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Reframing The National Football League:
An Organizational Analysis Of The Construction Of A Modern Spectacle

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Reframing a Modern Spectacle: Organizational Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems in the NFL	1
A Perfect Union: The NFL and Television	18
Binary Structures of the NFL's Televised Spectacle	39
Excavating the <u>North Dallas Forty</u> : A Popular Fiction Representation of Competition, Celebrity, and Big Business in the NFL Spectacle	55
Conclusion: The Next Evolution of the NFL Spectacle—A Spectator's Fantasy	69
Bibliography	80

Reframing the NFL:

An Organizational Analysis of the Construction of a Modern Spectacle.

Scott Charles Lewis

ABSTRACT

Popular and consumer cultures share a similar trajectory in the United States with spectacle and money being key ingredients in the construction of both. This is most apparent in the sports industry in America with billions of dollars in revenue generated every year. During the first half of the twentieth century sports like baseball and boxing commanded a significant amount of cultural and economic capital. It was not unheard of for sports teams, talented athletes and even a few select coaches to ascend to a legendary or even mythical status. The spectacle and revenue generating capacity of amateur and professional sports was considerable during this time, but it was not until the early 1960s that the true potential for an American sports was constructed. The introduction of television in the development of the National Football League's spectacle redefined what sports in the United States means to popular and consumer cultures. The enormity of the National Football League's premier annual spectacle, the Super Bowl, is a testament to the sport's dominance of American popular and consumer cultures. By analyzing the National Football League's formative years during the 1960s and 1970s, it is my intention to demonstrate how the NFL was able to reframe its cultural product, and achieve an unprecedented social and economic status in American culture. I will employ

an organization set analysis of cultural industry systems proposed by Paul M. Hirsch in conjunction with Clifford Geertz and Jerome Bruner's studies on the cultural power and significance of the narrative form to trace the trajectory of the NFL's social and economic success. Popular fiction will also be included to demonstrate how thoroughly professional football infiltrated popular and consumer cultures and changed how Americans viewed televised sports. American sports have undergone amazing changes over the last century, but it was the National Football League and television that changed what the sports industry means to American culture.

Reframing a Modern Spectacle:
Organizational Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems in the NFL

Identifying and deciphering the meanings of cultural texts is a slippery task. Communicating a specific meaning for a cultural text is just as difficult. Multiple perspectives and interpretations from cultural participants and observers make the possibility of reaching a singular meaning to any cultural text extremely improbable if not impossible. My interest, however, is not a quest to decode a universal meaning embedded within a cultural text. Rather, I seek to examine how a text is packaged and communicated to a mass audience. The emergence of the television in the middle of the 20th century had an enormous impact on how texts were packaged and communicated. Television provided a conduit for a carefully and deliberately packaged professional sports product called the NFL that over the next two decades became one of the most dominant cultural institutions in the United States. The construction of the NFL product relied heavily on dualistic texts, and these texts helped change football games into modern sport spectacles that communicated to generations of Americans commercialized values of masculinity, competition, success and sexuality. The construction of the NFL's indoctrinating process is of particular interest. By employing cultural criticisms from Clifford Geertz, Jerome Bruner, and Paul M. Hirsch, I will examine how the use of binary structures within the NFL narratives, such as team and player marketing strategies, broadcasting innovations, viewer/consumer development, and popular fiction, during the

1960s and 1970s were reframed by cultural industry systems which ultimately changed how sports were represented in late 20th century popular culture.

The inspiration for my analysis is largely rooted in personal experiences dating back to an early childhood full of tactile and visual encounters with the game. Playing football games from sunrise to sunset on the weekends, attending professional and college games in stadiums packed with cheering fans, and of course watching hours and hours of televised games were all significant components in my childhood development. I learned as an eight year old boy while watching Super Bowl XII that Dallas was ‘America’s Team’ and a heavy favorite to win so in response to this new information I immediately rooted for their opponent the Denver Broncos. The game was not close, and the team I rooted for did not win. Despite the loss I learned a number of lessons by watching the game on television. I learned about popular perceptions of masculinity, competition, and independence by watching players on the field and observing the responses from the other people watching the game with me. I was also introduced to another aspect of the NFL spectacle, sex. The Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders introduced me to an aspect of sports that I had never witnessed prior to that game. Baseball and basketball did not have anyone like the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders on their side lines. Their importance to the play on the field or the outcome of the game is nonexistent, but the significance of the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders to understanding perceptions of sexuality in popular culture during this time was considerable.

In retrospect, peripheral participants in the spectacle helped solidify the NFL as the preeminent professional sports league in the United States by the close of the twentieth century. Furthermore, each of these lessons were instigated by more than just a

football game, the televised spectacle of Super Bowl XII was the first installment of an indoctrination process for my development as a young boy in American popular culture. Evidence of this indoctrination process is apparent even today as one of the most significant cultural events in my life, my wedding day, happens to be on Super Bowl Sunday. An argument that the symmetry of these events seems to frame a portion of my development as an individual would not be completely without merit. More importantly, I recognize another cultural force at work that shaped my affinity for the NFL game and spectacle, the narrative.

A term that is critical to my analysis is *spectacle*. Guy Debord, the cultural critic, offers an intriguing perspective on the relationship between *spectacle* and society,

The entire life of societies in which modern conditions of production reign announces itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation..... The spectacle, understood in its totality, is simultaneously the result and the project of the existing modes of production. It is not a supplement to the real world, it's added decoration. It is the heart of the unrealism of the real society. In all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, advertisement or direct consumption of entertainments, the spectacle is the present *model* of socially dominant life.¹

Debord's observation accurately describes intricate social functions associated with *spectacle*, but it does not adequately define the term *spectacle*. A more concise definition of the term is provided by Pierre Bourdieu's Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste. Essentially Bourdieu defines popular spectacle as collective festivities that offer spectators direct and immediate satisfactions. The spectacle satisfies the taste for and sense of revelry, the plain speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by

setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and properties.ⁱⁱ In the United States today, spectacles are essential to the construction of the world around us. Reality television programs and *extreme* sports are standard fare for the contemporary American viewer and consumer. Larger than life celebrities and extravagance provide ample material for popular consumption by a demanding American public. During the late-1960s and the decade of the 1970s professional football in the United States was reframed at an organizational level in an effort to offer its spectators more direct and immediate satisfaction. The persistence of the spectacle in American culture relies on a multitude of factors ranging from the abstract, such as taste, to the tangible, such as technology. The inclusion of an appealing narrative was a key element of the NFL spectacle.

Television audiences of the 1960s and 1970s experienced a different sports spectacle than previous audiences who relied on newspapers and radio broadcasts in the first half of the twentieth century and early television broadcasts during the 1950s. The early days of professional football lacked a strong fan base. As late as the 1950s the league's future was not guaranteed. The professional game lacked the support that the college game enjoyed since the early 20th century. Stories about the "Galloping Ghost," or the "Four Horsemen," or Notre Dame's Knute Rockne and "winning one for the Gipper" were all part of a sports' folklore that provided college football with appealing narratives and rudimentary spectacle that attracted and secured a fan base. By the 1960s astronauts walking on the moon, Civil Rights and anti-war protests, Vietnam War footage, and political assassinations were only some of the spectacles that television brought into homes throughout the United States in the sixties. The organizational system of the NFL

was ideally suited to maximize the economic and social potential that the mass media gatekeepers controlled. Television became an extremely effective vehicle for communicating cultural products, and the NFL happened to produce cultural product that was perfectly fashioned for television.

Major League Baseball had been acknowledged as America's pastime early in the twentieth century. Babe Ruth's homeruns, Jackie Robinson and the Brooklyn Dodgers' "Boys of Summer" breaking the racial barrier in professional baseball, or Lou Gehrig's farewell speech were all spectacles incorporated into the Major League Baseball's narratives prior to the extensive televised sports coverage of the late sixties and seventies. While baseball had plenty of its own narratives that helped the sport become a national pastime in the first half of the twentieth century, professional baseball did not capitalize on the opportunities provided by television in the second half of the twentieth century. Subsequently, during the 1960s and 1970s professional football supplanted professional baseball as the nation's sporting passion.

This shift in popularity was made possible by the NFL "reframing" the narratives to include large doses of spectacle. The development of multiple narratives within professional football created ample interpretive spaces to engage viewers. Marketing executives, sports reporters and individual fans navigated the same narratives, but were able to easily arrive at opposing interpretations. The different interpretations of the multiple narratives generated a distinct cultural significance for the NFL. In his book *Light: Anthropological Available Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, Clifford Geertz explores what he believes to be a revolution in cultural analysis, cultural psychology. His primary focus is on Jerome Bruner's work in education, but at a fundamental level

Bruner's and Geertz's attention falls squarely on the significance of the narrative.

According to Bruner,

We frame the accounts of our cultural origins and our most cherished beliefs in story form, and it is not just the 'content' of these stories that grip us, but their narrative artifice. Our immediate experience, what happened yesterday, or the day before is framed in the same storied way. Even more striking, we represent our lives (to ourselves as well as to others) in the form of narrative.ⁱⁱⁱ

The narratives of the NFL exist in every facet of the game. Seasons, games, plays, teams, players, coaches, and audiences were all narrative generating sources that the NFL, with the help of television, used to construct a spectacle without an equal.

The cultural product resonates on multiple levels for Americans as Michael Real points out, "If one were to create from scratch a sport to reflect the sexual, racial, and organizational priorities of the American power structure, it is doubtful that one could improve on football."^{iv} These priorities represent broad cross-sections of American society, and it is through the multiple narratives within the cultural text that Real's claim is proven accurate. The television coverage of the cultural product was able to highlight many of the different narratives in play, and it is the availability of multiple narratives and dualistic texts that enabled the mass media gatekeepers to promote the focal organization without over saturating the marketplace.

Spectators were able to use the structural binary within the NFL to articulate their own perceptions of the world around them. Clifford Geertz explored this concept in his seminal work on cockfighting in Balinese culture. Cockfighting for the Balinese was a story the Balinese told to themselves about themselves. The reframed NFL text permitted

similar latitude for the American television audience. Geertz observed, “the cockfight renders ordinary, everyday experience comprehensible by presenting it in terms of acts and objects which have had their practical consequences removed and been reduced to the level of sheer appearances, where their meaning can be more powerfully articulated and more exactly perceived.”^v Through a collective text, like the NFL, the individual fan is able to learn about his culture and his position within that culture.

. The success of the reframed NFL was demonstrated through more than economic trends, skyrocketing salaries and ticket prices. The reframed NFL text was part of a larger popular culture discourse. As a cultural text, the NFL is a participatory agent as well vehicle of communication. Suren Lalvani’s essay in the “Carrying the Ideological Ball: Text, Discourse, and Pleasure” discusses how cultural texts’ navigate a social formation known as popular culture by remaining polysemic in character. Lalvani states that there must be room for subordinate groups to interpret the cultural text despite the omnipresent dominant culture and values,

In general, a text’s popularity is contingent on affording subordinate groups the opportunity to both explore the tensions inherent in the text and to produce meanings and pleasures that exceed the text’s ability to control them; in this way popular spectacle is transformed into a cultural resource by which people make meanings of their social experience.^{vi}

The NFL reframed its narratives and spectacles. Lalvani’s observation reveals how dualistic texts operated within the larger discourse of popular culture by providing space and access to inherent tensions within the NFL text. Lalvani points out, “no single ideological formation can exhaust the meanings and values in a society, and neither can the presence of dominant ideology in a text like football exhaust the meanings and values

that can be produced from it.”^{vii} The dualistic texts were sources of meanings that appealed to both dominant and subordinate groups. The longevity and expansion of the NFL’s television coverage is a testament to the virtually inexhaustible resources for generating meaning within the cultural text.

How the NFL was able to reframe its cultural product is a crucial point in my argument, and Paul Hirsch’s *Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organizational Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems* provides an excellent framework for my argument. Hirsch examines how cultural products are selected and promoted within mass consumer cultures in an effort to generate new fads and the latest fashions. His approach breaks down a network of entrepreneurial organizations into role specific categories. These specific categories include providing personnel, material, capital, legal protection, and legitimacy necessary for the production of cultural goods. Together as a network these organizations are employed by a larger profit-seeking firm, called a focal organization. The interaction between the focal organization and the network of role specific organizations is of particular interest to Hirsch. Specifically, Hirsch outlines the structure and operation of entrepreneurial organizations engaged in the production and mass distribution of three types of ‘cultural items’: books, recordings, and motion pictures.^{viii} His organizational set analysis deals with the three cultural items mentioned above, but his framework for analysis of organizations and their subsystems can be used to clarify how any cultural industry is able to produce cultural products for national distribution. The premise of my argument is that the NFL used the same system of organizations studied by Hirsch to make the transition from an economic afterthought in American

popular culture prior to the 1960s and 1970s to one of the most profitable and dominant cultural industry systems in the world today.

