

5-2010

Solace in St. Louis: A case study in heroic cultural nostalgia

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SOLACE IN ST. LOUIS: A CASE STUDY IN HEROIC
CULTURAL NOSTALGIA

by

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Bachelor of Science
Elmira College, Elmira NY
2003

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts in Communication Studies
Department of Communication Studies
Greenspun College of Urban Affairs

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2010

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Amanda J. Pinney

entitled

Solace in St. Louis: A Case Study in Heroic Cultural Nostalgia

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Communication Studies

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May 2010

ABSTRACT

**Solace in St. Louis: A Case Study in
Heroic Cultural Nostalgia**

by

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This thesis examines the response of American popular culture to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. By utilizing the September 17, 2001 pre-game ceremony, held at Busch Stadium as a case study example larger generalizations are made about the role popular culture played in the days following the tragedy. In order to analyze this example, I have developed *heroic cultural nostalgia*, a framework that combines elements of myth, nostalgia and national identity. *Heroic cultural nostalgia* provides an explanation of how popular culture plays a role in crisis response. The framework highlights the role of contemporary heroes in evoking nostalgia as a means of providing an escape from current conditions and as a reinforcement of American exceptionalism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Joseph Valenzano, for his guidance and encouragement and Dr. Thomas Burkholder, Dr. Anthony Ferri and Dr. David Henry for graciously serving on my thesis committee. Additionally, I would like to thank the Department of Communication Studies faculty for sharing their extensive knowledge and the Department of Communication Studies graduate students for the friendship over the past two years. Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family for their unwavering love and support no matter where I am or what I attempt. Thank you all.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

September 11, 2001 profoundly changed American life and culture. The country went to war, the government implemented new policies, travelers faced new security procedures, and popular culture, including music, movies, art, sport and more, changed. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon marked the first time the United States had been attacked on its own soil since the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Americans responded to this crisis in many different ways. Although it is impossible with this project to study every cultural response to the tragedy, it is possible to examine a representative example. However, by analyzing a specific occurrence one can more clearly understand a larger event. This thesis examines the rhetorical response of popular culture to the tragic events of September 11 by conducting a case study of the ceremony that took place at Busch Stadium on September 17, 2001, before the St. Louis Cardinals played the Milwaukee Brewers.

Chapter one serves as an introduction to the project. It explains the threat to American culture presented by the terrorist attacks of 9/11, justifies baseball as a representative example of the response of popular culture to this threat, and introduces the concepts of myth, nostalgia and national identity and how they can be combined to create a theoretical framework called *heroic cultural nostalgia*. Chapter two provides a contextual explanation of the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis, and chapter three presents an analysis of the event. Finally, chapter four serves as a summary of the study and provides conclusions based upon this project. To begin, I first look at the threat to American culture posed by the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The Terrorist Attacks and the Effect on American Culture

At 8:46 a.m. on September 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 11, which had been hijacked en route from Boston to Los Angeles, crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. Just 17 minutes later, at 9:03 a.m., United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the Center's South Tower.¹ In a September 12, 2001 article in *Time* magazine, Nancy Gibbs wrote,

The first crash had changed everything; the second changed it again. Anyone who thought the first was an accident now knew better. . . . [It] felt like a war. . . The city buckled, the traffic stopped, the bridges and tunnels were shut down. . . the Empire State Building was evacuated, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the United Nations. First the New York airports were closed, then Washington's, and then the whole country was grounded for the first time in history.²

America had not experienced a tragedy of this magnitude on its shores since the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It was clear that the unbelievable event unfolding in New York was not just an accident, but an attack on America. As the day progressed, the situation became more surreal.

As the government and emergency crews rushed to respond to the situation in New York, tragedy struck once more, this time in Washington D.C. Due to a credible threat, the White House was evacuated. While the White House ended up surviving unscathed, a much more serious situation developed across town at the Pentagon. At 9:38 a.m., American Flight 77 crashed into the building, causing chaos in the nation's capital similar to that being experienced in New York.³

The damage in Washington D.C., however, could have been worse. At 10:03 a.m., United Flight 93 crashed in rural Pennsylvania after passengers were able to overtake hijackers and divert the plane away from the U.S. capital. By 10:30 a.m., four planes had crashed, and both the North and South towers of the World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon had collapsed.⁴ In a span of less than two hours, the country had come to a halt. Transportation was at a stand still, cultural institutions had closed, and Americans feared for their safety, wondering what would be next since it seemed no place in the nation was immune to terrorist attack.

Because of this fear, American cultural institutions around the country were shut down with the fear that they might also be attacked. Gibbs explains,

The Sears Tower in Chicago was evacuated, as were colleges and museums. Disney World shut down, and Major League Baseball canceled its games, and nuclear power plants went to top security status; the Hoover Dam and the Mall of America shut down, and Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and Mount Rushmore. It was as though someone had taken a huge brush and painted a bull's-eye around every place Americans gather, every icon we revere, every service we depend on, and vowed to take them out or shut them down, or force us to do it ourselves.⁵

Americans struggled to protect their cultural icons and their national identity in the face of the terrorist attacks. Even those institutions located geographically far from the chaos on the east coast, like the Hoover Dam, the Mall of America and Mount Rushmore, were closed.

As chaos continued in New York and Washington D.C., Americans around the country felt overwhelmed. Many felt compelled to help and they took any action they could to respond to the tragedy. U.S. citizens left work for the day and rushed to schools to pick up their children. Some hurried home to stay glued to their televisions and watch in amazement as the events unfolded. Others searched for sanctuary in their communities, while others rushed to stock up on necessities. Gibbs writes,

Churches and schools and civic groups all around the country offered to help anyone stranded by the grounding of the nation's planes. . . . Gasoline stations around the country were running out of gas as motorists rushed to top off their tanks. . . . Across the country, houses of all kinds of worship filled with grieving Americans singing America the Beautiful, wiping away streams of tears. . . . People all over the country had a sense of being suddenly at war.⁶

The attacks had an immediate impact on New York City and Washington, D.C., but the effects were wide-reaching. Collectively, the whole country responded to the tragedy. Americans turned to the president for guidance and instruction following the crisis.

On the evening of September 11, President Bush addressed the nation and acknowledged the threat posed by the terrorist attacks. He knew that Americans were unsure how to respond to the crisis and advised citizens to remain strong in the face of adversity. He stressed to the nation, and the world, that although the terrorists had attacked the United States on its own soil they had not been successful in their mission to destroy America. He said,

These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed. Our country is strong. A great people has been

moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.⁷

These remarks from President Bush confirmed the threat felt by the American people but urged them not to give in to it. He stressed the idea that America was more than brick and mortar buildings; it was a much larger ideal. Although physically the country had been crippled, the spirit of the nation was undamaged.

In a follow-up address the next week, President Bush once again stressed the strength of America, and urged citizens to go about their daily lives as a means of proving that American culture had not been changed. On September 20, 2001, in an address to a joint session of Congress and the nation, Bush condemned the terrorist attacks, pledged to find and punish those responsible, thanked the world for their prayers and support and asked Americans to persevere. To the people across the country, he said,

I ask you to live your lives, and hug your children. I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute, even in the face of a continuing threat. I ask you to uphold the values of America, and remember why so many have come here. We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. . . . I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. Terrorists attacked a symbol of American prosperity. They did not touch its source. America is successful because of the hard work, and creativity, and enterprise of our people. These were the true

strengths of our economy before September 11th, and they are our strengths today. . . . It is my hope that in the months and years ahead, life will return almost to normal. We'll go back to our lives and routines, and that is good.⁸

With his urging of citizens to resume their normal daily activities, he acknowledged the idea that culture is central to American identity. America is not just a country, it is what people do, what they believe, and the activities they participate in.

As the days passed, people around the country tried to accomplish this, learning to negotiate their daily lives in the wake of unspeakable tragedy. The American people and the purveyors of popular culture struggled to determine what activities were appropriate. Americans turned to the past for advice on how to move forward in the future.

Throughout American history popular culture, and more specifically leisure activities, served as a vehicle for the expression of national identity and in the days following September 11 it played a particularly important role. Following September 11, Richard Goldstein noted that, “In this charged environment, pop culture and politics swirl around each other like strands of DNA.”⁹ The reactions of politicians and pop culture icons played important roles in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks.

According to Charles Conrad, popular culture can be defined as, “an ongoing dialectic between the material characteristics of a political and economic system and the subjective, personal meanings that members of the culture attach to their everyday experiences.”¹⁰ Popular culture is particularly important in recent times, as Tim Edensor notes, because, “traditional cultural forms and practices of the nation are supplemented, and increasingly replaced in their affective power, by meanings, images and activities drawn from popular culture.”¹¹ It can be argued that in contemporary American society,

popular culture has a larger impact than traditional high culture. For example, there are many Americans who turn to entertainment programs, such as “The Daily Show” and “The Colbert Report,” for their news, rather than traditional news outlets, like CNN.¹²

Popular culture, however, does not consist solely of television. A variety of textual media are included in popular culture. According to Barry Brummett, popular culture consists of “those systems or artifacts that most people share and that most people know about . . . that are part of the everyday experience of most people.”¹³ This can include, among others, texts such as music, photography, cinema, television, leisure activities and sport. Sport, in particular, according to Michael L. Butterworth, “long has played a notable role in the reflection, construction, and maintenance of American cultural values.”¹⁴ This role can be attributed to a number of factors.

One reason that sport has influence in American culture, as John J. MacAloon explains, is that athletic games, “focus on human bodies: bodies dashing, soaring, lifting . . . bodies exploring and extending the limits. . . .The body is the central fact and means of each of our experiences. . . . Thus it serves as the central source of metaphors and symbols by which we configure the rest of our psychological, social and cultural worlds.”¹⁵ Due to the focus on athletic physical superiority, we often portray athletes in mythical ways. MacAloon explains that, “we project onto them a polarized set of stereotypes, noble and admirable on one side, infantile and loutish on the other. These stereotypes absorb and echo deep themes in our culture.”¹⁶ When comparing America to the rest of the world, MacAloon argues, sport plays a particularly significant role. He writes,

As for the United States, no nation devotes more of its resources of money, time and attention to sport. . . . In the dram of historical time, sport has colonized our leisure and industry, our family relations and gender identities, our media, school architecture and urban planning, our popular art and everyday speech, our national folklore, ritual and mythology. This fascination, this madness for sport, cross-cuts racial, ethnic, religious, political, class, age-group, and . . . sex boundaries.¹⁷

This far-reaching effect of sports on American culture is what makes people care so deeply about an industry that is, in reality, just fun and games. Because of sport's pervasive nature, there was much discussion of its role in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy.

On September 11, all professional and collegiate sporting events were cancelled indefinitely, and as the days passed people were conflicted about when they should return. The individuals that ran popular leisure activities, including sports, struggled with the same issues as all other Americans when it came to determining what was appropriate following the terrorist attacks. With athletics at a stand-still, sports celebrities and sports organizations got involved in the relief efforts. As Signa Butler explains, athletes in New York, "toured Ground Zero and local hospitals to offer support to rescue workers and victims' families [Additionally,] Giants Stadium, for instance, was used as a staging ground for volunteers and supplies for rescue workers at Ground Zero."¹⁸ Following nearly a week of suspended play, where some athletes participated in relief efforts and others spent time with their families, athletes returned to the playing field.

There were a number of visible changes in the post-9/11 sports arena. For example, the NFL had to postpone the Super Bowl by a week, which drastically effected

ticket sales. Additionally, the 2002 Winter Olympics were scheduled to take place in Salt Lake City, Utah just months after the attacks. However, the games were debated, with officials wondering if the contest should be moved or cancelled all together. Although the games were held at their originally scheduled time and at their originally scheduled location, they were significantly impacted, most notably in regard to security. According to Butler, “Security personnel outnumbered the 2,500 athletes by nearly two to one.”¹⁹ Security was not only increased at the Olympics, but at sports events and venues around the country. Although the Olympic officials had months to prepare for the games following the terrorist attacks, baseball was the first sport to return, only six days after September 11.

Baseball as an Example of American Culture

Much like the leaders of other major leisure activities, Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig questioned the appropriateness of daily activities in the wake of tragedy. In Selig’s case, the dilemma was whether or not to continue the 2001 baseball season. In a statement released on September 11, the Commissioner called off the 15 scheduled major league contests that day out of what he called, “the interest of security and out of a sense of deep mourning for the national tragedy that has occurred today.”²⁰ When asked how long baseball would be postponed, the Commissioner replied, ““I’m going to have to use my judgment. . . . We are a social institution that needs to be not only responsible but hopefully helpful as we move forward. So we’ll do what’s not in our best interest but in the best interests of this country, whatever that is.”²¹ Selig, in his

explanations of his actions following 9/11, continually referred to baseball as a “social institution,” which instilled the game with a responsibility to respond to the tragedy.

