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Rhetorical Constructions of Anger Management, Emotions, and Public Argument in Baseball Culture

The Case of Carlos Zambrano

KEVIN A. JOHNSON AND JOSEPH W. ANDERSON

Carlos Zambrano was a pitcher for the Chicago Cubs, and at the time of this essay, a pitcher for the Miami Marlins. Many baseball fans and writers know him for his pitching talents as well as his emotional outbursts. For example, Matt Leland recently noted, “The guy just has a fiery temperament. Sometimes, it’s a focused intensity that he channels into his pitching performances. When that’s the case, the Big Z normally dominates. Too often, though, Zambrano has let his emotions get the best of him, both on and off the mound.”¹ Leland described Zambrano as having “no qualms about fighting teammates in his own dugout, showing up his manager or letting the umpires know exactly how he feels about their calls.”²

Leland is one of many baseball writers who have questioned a string of incidents involving Zambrano. In June 2007, Dave Van Dyck reported, “It has come to this with the Cubs: Unable to beat other teams, they have started beating on each other. . . . In the midst of losing their fifth straight game and 11th in the last 15 . . . batterymates Carlos Zambrano and Michael Barrett tussled in the dugout and then apparently had an all-out set-to in the clubhouse.”³ The fistfight between Zambrano and Barrett would be followed by many temper tantrums in the dugout. In June 2010, Zambrano was “suspended indefinitely after a dugout tirade” where he “had to be separated from teammate Derrek Lee in the visitors’ dugout after surrendering four runs to the Chicago White Sox in the bottom of the first inning at U.S. Cellular Field.”⁴ As part of his suspension, Zambrano completed anger management counseling before being able to return to the playing field.

Zambrano talked about the counseling, telling Carrie Muskat, “It’s all done. I’m cured. . . . The problem I have to solve is when I get upset on the field. I think my problem is after I cross those lines. When somebody makes an error or I make an error, that’s my problem. . . . It did work, and believe me, that was an experience that I can take through the years.”⁵ Fans and baseball writers

have begun to question the sincerity of Zambrano's reflection given two subsequent incidents.

As a batter, Zambrano struck out in a game on May 31, 2011, and broke his bat over his knee in frustration. Then, on June 5, 2011, he called the Cubs "embarrassing" and questioned Cubs reliever Carlos Marmol's pitching strategy after the Cubs lost six games in a row and eight of their previous ten. Many baseball writers called for a suspension. For example, Gene Wojciechowski wrote, "You could see this latest meltdown—one in a loooooooooong line of nut-job moments by the Chicago Cubs starter—coming for days. And after what he said about his teammates Sunday, Cubs management ought to suspend him for days, weeks, months or, in a perfect world, the remainder of the season."⁶ A few writers were sympathetic to Zambrano's claim that the Cubs were an embarrassment, but even those reporters commented on Zambrano's anger getting the best of him. For instance, Dylan Polk noted, "If [the Cubs] look long enough, they'll understand Zambrano's point of view and turn things around." Although sympathetic, Polk still commented, "Zambrano has a history of flying off the handle and letting his temper get the best of him, which prior to Sunday, fans thought had culminated in 2010 with an altercation with then-first baseman Derrek Lee, landing Zambrano in the bullpen as well as anger management. Since then, his temper has been a running joke among baseball fans, sort of a ticking time bomb that fans . . . knew would inevitably explode."⁷

The purpose of this essay is to explore the implications of the rhetoric of baseball fans and writers surrounding the early June 2011 episodes involving Zambrano. Zambrano's case is perhaps the most notable and most recent example of an athlete receiving attention because of his anger, as well as being required to undergo anger management therapy. While this essay does suggest that Zambrano's case has much to teach us about MLB's anger management rhetoric, we do not mean to imply that he stands alone. Indeed, there are at least three other examples—two from baseball and one from basketball—that also grabbed national attention.

For example, in 2005, the *Los Angeles Times* featured an article on then-Dodger Milton Bradley who had been ordered to undergo anger management therapy for, among other things, throwing a water bottle at a fan.⁸ The article related conversations between Bradley and his teammates to those between former basketball teammates Magic Johnson and Kurt Rambis. A year earlier, in 2004, the *New York Times* featured a piece titled "Anger Management May Not Help at All," in which Benedict Carey referenced the cases of baseball players Bradley and Jose Guillen, and basketball player Ron Artest.⁹ Carey described anger management rather disparagingly, citing Dr. Ray DiGiuseppe of St. John's University, who calls anger management classes "a band-aid"

which allows people to think they have done something, when in fact they have not had any “real treatment.” DiGiuseppe goes so far as to suggest that anger management therapists are “operating under the delusion” that they are helping people when they may be making the problem worse.¹⁰ Articles such as this perhaps color the public’s trust in anger management therapy, and serve to elide expert opinions on the subject. Notably absent from these depictions of anger management therapy is any serious engagement with anger management experts and/or therapists. Such absence is problematic for a number of reasons that will become clearer by analyzing the rhetorical constructions of anger management in the case of Zambrano—not the least of which include the way baseball culture perceives the philosophical categories of argumentation, therapy, and expertise.