The success of the NFL as a ‘focal organization’ depended on the network of role specific organizations mentioned earlier. Hirsch identifies the individual components of this network as ‘input organizations,’ ‘output organizations,’ and the ‘mass media gatekeepers.’ Before a closer examination of the process can begin, it is necessary to establish what these key terms mean. Hirsch defines ‘cultural organizations’ as profit seeking firms that produce cultural products for national distribution.^{ix} The National Football League clearly fits the definition of cultural organization in that it seeks to generate profits through the production of its cultural product. The author, Michael Real, clarifies the profit-seeking aspect of the NFL in his text *Mass Mediated Culture*,

The organization of personnel in professional football is almost a caricature of the discipline of a modern corporate military industrial society. In an enterprise in which strict disciplinarians like Vince Lombardi, Don Shula, and Woody Hayes have created the powerful empires, the primers for coaches might be military manuals and for players *The Organization Man*.^x

Financial profit is a primary motivation for the NFL. However, according to the definition of a cultural organization, there must be cultural products generated by the organization. Once again an explanation of the terminology is useful, and Hirsch provides the parameters,

Cultural products may be defined tentatively as “nonmaterial” goods directed at a public of consumers, for whom they generally serve an esthetic or expressive, rather than clearly utilitarian function.....

Movies, plays, books, art prints, phonograph records, and pro football games are predominantly cultural products; each is nonmaterial in the sense that it embodies a live one-of-a-kind performance and/or contains a unique set of ideas.”^{xi}

The aspects of professional football games that qualify them as cultural products were exactly the same qualities that resonated within the narrative structure of the National Football League. The nonmaterial goods, or the games, directed at a public of consumers did embody live and one of a kind performances that contained a unique set of ideas; but the structure of the game, such as time of play, methods of scoring points, and rules dictating appropriate conduct during the course of play, created a degree of consistency for the television viewer to rely on while the multiple narratives within the game were explored and interpreted.

The reframed NFL text was able to reproduce multiple meanings on a consistent basis. However, the participation of the television audiences, by their consumption of the NFL’s cultural products, was paramount. As John Fiske stated in *Television Culture* that “television texts may be constructed to convey limited meanings, but audience members may ‘play’ with these texts in ways that allow them to manipulate meanings and feel greater control over their own position.”^{xii} The dualistic texts within the NFL narratives were ideal in the sense that dominant and subordinate values could exist at the same time in the same discursive text. Multiple meanings were not only possible they were encouraged by the structure of the narratives. Following Michel Foucault’s observation that knowledge is power, Lalvani states that the television audience participates in the discourse with significant power,

The uses of technology to mediate the text may in fact undermine the rule

of law operating in the text. The presence of slow motion photography and instant replay in football, audiences of both the televised text and even the stadium text begin to enjoy the pleasures of empowerment that the ability to ‘really know’ via the camera apparatus provides. In a discourse where the will to know exceeds the power to contain, author, and legitimate that knowledge, the audience member becomes a discursive power, producing knowledge and participating in the pleasures of truth that undercuts the once absolute and constituted legislative authority of the umpire.^{xiii}

The inclusion of a mediator within the discourse must not be overlooked. The television camera added another lens, both figuratively and literally, for the spectator to interpret the text. Through television the dualistic texts stimulated the audience to use their social relationships to connect with the textual discourse and generate their own meanings. However, an explanation of how the NFL, the cultural or focal organization, and television networks, or mass media gatekeepers, worked together to generate the popular demand for the NFL’s cultural product is required.

The social and economic success of this relationship is, however, contingent on smaller elements in the organizational system. In particular the organizations that link producers to the consumers also known as the boundary-spanning role occupants, or the input and output organizations, played crucial parts in the larger cultural industry system. Hirsch defines the input organization as those systems employed for product selection, and output organizations as those systems used to market the cultural products.^{xiv} The NFL as a focal organization relies heavily on input and output organizations. The importance of the inter-organizational relationships was noted by William M. Evan, “As a partial social system, a focal organization depends on input organizations for various

resources: personnel, material, capital, legality and legitimacy... The focal organization in turn produces a product or a service for a market, an audience, a client system etc.”^{xv} In the NFL’s organizational system, input organizations provided the functions mentioned by Evan.

Perhaps the most important input organization for the NFL was the National Collegiate Athletic Association. The NCAA supplied the NFL with new personnel on an annual basis through the NFL draft. Each year a new crop of college football players, some vehemently promoted by the NCAA with awards, like the Heisman Trophy for best college football player, applied for employment with the focal organization called the NFL. This process insured that the focal organization chose its personnel from the most talented applicants available, thereby assuring fans and consumers that the cultural products would be of the best possible quality. Furthermore, without a minor league system in place, the NFL used the NCAA as a training facility where talents and skills of amateur athletes were refined for the professional level.

Input organizations such as Riddell and Spalding, manufacturers of sporting goods, also provided material necessary for the production of the NFL’s cultural product. Riddell’s ‘suspension football helmet’ was an essential part of the protection for the personnel. The helmet also provided the NFL with a distinct image that was marketable and that no other professional sport shared. Similarly, Spalding provided the most fundamental element to the game, the football. The uniquely shaped ball provided the NFL with yet another distinct and marketable trademark. While there were numerous other input organizations that contributed material to the focal organization, the functions of input organizations mentioned by Evan were carried out by both Riddell and Spalding.

An input organization that contributed to the infusion of capital to the focal organization was NFL Properties Incorporated. The licensing arm of the NFL was founded in 1963, and it protected league sponsored logos and retail merchandise that generated revenue for NFL teams to divide equally with each other. The marketing of NFL paraphernalia through output organizations was regulated by this input organization, and the NFL was able to use the capital provided by NFL Properties Inc. to produce a cultural product that served an esthetic and expressive function for the consumers.

The legal resources for the NFL were located within input organizations like the National Football League's Players Association and the Players' Negotiating Committee. Additionally, individuals, like NFL commissioner Pete Rozelle, contributed significant legal maneuvers that changed the focal organization in extremely important ways. The Broadcasting Act of 1961 [discussed in chapter 2] was an excellent example of the legality, mentioned by Evan, which helped secure the focal organization's economic and popular success.

The last type of input organization resource mentioned by Evan was legitimacy, and the NFL's input organization responsible for promoting the focal organization's legitimacy was unlike any other input organization being used in professional sports at the time. In 1965, Pete Rozelle, the NFL commissioner, negotiated a deal with Ed Sabol for the purchase of his company Blair Motion Pictures. Renamed NFL films, this input organization became responsible for identifying obscure, yet intriguing, narratives within the NFL in order to generate more interest among fans, and to indoctrinate those less informed or new NFL fans during the 1960s and 1970s. Stoic narration and video footage of teams, players and important games was the formula used by this input

organization to infuse the NFL with almost mythical qualities. Individual athletes representing core values and ethics in American culture, teams overcoming insurmountable odds on their way to success, or games that embodied the American ideals of competition and success were all used to legitimize the focal organization.

The strength of the input organizations, and the resources they provide the focal organization determined the reliability and success of the output organizations. Hirsch described the output organizations' relationship with the focal organization,

At their output boundaries, cultural organizations confront high levels of uncertainty concerning the commercial prospects of goods shipped out to national networks of promoters and distributors. Stratification within each industry is based partly on each firm's ability to control the distribution of marginally differentiated products. Competitive advantage lies with firms best able to link available input to reliable and established distribution channels.^{xvi}

Corporate sponsors, promoters and distributors were output organizations that the NFL, as a focal organization, linked to its own input organization, NFL Properties Inc., in order to thoroughly distribute its cultural product to a nation of consumers. The NFL's success in this regard was demonstrated on a number of separate occasions during the 1960s and 1970s. The Broadcasting Act of 1961 clearly established an unprecedented level of access to a national network of promoters and distributors of the NFL's product in the form of television and radio coverage. Furthermore, during this time period rivals to the NFL, like the World Football League and the American Football League, did not have the same inter-organizational support systems in place, and were subsequently eliminated or assimilated by the National Football League.

A key component to the success of output organizations and ultimately focal organizations is the ‘mass media gatekeepers.’ During the sixties and seventies, the NFL established that network television was the ‘mass media gatekeeper’ that would propel the focal organization into the end of the twentieth century and beyond. According to Hirsch the ‘mass media gatekeepers’ dictate the outcome of a cultural product’s introduction into consumer society, “Cultural products provide ‘copy’ and ‘programming’ for newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and television programs; in exchange they receive ‘free’ publicity. The presence or absence of coverage, rather than its favorable or unfavorable interpretation, is the important variable here.”^{xvii} The significance of the Broadcasting Act of 1961 must be mentioned once again here to illuminate how important unrestricted access to network television was for the NFL. Exclusive arrangements with NBC to broadcast the NFL-AFL championship games, then later an exclusive arrangement with CBS to air all of the regular season games, and finally the agreement with ABC to develop and broadcast a new NFL prime time program called *Monday Night Football* all demonstrate how the NFL maximized its media exposure. This extensive media exposure via the three largest television networks in the United States paid enormous social and economic dividends for the NFL. Hirsch believes that the ‘mass media gatekeepers’ are a strategic checkpoint where fads or fashions are either blocked or facilitated.^{xviii} In the case of the NFL, the broadcast rights for the focal organization’s cultural products became the object of high stakes bidding war with each major network positioning themselves for a piece of the financial profits associated with the NFL product.

The union between focal organization and the mass media gatekeepers was economically successful primarily because of the strong inter-organizational relationships. Furthermore, with the extensive coverage given to the NFL by the mass media gatekeepers the culture that the individual fan learns about is not restricted to remote or local communities. National broadcasts of the games extended team fan bases beyond local boundaries, and by doing so allowed viewers from opposite sides of the country to share in common experiences related to the NFL text.

The significance of the narrative in the NFL cannot be understated, and when these narratives were packaged with spectacle their impact on how sports would come to be represented and viewed in the United States was revolutionary. A growing demand for the spectacle whether it was a game, a play, a team, or an individual player became more common during the 1970s. Television, as the NFL had demonstrated, was the ideal vehicle for the spectacle in sport. One such change in the representation of televised sports took place during the 1970s when the American Broadcast Company promoted its sports oriented program, *The Wide World of Sports*, with televised images of different athletic triumphs representing the “Thrill of victory,” and video footage of athletic failures represents the “Agony of defeat.” Images of a weightlifter successfully lifting an enormous amount of weight over his head, or a ski jumper painfully crashing through a banner next to the ramp demonstrated the desired spectacle in their triumph and failure. Multiple narratives and spectacle in sports became more and more commonplace for television audiences. Not surprisingly, audiences could not get enough of this new style of television coverage. The creation in 1978 of the all sports network, ESPN, verifies the

growing public demand for televised sports coverage. The face of American sports was changed to accommodate the demand of the fans and consumers.

Chapter Two:
A Perfect Union:
The NFL and Television

The rise of professional sports in the United States began in the middle of the nineteenth century with baseball leading the charge. Life for the people of the United States was forever altered. Opportunities to earn a living playing a sport, reporting on sports events, or perhaps financing a professional team were new phenomena for Americans. While prizefighting and thoroughbred racing had enjoyed a certain degree of exclusivity in American sports history, everything began to change by the beginning of the twentieth century due to the rise of mass audiences in urban centers, increases in expendable income, and more leisure time. The blossoming mass media publications of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provided an ideal vehicle for promoting the newest arrivals to American popular culture, baseball and football. Professional football games served as cultural products consumed by a growing number of Americans. This chapter will examine how the NFL developed into a cultural organization whose cultural products affect social, economic and political aspects of American society. The popular and economic success of the NFL in the second half of the twentieth century depended in large part on the reframing of the league's product, the games, into a spectacle that in turn depended on how NFL executives, team owners, and mass media marketing and advertising consultants packaged the athletes, coaches, and games for the American television marketplace.

During the early twentieth century professional baseball had struck a chord with the American public; and the mass media, capitalizing on the sport's growing popularity, was able to construct an image of baseball as America's game. Professional football, however, was far from its eventual position of dominance in the American sports echelon. In fact, in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, college football was considerably more popular in America than professional football. According to Jerry Gorman and Kirk Calhoun, authors of the book The Name of the Game: The Business of Sports,

Pro football's starting date was 1895, but that was a ragtag start. Definition was a problem. An outgrowth of the enormously popular college game, the pros found themselves in competition with their better known predecessor, and invariably came out second. To many fans, their game was little more than a duplication of college football with over-the-hill players. Pro teams were stocked with college stars that were paid for an afternoon's extracurricular activity. There were no contracts. Players went from team to team as their talents dictated their desirability. Understandably, the unstable rosters thwarted fan loyalty.^{xix}

Without dependable fan loyalty, the future of professional football would remain in a precarious limbo well into the twentieth century until the formation of sponsored teams, franchises, and formal leagues. While college football flourished with the help of mass media publications, it was not until the championship game in 1958 between the New York Giants and the Baltimore Colts that the true potential of professional football became apparent through the new medium of television.