In his remarks, Selig also mentioned his personal relationship with the President, both former owners of major league baseball teams, and put the role of baseball into perspective. Selig said, “The president, when I see him, kids me about the tough job I have. I guess if I were with him today, I'd say it might be a tough job but it's all about games. His job is tough and it's about life and death. I can't worry about games today.”²² Like the other cultural institutions that had come to a halt, on Selig’s orders, baseball did the same.

In an essay titled “Baseball in a Time of Crisis,” Selig detailed the process he went through trying to figure out the best way to proceed with the 2001 Major League season:

For more than a century, Major League Baseball has been uniting and entertaining people in times of peace and prosperity, and in times of crisis. More than just another spectator sport or entertainment option, baseball is a much-loved and much-needed social institution. . . . When terrorists attacked the United States on September 11, baseball was in the home stretch of another exciting season. . . . The question of whether baseball should continue and, if so, when, had to be addressed immediately.²³

In this passage, for a second time, Selig calls the game a “much-needed social institution.” Because the sport is considered as such, it has a strong tie to American history. The history of the game was important to Selig in the wake of 9/11 not just for its role as a “uniting factor” for Americans, but for another reason, as well.

Selig turned to the historical precedent set by Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis during World War II. In his January 14, 1942, letter to President Roosevelt, Commissioner Landis questioned the role of baseball during a time of American crisis. Landis wrote, “The time is approaching when, in ordinary conditions, our teams would be heading for Spring training camps. However, inasmuch as these are not ordinary times, I venture to ask what you have in mind as to whether professional baseball should continue to operate.”²⁴ Responding the next day, Roosevelt urged the Commissioner to embark on the new season.

In his response, known as “the Green Light Letter,” President Roosevelt said, “I honestly feel it would be best for the country to keep baseball going. There will be fewer people unemployed and everybody will work longer hours and harder than ever before. And that means that they ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off their work even more than before.”²⁵ The President recognized the importance of cultural activities, such as baseball, in supporting the war effort by providing entertainment for Americans on the homefront and soldiers overseas and in its symbolic capacity as an American social institution.

Honoring the historical precedent set by Landis and Roosevelt, and following President Bush’s urging to return to normal life, Selig continued the 2001 season after a six day hiatus. The commissioner explained,

To cease playing baseball as a result of those attacks would go against the ideals of our great nation. While it was important- and appropriate – to suspend play for a period of time to honor those who had lost their lives in the attacks, it was also necessary to heed the words of President George W. Bush, who urged U.S.

citizens to return as soon as possible to their normal way of life. The decision was a difficult one; I decided it was best to wait through that first weekend and begin play on the Monday following the attacks. I believe the timing was right, as was the response of our clubs and players. The outpouring of sympathy for the victims; the reverence for the true American heroes, the firefighters, policemen, and rescue workers; and the display of patriotism were memorable, proving once again that baseball, as a social institution, can play an important part in the healing of our great nation.²⁶

As Selig once again classified baseball as a social institution, he expressed recognition that baseball is included as part of culture and the “normal” American way of life. He decided that, for the good of the country, it was important for baseball, as an example of popular culture, to return to the diamond.

When baseball returned to the field on September 17, 2001, the rhetorical response to the events of September 11 at the ballparks was characteristic of the larger American response to the tragedy. Six games were played that day, and emotion and patriotism ran high in stadiums around the country. Every game featured a moment of silence and, at the instruction of Commissioner Selig, the singing of “God Bless America” during the seventh inning stretch. Additionally, each franchise chose to remember the lives lost and mark the return of the game in their own way.²⁷ The pre-game ceremony that night in St. Louis, for example, serves as an excellent case study of the rhetorical response by baseball, and in a more general way, popular culture.

During the ceremony in St. Louis, organized by team officials, longtime Cardinals broadcaster Jack Buck read an original poem while over 600 fire fighters and police

officers lined the outfield warning track and a military honor guard stood at attention on the infield. Buck's poem was accompanied by patriotic music and a large American flag was displayed on the field. Buck's words were followed by a 21-gun firework salute and all of these components contributed to a ceremony representative of the response by American popular culture. This ceremony is a successful example of how popular culture serves as a vehicle for the expression of Americanism.

The relationship between the game and the country is well-documented. According to Eldon Snyder, "sport in America appears to be associated . . . with motherhood, apple pie, and those other things that make us feel good about our past. This sport nostalgia can unite people by transcending class, race, and religious denominations."²⁸ Looking specifically at baseball, Michael Butterworth explains, "More than any other sport, baseball embodies the mythology and ideology of American culture. It has the deepest history of the nation's major sports and has long been referred to as the 'American game' or the 'national pastime.'"²⁹ This mythological and ideological expression of American culture through baseball allows the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis to serve as a representative example of the response by popular culture, and in particular, leisure activities following 9/11.

Theoretical Concepts Related to the Aftermath of 9/11

As social institutions, baseball and other leisure activities are intimately tied to expressions of Americanism. Examining the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis through the lenses of myth, nostalgia and national identity, allows for a deeper understanding of the cultural response to the September 11 terrorist attacks. By combining aspects of these

theories to create *heroic cultural nostalgia*, one can gain a larger understanding of the response of popular culture to the tragedy. The appearance of the theoretical factors at the ballpark is representative of many other events that took place in the wake of 9/11. Before we can assess their role in the days and months following September 11, 2001, we must first understand the concepts of American mythology, nostalgia and national identity.

American Mythology

Mythology, according to Phillip J. Chidester, “fills mystical, cosmological, social and psychological needs,” and act as, “a code through which to decipher the mysteries of the universe.”³⁰ He continues to explain that myth “unites members of a society in their struggles against grand challenges and fuels their ongoing quest to achieve ‘the good life.’”³¹ Chidester notes that these characteristics of myth make it particularly important in times of national crisis. He says, “the structure and function of myth in a given society are only fully revealed in moments of great violence or creativity.”³² V. William Balthrop also explains that, “a culture under increasing attack grants a preeminence to ideology that imbues it with mythic qualities such that it now redefines the polarizing image, hence, the culture itself.”³³ This means that in situations like those presented by 9/11, citizens turn to mythology to reaffirm American culture. This mechanism was instrumental in the days and months following the terrorist attacks as Americans responded to the tragedy and the role of myth became more prevalent.

These myths have power, in part, because of their ability to evoke a hero figure. Chidester explains that “Myth’s enduring ability to reconcile the sacred and the profane is rooted in the hero figure that animates all mythic narratives.”³⁴ This characteristic allows

sport to function as myth in American society. Chidester explains the important role that sports play in contemporary society by perpetuating American mythology. He states, “While hardly functioning as literal heroes in the classical sense, athletes came to be seen as human embodiments of our constant striving to transcend the material and to grasp the immaterial – as a kind of living metaphor for the grand achievements of the heroes of antiquity.”³⁵ So, although sports do not provide literal heroes who slay monsters, win wars or rescue fair maidens, figures associated with touchdowns, gold medals and homeruns fulfill the heroic culture type in contemporary society.

Balthrop explains that the power of myth and heroes has a nostalgic quality as well. He writes, “Humans apparently rely upon what they already know as the basis upon which to attribute meaning to newly encountered events. . . . The myth and encountered experience enter into a mutually reinforcing cycle as myth provides an explanation for events, which in turn function as further confirmatory proof for the myth’s power of explanation.”³⁶ For example, in the example given earlier in the chapter from the Bush address on September 11, he infers that the mythology associated with America and the country’s exceptionalism were the cause for the attacks in New York and Washington. Because both myth and nostalgia allow for individuals to use past events as a basis to interpret new events, they both play an important function in the creation of national identity. To understand this concept more completely, I will next briefly examine nostalgia.

Nostalgia

According to Fred Davis, nostalgia can be defined as, “one of the means – or better, one of the more readily accessible psychological lenses – we employ in the never

ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities.”³⁷ In times of uncertainty, this lens can put an unfamiliar event into perspective by viewing it through the lens of something known. Nostalgia brings a sense of comfort by making an uncomfortable situation familiar.

This ability to familiarize a situation allows nostalgic communication to, according to Conrad, “normalize inhospitable conditions” and function as a “mechanism of coping with the unbearable.”³⁸ Roger Aden explains that nostalgic communication “can be conceptualized as a process of inviting escape from contemporary conditions that are perceived to be inhospitable in order to provide individuals with a secure place of resistance.”³⁹ This remembrance of the past allows a person temporary relief from unbearable conditions. For example, Aden writes, “nostalgic communication offers individuals a trip to a time when pressures appear to be few by virtue of selective emphasis on the ‘good’ in the ‘ol’ days.”⁴⁰ Even though it is important to remember the good ol’ days, perhaps more importantly it mutes the negative and focuses on positive memories as a means of re-establishing national identity.

This re-establishment of national identity occurs by reminding people that things can once again be good like they used to be.⁴¹ Popular culture can serve this function and, in times of crisis, nostalgia reminds people what it was like in happier times, which in turn reaffirms national identity.

Sport is one example of how popular culture can use nostalgia to express national identity. Sport, according to Snyder, is able to accomplish this because, “for those involved in sport, past or present, sport nostalgia may provide a source of consolation and

a means of adjustment to the uncertainties of their lives.”⁴² Sport is an effective vehicle for nostalgia because of its prevalence in the lives of many Americans.

The role of nostalgia in the lives of most Americans allows it to function on a collective level. According to Snyder, “collective nostalgia is based on the collective memories of people in a society.”⁴³ Davis explains the importance of nostalgia in a group context:

In its collective manifestations nostalgia thrives . . . on the rude transitions rendered by history, on the discontinuities and dislocations wrought by such phenomena as war, depression, civil disturbance, and cataclysmic natural disasters – in short, those events that cause masses of people to feel uneasy and to wonder whether the world and their being are quite what they always took them to be.⁴⁴

This collective nostalgia is especially important in times of large-scale crisis. According to Davis, “the untoward event, although unanticipated, involves a concentration of attention and anxious concern among millions of persons at the same moment of historical time, thereby creating a fertile social psychological medium for the production and diffusion of nostalgic sentiment.”⁴⁵ Because such a large number of people feel anxious following an unexpected event, collective nostalgia plays an important role in situations like the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. This collective nostalgia, created partially by the use of mythology, is an important factor in the creation of national identity.

National Identity

National identity is defined by John Hutcheson as, “a constructed and public national self-image based on membership in a political community as well as history,

myths, symbols, language, and cultural norms commonly held by members of a nation.”⁴⁶ More specifically, he explains that because of national identity, “the nation is an entity deeply rooted in history, culture, and myth and embedded in human nature.”⁴⁷ This national identity develops a “positive ‘social myth’ to distinguish it from other nations, justify its existence, and defend its interests; these myths appeal to the ‘collective self of the nation’ by framing historical events in positive lights and establishing a sense of superiority over other nations.”⁴⁸ This intersection of myth and collective nostalgia allows for a sense of national pride, which allows people to come together in times when national identity is challenged and provides a common ground for people to identify themselves as part of the nation. In the United States, this identity is often expressed in the form of American exceptionalism.

American exceptionalism contributes to national identity because of the unique opinions Americans hold about themselves and their country.⁴⁹ According to Deborah L. Madsen, “American exceptionalism permeates every period of American history and is the single most powerful agent in a series of arguments that has been fought down the centuries concerning the identity of America and Americans.”⁵⁰ Robert L. Ivie and Oscar Giner explain:

Americans habitually imagine themselves as a morally elevated people set apart from the rest of the world and living in a land of opportunity that is the envy and aspiration of human kind. . . [because] the United States customarily identifies itself as an exception to the rule of human history—as an innocent nation exempt from earthly constraints and endowed with the manifest destiny of a chosen people.⁵¹

Madsen agrees with this morally elevated perception and points to its roots in the Puritan founding of the nation. She explains that:

Massachusetts Bay colonists [believed] that as Puritans they were charged with a special spiritual and political destiny: to create in the New World a church and society that would provide the model for all nations of Europe as they struggled to reform themselves. . . . In this view, the New World is the last and best chance offered by God to a fallen humanity that has only to look to His exceptional new church for redemption. Thus, America and Americans are special, exceptional, because they are charged with saving the world from itself and, at the same time, America and Americans must sustain a high level of spiritual, political and moral commitment to this exceptional destiny.⁵²

This exceptionalist idea has continued to thrive since the founding of the nation, with research showing that this concept influences everything from politics to race relations to ethics and morality both in the United States and in interactions with other nations.⁵³

American exceptionalism not only frames American history but is a large factor in American national identity as well. The concept of national identity always serves an important role in the United States, however it takes on a heightened sense of value in times of crisis.

During troubling times, such as the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, national identity plays a particularly vital role. In situations of conflict, Hutcheson explains, “nationalist sentiment thrives . . . particularly when the nation itself has been threatened or national interests are at stake.”⁵⁴ During these times, according to Robin Kowalski and Randall Wolfe, nationalist sentiment increases because, “people’s pride

and self-esteem are affected not only by their own behavior but also by the fortunes and misfortunes of the groups with which they are affiliated.”⁵⁵ These sentiments are often expressed in the United States through patriotic behaviors and are particularly evident in times of international interactions.

