

Open: A Narrative Criticism

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Open: A Narrative Criticism

“Over the last 21 years, I have found loyalty. You have pulled for me on the court - and also in life. I have found inspiration. You have willed me to succeed, sometimes even in my lowest moment. And I have found generosity. You have given me your shoulder to stand on, to reach for my dreams. Dreams I could never have reached without you” (Andre Agassi, Retirement Speech, 2006).

Introduction

He has won eight Grand Slams, the biggest tennis tournaments in the world, an Olympic gold medal representing the United States of America, seventeen ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) Master Series and twenty seven ATP tour tournaments. He held a number one world ranking for over thirty consecutive weeks and is noted as one of the greatest legends in the history of tennis. Andre Agassi has had one of the most successful careers as a professional tennis player, yet has despised the sport for most of his life (Agassi). Since Andre was a baby, his father forced him to swing a racket while he played in his crib. By the time Andre could hit a tennis ball over the net, his father would not let him leave until he hit two- thousand five hundred balls each day, figuring he would hit seventeen- thousand five hundred balls each week. By the end of one year, Andre would have hit nearly one million balls. As his father said, “A child who hits one million balls each year will be unbeatable” (Agassi, 30). This type of thinking is why his violent father sent his prodigy Andre across the country to a tennis academy, where he had to survive as a thirteen year old boy dealing with constant pressure from those surrounding him.

Eventually Andre would change his image countless times, cause destruction towards the academy and himself, be disrespectful to the game of tennis, clearly a cry for

help. However, no one was there to help him. As he began playing professional tennis tournaments, the media resented him and Agassi continued to rebel and resent himself and his life. However, as much as Andre Agassi hated the game of tennis, he hated his perfectionism as much. It is clear Andre lived a life tormented by self-destruction and perfectionism, even as he changed the game of tennis forever (Agassi, 3).

Background

When Andre Agassi retired from tennis in 2006, his next step as a perfectionist was to tell his story; a battle overcoming himself, his image, the media, and tennis. In Andre Agassi's autobiography *Open*, Andre opens up about the regretful decisions he made in his life, and the influential figures he met who shaped him into the man he is today, one of the most beloved tennis players in history. Andre begins his story when at a young age, his father would make bets worth an entire month's pay that seven year old Andre would beat middle-aged men in tennis matches. The pressures Andre faced then was nothing compared to feeling isolated at Nick Bolleteri's tennis camp, where he did not receive a proper education. At the age of thirteen, Andre turned to drinking hard liquor, smoking marijuana, and changed his look to a Mohawk, earrings, and eyeliner as he cried out for help (Agassi, 33). However, nobody objected as he continued to win matches. He shocked the world as he won professional tournaments at 16 and his first Grand Slam, Wimbledon, in 1992, but the media began to resent this young teenager. Andre was so talented, yet hated the game of tennis for almost all of his life. The only thing that kept him going was his perfectionism and the individualistic game of tennis.

Andre eventually found healthy ways to make himself happy, which included helping others and a support team that truly cared about the well-being of Andre. With these positive influences in his life, Andre found a way to continue to compete, challenge himself, and stay motivated when others would have quit. Andre's story of finding his way through a life full of obstacles is truly an inspiration and can motivate many people who chose to read his book.

Andre Agassi tells his story of falling into depression, turning to crystal meth and other recreational drugs to find pleasure, and his hatred toward the game of tennis. However, Andre Agassi overcame his struggles and used this motivation to help others. Andre Agassi opened a charter school for underprivileged children in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Las Vegas. The school, Agassi College Preparatory Academy, raised over eighty-five million dollars and has changed countless amounts of lives (Nov 9, 2009). The way Andre fought his demons was finding peace through helping others. This motivational story, where Andre is honest about the struggles in his life and how he overcame it, is very important for communication scholars. Andre Agassi makes a connection with his audience, the readers, which compel them to keep reading. After finishing the book, the audience can hopefully reevaluate their own lives and change them for the better by the means of competing better in tennis or becoming a better human being (stopping drug and alcohol abuse), finding true happiness, or living a healthier life. In addition, the audience can get a lot out of Andre's book because he is brutally truthful that they sympathize with him, but also feel like they experienced it with him. At the same time, they can relate to his story with their own life. This is what makes

the book so amazing and his storytelling abilities so inspirational. If Andre can make it through difficult times, then the audience can as well. Andre lived a life full of pressure from not only society, the media, his father, and his coaches, but also from himself and his obsessive perfectionism. Communication scholars can see how the audience has taken Andre's experience and story as he overcame his own obstacles and can hopefully be inspired to do the same.