The introduction of television coverage in professional football was the most significant event in twentieth century sports in the United States. Initially, television

coverage was perceived more as a source of anxiety for National Football League owners than as the savior of professional football. Worried that spectators would stay home to watch the televised games rather than buy tickets to the actual games, owners were extremely cautious. During the 1950 season that included televised coverage of football games, the Los Angeles Rams reported that their attendance numbers for that season were down by nearly fifty percent from the 1949 season that did not have television coverage.^{xx} Despite initial concerns, the NFL negotiated a contract with the Columbia Broadcasting System in 1956 for \$750,000, and in return CBS was granted the exclusive television rights for eleven of the twelve teams in the National Football League. The teams, in turn, received money according to their respective television markets: the New York Giants with their enormous television market received \$85,000, while the Green Bay Packers earned \$35,000 because of their small and remote television market.^{xxi} Television was now inextricably linked with football, and the scope of a smaller cultural organization in American sports known as professional football began to expand. It was a marriage that would prove to be a brilliant union for both parties.

The first few years of televised professional football under the new contract did not see any tremendous surge in national popularity. However, by incorporating safeguards to help prevent the loss of stadium spectators, such as television blackout zones that extended in all directions for 50 miles of the host city, attendance to NFL games rose by eleven percent in 1957.^{xxii} Television coverage was already beginning to demonstrate its ability not only to connect with home viewers, but also to increase professional football's popularity with local fan bases.

This initial popular and economic success, however, was somewhat diminished by the lackluster championship games in 1956 and 1957. The first two televised NFL championship games were lopsided routs, the New York Giants crushing the Chicago Bears 47-7 in 1956, and the Detroit Lions defeating the Cleveland Browns 50-14 in 1957. The appeal of hard-hitting, but competitively lopsided, professional football championship games quickly waned in popularity. At the start of the 1958 championship game, between the New York Giants and the Baltimore Colts, another rout seemed imminent. However, it was this game that revealed a glimpse of a future national passion in the United States. An early 14-3 Colt lead over the Giants appeared to be the beginning of another championship landslide, but with less than two minutes left in the game the Giants maneuvered themselves into a tie with a three point field goal as regulation time expired.

The outcome of this championship game would be determined by a new addition to the format of the NFL game, which proved to be one of the first steps the league took towards the creation of a new spectacle. This new component to the NFL game was simply the addition of extra time if the contest ended in a tie at the end of regulation time. Referred to as 'sudden death overtime,' this new twist to the NFL game assured that the contest would not end in a tie. The first team to score by any means during the additional time would win the game. The elimination of the possibility of a tie in the championship game, and the dramatic name for this extra time, 'sudden death', played perfectly into the pervasive corporate mentality of many Americans who had been conditioned to view themselves and the world around them in terms of winners and losers. The NFL

capitalized on this popular sentiment by providing its fans with a dramatic and decisive conclusion to games that would have otherwise produced no winner or loser.

The 1958 NFL championship broke new ground for the league. Spectators across the country were introduced to the latest sport spectacle through television. The stage was set for a level of high-intensity drama that had previously been absent from professional football, and the television cameras were there to broadcast every image on the field and in the stands. The teams did not disappoint the league, the spectators in the stands, or those watching the game on television. The drama that unfolded on the field and in the living rooms across the country is described by Gorman and Calhoun:

The Giants won the coin toss and chose to receive. But they could not move the ball and punted to the Colts' 20 yard-line. All eyes turned to John Unitas. The man who only three years earlier was playing semi-pro ball for \$6 a game was suddenly at the center of professional football, the center of the entire American sports world. Unitas proved unflappable. He handed off to halfback L.G. Dupre for ten yards and a first down. Dupre got three more on the ground, and Unitas passed to fullback Allan Ameche for another first down. Then, after another Dupre run, Unitas was sacked. On third and long, he looked down field for Lenny Moore, but Moore was covered. Spotting Ray Berry, Unitas realized the receiver was short of the first down marker. Incredibly, as the Baltimore line held out the Giants, Unitas waved for Berry to go a little deeper, and then calmly threw him the ball. A 21 yard run by Ameche and 12 yard pass to Berry gave Baltimore first and goal at the nine, well within Myhra's field goal range. But, Unitas just kept hammering at the Giants defense, a short pass to the tight end reached the one yard line. The next play has been immortalized by television, the images run over and over in the minds of football fans much too young to have seen it: Unitas taking the snap from

the center and jamming the ball into his fullback's gut; the Colts' line driving the Giants back on their heels; Alan "The Horse" Ameche, head lowered, charging untouched into the end zone.^{xxiii}

Even this condensed recollection appearing in a written text communicates a highly charged narrative. Spectators in the stands had taken to the sidelines, and as Ameche scored the winning touchdown there were spectators standing in the endzone as the play was in progress. The enthusiasm in the stands was also shared by those who viewed the game on television. Having seen the action of the championship game unfold on television, people from across the country were now able to describe the action on the field as though they had seen the game in person.

The 1958 NFL championship game was a pivotal point in the evolution of the NFL and its spectacle. Determining the exact impact of network exposure on the NFL's early success is difficult, but between 1958 and 1969 the game's spectacular success at the gate coincides almost exactly with the growth of television coverage.^{xxiv} One of the aspects impacted by television coverage was the construction of subplots, or multiple narratives, within the individual games themselves. These multiple narratives were not always common knowledge, and without the benefit of television announcers including these narratives in the broadcast the spectators in the stands were excluded from significant aspects of the NFL spectacle. This aspect of the construction of the NFL spectacle through the dissemination of multiple narratives will be further explored in chapter three, but for now it is safe to say that television coverage of the 1958 NFL championship game changed the future for professional football in the United States.

The economic success of the NFL's reframed spectacle relied in large part on the advertising revenue generated by television commercials broadcast during the course of

the games. The growing popularity of televised NFL games during the 1960s and 1970s meant dramatic increases in advertising opportunities. In turn, the earning potential for small market teams and large market teams increased. Television became more than an electronic forum for professional football games. Provided that viewers were tuning in, which appeared to be the case as NFL games television ratings rose steadily following the 1958 championship game, advertising time on television was a powerful and expensive tool in the broadcast networks' arsenal that increased in strength over time.

The structure of the game itself was ideally suited for television advertisements. Unlike other sports such as basketball, baseball, and soccer that are unpredictable in the stoppage of play, football has regular and predictable breaks in the action on the field. Each individual play lasts for several seconds, and then the action is stopped. Long touchdown runs of twenty to thirty seconds would be the rare exception. Otherwise the action on the field consists of short bursts of activity that are followed by a resetting of the ball to the appropriate place on the field. This predictability of the action during a game allowed sponsors and advertisers ample opportunities to promote their products. Increased flexibility in television time for sponsors made the NFL an even more appealing investment opportunity for corporate sponsors and advertisers. Eventually, the NFL incorporated scheduled television timeouts. What this consisted of was extra time added to the stoppage of play on the field whether at the end of a quarter of play or, a timeout called by a team on the field. Halftime during a game also offered ample time for commercials. This was a clear advantage for the NFL over other professional sports organizations, but the potential increase in revenue from television advertising required careful planning by the NFL owners.

In order to capitalize on the economic potential in televising NFL games, team owners needed to reorganize the league's advertising and marketing infrastructure. Prior to the 1960 season, the NFL owners were responsible for their own marketing. Each team had exclusive rights to its local market, but as would be expected the larger markets such as, New York and Los Angeles fared considerably better than the smaller market teams, like Green Bay and Cleveland. The challenge for the NFL was to make sure that the smaller market teams were able to compete with the larger market teams both on the field and in the marketplace. The prevailing logic was that the NFL's overall economic health was paramount. The best way to ensure the economic health of the league was to secure space in the marketplace for the smaller market teams like, Green Bay and Cleveland as well as the large market teams in New York and Los Angeles. Television coverage of the league's games provided an ideal opportunity for the NFL to achieve its goal of economic parity. The National Football League was able to harness the revenue-generating force of commercial television in large part due to the extraordinary vision of the newly elected National Football League commissioner Alvin 'Pete' Rozelle.

Rozelle's first and perhaps most significant accomplishment as NFL commissioner was to spearhead the push for the United States Congress to pass the Broadcasting Act of 1961. The bill was passed by Congress in spite of individual team owners' protests. Rozelle's tenacious pursuit of a unified NFL broadcasting agreement secured an unprecedented telecommunications arrangement. The ramifications of the Broadcasting Act of 1961 allowed professional sports franchises to negotiate the sale of national broadcast rights as a single economic unit; by negotiating for the league Rozelle gained substantial leverage with the networks which, in turn, brought in more money than

the teams could have individually negotiated for on their own. Perhaps more importantly for the NFL, by splitting the money equally among the franchises, concerns over the inherent inequity between large market and small market franchises was negated thereby securing the overall economic health of the league.^{xxv} The NFL and the major broadcast networks quickly became entrenched with one another because of the enormous sums of money involved in broadcasting and advertising rights. Subsequently, competitors, such as the World Football League and later the United States Football League and smaller telecommunications companies, were unable to maneuver themselves into any sort of bargaining position, and would eventually succumb to the professional football-media juggernaut.

The economic and popular success of the NFL was secured further by the incorporation of the technology involved in television coverage of the NFL spectacle. Despite the physical distance between the spectators viewing the action of a game on television and the actual game being played in a stadium, perhaps on the opposite side of the country, television brought the spectacle of professional football into remote communities and homes across the country. The spectators in the stadiums may have witnessed these events, but those spectators who viewed these events on television were offered a significantly different experience. Subsequently, the impact of the technological progress in television coverage of football games helped to enhance the NFL spectacle as a whole, and create a lucrative market space for the NFL to exploit. In the text edited by E.A. Kaplan, Regarding Television, the impact of 'televisual' technology on the audience and the fascination with spectacle is described by Mark Morse,

Throughout the game, graphics in bright contrasts are superimposed on the diegetic image of the game, keeping the viewer abreast of the record of an athlete or team. Sometimes a framed insert of a player's face or even of a part of the body is superimposed over the game, at times replacing the diegesis entirely. During the game, elaborate advancing and receding frames may set apart the instant replays; they may also appear unmarked. These colorful graphics and moving frames exert a visual fascination.^{xxvi}

Fan bases once limited to the cities and surrounding areas of the individual franchises now extended from coast to coast. Additionally, the NFL achieved popular success with its viewers by turning to the rapidly expanding electronics industry to provide the tools to mold a new professional football image and product. Cultural critic John Lahr observes, "The precision of technology molds the form of modern spectacle."^{xxvii} The technological advances made during the 1960s and 1970s contributed to television's reframing of the NFL in American culture. Instant replay or slow motion playback, close up camera angles, sound recording equipment on the field, aerial coverage by blimps, wireless microphones for the referees, giant television screens in the stadiums, and the shift from small black and white television sets to larger color television consoles all helped reshape modern professional football into spectacle.

One of the first methods that television coverage reframed the game for television audiences was through the use of aerial camera angles. A CBS director named Frank Chirkinian convinced the president of CBS Sports to pay three thousand dollars to mount a camera in a blimp that hovered over the stadium providing television audiences with camera angles that were previously unattainable.^{xxviii} Aerial camera angles became a staple in television coverage of football games, and in addition to supplying television

audiences with television coverage unlike any other professional sport at the time, blimps also provided a new advertising platform. Companies like Goodyear Tires took advantage of this technological application. It was not long before the aerial coverage of NFL games was supplied not by just blimps, but rather it was aerial coverage provided by the Goodyear Blimp. Support from corporate sponsors would prove to be beneficial to both the mass media gatekeepers as well as the focal organization.

There were more technological advances that helped reframe the NFL spectacle, and none were more important than instant replay. This technological addition changed the game for the television viewers. Spectators in the stadiums were often excluded from much of the action that took place on the field. Quite often the spectators in the stadium were too far away from the field to see, or perhaps the view was obstructed by other spectators or players on the field, or, the game just moved too fast for the spectators to keep track of all of the action taking place. In any case the spectators in the stadium had to make sacrifices when viewing games because of physical limitations that the television audience did not have to endure. Developed by the MVR Corporation of Palo Alto, the single frame recorder was capable of recording twenty seconds of black and white video as six hundred single frames on a shiny aluminum magnetic disc coated with nickel cobalt. The recorder, model VDR-210CF, was built for the CBS network to use for football games, instantly playing back short action sequences in normal motion, or freezing the motion at a single frame.^{xxix} Television spectators now had an advantage over stadium spectators in their consumption of the NFL spectacle. Amazing runs, spectacular receptions, hard hits, and questionable calls by the referees were all now subject to review by the television audience while the stadium spectators were left

without any recourse except for their imaginations to recall the action on the field. At least this was the case until the NFL took steps to try and provide access to some of the same advantages to viewing a game that television audiences enjoyed by installing giant replay screens in each stadium starting in 1976. The advantages to viewing a game on television were apparent even in the stadiums hosting the game where now spectators in the stands had their experience reframed by television.