Whether these events are positive, such as the Olympics, or negative, such as military conflict, they cause increases in national pride and a heightened role for American national identity.⁵⁶ When a people feel that their identity has been attacked or threatened, as in the case of September 11, they instinctively try to protect and enhance it.⁵⁷ This could include anything from flying flags, wearing red, white and blue, singing the national anthem, or attending baseball games. These expressions all invite a feeling of comfort and a sense of belonging as a member of the nation. When elements of national identity are combined with components of myth and nostalgia, they create a framework that I call *heroic cultural nostalgia*.

Heroic Cultural Nostalgia

In order to evaluate the events of the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis, and thus the larger response of popular culture as a whole, I have established a framework which combines components of the theories I just discussed. *Heroic cultural nostalgia* is evident in times of national crisis. The first component of the framework focuses on the role of a contemporary hero in crisis situations. It is important to note that the individuals in this project are not literal heroes. Myths, and therefore heroes, are timeless. This means that a living individual cannot serve as a hero because they, unlike myth, are not timeless. However, contemporary, mortal individuals can display heroic qualities and this is what I

examined in this project. An individual must embody three important heroic qualities. First, the individual must be an established public figure. Second, the actions of the individual must be examples of positive behavior for the general public. Third, the individual must possess identifiable, admirable qualities.

The second component of *heroic cultural nostalgia* is based in the concepts of nostalgia. Nostalgia is implemented by the individuals who possess heroic characteristics in order to evoke pleasant memories of the past and to juxtapose the past and the present. This nostalgia serves as a means of creating national identity, the third component. Nostalgia both reinforces national identity and serves to promote American exceptionalism. Contemporary individuals who exhibit heroic characteristics, including being public figures, exemplars of behavior and possess admirable characteristics, utilize nostalgia as a means of reinforcing national identity and remind citizens of the exceptional nature of the United States.

Popular culture can serve as a vehicle for expressions of national identity, which is, in part, a combination of myth and nostalgia. The role of national identity is particularly important in times of American crisis. Baseball, as a representative example, can be studied to obtain a greater understanding of popular culture's larger response to September 11 and can be studied through expressions of heroic *cultural nostalgia*. To understand how that happened, let us now examine in depth the pre-game ceremony from Busch Stadium that took place on September 17, 2001.

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<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/911timeline.htm>

² Nancy Gibbs, "Special Report: The Day of the Attack," *TIME Magazine*, September 12, 2001.

³ Gibbs, "Special Report: The Day of the Attack."

⁴ American Rhetoric, "9/11 Timeline of Events."

⁵ Gibbs, "Special Report: The Day of the Attack."

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- ⁶ Gibbs, "Special Report: The Day of the Attack."
- ⁷ George Bush, "9/11 Address to the Nation," American Rhetoric.com, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911addresstothetation.htm>
- ⁸ George Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress Following 9/11 Attacks," AmericanRhetoric.com, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911jointsessionspeech.htm>
- ⁹ Richard Goldstein, "Neo-Macho Man: Pop Culture and Post-9/11 Politics," *The Nation*, March 24, 2009, 16.
- ¹⁰ Charles Conrad, "Work Songs, Hegemony, and Illusions of Self," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 5 (3), 179.
- ¹¹ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (New York: Berg, 2002), 12.
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- ¹⁴ Michael L. Butterworth, "Ritual in the 'Church of Baseball': Suppressing the Discourse of Democracy after 9/11," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 2, (2005): 111.
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- ¹⁶ MacAloon, "Double Visions," 102.
- ¹⁷ MacAloon, "Double Visions," 101.
- ¹⁸ Signa Butler, "The Games Go On: While 9/11 Turned the World Upside-Down, Sports Managed to Stay Upright," CBC Sports Online, www.cbc.ca/sports/indepth/feature-911sports.html
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- ²⁰ Murray Chass, "Selig, In a Sense of Mourning, Cancels Baseball Games," *The New York Times*, September 12, 2001, Sports Section.
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- ²³ Allan H. (Bud) Selig, "Baseball in a Time of Crisis," in *Baseball as America: Seeing Ourselves Through Our National Game*, ed. John Odell (Washington, D.C., National Geographic, 2002), 66.
- ²⁴ Kennesaw Mountain Landis to Franklin D. Roosevelt, January 14, 1942, Organization of American Historians, <http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/sport/presletter.html>
- ²⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt to Kennesaw Mountain Landis, January 15, 1942, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum Giamatti Research Center.
- ²⁶ Selig, "Baseball in a Time of Crisis."
- ²⁷ For more detailed explanation on the return of baseball post 9/11, please see chapter 2.
- ²⁸ Eldon E. Snyder, "Sociology of Nostalgia: Sports Halls of Fame and Museums in America," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8 (1991): 233-234.
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- ³⁰ Phillip J. Chidester, "'The Toy Store of Life': Myth, Sport and the Mediated Reconstruction of the American Hero in the Shadow of the September 11th Terrorist Attacks," *Southern Communication Journal* 74 (2009): 355.
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- ³⁵ Chidester, "The Toy Store of Life," 357-8.
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- ³⁹ Roger C. Aden, "Nostalgic Communication as Temporal Escape: *When It Was a Game's* Re-construction of a Baseball/Work Community," *Western Journal of Communications*, 59 (1995)," 22.
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- ⁴³ Snyder, "Sociology of Nostalgia," 230.
- ⁴⁴ Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday*, 49.
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CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

September 11, 2001 changed America in many ways. This project focuses on the changes that occurred in popular culture following the tragic events of the terrorist attacks. In the days and months leading up to the attacks, popular culture was very different than the product created post-September 11. Prior to 9/11, many saw popular culture as frivolous, self-indulgent, and even trashy. According to James Poniewozik, Jeanne McDowell, and Andrea Sachs, in a *Time Magazine* article, “The Great Before, goes the myth, was a time of peace, plenty and triviality, where we coasted in blissful self-absorption, drunk on day trading, egged on by a selfish, amoral popular culture.”¹ Americans enjoyed their lives and indulged in popular culture that was over the top, featuring crazy reality shows, a thirst for celebrity scandals, violent movies and sarcastic comments; however, following the terrorist attacks, at least in the short term, popular culture took a step back and reevaluated what entertainment was, and what was the message that it sent. Baseball, given its nostalgic ties to American history was one of the first to respond, while many other forms of popular culture struggled to determine what to do. An article in *Time Magazine*, written on October 1, 2001, addressed this issue, stating that,

The attacks have shaken pop culture’s sense of what’s funny, thrilling and acceptable. . . . so much that we could say casually a month ago rings empty, even cruel today. Our metaphors have expired. Pleasure seems mocking and futile. The language that artists, comedians, storytellers and actors use to explain us to ourselves now seems frivolous, inappropriate, or simply outdated.²

Immediate and significant changes were evident in popular culture. Robert J. Bresler, the National Affairs editor of *USA Today*, seemed to sum up the issues when he explained, “The silly season is over. . . . What was once amusing will seem childish and absurd. . . . A generation that felt it could postpone adulthood indefinitely will have to grow up in a hurry.”³ This sentiment was echoed by many in the aftermath of September 11 and this sentiment had a significant impact on the popular culture industry in the United States.

The purveyors of popular culture faced a significant rhetorical problem in the post-9/11 United States. They needed to determine the role of popular culture, the acceptability and tastefulness of a variety of activities, and how much the events of 9/11 impacted popular culture. The creators of popular culture met this challenge in a variety of ways. To fully understand how the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis was able to respond in an exemplary way that was representative of the larger response of popular culture, however, I must first explain the general reaction of popular culture. Next, I look at the reaction of sports in general, followed by a detailed description of the response of Major League Baseball. Finally, I detail the components of the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis, including the presentation made by long-time Cardinals broadcaster Jack Buck. To begin, I first look at the general reply of popular culture to the events of September 11.

Reaction of Popular Culture to 9/11

As David Ansen of *Newsweek* pointed out, “the impact of the catastrophe on the world of art and entertainment was instantaneous and seismic.”⁴ This sudden, influential event changed popular culture in a number of ways. At first, entertainment came to a halt. Following the brief period of inactivity, entertainers worked to help the relief effort.

Finally, popular culture had to adjust to American sensitivities as it moved forward after September 11.

In the immediate wake of the attacks, popular culture came to a standstill. James Poniewozik explained that, “in the short term, the terror attacks have not yet changed pop culture so much as suspended it.”⁵ Television networks interrupted days of regular programming for round the clock coverage of the events. Additionally, Broadway theaters temporarily closed their doors,⁶ and sporting events around the country were cancelled. The purveyors of popular culture knew that immediately following the attacks, popular culture needed to be suspended for a number of reasons. It was a time for respect and reflection, of constant news coverage and processing the enormous events that had just occurred. It was not a time for entertainment and levity. Soon, however, popular cultural institutions felt a need to return, to provide the welcome respite from grief and somberness. The first thing that many entertainers did was get involved in raising funds for the relief effort.

Benefits were held, celebrities visited victims and rescue workers, and even a benefit comic book was created by illustrators and artists in the graphic novel field, with all proceeds going to the relief effort.⁷ Additionally, in an unprecedented move, the four major networks collaborated to broadcast the star-studded telethon, “America: A Tribute to Heroes,” to raise money for the victims of the tragedy.⁸ The collaboration, broadcast on September 21, 2001, was a commercial-free, two-hour telecast seen on over 30 different networks, in 210 different countries and was viewed by over 89 million people.⁹ The broadcast featured varied musical performances, from Stevie Wonder to Limp Bizkit to Tony Bennett, who performed a rendition of “New York, New York” with a NYFD

helmet on top of his piano. In addition to the performances, entertainers, including Tom Hanks, Clint Eastwood and Julia Roberts, told stories of heroism on 9/11 while asking viewers to call in with donations. The calls for donations were answered by additional celebrities, manning phone banks in Los Angeles, New York and London. In the first fifteen minutes of the broadcast, the show received over 300,000 calls from viewers,¹⁰ eventually raising over \$150 million dollars.¹¹ After participating in the relief effort, creators of popular culture turned their efforts to resuming their normal jobs.

As popular culture looked to resume its everyday role in American society in the days and months following September 11, Americans questioned their proper role in society. Some, like *USA Today* columnist Robert J. Bresler, felt that in the wake of 9/11, popular culture should be relegated to a status of unimportance. Following the tragedy, he wrote, “A culture that has so long elevated self-gratification over self-control must be forever abandoned. . . . The spirit of the New York City firefighters, police, and rescue workers should be the model for this generation, not rock stars, rap singers, and teenage divas.”¹² Following September 11, entertainers re-evaluated their role and reassessed their endeavors. According to James Poniewozik, “Entertainers in every field are in a crisis of relevance, caught up in a nationwide feeling of survivor’s guilt, unsure whether their work has a place in the new reality.”¹³ While popular culture struggled to define what it was in the wake of tragedy, themes began to emerge in entertainment. Poniewozik explained that although it was still unsure of what it was, “mainly, pop culture redefined itself in terms of what it now is not. . . . It is not too flippant. . . . And it is not political. . . . Above all, it is not too violent.”¹⁴ Every form of popular culture was impacted by these themes in a significant way.

Broadway shows were closed for two days following the attacks. However, they returned rather quickly, reopening on September 13 at the request of New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani.¹⁵ Although the shows were only closed for two days, they still suffered. Attendance figures plummeted and many shows were forced to close.¹⁶ Additionally, a revival of the Stephen Sondheim musical “Assassins,” was put on hold for at least a year.¹⁷ This aligns with the motives that Poniewozik identified in that the producers of the “Assassins” revival decided that it was too flippant at the time to stage a musical in which all the characters were musical versions of individuals who had tried to assassinate the president of the United States.

In addition to live theater, the motion picture industry was also affected. The release of the film “Collateral Damage,” starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, was delayed because it featured a terrorism plot line. Movies showcasing terrorism that were in pre-production, including Tom Clancy’s “The Sum of All Fears,” were put on hold indefinitely.¹⁸ Both of these movies had violent and political themes that were deemed inappropriate for the time. On the other hand, MGM expanded the distribution of their light-hearted comedy movie, “Legally Blonde,” after movie theater owners requested more feel good movies in the wake of the tragedy.¹⁹

Television was also impacted in a number of ways. The annual Emmy Awards show telecast was postponed until October 7 and host Ellen DeGeneres’ did not perform a monologue in order to avoid flippancy, and the show producers took out a skit about President Bush and former Vice President Al Gore in order to stay away from the political.²⁰ Shows were reviewed and content was removed that would seem insensitive in the wake of September 11. For example, to avoid violence eerily similar to recent

events, the series premier of *24* on the Fox network had a scene removed where an assassin blows up an airplane in order to kill a presidential candidate.²¹ Scenes from a number of shows set in New York were digitally remastered or reshot to include the new city skyline. While some shows were scrambling to remove reminders of the terrorist attacks from their shows, others addressed it head on. The popular political drama, *The West Wing*, aired a special episode on October 3, 2001 that directly addressed issues in the United States following the terrorist attacks.²² Whether through addition or subtraction, television was profoundly affected.