The rhetoric reacting to Zambrano’s case of anger management is important for at least three reasons. First, it marks the first accusation from baseball fans and writers that Zambrano had stepped over the line in terms of his anger management. As such, the Zambrano case promises to shed light on the permissible displays of anger in the current culture of baseball. Second, it marks the most recent incarnation of judgmental rhetoric concerning the effectiveness of anger management therapy. Third, and perhaps more contentious, is the idea that Zambrano has functioned as an icon of “hot-headedness” for MLB—he has become a player most fans would identify quickly as having “anger problems.” Thus, taken together, examining Zambrano’s case we are likely to gain a critical understanding of the baseball public’s perceptions of acceptable ways to manage anger and emotions.

This essay argues that the end of Zambrano’s time with the Chicago Cubs provides a site for understanding deeper issues about MLB culture concerning the perceptions of anger, anger management, emotions, and norms of argumentation. In order to defend and explain this argument, this essay delves into four different areas of inquiry that undergird the rhetoric surrounding the Zambrano episode in early June 2011. First, the essay examines the underlying skepticism and beliefs concerning the practice of anger management counseling. Second, the essay explores the degree of argument aversion between players and the general public. Third, the essay provides an inquiry into the degree of cultural sensitivity in the rhetoric surrounding Zambrano in his post-anger management era. Finally, the essay explores some of the implicit assumptions concerning the range of acceptable player expression of emotions in the game of baseball.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that whether or not Zambrano engages in “outbursts” after the beginning of June 2011 is largely irrelevant to our examination. Zambrano could undergo a marked transformation in

the public eye. What this examination is concerned with is the initial baseball public disapproval after the June 2011 episode, and more specifically, the implications of the expressed disapproval against Zambrano after he both went through anger management counseling and stated that the counseling worked. Notably, Zambrano completed his first full season without incident. At the same time, Zambrano's attitude change was attributed more to a change of scenery or situation than to the anger management therapy. For example, MLB sportswriter Tom Green wrote, "There's something different about Carlos Zambrano now that he's in Miami. He isn't the same short-tempered pitcher who took out his frustration in the dugout when things didn't go his way on the mound in Chicago."¹¹ To be fair, the change of scenery could have played a large role in the attitude change. Our examination is more concerned with three important areas: (1) the general lack of public discussion about anger management therapy itself, (2) the lack of public engagement with anger management therapists (who might have suggested a change of scenery like what happened when he went to Miami), and (3) the way MLB's public immediately dismissed the effectiveness of anger management therapy after the June 2011 episode. Thus, this study focuses on the rhetoric concerning anger management in MLB and its public.

ANGER MANAGEMENT AND THE QUESTIONING OF THERAPEUTIC EXPERTISE

Mitch Abrams is a respected expert on anger management in sports. He earned his doctorate in psychology, has counseled thousands of athletes in anger management, and is the chair of the Anger and Violence in Sport Special Interest Group of the Association for Applied Sport Psychology. According to Abrams, "anger is a normal emotion. Anger is neither good nor bad, and no judgment need be attached to it. Some people believe that a problem arises if a person becomes angry. This idea is not true. To pass judgment on anger and condemn those who admit to becoming angry is the equivalent of robbing people of their humanness." He continues, "The belief that anger is bad is so strongly engrained that people will sometimes deny its existence even when it is spilling out all over the place. . . . Therefore, when we talk about anger management for peak performance in sport, we are not always talking about making athletes polite and calm. Rather, we are referring to their ability to self-regulate their emotions to what their tasks require."¹²

That Zambrano has struggled with an anger problem is uncontested. Even Zambrano has admitted he continues to struggle with his anger problem. However, the rhetoric surrounding Zambrano in the first episode after

his anger management counseling has almost conclusively decided that anger management counseling has failed. To name a few examples, David Haugh wrote in the *Chicago Tribune*, “Zambrano was the same immature hothead he swore he wouldn’t be again. . . . [I]f it were me, after severing ties with whatever therapist signed off on Zambrano’s anger management last July, the Cubs’ next move seems easy. Suspend Zambrano as long as it takes Hendry to find a trade partner willing to take on [Zambrano’s contract].”¹³ Sean Kernan similarly expressed his cynicism about anger management counseling, “Yes, ‘Big Z’ looked good in his eight innings even with the busted bat, but if the frustration continues all of the anger management classes in the world won’t keep Zambrano from a meltdown.”¹⁴

Undergirding such rhetoric is a fundamental disbelief in the process of rehabilitation. A minimal belief and understanding of anger management counseling would result in a different kind of rhetoric. For example, we would likely hear more rhetorical sensitivities concerning the struggles Zambrano goes through when managing his anger. The rhetoric surrounding Zambrano constructs anger management in a consistent manner of the myth Abrams pointed out—the point of anger management is “not always talking about making athletes polite and calm.” And regardless of whether or not anger management objectively worked, there was not a single instance in fan and media reactions where they sought to hear the voice of anger management professionals—there simply was no engagement. Even if fans and writers got it right, they certainly did not rely on any level of expertise on the subject before jumping to conclusions.