Another technological enhancement to the NFL spectacle that changed the experience for the television audience was the close-up camera shot of the athletes on the field. The spectators in the stands were never privy to the individual intensity of the players that zoom lenses on television cameras were able to capture. The toothless snarl of the Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker Jack Lambert flashed at his opponent was part of the television audience's experience, but the spectators in the stands were completely left out of the exchange. The close-up camera angle revealed the athletes to be more than numbered bodies in team jerseys. Emotional and physical intensity could be seen on the players' and coaches' faces, and for the television viewers this was yet another advantage to watching the NFL on television.

The technological advances for the new NFL spectacle did not stop with the visual advantages of the television camera. The audio technology employed on the sidelines during games further enhanced the television viewers' experience and reframed the NFL spectacle. Armed with an arsenal of microphones film crews working for the NFL were able to capture sounds of action on the field that had never before been heard by spectators in the stands. The president of NFL Films, Steve Sabol, stated the importance of sound and the NFL spectacle, "Sound is an invaluable element in great

storytelling. Short of strapping on a helmet and taking the field, the only way fans can discover how passionate and dramatic and visceral the game is on every play, is through our films.’^{xxx} Bone-crunching hits, inspirational speeches on the sideline, or on some occasions the obscenity-laden tirades of players and coaches were all absent from the spectators’ perspective prior to television coverage. Obviously the potential for profanities being broadcast to the television audiences was a concern, but the rewards from including the sound from the action on the field outweighed the risk of missing an audio edit.

The spectators in the stadiums may have witnessed these events, but those spectators who viewed these events on television were offered a significantly different experience. Scenarios, such as: the close-up camera shots showing the toothless snarl of the Pittsburgh Steelers’ linebacker Jack Lambert, a slow motion replay Franco Harris coming out of nowhere to make the game winning catch that became known as the “Immaculate Reception,” or the crushing sound of Deacon Jones of the Los Angeles Rams breaking through an offensive lineman’s block in route to decimating an unaware quarterback, occurred in stadiums full of screaming fans in a sea of emotional outpouring that created its own meanings for those who participated or at least witnessed. Those same images viewed via television broadcasts were reframed as a modern sports myths that have been replayed over many years as testimony to the ferocious nobility of the NFL athletes and the inherent drama of the NFL spectacle. In each case the reframing of the events and actions that take place for those spectators in the stadiums as singular moments during the course of a game into NFL legend was made possible through

advances in audio and video technology. The visual fascination of the viewer determines the success of the spectacle.

The NFL did everything it could do to amplify the visual impact of its athletes and games, including rudimentary changes to aspects of the spectacle, such as more vibrantly colored team uniforms, larger last names on the players' jerseys, and even changing the placement of "hash marks" on the field. In each case the NFL's cultural product was enhanced. The changes to the uniforms not only made the game more visually stimulating on color television, but these changes were also beneficial in a marketing sense. The Miami Dolphin teal, orange and white jerseys, or Roger Staubach, the Dallas Cowboy's star quarterback's number twelve quickly became examples of the NFL's thorough infiltration into American popular culture. Changing the placement of the 'hash marks', yard line markers used to place the football at the start of each play, encouraged offenses to pass more frequently by increasing the distance from the ball to the side line. The passing game in a team's offensive strategy became much more important following this change. As a result, the increased number of passes during a game sped up the action on the field. Rather than the run based offenses often referred to as "three yards and a cloud of dust," the new emphasis on passing brought exciting new elements to the game like the "long bomb," or the "Hail Mary," both of which made the game more exciting for spectators.

One of the more innovative methods used by the NFL to reframe the spectacle of professional football was the creation of the promotional vehicle called NFL Films in 1963. The premise of NFL Films was to establish an 'official' interpretation of the NFL product for current fans and for future fans of the NFL. Using a gravel-voiced narrator

and martial music, NFL Films presented narratives of teams, games and players framed as epic dramas. Sports historian, Michael Mandelbaum describes these programs in his book *The Meaning of Sport*, “They resembled the television series of the 1950s that chronicled the American campaigns in the Pacific during World War II called *Victory at Sea*.”^{xxxix} NFL Films was a vital component to the NFL’s reframing process that really started building momentum by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s. The first production for NFL Films was “They Call It Pro Football” in 1965, and by 1967 the first season of “NFL Films Presents,” the longest running sports series on television, was aired on television. While there were fans of the NFL prior to the reframing process, many people were exposed to their first NFL games through television. These new fans showed enthusiasm for the NFL, but the challenge was to establish a fan base that would continue to grow.

NFL Films, as mentioned in chapter one, helped legitimize the contemporary teams, players, and coaches by providing an historical context through which the fans could compare their heroes with those enshrined in the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio. Furthermore, the history of the game and its players was an important tool for the NFL as it reframed its product. The saying that “history is written by the winners” in this case is more than just a cliché. NFL Films allowed the NFL to rewrite history on its own terms. Certainly, the statistics and scores of the games could not be changed, but the dynamics surrounding the spectacle were quite a bit more malleable. In fact this malleability was critical in reframing the NFL spectacle. NFL Films used structural binary of the focal organization’s cultural product as a primary reframing mechanism. The epic dramas that Mandelbaum referred to were simply structural binaries that

provided substantial space for multiple meanings and ample material for ‘thick’ description. The information NFL Films provided in its programs was edited and narrated in a deliberate fashion; the subject matter, camera angles, and sound bytes were all used to create a new image of an old game. An editor from the magazine *The New Yorker* described how influential NFL Films was in the formation of the NFL’s cultural product, “The images of the Lombardi years in Green Bay were captured and spread wide by NFL Films, the fledgling propaganda office of the Pete Rozelle papacy—the snow, the muddy faces, the steam escaping from tooth-short mouths played back in slow motion made the Packers into a romantic team of legend.”^{xxxii} The image that the NFL was reframing was a work in progress, and many more changes to the spectacle awaited viewers as the 1960s drew to a close.

The start of a new decade brought a revolutionary change to the world of professional sports and American popular culture, called *Monday Night Football*. Until the 1970 season, professional football was played on Sundays in the afternoon hours. Rozelle realized that the NFL was in danger of over saturating its audience with all of the NFL games being played on Sunday afternoons, and the possibility of schedule conflicts between multiple games was a serious concern as well. However, the time slots for primetime television had been exclusively reserved for popular comedies like *I Love Lucy* and *The Milton Berle Show* or television series like *Gunsmoke*. Advertisers pay the highest fees to get across their message during primetime television, so securing a prime time slot required a program that would consistently attract and retain viewers. Fortunately, there was a market of product-consuming viewers in ‘prime time’ slots that remained untapped to which Rozelle and the NFL only needed access.

The access to the prime time television slot was provided by ABC, the American Broadcasting Company. A young network executive named Roone Arledge worked with Rozelle to create the most enduring sports broadcast in the history of television. The NFL and the American Broadcasting Company capitalized on this programming opportunity by airing professional football games on Monday nights during the valuable primetime hours of television programming.^{xxxiii} This was a low risk venture for the NFL and ABC mainly because of the decision to broadcast the game on a night of the week that had proven over time to be a weak programming night. The concept was strengthened by the fact that only one NFL game would be broadcast on one network each Monday night during the season, thereby concentrating a nationwide NFL audience on a single televised broadcast. Furthermore, ABC's *Monday Night Football* broadcast games from both conferences. The other broadcast networks were limited to games from only one of the leagues two conferences. Televising games from both conferences expanded the potential audience to include Monday evening viewers from all NFL markets both large and small.^{xxxiv} Viewers were provided with a new and unconventional representation of professional football. This foray into primetime programming for the NFL, secured a crucial foothold with the mass media gatekeepers. The focal organization now had the ability to link an input organization like NFL Properties Inc. with a reliable and established distribution channel during the popular primetime broadcasting hours. As a result, ABC landed a broadcasting juggernaut that has remained on the air for thirty five years and counting, and the NFL was given a second day each week to showcase its product to a national audience. The significance of *Monday Night Football's* economic

and popular success, however, pales only in comparison to the focal organization's greatest innovation, the Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl like much of the National Football League spectacle was engineered during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Similarly, the origins of the Super Bowl started relatively small. The entire process was initiated through the merger between the National Football League and its primary competition from 1959 until 1966, the American Football League. The premise of the game was to be a championship game between the once rival leagues. After the merger of the leagues under an NFL banner, the NFL was divided into two conferences, and at season's end the two conference champions would face off in a league championship game. While the significance of the game was apparent to those who participated in the games and to already established NFL fans, the popular and consumer culture phenomena called the Super Bowl had not yet been conceived. In fact, the first four league championship games following the merger were not referred to officially as Super Bowls. According to Lamar Hunt, founder of the AFL, it was during a meeting in a hotel room with executives from the NFL that the phrase now associated with the single biggest sporting spectacle in the world was rather haphazardly created in response to the notion of scheduling a championship game,

Obviously, the word *bowl*, like the Orange Bowl, the Cotton Bowl, and the Rose Bowl, was a big football game. I think Super Bowl came to mind because my three children at the time had a toy ball called a super ball, a high energy ball that you could bounce on concrete and, like a golf ball, would bounce over a house. Thereafter, this committee began rather than going through all this awkward language, to refer to the game as the Super

Bowl. Everybody thought that was a hokey name and we couldn't call it that. But Pete felt strongly that the game needed to have a quality name. The name NFL-AFL World Championship Game was on the trophy, the program and the tickets, but it wouldn't fit in a headline. So the media, for the most part, seized on the name Super Bowl.^{xxxv}

The impact of the media was once again apparent in the construction of the NFL spectacle. The title of Super Bowl was bestowed upon the first championship games well after they had been played.

In addition to creating a media friendly moniker for the new championship game, the NFL executives and marketing analysts realized location was paramount to the success of their Super Bowl plans. The championship games played in the NFL and AFL prior to the first Super Bowl were played in Green Bay and Buffalo in January. If the new championship games were indeed going to be 'super' then a neutral stadium, a venue boasting a favorable climate in January, and a large urban market would be required.^{xxxvi} Los Angeles Coliseum hosted the first Super Bowl between the Green Bay Packers and the Kansas City Chiefs. The big market of Los Angeles left the stadium one third empty, only managing to fill 61,000 of the 92,000 available seats.^{xxxvii} The following year the game was moved to the Orange Bowl in Miami where once again the whole affair seemed rather anticlimactic. The second Super Bowl had been upstaged by the previous week's frozen struggle between the Dallas Cowboys and the Green Bay Packers vying for a spot in the Super Bowl. That game, affectionately called the "Ice Bowl" is still remembered and will be examined later in this analysis. Suffice it to say the third Super Bowl, held once again in Miami, was the spark that both leagues and impatient network executives had sought.

The catalyst for the spark that ignited the NFL was a young and extremely confident quarterback named “Broadway” Joe Namath who brought a style and flair to the game of professional football like no one else before him. The match up for Super Bowl III was devoured by the spectacle-generating mass media. The teams seemed disproportionate in skill levels. The Baltimore Colts were heavily favored due to a talent laden roster and superior coaches like Don Shula and Chuck Knoll, who went on to win a combined six Super Bowls during the 1970s. The New York Jets on the other hand were completely overmatched in all facets of the game save one, confidence. Namath’s impact on the NFL spectacle will be explored later in this text, but for now ‘Broadway’ Joe and the New York Jets were the equivalent to the Bible’s David and the Baltimore Colts’ served as the imposing Goliath. The binary structure of this spectacle was further heightened by Namath’s brash guarantee of a Jets victory. The audacity of Namath’s statement was only exacerbated by the media and in particular television interviews which demonstrated Namath’s cool demeanor in the face of impending and humiliating defeat by the better team. By the end of Super Bowl III the only thing more amazing to those who had followed the crescendo of this spectacle preceding the game was, in slow motion replay of course, the image of ‘Broadway’ Joe leading his victorious New York Jets team off the field and into the hearts of American consumers across the country. Following the third Super Bowl, NFL executives and marketing strategists recognized that football was on the verge of something monumental in terms of professional sports and television coverage. The Super Bowl today is the biggest recurring event on television. In fact the game is so big that the rights are rotated between the networks.

In 1991 the top rate was \$875,000 for a thirty second time slot during the game.^{xxxviii} By 2003 *Monday Night Football* had achieved the second longest uninterrupted tenure of any prime-time television program.^{xxxix} Statistics such as these demonstrate that innovations such as the Super Bowl and *Monday Night Football* have helped propel the National Football League to the forefront of American sports. Meanwhile the spectacle generated by the television coverage of the players, coaches, venues, and games reveal a system of structural binaries that spectators negotiated to arrive at their own meanings. Through these dualistic texts and their multiple representations and interpretations the NFL serves as a powerful cultural organization that is deeply entrenched in American popular and consumer culture. The next chapter will explore some of these texts in an effort to better understand the significance of the NFL as a cultural organization.