Tennis players, athletes, or any human being struggling with the daily pressure of isolation and perfectionism would find *Open* truly inspiring and a relatable story as well. Although Andre is a wealthy superstar, he has been through an incredible amount in his life and can inspire anyone who is depressed and unhappy. Andre had to live an extremely lonely life with no one truly looking out for his best interest. He had to grow up very quickly without support, eventually believing money and winning would create happiness. When he realized this was not the case, he continued to find ways to rebel.

Athletes will enjoy *Open* because they understand the pressures and emotions that come with a sport and it truly captivates the reader's interest. Tennis players will enjoy this book because Andre gives accounts of all his tennis matches and strategies to overcome even the worst situations, on and off the court.

Anyone struggling with finding themselves would truly benefit from *Open* because Andre hit rock bottom as a person and eventually made his way back to the top. This book is very important to the audience because they feel like they are part of his life, and may have experienced similar struggles. Even though most of the audience have not

been professional athletes nor have made millions of dollars, they can still feel like they relate to Andre's story. This book makes the audience feel that if Andre could overcome such obstacles and in the end become truly happy, then they can as well. It makes the audience wonder how Andre overcame his struggles to be such a successful human being.

How did Andre overcome his battle with depression and struggles with the media and the pressure he put on himself? Andre eventually found ways to conquer his demons and eventually love himself and the support group around him. In this paper, I am going to explain the struggles Andre dealt with from childhood to the bad choices he made when he hit rock bottom. Then I am going to explain how he overcame these obstacles to become one of the greatest athletes to conquer his demons and eventually was able to educate thousands of young children and teach them to have dreams of their own. Most importantly, I will explain how the rhetor (Andre Agassi) gets the reaction from the audience and the world as he did. The way he is so brutally honest and made people feel empathetic for himself, allows the audience to feel like they can learn something from his story. Many different types of audiences would benefit from *Open* because the rhetor is so passionate, compassionate, and most importantly, honest. Lastly, I will describe a method and framework to discuss Andre's artifact and analyze his decisions and the communication he builds with the audience. Andre Agassi shared his story about overcoming obstacles such as depression and perfectionism in order to share his wisdom

with the audience, where he speaks from the heart to inspire others to overcome similar situations.

Reactions from the Audience

When Agassi's *Open* came out in 2009, there was much controversy in the media with sport reporters and critics concerning his candid autobiography. Agassi's honest and open artifact caused people to speculate about the game of tennis. Tennis has been described as a "rich man's sport" with no secrets ever being revealed. However, Andre unleashes all of his memories including the good, the bad, the obstacles, and the challenges he faced. He opens up about his abuse of crystal meth, his heavy drinking at the age of thirteen, his violent father, and the media that led to his insecurities and self hatred. Michael Mewshaw from *The Washington Post* reported, "Andre Agassi... has produced an honest, substantive, insightful autobiography... The bulk of this extraordinary book vividly recounts a lost childhood, a Dickensian adolescence, and a chaotic struggle in adulthood to establish identity" (Book Review: 'Open by Andre Agassi, 333).