One can certainly imagine a different story regarding anger management counseling than the overwhelming opinion that anger management counseling had failed. For example, in 2007 the fight between Zambrano and Barrett had nearly identical conditions to the early June 2011 events. The former was a five-game losing streak, the latter was a six-game losing streak. The former was in the beginning of June, and the latter was in the beginning of June. However, in the former, Zambrano confronted Barrett in the middle of his anger which resulted in a fight between the two of them. In the later, Zambrano did not confront Marmol—he talked to the press, but he did not take it out by yelling at Marmol or any other of his teammates. Rhetoric that is sympathetic to anger management counseling might point to the fact that the later incident shows that anger management counseling had made a difference. If anger is not something that goes away, but something that is to be managed, then the later event seems to mark progress. Zambrano expressed his anger to the media rather than getting into a verbal confrontation and fight with a teammate. Expressing anger to the media is a far cry from fighting teammates.

However, the rhetoric of fans and sports writers constructed anger management as a failure, and by extension, called for Zambrano to be suspended or traded. Such rhetoric risks the delegitimization of anger management counseling's ethos by not accounting for the complexities of anger management and anger in general.

Furthermore, the lack of reliance on anger management experts is particularly noteworthy given MLB's deference to other forms of mandated counseling. For example, when Miguel Cabrera was arrested in 2012 for his second DUI offense, Detroit Tigers general manager Dave Dombrowski was asked about whether Cabrera would have to spend time away from the team. Dombrowski said, "Those [decisions] are in experts' hands. There's people that are experts in these areas, doctors that handle these types of situations. The commissioner's office and players' association work very closely together in trying to help these types of situations. Their knowledge far exceeds mine."¹⁵

Even more troubling, perhaps, is the blatant disregard offered by many fans who are quick to dismiss behavior so long as the athlete is contributing to a winning team. Examples of this certainly abound in professional sports across the board. In terms of therapy, however, the necessity for therapy is dismissed in times when they perhaps need it most—when the glamour and fame is at its peak. This becomes notable in Cabrera's case, where the severity is downplayed by many fans. Fans of Cabrera exhibit an attitude reflecting that they do not care if Cabrera drives drunk, so long as he is a productive player. For example, on October 12, 2012, Twitter user @CurseOfBenitez tweeted at the Tigers official account, "I've decided that Miguel Cabrera's DUI was actually an arrest for Driving Under the Influence of Greatness #MVP. Meanwhile, on October 11, 2012 @MattCapozzi tweeted "Watch out oakland Miguel Cabrera got a hold of some champagne #DUI waiting to happen hahahahaha." On the same day, @Faraj_MoeAli opined "You know a man is a great man if they smile in their mugshot after getting a DUI. #Cabrera #MVP."¹⁶

ARGUMENTATION AVERSION

Another tenant of anger management is the ability to engage in constructive argument. Zambrano made two particular claims to the media. One claim was that the Cubs were embarrassing. The other was the argument that Carlos Marmol should not have pitched anything other than a fastball to Ryan Theriot (that pitch selection was responsible for the loss). While it goes against the norm to "criticize" teammates in the media, the violation of the norm in this case tells us a little bit about the role of argument aversion in baseball culture.

Many fans and members of the media took Zambrano's first argument (the Cubs being an embarrassment) seriously. For example, Tyler Juranovich commented, "I am not one that usually agrees with Chicago Cub's [*sic*] pitcher, Carlos Zambrano, but he spoke nothing but truth yesterday when he called the Cubs 'embarrassing' after being swept by the St. Louis Cardinals. I don't know if any of you have watched the Cubs lately (or any time really) but if you have, it's hard not to agree with Zambrano's assessment."¹⁷ Matt Snyder wrote, "I can envision Zambrano catching a lot of flak for this, but is he really wrong? The Cubs obviously don't have the best collection of talent and have suffered injuries, but they're playing pretty embarrassing baseball right now." Taken together, reporters were able to maintain a sense that Zambrano's comments were somehow inappropriate, but agreed with his assessment that the Cubs' play was embarrassing.

Conversely, fans and members of the media took Zambrano's second argument (Marmol should have pitched nothing but fastballs to Theriot) as insulting. Rather than treating the argument with any sincerity, most of baseball culture called on Zambrano to immediately apologize to Marmol because they believed the comments to be inappropriate. For example, a Cubs fan stated, "I agree with what Z said, but it would have been better to not throw Marmol under the bus at the same time."¹⁸ Gordon Wittenmyer of the *Chicago Sun-Times* wrote an article entitled, "Carlos Zambrano rips Carlos Marmol, calls Cubs 'embarrassing.'"¹⁹ There are at least a couple of problems with this rhetorical construction of Zambrano's comments.

First, anger management is not about making an athlete polite and calm. Thus, the assertion that Zambrano somehow violated "politeness" toward Marmol is implicated in the rhetorical response and understanding of anger management. Second, media reaction did nothing to inquire about baseball strategy and engage with fans about the question of strategy. While reporters and fans were happy to engage on the question of whether the Cubs were embarrassing, there was no such discussion about pitching Ryan Theriot anything but fastballs. ESPN regularly does pitch tracking, and spotlights entire at bats to talk about pitch selection and location. They could have easily tracked Ryan Theriot's at bats to show baseball fans whether or not Zambrano's argument was warranted. Furthermore, one could easily imagine Marmol refuting Zambrano in front of the media so that fans have an idea about the strategy involved in baseball. He could have said something to the effect of, "It was my strategy to show a slider out of the zone that would make the fastball look faster and more unpredictable. Set-up pitches are necessary—I just missed my location on the slider today by getting it in the zone and Theriot made me pay for it." That would be a reasonable argument against a reasonable argu-

ment. Then there could have been a debate about the strategy. However, the debate was closed when people demanded Zambrano apologize rather than engage in a discussion about who chose the strategy or whether the strategy was reasonable.