Chapter Three: Binary Structures of the NFL's Televised Spectacle

The economic and popular success experienced by a focal organization depends in large part on the effectiveness of its supporting infrastructure, or the input and output organizations, and stable relationships with mass media gatekeepers. During the 1960s and 1970s, the NFL met these criteria and subsequently experienced unprecedented economic and popular success. The strength of the NFL's organizational system was anchored by its high quality cultural product which evolved from a chaotic collection of professional football teams and athletes floundering in anonymity into a mass media driven spectacle that supplanted professional baseball as the national pastime. Television coverage of the NFL's cultural product was crucial to this evolution. National exposure for the NFL by the three major broadcast networks at the time in the United States—ABC, CBS, NBC—was only part of the reason for the NFL's economic and popular success. The primary reason for the cultural product's popular and economic success was the broadcast networks' ability to capitalize on the binary structure of multiple narratives within the NFL spectacle both on and off the field. Binary structures found within the NFL's spectacle, such as conflicting representations of masculinity; individual and team marketing strategies; geographical rivalries; sports announcers; and tension between masculinity and femininity, effectively reframed how the cultural product was represented by the mass media gatekeepers.

The NFL maximized the economic and popular potential of multiple narratives within its cultural product by communicating their binary structures via the televised spectacle to mass audiences before any other professional sports organization. John Fiske observed that televised sport spectacles are presented in terms of character, conflict and resolution, which allows the viewer to generate meaning from the cultural product on an individual basis. “Television is a producerly text that invites a producerly set of reading relations: the production of meaning is shared between text and viewer so that television does not preserve its authorial power and privilege.”^{x1} This is significant because the viewers are engaged by the process of narrativization, and left to produce meanings that would otherwise be unavailable to non-authors. Fiske further elaborated on this concept:

Television sport sets itself up to be disagreed with, its producerliness invites viewer-made meanings. This invitation to disagree can be part of the authorial function, as when two or more of the on-screen commentators/experts offer different ‘stories’ of events in the game. More importantly, however, television’s own discursive repertoire gives to the viewer authorial knowledge and the power to produce meanings that goes with it. The constant flow of background and statistical information, of replays from all angles and at all speeds, of diagrammatic explanations of tactics, all give the viewer the insider information that is normally the preserve and privilege of the author, to be released by him or her in controlled doses throughout the progress of the narrative.^{xli}

The authorial knowledge given to the viewers by television coverage was a crucial element to the NFL spectacle. The knowledge that the viewers were privy to during the course of a game was not available to spectators in the stadiums. This ‘insider

information' also enabled viewers to participate in discussions with fellow viewers during and after the games that further enhanced their experience of the spectacle.

The binary structure provided common foundations from which to formulate their interpretations. Since the construction of meaning is a fluid process that varies from reader-to-reader, or in this case, viewer-to-viewer, the use of dualistic texts and binary structure helped to somewhat stabilize the experience for the viewers. The dynamics of this process are addressed by cultural critics using Pierre Bourdieu's work on taste,

Cultural products, such as particular forms of mediated sport, meet varying interests that consumers have developed from their own social positions, according to Bourdieu. Therefore, when audience members choose to take part in ritualized behaviors associated with a particular televised sport, they do so not simply as participants in a national cultural form but as participants with particular experiences and social positions that predisposes them toward certain sports and behaviors.^{xliii}

The NFL's cultural product served as a site of negotiation where viewers produced meaning in conjunction with the text. Viewers could share similar or conflicting perspectives with the knowledge that there was room for discord among viewers, and in some cases viewers' mutual antagonism made the experience of watching the televised spectacle more enjoyable. In this regard, the binary structure of many NFL narratives engaged the viewers on more than just a voyeuristic capacity.

Dualistic texts, such as Joe Namath and Johnny Unitas, or the Dallas Cowboys and the Pittsburgh Steelers, allowed the viewers, or meaning producers, alternate interpretations. The contrasts between the two athletes seemed to parallel the social climate at that time. The ideological tensions between mainstream corporate culture and

the youth led counter-culture could be easily reframed by television into an athletic struggle where the outcome on the field would be representative of the social struggle. Expanding on this contrast author John Bloom made this observation on the binary aspects between the two athletes,

One can see Unitas as the stable white collar worker, or ‘company man,’ and Namath as the young jet-set consumer who wears trendy double-breasted suits to late evenings at the “21 Club.” On another level, Unitas is the one his coach Don Shula once called “an excellent field general” who heroically leads his team into glorious battles, while Namath is a reckless cowboy who inspires players through his bold individualism and swaggering confidence. And, most important, Unitas represents masculine virtues as defined in the 1950s, and Namath the rebellious youth of the 1960s.^{xliii}

This contrast in styles, both on and off the field, assimilated into the binary structure of the NFL narrative on masculinity in popular culture. Each quarterback represented distinct ideals of masculinity, and through televised coverage of the NFL narrative these conflicting ideals were brought directly into homes and neighborhood taverns to become part of a national discourse about masculinity in American society. Rival quarterbacks could now transcend the playing field, and participate in the viewers’ negotiations with representations of masculinity in popular culture. In the NFL-AFL championship game in 1969 between the Baltimore Colts and the New York Jets, one of the most intriguing aspects of the game was style of play from each teams’ quarterback.

Johnny Unitas was the quarterback for the NFL’s Baltimore Colts team. The Colts had been one of the NFL’s more dominant teams during the first years of television coverage. The Colts’ victory in the historic championship game in 1958 had helped

solidify their place in the upper echelon of NFL teams, and the efficient businesslike approach the Colts employed to win football games became the professional athletic standard that viewers expected. During a time when corporations and the corporate lifestyle became more and more prevalent, the Colts, especially Unitas, came to represent an ideal of not just professional athletics, but an ideal of masculinity that embraced corporate qualities such as efficiency, tireless work ethic, reliability, stability, and most importantly respect for the authority associated with the chain of command.

In contrast to the Colts' stoic quarterback was a brash and flamboyant playboy named Joe Namath, who had guaranteed a Jets victory over the favored Colts. Namath's shoulder-length hair and all white shoes appeared to be the antithesis to Unitas's crew-cut, and workman black high-tops. Namath challenged conventional perspectives of masculinity. His posing in women's pantyhose for advertisers or wearing mink fur coats on the sidelines during games clearly violated popular conventions on athletes and masculinity. In the process, Namath established himself as a self-assured playboy that advertisers and viewers found irresistible. Posing for women's pantyhose advertisements and wearing mink coats, as mentioned earlier, challenged conventional boundaries of masculinity, and these acts also objectified Namath's body. Bloom provides insight to Namath's objectification through his analysis of a highlight film of Super Bowl III, produced by NFL Films, that included a song performed by the musical group Super Chicks titled "*Broadway Joe*",

To reach deeper into the complexities of his image, we can return to the opening segments of the highlight film. The words to 'Broadway Joe' convey the physical attractiveness of Namath, with a young, all female chorus singing, He's a hero / He's a pro / He's a mister something else, /

He's Broadway Joe, / He's a groovy, super guy, / He can pass a football through a needle's eye, / What a feeling, / What a sight, / When we see that number 12 in green and white, / One, two, three, hip go-go-go, / No one else can throw like Broadway Joe The 'Super Chicks' also sing of his hair and his sex appeal. Combined with shots of women blowing kisses, cheering, and grabbing Namath, one gets the idea that his fame has something to do with his own objectification as sex symbol.^{xliv}

Namath's highly publicized nightlife exploits in Manhattan with money, alcohol, and women validated his masculine status as an NFL quarterback. Unitas, on the other hand, looked as though he was in the military. He had the respect of coaches, and fellow players, and his toughness on the field was unquestioned and even admired by opposing defensive players. A former Los Angeles Rams defensive tackle commented on Unitas' toughness, "When he sees us coming he knows it's going to hurt and we know it's going to hurt, but he stands there and takes it. No other quarterback has such class".^{xlv}

The importance of a binary structure in the NFL narratives was also apparent in the construction of unit identities, either offense or defense. Unlike baseball, professional football by this time had employed a platoon system of players for each team. This means that there were offensive players and there were defensive players on each team. Athletes that played offense and defense during a game were a rarity at this time. The NFL spectacle benefited from this shift. Football players were now positional specialists, and their expertise, whether individual or as a unit, became an ideal vehicle for the commercial promotion of the cultural product.

Individual athletes with exceptional skills were often singled out from their peers and given clever nicknames for the league and media to promote. Television

commentators would refer to these nicknames throughout the broadcast to draw further attention to the athlete and enhance the spectacle. Describing a touchdown run by the “Juice” was more engaging than describing the same play completed by number thirty two or a running back named Simpson. Walter Payton was a punishing running back for the Chicago Bears, but as “Sweetness”, Payton came to be known as the prototypical NFL athlete, a consummate teammate with a tireless work ethic.

A similar promotional approach was used for defensive units during this time to generate attention from NFL spectators. Defensive units like Pittsburgh’s “Steel Curtain,” Minnesota’s “Purple People Eaters,” or Los Angeles’ “Fearsome Foursome” became synonymous with an organized brutality promoted by the league and mass media gatekeepers, and eagerly consumed by the viewers. A promotional binary structure would then pit these extraordinary offensive football players against these menacing defenses in a manner that would enhance the overall spectacle. Viewers would be bombarded for six days between games with media coverage promoting the following week’s match-ups. Would Kenny “the Snake” Stabler be able to elude the Denver Bronco’s “Orange Crush” defense? Or can “Broadway Joe” and the New York Jets upset the undefeated Miami Dolphins and their vaunted “No-Name” defense? The inclusion of instant replay, slow motion play back, close up camera angles and stylistic narrativization by the announcers, allowed the television viewer to enjoy a spectacle again and again.

The binary structure of the game was not restricted to the field of play, and through the implementation of a modified binary structure in the broadcast booth the NFL and ABC captured the attention of many viewers. A seemingly innocuous change to the number of broadcasters in the booth during the game created a new dynamic to the

televised coverage of the games. Prior to the introduction of *Monday Night Football* in 1970, the broadcasting responsibilities belonged to two people: the narrator, who was responsible for reporting the action of the game or the “play-by-play,” and a “color” commentator, who provided additional narrative information regarding the players, coaches, and strategies being implemented by the competing teams. Despite the appearance of a dualistic text, the format for these broadcasts communicated cooperative messages with few if any dissenting perspectives. *Monday Night Football* added a third personality to the broadcast booth and effectively changed the landscape of network broadcasting and professional football. While the traditional “play-by-play” announcer was retained, the two other broadcasters were given significant latitude in their roles as “color” commentators by the show’s producers.^{xlvi} The third personality served as a disruptive force, and help charge the benign environment of the broadcast booth. The key for the NFL and ABC was to pick the right third personality. Someone who could infuse “prime time” passion into a “prime time” sports telecast, and Howard Cosell was exactly the person for the job.

The construction of this rather eclectic broadcast team succeeded in creating yet another narrative for the NFL to be consumed by a growing fan base. The broadcast team became a signature feature of *Monday Night Football*. Frank Gifford, a former NFL player served as the narrator or ‘play-by-play’ commentator. Howard Cosell, a lawyer by training and sportscaster in practice brought his analytical if not ungainly approach to professional sports along with his sullen appearance to primetime television. Juxtaposing Cosell’s presence in every regard was Don Meredith, another former player, who was known for his cavalier quarterback style on the field and a folksy and carefree

attitude off the field. The binary structure was maintained despite the presence of a third announcer. Even with Gifford serving as a fulcrum between Cosell and ‘Dandy’ Don Meredith, *Monday Night Football* telecasts managed to generate as much tension in the booth as could be found on the field with the players or on the sideline with the coaches.

The tension between Cosell and Meredith created interest among television viewers Cosell’s pedantic verbosity obviously clashed with Meredith’s drawl-laden vocabulary. Cosell used a style that served him well when he worked as a lawyer in New York City often claiming to “Tell it like it is,” and Meredith provided a sort of comic relief by antagonizing Cosell with simplistic observations and ‘down-home’ analogies during the telecasts. Popular opinions about Cosell settled at opposite ends of the spectrum. People either loved or hated Cosell, and he had the fan mail to prove it. The sports historian Benjamin Rader described Cosell as,

Caustic, unctuous, polysyllabic, and given to making even the most trivial observation sound like something profound, analysts concluded that Cosell was the man the audience “loved to hate.” Unlike any other broadcaster, Cosell was able to get away with simultaneously promoting, reporting, and criticizing an event packaged and merchandised by his own network.^{xlvi}

Eventually the telecast that ABC and the NFL presented on Monday nights during football season was not one spectacle but two spectacles, one on the field and one in the broadcast booth. Their dualistic broadcasting styles made for entertaining if not informative television. The televised spectacle of *Monday Night Football* demonstrated the growing popularity of the NFL’s cultural product through its consistently high viewer ratings and its longevity which still endures today.