Many tennis critics felt offended that Andre Agassi lied and cheated his way out of a prestigious sport. Tennis has been known for being a classy and respectable sport. Andre was able to single handedly tarnish that reputation with his drug abuse, lies and hostility towards the game. When a doctor working with the ATP called Andre and informed that he failed a drug test, testing positive in crystal meth, Andre created a string of lies to officials. In order to get out of any consequences or suspensions, he said he drank a spiked soda and the ATP discharged the failed drug test immediately. By telling

his story in *Open*, it showed how the ATP is lenient towards star athletes and turn a blind eye when mistakes are made. People from the ATP and the tennis world felt Andre put them in a bad light and embarrassed tennis as a sport. Tennis critics asked some of the best tennis players in the world, including Martina Navratilova, Rafael Nadal, and Boris Becker on how this affected the game of tennis. The number two ranked player in the world, Rafael Nadal, believed this is the last thing tennis needed. Boris Becker, another legend in the game of tennis quoted, “[I’m] struggling to get my head around why Andre would confess to something so damaging as taking drugs and then getting away with it?” (Agassi Drug Scandal: Tennis Legends React). Sports critics compared Andre’s crystal meth abuse to the “baseball drug scandal” on how society allows star athletes to avoid consequences for their actions (Agassi Admits Using Drugs in his Memoir).

However, many other critics believe this autobiography is so pure and honest that it inspires hope to all athletes and human beings. Sean Gregory from *Time* believes, “Agassi may have penned one of the best sports autobiographies of all time. Check – it’s one of the best memoirs out there, period” (Andre Agassi Unstrung - *Time*). The way Andre conquered his demons and fell in a love with the girl of his dreams lets us believe in perfect endings. He brings romanticism along with realism as he explains his life. The way he overcame his obstacles and turned to helping others is an inspiring story. Andre was the oldest man to win his last open and ended his professional journey at the happiest he has ever been. It truly is a “heartful memoir...Agassi style is open, all right, and his book, like so many of his tennis games, is a clear winner” (*O, The Oprah Magazine*).

Struggles

Andre Agassi's *Open* is a contemporary piece because it reveals the truth that even the number one tennis player in the world can make mistakes. Although he may look perfect on the outside, he was not. Few people expected Andre Agassi to have ever dreaded or hated the game of tennis. They never knew how much he suffered as a young child. People assumed he was arrogant to have a "team" of five of his friends travel with him at all times, but in reality he was lonely. He had been abused from the beginning of his life, so he needed people to surround him to help him cope with the struggles he endured as a professional tennis player. This book is significant for the present because people assume athletes, actors, and other wealthy important people don't have worries or problems in their life. From the exterior, they seem to have everything. However, money does not buy happiness, and neither does wealth or fame. As famous as Andre became, he was never truly happy, until he became the person he was proud of. It was not until Andre realized that if he "was to remain *this Andre* for the rest of my life, that's what I find truly depressing and shameful" (Agassi, 253). The changes Andre made after he hit rock bottom can inspire many athletes and people today.

Overcoming Obstacles

When Andre was twenty-seven years old, he was ranked #144 in the world and it was his lowest ranking since he was sixteen years old. No one would have ever imagined Andre could have made a comeback, especially if they knew what was going on in his personal life. He had been using crystal meth, was divorcing his famous Hollywood wife

Brooke Shields, and had shattered hopes for the future. He committed himself to his loyal brother, his best friend and trainer Gil, and his wise coach Brad. He put himself out there completely helpless and vulnerable and told the truth to all those who loved him. For most people, this is the hardest thing to do, when we eventually come clean of all of our actions and put ourselves out in the open with nothing to hide. Anyone reading the book can realize how scary it is to be as vulnerable as Andre was and how strong he was to give himself the opportunity to change. From that point on, Andre did whatever he could to get back on the right track. His first truly gratifying experience occurred when he helped save his best friend's daughter from a car accident. Andre used his own money and time to have her transported via helicopter and put her in the best intensive care unit. This is the first time Andre felt proud of who he was and from that moment on, he wanted to continue to help others.

As Andre regained his balance of life with the help of the team around him, he also strived to meet the girl of his dreams, professional tennis player Steffi Graf. She became his backbone and strength, while he worked to get her to even go on a date with him. Andre turned his life around and became someone who he was truly proud of. His story continues as he explains the rest of his career in his narrative.