Taken together, both of these comments and the fan and media reaction confirms a general lack of tolerance for a player's ability to make arguments about a teammate's performance—argumentative players may be easily construed as angry players. The media may make arguments. The fans may make arguments. Managers may make arguments. Organizational leaders (GMs, presidents, etc.) may make arguments. However, the people who are closest to the action should not. According to baseball culture, an argument about a team's performance is marginally permissible, but arguing about a teammate's performance is dangerous territory. Perhaps baseball fans stand to benefit in understanding strategic aspects of the game by encouraging players to engage in debate on a regular basis in front of the media—more debate results in more learning about strategies, details, and norms of baseball.

Aristotle believed in debate from the most credible people on all sides of an issue. To exempt players from debates about baseball strategy in the public is to limit fans' understanding of the game. Furthermore, an even bigger risk is that refusing to allow the expression of anger in the form of making arguments in front of the media risks escalating the way anger is relieved. When players feel like they cannot express their anger, it can build to aggression and physical fights. When internalized, it can lead to depression and lowered self-esteem.²⁰ Perhaps expressing anger in words to the media is a productive outlet and should be encouraged so long as the expression is in the form of argument and not *ad hominem*. Zambrano's expression was a far cry from *ad hominem*.

CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE

While cultural bias is an increasingly difficult factor to determine given today's subtle and unconscious biases, the rhetoric surrounding Zambrano is consistent with a long tradition of popular constructions of the hot-tempered Latino. Alfredo Mirande found that Spanish conquistadores introduced the image of the super-macho, virulent, and violent Hispanic man to the New World, an image which has been reinforced in one form or another in mass media.²¹ Carlos Monsivais traced the perpetuation of this image, including the angry, nostrils-flaring, Latin characters in many American movies in the 1950s.²² Celia Falicov found that contrary images of Latino masculinity rarely find their place in the media. She noted that while watching many movies, "as well as in my clinical practice, I have observed many characters that offer

alternative positive portrayals of Latino masculinity. However, these characteristics have not received the attention that the negative construction has acquired over time.”²³

There might be a little bit of this perpetuation imposed on Zambrano. Granted, definitive proof of the framing of Zambrano as a quintessential angry Latino may be a bit of a stretch given how subtly such bias may be manifest. On the one hand, numerous Latinos have been featured as “problems” to their teams because of their temperament—Ozzie Guillen, Carlos Silva, Francisco Rodriguez, and Jose Canseco. On the other hand, numerous Latinos have displayed the “calm and polite” expectation of baseball culture—Alex Gonzalez, Benji Molina, and Carlos Lee. To get a better sense of the framing, the case of Zambrano thus requires an examination of the historical construction of Latin American masculinity in the context of MLB.

For decades, scholars have examined sports in general and baseball specifically as a masculine space, a place for hegemonic notions masculinity to develop and flourish.²⁴ Further, gender in general, as well as masculinity specifically is not monolithic but rather intersects with other cultural factors such as race, class, and ethnicity.²⁵ In MLB, the specific construction of “Latin American” masculinity is an example of such intersectionality. A careful reading of Latin American integration into MLB reveals that the construction of Latin American masculinity developed along four overlapping yet separate items.

First, Latin players in the 1940s–1970s faced a double bind of sorts, being perceived as both “black” and “Latin.” As the late Hall of Famer Roberto Clemente once famously put it, “Me, I’m a double nigger because I’m black and a nigger because I’m Puerto Rican.”²⁶ Clemente’s remarks underscored the tensions that many Latin athletes suffered during their integration. Part of this tension was due to their being unprepared for the type of institutionalized segregation that American baseball offered. While professional baseball in the United States was exclusive (both in terms of MLB and the Negro leagues), professional baseball leagues in Mexico as well as the Caribbean were racially inclusive, a fact that Adrian Burgos Jr. argues “shaped their expectations about what playing professionally in the States would be like once the racial barrier was dismantled.”²⁷

Pioneering “black” (also referred to as “darker-skinned”) Latinos (such as Minnie Minoso and Vic Power) faced the double-burden of entering MLB as both black men and Latinos. Being black and Latino “complicated their place” in baseball integration, and “Latinos who participated as integration pioneers after 1947 continued to face many of the same cultural constraints encountered by those who preceded them into the majors, and also mirrored what everyday Latinos faced in their interactions in US society.”²⁸