In the same fashion as television and movie executives, radio station owners reassessed their content. Clear Channel Communications, a corporation that owns over 1,200 radio stations, emailed a list of over 150 songs that DJs should consider avoiding in the wake of the tragedy.²³ This list included numerous songs, including Peter, Paul and Mary's "Leaving on a Jet Plane." These songs were not explicitly banned on air, but it was suggested that they should be avoided, as they may remind people of the violent events of 9/11.²⁴

Not even the virtual world escaped the influence of September 11. Online news satire websites, including theonion.com, suspended production because, with the terrorist attacks dominating the headlines, the producers of the web pages felt it would be inappropriate to try and be humorous about the 9/11 tragedy.²⁵ Additionally, Microsoft delayed the release of their "Flight Simulator 2002" computer program. The program became popular with earlier editions as it allows users to fly a simulated airplane. The new version was delayed because the game allowed users to virtually fly their planes into the Twin Towers in New York City. In addition to the delay of the new version, the

company hurried to create software that would remove the Twin Towers from earlier versions of the game.²⁶ Entertainers took every precaution to be appropriate in the wake of tragedy.

All of the adjustments that were made following the terrorist attacks were an attempt to address the proper contemporary role of popular culture following September 11. While many of the changes made have faded away as the years have passed, at the time they were deemed a necessary response to the attacks. This pattern of suspending activity, participating in relief efforts and then returning to normal activities while being aware of American sensitivities was echoed on the playing fields as well as in the performing arts industry.

Reaction of Sport to 9/11

Similar to other forms of popular culture, the immediate response of the sporting industry to the tragedy of September 11 was a temporary halt on all activity. Individual games were cancelled on the 11th and 12th. Richard Hoffer described the effect of the response succinctly, “Two days after jetliners sliced through America’s totems of capitalism and military might, sports simply closed down. . . . Our stadiums were quiet and dark, parking lots empty, the games just . . . gone.”²⁷ As Hoffer observed, individual games had been cancelled in the past, and individual sports had shut down for national events but never had all professional and the majority of collegiate sports been completely shut down. Hoffer writes, “The idea of a week without big-time sports in this country had no historical precedent.” It was the first time that the leisure industry came to a complete standstill.

The National Football League, Major League Baseball, NASCAR, college football,²⁸ Major League Soccer and the Professional Golfers Association Tour all suspended play indefinitely.²⁹ According to an Associated Press report, the time slots normally devoted to sports were turned over to reports on September 11.³⁰ While the games were on hold, athletes got involved in the relief efforts in a number of ways.

The teams in New York were affected most directly by the tragedy and volunteered their time to help. For example, The New York Yankees, on Saturday, September 15, filled three vans with players and visited relief effort volunteers at the Javits Center, family members waiting for information on missing loved ones at the Lexington Avenue armory and victims of the attack at St. Vincent's Hospital.³¹ The Mets also got involved in the city. Superstar Mike Piazza visited wounded police and fire personnel at local hospitals and went to Ground Zero to talk with rescue workers.³² Mets manager Bobby Valentine volunteered at a drop-off location for donated relief supplies in the Shea Stadium parking lot. In fact, Valentine was so involved, he skipped the team's charter flight to Pittsburgh when play resumed, and traveled alone on a commercial flight hours later so that he could stay longer and help with the relief effort.³³ However, the New York baseball teams were not the only sporting organizations to rush to help.

The PGA Tour donated \$2 million to the relief effort. Additionally, they asked that fans who had pre-purchased tickets to the cancelled golf events donate the price of admission to the relief effort rather than asking for a refund. Additionally, PGA Tour staff and golfers participated in blood drives and other volunteer efforts. The LPGA set up a relief fund through their charitable foundation and held a prayer service in the place of its cancelled tournament, with players, caddies, organizers and fans holding vigil on

the 18th green. The NFL's Washington Redskins donated \$250,000 to a fund for victims of the Pentagon attack and their league mates the San Francisco 49ers held a blood drive where over 100 players and employees of the organization donated blood. The NHL's Los Angeles Kings donated all of the ticket money from a pre-season game to the relief effort in remembrance of two of their scouts who were passengers on one of the planes that hit the World Trade Center. In addition to contributions from professional sports, the NCAA got involved as well, donating \$5 million to the relief efforts.³⁴ While they were off the field, athletes did everything they could to help. When they returned to the field, the effect of September 11 on athletics was long lasting and far reaching.

One of the most prominent changes was the new security measures implemented for all sporting events. Large bags and coolers were no longer allowed, no-parking perimeters were set up around stadiums, fans were subject to searches, public access to certain areas decreased and uniformed security forces were increased at every venue.³⁵ Both the Super Bowl and the 2002 Winter Olympics were significantly impacted by 9/11. Not only was the Super Bowl postponed by a week, the organizers of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City debated postponing, moving or cancelling the Games.³⁶ When both events were held, security was taken so seriously that, according to Mike Fish, the importance, "had been elevated to the level of a national security event where the federal government takes the lead in coordinating activities."³⁷ Things were certainly different for both the fans returning to the stadiums and the athletes returning to the field.

When professional sports returned, each organization honored those impacted by the tragedy. For example, when the National Football League resumed play on September 25, a number of tributes took place. American flag decals adorned every helmet for the

remainder of the season. Red, white and blue bunting and banners that read, “United We Stand,” adorned NFL stadiums. Additionally, patriotic song lyric sheets were distributed to fans entering the stadium and nationally recognized recording artists sang “America the Beautiful,” at every game. Fans also received a miniature American flag that day, with the NFL purchasing over one million flags for the occasion. Finally, each stadium played a one-minute video montage tribute, created by NFL films, before the game.³⁸

As each sports organization returned to the field, diamond, hardwood, greens, or ice they responded to the events of September 11 in their own way. Baseball was the first sport to return following the tragedy and serves as a representative example of this broader response by popular culture and professional sports to 9/11.

Reaction of Baseball to 9/11

Baseball returned to the diamond on Monday, September 17, 2001. Six games appeared on the schedule and emotion and patriotism ran high at those ballpark. Each game featured a moment of silence and the singing of “God Bless America” at the instruction of Commissioner Selig. Additionally, each stadium chose to remember the lives lost and mark the return of the game in their own way. In Los Angeles, the National Anthem was sung by a LAPD officer. In Pittsburgh, where the Pirates played the Mets, “I Love NY” buttons were distributed to all of the fans, and the Mets donned NYPD and NYEMS caps rather than their traditional uniform hats. In Colorado, an enormous flag was displayed on the field, held by all of the players on the Rockies and the visiting Arizona Diamondbacks. During the game between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Atlanta Braves, commercials in the Phillies’ radio and television broadcasts were

replaced by public service announcements for the Red Cross and other relief organizations. The remembrance even spread to Canada, where the Montreal Expos cancelled all game night promotions, forbid the mascot Youppi from dancing and offered a video tribute to America. While everyone tried their best to return to normal, it was certainly not your average day at the ballpark.³⁹

For the remainder of the 2001 season, every baseball uniform worn by players, coaches and managers, featured an American flag on the back of the jersey above the name and number. Additionally, every cap worn on a Major League field had a U.S. flag stitched on the left side of the cap.⁴⁰ Major leaguer Marquis Grissom also recalled seeing flags throughout baseball stadiums around the country. He said, “When we came back, (the American flag) was everywhere. I guess it had never really gone away, but you noticed it more. People were waving it more, wearing it more.”⁴¹ Professional baseball player Shawn Green added, “It’s a way to show our support, and we need to show our support any way we can.”⁴² Displays of the American flag were joined by the singing of “God Bless America” during the seventh inning stretch, a tradition born in tragedy following September 11.

Ballparks around the country have had music during the seventh inning stretch for years. Most play “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” and many have their own unique traditional songs, as well. For example, at Yankee Stadium, they play “YMCA” while the groundskeepers dance and entertain the crowd. At Fenway Park in Boston, fans sing along to “Sweet Caroline” and at Baltimore’s Camden Yards they play John Denver’s “Thank God I’m A Country Boy.” However, following 9/11, all ballparks around the country added “God Bless America.” According to Paul C. Smith, an MLB.com writer,

“From the invigorating tenor voice of New York police Officer Daniel Rodriguez to the blaring trumpet of Jesse McGuire in Arizona to the booming rendition of Kate Smith's "God Bless America" in Philadelphia, people looked, listened and remembered. Tears were everywhere. Hugs followed. And the games were not the same.”⁴³ Not only was the song touching for the fans, but the players on the field recognized its importance as well. Yankee superstar Derek Jeter said, “You can’t help but think about (Sept. 11), especially in the seventh inning when they play that song. They always show members of the police and fire departments, so you think about it. If you’re human, you think about it.”⁴⁴ The seventh-inning stretch became a time not just to stretch and prepare for the final innings, but also a time for reflection, honor and respect.

These instances are all examples of how Major League Baseball addressed the problem that had been presented to them in the aftermath of 9/11. A representative case study can be seen in the pregame ceremony that was held in St. Louis on September 17, 2001.

Case Study: St. Louis

The pre-game ceremony held in St. Louis on September 17, 2001 serves as a representative example of not only the reaction of Major League Baseball to the events of 9/11, but also of the larger response from popular culture. Just like other expressions of popular culture at the time, baseball first suspended activity, then engaged in an instance of remembrance and reverence when they returned to work. There are a number of important factors to examine in the pre-game ceremony, which was orchestrated by the St. Louis Cardinals front office staff, in accordance with the instructions from

Commissioner Selig. These factors include the location, Busch Stadium, the visual elements, including fireworks, flags and rescue workers, the speaker, Jack Buck, and his textual address to the crowd.

The location for the ceremony was Busch Stadium, home of the St. Louis Cardinals from 1966 – 2005.⁴⁵ During these years, over 80,000,000 baseball fans watched Cardinals games and over 7,000,000 football fans watched Cardinals and Rams games. Additionally, the stadium hosted special events, including soccer games, concerts and even a circus.⁴⁶ The stadium, although unremarkable in its construction, serves a special nostalgic function for the people of St. Louis. Upon the closing of the stadium in 2005, Leslie Gibson McCarthy wrote, “Decried by pundits as cookie-cutter and non-descript, it was lumped in with other 1960s multipurpose venues. . . . And if you weren’t staring up at the 96 concrete arches circling the top, it really was like all the others . . . [but] Busch Stadium was uniquely ours.”⁴⁷ One of the unique features of the stadium is the view of the Gateway Arch from the stadium. The Arch, the signature monument of the city of St. Louis, was one of the many national cultural institutions closed to visitors on September 11.⁴⁸ Busch Stadium, itself a St. Louis monument, saw many security changes in the days following 9/11 and on the evening of September 17, new security measures were in place to keep fans safe in the face of terrorism.

According to official attendance numbers, 32,563 fans entered the stadium that night, down from the season average of 37,815.⁴⁹ The St. Louis Cardinals, following the instructions of Major League Baseball, implemented new security procedures. Major League Baseball forbid large bags, backpacks, and coolers at the six stadiums that re-opened on September 17. Smaller bags, including purses and diaper bags, were subject to

search. Fans were even asked to lift their baseball caps so that security officers could check underneath them. Additionally, parking within 100 feet of the stadium was by special permit only. Along with the increased security measures, there were additional security staff on duty. At a Cardinals game, pre-9/11, the security staff consisted of 25 security officers and 17 police officers. When the stadium re-opened for the game on the 17th, the staff had been increased to 45 security officers and 32 police officers.⁵⁰

Once the fans passed through the new security measures, each person was handed a small, Cardinals-supplied American flag, which complimented the patriotic outfits worn by the majority of fans.⁵¹ Additionally, on the way to their seats, fans could donate money to local firemen who were raising money for the families of emergency workers in New York City.⁵² When the fans took their seats, expressions of patriotism and American pride were seen throughout the ballpark.

The atmosphere in the stadium was compared to that of a game on Independence Day, but with a different emotional component. Elizabeth Holland and Jeremy Kohler explain, “From an ecstatic fan reaction to Bruce Springsteen’s ‘Born in the USA,’ to the shimmery Uncle Sam hats some in the stands wore, to the red, white and blue ribbons in little girls’ ponytails, to the American flags popping out of beer vendors’ hats, Monday night had the feel of the Fourth of July. But in a very different way.”⁵³ These public displays of patriotism, along with the components of the pre-game ceremony, could have been expressed on Independence Day. However, they took place in the wake of 9/11 so patriotism, American pride and communal support joined somberness, sorrow and remembrance.

The pre-game ceremony began with the honoring of over 600 firefighters and police officers. The throngs of rescue personnel lined the warning track of the field for the rest of the pre-game ceremony. There were so many officers and firefighters that they stretched the length of the field from the left field line to first base.⁵⁴ The jumbo video monitors showed a video montage of patriotic images while Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the U.S.A." played in the background. The St. Louis Christian College Choir performed the National Anthem, which reporters Elizabethe Holland, Jeremy Kohler and Greg Jonsson called, "the most emotionally received performance of the song ever at Busch."⁵⁵ At the end of the performance, the crowd erupted into long-lasting applause. The ceremony ended with a 21-gun firework salute, during which the audience stood silent, however when it concluded the crowd erupted in applause and prolonged cheers of "U-S-A! U-S-A!"⁵⁶ The highlight of the ceremony, though, was a poem written and presented by longtime St. Louis broadcaster Jack Buck.