Theory

Alasdair MacIntyre, a famous philosopher, "once described human beings as 'essentially a story-telling animal'" (Foss, 307). Narratives help human beings use real life experiences from places, events, and people to help others make decisions and

choices in the future. By sharing these stories from the past, it can help people who are going through similar life-experiences make the best decision for themselves. As Foss said, “people tell stories in order to do certain things, to attain interactional claims” (Foss, 310). Autobiographies are a type of narrative. People go through life telling their story, sharing their experiences, and trying to come to terms with the choices they made and how it helped or hurt them. Many famous actors, politicians, athletes, and superstars share their fairytale stories from failure to success to motivate and inspire people to achieve their dreams as well. Andre Agassi is a clear example of this.

Narrative criticism has much more to it than just being a persuasive technique of story-telling. In fact, communication scholar, Walter Fisher claimed, “stories are fundamental to communication because they provide structure for our experience as humans and because they influence people to live in communities that share common explanations and understanding” (Fisher, 239). Narratives help people communicate from different cultures, time periods, and places. We can learn and grow from the mistakes a rhetor has made, as he shares his story through his narrative. At the same time, narratives can teach us about moral constructs through the wisdom and truth of the rhetor. Literary critic, Hayden White has been quoted saying, “story forms not only permit us to judge the moral significance of human life, but also provide the means by which to judge them, even while we pretend to be merely describing them” (Lewis, 272). Although it may seem like rhetors are just describing events in their life, they are in fact, teaching us how to make the right and moral decision.

The study of narrative discourse has had a long history. It dates back to classical Greece and Rome, where philosophers Aristotle and Quintilian wrote about the study of narration. Communication scholars brought it into the communication discipline when, “Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis theorized the use of narrative for studying interpersonal relationships, suggesting that to ‘have or be in a relation is to have or be in a story’” (Foss, 309). One of the reasons narrative criticism is used in communication research is because of the audience’s reactions to the rhetor. The audience can create a relationship with the storyteller as they learn from the challenges the rhetor faced.

The audience is very important to narrative criticism. In fact, audiences are much more involved than in any other forms of discourse. “What makes it different is that the narrative creates for both the storyteller and the audience a personal involvement in the narrative world and the act of the narrative” (Foss 308). The audience and the storyteller share a bond, where they feel an emotional connection with the characters, settings, and places in the story. However, one thing that is very important is “both the narrator and the audience must recognize the discursive form of the story and understand the story’s meaning” (Foss, 309). There is definitely an involvement between the audience and the storyteller, as the storytellers’ share their experiences in the form and content of the story. The storyteller invites the audience to then respond to the evaluation of the world, which is presented in the story.

Narratives can be distinguished by other rhetorical forms by four characteristics. Narratives are comprised of events that are active, with at least two events occurring.

Narratives must be organized by time and put in chronological order. The narrator must have casual relationships between events in the story. Although it may not seem evident, there is always some sort of relationship among the stories. Finally, a narrative must have a unified subject (Lewis, 267). All narratives possess three qualities that make them inherently coherent and meaningful: wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation (Thatcher & Moore, 20). Wholeness refers to the honesty the narrator must have present in their narrative. Then there must be a transformation, where a change occurs to allow the rhetor to become a better human being. Narratives depict some sort of change. The nature of the change is defined by stipulating relationships between earlier and later events in the story. Finally, self-regulation refers to the preserved meaning in which the rhetor continuously emphasizes stories that relate to the unified subject.

Method Framework

I will follow the guidelines for narrative criticism to analyze *Open*. There is a distinct method to analyze a narrative artifact. The first step in a narrative analysis is to identify the objective of the action in the story. This is the time when the audience can make the best guess of a situation the story is addressing. In other words, what is the story teller trying to do? The aim is to identify what you believe this objective is. “The nature of the narrated world that is developed, including the settings, the characters, and other features, will provide you with clues as to the action the narrative is supposed to be performing” (Foss 311). There are many objectives that commonly characterize stories which include teaching, constructing or offering lessons, clarify thinking or to make

sense of something, helping the storyteller or the audience function more effectively in the present, gaining self knowledge and constructing an identity (Foss 313). These are just a few examples of objectives, which can change from storytellers to situations and audience perceptions.