A second factor in the identity of Latin American players was the fact that many Latino players did not mesh with pioneering African American players. Cultural assimilation was no easier for Latinos than any other group. Alex Pompey (given a job by the Giants to assist in Latinos' cultural assimilation) explained that many foreign-born Latinos did not adjust well: "some boys cry and want to go home" due to racial segregation. Latin players' relationships were often strained with their black teammates. One African American player said, "Latin Negroes cry when they encounter segregation for the first time . . . We [African Americans] don't cry and we have it a hell of a lot worse than they do. . . . But we're conditioned, I guess."²⁹ Latin players also had to negotiate being confronted with the choice "of whether or not to identify as a 'Negro' regardless of their individual family history or physical appearance."³⁰ Many Latinos were accused of denying their "colored identity," and of thinking "they're better than the colored guy."³¹

The third and fourth factors in the construction Latin American masculinity revolved around the public behaviors of Latin players. As with pioneering African American players, Latino players were forced to carefully guard their public image. The cultural stereotype of "the hot-blooded Latin" often shaped public perceptions of Latin players. Minnie Minoso, the first black Latino in the major leagues, contradicted the stereotype of "the hot-blooded Latin" by "fighting back without anger."³² Minoso reportedly would obey segregation policies, figuring that such laws could not harm him, however he also recounted that because of his demeanor, "some black ballplayers tell me that I didn't understand prejudice and discrimination because I was Cuban, not black."³³ Minoso was isolated, not always accepted by black players, and also subject to Jim Crow laws. Like Jackie Robinson did for African American players, it was Minoso's demeanor perhaps even more than his talent that allowed future Latin stars such as Roberto Clemente "to speak more freely as men fiercely proud of being black and Latino."³⁴

Not all players however had Minoso's temperament. Perhaps the starkest example is Silvio Garcia, a talented Latino player who had extensive experience playing integrated ball in Cuba and who was refused integration into MLB. Branch Rickey, four years prior to signing Jackie Robinson, believed that Garcia had major-league talent, but was dissuaded due to Garcia's temperament. When asked by Rickey how he might respond to a physical confrontation with a white player, Garcia reportedly responded by saying, "I kill him."³⁵ According to Burgos, Latino's intolerance to racial slurs and confrontations based on race was not limited to Silvio Garcia.

Also contrary to Minoso, Vic Power was unafraid of speaking about racism and the institutionalized nature of American inequality. He also was gregari-

ous, a jokester of sorts, who spoke out without always considering the social codes of conduct. Signed by the Yankees, Power was a “black Puerto Rican [who] ran counter to the genteel black southerner or the corporate player who abided by the rules.”³⁶ Ultimately, the Yankees, who lagged far behind in baseball’s integration process in general, refused to promote Power to the major leagues, and instead traded his rights to the Philadelphia A’s. Burgos summarized that “the controversy over the Yankees failure to bring up Power illustrates how Latinos were essential actors in baseball’s integration drama.”³⁷

The popular image of the violent Latino, intersecting with issues of masculinity and baseball, was given more or less concrete form in 1965. One of the more noted, if not lamented, instances of violence by a Latino came in 1965 when Juan Marichal struck opposing catcher Johnny Roseboro in the head with his bat during a game. Marichal, who accused Roseboro of nearly hitting him in the head with return throws to pitcher Sandy Koufax, was blamed for letting his emotions get the best of him. Marichal, known for taunting opponents (or “bench jockeying”), had broken “the informal masculine and professional code regarding behavior in the heat of competition.”³⁸ Burgos commented that “bench jockeying helped create a hyper-masculine space where players proved their masculinity through physical displays of athleticism, attempts to unsettle their opponents with their words, and control of their own emotions.”³⁹ This concept of “hyper-masculine space” intersecting with the world of baseball is consistent with Messner’s (and others’) arguments regarding sports, masculinity, and the negotiated rules of performing masculinity. Such is also consistent with Zambrano’s instance of supposedly publicly chastising his own teammate in a postgame interview: Zambrano’s major transgression was not so much that he got angry, nor even that he called out a teammate, but rather that he “broke the code” by calling out his teammate publicly.

Finally, the fourth area of masculinity and construction of Latin American masculinity in baseball centered around language. For example, former Giants manager Alvin Dark’s “English only” policy infuriated some of his Latin players, such as Orlando Cepeda. Cepeda felt not only proud of his native Puerto Rican Spanish, but also felt embarrassed by being forced to speak in broken English. Burgos documented that “cultural pride and masculinity were inextricably involved in negotiating the politics of language.”⁴⁰ While Felipe Alou explained that speaking in their native language was not meant to alienate English-speaking teammates, but rather to alleviate the stress of fumbling for the right words, English-only policies or even the expectancy of English forced the non-fluent to “no longer sound like men able to speak for themselves.”⁴¹

Additionally, the English-language sports media frequently engaged in what Burgos and others call “intellectual disenfranchisement” of Latino play-

ers by focusing on the players' accents and pronunciations as opposed to the content of their message. As readers' attention was shifted from content to accents and difference, the sports media "reinforced popular perceptions of Latinos as unintelligent, inarticulate, and unworthy of being treated as intellectual peers."⁴² The press also reinforced the stereotype of the "hot-blooded Latin." As Rico Carty discussed, "when you cannot express yourself the way you want to, you get frustrated," and when Latin players expressed frustration with the press (for being misquoted, misunderstood, or quoted out of context) they were often labeled as "hot-headed, hot-blooded Latinos."⁴³ Carty explained that when you were not fluent enough to explain and defend yourself with words, "all you have left is to fight and defend yourself."⁴⁴

In the face of such intellectual disenfranchisement, many Latino players responded by refusing to talk to the press, as "not appearing in print was better than being publicly mocked, which was considered an affront to their masculinity."⁴⁵ Burgos explained that the baseball diamond provides a "space for performances of masculinity," and that the ability to verbally defend one's self is a "reflection of one's cultural pride and as part of one's masculinity: men stand up and speak for themselves to defend their honor."⁴⁶ The intellectual disenfranchisement perpetrated by American-English-media stripped non-fluent men with accents of this facet of what it means to be a man in many traditional Latino cultures.