As described in his 2002 obituary, Buck led an amazing life, an individual who was much more than just a sportscaster. A tribute in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said: "His life was the stuff of dreams: a decorated war veteran, father of eight, inducted into 11 halls of fame, recognized as the radio voice of Cardinals baseball for almost 50 years, familiar with some of America's most popular celebrities and athletes, beloved as one of St. Louis leading citizens."⁵⁷ In addition to his work with the Cardinals, Buck had a long and successful career in television and radio. He broadcast football games in both mediums, including hosting one of the first television network studio NFL shows. He conducted interviews with celebrities, athletes and dignitaries, including Eleanor Roosevelt. He was even selected to broadcast from the top of the famous Gateway Arch

the day it was completed.⁵⁸ In addition to his professional work, Buck was involved in numerous charitable causes, including the fight against cystic fibrosis. It is estimated that Buck alone raised over \$30 million for the cause.⁵⁹

It is fair to say that Buck was the product of the American dream. He was born on August 21, 1924 in Holyoke, Massachusetts, the third of seven children. The family relocated to Cleveland in 1939 and his father died a year later. Buck held down as many as three jobs at a time while attending high school to help the family survive tough financial times.⁶⁰ Drafted at age 19 to join the Army during World War II, Buck fought in Germany and in 1945 was wounded by shrapnel and awarded a Purple Heart. According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, “Though his time in service was relatively brief, those years had a profound effect.”⁶¹

Clad in a bright red blazer, adorned with an American Flag pin, looking frail and noticeably shaking from Parkinson’s disease, Buck took the field to read a poem he wrote himself.⁶² He knew that perhaps some would see his presentation as an odd choice, but the broadcaster felt it was appropriate: “People are going to think I’m wacky, writing poems instead of broadcasting sports, but I tried to touch on the points about this country and about what’s going on and what we’re going to do . . . and why we’re doing it. We’ve all been here before, haven’t we?”⁶³ The revered broadcaster had already been involved in a September 11 remembrance ceremony, as he had served as the host of “Together We Stand, an Interfaith Gathering of Inspiration, Unity and Peace,” at the World’s Fair Pavilion just the day before.⁶⁴ During his second tribute, on the field at Busch Stadium, Leslie Gibson McCarty of *St. Louis Magazine* described his delivery as, “clear, resolute and familiar, voice cracking with emotion.”⁶⁵ Although less than 200

words, the poem was powerful and inspired strong reactions from the audience. During the presentation, an Honor Guard presented the colors and stood at attention near the base path and a large American flag was unfurled in the outfield. An instrumental version of “America the Beautiful” played over the PA system in the background while Buck spoke.⁶⁶ The text of Buck’s poem is as follows:

Since this nation was founded . . . under God
More than 200 years ago
We have been the bastion of freedom
The light that keeps the free world aglow
We do not covet the possessions of others
We are blessed with the bounty we share.
We have rushed to help other nations
. . . anything . . . any time. . . anywhere.
War is just not our nature
We won’t start . . . but we will end the fight
If we are involved we shall be resolved
To protect what we know is right.
We have been challenged by a cowardly foe
Who strikes and then hides from our view.
With one voice we say, “There is no choice today,
There is only one thing to do.”
Everyone is saying – the same thing – and praying
That we end these senseless moments we are living.

As our fathers did before . . . we shall win this unwanted war

And our children . . . will enjoy the future . . . we'll be giving.⁶⁷

While the fans were moved by the words their hometown favorite penned for the occasion, what they did not realize at the time was that Buck was making his final public appearance at Busch Stadium that night. The broadcaster dealt with months of health complications beginning shortly after the 2001 season ended and he passed away on June 18, 2002.⁶⁸

Perhaps only an afterthought for those in attendance that night, the Cardinals beat the Milwaukee Brewers by a score of 2-1.⁶⁹ The pre-game ceremony in St. Louis serves as a representative example of the reaction of sport and popular culture to the events of September 11. The words of Jack Buck intermix with the performative components of the ceremony to create a unique response to September 11, which at the same time is indicative of the larger answer of popular culture to the dramatic events of that day. Now that I have clearly described the rhetorical text of study, chapter three will apply the theoretical concepts introduced in chapter one to the pre-game ceremony at Busch Stadium.

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² James Poniewozik et al., "What's Entertainment Now?" *Time*, October 1, 2001, 5.

³ Robert J. Bresler, "State of the Nation: The End of the Silly Season," *USA Today*, November 2001, 17.

⁴ David Ansen, "Finding Our New Voice," *Newsweek*, October 1, 2001, 6.

⁵ Poniewozik et al., "What's Entertainment Now?"

⁶ Ansen, "Finding Our New Voice."

⁷ Poniewozik et al., "What's Entertainment Now?"

⁸ Poniewozik et al., "What's Entertainment Now?"

⁹ ABCNews.com, "60 Million Watch America: A Tribute for Heroes," <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/story?id=102309&page=1>, (accessed February 15, 2010).

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- ¹² Bresler, "State of the Nation: The End of the Silly Season."
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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 ignited a crisis in the United States, triggering the pervasive use of what John Hutcheson et al. call, “nation-affirming rhetoric.”¹ Popular culture responded to this crisis in a variety of ways. Utilizing detailed textual analysis which applies communication theories to the St. Louis Cardinals’ pregame ceremony on September 17, 2001, this chapter examines the rhetorical significance of the response of popular culture to the events of September 11.

During times of crisis, Americans address their trepidations by turning to concepts that are familiar and comforting. This often leads to a nostalgic retreat to the past. People find instances and images that contain core American mythology, evoke collective memories, and express national identity comforting. First, I establish a critical perspective to examine the case study. The framework, which I call *heroic cultural nostalgia* includes elements of myth, nostalgia, and national identity. I will identify the key elements from each rhetorical device and explain how they function as components in this theoretical framework. Second, I explore the visual and non-visual elements of the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis through this perspective. To begin, I will reintroduce the rhetorical concepts that factor into my analysis.

Myth

As a rhetorical device, myth serves a particularly important function because, as Robert C. Rowland explains, “myth is one of our most powerful cognitive instruments for making sense of the world. . . . It is through myth that we define our societies and our

lives.”² In order to do this, the power of myth is rooted in its ability to “answer human problems that cannot be answered discursively.”³ According to Rowland,

Discursive language of science or history works well for problems of fact, but fails utterly when problems of value are confronted. There are no purely rational answers to such problems; therefore humans have no choice but to turn to narrative forms, the most powerful of which is myth. . . . The function of myth is to transcend ordinary life and provide meaningful grounding for that which cannot be supported rationally.⁴

Due to this ability to explain the mysterious, myth is especially important in times when people are looking for answers. Myth played a powerful role in the United States following the September 11 terrorist attacks through its ability to seemingly explain the unexplainable.

In many situations, including the aftermath of 9/11, myth can be effective because of its narrative context. As Phillip J. Chidester explains, myth “continues to engage and fascinate those who participate in its telling precisely because of its ability to relate the experiences of modern life to images of primeval times and of epic battles between the forces of good and evil.”⁵ By allowing individuals to relate contemporary situations to classical imagery, myth allows people to make sense of current conditions. An important mythical component in the ancient battles against evil was the hero figure, and the importance of the hero still serves an important function in contemporary mythology.

Chidester describes the important function of the hero in mythology. According to Chidester, myth’s power comes from the hero characters that appear in every myth.⁶ He further explains that, “heroes emerged as the narrative embodiment of a society’s

yearning to act in the real world, to transcend its own human failings and to achieve its potential for otherworldly greatness.”⁷ The actions of the hero provide a knowledge base and exemplar behavior that individuals can tie to real life situations. Rowland explains that by embodying these characteristics, “the hero symbolically solves the problems confronted in the myth and serves as a model for social action.”⁸ There is a distinction, however, between ancient and contemporary hero figures.

While ancient heroes literally accomplished epic feats, such as Hercules and his twelve labors, contemporary heroes embody the spirit without performing epic feats. According to Chidester, “because of their divine pedigrees, the heroes of ancient times were poised to commit acts of pure material transcendence – to defeat tangible monsters and to overcome physical forces that would easily overwhelm any mere mortal.”⁹ Contemporary heroes, on the other hand, “may accomplish impressive feats of their own, but their status as demigods is clearly figurative in nature. . . . a suggestion of what these idolized figures might achieve themselves if ever confronted by the kinds of insurmountable material obstacles conquered by the heroes of Greek and Roman antiquity.”¹⁰ Although heroes either completed, or are perceived to be able to complete god-like feats, it is the combination of that ability with human characteristics which effectively makes the hero figure an identifiable character.

By combining mortal characteristics with the potential of superhuman feats heroes become relatable to everyday citizens. Chidester explains that, “in order to invite identification among all the members of a given society, a hero must openly display a wide range of admirable qualities. . . . so potent are these qualities that a hero need not actually perform heroic acts in order to be accorded such status by an adoring public.”¹¹

This potency of qualities allows for contemporary figures to embody heroic characteristics without actually being a hero. Through this role, contemporary public figures can provide relatable examples and provides a moral guide for individuals, thus, in effect becoming someone who can lead the way in challenging situations. In American society, individuals often turn to popular culture to find these examples. In particular, sporting events often embody mythical qualities and figures in sports often exhibit heroic characteristics.

Sport is, perhaps, the most directly mythic form of popular culture in contemporary society. According to Chidester,

Sport supplies American society with succeeding generations of characters who, if not true heroes in the classical sense, certainly do embody heroic qualities and, with them, consistent and persistent proof of our continued human link to a divine realm. . . . While clearly not directly comparable to the true demigod characters of classic myth, modern sports stars come to represent in a symbolic way these ancient heroes and their literal sacrifices to the well-being of the community.¹²

He does note, however, in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks, the American idea of a hero took a different form.

While figures in sports still fulfilled the modern role of the hero following 9/11, Chidester argues that there were others who seemed to more literally embody that role:

In the chaotic struggle to regain a sense of balance and order in the world. . . . America needed *heroes*. . . . As ideal vessels for the courage and sacrifice needed to counter the destructive resolve of the terrorists, the firefighters, police officers,

and paramedics who responded so selflessly to the 9/11 attacks were summarily dubbed ‘the new princes and princesses.’¹³

The contemporary applications of myths and those figures who display heroic characteristics played an important role following the 9/11 attacks because of the ability to function in ways similar to ancient myths and heroes. America needed this at the time, as both a moral guide, but also as a reminder that things could possibly end “happily ever after.”

In summary, individuals who display heroic characteristics serve a number of important roles in times of crisis. First, through their deeds, the individual provides examples of behavior that individuals can apply to their everyday life, thus creating a model for social action. Second, individuals create identification with an audience through their admirable qualities. Both of these functions are possible for both literal heroes through epic feats, as well as contemporary heroes who do not actually complete epic tasks but embody a belief in the ability to do so. Contemporary popular culture figures who possess heroic characteristics draw upon the past to help people recall the “good ol’ days.”

Nostalgia

Nostalgia also serves an important rhetorical function. According to Eldon E. Snyder nostalgia is, “a remembrance or recollection of the past, a past that is imbued with special qualities.”¹⁴ According to Fred Davis, these qualities can include, “beauty, pleasure, joy, satisfaction, goodness, happiness, love . . . in sum, any or several of the *positive* affects of being.”¹⁵ Snyder stresses the importance of nostalgia when he explains

that, “it [nostalgia] is important for the understanding and interpreting of political behavior, patriotism and nationality.”¹⁶ Particularly in times of crisis or sadness, “this juxtaposition of the past with the present creates the context for feelings of nostalgia.”¹⁷ This ability of nostalgia to juxtapose the past and present allows, in a way, for an escape to a secure place. An important component of creating escape is an emphasis on the “good ol’ days,” a place that many associate with escape. The good ol’ days weren’t always necessarily that good, but when seen through the lens of nostalgia they are viewed as such.

For example, following the 9/11 attacks, people seemed to be nostalgic for the 1940s, the last time that America was attacked on its own shores. People fondly remembered victory gardens, war bond drives and Joe DiMaggio joining the military. However, when thinking more widely about the events of World War II, one cannot possibly be nostalgic for the tremendous loss of American lives in the European and Pacific theatres. Fred Davis explains this selective memory effect: “The nostalgic mood is one whose active tendency is to envelop all that may have been painful or unattractive about the past in a kind of fuzzy, redeemingly benign aura. The hurts, the annoyances, disappointments, and irritations, if they are permitted to intrude at all, are filtered forgivingly through an ‘it-was-all-for-the-best’ attitude.”¹⁸ This “all for the best” attitude allows people to put current events into perspective, knowing that there may be a time in the future when current tragedies seem “all for the best” as well.