The second step in a narrative analysis is identifying the features of the narrative. “After you have identified a major objective of the narrative you are analyzing, your next step is to determine the features of the story that contribute to the achievement of the objective” (Foss, 312). In this step, it is important to understand why the storyteller made certain choices about how to shape the story. He uses features, such as the setting, the characters, the events, the themes, the relationships all in a way to shape his story. He writes a certain way to the audience, where he has to understand the evaluation of the audience’s knowledge, personality, and abilities (Foss). Even the narrator writes in a certain way about himself, his choices, and the type of vocabulary he uses so that he can make a connection with the audience as well. He purposely uses characters, and the places he has been, so we understand the rhetor and his purpose better.

The final step in a narrative analysis is to assess the narrative. The evaluation of the narrative includes “the scrutiny of the objective itself to determine whether it is an appropriate one, and the assessment of the strategies used in the narrative to see whether they accomplish the objective and allow the narrative to work” (Foss, 315). In the first kind of evaluation, “you reflect on the legitimacy or soundness of the objective given what you know about the rhetorical situation in which it took place – the context, the storyteller, and the audience” (Foss, 315). In the second evaluation, the features of the

story are compared to the objective to see if they align and if the objective was accomplished.

Application

Andre Agassi's *Open* can be analyzed through the narrative criticism method (Fisher, 337). In the first step, we as the audience must find out what Andre was trying to teach us. The objective of his story was to tell the truth about his life. The media, his fans, and even the people closest to Andre had skewed images of this tennis icon. The media had resented him or loved him, depending on how well he was doing in tennis. Andre wanted to get rid of this "tennis stereotype" and tell the world who he truly is; an ordinary man who overcame obstacles, just like anyone else. In fact, most people assume superstars have it easy and are blessed from the start. Andre is trying to inform us that it is quite the contrary. Andre gives us the honest truth as he struggled with tough situations, found love in helping others, and finally become the man he wanted to be. He lays it all down in his honest novel and for once in his life, he tells the truth. He did hate tennis, but played to make money. He did lie to the ATP and used an illegal substance, crystal meth, and he did become extremely depressed. He finally reveals to everyone about the person he was, and the person he became and he opens up for the first time in his life to his fans and the audiences who read *Open*.

In the second step of the analysis, we as the audience will identify the features of the narrative. This means we will take certain scenes, characters, places, and events in the rhetor's life and explain how the features of the story contribute to the achievement of the

objective. We will analyze why Andre, the rhetor, wrote the way he did, choose the scenes he did, and described his life in his honest way. He had a purpose, so the audience would be empathetic towards his hard life and see how vulnerable Andre really was. In the next few paragraphs, I will choose quotes from *Open*, which truly emphasizes how the objective was reached.

From the first page of *Open*, we get a sense of how Andre grew up. We realize he had a tough childhood as he was born to be a “winner.” His father would expect nothing less, other than to have the greatest tennis player in the world. The pressures he put on Andre were overwhelming. The audience truly empathizes with Andre as we can only imagine how a young six year old boy could be faced with such challenges and abuse. By the time Andre was thirteen years old, he was sent to a tennis academy to fend for himself. “People like to call the Bollettieri Academy a boot camp, but it's really a glorified prison camp... The constant pressure, the cutthroat competition, the total lack of adult supervision – it slowly turns us into animals” (Agassi, 74). Andre was so confused at this time in his life, but he had no adult supervision or role models to be there for him. He had to grow up on his own, at such a young age. Andre explains this to the audience, so we can understand why he started to misbehave and caused chaos. He chose this path because he was lonely and without any guidance.

Andre, as a rhetor, changes his storyline from having the audience pity him as a small boy to a young teenager causing ruckus and misbehaviors. He explains how he became a masked avenger, trying to abolish the tennis academy and starving for

attention. At the time, adults must have disliked Andre and thought he was nothing but trouble. But, as the audience, we can see he was just crying out for help.