Carlos Zambrano, the public figure, is, like all public figures, a "cultural production." Burgos explains that

cultural productions of Latino in media coverage, marketing campaigns, and self-representations have combined to sustain the image of Latinos as persistent foreigners in baseball and U.S. society, arrivals in a "recent" wave. The public face constructed to represent Latinos distorts the Latino past within the game and powerfully elides the long history of Latino participation and the social forces that have shaped that participation.⁴⁷

Recent media productions, as well as self-representations of Zambrano, depict him as "cured" of his "anger problems." The current cultural production depicts "anger" as a "problem to be solved" and anger management issues as synonymous with immaturity. In 2011, for instance, prior to his most recent "outburst," Zambrano actually joked with a Los Angeles blogger who asked him whether he was always "emotional when he pitches" by turning the question around, asking "where have you been the last nine years?"⁴⁸ Later in the same piece, Zambrano admitted to getting angry, but that when he's mad he is "on his game," and that now he has "learned to control it."⁴⁹

After and since Zambrano's later frustrations with teammates, he has been

cast as a redeemed athlete. In one recent interview, Zambrano claims that he will be a preacher in the future, and he credits his “rebirth” and maturity to spiritual enlightenment.⁵⁰ For another example, Showtime’s recent reality series *The Franchise* featured a three minute and thirty-five second spotlight on Zambrano, in which four basic themes emerged. The first theme is that “the old Carlos Zambrano” is gone (Zambrano’s words) and that “he has matured. FINALLY” (Marlins announcer).⁵¹

Secondly, an unnamed source states “he could have been an angry, sulky, pain in the ass—piece of shit—which is what the scouting report said he was. Everyone was wrong.” This quotation is interesting for two reasons: first, it underscores the idea that Zambrano has been cured, noting “everyone was wrong,” and yet it cites no experts in the field of anger management (in fact, the segment in total did not feature a single anger management therapist or expert); second, this quote links Zambrano’s past anger with being “sulky” and “a pain in the ass.” While it is true that Zambrano had outbursts of rage, being “sulky” would seem to be at odds with depictions of the pitcher as a “fiery,” “hot-blooded” Latino.

Third, in several montages, as well as a voice-over by a teammate, Zambrano is depicted as “intense,” but also jovial, almost childlike. For example, in one montage, he is seen talking to himself, yelling at himself to be motivated and focused. This montage gives way to images of him laughing, even singing “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” in the dugout. Also, Zambrano is quoted saying that he feels “grateful” and “blessed” for his new opportunity, and that he plans to “enjoy every moment.” Finally, a Marlin’s announcer notes that Zambrano has “become a real fan favorite” since arriving in Miami. In sum, Zambrano is depicted as a calm, happy-go-lucky caricature of his “former self.”

Fourth, Zambrano’s segment in *The Franchise* features an apologia of sorts for his past frustrations with teammates. There seems to be a concerted effort to depict Zambrano as a “good teammate.” For example, Zambrano is quoted saying “in the past I wasn’t mature. . . . Now I don’t care about what I can’t control.” This quote then cuts to a clip of his third-baseman making a throwing error, and Zambrano says, “if somebody fail[s] you go out there and I’ll pick him up.” Another example of Zambrano being a good teammate is in his cheerleading for his closer Heath Bell. The announcer reveals that “of Bell’s four blown saves this year, three could have been wins for Zambrano.” The final clip of the segment shows Zambrano in the clubhouse cheering on Bell and practically jumping for joy when Bell saves the game.

In total, the spotlight feature in *The Franchise* provides a picture of Zambrano as a calm yet intense man who has matured, a good teammate who has put the past behind him and is in control of his emotions. Notably, viewers do

not hear from Zambrano's anger management therapists, nor any experts in the field of sports psychology. *The Franchise* further reinforces the idea that anger is "immature," a "problem to be solved," and that the appropriate way to perform masculinity is to be intense within culturally—not clinically—negotiated limitations.