According to Davis, nostalgia occurs most frequently, “in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties,” creating a “nostalgia-borne dialectic of the search for continuity amid threats of discontinuity.”¹⁹ As Aden explains, this allows for

nostalgia to provide an escape from hostile current conditions to a safe and secure past.²⁰ Although this escape is only temporary, it serves an important function in the immediate aftermath of events, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Popular culture provided this escape through a variety of outlets, including sport and leisure events, in the fall of 2001. According to Snyder, “Sports in America appears to be associated . . . with motherhood, apple pie, and those other things that make us feel good about our past. Thus sport nostalgia can be socially integrating by transcending class, race and religious denominations.” Through these associations, sport provided Americans a temporal escape from current conditions and a safe refuge in a present that embodies a peaceful past.

In summary, nostalgia evokes special memories of the past which are rich with pleasant feelings including, among others, joy, goodness and satisfaction. Another ability of nostalgia is the juxtaposition of present and past conditions, which provides an escape from the inhospitable present to the secure, comforting past. This escape, provided by nostalgia, is only temporary, but extremely powerful. This power is seen in many situations, but as Snyder explains above, sport nostalgia is particularly effective in accomplishing the tasks of evoking feeling and providing escape in popular culture. In contemporary popular culture, our heroes can emerge and help invoke nostalgic longings for the past that are deeply rooted in our national consciousness.

National Identity

John Hutcheson, et al, explain national identity as, “a specific form of collective identity that is simultaneously one of inclusion that provides a boundary around ‘us’ and one of exclusion that distinguishes ‘us’ from ‘them.’”²¹ Hutcheson et al also provide a more comprehensive definition, which states that national identity is a publicly created

self-image, which contains common myths, symbols, and cultural norms.²² The identity of each nation is distinctive, and national identity in the United States is no different in that respect.

Since the United States began, American national identity has, “articulated American uniqueness as grounded in certain civil-religious beliefs and core values of liberty, equality, and self-government.”²³ By combining liberty and equality with the ideas of individualism, populism and laissez-faire economics, these beliefs encompass the concept of American exceptionalism. American exceptionalism is a concept that originated in the Puritan founding of the United States. Originally, the term focused on the way that the United States differed from other western countries, but today incorporates all of the characteristics that support the argument that America is better in many ways than the rest of the world.²⁴

Another important aspect of national identity in the United States is the idea that the country is, “a military, economic, and cultural ‘super-power.’”²⁵ Tied up in this notion of “super-power” is the idea that because of this, the United States is stronger in all of these regards than other nations. This leads the United States to “derive much of its identity from its position vis-à-vis other nations.”²⁶ Comparisons to foreign countries become heightened in times of international conflict and focus on the superiority of America over other nations.

Expressions of American national identity are stronger and more prevalent during challenging times. According to Hutcheson et al, nationalist sentiments run particularly high when a nation has been attacked or their interests have been threatened.²⁷ National sentiment thrived after the 9/11 attacks when “culturally embedded symbols are

threatened by another nation or international actor.”²⁸ While politicians and military leaders were the most likely to invoke feelings of national identity following September 11, it was expressed through other avenues as well, including popular culture.²⁹

Hutcheson, et al, point out some of the most prevalent uses of national identity following the terrorist attacks, including: “affirmation of American values and ideals that drew upon the U.S. ‘mythology’ of individualism, liberty and equality; affirmation of U.S. international power and dominance, thereby tapping into the nation’s long-established self-image as a world super-power; emphasis on unification among Americans across ideological and racial lines.”³⁰ This creates what Nancy K. Rivenburgh calls “the national identity dynamic.”³¹

Rivenburgh defines the concept as, “the tendency to protect or maintain national identity,” and explains that, “in situations where a particular in-group identity becomes salient, individuals will, as a cognitive behavioral pattern, seek to maintain, protect or enhance that group activity. . . . This could be seen most blatantly in outburst of patriotism . . . during war.”³² Patriotism serves as a vehicle for citizens to maintain, protect and enhance American national identity in times of crisis. In conjunction with heroes and nostalgia, national identity was an important component in the response of Americans to the tragedy of September 11.

In summary, national identity, which is based in myths, symbols, language and culture, allows citizens of a nation to relate to each other and to differentiate themselves from individuals in other countries. National identity in the United States is anchored by the concept of American exceptionalism as individuals view the country as a “military, economic and cultural super-power.”³³ American national identity is particularly

important in times of crisis, especially when American culture has been threatened by an outside force. During these times, national identity unites Americans, despite their differences, by re-affirming American ideals and values, as well as expressing the military and cultural dominance of the United States. Perhaps most importantly, citizens will enhance national identity when challenged by international foes and *heroic cultural nostalgia* is a means by which this is accomplished. By combining aspects of national identity, nostalgia and myth, I propose that *heroic cultural nostalgia* can be used as a critical perspective to evaluate the pre-game ceremony held in St. Louis on September 17, 2001.

Heroic Cultural Nostalgia

Utilizing related concepts drawn from myth, nostalgia and national identity, I devised a critical framework, *heroic cultural nostalgia*, which can be illustrated by examining the case study in St. Louis. These factors provide an explanation of how contemporary public figures with heroic characteristics remind us of the good ol' days and, through that remembrance, reinforce the idea that we, as Americans, are exceptional. This framework recognizes that these public figures are heroic not because of the feats they accomplish, but because of their ability to remind us of our exceptional qualities. Contemporary figures with heroic characteristics utilize nostalgic feelings and memories, to remind us that the United States is exceptional. For example, following the September 11 attacks there seemed to be nostalgia for World War II, when Americans stood strong in the wake of an attack by an enemy, when feelings of nationalism and patriotism ran high and when Uncle Sam and Rosie the Riveter embodied the heroic acts of everyday

Americans. By conjuring these memories of World War II and other positive aspects of our past and culture, contemporary heroes are able to remind individuals of the ways in which America is exceptional. This combination of factors functions as *heroic cultural nostalgia* and there are many specific examples of how the pre-game ceremony at Busch Stadium illustrates this concept at work.

In the following section I examine the components of *heroic cultural nostalgia* and explain how the components function together by utilizing examples from the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis. First, I identify three heroic characteristics and explain how Cardinals' broadcaster Jack Buck, as well as police, fire and emergency personnel exhibited these traits. Next, I examine the nostalgic elements in the pre-game ceremony and how they served to provoke pleasant memories, by juxtaposing the past and present to provide an escape from inhospitable current conditions. Finally, I look at how the pre-game ceremony reinforced national identity and promoted American exceptionalism. In order to conduct this analysis, I viewed primary source footage of the pregame ceremony on YouTube³⁴ and I obtained the text of Jack Buck's poem from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.³⁵ Additionally, I augmented my primary source research by utilizing newspaper accounts of the ceremony that were published in the days following the ceremony. To begin my analysis, I examine the role of contemporary figures with heroic characteristics in the case study example.

Heroics

In a time of crisis there are three important characteristics that are displayed by individuals with heroic traits. First, individuals must be public figures. Second,

individuals must act as an example for average citizens. Finally, individuals must possess admirable qualities that are valued by members of society. By acting as a model for action through the enactment of behaviors that people should adopt in their lives, certain individuals can be looked to in a time of crisis to set the standard of behavior. By identifying with the admirable characteristics of these individuals, people are able to make a connection with them, which allows the individual to serve as someone to look up to, as well as someone with whom everyday citizens identify. In the pre-game ceremony at Busch stadium, this role was fulfilled specifically by Cardinals' broadcaster Jack Buck, as well as more generally by hundreds of fire and police officers. While neither Buck nor the St. Louis emergency personnel were involved directly in the tragedies in New York City or Washington DC, they serve as symbolic representations of the actual individuals who responded to the terrorist attacks in those cities.

The first heroic characteristic of an exemplary individual in a time of crisis is that they must be a public figure. Jack Buck began broadcasting for the Cardinals in 1954, so he had been on the radio and in the public eye in St. Louis for nearly 50 years at the time of the 2001 terrorist attacks. In addition to his radio work for the Cardinals, he broadcast both baseball and football for national television audiences throughout his career. Buck also played a very active and visible role in the St. Louis community, where he was involved in a number of charitable organizations and often made appearances at special events as the "master of ceremony."³⁶ Given his level of visibility, Buck clearly fulfilled the requirement of being considered a "public figure."

The fire fighters, police officers and EMTs also fulfill the "public figure" requirement but in a different way than did Buck. While Buck can be considered a

“public figure” because of his celebrity, the emergency workers are public figures because of their role in society. Employed as civil servants, the officers serve the public everyday while performing the routine tasks of their jobs. Additionally, these individuals are very visible in public given their easily recognizable uniforms, equipment and vehicles. In addition to serving as public figures, these individuals must also be exemplary models of expected behavior.

The second characteristic of an individual with heroic characteristics is that they act as a model of behavior for others. Jack Buck’s reaction to the tragedy of 9/11 was exemplary. Buck exhibited admirable qualities in three ways: by participating in community events, by expressing his feelings after 9/11 and by encouraging others to take action as well. Even before the pre-game ceremony at Busch Stadium on September 17, Buck had already taken a leading role in the community response to tragedy, as he served as the host of an interfaith remembrance ceremony in the World’s Fair Pavilion in St. Louis.³⁷

Additionally, he wrote his own speech for the ceremony at Busch Stadium, choosing poetry to express his feelings on the tragedy. This allowed Buck’s poem to become a conduit through which people’s emotions could be channeled and showed individuals that it was acceptable to share their feelings on the tragedy. During his poem, he urges citizens to action, stating “If we are involved we shall be resolved to protect what we know is right.”³⁸ Buck encourages people to “be involved” in the response to 9/11 as a means of protecting American interests. Additionally, he expressed the need to “protect” American interests, or “what we know is right.” By showing his involvement in the public expression of emotions following 9/11, and calling for the involvement of

others as well, Buck served as a behavioral example for the general public in the aftermath of the attacks.. Buck, however, was not the only person in the stadium to embody exemplary behaviors during the pre-game ceremony.

In addition to the ways that Jack Buck exhibited model behavior during the pre-game ceremony, the emergency personnel also exhibited model behavior in two ways. First, they served as an embodiment of the first responders to the attacks and second, they provided a direct link to those responders by collecting donations for the relief effort in New York. On the field for the entirety of the pre-game ceremony, clearly evident in the background while Buck was speaking, over 600 fire fighters and police officers filled the warning track, comprising a sea of public servants in the outfield.³⁹ Perhaps evoking a more literal incarnation of the hero, the emergency personnel also expressed model behavior in the days following 9/11. Although the fire fighters and police officers in St. Louis did not personally respond to the terrorist attacks, they served as an embodiment of those who did. By being the first to respond to the tragedies in New York and Washington, D.C., emergency workers exhibited courage and valor, two aspects that contribute to heroic characteristics.

In addition to their presence on the field, the fire fighters at Busch Stadium that night collected funds for the families of rescue workers in New York City. As fans entered the stadium, fire fighters accepted donations to send to the relief effort in New York.⁴⁰ By showing their support of the relief effort and providing an outlet for others to join, the fire fighters served as an example of the generosity and philanthropy that was expected from Americans in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Along with public personas and exemplary behavior, the third heroic characteristic is the possession of identifiable and admirable qualities. As a long standing member of both the baseball community and the press, Jack Buck possessed many admirable qualities to which people could relate. Although many people were aware of Buck's background before the terrorist attacks, his commendable qualities took on a heightened meaning in the context of 9/11. Buck's rise to celebrity was realized in true "American dream" fashion. First, Buck came from a working class background and exhibited initiative, drive, dedication and a commitment to hard work by holding down numerous jobs in high school to help his family through hard times.⁴¹ Additionally, Buck exhibited patriotism and American pride, showcased by his service in the United States military during World War II.⁴² Buck even made the ultimate sacrifice for his country when he was wounded, winning the purple heart for his actions. Finally, Buck was generous and caring of those who were less fortunate, as was shown through his extensive charity work.⁴³ By being hard-working, patriotic and benevolent, Buck possessed the admirable qualities necessary to fulfill the final heroic characteristic.

Not only could Americans identify with the characteristics embodied by Buck, people identified with the emergency personnel following September 11. As we all know, but sometimes fail to recognize, civil servants possess many admirable qualities. Rescue workers are average Americans who are extraordinary everyday because their job requires them to put their personal safety on the line for the benefit of society. People identified with their sacrifice, service, and bravery. Even though the emergency personnel in St. Louis did not directly respond to the events of 9/11, they were symbolic representations of those who actually responded in New York and Washington. Through

civil service, sacrifice and bravery, Americans are able to identify with the rescue workers, thus fulfilling the requirements of the final heroic characteristic. As individuals who possessed heroic characteristics in the wake of national tragedy, Buck and the emergency personnel sought to provide comfort by calling upon examples from the past.