“No one seems to notice my antics anymore. I’ve consumed gallons of whiskey, chew tobacco, hardcore weed like Skoal and Kodiak. After losses I stick a plum-sized wad of chew inside my mouth. The bigger the loss, the bigger the wad.

What rebellion is left? What new sin can I commit to show the world I’m unhappy and want to go home” (Agassi, 86).

Andre must have seemed like a nightmare as a teenager, but all he craved was love. As the audience, we begin to understand why Andre misbehaved with childish behaviors and turned to drugs and alcohol. It was not in his character, but rather a sign that he was lost without any direction in his life.

As Andre continued to win and become a star, he still had no one around him that supported him or cared for his overall well-being. He traveled with a coach who terrorized him, but worst of all, the media began to attack him as well. We, as the audience, already know how lost Andre was before he became famous. We can only imagine how he must have felt when people began to notice this prodigy as he was forced in the limelight. Andre did not know how to deal with this added pressure. “But no one can make me ready for the battle with the media, because it’s not really a battle, it’s a massacre. Each day brings another anti-Agassi screed in another magazine or newspaper... I’m a punk, I’m a clown, I’m a fraud, I’m a fluke” (Agassi, 123). We realize that Andre was bewildered and did not know how to cope with his success. He

had already mentioned how he hated tennis and wanted to go home. It must have been terrible to be judged by the entire world when he truly did not want to be there to begin with. However, he hoped if he continued to make money, the emptiness would close and he would eventually become happy.

Andre Agassi eventually had enough money to be set for life, in addition to being extremely wealthy and famous. He began to win more matches, but this did not lead to happiness. He married a Hollywood actress, Brooke Shields, yet the empty void in his life was still present. A “buddy” of his offered him crystal meth, and he decided to try it. This was the only time Andre felt happy and euphoric, that is, until he would crash hours later. Andre was confused with himself and unhappy with who he was as a human being.

“I tell myself that you can’t be unhappy when you have money in the bank and own your own plane. But I can’t help it, I feel listless, hopeless, trapped in a life I didn’t choose, hounded by people I can’t see...Feeling depressed about nothing, about life in general, is another thing altogether.” (Agassi, 232)

At this point of the story, we as an audience feel empathy and wonder when Andre will change. We know how great of an athlete he is, but when will he have his breaking moment and become the beloved athlete and human?

When Andre hit rock bottom, he decided he was going to make a change. He was going to stop drinking, abusing crystal meth, and recommit himself to tennis. With this being said, he wanted to only surround himself with people who had his best interest in heart. He told all those who loved him the truth about his life, his depression, and his

drugs. For once, he was honest and completely vulnerable. This is how Andre, the rhetor, is throughout his entire book. Andre told the truth about the pressure, the rage, and the abandonment he felt. From that point on, he only had positive influences in his life, (Perry, J.P., Gil, Brad, and eventually Steffi) and started his process of becoming happy. “Sports writers rip me about my entourage. They say I travel with all these people because it feeds my ego. But these people around me aren’t an entourage, they’re my team and family” (Agassi, 154). Andre admitted he did not want to be lonely, so his team travelled with him and encouraged him to keep on going.

Andre’s turning point occurs in a time of sorrow. Andre’s trainer Gil’s daughter became deathly ill and Andre used his money and time to help her. He bought her everything she needed to comfort her, as well as flying and putting her in the best medical care in the country.

“A look of pure relief, and gratitude and joy, washes over her face, and in this look, in this courageous little girl, I find the thing I’ve been seeking, the philosopher’s stone that united all the experiences, good and bad, of the last few years. Her suffering, her resilient smile in the face of that suffering, my part in easing her suffering – this, this is reason for everything” (Agassi, 255).

It is at this moment when Andre realized his passion in life was helping others. From this point on, we as the audience believe Andre has overcome his obstacles. He was on the right path and will become truly happy. “I’m financially able to think larger, to widen me lens, and in 1997, though I’ve hit rock bottom, or because I’ve’ hit rock

bottom, I'm ready" (Agassi, 261). Andre began planning a charter school and he continued to commit himself to the people he loved and tennis.