What might cause some to raise an eyebrow is that media depictions of Zambrano focus more on his temper than they do on his likeability (e.g., very little coverage is devoted to his Big Z Foundation). Eyebrows are raised, for example, when one considers the comparison of media and fan reactions to Zambrano with the reactions to Boston Red Sox pitcher Jonathon Papelbon. In the 2011 season Papelbon was suspended for two games for making contact with an umpire during an argument. Previously, Papelbon threw a towel and yelled, "Don't take my fucking picture" to a photographer. He screamed at an umpire while throwing his hat into the ground. He called his teammate Manny Ramirez a cancer, among many other similar incidents. Yet he has plenty of positive publicity. Papelbon gets positive press for his charity appearances, his dances, his celebrations, and he appears as a positive figure in commercial advertisements. Despite Papelbon's background, Papelbon was not ordered to undergo anger management. Regardless, Papelbon's behavior is not intended to justify Zambrano's behavior. At the same time, the disparate coverage between the two might indicate a media and fan bias in baseball. In any case, Zambrano's behavior did not help to eliminate the stigma of the "angry Latino" in the media.

Of course, as previously noted in the case of Cabrera, there is also the issue of performance. The baseball culture of fans and media are probably more likely to forgive anger issues if the playing performance is at a high level. Papelbon is legendary in terms of his success. He was instrumental in the Red Sox winning World Series titles, has 275 saves as a closer, a career 2.31 ERA, and is considered a team leader. Perhaps because of his success, fans and media do not think he needs anger management. Bo Jackson was a dual sport all-star and named by some as the best athlete ever, and baseball fans saw little problem with him smashing bats over his knee. Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan beat up on a young Robin Ventura and he was valorized for his fighting abilities. One encounters troubled waters when performance is poor and attitude is poor. The lesson of this rhetoric of baseball fans and media appears to be that poor behavior may be permissible depending on how bad the anger is, balanced by how well the player performs (and in the case of Nolan Ryan, whose "fault" the behavior appears to be—Nolan Ryan is rarely perceived to have instigated Robin Ventura by throwing at him). In the end, culture and performance are subtle issues—the degree of influence such perceptions had on the rhetoric

surrounding Zambrano is difficult to determine. Still, one cannot help but raise these issues since they appear as trends in baseball culture.

RHETORIC OF EMOTIONS

The reaction after Zambrano's June 2011 episode also teaches a bit about how baseball fans and writers talk about emotions. For Aristotle, emotions were important to understanding pathos. And emotions do not exist in isolation. For example, according to Aristotle, fear may turn to anger, attraction may turn to love, and pleasure may turn to pain. One characteristic of the effective rhetor is the ability to steer their audience from one emotion to another. Learning how to maneuver an audience from one emotion to another allows a certain command of the audience's attention. Aristotle's theory of emotions is telling in the case of Zambrano as it helps to highlight the remedial beliefs about emotions in baseball fan and media culture.

According to baseball media and fans, Zambrano needed to channel his emotions effectively in order to be effective. While this is likely true, the rhetoric surrounding Zambrano demonstrates the problematic lumping of all feeling into the category of the "emotions." For example, a *Chicago Tribune* headline read, "At times, Carlos Zambrano's emotion is his Achilles' heel—but the Cubs ace can't succeed without it." The point of the Achilles heel metaphor is that Achilles' heel was specifically an area of weakness that led to Achilles' death. As such, Zambrano's emotions are constructed as a paradox. The question of what feelings of emotion result in positive outward performance and what feelings of emotion result in negative outward performance is notably absent in the rhetoric concerning emotions in general.

Importantly, Zambrano has appeared to talk about his emotions in a slightly more sophisticated manner after anger management counseling than do most baseball fans and media. Zambrano explained, "The emotions always will be there, . . . that's the way I am, that's the way I know how to pitch. I've been in the big leagues nine, 9½ years and I've been like that since I came in." He said the problem comes when he lets the emotion "go out of my hands."⁵² Just like Aristotle theorized the rhetorician should be able to move an audience from one emotion to another, Zambrano has acknowledged his desire to steer his mind from one emotion to another rather than letting the range of emotions get the best of him. What Zambrano, baseball fans, and media seem to lack is a rhetoric of subtleties when it comes to emotions.

According to this view, Zambrano's case is about anger as an isolated emotion that is directed. Anger is good when Zambrano is able to direct it into his pitching performance, and it is negative when it harms his pitching perfor-

mance. However, anger leads to several other emotions that are absent from rhetoric surrounding Zambrano's emotions. Anger may lead to aggression, and aggression is what occurs in Zambrano's "outbursts." Anger may lead to a feeling of empowerment, and a sense of empowerment leads to a feeling of being able to control a given situation. Anger may lead to appreciation that baseball is just a game and small compared to the more important things in life (family, etc.), and appreciation of the more important things in life may lead to a calming sense of relaxation before approaching another batter. Anger may lead to a feeling of curiosity, and curiosity may lead to learning more about the game of baseball. However, the subtleties of emotions are rarely, if ever, found in the rhetoric of baseball fans and media. Typically, one emotion is singled out, and linked to a positive or negative outward display.