Heroic Nostalgia

As explained earlier in this chapter, nostalgia plays a particularly important role in times of crisis. First, nostalgia evokes pleasant memories of the past in order to distract individuals from the present. Second, nostalgia creates a juxtaposition of past memories with current conditions to provide an escape from an inhospitable present. There were three important channels that created nostalgia during the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis, including Busch Stadium and Jack Buck and the emergency personnel. To begin, I examine the nostalgic memories evoked by the ballpark.

Busch Stadium is a nostalgic location for many residents of St. Louis. Opened in 1966, many St. Louis residents in 2001 had been attending games at the stadium since their childhood. Busch Stadium can be viewed as a modern day arena, a location for contemporary heroics. While ancient heroes faced epic physical challenges and defeated foes in arenas and on quests, contemporary individuals with heroic characteristics who are associated with sport face epic societal challenges in stadiums.

Just by attending an event in Busch Stadium, fans are immediately enveloped in the nostalgia of baseball and Americanism. The stadium is seemingly timeless, and every time fans enter the ballpark it elicits memories of past experiences. The game of baseball itself can provide the same nostalgic feelings and escape to memories of the past. As I

have illustrated, leisure activities, and baseball in particular, are often viewed in a nostalgic context. For many, the game evokes memories of childhood, a simpler time when games were fun, people were innocent and life was easier. The game also evokes nostalgic American feelings, as the game is closely tied to American history. The game played an important role during World War II and is so closely tied to American culture that people mention it in the same breath with apple pie and Independence Day. This is an important component of *heroic cultural nostalgia* because the positive past memories help allay feelings of uncertainty, fear, anger and loss against feelings in the present.

Not only is Busch Stadium nostalgic because it is the location for baseball games, Busch Stadium itself is nostalgic because it is tied to emotional memories for the city of St. Louis. Many exciting events took place in Busch Stadium and attending a game there evokes happy memories of the past for many of those who walk through its gates. These events include, among others, the 1985 National League Championship series home run by Ozzie Smith; Bob Gibson striking out seventeen batters in the 1968 World Series; and Mark McGwire breaking the single season homerun record in 1998.⁴⁴ These moments represent happier times for the city of St. Louis, when the stadium served as the location for these athletic triumphs that brought joy, pride, happiness and celebration to the city. Not only did the home of the Cardinals provide pleasant, nostalgic feelings for the people of St. Louis, so too did the voice of the St. Louis Cardinals, Jack Buck.

Jack Buck augmented the nostalgic characteristics of Busch Stadium through both his presence at the event and through the text of his speech. Buck not only evokes nostalgia, Buck himself helps to create that nostalgia for the fans at the pre-game ceremony. As I stated earlier, Buck had been a broadcaster for the Cardinals for nearly 50

years. Just hearing his voice could provide a tie for many to the past, as his voice had been invited into their homes and cars to bring the games in Busch Stadium to life over the radio. Not only did Buck contribute to the nostalgia of the event with his participation and the memories his voice elicited, he evoked a longing for the good old days through the text of his poem.

Offering a juxtaposition between the present and past Buck recited, “Everyone is saying – the same thing – and praying, that we end these senseless moments we are living. As our fathers did before . . . we shall win this unwanted war.”⁴⁵ In this passage Buck recognizes the need to escape from “senseless” current conditions and nostalgically references the past when “our fathers” were victorious on the battlefield. This passage created a parallel between now and then, which allowed people to remember a past where the United States had overcome tragedy, instead of focusing on a present when the terrorist attacks had left many feeling vulnerable. Additionally, it affirmed the attitude that the United States would win the military conflict that arose following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Joining Busch Stadium and Jack Buck, the emergency personnel also evoked a sense of nostalgia for those who were in attendance.

The participation of the emergency workers in the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis evoked nostalgic memories of six days earlier, when members of the New York Police and Fire Departments heroically risked their lives as the first responders to the tragedy of 9/11. While it may seem confusing that one would fondly look back on the events of the previous week, the emergency personnel did not create longing for the terror, death and destruction; rather, they served as reminders of the bravery, heroism and selflessness of those who responded to the attacks. Seeing the emergency workers from

St. Louis reminded the audience of the events of the previous week, when they watched the events unfold on television and read about it in the newspapers from the safety of their homes. This works, in combination with the nostalgic characteristics of Busch Stadium and Jack Buck, to create an overall nostalgic experience for those in the ballpark that night, where individuals with heroic characteristics invited an audience to recall the good ol' days.

In summary, Jack Buck and the civil servants exhibited heroic characteristics in Busch Stadium, a modern arena. These individuals elicited a more positive interpretation of the crisis facing the nation by evoking nostalgia for the past. In addition to the nostalgia that they created, the heroes also served to heighten people's awareness of American national identity during the pre-game ceremony.

Reconnecting with National Identity

A number of components in national identity factor heavily into *heroic cultural nostalgia*. Most importantly, national identity promotes the idea of American exceptionalism and embraces the idea of the United States as a unique military, economic and cultural super power. The pre-game ceremony in St. Louis featured a number of elements that accomplished this task. These elements include: the text of Jack Buck's poem, the appearance of nationalistic symbols, the 21-gun firework salute, the use of patriotic music and the participation of a military honor guard. To begin, I examine Buck's speech in the context of American exceptionalism.

The poem written and read by Jack Buck during the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis is, overall, an argument for American exceptionalism. From start to finish, the text

serves to establish American exceptionalist feelings and to reaffirm the United States as a cultural, political and military superpower. To begin his speech, Buck writes, “Since this nation was founded . . . under God, more than 200 years ago, we have been the bastion of freedom, the light that keeps the free world aglow.”⁴⁶ This passage shows Buck’s belief in the Puritan roots of the United States, a basic element in American exceptionalism, illustrated by the mention of God, which serves as a nod to the religious founding of the country.

Later in the poem, Buck stresses the fact that the United States will be strong in the face of attack. When he states, “We won’t start . . . but we will end the fight,”⁴⁷ the crowd bursts into applause.⁴⁸ He continues to say, “We have been challenged by a cowardly foe, who strikes and then hides from our view.”⁴⁹ This shows both that nationalist sentiments increase in the face of attack and, that American citizens view the United States as a military superpower, ready to stand in the face of any attack and protect the nation. This passage highlights the military superiority of the United States to other nations by emphasizing that those we fight are “cowardly foes” and we will “end the fight” that they started.

Buck ends his poem essentially guaranteeing the United States eventual victory in this conflict by stating that “we shall win this unwanted war.”⁵⁰ This passage shows that, as a benevolent nation, the United States does not start international conflicts, however, because of the military strength and superiority, the country will successfully defend itself in the face of attack. Buck, exhibiting heroic characteristics, uses his poem to reinforce the exceptionalism and superiority of America. However, his text was not the

only means of expressing American national identity at the ballpark, there were many other examples of American exceptionalism and national identity.

One way that national identity was expressed during the pre-game ceremony was through the prevalence of American flags, patriotic clothing and other uses of red, white and blue. The St. Louis Cardinals provided every fan at the stadium with a small American flag,⁵¹ and many chose to display and wave the flags during the game. In addition to the small, individual flags, an enormous American flag was unfurled in the outfield grass during Buck's poem.⁵² Perhaps the most identifiable symbol of America, the flag reminds people of everything that is associated with American national identity. The flags were accompanied by many hand-painted signs that fans brought to the ballpark, including one sign that was highlighted in the television coverage of the ceremony, which featured the warning, "Don't Tread on Me."⁵³ These signs provided an additional outlet for expressions of nationalist sentiments.

In addition to the display of flags and patriotic signs, clothing was used to express national identity. To show their identification as Americans, many fans chose to augment their red Cardinals gear with white and blue, creating patriotic outfits, which were adorned with accessories, including "Uncle Sam hats" and "red, white and blue ponytail ribbons."⁵⁴ Jack Buck himself was clad in a red blazer, adorned with an American flag pin.⁵⁵ Joining the red, white and blue clothing were some fans who dressed as firefighters and sported red fire helmets emblazoned with "USA."⁵⁶ This expression can be seen as an emulation of individuals with heroic characteristics by the fans, again illustrating the regard the public had for the emergency personnel. All of these expressions of patriotism promoted American exceptionalism and national identity.

The visual expressions of national identity were joined by an audible expression, through the music that was used at the ballpark. Patriotic music abounded at the stadium. The traditional singing of “The Star Spangled Banner” was performed by the St. Louis Christian College Choir. This song is not only important symbolically because it serves as the national anthem, but also in the lyrics which support the importance of the American flag as a national symbol. Another revered patriotic song that was featured during the ceremony was “America the Beautiful,” which played in the background while Buck read his speech.⁵⁷ Additionally, popular, contemporary patriotic songs were utilized, including Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the USA,” that played while fans danced in the stands and Lee Greenwood’s “Proud to Be an American” that played on the jumbo video screen during a montage of patriotic images.⁵⁸ The music promoted feelings of liberty, pride and sentimental remembrances of what it means to be an American.

While music was utilized during many facets of the pre-game ceremony, there was one element that was noticeably quiet, save for the noise it created itself. At the conclusion of Buck’s presentation, the music ended, the audience applauded and then everyone in the stadium stood in silence as they listened to 21 explosions.⁵⁹ This expression is revered as the highest of all military salutes and traditionally features the use of weapons, rather than fireworks. However, the combination of both a military honor and the use of fireworks served to create a visually stunning symbol of American culture. The military implication highlights once again the military superiority of the United States and the fireworks bring to mind Independence Day, a celebration which highlights the birth of our nation in exceptional fashion through revolution.

The military component at Busch Stadium was not limited to the 21-gun salute. During the pre-game ceremony, a military honor guard stood at attention on the infield, presenting the colors of the nation. This too symbolizes the military might and superiority of the United States to all involved. Additionally, honor guards are appointed by the branches of the military to serve as the representations of the armed forces during public appearances.⁶⁰ The use of an honor guard at Busch Stadium shows that the military had reached out to the public to demonstrate military action, presence and security.

The pre-game ceremony in St. Louis embodies the ideals of *heroic cultural nostalgia*. The ceremony featured individuals with heroic characteristics, like Jack Buck and the emergency personnel, who all possessed admirable qualities while serving as models of behavior during a time of crisis. These individuals worked together with their location to elicit nostalgic longings for the past that helped overcome current trepidations. These expressions all referenced and re-invigorated an American national identity grounded in the exceptional qualities of our history and culture. From the music to the apparel to the visual representations of American symbols to the text of Buck's poem, patriotism, affirmations of American values and protection of the United States' reputation as an international superpower were expressed throughout the pre-game ceremony. All of these factors, when viewed as *heroic cultural nostalgia* serve to explain the power and rhetorical importance of the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis on September 17, 2001 as an example of a larger cultural response to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States.

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CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Although the September 11 terrorist attacks took place nearly a decade ago, there are still many relevant reasons to study it today. By analyzing the rhetorical response of popular culture to the events of the terrorist attacks, I have been able to bring some of these reasons to light. In this project, I examined the pre-game ceremony at Busch Stadium, which took place on September 17, 2001 as a case study where *heroic cultural nostalgia* was employed following a national crisis. First, I introduced the project and established baseball as a representative example of the popular culture response to September 11. Second, I described the theoretical concepts of myth, nostalgia and national identity and set up a basic framework for *heroic cultural nostalgia*. Next, I presented an in-depth description of the response of popular culture to September 11 and detailed the elements of the ceremony in St. Louis. Chapter three provided the theoretical basis of *heroic cultural nostalgia* in more detail and applied the concepts to the pre-game ceremony.

In this chapter, I will first expand the work of the case study by discussing implications for *heroic cultural nostalgia* in other popular cultural responses to September 11. Second, I will address the theoretical implications created by this analysis. Third, I examine the practical considerations of this study. Finally, I provide suggestions for further research. Based on the study I conducted regarding the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis, I will now look at how *heroic cultural nostalgia* might work when considering additional popular culture responses to September 11.

Heroic Cultural Nostalgia in Popular Culture Responses to 9/11

As a case study, the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis showcases one example of how *heroic cultural nostalgia* can provide a framework to provide an explanation of the response of popular culture to the tragedy of 9/11. Here, I will briefly describe how *heroic cultural nostalgia* can be seen in additional forms of popular culture responses to the events of September 11, including the “America: A Tribute to Heroes” telethon and the music of country superstar Toby Keith, and in the return of NFL football following the tragedy.

As I discussed in chapter two, “America: A Tribute to Heroes,” was a telethon held on September 21, 2001. The telethon lasted two hours and was aired commercial-free on all four major networks and over 30 cable networks in 210 countries. The event, which was viewed by over 89 million people, received over 300,000 calls from viewers in the first 15 minutes and raised over \$150 million for the 9/11 relief effort.¹ Like the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis, this event can be viewed through the theoretical framework of *heroic cultural nostalgia*.