It was at this time in Andre's life when he met the women of his dreams, Steffi Graf. He worked hard to date her, and treated her like a princess. He promised her he would always love her and in return, is finally proud of the man he had become. Andre had a fairytale ending, when he found his princess and fell in love. We, as the audience, were happy that Andre and Steffi get married. From there on out, Andre continued to do well in tennis and became the oldest man to win the U.S. Open, which symbolized him overcoming his obstacles. When he finally retired, Andre made a courageous last stand, where he delivered one of the most stirring farewells ever heard in the history of tennis.

"The scoreboard said I lost today, but what the scoreboard doesn't say is what it is I have found. Over the last twenty one years, I have found loyalty. I have found inspiration. You have willed me to succeed, sometimes even in my lowest moments. You have given me your shoulders to stand on, to reach for my dreams" (Agassi, 379).

This final speech represented the progress Andre made in his life. He told the tennis fans, how much he conquered, fought, and overcame. It was not easy, but it was worth it. We as the audience, become emotional, as we have shared his experiences, and felt his presence. We rode on Andre's journey and fell in love with the man he became.

After analyzing the features of the narrative, I come to the final step in a narrative analysis where I assess the narrative. In this stage, we as the audience must evaluate

Andre's storyline and see if his objective was appropriate and whether it was accomplished. After reading the book, I felt like a completely changed human being. I was inspired to become a better tennis player and human being. I asked six of my teammates on my collegiate tennis team who read the book on their perspective of the book and we all believe Andre reached his objective by telling the truth about his life and coming clean with his past and the mistakes he made. He taught us a lesson about the challenges in life we all will face and how it is possible to overcome them. He has changed our opinion about fame and wealth because at the end of the day, it will not make someone happier. Finding true love and surrounding yourself by people who have your best interest in heart is one of the only cures to becoming genuinely happy. In *Open's* acknowledgment, Andre told us he wrote this book for his children. "I hope it helps them avoid some traps I walked right into. More, I hope it will be one of many books that gives them comfort, guidance, pleasure" (Agassi, 388). This story will not only guide and comfort his children, but rather anyone reading his book. After analyzing *Open* with a narrative criticism method, we as the audience can take a lot out of his storyline and the message Andre Agassi told us, which is the possibility and ability to overcome obstacles.

Conclusion

The findings of the analysis of Andre Agassi's *Open* contribute to rhetorical theory, and in specific narrative criticism. By engaging in Agassi's autobiography, I hoped to demonstrate the role communication plays in understanding and interpreting

rhetors and the truth behind their narratives. I also wanted to understand how the audience could be influenced by a narrative. I demonstrated this through applying the narrative method to my artifact. Once I identified the objective of Andre's story, I then analyzed the features that supported his objective. Finally I assessed the narrative and evaluated how the objective was met. I analyzed it, as an audience would, as if we were working together to put the rhetorical theory into rhetorical practice. Andre wrote a truthful memoir in order to show the world how he overcame tough situations throughout his life, and could inspire others to do the same.

In our society, we often assume famous and wealthy people live perfect happy lives. Most of us strive to become as well off as they are, figuring we will be extremely happy and loved. By using Andre Agassi's story, we see this is not the case at all. Andre had to overcome many obstacles and challenges throughout his life to eventually become one of the most beloved tennis players in history. He did not have an easy life and was not happy because he had money. He only became genuinely happy when he was surrounded by people who loved him and when he eventually found his passion through helping others. Andre wrote his autobiography *Open* in order to show the world who he truly was as a human being. He put himself out there and was completely vulnerable for the first time in his life. He talked about how he used to lie to the press and how he actually felt about his life, tennis, and the media. The reason the audience felt so compelled to read and to listen to Andre is because he was so honest. The audience felt part of Andre's journey and felt like they could become better tennis players, athletes,

and human beings as well. By using the narrative method to critique Andre Agassi's *Open* we can see how the audience can learn from Andre's mistakes and how he overcame obstacles, just like all humans make.

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