Furthermore, the rhetoric of baseball fans and media suggests a strong connection to the construction of emotional feelings as relative to their outward display. In other words, emotions are measured based on the external appearance rather than the highly subjective internalized emotional feeling. For baseball fans and media, the more a player "shows" emotion, the more emotion a player feels. Garrett Anderson provides a telling case as he is often constructed as the polar opposite of Zambrano. Anderson was an outfielder for the Angels who stated on several occasions that he felt uncomfortable expressing his emotions and heard complaints from people who want him to express emotion to "show that he cares" about playing baseball.⁵³ When Anderson hit a home run or won a baseball game, he seldom expressed any emotion. When Anderson struck out or made an error, he seldom showed any emotion. Anderson is "as stoic as they come on the baseball field and off of it."⁵⁴

Notably absent from the rhetorical construction of Anderson is any discussion about how he controls his emotions. For fans and media who believe Anderson experiences intense emotion and passion, Anderson is perceived to keep those emotions in control—a testament to the fact that Anderson is either a master of emotions (mastering emotions is privileged), or that he must not experience the intensity of emotions that are difficult to contain. For baseball fans and media who believe Anderson does not experience emotion, Anderson is perceived as not caring about the game as much as they do, or worse, not caring about the game at all (e.g., perhaps it is only about money or some other selfish interest). The larger point, of course, is that we are only left to theorize the possibilities, because baseball fans and media culture do not tend to delve into discussions about how to talk about emotions with any degree of sophistication in cases of either too much emotion (i.e., Zambrano) or too little emotion (i.e., Anderson).

Perhaps Aristotle offers a better way of talking about how emotions are “channeled” into baseball performance. Specifically, Aristotle explained that for the rhetorician, there are certain vices and virtues. The comparison between Zambrano and Anderson demonstrates that for baseball fans and media, “caring” is a virtue and a vice. When “caring” is expressed as aggression, the player risks that the emotion will be taken as a vice. When caring is expressed as “joy,” it will certainly be taken as a virtue. Expressions of joy or happiness are virtues when things are good. Showing no expression is a vice when things are good. Expression of moderate anger is a virtue when things are bad. Expression of disappointment is a virtue when things are bad. Expressions of anger risk the perception of vice when things are bad. No expression when things are bad is a vice of not caring. Thus, expressions of disappointment hold a certain sense of decorum for baseball fans and writers.

CONCLUSION

Baseball fans and media may have been correct in many of their judgments concerning Zambrano. The fact that Zambrano struggles with anger management is uncontested. There is no certainty that in the future Zambrano will avoid fighting with teammates and opponents. In the future, he might break a bat over his knee, and he might take his anger out on a Gatorade machine. He might mock an umpire again by signaling for the umpire to be ejected. Regardless of Zambrano’s future behavior, there is a lot to be learned from the way baseball fans and media have talked about his first “incidents” after going through anger management counseling.

Baseball fans and media might learn to understand the complex struggle to manage anger. We might stand to gain an increased understanding and appreciation for anger management counselors and the progress that they are able to make with their clients in expressing their anger by turning away from violent confrontations with teammates. We might be more reflexive of the inconsistency of our standards of permissible aggressive behavior so that when one player breaks a bat over their knee it is as (im-)permissible as when another player breaks a bat over their knee. We might open the conversation about anger management to include the perspective of anger management professionals before castigating them as failures. We might be more willing to be understanding of people’s anger, to encourage a spirit of argumentation, to further understand the complexities of baseball. In that spirit, we might view argumentation as a practice of caring rather than a threatening endeavor. We might choose to question whether cultural bias has any relation to our perception of outward expressions of anger and the way our hunger for watching

good performances may cloud our judgment of improper behavior. We might question why we perceive certain outward expressions of emotion as virtues and others as vices. We might work to develop a more sophisticated vocabulary to talk about the range of emotions experienced in the game.

We might also learn a type of patience in letting a story unfold without imposing our own sensationalism on those immediately affected. Marmol did not have a problem with Zambrano to begin with. A day after the “incident,” Marmol told reporters that he “accepted the apology and said there were no problems between the two in the first place.”⁵⁵ Marmol may be more willing to tolerate criticism than baseball fans and media. Perhaps baseball fans and media may consider allowing players more control over managing their own tensions without attempting to create issues for them. In sum, we might encourage behavior within ourselves, as part of baseball culture, that increases expressions of care and compassion for a game that, when at its best, inspires those emotions in us.

One area requiring future study and consideration also emerged: an extensive study of how the Latin American press has covered Zambrano, as well as other Latino baseball players, is warranted. Our initial reaction to the Latin American coverage is that while some is similar to English/US coverage, English media still perhaps biases readers based on language barriers. Furthermore, much more can and should be done to compare the Latin American vs. US mainstream media to determine the continued prevalence of “intellectual disenfranchisement” within US media sources.

Zambrano has been cast as a “redemption story” of sorts by recent US media sources. Redemption stories are not new, and such stories make “good copy” from a newspaper standpoint. While Zambrano has largely been redeemed, two items are worthy of note: first, his redemption—be it spiritual enlightenment, newfound maturity, or whatever—has been documented along with his pitching success. This indicates that success on the field—not spiritual growth or maturity—is the primary necessary condition for such redemption stories. After all, if Zambrano could no longer pitch, his “story” would not be spotlighted on reality television programs. Second, the rhetorical construction of anger management is socially significant. Persistently absent from media commentary on the Zambrano redemption story is the voice of experts within the field of anger management. We find this continuing trend of ignoring specialists alarming, and hope to move towards a society which is more trusting of intellectual and technical expertise. If nothing else, it is our contention that the experts ought to have a voice at the table.

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