Yet another example of the successful use of the binary structure of NFL narratives is involved in the creation of intense rivalries between NFL teams and cities. Certainly rivalries exist in other professional sports, such as the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox, or the Los Angeles Lakers and the Boston Celtics, but rivalries in the NFL were intensified by a scarcity of the cultural product. Whereas professional basketball played over eighty games; and professional baseball played well over one hundred games; football's fourteen week season, followed by two playoff games, and the championship game were significant factors in generating the passionate emotions necessary for enduring rivalries. Animosity between the Green Bay Packers and the Chicago Bears, the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Oakland Raiders, or the Dallas Cowboys and the Washington Redskins was intense and marketable. In a fourteen game season every game was important, and teams in the same division having to play each other twice each season, one home game and one away game, made those contests even more critical to a team's championship aspirations.

The input organization, NFL Films, and the mass media gatekeepers, television networks, helped legitimize these rivalries with narratives explaining the history behind the contests quite often citing particular games or even plays that were responsible spawning bitter rivalries. The 1972 playoff game between the Oakland Raiders and the Pittsburgh Steelers is a perfect example of how rivalries were fueled by NFL Films. The game was intensely fought for almost the full sixty minutes. After fifty nine minutes of competition the Oakland Raiders were in position to win the game. The Steelers received the ball with less than a minute left in the game. Starting eighty yards away from the end zone, Terry Bradshaw, the Steelers' quarterback, took the field and managed to move the

ball to the Steelers' forty yard line. The next three plays for the Steelers offense failed to gain a single yard, and time had all but expired. Now sixty yards away from the end zone and only twenty two seconds left to play, the Steelers were down to their last play. A desperate pass by Bradshaw deflected off a Raider defensive player, Jack Tatum. As the ball fell helplessly to the ground Franco Harris, the Steelers' running back, appeared to come out of nowhere to catch the ball just before it hit the ground. Scampering sixty yards through a stunned Oakland defense, Harris scored the game winning touchdown with five seconds left to play. The play became known as "The Immaculate Reception," and was a source of intense debate and scrutiny among NFL officials and fans. Even those who saw the game on television with the benefit of instant replay could not determine how Harris was able to make the catch. Steelers' fans credited divine intervention for the play, while Raiders' fans described the event as grand larceny. Seizing the opportunity, NFL Films and the mass media gatekeepers exploited the game and the play with extensive replay coverage and dramatic narration. The following year the anticipation of a playoff rematch between the teams was second to none.

Exploitation may seem to be a harsh evaluation of this situation, but the fact of the matter was that a key element to the success of the televised NFL spectacle was exploitation. One obvious example was the exploitation of popular perceptions of sex. Once again a binary structure is apparent in the NFL's representation of sex. First, scantily clad cheerleaders smiling and dancing for the cameras were juxtaposed against men in body armor and tight pants engaging in testosterone charged physical conflicts. The Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders emerged in the 1970s as one of the most publicized components to the NFL spectacle. Sex became a significant force in the reframing of the

cultural product. Rader commented on the impact of the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders on the spectacle and viewers,

No team exploited sex appeal more effectively than the Dallas Cowboys. The Cowboys Cheerleaders flaunted heaving, skimpily covered breasts and short shorts which exposed some of the curvature of their posteriors. Watching a performance of the Cheerleaders, a visiting hockey coach from the Soviet Union asked, “Are those fallen women?” Only a non-American would have framed such a query, for the Cheerleaders according to the Cowboy press releases, represented the finest young women in America. In fact, some 2,000 girls auditioned for ten spots, and some 40,000 girls between the ages of four and twelve also entered the annual “Little Miss Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders” contest. Other spin-offs included a line of children’s clothes, costume jewelry, coloring books and trading cards.^{xlviii}

The Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders established that sex and the NFL could generate substantial revenue. Furthermore, the Cowboy Cheerleaders also helped change how television represented sex appeal. The objectification of the female body was encouraged by the camera lens which provided rather intimate angles and perspectives of the cheerleaders that would not be available to the spectators in the stadiums. However, the objectification of the body was not restricted to cheerleaders.

The players were also objectified as ideals of sex appeal. Players, like Joe Namath and a young Joe Montana, were fan favorites, and it was not simply their athletic prowess that compelled viewers. Both Montana and Namath were attractive and charismatic. Montana, who came into the league in 1977, was an instant success with the San Francisco Forty-Niners’ fans. Edward J Debartolo, owner of the San Francisco 49ers, said of Montana, “When he came to this organization he came as Sir Lancelot came to

Camelot.”^{xlix} Kathryn Jay the sports historian described Montana’s impact on the fans and advertisers, “The 6’2” quarterback was such a winner—complete with beautiful blue eyes and a rare sense of style—that most of the Bay Area simply fell in love He had the kind of cool masculinity that advertisers paid millions to associate themselves with and that the NFL loved to promote.”¹ Sex appeal translated into advertising dollars for the NFL. Television ushered in new economic opportunities for advertisers and the NFL, and sex appeal was a key component to the reframing of the NFL’s cultural product.

The sexual objectification of women and men in the NFL was a substantial part of the ‘reframing’ process for the professional football. Television cameras provided unprecedented access for viewers to the athletic bodies of both cheerleaders and players. Popular conceptions of the human form were altered. The Cowboy Cheerleaders represented an image of the female body that was emulated by other NFL teams’ cheerleaders, and women and girls across the country. Meanwhile, advertisers quickly recognized the marketing potential of charismatic and attractive athletes like Montana and Namath, and as the NFL moved from the 1960s into the 1970s endorsements from players on a myriad of products began to increase. The NFL promoted the binary structure of sex in blatant, but highly effective terms that television coverage was able to accentuate and generate revenue for the focal organization.

All of these dualistic texts encourage active spectatorship by playing upon tensions within a larger cultural framework. The masculinity of spectatorship is an example of the spectator taking in active role in viewing the spectacle. Holidays such as Thanksgiving have become traditional events for the NFL spectator. Entire families are often affected by the NFL on Thanksgiving. Every year as the Detroit Lions take the

field to battle the Dallas Cowboys or occasionally the Green Bay Packers families are divided as the men congregate around the television set and the women are relegated to the kitchen if for no other reason than a lack of room on the couch. This statement is not meant to imply that women do not participate in active spectatorship, but rather it is meant to acknowledge a pattern of behavior established in more than just a few households during the Thanksgiving holiday.

Active spectatorship of the NFL spectacle during this time also raises some important questions about two aspects of the cultural product that fall outside of the scope of this study, but still deserve attention. The first of these two topics is gambling. The NFL established strict rules prohibiting gambling within the league, but the reality of the matter is that gambling is an enormous part of the NFL spectacle for many spectators. Daily newspapers, gambling magazines, and even television networks all participate to different degrees with the promotion of gambling on NFL games. Spectators spend in some cases copious amounts of time researching the latest “odds” on the upcoming games. ‘Favorites’ and ‘underdogs’ are part of the NFL vernacular, and one of the most famous NFL television personalities of the seventies, Jimmy “the Greek” Snyder was a professional bookmaker who was a regular on the CBS pre-game show *NFL Today*. Gambling provides for many spectators that direct and immediate satisfaction that Bourdieu said was an integral part of any spectacle. The tension between the NFL’s official position on prohibiting gambling within its organization, and the reality of a multi-million dollar industry promoting gambling creates an important site of negotiation for the active spectator.

The second topic that must be acknowledged in relation to the idea of active spectatorship is race. Again, this is a topic that falls outside of the scope of this study, but nonetheless the importance of race in the NFL spectacle during this time must be addressed. Despite all of the NFL's efforts to produce a cultural product that would appeal to a national market of consumers during the late sixties and throughout the majority of the seventies, the NFL spectacle was undeniably 'white' in its construction. The absence of African-American coaches and quarterbacks during this time is perhaps the most glaring indictment of the racial prejudice of the National Football League. The number of African-American athletes in the NFL did continue to increase during this time, but their opportunities to play were restricted to certain positions. The running back and wide receiver positions were generally viewed as physical rather than cerebral, and therefore ideally suited for black athletes. White athletes occupied the positions on the field that required strategic coordination such as quarterback, center and linebacker. These positions were viewed as leaders for their particular unit, offense or defense. Referred to as "stacking," this racist practice of athletic segregation was a reality of the NFL spectacle of the time. The author, William M. Leonard II, defines "stacking" as, "the disproportional relegation of athletes to specific sport position on the basis of ascribed characteristics such as ethnicity and race."^{li} This practice of positional segregation generated an undesirable tension within the NFL spectacle. Active spectatorship in this case resulted in difficult negotiations for both black and white spectators who had to position themselves in relation to a cultural product that claimed to promote racial equality and harmony, but in reality perpetuated racial stereotypes. In

spite of these contradictory elements the NFL spectacle became a dominant force on the landscape of American culture.

The reframed representations of masculinity, individual and team marketing strategies, geographical rivalries, and tension between masculinity and femininity help to change how Americans viewed sports. Whether intentional or not, the binary structure of these issues served to captivate viewers, and in some cases challenge popular conventions on social issues. In any event the NFL spectacle that emerged and grew out of this time was made possible by viewers negotiating multiple meanings from these dualistic texts. The multiple narratives within the NFL text had been reframed through television coverage, but new representations of the cultural product in contemporary fiction would further demonstrate how thoroughly the NFL spectacle had been integrated into American popular culture.

Chapter Four:
Excavating the North Dallas Forty: A Popular Fiction Representation of
Competition, Celebrity, and Big Business in the NFL Spectacle

The success and growth of the National Football League during the late-1960s and early-1970s relied on the spectators' consumption of the televised spectacle. The union between a cultural organization, the NFL, and mass media gatekeepers, the major television networks, used the binary structure of narratives within professional football to generate a cultural product unlike any other at that time. Changes made within the NFL as a cultural organization resulted in a spectacle that created tensions in the images it generated.

The book *North Dallas Forty* written by Peter Gent takes exception with the notion of an official myth of professional football during this transitional period for the National Football League. Gent's book is a fictional account of his real life professional football career with the organization that earned the moniker during the 1970s as "America's Team", the Dallas Cowboys. The relevance of this text to my study is readily apparent. Gent's text is comparable to other sports exposes of the 20th century such as Dick Francis's, *Decider*, a book that uses fictional characters to explore some of the dark recesses of professional horse racing and gambling. Harry Stein's book, *Hoopla*, is another similar examination of corruption in Major League Baseball dealing primarily with the Chicago White Sox scandal of 1919. Each text comments on corruption in professional sport, but Gent's text offers a perspective of the corruption within the NFL

spectacle that is germane to an analysis of organizational systems as well as individual participants. Gent's experiences occur in multiple places throughout the organizational system of the NFL, and Gent's recollections offer a representation of the NFL's cultural product that challenges numerous myths about the NFL spectacle. Coaches, owners, players, and team policies are all sites of tension for Gent. This chapter will take a closer look into some of the issues in the NFL spectacle that Gent took exception with, and how he tried in his own way to make sense of his life and his position within a larger cultural framework.

In Gent's text, professional football offers a 'thick description.' Clifford Geertz used the term 'thick' to describe data collected by anthropologists used in cultural analyses, and his application of this term is appropriate for this examination of a cultural organization's representation in a popular text of the time. Geertz states

In finished anthropological writings this fact—that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to—is obscured because most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined.... Analysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification and determining their social ground and import.^{lii}

Gent's access to the spectacle of professional football helps him construct a vision of the National Football League's cultural product that challenged the traditional sentimentality associated with earlier representations of the NFL. As readers, we must sort out the structures of signification and determine their 'social ground and import.' This analysis will examine how Gent's text uses issues concerned with the nature of competition, the

effects of celebrity, and the class structure of NFL organizations to expose the NFL spectacle as a collection of contradictions involving the impact of big business on professional football.

The meanings contained within these narratives were complex, and varied depending largely on the individual spectator's perspective. The popular media representations of an official NFL culture were saturated with sentimentality and gallant heroics. Stories about victorious performances inspired by fallen comrades, like Knute Rockne's plea to his team to "win one for the 'gipper'," or the heroic exploits of individual players, like Red Grange, were standard fare. Even the very origin of the NFL was described in sentimental terms. The author Phil Schaff described in his book Sports, Inc. the following story, and the man he believed to be a primary driving force behind early professional football,

It is hard to remember that the NFL really got its start in a car showroom in 1922, and George Halas was there. The NFL is the ultimate rags to riches' story in every sense of the word. Football had many obstacles in its early days, from inclement weather to demanding logistics. But the league met its early challenges and persisted. Patient, smart men gave the sport a chance through innovative management and effective leadership. George Halas was a man like that. He had the smarts to move his team from Decatur to Chicago, sign the hottest property, Red Grange and immediately take him on a national barnstorming tour to spread the popularity of football. Halas's work built the framework for a league in what eventually became the most popular sport in America. He was at the NFL's first organizational meeting, coached the Chicago Bears for forty years, and literally created the prototype administration.^{liii}

This kind of ‘rags to riches’ sentimentality that Schaff refers to was essential to a professional sport that would have to compete with another professional sport already known as the ‘national pastime’

The ability of professional football to lure spectators and their dollars away from Major League Baseball depended on the appeal of their cultural product, and during this time sentimental narratives proved to be very successful. Consequently, the narratives that emerged in the popular media conveyed messages such as triumphing against the odds or the power of perseverance. While this narrative style is still employed in contemporary forms of popular media, during the late-1960s and early-1970s another style of narrative emerged that directly challenged the earlier sentimental narratives.