The celebrities who participated in the telethon exhibited the heroic characteristics I described earlier. First, they are all clearly public figures, given their roles as actors and musicians. Second, they showcase exemplary models of behavior by donating their time and money to the relief effort. Third, the participating celebrities possess admirable characteristics, with which the American public can identify. Celebrities, just like the “regular people” in the United States, were devastated by this tragedy. Additionally, people identified the actors with projects they had done in the past and with characteristics that characters in their movies possess. This association added to their

credibility as individuals with heroic characteristics. For example, people admire characters portrayed by Tom Hanks in movies like *Saving Private Ryan* and *Apollo 13*, both films about American heroics that were released prior to 9/11. His characters possess bravery, patriotism and strength in times of tragedy, characteristics that people in turn recognize when seeing Hanks. Another celebrity participant, Clint Eastwood, also brings to mind admirable characteristics. Known for his work in westerns, the image of Eastwood brings to mind cowboys, strength, manliness, and the conquering of the American frontier. These characteristics are admired in the United States and by watching Eastwood participate in the telethon, the celebrity as an individual with heroic characteristics is reinforced through the admiration and identification with these qualities.

By embodying these characteristics, the celebrities that participated in the telethon evoked nostalgia for the past and provide an escape from the present. Just as the emergency personnel on the field in St. Louis created nostalgia for the bravery that took place on 9/11, so to did actors who told stories of individual heroics that took place during the attacks. Additionally, the musicians provided performances of nostalgic songs, including “New York, New York” and “Blowin’ in the Wind.” These songs have the capability to transport people to different times, whether it’s the heyday of New York City or the peace movement of the 1960s. This longing for a bygone era created by the celebrities served to evoke a feeling of national identity and served to remind viewers of the special nature of America. This was accomplished in many ways, such as the placement of a NYFD helmet on Tony Bennett’s piano during his performance of “New York, New York,” and the patriotic images that were used throughout the broadcast. By fulfilling all of these characteristics, the “America: A Tribute to Heroes” telethon, also

clearly fulfills the framework of *heroic cultural nostalgia* in the same ways as the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis.

Another response by popular culture to the events of September 11 that can be viewed as an example of *heroic cultural nostalgia* is the release of the song, “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue,” by Toby Keith. In this situation, Keith, a country music superstar, exhibits heroic characteristics. Keith, as a recording artist, clearly fulfills the public figure requirement. Additionally, he served as a model for behavior in the days following September 11 with his recording of patriotic music and his involvement in the USO organization.² Finally, Keith possesses admirable characteristics including his work ethic, patriotism and traditional values. As an individual with heroic qualities, Keith was able to evoke nostalgia, which in turn reaffirms American exceptionalism, through his song, “Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue.” Many of his lyrics evoke a longing for an era where his parents fought for this country:

We will always recognize, when we see ol’ glory flying, there’s a lot of men dead so we can sleep in peace at night when we lay down our head. My daddy served in the army, where he lost his right eye. But he flew a flag out in our yard ‘til the day he died. He wanted my mother, my brother, my sister and me, to grow up and live happy in the land of the free.³

This passage evokes nostalgic memories of those who have served our nation in the past and, in return, the freedom that has brought to the United States. His lyrics also reinforce American exceptionalism, particularly when he foreshadows the strength of the military response against the terrorists. Keith sings:

Oh, Justice will be served and the battle will rage. This big dog will fight when you rattle his cage. You'll be sorry that you messed with the US of A, 'cuz we'll put a boot in your ass, it's the American way. Hey Uncle Sam put your name at the top of his list, and the Statue of Liberty started shaking her fist. And the eagle will fly, and there's gonna be hell, when you hear Mother Freedom start ringing her bell! And it'll feel like the whole wide world is raining down on you . . . brought to you courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue.⁴

While these song lyrics may appear to some as crude, they clearly illustrate a belief in American exceptionalism by expressing the idea that a foreign enemy stands no chance against the military and political force of the United States.

Another form of popular culture that responded to the events of September 11 was the National Football League. Just days into the 2001 season when the terrorist attacks occurred, the NFL, like baseball, cancelled games in response to the tragedy. When the teams returned for week three on September 23, the league recognized the tragedy in many ways and this response can be seen as an expression of *heroic cultural nostalgia*. In this scenario, there were a variety of individuals who possessed heroic characteristics. Like the pre-game ceremony in St. Louis, during the national anthem in Seattle, members of the police and fire departments took the field. As explained earlier, the police and fire personnel fulfill all of the heroic characteristics as public figures who possess admirable qualities and act as exemplary models of behavior. In addition to the emergency personnel, in many of the games, the football players were also individuals with heroic characteristics. Clearly the football players are all public figures given their role as professional athletes and teams from New York, the Giants and Jets, served as symbolic

representations of the heroes who responded to the tragedy. Additionally, the New England Patriots were identifiable given their connection to American revolutionary history.

These individuals were able to evoke nostalgia and promote national identity in ways similar to those found in St. Louis. Fans were given flags when they entered stadiums, patriotic music was used, video tributes were played, uniforms were adorned with patriotic patches and flags and military personnel were utilized on-field during pre-game ceremonies.⁵ All of these factors serve to create a longing for the past and to remind American citizens of their exceptional nature. As Toby Keith, the telethon and the pre-game ceremony illustrate, *heroic cultural nostalgia* can be successfully applied to a variety of popular culture responses to the tragedy of September 11. There are also many important theoretical implications brought forward by this project.

Theoretical Implications

This project has a number of important theoretical implications for the field of rhetorical studies. First, this project solidifies the idea that contemporary individuals with heroic characteristics are found within the realm of popular culture and that they play a key role in times of crisis. Second, this project shows that these individuals from popular culture serve to benefit the public through epideictic, rather than epic means. Finally, this project showcases the idea that American exceptionalism, evoked through nostalgia, is a political component of messages produced by popular culture. Overall, this project has shown that *heroic cultural nostalgia* can be seen as a means by which popular culture plays an important role in crisis response.

By building upon the work of Philip J. Chidester, who argues that athletes fulfill the role of the hero in contemporary society,⁶ this project argues that, on a broader scale, a variety of public figures exhibit heroic characteristics. Given the prevalence of popular culture in American society, this is the location for many of our identifiable public figures and, because of its narrative abilities, popular culture provides the grounds to host individuals with heroic characteristics. Robert C. Rowland credits myth's narrative form as one reason it functions so well to help solve seemingly "unsolvable" situations.⁷ Many forms of popular culture, including movies, songs, television shows, popular novels, and even sporting events occur in a narrative form. Thus, popular culture features characters with heroic qualities.

Another important theoretical implication is the way in which these individuals from popular culture achieve their heroism in comparison to their ancient counterparts. While ancient heroes performed literal feats of strength and bravery while perhaps saving a village from a dragon, or by slaying the Minotaur and saving the fair maiden, contemporary individuals exhibit heroic characteristics through their words. While Chidester illustrated this distinction between literal heroics and perceived heroics,⁸ this project distinctly identifies the ways in which contemporary individuals can exhibit heroic characteristics. These tasks, as illustrated before, include evoking nostalgia as a means of reinforcing national identity and reaffirming American exceptionalism.

American exceptionalism itself is key to the third theoretical implication of this project. This project shows that American exceptionalism is a political component of messages produced by contemporary heroes in the arena of popular culture. John Hutcheson, et al. argue that the views Americans hold of themselves identify the United

States as a, “military, economic and cultural ‘superpower,’” and that they view the country as better than any other.⁹ Additionally, this experience of popular culture as a political venue, can explain why there seems to be a long tradition of interaction between presidents, military figures and sporting events. While previous authors have identified many outlets for these expressions, this project solidifies popular culture as a distinct location for these inherently political messages. Additionally, there are many practical considerations to take into consideration, given popular cultures important role in times of crisis.

Practical Considerations

In addition to the theoretical contributions made by this project, it also has practical applications. First, this project shows that popular culture played an instrumental role in the aftermath of September 11. Second, it illustrates the dramatic impact that the terrorist attacks had on American popular culture. Finally, the project highlights the lasting impact that 9/11 had on the subject of the case study, baseball.

As shown in this project, popular culture responded in many ways to the events of September 11. In the immediate aftermath, popular culture came to a standstill as the sporting industry shut down, Broadway closed its doors, movie and television shows were postponed and benefits and remembrance ceremonies were held in place of normal popular culture events.¹⁰ Seeing purveyors of popular culture take time away from normal activities to participate in benefits and remembrance ceremonies was important because, as Toni Fitzgerald explains, people increasingly turn to popular culture for

important information,¹¹ and in this case, they turned to popular culture as a method of coping with tragedy.

Not only was popular culture an important vehicle to help Americans respond to tragedy, the tragedy had an enormous impact on the entertainment industry.

Content was changed in movies and television shows and the purveyors of popular culture took every precaution to be sensitive to the topics related to the terrorist attacks.¹²

Nearly ten years later many of the changes have proven to be temporary but, in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks popular culture took a dramatic turn from the pre-9/11 frivolity to a more reverent and reserved style. Despite some of the seeming triviality of other forms of popular culture in the days preceding 9/11, baseball, given its ties to American history and society, was able to serve as an example for other forms of popular culture on how to respond to tragedy. The final practical consideration of this project is how the events surrounding September 11 impacted the game of baseball.

Many of the changes that were implemented as a response to the terrorist attacks of 2001 have been permanently adopted by Major League Baseball. First, the increased security measures that were implemented following 9/11 have become standard protocol at stadiums around the country. People today still face additional searches, restrictions on items that can be brought into stadiums and additional security measures to access certain areas of the stadiums. Security measures were not the only changes that became permanent. Second, the singing of “God Bless America,” during the seventh inning stretch, which was mandated by Commissioner Bud Selig after 9/11, has remained a fixture at all major league games, and each year on September 11, ceremonies are held during all Major League Baseball games in remembrance of the terrorist attacks. This

shows the continued relationship between baseball and on a larger scale American popular culture in general, to political events. While this project highlights many of the theoretical implications and practical applications of the concept of *heroic cultural nostalgia* there are limitations of this study and areas that deserve further exploration.

Suggestions for further Research

The major limitation with this project is the scope of its focus. This thesis is written as a case study, meaning that I focused my examination on one specific popular culture response to one specific national tragedy. It is not possible, given the limited scope of this project, to illustrate how all of popular culture responded to this crisis situation. This research is generalizable to the other popular culture responses to September 11, but cannot be generalized on a larger scale; because of this limitation there are avenues of research that deserve further examination.

First, subsequent research should examine if there is a specific type of crisis that can be studied with *heroic cultural nostalgia*. The example in this case study is an instance of foreign attack on United States soil, but, it would be interesting to determine if this framework could be applied universally to any type of tragedy, including, among others, assassinations, wars, economic crises, and natural disasters. For example, could the events after Hurricane Katrina be viewed through the framework of *heroic cultural nostalgia*.

Second, further research could examine *heroic cultural nostalgia* in a historic context. Researchers could examine past American crises and see if heroic cultural nostalgia is applicable to past events. Researchers could examine events like the bombing

of Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, or the Oklahoma City bombing to determine if the framework would be applicable in those situations as well.

Finally, further research should examine how long the results of *heroic cultural nostalgia* last. This study has shown that the framework showcases an effective response in the short term, but subsequent research should be implemented to determine if *heroic cultural nostalgia* loses its influence and ability the further away from an event a society moves. And, if the events lessen, research needs to examine for how long the process is effective.

Despite these limitations, this project served to further the research on the importance of the reaction of American popular culture to situations of crisis. September 11 represents one of the darkest moments in American history, however the response of popular culture allowed people to look to an individual with heroic characteristics and escape to happier, nostalgic times and to reaffirm the idea that they were still special. By studying the pre-game ceremony held at Busch Stadium on September 17, 2001, this project can provide generalized conclusions on the importance of popular culture in the aftermath of 9/11.

¹ABCNews.com, "60 Million Watch America: A Tribute for Heroes," <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/story?id=102309&page=1>.

²Tobykeith.com, "Biography," <http://www.tobykeith.com/about.html>.

³Songlyrics.com, "Toby Keith – Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue Lyrics," <http://www.songlyrics.com/toby-keith/courtesy-of-the-red-white-and-blue-lyrics/>.

⁴Songlyrics.com, "Toby Keith – Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue Lyrics."

⁵Gary Mihoces, "Emotional Day for NFL," *USA Today*, September 24, 2001, Sports Section, 1C.

⁶Phillip J. Chidester, "'The Toy Store of Life': Myth, Sport and the Mediated Reconstruction of the American Hero in the Shadow of the September 11th Terrorist Attacks," *Southern Communication Journal* 74 (2009): 355.

⁷Robert C. Rowland, "On Mythic Criticism," *Communication Studies* 41 (1990), 102.

⁸Chidester, "The Toy Story of Life," 356.

⁹John Hutcheson, et al., "U.S. National Identity, Political Elites, and a Patriotic Press Following September 11," *Political Communication* 21 (2004), 29.

¹⁰ For a more detailed description of the response of popular culture to 9/11, please see Chapter 2.

¹¹ Fitzgerald, Toni, "Yes, America Does Turn to John Stewart," *Media Life Magazine*, November 8, 2006.

¹² For a more detailed explanation of post-9/11 popular culture, please see Chapter 2.

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