of the Collective: A Realist Theory of Collective Subjectivities." *Sociological Theory* 25 (4):295–324. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9558.2007.00311.x.
- Verducci, Tom. 2013. "Why I'll Never Vote for a Known Steroids User for the Hall of Fame." Retrieved December 7, 2014 (<http://www.si.com/mlb/2013/01/08/hall-fame-ballot-steroids-mark-mcwire-barry-bonds-roger-clemens>).
- Weber, Max. 1946a. "Politics as a Vocation." Pp. 77–128 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max. 1946b. "The Social Psychology of World Religions." Pp. 267–301 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, edited by H. Gerth and C.W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max. 1968. *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Werron, Tobias. 2010. "World Sport and Its Public: On Historical Relations of Modern Sport and the Media." Pp. 33–60 in *Observing Sport: System-Theoretical Approaches to Sport as a Social Phenomenon*, edited by U. Wagner, R. Storm, and J. Hoberman. Schorndorf: Hofmann.
- Zelizer, Viviana. 1997. *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.