The sentimental narratives about the NFL’s formative years were replaced by the cynical narratives about the struggles of personnel in a focal organization dealing with the pressures of unprecedented economic success and growth. Gent’s perspective on issues, such as team and individual competition, the perils of celebrity, and what Gent refers to as the corruption of the game by corporate agendas, is in direct contrast to the traditional sentimental narrative associated with the National Football League’s official cultural product.

One of the most important marketing techniques used by early NFL promoters was emphasizing the collective nature of professional football. This was a team sport, and no single player was more important than the team. A slogan like ‘there is no ‘I’ in team’ became an organizational mantra. The sentimental narratives glorified self-sacrifice for the success of the team. The story of the injured player returning to the field of battle to help his teammates no matter what the cost to himself became part of the

NFL's legacy. Spectators marveled at these unselfish gladiators. During these formative years for the NFL the entire nation had been called together in a collective response to the demands of World War II. A sport that emphasizes coordinated cooperation of a group for the benefit of the whole was almost a natural extension of the American spirit. It is therefore not surprising that the NFL's cultural product grew in popularity. According to Gent, however, this image of team unity and self-sacrifice was not true to experience as part of the NFL spectacle.

The burgeoning success in the National Football League that accompanied television broadcasting brought with it an extraordinary demand for teams to win. While winning has always been important in the NFL, the line between individual success and team success became blurred with the infusion of massive amounts of commercial capital provided by the numerous corporate sponsors seeking to align their products and services with the NFL's cultural product. Vince Lombardi, the former coach of the Green Bay Packers, sums up the NFL reality that Gent's text explores, "Winning isn't the most important thing, it's the only thing." Spectators paid to cheer for winning teams, and corporate sponsors wanted winners to promote their products. Subsequently, job security in the NFL became contingent with the win/loss record of the team.

Gent responded to this unforgiving reality with a question that he struggles with throughout the text, "What good is team success if the individual doesn't survive to share in it?" His initial response to this question helps clarify his thoughts on the subject,

When an athlete, no matter what color jersey he wears, finally realizes that opponents and teammates alike are his adversaries, and he must deal and dispense with them all, he is on his way to understanding the spirit that underlies the business of competitive sport. There is no team, no

loyalty, no camaraderie; there is only him, alone. The team itself is fiction and playing for B.A. [Gent's coach Tom Landry] made it all the more obvious to me. Team success to B.A. meant personal success. But it wasn't winning that B.A. cared about, or football, or God, it was how those things combined to make [the coach] successful.^{liv}

Two clear examples of the nature of competition in the NFL came to Gent after he had lost his starting position with the team when he was injured. He realized that the only playing time he was given after his injury was when his team had no chance of winning because of an opponent's insurmountable lead. Gent admits to eventually cheering for the opponent's success in hopes that he would be given playing time once his team fell too far behind on the scoreboard. The second example involves a conversation that Gent had with his friend and starting quarterback Seth Maxwell [Don Meredith]. The two players discussed the importance of winning in the NFL, and the subtle, yet severe, nature of competition between teammates,

Maxwell retorted, 'My job is to win. Nothing else is good enough.' 'You and that Vince Lombardi no second-place shit,' I harangued, 'You sound like Art Hartman [Craig Morton].' Maxwell's head came up at the mention of his competitor's name. 'You know,' he said, 'I used to think that that kid had it all.' He shook his head and looked at the floor. 'But he don't. He's got the size and the arm. He's conscientious and he works hard.' Seth brought his eyes up to meet mine. 'But he's simple, too simple. I'll get him. He just don't understand what it's all about ... He thinks that he is destined to be number one,' Maxwell said. A note of amazement edged his voice. 'When I win he really seems pleased. He never seems to worry about it.' 'He's a team man,' I said. 'I'm a team man,' Maxwell said. 'He just ain't on my team. Besides, a man that don't worry don't win. And as long as I win for them they need me.'^{lv}

The differences between Meredith and Morton are subtle, but significant. Meredith is a veteran quarterback, and had been in the league with the Cowboys since the team was first founded in 1960. His experience in professional football taught him that the nature of competition in the NFL was cutthroat. The glorified sentimentality of team spirit was little more than NFL rhetoric. The truth to Meredith's observation was supported following his retirement in 1969, after which Morton was the starting quarterback for two years. He led his team to the Super Bowl in his second year, but lost. The following year, the Cowboys drafted Roger Staubach, and Morton returned to the bench as a backup to the rookie quarterback. Competition had always been a key element in professional football, but the price the players and coaches had to pay during Gent's NFL tenure had risen exponentially with the expectations of corporate sponsors and spectators.

The shift in the concept of competition, and how it relates to the team and the individual, is significant because as spectators we use spectacles to help negotiate our own place within the culture. In this case the evolution of competition in the NFL is important to the eventual evolution of the professional football spectator. Changes to the organizational system, such as 'free agency,' further emphasized the importance of the individual players. Ultimately, the spectators had to choose whether or not fundamental shifts in the concepts of team and competition in the NFL would warrant their continued patronage. Astronomical profits and continued expansion of the league demonstrated that not only had spectators adapted to these changes, but that they overwhelmingly approved of a new version of the NFL's spectacle.

Gent's representation of the NFL in the late-sixties and early-seventies also exposed a new facet to the professional football player, unprecedented celebrity as a

result of television. In Gent's text, the issue of fame introduced through television exposure of the NFL's participants presents complex problems for players, coaches, teams, and spectators. Gent's text takes exception with misconstrued versions of celebrity where fame was not earned by an athlete's talents or performances, but rather through the representations of the athlete distorted by televised images. In his book *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch describes the impact of television on sport spectators, "Television has enlarged the audience for sports while lowering the level of its understanding ... As spectators become less knowledgeable about the games they watch, they become sensation-minded and bloodthirsty."^{lvi} Gent's struggle with unprecedented celebrity is closely related to Lasch's idea of the 'sensation-minded and blood thirsty' spectator.' Celebrity, in Gent's text, is little more than an extended misconception of a professional athlete that has become more appealing than the genuine article. Gent describes a certain ironic sense of satisfaction regarding his celebrity and the fascination a business mogul had for the NFL spectacle. He details a conversation he had with a wealthy businessman at an exclusive Dallas country club that demonstrates the appeal of the NFL spectacle and its relation to the distorted sense of celebrity that confounded Gent,

'Boy, I'll never forget the time you hit the goalpost against New York. I thought you were dead.' 'I thought I was dead, too.' They all laughed heartily. It was always surprising to me to see respected businessmen who deal in millions of dollars and thousands of lives giggling like pubescent schoolgirls around a football player. I could never figure out if it was worship or fear. Probably just confusion.^{lvii}

In this instance Gent's celebrity was not based out of any appreciation for the game itself, but rather in the brutal injuries he sustained during the course of a televised game. Gent's

talents and skills as a professional athlete were an afterthought to this spectator, but Gent's ability to withstand enormous amounts of physical punishment and pain mesmerized this particular spectator. This remark about the effect that the mere presence of a professional football player had on powerful businessmen further demonstrates the power of celebrity that professional football players experienced because of the NFL spectacle

Throughout the text Gent refers to exploits he shared with the team's starting quarterback Seth Maxwell, the fictional representation of Cowboy quarterback and future Monday Night Football color commentator Don Meredith. The two players experience numerous variations of popular celebrity that became associated with professional football 'stars.' Some of the accounts are benign in nature, such as striking up a brief conversation with a toll booth attendant, who "Like a true Texas football fan he went completely berserk. Waving and trying to speak as we glided through, he spat half his sandwich on the trunk."^{lviii}

Other instances were evidence of the previously mentioned distorted celebrity experienced by Gent and Meredith,

On a dull Wednesday in March we had gotten high, filled the car with gasoline, whiskey, speed, and grass, and driven to Santa Fe nonstop. We spent two nights at an old hotel, until at 3 a.m the second morning Maxwell finally seduced the night clerk on a brown leather couch in the lobby. I alternated between standing guard and watching them fuck. She was a heavysset woman, about forty-five, and all the time Maxwell humped away at her, she babbled endlessly about him being her son's favorite football star, and how pleased the boy would be to learn she and Maxwell had met and become friends.^{lix}

Vulgarity aside, this passage from Gent's text demonstrates how the spectacle of professional football and popular celebrity distorted one another. Physical excess off the field was the reward for physical sacrifice on the field. The night clerk's enthusiasm was rooted in her understanding of the importance that the 'star' quarterback held for her son. The night clerk was what Lasch described as the 'sensation-minded spectator.' The significance of the event was not physical gratification, but rather the meaning generated by the intersection of spectacle and celebrity.

Throughout the book there is a divisive split between the players and the coaches and owner. The players struggle to meet the expectations of the coaches and ultimately the owners in an attempt to secure economic security and celebrity. Meanwhile the owners and the coaches struggle to meet the expectations of the television networks and corporate sponsors that help dictate spectator spending on the NFL spectacle by producing a winning team which translates into higher market shares. This tension reveals the class structure of the NFL. Gent's text takes exception with this class structure and its inequities. He recalled an NFL players' association meeting that went drastically awry.

A select committee of players' representatives reached an agreement with the owners' group. A document was drawn up and Clinton [the owners' negotiator and Dallas Cowboy general manager] asked permission to take it to his superiors for their signatures. The next day he returned with the signed agreement and announced that the owners were pleased the strike was over. While Clinton was making his speech, Jerry Ragen [the players' association president] thumbed through the twenty five page agreement and found that the owners had substituted fourteen new pages.

Another agreement was reached three days later and the owners' signatures were witnessed by the select committee. It had all seemed pretty pointless. The owners refused to honor several portions of the agreement, preferring long court hassles to compliance.^{lx}

Gent's assessment reveals the condition of the relationship between labor and management to be strained at best. The tension within the class structure of the NFL was apparent in areas beyond the collective bargaining table.

Gent, just like any other individual player during this time, was exposed to the difficulties of labor negotiations when player contracts were drawn up. The financial battlefield of professional football in the late-sixties and early-seventies was precarious at best for the individual athlete. Gent described his own contract negotiation and the impotent position he was backed into by the team's general manager Clinton Foote,

Negotiating with Clinton Foote was extremely difficult for three reasons, First, Clinton owned a small part of the club and had an override on profits. Thus, a percentage of any money Clinton saved in overhead (i.e. player's salaries) came back into his own pocket. Second, Clinton tried never to let a player know the whole truth about his status with the club. It kept the players off balance and easier to control. A player didn't need to know any more than was necessary to play on Sunday. Third, Clinton Foote was one smart son-of-a-bitch. Contract negotiations were honorless, distasteful, and totally frightening experiences. There were no fixed rules and behavior varied radically, depending on the individuals involved.^{lxi}

In describing his status as a professional football player in the NFL Gent reveals the powerlessness of a participant in the popular spectacle, "I played football where, and when, Conrad Hunter [fictional representation of Cowboy owner Clint Murchison Jr.] desired. It was all I knew to do, and it was terrifying to be owned by a fifty year old,

devout Roman Catholic millionaire, whose only pleasure was hanging out in locker rooms.”^{lxii} The key word in this passage is ‘owned,’ and what this meant to NFL players was exactly what the term suggested. Players were the property of their team. This meant that a player’s career was not his to control.

What this inherent powerlessness of the NFL players allowed NFL team owners to do was essentially monopolize talent as a resource. Spectators in Dallas, Oakland, Miami, Green Bay, and Pittsburgh all enjoyed several continuous years of success by their teams because their players could not leave to play for another team. Success on the field translated to success in the marketplace, and with the revenue that teams like these were able to generate they were able to buy more talent. Thus it is not surprising that they became known as dynasties.

As the corporate mentality became more prevalent in the NFL, the importance of statistics increased. Player production and efficiency were scrutinized like never before, and in response the individual players were forced to perform out of fear of becoming obsolete and forced into retirement. Participation in the NFL spectacle was solely contingent on a player’s performance. Gent discusses this reality with Meredith in the text,

Well, you can believe all that sport shit if you want to, I said.
But we’re not the team, man, they are, B.A. [Coach Tom Landry],
Conrad Hunter [Owner Clint Murchison Jr.] and Clint Foote [General
Manager Tex Schramm], and all of those front office cocksuckers,
they’re the team. We’re just the fucking equipment to be listed along
with the shoulder pads and headgear and jockstraps. This is first and
foremost a business, with antitrust exemptions, tax breaks, and
depreciations. And all of the first and tens, all the last-second touchdowns

and 95 yard passes are just items on a ledger to be weighed along with the cost of precooked steak and green eggs. People don't talk about football teams anymore, they talk about football systems, and the control long ago moved off the field....So, everything you think is so swell and wonderful and unduplicatable about you as a quarterback B.A. has on a tape downtown ready to be pumped into the next guy like he was pulling on headgear.^{lxiii}

Through this lengthy quote Gent justifies his disillusionment with the impact that big business has had on the NFL. Teams are replaced by systems, and players are merely interchangeable cogs in a spectacle producing machine. The integrity of the sport is debased by a profit-driven corporate agenda. Once again the ability to reproduce success on the field was seen as crucial to maintaining a revenue-generating fan base which ultimately determined the success of the NFL spectacle.

Peter Gent produced a text that challenged how professional football was represented and subsequently interpreted. In the foreword for the 30th anniversary edition Gent provides a brief but revealing summary about the subject of his book the NFL, "There is no greater display of everything that's magnificent about sport in America, and everything that is wrong with culture in America."^{lxiv} His iconoclastic style of writing exposed the harsh reality of professional football and its union with the modern spectacle. Culturally revered concepts of honest and fair competition in professional sport were shown to be dated and in some cases out of place in the world of the NFL spectacle. The perils of celebrity in a world of televised images and extreme close-ups were in many cases tragically real and unavoidable for many professional football players. All the while the wheels of corporate progress ground the relics of an earlier era of professional

football into dust, and replaced the old conventions with new systems. As a popular media text, Gent's book deserves attention for what it said about the evolution of the NFL spectacle.

Conclusion:
The Next Evolution of the NFL Spectacle—A Spectator’s Fantasy

The National Football League established itself as the dominant spectator sport in American popular culture during the late-1960s and early-1970s through its union with television. The technological advances in television broadcasting were perfectly suited to showcase professional football. A key to the success of this union was the unprecedented access to the NFL’s cultural product. Never before seen images were broadcast across the country, and eventually around the world to an ever-expanding NFL fan base. Spectators were provided with extreme close ups of their favorite players, instant replay allowed for spectacular moments to be relived again and again, and even the sounds from the sidelines and field of play were made accessible to the television spectators. It is this issue of access that ultimately determined the enormous success of the NFL during these transitional years. By increasing the spectators’ access to the cultural product through television coverage the NFL secured an audience of not only loyal fans, but an active community of consumers to entice corporate sponsorship.

So why is this project important? Certainly the financial impact that the NFL has on the American economy warrants a close analysis. Just how this spectacle was able to assume such a prominent position in the American marketplace is pertinent and complex question. However, to think that the NFL spectacle affects only the United States’ economic markets would be naïve. Satellite television has exploded previous limitations of the network broadcasts of the NFL spectacle. Taking a cue from early NFL pioneers

in the new television market of the sixties, current NFL executives have identified the benefits of satellite programming and the multiple packaging opportunities that are available. Not only do these packages offer games unavailable to television network customers, the satellite packages can be broadcast across borders and around the globe without the participation of the television networks. This provides yet another revenue generating opportunity for the NFL, and a chance to bring its product into remote locations around the globe. In his book *Sports Inc.* published in 2004, Phil Schaff compiled a list of 161 countries that aired Super Bowl XXXVI, and were considered to have a relevant market, or promotional objective.^{lxv} Places across the globe from Abu Dhabi to Vatican City aired the thirty sixth installment of the NFL's ultimate spectacle. A columnist for *USA Today* cited in his column that 500 million households outside of the United States, an increase of about forty percent from last year, will see NFL action on television.^{lxvi} Numbers such as these cannot be ignored or trivialized. The NFL spectacle is a national phenomenon with global implications. In order to fully understand just how this level of success and influence exhibited by the NFL's cultural product an analysis of its early formation is important.

Exactly how the NFL spectacle surged to the forefront of American popular culture is debatable. My argument centers on the emergence of improved technology in the television broadcasting industry as the driving force behind the spectacle's success, but there are some cultural critics who point to a shift in some of our country's fundamental principles as the reason for the NFL's extraordinary success. The humorist George Carlin offers his perspective on how football was able to dethrone baseball as our national pastime,

Baseball is a 19th century pastoral game / Football is a twentieth-century technological struggle / Baseball is played on a diamond, in a park / Football is played on a GRIDIRON, in a Stadium, sometimes called Soldier Field or War Memorial Stadium / Baseball begins in the spring, the season of new life / Football begins in the fall, when everything is dying / Baseball has the 7th inning stretch / Football has the 2 minute warning / Baseball has no time limit, ‘We don’t know when it’s going to end’ / Football is rigidly timed and it will end ‘even if we have to go to sudden death’ / Finally, the objectives of the two games are completely different: In football, the object is for the quarterback, otherwise known as the field general, to be on target with his aerial assault, riddling the defense by hitting his receivers with deadly accuracy in spite of the blitz, even if he has to use the shotgun. With short bullet passes and long bombs, he marches his troops into enemy territory, balancing this aerial assault with a sustained ground attack that punches holes in the forward wall of the enemy’s defensive line / In baseball the object is to go home! And to be safe! ‘I hope I’ll be safe at home!’^{lxvii}

While this passage is humor laden, I believe that one of Carlin’s first observations ring true as to why the NFL has been so successful over the last forty years. Technology as mentioned earlier has changed the face of the American sport spectacle. Furthermore, technological advancements and applications will continue to dictate the evolution of the NFL spectacle.

Another example of the impact of technology on the NFL spectacle is demonstrated by the enormous popularity of NFL video games. Companies like EA Sports have identified a massive consumer community that is insatiable when it comes to purchasing the latest sports video games. While Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association have video games depicting their sport and athletes, the most

popular sports video game is the NFL's product *Madden NFL*. These games generate hundreds of millions of dollars every year, and every year a new version hits the market. Each year the team rosters are updated to stay current with NFL rosters. Bonus features such as player drafts, stadium design, and trades between the teams are all designed to enhance the experience for the consumer. Furthermore, the idea of active spectatorship is again apparent when you consider the numerous video game conventions and on-line competitions that are held in an effort to promote the product and create a more cohesive community of consumers.

Why the evolution of the NFL spectacle is important has been addressed. The next logical step is to ask what should be studied next regarding this cultural product. The 21st century version of the NFL spectacle is not that much different than the earlier version from the late-sixties and early-seventies. Just as television reached into American homes and captured countless numbers of new spectators, technological advances have once again changed the face of the NFL spectacle and reinvented the NFL spectator. Once again this monumental change begins with new and increased access to the cultural product. The internet has taken the average television spectator, and given him almost unlimited access to the NFL spectacle from teams, to coaches, to individual players.

The access to this instant information has created a new breed of NFL spectator and, any studies on the evolution or the condition of the NFL cultural product in the 21st century must include the fantasy football phenomenon. Tracking statistics and scores in today's NFL is made easier and instantaneous thanks to the internet. The information that once took weeks or at the very least days to reach the spectator is now available

instantaneously through NFL affiliated websites on the internet, or through continuous league updates that are now a staple part of every NFL televised broadcast. The new spectator uses the instant information to add a new dimension to the NFL spectacle. Using statistical information generated in the “real world” of the NFL, spectators can create a fantasy world of the NFL spectacle that they can, in part, control. This imaginary control enhances the experience of the NFL cultural product for many spectators, and as a result the “fantasy football” industry has exploded in popularity over the last decade.

The premise of fantasy football is to bring the spectator deeper into the spectacle through the analysis and prognostication of players’ statistics. Each spectator tracks the statistics of individual players, primarily offensive players but there are versions of fantasy football that track defensive players as well as entire defensive teams. The object is to compile a collection of individual players into a fantasy team. This is done during fantasy drafts where groups of spectators gather together in person or on-line to form leagues of anywhere from six to twenty teams. Ultimately, each weekend during the regular NFL season different teams within the fantasy league are matched up against one another. The statistics of the individual players are then recorded and assigned point totals depending on the statistic, for instance a touchdown earns a player six points, passing yards and rushing yards also earn points, whereas interceptions and fumbles subtract points from a player’ total. Each team totals its players’ points, and the fantasy team with the highest point total wins. By the end of the regular NFL season two fantasy teams will be paired together for the league championship, and the winner in many

leagues that incorporate gambling into the spectacle will then win the cash prize, or at the very least the winner will enjoy bragging rights until the start of next season.

The significance of the cultural phenomenon resides on many different levels both social and economic. Different sources have quoted numbers of participants in 'fantasy football' in the United States ranging from 15 to 30 million. Even if the actual number of participants is at the low end of this range, the numbers are staggering. Combine this participation with the number of corporate sponsors that have entered the fray and the economic impact alone warrants further study. However, there is more to this latest incarnation of the NFL spectacle. The social ramifications span traditional boundaries such as gender and social class. The internet levels the playing field so to speak, and prejudices and biases are toothless in the vastness of cyberspace. The fantasy football general manager, or spectator, of the team called the 'Ravenous Space Monkeys' could be the girl scout that just sold you your favorite box of cookies, or it could be the CEO of the Dallas Cowboys. Anonymity is a key element in the increasing number of fantasy football participants. The fear of failure or embarrassment is minimized when no one knows who controls the other fantasy team. As a result novice spectators can venture into the experience with little or no fear of making a mistake and enduring the humiliation of their own ignorance.

Spectator participation in the professional football spectacle made the NFL's cultural product into a social and economic force. Understanding some of the history and subtle aspects of this phenomenon will shed light on how we as spectators and participants in the development of our society define ourselves in relation to our culture. The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves were played on our televisions during the

sixties and seventies, and the NFL was there to provide us access to a captivating cultural product and lead us to a new understanding of the modern spectacle. As spectators continue to use the internet to reframe their understanding of the modern spectacle, the future of the NFL's cultural product will rely on the continued access to the spectacle through cyberspace.

Endnotes

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- ^v Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 443.
- ^{vi} Suren Lalvani, “Carrying the Ideological Ball: Text, Discourse, and Pleasure,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 11 (1988) 157.
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- ^{viii} Paul M Hirsch. “Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organization Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems.” *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, eds. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Berkley: University of California, 1991) 314.
- ^{ix} Hirsch 315.
- ^x Real 106.
- ^{xi} Hirsch 315.
- ^{xii} John Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 46.
- ^{xiii} Lalvani 171.
- ^{xiv} Hirsch 317.
- ^{xv} William M. Evan, “Toward a Theory of Inter-Organizational Relations”. *Management Science* 11 (1963) 177-79.
- ^{xvi} Hirsch 319.

^{xvii} Hirsch 320-1.

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^{xix} Jerry Gorman and Kirk Calhoun, *The Name of the Game: The Business of Sports* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1994) 21

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^{xxi} Kyle Rote and Jack Winter, "Pro Football: Does Money Run the Game?" *Look* 21 Oct. 1969: 93.

^{xxii} Gorman and Calhoun 52.

^{xxiii} Gorman and Calhoun 53.

^{xxiv} Rote and Winter, 93.

^{xxv} Gorman and Calhoun 61.

^{xxvi} M. Morse, "Sport on Television: Replay and display," *Regarding Television*, ed. E.A. Kaplan (Los Angeles: American Film Institute/University Publications of America 1983) 50.

^{xxvii} John Lahr, "The Theater of Sports," *Sport in the Sociocultural Process*, Ed. M. Hart (Dubuque, IA: W.C. 1976) 203.

^{xxviii} Melissa Green, and Eric Carr, "Football, Fans and Technology." Jan 2005. Primedia. 7 Jan 2005. <http://football.about.com/od/>.>

^{xxix} William Slatkin, "Years of Video Recording," *Electronics World* Nov. 1971: 36-8.

^{xxx} Steve Sabol, "Film and Sound Audio" 2003. NFL Films. Jan 2005. <http://nflfilms.com/media/>.>

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^{xxxii} Sabol.

^{xxxiii} Gorman and Calhoun, 59.

- ^{xxxiv} Phil Schaaf, *Sports, Inc.: 100 Years of Sports Business* (New York: Prometheus, 2004) 138.
- ^{xxxv} Jeff Miller, *Going Long* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 2003) 205.
- ^{xxxvi} Miller 204.
- ^{xxxvii} Gorman and Calhoun, 69.
- ^{xxxviii} Gorman and Calhoun 68.
- ^{xxxix} Mandelbaum 181.
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- ^{xliii} John Bloom, "Joe Namath and Super Bowl III: An Interpretation of Style," *Journal of Sport History* 15 (1988) 66.
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